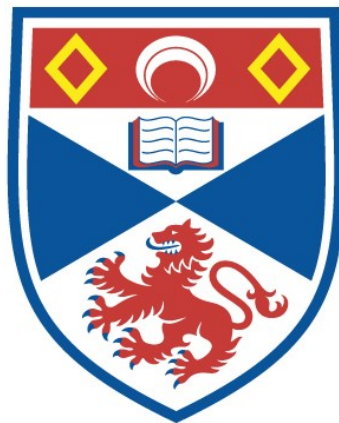# PARTICIPATING IN DIVINE CONFLICT: CONSTRUCTING A BAPTIST-CHARISMATIC THEOLOGY OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE IN DIALOGUE WITH PAUL S. FIDDES

Alistair Joseph Cuthbert

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
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Participating in Divine Conflict: Constructing a Baptist-Charismatic Theology of Spiritual Warfare in Dialogue with Paul S. Fiddes.

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St Andrews

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

In light of the lack of systematic theology work on the demonic-spiritual realm, the aim of this thesis is to construct a doctrine of God which is commodious and coherent enough to locate a theology of spiritual warfare. The specific question that guides the thesis is 'does the contemporary theology of Paul S. Fiddes offer a better framework than traditional theologies to explain the nature and character of God that best fits with a theology of spiritual warfare?' Indeed, the reached answer concludes that at variance with traditional doctrines of God, a critical evaluation and reconstruction of Paul Fiddes' theology – with emphases on God's kenotic sovereignty, passibility, openness to the created order and panentheistic reality – offers a better structure to construct a Doctrine of God that best imbibes a theology of spiritual warfare.

In order to address and answer the question, the development of the thesis has three distinct phases. First, after the introduction, chapters two and three broadly delineate with some analysis Fiddes' doctrine of God and his understanding of the demonic realm and nature of evil. From this follows, in chapters four to six, critical examinations of the three incommunicable attributes of God, - divine omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence - which are explicated using Fiddes' corpus as well as salient interlocutors. These chosen attributes are central to a doctrine of God that helps make sense of the spiritual world, especially the demonic, as attested to by scripture, reason and experience. Finally, in chapter seven, the overall findings of these five chapters are then used to build a constructive theology of spiritual warfare, a dialectical theology operant on the planes of the individual and corporate which is theologically congruent with the critically adapted doctrine of God presented in the previous chapters. The entire thesis takes the form of a dialogue between Fiddes and this author, who continually draws upon pertinent modern (and some historical) scholarship concerning divine conflict and the doctrine of God.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CD II/1   Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of God*. Vol. 2.1 of *Church Dogmatics*. Edited by G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance. Translated by T.H.L. Parker, W. B. Johnston, Harold Knight and J.L.M Haire. Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010.

CD II/2   Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of God*. Vol. 2.2 of *Church Dogmatics*. Edited by G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance. Translated by G.W. Bromiley, J.C. Campbell, Iain Wilson, J. Strathearn McNab, Harold Knight and R. A. Stewart. Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010.

CD III/3   Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of Creation*. Vol. 3.3 of *Church Dogmatics*. Edited by G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance. Translated by G. W. Bromiley and R.J. Ehrlich. Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010.

CD IV/1   Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of Reconciliation.* Vol. 4.1 of *Church Dogmatics*. Edited by G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance. Translated by G. W. Bromiley. Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010.

CD IV/3.1   Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of Reconciliation.* Vol. 4.3.1 of *Church Dogmatics*. Edited by G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance. Translated by G. W. Bromiley. Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010.

CSG   Paul S. Fiddes, *The Creative Suffering of God*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988.

PEPS   Paul S. Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation: The Christian Idea of Atonement*. London: Darton, Longman, & Todd, 1989.

FAL   Paul S. Fiddes, *Freedom and Limit: A Dialogue between Literature and Christian Doctrine*. Basingstoke Macon: Macmillan, 1991.

PIG   Paul S. Fiddes, *Participating in God: A Pastoral Doctrine of the Trinity*. London: Darton, Longman, & Todd. 2000.

TPE   Paul S. Fiddes, *The Promised End: Eschatology in Theology and Literature*. Oxford: Blackwell. 2000.

SWKG   Paul S. Fiddes, *Seeing the World and Knowing God: Hebrew Wisdom and Christian Doctrine in a Late-Modern Context*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2013.

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Setting the Scene

In 1993 the Intercession Working Group (IWG) of the Lausanne Committee for World

Evangelisation met in London to discuss the rapid advancement of 'Spiritual Warfare' (SW

hereafter) teaching and practise among Evangelicals and Pentecostals around the world. This

meeting resulted with a written statement on 'spiritual conflict' in The Lausanne Covenant.[1] The

statement is an expansion on the original statement on spiritual conflict in clause 12 of the 1974

Lausanne Covenant.[2] By 1993 many voices from Asia and Africa were stating to the western

church of the constant reality of dark powers and SW where they live. These voices catalysed the

discussion that led to the forming of the 1993 statement, which, while recognising that the

influence of the enlightenment had dulled the western mind to spiritual realities, acknowledged

that the overall global context of the mid-1990s was one of increasing openness to and interest in

the occult and dark arts.

Two factors precipitated this rise and interest in SW according to the Lausanne

committee. First, the growth of the church in the global south, situated in cultures explicitly open

to the dark side of the spiritual realm; this church and its worldview is then exported around the

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[1] "Lausanne Statement on Spiritual Warfare (1993)," Lausanne Movement, accessed March 8, 2022, (https://www.lausanne.org/content/statement/statement-on-spiritual-warfare-1993).
[2] C. Rene Padilla, "Spiritual Conflict," in *The New Face of Evangelicalism: An International Symposium on the Lausanne Conference*, ed. C. Rene Padilla. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1976), 205.

world via mass migration of people from the global south to the west. Second, the decline of Christianity in the west has resulted in an increased interest in eastern religious practise, a sensationalism of the occult, and a progressive reversion back to pre-Christian pagan belief. Collectively this has prepared the ground to receive a nuanced Christian gospel message that emphasises the spirit realm and a semi-dualistic struggle between good and evil.[3] These factors collectively lead to an ever-increasing juxtaposition of contrasting worldviews ubiquitously present around the globe and in the world-wide church, especially Evangelical, Pentecostal and Catholic-charismatic expressions.[4]

This means that in western culture, as enlightenment-modernity is replaced by the current late-modern milieu, there is a greater openness to spiritual ideas such as angels and demons than in the past. No longer will the mention of the devil, angels or demons bring the social conversation to a halt.[5] Rather, angels are one of the main comeback tales of recent times,[6] and evil characters are central to many blockbuster films.[7] Indeed, a brief perusal of a modern book shop will make one aware of the ever-increasing availability of books on witchcraft and the occult.[8] Therefore, as interest in the supernatural rises in western culture and the epicentre of Christianity shifts towards the global south, there has been a concomitant rise of intrigue within

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[3] "Lausanne Statement." The statement notes the sizeable popularity of Frank Perretti's three fictional novels about SW, *This Present Darkness, Piercing the Darkness, The Prophet*, widely held to be the christian equivalent of the film *The Exorcist* in raising awareness of SW in the psyche and zeitgeist of Christian sub-culture.

[4] Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

[5] Walter Wink, *Unmasking the Powers: The Invisible Forces that Determine Human Existence* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 1.

[6] Stephen F. Noll, *Angels of Light, Powers of Darkness: Thinking Biblically about Angels, Satan & Principalities* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 11.

[7] For example, Dr Hannibal Lecter in 'Silence of the Lambs.' Andrew Delbanco, *The Death of Satan: How Americans Have Lost the Sense of Evil* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995), 19.

[8] A cursory search on the Waterstones website reveals over 1000 titles on the occult. Accessed March 8, 2022, (https://www.waterstones.com/books/search/term/occult).

the church of matters pertaining to spiritual beings; their ontology, purpose and role in the

spiritual war behind the scenes. With that has come much debate concerning the nature of SW,

Christians and demonization, demonization and mental health,[9] whether Satan is a personal being

or mythical-malevolent force, and whether or not there are demonic spirits over geographical or

sociological territories.[10]

The situation that now exists is the culmination of a number of decades of researching,

writing and practise of the spirit realm, both in the church and culture. For the Lausanne

statement of 1993 reflected a time period many consider to be the zenith of the SW movement.

In fact, by the 1990s there had already been at least two decades of popular teaching on the

subject as the charismatic renewal movement spread through different christian denominations.

To illustrate, in the UK anglican church renewal movement a few decades after the ministry of

the first British anglican-charismatic pioneer, Alexander Boddy, pentecostal happenings took

place among a number of anglican curates in the 1960s and 70s which resulted in a large number

of charismatic anglican clergy getting involved in SW teaching and praxis. Of this large group,

three - namely Michael Harper, David Watson and Michael Green - published books specifically

on the subject of SW.[11]

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[9] Henry and Mary Virkler, "Demonic Involvement in Human Life and Illness." *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 5 (Spring 1977): 96-101.

[10] C. Peter. Wagner (ed.), *Territorial Spirits: Practical Strategies for How to Crush the Enemy through Spiritual Warfare* (Shippensburg: Destiny Image, 2012); Chuck Lowe, *Territorial Spirits and World Evangelisation*? (Ross-Shire: Mentor, 1998).

[11] Michael Harper, *Spiritual Warfare* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1970); David C. K. Watson, *God's Freedom Fighters* (London: Movement Books, 1972); David Watson, *Discipleship* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1981), 167-186; Michael Green, *I Believe in Satan's Downfall* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1981); cf. Graham R. Smith, *The Church Militant: Spiritual Warfare in the Anglican Charismatic Renewal* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2016), 30-44. Perhaps because of its narrower focus on deliverance and exorcism, Smith omits John Richards' well known text *But Deliver Us From Evil* from the list. The James M. Collins, *Exorcism and Deliverance Ministry in the Twentieth Century* (Milton Keynes, Paternoster, 2009), 76-80; Francis Young, *A History of Anglican Exorcism: Deliverance and Demonology in Church Ritual* (London: T&T Clark, 2018), 131-132.

These three texts were part of a deluge of popular texts on SW that appeared in the years from the 1970s to mid-1990s, with the sole intent of raising the level of awareness within churches regarding the heavenly realms, especially the sphere of the demonic.[12] Many of these texts cover similar ground: a definition of SW,[13] biblical data on demons and evil spirits,[14] and practical guidelines on SW and deliverance ministry.[15] Indeed, there has been a steady flow of general texts on SW from the 1990s to the present day covering similar themes.[16] Questions about SW, evil, theodicy, angels and demons, and so on, are now so prevalent across the world, that it is a subject within doctrine which is constantly in need of research, examination, development and sermonic address.[17]

1.2 Systematic Theology - An Integrative Approach

Broadly speaking, this thesis is a systematic theology of SW. As the title states, it is a construction of a baptist-charismatic systematic theology of SW in dialogue with the Baptist theologian Paul S. Fiddes. However, as will become clear throughout the thesis, for two reasons

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[12] 'Classic' texts include Neil T. Anderson, *Victory Over the Darkness* (Oxford: Lion Publishing, 1992); Frank and Ida Mae Hammond, *Pigs in the Parlour* (Kirkwood: Impact, 1973); Peter Horrobin, *Healing Through Deliverance* (Lancaster: Sovereign World Ltd, 1995); and Kurt E. Koch, *Between Christ and Satan* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1971).

[13] Edward N. Gross, *Miracles, Demons & Spiritual Warfare: An Urgent Call for Discernment* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990), 111-123; Clinton E. Arnold, *3 Crucial Questions about Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1997), 17-72.

[14] Ed Murphy, *The Handbook for Spiritual Warfare*, rev ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996), 192-425; C. Peter Wagner, *Spiritual Warfare Strategy: Confronting Spiritual Powers* (Shippensburg: Destiny Image, 1996), 117-241.

[15] Dean Sherman, *Spiritual Warfare for Every Christian* (Seattle: YWAM Publishing, 1995), 179-197; Francis MacNutt, *Deliverance from Evil Spirits: A Practical Manual* (Grand Rapids: Chosen Books, 1995), 167-255.

[16] For example, James K. Beilby and Paul Rhodes Eddy (eds.), *Understanding Spiritual Warfare: Four Views* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012); Richard Beck, *Reviving Old Scratch: Demons and the Devil for Doubters and the Disenchanted* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016); and Billy Hallowell, *Playing With Fire: A Modern Investigation into Demons, Exorcism and Ghosts* (Nashville: Emanate Books, 2020).

[17] Tim Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Scepticism* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2015), 154-155.

the theology articulated will be as interdisciplinary as systematic. First, SW is a concept that a number of theological disciplines debate. The multidisciplinary nature of the subject is seen in the copious amount of work that seeks to tackle this broad matter from different perspectives. In addition to the above-mentioned general and popular texts on the subject, there are academic works exploring the various ways one can approach the subjects of evil, suffering, the demonic, and Satan, which can all fit under the rubric 'SW.'

For instance, biblical scholarship. Old and New Testament scholarship have been researching, in-depth, the cultural context, worldview and belief systems of the Ancient Near East and first century Palestine when it comes to the spirit realm. For instance, questions are asked about the only four places in the Hebrew Bible that the noun הַשָּׂטָן (*the śâṭân*) appears and what it signifies in those contexts.[18] Or what influence did the surrounding neighbours, with their own beliefs about evil beings, have on Israel's development of The Satan.[19] Moreover, passages about 'divine councils' such as Deuteronomy 32 and Psalm 82 have lead to exegetical investigation about the implications of this concept for Israel's understanding of Yahwistic monism.[20] Research into certain passages has revealed Old Testament theological themes such as the 'divine warrior' motif of Yahweh,[21] and even caused some scholars to explicate the

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[18] Numbers 22; Job 1-2; Zechariah 3; 1 Chronicles 21. Scholars conclude that because of the pronoun used with 'Satan' it cannot refer to a name but to forensic imagery of an accuser who opposes divine plans. C. Breytenbach and P. L. Day, "Satan," in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, eds. Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking and Pieter W. van der Horst. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), 1369-1380; Neil Forsyth, *The Old Enemy: Satan and the Combat Myth* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 107-123.

[19] T. J. Wray and Gregory Mobley, *The Birth of Satan: Tracing the Devil's Biblical Roots* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 75-94.

[20] Antti Laato, "The Devil in the Old Testament," in *Evil and the Devil*, eds. Ida Frohlich, and Erkki Koskenniemi. (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), 5-17; Michael S. Heiser, "Co-Regency in Ancient Israel's Divine Council as the Conceptual Backdrop to Ancient Jewish Binitarian Monotheism." *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 26.2 (2015): 195-225.

[21] Tremper Longman III and Daniel Reid, *God is a Warrior* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995).

corollaries of Old Testament texts on systematic questions such as divine omnipotence.[22]

Within New Testament scholarship much is made of the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran.[23] From these ancient texts scholars have unearthed an abundance of information about the development of a systematic demonology in the Qumran tradition, providing 'a rich vocabulary for the prince of the evil demons.'[24] From Jubilees and the Enoch books comes the claim that the origin of the demonic is the rebellion and lust of the watcher angels, via an in-depth account of the Genesis 6 narrative involving the sons of God marrying human women and producing giants, the Nephilim, as their progeny.[25] Much of this second temple scholarship lays the groundwork for the first century Palestinian Jewish attitudes and beliefs regarding the realm of the spirit world, and some of the texts appear to be in the background of 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6.[26]

According to Wright, via Jesus of Nazareth's announcement about the coming kingdom of God, the gospels delineate a multitudinous account of the problem of evil and how the kerygma and praxis of the kingdom confronts the darkness.[27] Indeed, because of the multifarious

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[22] Jon D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (San Francisco: Harper, 1988).

[23] Most of the focus has been on Jubilees and 1 and 2 Enoch, fragments and translations of which were discovered in the Qumran caves.

[24] Everett Ferguson, *Demonology of the Early Christian World* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1984), 76-77.

[25] According to both Jubilees and 1 Enoch demons originated from the Watchers. They are the spirits of the giants, and they happen to be evil spirits, i.e. demons. Ferguson, *Demonology*, 70; cf. Ida Frohlich, "Evil in Second Temple Texts," in *Evil and the Devil*, eds. Ida Frohlich, and Erkki Koskenniemi. (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), 33-35.

[26] Henry Ansgar Kelly, *Towards the Death of Satan: The Growth and Decline of Christian Demonology* (London: G. Chapman, 1968), 19-23.

[27] N. T. Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 45-63.

nature of evil, it has been argued that Jesus operated as an exorcist, much like other exorcists of the time.[28] Perhaps this role was birthed during Jesus' 40 days of temptation in the wilderness, which in the contemporary Jewish imagination was a haunt for demons.[29] As an exorcist, this influences the content of Jesus' teaching by often using parables with a Godward view in order to counter the Satanward view of the Jewish culture.[30] This belief in and exercise of exorcism continued, so it is claimed, by many of the New Testament koinonia and ecclesia,[31] as well as many of the churches of the 2nd century.[32]

If we take biblical scholarship into SW and frame it as 'research and systematisation,' then 'meaning ascription and implementation' could be housed within the theological encyclopaedic domains of practical and pastoral theology. In these disciplines there are no shortage of texts containing various claimed phenomenon concerning SW, claims that I will not critique but rather accept as existent and use as described.[33] Much of it focusses on anecdotal

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[28] Graham H. Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist: A Contribution to the Study of the Historical Jesus* (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1993), 136-156; Graham H. Twelftree, *Jesus The Miracle Worker* (Downers Grove, IVP Academic, 1999), 281-292.

[29] Keith Ferdinando, *The Message of Spiritual Warfare* (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 2016), 74-81.

[30] James Kallas, *Jesus and the Power of Satan* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968), 141-151.

[31] Graham H. Twelftree, *Christ Triumphant: Exorcism Then and Now* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1985), 85-134. Some claim that exorcisms only happened in the Gospels and Acts, see John Christopher Thomas, *The Devil, Disease and Deliverance: Origins of Illness in New Testament Thought* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 307-309.

[32] Graham H. Twelftree, *In the Name of Jesus: Exorcism Among Early Christians* (Grand Rapids, Baker, 2007), 209-275; Andrew Daunton-Fear, *Healing in the Early Church: The Church's Ministry of Healing and Exorcism from the First to the Fifth Century* (Milton Keynes, Paternoster, 2009), 40-67.

[33] A selection of texts includes Gabriele Amorth, *An Exorcist Tells His Story*, Trans. Nicoletta V. MacKenzie. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999); Matthew Linn and Dennis Linn, *Deliverance Prayer: Experiential, Psychological and Theological Approaches* (New York: Paulist Press, 1981); Francis MacNutt, *Healing* (rev ed.) (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1999); MacNutt, *Deliverance from*; Malachi Martin, *Hostage to the Devil: The Possession and Exorcism of Five Contemporary Americans* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992); John Richards, *But Deliver Us from Evil. An Introduction to the Demonic Dimension in Pastoral Care* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1974).

accounts of deliverance prayer and exorcism rites, especially from Catholic and Anglican authors

since there is a long history of exorcism and deliverance in these church traditions, and they have

their own international association of exorcists (AIE) and ministries of deliverance.[34] Also, in

light of some fatal consequences of exorcisms,[35] some practical theology texts helpfully target

safeguarding implementation.[36]

As well as biblical studies and pastoral theology, much ink has been spilled considering

evil in all its forms within philosophy of religion. What is termed 'the problem of evil' is

consensually held to be arguably the most potent challenge to theism, and has been called the

'rock of atheism.'[37] Indeed, it is by far the most written about subject in the last few decades

within the discipline.[38] The standardised format of the 'argument from evil' has a long history. In

the sixth century Boethius asked 'If God indeed does exist, what is the source of evil?'[39] Twelve

hundred years later, Hume expanded and developed Boethius' question to ask of God, 'Is he

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[34] The AIE's statutes were recognised by the Catholic Church only in 2014. Of course, the Catholic church has always assumed the existence of angels and demons since the Lateran IV council in 1215. Paul M. Quay, "Angels and Demons: The Teaching of IV Lateran," *Theological Studies* 42 (1981): 20-45. The aforementioned John Richards was instrumental in establishing the 'Christian Exorcism Study Group (CESG)' with recommendations on ecclesial authority structures and permission in cases of genuine possession. Young, *A History of Anglican*, 129-130. In 1987 the CESG changed its name to the 'Christian Deliverance Study Group' as a reflection of how rarely demonic possession is discovered and actual exorcism needed.

[35] Thomas B. Allen, *Possessed: The True Story of an Exorcism* (Lincoln: iUniverse, 2000); Felicitas D. Goodman, *The Exorcism of Anneliese Michel* (Eugene: Resource Publications, 2005).

[36] Church of England Working Party, *A Time to Heal: A Contribution Towards the Ministry of Healing* (London: Church House Publishing, 2000), 167-181; John M. Duffey, *Lessons Learned: The Anneliese Michel Exorcism: The Implementation of a Safe and Thorough Examination, Determination, and Exorcism of Demonic Possession* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2011).

[37] Jeff Astley, David Brown and Ann Loades, eds. *Evil: A Reader* (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 1-3; Stephen T. Davis (ed.), *Encountering Evil: Live Options in Theodicy* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1981), 1-6;

[38] William Hasker, *The Triumph of God Over Evil: Theodicy for a Suffering World* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2008), 15-16; John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, second ed, (London: MacMillan Press, 1977), 365-386.

[39] Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. P. G. Walsh. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 11.

willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then he is impotent. Is he able, but not willing? Then he is

malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Whence then is evil?'[40] More recently, moral

philosopher McCloskey asserts, 'The problem of evil is a very simple one to state. There is evil

in the world; yet the world is said to be the creation of a good and omnipotent God. How is this

possible? Surely a good, omnipotent God would have made a world free of evil of any kind?'[41]

However, as has been pointed out, the problem of evil, i.e. theodicy, as articulated above

is fundamentally a philosophical and logical problem. It does not consider the probabilistic,

epistemological or existential approaches to the problem.[42] The multilateral challenge is why

Ricoeur dubbed the question of evil as one that resists reflection and remains inscrutable.[43]

Types of evil are delineated into different categories: moral, natural, diabolical, and gratuitous or

dysteleological which collectively create different questions in theodicy such as, is this the best

possible world; do we need first order suffering in order to experience second order positive

goods; or what is the cost-effectiveness of evil and how are we to quantify suffering in theodicy?

Some philosophers re-articulate Augustine's scheme defining evil as *privatio boni* whereas

others follow an 'Irenaean theodicy' as more recently advanced by Schleiermacher.[44] Still others

proffer a different approach, such as Kelsey's argument that since rationalistic theology will not

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[40] David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (New York: Social Sciences Publishers, 1948), 198.

[41] H. J. McCloskey, "The Problem of Evil," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 30.3 (1962): 187.

[42] For an overview of the approaches to the problem of evil, see Michael L. Peterson, *God and Evil: An Introduction to the Issues* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998). The logical problem of evil for the philosopher is different to the existential problem of evil for the pastor - both belong to the complex called the problem of evil. Peter van Inwagen (ed.), *Christian Faith and the Problem of Evil* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), viii-ix.

[43] Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 151-157.

[44] Hick, *Evil and*, 35-235; and John H. Hick, "An Irenaean Theodicy," in *Encountering Evil: Live Options in Theodicy*, ed. Stephen T. Davis. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1981), 39-68.

produce the needed answers there needs to be a great level of ability to discern what is going on in the spirit realm; there is a real need for the spiritual gift of discernment.[45] As we will see a constructed theology of SW routinely considers and engages with philosophy of religion questions of theodicy and their implications for theology.

The second reason why the constructed theology will be as interdisciplinary as systematic is because of the choice to engage with the written corpus of Paul S. Fiddes, a theologian whose theological *oeuvre* is commodious. While Fiddes holds a professorial role in systematic theology at the University of Oxford, he prefers the nomenclature 'constructive' theologian over systematic since he has spent his entire academic career writing connectional theology between disciplines.[46] In order to locate a baptist-charismatic theology of SW within a doctrine of God, it is imperative to draw on, engage and critique a theologian who writes with breadth, is inter-connectional, and baptistic. Fiddes is that theologian and has amassed a significant amount of theological work on the doctrine of God in a career of approximately 50 years. Since his appointment in 1972 as a research fellow at Regent's Park College he has had a prolific scholarly career of immense proportions.[47]

The nature of his theological enterprise demonstrates congruence with the three proverbial hats he has worn within Regents Park for the last half-century: as a professor of

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[45] Kelsey makes this claim, not from 1 Corinthians 12:10, but from depth psychology and his reading of Jung. Morton Kelsey, *Discernment: A Study in Ecstasy and Evil* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 51-85.

[46] Paul Fiddes, personal communication with the author, 15 & 16 March 2016.

[47] His published monographs, journal articles, book reviews, edited volumes (as both editor and contributor), and reports number to date in excess of 200, with more works due to be published next year and 2024. For an in-depth biographical account see Anthony J. Clarke and Paul S. Fiddes, *Dissenting Spirit: A History of Regent's Park College, 1752-2017* (Oxford: Regent's Park College, 2017), 153-221.

systematic theology he has published extensively on different doctrines of theology; as a graduate and lecturer of mediaeval language and literature, as well as one of the founders of the Oxford Centre for the Study of Christianity and Culture, he has written widely on the relationship between theology and literature; and as an ordained minister in the Baptist Union of Great Britain he has contributed greatly to Baptist scholarship.[48] For these and other reasons that will become apparent throughout the thesis, he makes a suitable dialogue partner for the interdisciplinary subject of SW.

1.3 This Study

Historically relatively little systematic-doctrinal work on evil forces and SW has been done.[49] Until the turn of this century when, so it is argued, Gregory Boyd raised 'the current discussion of spiritual warfare to a new and unanticipated level of scholarly investigation,'[50] theologians rarely wrote dogmatic or systematic theology on the evil spiritual realm. There are some possible rare exceptions in the 20th century,[51] but in comparison to the substantial amount

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[48] Anthony Clarke and Andrew Moore, "Introduction: Essaying the Doctrine of God," in *Within the Love of God: Essays on the Doctrine of God in Honour of Paul S. Fiddes,* eds. Anthony Clarke and Andrew Moore. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 1-6.

[49] Famously, having spent 150 pages developing his angelology and kingdom of heaven thesis, Barth finally turns his attention to give a 'momentary glance at demons,' for only 13 pages. *CD* III/3, §51.1-3, 369-531.

[50] C. Peter Wagner and Rebecca Greenwood, "Response to Gregory Boyd," in *Understanding Spiritual Warfare: Four Views,* eds. James K. Beilby and Paul Rhodes Eddy. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 169, cf. Gregory A. Boyd, *God at War: The Bible & Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1997), interior flyleaf. Others who agree with Wagner concerning *God at War* and Gregory A. Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil: Constructing a Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001), include Gordon L. Anderson, review of *God at War* and *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, by Gregory A. Boyd, *PNEUMA: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 25.1 (Spring 2003): 128-129; V. Philips Long, review of *God at War: The Bible & Spiritual Conflict*, by Gregory A. Boyd, *Presbyterion* 23.2 (1997): 125; Christopher A. Hall, review of *Satan and the Problem of Evil: Constructing a Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy*, by Gregory A. Boyd, *Christianity Today* 47.2 (Feb 2003): 90-91.

[51] Helmut Thielicke, *Between God and Satan* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963); T. F. Torrance, *The Apocalypse Today* (London: James Clarke & Co., 1960); Harvey G. Cox, *On Not Leaving it to the Snake* (London: SCM Press, 1968).

of work that has come from the above-mentioned disciplines - as well as popular-general texts -

there is still very little systematic theology work addressing this somewhat controversial area of

christian belief and praxis.[52]

This thesis, therefore, is a baptist-charismatic contribution to the debate in order to build

upon the small amount of systematic-theological work that has already been done.[53] The specific

research question answered is whether or not the contemporary baptist theology of Paul S.

Fiddes offers a better framework than other theologies (traditional and modern) to construct a

doctrine of God that best underpins a theology of SW? For, as will be shown below in chapter

seven, the theological problem this thesis seeks to address is whether or not Fiddes' baptistic

theology offers a contemporary, capacious, effective and dynamic doctrine of God into which a

theology of SW can be situated, without succumbing to the weaknesses of other accounts.

Stated slightly differently and with more exactitude, will a critical evaluation and

reconstruction of Fiddes' theology – with emphases on God's kenotic sovereignty, passibility,

openness to the created order and panentheistic reality – offer a more effective schema to

construct a doctrine of God that best explicates a unified theology of SW than the strong

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[52] E. Janet Warren, *Cleansing the Cosmos* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2012)*,* 23.

[53] It is 20 years since a British baptist scholar last published a theology of SW. Nigel Wright's *A Theology of the Dark Side* is an updated version of his original 1989 publication *The Fair Face of Evil* and close reading and analysis reveal some significant theological adaptations in the 14 years between the editions. Nigel G. Wright, *The Fair Face of Evil: Putting the Power of Darkness in its Place* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1989), 17-52, cf. Nigel G. Wright, *A Theology of the Dark Side: Putting the Power of Evil in its Place* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 29-61. More recent works include William K. Kay and Robin Parry (eds.), *Exorcism & Deliverance: Multi-Disciplinary Studies* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2011); Warren, *Cleansing*; Stephen C. Torr, *A Dramatic Pentecostal/Charismatic Anti-Theodicy: Improvising on a Divine Performance of Lament* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2013); Smith, *The Church Militant*; David Bradnick, *Evil, Spirits, and Possession: An Emergent Theology of the Demonic* (Leiden: Brill, 2017); Torsten Löfstedt, *The Devil, Demons, Judas, and "the Jews"* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2021).

sovereignty account of Powlison, the dualistic rationale of Wagner, the neo-molinist justification of Boyd, or the Jungian integrative case of Wink?[54]

1.4 Method and Scope

Methodologically, this thesis will be a scholarly conversation between Fiddes and me. As his main interlocutor, I will bring into the dialogue alternative ideas gleaned from other theologians and contributors from the literary corpus of systematic theology and SW thinking. With regard to scope, establishing a Fiddesian doctrine of God commodious enough to locate a theology of SW into, is the major priority of this thesis. Therefore, only theological issues common to both Fiddes' doctrine of God and SW theology will be analysed and discussed. Areas of discussion in divine conflict studies not addressed by Fiddes will not be considered. Once Fiddes' doctrine of God is delineated, then the main theological-constructive section of the thesis will follow, situating a unified SW theology into the doctrine of God.

The thesis logically separates into three distinct, yet interrelated, parts. In part one, the reader is introduced to the theological world of Paul S. Fiddes. A general introduction and overall summary of his doctrine of God is followed by an assembled Fiddesian doctrine of evil, one that is both systematic-connectional and interdisciplinary. Part two explores the three main incommunicable and necessary properties of a doctrine of God, namely omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence, which centrally pertain to a coherent theology of SW. This then leads onto the final part of the thesis, an operation of constructive theology in which a theology

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[54] See below, pp. 182-230.

of SW, one that can be located within the established doctrine of God, will be delineated and situated into a nuanced articulation of God's nature and character. Let us now turn our attention to an overview of Fiddes' doctrine of God.

Chapter Two

FIDDES' DOCTRINE OF GOD

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to elucidate the key themes in Paul S. Fiddes' theological work on the doctrine of God. The above-mentioned separation of Fiddes' theological corpus into three areas of interest is for didactic clarity only and should not be seen as a suggestion that there is little interconnectedness in his work. Indeed, like all sophisticated theologians, most of what he says is ultimately grounded in the doctrine of God.[1] However, for the purpose of this chapter, I will draw upon those key works of Fiddes that focus primarily on analysing, discussing and contributing systematically to the Doctrine of God.[2] Other writings of Fiddes on the doctrine of God will be used to buttress the main texts where appropriate. Focus on these key sources will not only allow for elucidation of Fiddes' doctrine of God but also possibly reveal whether or not there has been any change or development in his thought over the thirty years covered by these texts.

This chapter will bifurcate into two halves. Before attempting to critically delineate Fiddes' doctrine of God, some historical and methodological issues will be examined. First, the reasons for the increased popularity of the concept of a passible God which concomitantly infers

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[1] Fiddes' conviction that the Christian God is possible who suffers in love with his creation is used in order to better understand literature such as Gerald Manley Hopkins' sonnets and is also strategic doctrine that is significant for Baptist believers. *CSG*, cf. *FAL*, 138-145; Paul S. Fiddes, *Tracks and Traces: Baptist Identity in Church and Theology* (Carlisle: Paternoster. 2003), 57-61.

[2] *CSG*; *PEPS*; *PIG*; Paul S. Fiddes, "Relational Trinity: Radical Perspective," in *Two Views on the Doctrine of the Trinity*, ed. Jason Sexton. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 159-185; Paul S. Fiddes, "The Atonement and the Trinity," in *The Forgotten Trinity 3: A Selection of Papers Presented to the BCC Study Commission on Trinitarian Doctrine Today*, ed. Alasdair I. C. Heron. (London: British Council of Churches, 1991), 103–22.

problems with the traditional-historical position, and second, a shift regarding the appropriate

sources used to formulate a doctrine of God with special reference to Fiddes' strong advocacy

that spiritual life *experience* should be a more influential source for theological formulation.

Following these considerations attention will then turn to Fiddes' doctrine of God: specifically

looking at the nature and character of the triune God of the Christian faith; the claimed fact of,

and the way in which, God is a passible God of suffering love; the impact of God's suffering on

salvation and atonement theology; and the ways in which a central divine attribute of suffering

redefines other divine attributes.

2.2 The Contemporary Need for a Passible God

As other theologians have identified, a number of factors have driven the current

suspicion in some quarters concerning God's impassibility.[3] Many who critique the traditional

doctrine of impassibility, especially the impassibility of God's feelings,[4] have become convinced

that God suffers and is therefore passible with humanity.[5] These scholars hold the belief in a

suffering God axiomatic for modern theology,[6] a kind of 'new orthodoxy.'[7] Fiddes concurs and

argues that there are some very good reasons for adapting our understanding of God's nature and

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[3] Thomas G. Weinandy, "Does God Suffer?" *First Things* 117 N (2001): 35; Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, third ed, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 273-279.

[4] Richard E. Creel, *Divine Impassibility: An Essay in Philosophical Theology* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 1986), 113.

[5] Weinandy lists scholars who defend the full passibility of God including Jüngel, a very influential theologian for Fiddes. Fiddes criticises Webster for claiming that Jüngel is not a divine passibility scholar whereas Jüngel actually describes God facing both death and non-being. Weinandy, "Does God," 35, cf. Paul S. Fiddes, "A Review of 'Eberhard Jüngel. An Introduction to his Thought' by John Webster," *Journal of Theological Studies* 38.1 (1987): 265-9.

[6] Lee finds it incredible that so little has been written on the suffering of God. Jung Y. Lee, *God Suffers for Us: A Systematic Enquiry into the Concept of Divine Passibility* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), 1.

[7] Richard Bauckham, "'Only the Suffering God Can Help:' Divine Passibility in Modern Theology," *Themelios* 9.3 (1984): 6-7.

character, both ontologically and immanently, in order to speak coherently into the contemporary *zeitgeist.* He lists four central developments that drive the need to articulate a passible God: a new understanding of love; Christology and a theology of the cross; theodicy and human suffering; and a new worldview about the nature of the reality of the world.[8]

First, there is insight from modern psychology regarding the nature of love, a movement away from love being defined as an attitude of will and mind that is devoid from emotion to a posture of suffering love that involves empathy for and vulnerability with the sufferer. As process theology portrays 'God is the great companion – the fellow sufferer who understands.'[9] This change in understanding helps reiterate the often ignored biblical theme found especially in the prophets that Yahweh's pathos means that he suffers when his covenant people reject his covenant *hesed.* In fact, the Old Testament describes Yahweh as not simply sharing in the suffering of his people but actually a God whose *hesed* summons all humans to enter into and share in the suffering that he already feels for humanity.[10] The book of Hosea quintessentially tells this tale: Hosea, Fiddes argues, marries the known prostitute Gomer in order to partake in the suffering that God is already enduring due to the covenant unfaithfulness of his people Israel.[11]

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[8] Paul S. Fiddes, "Suffering, Divine," in *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Modern Christian Thought*, ed. Alister E. McGrath. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 634.

[9] Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (New York: Free Press; London: Collier Macmillan, 1979), 351. In *CSG*, Fiddes makes little reference to scripture (only key texts such as Exodus 3:14, Jeremiah 31, Hosea 11 and Mark 15:39) whereas both Whitehead and Hartshorne are among the most cited authors. This offers a marked contrast with other passibilists who base their arguments in 'divine repentance' type texts such as 1 Samuel 15. For example, Terence E. Fretheim, "The Repentance of God: A Key to Evaluating Old Testament God-Talk," *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 10 (1988): 47-70.

[10] *CSG*, 19-25.

[11] Paul S. Fiddes, "The Cross of Hosea Revisited: The Meaning of Suffering in the Book of Hosea," *Review & Expositor* 90 (Spring 1993): 176-178. This paper well illustrates the influence on Fiddes' thinking of H. Wheeler Robinson, especially his two key texts *Suffering Human and Divine* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1939) and *The Cross in the Old Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1965).

Secondly, the suffering of Jesus Christ on the cross, which has always been central to understanding the Christian faith (1 Corinthians 1:18-31), is now understood in a different, less-dichotomised way than that inherited from Chalcedon. No longer can we define personhood in a compartmentalised way but rather if Christ is one with God and humanity, then he must be so as a complete person. Starting at Luther's 'theology of the cross,' we need to go further and understand that the suffering of Christ on the cross creates a theology *from* the cross (*kreuzestheologie*), an actualised event in human history that explicitly reveals God's triune, eternal nature.[12] Rooted in the centurion's response after Christ died (Mark 15:39), Fiddes states 'God suffers in the cross in *oneness* with the person of Christ; God suffers *eternally* in the cross; God is most *Godlike* in the suffering of the cross.'[13]

To further develop his point, Fiddes suggests that this change in our understanding of Christ crucified and the theology that comes from the cross will alter the meaning of the atonement for this modern era. Indeed, argues Fiddes, this is not unprecedented since church history clearly shows us that ideas regarding the atonement have changed from era to era in order to make the atonement communicable to the current milieu. Therefore viewing God as suffering in his entire being through Christ on the cross helps the church today communicate the atonement in ways that offer answers to a modern society struggling under the weight of personality fragmentation and loss of social relationships.[14]

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[12] *CSG*, 25-31.
[13] *CSG*, 31.
[14] *PEPS*, 3-13.

Third, 'there seems little doubt that the problem of human suffering has been the most powerful motivation in recent years for affirming the suffering of God.'[15] Ubiquitous media has created an ever-increasing global consciousness of suffering, pain and evil among humanity which renders the impassibility of God more tenuous in a growing awareness and context of theodicy. When affliction and torment avail 'it is a consolation to those who suffer to know that God suffers too, and understands their situation from within.'[16]

The genocide at Auschwitz, more than any other historical event, took evil and suffering to an unprecedented level, according to Fiddes. In fact he asks whether it is at all possible to do theology after Auschwitz?[17] In the face of such tragedy and evil the most satisfying (though not perfect) theodicy is the 'freewill defence' by which God passes onto creation a radical freedom that is irrevocable and which places limits on himself. To morally justify this, Fiddes claims, it is imperative that God also share in the suffering caused by evil human actions located in the irrevocable freedom given to creation. In suffering with creation, God is both present with and also protesting against the pain befalling creation, which he often does in silence and hiddenness and this serves as a pattern for humans to imitate with each other.[18]

Fourthly, Fiddes asserts that the way in which humanity thinks about the world will influence the way we think about God the creator of the world. Unlike past worldviews that saw God and the world as static and immutable, today the world is viewed as being in a state of flux

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[15] Fiddes, "Suffering, Divine," 636; Other passibilists come from countries or racial groups that have experienced much pain and suffering in the twentieth century. Thomas G. Weinandy, *Does God Suffer?* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000), 2-6.

[16] *CSG*, 31.

[17] Aguilar asks similar questions in a post-Rwandan genocide era. Mario Aguilar, *Theology, Liberation and Genocide: A Theology of the Periphery* (London: SCM Press, 2009).

[18] *PEPS*, 207-220.

and decay, a living organism instead of a machine.[19] Within theology much of this view has been

developed by process theology that posits that God is the designer who has to work *inside* the

organism and experience its growing pains. God the co-creator of the universe suffers just like

the creatures in the world and this means that God can only *cause* by persuasion and influence,

that everything in the universe enjoys some kind of experience or feeling, and that there is a

place for sacrifice in the world systems.[20]

Defining reality as 'event' and 'becoming' in which there is potential that grows into

actual entities, significantly changes the doctrine of God. As Fiddes summarises, Process

theology holds that God is di-polar in nature consisting of an immutable primordial-nature pole

and a pre-hending, interactive and mutable consequent-nature pole and this redefines divine

omniscience as God's perfect knowledge of possibility and actuality, not possibility *as* actuality,

and omnipotence in terms of persuasion.[21] However, despite accommodating into his doctrine of

God elements of process thinking, Fiddes is no process theologian. He fundamentally disagrees

with process thought that creativity is *the* supreme value and instead argues that God's

limitations and suffering are rooted in his freedom, desire, will and decision as creator. He also

takes issue with the di-polar nature of God as it is insufficiently trinitarian, insulating part of

God's being from the suffering of the world instead of allowing God in his entire being to be

changed by the world.[22]

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[19] *CSG*, 37-39.
[20] *CSG*, 39-42.
[21] Paul S. Fiddes, "Process Theology," in *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Modern Christian Thought*, ed. Alister E. McGrath. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 472-474.
[22] *CSG*, 44-45.

The above reasons for why Fiddes believes that we need to hold a conviction about a passible God of suffering love not only present a positive case for change but negatively render the historical tradition of impassibility as erroneous and not an accurate representation of the God of the Hebrew and Christian scriptures. For this charge centres around the Harnackian 'history of Dogma' thesis which claims that Greek philosophical ideas increasingly influenced Christian thinking in a negative way and this needs to be admitted and addressed. However, no serious scholar denies that the early Church Fathers used Greek philosophical concepts;[23] rather the debate centres on whether the use of philosophy was legitimate and did it aid or impede articulation of a doctrine of God?

Some passibilists hold to a strong form of the ruination by philosophy theory.[24] Pollard is scathing in his polemic against the tradition of impassibility arguing that the acceptance of Greek concepts radically changed Semitic ideas to the point of being completely unrecognisable which resulted in a gradual reduction of the living God of the Old Testament into a transcendent and nameless absolute of Greek philosophy.[25] In contrast, Fiddes holds to a softer version of this theory and argues that while the doctrine of God does need re-articulation into a passible framework, there are some understandable reasons why the early Fathers proposed an impassable God and there is a need to deconstruct the case for divine impassability and offer a more careful and nuanced alternative.

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[23] Advocates of God's impassibility such as Weinandy and Hart have no problem at all admitting that the Fathers used Greek philosophy. Weinandy, "Does God," 38 and David B. Hart, "No Shadow of Turning: On Divine Impassibility," *Pro Ecclesia* (2002): 205-206.

[24] For example, Paul L. Gavrilyuk, *The Suffering of the Impassible God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 176.

[25] T. E. Pollard, "The Impassibility of God," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 8.4 (1955): 353-356.

To begin, Fiddes states that the fickle gods of the Greeks and Romans created a cultural

context that drove the need to conclude God as a necessary being. However, now in a current

post-holocaust context this calls for a God who suffers through his participation with the world.[26]

Second, this drive for a necessary God meant that perfection and simplicity were fundamental to

God's being and so any suggestion of *change* or *complexity* was immediately condemned as this

would infer that God was not complete and needed some kind of improvement. Subsequently,

this disqualified any conceptual form of divine suffering since – despite the best efforts of

Tertullian and some modern scholars to create a one-dimensional definition of divine suffering

that involves *no* change – to suffer, either internally or externally, means to go through some sort

of experience of change.[27] Yet there is a need for caution in the way that we talk about 'change'

and, even though Fiddes disagrees with his conclusions, it would be advantageous to follow

Aquinas' example of careful speech when stating that God is unchanging and that he only

changes *in certain ways*.[28]

One way Aquinas is adamant that God does not change, and thereby suffer from, is in the

kind of change that humans grow in experiential knowledge of. Conversely Fiddes states the

opposite, suggesting that our understanding of God and his ability to change and suffer *has to be*

grounded in human experience of change and suffering, especially the experience of inner feeling

suffering and outside impact suffering.[29] This raises the question of human experience as a

source of theology, a subject to which I now turn.

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[26] *PIG*, 176-179.
[27] *CSG*, 57-63; cf. *PIG*, 170-176. Little difference in Fiddes' thinking on this subject in the twelve years between the two texts.
[28] *CSG*, 49-57.
[29] *CSG*, 52-53 cf. 47-49.

2.3 The Place of *Experience* in Formulating a Doctrine of God

'Even if Fiddes' proposed understanding of God makes for creative and imaginative philosophical theology, unfortunately it makes for poor biblical theology. This god is hardly the God of the Bible.'[30] Ware's candid criticism betrays the fundamental conflict over what sources should be used when formulating doctrine, especially a doctrine of God. As is clear, Ware believes that scripture should be the main source and all other sources are subservient to the supremacy of scripture. This understanding undergirds judgment of Fiddes' work as a philosophical treatise or philosophical theology, not biblical or systematic theology.[31]

Fiddes does not hide which sources he draws upon in creating a doctrine of a suffering God. There is no denying that he draws mainly on German theology *from* the cross (including Luther, Barth and Hegel), process philosophy and theology (especially the work of Whitehead and Hartshorne), death of God theology (Altizer and others), and finally classical theism.[32] He uses these four strands in an interweaving and inter-penetrating way to construct a theology of a suffering God. Indeed, some reviewers have noted the strong dialectical conflation of the four traditions with much conversation, cross-pollination and synthesis. This is especially true of Fiddes' disproportionate use of process theology which he aligns with Barth's insistence on the concept of the *freedom* of God in order to formulate a God who freely chooses to be in love and wants to receive love from creation.[33]

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[30] Bruce Ware, review of *The Creative Suffering of God*, by Paul S. Fiddes, *Trinity Journal* 16NS (1995): 238.

[31] Tripole, S.J., review of *The Creative Suffering*, 381-382.

[32] *CSG*, 12-15. Fiddes states that most of his theology is drawn from the six 'greats' of twentieth-century protestant, catholic and process theology: Respectively, Barth, Tillich, von Balthasar, Rahner, Whitehead, & Hartshorne. Paul Fiddes, personal communication with the author, 15 & 16 March 2016.

[33] Ware, review of *The Creative Suffering*, 233-235; Paul Sponheim, review of *The Creative Suffering of God*, by Paul S. Fiddes, *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible & Theology* 43.2 (1989): 217.

For Fiddes German theology *from* the cross acts as the central conduit, bridging the real

life faith-historical event of the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth to the *experience* of God in the

heart of his triune nature. This drives the central thesis of his doctrine of divine suffering love

which is to 'speak consistently of a God who suffers eminently and yet is still God, and a God

who suffers universally and yet is still present uniquely and decisively in the sufferings of

Christ.'[34] The title 'Son of God' has to be acknowledged in any doctrine of the atonement as it

grounds the fact that the son-ship of Jesus to the Father has eternal significance for God's nature

and character. Jesus' oneness with the Father means that the cry of dereliction on the cross

reveals the forsakenness in the centre and heart of the Trinity.[35]

Forsakenness, dereliction and death at the cross, which are therefore in the very centre of

God's nature, naturally raise the question of how to appropriately speak of the suffering and,

ultimately, the death of God? Fiddes suggests that, though the death of God movement is past,

the questions asked and answers given are still salient today. Altizer et al were dealing with the

general conscious loss of a sense of God, especially now that God is not necessary in order to

answer many of life's fundamental questions. They were also reacting to certain caricatures of

God and so this is why it is imperative to understand God in his passibility, vulnerability and

kenosis. Fiddes argues that we need to face up to God's absence and hiddenness without

concluding that he no longer exists.[36] The key to understanding dereliction and death in the heart

of God without concluding that he no longer exists is to take Hegel's *real* death of God seriously,

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[34] *CSG*, 3. It has been asked just how reasonable and justifiable is it to claim that humans are able to probe into the character of the divine being? David A. Pailin, review of *The Creative Suffering of God*, by Paul S. Fiddes, *Modern Churchman* 31.1 (1989): 60.
    [35] *PEPS*, 51-58.
    [36] *CSG*, 174-189.

that dialectically God's death is at the same time his living presence. The death of the living God means that God enters into the realm of death, defeats it while facing non-being and ultimately overcomes it through the resurrection of Jesus. We can talk of degrees of perishing and relationlessness with the cross of Christ as the most extreme type of relationlessness possible. Hence, through the cross God experiences alienation in his own relationships and this brings those relationships closer. In experiencing death, God is alive.[37]

Not only did the suffering and death of Christ on the cross bring dereliction and forsakenness into the centre of the triune God, it also radically changed the way Christ's disciples thought about and understood God in light of their *experience* of God's self-revelation in the crucifixion and resurrection.[38] Some of Christ's disciples were present and witnessed the pain and suffering of the crucifixion (John 19:25-27). As noted by Fiddes, Jesus pre-empts his ultimate demonstration of love when going to the cross by stating that 'greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends' (John 15:13).[39] The cross has the power to move hearts and minds but not by compulsion or individual election. By revealing the love of God on the cross, God infused love into humanity in a way that exceeds a mere exemplarist theory of atonement.[40]

The quintessential demonstration of the redemptive power of love is the cross of Christ, a love undergirded by God's suffering and anguish. Fiddes argues that the contrast between Judas

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[37] *CSG*, 189-206. As stated below (see below, pp. 45-46) Fiddes asserts that all God-speech is highly metaphorical and thus inevitably lacks metaphysical exactness. Strong metaphors such as 'degrees of perishing' and 'relationlessness,' for example, are Fiddes' attempt to understand the death of God incarnate on the cross without concluding that God is dead.

[38] Fiddes, "Relational Trinity," 162-163.

[39] *PEPS*, 155-158.

[40] *PEPS*, 141-150.

Iscariot and Jesus in the entire passion narrative amplifies God's self-sacrificing love. In his death on the cross not only was God's love put on full display, but so was the Lordship of Christ since in freedom Jesus of Nazareth chose to love, suffer and die in order to realise God's strong desire to be in fellowship with humanity.[41] Moreover, this demonstration of love was accompanied by divine forgiveness, as highlighted in Jesus' statement 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing' (Luke 23:34a), and so the death of Christ on the cross perfectly exemplifies forgiveness as a journey of endurance and anguish. Witnessing the endurance of divine love and forgiveness speaks into our experience of guilt, shame, anxiety and unforgiveness.[42]

The suffering love of God, as demonstrated in the human and divine Jesus of Nazareth, offers understanding of the nature of human suffering and opens to us the use of human experience of suffering as analogous to divine suffering. Fiddes pleads that we need to avoid 'one dimensional' suffering ascribed to God like in the past tradition. Learning from the human experience of *active suffering* to attribute suffering to the divine consists of both fate and action, suffering that is chosen and that which befalls in a dialectical manner; otherwise all talk about suffering becomes largely meaningless and foreign.[43]

If, Fiddes maintains, we treat seriously human experience as analogous to divine nature and experience, and do not simply reduce it to anthropomorphic and anthropopathic language, then this opens up a whole new theological horizon for exploration into who God is and the

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[41] *PEPS*, 140-168.
[42] *PEPS*, 171-189.
[43] *CSG*, 57-63.

nature of his relationship with creation.[44] It also permits treating stories outside of scripture and

tradition as potential source material that allows God to speak to us through those accounts as we

participate in him.[45] Seeing experiences such as living in community, having dependency in

relationships, intercessory prayer, and forgiveness and reconciliation as participation in God will

take those experiences to deeper and richer levels.[46]

We should note that the place of *experience* in the formulation of doctrine appears to

have become more central in Fiddes' thinking as time has progressed. An early strong critique

made by Fiddes about the charismatic renewal movement was that its main evidence and source

material was experience and therefore it was difficult to conclude it was theologically coherent

and made a contribution to the doctrine of God.[47] It also has a tendency to diminish the

normative place of water-baptism in favour of the less-regular and manifestation-based 'baptism

in the Spirit.'[48] However, by the turn of the century Fiddes was adamant that we need to follow

the early church who spoke of the Trinity out of their experience and therefore delineate an

experienced and pastoral doctrine of the Trinity; one that has been shaped by pastoral experience

and also a belief in our participation in God.[49] As we will see, Fiddes' panentheistic vision of

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[44] *PEPS*, 190-206.

[45] Paul S. Fiddes, "God and Story in the Church and in Doctrine. Reflections on the Ecclesial Basis of Method in Theology," *Ecclesial Practices* 2 (2015): 5-22.

[46] Fiddes, "Relational Trinity," 182-185. It appears that later Fiddes emphasises that not all experiences can become normative but only those which witness to the revelation of God in Christ. Paul S. Fiddes, "A Response to Andrew Moore" (paper presented at the one-day colloquium on the Doctrine of God in conversation with Paul Fiddes, St Mary's School of Divinity, University of St Andrews, St Andrews, Fife, 16 April 2016).

[47] Paul S. Fiddes, "The Theology of the Charismatic Movement" in *Strange Gifts? A Guide to Charismatic Renewal*, eds. D. Martin and P. Mullen. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), 19-40. Moore has the same problem with using experience either as a source or a norm. Andrew Moore, "Experience and the Doctrine of God," in *Within the Love of God: Essays on the Doctrine of God in Honour of Paul S. Fiddes*, eds. Anthony Clarke and Andrew Moore. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 65-66.

[48] Paul S. Fiddes, *Charismatic Renewal: A Baptist View* (London: Baptist Publications, 1980), 35-37.

[49] *PIG*, 3-10.

participating in God is the warp and woof of his doctrine of God.

2.4 The Nature and Character of the Triune God

Fretheim laments that the Christian church in the western world has relied on monarchical images of dominance and masculine power for too long. There is a need for the non-monarchical biblical witness of God to be brought to the fore.[50] Fiddes concurs and explores ways to communicate the God of scripture in ways that resonates with the contemporary and cosmopolitan cultural milieu. The way to do this is to describe God's triune nature in terms of personhood, relations, participation and a perichoretic inter-penetration both within God himself and between God and creation. This can be best articulated within a panentheistic framework. While the early church theologians managed to find language that expressed the oneness and diversity of God, as well as the distinctness of persons in the Trinity and the freedom of both divine and human persons, there is still a need to go further.[51] Fiddes avers that participation in the relations of the Trinity is the way forward since the idea of 'participation' treats the triune relationships very seriously.[52]

Personal language rooted in pastoral experience is vital and very promising in helping humanity understand its relations both with God and with each other. Participative language is

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[50] Terence E. Fretheim, *The Suffering of God: An Old Testament Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), xiii-xvi.

[51] *PIG*, 13-16.

