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Moral Revelation in the Coming Age: An Eschatological Evaluation of Kern Robert Trembath's Anthropology of Revelation

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All Christian theological reflection has eschatological ramifications. Inherent in every theology of liturgy, anthropology, revelation, ethics, sacraments, history, church, Christ and the Trinity are implications about the final fate of all things.[1]

Indeed, one might say that in all the components listed above, there are only the two parent categories of God and humanity, each secondary item representing a specific blend of the two. Eschatology is the study of the final state of those two categories together, and thus all theology is related in a significant way to this final state.

Although the twentieth century was a time of rampant eschatological reflection for Christian theology, to the point at which the unique character of eschatology sometimes became lost or co-opted by other branches of theological pursuit, there remains a widespread feeling that what John Thiel calls 'thick' eschatological depictions[2] are speculative curiosities, to be either read as thought-provoking exercises or shunned as mere fantasy and escapism.

Eschatology, however, if it is indeed at the very heart of the Christian witness to the world, must not be relegated to mere curiosity or escapism. If it is the centre, it must bear weight. If all theology has eschatological implications, those implications must be meaningful. Accordingly, this article attempts to demonstrate some of

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[1] For a recent example of the application of this observation, see Joshua R. Brotherton, 'Universalism and Predestinarianism: A Critique of the Theological Anthropology that Undergirds Catholic Universalist Eschatology', *Theological Studies* 77, no. 3 (2016): 603–26. Brotherton works in the opposite direction to some degree, evaluating eschatology from anthropology, but his work rests on a solid observation of the relationship between the two.

[2] John E. Thiel, *Icons of Hope: The 'Last Things' in Catholic Imagination* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013).

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the weight that the work of eschatology can bear by evaluating a proposed theology of revelation by Kern Robert Trembath and working out its eschatological ramifications.

I will summarize Trembath's theology of a revelatory humanity, give a general response, and then test Trembath's anthropology against different prevailing understandings of the coming age. My goal is neither to advocate for Trembath's image of humanity, though I believe it has some worthwhile things to say, nor to argue specifically for any model of eschatology. Instead, I seek to show how eschatology can evaluate another branch of theology in a concrete way, revealing its implications. This exercise has value in showing how a particular position may have a compatible or incompatible relationship with the content of other theological commitments.

For the most part, I will not take sides on the issues that Trembath raises. In my final evaluation, however, I will contend that Trembath's picture of humanity is compatible only with an epektatic eschatology and is entirely incompatible with the stasis/eternity model of human eschatological experience.

I. Trembath's Model of Revelation

In *Divine Revelation: Our Moral Relation with God*,[3] Kern Robert Trembath presents several different theories of revelation before moving on to his own

construction. His concern is to find a model of revelation that is born out of practical, psychological experience, as well as one that can exist in an ecumenical context, such that the content of revelation does not simply follow necessarily from the model's presuppositions.

Trembath first presents what he calls 'divergence theories', including those of William J. Abraham, Carl F. H. Henry, Karl Barth, and J. I. Packer. Trembath suggests that divergence theories 'cut across' (p. 66) human experience, presenting new claims to divine revelation that are positioned over and against our normal modes of existence. Such a discontinuity with our everyday existence demands criteria of interpretation that these theories do not give—or if any such criteria are given, they presuppose the content of the revelation.

This approach works well, Trembath argues, when confined to existing Christian communities, but he says that it 'is less acceptable, though, if one wishes to think of how God is disclosed to the larger non-Christian world, and I am convinced that the most important distinction between biblical inspiration and divine revelation is that the latter enables us to do just that' (p. 67).

Next, Trembath describes 'convergence theories', considering the work of Avery Dulles, John Macquarrie, Gerald O'Collins, Ian T. Ramsey, and Michael Polanyi. These theories, for which he has greater affinity, 'identify God's revelation *in* the natural and the mundane without identifying it *as* the natural and mundane. Thus, the revelation of God cooperates with the natural, especially the human natural, neither impugning it nor canonizing it

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3 Kern Robert Trembath, *Divine Revelation: Our Moral Relation with God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

in advance' (p. 111f). Trembath builds upon these convergence theories, especially those of Ramsey and Polanyi, in setting forth his own theory of human beings, constituted *as* divine revelation.

