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FREEDOM UN/LIMITED: A SYMPATHETIC CRITIQUE OF LIBERTARIAN FREEDOM IN THE OPEN THEISM OF CLARK PINNOCK

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Freedom Un/Limited: A Sympathetic Critique of Libertarian Freedom
in the Open Theism of Clark Pinnock

Abstract

This thesis lays out a critique of the libertarian autonomy in Clark Pinnock's open theism. It contends that libertarian autonomy (defined as the choice to do otherwise) is unable to do justice to the fuller sense of freedom described in the biblical narrative. Offering more than a critique, this thesis suggests an alternative definition of freedom by qualifying Karl Barth's "freedom as obedience" as 'freedom as faithfulness'. As such, true freedom is contrasted to the autonomy that leads to evil, and is found beyond the false dichotomy of compatibilism and incompatibilism, heteronomy and autonomy. Freedom is recognized as a good gift of creation and a promise of the eschaton, and thus must be distanced from the shadow of evil which haunts human autonomy. Ultimately, this thesis contends that faithfulness to God as the source and call of life leads to responsive, transformative, and eschatologically unlimited freedom.

This thesis is dedicated to my wife on the celebration of our first year together. She has supported and encouraged me throughout its writing and has given me freedom by calling me to be faithful to her.

CONTENTS

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One acts freely in a situation if, and only if, one could have done otherwise.

Clark Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*

Human freedom is the God-given freedom to obey.

Karl Barth, AThe Gift of Freedom@

It was for freedom that Christ set us free.

Galatians 5:1 (NASB)

INTRODUCTION

What is human freedom? Greater than our concept of it, freedom is an idea that reaches beyond our understanding, leading us forward.[1] Because 'freedom' cannot be captured – by definition – we must continue to think about it. If our conceptions of freedom become closed, we will have lost touch with what we are trying to understand.

Understandings of freedom in theological discourse indicate and form the way we orient ourselves to God, to each other, and to creation. As such, our image of freedom is one of the most significant in and for Christian theology as a whole. Our understanding of the nature of freedom shapes the concepts of divine and human responsibility, culpability, and capacity in far-reaching ways. For example, if the divine (capacity for) freedom is a manifestation of power, then divine responsibility and culpability will be great. If God's sovereign freedom is a form of autonomy (whether or not that term is used), it will be at the expense of human freedom, responsibility, and culpability. The significance of our image of freedom lies in its location in our web of beliefs. Being close to the center of that web, a change in the concept of freedom means a change in the concepts that flow out of and through it.[2]

A recent proposal for a change in our conception of human freedom has been put forward by the advocates of 'open theism'. Clark Pinnock has served as a central figure in this

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[1]The distinction between 'concept' and 'idea' is used by Herman Dooyeweerd, wherein a concept is a retrocipation in the foundational direction and an idea is an anticipation in the transcendental direction. Concept is "restrictive" and idea is "expansive." I understand freedom to be an idea because it opens as opposed to a concept which closes (not negatively, but for the sake of comprehension). See: Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, Vol. II, David H. Freeman and H. De Jongste, trans. (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1955), 186-7.

[2]I am referring to Willard Van Orman Quine's web metaphor, which he uses to describe the structure of human knowledge: "Two Dogmas of Empiricism," in *From a Logical Point of View: 9 logico-philosophical essays* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1953), 42-43.

movement, and his understanding of freedom will be the subject of this thesis. While it is not Pinnock's sole interest, the nature and role of human freedom is a central concern for him as he critically reflects on the assumptions of traditional theology. While I believe that Pinnock has rightly challenged 'classical theism' and served to open theology in important ways, I intend to argue that he has not (yet) sufficiently opened the true nature of human freedom. My aim is to invite Pinnock to consider an alternative to libertarian autonomy, which, as I will argue, he believes to be genuine freedom. A central claim of this thesis is that an alternative to libertarian autonomy does not necessarily have to limit human freedom. In fact, I will argue that understanding freedom as libertarian – liberty in the sense of autonomy – obscures its true, unlimited nature.