[52] *PIG*, 11-13. Participation in the 'relations,' not persons, of the Trinity is arguably the unique, centripetal idea of Fiddes to which all his theology migrates. Paul S. Fiddes, "Creation Out of Love," in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, ed. J. Polkinghorne. (London: SPCK, 2001), 184-191; Paul S. Fiddes, "The quest for a place which is not-a-place: the hiddenness of God and the presence of God," in *Silence and the Word: Negative Theology and Incarnation*, eds. O. Davies and D. Turner. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 51-55; Paul S. Fiddes, "Participating in the Trinity," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 33.3 (2006): 375-391.

not subservient to analogic language proper, but rather an appropriate image for the personalness of God.[53] Seeing God as an event of relationships grounded in the language of participation can, insists Fiddes, allow us to retain the Thomistic language of 'subsistent relations' so long as we raise our gaze to a 'third level of meaning'[54]: God's relations are as ontic and real as that which is either created or uncreated and their ground of existence lies within themselves.[55] This understanding is what sets the foundation for a so-called 'radical' trinitarian model,[56] one that consists of genuine perichoresis thereby mirroring Jesus' high priestly prayer in John 17:21.[57]

Moreover, a genuine understanding of our participation in the divine nature (Acts 17: 28; Col 1:16-20; 2 Peter 1:4) will, asserts Fiddes, help us more effectively close the post-enlightenment gap between ontology and epistemology since we know God as we participate in life. It will also help with ecological theology and inter-personal relations since all of creation – because of its covenant with God (Genesis 9:8) – shares in the divine dance and responds to God, and participation in the Trinity closes the gap between the subject and object which will impact, intensify and deepen our relationships with each other.[58]

Fiddes believes that this social, perichoretic, panentheistic understanding of the Trinity that *actually* places human beings in participation with the relations of the godhead also has a

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[53] *PIG*, 28-33.
[54] *PIG*, 34.
[55] *PIG*, 34-46.
[56] A model that has come in for significant criticism in recent years. Stephen R. Holmes, "Response to Paul S. Fiddes," in *Two Views on the Doctrine of the Trinity*, ed. Jason Sexton. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 186-190; Paul D. Molnar, "Response to Paul S. Fiddes," in *Two Views on the Doctrine of the Trinity*, ed. Jason Sexton. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 191-196; Thomas H. McCall, "Response to Paul S. Fiddes," in *Two Views on the Doctrine of the Trinity*, ed. Jason Sexton. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 197-203.
[57] *PIG*, 46-56.
[58] Fiddes, "Participating in," 375-391.

number of significant advantages that offer solutions to perennial problems unearthed in church history. First, it strongly counters the above-mentioned images of dominance, power and monarchical superiority that have lead to subordination and abuse.[59] The divine dance that emphasises interpenetration and focus on the movements, not the dancers, removes domination of the Father, so often used to justify oppression. It throws open relational language allowing us to talk about a motherly father or fatherly mother which, without undermining, brings equality to our understanding of the Trinity.[60] This egalitarian dance flattens out authority structures both within the state and the church and it redefines authority in terms of kenotic, humble service as modelled by Jesus in John 13. Vicious cycles of domination, power-plays and scapegoating cease when we focus on our participation in the Trinity and the completeness of fellowship we have with the triune God.[61]

A second advantage is a new understanding the role and experience of intercessory prayer. Fiddes is highly critical of the traditional 'two-cause' theory of prayer held by Aquinas and others suggesting that it makes the world appear to have no freedom and that God appears to be the cause for everything that happens.[62] If he is the irresistible first cause of everything that happens then is there any point making requests to him? Instead, avers Fiddes, if we view time as situated 'in God' and our prayers 'participating in God' then, to borrow from Barth, 'God's creation of our time' happens while being influenced by our prayers.[63] By taking the process theology idea of divine action as persuasion Fiddes suggests that instead of seeing God as an

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[59] *PIG*, 62-71.
[60] *PIG*, 71-96.
[61] *PIG*, 96-108.
[62] *PIG*, 116-120.
[63] *PIG*, 121-126 cf. *CD* II/1, §25.2, 61-62. Holmes is highly suspect of claiming that intercessory prayer is participating in God since Fiddes embeds this claim in a 'normative' experience of prayer. Holmes rejects any concept of a 'normative' experience of prayer. Holmes, "Response to Paul, 187.

object to be grasped, it is better to conceive of persuasion as part of the divine dance, a working

partnership between God and the world in which God has perfect and eternal knowledge of all

possibilities. Like God in the Old Testament, since God knows the power of persuasive love he

can make open-ended promises that involve slight risk with regard to the *content* of the

fulfilment of future promises while having assurance about the attunement of creation's choices

into the divine purpose.[64]

Another helpful improvement that participating in God's movements of love creates

concerns the practise of forgiveness and potential reconciliation. Forgiveness is a two-stage

journey of discovery and endurance. It seeks to win the offender back into relationship and in the

process overcome hostility, anxiety and self-indulgence.[65] Therefore, 'when salvation is

understood as an act of divine forgiveness,' a journey of forgiveness that became part of God's

journey when uniquely demonstrated by Christ on the cross, and realised in moments of inter-

human forgiveness and possible reconciliation, this negates the need for an atonement theory to

be based on legal pardon, commercial arrangements or divine wrath appeasement. Therefore,

pastorally, claims Fiddes, if viewed from a participation in the divine perspective, speaking

forgiveness over people *before* they repent could unlock repentance and possible reconciliation

since people are set free from guilt. Christ did this from the cross (Luke 23:34) as well as at other

times in his earthly ministry (Matt 9:2; Luke 7:36-50; Luke 19:1-10).[66]

A final significant corollary of our participation in the divine perichoresis is greater

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[64] *PIG*, 131-144.
[65] *PIG*, 192-197.
[66] *PIG*, 197. Fiddes counters Swinburne's logical objection to forgiveness *before* repentance by asserting that the transformative power of salvation lies in the untidy and extravagant nature of forgiveness. *PIG*, 197-220.

understanding of the contentious area of bodily healing. In dialogue with a medical-missionary doctor Fiddes differentiates between three forms of the unknown in healing: the unknown in the known, the not as yet known, and the completely inexplicable type of healing that has no knowable explanation in scientific terms. Fiddes purports that the category of 'supernatural healings' as the third kind and these events point to a kind of new possibility in which God is doing something *new* in nature. This can, he claims, only happen when there is cooperation and synergy between God and creation, divine initiative and creaturely response. Since the world is complex and a suffering God is on the side of victim of sickness, then the only plausible explanation of these unique healings is the conflation of divine purpose and creation's response. If there is a breaking down of that cooperation then healing will not take place.[67]

There are other aspects of Fiddes' doctrine of God that bolster his panentheistic vision of participation in the divine perichoresis, which need mentioned. In the divine dance within God himself and between God and creation, Fiddes argues that the Spirit of God should receive greater recognition than has historically been the case. While acknowledging some ambiguity as to the anonymity and self-effacing nature of the Spirit, it is imperative to see the Spirit as a distinct mover within the triune God whose movement is represented through Old Testament images of fire, water, oil and wings.[68] Juxtaposing East and West Spirit traditions also creates the understanding of the Spirit as a *disturber*, disturbing the relationship and common life between the Father and Son, resulting in life and love constantly being renewed. Lastly, creation-ward

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[67] Paul S. Fiddes and Bill Lees, "How are People Healed Today? The relation between the 'Medical' and the 'Spiritual' in Healing," in *Christian Healing. What can we Believe?* ed. Ernest Lucas. (London: Lynx Communications, SPCK, 1997), 12-22.

[68] *PIG*, 251-264. Elsewhere Fiddes claims that through the same images we understand the relations of eternal generation and movements of self-giving. Fiddes, "The quest for a place," 51-55.

movement of the Spirit also creates spiritual gifts; gifts that should be fundamentally viewed as coming from the being of God, kenotic in nature and therefore not to be used as spiritual collateral in order to dominate while subordinating other gifts and persons.[69]

Other facets of the triune God in whom we participate which help us to understand him and explain him to others include his creative force of love, his fuller presence due to his inimitable relationship to time, and within that fuller presence his hiddenness within the triune relations without being absent. To state 'God creates out of love' may well have a place within science as well as theology, which starts from the religious experience of love demonstrated by Jesus of Nazareth, and has significant consequences regarding God's omniscience, divine risk and openness in continual creation, use of evolution, and creation *actually* indwelling divine life.[70]

Also, to counter all visions of the future within postmodernity, Fiddes argues that one needs to view the millennial hope as an eternal dwelling of God, a kenotic humility of the incarnation that heals and fills the now while keeping the future open-ended.[71] Finally, regarding the perceived absence of God by many, Fiddes develops a theology of divine presence and place by taking the hidden wisdom of Job 28 and juxtaposing it with Plato's concept of the *Khora* (that primordial space which is both absent and present, a place and yet not-a-place). Then using highly metaphorical language, human inter-personal relationships can be viewed as analogous of

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[69] *PIG*, 264-274; Fiddes, "The Theology of," 32-38; Fiddes' focus on the presence of the Spirit in the world and his kenotic reality may have come from Moltmann. Paul S. Fiddes, "A Review of 'God in Creation. An Ecological Doctrine of Creation' by Jürgen Moltmann," *Journal of Theological Studies* 38/1 (1987): 262-265.
[70] Fiddes, "Creation Out," 167-191.
[71] Paul S. Fiddes, "Millennium and Utopia [*or* 'Apocalypse and Millennium']: Images of a Fuller Presence," in *Apocalyptic in History and Tradition*, eds. C. Rowland and J. Barton. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 7-25.

the participatory relations of the triune God and so those 'no-places' that exist between the human self and other selves analogously represent the places-that-are-no-places in the divine relations in which God can be present but hidden.[72]

Having sketched the grand panentheistic vision of Fiddes' doctrine of God, it is now necessary to hold up the proverbial microscope to the engine of this vision – divine pathos and suffering – in order to better understand the way Fiddes articulates it, and also unveil its impact on the atonement and salvation as well as on other divine attributes. The rest of the chapter will address these matters.

2.5 Divine Passibility of Suffering Love

Fiddes believes that there are a number of reasons why it is vital to formulate a coherent and communicative doctrine of a passible God.[73] Of the four listed, the most prevalent in his writings focusses on a practical theodicy undergirded by a sound philosophical 'freewill defence.' To repeat, his argument is that the best way to elucidate and construct a solution to the theodicy problem is to advocate that it is only a suffering God who could create a world in which suffering and misery are significant aspects of reality. To suggest otherwise – i.e. that only an impassable God who is immune from change can create this kind of world – is according to Fiddes a residual 'negative transcendence' of platonic philosophy.[74]

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[72] Fiddes, "The quest for a place," 35-55; *SWKG*, 218-265. Another example of Fiddes using strong metaphors and connections from elsewhere, this time to try and articulate the apparent hiddenness of an omnipresent God.

[73] See above, pp. 16-22.

[74] Fiddes, "Suffering, Divine," 634-635. A good example of a contemporary impassibilist who holds to Fiddes' description of negative transcendence is John Webster. John Webster, "Non ex aequo: God's Relation to Creatures," in *Within the Love of God: Essays on the Doctrine of God in Honour of Paul S. Fiddes*, eds. Anthony Clarke and Andrew Moore. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 95-107. Fiddes responds stating it is an erroneous understanding of divine aseity, especially confusing self-existence with self-sufficiency, which feeds this

Absolutely integral to this insistence of divine passibility is the Barthian pillar that

God's sovereignty lies specifically in his freedom (Fiddes would also add 'desire') to *choose* to

empty himself and be conditioned by the world.[75] While God is of course self-existent, he

chooses not to be self-sufficient but rather open to affection and impact from creation without

necessary conditioning *by* the world.[76] The theodicy problem of suffering, both human and

creation, demands a God who suffers through participation with the world. Given that God gifted

the world with irrevocable freewill which will inevitably lead to evil and suffering, necessitates

that he must be a God who participates in it himself both externally and internally since his self-

revelation determines that all external activity to God must have some analogy to his actual

essence.[77]

On this basis it is plausible to hold to a doctrine of a passible God that significantly

answers the current challenges of theodicy. Fiddes proffers a theodicy of four different types.

First, a theodicy of consolation means that in the midst of suffering the sufferer can be assured of

God's suffering presence with them. Second, a theodicy of story allows for appeals to the stories

of others who have suffered to be made, with Christ's passion narrative being the most effective.

Third, a theodicy of protest which reinforces the conviction of injustice and wrongdoing by

insisting that God is on the side of the victim and protesting against the dealers of pain. Then

finally, a theodicy of freewill that moves the philosophical questions beyond any doubt that the

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negative transcendence tendency. Paul S. Fiddes, "A Response to John Webster" (paper presented at the one-day colloquium on the Doctrine of God in conversation with Paul Fiddes, St Mary's School of Divinity, University of St Andrews, St Andrews, Fife, 16 April 2016).

[75] *CD* II/1, §31.1-3, 440-677.

[76] Fiddes, "Suffering, Divine," 634-635. Fiddes' emphasis on divine choice sets him apart from process theology.

[77] Fiddes, "Suffering, Divine," 636.

only free world God was able to create is one in which there was the potential of both good *and* evil.[78]

In a specific comment on the 'freewill defence' theodicy, Fiddes argues that any coherent appeal to it must contain two vital aspects of God's passibility. Firstly, if it is the case that, because of the freewill of creatures, evil happens from the created universe then it has to be something that befalls God. Indeed, in creation, God takes the risk of the emergence of nothingness and he suffers its impact. Secondly, this emergence of non-being unearths the matter of divine responsibility for a broken world. Even though God indeed shares in the consequence and does everything possible, especially in the cross of Christ, to overcome the brokenness, any freewill theodicy *ultimately* traces responsibility back to God.[79]

The main reason for the urgency to formulate an acceptable and cohesive freewill defence theodicy with a suffering God as its kernel is the post-enlightened and western understanding of suffering and pain that has raised new questions. There are now, according to Fiddes, three main forms of the phenomenon of suffering that western culture is acutely aware of. First, the theoretical paradigm that associates the status of evil in the universe with the causation and consequences of evil. Secondly, the practical conundrum of how to live authentically in the face of mass suffering which is followed lastly by the aesthetic concerns in which human suffering has been placed within the context of tragedy. These three forms of understanding, together with the modern idea that suffering is both an inner feeling and result of

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[78] *PIG*, 155-170.

[79] Paul S. Fiddes, "Something will come of nothing: on *A Theology of the Dark Side*," in *Challenging to Change: dialogues with a radical Baptist theologian. Essays presented to Dr Nigel G. Wright on his sixtieth birthday*, ed. Pieter J. Lalleman. (London: Spurgeon's College, 2009), 99-100; *PIG*, 164-170.

impact from causes beyond our bodies, means that there is a need for a theodicy proper built upon divine passibility.[80]

This new kind of post-Auschwitz theodicy – moving beyond the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries' theoretical, practical and aesthetic approaches to suffering of Leibniz, Schelling, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Unamuno – needs at its core a trinitarian theology which has been ruptured by the victims (the main vessel of which is the death of Christ rupturing the heart of the Trinity) and makes space for both God's presence and empathy with those who suffer.[81] Therefore, accepting this particular world as the highly probably outcome of a creation full of irrevocable freedom to be used for good and ill, and assuming that pain and suffering is not a first cause of God for some higher decretive will, Fiddes argues that the only option for God was to limit his own self, a universal act of kenotic cruciformity (Philippians 2:5-11), which means that God can only persuade, not coerce, and so humanity and wider creation have genuine freedom to choose to partner with him or not.[82] Obviously, a God with suffering humility at the centre of his triune being radically changes the nature and understanding of his attribute of omnipotence and this undermines domination, power, superiority, hierarchy and oppression within creation, the very factors that cause and perpetuate suffering and pain.[83]

Indeed, purports Fiddes, the triune God of scripture has suffered in his entire being

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[80] Paul S. Fiddes, "Suffering in Theology and Modern European Thought," in *The Oxford Handbook of Theology and Modern European Thought*, eds. Nicholas Adams, Graham Ward and George Pattison. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 169-170.
[81] Fiddes, "Suffering in," 170-188.
[82] *PIG*, 164-165.
[83] *PIG*, 62-112.

since the rupturing of creation through the fall. As the Hebrew Bible attests, once God enacts his salvation history plan through divine purpose and desire, this is often frustrated or thwarted by the freewill rebellion of his people. In Hosea we read of a vulnerable God full of divine pathos who calls his prophet to act out sexually the spiritual adultery taking place with his beloved people. There has to be an openness to the *way* God achieves his purposes with the path open to judgement as suffering and a specific blend of wrath and love conflating as the pathos of God. Ultimately, the suffering does result in transformation as the suffering of the empathetic forgiver becomes redemptive for the offender because the offender realises that their life is under judgement and so turns to receive this redeeming love.[84]

This suffering through chosen self-limitation also exacerbates the humility of God because it allows something alien and strange to emerge from creation. From Barth's influence, Fiddes sees evil – another significant cause of pain and suffering – as 'nothingness;'[85] a parasitic non-being entity that emerges from creation and manifests itself in all forms of both moral and natural evil. The entire creation is no longer what God intended it to be and the malevolency of creation is what befalls God and causes him to suffer.[86]

While Fiddes believes that divine passibility offers the best framework for a more plausible theodicy, he is not blind to its limits. Taking his cue from Dostoyevsky's Ivan Karamazov who asked, 'is the whole universe worth the tears of one tortured child?' Fiddes acknowledges that the question remains largely unanswered as to whether God's initial decision

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[84] Fiddes, "The Cross," 175-190.
[85] *CD* III/3, §50.1-4, 289-368.
[86] *PIG*, 166-168.

to proceed with creation was worth the ongoing cost.[87] The other significant weakness of divine passibility raised by critics is whether or not the specific and uniquely efficacious crucifixion and suffering of the Son on the cross simply collapses into a general doctrine of divine suffering, contrary to scriptural witness and church tradition. Let us now address this specific critique.

2.6 Divine Passibility's Impact on Atonement and Salvation

Since Fiddes' doctrine of God centres upon a description of a passible God of suffering love, a love that is analogous to some extent with human love, then it should come as no surprise to discover that the love of God is the central impetus for Fiddes' understanding of both salvation and the atonement. Using Aulen's three 'types' of atonement theory (Christus Victor, objective, subjective) each of which addresses a different fundamental obstruction which prevents salvation,[88] we see that Fiddes claims a slightly nuanced atonement theory, one he calls a 'subjective view which has an objective focus.'[89]

Rooting the cross of Jesus as the catalysing event, Fiddes agrees that the modern orientation in atonement theory, which begins at the subjective end by focussing on the present response to God and is then *followed by* affirmation of the objective event of the cross for a response, is a superior atonement theology for today's western culture.[90] There have been different ways of understanding the objective and subjective poles of the atonement: salvation as

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[87] *PIG*, 187.

[88] Paul R. Eddy and James Beilby, "The Atonement: *An Introduction*," in *The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views*, eds. James Beilby and Paul R. Eddy. (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006), 11-20.

[89] Paul S. Fiddes, "A Response to Stephen R. Holmes" (paper presented at the one-day colloquium on the Doctrine of God in conversation with Paul Fiddes, St Mary's School of Divinity, University of St Andrews, St Andrews, Fife, 16 April 2016).

[90] *PEPS*, 28-29.

a process in present human experience (subjective) versus salvation in the past event outside of

our experience and feeling (objective) or salvation as an act of God (objective) versus salvation

including a human response (subjective). However, the problem in these theories is a framing of

the objective and subjective in a zero-sum game relationship, in which accentuation of one

results in a lessening of the other. Rather, states Fiddes, what is needed is an account that

integrates the past event of the cross and the constantly current process of salvation.[91]

The best attempt, according to Fiddes, lies in a reversal of some of the strongly objective

atonement theories (e.g. Anselm) and propose some kind of change in God and also, once God is

satisfied, in human attitudes. A subjective theory with an objective focus in which both the

human and divine go through a process of change is the most satisfactory way of dealing with

human alienation and estrangement as well as fragmentation of social relationships which need

healing and reconciliation.[92] Ideally, there should be a juxtaposition of divine suffering with

human change, a serious picture of God who goes through some kind of change in the act of at-

one-ment. Holding the human response of the Son to the Father when on the cross as the aimed

norm stresses the power of the cross to change human hearts within a context of open obedience

to the Father and empathetic divine suffering love towards the human.[93]

Underlying this preference for a subjective view with objective focus is Fiddes'

commitment to understanding salvation as a *process of transformation*. Starting with his baptistic

commitment to community and relationship within an eschatological reality, he applies the more

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[91] *PEPS*, 26-28.

[92] Paul S. Fiddes, "Salvation," in *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, eds. J. Webster, K. Tanner and I. Torrance. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 178-180.

[93] *PEPS*, 27-28.

eastern concept of progressive divinization which is identified by being increasingly moulded into the likeness of God. Within a committed and faithful community, salvation is defined as a moving away from sin towards a more divinized existence that in the process effectively deals with aspects of residual fallenness such as estrangement, anxiety, hostility, fear and idolatry.[94]

When Fiddes takes this conviction of salvation as transformation and conflates it with the kernel of his atonement theory, the love of God, this firmly places him within the stream of Abelard, but one less traditional. For he purports that Abelard, who centrally emphasised Christ as the great teacher and example and the one who arouses responding love within humanity,[95] has been misunderstood. Yes, Abelard attacked the classic objective imagery of the atonement with its dualistic perspective, believed that the atonement should not be focussed on overcoming the devil, and rejected Anselm's objective theory. However, he did not simply develop 'Christ as the example of love' model for Christian believers to emulate but instead viewed God's love as transformative, a love that God revealed and poured out on us as an act of fulfilling his own being.[96] The ultimate demonstration of this love happened objectively in the death of Christ when God himself entered the bitter depths of human experience to the utmost degree.

The fundamental purpose of God's transformational love is to heal broken relationships in acts of divine-human reconciliation. God is constantly seeking out people to save (1 Timothy 2:3-4; 2 Peter 3:9), and perennially offering forgiveness and reconciliation to the sinner in a process which is costly to God. This must happen in the here and now, and involve response

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[94] Fiddes, "Salvation," 176-178.
[95] Gustaf Aulen, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of the Atonement* (London: SPCK, 1931), 95-96.
[96] *PEPS*, 141-150.

from humanity: the reciprocal movements in the process of salvation is the intimate act of atonement.[97] This reconciliatory act with humanity also has its place within a greater quest of unity of creation through redemption. Salvation in the present is enacted by God as creator and redeemer seeking to bring oneness to a chaotic and disharmonised creation, often symbolised in the Hebrew Bible as sea monsters of chaos.[98] Like forgiveness and reconciliation with humans, this harmonisation of creation involves much pain, suffering and cost to God and causes him to adopt a continual kenotic posture of vulnerability.[99]

Fiddes' atonement idea which places the present process of salvation prior to the past objective event of the cross, together with the insistence that God continually suffers through vulnerable love in the process of salvation and reconciliation, could potentially be susceptible to the danger of reducing the specific and unique suffering of the son on the cross into a broader and more general divine suffering. However, as one recent interlocutor of Fiddes' atonement theology has pointed out, he manages to avoid this and does not collapse Christology into divine passibility in a way that other divine suffering accounts do.[100] In fact, despite locating himself firmly within a reinterpreted Abelardian tradition on the atonement which was often accused of underplaying the cross of Christ,[101] Fiddes is adamant that the cross of Christ is not only the sublime example of who God always is in creative-redemptive work but moreover is a totally

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[97] *PEPS*, 14-17.

[98] Some claim these monsters are demonic beings. Boyd, *God at War*, 93-113; John Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 87.

[99] *PEPS*, 17-22; cf. Fiddes, "Creation Out," 167-191.

[100] However, Holmes claims that Fiddes is less successful in keeping the cross the objective focus in his critique of various soteriological images. Stephen R. Holmes, "Who Can Count How Many Crosses?: *Paul Fiddes on Salvation*," in *Within the Love of God: Essays on the Doctrine of God in Honour of Paul S. Fiddes*, eds. Anthony Clarke and Andrew Moore. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 124-133.

[101] Aulen, *Christus*, 96-97.

unique and ultimate event in the story of the human and divine.[102] The cross is the most intense

event of divine suffering because God goes the furthest he ever will into a world alienated from

its creator in order to achieve reconciliation.[103]

Therefore, if the death of Christ on the cross is the greatest demonstration of who God is

and defines God's very ontology, then the cross is, suggests Fiddes, the 'primary word' in God's

ordo salutis as well as the full conceptualisation of the doctrine of the Trinity. The crucifixion

fully reveals the nature of the relations of the triune God: the abandonment and forsaking of the

Son by the Father; the suffering and total sense of forsakenness experienced by the Son and the

Holy Spirit; and the divine hypostasis who incorporates us into the universal cruciform nature of

God by drawing us into the atonement event.[104] It unpacks the sequence of revelation and fuses

the word of the cross and Word of eternal begetting within the very being of God. Consequently,

this more closely aligns with the Orthodox tradition's view of 'the heart of the atonement in the

identification of the divine Logos with human nature in all the circumstances of human

fallenness,'[105] thereby demonstrating God's willingness to enter into the muck of the human

predicament, offer forgiveness, seek out reconciliation and open up participation in the divine

being in and through the subsistent relations of the Trinity.[106]

This location of the cross of Christ in the very centre of God's being unearths

innumerable corollaries that need to be explored when trying to articulate salvation and

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[102] *PEPS*, 24-26.
[103] Fiddes, "A Response to Stephen."
[104] Fiddes, "The Atonement," 103-108, 117-120.
[105] Fiddes, "The Atonement," 113.
[106] Fiddes, "The Atonement," 108-117.

atonement theology in today's cultural milieu. Fiddes primarily focusses upon three, which he

believes are non-negotiable: sacrifice, justice, and evil. Sacrifice, he claims, was the first primary

image that the early church used when it was trying to understand salvation.[107] As most Old

Testament scholars attest, sacrifice was not seen as an act of propitiation to placate the anger of

Yahweh, but rather an act of expiation designed to cover over sins through cleansing. Therefore,

the death of Christ is recognised in scripture as a sacrifice, a sin or gift offering that is both

substitutionary and representative but not in a penal way.[108] When understood this way, a path is

paved for development of other sacrifice language-type metaphors for atonement, such as

Girard's mimetic theory and scapegoating, Kristeva's female sacrifice through kenotic self-

sacrifice, and Von Balthasar's triune mutual self-giving and Christ's separation experience,[109] all

of which can aid but not replace the use of sacrifice to understand salvation.[110]

With regards to justice it is vital to remember the above-mentioned point that views of

justice in atonement theology are heavily influenced by their historical epoch.[111] When it comes

to Jesus, Fiddes reminds us that Jesus was rightfully guilty of blasphemy in Jewish eyes and

sedition in Roman minds. However, human judgement against Jesus does not equate to divine

judgement against him. Instead, as a subjective view demands, the Father identifies with human

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[107] Fiddes, "Salvation," 183.

[108] *PEPS*, 61-82. 'I make clear that, understood in this way, the language of penal suffering is biblical and appropriate, as is the language of substitution, since Christ goes further along the road towards non-being than we need ever do. What is not appropriate, I argue, is penal substitution understood as paying a penalty in our place.' Fiddes, "A Response to Stephen," cf. Thomas R. Schreiner, "Penal Substitutionary View," in *The Nature of the Atonement: Four Views*, eds. James Beilby and Paul R. Eddy (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006), 67-98; William Lane Craig, *Atonement and the Death of Christ: An Exegetical, Historical and Philosophical Exploration* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2020).

[109] Paul S. Fiddes, "Sacrifice, Atonement and Renewal: Intersections between Girard, Kristeva and Von Balthasar," in *Sacrifice and the Modern World*, eds. Johannes Zachhuber and Julia Meszaros. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 48-65.

[110] Fiddes, "Salvation," 185.

[111] See above, p. 18.

fallenness which outworks itself in allowing sinful behaviour take its natural course (Romans 1). This naturally leads to the condemnation of Jesus by a corrupt court and he painfully experiences the alienation and forsakenness of the Father who also suffers greatly in the process.[112] Contra Calvin and Luther, the atonement responds to the demands of justice by seeking out restoration and reconciliation as God participates in human estrangement and alienation. Punishment has the aim of reform, and forgiveness is offered *before* repentance.[113]

Finally, Fiddes advocates a transformational victory over evil, one with an Abelardian root in which the victory of Christ over evil through the atoning love of God has the power to move human hearts into action and impact against the evil at work in the world. We enter into cooperation with God's saving action via the power of revelation, creative power of the community of the crucified, the unveiling of God's own self, and the power of the story, especially stories of victory over evil.[114]

2.7 The Challenge of Divine Passibility on Other Divine Attributes

Intrinsic to all discussion and language used for God is its metaphorical and analogous nature, with an awareness that it all falls short in actually describing exactly who God is. Fiddes agrees that all God-talk is metaphorical and so the job of the theologian is to decide on the most appropriate form of language to be used of the God of the covenant.[115] As widely recognised,

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[112] *PEPS*, 84-96.
[113] *PEPS*, 96-111.
[114] Paul S. Fiddes, "Christianity, Atonement and Evil," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Problem of Evil*, eds. Paul Mosser and Chad Meister. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 222-226; cf. *PEPS*, 135-139. In the near-30 years between these two works of Fiddes there has been little change concerning his ideas on the atonement and evil.
[115] Paul Fiddes, personal communication with the author, 15 & 16 March 2016.

scripture says very little of God's ontological reality but rather describes him in the context of

relating with his covenant partners. This creates a discussion about who God is and what his

divine attributes are. In short, what qualities or attributes make God God and are there any divine

attributes that could be changed or discarded and would still leave God as exhaustively divine?

Fiddes is acutely aware of the need for a doctrine of God that sails a central course

maintaining a refined definition of God's sovereignty and control while avoiding the Scylla and

Charybdis of God as controll*ing* or not-in-control. For him it is possible to portray a suffering

God, without this being simply a projection of human experience, who suffers and remains God.

In this God's immanence and transcendence need to be firmly juxtaposed.[116]

While there have been some serious and well-thought out attempts to do this in the recent

past, Fiddes identifies some theological problems within these attempts that need addressed and

corrected. Barth's insistence that God freely chooses to be a suffering God and remains

impassible while also becoming passible is to be applauded. Yet there is still too great a wedge

between the being and action of God in the immanent Trinity. God is more complex than Barth

allows.[117] The di-polar approach of process theology creates a way to convey God as both

immersed in the processes of the world while completely independent of it through his

immutable grasp of actuality and possibility. Yet God is still too absorbed in creation and too

subject to it, whereas divine suffering is possible because of the completion of who God is and

his free decision to become self-limited.[118] Moltmann, it seems, finds a way to satisfactorily

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[116] *CSG*, 110-112.
[117] *CSG*, 112-123.
[118] *CSG*, 123-135; cf. Fiddes, "Process," 474-475.

articulate a suffering God who remains transcendent. He does this by focussing on the necessary love response within the inner life of the Trinity whilst also taking seriously the analogous connection between divine and creaturely persons and relations. However, claims Fiddes, he does not go far enough about creation's participation in the divine which reveals the complexity of God. For if he did this would allow maintaining transcendence and otherness *within* suffering thereby avoiding transcendence *beyond* suffering, as normally held by traditional theology.[119]

Fiddes is mainly interested in the divine attributes intrinsically linked with a concept of a suffering God. Seldom in his corpus does he address or challenge the moral characteristics of God predicated in scripture (1 John 1:5, Luke 18:19; 1 John 4:8). Rather it is the key classical incommunicable attributes of God (omnipotence, omnipresence and omniscience) and their corollaries (eternality, simplicity, self-existence, self-sufficiency, and immateriality) which are his main focus. Given the salience of these three omnis and inferences to theologically understand God's ontology during SW and conflict, and in preparation for the chapters below, a brief delineation of Fiddes' divine attribute theology at this point is warranted.

In the light of both divine passibility and the cross of Christ, Fiddes desires to re-define omnipotence. His key point is that true divine power is grounded in divine vulnerability, self-limitation, persuasion, sacrifice, feeling, and forgiveness.[120] There is little doubt of process theology's influence on Fiddes regarding divine power; however, Fiddes takes the emphasis upon divine persuasion and vulnerability and centres it within the triune divine dance, those movements of love that creation participates in. This, he claims, solves with the perennial

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[119] *CSG*, 135-143.
[120] *CSG*, 144-173; *PEPS*, 75-82; *PIG*, 131-151.

problem of process theology with God portrayed as an object to be grasped.[121] The use of

persuasion does not mean that God is potentially impotent as his influence is still powerful while

devoid of domination and omnicontrol. God's activity is persuasive, luring, often aligns with the

hopes and wishes of creation, and results in dependence upon God without subjugation.

In answering the usual criticisms of this view, namely that God is not powerful enough to

be both the creator and sustainer of the world, and God cannot be sure of fulfilling his divine

purposes, Fiddes acknowledges that the risk is real though minimum since God acting in 'weak

power' is far more fruitful in bringing people along with him by being malleable in his divine

will through attunement of our choices into the divine purpose which increases God's persuasive

love and power.[122] Primarily God does this through three main conduits: the story and situation

of a suffering God, in which the story of the Jesus' suffering becomes the kerygma for the church

that helps the marginalised identify themselves with it and places God in a situation where he

opens up through suffering to embrace what we suffer. Then the feelings of God, where God

transcends rationalism, uses intuition and is able to both anticipate the experience and receive the

actual experience into himself once it occurs. Finally, the creative journey of forgiveness,

analogous to forgiveness between humans, in which divine forgiveness reconciles both feelings

and love having come through the fires of judgement and transformation.[123]

Fiddes' wider panentheistic vision of participation means that creation's experience of

death, a movement from something to nothing, is analogous to God's omnipresence, which

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[121] *PIG*, 131-136.
[122] *PIG*, 139-144.
[123] *CSG*, 146-163.

without contradicting scriptural texts of God's total presence (e.g. Psalm 139), allows space for death and non-being within God himself, especially in light of the 'death of the living God' on the cross.[124] Since in the fallen world existence is constantly threatened by alienating non-being, God as creator suffers as he exposes himself to the hostile ontology of *das Nichtige* which arises primarily via evil, both moral and natural.

Of course, argues Fiddes, God is ultimately responsible for creating the conditioning factors (such as irrevocable freewill) which made both natural and moral failure within creation a distinct possibility and so he has to be able to confront, expose and absorb negation into himself in order to overcome nothingness.[125] Hostile non-being represents the alien nature of suffering that arises from free creation which befalls the sovereign God. It could not be otherwise and it is something God endures and deals with. This he has done by the cross where, through Christ, God conquered non-being and took death into his very being and transformed it so that it is no longer an instrument of hostility affecting creation.[126] This closely aligns Fiddes with Hegel's self-negating God theology that sought to counter ideas of negation being alien to God, while differing somewhat from both Altizer's death of God thinking where there is a total immersion of God into the finite world and Tillich's dialectic of opposites theory which needs to deny the historicity of Jesus of Nazareth in order to work.[127] What all these different understandings of nothingness that befall God have in common is, as Macquarrie helped develop, the need to construct a trinitarian model of the triune God in which the relations of God can be ruptured and

[124] *CSG*, 193-200.
[125] *CSG*, 207-229.
[126] *CSG*, 261-267.
[127] *CSG*, 233-260.

disturbed because of the vulnerability and kenotic self-emptying reality at the heart of God's very being.[128]

Thirdly, Fiddes' drive to understand how to speak coherently of God's omniscience is not due primarily to his desire to understand the mutability of God in scripture (e.g. Genesis 6:6) but rather a progressive elucidation of a suffering God concept in conversation with process theology. He not only believes that process thought can offer helpful insights into understanding how the particular factual event of Jesus of Nazareth can transform lives today but that their definition of divine omniscience as God's perfect knowledge of both possibility and actuality without ever treating them synonymously is worthy of note.[129] Indeed, this idea helps when seeking to develop language that takes divine suffering seriously and involves talking about 'the future' since suffering involves waiting, participating in time, and moving into new states of change from potential to actual. We have to somehow convey that there are new reality states ahead for God but not in a way experienced by humans.[130]

Fiddes' reformulation of God's omniscience in this way leads to him purport the 'perfect incompleteness of God.' This means a distinction between God's perfection and completion holding that God is perfect but his completeness lies ahead. Since God has perfect knowledge of all possibilities, then something new to him is not new and surprising as it is to us but when potential becomes actual this contributes something fresh to his experience. In order to make this

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[128] Paul S. Fiddes, "On God the Incomparable: Thinking about God with John Macquarrie," in *In Search of Humanity and Deity: A Celebration of John Macquarrie's Theology*, ed. Robert Morgan. (London: SCM Press, 2006), 182-186.

[129] Fiddes, "Process," 474.

[130] *CSG*, 77-78.

concept coherent Fiddes further distinguishes between the nature of possibilities. Those that arise from creator and creature interaction, God fully knows as possibilities whereas those possibilities he conceives from his creative imagination and desire for creation there lies a knowledge gap between possibilities and actual experience.[131] Considering how difficult it is logically to articulate humans' relation to time, past, present and future, then it is infinitely more difficult to understand God's relation to time and so we need to explore what this means for temporality and eternity, certain and unknown aspects of future, divine desire, and divine suffering and change.[132] Only then will we move nearer to understanding divine passibility and also God's self-revelation of his name 'I will be who I will be' to Moses and his people (Exodus 3:14).[133]

2.8 Conclusion

The objective of this chapter is twofold: to examine and analyse Fiddes' methodological and historical presuppositions which ground his doctrine of God, and to delineate his doctrine of God with specific focus on the ontology of the triune God, especially his passibility of suffering love, and the impact divine suffering has on the doctrine of salvation and atonement and other attributes of God. As demonstrated, Fiddes remains a stalwart defender of divine passibility. While he understands the reasons why divine impassibility was the traditional norm, today's post-Auschwitz western culture demands a different vision of God, one that is present in scripture, tradition and experience but has been a minor theological stream in the past.

Certain influences, primarily German theology *from* the cross and less-so death of God

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[131] *CSG*, 91-98.
[132] *CSG*, 100-109.
[133] *CSG*, 98-100.

theology, have resulted in Fiddes viewing human experiences as definite sources and, if they align with the revelation and witness of Christ in God, possible norms. Hence, humanity can learn much about divine suffering *inter alia* from human experience of tragedy and pain. Once divine passibility of suffering love is established as the warp and woof of the doctrine of God then this has significant impact on other areas of doctrine: a more subjective understanding of the atonement and salvation and rearticulated definitions of the incommunicable attributes of God and their deductions.

A secondary question, mentioned in the introduction, to be answered in this chapter is whether or not there has been any significant developments or changes in Fiddes' vision of a doctrine of God in the thirty years of published theological work. Given that some consider Fiddes' *Creative Suffering of God* - the earliest monograph to be discussed in this chapter – to be his magnum opus,[134] then it comes as little surprise to conclude that there has been some development of ideas over the years but without any significant change in vision. The following vision facets have remained: his understanding of divine passibility that involves change; divine power characterised by vulnerability, kenosis and persuasion; re-assessed atonement theory of Abelard as transformation; and the relationship of evil and the atonement. Secondly, he actively reiterates certain features of his theological vision throughout his writings, namely the participation of all creation in the relations of the triune God,[135] the relational nature of the

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[134] Jeff B. Pool, review of *The Creative Suffering of God*, by Paul S. Fiddes, *The Journal of Religion* 70.3 (1990): 471.
[135] Fiddes accepts that what divine suffering of the Spirit entails is something that needs developed. Paul Fiddes, personal communication with the author, 15 & 16 March 2016.

Trinity, and the presence of punishment and substitution in scripture without support of a

forensic penal substitution understanding of the atonement.

Finally, despite there being few significant critical engagements of Fiddes' work by

interlocutors and critics over the years,[136] this has not prevented him specifically developing his

conviction that experience can be a theological source and possible norm. This is clearly seen in

the significant corpus of work exploring the relationship between literature and theology, in

which he seeks to unearth the voice and presence of God in literary works not traditionally used

by the church. This body of work will be the main source for the next chapter since much of it

explores the human experience of tragedy, suffering and pain in relation to evil and so will

facilitate a critical appraisal of the doctrine of evil and demons in conversation with Fiddes.

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[136] In 2016 Fiddes could only think of five serious critics of his written work: Thomas Weinandy, Frances Young, Stephen Holmes, Paul Molnar and Thomas McCall. Paul Fiddes, personal communication with the author, 15 & 16 March 2016. The contributors in Clarke and Moore's *Within the Love of God,* and Gregory Boyd, could also be added to the list. Gregory A. Boyd, *Crucifixion of the Warrior God: Interpreting the Old Testament's Violent Portraits of God in Light of the Cross*, vol. 2 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017), 776.

Chapter Three

A FIDDESIAN ACCOUNT OF EVIL

3.1 Introduction

In chapter two it was repeatedly noted that one major *modus operandi* of Fiddes'

theology is to delineate theological doctrines in ways coherent to the current milieu, which will

likely involve significant reconstruction of certain doctrines.[1] This includes constructing a

superior understanding of the atonement, i.e. Abelard's atonement theology of transformation,

that not only makes sense of the modern fracturing of personality but also best explains God's

victory over evil.[2] In doing this Fiddes is continuing along the well-worn path of contextualising

systematic theology in order to make it coherent and communicable to those in the contemporary

epoch.[3]

Fundamentally, the imperative to recast theology using new constructs and ideas in order

to communicate today is rooted in the existential tension between the closed nature of the past

and the open reality of the future, one full of possibility and potential.[4] Fiddes argues that this

reality offers the perfect opportunity to juxtapose theology and literature in a way that releases

doctrine from its usual path moving from mystery to the world, and thereby closure, and instead

move from the story or world to mystery, which leads to openness.[5] Future openness, as often

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[1] See above, pp. 16-17, 19, 21-22, 28, 37.
[2] See above, pp. 40-42, 45.
[3] Fiddes claims that the early church's emphasis on *Christus Victor* and views of justice were epochal
driven. See above, pp. 18, 44-45.
[4] *FAL*, 3-7.
[5] *FAL*, 8-15.

found in literature, is congruent with the self-opening of God through his capacious self-revelation.[6] The practise of aligning theology with literature's movement towards openness only works if both God's revelation and creation's response to that revelation are located within a framework of participation in the triune God. When this is the case, states Fiddes, it means that we have a theological basis for including story, metaphor and non-scriptural analogy into works of systematic theology. We can, therefore, draw upon literature and art in different ways in order to further articulate divine revelation and theology in ways understandable to contemporary culture.[7]

By using this methodology Fiddes seeks to analyse and understand the nature and location of evil. Claiming to follow Jewish and Christian tradition, as well as Derrida and Jones, he posits that God is a supreme sign-maker and has created a world which is a text and full of signs.[8] Therefore much literature, especially tragic literature, reflects the fallen nature of the world and all its pain, evil and suffering. So these texts are full of signs which can not only illustrate a theology of evil but *make* a theology of evil.[9]

So, the main objective of this chapter is to formulate a theology of evil in conversation with

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[6] This is why for Fiddes apocalyptic eschatology envisages an end of history and the cosmos with surety about the 'event' of the eschaton while maintaining an openness concerning the 'content.' *TPE*, 1-28.

[7] Paul S. Fiddes, "Concept, Image and Story in Systematic Theology," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 11.1 (2009): 11-17.

[8] Paul S. Fiddes, "The Sacramental Modernism of David Jones and the World as Text," in *David Jones. The Furrowed Line*, ed. Rebecca White. (Oxford: Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius, 2014), 61-64; Paul S. Fiddes, "Dystopia, Utopia and the Millennium: Competing Images of Presence in an Anxious World," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 43/1 (2016): 17-18.

[9] Fiddes, "Concept," 5; Paul S. Fiddes, "Story and Possibility: Reflections on the Last Scenes of the Fourth Gospel and Shakespeare's The Tempest," in *Revelation and Story: Narrative Theology and the Centrality of Story*, eds. H. Sauter and J. Barton. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 29-37.

Fiddes in order to establish a kernel understanding of evil that will be used throughout the rest of the thesis. Drawing primarily on his work concerning the relationship of literature and theology, as well as salient texts from his doctrine of God corpus, I will analyse and critique Fiddes' explication of evil and corollaries in ways coherent for western late-modern culture. This will be used to arrive at a formulation and definition of evil which will be the understanding upon which to construct a doctrine of God that can coherently explain a SW theology. The rest of this chapter will explore these main facets.

3.2 What is Evil? Its Ontology

'For what is that which we call evil but the absence of good?'[10] Fiddes aligns firmly with Augustine's definition of evil as a *privatio boni*,[11] a slipping away towards an absence of the good, which leads to a corruption of the good and eventual moving away from God back to nothing.[12] Like Augustine's argument that animal disease has no substance or intrinsic existence but is rather the absence of health, Fiddes avers that evil, be moral, human or natural, has no ontological standing at all but instead has a fundamental ambiguity to it.[13]

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[10] The *Enchiridion* in Philip Schaff, (ed.), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. 3 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 240.

[11] Augustine took the *privatio boni* theory from the Platonists in order to defeat the widely-held Manichean dualistic view of evil at the time. Brian Hebblethwaite, "MacKinnon and the Problem of Evil," in *Christ, Ethics and Tragedy: Essays in Honour of Donald MacKinnon*, ed. Kenneth Surin. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 132.

[12] Fiddes, "Something will come," 94-95; Paul S. Fiddes, "Tragedy as Rhetoric of Evil," in *Rhetorik des Bösen / The Rhetoric of Evil*, eds. Paul S. Fiddes and Jochen Schmidt. (Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2013), 170; Paul S. Fiddes, "Is this the Promised End? Shakespearean Tragedy and a Christian Tragic Theology for Today" (paper presented at the Institute for Theology, Imagination & the Arts Seminar, St Mary's School of Divinity, University of St Andrews, St Andrews, Fife, 15 April 2016); Paul S. Fiddes, "Question and Answer Session" (Institute for Theology, Imagination & the Arts Seminar, St Mary's School of Divinity, University of St Andrews, St Andrews, Fife, 15 April 2016); Fiddes, "Christianity, Atonement," 213.

[13] Fiddes, "Tragedy," 169-173.

Defining evil as movement away from the good towards nothingness and ultimately

death places Fiddes alongside theologians and literary writers who superimpose metaphysical

categories such as being and non-being onto this definition of evil as nothingness. Indeed, notes

Fiddes, Augustine clearly defines two types of non-being: an absolute non-being – Plato's *ouk*

on – which, while intrinsically not evil, is the slipping back towards it, and a malevolent and

aggressive non-being which is hostile to the Good; Plato's *me on*.[14]

Fiddes concurs with Wright's definition and critique of evil as nothingness, which

though not a necessity of creation, does exist and has far-reaching implications for other areas

of theology.[15] Rejecting Moltmann's *zimsum* and Barth's account of *das Nichtige*, suggesting

that they both imply that evil is necessarily part of creation, Fiddes applauds Wright's following

of Niebuhr and his proposition that since existence is basically the tension between freedom and

anxiety, there is always the possibility of evil; a practical inevitability without the logical

necessity.[16]

Extrapolating this understanding to the macro-level of creation means that since

creation was created *ex nihilo* it is always under threat of collapsing back into chaos as humans

exercise their immature freedom in order to freely rebel against God and give evil a chance to

'posit itself.'[17] Significantly, Wright, following Niebuhr, refers to 'sin,' not 'evil' positing itself

and this, it seems, demonstrates Fiddes' contention that sin has a particularity whereas evil is

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[14] Fiddes, "Christianity, Atonement," 213; "Can God Face Up to Evil?" Paul S. Fiddes, accessed March 15, 2022, (https://www.closertotruth.com/series/can-god-face-evil#video-2218). cf. Paul Fiddes, personal communication with the author, 15 & 16 March 2016.

[15] Fiddes, "Something will come," 87-88.

[16] Fiddes, "Something will come," 93-95; cf. Wright, *A Theology*, 77.

[17] Fiddes, "Something will come," 94-95; cf. Wright, *A Theology*, 77-79.

universal. For if we understand sin as an attitude and action of covenant breaking and rebellion against God, and a failure to actualise the potential that human beings have received from God, then behind this lies a wider reality of cosmic and universal estrangement and opposition to the Good. This, we can define as evil.[18]

Besides, this universal hostility of evil which consists in part of human rebellion and sin means that evil is something that befalls God.[19] Consequently, if this is something that happens *to* God then this raises the question - discussed below - about *where* evil is located.[20] Fiddes also notes the obvious criticism against process theology that if evil is ever-present within God's being, specifically in his consequent nature which is thoroughly immersed into the flow of time and the world, then this gives no explanation of evil and no possibility of its judgement or eradication. Moreover, evil acts and experiences can have the same everlasting state as beautiful and good experiences.[21] Fiddes replies that all branches of process thinking promote the *transformation* of all experiences God has in his consequent nature thereby not bestowing evil with either a subjective or objective immortality: 'we can surely approve the basic idea that if all experiences can be preserved in God, then they can also be transfigured, and evil need not triumph.'[22]

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[18] There is however some overlap of evil and sin according to Fiddes. They are intertwined in the demonic principalities and powers mentioned in the New Testament, and in taking Barth's definition of nothingness as that which God *does not will* means the actualizing of nothingness is sin and this gives non-being its own evil identity. Fiddes, "Christianity, Atonement," 212-214; cf. *CD* III/3, §50.3, 302-312.

[19] See above, pp. 35-36.

[20] See below, pp. 169-178.

[21] *TPE*, 206-208.

[22] *TPE*, 208. Fiddes however believes that trinitarian, not di-polarity, theology is the superior way to explain this transformation. *CSG*, 125-135.

Furthermore, in accordance with other literary writers, Fiddes' use of literature to make theology leads him to develop further Augustine's *privatio boni* definition of evil. As part of a larger discussion on transcending the perennial Augustine versus Pelagius debate,[23] Fiddes analyses the nature of evil from which humans need to be saved by theologically critiquing Golding's writings, especially *Lord of the Flies*. Fiddes largely supports Golding's use of Heidegger and Barth, in which he postulates that the antidote to human darkness and movement towards a non-being *das Nichtige* is to acknowledge that God, as being-himself, kenotically enters the realm of nothingness, endures the consequences and overcomes in order to call human beings back to him and have the courage 'to be.'[24]

Charles Williams, notes Fiddes, proffers a more radical understanding of Augustine's definition of evil in human life in his writings. He negates any concept of evil as a created force by noting that evil is 'nothing'; very parasitic and extracts from the good. His interpretation of the edenic fall introduces a unique and helpful answer as to *why* Adam was drawn to evil and disobedience. Combining Augustine and Aquinas, Williams purports that Adam wanted to know the good but could only know it through experiencing evil. Using the phrase 'this is and is not' all the characters in Williams' books embark on a way of exchange in order to discover that the nothingness of evil mixed with part-good is, in fact, the path towards the good.[25] Unfortunately, Williams' suggestion does not answer the theological conundrum of justifying the presence of evil in the world. Instead, argues Fiddes, the image of the perichoretic dance will help disqualify the idea of the necessity of evil not by unifying good and evil but rather

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[23] *FAL*, 196-202.
[24] *FAL*, 224-228.
[25] Paul S. Fiddes, "Charles Williams and the Problem of Evil," in *Essays and Memoirs from the Oxford C. S. Lewis Society*, eds. Judith Wolfe and Brendan Wolfe. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 65-73.

acknowledging the messy interweaving of good and evil. This image of a dance, together with the Christian story of suffering love which we all can indwell and relate to our own story, can also help avoid polarising good and evil which often leads to the demonizing of others through scapegoating and perpetuation of the redemptive myth of violence.[26]

The messy interweaving of good and evil means there is an ambiguity to evil. To best understand this, claims Fiddes, we need to look to tragic theology, a theology rooted in tragic literature and playwrights, and is best extracted from Shakespeare, not Greek tragedy.[27] Tragic theology best deals with the intractability of evil and suffering in the contingencies of everyday, normal life. It helpfully divides 'evil' into three different types: 'moral,' when human behaviour rebels against moral categories; 'human fragility,' the failure of humans in a hostile world; and 'natural,' those natural disturbances that are caused by the randomness in creation. All three types of evil are portrayed best by Shakespeare since his plays are shaped by the Christian culture of the time.[28]

It is the Christian milieu of the time of Shakespeare that catalyses his definition of tragedy as the clash between individual persons and the surrounding society,[29] especially in the area of values and morals and the discerning of good from evil.[30] In King Lear, the story centres

[26] Fiddes, "Charles Williams," 83-85; Paul S. Fiddes, "The Story and the Stories: Revelation and the Challenge of Postmodern Culture," in *Faith in the Centre*, ed. P. Fiddes. (Macon: Smyth and Helwys, 2001), 87-89; cf. Rene Girard, *The Scapegoat*, trans. Yvonne Freccero. (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1986).

[27] Fiddes, "Is this the Promised End?"

[28] Fiddes, "Tragedy," 165-173, cf. Hebblethwaite, "MacKinnon," 131-145. Fiddes raises the question of why, especially in art, moral evil is labelled tragic whereas natural evil seldom is? Fiddes, "Is this the Promised End?"

[29] The subject of Fiddes' latest monograph, Paul S. Fiddes, *More Things in Heaven and Earth: Shakespeare, Theology, and the Interplay of Texts* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2022).

[30] Fiddes, "Tragedy," 178-179.

on a man who is reduced to nothing, an *ouk on* which aligns with the strong reformation

principle of the time that humans are made from nothing. In most works of Shakespeare, claims

Fiddes, evil as *privatio boni* is the inability to survive a clash of values, unless the character is

able to feel love and grief in the moment for this will ultimately be the value that will conquer

evil.[31]

Overall, what impression do we receive from Fiddes regarding the ontology of evil?

Since he is a systematic theologian who constructs theology primarily by making connections,[32]

I want to suggest that Fiddes does not arrive at tight, systematic theological definition of evil

but rather, via his discussions about evil in his analyses of tragic literature,[33] he arrives at a

number of conclusions without necessarily addressing the question of coherence of these

concluded ideas.

The clear conclusions reached are as follows: Fiddes is Augustinian in his understanding

of evil as *privatio boni*; he rejects the idea of ontic evil since evil is fundamentally ambiguous

because of its non-ontological state; he views sin and subsequently evil as rooted in creation's

freedom and rebellion against God, hence evil *befalling* God;[34] and despite his apparent

rejection of a Barthian definition of nothingness,[35] he still defines evil as a Niebuhrean freedom-

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[31] Fiddes, "Tragedy," 179-183.
[32] Paul Fiddes, personal communication with the author, 15 & 16 March 2016.
[33] Only his critique of Wright's theology has evil and the demonic as the main subject matter. Fiddes, "Something will come," 87-104.
[34] See above, pp. 35-36, 58.
[35] A definition which has been heavily critiqued. Warren, *Cleansing*, 65; R. Scott Rodin, *Evil and Theodicy in the Theology of Karl Barth* (New York: Peter Lang, 1997), 166-167; Vernon R. Mallow, *The Demonic: A Selected Theological Study: An Examination into the Theology of Edwin Lewis, Karl Barth, and Paul Tillich* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1983), 97; Wright, *A Theology*, 51, cf. Wright, *The Fair Face*, 40.

anxiety movement towards non-being whether that is absolute non-being (*ouk on*) or nefarious non-being (*me on*).

Therefore, without entering into the debate regarding the church's traditional understanding of the ontology of evil and a satisfactory theodicy,[36] it is very apparent that if these reached conclusions are juxtaposed with Fiddes' non-Augustinian doctrine of God, then we arrive at a theological impasse. On the one hand we have a doctrine of God which lends itself more naturally to a semi-dualistic, metaphysical understanding of evil and SW, and a definition of evil which primarily appeals to libertarian freedom of all creation (human and spirit beings), which creates the evil that befalls God and continually threatens to reduce creation back to chaos. This strongly contrasts with the non-dualistic, monistic doctrine of God that minimises the chaotic and malevolent freedom of evil, defines evil in non-personalist terms and upholds an overarching strong sovereignty-control picture of the nature and character of God. Indeed, as Blocher notes, many theologians maintain a critical distance from a theodicy that emphasises autonomy and independence and paints God as takings 'risks,' since this all leads to fundamental questions about the sovereignty of God.[37]

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[36] For more, see Henri Blocher, *Evil and the Cross: Christian Thought and the Problem of Evil* (Leicester: Apollos, 1994), 36; cf. Astley, Brown and Loades, *Evil*, 60-78; Hick, *Evil and*, 236-240.