To say that humans are constituted as divine revelation means that the divine self-disclosure forms the background or horizon upon which the very act of being human is made possible. Being human, for Trembath, essentially means existing as a moral being, or a being beckoned to by goodness. The four modes of response to this beckoning are knowing, loving, hoping and being in community. Together, these four modes form what it means to be a human or moral being.

In this conception, God's stance toward the cosmos, one of love and revelation, forms the precondition for humanity and essentially brings humanity into being by elevating it above the rest of creation. Human persons are, for Trembath, divine revelation because they are capable of this fourfold morality. This divine stance of love fulfills each capacity by being its transcendent pre-condition. Each condition deserves a brief review below before we move on to the eschatological evaluation.

1. Knowledge

Trembath's view of knowledge holds that human intellectual seeking finds its natural goodness in what he calls 'Point S', a moment in which the knowable is known by the mind (p. 120). Finite things are knowable and therefore can be the objects of a 'Point S' moment. However, God is not one of the things to be known, as God is the ground of all knowing and therefore cannot be encompassed by knowing.

All knowing is about God, but no particular datum can be affixed to God as genuinely about God. God is unknowable in the strict sense of the word, and thus Trembath finds himself in agreement with much of the apophatic (i.e. approaching God by negation) tradition. Trembath sees knowledge as fundamentally moral, as it is always enacted in judgement in response to the beckoning of the good of agreement between knowledge about things and the state of things, as well as the context of goodness in which all knowing is performed.

2. Love

Trembath defines love as 'the gratuitous exchange of self-surpassing behaviors and intentions concerning a beloved's concrete existence' (p. 124). It is an exchange into which we can grow, a coupling of eros and agape together. A recognition of personhood, of inherent lovability as a potential bearer of goodness, is necessary for a person to be loved. We are beholden to each other to recognize each other's potential for goodness, and therefore to respond to each other with love. But Trembath insists that if a person rejects that fact in us, we cannot love them. (This point seems demonstrably untrue and would deeply undermine much of Christ's command to love those who persecute us.)

Trembath's account of God as the ground of this anthropology of love is fascinating. He places Christology within a larger soteriology of God's love for the world, which includes human persons. God grasps creation as beloved and therefore makes it

lovable and capable of love. This precondition of human love, namely divine love, changes both the lover and the beloved. Humans are moral creatures because God has first loved them into humanity:

> In loving one who was other-than-God, God became other-than-God and thus beckoned that other-than-God to the new kind of existence that we all too blithely call human. The newness of that new existence was precisely the presence of God within it, generating for the first time in the cosmos the historical possibility of material reality able to transcend itself in knowledge, love, hope, and community. That is who Christ was definitely and thus what God intends for all humanity. (p. 157)

3. Hope

Trembath's anthropology of hope has three aspects: memory, a 'relatively indeterminate future', and the ability to commit confidently (p. 131). He understands memory as the function that both collects data as a stream and stores it as a stack (p. 132).[4] The person then uses that information stored in memory to apply it to the future.

The second constituent, a relatively indeterminate future, necessitates a kind of temporal environment. Trembath even includes an appendix that discusses an appropriate definition of time (p. 133). As we will consider more closely below, an important part of this relationship to the future is the idea that in hoping 'we commit ourselves to a state of affairs that is not *and may never be* but toward which we stand nonetheless as though its coming-into-being were both quite likely and influenceable by our personal efforts' (p. 133, emphasis in original).

Finally, the ability to commit confidently is seen as a response to the idea that 'goodness beckons us' (p. 135), such that we cannot claim to hope and fail to act towards that hope when opportunity arises. Hope is 'the temporally enduring expression of goodness' (p. 135).

