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Renewed and Always Renewing? A Rejoinder 'after' *Renewing Christian Theology*

Amos Yong

I am grateful first to Christopher Stephenson for organizing the panel to discuss my new book (with Jonathan A. Anderson), *Renewing Christian Theology: Systematics for a Global Christianity* (Baylor University Press, 2014)—hereafter *RCT*—and then to Lee University for hosting the discussion. I am doubly indebted to the three panellists / four respondents—Mark Mann was unable to be present in Cleveland Tennessee for the discussion, but submitted his review after the event—for their hermeneutic of generosity and yet critical engagement with the book.

I will deal first with some overarching issues that are repeatedly mentioned, and then turn in the second part to some of their more specific concerns. The following cannot hope to comprehensively address all of the important questions that have been raised. Suffice to say that these considerations, along with the preceding essays, reflect specific trajectories of conversation and debate about renewal theology that, one might argue depending on how *renewal* is defined, are proliferating in many directions.

I Overarching Considerations—the place of Eschatology

Almost to a person (Oord perhaps excepted) it was observed that my starting with eschatology is at least a challenge (pedagogically, minimally, said Lisa Stephenson), if not a major conceptual/structural (Green) or theological (Mann) problem. Exacerbating the issue is that the springboard was the eschatological claims of the World Assembly of God Fellowship 'statement of faith' (WAGF SFT) and its 'sectarian' rather than catholic accents (Green) along with its non-'winsome' and 'stilted' wording (Oord). Regarding the reversal, at a certain level, I wanted to be provocative and prompt rethinking, and this is achieved at least in part through the kind of dissonance that rearrangement of the loci precipitates (as my interlocutors note).

Yet the point is not just being novel for novelty's sake but to achieve three interrelated objectives: 1) engage deeply with the particularity of renewal traditions (in this case represented

Amos Yong *(PhD Boston) is Professor of Theology and Mission, School of Intercultural Studies, Fuller Theological Seminary, California. He was previously J. Rodman Williams Professor of Theology and dean at Regent University School of Divinity, Virginia. Yong's scholarship has been foundational in Pentecostal theology, interacting with both traditional theological traditions and contemporary contextual theologies.*

by the WAGF) in order to provide guidance for theological thinking with the church in the twenty-first century; 2) provide a systematic theology against the contemporary world-Christianity horizon that is nevertheless both evangelical and ecumenical enough to be considered as a text beyond the renewalist orbit; and 3) remain faithful to my vocation as a *constructive* theologian, hence charting a line of thinking that yet breaks new ground in some respects.

It may now be impossible for any one-volume systematic theological effort to achieve all three of these goals. For instance, to write a *textbook* is by definition to remain at a preliminary level in order that students can be provided maps of and orientations to the state of the discussions, but to do constructive theology is to presume levels of understanding usually absent from those consulting or using such introductions. Or, first or second year students in specific ecclesiastical contexts (renewalist, for example) need to be grounded first and foremost in their own theological traditions rather than being forced to grapple with ideas coming from sources in which presuppositions differ vastly from their own. Hence bringing these many voices together without the time or space to expand on how they may be fundamentally contrary at the level of assumptions is an injustice to those at the starting line.

Thus Lisa Stephenson worries that my efforts to work off the WAGF SFT may be 'a bridge to nowhere'—registering perhaps intimations of a dual concern: that the efforts to connect the specificities of a confessional statement of faith to the broader theological academy underestimates the distinctive genres that are operative within these two domains, or, by extension, that those in Assemblies circles, or in renewalist movements in general, are being led into a wide-wide ecumenical and scholarly world that will set them adrift, without adequate moorings in an ecclesial home.

My response to at least the latter concern is that in a globalizing and information-rich electronic and shrinking world, it is better not only to introduce the diversity of voices up front—millennials are used to such anyway—but then to show how these many perspectives can be 'handled' in ways that do not compromise distinctive commitments, than to assume that our students either would not want the challenge or to think that they are oblivious to the challenges, even opportunities, of pluralism.