[37] Blocher, *Evil and the Cross*, 36-37. Like Fiddes, Yong also defines evil as *privatio boni* but then appeals heavily to process theology to re-articulate the doctrine of God. Amos Yong, *The Spirit of Creation: Modern Science and Divine Action in the Pentecostal-Charismatic Imagination* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 173-225.

Historically in the debate over spiritual conflict and warfare, 'theologians seldom consider evil spirits, and "spiritual warfare" advocates seldom consider philosophical aspects of evil.'[38] The Augustinian *privatio boni* model describes evil as non-being or the absence of good and tends to minimise 'the biblical portrayal of God's opposition to evil, does not address the anecdotal evidence in 'spiritual warfare' literature, and seems inadequate to explain extreme or dysteleological evil, and demonization.'[39] Whereas views of limited dualism are more effective in affirming people's perceived reality of evil by validating people's experience of apparent pointless evil, maintaining the goodness of God, articulating a refined understanding of God's sovereignty and best supporting the biblical and historical-traditional picture of an *ontological over-and-againstness* of evil and the demonic.[40]

Therefore, at this juncture it can be safely concluded that Fiddes' *a priori* commitment to a panentheistic and participative doctrine of God, one which naturally imbibes an eschatology of hopeful universalism and doctrine of creation capacious enough for divine suffering,[41] determines an ontology of evil which does not allow a 'space' *within* God for personal, autonomous and wilful rebellion against God or a 'place' that is a punitive destination for all those who come under the judgement and wrath of God as consequence of their defiance and rebellion. Logically, evil as privation is a more congruent fit.

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[38] Warren, *Cleansing*, 59.
[39] Warren, *Cleansing*, 60.
[40] MacMullen states that in the early church epoch the God of Christianity was known to be at war with many different rivals, which included his angels at war with Satan. Ramsay MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire (A.D. 100-400)* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 17-18, 27-28.
[41] See below, pp. 88.

However, I would contend that since Fiddes is a theologian who engages with the biblical text and considers 'experience' a valid source for theological formulation,[42] he needs to reconsider the clear *prima facie* biblical witness and contemporary experience of many which validates an understanding of evil grounded in the ontological reality and sentient awareness of diabolical evil. This, I believe, is possible through deeper thinking about ontology and engagement with current, subtle articulations of ontology as naked existence which could encapsulate *privatio boni* while denying *privatio esse*,[43] and create a type of ontology of evil that does not have to deny the panentheistic reality of God. This is addressed in greater detail in chapter six below.

3.3 Evil's Personifications: Satan, Triumvirate, Demons, Principalities and Powers

Notwithstanding the previous critical comments, the above-mentioned ambiguity and nothingness of evil continues to be the main controlling framework for Fiddes as he articulates his understanding of metaphorical language used to represent evil, especially language of personification, which helps humanity comprehend regular occurrences of perceived evil. Drawing much from both theology proper and tragic literature, Fiddes offers an all-

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[42] See above, pp. 27-28.

[43] Much good work on this subject has been done. For more see Warren, *Cleansing*, 260-276; Thomas A. Noble, "The Spirit World: A Theological Approach," in *The Unseen World: Christian Reflections on Angels, Demons and the Heavenly Realm*, ed. Anthony N. S. Lane. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 216-218; R. W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology, Vol.1: The Triune God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 117; Wright, *A Theology*, 81-82. Revelation 13:18 numbering of the beast as 666, the ultimate 'falling short' of absolute perfection, could substantiate a reading of Dante's account of Satan casting him as definite privation with necessary existence, a personification of absolute evil which is a form of existence but stripped of all potential 'goods.' See Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy 1: Hell*, trans. Dorothy L. Sayers (London: Penguin Books, 1949), Canto 34, 285-291.

encompassing representation of evil by reconstructing the traditional personified manifestations of evil in modern language thereby offering a culturally relevant and acceptable understanding of evil that helps explain modern society's observation and experience of evil.

Significantly, Fiddes redefines and rejects certain parts of Christian tradition regarding evil. Before doing that, however, he acknowledges the New Testament's diverse portrayal of the forces of evil, including Satan and principalities and powers, and also notes that in Christian tradition Satan has indeed become the full representation of evil, the rubric under which to locate all other personifications of evil.[44] In terms of redefinition, Fiddes revises the traditional understanding of the triumvirate of evil, i.e. the flesh, world and devil, as the 'sinister triumvirate of *sin, law and death*.'[45] Since that which connects the flesh, world and devil is the potential to tempt and this presupposes the existence of wilful sentience or even personhood, it seems likely that Fiddes, following Tillich and Macquarrie, redefines the triptych of evil in a way more congruent with evil as *privatio boni,* since sin, law and death are all perversions of something good and become evil when held up as tyrannical idols to be obeyed.[46]

Regarding what he rejects, Fiddes suggests that the historical understanding of Satan as the totality of evil and akin to the devil is very problematic since it contravenes the root understanding of personhood: 'it is not possible to apply the term 'person' to an entity which is absolutely evil and thus capable only of depersonalising . . . what is surely essential is to

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[44] *PEPS*, 114-125.
[45] *PEPS*, 114.
[46] *PEPS*, 114-118. Similarly, Caird posits that the law, sin and death can be seen as part of the principalities and powers. George B. Caird, *Principalities and Powers: A Study in Pauline Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1956), 43-51.

recognise the spiritual reality to which the name 'Satan' witnesses.'[47] Fiddes jettisons the

traditional understanding of Satan as a fully ontological evil being in order to maintain a

distinction between personhood and Satan, which also sustains the redeem-ability of every

person without extending this to Satan.[48]

A non-ontological Satan, together with evil as *privatio boni* and essentially

'nothingness,' aligns Fiddes firmly with other modern scholars.[49] He applauds Wright's

progressive shift away from viewing Satan as a fallen angel to instead a 'projection out of

human fallenness' since this idea is more coherent if Satan's character is a non-being nothing.[50]

This understanding also, argues Fiddes, helps make sense of ambiguity of 'the Satan' and the

different remits he is portrayed as having at different points. In agreement with Wink, he notes

that a fluid and malleable definition of Satan lends itself to the portrayal of development of

Satan in the scriptures, whether that be a servant of Yahweh, an *agent provocateur,* or

quintessential malevolent enemy of Christ.[51]

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[47] *PEPS*, 118. It should be noted that Fiddes often uses 'personality' and 'personhood' as synonymous terms. I will distinguish them and use 'personhood' when ontology is the focus and 'personality' when the combination of human characteristics and qualities is being discussed.

[48] *PEPS*, 119. This position sets Fiddes at odds with Wink. Wink, *Unmasking*, 39-40.

[49] For instance, Noble, "The Spirit World," 210-218, cf. Robert Cook, "Devils and Manticores: Plundering Jung for a Plausible Demonology," in *The Unseen World: Christian Reflections on Angels, Demons and the Heavenly Realm*, ed. Anthony N. S. Lane. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 175-177.

[50] Fiddes, "Something will come," 91. Fiddes correctly notes that this shift in thinking which took place between two editions is largely down to the influence of Wink and Noble. However, after noting Wright's new section in the second edition on the devil and evil as projections of fallen human thinking, he suggests that the first edition is still exercising significant influence and presence in the second. Fiddes, "Something will come," 89-93; cf. Wright, *A Theology*, 76-82.

[51] *PEPS*, 118-122; Fiddes, "Charles Williams," 77-81; cf. Wink, *Unmasking*, 9-40.

Arriving at the conviction that Satan is a nothingness, a mere projection of human fallenness and the dark side of the good, emboldens Fiddes to increase the metaphorical language concerning 'the Satan' from his exploration of literature and theology. From William Blake he suggests viewing Satan as a disturbance of the human psyche, a false state of self-righteous selfhood which is chaotic and divided and can lead into satanic spheres of vice.[52] Moreover, theologically, Blake articulates Satan as the empty shell of God's objective existence, an idea that, claims Fiddes, opens the door to Jung's definition of Satan as the dark side of God,[53] and surprisingly finds congruence with Altizer's definition of Satan as an image of God estranged from the God who is normally delineated as abstract transcendence.[54]

There is certainly no doubt that jettisoning certain understandings of the traditional, especially mediaeval, picture of a personalised Satan as the epitome of evil, frees Fiddes to develop a theology of Satan that, similarly to Wink and others, helps communicate the concept of evil to western modern culture in a more palatable way. However, in so doing it seems to me that he creates other points of contention that will undermine the clarity of definition that he seeks. Essentially, he places too much weight on the 'two Satans in scripture' motif, the idea promulgated of a systematic evolution of 'the Satan' in scripture. In reality, the picture is more ambiguous. The presence or absence of the article is significant, as well as the etymology and context of the use of the noun *sâṭân*.[55]

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[52] *FAL*, 92-93; Paul S. Fiddes, "The Passion Story in Literature," in *The Oxford Handbook of English Literature and Theology, eds.* Andrew W. Hass, David Jasper and Elisabeth Jay. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 752-755; Paul S. Fiddes, "Patterns of hope and images of eternity: listening to Shakespeare, Blake and T.S. Eliot," in *Art, Imagination and Christian Hope*, eds. Trevor Hart, Jeremy Begbie and Gavin Hopps. (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 41-46.

[53] *FAL*, 93-94.

[54] *TPE*, 248.

[55] 'It is difficult to maintain, as many scholars have, that we see in the Hebrew Bible a developing notion of Satan.' Breytenbach and Day, "Satan," 1378. Others have noted that the especial use of the noun *sâṭân* in Numbers

Secondly, in depersonalising Satan to non-ontological status Fiddes places himself firmly

at odds with much scripture, tradition and experience. Not only is it questionable that this view

of Satan is necessary in order to delineate his panentheistic vision of God, hopeful universalism,

and current *zeitgeist*-driven metaphorical language about the nature of evil, but it also

significantly contravenes much witness of scripture, especially the life and teaching of Jesus,[56]

church historical-traditional accounts of deliverance and exorcism of sentient, volitional evil

spirits,[57] and current global experience of the reality of the demonic that testifies to demonic

elements of communication, tactics and planning.[58] Returning to the aforementioned 1993

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22 to render the action of God as 'satanic' certainly precludes any systematic evolution of Satan. Elaine Pagels, *The Origin of Satan* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), 39-41; Beck, *Reviving Old Scratch*, 8-9; Forsyth, *The Old Enemy*, 113.

[56] In the Matthean version of the Lord's prayer NT scholars agree that Jesus prays for deliverance from the 'evil one' (Matthew 6:13). R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 231, 251-252; Donald A. Hagner, *Word Biblical Commentary Volume 33A: Matthew 1-13* (Dallas: Word Books, 1993), 151-162; Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 223-225.

[57] Daunton-Fear robustly demonstrates that exorcism was widely practised in the first three centuries of church history before becoming a minor ministry in the post-Nicene church. Daunton-Fear, *Healing in the Early Church*, 67, 110, 131, 151, 158-164.

[58] Goodman, in her exorcism accounts, states that ultimately 'experience is the most powerful of all persuaders' when it comes to claims of interaction with demons and others spirits. Felicitas D. Goodman, *How About Demons? Possession and Exorcism in the Modern World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 124-126. Linn and Linn document accounts of thirty-two persons who were part of a group of two thousand people who all testified to beneficial experiences once deliverance prayer had been done over them. Linn and Linn, *Deliverance Prayer*, 160-163. Boyd informs that many areas of the world hold a cultural paradigm of the reality of evil spirits and demon possession which is supported by numerous *a-posteriori* accounts. This evidence has also challenged western anthropologists and ethnographers' framework of naturalism, Gregory Boyd, "The Ground-Level Deliverance Model," in *Understanding Spiritual Warfare: Four Views,* eds. James K. Beilby and Paul Rhodes Eddy. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 143-147. In the Anglican church exorcist John Richards not only suggests speaking directly to evil spirits when exorcising either people or places, but also perform a reversal prayer over those who have made a satanic promise to renounce Christ which they made by speaking and praying directly to their 'master and Lord Satan.' John Richards, *Exorcism, Deliverance and Healing: Some Pastoral and Liturgical Guidelines* (Nottingham: Grove Books, 1990), 18-21; cf. Richards, *But Deliver Us*, 82. The lived, experienced knowledge of satanic oppression and the use of authoritative monologue and commands to exorcise evil spirits who can hear and obey is commonplace in sub-Sahara African Christianity. For an extensive, academic account of this global-south normality see Robert H. Bennett, *I Am Not Afraid: Demon Possession and Spiritual Warfare* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2013), 1-96. For a fair and even-balanced account of modern day exorcism and deliverance in the modern western church see Collins, *Exorcism and Deliverance*.

Lausanne working group report and statement on SW,[59] it strongly states that 'the principalities and powers of evil *who are seeking to overthrow* the church and *frustrate* its task of evangelisation' (emphasis mine) are to be constantly fought in the spiritual realm by the church.[60]

While, like Fiddes, we may not want to bestow full status of personhood upon 'the Satan' since we cannot be sure of his origins,[61] I would argue that it is possible to develop a nascent, hortative definition which reflects his sub-personhood and acknowledges a quasi-ontology capacious enough for sentient existence, wilful opposition to God and creation, a certain amount of say-so, and ability for accusation, deception and chameleon-type behaviour. God's enemy is aware and knowledgeable about his existence and opposition to God.[62]

Moving on to other personifications of evil under the 'Satan' rubric, it is firstly significant to note that Fiddes refuses to list 'demons' along with other tyrants of evil, claiming that they are too hard to classify and that they can be associated with the above-mentioned three

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[59] See above, pp. 1-2.

[60] "Lausanne Statement."

[61] There is simply no consensus, let alone unanimity, on whether or not texts such as Isaiah 14:12-21 and Ezekiel 28:1-17 correctly reveal the origin of Satan as a fallen archangel. Some adamantly claim that these passages go beyond a natural description of a human king and point to another-worldly enemy of God, Satan. Boyd, *God at War*, 157-162; Green, *I Believe*, 36-42. At the opposite pole, it is asserted that these passages about earthly kings were co-opted into a 'legends of the fall,' especially the Lucifer myth, which was then made very prominent by Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Pagels, *The Origin*, 47-49; Wray and Mobley. *The Birth of Satan*, 108-112. Between these poles we have the honest agnosticism of Wright who maintains that while the exegetical evidence for these passages supporting the fall of Satan theory is very weak and shaky, there can be good *theological* reasons for moving towards an angelic fall conclusion. Wright, *A Theology*, 70-73.

[62] Wright's consistent use of 'The Satan' is both helpful and instructive at this point. It demonstrates the sub or quasi-personhood of 'The Satan' that we can use to demonstrate his malevolent will that opposes both God and creation without bestowing upon him full personhood of the *imago-dei* of humanity. This nuanced position of sub-personhood also allows for the creation of degrees of non-personhood determined by movement away from the good towards nothingness. Wright, *Evil and*, 45, 108-112.

main groups of tyrants.[63] As already noted, the triumvirate of sin, law and death are ultimately perversions of the good and therefore capable of becoming demonic idols with diabolical consequences. Acquiescing to the idols of sin and the law results in death, the antipathetic demonic result to transformative life in Christ.[64] In fact, claims Fiddes, there is much literature evidence, especially during reformation times, of a movement away from the devil's rights and towards the law of God which portrays the real powers and principalities as the existential triumvirate of sin, law, and death, not legions of devils and Satan.[65]

Regarding specifically powers and principalities and noting that the apostle Paul refers more often to them than Satan,[66] Fiddes fundamentally holds that any structure, political or otherwise, can become a demonic power when it moves towards becoming an idol, away from its intrinsic goodness and service.[67] Following Caird, he suggests it is a movement away from the good, a return to nothingness and chaotic creation intermingled with a variety of demonic systems:[68] the 'best systems can become demonic, whether economic, political or ecclesiastical; bureaucracies can add a spirit of legalism to their particular demonic tendencies.'[69] This understanding of potential demonic structures acts as a catalyst for Fiddes to identify potential

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[63] *PEPS*, 114.

[64] *PEPS*, 114-118.

[65] Fiddes, "The Passion," 747-750.

[66] Fiddes suggests that the Apostle Paul constructed his understanding of principalities and powers based on a belief of a continuous fall of rebellious angels throughout human history, alluded to in passages such as Genesis 6, Deuteronomy 32:8-9, and Psalm 82:2. These passages are used by territorial spirits advocates who claim that geographical regions can be under the spiritual influence of evil spirits that have a regional mandate and corporate possession. Wright also suggests that there is some overlap between Wink's claim that principalities and powers create 'atmospheres' over territory that can be open or closed to God's grace, and territorial spirits over cities and cultures. *FAL*, 93-94; Wagner, *Spiritual*, 167-169; Wright, *A Theology*, 148-149.

[67] *PEPS*, 122-125; Fiddes, "Something will come," 100-104; Fiddes and Lees, "How are People Healed," 25-27.

[68] *PEPS*, 122-125; cf. Caird, *Principalities*, 51-53.

[69] *PEPS*, 124.

demonic principalities and powers in various types of literature, be that Lawrence's abandoned love,[70] Frye's world rejected by desire,[71] or King Lear's temporal whole of nothingness.[72]

There is certainly no doubt that Fiddes' position concurs with much of the significant research on principalities and powers that emphasises fallen structures of earthly existence instead of nefarious spiritual beings.[73] There is also certainty that this understanding of the principalities and powers finds a natural place within his panentheistic vision of God and hope-filled universalism. However, I have to posit that Fiddes' position simply reveals only one part of the picture and fails to reflect the fully-orbed nature and reality of principalities and powers congruent to scripture and claimed experience.[74]

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[70] *FAL*, 164-172.

[71] *TPE*, 15-22.

[72] *TPE*, 54-57.

[73] To mention a few, Berkhof's claim that the apostle Paul has demythologised the powers of their personal and spiritual nature found in rabbinic and apocalyptic texts, Hendrikus Berkhof, *Christ and the Powers* (Harrisonburg: Herald Press, 1977), 18-24; Wink's bi-polar outward manifestation and inner spirituality of principalities and powers that mainly refer to generic, psychic and social forces confronted in everyday life, Wink, *Unmasking*, 4; Kellermann's liturgical-political confrontation and exorcism of institutional, social, ideological, political systemic powers holding sway in western culture, Bill Wylie Kellermann, *Seasons of Faith and Conscience: Explorations in Liturgical Direct Action* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2008), 71-102; Yoder's conclusion that the powers are fallen aspects of God's good creation, triumphed over by Christ though not destroyed, and overcome by cruciform ecclesiology and revolutionary subordination, John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 134-192; and Newbigin's principalities and powers, which are spiritually very real but never exist apart from the human agencies they embody. Therefore, spiritual conflict with them is not against human beings but rather against the spiritual power that is behind, within and above human beings, Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (London: SPCK, 1989), 198-210.

[74] Green emphatically argues that the understanding of principalities and powers in both Judaism, the Greco-Roman World and New Testament age was of spiritual forces beyond human power and authority. To suggest that the principalities and powers of the Pauline letters are different and separate from the demons of the gospels is misleading and dangerous. Green, *I Believe*, 78-84. In terms of their nature, Green asserts that the 'truth of the matter is that words like principalities, powers and thrones are used of human rulers and of the spiritual forces which lie behind them.' He also claims that 1 Corinthians 2:8, Titus 3:1, and Romans 13:1 can be taken either way. Green, *I Believe*, 84-85. Other scholars who claim the same include Greg Boyd, "Powers and Principalities," in *Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics*, ed. Joel Green. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 611-613; P. T. O'Brien, "Principalities and Powers and Their Relationship to Structures," *The Reformed Theological Review* 40.1 (1981): 1-10; P.T. O'Brien, "Principalities and Powers: Opponents of the Church," in *Biblical Interpretation and the Church: Text and Context*, ed. D. A. Carson. (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1984), 110-143; Heinrich Schlier, *Principalities and Powers in the New Testament* (Freiberg: Verlag Herder, 1961), 11-39.

Clearly, there is a certain amount of ambiguity when it comes to definitive descriptions of the principalities and powers.[75] In contrast to the highly-schematised gnostic assertions of the spirit world, the New Testament vagueness is probably deliberate and therein lies its genius. However, taking a lead from Wright's work on idolatry and the demonic it is certainly possible to define principalities and powers in a way that does not ignore the potential fallenness of structures and institutions (without *having* to demonise them all) while clearly recognising the ontological spiritual reality *behind* and *within* them. An idol, states Paul, is nothing in and of itself (1 Corinthinans 8). However, when a worshipper offers a sacrifice to that idol then they are offering to a demon (1 Corinthians 10). Therefore an idol is both nothingness and demonic at the same time.[76]

This same explanation can be applied to principalities and powers. For example, consider the contrasting delineation of the state between Romans 13 and Revelation 13. If the state remains within the limits of its function then it is the servant of God; if it exceeds that limit and parasitically feeds on power and worship, then it becomes a diabolical power: an instrument of Satan.[77] Conflation of passages such as 1 Corinthians 2:8, Romans 13:1 and Revelation 13 with the tensioned age of the eschaton justifies Cullmann's dialectical definition of the principles and powers as the reality of *both* state government and structure authority *and* angelic-demonic ontological forces behind and within those structured authorities.[78] Indeed,

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[75] McAlpine helpfully summarises the different understandings of powers and principalities from the reformed, anabaptist, third wave, and social science traditions before offering a parallel reading and possibilities for future research and understanding. Thomas H. McAlpine, *Facing the Powers: What are the Options?* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2003).

[76] Wright, *Evil and*, 112-113.

[77] Oscar Cullmann, *The State in the New Testament* (New York: Scribner, 1956), 50-92.

[78] Cullmann, *The State*, 95-114; Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time* rev ed. (London: SCM Press, 1962), 191-210.

returning to Ephesians 6:10-12, it can be affirmed that there are invisible positive and negative

spiritual powers whose outer veneer is the human or state institution.[79]

Finally, in Fiddes' position on the relation of 'demons' to Satan he continues the non-

ontology of Satan theme. In his dialogue with a medical missionary doctor, Fiddes supports

Lees' encouragement and call not to ignore the demonic but rather acknowledge its

overwhelming reality.[80] However, in contradistinction to his debating partner's belief in the

personhood of the demonic, Fiddes states categorically that it is inconsequential whether or not

someone believes in an evil force with or without a personhood of its own, so long as we agree

on the very real and objective experience of evil as a hostile dark reservoir opposed to the

purposes of God.[81]

Fiddes' propensity to give human experience premier position in theological formulation

means that, despite holding the contrary view that demons are non-persons, chaotic and

irrational nothings, like Wright he is unwilling to belittle or negate others' experience of the

demonic in a personified form so long as experiential claims are not exaggerated or embellished

in order to create a pre-occupation with the demonic.[82] Of course, however, this difference of

understanding will only remain inconsequential so long as there is no attempt to confront the

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[79] Cullmann, *The State*, 108-109; Cullmann, *Christ*, 104. In discussing how to view theologically the
biblical evidence on principalities and powers, Wright sees no reason to not follow a path between Wink and Stott in
which structures can produce demonic forces and the demonic can use structures for its own purposes. There is not
contradiction between Paul's theology and Jesus' confrontation of the demonic in the gospels. Wright, *A Theology*,
139-145.
[80] Fiddes and Lees, "How are People Healed," 22-25.
[81] Fiddes and Lees, "How are People Healed," 25-27.
[82] Fiddes, "Something will come," 101.

demonic. Approaches to address the demonic will significantly differ depending upon whether or not there is an ontological reality to a demonic, evil spirit.

3.4 Defeat of the Demonic: Evil and the Atonement

Having delineated Fiddes' understanding of the identification and ontology of the various personifications that comprise evil, it is necessary to juxtapose this with his position on the atonement in order to see in what way, if any, Jesus' death and resurrection defeats evil and the demonic, however they are construed. As noted earlier,[83] in Fiddes' key text on the atonement he attempts to tackle a fundamental question regarding the atonement, namely 'how can a particular event in the past have an effect upon our experience of salvation today?'[84] The question is critical because salvation is dependent upon both the past crucifixion of Jesus and the work of God in the here and now.[85] So in turning specifically to evil, he similarly asks how exactly does the victory of Jesus two thousand years ago deliver defeat of evil in a modern age which appears to be in the grip of much evil?[86]

To answer this question Fiddes broadens his atonement theology and applies it to his understanding of evil. While holding a nuanced transformative view of Abelard's exemplarist theory,[87] Fiddes recognises that there is a significant Satanward aspect to the atonement (1 John 3:8). Therefore, he elucidates a subjective stress to the *Christus Victor* theory by stating that the possibility of victory over evil is rooted in our subjective participation with the triune God as we

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[83] See above, pp. 39-43.
[84] *PEPS*, ix.
[85] Fiddes, "Salvation," 178.
[86] *PEPS*, 112-113.
[87] See above, pp. 39-40.

enter into God's objective and historical victory over evil and cooperate with divine purpose: 'the victory of Christ at the cross empowers us to enter upon God's victory in the present.'[88]

Part of his arrival at this understanding is via rejection of the traditional understanding and uses of the *Christus Victor* theory, ones with an objective focus and subjective appendix. He jettisons the classic understanding of it because it relies on a personalist ontology of Satan and in its 'ransom theory' form bequeaths too many rights to the devil.[89] It also offers an inadequate theodicy.[90] Secondly, he repudiates Aulen's description of *Christus Victor* stating that he relies too much on whom the ransom is given to, whereas the focus should be on 'by whom' the ransom is given. Aulen's theory also creates internal conflict of wrath and love in God, which Fiddes argues is never present in God,[91] and it presents an inferior theodicy which allows evil to continue incessantly and God be excused of any responsibility for evil.[92] Finally, Fiddes also renounces Barth's use of *Christus Victor*. While appreciating Barth's rejection of a penal substitution atonement and casting evil as essentially *Das Nichtige*,[93] he concludes that the account leans too much towards the objective end and makes it very difficult to see *how* someone's actual sin has been killed in another person (i.e. Christ).[94] Overall, while an objective view of *Christus Victor* correctly asserts strongly the decisive nature of the past event of the

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[88] *PEPS*, 135-139; cf. Fiddes, "Christianity, Atonement," 222. There is no noticeable change or development in Fiddes' atonement theology and evil in the near-thirty years between these two works despite his awareness of a number of different ways to understand the relationship between 'objective' and 'subjective' poles of the atonement. See Fiddes, "Salvation," 179-180.

[89] *PEPS*, 129-131.

[90] Fiddes, "Christianity, Atonement," 219-220.

[91] *PEPS*, 132-133; cf. Fiddes, "Christianity, Atonement," 220.

[92] Fiddes, "Christianity, Atonement," 221.

[93] See above, pp. 44 fn.108. In accepting 'penal suffering' and 'substitution' but rejecting 'penal substitution' Fiddes agrees with Barth's 'substitution/representative' account while claiming that Barth 'rejects any [penal substitution] idea that Christ atones for our sin by bearing a punishment in our place.' Rather, 'Christ "caused sin to be taken and killed on the cross in his own person."' *PEPS*, 134, cf. *CD* IV/1, §59.2, 253-255.

[94] *PEPS*, 133-134; cf. Fiddes, "Christianity, Atonement," 221-222.

cross, it does not sufficiently explain 'the "slaying" of sin, or the dealing of a fatal blow to Satan, or the quenching of divine wrath.'[95]

Greater potency therefore lies in a subjective stress on *Christus Victor.* This view presents Christ's victory over idols, power and principalities and the demonic as a present event into which we can enter. Enlisting the help of Macquarrie, Fiddes suggests there are four ways in which the victory of Christ over idols et al releases victory in human life in the present: releasing the power of revelation; finding creative power in the community of the crucified;[96] the unveiling of God's own self from the past in the present; and empowering Christ's story of suffering which helps makes sense of pointless evil.[97] All four possibilities are creatively plausible because of the subjective stress of the *Christus Victor* theory which renders Abelard's theology of transforming love vital to any understanding of impact on the current situation of evil.[98] Only the love of God revealed in the cross creates the possibility of infusing love into an evil situation and moving human hearts to respond to God.[99] The love shown on the cross breaks idols, especially the idol of the self,[100] and helps 'people make the victory of Christ their own.'[101]

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[95] Fiddes, "Christianity, Atonement," 222.

[96] For an articulation of what this entails see Paul S. Fiddes, "Atonement in the Life of the Church," in *Care Împarte Drept Cuvântul Adevărului.' Volum Omagial Ioan Bunaciu*, eds. Otniel Bunaciu, Radu Gheorghiţa, and Emil Bartoş. (Oradea: Editura Reformatio, 2005), 195-208.

[97] *PEPS*, 136-138; Fiddes, "Christianity, Atonement," 223-225; cf. John Macquarrie, *The Principles of Christian Theology* rev ed. (London: SCM, 1977), 324-327.

[98] Perhaps without realising it, Fiddes has closely aligned to the classic anabaptist Christus Victor model which is not only 'conflictive' but also 'transformative.' Thomas N. Finger, *A Contemporary Anabaptist Theology: Biblical, Historical, Constructive* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 341-343.

[99] *PEPS*, 138-139; Fiddes, "Christianity, Atonement," 225-226.

[100] *FAL*, 103-110.

[101] *PEPS*, 139.

Entering into the victory of Christ also releases a number of other positive consequences that aid the believer in their salvific progressive transformation into a more perfect image of God.[102] First, since Christ wrought victory *through* death on the cross this means that the embracing of human weakness, instead of strength, will let the power and victory of Christ work through ineptitude (2 Cor 12:8-10).[103] Also, those who believe become justified, not due to some transfer of penalty but rather because Christ demonstrates solidarity, identification and participation in the human experience of being under God's judgement. In turn, this participation causes God to absorb and overcome sin which brings destruction not only to sin but also principalities and powers, demonic structures, etc.[104] Thirdly, and most crucially, the journey of creative transformation needs to run through the conduit of forgiveness. Forgiveness – understood as an emotional and vulnerable winning back into relationship – is at the heart of Christian salvation and, contentiously claims Fiddes, needs a suffering God so that evil can be overcome and evildoers transformed.[105] Ultimately, this is best achieved within a corporate community of forgiveness.[106]

To supplement and embellish his case of a subjective stress on *Christus Victor* atonement theology, Fiddes uniquely cites works of literature with this theme.[107] To illustrate, in Blake's literary interface with theology Fiddes extrapolates Blake's lucid and perceptive conclusion that the God of Milton's *Paradise Lost* is actually 'Satan' and that the only way to deal with the satanic spectre of selfhood which results from tensions, imbalance, shame and

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[102] This language and insight we get from the Eastern tradition. Fiddes, "Salvation," 176-177.
[103] *PEPS*, 125-129.
[104] Fiddes, "Salvation," 186-189; Fiddes, "Atonement in," 199-202.
[105] Fiddes, "Salvation," 189-192.
[106] Fiddes, "Atonement in," 196-199.
[107] Fiddes, "The Passion," 745-747.

jealousy in human life caused by human disintegration is in fact an Abelardian atonement theology that decimates demonic idols, especially the idol of the self through the transformative cruciform love of God.[108]

In totality, Fiddes is delineating a holistic atonement theology that not only addresses the problem and reality of evil but also offers a promised end of hope and final destruction of evil. Poetically, he dares to say that 'eternally there is a cross in the heart of God' and this is because 'only suffering love has the power to persuade reluctant human wills towards to good and so overcome evil.'[109] Because suffering love is through the death of Christ on the cross, it has a tragic quality to it and, claims Fiddes, is without consolation. However, like consolation that follows tragedy, the resurrection brings a consolation that transcends since it is of a completely different order and therefore actually changes the ontological reality of things.[110]

3.5 The Problem of Evil (Theodicy)

No construction of a theological understanding of evil is complete without considering the question of theodicy; the vindication of God and his providence in view of apparent malevolent evil. Fiddes is acutely aware of the need of a theological construct which tries to exonerate God while responding to the evidential problem of evil that seems to undermine the existence of a benevolent and omnipotent deity, but does aver that it should be accepted that there is no one-hundred percent satisfactory theodicy.[111]

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[108] *FAL*, 107-109.
[109] Fiddes, "Is this the Promised End?"
[110] Fiddes, "Tragedy," 183-187; Fiddes, "Question."
[111] Fiddes, "Christianity, Atonement," 229.

That said, this should not preclude attempts made to construct a theological schema that best answers the theodicy question. Fiddes strongly argues that it is vital to reject all anachronisms and formulate appropriately for the current cultural context. This means that we can and should recognise stalwart historic attempts to make and remake a theoretical theodicy by the likes of Leibniz, et al,[112] but also acknowledge that the current post-Auschwitz milieu means there is little, if any, room for theoretical approaches to theodicy. Instead a new kind of theodicy is needed, one that recognises resignation and active suffering and is commodious enough for God to be present and empathetic alongside victims. Indeed, states Fiddes, only divine suffering makes sense of any freewill account of the existence of evil and this can be defended by the Old Testament portrait of Yahweh, as well as a theology of Christ's death which allows for a rupturing to take place within the Trinity.[113]

'In this cultural context theology has taken a predominately practical approach which is characterized both by protest against suffering in the light of future hope, and by assurance of God's presence in suffering.'[114] God does not lose all culpability by making a freewill-possible world. In fact, Fiddes believes that freewill is given to the entire creation and so the evil that takes place due to the exercised freewill of creatures means that it is something that befalls God. Therefore the only plausible justification for God initially making this type of creation is that he participates and suffers in solidarity and empathy with it.[115]

[112] Fiddes, "Suffering in Theology," 170-174.
[113] Fiddes, "Suffering in Theology," 186-187.
[114] Fiddes, "Suffering in Theology," 188.
[115] Fiddes, "Something will come," 99-100; Fiddes, "Christianity, Atonement," 217-218. Fiddes offers this argument in response to Hick's claim about evil's place in the divine aim. Fiddes contends that Hick's argument still does not offer a satisfactory answer to Dostoevsky's Ivan Karamazov's moral question about whether or not the universe, as it is, is worth the tears of one tortured child.

Fiddes' conviction regarding theodicy is buttressed by his understanding of the book of Job. Even though this sacred text does not solve the question of theodicy, it certainly confirms that God never deserts us when suffering in pain.[116] Much of his understanding of Job, especially chapters 38-42, emerges from his interaction with literature on tragedy, philosophy and theology. Following Levinas, Fiddes agrees that Job is really only concerned with the problem of his own suffering and devotes no time addressing transcendent and ubiquitous evil marked by sheer excessiveness.[117] This, it seems, strongly identifies with liberation theology's understanding of theodicy that responds to the fathomless mysteries of creation by focussing instead on the particularity of a tragic situation without expecting God to change the cosmic and structural diabolic causative factors.[118] However, converging energy and protest on the immanent situation does not mitigate against Williams' proposal, that we should imitate Job and rage against suffering instead of adopting a *laissez-faire* posture towards it.[119]

A practical theodicy answer goes some way towards understanding the problem of evil. Fiddes proposes that there are further theological adaptations to be made, especially in the doctrine of God, in order to gain greater understanding of and answer to the theodicy question. Building on Wright's work in which he distinguishes between evil and the 'shadow-side' of creation, Fiddes proposes that behind the shadow lies genuine destructive and pointless evil which permeates the entire creation and has origins in the exercising of total freedom by the whole of creation. The consequence is creation falling away from divine purpose and the ultimate good, resulting in 'red tooth and claw' evil. Fortunately, claims Fiddes, both scripture

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[116] *SWKG*, 73.
[117] *SWKG*, 66-73.
[118] *FAL*, 200-201.
[119] Fiddes, "Charles Williams," 74.

(Genesis 9:8, Psalm 19:1-4, Romans 8:19-22) and process theology describe the world as an organic community that can not only respond to God but also potentially enjoy him.[120] Consequently, imbibing the entire creation with freewill means that any evil resulting from creation's freedom is something that befalls God and for which he is *ultimately* responsible. Hence why God stands in solidarity with creation and also suffers all evil ramifications.[121]

Appealing to process theology insights catalyses more creative steps towards an understanding of why evil exists alongside God. First, states Fiddes, the 'God repented/relented' passages understood from a process perspective aid us to speak of evil as a possible occasion for good so long as we jettison some of the classic views of God's omniscience and irresistible grace in favour of a God who self-limits, changes, suffers and interacts in time with creation.[122] Indeed, as argued by Pannenberg, it is meaningless to talk about freewill and open choice of creation while maintaining the timelessness of God.[123]

Second, the process vision of God and the universe consisting of openness, possibility, potential, divine-creation response and vice versa, and cosmic cooperation, coheres more effectively to the Shakespearean portrayal of comedy that elicits a line of tension in the lives of his characters. Often they fall into disorientations because of their freedom and thereby need love and healing, which can only come by divine love immersing itself into the disorder, chaos and evil.[124]

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[120] Fiddes, "Something will come," 95-99.
[121] Fiddes, "Something will come," 99-100.
[122] Fiddes, "Charles Williams," 76-77.
[123] Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Basic Questions in Theology*, vol.3, trans. R. A. Wilson (London: SCM Press, 1973), 107-108.
[124] *FAL*, 66-75.

Third, the emphasis upon process and development of creation and creator can be applied to human persons *post-death* and this could aid in answering the theodicy question by maintaining that those whose lives were tragically and perhaps painfully cut short still have a chance to actualise their full potential beyond death.[125] Fiddes strongly believes that this belief will mitigate some of the moral objections contained within the theodicy question and also, by developing Lewis, help locate evil and suffering within God's perichoretic dance in which evil that disturbs and thwarts and is caused by creation's freewill is overcome and transformed within the movement of the divine dance. God has the power to incorporate change into the beautiful whole, and this includes transforming evil.[126]

In sum, Fiddes works hard to articulate good answers to the question of theodicy which involves steering a course somewhere mid-spectrum between the poles of evil as a fateful determinism that cannot be avoided, and a perfect answer to the theodicy question which could explain all evil.[127] There is a *necessity* to evil since everything is an occasion for love and joy, and this includes evil. This does not mean however that evil is a 'necessary' part of reality.[128] God and evil are not comparable realities even though both are uncreated. For only God is self-existent whereas evil is derived existence and strictly nothing, hence why tragic language of evil as *privatio boni* is important and negates any clear and concise definition of evil since it is intrinsically 'nothing.' Therefore, claims Fiddes, the most satisfactory answer to the theodicy question has to be laced with the rhetoric of tragedy and posits our engagement and

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[125] *TPE*, 133-135.
[126] Paul S. Fiddes, "'For the Dance all Things Were Made:' The Great Dance in C.S. Lewis' Perelandra," in *C. S. Lewis's Perelandra: Reshaping the Image of the Cosmos*, eds. Judith Wolfe and Brendan Wolfe. (Kent: Kent State University Press, 2013), 43-46.
[127] Fiddes, "Is this the Promised End?"
[128] Fiddes, "Charles Williams," 81-83.

participation in God, a God who through the cross contests, absorbs and overcomes evil.[129] In so

doing God reciprocates our participation by being divinely present in the midst of all human

suffering and pain.[130]

There is much to concur with in Fiddes' exploration for a most satisfactory answer to the

theodicy question. While more will be said in the following chapters, suffice it to state briefly

that it seems to me that though his case could be modified to generate more explanatory power,

there is a substantial flaw that undermines his argument. In terms of helpful modifications, as

Fiddes is seeking a most-conducive answer for today's post-Auschwitz situation, he would

benefit from greater interaction with science, especially chaos-theory and indeterminism, in

order to buttress his case for the apparent randomness and ambiguity of evil; natural evil

especially.[131] Secondly, his rejection of a theoretical answer to the theodicy question in favour

of a practical and experiential one may significantly reduce the intellectual robustness of his

answer, especially now that some philosophers of religion demarcate between intellectual-

logical approaches and emotive approaches to the problem of evil.[132]

Notwithstanding these improvements *vis-à-vis* Fiddes' answer to the theodicy question,

his firm rejection of an ontology of evil in favour of a *privatio boni* position, in my opinion,

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[129] Fiddes, "Tragedy," 189-192.

[130] Fiddes, "Is this the Promised End?"

[131] For example, Jason Colwell, "Chaos and Providence," *International Journal for Philosophy and Religion* 48 (2000): 131-138. After technical definitions, Colwell proceeds to effectively explain God's answering of Elijah's prayer to stop the rain for 3 years (1 Kings 17:1f, cf. James 5:17) from the perspective of chaos theory. This shows the complexity of creation thus helping to explain the ambiguous nature of much evil.

[132] In his articulation of the freewill defence to the theodicy question, Davis separates the problem of evil into a logical form and an emotional form. The latter form hinders a strong positive case to be made to *believe* in an omnipotent God who co-exists with evil. Stephen T. Davis, "Free Will and Evil," in *Encountering Evil: Live Options in Theodicy*, ed. Stephen T. Davis. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1981), 69-83.

significantly damages his attempted explanation of natural evil. As noted, his starting point is

the conviction that no completely satisfactory theodicy exists.[133] This certainly seems the case if

trying to causally explain the reasons behind natural evil from a *privatio boni* understanding.

For, as some scholars argue, it is far more plausible and consistent to understand all types of

evil - moral, human *and* natural - using a freewill defence argument which insists that all evil

finds its origins in the freewill decisions of moral and sentient agents, particularly non-human

ones.[134] As Augustine held, Satan (Lucifer) and his minions are the primary cause of natural

evil,[135] a belief that catalyses an option for the church to attempt to counter it through prayer in

the Spirit.

3.6 The Consequences of Evil: Death, Darkness and Development

Fiddes is a thorough-going post-Auschwitz theologian. His predilection for practical,

not theoretical, theodicy means taking very seriously the consequences of evil, both in this life

and in the one to come. He holds that evil is very real and objectively experienced by many

irrespective of whether or not one believes in an ontological evil power with personhood and

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[133] See above, pp. 38-39.

[134] Boyd, *Satan and the Problem*, 50-84; Greg Boyd and Paul R. Eddy, "Evil," in *Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics*, ed. Joel Green. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 288-289; David B. Hart, *The Doors of the Sea: Where was God in the Tsunami?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005); and Carl E. Braaten, "Powers in Conflict: Christ and the Devil," in *Sin, Death and the Devil*, eds. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 96-98.

[135] Plantinga insists that Augustine, rightly, locates natural evil in the free action of non-human spirits. Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 191-195; Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom and Evil* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1975), 57-59. Interestingly, the works of Augustine cited by Plantinga to support his claim make no mention of Satan. It seems that Plantinga takes Augustine's explanation of moral evil caused by human freewill and applies it to explicate how natural evil is caused by non-human freewill. For a robust development of this application see Robert Francis Allen, "St. Augustine's Free Will Theodicy and Natural Evil," *Ars Disputandi* 3:1 (2003): 84-90. Contrary to Plantinga, Hasker, while acknowledging that Plantinga does raise the bar to attempt 'to prove positively that the existence of God is consistent with that of [all] evil' by demonstrating logical consistency, concludes the attempt as monumentally implausible since science has already identified the causes of many natural destructive phenomena, such as the discipline of plate tectonics to explain earthquakes. Hasker, *The Triumph*, 63-65.

wilful volition.[136] That way all can agree that it is imperative to seek the best understanding of the consequences of evil in order to unearth possible antidotes and responses to its existence.

Fiddes discusses at length the greatest consequence of evil, *death*, especially in relation to its place in literature (biblical and otherwise) and subsequently the implications for Christian doctrine. The central common theme is its sheer ambiguity. He primarily notes that in scripture there is a complex delineation of death, one that is far removed from a simple attribution of 'death is the result of the fall and sin.' Fiddes notes that a detailed reading of the Old Testament reveals that death is described as a negative force before actual biological death, part of creation with a remit of boundary marking and then enemy to life after the fall, and not permanent in God's creative intent but rather provisional while necessary within an evolutionary framework.[137] Hence why, philosophically speaking, there is an ambivalence to death as it is a sliding scale from neutral non-being to annihilating nothingness that is totally hostile to love and life.[138]

In other literature, death overlaps with tragedy and both are explicitly declared as *waste.* Tragedies contain much waste, expense and regret and often result in death when tragic figures, especially in Shakespeare, fail to affirm positive values and vision once held. This causes much tragedy to be played out against the background of death where the word spoken lives within the grasp of death, a reality exemplified in the tragic story of Christ who fully participated in human loss by the self-giving of his life.[139] Yet, insists Fiddes, precisely because of the

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[136] See above, pp. 26-27.
[137] *PIG*, 230-235; *TPE*, 66-71.
[138] *PIG*, 235-236.
[139] *FAL*, 75-82; Fiddes, "Is this the Promised End?"

crucifixion, cry of dereliction, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the other side of Easter is the

only place from which we can see reconciliation and in which our ultimate hope lies.[140] Evil and

its consequence of death does not hold the final story and is not the end. In fact, death can be

our servant instead of enemy, seen as a good thing spoilt as it forces us to accept it and respond

in protest by facing our own immortality as well as affirm fundamental human values such as

love and forgiveness, the kind of which death cannot destroy.[141]

The ambivalence of death with respect to human experience of it, together with the

potential conquering and use of it on the resurrection side of Easter, creates the need for a re-

articulation of the place of death within the triune God, especially since humans and their

relationship with death participate within the Trinity. Drawing from Jüngel, Fiddes offers a

nuanced definition insisting that God experiences death and dying in the form of perishing and

relationlessness without *actual* death.[142] He arrives at this conclusion after rejecting Moltmann's

insistence that humans do not experience their own death, only the death of others, and the same

applies to the Father and Son.[143] Instead, Fiddes argues that there is good psychological

evidence that humans do experience their own impending death and so within a participatory

understanding of the panentheistic triune God this means that death is an experience known to

God in God's own life. Consequently, therefore, we can refer to God owning death, death

belonging to God, his own nothingness and his perishability. God is willing and able to

experience his own relationships in a new way in the face of death.[144]

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[140] *FAL*, 82; Fiddes, "Tragedy," 176.
[141] Fiddes, "Tragedy," 174-176; Fiddes, "Is this the Promised End?"
[142] *PIG*, 239-242, cf. Eberhard Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World*, trans. D. Guder (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1983), 199-219.
[143] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God* (London: SCM Press, 1974), 207, 217, 243ff.
[144] *PIG*, 236-244. Fiddes' entire argument about death in the triune God is a highly metaphorical attempt to answer the 'death of God' theologians and state that while God does indeed endure death, he is not dead.

A second, less guaranteed, consequence of evil in lived life and existence is *darkness*. Its reduced inevitability is grounded in the fact that it is a shaded experience extrapolated from the tension created in fallen existence between freedom and limit.[145] Fiddes' critique of literature draws attention to differing modalities of darkness all of which aid the theologian to approach the ambiguities of human life and presence of evil. From Golding, Fiddes identifies a continuum of darkness, from a basic darkness that arises out of the general anxiety of human life through to a darkness that merges with a deeper kind of dark; one permeated with evil. Some of Golding's characters quintessentially demonstrate movement along this spectrum by failing to trust each other, relapsing into the fallen tides of their nature, or bombastically over asserting their pride and neglect. Ironically, in trying to deal with the anxiety that is causing the darkness without turning to grace and its source, the characters are led into deeper, more sinister darkness.[146]

In his analysis of poetry and sonnets, Fiddes uses Hopkins' work to elucidate the need for negative and positive expressions of the sublime and beauty in order to fully and experientially participate in the life of the triune God.[147] In his poetry there are shifting boundaries between positive and negative sublime; between the beauty of the world and the imposing, destructive nature of creation. It is in the negative sublime that arises a sense of dread and horror in the face of vast and significant forces of power and destruction, which in turn creates a *darkness,* one present in the romantic sublime, and one in which, according to Hopkins, Christ is absent and no longer at the centre of the world or its universal forms that he

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[145] *FAL*, 207-208.
[146] *FAL*, 208-214.
[147] Paul S. Fiddes, "The Sublime and the Beautiful: Intersections Between Theology and Literature," in *Literature and Theology: New Interdisciplinary Spaces*, ed. Heather Walton. (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 148-149.

calls 'inscapes.' Fiddes concurs that the darkness is real but contends that God is never absent but hidden.[148]

Finally, and differently to much church tradition, Fiddes holds to a final and complete overcoming of all evil, which he describes as a 'hopeful universalism;' a Christian hope in which no one is left outside, alienated or rejected.[149] Instead of a 'dogmatic universalism' which Fiddes argues does not deal sufficiently with evil and wickedness, his account of hopeful universalism eradicates evil as it allows people to repent, grow and be sanctified after death and best explains scriptural texts that speak of God wanting 'all to be saved' (2 Peter 3:9; 1 Timothy 2:4).[150] Other advantages of this position include an eschatological end that makes room for an optimistic version of conditional immortality that offers the most hope in the face of death and the best theodicy answer since justice is found in post-death growth and development of those whose lives were prematurely cut short.[151]

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter had two aims to meet: to analyse and discuss Fiddes' theology of evil

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[148] Fiddes, "The Sublime," 142-148. According to Fiddes, the idea of 'inscapes' came to Hopkins primarily from his reading of scripture: Psalm 18 and 139 to be specific. Paul S. Fiddes, "G. M. Hopkins," in *The Blackwell Companion to the Bible in English Literature*, eds. R. Lemon and C. Rowland (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 572.

[149] Fiddes, "Question."

[150] I say 'his account of hopeful universalism' because in drawing from Hebblethwaite, Whitehead and Hartshorne, Fiddes' hopeful universalist version comes with the opportunity for people to repent or not, according to their freewill decision. The inclusion of freewill sets Fiddes at odds with more standard accounts. *TPE*, 190-196; Fiddes, "Tragedy," 188-189, cf. Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *Dare We Hope That All Men Be Saved? With a Short Discourse on Hell,* 2nd ed., trans David Kipp and Lothar Krauth. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2014); Paul Dafydd Jones, "A Hopeful Universalism," *The Christian Century* 129 (2012): 22-27. For a recent defence of dogmatic universalism, see David Bentley Hart, *That All Shall Be Saved: Heaven, Hell & Universal Salvation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019).

[151] *TPE*, 49-52, 133-135.

deciphered from his corpus on literature and theology and the doctrine of God, and to formulate a doctrine of evil that will be used in the following chapters as I seek to locate a theology of SW into a doctrine of God in a theologically coherent way. As demonstrated, Fiddes delineates a portrait of evil which does not fully answer the theodicy question and is not a closed, systematic theology of evil with no room for further deliberations and additions. Just like his doctrine of God, there is openness and a malleable quality to his understanding of evil that can be shaped and adapted.

It has been shown what impact Fiddes' theology of evil has upon different areas of his work. The analyses and discussion on Abelardian atonement theology of transformation and its effect on evil, together with the consequences of evil seen especially in tragic literature, will serve more effectively as foundational concepts on which to build a theology of omnipotence and theology of omnipresence in chapters five and six than use for a particular facet of a theology of evil. Hence the lack of critical engagement in those two sections.

From interlocution of the other three sections in this chapter, i.e. the ontology of evil, evil's personifications, and the problem of evil, it is possible to formulate a fundamental rubric concerning evil that will be used and applied in the forthcoming critical analyses, discussion and delineation of a doctrine of God capable and coherent enough to contain a theology of SW. Concluding from the above, it seems clear that there is no overarching imperative to follow Fiddes' binary thinking and jettison the biblical and experiential witness of ontologically-grounded evil - whether in satanic, demonic, power and principality or triumvirate form - in order to maintain his panentheistic vision of God or avoid rendering 'the Satan' personhood and

full salvific potential that accompanies it.

Following Fiddes' insistence to formulate a practical theodicy that is coherent in the present milieu, I insist that any theology of evil needs, potentially, to hold explanatory power of both the biblical and traditional picture of ontologically-grounded evil, as well as humanity's experience of situational, moral and natural evil, especially that of a dysteleological kind. Evil, in whatever form, is quasi-personal with intelligence, volition, freewill and awareness.[152] It is also, following Augustine, 'hell-bent' on driving humanity towards nothingness and *me on* non-being through continual action of its remit to kill, steal, devour and destroy (John 10:10; 1 Peter 5:8). While ambiguity remains concerning the origin of evil and its personifications, this is not the case regarding its reality in people's lives and the world-at-large.

A heavily nuanced doctrine of evil: one which maintains the ontological over-and-againstness of evil; does not deny its malevolent work towards a destination of non-being; gives space for the potential exercising of diabolical freewill planning and strategy; and recognises its operative but limited power in light of the cross, has, I believe, significantly more congruence apposed with the doctrine of God held by Fiddes than his definition of evil as primarily *privatio boni.* Therefore, in the following chapters I will critically engage with Fiddes' doctrine of God in order to shape and articulate a doctrine of God which can best make sense of God's nature and character in the midst of evil as defined in this chapter. First, let us address God's omniscient knowledge.

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[152] As Noble, following Green and Wright, suggests, Satan can be viewed as a sub-person, an anti-person of sorts, who possesses a malevolent intelligence that wills, acts and knows but it totally without any personal feeling or sympathy. Instead he is obsessed with self-aggrandisement and feeds parasitically on human wickedness. Noble, "The Spirit World," 217-218.

Chapter Four

KNOWLEDGE - GOD'S OMNISCIENCE IN A CONTEXT OF SPIRITUAL

WARFARE

4.1 Introduction

> Then, you've asked the question, does God know what is going to happen in the future and I would say, no, God *does not know* that *in detail*. Now, this is because God wants the world to be free, to make its own decisions, to do new things in cooperation with God, and if God knew the future in detail it would be closed and determined. . . I think *foreknowledge and predetermination belong together*. . . I don't think that we can simply distinguish foreknowledge from predetermination. The one does mean the other. (emphasis mine).[1]

The unwillingness of Fiddes to advocate exhaustive divine foreknowledge ('EDF' hereafter) is determined collectively by his participation in the triune God vision and a theological understanding of a suffering God who participates in time, interacts with creation, and constantly moves from states of potentiality to actuality. Therefore, his denial of EDF leads to an understanding of divine omniscience which contends God's knowledge to be perfect concerning possibility *and* actuality but not possibility *as* actuality.[2]

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[1] "Is God All-Knowing?" Paul S. Fiddes, accessed March 15, 2022, (https://www.closertotruth.com/series/god-all-knowing#video-2222). Repeated in "Is the Future Open?" Paul S. Fiddes, accessed May 15, 2022, (https://www.closertotruth.com/series/the-future-open#video-2222), cf. *TPE*, 128.

[2] Paul S. Fiddes, Brian Haymes and Richard Kidd, *Baptists and the Communion of Saints: A Theology of Covenanted Disciples* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2014), 140. Fiddes' Oxford colleague Bradshaw comments that the seminal open theist text, *The Openness of God*, would have been enhanced if it had included a chapter by Fiddes without any real evangelical-theological incongruence. Timothy Bradshaw, review of *The Openness of God: a biblical challenge to the traditional understanding of God*, by Clark H. Pinnock, Richard Rice, John Sanders, William Hasker, and David Basinger, *Themelios* 21.3 (1996): 29.

The use of Fiddes for a discussion on divine omniscience is very appropriate. Trying to understand what God knows in the midst of spiritual conflict is a subject matter relevant to a number of theological disciplines and in Fiddes there is an eclecticism which merits inclusion in the conversation. Academically, Fiddes approaches God's omniscience as a theologian, not philosopher. Yet his contributions to the debate are not typical of most theologians. Similarly to his position of holding an Augustinian position in matters concerning the nature of evil but non-Augustinian when relating that to the doctrine of God, it will be shown that unlike the typical theologian who seeks to defend and protect God's sovereignty and usually holds to a form of theological determinism, Fiddes atypically aligns more closely to philosophers by holding a robust conception of libertarian free will and vigorously defending it.[3]

Overall, Fiddes' commitment to the free will of all creation shapes and undergirds his doctrine of God which offers an attempt at a more nuanced understanding of God's omniscience which may be more congruent to a theology of SW than other historical-traditional doctrines of God.[4] This is especially the case as we consider the eschatological context of the phenomenon of SW. Eschatological visions of the future often result in either over or under realised understandings of the present. Biblical theology has consistently adopted a 'both-and' position by articulating a semi-realized eschatological reality. The current age of tension imbibed with an 'already-not yet' nature is rooted in the biblical development of the kingdom of God, best

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[3] "If God knows the future, what is free will?" David P. Hunt #1, accessed March 15, 2022, (https://www.closertotruth.com/series/if-god-knows-the-future-what-free-will#video-2443).