Trembath's grounding of hope in the Trinity, and specifically in the Holy Spirit, is rooted in the idea that in love hope moves toward the bringing about of a 'new person' (p. 159). Two persons who love each other therefore disclose themselves to each other for each other's good, and each hopes for the improvement of the other. When this process takes place, two new persons stand before each other, transformed by love. This process finds its fundamental grounding in God's relatedness to the world, a transformative love that also transforms God (p. 162).

4. Community

Trembath locates human morality as community not in its own act, as he has done with the other three constitu-

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4 It is unclear whether he genuinely intends to use computational terminology here. The reference may be metaphorical, but it is technically incorrect. Human memory does not work like stack memory in a computer (last in, first out), but more appropriately like a memory heap, which does not have this constraint. Although perhaps our minds keep things in chronological order (a debatable fact in itself), they do not require us to sort through each memory back to a specific event in order to access it, which is precisely what a stack requires.

ent parts of human persons, but as the goal and outcome of human morality in knowing, loving and hoping. His location of knowing as communal is an exposition of trust in the authoritative good work of others in their contribution to knowledge. Drawing an example from Lonergan, he states that we trust the good and truthful work of the community of people who put together a map that we choose to follow (p. 137f.).

Love, as Trembath has already explained, fundamentally functions in community, even a community of two. Finally, hoping, by and large, consists of desires for persons and communities. These interpersonal concerns move toward community itself. Trembath concludes his communal anthropology by stating, 'While the community exists on the one hand at a level more abstract than the individual, it is also, and on the other, the most tangible location of all three aspects of moralness and hence the most tangible medium of divine revelation" (p. 141).

His theology of community can be summarized in the statement, 'The Trinity is God acting personally and communitarianly within history, not abstractly but concretely, constituting the possibility of the human community's response in faith and commitment, and thus rendering that community a community of God' (p. 164). God as community is the ground of humans as community.

II. Brief Criticisms

I will briefly address Trembath's revelatory anthropology in general terms before moving on to its eschatological applications.

Trembath knows that his explanation of the Trinity goes against the classical distinction between the immanent and economic Trinities. This description of God, however, is consonant with his belief that God is 'in time' and in history. His argument for this state of affairs can be found in his appendix (pp. 178–81).

I cannot fully evaluate here the claim that God should be in time by nature, as opposed to by an act of divine power and grace. However, I fundamentally disagree with this position, partially on the ground of physics and partially on apophatic grounds. Given Trembath's statements about God as the ground of knowledge, incorporating God into time seems difficult and perhaps self-contradictory.

Trembath's method also poses some difficulty when he addresses traditional doctrines. Although no theologian is required to follow any particular methodology regarding traditional doctrines, it does seem problematic to consider traditional doctrines in the context of their own debates and discussions and then claim that one's own perception was the ultimate goal that these venerable minds were only beginning to or falteringly attempting to express![5] This is particularly difficult when one's conclusion (that God changes within time) is clearly something that those minds would have rejected.

Further, Trembath summarily dispenses with the Christological debates of the early church, arguing that they were essentially trying to make the point that 'if human beings are essen-

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5 One sees examples of this tendency on pp. 155f. and 162, but the whole discussion of the Trinity is couched in this approach.

tially open to the possibility of self-transcendence, then it is historically possible for this self-transcendence to be so actualized that one in fact lives a life concretely reflective of everything God both intends for human beings on the one hand and graciously offers them on the other' (p. 156). This may be half of what the Christological debates were addressing, but there is another significant side to those debates, characterized especially by the Logos-centered arguments of Cyril of Alexandria.