The challenge of how to do constructive theology while providing an introductory map to the theological tradition is a bit more difficult to respond to. I admitted even in *RCT* (18) that the trinitarian logic of Christian faith as expressed in the Nicene confession of Father-Son-Spirit, in that order, has served as foundational to the theological tradition for almost two millennia, and to start with the Spirit or begin with eschatology may be deeply problematic. The 'solutions' proffered by Lisa Stephenson and Chris Green move us in opposite directions. The former wonders why we do not stay with the classical ordering and simply reconfigure such pneumatologically; the latter suggests that, having inverted the WAGF SFT order, why not take additional and important steps to reconsider the logic of renewal theology

wholesale, rather than just proceed in reverse sequence through the WAGF statements?

I think—in conversation here with Lisa Stephenson—to stay with the historic sequence does not create enough space for the emergence of a renewalist pneumato-logic. More precisely, the renewalist imagination resists being shoehorned into the modernist straightjacket that has prioritized epistemology in order to establish the foundations for theological knowing, with the result being foundationalist treatments of the doctrine of scripture at the beginning of the systematic theological enterprise. My turning the dogmatic loci upside-down in effect challenges such quests for epistemic warrants and certitudes, thereby 'illustrating rightly the proper [and historic] place of Scripture relative to the major doctrines of the church' (Oord).

For me, we know as much if not more so through feeling (orthopathos) and practice (orthopraxis) as we do via Cartesian processes of reasoning. Scripture is normative indeed, as the pages of *RCT* unveil, albeit not in any foundational modernist sense. Hence, I plead with Stephenson to be patient to see if, in the longer run, the gains made do offset the losses (she is clearly not at this point convinced that the payoff vindicates the inversion).

To Green, then, I would merely reiterate that the shift is already radical enough in *RCT* and that we may need to remain here at least for the moment even if we consider it as a stepping-stone toward the kind of rethinking he is proposing. A thorough reorganization of the loci in light of renewalist orthopathic and orthopraxic commitments would require justification at every step to avoid the charge of the arbitrary re-ordering of the loci. It might be that such will indeed be the end of systematic theology as we know it, toward the articulation of a paradoxical *dynamic-systematic-glocal* Christian theological vision.

Perhaps Green will write that kind of book and if so he might thank *RCT* later for opening up possibilities for that work. To be sure the renewing of Christian theology is never done—first to bring church beliefs into conformity with the apostolic witness (like those in the Reformed tradition that is "reformed and always reforming"). Then also to enable faithful and creative practices to flourish, following the apostolic Christians who responded to their times by the power of the Holy Spirit (hence to be "renewed and always renewing").

In the big scheme of things, let me defend the reversal along three lines: that *RCT* is intended: 1) to be read as complementary to the ongoing discussion rather than as an effort to displace the Nicene tradition (18); 2) to present the eschatological not in terms of concerns about 'the end times' but in substantively *theological*—meaning in 'pneumatological and christological, and hence trinitarian' (17)—terms; and 3) as no more than sketching a pneumatologically-oriented trinitarian theological vision for the present global conversation, rather than presenting any final word on what this might or ought to look like.

In regard to the second point, that Mark Mann thinks my beginning with eschatology undermines my pneumatological and christological starting point and suggests that chapters 2.3 and 2.4—the last two sections reflect-

ing my own response to the theological and doctrinal issues dealt within in each chapter—were not sufficiently clear about how my eschatological reconstruction is renewally, theologically, and trinitarianly funded. My hope remains that the pneumatological and christological eschatology gestured toward in *RCT* advances the discussion beyond where it currently is, although I grant that I could have worked harder to elucidate such eschatologically-defined arena beyond the paragraph, and handful of references, provided on page 15.

With regard to point 3, the present set of exchanges is in some respects a first-fruits of *RCT*'s reception, or lack thereof, that will determine its long-term fate and perhaps legacy. So even if I, like Tom Oord, feel hampered by the fact that the wording of the WAGF is from 'a half century ago or more'—a point that applies perhaps also to the 'Articles of Faith' of his own Church of the Nazarene—I have decided here not to ignore these relics from a previous era but to attempt their retrieval and reappropriation.

My wager is that if there is to be any future for the WAGF, or for any other Christian confession in the broader Protestant stream for that matter—an open question indeed given the *post-denominational* turn in contemporary world Christianity—something like what I have attempted in *RCT* will be needed, at least at the methodological level, even if the specific decision to reverse the sequence of the loci is not adopted. Whether and to what degree *RCT*, and the corpus of work it represents, is embraced as a valuable contribution to Christian thinking for a twenty-first century of third millennium global context, or if it will be (eventually) forgotten because of implausibilities inherent in its fundamental intuitions, remains to be seen.