[4] See chapter 2 above.

articulated by Christ's statement 'the kingdom of God has come near,'[5] and demonstrated by his example as a first century Palestinian exorcist who, when encountering the existence of malevolent and dysteleological evil, brought spiritual emancipation and deliverance via exercising the truth and power of the kingdom of God.[6]

Therefore, while resting on a guaranteed final full consummation of the kingdom of God,[7] we presently inhabit this continuing realized age of tension which can manifest itself, experientially and phenomenologically, as semi-dualistic in spiritual conflict terms. This is the reason why the didactic material about armour and warfare stated in Ephesians 6:10-20 with regard to our πάλη against authorities,[8] cosmic powers of darkness, and spiritual forces of evil is an important consideration from the Pauline corpus to use analogously. If we logically extrapolate the warfare analogy and its underlying truth value by conflating the idea of 'struggle' or 'wrestle' against powers, authorities and principalities *with* the scriptural witness, tradition of the early church,[9] and many claimed accounts of possession and exorcism,[10] then we can conclude that the current existence of evil operates within a metaphysical 'now and not-yet' reality marked by contingency, openness, ambiguity, non-determinism, and significant say-so in this current age of ongoing SW and conflict.

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[5] Mark 1:15. For substantial discussion and conclusion about the meaning of the tensioned verbs, ἤγγικεν and ἔφθασεν, see G.E. Ladd, *The Presence of the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974).

[6] Twelftree, *Christ Triumphant*, 20-86.

[7] The last chapters of Revelation reveal that all dualism is removed. Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 106-108.

[8] Fighting, battling, struggling or wrestling.

[9] Daunton-Fear, *Healing in the Early Church*.

[10] Bennett, *I Am Not Afraid*, 1-96.

This therefore leaves much potential for casting a new theological vision of divine omniscience within a SW reality by using Fiddes' contemporary theology as the key primary source. In the rest of this chapter I will delineate and analyse Fiddes' understanding of divine omniscience, focussing primarily on divine passibility and mutability, God's relationship to time and eternity, implications for divine and human freedom, and the universal hope of the eschaton and its content. From this there will be a brief proposal of some central features of God's omniscience which can bring greater clarity to a theology of SW.

4.2 The Passibility and Mutability of God: Our Fellow Sufferer Who Understands

Despite having written only a small amount specifically about divine omniscience,[11] Fiddes' continual grounding of his corpus of work in the doctrine of God means that he returns to God's knowledge with frequency.[12] While denying EDF, he adamantly states with clear succinctness that God knows everything that has happened in the past and everything that is currently happening; this is a very important part of the notion of God's omniscience.[13] At this early juncture, however, we encounter the first problem with Fiddes' 'presentism.' The overlap and synthesis of human future choice and the future of the world means that God has *no* foreknowledge at all, neither the future contingent agency of free moral beings or his own response. Is it not impossible, philosophically, to know the future in outline but not in detail?[14] Second, to defend presentism hermeneutically results in tying oneself in theological knots. While

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[11] *CSG*, 77-109.
[12] To illustrate, Fiddes, "Relational Trinity," 178-182; Fiddes, "Charles Williams," 73-77; *SWKG*, 373-396.
[13] "Is God; Is the Future."
[14] "Either God foresees all the future or none of it." Robert E. Picirilli, "An Arminian Response to John Sanders's *The God Who Risks: A Theology of Providence,*" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 44.3 (2001): 479.

accepting that all language about God is to a greater or lesser extent metaphorical, rejecting the traditional hermeneutical concepts of anthropomorphism and anthropopathism, as Fiddes does in his studies of Hosea and Jeremiah,[15] consequentially presents challenges accepting God's exhaustive knowledge of both the past and the present, as well as the future.[16]

That said, as stated above, Fiddes advocates the doctrine of a passible God of suffering love which includes a presentist understanding of divine omniscience because it answers a number of theological challenges.[17] It also has important implications for Christian living, church history (especially within one's own denomination), and the relationship between scripture and theology.[18] On this latter point Fiddes claims innumerable positive theological benefits including a tenable account of God involved with humans in their suffering;[19] a foundational tenet for any theology of trust;[20] equipping us to elicit more in-depth understanding and appreciation of tragic literature that contains theological themes such as the writings of Blake and Hopkins;[21]

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[15] Since modern psychology teaches that to love involves suffering with, empathy for, and vulnerability with, the sufferer, God's covenant *hesed* involves suffering with Israel. *CSG*, 16-25; Fiddes, "The Cross," 176-178.

[16] For example, if God had no future knowledge of how Abraham would respond to his test (Gen 22:12), then it seems difficult to escape the conclusions that God did not know the present situation in Sodom (Gen 18:20-21), forgets the past like the sins of his people (Isa 43:25), what the rainbow is for (Gen 9:15-16), or delightfully smells the sacrifice of Noah which delights his 'heart.' Bruce A. Ware, *God's Lesser Glory: A Critique of Open Theism* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2001), 76-77; Tony Gray and Christopher Sinkinson (eds.), *Reconstructing Theology: A Critical Assessment of the Theology of Clark Pinnock* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2000), x.

[17] See above, pp. 16-22, 34-51; cf. *PEPS*, 207-220; *PIG*, 62-112.

[18] Prayers are petitions in time *in God* who lives in relationship without a hint of coercion or unilateral action, only persuasion. Paul S. Fiddes, "Introduction: A Theology of Public Prayer," in *Prayers of the People*, eds. Karen E. Smith and Simon P. Woodman. (Oxford: Regents's Park College, 2011), 1-16; *PIG*, 115-151. In literature, there is the offer of possible future worlds, a hope that expects the unexpected. *FAL*, 1-46; *TPE*, 110-180; Paul S. Fiddes, "*The Promised End*: Response to a Review by Jennifer L. Geddes," *Conversations in Religion and Theology* 2.2 (2004): 191–5. Baptist Daniel Turner debated 'socinian' general baptists Foster and Bulkley when promoting universal revelation over natural theology. Paul S. Fiddes, "Daniel Turner and a Theology of the Church Universal," in *Pulpit and People: Studies in Eighteenth Century Baptist Life and Thought*, ed. John H. Y. Briggs. (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2009), 125-127.

[19] *SWKG*, 60-83.

[20] Paul S. Fiddes, Brian Haymes, Richard Kidd and Michael Quicke, *On the Way of Trust* (Oxford: Whitley Publications, 1997), 11-35.

[21] *FAL*, 85-145.

transformation of humanity towards God himself;[22] a more robust account of God's involvement in believers' baptism;[23] and a significantly stronger foundational platform from which to develop sermons on forgiveness using a definition of forgiveness as a divine journey of anguish, and targeted movements towards some examples of restorative justice.[24]

While it is beyond doubt that Fiddes has considered and articulated a multifarious defence and advocacy of divine passibility with limited foreknowledge, it is necessary for the purpose of this study to examine the centre of this vision in order to establish whether or not they help construct an understanding of omniscience befitting a doctrine of God which is congruent with a SW reality. Therefore, let us consider the historical influences of baptist and process theology and if divine passibility infers mutability and vice versa.

Fiddes is a baptist theologian and he recognises there is a live history of baptist scholarship on suffering, both divine and human, which has had an impact on his theology.[25]

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[22] Fiddes, "The Passion," 755-758.

[23] Paul S. Fiddes (ed.), *Believing and Being Baptized*: *Baptism, so-called re-baptism, and children in the church.* The Faith and Unity Executive Committee. Doctrine and Worship Committee (London: Baptist Union, 1996), 17-20, 44-45.

[24] Paul S. Fiddes, "Preaching Forgiveness," *Preaching Today* 36/1 (1993): 11-15; Paul S. Fiddes, "Memory, Forgetting and the Problem of Forgiveness: Reflecting on Volf, Derrida and Ricoeur," in *Forgiving and Forgetting. At the Margins of Soteriology*. Series: *Religion in Philosophy and Theology*, eds. Johannes Zacchuber and Hartmut Von Sass. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 130-133; Paul S. Fiddes, "Restorative Justice and the Theological Dynamic of Forgiveness," *Oxford Journal of Law and Religion* (2015): 5-8.

[25] Fiddes concurs with Mason who highlights the baptist emphases on direct *experience* of God and standing up to powers in dissent has lead to the idea of the possibility of God. Paul S. Fiddes, "Towards a New Millennium: Doctrinal Themes of Strategic Significance for Baptists," in *Baptist Faith and Witness Book 2: The Papers of the Study and Research Division of the Baptist World Alliance, 1995–2000*, ed. L. A. Cupit. (Baptist World Alliance, 1999), 22, fn.5. Paul S. Fiddes, "Prophecy, Corporate Personality, and Suffering: Some Themes and Methods in Baptist Old Testament Scholarship," in *The "Plainly Revealed" Word of God? Baptist Hermeneutics in Theory and Practice*, eds. Helen Dare and Simon Woodman. (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2011), 90. cf. H. Wheeler Robinson, *Redemption and Revelation: in the Actuality of History* (London: Nisbet & Co., 1942), 150, fn.1. Fiddes, "Prophecy, Corporate Personality," 94. Rex Mason, "Response to Paul Fiddes," in *The "Plainly Revealed" Word of God? Baptist Hermeneutics in Theory and Practice*, eds. Helen Dare and Simon Woodman. (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2011), 95-98.

That, together with his increasing openness to 'experience' as a source for theology has resulted

in Fiddes propounding divine suffering in order to find a satisfactory theodicy in the face of

much contemporary human suffering.[26] Divine passibility offers a helpful explanation for the

three primary forms of the phenomenon of suffering: theoretical, practical and aesthetic.[27]

Divine passibility is, according to Fiddes, the most satisfying way to present the biblical

God who works out his purposes and plans in a world that is a living organism and constantly in

a state of flux.[28] If, as he maintains, the world should be conceived as a social, interconnected

organism with an intrinsic reality that is always becoming and changing through actual

occasions, then we need a doctrine of God that articulates power as persuasion, knowledge as

actual *and* potential, and mutability as a result of God being affected by the world.[29] For this

Fiddes leans heavily on process theology.[30] However, as previously noted,[31] attentive listening to

Fiddes reveals that he does not accept it as a water-tight theological system and is critical of a

number of its key tenets, especially its trinitarian deficiencies,[32] and the highly controversial

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[26] See above, pp. 23-28.

[27] This is primarily because we see the call on the prophet to enter into the divine pathos and into a redeeming transformation of the situation of suffering by entering into the divine forgiveness and thereby being able to start to forgive the perpetrator of the suffering. Fiddes, "The Cross," 176-178, 186-188; Fiddes, "Suffering in Theology," 169-170.

[28] Fiddes, "Suffering, Divine," 634.

[29] Fiddes, "Process," 472-475.

[30] There are, of course, different process theologies. Ronald Nash, "Introduction," in *Process Theology*, ed. Ronald Nash. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987), ix-xii; Thomas Jay Oord, *The Uncontrolling Love of God: An Open and Relational Account of Providence* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic Press, 2015), 119-120.

[31] See above, pp. 19-21, 46-47.

[32] Attempts by theologians to re-formulate process theology in trinitarian terms include Gregory A. Boyd, "The Self-Sufficient Sociality of God: A Trinitarian Revision of Hartshorne's Metaphysics," 73-94; and Joseph A. Bracken, "Panentheism from a Process Perspective," 95-113, both in *Trinity in Process: A Relational Theology of God*, eds. Joseph A. Bracken and Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki. (New York: Continuum, 1997). Of Bracken's earlier work, Fiddes claims that he fails to successfully position process theology within the Trinity because he objectifies the Father, Son and Spirit and ends up with tritheism. Paul S. Fiddes, "The Trinity in Process Thought," (Unpublished Paper, 1987), 2-5. cf. Joseph Bracken, *The Triune Symbol: Persons, Process and Community* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1985).

insistence that divine limitation is due to the supreme value and superiority of creation and creativity, not God's freedom and desire.[33]

This reliance on a nuanced version of process theology by Fiddes, which views divine love as suffering and defines creation as consisting of a significant element of co-operation between God and finite beings,[34] causes him to postulate divine change as an integral part of divine passibility. This has to be the case if the reality of divine suffering is taken seriously and God is viewed as existing in an ontological state that includes, as suggested by the Hebrew prophets, waiting, interacting in time, and moving forward into future states of reality in a way different to that of created beings.[35]

Overall this raises the question whether or not Fiddes needs to embrace a particular version of process theology that results in locating divine mutability into divine suffering in order to continue the recent baptist writings on divine passibility? To start, despite claims that process theology is bringing a counter-balancing alternative to the heavily-platonised traditional doctrine of God,[36] ironically the same accusation could be made towards process theology.[37] Not only is this a recapitulation of the ancient debate between different Greek schools of thought that

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[33] See above, p. 22. Fiddes also recognises process theology's limitation for baptist ecclesiology and mission. Paul S. Fiddes, "Baptism and Membership of the Body of Christ: A Theological and Ecumenical Conundrum," in *Gemeinschaft der Kirchen und gesellschaftliche Verantwortung: die Würde des Anderen und das Recht anders zu denken; Festschrift für Professor Dr. Erich Geldbach,* eds. Lena Lybæk et al. (Oekumenische Studien 30: LIT Verlag Berlin-Hamburg-Münster, 2004), 87-90.

[34] Paul S. Fiddes, "Process Theology," in *Microsoft Encarta Electronic Encyclopedia* (Microsoft/Websters, 1996).

[35] *CSG*, 77-78.

[36] See above, pp. 21-22.

[37] It could be questioned whether Fiddes gives classical theism found in Augustine, Calvin, and Luther any substantial consideration. They certainly do not regularly appear in *CSG*, Fiddes' key work on divine passibility.

emphasised either 'being' (Parmenides and Plato) or 'becoming' (Heraclitus and Protagoras),[38] but it is also apparent that Fiddes' application of process thought attempts to integrate theology with today's dominant western philosophical worldview. Since science and chaos-theory has established that the world is complex with an open future consisting of randomness and many possibilities, Fiddes argues that God should be defined as necessarily complex who in *perfect incompleteness* moves with perichoretic delight abounding with freedom, persuasion, love and cooperation.[39] However, despite accepting that evolutionary theory is an established fact which demonstrates that every strata of creation, grows, changes and is ever-becoming,[40] Fiddes' insistence that divine limitation be based upon God's freedom and desire, not ontological superiority of creation, rules out using evolutionary terms to define God as active and involved in the process of evolution, not transcendent over creation.[41]

Related, we also should consider if it is possible for divine suffering to take place without divine change. It seems that Fiddes has not seriously engaged with the key theologians of western church tradition and so some interlocution with current theologians of the tradition is merited. To begin, as noted above,[42] Weinandy strongly maintains that the impassible God of scripture and tradition is more loving and compassionate than a God who suffers via change.[43]

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[38] Charles Hartshorne and William L Reese (eds.), *Philosophers Speak of God* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 2; Royce Gordon Gruenler, *The Inexhaustible God: Biblical Faith and the Challenge of Process Theism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983), 7-8.

[39] *CSG*, 91-98; *SWKG*, 130-166.

[40] Linell E. Cady, "Extending the boundaries of theology: The writings of John B Cobb, Jr," *Religious Studies Review* 19.1 (1993): 15-17.

[41] Some process thinkers use evolutionary theory to develop a diverse nature of Christianity by actualising its infinite potential, creativity and divinity thereby becoming a potential model of multi-religious understanding and harmony. See Ronald Faber, "Introduction to Process Theology," in *Models of God and Alternative Ultimate Realities*, eds. Jeanine Diller and Asa Kasher. (Netherlands: Springer Publishers, 2013), 318-321.

[42] See above, pp. 16-17, 21, 53.

[43] Thomas G. Weinandy, *Does God Change? The Word's Becoming in the Incarnation* (Still River: St Bede's Publications, 1985); Weinandy, *Does God Suffer*.

After accurately summarising the pathos of God movement (which includes Fiddes),[44] Weinandy

directly criticises Fiddes on the need for a creator-creature distinction and argues that holding to

a panentheistic understanding of God while maintaining that God is the creator is incoherent, as

the creator God is wholly other to the created order. It is metaphysically impossible for him to be

ontologically part of the created order while simultaneously its creator.[45]

One wonders, however, whether just like Fiddes, Weinandy lets his philosophical

commitments from tradition belie his theology. For it appears that his acceptance of Aquinas'

apatheia and *actus purus* cause him to unsatisfactorily explain scripture's portrayal of a God

who on a *prima facie* reading, appears to be both immutable (Numbers 23:19, Malachi 3:6;

James 1:17) and mutable (Genesis 6:6-7; 1 Samuel 15: 11, 35; Jonah 3:10; Amos 7:3).[46] His

commitment to divine simplicity rules out a dialectically synthesised understanding - say divine

moral immutability and relational mutability - and so he concludes that all change is predicated

upon the change in the humans involved, despite the clear statements that God, as subject,

changed, relented, grieved.[47] Moreover, he philosophically critiques Fiddes' panentheism

without exegesis of verses used to supporting panentheism, e.g. Acts 17:28 or Colossians 1:16-

17.[48]

Another interlocutor defending the tradition is Frances Young. As a patristic scholar she

critiques Fiddes' divine passibility of suffering love on two fronts: first, since the Fathers

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[44] Weinandy, *Does God Suffer*, 1-26; Weinandy, "Does God," 35.
[45] Weinandy, *Does God Suffer*, 153-157.
[46] Weinandy, *Does God Change*, 74-82.
[47] Weinandy, "Does God," 37-38.
[48] See above, p. 29.

consistently held the Chalcedonian paradox of Christ as one who suffered without suffering, they would have resisted Fiddes' use of personal language analogously for God's being as too anthropomorphic, and also reacted to any suggestion of change in the divine being.[49] Second, and more compelling, as a mother to a severely handicapped son she strongly argues that emotions and feelings cannot be trusted and humans are ambivalent in their evaluation of those emotions. Young rightly states that since human experience of tragedy clearly calls for both times of empathetic suffering with the victim and occasions for the helper to be beyond self-involvement and suffering, the same should be predicated of God.[50] This interesting interchange certainly opens the way for an analysis and exploration into divine omnipotence and whether the use of human power can be analogously used to speak of God. This will be explored further in the next chapter.

The final idea to briefly consider is von Balthasar's thesis that God does not need to change in order to suffer. Fiddes lists the thesis as part of the historical development of divine passibility and an important influence on the debate.[51] Following his critique of Moltmann's capitulation to Whiteheadean metaphysics, von Balthasar convincingly argues that we cannot accept any form of world process that is identified with the eternal and timeless hypostases in God. Rather, all discussion of God's triune life (including suffering) must start from a theology of the cross, rooted in the mystery of the absolute, which will open up the possibility of suffering

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[49] Frances Young, "*Apathos Epathen*: Patristic Reflection on God, Suffering and the Cross," in *Within the Love of God: Essays on the Doctrine of God in Honour of Paul S. Fiddes*, eds. Anthony Clarke and Andrew Moore. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 79-94.

[50] Frances Young, *Face to Face: A Narrative Essay in the Theology of Suffering* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990), 237-239. Fiddes acknowledges that this is a very strong challenge to the concept of a suffering God but responds by arguing that divine empathetic suffering does not overwhelm God in the way that it may a human being. *PIG*, 179-184.

[51] Fiddes, "Suffering, Divine," 634.

experience being considered with implications that are trinitarian and Christological, and ultimately grounded in God.[52] In other words, there is potential for divine suffering *within* God himself and it consists of the reckless giving away of the Father by himself, and the divine recklessness of the Son, in the power of the Spirit, in allowing himself to be crushed.[53]

4.3 In God Time is Healed and Creation is Free

Fiddes' panentheistic vision of participating in God is the overarching framework of his doctrine of God.[54] Therefore, the idea that all reality is *in* God has interesting ramifications in how to think about the concept of time and the nature of freedom. Fiddes, like all astute theologians, is very aware of this and seeks to offer a particular understanding of time that remains effective and coherent when articulating creaturely libertarian freedom without undermining his panentheistic model or arriving at some version of causal predetermination *and* foreknowledge, which he sees belonging together. So to continue to formulate a definition of omniscience that makes sense of SW reality, critical engagement with Fiddes' position on the nature of time and eternity, together with the implications this has for EDF and divine and human freedom, is needed.

Fiddes primarily looks to literature as it raises a number of doctrine of God matters such as divine relations to time and eternity.[55] Literary endings are often left open with both certainty and possibilities, which mirror God's knowledge of the future; *he knows what can be known.*

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[52] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory. Vol. IV - The Action,* trans. Graham Harrison. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994), 321-324.
[53] Balthasar, *Theo-Drama. Vol. IV*, 328.
[54] See above, pp. 28-34.
[55] See above, pp. 55, cf. Fiddes, "Concept," 17-22.

Eternity is not static but rather open and consists of a unity of space and time that implies immensity, eternity, growth and development as time is healed and fully integrated through God's participation in it via perichoresis and eternity's participation in the triune God.[56] Any idea of foreordination or predetermination is foreign to Fiddes' vision of God that consists of co-working with creation to bring about the future, which infers a logical denial of any kind of EDF.

In *The Promised End* Fiddes offers his most substantial discussion on God, time and eternity which he extrapolates from discussion of literary works by T.S Elliot and Virginia Woolf. Their works highlight the problems of time's fragmentation, isolation in time between inner and outer time, timelessness, and eternity as simultaneity.[57] He rejects Elliot's 'eternity as simultaneity' position claiming that it is very Augustinian and holding eternity to be timeless does not necessarily lead to the human broken self being healed by an interplay between timelessness and humanity, as claimed by Elliot.[58] Jettisoning other versions of the eternal moment, the absolute presentness of Moltmann,[59] and the eternal presentism of Boethius,[60] Fiddes calls for a return to the way eternity is seen in scripture and its presentation of the God of the ages living in unending durations. Not only will this accord well with the special relativity of Einstein and current views of time in modern physics, but it will also elicit new possibilities in thinking about participation in time, post-death growth and development in eternal duration, and posit the concept of timelessness as the healing of time, made possible by bringing 'love' into the

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[56] Fiddes, "Patterns of hope," 31-50; Fiddes, "Dystopia, Utopia," 11-21; Fiddes, "*The Promised*," 191-195; *SWKG*, 130-166, 299-323.
[57] *TPE*, 110-147.
[58] *TPE*, 123-124.
[59] That 'kairotic' moment that is fulfilling and our experience of the eternal moment itself. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God* (London: SCM Press, 1996), 289.
[60] That is, the past, present and future are one simultaneous point in the eternity in which God exists.

discussion.[61]

While Fiddes correctly understands that 'as modern relativity theory tells us, time is characterized by its relations - to space, velocity, to the observer - rather than being something absolute,'[62] it does seem that his concepts of the healing of time in God,[63] and the continual integration of time within God, which makes sense of the image of the 'journey,'[64] are difficult to ground in the experience of the observer. Crucially, what does the healing of time and the harmonising of time with the self actually mean and how are *humans* to speak of it?[65] There are ways, I believe, in which Fiddes' account of time's healing in God could be clarified and developed.

To begin, it appears that Fiddes has not correctly understood Barth's definition of God's eternity and his charge that Barth's use of Boethius' simultaneity is another form of timelessness is a misunderstanding of the nuanced approach of Barth.[66] Barth goes to great lengths to frame God's eternity as a perfection of his freedom and avoids defining divine eternity with either timelessness or everlastingness concepts.[67] God is lord of time and so his eternity is a positive description of what God *is* in his absolute freedom, and it is this divine freedom - something

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[61] *TPE*, 124-140.

[62] *TPE*, 140.

[63] Fiddes acknowledges taking this term from Barth but he disagrees that an understanding of the healing of time can be done with a Boethian formula of simultaneity. Instead, a healing of time retains a distinction between the phases of time. *TPE*, 138-139, cf. *CD* II/1, §31.3, 617-618.

[64] Paul S. Fiddes, "Spirituality as Attentiveness: Stillness and Journey," in *Under the Rule of Christ: Dimensions of Baptist Spirituality*. Regent's Study Guides 14, ed. Paul S. Fiddes. (Oxford: Regent's Park College with Macon: Smith & Helwys, 2008), 55-57.

[65] *TPE*, 139.

[66] *TPE*, 139.

[67] *CD* II/1, §31.3, 608-640; cf. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *Introduction to the Theology of Karl Barth* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1979), 80-81.

Fiddes completely acknowledges - which determines the need to differentiate eternity as God's time from fallen human experience of fallen time.[68] As stated, 'God's eternity is authentically temporal but it is *authentically* temporal: it is our experience of time that is *unauthentic.*'[69] Therefore, when it comes to the complex idea of time and eternity Fiddes' concept of the healing of time in God may be a perfect aspect of God's eternity rooted in his freedom but completely impotent when trying to articulate divine eternity from the creaturely experience of human temporality.

Second, as a theologian Fiddes could enhance his understanding of divine eternity by supplementing his discussion with recent scholarship by modern philosophers of religion. As is well known, theistic philosophers generally fall into one of two categories concerning the nature of time: some hold a tensed theory of time in which the past, present and future are objective realities and tensed language reflects that reality, while others, like many physicists, postulate a tenseless theory of time which holds that all moments and events in time are equally real and existent.[70] Fiddes, rooting his discussion in the eternal dance of the Trinity together with salient examples from poetry, claims that there is no theological model of time and space that proves either static or dynamic understanding of time and so theology needs to integrate its discussion

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[68] "God is the God whom God has determined to be." Fiddes, "Is God." Fiddes, "Is the Future."

[69] John Colwell, "The Contemporaneity of the Divine Decision: Reflections on Barth's Denial of Universalism," in *Universalism and the Doctrine of Hell*, ed. Nigel M. de S. Cameron. (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1992), 150. The temporality of God consists of the Trinity of pre-temporality, supra-temporality, and post-temporality. God shows himself as the one who precedes time, accompanies time and is there after time. Bromiley, *Introduction*, 81.

[70] For extensive discussion see William Lane Craig, *The Tensed Theory of Time: A Critical Examination* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2000); William Lane Craig, *The Tenseless Theory of Time: A Critical Examination* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2000); cf. J. M. E. McTaggart, *The Nature of Existence,* vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1927).

of time in the doctrine of God, in which our successive moments of time have their source in God's time.[71]

However, without any philosophical critique of the tenseless view of time, Fiddes' entire understanding of God's omniscience is predicated on a tensed theory of time. Indeed, he assumes a type-A understanding of time without any real examination and critique of the tenseless model because the former fits his doctrine of a suffering God. Only with a tensed view of time can 'the now' exist as a privileged temporal location independent of our experience, and in a way different from the past and the future. Moreover, only a tensed view can conclude that God, like humans, is temporal and has to change since he is present in the midst of changing reality. This accords well with Fiddes' view of a passible, mutable God who co-creates the future - a future that does not *actually* exist - by partnering with creation. Without specifically referring to tensed or tenseless understandings of time, Fiddes' account is grounded on a type-A tensed model of time since God in his continuing temporality has, despite its non-existence, exhaustive knowledge of *the past* together with unlimited understanding of the present.[72]

Also, while a clear proponent of God's partial knowledge of the future and divine temporal interaction with creation, Fiddes is less clear on the nature of time and the creation of the universe. When he proposes the healing of time in God does he, like Lane Craig, see God as timeless before creation and temporal since the creation of the universe?[73] This would logically

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[71] *TPE*, 181-218.

[72] "God knows everything that has happened and everything that is happening." Fiddes, "Is God."; Fiddes, "Is the Future."

[73] William Lane Craig, "Timelessness and Omnitemporality," in *God and Time: Four Views,* ed. Gregory E. Ganssle. (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 2001), 129-160; cf. William Lane Craig, *God, Time and Eternity* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001), 3-42, 134-139.

support creation *ex nihilo* and divine interaction with the universe, both attested by scripture and Fiddes.[74] Or does God transcend time since he is more fundamental than time itself and therefore 'the freedom of God from ontic determination is the ground of creation's goodness: precisely because creation is uncompelled, unnecessary . . . it can reveal how God is the God he is.'[75]

Moreover is Fiddes correct to coalesce foreknowledge and predetermination and thereby conclude that divine foreknowledge *cannot* co-exist with creaturely freedom?[76] In short, is it imperative to maintain God's absolute knowledge of past and present but only partial knowledge of the future in order to enhance divine and creaturely freedom so as to not undermine Fiddes' panentheistic vision? Fiddes, like relational, openness and process theologians, espouses freedom, both divine and creaturely, solely in libertarian terms and rejects any kind of compatibilism.[77] This commitment to libertarian freedom, so he claims, means that exhaustive predetermination and foreknowledge do not exist and the nature of the future is potential, not actual, and therefore not fully knowable, even by God. The one exception to this definition of freedom is *ecclesiological* freedom which Fiddes, like historical and orthodox Christian thought, sees not as personal autonomy but life bound up under the rule of Christ and obeying him (John 14:23-24).[78]

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[74] In order to defend God's self-existence without necessary self-sufficiency Fiddes grounds creation *ex nihilo* in divine internality, i.e. God's will, love and good pleasure. *CSG*, 75. For God's divine interaction and human contribution to God's creation see Paul S. Fiddes, "Faith, Theology and Imagination' by John McIntyre," *Modern Churchman* 30/2 (1988): 58-59.

[75] David B. Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 158.

[76] See above, p. 91.

[77] Given his emphasis on the conflation and interweaving of process theology and Barth's theme of God's freedom and desire, Fiddes could aid his claim by critiquing Gunton's claim of metaphysical incongruence between process theology and Barth. A brief footnote does not suffice. Colin E. Gunton, *Becoming and Being*, new ed, (London: SCM Press, 2001), 220-224, cf. *CSG*, 15, fn. 42.

[78] Paul S. Fiddes, "A Fourth Strand of the Reformation. Editorial," *Ecclesiology* 13 (2017): 153-159.

Fiddes advocates libertarian freedom, both divine and creaturely, for a number of claimed advantages. Not only does it accurately reflect the paradoxical tension between freedom and limit of the human condition,[79] it also brings understanding to human experience of the sublime,[80] opens humanity up to trust-laden relationships,[81] best articulates *how* God continually creates new things in the world,[82] and brings greater understanding to the divine name revealed to Moses in Exodus 3 as "I am what you will find me to be."[83] Not only that but, as already discussed above, divine and creaturely libertarian freedom is also central to understanding the suffering inherent in creation and this paves the way for the construction of divine suffering, a theology that offers the best answer to the theodicy problem.[84] As Blocher states, this post-renaissance thinking that emphasises human autonomy and independence as the best explanation of why evil exists, arose due to dissatisfaction with the compatibilist explanations offered by Augustine and Aquinas.[85]

Notwithstanding the pervasiveness of compatibilist theologies of freedom in the tradition, the majority of scholarly work on SW assumes a libertarian understanding of freedom.[86] Fiddes

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[79] *FAL*, 85-115; 173-204.

[80] Fiddes, "The Sublime," 128-132.

[81] Fiddes, et al, *On the Way*, 17-35.

[82] Paul S. Fiddes, "The Place of Christian Theology in the Modern University," *Baptist Quarterly* 42 (Apr, 2007): 80-82.

[83] Paul S. Fiddes, *The Escape and the City. Old Testament Study. Baptist Union Christian Training Programme* (London: Baptist Union, 1974), 5-9.

[84] See above, pp. 34-39.

[85] Blocher, *Evil and the Cross*, 36-37.

[86] Yong, for instance, offers five good reasons for the libertarian notion of freedom. Yong, *The Spirit of*, 94-95.

coheres well within this corpus of work. However, a significant problem arises when it is claimed that the only way to have genuine creaturely freedom is through limiting God's foreknowledge and thereby denying his EDF of the future. When we apply this nuanced definition of omniscience to eschatological hope for the future, it ultimately fails to offer the certainty and hope for the eschaton as articulated by both scripture and church tradition.

Therefore, if we could find a robust theological case that maintains divine and creaturely freedom while simultaneously espousing divine EDF (i.e. God sees and knows all reality which from the human perspective falls into past, present and future categories) then one could articulate a doctrine of divine omniscience that accords well with the scriptural witness of semi-dualistic SW worldview that still guarantees a dynamic sovereignty of God and an assured eschatology. Subsequently, this need to maintain divine EDF negates theological systems under the rubric of relational theism such as process theology and open theism,[87] and the imperative to define freedom and free will in libertarian terms invalidates the different types of compatibilist theologies.[88]

The remaining widely-held theological cases, which claim to appose divine EDF and

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[87] Process theology, like Fiddes, rejects any notion of a coercive, interventionist God and so it is very difficult to see how God can guarantee the eschaton. John B. Cobb Jr and David R. Griffin, *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), 52-54, cf. "How does God Relate to the World?" Paul S. Fiddes, accessed March 15, 2022, (https://www.closertotruth.com/series/how-does-god-relate-the-world#video-2220). Slightly differently open theism maintains divine power and knowledge to intervene when God sees fit. However, as Fiddes states, this creates moral problems considering God's apparent arbitrary decision making of when to intervene and when not to. "How does God."

[88] 'Given that the compatibilist God has control over all "voluntary" actions performed by moral agents, it would appear, accordingly, that we must consider him responsible for all the gratuitously evil states of affairs.' David Basinger, "Human Freedom and Divine Providence: Some New Thoughts on an Old Problem," *Religious Studies* 15 (1979): 493.

creational libertarian freedom, are Molinism and simple foreknowledge, specifically the nuanced

account of David Hunt. Unfortunately Molinism - despite some recent excellent work on

Molina's claim that God's omniscience consists in chronological order of *scientia naturalis*

(God's knowledge of all possible truths); *scientia media* (God's knowledge of all counterfactual

truths); then God's *divine creative decree;* and finally *scientia libera* (God's knowledge of all

actual truths) - still undermines genuine creaturely freedom because 'God becomes the arch-

manipulator, knowing in every case exactly "which button to push" in order to elicit precisely the

desired result from his creatures.'[89]

Similarly, simple foreknowledge as articulated by Hunt does not manage to circumvent

the Achilles heel of simple foreknowledge - the problem of theological fatalism - and solve the

apparent binary problem of divine foreknowledge and creaturely free will, which is an aporetic

challenge. Despite insisting that an increase in divine foreknowledge does not diminish human

agency since God contemporaneously knows what we freely choose to do,[90] Hunt's account of

simple foreknowledge is only successful when we redefine our understanding of the conditions

of human free agency.

Libertarian freedom consists of the condition of alternatives (X could do A or non-A) and

the condition of non-compatibilist sourcehood (X is the complete source of decision A or

decision non-A). Hunt advocates prioritising sourcehood over alternatives as a way to make free

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[89] Clark H. Pinnock, Richard Rice, John Sanders, William Hasker, and David Basinger. *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 145, cf. Kirk R. MacGregor, *A Molinist-Anabaptist Systematic Theology* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2007), 38-45.

[90] Hunt claims this happens when the focus is on knowledge of *propositional* truth, which sees future contingent truth as a real datum which is omni-temporal with truth conditions for the past, present and future. David P. Hunt, "Two Problems with Knowing the Future," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 34 (April 1997): 273-285.

agency distinct from causal determinism since God foreknows what a person is going to do *because* she is going to do it, not she does it because God foreknows she is going to do it. In sum, Hunt's definition of free agency maintains sourcehood as the deep core of free will thereby concluding that humans are free to make decisions and this is not diminished if a divine fore-knower is added into the frame.[91] Analogously, God looks through a time telescope and sees future truth propositions, which establishes the existence of the future in some sense.[92]

The question about Hunt's proposal is whether or not removing the condition of counter-factual alternatives leaves an adequate definition of freedom? It seems clear to me that it does not since any person could be the primary cause of an action done without any counter-factual option to do otherwise or not do at all; their freedom is illusory. So Hunt's claim that one can satisfactorily hold together EDF and free will, within a tensed definition of time, without having to adapt our doctrine of God by denying complete EDF as Fiddes does, comes at too much cost if the only plausible way to do this is by adapting the definition of human agency.[93] If it is not an option to reduce free will action to only the condition of sourcehood or redefine God's omniscience to complete knowledge of past and present but not EDF, then another question comes to the fore. Is there another way to articulate God's EDF and the complete libertarian freedom of all sentient creatures, human and otherwise, which will guarantee an eschatology

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[91] Hunt builds his argument using Harry Frankfurt's claimed counterexample to the principle of alternative possibilities. David P. Hunt and Seth Shabo, "Frankfurt cases and the (in)significance of timing: a defense of the buffering strategy," *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition* 164.3 (July 2013): 599-622.

[92] David P. Hunt, "Divine Providence and Simple Foreknowledge," *Faith and Philosophy* 10 (July 1993): 394-414.

[93] Leftow holds a similar view of simple foreknowledge but specifies that God sees free will action from outside of time. God's sight and knowledge comes when humans do something and this causes God to be in a cognitive state that registers the information that we do something. Brian Leftow, *Time and Eternity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 246-266; 279-282.

faithful to the Christian tradition, and uphold any SW account where God is in conflict with malevolent spiritual forces who are exercising their freedom and autonomy to rebel against their creator and oppose his wilful actions?

Kathryn Tanner proffers an account of the Christian faith which is Christocentric and builds upon two key themes: a stress on God as the ultimate giver of gifts and a non-competitive understanding of God's knowledge and power.[94] In brief, Tanner's starting point is that God is creator and creation is not. Therefore, God and creation operate on completely different planes of existence and this means that divine and human agency also operate on totally different ontological fields and are thereby not in competition at all.[95] Basically, human beings deliberate and act freely while God simultaneously intends, and this is simply non-problematic. Indeed, there is no incompatibility between God's universal, direct creative agency and the creature's own power and efficacy.

The real advantage of this non-competitive view of God's agency, and by inference his knowledge, is that it does not succumb to the usual problem of a trade-off definition of divine sovereignty and human freewill.[96] It avoids the typical conclusion that there is a kind of zero-sum transaction between God's and creaturely agency and so God's power and knowledge to act need to decrease in order to make room for human agency. As we know, Fiddes partakes in this

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[94] Kathryn Tanner, *Jesus, Humanity and the Trinity: A Brief Systematic Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), and Kathryn Tanner, *Christ the Key* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[95] This non-competitive relation between divine agency and human freewill is rooted in God the ultimate gift-giver. For it means all gifts to creation come from the abundance and fullness of God and so he does not need to decrease in order to allow creatures to increase. Tanner, *Jesus, Humanity*, 1-5, 41-46, 90-92. Tanner, *Christ the*, 53-55.

[96] The same trade-off exists in many analyses of God's transcendence and immanence.

zero-sum game by insisting that God's power is defined in terms of persuasion and non-coercion in order to maintain human libertarian freedom.[97] If he applied Tanner's non-competitive view to his theological vision, then this would significantly help Fiddes offer a better guaranteed active sovereignty of God and more accurately theologically exegete passages of scripture that juxtapose human freedom and divine providence in apparent tension.

4.4 Universal Hope and the Eschaton

The imperative to maintain EDF and libertarian freedom is a necessity when considering the eschatological vision of scripture and Christian tradition. Put simply, the promise of the seven 'no mores' in Revelation 20-22 offer hope and encouragement to tenaciously endure all forms of evil and pain common to humanity while believing that one day all wrongs will be righted and full justice actualised.[98] However, Fiddes' close affinity with process theology means that there is significant doubt as to whether a non-interventionist deity who 'determines to be the kind of creator in which nothing is ever achieved without the partnering of God with the covenanted creation he is in covenant with,'[99] will be able to actualise the promised eschatological fulfilment.[100]

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[97] See above, pp. 47-48.

[98] All the 'No More's' Rev 20:10, 14; 21:4, 25, 27; 22:3). Concerning the debate about how literal or metaphorical to view the language in these chapters, Fiddes sees the chapters as highly metaphorical speech about God and not to be taken literally. Paul Fiddes, personal communication with the author, 15 & 16 March 2016. cf. Paul S. Fiddes, "Law and Divine Mercy in Shakespeare's Religious Imagination: *Measure for Measure* and *The Merchant of Venice*," in *Poetry and the Religious Imagination*, eds. Francesca B. Knox and David Lonsdale. (Aldershot: Ashgate: 2015), 125-126.

[99] Paul Fiddes, personal communication with the author, 15 & 16 March 2016.

[100] Nash notes that in process theism 'no ultimate triumph over evil is possible for God.' Nash, "Introduction," 20.

Fiddes' fundamental understanding of covenant in terms of non-unilateral cooperation and partnership with creation, significantly interweaves itself through all his body of work. There is a universal and certain promise of hope in the eschaton but both its content and timing is an open mystery.[101] So within this ambiguous eschaton Fiddes seeks to understand the open nature of the future and the universal hope contained within that open future.[102] Taking his cue from literature and theology, Fiddes notes that both storytellers and poets are in positions of providence and they delineate visions of the apocalyptic that are open-ended and full of possibilities while still containing a guaranteed promise of final fulfilment.[103] God, as divine author, works in the same way.[104]

This understanding, claims Fiddes, also greatly impacts our understanding of the future of Christian ministry. Not only does God co-labour with all of humanity in a context of openness,[105] but he also genuinely journeys into an unknown-content future with the church as a pilgrim community moving into the future with an openness to the new things which God is doing.[106] One area where this is very evident is in prayer and prophecy; there is no divine blueprint or

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[101] Fiddes, Haymes and Kidd, *Baptists and the Communion*, 136-142.

[102] Paul S. Fiddes, "Ambiguities of the Future: Theological Hints in the Novels of Patrick White," *Pacifica* 23.3 (2010): 281-298.

[103] Paul S. Fiddes, "Versions of the Wasteland. The Sense of an Ending in Theology and Literature in the Modern Period," in *Modernism, Christianity and Apocalypse*, eds. Erik Tonning, Matthew Feldman & David Addyman. (Brill: Leiden, 2014), 29-52.

[104] Paul S. Fiddes, "When Text Becomes Voice: *You've Got Mail,*" in *Flickering Images*, eds. Paul S. Fiddes and A. Clarke. (Macon: Smyth and Helwys, 2005), 97-111.

[105] Paul S. Fiddes, "Ecclesiology and Ethnography: Two Disciplines, Two Worlds?" in *Perspectives on Ecclesiology and Ethnography*, ed. Pete Ward. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 29-35.

[106] Paul S. Fiddes (ed.), *Forms of Ministry among Baptists*: *Towards and Understanding of Spiritual Leadership.* The Faith and Unity Executive Committee. Doctrine and Worship Committee (London: Baptist Union, 1994), 47-51. Fiddes illustrates this in his account of Gainsborough covenant when churches pilgrimmed together with God into an open future. Paul S. Fiddes, "'Walking Together:' The Place of Covenant Theology in Baptist Life Yesterday and Today," in *Pilgrim Pathways: Essays in Baptist History in Honour of B. R. White*, eds. Paul S. Fiddes, William H. Brackney, and John H. Y. Briggs. (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1999), pp. 47-50.

prediction but rather a divine promise to partner into the open future with the church.[107]

Therefore, the key question to ask is whether or not Fiddes' 'apocalyptic eschatology,' which does envisage an end to the cosmos and history because there is still a confidence in God to bring his divine purposes to completion despite the openness of the future, can be framed within an eschatological vision consisting of a non-unilateral, non-interventionist deity who only works by divine fiat if and when the wills of creator and creation coalesce?[108] Can God know the 'end' as a certain event when the content leading up to that event is dependent upon the partnership between God and the world?[109] It appears very difficult to offer any assurance of a guaranteed eschatological end when God never coerces or acts unilaterally but only works with a creation, imbibed with irrevocable libertarian free will, through gentle persuasion or influence. If, as has been clearly established, Fiddes only thinks God's providence can be actualised when there is an aligning of human and divine wills, then considering humanity's intrinsic freedom to rebel and exercise autonomy strongly suggests that there may never be that needed alignment, theoretically or actually.[110]

Like Barth, Fiddes holds to a universal hope and not some form of dogmatic universalism.[111] However, the similarity comes to an end in the fact that Barth's theology of hope is rooted in divine freedom and the ability for God to freely intervene or not; a possibility

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[107] Fiddes, "Introduction," 11-13.

[108] *TPE*, 23-26.

[109] Paul S. Fiddes, "Facing the End: The Apocalyptic Experience in Some Modern Novels," in *Called To One Hope: Perspectives on the Life to Come*, ed. John Colwell. (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2000), 203-207.

[110] Even his appeal to the universal hope in the power of suffering love does not, admits Fiddes, offer a full guarantee of the overcoming of evil and fulfilment of God's purposes within creation. Paul Fiddes, personal communication with the author, 15 & 16 March 2016, cf. "Is God." "Is the Future."

[111] See *CD* II/2, §35.3, 417-419; *CD* IV/3.1, §70.3, 461-478; cf. *TPE*, 49-52.

not present in the process eschatology to which Fiddes adheres. Can one indeed have any basis

for eschatological hope for the ending of all evil if God is part-reliant on the very creation that

manifests evil for his divine action in the open future? The answer from both process thinkers

and their interlocutors is clearly negative: 'There is not and there will not be an end of evil. . .

there is no final end of evil. And that is "good." . . . that there will be no termination of evil in the

universe is not something that we should regret.'[112]

Notwithstanding Fiddes' non-acceptance of the idea of divine intervention, since it

suggests God's absence and also raises teleological and moral problems concerning the why of

divine intervention,[113] it appears that the very idea of eschatological hope on a universal level

needs to be predicated, in the least, on some form of potential ultra soft-unilateral divine action.

This could be grounded in divine freedom as articulated by Barth or in a relational theistic

account which maintains creaturely libertarian freedom and divine omnipotence that is generally

kenotic but with the caveat that the power of creation to influence God is finite.[114]

4.5 Final Comment: Divine Omniscience in a Spiritual Warfare Context

Let me conclude by returning to the over-arching research question being asked: does

Fiddes' contemporary theology, especially his doctrine of God, offer a better theological

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[112] Catherine Keller, "The Mystery of the Insoluble Evil: Violence and Evil in Marjorie Suchocki," in *World Without End: Christian Eschatology from a Process Perspective*, ed. Joseph A. Bracken. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 57-58; Michael L. Peterson, "God and Evil in Process Theology," in *Process Theology*, ed. Ronald Nash. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987), 133-136.

[113] See above, p. 109 fn.87.

[114] Boyd, for example, argues that there is finitude of creaturely freedom that stipulates 'that *to the extent* that humans or angels are self-determining, to *that* extent their moral responsibility must be irrevocable.' Therefore, there is a limit to creations' self-determination and this explains why God can intervene *sometimes* but not always and also why God can give assurance of winning the eschatological cosmic battle, not immediately but eventually. Boyd, *Satan and the Problem*, 178-206.

framework to understand God's nature and character in the context of the reality of SW? While

the above analysis and critique highlights some weaknesses, there are a number of strengths in

Fiddes' approach that can be used to delineate a theology of SW. There are also a number of key

areas integral to a SW theology and understanding that Fiddes never addresses in his written

corpus, such as the libertarian free will of angelic beings, a theological account of the exorcisms

in the gospels, or the relationship between the demonic and modern psychiatric conditions.[115]

However, some of his written work can aid an explication of the place of divine

omniscience in a theological understanding of SW. His insistence on divine passibility is

advantageous when it concerns formulating a satisfactory answer for theodicy. It also reflects

scriptural witness.[116] Given the divine gift of irrevocable freedom to creation (including angels

and demons), the idea that God is a fellow sufferer who stands in solidarity with the afflicted has

much merit. Where it gets problematic, however, is the argument that divine passibility needs to

be established upon divine ontological mutability, divine becoming, necessary growth in

knowledge, and a denial of simplicity or *actus purus*. To deny anthropomorphic or

anthropopathic language and insist that God *actually* grows in his knowledge of the future,

especially future spiritual battle strategy, raises a number of obstacles to a satisfactory

understanding of God's omniscience, particularly his knowledge of the future. We can accept

that it may appear this way phenomenologically and experientially from a human perspective

without affirming it *de facto* as actual divine ontology.

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[115] Boyd, *Satan and the Problem*, 50-84; Boyd, *God at War*, 169-237; For an excellent investigation into exorcism and psychiatry see David Instone-Brewer, "Jesus and the Psychiatrists," in *The Unseen World: Christian Reflections on Angels, Demons and the Heavenly Realm*, ed. Anthony N. S. Lane. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 133-148.

[116] For example, the third hypostasis of the Trinity, i.e. the Holy Spirit, can be grieved (Ephesians 4:30).

As well as the above-mentioned charges that theology should not necessarily take all its cues from science and philosophy, that delineating God as both creator and part of creation is impossible, and that to base divine passibility on a human understanding of emotion and feeling is mistaken,[117] Fiddes' understanding of divine passibility and omniscience also assumes that there cannot be divine suffering without divine change nor divine change without limited divine foreknowledge. Regarding the first assumption, the work of von Balthasar plausibly presents a case of divine suffering without ontological change by locating divine passibility *within* the Trinity, a Trinity that inculcates a theology of the cross into its very being.[118] Therefore, we can advocate divine passibility without holding to ontological change in God, a position which could introduce arbitrariness and undermine God's necessary virtuous nature and character.

Moreover, Fiddes' second assumption that genuine divine change can only happen with limited divine foreknowledge of the future is also in need of nuancing and adaptation of some of the underlying assumptions. Any denial of EDF involves certain convictions about the nature of time and of the future, as well as a specific understanding of freewill which negates exhaustive foreknowing, even on the part of God.

A theology of SW should have a consistent understanding of the nature of time and of the future. If, like Fiddes, one assumes a tensed theory of time in which the 'now' exists as the only privileged temporal location, then it has to be held that the past no longer exists except in the divine memory and the future does not exist and thereby is not exhaustively knowable. This accords well with most relational theologians whose accounts it is claimed can be sustained by a

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[117] See above, pp. 106-108.
[118] See above, p. 109.

litany of scriptural examples.[119]

Conversely, a tenseless theory of time not only validates God's perfect knowledge of both the past and present, but also removes the very concept of *fore*knowledge and replaces it with simple divine knowledge of that which creation labels 'the future.' So, if we were to consistently apply a tenseless theory to God's relationship with time then this would still leave open the potential to construct Fiddes' *time is in God,* as well as his concept of the healing of time, within a tenseless understanding. For the idea that time exists within the panentheistic reality of God strongly supports the biblical portrayal of God as the very fundamental ground of being and the eternal, non-created reality at the beginning.[120] Furthermore, by extrapolating Tanner's non-competitive view, the healing of time can only happen in a divine being in whom time is healed without fracture. Indeed, time is already healed in God's tenseless reality despite it not appearing so *vis-à-vis* the perspective of creation.

God, in his tenseless existence which transcends time as we know it, has perfect knowledge of all things, including all future actions of creation, all possible counter-factual realities, all potential alternative worlds, and therefore the direction, content and final outcome of the spiritual battle which is an intrinsic element of the tensioned 'now and not yet' we inhabit. Yet this does not have to lead to the problem of theological fatalism as is often claimed. A non-competitive understanding of God's power and knowledge means that human and divine agency

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[119] See David Basinger, *The Case for Freewill Theism: A Philosophical Assessment* (Downers Grove: IVP Press, 1996), 51; William Hasker, *God, Time and Knowledge* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 194; John Sanders, *The God Who Risks: A Theology of Providence* (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 1998), 131-132.

[120] As Genesis 1:1 attests, אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא בְּרֵאשִׁית (In the Beginning, God).

are not in a zero-sum knowledge and power struggle since they are operating in completely distinct fields of being.[121]

God's full knowledge is contemporaneous with human and angelic free agency and so guarantees creational freedom without undermining the full sovereignty of God. Contrary to Fiddes,[122] there can be human freewill without predetermination. There is no lack in God's knowledge of all action. This knowledge comes when humans exercise free agency while God is in a different plane of existence and cognitive state that registers that information. This enables both human and angelic freewill to operate and God to have all knowledge that allows him to respond appropriately according to his understanding and will. Therefore, there is enough freedom for human and angelic beings to have significant 'say-so' in terms of the content of the eschaton without the potential to derail the ultimate final destination of the eschaton. This alone offers universal hope to creation in the face of diabolical powers and reinforces that evil will be conquered when the new heavens and new earth are fully inaugurated.

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[121] See above, pp. 112-113.
[122] See above, pp. 91.

Chapter Five

POWER - GOD'S OMNIPOTENCE IN THE REALM OF SPIRITUAL

CONFLICT

5.1 Introduction

When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison. . . surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. *But fire came down from heaven and devoured them.* (emphasis mine).[1]

The image, scope and description we receive from scripture vis-à-vis Satan, the demonic and evil is multifarious and multi-layered.[2] Confirming Pauline language about putting on spiritual armour in order to stand strong in our 'struggle' with principalities and powers, the New Testament picture and much experience of exorcism ministry today, strongly suggests that when it comes to the nature of evil, the phenomenological reality is not uniform.

Not only do we have the biblical-theological account of Satan adopting many different personas and roles in relation to God,[3] but a theological reading of the gospels and Acts unearths an unsystematic theology of the demonstration of divine power by God incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth; what is sometimes referred to as 'power encounters' with evil.[4] Nowhere in the gospels is there a sense that any evil spiritual opposition to Jesus is disingenuous, or that Jesus is

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[1] Revelation 20:7-9 (New International Version). Bauckham notes that 'the destruction of evil at its deepest level is portrayed not as an immediate consequence, but one delayed a thousand years." Bauckham, *The Theology*, 106.

[2] Walter Wink gives a strong account of the fluidity of 'The Satan' in scripture. Wink, *Unmasking*, 9-40.

[3] From God's viceroy (Job 1-2) to His malevolent foe whose diabolical work the Son of God comes to destroy (1 John 3:8).

[4] David Powlison, *Power Encounters: Reclaiming Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995).

merely humouring Satan when confronted by him. There are incidences of absolute divine

authority over the demonic: Jesus not letting the demons speak,[5] exorcising an evil spirit at a

distance,[6] authorising his disciples to exorcise demons,[7] and others using the name of Jesus to

drive out demons.[8] Conversely, however, there are instances of a more dualistic reality in which

demons resist Jesus' command, trade with him and put in a final request that he acquiesces to,[9]

and certain individuals overpowered by a man with an evil spirit and beaten extensively in spite

of an attempted exorcism using the name of Jesus.[10]

This, together with modern eye-witness accounts of drawn-out exorcisms, especially in

the global south,[11] brings to the fore appropriate questions about the reality of evil spirits,

suffering and theodicy proper. Specifically, why, if God is omnipotent as traditionally

articulated, does he not simply bring the event of the parousia forward to the present, thus ending

the age of now-and-not-yet tension, and inaugurate the new heavens and new earth? Given that

the global church currently testifies to the conquering, but not total destruction, of evil, what

does this suggest about God's being and character, as well as the nature and make-up of his

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[5] Mark 1:34 (cf. Luke 4:41).

[6] Mark 7:24-30 (cf. Matthew 15:21-28). It is most likely that it was these inimitable demonstrations of divine authority that lead the Pharisees and scribes to conclude that Jesus was possessed by and using the power of Beelzebul, the prince of demons, Satan himself (Mark 3:22-30 cf. Matt 12:22-29; Luke 11:14-20). Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 104-106.