Finally, Trembath's construction of hope as requiring our involvement seems difficult. People often hope for things that are entirely outside their control: good weather for their crops, that the pollen won't be so bad this spring, or that Mother's cancer would go into remission. Certainly, if they *could* influence the outcome, they would, and we often attempt to devise ways to do so—bargaining, sacrificing, performing superstitious acts. But the fact remains that there are things that we hope for but can never influence. Consider for example the Welsh insistence on the continued life and return of King Arthur during the Middle Ages,[6] which no Welshman could hope to bring about but many had great confidence and hope in. This is, of course, to say nothing of the second coming of Christ, which will happen at the behest of the wisdom of God, not the wisdom of mortals.

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6 For a tangential, but fascinating look at this topic, see R. S. Loomis, 'The Legend of Arthur's Survival', in Loomis, ed., *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages: A Collaborative History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), 64–71.

III. Eschatological Ramifications

I could find no hint of eschatology in Trembath's revelatory anthropology, so here I am endeavouring to tease out that which Trembath himself did not. It may be that since Trembath's work affirms a God within time, the traditional hope of the culmination of history, its end, and the establishment of a new age related to the past in a mystery of continuity and newness may not be possible within his conception.

However, we need not insist on Trembath's 'God in time' to affirm large portions of his revelatory anthropology. Humans are constituted, Trembath insists, as persons by the Trinitarian actions of God within history. Such a viewpoint does not require the relationship of God to time that Trembath describes. Instead, if we accept Trembath's observations that humans are constituted by revelation and as revelation, it appears that they can quite readily fit into a traditional metaphysics.

If this is the case, then we must ask what it means to be human in an eschatological context, given Trembath's idea of humanity as revelation.

1. Eschatological knowing

Trembath describes the quest for knowledge as that which gives people a 'comfortability in the fit between their inner knowledge on the one hand and the real world on the other'. He perceives two goods in the achievement of 'Point S' where one's observation meets reality. First, an unresolved tension between knowledge and being is overcome. Second, abiding in a 'Point S' for however long or short a

time reveals goodness to be the ultimate ground and goal of all knowing. Trembath sees all statements as moral statements, since they are judgements made in the context of goodness that makes them possible.

Such a construction of human knowledge fits incredibly well into traditional models of eschatology. For stasis models of the coming age, the mind rests entirely at an ultimate Point S. The mind is satisfied with the contemplation of God, seen in God's own essence.[7] There is consonance between the mind, which understands all it can of God, and God as God is. The human mind, in this model, knows and judges God to be good. It relaxes and rests, no longer seeking and thus happy.[8]

Here, both natural and supernatural knowledge are involved in the graced humanity that participates fully according to its nature in the essence of God. For the natural capacity is at ease with all things as one creature relates to another. But also, there is the ease of knowledge that humans participate in, having been incorporated into the Son of God. Being partakers of the divine nature gives us then the ability to know in a way, not just natural to our biological, psychological and historical settings, but in a way analogous to God's own knowledge. To know things, not just discursively but more deeply and transcendently in a final rest, is a good description of an eschatological 'Point S'.

So too, in a model of epektasis (i.e. progress even in eternal happiness) the mind strives towards an ever-closer meeting between the reality of God and the mind's perception of God. It is wrong to think of epektatic striving as a striving out of a lack; it should be conceived more as a striving from glory to glory. Gregory of Nyssa writes that the mind 'makes its way upward without ceasing, ever through its prior accomplishments renewing its intensity for the flight'.[9] Maximus the Confessor, following Gregory, speaks of the mind racing upward without stalling:

> Yet the mind who remains faithful in this divine ministry—having gnostic wisdom joined with him like a companion, and having the noble demeanor and reflection that arise therewith—invariably travels in a holy way of life the road of the virtues, a road that in no way admits of any stalling on the part of those who walk in it. On the contrary, this mind runs the ever-moving, swift race of the soul toward the goal of the upward call.[10]

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7 Benedict XII, *Benedictus Deus*, 1336 in Henrich Denzinger and Peter Schunermann, eds., *Enchridion Symbolorum*, 46th ed. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012), 302–3.

8 St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Westminster, UK: Christian Classics, 1981), 601f. (ST I–II iii.8).

9 Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*, trans. Abraham J. Malherbe and Everett Ferguson (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 113.