II Specific Points of Discussion

I now proceed in order of the presentations and publication (in this issue of *Evangelical Review of Theology*), which are identical with the addition of the Mann written response inserted into the mix.

1. Lisa Stephenson

Lisa Stephenson rightly insists that today we ought to be even more intentionally focused on the gendered character of renewal theological thinking in particular, not to mention across the board of theological reflection. I have appreciated and encouraged her own work on this front,[1] and would welcome further developments, particularly among renewalist theologians. Certainly there are still too few in this camp that are equipped to critically deploy feminist perspectives for the theological task, and we need to find ways to nurture their efforts in this regard.

Regarding her specific suggestion of foregrounding the Markan story

1 E.g., Lisa P. Stephenson, *Dismantling the Dualisms for American Pentecostal Women in Ministry: A Feminist-Pneumatological Approach*, Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies 11 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011); also Stephenson, 'Tillich's Sacramental Spirituality in a New Key: A Feminist Pentecostal Proposal', in Nimi Wariboko and Amos Yong, eds., *Paul Tillich and Pentecostal Theology: Spiritual Presence and Spiritual Power* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 115-25.

of the woman with the issue of blood in place of the narrative about the Gerasene demoniac, I recognize now that there are many ways to develop her proposal so as to engage the disability perspectives important for my purposes in *RCT* chapter 8. Clearly, the fact that this woman suffered with her condition for twelve years (Mark 5:25) suggests that her situation could be illumined considerably through the lenses of chronic illness, particularly given the correlations between chronic illness and the lives of women and also in light of the growing research at where chronic illness and disability studies nexus.[2] My previous focus on issues of mental illness and especially intellectual disability prevented me from making this connection. Ah, the theologian's work is never done.

Before I move on, I want to make one more comment, not on one of Lisa Stephenson's 'concerns', but on her commendation of the inclusion of images in the book. She rightly recognizes the central role these play in engaging the affective dimension of human feeling. We are barely beginning to consider how our theological endeavours are informed by affectivity and affective modes of being, knowing, and doing.[3] I am thankful to my co-author Jonathan Anderson for ensuring that *RCT*'s emphasis on orthodoxy does not ignore or neglect the equally important spheres of orthopathy and orthopraxy. The book's images facilitate interaction with the former orthopathic scope while the final section of each chapter focuses on the latter orthopraxic pathways for faithful Christian responses to each doctrinal locus in the present time.

2. Chris Green

Chris Green raises a number of questions about my chapter 6 on ordinances and sacraments. I wish to respond to his observations at two levels: what we might call the *meta-sacramental*, and the *performative*.

With regard to the former, I link some of the more minor critical points to Green's scepticism about the '(im)possibility of a global renewal systematics'. For Green, the worries are about whether *a* global renewal perspective exists. But then his observations about the framing of the ordinance-sacrament topic suggest the other side of this coin: that each of the eleven articles of the WAGF SFT—or alternative structure if we had some other confessional starting point—begs the question about whether a systematic or synthetic approach is possible.

Green's expertise in this area (originally his very good PhD thesis, now published)[4] highlights for me how not

2 E.g., Darla Schumm and Michael Stoltzfus, 'Chronic Illness and Disability: Narratives of Suffering and Healing in Buddhism and Christianity', in Darla Schumm and Michael Stoltzfus, eds., *Disability and Religious Diversity: Cross-Cultural and Interreligious Perspectives Hardcover* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 159-76.

3 Some exploratory venues are charted in my *Spirit of Love: A Trinitarian Theology of Grace* (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2012), part II; see also Dale Coulter and Amos Yong, eds., *The Spirit, the Affections, and the Christian Tradition* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2016).