[7] Mark 6:6b-13 (cf. Matthew 10:1; Luke 9:1-6).

[8] Mark 9:38-40 (cf. Luke 9:49-50).

[9] Mark 5:1-17 (cf. Matthew 8:28-32; Luke 8:27-39). Contra Wink (see below, p. 174 fn.103), a prima facie exegesis suggests supra power that enables the demoniac to break physical iron chains literally and be overtly violent.

[10] Acts 19:11-16. Arnold correctly asserts that given the scarcity of other accounts or references to evil spirits by Luke in the rest of Acts, this supports the case that Ephesus was a centre of demonic activity. Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians: Power and Magic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 30-31. Acts 19:17-20 also supports this thesis.

[11] For example, Keith Ferdinando, "Screwtape Revisited: Demonology Western, African and Biblical," in *The Unseen World: Christian Reflections on Angels, Demons and the Heavenly Realm*, ed. Anthony N. S. Lane. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 118-120; Keith Ferdinando, *The Battle is God's* (Nigeria: Africa Christian Textbooks, 2012), 17-23.

operational power?

What follows is a definition of God's omnipotence that helps constitute a doctrine of God suitable to locate a theology of SW within. Fiddes' writings on divine power, especially the power of suffering love which is driven by an ontology of divine kenosis will be central to this account, and also his kenotic understanding of divine interaction with creation, a cruciform nature of power as demonstrated by Jesus on the cross. Also key will be a nuanced dialectical synthesis of Fiddes' Abelardian atonement of transformation with the *Christus Victor* view in order to better elicit a pertinent definition of omnipotence.

5.2 Kenosis: A Definitive Ontology of Omnipotence

> But this kind of vulnerability can be combined with the faith that God's love can never fail or be destroyed, and that love is - finally - the strongest power in the universe, able to overcome evil with its resources of persuasion.[12]

To repeat, Fiddes constructs his theology using a redefinition of omnipotence. God's ultimate and most effective power is the power of suffering love, grounded in divine vulnerability and freely-chosen self-limitation, centred in the perichoretic dance of the Trinity and operated via persuasion and influence. Granted there is risk involved but this does not, as is often claimed, make God impotent since God's 'weak power' of persuasion can be very constraining and if it aligns with the wishes and desires of creation will result in actualising God's will without the need of any strong intervention or coercion.[13]

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[12] Paul S. Fiddes, "A Theological Reconsideration of 'the Wild': A Response to Elizabeth O'Donnell Gandolpho," *Louvain Studies* 41.3 (2018): 326-327.

[13] See above, pp. 51-52. Fiddes rejects all worldly ideas of coercive and dominant power when defining divine power. "Is God All-Powerful?" Paul S. Fiddes, accessed March 19, 2022, (https://www.closertotruth.com/series/god-all-powerful).

As we know Fiddes is influenced by process thought when it comes to defining omnipotence in terms of divine persuasion and influence.[14] His embrace of the non-unilateral power of suffering love both aligns him with and sets his face against different Christian scholars.[15] For Fiddes, the conflation of process theology's emphasis on persuasion with no domination and the biblical theme of God's suffering, found especially in the prophets, goes a considerable way to help understand God in the context of a fallen creation which exercises its full access to irrevocable freedom in order to use for good or ill.[16]

This conflation by Fiddes immediately raises two critical questions. First, has Fiddes accepted process theology's non-coercive persuasive position without careful consideration of whether or not this is logically coherent? As Basinger asks, is it necessarily impossible for the process God to intervene or coerce or is it an act of self-limitation? If the former, then this raises

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[14] See above, pp. 19-20. Where Fiddes diverges from process theology is in his locating God's persuasion and influence within the freedom of God. Defining God's omnipotence as persuasion and influence in the power of suffering love is a central tenet which Fiddes has consistently purported since the beginning of his academic career. For example, see Fiddes, *The Escape*, 18-21; *TPE*, 166-175; Fiddes, "The Place," 74-80; Fiddes, "Ecclesiology and Ethnography," 13-17, 29-35; Paul S. Fiddes, "Ancient and Modern Wisdom: The Intersection of Clinical and Theological Understanding of Health," in *Wisdom, Science and the Scriptures: Essays in Honour of Ernest Lucas*, eds. Stephen Finamore and John Weaver. (Centre for Baptist History and Heritage and Bristol Baptist College, 2012), 90-95; Paul S. Fiddes, "Shakespeare in Church: Reflection on an Intertextual Liturgy Based on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," *Ecclesial Practices* 4.2 (2017): 210-211; Paul S. Fiddes, "Covenant and Participation: A Personal Review of the Essays," *Perspectives in Religious Studies,* 44.1 (2017): 129-132.

[15] Fiddes rejects Healy's unilateralist position in favour of Hauerwas' human-divine co-operation stance. Paul S. Fiddes, "Versions of Ecclesiology: Stanley Hauerwas and Nicholas Healy," *Ecclesiology*, 12/3 (2016): 332-342; Paul S. Fiddes, "Ecclesiology and Ethnography: one world revisited," *Journal Teologic*, 15/1 (2016): 29-32. Moreover, Fiddes is highly critical of Aquinas' Thomistic causation theology which views God as the primary cause, arguing instead that it is better to imagine God acting persuasively. Paul S. Fiddes, "*Ex Opere Operato*: Rethinking a Historic Baptist Rejection," in *Baptist Sacramentalism 2*. Studies in Baptist History and Thought Volume 25, eds. Anthony R. Cross and Philip E. Thompson. (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008), 222-229.

[16] See above, pp. 37-38, cf. Paul S. Fiddes, "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit": The Triune Creator in Hymn and Theology," in *Gathering Disciples. Essays in Honour of Christopher J. Ellis*, eds. Myra Blyth and Andy Goodliff. (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2017), 217-219.

the challenge of talking about a necessarily powerless deity without any experiential base to draw from, especially when human experience consistently demonstrates the ability to control other human behaviour whether through ultra-soft, soft, mid or hard coercion.[17] If the latter, as held by Fiddes rooted in God's freedom, then the same charge can be brought as made against the classic freewill theist: why does God not freely choose to intervene in cases of dysteleological evil such as the holocaust?[18]

The second question concerns Fiddes' use of the prophets, especially Hosea, and whether he uses these prophetic passages correctly to develop this kenotic-based understanding of divine passibility. As has been pointed out by Young, as well as Hosea's language of the 'man-like' God (the one who walks in the garden and woos his lover), other prophets such as Isaiah and Amos describe Yahweh as 'wholly other' in contrast to the popular gods of the nations around Israel. Therefore, this leads to the use of *synthesis* (observing the highest and most beautiful things of creation), *analysis* (using the technique of abstraction, taking away what we know and arriving at apophatic terms), and *analogy* (creating myths and similes) in order to understand God as both infinite, incomprehensible, beyond human knowledge but, via revelation, accommodating and speaking to us in human language that we understand. Fiddes, she suggests, would do well incorporating a more sophisticated form of anthropomorphism into his theology.[19]

The overarching rubric of Fiddes' position regarding the persuasive power of suffering

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[17] David Basinger, "Divine Power: Do Process Theists Have a Better Idea?" in *Process Theology*, ed. Ronald H. Nash. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987), 203-205.
    [18] David Basinger, "Divine Persuasion: Could the Process God Do More?" *Journal of Religion* 64.3 (1984): 334-335.
    [19] Young, *Face to Face*, 242-247.

love is kenosis. He defines God as the one who humbly reveals himself and freely desires to limit himself and be the self-emptying kenotic God.[20] Despite Fiddes' denial of being a social trinitarian,[21] a theology of divine triune society is the best setting for a doctrine of kenosis.[22] That said, however, there is still an imperative to converge our focus on the specific nature of Fiddes' understanding of kenosis in terms of scope and implications.[23]

A synthesis of Fiddes' panentheistic vision and definition of power as persuasion and suffering love results in a capacious definition and scope of kenosis. There are, in the main, three theological meanings of the term 'kenosis:' christological, trinitarian and generalised.[24] Similarly, Fiddes writes about three kinds of kenosis which he calls *three kenotic moments*, namely 'the eternal kenosis of the Father in the sending out of the Son; the kenosis of creation in which God brings into being something that has reality over against God's self who is himself self-emptying, and the cross, which is the deepest kind of self-emptying.'[25] In a reversal of the temporal-chronological order of the three kenotic moments, it is the final 'moment,' the cross in the heart of God, that Fiddes uses as the foundation for kenotic theological development

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[20] Paul S. Fiddes, "The Making of a Christian Mind," in *Faith in the Centre,* ed. Paul S. Fiddes. (Macon: Smyth & Helwys Press, 2001), 14-18; Fiddes, "The Story," 89-94.

[21] Fiddes, "Relational Trinity," 159-161.

[22] Thomas R. Thompson and Cornelius Plantinga Jnr, "Trinity and Kenosis," in *Exploring Kenotic Christology: The Self-Emptying of God,* ed. C. Stephen Evans. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 165-189.

[23] Fiddes claims that a kenotic definition of God also affects our understanding of God's omniscience. Fiddes, "Charles Williams," 77.

[24] Sarah Coakley, "Kenosis: Theological Meanings and Gender Connotations," in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, ed. J. Polkinghorne. (London: SPCK, 2001), 192-204.

[25] Paul Fiddes, personal communication with the author, 15 & 16 March 2016. cf. Fiddes, "Participating in," 379-383; *PIG*, 34-46; Fiddes, "Creation Out," 167-191; *PEPS*, 51-58. Of note is that Fiddes here departs from Robinson who held that kenosis of the Spirit is the deepest kind of kenosis. Robinson, *Redemption*, 294-295.

concerned with trinitarian and generalised meanings of kenosis.[26]

As will be shown, Fiddes presumes God's self-emptying on the cross when exploring the atonement without any serious exegetical work on Philippians 2 and other examples of divine limitation in the biblical account.[27] Consequently, he does not enter some of the kenotic Christology debates such as whether the kenotic state of Christ was for the duration of the incarnation or only between crucifixion and Holy Saturday;[28] the relation between kenosis and glorification;[29] the difference between ontological, functional and kryptic kenosis;[30] or what divine attributes did Christ acquiesce in the incarnation without loss of divinity?[31]

Moreover, Fiddes argues that this idea of kenosis has to be an essential concept from which to construct a doctrine of God for today's world, despite the fact that kenotic theology

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[26] At this point, the limitations of temporal language such as 'moment' (borrowed from Bulgakov and von Balthasar) become significant. Coakley rightly notes that the majority of essays (including Fiddes' chapter) in *The Work of Love* address the significance of kenosis in regard to God's relation to the world and subsequently only turn to christological or trinitarian meaning for illustration. Coakley, "Kenosis: Theological," 193.

[27] Gordon D. Fee, "The New Testament and Kenosis Christology," in *Exploring Kenotic Christology: The Self-Emptying of God*, ed. C. Stephen Evans. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 25-44; N. T. Wright, "*arpagmos* and the meaning of Philippians 2:5-11," *Journal of Theological Studies* 37.2 (1986): 321-352; Kenneth S. Wuest, "When Jesus Emptied Himself," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 115.458 (1958): 153-158.

[28] Without fully aligning with his Holy Saturday kenosis descent, Fiddes appreciates von Balthasar's theory of atonement based upon the formlessness of the Word and Christ's kenotic obedience to descend into hell. See Paul S. Fiddes, review of *The Glory of the Lord VII. Theology: The New Covenant,* by Hans Urs von Balthasar. *The Expository Times* 102/11 (1991): 349-350.

[29] C. Stephen Evans, "Kenotic Christology and the Nature of God," in *Exploring Kenotic Christology: The Self-Emptying of God*, ed. C. Stephen Evans. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 200-202.

[30] Oliver D. Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity: The Incarnation Reconsidered* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 118-153.

[31] Graham James, "The Enduring Appeal of a Kenotic Christology," *Theology* 86 (1983): 7-14.

predicated on divine mutability and passibility is only a recent development with little precedent. Unlike other Kenoticists, Fiddes spills little ink analysing the development of modern-period Kenoticism from nineteenth-century German theology into Anglophone theology in an attempt to make sense of Christ's incarnation as one person with two natures in light of a newly emerging understanding of personality and self-consciousness.[32] Instead he simply presupposes God's kenotic ontology and from this starting-point differentiates his understanding of God as necessarily kenotic from others and what it means for God to be kenotic in his triune being.

This lack of analysis, together with little serious exegetical work on those scriptural passages which possibly suggest kenosis, weakens Fiddes' account. Feenstra, for instance, argues for a kenotic Christology that is faithful to scripture and Chalcedon by adopting a 'omni-unless-freely-and-temporarily choosing to be otherwise for the purpose of incarnation and reconciliation' definition. Moreover, in order to avoid the common objections of traditional theologians, he concludes that all discussion of kenosis and divine attributes *has to* start with testimony of Jesus of Nazareth, not the doctrine of God.[33] This indeed raises a number of interesting possibilities about God's power and logical limitation: if God can bring into being a pregnant virgin then can he also create a married bachelor or make two plus two equal five?

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[32] For a recent thorough historical overview of the development of modern Kenoticism spreading from the continent to Scotland and England, see David Brown, *Divine Humanity: Kenosis and the Construction of a Christian Theology* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2011), 36-171. Other historical analyses of modern kenosis development include D. G. Dawe, "A Fresh Look at the Kenotic Christologies," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 15 (1962): 337-349; D. G. Dawe, *The Form of a Servant: A Historical Analysis of the Kenotic Motif* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), 47-176; Friedrich Loofs, "Kenosis," in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics VII*, ed. James Hastings. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1914), 680-687; Bruce McCormack, "Kenoticism in Modern Christology," In *The Oxford Handbook of Christology*, eds. Francesca Aran Murphy and Troy A. Stephano. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 444-457.

[33] Ronald J. Feenstra, "A Kenotic Christological Method for Understanding the Divine Attributes," in *Exploring Kenotic Christology: The Self-Emptying of God*, ed. C. Stephen Evans. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 150-164.

Also, there is a broad critique of kenotic Christology by Weinandy who argues that we should define personhood ontologically instead of psychologically. If done, then kenotic problems disappear, such as postulating the incarnation in compositional ways which inevitably reduce divinity.[34]

Notwithstanding these potential criticisms, God *is* necessarily kenotic, according to Fiddes, but not because of any necessity imposed on him by an external force.[35] Rather his kenosis is rooted in an 'internal necessity' caused by his eternal desire and divine will.[36] God chooses kenosis but not in the sense of choosing between option A and option B.[37] God's forming of covenant with creation means he becomes necessarily kenotic and this is perfectly demonstrated when there is a convergence of creation's responsiveness and the desire of God. This accounts for miracles which can often happen if there is complete alignment between God's will and desire and free acts of creation.[38]

Exploring what God's kenotic ontology infers for his triune being is the second kenotic moment that Fiddes often considers. Because the heart of kenosis power is suffering love, not just of the Son but of the Trinity, this removes any notion of monarchical hierarchy from the

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[34] Weinandy, *Does God Change*, 118-123.

[35] As widely known, Process theology postulates that God has always had a universe somewhere and has always known limitation because of free acts of creatures. Charles Hartshorne, *The Divine Relativity: A Social Conception of God* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), 29-30; David R. Griffin, *God, Power and Evil: A Process Theodicy* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), 279-280.

[36] *CD* II/1, §28, 257-321.

[37] Fiddes believes that words such as 'choose' 'desire' and 'will' all have their place and so this slightly sets him apart from other necessary Kenoticists such as Oord who believes that God's kenosis is involuntary because it derives from God's eternal and unchanging nature of love.' Paul Fiddes, personal communication with the author, 15 & 16 March 2016. cf. Oord, *The Uncontrolling*, 94-95.

[38] The resurrection is the unique and quintessential great miracle that comes from the perfect response of Jesus and the desire of the Father. Paul Fiddes, personal communication with the author, 15 & 16 March 2016.

Trinity and eradicates all concepts of submissive power-over. Any trinitarian theology of

dominance, claims Fiddes, leads to oppression and coercion in human relations whether by the

state, men or pastors. In the past, the dominance of the state was intertwined with the authority of

the church,[39] and since the church was by-and-large patriarchal for most of its history its

authority naturally resulted in the oppression of women.[40] This implicated the pastorate, a

servant-leader, shepherd calling that too-often-than-not exercised authority through dominance

and oppression, and has been of late undergirded by a charismatic theology which emphasizes

spiritual hierarchy and a ministerial pecking order.[41] What makes this emphasis on authority

within the charismatic renewal especially egregious is the central role the Holy Spirit plays but

with little understanding of his kenotic nature.[42]

5.3 Kenotic Relations with Creation

Paradoxically both Christological and trinitarian kenosis only makes sense when situated

within an understanding of a generalised, unprecedented kenosis of creation which intrinsically

implicates soteriological and ecclesial kenotic movements. This is Fiddes' third kenotic moment,

one that aligns well with Brunner's kenotic definition of creation, a thorough articulation that

needs quoted at length:

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[39] *PIG*, 96-101.

[40] Paul S. Fiddes, "The Status of Women in the Thought of Karl Barth" in *After Eve: Women, Theology & the Christian Tradition*, ed. J. Soskice. (London: Collins, 1990), 138-55; *PIG*, 101-104; Paul S. Fiddes, *A Unicorn Dies. A Novel of Mystery and Ideas* (Oxford: Firedint Publishing, 2017), 3, 20-21.

[41] Fiddes, *Charismatic*, 24-30; Fiddes, "The Theology of," 32-38; *PIG*, 62-71; Paul Fiddes, personal communication with the author, 15 & 16 March 2016.

[42] Despite departing somewhat from Robinson on the depth of the kenosis of the Spirit, Fiddes is still influenced by Robinson's and later Moltmann's kenosis of the Spirit. Paul S. Fiddes, "Pentecost. The Rhythm of God on Monday," in *Rhythms of Faithfulness. Essays in Honour of John E. Colwell*, eds. Andy Goodliff and Paul W. Goodliff. (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2018), 204–210; *SWKG*, 381-387; cf. H. Wheeler Robinson, *The Christian Experience of the Holy Spirit* (London: Nisbet, 1928), 83-87; Fiddes, "A Review of *God*," 262-265.

God does not wish to occupy the whole of Space Himself, but that He wills to make room for other forms of existence. In so doing He limits himself… The maximum of the divine self-limitation is equally the maximum of actual "over-againstness" - the free position of that being who is "over against" God and is therefore able to answer the Word of the Creator in freedom … Now we begin to see what a large measure of self-limitation He has imposed upon Himself, and how far He has emptied Himself, in order to realize this aim, to achieve it, indeed, in a creature which has misused its creaturely freedom to such an extent as to defy God. *The kenosis, which reaches its paradoxical climax in the Cross of Christ, began with the creation of the world.* (emphasis mine).[43]

God's self-limitation in order to create potential for other types of creaturely existence is for Fiddes a reality that explicates itself in many different manifestations within creation. Crucially, humanity is given space and freedom to participate in, with and through God via intercessory prayer, advancing medical science, literature (despite novels often failing to catch divine kenosis), and non-coercive attitudes and behaviour in politics and other public spheres.[44] Since creation is an act of divine kenosis, reliant upon wide movements of the Spirit of God, then creation has to look for these manifestations because God's self-limitation results in divine concealment and ambiguous recognition of his Spirit.[45]

Like Brunner, Fiddes earths his understanding of God's kenotic self-limitation in the

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[43] Emil Brunner, *Dogmatics. Vol.2, The Christian doctrine of creation and redemption*, trans. Olive Wyon. (London: Lutterworth Press, 1952), 20.

[44] Fiddes concludes that general baptists do not go far enough in regard to freewill. Paul S. Fiddes, "Foreword" to William H. Brackney, *The Early English General Baptists and Their Theological Formation* (Oxford: Regent's Park College, 2017), ix-xiv; Paul S. Fiddes, "Attending to the Sublime and the Beautiful: Theological Reflection on Iris Murdoch and Emmanuel Levinas," in *Theology of Beauty*, eds. Alexei Bodrov and Michael Tolstoluzhenko. (Moscow: St Andrew's Press, 2013), 83-85; Fiddes, "Introduction," 11-16, cf. Fiddes, Haymes and Kidd, *Baptists and the Communion*, 81-84; Fiddes and Lees, "How are People Healed," 16-22; Paul S. Fiddes, "Introduction: The Novel and the Spiritual Journey Today," in *The Novel, Spirituality and Modern Culture. Eight Novelists Write about their Craft and their Context,* ed. Paul S. Fiddes. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), 3-8, cf. *FAL*, 39-46; *PEPS*, 190-206.

[45] Robinson, *Redemption*, 294-297.

freedom and desire of God, not process theology's external necessity.[46] Before the foundation of

the world there was the self-limitation of God. This was freely-chosen and catalysed by divine

love. All creational kenosis language should be 'God's-will-as-desire' speech, not essential

nature vernacular, as desire speech mirrors exactly the triune movements of relational love in

God's nature and character.[47]

Similar to previous weaknesses, Fiddes' chronological emphasis on kenosis as the basic,

freely-chosen, self-structure of the Trinity which *then* perfectly manifests itself on the cross of

Christ could potentially place too much emphasis upon ontological otherness and thereby render

kenosis meaningless to humans' existence and experience. As Macquarrie, with the help of

Thomasius, reminds us, there needs to be a differentiation between *logos ensarkos* and *logos

asarkos* since the former leads to greater meaning and relevance for creation by grounding

kenosis theology in the humiliation of Christ and self-abasement of Jesus of Nazareth on the

cross.[48] Moreover, a third alternative to the ontological or ethical view is that the christological

subject is the divine person acting by means of the acts performed by the man Jesus. In short, the

man Jesus acts and suffers and the Logos receives suffering up into his own being: 'the

receptivity of the Logos simply *is* his self emptying.'[49] Perhaps applying these insights would

help prevent potential loss of Fiddes' kenosis account to the incommunicable reality of an

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[46] "At this point process thought differs from most versions of kenotic theology by claiming that the limitations of divine power are the product of metaphysical necessity rather than voluntary self-limitation." Ian G. Barbour, "God's Power: A Process View," in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, ed. J. Polkinghorne. (London: SPCK, 2001), 6.

[47] Fiddes, "Creation Out," 178-184, cf. *CD* II/1, §28.1, 271-272.

[48] John Macquarrie, "Kenoticism Reconsidered," *Theology* 77 (Mar 1974): 122-124.

[49] McCormack, "Kenoticism in Modern," 455-456. Elsewhere, McCormack claims that kenosis takes the genus of humility and applies it to God the Son thereby communicating human attributes to the divine instead of the usual vice-versa. Bruce McCormack, "Karl Barth's Christology as a Resource for a Reformed Version of Kenoticism," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 8/3 (2006): 246-247.

ontology of complete otherness.

That said, Fiddes' articulation and defence of creation as a kenotic act implies soteriological and ecclesial kenotic movements since God brings into being something contingent that is given *de-facto* over-againstness towards God and his self-emptying being. This emphasises the humility of God because creation is no longer its original design and this has inevitably led to arising malevolence and evil which have significant say-so over and against God in his humble and kenotic state. Indeed, the achievement of creation as kenosis is the creation of creatures free to misuse their creaturely freedom to such an extent as to resist God and thwart his will and desires for creation.[50] Hence, kenotic movements of soteriology and ecclesiology.

For Fiddes, salvation is a very wide and deep concept since it is descriptive of the way God is actually working in the world. The atonement is narrower but nonetheless imperative to any understanding of salvation. Since salvation is possible through the healing of relationships, the world-wide and cosmic activity of salvation is bound up and dependent upon the particular self-giving love and sacrifice which brought total relational healing through the life of Jesus of Nazareth; a particular life at a specific historical moment.[51] Because of this historical particularism all soteriological movements of kenosis are, according to Fiddes, movements of the kind of omnipotence manifest in the divine power of cruciform suffering love. As stated above, theories of atonement have been formed by the prevalent culture at the time and so an atonement

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[50] See above, pp. 130-131.
[51] "Immortality and Personal Consciousness?" Paul S. Fiddes, accessed March 21, 2022, (https://www.closertotruth.com/series/immortality-and-personal-consciousness#video-2221)

defined by suffering love is the most effective explanation for today's culture personality and relational fragmentation.[52] Much of the effectiveness of locating the cross of Christ and divine suffering in the epicentre of God's being lies in the explanatory power it gives to explaining theologically three current key issues in western culture: sacrifice, justice and evil.[53]

The overall impact the divine passibility of suffering love has on salvation and the atonement is to accentuate the process of transformation, i.e. the becoming of salvation. This understanding of salvation is best served by a transformative, subjective view of the atonement which focusses on the objective event of the cross.[54] The atonement's potential to transform has to be framed within an egalitarian participation in the relations and movements of the triune God since this is what redefines authority and power and allows creation to move *through* the objective victory of the cross and participate in today's subjective victories of Christ against

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[52] See above, p. 18.

[53] See above, pp. 43-45.

[54] See above, pp. 40-41. Fiddes is correct to ground his subjective view with objective focus atonement theory in a cogent re-appraisal of Abelard. He aligns himself with current thinking on the medieval philosopher that seeks to remove the reductionist label of 'the exemplarist' that became especially prominent in England at the turn of the twentieth century. Due to the efforts of critics such as Hastings Rashdall, Abelard was appealed to which *reduced* the cross and its meaning to simply a demonstration of the love of God. However, Abelard is more complex that this. Aulen, *Christus*, 47-55; McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 425-430. Despite the continuous existence of the reductionist caricature of Abelard, Fiddes and others engage with Abelard's main writings, especially his commentary on Romans arguing that there can only be a subjective transformation *if* there is an objective transaction. It is rightly purported that Abelard extracted two meta-themes in Romans: an exaltation of divine grace at the expense of human merit, and humans serving God from a well of love, not fear. Eddy and Beilby, "The Atonement," 18-19; G. R. Evans, *Anselm and a New Generation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 161-162, cf. Fiddes, *PEPS*, 140-161; Thomas Williams, "Sin, grace and redemption," in *The Cambridge Companion to Abelard*, eds. Jeffrey E. Brower and Kevin Guilfoy. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 258-278; Richard E. Weingart, *The Logic of Divine Love: A Critical Analysis of the Soteriology of Peter Abailard* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 139-144; M. T. Clanchy, *Abelard: A Medieval Life* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 285-287; John Marenbon, *Abelard in Four Dimensions: A Twelfth-Century Philosopher in his Context and Ours* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013), 100-101. Of course the former is objective, a transaction from God to humanity because humanity is dominated by sin. Sin is both objective (i.e. punishment and damnation), and subjective (i.e. concupiscence). Williams, "Sin, grace," 260-269.

current diabolical manifestations of evil. Indeed, 'though atonement has been achieved potentially in the event of Christ, it only becomes *actual* in the present, as people make the victory of Christ their own,' which is completed by moving the main thrust of the *Christus Victor* motif more towards the subjective than the objective.[55]

There can be no separation of the atonement and the Trinity as this identifies the Logos with the human condition and enables God to enter into the mess of the human predicament, offer forgiveness and reconcile us to each other. Within atonement as participation, divine omnipotence is that of suffering forgiveness and our participation in the divine relations means when we suffer we do so because we are participating in the divine forsakenness between the Father and Son on the cross.[56] Framing the atonement and divine omnipotence as suffering also means that sacrifice is at the epicentre of salvation,[57] and this manifests itself solely through divine persuasion and wooing, not the traditionally held irresistible grace. Grace is prevenient, not unavoidable, since it respectfully treats human freewill as it woos and persuades people into salvation,[58] as well as baptism and body of Christ membership.[59]

Moreover, according to Fiddes, the manifestation of actualised freewill also determines a kenotic ecclesiology built upon genuine *diakonia* and self-emptying. Indeed, the church needs to

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[55] Fiddes, *PEPS*, 135-139.
[56] Fiddes, "The Atonement," 111-117.
[57] Fiddes, "Sacrifice," 63-66.
[58] Paul S. Fiddes, "The Understanding of Salvation in the Baptist Tradition," in *For Us and for Our Salvation: Seven Perspectives on Christian Soteriology,* ed. Rienk Lanooy. (Utrecht: Interuniversitair Instituut voor Missiologie en Oecumenica, 1994), 25-31.
[59] Paul S. Fiddes, "'Believer's Baptism. An act of inclusion or exclusion?' Signposts for a New Century," in *Exploring Baptist Distinctives*. (Hertfordshire Baptist Association, 1999), 8-13; Fiddes, "Baptism and Membership," 91-93.

be a community of worship, justice, forgiveness and sacrifice.[60] Not only does this give greater understanding to the role and experience of intercessory prayer, it also redefines church leadership in kenotic terms of humble service instead of dominance and monarchical demonstrations of worldly power.[61]

For Fiddes, as a baptist thinker, a kenotically defined ecclesiology and leadership structure sits well with an historic baptist doctrine of the church. Concepts of power and authority are intrinsically connected to a vision of God.[62] Church authority resides *de facto* in the community congregation,[63] not leadership team,[64] and the *nature* of that authority is necessarily grounded in the doctrine of our kenotic, self-sacrificing triune God.[65] Therefore, given that a passible God dwells in a broken and imperfect church as an expression of the humility of God,[66] this leaves no room for dominating power but only persuasive, servant *dunamis* demonstrated by vulnerable leadership in mutual relations of absolute trust.[67] Indeed, this is the necessary

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[60] Fiddes, "Atonement in," 195-208.

[61] See above, pp. 29-30.

[62] Paul S. Fiddes, "Authority in Pastor-People Relationships," in *Baptist Faith and Witness, The Papers of the Study and Research Division of the Baptist World Alliance 1990-95,* eds. William H. Brackney and T.A. Cupit. (Samford University Press, Samford, 1995), 59-61.

[63] This is why, as argued by Kierkegaard, Christianity should be governed by a life of kenotic discipleship which includes suffering and offense, so that when congregations come together their expression of authority is genuinely kenotic. David R. Law, *Kierkegaard's Kenotic Christology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 243-247.

[64] It appears less plausible to work out the implications of kenosis for church leadership and governance in an *episkopos*-structured denomination that operates hierarchically. See less-than-convincing attempts by Anglican Archdeacon Vanessa Herrick, *Limits of Vulnerability* (Cambridge: Grove Books, 1997); Vanessa Herrick and Ivan Mann, *Jesus Wept: Reflections on Vulnerability in Leadership* (London: DLT, 1998), and Anglican Priest T. D. Herbert, *Kenosis and Priesthood* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008).

[65] Paul S. Fiddes, *A Leading Question: The Structure and Authority of Leadership in the Local Church* (London: Baptist Publications, 1986), 7-11, 47-71, cf. Paul S. Fiddes, Brian Haymes, Richard Kidd and Michael Quicke, *Something to Declare. A Study of the Declaration of Principle of the Baptist Union of Great Britain* (Oxford: Whitley Publications, 1996), 12-16.

[66] Paul S. Fiddes, "Christian Doctrine and Free Church Ecclesiology: Recent Developments among Baptists in the Southern United States," *Ecclesiology* 7.2 (2011): 202-207.

[67] Fiddes, "Authority in Pastor-People," 61-63; Fiddes, et al, *On the Way*, 11-16, 28-35; cf. Fiddes (ed.), *Forms of Ministry*, 26; Paul S. Fiddes, "The Root of Religious Freedom: Interpreting Some Muslim and Christian Sacred Texts," *Oxford Journal of Law and Religion* (2012): 177-180.

ecclesiology for the broken body of the undivided Christ.[68]

Having now assessed Fiddes' theological description and discussion on divine power of suffering love that is undergirded by a broad and all-encompassing ontology of divine kenosis, it is now incumbent upon me to construct a kenotic understanding of omnipotence that necessitates a particular type of divine interaction with creation. My intention is to define God's omnipotence within a doctrine of God which can help explain the various scriptural and phenomenological accounts inside a systematic theology of SW.

5.4 Omnipotence's Kenotic Warfare with Evil: Its Nature and Scope

Before defining God's omnipotence, some critical comments on Fiddes' propositions need to be made. First, is the definition of power as 'suffering love' the only way God exercises power? If no, then what other facets of power sit comfortably with a non-coercive, softly-persuasive idea of the power of suffering love? As we will see, the classic (and especially reformed) paradigm of biblical warfare theology is predicated upon a strong definition of sovereign and providential divine power, which seems unlikely to be consistent with power as suffering love.[69]

A corollary, which is also related to the above discussion on omniscience,[70] is that it is

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[68] Paul S. Fiddes, "An Ecclesiology of an Undivided Christ," in *Worship, Tradition, and Engagement: Essays in Honor of Timothy George*, eds. David S. Dockery, James Earl Massey and Robert Smith Jnr. (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2018), 200-216. James claims that genuinely authentic relationships are self-emptying since Christ calls all his followers to be self-emptying as he was. James, "The Enduring Appeal," 11-13.

[69] Even the slightly more dualistic classic paradigm of the early church still believed in and practised ekballistic ministry that used the command-control mode, somewhat antithetical to soft-persuasion through suffering love.

[70] See chapter 4 above.

not obvious how a divine being who operates power only by persuasion can actualise the parousia in a way faithful to scripture if he does not know the kairos time, or if he does can only bring it about in co-operation with creation in a non-unilateral way. Finally, given that Fiddes focuses the majority of his account of omnipotence of suffering love on soteriological matters, it is unclear whether or not non-coercive suffering love will overcome and finally eradicate diabolical evil, especially if evil has no ontological status but is rather *privatio boni* ambiguously expressed as *nihil*.[71]

Moreover, some of Fiddes' early ecclesiological work unambiguously claims that God can and does *overcome* hostile forces including powers and principalities. Conflict is represented by the symbol of chaotic water and so the exodus and baptism are understood as overcoming the hostile powers that oppress human beings.[72] However, these powers are not demonic but rather political and this-worldly which means that divine creative power is not battling it out with Satan *per se* but rather emancipating the people of God by leading them out of exilic despair and disillusionment back to Canaan in order to rebuild Zion.[73] Therefore, does this suggest that God *can* act unilaterally when he has to or has intervention-causal power evolved into the power of suffering love as part of the theological drama of God's people, especially this side of Golgotha? Fiddes unquestionably takes the latter option. The problem of evil and suffering can *only* be satisfactorily explained by divine mutability and vulnerability. Whatever the type of theodicy - consolation, story, protest, or freewill - it has to be addressed by the full passibility of the divine

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[71] See above, pp. 56-64.
[72] Paul S. Fiddes, "Baptism and Creation," in *Reflections on the Water: Understanding God and the World Through the Baptism of Believers*, ed. Paul S. Fiddes. (Oxford: Regents Park College with Marcon: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 1996), 53-55.
[73] Fiddes, *The Escape*, 32-36.

and the reality that evil, whether moral or natural, which is totally alien to God, does actually befall him.[74]

However, the question remains unanswered if we view theodicy and SW as realities that are both caused by diabolical spiritual entities with volition and being. For if this is the case, then it needs to be conceded that Fiddes does not examine this in his corpus since he does not view Satan and demons as ontological realities but as a mystery caught somewhere between personhood and human sin.[75] In fact, it is the denial of an objective reality of Satan that helps drive the subjective stress on the nuanced Abelardian atonement theory of transformation through the redemptive power of suffering love.[76] This, I believe, leaves Fiddes' definition of omnipotence lacking and so it is imperative to broaden and deepen it in order to better understand the reality of divine omnipotence in the midst of a world marred by malevolence and dysteleological evil.

Fiddes defines omnipotence as suffering love on the ground of cruciform and trinitarian kenosis, which is situated within a *generalised* kenosis. This is certainly an appropriate way to define omnipotence for two significant reasons. First, methodologically, theodicy is a theological concept that can be extrapolated from experience, which is an important source of theological method when dealing with theodicy and human suffering.[77] Take Levinas, for instance, who wrote philosophy as someone who survived incarceration in Auschwitz.[78] Of course, not all

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[74] *PIG*, 152-179.
[75] *PEPS*, 118-122.
[76] *PEPS*, 129-150.
[77] See above, pp. 23-28.
[78] Renee D.N. Van Riessen, *Man as a Place of God: Levinas' Hermeneutics of Kenosis* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2007), 101-130. Similarly, Wolterstoff starts his philosophy of divine passibility not from philosophy but from experience after the premature death of his son. Fiddes had the same tragic experience. See Kelly J. Clark,

agree and some see great danger in rooting any aspect of the doctrine of God in experience

which may lead to over-anthropomorphising.[79] However, as as we will see in chapter seven the

lack of biblical detail and historical-theological material on the spirit world legitimately invites

human experience to help form our knowledge base.[80]

Second, kenosis helps to explain perceived divine hiddenness amidst evil and suffering

before and after the incarnation of Christ. Those who posit kenosis in the Hebrew Bible without

any Christological considerations, relate God's omnipotence to humility. The kenosis of God is

realised while retaining transcendence when God manifests himself in humility alongside the

defeated, the poor and the expelled via a gentle whisper (1 Kings 19:12).[81]

Moreover, receding further into the past we note that kenosis helps explain continuous

creation and divine action as the two sides of the same coin. Creation is evolutionary and

ongoing, governed by a somewhat chaotic orderly disorder, and so generalised kenosis maintains

a self-effacing theological position; a kind of kenotic paradoxical theology that enables us to

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"Hold Not Thy Peace At My Tears: Methodological Reflections on Divine Impassibility," in *Our Knowledge of God: Essays on Natural and Philosophical* Theology, ed. Kelly J. Clark. (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1992), 167-168.

[79] Cook believes that titles like *The Human Face of God* and *The Crucified God* use language that reflects weakness in human experience without necessarily differentiating between weakness caused by sin, weakness affected by circumstances, and weakness through an inability to cope. Such an account may well give too much power and significance to circumstances, sin or the power of the evil one, and we need to avoid this. David Cook, "Weak Church, Weak God," in *The Power & Weakness of God: Impassibility and Orthodoxy,* ed. Nigel M De S. Cameron. (Edinburgh: Rutherford House Books, 1990), 69-92.

[80] Clark suggests that *sola scriptura* will not produce the full answer needed due to an 'under-determination' of scripture. This can happen when scripture rightly interpreted may not settle the issue as it may not address the issue at all; when scripture rightly interpreted could settle the issue but the right rules of interpretation may not be discernable; and there may be no such thing as the 'right' interpretation of scripture. There may be competing explanations of the text all of which are compatible with the text. Clark, "Hold Not Thy Peace," 176-177.

[81] Van Riessen, *Man as a Place*, 173-187.

accept both divine hiddenness and the providential work of God.[82] Overall, once we view the

activity of God in creation as vulnerable and an act of self-emptying love,[83] then we can think of

kenosis in trinitarian terms thereby presupposing kenosis as *the* selfless act of the persons in the

inner-trinitarian life of love and placing the kenotic heavenly sacrifice of the lamb at the

intersecting point where God and the world are mutually joined.[84]

The consistent challenge in any delineation of kenosis, whether that be christological,

trinitarian or generalised, is on the matter of power and whether or not there are limitations on

divine omnipotence or different definitions of power which are greater than sheer semantics. Is it

unreasonable to posit that God can choose to self-limit himself at time (T) only to rescind that

decision at time (T+1) or does his omniscience make this impossible? Does divine omnipotence

include the ability to limit one's omnipotence or is that akin to the logical challenges of the stone

paradox? As philosophers agree, there are limitations on omnipotence which create a need to

categorise various impossibilities; those limitations which do not negate an omnipotent being

from being omnipotent.[85] Following classical thinkers, we should discern between logical (God

cannot create a married bachelor) and moral (God cannot lie) impossibilities for God.[86] Other

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[82] John Polkinghorne, "Kenotic Creation and Divine Action," in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, ed. John Polkinghorne. (London: SPCK, 2001), 90-106.

[83] W. H. Vanstone, *Love's Endeavour, Love's Expense: The Response of Being to the Love of God* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1977), 66-67.

[84] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990), 24-36; cf. P. T. Forsyth, *The Person & Place of Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 271.

[85] Wierenga lists certain conditions on omnipotence which include God not needing to be able to do the logically impossible in order to be omnipotent and doing any immoral thing that is incompatible with the essential properties that God has. Edward R. Wierenga, *The Nature of God: An Inquiry into Divine Attributes* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 14-18.

[86] Anselm claimed moral impossibilities for God such as making himself corrupt or telling lies. This would be a sign of impotence, not power, as these corruptible things would have power over him. Anselm, *Proslogion: With a Reply on Behalf of the Fool by Gaunilo and the Author's Reply to Gaunilo,* trans. M. J. Charlesworth. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), 123-125. Similarly, Aquinas listed many illogical things God cannot do such as making himself not to be and making the past not to have been. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles.* II, trans. James F. Anderson. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), 73-76.

categories include virtuous behaviour and non-embodiment; does it impinge on divine

omnipotence if God cannot act courageously or because he is everywhere (Psalm 139:7-8) is

unable to be closer to the train station than the post office?[87] These various kinds of

impossibilities are coterminous under the rubric definition of omnipotence offered by Swinburne

and others as the ability to bring about all states of affairs so long as those states are not

impossible for that being to bring about, and the making of these states of affairs is not

incompatible with that which has already happened and is viewed on balance as a good thing and

significantly better than restraining from doing it.[88]

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to fully investigate the philosophical detail of this

question. Suffice to say, taking our cue from Swinburne, the paradox of the stone demonstrates

that God cannot do that which is logically impossible, and yet this does not necessarily invalidate

his omnipotence.[89] One simply has to note the logical challenge a synoptic reading of Jesus'

return to Nazareth gives to witness the multi-voiced reasoning given for the lack of miracles

performed.[90] Furthermore, the sheer ambiguity of the New Testament data especially in the

pertinent gospel texts that display some form of self-limitation of divine prerogatives in the life

of Jesus of Nazareth,[91] suggests that there can be limitations placed on God by creation that

thwart the divine plan; God is not simply deciding to accede or not to a prayer petition or cry for

deliverance.

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[87] Bede Rundle, *Why there is Something rather than Nothing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 83-84.

[88] Richard Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism,* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 149-161; Stephen T. Davis, *Logic and the Nature of God* (London: Macmillan Press, 1983), 68-85.

[89] Swinburne, *The Coherence*, 152-158.

[90] Mark 6:5-6 cf. Matthew 13:58. Commentators go to great lengths to avoid the natural conclusion that the lack of faith seemed to have limited Jesus' ability to display *dunamis* in Nazareth. See France, *The Gospel*, 550 and Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 367.

[91] See Fee, "The New Testament," 37-44 for an insightful discussion into these passages.

As I am arguing that there are good reasons for using the concept of kenosis to form an instructive framework to define divine omnipotence within a theology of SW, it is critical to construct a concept of omnipotence using a nuanced version of kenosis: one that shows congruence with the current reality of evil and spiritual conflict and the full eradication of it at the final consummation of the eschaton. Following Fiddes' three kenotic moments,[92] which extrapolate trinitarian and general kenosis from a deep kenotic Christology rooted in the deepest expression of divine self-emptying on the cross, a case will be constructed using Philippians 2:5-11 as the quintessential model of kenotic power with the assumption that the cross at the heart of kenotic Christology is also at the epicentre of the triune God and God's relationship with creation. Moreover, the use of a kenotic theology of the cross better serves a subjective, transformative *Christus Victor* authoritative atonement theology with much potential for divine omnipotence.

To construct this kenotic power model I propose using the Christology of Hans Lassen Martensen.[93] Specific to our purposes, he embraced and promulgated a Lutheran theology of divine kenosis, a condescension of God in solidarity with humanity which revealed the capacious nature of divine love.[94] Uniquely, he suggested that the Son had two centres of consciousness:

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[92] See above, pp. 126-127.

[93] A Danish social critic trained in philosophy and theology, who has in recent centuries received greater attention for his own writings instead of simply being the object of Kierkegaard's antipathy. Since the first translation of his work into English in the 1860s [H. L. Martensen, *Christian Dogmatics: Compendium of the Doctrines of Christianity*, trans. W Urwick (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1866)] there has been a gradual growth in English translations of his work. The first was completed in 1969 but only published recently as Robert Leslie Horn, *Positivity and Dialectic: A Study of the Theological Method of Hans Lassen Martensen* (Copenhagen: CA Reitzel, 2007). Intellectually, Martensen stands between Hegel and Kierkegaard and was part-responsible for introducing the former to the Danish intellectual world of the latter. Terry Godlove (ed.), *Between Hegel and Kierkegaard: Hans L. Martensen's Philosophy of Religion*, trans. Curtis L. Thompson and David J. Kangas (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 1-4.

[94] 'We follow, therefore, the apostle Paul, who represented to himself the incarnation of God as a self-emptying (ἐκένωσεν) of the divine logos, manifesting itself primarily as self-abasement . . . (Phil 2:6,7).' Martensen, *Christian Dogmatics*, §133, 265.

one in heaven and one on earth. Christ grew in his divine consciousness while incarnated on

earth and this climaxed during the passion. The major impact was his idea that this two-fold

actuality of the Son was 'not divine and human as on the two-natures model but rather one divine

nature simultaneously in full power and kenotic.'[95] Omnipotence is dialectic, a synthesis of full

and varying kenotic power:

> In the place of world creating omnipotence enters the world-vanquishing and world-completing power, the infinite power and fullness of love and holiness in virtue of which the God-man was able to testify "all power is given to me in heaven and earth" (Matthew 28:18).[96]

Martensen's articulation of kenosis holds much explanatory capacity for God's

omnipotence within a battle-worn creation. The idea of two lateral strands within the life of God,

one permanently in the triune life and one kenotically in the incarnation and after coheres well

with the Christ hymn of Philippians 2. Not only does the story of Jesus function as a tale of God's

assumption of finitude but it also narrates the ascendancy of humanity, a humanity originally

formed to be the temple of the divine. Consequentially, 'Jesus' human nature is eternally

receptive to divinity and in Jesus human nature is perfected and reaches its true idea.'[97] Overall,

therefore, the kenotic Christ cannot remain unchanged: not only is there an internalising of new

experiences for the first time but also after Christ's exaltation a continuation through the Spirit's

ministry of drawing people to himself.

This narrative movement maps effortlessly onto the Christ hymn's self-emptying

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[95] Brown, *Divine Humanity*, 61.

[96] Martensen, *Christian Dogmatics*, §135, 267.

[97] Lee C. Barrett, "Martensen as Systematic Theologian: The Architectonics of Incarnation," in *Hans Lassen Martensen: Theologian, Philosopher and Social Critic*, ed. Jon Stewart. (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2012), 89, cf. Martensen, *Christian Dogmatics*, §137, 270-273.

descent, death, and exaltation of the Son. The Son descends to earth through *kenosis* in the heart of God, gives up dominant and full creative power for persuasive influence and is filled with the Spirit of God which manifests in love, compassion and miraculous signs (Phil 2:6-7).[98] Upon his crucifixion and death, the ultimate *moral kenosis* of suffering love is exemplified by a fatal rupture in the body-ness of the incarnation and alienating forsakenness within the Trinity (Phil 2:8).[99] God's self-emptying is followed by the exaltation of Christ at his resurrection, a *plerosis* state of the Son's self-realisation, which establishes our redemption (Phil 2:9).[100]

Collectively, the crucifixion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ allows us theologically describe the now and not-yet milieu we currently inhabit as a continuum that moves between the poles of kenotic emptiness and the fullness of plerosis. As scripture, tradition and experience reiterate, this current time between Pentecost and the full parousia of Christ consists of moments of healings and death, forgiveness and resentment, deliverance and torment; all evidence of full power, under-used power, and no available power.[101] Finally, when the full eschatological consummation happens, as described in Philippians 2:10-11, it is the sublime and supreme *henotic* moment, an intimate uniting of infinite and finite personhood resulting in the divine and many creaturely persons becoming one,[102] which concludes with

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[98] Brown, *Divine Humanity*, 259-261; Keith Ward, "Cosmos and Kenosis," in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, ed. J. Polkinghorne. (London: SPCK, 2001), 161-164.

[99] *PIG*, 224-250; Balthasar, *Mysterium*, 23-36; Vanstone, *Love's Endeavour,* 55-74. Torrance argues, following Rahner, that since the imminent Trinity is the economic Trinity then only Christ can speak into the stark meaninglessness as the one God enters into and takes into himself all aspects of earthly pain and suffering. Alan Torrance, "Does God Suffer? Incarnation and Impassibility," in *Christ in Our Place: The Humanity of God in Christ for the Reconciliation of the World*, eds. Trevor A. Hart and Daniel P. Thimell. (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1989), 364-368.

[100] The plerosis establishes both the humanward movement to God and the Godward movement to humankind. Forsyth, *The Person*, 321-357.

[101] 'The attempt to follow Christ in this world should not always take the kenotic path. Sometimes [unilateral] power is the right instrument to use.' Brown, *Divine Humanity*, 264-266.

[102] Galatians 2:20.

theosis, that complete unity with the triune God and sharing in the divine life (2 Peter 1:4), which, according to Ward, is the final telos of God for creation.[103]

Because the death and resurrection of the Son signifies an immemorial cross in the being of God, the kenotic journey of Christ is foundational for trinitarian and generalised kenotic sojourns. What is true of kenotic Christology is true of kenotic Trinitarianism and kenotic cosmology.[104] Therefore, to better understand the kenotic reality that conflicts with spiritual powers of evil, extrapolation from the life of Jesus is needed.

First, Jesus, empowered by the Holy Spirit, often operates with full power through authoritative usage of his being and instruction (Luke 4:1; 10:21; Mark 4:39; 5:7; etc.).[105] Second, after his death, he plunges the depths of hell in a radical descent of kenosis to have solidarity with the dead and identify with the complete godforsaken-ness and outright evil he wants to defeat and rescue humanity from (Ephesians 4:7-9; 1 Peter 3:19; 4:5-6).[106] Third, following the precedent established by Jesus empowering his disciples over the demonic (Mark 6:7, 13), after his ascension his name was authoritatively used by his apostles to command demonic powers to leave (Acts 16:18).[107] Finally, at the final consummation of the eschaton, there will be, as part-cited above,[108] the full eradication of all evil - Satan, demons, the beast,

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[103] Keith Ward, *The Christian Idea of God: A Philosophical Foundation for Faith* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 191-203.
[104] Ward, "Cosmos and," 152-166.
[105] Fee, "The New Testament," 37-39.
[106] Edward Oakes, "The Internal Logic of Holy Saturday in the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 9.2 (2007): 188-193.
[107] Conversely, we can also see the fluctuation within the kenosis-plerosis continuum as Jesus' name is used without authority with powerless and disastrous results (Acts 19:13-16).
[108] See above, p. 121.

false prophet - initiated by the Son appearing in full glory and power (Revelation 19:11-21) and completed by the great judge on the almighty throne (Revelation 20:7-15).

Theologically, spiritually and phenomenologically, our current epoch is one which fluctuates between kenosis and plerosis. The reason for the coming of the Son incarnate was to destroy the works of the demonic (1 John 3:8) yet the total eradication of evil is still to happen. In the meantime, we see and experience proleptic divine events of emancipation from the diabolical, fuelled by the plerosis of the triune God. Unfortunately, we also see moments of kenotic servitude when humanity and creation remain enslaved to the free-but-always-evil decisions of the demonic. So, because of the nature of enslaved freedom of Satan and hordes, for which they will be held morally responsible,[109] the power of suffering love will never persuade or influence them to change, thereby only leaving one apocalyptic option: the exhaustive eternal destruction of all evil in the all-consuming *henotic* and *theosic* power of the triune God.

5.5 Conclusion

I have sought to formulate a definition and understanding of an incommunicable attribute of God, divine omnipotence, in order to help explain God's interaction with creation. This current creation endures a now-and-not-yet spiritual warzone reality between the kingdom of God and the realm of darkness, and continues to groan in labour pains longing for the day of redemption and renewal (Romans 8:20-23). As articulated, a theology of divine power has to

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[109] For a helpful account of the philosophy and theology of Jonathan Edwards concerning the type of freedom a person (or spiritual being) needs to have to be morally culpable, see Steve Holmes, "Edwards on the Will," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 1.3 (1999): 273-285.

consist of the spiritual concept of kenosis in order to have congruence with much of the witness of scripture and experience of real life. For, I would proffer, the doctrine of omnipotence, as historically understood as unlimited power, when conflated with the absolute goodness of God is the main impediment to belief in the God of scripture. Many ask the original question of this chapter; why does the biblically good and all-powerful God not just usher in the consummation and bring an end to all evil and spiritual darkness that plagues creation and humankind in particular?

A kenotic definition of omnipotence, based in large measure on Fiddes' theology of suffering love, partially answers this question both in terms of the being of God and his interaction with creation. While it insists that God *could* bring about the end of suffering and an answer to the theodicy question, it does not suggest *when* he will do it, or indeed *why* he has not already done it. As argued, there is simply no complete solution to the problem and reality of evil in the here and now and any attempt to fully explain it is flawed, since the tragic is mysterious and remains without adequate explanation.[110]

Notwithstanding this limitation, the alternative definition of kenosis as suggested by Martensen and used to supplement and develop Fiddes' definition of omnipotence as suffering love, holds much potential for further understanding of God's power in the midst of a reality of SW. First and foremost, it coheres well with the descent and glorification of Christ as described in Philippians 2 and this forms a satisfactory *Christian* theology based on the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth, which according to the gospels and letters of Paul, was rooted in human

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[110] Brown, *Divine Humanity*, 120-125.

weakness (1 Corinthians 1; 2 Corinthians 12). Hence, therefore, this offers a theological account of variable demonstrations of power in the gospels but without concluding, as in process theology, necessary kenosis since this does not account for answered prayer and the consummation of the parousia.

Second, the use of Martensen's account helps negate a couple of the weaknesses of Fiddes' account. It allows us to articulate how kenosis can be extrapolated from Christology to a trinitarian and generalised concept. The juxtaposition of full and varying kenotic power permits the idea of suffering love to be one *mode* of divine omnipotence, not omnipotence *en esse.* Second, Martensen's dialectic of kenotic power offers a way to advance Fiddes' nuanced Abelardian atonement theology by maintaining an emphasis upon subjective experience, but this experience includes genuine events of exorcism and deliverance when full kenotic power is at work; this is all a proleptic foretaste of the ultimate end of all evil.

Overall, this definition of omnipotence goes a considerable way to maintain a traditional understanding of divine power in the now-and-not-yet milieu of the contemporary reality while helping to address some of the perennial questions of theodicy. It also forms the beginnings of an understanding upon which to delineate and articulate the other divine attributes since, as Swinburne correctly claims, omnipotence is central because all the other divine characteristics flow from it.[111]

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[111] "Is God All-powerful?" Richard Swinburne, accessed March 22, 2022, (https://www.closertotruth.com/series/god-all-powerful#video-4271)

Chapter Six

PANENTHEISM - THE SITUATION OF SPIRITUAL COMBAT WITHIN THE OMNIPRESENCE OF GOD[1]

6.1 Introduction

Panentheism is 'the belief that the Being of God includes and penetrates the whole universe, so that every part of it exists in Him, but (as against Pantheism) that His being is more than, and is not exhausted by, the universe.'[2] Fiddes is a self-identifying panentheist:[3] 'My own proposal is that 'pan-entheism' as the participating of everything in God is a sharing in interweaving movements of relational love.'[4] As worked out in *CSG,* he claims that a panentheistic participative doctrine of God is superior to both the classic and pantheistic doctrines of God in order to account for existence, being and non-being in God and creation, and how moral and natural evil affect a passible God of suffering love.[5]

Fiddes' central theological tenet of participation in God is very much the underlying structure of his articulated panentheism. Not only does it help explain divine agency in a world

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[1] For a published adapted version of this chapter see Alistair J. Cuthbert, "The Evil One *in* God?' A Theological Development of Paul S. Fiddes' Panentheistic Doctrine of God to Account for a Robust Ontology of The Satan and Demonic" *Pacific Journal of Theological Research* 16.1 (2021): 3-14.