10 *Quaestiones ad Thalassium*, 17; St. Maximus the Confessor, *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ*, trans. Paul M. Bowers and Robert Louis Wilkin (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003), 106. For a good discussion of the anti-Origen quality of the rejection of 'stasis' for the mind, see Paul M. Bowers, 'Maximus the Confessor, Gregory of Nyssa, and the Concept of "Perpetual Progress" ', *Vigiliae Christianae* 46, no. 2 (June 1992): 151–71.

Like a student who has come to master the first level of a difficult philosopher's thought, one is invited further to understand deeper and deeper levels of complexity. Each has a Point S moment that resides with the person and does not leave. That Point S is carried forward and forms the foundation for further Points S. Again, the natural and supernatural work well together here. The natural knowledge rests and then strives in its new resting towards a further satisfaction. But also, this knowing brings about new creation; indeed, it brings about the situation in which new knowing can take place.

Of these two models, which are both compatible with the Point S focus of knowledge, the epektatic model best aligns with Trembath's understanding of God as mysterious foundation for knowledge. He writes:

> The real point behind calling various aspects of theology mystery, or calling God ultimate mystery, is not to imply that someday some sort of messianic detective will uncover the final clues to the Ultimate Puzzle and bring about a Point S condition with respect to our understanding of God. It is instead to remind ourselves that God is the ultimate condition of the possibility of knowledge (hence the intellectual overtones of the word mystery) but not merely as the first mental actor in an entire series of mental acts. As Mystery of the world, God is that which our knowing capacities presuppose as both source and target of knowing itself. (pp. 145–46)

2. Eschatological love

If love is the expression of concern for another's concrete existence, a coupling of eros and agape, then any eschatological image that is a gracing or crowning of this nature stumbles at the very moment at which it removes all concrete interactions between persons. Here *concrete* means, at the very least, meeting the basic expectations of human existence: physical, emotional, knowing and communicative interaction. The bases for such an interaction, which is not simply a picture or diorama of love, are a common physical nature and a common time in which to interact.

Time, as a central component of Trembath's anthropology (as is seen especially in his discussion of hope), functions of course in both knowing and loving as well. One cannot come to the Point S as a relaxation unless that moment is preceded by points when satisfaction is the goal, not the actuality. Love also seeks the betterment of the beloved.

Trembath never references the theology of George MacDonald in his work, but his ideas are strikingly similar and indeed may serve as a corrective at some points. MacDonald's observation about love is pertinent here:

> For love loves unto purity. Love has ever in view the absolute loveliness of that which it beholds. Where loveliness is incomplete, and love cannot love its fill of loving, it spends itself to make more lovely, that it may love more; it strives for perfection, even that itself may be perfected—not in itself, but in the object.[11]

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11 George MacDonald, 'The Consuming Fire', in *Unspoken Sermons* (Whitehorn, CA: Johan-

Love is always seeking the betterment of the object loved. In a static or what has often been called an 'eternal' eschatology, no such desire for betterment is possible. Instead, the highest level of perfection has been achieved. This is true not only where the idea of betterment is most obvious—in fellow humans or the cosmos in general—but in God's expression in those things, his revelation to those things, and the realization of love in those things.

Indeed, in depictions of the static eschaton, one wonders precisely how humans love each other beyond the simple individualistic experience of feeling good about those persons. Surely we will have forgiven each other, but even that remains a past fact in the eternal 'now' of most formulations of 'eternal' life. Divine love as pure act, perhaps the crowning observation of Thomistic theology, brings about a rather incongruous eschatological anthropology in which persons do not act but merely contemplate.[12]

For humans to love, we must love as action. Trembath's anthropology then finds no crowning in a timeless eternity, but instead finds a good partner in the epektasis of Gregory of Nyssa and the Orthodox tradition. This should be no surprise, given that Trembath places not only humanity firmly in time, but also God. But again, one need not take this controversial step to follow Trembath's lead here. Humanity may be planted firmly in time, and its nature may be graced by the eternal life of God, without ejecting either humanity from time or God from eternity.