This thesis consists of three chapters. The first follows Pinnock's theological pilgrimage from being a staunch defender of classical theism to becoming an energetic proponent of open theism, a journey towards a new theology of freedom that I believe should be continued. In this context, I will defend Pinnock's desire to practice biblically informed theology against his critics who accuse him of favoring contemporary philosophy at the expense of Scripture. Finally, I will raise some of the important ways in which Pinnock's understanding of human freedom differs from that of classical theism.

The second chapter follows the development of the concept of autonomy and its association with later definitions of freedom as 'liberty'. I will argue that Pinnock, who usually does well to question current philosophical assumptions, embraces this libertarian definition of freedom in his open theology. I will then introduce what seems to be a unique and viable alternative to Pinnock's understanding of freedom to be found in Karl Barth's insistence that human freedom is found only in obedience. Using this alternative, I will contrast Barth's

freedom as participatory obedience with Pinnock's freedom as libertarian autonomy. In my sharpest criticism, I will argue that Pinnock, in making libertarian freedom necessary for love, ends up privileging autonomy over love.

In the third and final chapter, I will qualify Barth's 'obedience' as faithfulness to God's call for life. I will argue that 'obedience' fails to denote the freedom that is found in faithfulness, and that it does not sufficiently honor the (free) multiplicity of positive responses to the call of life. I will then further qualify freedom as eschatologically oriented, meaning that the fullness of human freedom is yet to come. If freedom is an eternally fixed amount of power that is merely exchanged and which cannot be created, deepened, or expanded, its distribution will be limited to a zero-sum game in which one can only have freedom at the expense of another. Given an eschatological openness, however, freedom can be thought of as generated rather than merely exchanged. Thus, instead of limiting freedom, faithfulness actually offers unlimited freedom: freedom that is open to the future.

I believe that this alternative understanding of freedom would strengthen Pinnock's project, and this critical study is meant as a friendly invitation to continue exploring the possibilities offered by open theism. As we will see, Pinnock desires a theology that is attentive to God's relationality and animated by God's love, and I intend to argue that freedom conceived as faithfulness and not autonomy respects such a desire.

CHAPTER I

AN INVITATION TO CLARK PINNOCK

Out of Fundamentalism

Whether or not one agrees with the direction of his theological pilgrimage, Clark Pinnock has made an intellectually sound and creative contribution to contemporary theology.[3] I have every intention of honoring this pilgrimage by asking Pinnock to journey even further toward a more liberating view of freedom than that of *libertarian* freedom. But first, I must begin by retracing the steps of Pinnock's journey thus far in order to gain a bearing on where he is now.

Early on in his life, Pinnock frequented an InterVarsity book room in Toronto and immersed himself in the "staunchly Calvinistic writings" of John Murray, Martyn Lloyd Jones, Cornelius Van Til, Carl F.H. Henry, James I. Packer, and Paul Jewett.[4] It was the influence of these writers and the community he sought out in the form of InterVarsity that led him to Calvinism.[5] He writes: "I began my theological life as a Calvinist who regarded alternate evangelical interpretations as suspect and at least mildly heretical. I accepted the view I was given that Calvinism was just scriptural evangelicalism in its purest expression, and I did not

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[3]A reference to Pinnock's description of himself: "So I do not apologize for admitting to being on a *pilgrimage* in theology. . . .We are fallible and historically situated creatures, and our best thinking falls far short of the ideal of what our subject matter requires. A pilgrimage, therefore, far from being unusual or slightly dishonorable, is what we would expect theologians who are properly aware of their limitations to experience." Clark Pinnock, "From Augustine to Arminius: A Pilgrimage in Theology" in Clark Pinnock, ed., *The Grace of God, the Will of Man* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1989), 16.

[4]Barry L. Callen, *Clark H. Pinnock: Journey Toward Renewal; An Intellectual Biography* (Nappenee, Indiana: Evangel Publishing House, 2000), 20.