4 Chris E. W. Green, *Foretasting the Kingdom: Toward a Pentecostal Theology of the Lord's Supper* (Cleveland, Tenn.: CPT Press, 2012). Note

only this chapter but also each one in my book could have been fruitfully expanded into its own monograph, thus registering in retrospect what haunted me throughout the writing of *RCT*: that it is quite hubristic in our time to even imagine, much less (attempt to) produce, something like a systematic theology, particularly one on a global scale, and that to work toward such with any kind of plausibility requires something more like Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics* than can be accomplished in something like a 450-page book, with pictures![5] For instance I responded initially, 'Why yes!' to Green's suggestion that I begin this chapter instead with 'a properly *theological* account of *Jesus'* experience of baptism'—but then thought instead to include such in an expanded re-telling of John's baptism in order to preserve the Baptist's narrative as a ramp toward the Fourth Gospel and its implications for the topic at hand.

The point is that so much more could have been done, and in a real sense, even a full volume on any theological topic will invite further development along other tributaries that even then remain no more than 'broken fragments' of our understanding on this side of the eschaton.

There lurks, however, a worry that may be even larger than Green realizes. His reading of the second, historical, section of chapter 7 prompts the question about whether my 'truncated description … in effect only re-inscribe[s] already-familiar (mis) understandings' about the ordinance-sacrament theme. This presses to the limits what I call the *meta-sacramental* concern: that historically, the shift to *ordinance* represents a transition to a wholly new discursive space that may be fundamentally incompatible, precisely because opposed to, that represented by heretofore dominant *sacramental* discourse, so that any attempts to bridge the two (like mine) seeks to inhabit some artificial site amidst binary conceptual universes (e.g., the 'spiritual/ material dualism' that Green notes).

The (cultural linguistic/Lindbeckian) purist in me invites our resignation then to the reality that these are effectively incommensurable dogmatic spaces, and that one can only thereby convert from one to the other but never synthesize them without violating or distorting something about their historic commitments. Yet the renewalist systematician in me urges that what we might not be able to resolve at the elaborated dogmatic level finds partial, if not ongoing encouragement toward, communion at the level of practice.

Here then I turn to briefly comment on the *performative* way forward for the renewal of Christian theology in global and pluralistic context. Green rightly discerns that it is *as* human creatures participate in the economy of the triune

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that, if in this book Green's commitments are with the broader Nicene tradition which prioritizes the sacramental tradition in specific ways, my own renewalist matrix requires not a privileging of sacramentality but the hard work of envisioning its reappropriation vis-à-vis the global horizons of ecclesial communities and churches across the ordinance-sacrament spectrum.

5 I suppose that is in part why the current attempts toward a global systematics by my colleague here at Fuller Seminary, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, reaches to five-volumes: *A Constructive Christian Theology for a Pluralistic World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013-2017)!

God, that they are effective and transformative, so he pushes for a further accounting of this 'as' conjunction that is 'obviously crucial' to my soteriology. While a fair enough request, I am unsure this will be sufficient since any such explication will inevitably remain at the theoretical level and press further questions about the metaphysical accounts at stake.

So for instance, my philosophical theology of participation presumes a Peircean and pragmatist approach that bypasses the Kantian noumenon-phenomenon distinction so that the 'as' denotes engagements with extra-human realities, albeit always semiotically (interpretatively) through practice,[6] although this in turn will beg further discussion and consideration vis-à-vis other metaphysical horizons and their role in scriptural hermeneutics. While never one to shy away from philosophical and hermeneutical issues, for the moment let me say only that I believe focusing our energies on developing vocabulary that invites common practice is the best way forward in the long run (this is in chapter 6.4—consistent with the *practices* proposals in every fourth section of the eleven chapters) since the increasing sharing of communion and of the Lord's Supper will in time generate new discursive possibilities for common dogmatic clarification.

No, I do not expect these dogmatic traditions to converge overnight, but I do believe that the current postdenominational climate of the global church portends such possibilities and that renewal movements can play crucial roles in foretasting (as Green himself might put it) and gesturing toward new possibilities for a systematic reconfiguration of theologies of ordinances and sacraments for the third millennium. So while 'a robust theology of participation' is central to any dialogue between renewalists and others on this front, it will be through and *as* we practise (together) that we will discern the possibilities of bridging *ordinance* and *sacramental* universes.[7]

3. Mark Mann

I have fond memories of struggling with Mark Mann and others in Robert Cummings Neville's seminars in the late 1990s as we attempted to comprehend how the latter's *pragmaticist* semiotics unlocked the key to the universe; at the same time, I also puzzled over how such 'pragmaticism'—Peirce's own contorted neologism designed to be 'ugly enough to be safe from kidnappers' and to distinguish his ideas from that of his contemporary and one-time colleague William James—was similar to but yet also a long ways from the *pragmatism* of my own pentecostal tradition.[8] We have both found our ways

6 As developed early on in my work: e.g., *Spirit-Word-Community: Theological Hermeneutics in Trinitarian Perspective*, New Critical Thinking in Religion, Theology and Biblical Studies Series (Burlington, Vt., and Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2002).