[2] F. L. Cross, and E. A. Livingstone (eds.). *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* third ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 1213.

[3] It is claimed that panentheism is popular among philosophical theologians but not systematic or biblical theologians. Philip Clayton, "Panentheism in Metaphysical and Scientific Perspective," in *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being: Panentheistic Reflections on God's Presence in a Scientific World*, eds. Philip Clayton and Arthur Peacocke. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 74.

[4] *PIG*, 292.

[5] See above, pp. 48-50.

of flux and decay,[6] it also describes God's ontology in ways which undermine historical abuses of power and hierarchy. Moreover, the concept of participation helps humanity in its relationships through forgiveness, as well as intercessory prayer and the use and application of love in creative ways. Paradoxically, participation through perichoresis can also be used to explain moments of perceived bodily healing as well as apparent divine hiddenness.[7]

In relation to the main thesis of this work, any account of God's omnipresence that articulates God's panentheistic reality is confronted by a significant challenge: *how* does evil exist within God without making God the primary cause of evil and *where* does this evil reside in God's omnipresent holiness and goodness? As discussed above, Fiddes rejects Barth and Moltmann's descriptions of the nature and location of evil and instead takes Augustine's *privatio boni* and juxtaposes it with Heideggerian being and non-being in order to develop an understanding of evil as a slipping into nothingness.[8] From these conclusions of the nature and location of evil, Fiddes subsequently arrives at a number of outcomes regarding the consequences of evil.[9]

The aim of this chapter is to construct a doctrine of divine omnipresence that has room for, and helps make sense of, those things that must be real for SW to be real. Building upon the above account of the nature and ontology of evil, I intend to take Fiddes' panentheistic vision of God's participative triune nature and reconstruct it in order to help explain the presence of personal, ontological evil within the omnipresence of God. This aim will naturally involve

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[6] See above, pp. 19-20.
[7] See above, pp. 28-34.
[8] See above, pp. 57-62.
[9] See above, pp. 84-88.

discussion of evil's impact upon God's passible nature and, in light of scripture's strongly suggested eradication of all evil and suffering, the eschatological and teleological implications of this account.

In order to reconstruct Fiddes' panentheistic vision and make room for ontological evil, his articulation of panentheism will have to be critically analysed. This will involve understanding the covenant theology of panentheism he proffers, defining and critiquing his espoused form of panentheism by examining his trinitarian theology of participation as 'persons as relations,' and succinctly investigating his claim of divine presence and hiddenness. From this a reconstruction of a panentheistic doctrine of God will be done, one which allows for the presence of ontological evil and forms a didactic theological schema that takes seriously claimed experiences and stories of evil and classical theology's assertion of the future eradication of all evil.

6.2 Covenant Theology of Panentheism

As a theologian within the Baptist tradition, Fiddes seeks to undergird his philosophical and theological ideas primarily with sound biblical exegesis. While he accepts that God can and does speak to creation through non-Christian texts and sources, known as the word (small 'w') of God,[10] the canon of scripture has a sufficiency because of its openness to meet with and participate in God.[11] The covenantal nature of panentheism is, for Fiddes, fundamentally rooted

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[10] Paul S. Fiddes, "A Review of 'Persuade us to Rejoice. The Liberating Power of Fiction' by Robert McAfee Brown," *Literature and Theology* 9/1 (1995): 110-111.

[11] Paul S. Fiddes, "The Canon as Space and Place," in *Die Einheit der Schrift und die Vielfalt des Kanons/The Unity of Scripture and the Diversity of the Canon. Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche,* eds. John Barton and Michael Wolter (Bd. 118, Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2003), 128-132, 142-145.

in the earliest biblical covenant expressed in scripture. Creation shares in the divine perichoresis from the moment God makes a post-flood covenant with all living creation (Genesis 9:8-17),[12] which in turn participates in God to greater or lesser degrees.[13]

As this covenant is never reversed then there is a natural building on this foundational principle explicated by other key biblical texts. The psalmist declares there is nowhere in all of creation where God's Spirit is not (Psalm 139:7-12),[14] and the prophets unequivocally announce that God makes other covenants with creation and has relations with other peoples while maintaining a particular covenant with Israel (Hosea 2:18, Amos 9:7, Isaiah 45:1-4).[15] Meanwhile, Jesus prays that all believers will be *in* the triune God just as the Father and Son are *in* each other (John 17:20-23).[16] Paul, appropriating a philosophical idea from Cretan philosophy, states that all humanity lives, moves and has its being in God (Acts 17:28),[17] and most central for participation as relations, the Petrine school spiritually encourages their readers by promising that the calling and election of Christian believers results in their participation in the divine

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[12] Perichoresis, claims Fiddes, is a theological conviction he sourced, not from Moltmann, but from C.S. Lewis. Fiddes, "'For the Dance," 37-41. For an in-depth study of perichoretic co-inherence in the writings and friendships of C.S Lewis see Paul S. Fiddes, *Charles Williams and C.S. Lewis: Friends in Co-Inherence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

[13] Fiddes, "Participating in," 388-390; Paul S. Fiddes, "Preface," in *Covenant and Church for Rough Sleepers. A Baptist Ecclesiology in Conversation with the Trinitarian Pastoral Theology of Paul S. Fiddes,* by Daniel Sutcliffe-Pratt. Centre for Baptist History and Heritage Studies, Occasional Papers 14 (Oxford: Regent's Park College, 2017), 1-4.

[14] Fiddes agrees with Hopkins that this Psalm shows God indwelling all the ubiquitous inscapes of the world. Fiddes, "G. M. Hopkins," 572-573.

[15] Fiddes, "Preface," 2-3; Fiddes, "Covenant and Participation," 127-128. For agreement scholars on the 'sandal of particularity' see Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 74-76; David Allan Hubbard, *Joel and Amos: An Introduction and Commentary* (Nottingham: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 247; J. Andrew Dearman, *The Book of Hosea* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 125-126.

[16] Fiddes takes issue with Volf's comment that humans cannot indwell the person of the Spirit, but only his ambience. *PIG*, 46-48, cf. Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 211.

[17] Fiddes, "Covenant and Participation," 128-129; Fiddes, "Ecclesiology and Ethnography," 32.

nature of God (2 Peter 1:4).[18]

Consequently, establishing a biblical-theological foundation for God's universal and panentheistic omnipresence justifies further application into Fiddes' other two academic disciplines. Regarding the relationship between literature and theology, since God can speak through non-Christian literature, wisdom can be identified and received not just through observation and mediation but through participation in the world which is participating in God.[19] Fiddes defines this as the *fear of the Lord* and it is categorised by an open pluralism and boundless knowledge of the world,[20] a world which has holistic unity since God in his panentheistic glory relates to each part of it within himself.[21]

Concerning ecclesiology, a covenant theology of panentheism comprises of the covenant ecclesiology of the body of Christ, which is a vertical and horizontal covenant through which God uses the local church as the centre point in order to interact and partner with creation.[22] Despite the future eschatological vision of a hope-filled unified and fully operant body of Christ, the *de facto* reality is that the church is a fractured body with missing parts and much inequality. The reason for this, states Fiddes, is the inherent tension created by the vertical and horizontal covenants: tension between the rule of the congregation and church leadership, and between the

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[18] Fiddes, "Participating in," 375.

[19] *SWKG*, 203-212.

[20] Paul S. Fiddes, "'Where Shall Wisdom Be Found?': Job 28 as a Riddle for Ancient and Modern Readers" in *After the Exile: Essays in Honour of Rex Mason*, eds. John Barton and David J. Reimer. (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1996), 186-190.

[21] Paul S. Fiddes, "Old Testament Principles of Wholeness," in *Iosif Ton - orizonturi noi in spiritualitate si slujire*, eds. Sorin Sabou and Dorothy Ghitea. (Oradea: Editura Cartea Crestina, 2004), 36-38.

[22] Fiddes, "An Ecclesiology," 212-214; Paul S. Fiddes, "Covenant and the Inheritance of Separatism," in *The Fourth Strand of the Reformation: The Covenant Ecclesiology of Anabaptists, English Separatists, and Early General Baptists*, eds. Paul S. Fiddes, William H. Brackney and Malcolm B. Yarnell III. Centre for Baptist History and Heritage Studies, Volume 17 (Oxford: Regent's Park College, 2018), 69-72.

local church community and wider church body.[23] The needed antidote is a re-establishment of covenant freedom, defined not as personal autonomy but as living under the ubiquitous rule of Christ; churches need to make covenantal room for this rule.[24]

Notwithstanding this continual falling short, these covenants of the panentheistic God are the spiritual blueprint for God's relationship with the church and creation. God indeed opens up his triune self for creation and the church in order that all of creation currently shares in the life of God, the very life that God determines for himself.[25] Revealing himself to all creation enables God to make different covenants that go beyond the church;[26] a covenant with the world and an inimitable type of covenant with Christians.[27] This 'Christian-type' covenant is one of the three vertical covenants God enters into with his people: a covenant of grace with human beings for their salvation in Christ, a divine covenant between the Persons of the Triune God, and a covenantal agreement God makes corporately with a church or a group of churches.[28]

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[23] Paul S. Fiddes, "Baptist Concepts of the Church and their Antecedents," in *The Oxford Handbook of Ecclesiology*, ed. Paul Avis. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 293-300.

[24] Fiddes, "A Fourth Strand," 157; Fiddes, "Baptist Concepts," 310-312.

[25] Fiddes (ed.), *Believing and*, 19, 44; Paul S. Fiddes, "Christianity, Culture and Education: A Baptist Perspective," in *The Scholarly Vocation and the Baptist Academy: Essays on the Future of Baptist Higher Education*, eds. R. Ward and D. Gushee. (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2008), 9-10; Fiddes gives full credit to Barth for the grace-filled and free basis of God's covenant with creation. Fiddes, "'Walking Together,' 58-63; cf. *CD* II/2, §33.2, 161-194.

[26] Paul S. Fiddes, "Baptists and Theological Education: A Vision for the Twenty-First Century," in *Baptist Identity into the 21st Century: Essays in Honour of Ken Manley*, ed. Frank Rees. (Melbourne: Whitley College, 2016), 188-192.

[27] Fiddes, "Christian Doctrine," 216-219.

[28] It is the second type of vertical covenant, a divine transactional covenant between the persons of the Trinity which is the basis for 'persons as relations' participatory panentheistic theology. Paul S. Fiddes, "Theology of Covenant," in *A Dictionary of European Baptist Life and Thought*, ed. John. H. Y. Briggs. Studies in Baptist History and Thought Volume 33 (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2009), 124-126; Paul S. Fiddes, "Church and Sect: Cross-currents in Early Baptist Life," in *Exploring Baptist Origins*, eds. Anthony R. Cross and Nicholas J. Wood. Centre for Baptist History and Heritage Studies Volume 1 (Oxford: Regent's Park College, 2010), 43-50.

As I will demonstrate below, Fiddes takes this covenant theology of panentheism and uses it to propose a commodious participatory doctrine of God; one that undergirds all claims of a passible God of suffering love. While the biblical basis for a covenant theology of panentheism is plausible, this does not establish what form of panentheistic notion Fiddes is espousing, since there are various accounts of panentheism being suggested, especially in dialogue between theologians and scientists.[29] To this ambiguity we now turn.

6.3 Panentheism Defined: 'Persons as Relations' Participation

While claiming that all God-speech is metaphorical, Fiddes holds that human beings can know and speak of God and, in a limited way, say who God is without resorting only to literalism or apophatic language.[30] Ontologically, God is love and has loving relations within his triune self and so the optimal way to describe this is via the language of participation. Humans exist within a universe of participation with relationships at the centre, all of which is experienced within the very being of God. The entire universe is engaging in God like this and so we should place all other asked existential questions into this experienced framework.[31]

'An "event of relationships" is a participatory concept that makes sense only in actual life events. This does not replace revelation with human experience, but locates the self-disclosure of God where God wants to be.'[32] In debate with Holmes, Molnar and McCall, Fiddes succinctly

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[29] Samuel M. Powell, review of *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being: Panentheistic Reflections on God's Presence in a Scientific World*, by Philip Clayton and Arthur Peacocke (eds.), *Scottish Journal of Theology* 61.1 (2008): 107-108.

[30] Paul S. Fiddes, review of *Karl Barth: A Theological Legacy*, by Eberhard Jüngel. *Journal of Theological Studies* 40/2 (1989): 696-699.

[31] "What is God [parts 1&2]?" Paul S. Fiddes, accessed March 22, 2022, (https://www.closertotruth.com/series/what-god-part-1#video-2225)

[32] Fiddes, "Relational Trinity," 185.

depicts his panentheistic and participatory doctrine of the Trinity as 'persons as relations.'[33] He

claims that not only is this the most appropriate language that we have to speak of the persons of

the Trinity but that it is also methodologically sound,[34] uses the majority of theological sources,

and was the approach of the early Church fathers who defined hypostasis relationally, not

objectively.[35] Moreover, relations language offers the best analogy for God-speech and it also

helps us understand Rahner's rule by finding a concept of the divine that expresses the relational

experience of persons and helps us understand our participation in the triune God.[36]

By his own admission, Fiddes believes that his *unique* contribution to trinitarian theology

is defining the Trinity as 'persons as relations,'[37] which ungirds his panentheistic vision of God.

As discussed,[38] his panentheistic doctrine of participating in God using a persons-as-relations

trinitarian definition permeates the entire substantial corpus of his work in systematic theology,

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[33] Fiddes, "Relational Trinity," 159-206.

[34] McCall is critical of Fiddes' notion of relationality without involving language of persons. It jettisons classic Christology and embraces degree Christology. McCall, "Response to Paul, 197-203. Fiddes' rejoinder is that all human language falls short and that our own human experiences of living in relations with others can be seen to reflect and participate in the relations in God. Paul S. Fiddes, "Rejoinder Comments and Clarification," in *Two Views on the Doctrine of the Trinity*, ed. Jason Sexton. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 205-206. On degree Christology, Fiddes remains ambiguous. See Paul S. Fiddes, review of *Christology in Conflict. The Identity of a Saviour in Rahner and Barth* by Bruce Marshall. *Journal of Theological Studies* 40/2 (1989): 700-703.

[35] Holmes disagrees, claiming that the Eastern Fathers were committed to divine simplicity more than Fiddes acknowledges and that the concept of 'relations' does not connect to the idea of personhood, as claimed by Fiddes. Holmes, "Response," 188-190. For a sustained defence of his first rebuttal point, see Stephen R. Holmes, *The Holy Trinity: Understanding God's Life* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2012), 97-120.

[36] *PIG*, 34-46, cf. Karl Rahner, *The Trinity,* trans. Joseph Donceel (Tunbridge Wells: Burns & Oats, 1970), 22.

[37] Paul Fiddes, personal communication with the author, 15 & 16 March 2016. Of course, Fiddes is aware that this language comes from Augustine and Aquinas. His claim of uniqueness lies in taking an extra step beyond 'subsistent relations' and using radical language that talks about the "event of relationships," which is the best language of participation. Fiddes, "Participating in," 379-383.

[38] See above, pp. 28-34.

theological insights from literature, and baptist and ecumenical ecclesiology.[39] Consequently,

however, this exclusive claim creates a challenge when attempting to situate him on the

continuum of panentheistic understanding which some suggest currently exists.[40] On this

continuum between the poles of pantheism and classic theism Gregersen helpfully suggests that

there are, generally, three varieties of panentheism.[41] Despite the differences, however, for our

current purposes it is vital to note that there is the challenging but important ontology of bilateral

relations between God and the world in which 'the world is *somehow* "contained in God" and

there will be *some* "return" of the world into the life of God' (emphasis mine).[42] This generic

ontology commonly runs through all three varieties and affects every attempt to define the

'somehow' and the 'some.'

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[39] A selection of his work in the three areas of research where this is the case includes Fiddes, "Participating in," 375-391; Fiddes, "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit," 207-210; Paul Fiddes, personal communication with the author, 15 & 16 March 2016; Fiddes, "Concept," 22-23; Paul S. Fiddes, "The Late-Modern Reversal of Spirit and Letter: Derrida, Augustine and Film," in *The Spirit and the Letter: A Tradition and a Reversal*, eds. Günter Badder and Paul S. Fiddes. (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 124-130; Paul S. Fiddes, "Not Anarchy but Covenant: A Nonconformist Response to Matthew Arnold's view of Religion and Culture," in *Theology and Human Flourishing: Essays in Honor of Timothy J. Gorringe*, eds. Mike Higton, Jeremy Law and Christopher Rowland. (Eugene: Cascade, 2011), 147-155; Fiddes, "Attending to," 83-85; Paul S. Fiddes, "The Church and Salvation: A Comparison of Orthodox and Baptist Thinking," in *Ecumenism and History: Studies in Honour of John H. Y. Briggs*, ed. Anthony R. Cross. (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2002), 143-148; Paul S. Fiddes, "The Church Local and Universal: Catholic and Baptist Perspectives on *Koinonia* Ecclesiology," in *Revisioning, Renewing, Rediscovering the Triune Center: Essays in Honor of Stanley J. Grenz*, eds. Derek J. Tidball, Brian S. Harris and Jason S. Sexton. (Eugene: Cascade, 2014), 97-108; Paul S. Fiddes, "Koinonia Ecclesiology among Roman Catholics and Baptists: Hermeneutics, Perichoresis and Personhood," *Pages* (The Journal of St. Andrew's Biblical Theological Institute) 18/2 (2014): 250-253, 262-265.

[40] That Fiddes is situated somewhere on the continuum is reflected in the attempts he makes to differentiate his position from both pantheism and classical theism. Paul S. Fiddes, "Response to Paul D. Molnar," in *Two Views on the Doctrine of the Trinity*, ed. Jason Sexton. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 104-108.

[41] *Soteriological* panentheism (similar to *eschatological* panentheism espoused by Polkinghorne and Ward), *revelational* (or *expressivist*) panentheism, and *di-polar* panentheism (also known as Whiteheadian panentheism). Niels Henrick Gregersen, "Three Varieties of Panentheism," in *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being: Panentheistic Reflections on God's Presence in a Scientific World*, eds. Philip Clayton and Arthur Peacocke. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 20-34.

[42] Gregersen, "Three Varieties," 20.

Gregersen examines the nature of the bilateral relations in order to differentiate. Within

the above-mentioned generic ontology, he discovers two different bilateral relationships. The first

he labels *strong* (or *strict*) which holds that there is a *necessary* interdependence between God

and the world. In its dipolar form it asserts that God cannot exist without the world, and that there

is a necessary bilateral relationship between God and world.[43] The second Gregersen names is

qualified panentheism and argues that it is a form of *Christian* panentheism because,[44] in contrast

to the strong bilateral relationship, qualified panentheism holds that while the world cannot exist

without God, God is self-existent and does not need the world to exist. Any co-determining that

happens in this kind of panentheism is an act of divine grace and freedom in which God freely

desires temporal events to influence him and creatures to share in the life of the triune God.[45]

Before we attempt to situate Fiddes on this continuum of panentheism, a qualification is

in order. Fiddes is a sophisticated theologian whose theology cannot be reduced to a certain

kind.[46] While Gregersen's varieties of panentheism is a helpful heuristic guide, it would be

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[43] Gregersen, "Three Varieties," 22-23.

[44] Olson concurs and argues that this christian panentheism, which is a qualified view, is now a serious option for all orthodox Christians and it is located via media between modern (strong/strict) panentheism and classical theism. Roger E. Olson, "A Postconservative Evangelical Response to Panentheism," *Evangelical Quarterly* 85/4 (2013): 337.

[45] Gregersen, "Three Varieties," 23-24.

[46] Fiddes' claim of drawing from and going beyond Augustine and Aquinas is prominent in his ecclesiology work and serves to theologically analyse different ecclesial and spiritual practises. Paul S. Fiddes and Peter Ward, "Affirming Faith at a Service of Baptism in St Aldates Church, Oxford," in *Explorations in Ecclesiology and Ethnography: Studies in Ecclesiology and Ethnography*, ed. Christian Scharen. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 61-65; Fiddes, "Ecclesiology and Ethnography," 24-29; Fiddes, Haymes and Kidd, *Baptists and the Communion*, 78-80. His source claim comes from a certain reading of Augustine and Aquinas concerning God's subsistent relations which suggests that the relations in God are as ontologically real as anything that is created or uncreated. *CSG*, 49-57 cf. Fiddes, "Relational Trinity," 167-169. One can conclude that Fiddes is correct in this assertion given than none of his interlocutors challenge this point and Holmes even concurs with it. Holmes, "Response," 186-190; Molnar, "Response," 191-196; McCall, "Response," 197-203.

erroneous to subject Fiddes' theology to an over-simplification in order to make it fit one of Gregersen's categories. The main problem it seems with the varieties on the continuum used in this debate, as Olson suggests, is that the term 'panentheism' is overstretched and is now used to cover too much.[47]

To illustrate, we can observe debate concerning the placement of other apparent panentheists on a spectrum. Cooper argues that Pannenberg is indeed a panentheist despite Pannenberg forcefully stating that he is not.[48] Similarly, Edwards joins Cooper to label Moltmann and his trinitarian-perichoretic panentheism as modern (i.e. strong/strict) by grouping him alongside process thinkers such as Griffin,[49] and claims that his philosophical framework comes from neoplatonic dialectical ontology found in Hegel and Schelling.[50] In contrast, Olson states that Moltmann comes approximately from the same theological stable as Pannenberg and definitely advocates a soteriological panentheism which affirms God's freedom and the voluntarist nature of his chosen dependence upon the world.[51]

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[47] Olson, "A Postconservative," 328, 336-337.

[48] John W. Cooper, *Panentheism: The Other God of the Philosophers* (Nottingham: Apollos, 2007), 259-281, cf. Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 45. Fiddes sees Pannenberg as a theological bed-fellow. Fiddes, "Response to Paul," 104.

[49] Denis Edwards, "A Relational and Evolving Universe Unfolding Within the Dynamism of the Divine Communion," in *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being: Panentheistic Reflections on God's Presence in a Scientific World*, eds. Philip Clayton and Arthur Peacocke. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 202.

[50] Cooper, *Panentheism*, 257-258.

[51] Roger E. Olson, "Trinity and Eschatology: The Historical Being of God in Jürgen Moltmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 36 (1983): 213-227; Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E. Olson, *20th-Century Theology: God & the World in a Transitional Age* (Cumbria: Paternoster Press, 1992), 170-199. Boyd agrees stating, 'While Moltmann sometimes uses panentheistic-sounding language, he clearly differentiates himself from process panentheism by affirming God's freedom in relation to creation as well as by affirming creatio ex nihilo.' Gregory A. Boyd, *Crucifixion of the Warrior God: Interpreting the Old Testament's Violent Portraits of God in Light of the Cross*, vol. 1 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017), 477 fn.37. Both scholars rightly base their conclusions on a number of Moltmann's writings in which he explicitly commits himself to God's intrinsic freedom, divine voluntary self-limitation, and *creatio ex nihilo*. See Jürgen Moltmann, "The Trinitarian History of God," *Theology* 78 (Dec 1975): 643-646; Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation* (London: SCM Press, 1985), 72-93; Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: Doctrine of God* (London: SCM Press, 1981), 105-111.

One probable reason for the variety of opinion when attempting to situate any theologian on this continuum is the number of complex factors and variables involved in the definition of panentheism. I suggest, therefore, that to elicit as much understanding as possible about where in relation to other panentheist thinkers Fiddes sits, we need to reduce the number of variables to a single dependent one on this continuum: *the degree to which God's perfection is influenced and affected by the world and creation.*

This focus on the God-world bilateral relations helps to identify what Fiddes does not mean in describing panentheism as a sharing in interweaving movements of relational love. As well as distancing himself from any hyper-weak panentheistic model where, due to his absolute aseity and transcendence, God is not affected at all by the world, Fiddes also refuses to endorse any Hegelian statement of a dependent, bilateral collapse of God and the world,[52] or any process theological statement denying divine self-existence by insisting on a non-contingent, necessary universe as part of the being of God.[53] That said, it is considerably easier to state what Fiddes

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[52] 'Without a world God is not God.' Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, vol. 1, ed. Peter C. Hodgson, trans. R. F. Brown, P. C. Hodgson, and J. M. Stewart (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), 308 fn.97. On what Hegel meant by the statement see Andrew Shanks, *Hegel's Political Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 87-89.

[53] See above, p. 20, cf. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 348. Decades later Hartshorne and Reese theologically develop and nuance Whitehead's position. Hartshorne and Reese, *Philosophers Speak*, 22.

does not believe, rather than what he does. However, upon closer inspection, one can identify a number of claims by Fiddes which can be used to build a constructive understanding of the nature of his panentheism that will help to form a panentheistic definition of divine omnipresence within which it will be possible to locate a theological understanding of SW.

To begin, Fiddes does not believe that the theological tradition of the church should never be either challenged or departed from and is increasingly open to *experience* as a legitimate source of theological formulation.[54] One painful experience Fiddes personally went through which has influenced his thinking with regard to *where* God is in mentally alternate worlds, was the premature and tragic death of his son Benjamin, to whom he dedicates *PE*. Juxtaposing this experience with Bonhoeffer's Christology has brought Fiddes to the conclusion that God through Christ was not only incarnated in this world but also in all *other* alternate worlds people mentally inhabit in their mind.[55] This has, in turn, led him to promulgate what he terms 'everyday theology,' which contra Coakley's narrow definition, is a participating in God in a wide and boundless panentheistic reality and if applied to the church and the sacraments can lead to creative and capacious sacramental and Eucharistic theology.[56]

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[54] See above, pp. 16-28. One could tentatively identify Fiddes as a theologian who utilises a post-conservative approach to theological construction, which is open to using both reason and experience (especially phenomenological-empirical evidence). 'The great theologians of each generation have realized that merely repeating particular formulations inherited from the previous generations would only preserve the gospel by petrifying it.' F. LeRon Shults, *Reforming the Doctrine of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 201.

[55] Paul Fiddes, personal communication with the author, 15 & 16 March 2016.

[56] Paul S. Fiddes, review of *God, Sexuality and the Self: An Essay 'On the Trinity,'* by Sarah Coakley. *Ecclesial Practices* 3/1 (2016): 142-46. Examples can be found in Paul S. Fiddes, review of *Material Eucharist*, by David Grumett. *Ecclesiology* 13/3 (2017): 387-392; Paul S. Fiddes, "Sacraments in a Virtual World?" *The Kate Boardman Blog*, accessed May 25, 2017 http:// kateboardman.me.uk/blog/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/virtual-communion.doc; Fiddes, "*Ex Opere Operato,*" 222-229; Fiddes, Haymes and Kidd, *Baptists and the Communion*, 163-184.

One implication of sacramental theology that pushes the boundaries leads Fiddes to consider the world as the 'body of God.' The term is suggested by Fiddes as the best metaphor to help understand sacramental and divine presence, especially within an online age and physical bodiless communication.[57] In a reality of bilateral relations with the divine, how is it possible to encounter a bodiless God especially at the Eucharistic table with elements that claim to be the blood and body of Christ?[58] Largely in keeping with McFague's thesis, Fiddes insists on holding the incarnation of Christ as the key to understanding the world as God's body, asserting that we work from the particular to the universal so that the 'yes' of the Son is inseparable from the 'yes' of Jesus of Nazareth. This, he claims, helps avoid pantheism and certain unsatisfactory forms of panentheism. It also guarantees a participating of everything within the life of the triune God alongside all the diversity and otherness that accompanies it.[59]

This assertion does find common ground with a number of other panentheists but not complete assent. Not all panentheists concur that the world is the body of God as it creates other theological complications. Two in particular are salient when discussing Fiddes. First, as Fiddes is a proponent of radical, irrevocable freewill,[60] some claim that the body of God metaphor is not compatible with any concept of libertarian freewill and only works with a compatibilist understanding. Ward, for instance, argues that early proponents of this type of thinking sought to uphold human individuality and causality in the history of the universe. If God is the head and he

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[57] From Sallie McFague, *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1993).
[58] *PIG*, 278-285.
[59] *PIG*, 285-294, cf. McFague, *The Body*, 131-195.
[60] See above, pp. 34-39, 78-84.

wants the body to operate holistically as a body, then where does this leave individual freedom and genuine human determinative say-so?[61]

Secondly, in aligning himself closely to McFague's delineation of the body of God metaphor, Fiddes situates himself very close to elements of process panentheism he distinguishes himself from in other works.[62] His 'persons as relations' work is thoroughly trinitarian and personal whereas McFague's theology has aspects of non-personal constructs of the divine and non-trinitarian assertions of God.[63] Moreover, Fiddes' ambivalence to degree Christology,[64] it would be prudent to maintain critical distance from McFague who fully endorses a panentheistic, evolutionary understanding of Christ.[65]

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[61] Keith Ward, "The World as the Body of God: A Panentheistic Metaphor," in *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being: Panentheistic Reflections on God's Presence in a Scientific World*, eds. Philip Clayton and Arthur Peacocke. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 64-67. A third way through the impasse of this perennial debate could be Page's concept of 'Pansyntheism.' Focussing on prepositional change, she suggests that to get beyond the divine sovereignty-freewill debate that remains problematic if everything is *in* God, we reframe it as God is *with* everything and everyone. That way divine and creaturely freedom is preserved and the connection comes through divine love seeking a response. Ruth Page, *God and the Web of Creation* (London: SCM Press, 1996), 40-52. For global-ecological implications see Ruth Page, "Panentheism and Pansyntheism: God in Relation," in *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being: Panentheistic Reflections on God's Presence in a Scientific World*, eds. Philip Clayton and Arthur Peacocke. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 222-232.

[62] Of course there are many similarities including non-patriarchal models of God, divine passibility, and language of bilateral intertwining of God and the world. Hence Fiddes and McFague have been located in the same panentheism-promoting group of theologians. See Michael W. Brierley, "Naming a Quiet Revolution: The Panentheistic Turn in Modern Theology," in *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being: Panentheistic Reflections on God's Presence in a Scientific World*, eds. Philip Clayton and Arthur Peacocke. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 3, 8, 11.

[63] While critiquing the monarchical model of God, McFague states everything in the world can become God's saving presence, it should not be limited only to the 'word' of God. This part of her thinking prompts a suggestion from fellow feminist theologian Ruether that her theology has a strong Neo-Platonist similarities found in both Plato and Plotinus. Sally McFague, *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 63-69, 200 fn.9; McFague, *The Body*, 193-194.

[64] See above, p. 157 fn.34.

[65] 'Jesus is not ontologically different from other paradigmatic figures either in our tradition or in other religious traditions who manifest in word and deed the love of God for the world. McFague, *Models of*, 136.

Another feature of Fiddes' persons-as-relations panentheism which resists easy categorisation is his work on panentheism, forgiveness and reconciliation. It is with this consideration that his understanding and advocacy of nuanced bilateral relations involving God and the world helps to place him on the single variable continuum consisting of degree differences in relation to God's perfection and to what extent it is influenced by the entire creation. Forgiveness is, attests Fiddes, a two-stage journey: a journey of discovery and a journey of endurance and anguish, both of which are journeys into God himself since Christ modelled them in his declaration of forgiveness from the cross (Luke 23:34) and subsequent death.[66] In this act, Christ teaches that there is a difference between divine perfection and divine completion; the latter is grounded in God's sovereign desire to relate to creation without any loss or addition of perfection.[67]

Further, locating the journey of forgiveness and reconciliation in the participatory relations of the triune God means that when we forgive we are actually partaking in the divine rhythms of the forgiveness of God. Also these movements of forgiving which participate in the divine dance of forgiveness obligate us, like Jesus, to pronounce and release unconditional forgiveness on people who have not apologised or repented in order to unlock hatred and hopefully bring them back into full relationship through reconciliation.[68] If this does not work, suggests Fiddes following Derrida and Riceour, then with God's enabling grace, radical forgetting or memory locking will be appropriate.[69]

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[66] *PIG*, 191-210.
[67] *PIG*, 211-215.
[68] *PIG*, 215-220.
[69] Fiddes, "Memory, Forgetting," 130-133. Fiddes has embarked upon further original work locating the Mennonite practise of 'restorative justice,' which is currently sometimes used in the British criminal justice system, within the panentheistic movements of participation in the divine. See Fiddes, "Restorative Justice," 1-12.

These unique elements included in Fiddes' panentheistic definition and vision defy reductionism and, in contrast to some claims, preclude his general inclusion in a group of panentheistic thinkers on the continuum somewhere between deism and pantheism.[70] Collectively, together with his 'persons as relations' definition of panentheistic, divine participation, these factors allow us to arrive at a panentheistic definition of divine omnipresence that can didactically be used as part of a systematic theology of SW. For it seems entirely plausible and appropriate that when we consider all aspects of Fiddes' theological construction of panentheism we are justified to place him on the continuum of Christian (qualified) panentheism; that qualified view that stands via media between classical theism and traditional panentheism and states that God necessarily exists without any creation, that the creation cannot exist without God, and that God willingly opens up his self-sufficiency to contingent creation in order to have a genuine, bi-lateral relationship with creation.[71]

Moreover, Fiddes' belief in post-death development and progressive possibilities also aligns him with *soteriological* panentheism which frames God 'all-in-all' talk in eschatological terms recognising the future consummation of all things dwelling in God in the eschaton.[72] This naturally implies that in the now-and-not-yet milieu we currently inhabit a complete panentheistic reality does not exist. It should be clear that this is an understanding of God's omnipresence that

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[70] Brierley is careful and correctly identifies a number of nuanced differences held by Fiddes that set him apart from other panentheists, Brierley, "Naming a Quiet," 3, 8-11. Conversely, Molnar is off-mark by pronouncing that Fiddes' panentheism is closer to Ted Peters and Catherine LaCugna, which can only be concluded if there is a misunderstanding of Fiddes' subtle distinction between self-existence and perfection, and self-sufficiency and completion, the latter of which God freely desires to be influenced by creation. Molnar, "Response," 194-196.

[71] My suggestion in order to help Fiddes clarify his position would be to use as one of his defending scriptures Acts 17:*24*-28, not v.28 alone, as the five verses clearly establish both God's self-existent ontology and panentheistic reality.

[72] See above, p. 88; Fiddes, "The Making," 12-14; Paul S. Fiddes, "Acceptance and Resistance in a Theology of Death," *Modern Believing* 56/2 (2015): 228-236.

is fully congruent with the thus far explicated theology of SW. The rest of this chapter will articulate an understanding of panentheism that makes room for the presence of the demonic and SW. However, before that, a brief excursus is needed to consider a corollary of the non-fully realised panentheism of the here and now and how Fiddes explains it by focussing on the hiddenness and presence of God.

6.4 Divine Hiddenness and Presence

'Hey God. . . where do you go to get away…away?'[73]

Rea claims that theological exploration into the question of divine hiddenness became a significant focus of academic theology in the second half of the twentieth century.[74] An overview of the Fiddes corpus regarding divine hiddenness and presence supports this assertion. In his early work the 'death of God' movement generates implications for divine hiddenness and presence that Fiddes addresses with explorations into kenotic metamorphosis and the 'death of the living God' where he posits that since God through Christ enters into the realms of death, it is in God experiencing death that we know he is hidden, not absent or dead.[75] These critical reflections have evolved over the decades to the point that the subject of God's presence and hiddenness is a substantial element of his panentheistic vision of participation. Most recently Fiddes has constructed a theology of presence and place in which he draws from diverse sources: the biblical text (Job 28), the *khora* of Plato and other philosophers, and the contemporary challenge of culture against language of domination and hierarchy - which collectively reveal

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[73] King's X, *Get Away*, from *Ogre Tones*, © 2005, by Knife Fight Media, Compact disc.
[74] Michael C. Rea, *The Hiddenness of God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 6. Rea lists a number of texts that came out in the last 30 years of the previous century by Terrien, Morris, and others, including Schellenberg whose main thesis Rae critically interacts with in his text.
[75] *CSG*, 174-206.

that the presence of God is a hidden presence and that, in his triune nature, there are relational

non-places that create space within God.[76]

Fiddes contributes to our current focus on divine hiddenness and its relevance for

understanding the incomplete, pre-eschaton panentheistic reality which currently exists. Using

literature as a starting point, he observes from Huxley and Le Guin the myth of a present, full

utopia. By confusing the eternal present with the eternal presence, the post-modernist posits that

only the present, not past or future, is real. In the present there is no real presence but just traces

of it. Fiddes, using Heidegger, claims these traces of presence lead to Being itself which is only

found in its hidden presence situated in the khora - a place that is a no-place, which is where

wisdom is found.[77]

If the fullness of wisdom is hidden and found in the place which is a no-place, then the

heart of present reality is hiddenness, specifically the hiddenness of God. Fiddes notes that a

number of attempts to identify these no-places have been made, such as the *zimsum* of the Jewish

Kabbalah, the apophatic tradition of mutual indwelling of God and cosmos in individual persons,

and the subject-object participating in many places as espoused by Barth. However, Fiddes'

radical proposal is that no-places are found in the spaces between the relational movements of

God; no-places found in God's presence can house the 'nothing' of the *khora*, apophatic

theology's 'empty place,' and both Barth's and Levinas' 'hiddenness as encounter' theology.[78]

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[76] *SWKG*, 218-265.
[77] *TPE*, 228-243; Fiddes, "Millennium," 7-22; cf. Fiddes, "The quest for a place," 35-42.
[78] Fiddes, "The quest for a place," 43-55; *TPE*, 250-258. Notwithstanding the alleged affiliation, Fiddes joins Bentley-Hart to criticise Levinas' use of Kabbalah in which God retreats in order to make nothingness, arguing that God does not need to withdraw to create space for 'no-place' and the sublime does not need to be demarcated from the beautiful to preserve the hiddenness of God. Fiddes, "Attending to," 78-80; cf. Hart, *The Beauty*, 75-93.

Therefore, asserts Fiddes, in the current semi-realised eschaton, both divine

presence and hiddenness are realities that we experience in the world around us: in culture,[79] in

literature,[80] and ecclesiastical structures.[81] Yet using soteriological panentheistic-sounding

language, our current desire for fuller presence unveils the millennial, especially post-millennial,

inclination that has permeated much of church history.[82] Whether it is labelled 'limited utopia' or

'millennial hope,' it is in these expressions which defy a dominating presence, resist associating

'presence' with 'present' and set faces to the open future, that a future millennial hope situated in

the Trinity emerges. Seeing the eternal God not as a dominating subject but a humble divine

being who operates kenotically, a millennial hope looks towards the future and hopes for the

final coming of God in all his panentheistic fullness.[83]

6.5 Ontological Evil and the Panentheistic Reality of God

Clayton claims that most panentheisms, following Augustine, subscribe to a privative

view of evil in which the goodness of God works in and through the cosmos to eliminate evil. In

contrast, panentheisms that do not take the privative view offer no helpful theodicy since God

remains responsible for evil, just as he does in much classical theology.[84] Having delineated

Fiddes' panentheism, I will now, in counterpoint to Clayton's assertion, outline a panentheistic

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[79] Fiddes, "The Story," 80-83.

[80] Fiddes claims that the coming and going of Aslan between Narnia and other worlds helps us theologically understand the hiddenness of God. Paul S. Fiddes, "C. S. Lewis the Myth-Maker" in *A Christian for All Christians: Essays in Honour of C. S. Lewis*, eds. Andrew Walker and James Patrick. (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1991), 144-149. God's hiddenness is also explored in classic literature. *FAL*, 138-144, 224-233.

[81] When baptist believers gather and baptise members of the covenant community, divine presence is realised in the presence of the triune God who intersects human and divine love in the triune perichoretic relations. Paul S. Fiddes, "Baptists and the Leuenberg Documents on Baptism," in *Dialog zwischen der Europäischen Baptistischen Föderation und der Gemeinschaft Evangelischer Kirchen in Europa zur Lehre und Praxis der Taufe*, eds. Wilhelm Hüffmeier and Tony Peck. (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Otto Lembech, 2005), 189-190.

[82] *TPE*, 221-228, 259-261.

[83] Fiddes, "Millennium," 23-25.

[84] Philip Clayton, "The Panentheistic Turn in Christian Theology," *Dialog* 38.4 (1999): 293.

doctrine of God which accounts for the presence and phenomenon of ontological evil, near-jettisons God's responsibility for evil, and strongly aligns with the scriptural witness of the final eradication of all evil in the eschaton.

In the above discussion concerning Fiddes' understanding of what evil is and whether it has ontology, it was recognised that his *a-priori* commitment to a panentheistic-participatory doctrine of God leads to the conclusion that evil as non-ontological *privatio boni* is more coherent, thereby corroborating Clayton's assertion.[85] However, as already mentioned, there is a case to be made for the existence of ontological evil within the panentheistic reality of God if there is engagement with contemporary definitions of 'naked existence' ontology; existence which maintains ontological *privatio boni* without a reductionistic *privatio esse*.[86] I will argue that this constructed framework better reflects both a *prima facie* understanding of the biblical witness regarding the evil realm, and personal experience of SW as a valid source for theological formulation.

As established, Fiddes jettisons Moltmann's concept of *zimsum* arguing that it implies that evil is a necessity of creation.[87] Instead he adopts a nuanced, dialectical understanding of Barth's *das Nichtige* account suggesting that on one hand it points towards evil as a necessary, non-contingent part of the creation while on the other offers the greatest definition of hostile and

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[85] See above, pp. 56-64.

[86] See above, p. 64.

[87] See above, pp. 57, 151. In this conclusion Fiddes agrees with Wright that the necessary result of creation is not evil, but rather than evil is a distinct possibility of creation and so is to be viewed as a threat to creation. "Something will come," 93-95; cf. Wright, *A Theology*, 77. Both Wright and Fiddes' analysis of Moltmann's *zimsum* is accurate given that Moltmann states that the *nihil* created by God's withdrawn presence in which he creates his creation, is non-avoidable God-forsakenness, hell, and absolute death. It is this forsakenness, i.e. nothingness, that God on the cross enters into, overcomes, and makes part of the eternality of God. *This* is his omnipresence, as reflected by the Psalmist in Psalm 139:8. Moltmann, *God in*, 86-93.

alienating non-being of the fallen world that represents the foreign nature of suffering which

arises from a free creation. This non-being, asserts Fiddes, is that which befalls the sovereign

God as he exposes himself to it and suffers from it.[88]

If evil is simply a negation of the good, then what has been discussed would progress

things when answering the *how* and *where* of evil's co-existence alongside God's omnipresent

holiness and goodness. However, to make a constructive-theological case of God's panentheistic

nature which accommodates a personalist-ontological account of evil, Fiddes' panentheistic

doctrine needs to be developed by taking some influences on Fiddes in a different direction.

While acknowledging that there are forms of *privatio boni* which hold a robust account of The

Satan,[89] a Barthian account of the nothingness that well captures the ambiguous and chaotic

nature of the demonic,[90] and some panentheistic accounts that do hold to an ontological Satan

and demons with volition and sentience,[91] I propose that the greatest potential for this

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[88] See above, pp. 49-50, 151. Of course, claims Fiddes, the consequence of the death of the living God on the cross is the allowance of death and non-being within God himself. *CSG*, 193-200. Significantly, Fiddes' dialectical approach to Barth reflects well the tension in Barth's articulation of 'nothingness' which strongly asserts an inevitability of the ontic reality of nothingness alongside creation but the emphatic denial that neither God nor creation is the author of nothingness since 'nothingness is neither as the Creator or creature is.' *CD* III/3, §50.4, 349-368.

[89] Dante's description of Satan is both ontological and parasitical. He is described as 'that creature who had once appeared so fair,' a reference to Lucifer, one of the sons of light, who has now become a parasitical figure and exists as a 'negative image of ultimate truth.' This is specifically illustrated by his three faces parodying as the ultimate negative of the Holy Trinity - hatred, ignorance, impotence. Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy: Inferno, Purgatorio, Paradiso*, trans. Robin Kirkpatrick (London: Penguin Books, 2012), Canto 34, 154-158, 533-535.

[90] Barth asserts that the nothingness, that which is not willed by God, has 'real evil and real death as well as real sin. . . there is also a real devil with his legions, and a real hell.' *CD* III/3, §50.3, 310. That there is a real ontic reality of the nothingness despite not being what the Creator or creature is, captures well the chaotic and ambiguous nature of the demonic accounts in scripture that synthesise single and plural pronouns of an evil spirit with no apparent contradiction. See for instance Mark 5:1-20 and Luke 4:31-37.

[91] Jonathan Edwards is a salient example. Strong and persuasive cases have been made that his doctrine of God is both neoplatonic and panentheistic; a 'qualified (christian)' panentheism, to use Gregersen's terminology. For a convincing case that Edwards' God is a simple and free being and creation is a necessary output of God's creative nature and like an emanation from God see Oliver D. Crisp, *Jonathan Edwards on God and Creation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 138-163. Within his panentheistic doctrine of God Edwards holds to a personalist-ontological account of the Satan which he proffers in his works. See Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Vol. 8: Ethical Writings*, ed. Paul Ramsey. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 589-599.

construction lies in Fiddes' use of von Balthasar's theology of the Trinity in which there is room

within the 'yes' between the Father and Son for creation to rebel by stating an emphatic and

rebellious 'no' within the triune relations of God.

Fiddes' appeal to von Balthasar's 'yes' and 'no' in the relations between the Father and

Son has become a persistent and permeating idea in his more recent work.[92] Within von

Balthasar's corpus, Fiddes repeatedly draws from his work on dramatic soteriology found in the

'Theo-drama' volumes of his trilogy, ones that address 'the good' within systematic theology.[93]

In these volumes von Balthasar explores the initiating of the incarnated Son into the divine life of

the Trinity and the central role played by libertarian freedom. With significant echoes of Barth,[94]

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[92] In my research on Fiddes it first appears in 2006 in Fiddes, "Participating in," 388-390, and since then has reappeared with much regularity, especially within his corpus of work on ecclesiology. See Fiddes, "The Place," 82-86; Fiddes, "Christianity, Culture," 15-16; Paul S. Fiddes, "Dual Citizenship in Athens and Jerusalem: The Place of the Christian Scholar in the Life of the Church," in *Questions of Identity: Studies in Honour of Brian Haymes*, eds. A. R. Cross and R. Gouldbourne. Centre for Baptist History and Heritage Studies Volume 6 (Oxford: Regent's Park College, 2011), 133-136; Paul S. Fiddes, "Preface," in *Tradition and the Baptist Academy*, eds. Roger A. Ward and Philip E. Thompson. Studies in Baptist History and Thought 31 (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2011), xi-xviii; Fiddes, "Ecclesiology and Ethnography," 24-29; Paul S. Fiddes, "A Conversation in Context: An Introduction to the Report, The Word of God in the Life of the Church," *American Baptist Quarterly*, 31.1 (2012): 19-21; *SWKG*, 368; Fiddes, Haymes and Kidd, *Baptists and the Communion*, 95-101; Paul S. Fiddes, "'*Koinonia*: The Church in and for the World.' Comment on the Final Part of *The Church – Towards a Common Vision* (Faith and Order Paper 214)," in *Baptist Faith and Witness, Book 5*, ed. Eron Henry. Papers of the Commission on Mission, Evangelism and Theological Reflection of the Baptist World Alliance 2010-2015 (Mclean: BWA, 2016), 41-44; Fiddes, "Ecclesiology and Ethnography: one," 23-29; Fiddes, "Pentecost," 199-204; Paul S. Fiddes, "The Trinity, Modern Art, and Participation in God," in *Christian Theology and the Transformation of Natural Religion: From Incarnation to Sacramentality. Essays in Honour of David Brown*, ed. Christopher R. Brewer. (Leuven: Peeters, 2018), 96; Paul S. Fiddes, "'Is this the Promised End?' Shakespearean Tragedy and Christian Tragic Theology for Today," in *The Transformation of Tragedy. Christian Influence from Early to Modern*, eds. Fionnuala O'Neill Tonning, Erik Tonning and Jolyon Mitchell. Studies in Theology and the Arts 16 (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 223-226, 238-240. As Fiddes said to me in person, "there is only one place that anyone can say 'no' to God and this is in the 'yes' of the Son to the Father." Paul Fiddes, personal communication with the author, 15 & 16 March 2016.

[93] Specifically, volume 4 called 'The Action' in which von Balthasar sets the scene of how God reveals himself the world by focussing upon spiritual conflict and the need for the armour of God: '*Revelation is a battlefield.* Those who do battle on it can only be believers and theologians, provided they have equipped themselves with the whole armour of God (Eph 6:11)' (emphasis mine). Balthasar, *Theo-Drama. Vol. IV*, 12.

[94] Barth and von Balthasar influence on Fiddes is shown in his use of them and his identification of overlapping themes. For example, both are adamant that God has complete freedom which is his natural self-expression. There is no process theology external contingent pressure to create. In this freedom God creates reality and being. Beyond being is the *nihil,* nothingness that is not willed by God but real nonetheless. *CD* III/3, §50.1-4, 289-35, cf. Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *Epilogue*, trans. Edward T. Oakes, S.J. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 77-86.

von Balthasar delineates the drama of the Trinity, a drama of kenosis couched in divine and creaturely freedom. The creation of the world is the first and most significant of three acts of kenosis. It is also a freely given divine act of kenosis that brings forth the Son and posits an absolute and infinite distance which can contain all other distances, including that of sin.[95]

This first act of kenosis gives the creature freedom over and against themselves and their creator, a freedom located within the relations of the Father and the Son. To quote von Balthasar, 'the Father's self-surrender to the Son and their relationship in the Spirit (which grounds everything) - human freedom participates in the divine autonomy, both when it says Yes and when it says No.'[96] When creation rebels and says 'no', a twisted knot in the Son's pouring out of himself within the relation with the Father is realised, which is a situation made possible because it is only within the Son's *eucharistia* to the Father that human freedom and perversion is exercised.[97]

When defining the demonic and evil realm in terms of personalist ontology, von Balthasar offers threads of enquiry and development not easily discernable in Barth or Fiddes. Von Balthasar postulates a kenotic theology of covenant, one that avoids internal suffering in the Trinity while grounding all experiences of suffering in God. Because of the boundless distance between Father and Son when the Son is freely brought forth in an act of divine kenosis, there is a resultant incomprehensible separation of God from himself in which exists the darkest,

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[95] Balthasar, *Theo-Drama. Vol. IV*, 319-328.

[96] Balthasar, *Theo-Drama. Vol. IV*, 328.

[97] Fiddes borrows the language of a 'twisted knot' from von Balthasar. It is not clear what the difference, theologically or otherwise, between a 'knot' and a 'twisted knot' is. Balthasar, *Theo-Drama. Vol. IV*, 328-332; Balthasar, *Mysterium*, ix, cf. Fiddes, "Participating in," 389; Fiddes, "Sacrifice," 61-62.

malevolent and more bitter forms of separation. This includes the possibility of hell given the voluntary disjunction of the Father and Son.[98]

Von Balthasar, like Barth and Fiddes, at no time defines evil in ontological terms. However, conversely, he does not proffer *privatio boni* or nothingness as the total *esse* of evil. Rather, when juxtaposing God's all-powerful love which contains powerlessness and the genuine freedom bestowed upon any creature made in God's image, this results in a freedom that is perfectly sovereign but still externally influenced by alien freedoms and rebellion; rebellious freedoms that may seem impregnable but are not if countered with the correct weaponry such as intercessory prayer (2 Cor 10:4-5).[99] The use of this weaponry is made efficacious by the kenotic power of the cross; an event that enables Jesus to 'psychologically' exhaust evil of its potency and also empower creatures to take evil captive in its intrinsic essence every time we refuse to resist it.[100]

In order to adapt von Balthasar's theological construct to allow the rebellious 'no' of ontological evil located within the 'yes' of the Son to the Father, various degrees of God's omnipresence need to be explored alongside consideration of the origin and freewill of evil sentient beings who have volition and self-awareness. If, von Balthasar argues, because of the freely desired distancing of the Father and Son, there is an interminable and incomprehensible distance which contains all other distances, sin and wicked forms of separation including hell,

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[98] Balthasar, *Theo-Drama. Vol. IV*, 319-328.
[99] Balthasar, *Theo-Drama. Vol. IV*, 330-332; Balthasar, *Epilogue*, 69-74.
[100] Balthasar, *Epilogue*, 74-76. These claims of von Balthasar demonstrate that while he is not restricting evil to only *privatio boni* he is also not willing to embrace the scriptural witness of the ontology of evil. Talk of 'psychological' exhaustion of evil aligns well to Wink's psychological-neurotic interpretation of the Gerasene demoniac, Wink, *Unmasking*, 43-50, and the notion of taking evil captive each time we refuse to resist contradicts James' imperative to 'resist the Devil, and he will flee from you' (James 4:7).

then arguably this distance is not static and closed but rather resistant to definition, mutable and malleable, which could include the containment of personal-ontological evil.[101]

Fiddes asks, how can there be any rejection within the panentheistic presence of God? He acknowledges that in Barth, Rahner and von Balthasar rejection is a distinct possibility whereas he argues for hopeful universalism via an omni-reconciliation of all beings.[102] Yet, Fiddes' panentheism is a qualified christian soteriological panentheism in which the current semi-realised panentheistic reality is still waiting for the full consummation of all things.[103] At present, however, creaturely and spiritual rebellion exists within God's omnipresence. Delineation of the current non-fully consummated panentheism allows for the exercising of creaturely freedom in positive and negative ways, intensifications of the presence of God's Holy Spirit, and degrees of divine presence and hiddenness. Focussing specifically on the Spirit, enables an application of Christ's Spirit who is metaphorically described as a divine wind, and who drives and dispels evil wherever there is an increased gradation and intensification of the divine panentheistic presence.[104]

Therefore, if the Spirit of Christ is present and moves in the relations between the Son and the Father,[105] relations in which exist the measureless distance of sin and the incomprehensible separation within God himself that houses darkness, malevolence, hell, and the twisted knot of creation's rebellion against its origins, then it seems consistent to argue that

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[101] It is the malleable nature of the relations within the triune God that Fiddes claims grounds human experience such as a sequence of thought in science within the dynamic flow of God's triune life. Fiddes, "Relational Trinity," 178.
[102] *SWKG*, 365-369.
[103] See above, pp. 166-167.
[104] Warren, *Cleansing*, 260-269.
[105] *PIG*, 251-277.

within the yes of the Son to the Father, the Spirit of Christ is continually and actively dispersing evil; evil which is generated by the quintessential ontological and sentient being of rebellion, one created as part of creation who now exercises disproportionate maniacal power as the one who is the *ultimate* denier of his own creaturely origin.

Popular eschatology holds that the metaphorical-theological idea, common to futurist and spiritual perspectives on the book of Revelation, behind the number of the beast, i.e. 666, is the ultimate falling short of divine perfection which is symbolised by the number 7.[106] Therefore, I want to suggest, the rebellion of the creation unwilling to acknowledge its origin as created by God which exercises a 'no' within the 'yes' between the Father and the Son could be extrapolated to demonstrate the ultimate expression of rebellion if applied to the biblical-mythical account of the angelic fall and the existence of Lucifer, otherwise known as the devil or The Satan.[107] Without repeating the above,[108] the angelic fall account holds that Lucifer was created as an archangel who later rebelled against God, and so his rebellion should be viewed as the ultimate disavowal of his origins. Therefore, as a created being currently in a state of ultimate rebellion, Lucifer (now The Satan) can be located within the relations of the Trinity, specifically in the twisted 'no' knot found in the 'yes' between the Son and the Father.

In contradistinction to Fiddes' claim that because the world is God's there is no room for

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[106] Steve Gregg, *Revelation: Four Views - A Parallel Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1997), 302-307.