[5]However, it is not as if Calvinism was forced on him. He began going to InterVarsity in order to supplement his attendance of a "liberal" Baptist church which he felt "had forgotten the truth and reality of God pretty much." Clark Pinnock, "I Was a Teenage Fundamentalist," *The Wittenburg Door* (December 1982-January 1983), 18.

question it for a long time."[6] While more than appreciating its apologetic strength, his attraction to Calvinistic theology was motivated by what he felt was its "scriptural" character.

Following Pinnock's career from the beginning, it is hard to deny that his theology is centered around the biblical narrative. At the age of fifteen, Pinnock went to a lecture at a nearby Baptist church and heard a faculty member from McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario extol higher criticism and its usefulness for biblical studies. Pinnock recalls that he judged the professor's approach as "destructive to our confidence in the reliability of the Bible."[7] His defensive stance toward "humanistic" and "Enlightenment"[8] biblical criticism was only stronger as he finished his theological education. As an evangelical theologian, Pinnock believed his vocation to be the defense of the Gospel against secular humanism and liberal theology.[9] During the formative years of his theology, this sense of his calling intensified in response to the challenges he saw Christianity facing. No longer did *portions* of 'orthodoxy' need to be defended against certain heretical teachings, but instead, the *whole* of the Christian

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[6]Pinnock, "From Augustine to Arminius," 17.

[7]Clark Pinnock, "Baptists and Biblical Authority," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, vol. 17 (1974): 193.

[8]These are still the terms that Pinnock uses to refer to biblical criticism in the reprinting of *The Scripture Principle*. However, his stance has become much more nuanced and mature in its most recent form:

> When criticism comes in, very often faith goes out. It is all too easy to slide from the critical methodology to the critical theology of religious liberalism. Nevertheless, in spite of the dangers, biblical criticism has come to signify many things and many methods, not all of them hostile to the interests of the faith.

Clark Pinnock and Barry L. Callen, *The Scripture Principle: Reclaiming the Full Authority of the Bible*, 2d. ed., (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2006), 157.

[9]As such, it is no surprise that he dedicates his 1985 book *The Untapped Power of Sheer Christianity: A Timely Manifesto Aimed at Comprehensive Renewal.* Burlington, Ont.: Welch Publishing Co., 1985) to Francis Schaeffer.

faith had to be defended against the historical critical method[10] and its attempts to undermine the reliability of Scripture.[11]

In opposition to "liberal" theologians, who attempted to reconcile the Christian faith with the tenets of modernity, Pinnock argued that the two worldviews were mutually exclusive. He writes:

> What is liberal theology? It is essentially a salvage operation, designed to rescue whatever can be saved, after secularism has been allowed to do its thing. It asks, what can we believe now that historic Christianity has been wasted by the acids of secularist criticism? Liberal theology is an orderly retreat from the biblical faith. It gives historic Christianity a decent burial. In order to avoid a direct clash with secularism, the liberals engaged in some crucial cognitive bargaining and agreed to shift to altogether new ground.[12]

Clearly, liberal theology was not the appropriate answer to modern secularism for Pinnock.[13] Much of his early career was directed toward fending off liberal theology and modern secularism, and it is important to place him in this context if one is to understand the more

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[10]Pinnock sees humanism and the dogmatic scientism that comes with it as one of the greatest threats to Christianity: "Christians must not be intellectually intimidated by the church scientific, that humanist-scientist complex which pretends to know everything there is." Clark Pinnock, *Biblical Revelation: The Foundation for Christian Theology* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 205.

[11]Cf. Callen, *Journey Toward Renewal*, 45-46. Callen gives an anecdote of a 1963 study that "denied the authenticity of many of the letters traditionally attributed to the authorship of Paul." The study relied on computers to perform a statistical study of the vocabulary contained within the letters. Pinnock was apparently perturbed enough to write a response article entitled "Honest to Computers?" in the UK edition of *InterVarsity Magazine* (Spring, 1964), 16-17.

[12]Clark Pinnock, *The Untapped Power of Sheer Christianity*, 18-19.