In an epektatic model of the eschaton, just as with knowledge, love can find a full flourishing in a way that both fulfils the natural capacity of humanity and participates in the divine gracing of humanity in Christ. We can love naturally, working towards each other's betterment, not from lack to fulfilment, but once again from glory into glory. And so too can we work towards the betterment of God—not the essence or substance of God, as if it could or needed to be improved, but in God's relationship with creation. The unfolding and unpacking of God's revelation, new every morning, as the loving work of persons for each other and also for God, is a possible and not unfitting crown for the human capacity to love.

3. Eschatological hope

The term 'eschatological hope' tends to mean either (1) the hope that functions in the current age and longs for the coming age, or (2) the faith in the coming age that is experienced now in the form of confident expectation. Here I mean neither of these. If Trembath's construction of the human being as moral because of the human abilities to know, love and hope is correct, then an eschatological construction of humanity must affirm that hope will exist in the coming age.

Once again, a static/eternal model of the coming age simply has no room for hope. All that has been or could be hoped for has happened; all is attained and nothing more can be added. Indeed, one cannot even hope that the same set of affairs will continue as it will not 'continue' to take place at all.

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nesen, 2011), 18–33.

12 St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, trans. Charles J. O'Neil (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012), 346ff.

St. Augustine, whose depiction of the eschaton leaves at least some room for something like time, does not allow for hope but posits a kind of supernaturally infused knowledge as one of the chief joys of the coming age, in which we know for certain we will never lose heaven.[13] Though I would agree with Augustine that those in heaven must be sure that heaven cannot be lost, there remains no ability to hope for anything else. Meanwhile, Aquinas simply rejects the idea of hope in heaven:

> Since then the arduous possible good cannot be an object of hope except in so far as it is something future, it follows that when happiness is no longer future, but present, it is incompatible with the virtue of hope. Consequently hope, like faith, is voided in heaven, and neither of them can be in the blessed.[14]

If the heavenly state is atemporal, then there is no orientation towards the future whatsoever. Hope is swallowed up in possession; faith is swallowed up in knowledge. While this might seem to be a neat packaging of the three theological virtues, in which faith, hope and love collapse into each other and become numerically one, it is not the case. Hope does not find its crown in possession; it is eradicated by it. Hope is equally eradicated by the knowledge of victory as by the knowledge of defeat. When the actual comes, hope goes.

If humanity is constituted by its ability to hope, then such an eternal state of affairs for humanity does not crown but destroys nature. As Trembath points out, time is necessary for hope. There must be something to hope for. Thus, if the atemporal culmination of humanity is true, then Trembath's anthropology falls short. If, instead, Trembath is right that hope is a constitutive part of what it means to be human, then the atemporal picture may still be true, but it cannot be a proper object of Christian hope, which strives to maintain the fine balance between the newness of God's unimaginable gift and the sameness of the ones who receive it from this age to the next.

Once again, an epektatic expression of the eschaton is most consistent with Trembath's anthropology. In such a model, hope, which draws on memory to point towards the future, works towards the goal, and believes that it will take place, can function in its full perfection. As persons go forward, in an unending ascent into the knowledge and love of God, they proceed hopefully, confident and committed toward the betterment of God's expression in the cosmos and between persons.[15]

One element of Trembath's construction of hope, however, encounters some difficulty in an eschatological framework: namely, one hopes for something that may not come to pass. In the eschatological world, God's expression in and through people, and people's expressions to each other, can have no doubt of ultimate success. If Trembath's understanding of a future event

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13 St. Augustine of Hippo, *City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2011), 778ff. XXII.30.
14 Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 2-2, q. 18 a. 2 ad 1.

15 For a fuller discussion of the state of hope and memory in the eschaton, see my article 'The Concept of Newness in Eschatology', *Pro Ecclesia* 25, no. 3 (2018).

perhaps not coming to pass means that the original intention of hope may go unfulfilled, then Trembath's concept of hope is simply incompatible with either of the two constructs of Christian eschatology that I am considering here.