7 We spent some time at the panel event going back-and-forth over this matter, leading our good friend and mutual colleague Rickie Moore to come up to us after the session and comment that Chris Green will always remember this as the night that Amos Yong whipped his 'as'—which sounds a lot funnier vocalized than read silently.

8 On pentecostal pragmatism, see Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard

from New England to the West Coast, although I know the Manns have family back on the Eastern shore so I am not sure how long we will enjoy our neighbourly proximity. Two aspects of Mann's reflections are prompts for my rejoinder: that regarding 'pneumatological excesses' and that regarding the language of 'eradication' in relationship to our theologies of sanctification.

Mann begins his response, recounting in testimonial fashion his own encounter with one of the 'extreme cases' of pentecostal or pneumatological excess, less to slight the pentecostal tradition than to highlight how he thinks *RCT* might be helpful to steer a more ecumenical and attractive evangelical way forward for global renewal theology and practice. Needless to say, renewalist theologians like me have these always in the background even if we may not, in our publications at least, cite or refer to such. On my more pessimistic days I think that such pentecostal triumphalism ought to be curtailed, although then I muse that to undercut such expectancy might sever the vital organs that make pentecostal spirituality what it is as a gift to the church catholic.[9]

Then the believing and more optimistic pentecostal side of my identity kicks in—the theologian of glory that is inevitably pentecostal (which is why I foregrounded the theology of the cross throughout *RCT*)—and says that even if our charism may also be our Achilles' heel, that can be used for God's purposes, and our responsibility as renewalist theologians is to simply persist in faithful diagnosis and constructive work and leave the rest in the Holy Spirit's hands. Similarly, I might suggest, the 'extremes' of the Holiness tradition, as with any other tradition, that informs also the Nazarene branch within which Mann serves, can continue to be catalytic for contemporary theological reflection.

And here I have touched upon a nerve for Mann as a Nazarene theologian. He resists *eradicationist* language as unfaithful to John Wesley's own 'more nuanced understanding of Christian perfection' and as out of sync with contemporary Wesleyan theologies of sanctification that understand the experience of perfect love as an ideal state rather than as one achieved in this life. In re-reading my chapter, it appears my training at Western Evangelical Seminary (now George Fox Evangelical Seminary) from back in the early 1990s has remained with me at least subconsciously.

At WES, we read Wesleyan authors, especially those engaging with the earlier Holiness theologians, who talked about the second work of grace in eradicationist terms and such has remained in my psyche (note that I

University Press, 2001); on the Peirce reference, see Yong, *The Dialogical Spirit: Christian Reason and Theological Method for the Third Millennium* (Eugene, Ore.: Cascade Books, 2014), 72, which is part of the ch. 2, 'Pragmatist and Pragmaticist Trajectories for a Postmodern Theology.'

9 On this point, see my review of the excellent book of David J. Courey, *What Has Wittenberg to Do with Azusa? Luther's Theology of the Cross and Pentecostal Triumphalism* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), in *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 35:2 (2015): 176-77, wherein I ruminate about whether Courey's prognosis might spell 'the end of Pentecostalism as we know it.'

did not reference my use of this specific term the four times it appears in my discussion).[10] Within the Nazarene camp more precisely and the broader Holiness conversation more generally, efforts have been made to get beyond the connotations of such terminology related to the doctrine of (entire) sanctification, so I can fully appreciate Mann's efforts to nuance this important point.

Yet beyond these insider-debates, use of eradicationism terminology and conceptualization may actually beneficially connect with the variety of radical theologies on the contemporary horizon. The point about such radicalism is too often a restorationist one of getting back to the roots, whether that of the biblical traditions or of the ways and paths of the early apostolic community. Within this framework, talk of the eradication of the sin nature may be hyperbolic from one (Wesleyan) perspective but yet call attention to the palpability and profundity of the Spirit's work in human lives from another (renewalist) angle.