[13]I use the past tense here, because Pinnock has certainly changed his mind significantly since he penned those words. His tone has softened considerably. However, even though he is less militant towards liberal theology now (often being charged as a liberal theologian himself), I wonder how much his core feelings displayed in this statement have changed. It seems that he is still very wary of anyone who places modern rationality over the biblical narrative; even if it means that he has turned the same critique on fundamentalists as well.

militant tone of his early works.

As a result of this defensive orientation, Pinnock wrote books with titles such as: *Set Forth Your Case: Studies in Christian Apologetics*, *A Defense of Biblical Infallibility*, and *Reason Enough: A Case for the Christian Faith*. These works argue that not only are the Evangelical core doctrinal beliefs biblically true, but that they are rationally true as well. Pinnock was certainly not alone in writing rationally apologetic books at this time, but he was heralded as a leading "conservative voice" following in the tradition of Francis Schaeffer.[14] In his later reflections, he sees his apologetic attitude as an instance of the "hard rationalism" of modernity that many fundamentalist critics themselves exhibited.[15] The deep attraction that American fundamentalist Christians felt for the scientific rationalism that threatened to undermine their faith was an irony that Pinnock later came to appreciate and regret.[16]

The Beginning of a Transition

Pinnock may have begun his theological career as a five-point Calvinist[17] and a

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[14]This may be due to a certain calling placed upon him from the Evangelical community. While reflecting on his early militantism, Pinnock writes: "It may have been the heady mixture of Francis Schaeffer joined to my encounter with Baptist fundamentalism while I was at the seminary in New Orleans. At any rate, in the late 1960s I found myself heralded as a conservative voice, and I succumbed to the populist adulation." in Callen, *Journey Toward Renewal*, 223.

[15]Callen, *Journey Toward Renewal*, 229.

[16]For a good account of possible reasons for this attraction, see: George M. Marsden *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1991). The fifth chapter entitled "The Evangelical Love Affair with Enlightenment Science" is particularly relevant. In it, Marsden compares the Dutch rejection of enlightenment science by Abraham Kuyper to the American embrace of it by B. B. Warfield. One key (and likely) thesis is that while the Dutch negatively associated the Enlightenment with the French and Dutch revolutions, the Americans positively associated it with the founding of their country.

[17]The five points of Calvinism are most recognizable in the English speaking world as the

rationalistic apologist, but even in his earlier publications, one sees hints of what would become his open view.[18] The 1986 publication of "God Limits His Knowledge" is often taken as the demarcation point for Pinnock's journey into open theism,[19] but already in 1975, he is wrestling with the evidence of genuine human freedom and shifting from Calvinism to Arminianism.

In an essay entitled "Responsible Freedom and the Flow of Biblical History," he begins with the simple observation that "Universal man almost without exception talks and feels *as if* he were free. He perceives himself to be a person capable of rising above his situation, of shaping his life and destiny, and making a significant impact upon history."[20] Rather than immediately rejecting this feeling as contrary to doctrine and the biblical text, Pinnock attempts to resolve this apparent contradiction between human experience and his belief that God's sovereignty dictates a strict determinism by turning to the biblical narrative itself. He writes:

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acronym TULIP. They are as follows: 1) Total depravity, 2) Unconditional election, 3) Limited atonement, 4) Irresistible grace, 5) Perseverance of the saints.

[18]Gregory Boyd, "Unbounded Love and the Openness of the Future: Exploration and Critique of Pinnock's Theological Pilgrimage" in Stanley E. Porter and Anthony R. Cross, eds., *Semper Reformandum: Studies in Honour of Clark H. Pinnock* (Carlisle, U.K.: Paternoster Press, 2003), 39. However, one may question how much of his strict Calvinism was tied up in what was more important to him: the defense of Scripture. Being taught that Calvinism was the only biblically true theological position would have certainly played on his desire to remain true to the Bible. This is not merely speculative on my part, for it is clear that his early publications center on the defense of biblical inerrancy and not determinism. Such a reading is also more consistent with his journey toward open theism. While Pinnock may have dropped strict inerrancy, he still held to a very strong view of the scriptural inspiration, and it is this view that leads him away from determinism.