[107] I use the term 'biblical-mythical' not to suggest an untrue account but rather to better reflect the mystery and ambiguity of Isaiah 14:12-21 and Ezekiel 28:1-17, which while not offering a strong exegetical case could be used, as argued by Wright, to justify good theological reasons for reaching an angelic fall account of the origin of the demonic. Wright, *A Theology*, 70-73.

[108] See above, pp. 64-74.

Satan but only internal and external structures of evil,[109] I maintain that it is theologically

plausible to locate all evil, including personified evil, in God, specifically in the rebellious 'no'

within the infinite distance of the 'yes' between the Father and Son. For this to be theologically

coherent one needs to articulate an understanding of the Satan and his minions which sits

somewhere between the demythologised, non-personalist position of Fiddes and the fully

personal and autonomous view of many popular SW advocates.[110] The best place to start for this

definition is with Boethius' minimalist definition of a person as 'the individual substance of a

rational nature,'[111] since this could be used to assert the Satan and demons' ontological

particularity.

Wink outlines the scriptural revelation of a changing Satan: he who evolves from a divine

viceroy residing in God's presence (Job 1-2) to the antithetical malevolent enemy of God who

will ultimately meet his end before the full consummation of the new heavens and new earth

(Rev 20:7-10).[112] This understanding can be used to define The Satan and demons as 'semi-real'

with ontology but without-full-personhood. Indeed, Wink argues that the lake of burning

sulphuric fire and brimstone into which the Satan will be cast is the same lake found in very

presence of the angels and the lamb in Rev 14:10.[113] Presuming this lake is synonymous with

hell, we can advance the case, contra Fiddes,[114] that the current location of the hell of evil is

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[109] Paul S. Fiddes, "Internal and External Powers. A Response to 'Journeying in Hope; Paul's Letter to the Romans and John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* and *The Holy War* in Conversation,' by Scott C. Ryan," *American Baptist Quarterly* 33.3-4 (2014): 324.

[110] See for example Anglican minister David Watson, Watson, *God's Freedom*, 50-67.

[111] Boethius, 'A Treatise Against Eutyches and Nestorius,' *The Theological Tractates*, trans. H. F. Stewart. (London: Heinemann, 1918), 85, cf. Boethius, *The Consolation,* xxviii-xxix.

[112] Wink, *Unmasking*, 9-40.

[113] Wink, *Unmasking*, 39-40.

[114] "Do Heaven and Hell Really Exist?" Paul S. Fiddes, accessed March 22, 2022, (https://www.closertotruth.com/series/do-heaven-and-hell-really-exist#video-2219)

found in the panentheistic presence of God, within the extreme depths of the 'no' found in the

'yes' between the Father and Son. Moreover, hell will remain so until evil is finally *eradicated*

when the present part-realised panentheistic eschatological reality arrives at its full

consummation, and the fullness of God's omnipresent reality is inaugurated and all things will

peacefully and harmoniously dwell 'in' God.[115]

Following Fiddes' rejection of Satan's full personhood without assenting to

Fiddes' non-ontological conclusion leaves room for an account of the Satan and the demonic

which still endorses evil's quasi-ontology, volition, semi-autonomy and say-so. This, I suggest,

best explains the biblical narrative accounts of the Satan and demons found in the gospels and

the myriad of accounts of apparently personal demons coming from practitioners, especially in

the global south.[116] Indeed, argues Warren, defining the demonic as semi-autonomous helps

explain the common phenomenon of a synergy between sin and demonic affliction that operates

inside malleable boundaries which adapt according to the individual or structural level of the

demonic power.[117]

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[115] The use of 'eradicated' in reference to evil is deliberate. While acknowledging the highly symbolic and mysterious nature of the book of Revelation, the hermeneutical dilemma needs solved by interpreting the highly symbolic language through the lens of the plain language. Therefore, mentions of the beast, false prophet and Satan being thrown into the lake of sulphur in order to be forever tormented (Rev 19:20; 20:10) should be interpreted in light that the lake of sulphur *is* the second death (Rev 20:14, 15; 21:8), and the previous declaration of the beast going to his destruction (Rev 17:8). For the most compelling conditional immortality case that the lake of sulphur fire is a consuming fire and all evil and wicked beings (both physical and spiritual) will be ultimately consumed see Edward William Fudge, *The Fire That Consumes: A Biblical and Historical Study of the Doctrine of Final Punishment*, third ed., (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2011), 234-252.

[116] In adding to the earlier discussion on the place of experience in Fiddes' theology (see above, pp. 23-28), it seems clear that despite Fiddes' desire to use story, experience, participation as genuine sources of theology (for example *PIG*, 3-10; Fiddes, "God and Story," 5-22; Fiddes, "Spirituality as Attentiveness, 38-42), when it comes to personalist-experiential accounts of demonization, Fiddes fails to seriously consider them or wrestle with the implications for his participatory doctrine of panentheism.

[117] Warren, *Cleansing*, 274-276.

In sum, therefore, it can be concluded that all origins and expressions of evil can be located within the near-realised soteriological panentheism of God without God being the sole author and originator of evil. Ontological evil is located in the extreme twisted 'no' within the 'yes' between the Father and Son, an extreme knot in the relations of the Trinity. The reason for its presence is the irrevocable autonomy given to creation, both physical and spiritual, which has manifested itself in choices of extreme rebellion as well as adherence. Therefore, as claimed by Fiddes, God is not free of all responsibility for evil since he created a world of freewill-possibilities for good or ill, hence why he participates and suffers in solidarity with creation.[118]

6.6 Conclusion

In this chapter Fiddes' central theological tenet of God's panentheistic omnipresence via creation's participation in the triune nature of God has been developed in order to construct a theology of panentheism capacious enough to include the reality of demonic personal-ontological spiritual beings. This has involved examining Fiddes' covenantal form of panentheism organised around 'persons as relations' participation, placing it tentatively on a typological continuum of various panentheisms, and arguing that the current non-fully realised panentheism of God means that divine hiddenness and presence are possible within the non-places in the relations of God.

Taking Fiddes' use of von Balthasar's 'no' of rebellion, sin and evil within the 'yes' of the Father to the Son has enabled a case to be made in order to establish the location of all beings and expressions of ontological evil within the panentheistic realm of God. Crucial to the

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[118] See above, pp. 78-84.

construction of this case is using and developing von Balthasar's dramatic soteriology into the theological realm of spiritual beings' autonomy, volition, self-awareness and, following Boethius, a minimal definition of quasi-being and personhood.

Indeed, there seems no conclusive and good reason, despite being argued by Fiddes and other modern panentheists, to restrict an understanding of divine panentheism, which has to account for the existence of evil, to only a *privatio boni* understanding of evil. It is surely plausible to hold a similar view for spiritual beings, especially in light of supporting biblical data regarding the creation of humankind including origins and freewill ability; a biblical demonology does not equal a speculative philosophy of demons.[119] However, regrettably, in adopting certain other themes from both Barth and von Balthasar, Fiddes has limited his definition of panentheism in a way that does not allow for serious exegetical engagement with biblical texts on the demonic nor phenomenological investigation of modern-day accounts of deliverance ministry.[120] Potentially he is vulnerable to the same well-known judgement aimed at Barth, who was criticised for his rejection of the idea of an angelic fall without serious exegesis of the salient passages which are historically held to describe what Augustine called the 'angelic catastrophe.'[121]

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[119] Barth pleaded that we not allow theology to become philosophy: an angelology should not be confused with a philosophy of angels. *CD* III/3, §51.1, 410-412.

[120] As attested to in UK Baptist life by the Baptist Deliverance Study Group.

[121] Barth's denial that demons are fallen angels is primarily based upon two major concerns: First, it conflicts with his argument that, contrary to common misconception, demons belong to intrinsic evil known as the nothingness not the negative side of creation, and second, in light of how little is known about the nature of human freedom, it is far too speculative to postulate about angelic spiritual freedom that, it is claimed, led to the rebellion of Lucifer and one-third of the angels. *CD* III/3, §51.3, 530-531. Barth's strong stance against any notion of an angelic fall has, notes Bromiley, seriously undermines Barth's excellent work on making angels a subject of theological investigation and left him vulnerable to the charge of marginalising the demonic and whether he is indeed 'obeying scripture as the criterion of dogmatic purity and truth?' Bromiley, *Introduction*, 155.

As we proceed to the next chapter in which a baptist-charismatic unified theology of SW will be constructed, this nuanced panentheistic articulation of God's omnipresence will be integrated into the broader theological construct. Via engagement with other scholars it will be argued that Fiddes' 'persons as relations' panentheism with certain qualifications is congruent with a unified SW theology which accounts for situations and experiences of ontological evil while maintaining that 'the earth is the Lord's and everything in it; in God we live, move, and have our being; and we may participate in the divine nature' (Psalm 24:1; Acts 17:28; 2 Peter 1:4).

Chapter Seven

THEOLOGICAL CONSTRUCTION: A DOCTRINE OF GOD FOR

SPIRITUAL WARFARE THEOLOGY

7.1 Introduction

Some think spiritual warfare is only deliverance. Others emphasize pulling down strongholds in the heavenlies. Still others say spiritual warfare is doing the works of Jesus – preaching, teaching, and living the truth. Yet another group claims all this is impractical. They claim we should focus on feeding the hungry, resisting racism, and speaking out against social injustice. *I believe we have to do it all.* (emphasis mine).[1]

Despite the absence of academic rigour, Sherman's characterisation of the different emphases on SW perfectly captures the various paradigms that exist within the literature, albeit across various sub-disciplines of theology. Therefore, in this penultimate chapter the objective is to take the content of the previous five chapters and use it to form the underlying doctrinal premises concerning God's ontology and character upon which to construct a systematic theology of SW. In short, create a dialectical theology, one which takes Fiddes' theology and interacts with various interlocutors, both similar and dissimilar to Fiddes, in order to harmonise the differences and work towards creating a capacious theology of SW that is operant in two spheres: the individual and the corporate.

To formulate a dialectally unified theology of SW, transcendent and imminent dimensions need to be considered in order to explicate what Hiebert has termed the 'excluded middle'; that realm of reality revealed by scripture which consists of spiritual beings and forces

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[1] Sherman, *Spiritual Warfare*, 187.

operating on this earth but not perceivable by rational assumptions or the scientific method.[2] In

order to explore these dimensions effectively, a theology needs constructed which looks at the

spirit world through the lens of the individual and the corporate while concurrently assessing the

a priori assumptions and *a posteriori* conclusions about God's nature and character, focussing

specifically on his omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence. The need to divide the

individual from the corporate, primarily for clarity, should not be seen as a denial of the

interweaving nature of evil in both the individual and corporate spheres, which afflict human

beings. As claimed, there is a definite reality to social evil, an evil with both human and

supernatural origins that can with relative ease dominate the lives of human beings when on their

own and in a social group setting.[3] However, before turning our attention to the substantive

theological-constructive content of this chapter, some comment about the methodological

challenges first needs to be offered.

7.2 Methodology - Challenges and Solutions

Overall, little systematic theological work has been done on SW.[4] While there is a

substantial corpus of biblical scholarship on the subject,[5] systematic theology has largely ignored

the evil spiritual realm when postulating its doctrine of God, as quintessentially demonstrated by

Barth.[6] This lack of scholarly production within systematics and dogmatics means there is a very

limited *body* of systematic theology literature to interact with and so, very much in the spirit of

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[2] Paul G. Hiebert, "The Flaw of the Excluded Middle." *Missiology* 10.1 (Jan 1982): 35-47.
[3] Stephen C. Mott, *Biblical Ethics and Social Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 3-21.
[4] See above, pp. 11-12.
[5] A few of the better known ones include Arnold, *Ephesians*; Berkhof, *Christ and*; Caird, *Principalities*; Wesley Carr, *Angels and principalities: the background, meaning and development of the Pauline phrase* hai archai kai hai exousiai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Schlier, *Principalities*; Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*.
[6] See above, p. 11 fn.51. Of course, since in Barth's view demons belong to the nothingness they received indirect consideration when he developed his doctrine of nothingness. *CD* III/3, §50.1-4, 289-368.

Fiddes, a construction of a dialectical theology of SW will necessarily be both connectional and inter-disciplinary within the theological sub-disciplines.

Recently, a number of theological works have summarised and in some cases analysed the limited contemporary theological literature on all matters relating to SW. Warren briefly notes academic literature and authors from various disciplines including NT scholarship, biblical theology, history, Pauline scholarship, interdisciplinary studies, psychology, practical theology, and even what she coins 'speculative theology.'[7] In more depth, Smith spends a considerable portion of his charismatic-anglican theology of SW analysing and critiquing three significant theological thinkers of the subject matter: Nigel Wright, Amos Yong, and Gregory Boyd.[8]

Slightly more dated, missiologist McAlpine elucidates various traditions within scholarship on the powers and principalities, an area of research which has received renewed interest since the horrors of Nazism and publication of Berkhof's seminal text *Christ and the Powers*. He discerns four streams that vary in their definition and understanding of powers and principalities. First, the reformed tradition in which thinkers such as Wink and Kellermann argue that all powers and principalities will be transformed and reconciled to God. Then, with the

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[7] Warren, *Cosmic Cleansing,* 14-17.
[8] Smith, *The Church Militant*, 124-182. This author notes that while the historic anglican SW thinkers analysed by Smith and the church congregation used as a case study both held a strong sovereignty of God theology, none of the three chosen thinkers do and so there lacks a theological undergirding of what is historically and practically believed in anglican churches who do SW. Alistair J. Cuthbert, review of *Church Militant: Spiritual Warfare in the Anglican Charismatic Renewal,* by Graham R. Smith. *PNEUMA: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 40**.**4 (2018): 580-582. Löfstedt goes further in his critique. Torsten Löfstedt, review of *Church Militant: Spiritual Warfare in the Anglican Charismatic Renewal,* by Graham R. Smith. *Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift* 94.1-2 (2018): 111-112.

Lohfink brothers and Yoder, an anabaptist tradition that calls for non-violent and radical over-againstness in order to counter the powers and principalities. Third, a third-wave tradition, illustrated in the writings of Wagner and Dawson, which places far greater emphasis on the ontological nature of all powers and principalities and engagement via 'supernatural' means. Finally, McAlpine claims that in the works of Kelsey, Hiebert and Shuster, there is the social-scientific tradition that engages the powers and principalities using the intersectionality of psychology and anthropology.[9]

Finally, Beilby and Eddy highlight four different models currently used in scholarship that have both convergence and divergence across the different aspects of SW theology.[10] In the text key proponents of each of the four models set out the distinctives of their view and points of convergence and divergence from the other views. Familiar names author three out of the four essays:[11] Wink proffers a social-scientific and Jungian understanding entitled the 'World Systems Model;' Boyd delineates a model best suited for exorcism and deliverance of individual persons called the 'Ground-Level Deliverance Model;' and Wagner offers an updated third-wave model

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[9] McAlpine, *Facing*. There is a difficulty differentiating scholars into different categories. For instance, McAlpine places Wink in the reformed tradition alongside Berkhof, Kellermann, and Green. There are certainly areas of overlap with these thinkers but to then exclude such a significant thinker as Wink from both the anabaptist and social scientific traditions is a major oversight, especially given his emphasis upon non-violent protest and Jungian depth psychology and archetypes.

[10] Beilby and Eddy, *Understanding*. A significant SW text. David Bradnick, review of *Understanding Spiritual Warfare: Four Views*, eds. James K. Beilby and Paul Rhodes Eddy, *Religious Studies Review* 39.4 (2013): 240.

[11] Powlison, whose work does not appear in much of the literature is whose essay, claims to be the traditional voice of spiritual warfare, one that retains a strong sovereignty of God concept at its core and focus on internal spiritual struggle with the fallen nature. His work is discussed below. David Powlison, "The Classical Model," in *Understanding Spiritual Warfare: Four Views,* eds. James K. Beilby and Paul Rhodes Eddy. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 89-111. Perhaps Smith should have engaged with Powlison's work instead of Wright or Yong (see above, p. 184 fn.8).

which focuses specifically on territorially active evil spirits and is entitled the 'strategic-level deliverance model.'

Overall a number of theologians who have written extensively on the doctrine of God, evil, and divine conflict have come to the fore in the last quarter of a century. Together with biblical scholars and missiologists there now exists a limited body of literature from different disciplines of the theological encyclopaedia that will be appealed to in order to support or counter the overall thesis and help ensure that this dialectical and unified theology of spiritual warfare is as inter-disciplinary as it is systematic.[12]

The final comment to be made is to acknowledge two potential lacunae with respect to the above-mentioned scholars from various disciplines. With the exception of Wright,[13] none have written or dialogued with Fiddes, and second, the obvious lack of non-protestant, non-western, global south, and female voices.[14] The first lacuna is not particularly self-evident and the rest of this chapter will bring Fiddes into dialogue with these other scholars. The second omission reflects the scope of this constructive theology: a baptistic-pentecostal systematic theology of SW which draws from scholars, like Fiddes, situated within the western protestant-baptistic tradition.[15]

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[12] There is some disparity of academic rigour in the literature with more facile intellectual engagement. E. Janet Warren, review of *Understanding Spiritual Warfare: Four Views*, eds. James K. Beilby and Paul Rhodes Eddy, *PNEUMA: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 36.1 (2014): 168.

[13] Fiddes has directly critiqued the theology of Wright. See Fiddes, "Something will come."

[14] Amos Yong, while originally from Malaysia, has spent his entire academic career in the USA. A number of female authors will be cited in this chapter but they are a minority of voices.

[15] As demonstrated above (pp.10-11), Fiddes is an ecumenical thinker whose sources of theology draw from all traditions and historical epochs. Therefore, despite the lack of diversity among his interlocutors, the use of Fiddes' theology as a primary source guarantees a more diverse and theologically rich account than would be gained from other protestant-baptistic thinkers.

Part A: The Evil Triptych - Spiritual Warfare Theology for the Individual

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of *this world* and of *the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit* who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the *cravings of our flesh* and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. (emphasis mine).[16]

SW literature generally defines evil which afflicts the individual as the flesh, the world and the devil.[17] Indeed, recognising that the life of every Christian is beset with a lifelong struggle with evil, the anglican prayer book catechism identifies the flesh, the world and the devil as the sources of personal temptation and sin which need countered daily with christian discipline practises.[18] In so doing, however, this in no way amounts to a denial or preclusion of the continuum that exists between the individual and societal spheres,[19] or the fact that the individual often leads to the corporate.[20] Nor does it offer an erroneous reductionism for the complexity of defining evil, a definition that continues to defy theologians.[21]

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[16] Ephesians 2:1-3 (NIV); cf. James 3:15 and 1 John 2:14b-16. The author of Ephesians makes it clear that the past living death which was characterised by trespasses and sins, was brought about and tied up in the forces of the world, the devil and the flesh. Andrew T. Lincoln, *Word Biblical Commentary Volume 42: Ephesians* (Dallas: Thomas Nelson, 1990), 117.

[17] Beilby and Eddy, *Understanding*, 32. Beilby and Eddy use this triumvirate as the pedagogical basis to arrange their four views text on SW.

[18] Working Party. *A Time to Heal*, 178-179.

[19] Gerald Ediger, "Strategic-Level Spiritual Warfare in Historical Retrospect." *Direction: A Mennonite Brethren Forum* 29.2 (2000): 126-127; Randy Friesen, "Equipping Principles for Spiritual Warfare," *Direction* 29.2 (2000): 145-151.

[20] Nigel G. Wright, "Charismatic Interpretations of the Demonic," in *The Unseen World: Christian Reflections on Angels, Demons and the Heavenly Realm*, ed. Anthony N. S. Lane. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 149-151. For a thorough account of the psychology of collective groups and national evil see M. Scott Peck, *People of the Lie: The Hope for Healing Human Evil* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1983), 212-253.

[21] McFarland highlights exactly the quintessential problem when the term 'evil' is used as a catch-all term given the significant differences, for starters, between moral evil, natural evil, physical evil and metaphysical evil. Therefore, we need to completely rethink the language of good and evil in common and academic discourse. Ian A. McFarland, "The Problem with Evil," *Theology Today* 74.4 (2018): 321-339.

Yet, notwithstanding these caveats, in order to create a capacious SW theology pertaining to christian discipleship that cogently deals with the influence of evil in the life of each christian believer, we need a balanced understanding of evil, the nature of which has the flesh, world and devil as its kernel.[22] Therefore, in this thesis SW theology in the sphere of the individual will maintain the *flesh* (internal human desire towards evil), the *world* (the unhealthy cultural and social environment in which we live) and the *devil* (a powerful and intelligent malevolent spirit-being) as the main definition of evil.

This leads us to consider the synergistic potential of the evil triptych with Fiddes' understanding of evil. Due to his definition of evil-without-ontology,[23] Fiddes redefines the traditional understanding of evil's triumvirate with another biblical triumvirate: sin, law and death.[24] The reason for this redefinition is to align with his proffered understanding of evil as *privatio boni,* since sin, law and death are each perversions of something good and the diabolical result when goods are worshipped as ultimate whose tyranny is to be obeyed. However, as concluded above, there is no convincing reason to situate our depiction of the evil which befalls the individual Christian only within Fiddes' somewhat binary *privatio boni*-only conclusion to the exclusion of much experiential witness and biblical tradition regarding ontologically-grounded evil with much over-againstness, volition and some kind of sub-personhood.[25]

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[22] Arnold, *3 Crucial*, 32-37. Powlison defines 'moral evil' as a three-stranded braid of the world, flesh and devil, which is different to, and needs an alternative approach to, 'situational evil.' See Powlison, *Power Encounters*, 109-112.
[23] See above, pp. 65-66.
[24] *PEPS*, 114-118.
[25] See above, pp. 88-90.

Moreover, having explicated in the previous chapter a nuanced understanding of divine panentheism with much room for ontologically-based evil,[26] it really is no longer the case that the only understanding of evil congruent with God's panentheistic omnipresence is *privatio-boni*. Rather, a refined doctrine of evil as set out in chapter two, one that maintains the ontological over-and-againstness of evil, is, I maintain, congruent with the critiqued and developed Fiddesian doctrine of God as elucidated in the previous three chapters. With this in mind, let us turn our attention to theology proper and consider the understanding of God's omniscience within a SW theology operant in the realm of the individual.

7.3 Two Realms Warfare Theology: The Necessary Prescience of God

As demonstrated in chapter four, Fiddes' account of God's omniscience offers some theological insight that can help undergird a theology of SW. Specifically, his definition of libertarian freedom, both divine and human, aligns well with most of the theological work on the subject. Secondly, his account of divine passibility goes a long way towards offering a satisfactory solution to the challenge of theodicy in modern culture. However, his denial of EDF, insistence on divine ontological mutability, advocacy of a non-unilateral and non-interventionist deity, and a tensed understanding of time, all combine to challenge the over-arching teleological SW narrative: despite the contingent realities created by both angelic and human freedom, scripture and Christian tradition point to an end of all evil and suffering, of which the sole author will be Yahweh.[27] Therefore, as I maintain in chapter four, there is an account of divine omniscience that maintains complete divine knowledge of past, present and future *and* full

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[26] See above, pp. 169-179.
[27] As stated above p. 121, perfectly illustrated in Revelation 20:7-10.

earthly and heavenly creaturely libertarian freedom, which thereby grounds the divine-dynamic sovereignty of God and assured eschatology that reflects scripture. So, what implications do these hold for a theology of SW in the sphere of the individual?

Interestingly, a number of theologians writing on SW in the life of an individual are scholars who operate in ministerial contexts either as a pastor, doctor or counsellor. Due to dealing with persons as individuals this drives their focus on the ways in which evil afflicts individuals, both believers and non-believers.[28] Of the various thinkers mentioned previously Boyd and Powlison have produced a substantial body of work between them on SW and the impact of the evil triptych on the life of an individual Christian.[29] Boyd's theology of SW centres on the development of a 'warfare worldview' which he has developed in two works of theology: biblical and systematic.[30] From a copious body of work that relates counselling approaches and techniques to the Christian faith, Powlison's key text for this thesis sets out a polemical vision to recapture what he calls the 'classic mode' of SW as a corrective to an area of christian ministry that has, he claims, significantly veered away from the biblical understanding of SW and into dangerous territory.[31]

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[28] One scholar, Warren, a medical doctor and theologian approaches her work on SW from a medical perspective and is especially interested in other metaphors that could be used since the term 'warfare' does not translate well in counselling situations of abuse, especially occurrences of satanic ritual abuse. Warren, *Cleansing*, 1-3.

[29] See above, pp. 185-186.

[30] Boyd, *God at War*; Boyd, *Satan and the Problem*. See above, pp. 11-12.

[31] Powlison, *Power Encounters*. An abridged version of this text published seventeen years later which shows little change or development in his overarching view of SW is Powlison, "The Classical," 89-122. He claims his book was needed because of the growing number of christian ministries teaching and practicing 'deliverance' in the quest to cast out demons from unbelievers and believers alike. Powlison, *Power Encounters*, 11-25.

Concerning the omniscience of God within a SW reality for the individual, any juxtaposition of Fiddes' doctrine of non-detail divine prescience with either Boyd or Powlison and buttressed with other thinkers exacerbates the weakness and limitations of Fiddes' omniscience position and reinforces the need for the nuanced account of a two realms theology delineated at the end of chapter four. Boyd, for instance, mirrors Fiddes' thinking with regard to defining freedom in libertarian, irrevocable terms and rejecting the traditional-Augustinian notion of divine impassibility in favour of the suffering of God.[32] However, when it comes to those weaker elements of Fiddes' omniscience doctrine such as denial of EDF or a complex process mutability of God, Boyd offers an alternative position, but one that still runs into similar difficulties.

Like other theologians, Boyd posits that any hortative explanation for the existence of evil has to consider that God has actualised a 'risky creation,' the reason being that libertarian freedom is genuine and 'love must be chosen' and so this freedom implies necessary risk which is sown into the very metaphysical fabric of creation.[33] Talk of 'risk' however raises the same obvious question that Fiddes fails to answer sufficiently: how can God guarantee his future return for his bride, the church and full eschatological consummation? Boyd answers this charge by stating that God can guarantee his future return because the corporate church (not the

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[32] Boyd, *Satan and the Problem*, 178-206. To repeat, Fiddes' motivation for divine passibility comes from his perception that there is a contemporary need for a passible God in order to help understand the new cultural conceptions of love and provide a defence against matters of theodicy, whereas Boyd is one of those passibilists who base their arguments in 'divine repentance' type texts such as 1 Samuel 15. Gregory A. Boyd, *God of the Possible: A Biblical Introduction to the Open View of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2000).

[33] Boyd, *Satan and the Problem*, 50-115. Like Boyd, Allen situates the exercise of freewill as the direct cause not just of moral evil among human beings but also natural evil as caused by the exercise of freewill of Satan and his cohorts. Allen, "St. Augustine's Free," 84-90, cf. Boyd, *Satan and the Problem*, 293-318.

individuals in it) was predestined before the foundations of the earth (Ephesians 1) and also God

has perfect knowledge of his *own character* and *ability* to intervene.[34]

It is at this point that Boyd and Fiddes part company. Fiddes' participatory panentheistic

doctrine of God which only allows God to operate by persuasion and influence precludes any

form of interventionism by God.[35] Fiddes suggests that open theism's intervention doctrine

creates as many problems as solutions. He states, 'This is the problem with open theism since

they have room for final intervention – God limits himself for a period and then ceases to limit

himself in order to put everything right at the end. In fact, God could intervene at any moment if

God really wanted to; why not at Auschwitz?'[36] Boyd partly answers this challenge with two

more theses of his warfare worldview: that despite there being risk in genuine love 'This Risk

Entails Moral Responsibility' and 'Moral Responsibility is Proportionate to the Potential to

Influence Others.' In other words, there cannot be a conceivable potential to love someone

without a commensurate potential to harm or hurt that person, hence why the freedom to love

demands the risk of moral responsibility. In God's wisdom he *aims high* in creation which

determines God to wager potential for great harm so that the possibility of a Mother Theresa is

counter-potentiated by the possibility of a Hitler; this wager is irrevocable and not something

God can arbitrarily interfere with.[37]

The intrinsic necessity of 'risk' common to both Fiddes and Boyd's theologies of non-

EDF presents a substantial problem when applied to the ongoing spiritual battle in the life of any

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[34] Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 155-158.
[35] See above, pp. 19-20.
[36] Paul Fiddes, personal communication with the author, 15 & 16 March 2016.
[37] Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 163-177.

individual Christian. Boyd calls for practical application of his warfare worldview theology to the flesh, world and devil. He gives a clarion call to every Christian to awaken to the reality of the spiritual war and become a spiritual soldier.[38] He also grounds his developed warfare worldview in everyday theodicy realities such as physical suffering, unanswered prayer and natural evil.[39] However, like Fiddes, he cannot give a guaranteed assurance that the eschatological hope of the Christian faith will eventually appear, whether in this life or the one to come.[40]

In chapter four it was concluded that Tanner's non-competitive model of divine sovereignty avoids the theological pitfalls common to all forms of relational theism, including that of Fiddes.[41] It is able to espouse full divine knowledge of past, present and future whilst defining creaturely freedom, both human and spiritual, in libertarian terms. That God (an uncreated, necessary being) and creation (a created, contingent reality) exist and operate on completely different ontological planes without the playing of any zero-sum game or God's agency having to decrease in order to make room for human agency, goes a considerable length to ensure a doctrine of divine omniscience that accords well with the realities of spiritual warfare in the lives of individual Christians. Tanner's theology offers a solution whether it is battling the

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[38] Boyd, "The Ground-Level," 151-157.

[39] Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 209-357. For his popular treatment see Gregory A. Boyd, *Is God to Blame? Beyond Pat Answers to the Problem of Suffering* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003).

[40] Boyd's defence of openness theology and formulation of a nuanced definition of God's sovereignty that does not consist of divine omni-control and a non-thwartable will is what receives most criticism. Anderson, review of *God at War*, 128; Kathy Holt, review of *God at War: The Bible & Spiritual Conflict*, by Gregory A. Boyd, *Stone-Campbell Journal* 2.1 (Spring 1999): 130; Robert A. Pyne, review of *God at War: The Bible & Spiritual Conflict*, by Gregory A. Boyd, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 155 (April-June 1998): 235-236. Smith adds that Boyd is still left with the problem of unanswered prayer for the eradication of evil in the here and now. Smith, *The Church Militant*, 178-181.

[41] See above, pp. 108-113.

devil by living out a 'Jesus-lifestyle deliverance' paradigm,[42] engaging in warfare against the world and its mores by transferring allegiance from the values and god of this world to Jesus and the kingdom of God,[43] or focussing on confronting those sins and temptations that arise from our fleshly nature by practising the classic disciplines of Bible study, prayer and worship.[44] Her ultimate gift giver and non-competitive model will theologically explain the global phenomenon of SW experience, and the scriptural witness of a semi-dualistic SW worldview during the age of tension. Concurrently, the model sustains a dynamic sovereignty of God and eschatology which guarantees God's full consummation of the new heavens and new earth as described in Revelation chapters 20-22.

7.4 Dual-Power Warfare Theology: The Kenotic Power of God

The use of Tanner's non-competitive model allows for a definition of divine omniscience that holds together the libertarian freewill of human and spiritual creatures and God's full exhaustive knowledge of the past, present and future. Not only, therefore, does this lead to divergence away from Fiddes and Boyd's differently articulated divine nescience positions, but it also sidelines Powlison's hard sovereignty of God stance that defines creaturely freedom in compatibilist terms.[45] However, when it comes to the matter of God's omnipotence,

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[42] Paul Rhodes Eddy and James K. Beilby, "Introduction," in *Understanding Spiritual Warfare: Four Views,* eds. James K. Beilby and Paul Rhodes Eddy. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 35-37; cf. Boyd, *God at War*, 192-214.

[43] Boyd, "The Ground-Level," 151-154; cf. Gregory A. Boyd, *The Myth of a Christian Nation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005). Boyd's ethics situate him in mainstream anabaptist thinking. See Yoder, *The Politics*, 147-155.

[44] Powlison, *Power Encounters*, 137-152; Powlison, "The Classical," 98-111.

[45] Boyd accuses Powlison of advocating an over-domesticated spiritual warfare model. Gregory Boyd, "Response to David Powlison," in *Understanding Spiritual Warfare: Four Views,* eds. James K. Beilby and Paul Rhodes Eddy. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 119-122.

chapter five's development of Fiddes' three kenotic moments creates room for hard and soft accounts of God's sovereign power, a doctrine that best reflects both the narrative truth of scripture regarding the demonic and claimed experience of individuals' spiritual battle with the flesh, world and devil.

To recap briefly, the developed account of Fiddes' omnipotence of suffering love uses Martensen's concept of divine omnipotence, one that mapped persuasively onto the kenotic hymn of Philippians 2:5-11. It was argued that while Fiddes' three kenotic moments are true, especially the kenosis on the cross which inserts a cross into the very heart and being of God, these moments only part-answer some of the questions surrounding God's omnipotence in an age with evil forces. It may suggest that God possibly *could* bring suffering to an end but certainly offers few answers to the *when* or *why* questions.[46]

Martensen's doctrine offers a mutable kenotic Christology that helps make sense of kenotic Trinitarianism and cosmology thus giving a better explanation of the now-and-not-yet tension that each individual believer currently inhabits, and also advances the refined Abelardian atonement theology of Fiddes towards *Christus Victor*. It does this by grounding real events of subjective and transformative deliverance and SW in the light of the atonement's objective transaction; genuine happenings when God's kenotic power is fully at work and the individual person receives a foretaste of the final consummation of all things.[47] Therefore, when we consider SW for an individual person, what foundational help does this theology of kenotic

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[46] See above, pp. 121-137.
[47] See above, pp. 137-147.

warfare with evil offer in order to understand the nature and character of God better in the midst of occurrences of evil of many different kinds?

Let us consider one subject that appears with regular frequency as the example *par excellence* of this matter regarding the power differential between God and the demonic: the demonization of Christians. Much heat is often generated when Christians and scholars debate if believing Christians can be demonised or worse still, demon possessed.[48] Boyd and Powlison are representative of the two centrist camps which oppose each other but avoid the extremes. As already noted,[49] Powlison's main objective in promoting his 'classic' view of spiritual warfare is to critique current 'deliverance' ministries which he labels '*ekballistic*' mode of ministry (EMM hereafter),[50] since they all practise casting demons out of both believers and unbelievers. Despite disparity over secondary matters, all streams of EMM agree on the primary issue of the need for Christian discipleship and exorcisms.[51]

Moreover, states Powlison, the claimed demonization of christian individuals produces two propositions that are adopted *a posteriori* and advanced in deliverance ministry. First, there is the tendency to define moral sin as demonic, ignoring the fact that in the gospels we see both

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[48] It is irrefutable that the debate has moved from the academy into the pews and politics with the appearance of popular articles and political reports appearing on the subject. For example, see Agnieszka Tennant, "Many Christians Say They are in Need of Deliverance." *Christianity Today* 45 (September 2001): 46-56, and the charity-political report, Javier Aguilar Molina, **"**The Invention of Child Witches in the Democratic Republic of Congo: Social Cleansing, Religious Commerce and the Difficulties of Being a Parent in an Urban Culture." (London: Save the Children, 2005).

[49] See above, p. 190 fn.32.

[50] From ἐκβάλλω meaning 'I cast out.' Powlison holds to the traditional ontology of demons by stating at the outset that he is not addressing any SW vision that capitulates to psychological or sociological projections. Powlison, *Power Encounters*, 27.

[51] Powlison describes 4 streams: charismatic, dispensational, Fuller third-wave, and broadly evangelical. Powlison, *Power Encounters*, 32-34. Arnold agrees. Arnold, *3 Crucial*, 139-140.

'situational' evil through people's suffering and 'moral' evil because of sin, and Jesus' exorcisms were performed for people suffering from situational, not moral evil.[52] Powlison's dichotomising evil into situational and moral is in order to counteract the claimed common practise within the EMM movement of demonising sinful behaviour which allows for potential 'the devil made me do it' type excuses.[53] Second, there is the continuing use of the command-control mode of Jesus as described in the gospels instead of a mode shift to christian discipleship as demonstrated in Acts and the rest of the New Testament.[54]

Many theologians (including Boyd) fully accept that believing Christians can be demonized to greater or lesser degrees.[55] Where the discussion reaches an impasse, especially within a western context, is differentiating between genuine demonization and cases of mental illness.[56] Those like Boyd who accept the demonization of Christians have the challenge of distinguishing between paranoid schizophrenia and bona fide cases of demonic oppression or

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[52] Powlison, *Power Encounters*, 63-76. Stafford notes that demonising moral sin is Powlison's over-arching issue to take to task. See Tim Stafford, review of *Power Encounters: Reclaiming Spiritual Warfare*, by David Powlison, *Christianity Today* 39.10 (1995): 48.

[53] Powlison illustrates his point by citing Anderson and his suggestions of demonic control of the saints. Powlison, *Power Encounters*, 75, cf. Neil T. Anderson, *The Bondage Breaker* (Tunbridge Wells: Monarch, 1990), 174-178.

[54] This shift in mode away from command-control to holistic christian discipleship fulfils, Powlison claims, the prophetic statement of Jesus that future generations of disciples will do 'greater things' than what Jesus and the Father have been doing (John 14:12). Powlison, *Power Encounters*, 77-92. However, he fails to properly address those passages that describe the apostles *and* disciples of Jesus operating in a command-control mode which results in deliverance and spiritual fruit such as Luke 9:1-6; 10:1-24 and Acts 16:16-40.

[55] A small sample includes Arnold, *3 Crucial*, 73-141; Boyd, "The Ground-Level," 151-156; Lawrence Burkholder, "The Theological Foundations of Deliverance Healing," *The Conrad Grebel Review* 19.1 (2001): 38-68; Wright, *A Theology*, 105-130; Jacques Theron, "A Critical Overview of the Church's Ministry of Deliverance from Evil Spirits," *PNEUMA: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 18 (1996): 79-92.

[56] On the difficulties identifying, assessing, explaining and treating mental illness from genuine cases of demonization, see Samuel Southard and Donna Southard, "Demonizing and Mental Illness: The Problem of Identification, Hong Kong," *Journal of Pastoral Psychology* 33.3 (1985): 173-188; Samuel Southard, "Demonizing and Mental Illness (II): The Problem of Assessment, Los Angeles," *Journal of Pastoral Psychology* 34.4 (1986): 264-287; Samuel Southard and Donna Southard, "Demonizing and Mental Illness (III): Explanations and Treatment, Seoul," *Journal of Pastoral Psychology* 35.2 (1986): 132-151.

even possession.[57] Boyd suggests an adoption of a 'shoot in both directions' approach

concerning demonization and mental illness. In the discipleship process there needs to be both

warfare prayer *and* sessions of counselling, irrespective of what the Christian disciple believes

they need.[58] In this both-and approach the three evils of the unholy triptych - the flesh, world and

devil - are engaged and battled against whether that involves growing in spiritual disciplines that

mortify the flesh, militant adherence to the kingdom of God or deliverance prayer ministry in

order to excise demonic oppression.

SW at the level of the individual has often been described as a 'power encounter.' It is an

encounter that often brings both salvation and greater suffering and persecution.[59] Both in

scripture and modern phenomenological assertions, there are varying degrees of divine

omnipotence at work in situations of spiritual conflict. As some have commented, the range of

belief, practise and experience in situations of demonology and deliverance is a combination of

worldview lenses, explicit adherence to the demonic in a particular culture, and the extent to

which God and his sovereignty is brought into the situation.[60] Some argue that because God's

sovereign power is infinitely greater than the demonic, all SW should be a quiet, no-fuss affair

whereas others conclude that depending upon the severity of someone's demonic infestation

determines the people, time and spiritual authority needed to carry out deliverance.[61]

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[57] Virkler proposes the use of both symptom analysis and the gift of 'discerning the spirits.' Virkler, "Demonic Involvement," 101.

[58] Boyd, "The Ground-Level," 155.

[59] Paul G. Hiebert, "Spiritual Warfare and Worldviews," *Direction* 29.2 (2000): 118-122.

[60] Ferdinando, "Screwtape Revisited," 103-132; Hiebert, "The Flaw," 43-47; Hiebert, "Spiritual Warfare," 114-118.

[61] Powlison, *Power Encounters*, 148-152; Powlison, "The Classical," 92-98; Lowe, *Territorial*, 129-141. MacNutt differentiates between protection, simple deliverance and heavy deliverance. MacNutt, *Deliverance from*, 142-180.

God's omnipotence as a theology of kenotic warfare goes a long way to theologically account for the varying levels and experience of the demonstration of divine power in SW situations involving individuals. In a similar way to Tanner's two-realm approach to God's omniscience, to situate all power encounters in SW onto the kenotic journey of Christ - from divine pre-existence to humiliation to exaltation - in which the divine nature is simultaneously on full power and kenotic power, is to present divine omnipotence as dialectical; a synthesising of full and varying kenotic power within God's imminent dealings with creation, both physical and spiritual. Theologically, this underwrites Jesus' lesson about the the strongman (Matthew 12:43-45; Luke 11:21-26) and the acute awareness needed to walk out the Christian faith consciously with a shrewd sense that it is distinctly possible, just like Judas Iscariot, to give personal territory back to the devil (Ephesians 4:26-27) which could ultimately lead to allowing evil to return and reign in one's life (Romans 6:12).[62]

7.5 Participatory Warfare Theology: The Panentheistic Presence of God

Fiddes' participating in God panentheistic vision is the central aspect of his doctrine of God,[63] and his 'persons as relations' trinitarian definition, which is the foundation to his panentheistic vision is, by his own claim, his unique contribution to trinitarian theology.[64] In chapter six, with the help of other panentheists such as Gregersen and von Balthasar, an adjusted and refined version of Fiddes' panentheistic doctrine has been offered that makes room for all expressions of evil, especially evil caused by rebellious demonic forces who are ontologically real, sub-personal, and operate with will and volition.

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[62] Gross, *Miracles, Demons*, 166-167.
[63] See above, pp. 28-34, 150-151.
[64] See above, pp. 157-158.

Above I argued that Fiddes' panentheism is a Christian and soteriological panentheism, one into which divine hiddenness finds a natural home in this current milieu and where forgiveness and reconciliation are common occurrences given the 'now-and-not-yet' dynamic of life and relationships between the first and second coming of Christ.[65] Von Balthasar's 'no' in the 'yes' between the Father and the Son creates infinite distance and space for the freewill rebellion of creation (both physical and spiritual) to continually happen within the omnipresence of God without making God the primary cause of all evil and sin in the world. Applying the above-developed accounts of the omniscience and omnipotence of God offers reasons to believe that the panentheistic reality of God will be all-in-all and will permeate the new heavens and new earth once fully consummated by God in the eschaton.[66]

It has been shown that the panentheism of Fiddes demonstrates the covenantal validity and biblical underpinnings of his omnipresence doctrine. Not only is the biblical-theological foundation for God's universal omnipresence a hallmark of Fiddes' doctrine but he has also shown the impact of panentheism upon the narrative world of literature and theology and our understanding of the church.[67] Therefore, this begs the question of what are the implications of God's universal and interweaving presence for the individual person's struggle with the evil triptych and what difference does it make framing SW as happening *within* the one in whom 'we live, move and have our being?'

The extent to which every human capacity is fallen is borne out by what Caird entitles

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[65] See above, pp. 157-167.
[66] See above, pp. 169-179.
[67] See above, pp. 152-156.

'the bondage of corruption.' Whether it is nature, humanity's relationship with nature, the presence and prevalence of different powers and principalities, or the many different thorns in the flesh, humanity is, and lives in a world, marred by a permanent corruption, decline and decay (Romans 8). This is internally and externally the human experience and condition, and no human being, except the second Adam, is exempt from it.[68] In this sense, SW against the flesh is living in and under the potential reconciliation to God wrought by Christ through his crucifixion and resurrection. Caird articulates this reality stating 'upon this divine plan to sum up all things in Christ there had intruded the contradiction of sin; man had come under God's judgement, the heavenly powers had become world-rulers of this darkness, the subhuman creation had been subjected to futility; and all must now be reconciled to God by the blood of the Cross.'[69]

Powlison concurs and avers that, in the main, SW is spiritual conflict in order to override and transform the bondage of corruption while recognising that it will not be fully possible until the eschaton. Emphasising preaching, teaching, and living the truth as expressions of spiritual disciplines, Powlison focuses on the believer in Christ being alert and fully aware of their new status in Christ in order to adopt a humble and teachable posture as life-long learners of the way of Jesus so that they can successfully fight against the enticements of their fallen, sinful fleshly nature. While it is not necessary to reject that true christian believers can be demonised, Powlison uses this preclusion to assert that while the Bible presents a balance of the three members of the evil triumvirate, the focus in most of the NT is, contrary to what some teach,[70]

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[68] Caird, *Principalities*, 54-79.
[69] Caird, *Principalities*, 79.
[70] Powlison accuses Wagner and Greenwood of holding to a theology in which the Devil completely drowns out the world and the flesh. David Powlison, "Response to C. Peter Wagner and Rebecca Greenwood," in *Understanding Spiritual Warfare: Four Views,* eds. James K. Beilby and Paul Rhodes Eddy. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 204.

primarily on the human heart, i.e. the flesh.[71]

The relevance of Powlison when it relates to the individual lies very much in his strong pastoral approach. It is intertwined with a conviction of God's decretive will and absolute sovereignty which plays out in his advocacy of sitting under biblical preaching, prayer, and discipleship as SW engagement. This comes out clearly in the globally-derived anecdotes he offers in order to prove his point such as the story of Bob and his 'demons of lust, anger, uncleanness and pride' who following attempts of deliverance starts to make progress once he embarks on some Christian counselling and discipleship; a post-deliverance stage of Christian discipleship and journey from spiritual milk to meat (Hebrews 5:12-14).[72]

With a different focus, Boyd's 'warfare worldview' offers a substantive theology and praxis for the individual Christian's engagement in spiritual warfare that specifically focusses upon evil systems and values at work in the world, and the demonic influences and structures that seek to create chaos and undermine the worship of God. Boyd's developed warfare worldview biblical theology, the kernel of which is what he calls the 'normativity of evil,'[73] based primarily on Daniel 10:12-20, is that because evil and suffering are a normal part of human existence we need to be spiritually engaged and overcoming it instead of intellectually questioning *why* evil is present.[74] This worldview, he argues, is truly global and adopted by countless individual

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[71] Powlison, *Power Encounters*, 93-120.

[72] Powlison, "The Classical," 106-108; Powlison, *Power Encounters*, 142-152.

[73] Not normative in the sense that it reflects God's original design but rather it is normal to the current fallen world state of play.

[74] Kelsey reiterates the 'normativity of naked evil' and stating that there is a very real 'naked evil,' that seeks to destroy and we need to accept this and one cannot reduce the horrors of Nazi death camps to basically an 'absence of the good.' Kelsey, *Discernment*, 74-75, 97-103; Morton Kelsey, *Healing & Christianity* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1995), 249-252, 282-284.

Christians across the world.[75]

Globally as a church and individual believers we need to, states Boyd, be in allegiance with the kingdom of God, not the kingdoms of the world. As Jesus pointedly infers in his kingdom teaching, allegiance to the kingdom of God immediately sets a person on a collision course with the kingdom of the world, for the kingdom of God is on the offensive (Matthew 16:18-19) and this will cause a worldly kingdom response of violence against those in the kingdom of God (Matthew 11:12) who are committed to non-violence.[76] Moreover, to avoid an overly-forced dichotomy between the world and the devil, Boyd reminds us that the Johannine literature, despite having no accounts of deliverance, uses strong dualistic language and states that the ruler of the world, together with its values and idols, is Satan himself (1 John 5:19 cf. 2 Corinthians 4:4).[77] Hence militant adherence to the kingdom of God is not just an act of SW against the world but simultaneously against Satan.

Ultimately, declaring warfare on the world, its value systems and idols will be ongoing and costly for each Christian believer. Boyd is under no illusion that when it comes to discerning kingdom values from worldly norms it can often be problematic but Christians in the west need to 'wake up' to the warfare context in which they live and stop what he calls 'holiday-living.'[78] Part of this waking up is realising that the kingdom of God does not look or sound like

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[75] Boyd, *God at War*, 9-11.
[76] Boyd, *God at War*, 216-218; 222-226. Ambiguity remains as to whether Boyd's firm conviction that the kingdom of God is characterised by a commitment to pacifistic non-violence naturally aligns him with Wink on this issue. Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 209-229.
[77] Boyd, *God at War*, 227-230.
[78] Boyd, "The Ground-Level," 151-152.

Christendom that is slowly disappearing, and any attempt to re-establish Christendom through

the use of SW is erroneous and should be opposed.[79]

When it concerns Satan and the demonic, Boyd argues that warfare is a recurrent theme in

the Scriptures which can form a hermeneutical lens through which to read scripture. Reading the

Hebrew Bible reveals that it is replete with images and symbolism which points to the fact that

God has to engage in battle with demonic powers in order to establish his will and purposes.[80]

Whether that be locking up the raging creational cosmic forces of the sea,[81] slaying diabolical

mythical beasts such as Leviathan or Behemoth,[82] conflict with and judgement of others 'gods',[83]

or even rebuking the arch-enemy Satan himself,[84] Boyd argues that all these Old Testament

examples and echoes force us to formulate a nuanced definition of God's enemies: fallen spiritual

beings with freedom, a will and sentience which are hell bent against individual christian

believers.

This warfare hermeneutic, argues Boyd, continues into the New Testament writings and

era. Due to the oppression of the Jews during the second temple period, the idea of spiritual

battles intensifies and so Jesus appears when the biblical writers had no problem viewing Satan

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[79] Boyd criticises the triumphant-sounding theology of Wagner and Greenwood. Gregory Boyd, "Response to C. Peter Wagner and Rebecca Greenwood," in *Understanding Spiritual Warfare: Four Views,* eds. James K. Beilby and Paul Rhodes Eddy. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 213-215.

[80] Boyd and Eddy, "Evil," 288.

[81] Boyd, *God at War*, 73-92; Boyd, "The Ground-Level," 130-132; cf. Longman III and Reid, *God is a Warrior*, 72-82. For a theological exploration of malevolent spiritual forces at work in the sea see Hart, *The Doors*.

[82] Boyd, *God at War*, 93-113; Boyd, "The Ground-Level," 132-133; cf. Day, *God's Conflict*, 87.

[83] Boyd, *God at War*, 114-142; cf. Boyd, "The Ground-Level," 133-135.

[84] Boyd, *God at War*, 143-167; cf. Boyd, "The Ground-Level," 135.

as the *functional* lord of the earth while still maintaining the non-dualistic metaphysical superiority of the uncreated God over the created and fallen archenemy Satan.[85] Jesus heals and delivers people in a functionally dualistic way while maintaining metaphysical superiority over Satan.[86] These actions, together with his kingdom of God declarations, form the warfare context; one in which kingdom advancement must take place through spiritual force so that the gates of hell will not prevail.[87]

Like others,[88] Boyd draws heavily on the gospels in order to flesh out the warfare worldview and demonstrate that the demonic is ontologically real and the conflict between the kingdoms is real and stark. The Lord's Prayer only makes sense if God's will is not being done, and the duality language of John's gospel paints the reality of the darkness.[89] This is why Boyd, in the spirit of Aulen and others, sees Christ's death and resurrection primarily in warfare and cosmic terms as the ultimate act of God's victory over Satan's functional domination of the earth.[90] Not only is this a demonstrable plain reading of the gospels,[91] but is also supported by countless global accounts of the reality of spirits and demon possession,[92] which have actually

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[85] Boyd, "Powers and Principalities," 611-612; Boyd, "The Ground-Level," 136; Boyd, *God at War*, 283-290.

[86] Twelftree has arguably written the most scholarship on all matters relating to exorcism in the history of the church. For more see Twelftree, *Christ Triumphant*; Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*; Twelftree, *In the Name of Jesus*.

[87] Boyd, *God at War*, 184-214; cf. Boyd, "The Ground-Level," 136-138.

[88] Others who base their doctrine of Satan and evil in the gospels include Kallas, *Jesus and the Power*, 118-201; Nam Shin Park, "Hermeneutics and Spiritual Warfare," *Didaskalia* 22 (2011): 85-103; J Lyle Story, "Jesus' 'Enemy' in the Gospels," *American Theological Inquiry* 6.1 (2013): 43-63; Willard M. Swartley, "Biblical Faith Confronting Opposing Spiritual Realties," *Direction* 29.2 (2000): 100-113.

[89] Boyd, *God at War*, 215-237.

[90] Aulen, *Christus*; Wright, *Evil and*, 114.

[91] An approach perfectly justified by Frei. Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of the Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 1.

[92] Boyd, *God at War*, 11-17.

caused numerous anthropologists and ethnographers to re-evaluate their framework of naturalism.[93]

In concluding this final section of part A, let us return to the question of what, if any, impact there is in reframing the individual's battle with the evil triumvirate within God's interweaving omnipresence? It seems, given the ubiquity of humanity's fallen fleshly nature, the global-worldly values and systems, and the diabolical but sentient enemy of God who is currently the prince/ruler of this world (John 12:31; 14:40; 16:11; Ephesians 2:2; 2 Corinthians 4:4), that the counter-ubiquity of God himself should, at the very least, be accented in any theological account.

This means that all experiences and encounters of spiritual warfare take place, *de facto,* within the very relations of the triune God and so all divine attributes of God can be called upon and used in the spiritual fight. There is no dualistic sacred-secular divide, no gnostic material-spiritual bifurcation, and most importantly no fear in the face of evil as every individual believer is surrounded by the perfect love of God, a love that will conquer all things and not allow anyone in Christ to be separated from his love by any angels or demons, principalities or powers (Romans 8:37-39).

Of course, no individual believer is *only* that. Each christian person is also part of a corporate body of God's people known as the church of Jesus Christ. Therefore, it is imperative to analyse and discuss whether or not situating the church's engagement in SW within a doctrine

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[93] Boyd, "The Ground-Level," 143-147.

of God will aid understanding and elicit greater explanatory power of the scriptural witness and experiential phenomena related to all matters related to evil and the demonic. To this task we now turn.

Part B: Territories, Powers and Principalities - Spiritual Warfare Theology on the Corporate Level

With the appearance in 1970 of the term 'spiritual warfare'[94] as a new nomenclature to describe the spiritual battle in every Christian's life, it did not take long - approximately two decades - for the term to become a broad rubric under which was housed not just every aspect of the individual believer's fight against the flesh, world and devil but also apparent corporate demonic forces and systems of evil, known as principalities and powers, that needed to be opposed by collective groups of people, especially church gatherings of christian believers. By 1987 Christians in their thousands gathered in the UK and other parts of the world for a global 'March for Jesus,' predicated on the claim that there are demonic spiritual beings at the top of demonic hierarchies who have geographical and strategic jurisdiction over large swathes of society and cities and need to be opposed in the spiritual realm.[95]

This new claim concerning evil territorial spirits received more publicity when the Lausanne conference on evangelism in 1993 released a cautious statement of recognition.[96] The

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[94] Widely attributed to Michael Harper in his 1970 text *Spiritual Warfare.*

[95] Ediger, "Strategic-Level Spiritual Warfare," 126-129; Wright, "Charismatic," 159-162.