Yet the point about appropriating the many tongues from across the many Christian traditions should not be to misrepresent their witnesses, so any retrieval needs to be alert to the dynamics of theological development within traditions as well. I happily stand corrected by Mann's careful exposition even as I reaffirm the radicality of the relationalist paradigm with which he and his Wesleyan and Holiness colleagues are hard at work.

4. Tom Oord

Tom Oord is a Nazarene theologian like Mark Mann, although Oord's overriding interest at the interface of the theology and science dialogue leads him to focus on my theology of creation instead (chapter 10). Like Mann and me, if not more so, Oord is a thoroughly, if not also primarily, relational theologian.[11] Perhaps the difference between us lies on what I call the practical or performative dimension so that for me, relationality includes essentially and constitutively human praxis vis-à-vis other creatures and a real world.

So, if Oord presses me for further argument about how humans are qualitatively different from other animals, if time and space permitted, I'd elaborate on their relational character and practice, or liturgically-oriented forms of life and thus continue on the performative rather than merely conceptual register. I would also emphasize the scope of possibilities available to human animals but not to others, and thereby attempt to adjudicate teleologically—rather than protologically—the complex questions related to human uniqueness.

Similarly, I am not motivated to say that 'the Bible is wrong when it appears to be so', although not so much because I do not want 'to offend some of the more conservative elements in the renewalist movement'; rather, I

10 E.g., Charles W. Carter, 'Hamartiology', in Charles W. Carter, ed., *A Contemporary Wesleyan Theology: Biblical, Systematic, and Practical*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press, 1983), I.266 passim, here citing H. Orton Wiley, early twentieth century Nazarene theologian.

11 By my count, Oord has at least three (of his many) books with the word *relational* in the title.

would like to enable a performative way forward beyond the errancy-inerrancy divide. To be clear: I see no need to be offensive for its own sake (as I am sure Oord agrees), but the issue—as indicated above—is the normativity of the scriptural witness, and that has to be judged by *how* we use, and are normed by, the Bible (a point that Lisa Stephenson's account indicates she appreciates about *RCT*), not by our claims about in/errancy.

My point is that formal definitions—whether about theological anthropology or about bibliology—while useful, will always have to account for concrete realities (apparent exceptions to the rule) and be exemplified in actual practice, so any full response must include historical and performative enactment.

A more weighty difference about how we might call Oord's first-order relationalism plays out differently from my second-order version is that, as I see it, Oord understands relationality as the primary *explanans*—the fundamental framework of explanation—whereas I see it as a subordinate one (to my renewalist, eschatological, pneumatological, and trinitarian rationality). So Oord's relationalism thus presumes a *creation ex amore* rather than a *creation ex nihilo* as well as an open theistic view of the future and of God's (fore)knowledge of such, whereas I am open to these various ideas only on a supporting basis and am comfortable with embracing both or multiple sides of these 'coins' within a more teleologically oriented account to the degree that these various positions reveal their value in different respects.

I think open theism is advantageous for understanding some but not all aspects of the scriptural witness; hence I prefer to remain at the theological and pneumatological level to anticipate how unfolding eschatological scenarios illuminate the truth of these (apparently) contrasting possibilities.[12] So I am not just being clever—or obscure or coy—in being inconclusive about foreknowledge or *creation ex nihilo*; it's just that I don't think there is or ought to be only one way through which we can or must respond to such matters.[13]

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12 Here again, I remain Peircean in terms of presuming that the laws of non-contradiction and excluded middle govern theological statements, albeit with regard to different respects that will be illuminated dynamically (see *Spirit-Word-Community*, 153-54); hence the teleological or pneumato-eschato-logic that characterizes my relationalism. At root, as Oord and I discovered when we first met in 1998 and disputed at a session of the joint annual meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies and the Wesleyan Theological Society in Cleveland, Tennessee (no less!), it is my Peircean instincts that most clearly distinguish *how* I think compared with Oord's Whiteheadian sensibilities, a point of contrast that goes back to our days in graduate studies at Boston University (myself under Bob Neville) and at Claremont Graduate University (Oord under John B. Cobb, Jr.). Yet despite our differences, we consider ourselves co-pilgrims and co-labourers along the parallel renewalist and Wesleyan theological highways in common cause and quest.