However, if his concept of things possibly not coming to pass may be construed otherwise, such an incompatibility may not result. It may be that in an epektatic state one's immediate striving towards deeper understanding may not culminate in precisely the way that one intended.

Perhaps, by sitting down to observe some aspect of nature or contemplate some aspect of God, or by walking with Christ and speaking with him, we will intend to come to a particular insight or joy but may instead receive some different insight. In this case, we have both fulfilled and not fulfilled Trembath's description of hope. On one hand, our pursuit of the secondary object (a specific insight) has failed; on the other hand, our pursuit of the primary object (God) has succeeded. In that sense, we have received precisely what we have sought, without possibility of failure.

The possibility of such failure regarding secondary objects would seem proper in an epektatic state, for if all immediate intentions were guaranteed to succeed as they were envisioned, then the mysterious otherness of God presented to us as future would be domesticated and tame. It seems that the future must remain the future, to some degree unknown. The people of God must go into it not as masters of time, such that time no longer possesses mystery, but divinely infused so that time no longer wounds.

4. The eschatological community

Recently, several works discussing the eschatological community have presented pictures of heaven in which human activity is possible, and in which people relate to each other in loving ways. Paul Griffith's *Decreation*[16] allows for human interaction in a repetitive stasis akin to liturgy. Thiel's book, cited above, presents a different picture of time and forgiveness in the coming age. N. T. Wright's groundbreaking *Surprised by Hope*[17] also depicts the eschatological community in interaction with each other.

Human beings cannot express real community if they are in a state in which they cannot interact with each other in meaningful ways. We may be overwhelmed by the divine presence, and in loving God we love all that God loves. But such an experience of love rises, not to the dignity of Christ's own self-giving love, but merely to the level of an overwhelming emotional and intellectual response.

In a state in which I perceive God, overwhelmed and static, my story ultimately complete, I can feel and know love for all persons in a way that I cannot know now. However, such a state is ultimately one in which we relate to others merely through God. Indeed, if we take God's honesty out of the picture, such a state could be achieved even if I were the only person in perfect joy and all others suffered the torments of the damned. I might experience the

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16 Paul J. Griffiths, *Decreation: The Last Things of All Creatures* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2015).

17 N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008).

divine presence, love all other persons, and be wrong about their fates. Who, when so overwhelmed, could know or care?

To have real community, however, we must interact with each other. We must care for each other, even when death and sorrow are behind us. We must live together, knowing, loving, and hoping for and in each other. Such a community is, as Trembath argues, the goal and the outcome of revelation. Indeed, it is revelation itself in many ways. To have an eschatological community that is both the natural and supernatural crowning of humanity, time must persist. And in that case, as Trembath observers, new things are made. In the community, all are changed from glory to glory, and indeed the community itself changes from glory to glory, reflecting the divine life into the cosmos, ever new every morning.

IV. Conclusion

I have attempted to briefly consider Kern Trembath's revelatory anthropology and its eschatological ramifications. I have not sought to place his work within the larger context of studies of the doctrine of revelation, but instead to show how his observations might work themselves out in a crowned and glorified anthropology in the coming age. Not surprisingly, his picture of humanity finds its fulfilment not in an eternal, static image of finished stories, but in an ongoing expression of humanity epektatically striving deeper into knowledge, love, hope and community.

If the main substance of Trembath's anthropology—that humans are by nature knowing, loving, hoping and communal—is correct, a static and 'eternal' heavenly state is still possible, but not the proper object of human hope in Christ, one that maintains the integrity of human nature. Instead, a heavenly state that perfects and supernaturally glorifies the people of God in their natural capacities must be viewed as the proper object of Christian hope. The reconstituted cosmos infused with the Holy Spirit, in an epektatic ascent into the infinite love of God, fits such an anthropology exceptionally well.