[96] The conference admitted their involvement in the promotion process through facilitating a track on spiritual warfare at Lausanne II 1989 conference in Manila under the aegis of then Fuller Seminary professor of church growth C. Peter Wagner and then continuing the life of that track under the sponsorship of the AD2000 and Beyond movement. Wagner, *Spiritual*, 16-21. In 1993 they stated, 'We are cautious about the way in which the concept of territorial spirits is being used and look to our biblical scholars to shed more light on this recent development.' "Lausanne Statement."

involvement of Wagner in Lausanne lead to a tacit acknowledgement that there could be a number of different 'levels' in the theology and practise of SW, as taught by Wagner: 'ground-level' warfare which seeks to free individual persons from demonic bondage, 'occult-level' warfare which attempts to deal with demonic oppression within Satanism, the occult, etc., and 'strategic (or cosmic)-level' warfare (SLSW hereafter), based upon Ephesians 6:12, which involves a direct confrontation in the spirit world through prayer and praise against principalities and powers, otherwise known as corporate, territorial spirits.[97] As stated above, for this purpose of this chapter these claims will be accepted at face value without any critique or defence.[98]

Deeper penetration into the world and practise of SLSW reveals three other unique assertions of orthopraxis that are new to Christian theology or practise. To begin, there is 'spiritual mapping' which is 'the practice of identifying the spiritual conditions at work in a given community, city or nation.'[99] This, so claimed, is achieved by looking at secular and Christian history, identifying prophets, intercessors, and spiritual elders, studying various demographics,[100] and, controversially, using new ageism's ley lines of a city to identify ancient landmarks and places of idol worship.[101] Second, when good spiritual mapping reveals the geographical areas

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[97] C. Peter Wagner, *Spiritual Warfare Strategy: Confronting Spiritual Powers* (Shippensburg: Destiny Image, 1996), 20-22; Rebecca Greenwood, *Authority to Tread: An Intercessor's Guide to Strategic-Level Spiritual Warfare* (Tonbridge: Sovereign World, 2005), 22-30; C. Peter Wagner and Rebecca Greenwood, "The Strategic-Level Deliverance Model," in *Understanding Spiritual Warfare: Four Views,* eds. James K. Beilby and Paul Rhodes Eddy. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 178-181. Cf. Eddy and Beilby, "Introduction," 40-43.

[98] See above, pp. 7-8.

[99] Wagner and Greenwood, "The Strategic," 182.

[100] John Dawson, "Seventh Time Around: Breaking Through a City's Invisible Barriers to the Gospel," in *Territorial Spirits: Insights on Strategic-Level Spiritual Warfare from Nineteen Christian Leaders*, ed. C. Peter Wagner. (Chichester: Sovereign World, 1991), 140-141.

[101] It is claimed, somewhat hyperbolic, that all this research can reveal hidden spiritual truths such as prevailing bondages in the city and the systemic root bondage which often concern land defilement such as bloodshed, war, broken land covenants, sexual immorality or idolatry. Greenwood, *Authority*, 92-98; Wagner and Greenwood, "The Strategic," 183-187. The reason for the controversy is that others identify ley lines as a central part of witchcraft. Michael Perry (ed.), *Deliverance: Psychic Disturbances and Occult Involvement*, second ed, (London: SPCK, 1996), 66-71.

that need to be surrounded by a wall of prayer, then 'intentional prayer walking' and prayer

marches like March for Jesus need to be organised and actioned.[102] Imitating Israel's marching

around Jericho, focussed intercessory prayer with eyes open is a key tactic in seeing the spiritual

atmosphere of a town or city positively change.[103]

Finally, if more SLSW is needed then there is another tool in the armoury known as

'identificational repentance,' which seeks to deal with original sin(s) of peoples, cities or nation

committed a long time ago by providing prayer intercessors (ideally *bloodline* descendants of

those who committed the original sins) who will stand in the gap and repent on behalf of the

historic offenders, can be used.[104] Overall, practitioners of SLSW purport that it is a gift of

spiritual technology from God whereas critics rebut by claiming that SLSW needs a more

rigorous method and should not mainly rely on the open-ended potential of experience to

determine one's theology.[105]

SLSW is, of course, a new development in the scholarship of spiritual warfare on the

corporate level. As previously mentioned,[106] there is a sizeable history of biblical scholarship on

the powers and principalities which concludes that Pauline language on the powers refers more to

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[102] Greenwood, *Authority*, 81-99; Wagner and Greenwood, "The Strategic," 181-191. Obviously using Old Testament historical narrative, i.e. Joshua 5:13-6:27, as biblical justification opens up a Pandora's box of hermeneutical challenges.

[103] Wagner and Greenwood, "The Strategic," 190-191.

[104] Greenwood, *Authority*, 76, 122-123. The primary text that argues identificational repentance is biblically sound and rooted in Nehemiah's prayer of corporate repentance (Nehemiah 1:5-9) is John Dawson, *Healing America's Wounds* (Ventura: Regal, 1994).

[105] Lowe, *Territorial Spirits*, 113-127; Powlison, "Response to C.," 207-209. Walter Wink and Michael Hardin, "Response to C. Peter Wagner and Rebecca Greenwood," in *Understanding Spiritual Warfare: Four Views,* eds. James K. Beilby and Paul Rhodes Eddy. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 199-203; cf. Rene Girard, *"To Double Business Bound": Essays in Literature, Mimesis, and Anthropology* (London, Athlone Press, 1978); Girard, *The Scapegoat*.

[106] See above, pp. 183-184.

societal and structural powers, not spiritual ones as previously thought.[107] More recently there has been an attempt, following the path first started by Cullmann, to seek a malleable and dialectical understanding of the powers, one that views them as both political and spiritual in an attempt to move beyond the binary positions of the past. No one has done more to develop this case than Walter Wink whose trilogy *The Powers* sought to relate the New Testament's witness of 'principalities and powers' to the pervasive social systems and structures of the modern era.[108]

Having claimed that his work is the first ever comprehensive study of the language of principalities and powers,[109] Wink suggests that the language of power pervades the entire New Testament and while somewhat malleable, the use of the language shows some clear patterns of synonymous usage. Most importantly, based upon Colossians 1:16, the powers stated in the New Testament text are heavenly *and* earthly, divine *and* human, spiritual *and* political, invisible *and* structural, good *and* evil, with the majority of usage referring to human bearers and social structures.[110]

With these introductory comments in mind, let us now proceed to consider the theological implications and assessment for the doctrine of God when we encase Wagner and Wink's corporate spiritual warfare models, together with other varying positions, within God's ontological and metaphysical reality. Following Wright's comments about the theology of an

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[107] Key texts include Berkhof, *Christ and*; Caird, *Principalities*; Albert H. Van Den Heuvel, *These Rebellious Powers* (London: SCM Press, 1966); E. Gordon Rupp, *Principalities and Powers* (London: Wyvern Books, 1965).

[108] Walter Wink, *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984); Wink, *Unmasking*; Wink, *Engaging*.

[109] Wink, *Naming*, 6.

[110] Wink, *Naming*, 7-12.

angelic fall,[111] what are the *theological* benefits of taking Wink's panentheistic world-systems paradigm and Wagner's strategic-level warfare model, together with all else in between, to form a lens through which to better understand the nature and character of the God who is in conflict with fallen forces of evil in the corporate spirit realm?

7.6 Corporate Warfare Foreknowledge: The Exhaustive Presentiment of God

Of the three omni-characteristics of God, his omniscience is the least considered metaphysical divine property when it concerns corporate level SW, especially against principalities and powers. Despite how critical and central they are to a fuller understanding of SW on the corporate level, questions such as 'what does God know about principalities and powers?,' 'when does he know it?,' and 'what foreknowing knowledge and understanding about the future destination of all principalities and powers does he possess?,' are rarely considered in scholarly discussions about the powers.[112]

As is known, within the nexus of Fiddes' doctrine of God is the question of divine passibility and its specific connection with evil and theodicy: in a world with so much suffering and misery it is only a suffering God who could have created it. To use Baukham's phraseology, 'only a suffering God can help.' There is, for Fiddes, an inextricable link between the passibility of God and the challenge of evil and theodicy and so this presents the opportunity for an analysis of this link and the related implications there are for corporate SW, especially with concern to the battle with principalities and powers, whether defined as political and societal forces *or* spiritual

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[111] Wright, *A Theology*, 70-73.
[112] Even in the three volumes of his magnum opus on *The Powers,* Wink never mentions the omniscience or foreknowledge of God.

beings *or* both.

The uncommon use of the term divine 'presentiment' presents an opportunity to explore the connections made by Fiddes between divine passibility and evil without arriving at similar conclusions to Fiddes which contain some already identified problematic elements.[113] While fully acknowledging the anthropomorphic and anthropopathic qualities of the term 'presentiment,' it seems justifiable to predicate it of God since it specifically elicits the idea of some kind of feeling of foreboding about future events that are likely to be of an evil kind. The emphases on feeling and potential future knowledge concerning malevolent events or happenings strongly suggest it is a term to be procured theologically and applied to this question regarding the nature of God's knowledge when in confrontation with principalities and powers.

As we have already discovered, the strengthened version of Fiddes' divine passibility, without the Achilles heels of presentism and mutability, offers a pliable and dynamic doctrine of divine suffering without the need for ontological change or lack of infinite divine prescience, hence the use of the term 'exhaustive presentiment.'[114] Tanner's non-competitive, ultimate gift-giver articulation of God allows us to maintain libertarian freewill and full divine foreknowledge without denying that God can and does indeed suffer, but not in the way envisaged by Fiddes. It is possible, as we know, to articulate the passibility of God without divine change or lack of foreknowledge, which in turn removes the imperative to define time *only* in a

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[113] See above, pp. 191-192.

[114] It could be averred that 'Exhaustive Presentiment' is an oxymoronic idea. My rationale for why it is not is that it perfectly captures God's possible response to future malevolent and nefarious events without inferring that these events take God by surprise. Similarly, a person can fully know that a loved one is going to die a painful death in the near future and yet still respond very emotionally when the loved one passes.

tensed manner.[115]

Of the previous interlocutions Young and von Balthasar present versions of divine passibility without change that hold most potential for synthesis with Tanner's non-competitive model. Young, in essence, states that what can be predicated of God is the experience humans have of evil and tragedy, an experience which sometimes demands fellow suffering with the victim and at other times needs a helper of static resolve who demonstrates imperviousness to the situation and goes beyond suffering and self-involvement. Slightly differently, von Balthasar locates all suffering of God *within* God himself, a theology of the cross which involves divine recklessness of the Father and Son in the power of the Spirit. Both constructs of divine passibility can be located within the necessary, non-contingent plane of existence occupied by God without any needed trade-off between divine sovereignty and creaturely libertarian freedom. In his uncreated realm of existence and being, God can freely choose to operate as the fellow sufferer or not without diminishing the reality of his divine passibility since suffering is known within the triune relations of the Trinity and is therefore not contingent on God's interaction with creation.[116]

However, in the other-worldly realm of spiritual conflict, God does interact with the

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[115] See above, pp. 99-103. Of the three interlocutors only Young and von Balthasar actually maintain passibility whereas Weinandy denies it in favour of divine impassibility.

[116] This suggested construction of divine passibility enables a new possible route instead of the usual well-worn paths between Calvinism and Arminianism. To illustrate, when critiquing open theist Boyd, Carson exemplifies the usual concession between divine sovereignty and human freewill as he argues in favour of a compatibilist definition of freedom in order to embolden his definition of divine sovereignty. He does this because he claims that any form of presentism denies the complexity of time and a God who does not know the future is no help regarding the problem of evil. Yet, for a theology of SW, the articulation of freedom in compatibilist terms is restrictive and lacks explanatory power. D.A. Carson, 'God, the Bible and Spiritual Warfare: A Review Article,' *Journal of Evangelical Theology Society* 42.2 (1999): 262-266.

created reality, albeit the created spiritual realm of the excluded middle. If, following Surin,

divine passibility with both creaturely libertarian freedom and unlimited divine foreknowledge,

presents the best answers for any Auschwitz theodicy while maintaining that God is a God of

love,[117] what ramifications does this 'eschatological and inverted theodicy' have for greater

understanding of the content of God's epistemological base when confronting and warring

against fallen societal, political or spiritual powers that seek to tyrannise and bring chaos to

corporate gatherings of people?[118]

As we consider God's exhaustive presentiment when in conflict with the powers, it is

vital that terms are defined regarding powers and principalities. Building on the brief mention

above and following the lead of Cullmann,[119] recast more recently in work by Wink and others, it

can be asserted that all principalities and powers are both political/structural *and* spiritual.

Indeed, it is largely accepted that Cullmann was the first to offer a non-binary both/and

interpretation of the principalities and powers,[120] which has produced the possibility of finding

common interpretive ground between thinkers of different theological frameworks. For example,

both Wagner and Wink give credit to Cullmann for his dialectical interpretation of Paul's

concept of 'authorities' (ἐξουσίαι) in Romans 13:1 and 1 Corinthians 2:8, referring to *both*

human governments and state authority *and* supernatural, angelic principalities, powers and

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[117] See above, pp. 19, 37.

[118] Rooting his divine passibility doctrine in God's unconditional love, Surin looks to the incarnation to show that God can suffer which leads to an inverted theodicy since God gave to human beings the freedom that he knew with full knowledge they would use one day to kill him. Kenneth Surin, "The Impassibility of God and the Problem of Evil," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 35.2 (1982): 97-115.

[119] See above, pp. 209-210.

[120] Cullmann, *The State*, 95-114; Cullmann, *Christ*, 191-205. O'Brien refers to Cullmann's 'double reference theory,' arguing that principalities and powers refer to civil authorities and angelic powers, being brought into the scholarly debate for the first time and this catalysed similar work by others such as Schmidt and Dehn. O'Brien, "Principalities and Powers," 117-119.

rulers that stand *behind* the human government.[121] In fact, Cullmann goes on to say, as suggested in Ephesians 6:12, that the state is the executive agent (i.e. the physical face) of the invisible spiritual powers.[122] Dialectically, once structural power (internal or external) moves from being a created good for the service of humanity to an idolatrous system of domination then it can be proffered that this idol is fuelled and enhanced by demonic spiritual beings.[123] Put differently, ontological, sentient, and parasitical demons feed off diabolical structures and powers and in turn exacerbate the demonic system of domination by applying their own conscious, nefarious desire to kill, steal and destroy (John 10:10).

Having established a unified, non-binary definition of the powers, that God is passible without any change or reduction of God's infinite foreknowledge, and that divine exhaustive presentiment does not reduce or eradicate the divine dynamism and emotion involved in conflict against all principalities and powers,[124] does this mean that what God knows we can know and how should this affect our engagement and participation in spiritual warfare? Regarding the final destiny of the powers and principalities, when it comes to structural and societal powers, there is a scholarly consensus that God has foreordained that one day their original design as gifts and goods to be enjoyed will be restored and the powers fully redeemed. Missiologist Sider for

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[121] Wink, *Naming*, 11-17. cf. Oscar Cullmann, "The Subjection of the Invisible Powers," in *Territorial Spirits: Practical Strategies for how to Crush the Enemy through Spiritual Warfare*, ed. C. Peter Wagner. (Shippensburg: Destiny Image, 2012), 218-219.

[122] Cullmann, *Christ*, 195. In order not to mislead with erroneous assimilation, it does need acknowledged that Wagner imports *a posteriori* the idea of territorial, 'super-spirits' into Cullmann's understanding of principalities and powers. This was never proposed by Cullmann.

[123] Wink's understanding that the powers, both in New Testament times and today, consist of an outer manifestation together with an inner spirituality or interiority is what leads him to postulate that the term 'principalities and powers' is generic, and refers to the physical, psychic and social forces encountered in everyday life. Wink, *Unmasking*, 4.

[124] Just like Jesus weeping while knowing full well his intention to bring Lazarus back from the dead (John 11:1-44), God can indeed weep because of the evil in the world despite exhaustively knowing the future defeat of the powers. Mott, *Biblical Ethics*, 19-21; J. S. Stewart, "On a Neglected Emphasis in New Testament Theology," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 4 (1951): 292-301.

example, when arguing that activist non-violence is superior to non-resistive pacifism, stakes his claim on the biblical witness that the principalities and powers are part of a good creation (Colossians 1:16), became fallen, have been disarmed (Colossians 2:15) and will one day be reconciled with their creator.[125]

If this is the case for political and structural principalities, will it be the same outcome of reconciliation for the spiritual powers behind the societal powers?[126] On this matter, there is no agreement. Sider argues that the powers in 1 Corinthians 15:24 will be rendered powerless, not destroyed.[127] Newbigin disagrees and states that they will ultimately be destroyed.[128] In an attempt to solve the scholarly *impasse* concerning the future outcome for all principalities and powers, Kellermann offers a dialectical solution based on the apparent paradoxical antinomy between Romans 13 and Revelation 13. Whether it is the history of Satan and demons or of a structure such as the law for example, we can see as illustrated in Romans 13 the creation of something or someone which is good and there to serve the people (the law or Lucifer) which becomes in Revelation 13 a fallen creation in a state of frenzy and chaos having received the focus of idolatry after giving into blasphemous pretensions.[129]

Therefore, in terms of the exhaustive divine presentiment which directs his divine actions

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[125] Ronald J. Sider, "Christ and Power," *International Review of Mission* 69 (1980): 12-20. Other 'Powers redemptionists' include Berkhof, *Christ and*, 36-46; Caird, *Principalities*, 26-30; Robert C. Linthicum, *City of God, City of Satan: A Biblical Theology of the Urban Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 68-73; Walter Wink, *The Powers that Be: Theology for a New Millennium* (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 13-36.

[126] Powell reveals that there are various treatments of these principalities and powers in the New Testament. They are brought to a new knowledge and understanding (Ephesians 3:10), reconciled (Colossians 1:20), triumphed over (Colossians 2:16), and destroyed (1 Corinthians 15). Cyril H. Powell, *The Biblical Concept of Power* (London: Epworth Press, 1963), 161-172.

[127] Sider, "Christ and Power," 14-15.

[128] Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 204.

[129] Kellermann, *Seasons of Faith*, 81-85.

against the demonic, whether structural or spiritual, God operates in a separate non-contingent realm from that which is created. He alone, with proleptic insight concerning future divine interaction into an eschatological kingdom, knows which powers, while operating under the broad sovereignty of God, are too far gone in their bombastic self-idolatry and thereby beyond redemption (Revelation 20). However, from the perspective of creation the foreknown final outcome of all principalities and powers is a mystery and so corporate gatherings of Christians need to participate with God in the specific divine conflict they face and seek divine empowerment to fight each battle without exact knowledge about the details of the end of the war. Let us now consider what that empowerment is.

7.7 Corporate Kenoticism: Spiritual Warfare Power for God's People

All authority and rule is now under Christ. This is the under-lying fact of this era, even though not fully recognised by many of its participants! The Christian, living in the times of tension between the Resurrection and the End, is denizen of a world whose rulers, both terrestrial and celestial, *do not yet all recognize Christ's authority.* Because of this, perplexing questions are continually raised about the Christian's allegiance. (emphasis mine).[130]

Having framed God's omnipotent power within the context of spiritual conflict on the individual level as dual power which manifests itself simultaneously and dialectically as divine full and varying kenotic power,[131] what are the implications of this model if mapped onto SW on the corporate level, especially claimed global-systemic and territorial expressions of the demonic? Obviously, there are various nuanced articulations of demonic powers on the corporate level but if we want to form a voluminous theology of omnipotence in SW that helps explicate a

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[130] Powell, *The Biblical Concept*, 171-172.
[131] See above, pp. 195-196.

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doctrine of God, then we need to tether our understanding of who God is to a dialectical and unified theology, what has been called an 'exousiology',[132] of SW on the corporate level.

The greatest dialectic is formed using polar opposite models as thesis and antithesis and harmonising them into a unified model. In the literature on corporate principalities, as hinted at in this section's introduction above,[133] the paradigms of Wagner and of Wink are arguably the two most polar opposite voices in the debate.[134] In the recent past they have clashed over matters pertaining to the ontology of the demonic, too broad a definition of intercessory prayer, flat use of the Bible, scapegoating and the use of the myth of redemptive violence, and a focus on american exceptionalism and Christendom.[135] In the wider debate, both positions have their critics from scholars who would define themselves as more centrist on matters pertaining to structural and territorial spirits.[136]

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[132] Yoder, *The Politics*, 141-144.

[133] See above, pp. 207-211.

[134] Breuninger states that Wink and Wagner represent the two extremes of 'powers theology.' Christian Breuninger, "Where Angels Fear to Tread: Appraising the Current Fascination with Spiritual Warfare," *Covenant Quarterly* 53 (1995): 41-42.

[135] To be more specific, in the most recent and final direct debate between the two proponents Wink and co-author Hardin accuse Wagner and his co-author Greenwood of using scripture in a hermeneutically flat way that is full of anachronisms. They also make gross generalisations of other religions under the rubric 'witchcraft' without noting the differences. Most concernedly is re-telling the story of their SLSW against an abortion clinic which, despite their denial and protestations, seemed somehow linked to the killing of the lead abortion doctor of the clinic as though this was part of 'binding and victory' over the abortion demon called 'Lilith.' Wink and Hardin, "Response to C.," 200-203.

[136] To exemplify critiquing Wagner, Arnold broadly welcomes SLSW and its emphasis upon territorial spirits but he cautions the reader about discerning and praying down territorial spirits instead of letting God do the tearing down. Arnold, *3 Crucial*, 143-199. Also Gilbert is highly critical of SLSW (also known as 'third-wave') theology's cosmological dualism and its tendency to give demons too much power. Pierre Gilbert, "The Third Wave Worldview: A Biblical Critique," *Direction* 29.2 (2000): 155-164. Focussed upon Wink, critics are very dubious about the varied sources Wink draws upon for his 'integral-panentheist worldview' including Jung, process philosophy and new physics which has lead to the accusation that he is a liberal and postmodern revisionist who eisegetically imports human psychology into the biblical text. Lloyd Gaston, review of *Unmasking the Powers: The Invisible Forces that Determine Human Existence*, by Walter Wink. *Theology Today* 44.1 (1987): 153; Bruce J. Malina, review of *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament*, by Walter Wink. *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 40.3 (1985): 75-76; Stephen F. Noll, "Thinking About Angels," in *The Unseen World: Christian Reflections on Angels, Demons and the Heavenly Realm*, ed. Anthony N. S. Lane. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 23-26; David Powlison, "Response to Walter Wink," in *Understanding Spiritual Warfare: Four Views,* eds. James K. Beilby and Paul Rhodes Eddy. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 77.

That said, notwithstanding the clear differences, there is a unified and dialectical theology that can be formed. Three points of overlap come to the fore: First, as already established, both models deal primarily with SW against corporate and strategic principalities and powers, despite differing understandings of the powers. Wink defines them as the inner and outer spiritual aspects of any given manifestation of power, especially within organisations, structures and systems that quickly become demonic if they become idols.[137] This definition naturally catalyses the didactic task of re-defining Satan in a non-personal and non-ontological way, which Wink does; Satan is no longer a noun but rather an adjective.[138] Conversely, Wagner believes the powers to be demons with full ontology, spirit-principalities that govern territories and are in rebellion against God.[139]

Both paradigms refer to the same scriptures (Deuteronomy 32:8 and Daniel 10) to buttress their articulation of geographically wide angels and demons over urban areas or corporate gatherings of human beings. Wagner builds his biblical theology of territorial spirits around these passages together with Psalm 82.[140] Wink, in line with his integrated approach,

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[137] Wink, *Naming*, 5.

[138] Wink's main reason for doing this is that the traditional understanding of Satan does not commend itself to the modern mind and so, despite all the surrounding evidence of evil's existence, nobody takes Satan intellectually seriously even though we also lack the intellectual capacity to understand and explain evil. Walter Wink and Gareth Higgins, "The World Systems Model," in *Understanding Spiritual Warfare: Four Views,* eds. James K. Beilby and Paul Rhodes Eddy. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 47-48; Wink, *Unmasking*, 9-11.

[139] C. Peter. Wagner, "Territorial Spirits," in *Territorial Spirits: Practical Strategies for How to Crush the Enemy through Spiritual Warfare*, ed. C. Peter Wagner. (Shippensburg: Destiny Image, 2012), 72-73; Wagner, *Spiritual*, 211-213; cf. Eddy and Beilby, "Introduction," 41.

[140] Wagner, *Spiritual*, 167-169. Heiser makes a very strong and convincing case that these passages used by Wagner make most sense when Yahweh is compared to other gods who actually do exist and that because Yahweh is uncreated and necessary whereas other gods are subsequent and contingent, monotheism means for Israel not a denial of other gods but that Yahweh is 'species-unique.' Michael S. Heiser, "Monotheism, Polytheism, Monolatry, or Henotheism? Toward an Assessment of Divine Plurality in the Hebrew Bible," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 18.1 (2008): 1-30. He also strongly argues that these passages, Deuteronomy 32:8 and Daniel 10, are source material for the apostle Paul when he writes about principalities and powers in his letters. Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* (Bellingham: Lexam Press, 2015), 113-122

takes these verses and adds to them non-canonical passages that talk of angels over nations, such as First Enoch 89-90.[141] Once he establishes these angels of nations and their connection to the 'sons of God' in Genesis 6:4 he applies this understanding to the angels of the seven churches in Revelation 2-3 arguing that the seven ἀγγέλοι are not human messengers but spiritual angels and that each angel is held accountable for the behaviour of the church. If the church turns its back on God then the angel could become demonic.[142]

Finally, both insist on the central importance of intercessory prayer. There is considerable consensus that persevering intercessory prayer directly influences what God does and God responds *because* of the intercessions.[143] As Wink succinctly puts it, 'history belongs to the intercessors' so long as biblical prayer is modelled on examples such as Abraham and Moses whose prayers are more like haggling God of the cosmic, oriental bazaar than the unctuous prayers of most churches.[144]

Viewing, therefore, all powers as visible structural or societal principalities that have become idolatrous and in their mode as idols are invisibly empowered and exacerbated by demonic volitional-spiritual beings, how does God's omnipotence demonstrate itself in the midst of divine conflict in which corporate gatherings of believers participate? The answer, it seems, is a two-pronged spiritual and physical approach, namely intelligent intercessory prayer and benevolent, non-violent resistive force.

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[141] Wink, *Naming*, 26-35; Wink, *Engaging*, 87-107.

[142] Wink, *Engaging*, 69-82.

[143] Wagner agrees with the emphasis upon intercessory prayer but disagree with Wink's definition of an intercessor believing it to be too broad and outside of the Christian faith. See C. Peter Wagner and Rebecca Greenwood, "Response to Walter Wink," in *Understanding Spiritual Warfare: Four Views,* eds. James K. Beilby and Paul Rhodes Eddy. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 86-87.

[144] Wink, *Engaging*, 297-317; Wink and Higgins, "The World Systems," 61-71.

To best explicate this approach, let me reconstruct and develop an illustration used by Wagner and Greenwood. Greenwood describes a SLSW 'prayer assignment' against gentlemen's clubs in the Houston area. When praying outside these clubs, not only did they see a number of men reach the door of the club, turn and leave promptly while they were praying for men not to go in, but over the following two months these clubs were exposed for fraudulent and corrupt practises which resulted in some of them closing, and this was then followed by the most fruitful evangelistic effort among the club girls that had ever been seen in this part of the city.[145]

The demonstration of God's divine power operating concurrently on full and changeable kenotic power is summed up in Greenwood's later statement: 'some of the Gentlemen's Clubs are still in operation in this area of the city.'[146] The desired outcome was only partially realised. For a SLSW-only approach, especially the type that seeks to tell a territorial spirit to leave a city or area, is a one-prong approach which does not address the physical, structural power that is present. If some of the clubs remain and the people of the city are still thinking and living according to sinful patterns, then this will reinforce the demonic right for evil spirits to remain. Instead, 'the people of God need to do hand-to-hand combat on the streets by proclaiming the message of deliverance and *ministering* to those victimized by sin and the demonic.'[147]

A two-pronged effective approach, which could see varying levels of God's kenotic power at work, could be intercession teams praying strategically over the area and clubs, evangelism teams spreading the gospel on the streets near the vicinity, engagement with the

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[145] Greenwood, *Authority*, 28-30.
[146] Greenwood, *Authority*, 30.
[147] Arnold, *3 Crucial*, 166.

diabolical structures and systems of the sex-club industry by non-violent political lobbying, and

pastoral intervention in the lives of the involved girls that seeks to help them work through the

personal root bondages that force them to choose this vocation. Collectively, this response would

seek to address both the worldly diabolical principality structures and its symbiotically-tied

demonic ontological powers behind the systems of domination.[148]

Viewing varying kenotic power as the *sine qua non* of God's omnipotence serves as a

powerful antidote to any spiritual hubris which may reside in the practitioners of SW on the

corporate level.[149] It also holds much explanatory power for the varying degrees of 'success' that

is experienced in the world of deliverance ministry.[150] Most vitally, it presents a theological

foundation for using God's power to serve one another,[151] and mobilising God's people to be a

church that comes alongside those who are marginalised and have no voice.[152] The more

effective the global church is in this, the greater the presence of God through his church, which

will have greater implications for the panentheistic reality of God; a matter to which we now

turn.

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[148] A really creative and fully-orbed approach could include developing a prophetic voice in culture via christian art, media, music, and film that confronts the cheap-sex message by presenting a biblical theology of sexuality in which covenant commitment is extolled and the demand for illicit sexual services jettisoned. This would certainly go far in rebutting Wink's criticism that by 'attempting to fight the demons "in the air," evangelicals and charismatics will continue largely to ignore the institutional sources of the demonic.' Wink, *Engaging*, 314.

[149] Something Fiddes is very sensitive to and critical of. See above, pp. 139-140.

[150] Seen of course in the life of Jesus when Mark recorded that Jesus 'could not do' any works of signs and wonders because of the unbelief in Nazareth. (Mark 6:4-6).

[151] George L. Murphy, "Toward a Theology of Technological War," *Dialog* 27 (1988): 51-53.

[152] William E. Pannell, "Evangelism and Power," *International Review of Mission* 69 (1980): 49-55.

7.8 Divine Pantheistic Omnipresence and Ubiquitous Powers and Principalities

Fiddes' Christian and soteriological panentheism governed by his trinitarian 'persons as relations' concept and full creaturely participation within the relations of the Trinity implies that evil, the demonic and fallen principalities and powers are, in some way, situated *within* God himself. Simultaneously, evil defined as the negative expression of irrevocable libertarian freedom means that God is not the primary origin or cause of evil and subsequent suffering. With the help of von Balthasar, the above-developed doctrine of God's omnipresence enables one to explain where evil resides and exercises its malevolent will within the relations of the triune God while ensuring that culpability for much evil remains with Satan, his demonic forces and the visible frontage of the powers and principalities.[153]

The worldwide ubiquity of internal and external structural powers and the sub-personal, volitional demonic forces behind them is attested to in many different contexts. Whether it is in the desert-nomadic animistic cultures of Africa,[154] the capitalist-consumerist urban centres around the globe,[155] tyrannical despotic states who are main players in the global arms-dealing trade,[156] or all parts of the world where human beings gather and form societies and culture based on hierarchy and privilege,[157] the existence and manifestation of evil in different forms is an accepted presupposition. Through his social-scientific prism on the powers, Hiebert reminds

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[153] See above, pp. 169-179.

[154] Keith Ferdinando, *The Triumph of Christ in African Perspective: A Study of Demonology and Redemption in the African Context* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1999); Andrew Olu Igenoza, "Christian Theology and the Belief in Evil Spirits: An African Perspective," *The Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 4.1 (1986): 39-48.

[155] Padilla, "Spiritual Conflict," 208-213.

[156] Murphy, "Toward a Theology," 48-54.

[157] Gerhard Lohfink, *Jesus and Community: The Social Dimension of Christian Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 115-121; Norbert F. Lohfink, *Option for the Poor: The Basic Principle of Liberation Theology in the Light of the Bible* (Berkeley: Bibal Press, 1987), 5-15.

us that the scriptural witness is that the earth is the Lord's and that God's key objective when

participating in spiritual conflict is to establish God's reign on earth and throughout the universe,

just as it is in the heavenly realm.[158] Moreover, O'Brien contends that understanding

principalities and powers as personal, supernatural agents who can penetrate social, political,

judicial structures significantly helps us to see the global ubiquity of the powers and also why not

all structures become tyrannical.[159]

Von Balthasar's 'yes' and 'no' between the Father and Son's relations creates relational

divine kenotic acts that result in a fathomless separation of God from himself in which exist all

forms of dark and wicked separation, including hell. This means it is a non-static and open

distance that can morph in order to contain all mutational types of evil, whether that be

personalist-ontological, structural and societal or even territorial. This has to be the case given

the malleable nature of the demonic and principalities and powers. For example, as Wink has

amply demonstrated, in scripture and church history Satan is a fluid category, one that changes

with every historical epoch. In the Old Testament he is presented as God's dark side, his *agent

provocateur*.[160] This representation is continued into the New Testament,[161] which delineates a

picture of Satan as a subtle tempter from God, a legalist, a being who knows his place, and a

means of deliverance.[162] It is as we enter early church history, with an increasing ubiquity of

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[158] Hiebert, "Spiritual Warfare," 118-123.
[159] O'Brien, "Principalities and Powers and," 9-10. O'Brien and others make the point that it is vital to note that the powers of evil work in and through people and that if we equate the powers only with human structures then false conclusions will be arrived at. Cf. Chloe Lynch, "How Convincing is Walter Wink's Interpretation of Paul's Language of the Powers?" *Evangelical Quarterly* 83.3 (2011): 262-265.
[160] 2 Samuel 24:1; Zechariah 3:1-5; Job 1-2.
[161] Luke 22:31-34; 1 Corinthians 5:1-5; 1 Timothy 1:20; Matthew 4:1-13 cf. Luke 4:1-13.
[162] Wink and Higgins, "The World Systems," 51-56; Wink, *Unmasking*, 14-22. This claim by Wink from these passages is contested. Brown, for example, commenting on 1 Cor 5:1-5 states that 'it cannot be claimed that Satan functions as an (unwitting) agent of God in 1 Cor 5:5. The verse does not refer to Satan himself, but primarily

evil, that church fathers like Justin Martyr and Abbot Richalm of Schontal portray Satan as the origin of evil and fully responsible for every evil act.[163] So this very unsystematic picture of Satan from scripture and church history should preclude any attempt to define Satan mono-archetypally or mono-theologically. Rather Satan should be seen as a changeable category between the poles of God's purposes intertwined with humanity's choices and thereby located in all his different descriptive characteristics in the significant and rebellious 'no' within the 'yes' between the Father and the Son.

To frame all accounts and evidence of evil as existing within the relations of the triune God in this way not only reinforces the mainline view that principalities and powers are still, despite their malevolent and nefarious spirit and action, under the broad sovereignty of God, but also all forms of territorial spirits are not independent of God and do not operate in a separate, dualistic fashion outside of the presence of God.[164] One of the repeated criticisms of Wagner's SLSW teaching is that because of its emphasis upon large geo-political areas under the complete influence and oppression of superior territorial spirits, it often demonises 'secular' culture and develops 'us versus them' language. Critics assert that this quickly moves the model of SW in the direction of nationalism, mimetic practise of scapegoating, or a Constantinian, postmillennial vision that seeks to get power in order to legislate Christianity back into the host culture.[165]

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to the realm of existence outside the Christian community over which Satan rules.' Derek R. Brown, *The God of This Age: Satan in the Churches and Letters of the Apostle Paul* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 151.

[163] Wink, *Unmasking*, 22-23, 36-37.

[164] Gilbert persuasively argues the problem with the third-wave movement that proffers territorial spirits theology is their cosmological worldview which, contrary to a christian worldview, has violence, mythologised accounts, and a pantheon of demons all at the centre of their creation account and so this goes a long way to creating a 'paranoid universe,' outside of God's providence and governed primarily by fear and a defensive mentality. Gilbert, "The Third Wave," 153-161.

[165] Wink and Hardin, "Response to C.," 199-203; Boyd, "Response to C.," 210-215.

Viewing all powers and principalities together with the bolstering spiritual forces behind them as situated within the triune relations of God and therefore within the very broad providence of God, does not mean, however, that SW is neat and tidy.[166] There exists too many accounts of explicit demonic and evil events often adversely affecting Christians to accept a pedestrian account of SW.[167] Rather, within the omnipresence of God subsists the *collective* omnipresence of principalities and powers and so this needs to be acknowledged and engaged with by the church globally. At this juncture, therefore, there is an imperative that apparent opposite paradigms of SW, as represented by Wagner and Wink, are viewed as the two sides of the same 'powers' coin which determine a two-pronged attack, one that deals with both spiritual and worldly systemic root issues together in an effective way.

Being sensitive to the global presence of evil Wagner, together with Greenwood, purports that SLSW is a gift of spiritual technology for the world from God. First, it is an effective means to the end goal of global evangelism, bringing people into belief in Christ.[168] Also, it never underestimates the activity of the demonic since Satan's origin as fallen Lucifer means that his complete *modus operandi* is to rebel against God and his creation by inducing as much suffering

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[166] Similarly, Foster reminds the reader that even though the Holy Spirit is omnipresent he still regularly acts territorially and manifests himself with particular weightiness in different regions or places, often in ways that are messy and chaotic, just like Pentecost. Roger Foster, "Preface," in *Territorial Spirits: Insights on Strategic-Level Spiritual Warfare from Nineteen Christian Leaders*, ed. C. Peter Wagner. (Chichester: Sovereign World, 1991), xi.

[167] Wagner retells an account of a Ghanaian Presbyterian pastor who, after instructing a tree used as a satanic shine to be cut down, collapsed and died the moment the tree was felled. C. Peter. Wagner, "Spiritual Warfare," in *Territorial Spirits: Practical Strategies for How to Crush the Enemy through Spiritual Warfare*, ed. C. Peter Wagner. (Shippensburg: Destiny Image, 2012), 49. Bennett cites a typical testimony of a convert to Christianity in Madagascar, "Before I was converted to Christianity, the devils had power over me. . . When the demons saw that I wanted to be a Christian they appeared to me with knives and spears and wanted to kill me. One day they wanted to throw me into the fire." Bennett, *I Am Not Afraid*, 76-77. Even Wink's journey into studying the Powers came after he nearly lost his life under the spiritual weight and oppression of the powers in South America. Wink, *Naming*, ix-x.

[168] Wagner, *Spiritual*, 151-154.

and misery as possible.[169] Third, SLSW is one specific part of a global rise in intercessory prayer that seeks to constantly and permanently cover the world in prayer.

This mention of global intercessory prayer presents the most significant tool in the spiritual arsenal to be used by the global church as she participates in spiritual conflict with the ubiquitous powers, both structural and spiritual. Without repeating on the *power* of prayer,[170] both Wagner and Wink maintain that intercessory prayer really does matter and is really effective. While history does not belong to the intercessor alone, history belongs to the God of the intercessor who partners (albeit as the stronger partner) with the intercessor and brings things about in response to prayer.[171] The omnipresent element concerning prayer, agree Wagner and Wink, is that prayer is dynamic, has some sort of causal effect regarding God's interaction with creation,[172] and this is primarily because God in us (i.e. the Holy Spirit) fuels our prayers and so in a sense it is God interceding to God on creation's behalf.[173] This theology of prayer therefore opens the door for less traditional, prophetic-type action in the belief that God's unction of the Spirit will call and raise an intercessor to stand in the gap and mediate a corporate act of identificational repentance for past sins, speak blessings over geographical areas via prayer walks, or confront a town or city about its idolatrous behaviour.[174]

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[169] Wagner and Greenwood criticise Boyd for not including the fall of Lucifer in his account of Satan's functional lordship. See Wagner and Greenwood, "Response to Gregory," 169-170.

[170] See above, pp. 220-222.

[171] The qualifications of an intercessor is where Wagner and Wink disagree the most. Wink's theology of prayer contends that Revelation 5-8 clearly teaches that all humans intervene in heavenly liturgy. Wink and Higgins, "The World Systems," 61-67; cf. Wink, *Engaging*, 298-304. Wagner and Greenwood absolutely disagree by retorting that there is a spiritual anointing, qualification and calling on the lives of the intercessors and so is not open to anyone. Greenwood, *Authority*, 59-64, 103-107; Wagner, *Spiritual*, 36-37.

[172] Wagner, *Spiritual*, 23-24.

[173] Wink, *Engaging*, 304-308

[174] Wink and Hardin, "Response to C.," 199-200; Wagner and Greenwood, "The Strategic," 187-191; Wagner, *Spiritual*, 256; Greenwood, *Authority*, 74-76.

7.9 Conclusion

> The existence of both God and the evil from which God is entreated to deliver us are integral and central ingredients in their religious worldview; the notion that there might be some logical incompatibility between the two simply does not come to mind.[175]

Hasker may be overstating his case in order to prepare his answer on whether or not God and evil are compatible. However, while questions of theodicy may prevent people from becoming Christian believers,[176] it seems the majority of Christians do practise their faith within the tension of an all-powerful, all-knowing, benevolent God and all-pervasive and prevalent evil, be that moral, natural, or spiritual. This chapter has sought to examine this tension by constructing a unified and dialectical theology of evil and SW. To do this Fiddes' doctrine of God has been utilised in order to undergird the constructed theology of SW in a way commensurate and congruent to the presented theology.

The adaption and development of Fiddes' theology has formed a doctrine of God well-suited to explain the various aspects of a spiritual warfare theology that explains spiritual conflict involving individual christian believers. In this doctrine, God's nature is dynamic, with a freely chosen ability to absorb the pain and suffering of the world without ontological mutability or limitation of foreknowledge. He is relationally malleable and able to genuinely respond to the irrevocable, libertarian freewill decisions of his creation, both spiritual and physical. All this he does while concurrently and non-competitively holding all knowledge of the past, present, future, and operating with varying degrees of full and kenotic power. This elicits a globally pervasive atonement of *Christus Victor*, which

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[175] Hasker, *The Triumph*, 55.
[176] 'In the mind of the latter [the non-believer] it [evil] stands as a major obstacle to religious commitment.' Hick, *Evil and*, 3.

collectively enables Christian believers to battle and overcome their fallen nature, live in allegiance to the kingdom of God, and remind Satan of his yet-to-be-fully consummated defeat by Christ through his crucifixion and resurrection.

In the same way as the rubric 'spiritual warfare' has evolved to include not just individual demons or forces of evil but also the claims of territorial principalities and powers, so has the articulated doctrine of God in this chapter grounded and sustained the depicted theology of SW on the geo-political corporate level. Situating all of God's knowledge within his exhaustive presentiment has enabled a theological connection to be made between God's infinite knowledge of all future events of evil and suffering and his genuine divine pathos. His ability to suffer and be passible without ontological change maintains the realness of his conflict with all forms of principalities and powers while knowing the full outcome of their final destination. God's omnipotence as defined above in kenotic concepts reflects in real terms the various outcomes of the SW two-pronged approach of non-violent activism and continuous prayer. Finally, the omnipresence of God matches the ubiquity of evil by manifesting itself through the global, continual prayers of all believing intercessors who are not praying apart from God but are interceding within the very relations of the triune God, counteracting the 'no' within the 'yes' of Father and Son by participating in the 'yes' within the triune relations.

Having reached the end of the chapter, all that now remains to be done in the final chapter of the thesis is an articulated theological definition of spiritual warfare. This will include a summary of the entire thesis, a verdict on whether or not the research thesis

statement has been demonstrated, and some comments on the outcome of using Fiddes'

theology as a congenial framework to build a doctrine of God robust enough to construct a

unified theology of SW. From these final judgements it will be possible to identify areas of

potential further study and research.

Chapter Eight

CONCLUSION

8.1 Introduction

As previously mentioned, the key themes of Fiddes' theological project have not altered during a career now spanning over 40 years.[1] In his most recent published writings, Fiddes' vision of who God is and how he acts deviates little from the picture set out earlier in *CSG* and other texts. For instance, having thoroughly analysed and critiqued Iris Murdoch's engagement and synthesis with theology in her philosophy and prose, Fiddes concludes that in order to develop a theology of a suffering God which goes beyond sentimentality - a charge brought by Murdoch - one needs to hold 'a theology that takes divine passibility seriously… is willing to work out the implications of passibility and empathy in terms of a radical self-limiting of divine knowledge and power and a mutability of God in the sense of divine openness to new experience arising from creation.'[2] Moreover, having made the surprising claim that he sourced the theological concept 'divine perichoresis' from Lewis, not Moltmann,[3] Fiddes delineates the historical, theological, and relational contours of Lewis' development of perichoresis through his 'co-inherent' friendship with Charles Williams, both of whom came to their perichoretic understanding through the work of G.L. Prestige.[4]

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[1] See above, pp. 22 fn.27; 28 fn.52; 45 fn.114.
[2] Paul S. Fiddes, *Iris Murdoch and the Others: A Writer in Dialogue with Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2022), 200, cf. *CSG*, 68-71.
[3] See above, p. 153 fn.12.
[4] Fiddes, *Charles Williams*. For an overview of Fiddes' perichoretic and co-inherent thesis about Lewis and Williams, see Alistair J. Cuthbert, review of *Charles Williams and C.S. Lewis: Friends In Co-Inherence,* by Paul S. Fiddes. *Pacific Journal of Theological Research* 17.1 (2022): 44-47.

The stability and consistency of Fiddes' theology has been crucial to the justification of him as dialogue partner for this construction of a doctrine of God which coheres well with a theology of SW. As noted in the introduction, modern thinking about SW has taken place since the beginnings of the charismatic renewal in the late 1960s.[5] Therefore, using Fiddes - a theologian whose corpus of work approximately mirrors the epoch of renewal - in conversation has created a genuine case of contemporary, constructive theology using sources which are both systematic and subject-based.[6] Also in drawing from Fiddes, a theologian who grounds both literary and ecclesial theology in a doctrine of God, has enabled emergent analysis to come forth from tragic literature and pastoral and practical theology, both of which are important considerations in a theology of SW. So Fiddes' doctrine of God is useful for theologising SW.

8.2 Summary of Thesis

The research question asked in the introduction was 'does the contemporary theology of Paul S. Fiddes offer a better framework than traditional theologies to explain the nature and character of God that best fits with a theology of SW?' More specifically, is it indeed the case that a critical evaluation and reconstruction of Fiddes' theology offers the best paradigm to construct a doctrine of God suitable for a spiritual conflict theology. Chapters two through seven answer this research question. Before articulating a succinct answer to the question by giving a theological account of SW, let us first summarise where we have been in the thesis, part by part.

Chapters two and three laid crucial ground work by delineating a broad picture of Fiddes'

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[5] See above, pp. 3-4.
[6] Some of Fiddes' earliest work was critiquing the charismatic renewal. See above, pp. 27-28.

doctrines of God and of evil, accounts that highlight the *sine qua non* themes in his key works.

Fiddes aligns well with other theologians who argue that divine passibility of suffering love is the

only appropriate response to evil and spiritual conflict in the current post-Auschwitz milieu.[7]

There is a cross in the heart of God, an experience of pain and suffering from the crucifixion of

Christ and cry of dereliction. Human affliction and pain at the hands of evil and malevolent

forces is analogous to divine nature and experience. Evil *befalls* God and so a practical theodicy

should be rooted in divine passibility and pathos, without collapsing Calvary into a general

account of divine suffering. Fiddes' theological definition of evil is that it is primarily *privatio*

boni, which emerges from nothingness. Satan may have sub-personhood and so there is no

sentience or wilful volition in evil but rather a parasitic quiddity which maintains ambiguity and

resists definition. For reasons I explicate in part two, Fiddes' non-ontological definition of evil is

a weakness and more at odds with his doctrine of God than a personal-ontological account of

evil.

Chapters four, five and six offered three developed and nuanced accounts of God's

necessary omni-attributes, i.e. his omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence, which

collectively establish a doctrine of God commodious enough to situate a spiritual warfare

theology. Because God is both passible and mutable, Fiddes denies EDF; God knows *only* what

can be known. A theology of SW, however, is better suited to a tenseless, not tensed, view of

time, and as shown can avoid a zero-sum game between divine sovereignty and creaturely

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[7] Davis informs that before the holocaust, *the* evil event which emboldened all theodicies was the Lisbon earthquake in 1755. It is interesting that the quintessential paradigm of evil has changed from an event of natural evil to a moral one, and so is now perhaps easier to explain. Davis, *Encountering* Evil, 6.

freedom thereby guaranteeing full divine knowledge of the future, including the eschatological full abolishment of evil, while maintaining full creaturely and angelic freedom and will.

In chapter five the use of Martensen's kenotic theology enabled the formulation of a journey of kenosis power that was able to be mapped onto the kenotic Christ hymn of Philippians chapter 2. Fiddes strongly proffers a non-coercive power definition, one freely realised in God by self-limitation which has a range of power outage depending upon the stages of kenosis, plerosis or theosis. Taking this definition of kenotic power helps elucidate in chapter six the plausibility of evil's location falling within the omnipresent, panentheistic domain of God. Situated in the 'yes' of relations between the Father and Son, this development of von Balthasar's trinitarian theology allows for the twisted knot of rebellion to be present in the relations of the triune God, whether those rebellious acts originate with human or spiritual beings.

In chapter seven a constructive dialectical theology of SW was presented, one in which Fiddes' nuanced doctrine of God could be located. Bifurcated into the individual and corporate, a theology of SW was depicted through the lenses of God's prescience, kenotic power, and panentheistic presence. Whether it is the spiritually evil triptych of the flesh, world and devil or the corporate territories, principalities or powers, forces of malevolence do contribute to the tension faced by all humans, Christian or otherwise, created by the co-existence of an all-powerful, good God and ubiquitous forces of evil, whether natural, moral, spiritual or existential. This tension was examined and explained by a dialectical theology of SW, a theology of which a succinct account will now be presented.

8.3 A Theological Account of Spiritual Warfare

> Evil is not merely a lack of something, but an effective agent, a living spiritual being, perverted and perverting, a terrible reality, mysterious and frightening. . . It is not a question of one devil but of many. . . This question of the devil and the influence he can exert on individual persons as well as on communities, whole societies and events is a very important chapter of Catholic doctrine.[8]

Theologically, what is SW? Who is involved in the conflict? Pope Paul VI's declaration to an audience of Catholic believers in 1972 perfectly encapsulates a doctrine of evil which needs embedded in any theology of SW. As the four acts of the biblical narrative strongly suggest, together with the fifth act currently being written,[9] God and his church are at war with a common enemy. The people of God participate in the divine conflict taking place in the heavenly realms; that excluded middle, which does not war against flesh and blood but rather spiritual beings, principalities and powers (Ephesians 6:12).

As the previous section concludes, the use of the contemporary theology of Paul S. Fiddes, adapted, integrated and nuanced as a result of my interlocution with Fiddes,[10] does offer a better schematic framework than more traditional theologies to construct a doctrine of God that best grounds a theology of SW. The proposed qualifications indeed strengthen the Fiddesian doctrine of God as an optimum model to make sense of the surrounding SW reality. Fundamentally, God is ultimately responsible for the presence and problem of evil. As the uncreated, non-contingent, necessary being, all other beings in created, necessary and contingent form owe their existence, ontology and irrevocable libertarian freedom to God, whether that

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[8] Robert Faricy S.J., "Deliverance from Evil: Private Exorcism," in *Deliverance Prayer*, eds. Matthew & Dennis Linn. (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), 73.

[9] Craig Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story* 2nd rev ed. (London: SPCK, 2014).

[10] Drawn from various sources, both direct and indirect critics of Fiddes.

freedom is used for ill or good. Therefore, God cannot be completely exonerated of all culpability

for the existence of evil and warfare reality currently prevalent in the heavenly, spiritual realms.

However, via revelation of scripture, God guarantees that the days of evil's presence and

activity are finite and the future, full consummation of the eschaton will realise the final and

exhaustive destruction of Satan and all demonic principalities and powers. Because God is a non-

contingent, necessary being, he exists and operates on a completely different and distinct plane of

reality from the created universe. Therefore, there is no need to reduce creaturely libertarian

freedom, God's EDF of the future, or his unlimited sovereignty and providence, in order to assert

absolute co-existence of full creaturely freedom alongside infinite divine knowledge of the past,

present and future.

Moreover, due to residual culpability remaining with God for the existence of malevolent,

nefarious spirit beings who cause much evil, divine passibility of suffering love is *inter alia* a

necessary attribute of God. 'Only the suffering God can help,'[11] one whose interaction with the

spiritual and physical creation determines divine relational mutability whilst maintaining

ontological immutability. His non-contingent, uncreated nature cannot change while his

approach, dealings and interactions with all created reality can. Through the mystery of the

incarnation, the two distinct planes of ontological reality coalesce, and the suffering of God takes

on a singular form because of divine passibility directly caused by creation via human agency.

There is no collapsing of Golgotha into a general account of divine suffering; rather the

crucifixion of Christ univocally actualises the cross permanently located within the heart of God.

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[11] Bauckham, "'Only the Suffering," 6-7.

Situating the cross in the heart of the triune God enables a kenotic Christology that maps out kenosis, plerosis and theosis power onto the incarnation, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ which consequently establishes a kenotic Trinitarianism and cosmology. Atonement power through Christ's death and resurrection is both humanward and Satanward, and releases combative and transformative power over Satan and the demonic, as well as the hold and tyranny of evil over the creation. Moreover, taking the singularity of the cross and the consequent defeat of the demonic, together with the universality of God's triune presence, establishes a panentheistic reality to God's ontology, one into which all sentient rebellion and opposition is situated within the infinite distance of the 'yes' between the Father and Son, which distance was caused by the rupturing of divine relations at the moment of dereliction at Calvary.

Finally, as worked out above,[12] an adapted Fiddesian doctrine of God offers an effective model of God that explicates evil and spiritual warfare taking place on the level of the individual, whether that be on the frontline of the sinful flesh, worldly values or devilish assignments. Concurrently, it also explains what impact corporate evil - be that fallen creation, principalities and powers, or even so called 'territorial spirits,' - has on God and, therefore, what we can expect in terms of his response and divine action in the face of the evil befalling him.

8.4 Potential Further Research

The scope of this thesis has been determined by which subjects under the general rubrics of 'spiritual warfare' and 'evil and the demonic' have been addressed by Fiddes in his sizeable corpus of scholarship. The connectional nature of his theological enterprise made him a very

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[12] See chapter 7 above.

suitable dialogue partner for constructing a theology of SW.[13] However, Fiddes does not address every relevant question or issue. There is an *ad infinitum* quality to the entire debate concerning evil and divine conflict which can be tackled from various perspectives, many of which are unaddressed by Fiddes and thereby outside of the scope of this thesis.

So, what follows are some areas of research not addressed in this thesis but very germane to the theological subject matter of evil and SW. To begin, given the practical nature of much SW teaching and scholarship, it would be prudent and relevant to examine the three constructions of God's knowledge, power and presence through the lens of practical theology and see what impact, if any, the above-theology of SW has on prayer ministry for deliverance or even a full exorcism.

Also, Fiddes' denial of an ontology of the demonic in favour of *privatio boni* means that much more could have been explored and argued in terms of Satan's origins and ontology, from both biblical scholarship and theology. For instance, what to make of Wright's claim that it is theologically vital to acknowledge the libertarian freewill fall of Lucifer and the angels despite the lack of favourable biblical evidence.[14]

Finally, the use of Fiddes' oeuvre as a primary source for this academic thesis could lead to a broad horizon of further research focussed on analysis and critique of Fiddes' doctrine of God. Building upon the development of Fiddes' doctrines of omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence, further inquiry is invited concerning other attributes of God, both communicable

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[13] See above, pp. 10-11, 231-232.
[14] Wright, *A Theology*, 70-73.

and incommunicable, in terms of their explication when situated within a triune God model of 'persons as relations.' Moreover, since little examination of Fiddes' use of sources has taken place above, this leaves an expansive amount of groundwork to be covered concerning his understanding and use of his central six twentieth-century theologians,[15] as well as other thinkers from various disciplines such as Kristeva, Hopkins, Girard, Murdoch, Levinas, etcetera. Given the copious amount and prolific rate of writings in Fiddes' corpus, together with the wide range of inter-disciplinary connections in his work, it seems indubitably the case that the scholarship of Fiddes will continue to be analysed and critiqued for many future generations, both within baptist theological circles and further afield.

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[15] See above, p.23 fn.32.

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