13 See also my essays: 'Divine Knowledge and Future Contingents: Weighing the Presuppositional Issues in the Contemporary Debate', *Evangelical Review of Theology* 26:3 (2002): 240-64, and 'Divine Knowledge and Relation to Time', in Thomas Jay Oord, ed., *Philosophy of Religion: Introductory Essays* (Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill Press/Nazarene Publishing House, 2003), 136-52; cf. 'Possibility and Actuality: The Doctrine of Creation and Its Implications for Divine Omniscience', *The Wesleyan Philosophical Society Online Journal* 1:1 (2001)

But here we touch, again, upon modal and teleological aspects of my overall approach that I sense Oord may not be completely satisfied with.

Let us therefore get directly to the point that puts this issue in stark relief: for Oord, 'The "whence" matters if the "whither" is to be believable'—meaning that we have to know about God's relationship to the origins of sin, evil, and the fall (the 'whence') in order to have the assurance that God can make good on his eschatological promises of redemption, restoration, and renewal (the 'whither'). Oord is too modest to even cite his own impressive book that attempts a full-blown relational theology of providence, and I cannot but strongly recommend all interested in this topic to read it carefully.[14]

My pentecostal, pneumatological, eschatological imagination, however, recommends three lines of response while appreciating Oord's open and relational assists. First, the *pentecostal* approach that embraces the cacophony and dissonance of the many tongues thinks that Oord's theodicy is a bit too neat; hence his 'whence' would be less tidy if the many voices were to be factored into the conversation in a more robust way.

Second, the *pneumatological* axis stresses the dynamic and hence agential and performative aspects of human thinking and believing; the solutions to our deepest existential and theoretical (theological) questions are most often intertwined with our doing and living. Third, the eschatological horizon means that, 'now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face' (1 Cor 13:12a, NRSV); hence, a more reserved apophatic account is not just a sign of intellectual weakness but is both theologically appropriate and actually comes in more handy than he might think.

III In Lieu of a Conclusion

I have not yet said anything about Christopher Stephenson's introduction. Since I served as a member on his PhD dissertation committee on pentecostal systematic theologies—that dissertation's lengthy chapter on my work showed that he had mastered my thinking up to that time[15]—he has continued to find what I have had to say helpful enough to recommend to others.[16] Stephenson not only read and commented on a draft version of *RCT* (xx), but has also given me effective feedback on at least three of my other books in the last half dozen years (at least as indicated in the 'Acknowledgments' or 'Preface' to my recent mono-

[http://home.snu.edu/~brint/wpsjnl/v1n1.htm].

14 Thomas Jay Oord, *The Uncontrolling Love of God: An Open and Relational Account of Providence* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2015).

15 Published later as Christopher A. Stephenson, *Types of Pentecostal Theology: Method, System, Spirit*, AAR Academy Series (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), including ch. 4, 'Systematic Theology as Philosophical and Fundamental Theology in Pneumatological Perspective: Amos Yong'.

16 E.g., Christopher A. Stephenson, 'Reality, Knowledge, and Life in Community: Metaphysics, Epistemology, and Hermeneutics in the Work of Amos Yong', in Wolfgang Vondey and Martin W. Mittelstadt, eds., *The Theology of Amos Yong and the New Face of Pentecostal Scholarship: Passion for the Spirit*, Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies 14 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013), 63-82.

graphs). He knows perhaps better than anyone how important methodological concerns are for me and his introductory comments provide important perspective for these essays, especially my rejoinder.

I suggest that the value of whatever I have done will be measured best by the creative and constructive thinking it prompts in others, and in that sense I eagerly and imminently anticipate the full emergence—currently gaining momentum, certainly[17]—of his own voice in the theological conversation.[18]

17 See for instance his 'Speculative Theology and Spiritual Practice: A Reformed, Catholic, and Pentecostal Conversation on an Aspect of Theological Method', in Steven M. Studebaker and Amos Yong, eds., *From Northampton to Azusa: Pentecostals and the Theology of Jonathan Edwards* [working title] (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, forthcoming).

18 Thanks to David Parker, editor of *Evangelical Review of Theology*, who enthusiastically welcomed the suggestion to publish this collection, and for his patience with my getting my part to him because of unforeseen delays. I appreciate also Christopher Stephenson's critical comments on an earlier draft of this rejoinder.

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