[19]Boyd, "Unbounded Love," 42, FN 10. Pinnock's article "God Limits His Knowledge" is found in: David Basinger and Randall Basinger, eds., *Predestination and Free Will: Four Views of Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom by John Feinberg, Norman Geisler, Bruce Reichenbach, and Clark Pinnock* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 141-162.

[20]Clark H. Pinnock, "Responsible Freedom and the Flow of Biblical History" in Clark Pinnock, ed., *Grace Unlimited* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship Inc., 1975), 95. Emphasis original.

> When we turn to the Bible, this natural conviction about human freedom is confirmed and strengthened. Man is viewed in Scripture as a responsible agent, created in the likeness of God, who must account morally to his Maker for the way in which he acts and for the decisions which he makes. What stands out in the biblical narrative is not what we might term a 'blueprint' model of the universe in which everything is already decided, so that individual enterprises are smothered underneath an exhaustive divine decree (cf. Westminster Confession IV).[21]

Pinnock believes that Scripture emphasizes a God who is personal and thus deeply involved in history rather than a God who foreordains history from a distant eternal present. In his understanding, God is dynamic and relational rather than static and impersonal. It is this scriptural base and existential observation that will later form the foundation for Pinnock's version of open theism.

Contrary to the claims of his detractors, Pinnock makes it clear that he did not begin to question Calvinism because he found it logically unsound, or because he became attracted to the principles of modern autonomy. Instead, he professes that it was his commitment to Scripture that caused him to question the Calvinist doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. While teaching at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in 1970, he concluded that this, the last of the five points of Calvinism,[22] could not do justice to – and, in fact, actually contradicted – the testimony of Hebrews.[23] He writes:

> And once I saw that, the logic of Calvinism was broken in principle, and it was only a matter of time before the larger implications of its breaking would dawn on me. The

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[21]Pinnock, "Responsible Freedom," 96. The chapter of the Westminster Confession that Pinnock actually seems to be referring to is chapter III, which deals with God's eternal decree (chapter IV deals with creation).

[22] See footnote 17 for a list of the five points.

[23]As examples, Pinnock first cites Heb. 3:12: "Take care, brethren, that there not be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God." Second, he cites Heb. 10:26: "For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins. . .". (NASB)

thread was pulled, and the garment must begin to unravel, as indeed it did.[24]

In retrospect, Pinnock's decision to use the word "logic" is unfortunate as it left him vulnerable to critics who, upon his shift to open theism, would accuse him of being more concerned with logical coherence than with biblical faithfulness. However, for Pinnock, it is precisely the failure of Calvinism's logic to adequately engage Scripture that begins his shift toward open theism. Pinnock saw that the internal logical coherence of Calvinism was strong, but this strength assumed scripturally unsupportable claims. The founding principle of Calvinistic logic (at least for the early Pinnock) was that it expressed a biblical logic, and once Pinnock believed this principle to be broken, he began to suspect the fuller coherence.

Pinnock had begun his career countering logic with logic, but became aware that his reliance on logical extrapolation from (what he took to be) the revealed truths of Scripture had eclipsed his ongoing reliance on the biblical narrative. This deeply biblical self-critique can be seen in the shift he makes to a new model of biblical authority. Reflecting on this change in what becomes his characteristic humility and self-awareness, he writes:

> I claimed that the Bible taught total inerrancy because I hoped that it did – I wanted it to. How would it be possible to maintain a firm stand against religious liberalism unless one held firmly to total inerrancy?[25]

Far from representing a higher view of Scripture, Pinnock came to the conclusion that "those who press [inerrancy] hard are elevating reason over Scripture at that point."[26] Thus, in his shift from the self-described "hard rationality" to "soft rationality,"[27] we see him coming to the

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[24]Pinnock, "From Augustine to Arminius," 17.

[25]Clark Pinnock, *The Scripture Principle* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), 58.

[26]Pinnock, *The Scripture Principle*, 58.

[27]Clark Pinnock: "Pinnock Postscript: How My Mind Has Changed" in Callen, *Journey*

realization that in the kind of theology he had espoused, a desire for a closed, stable doctrinal coherence had replaced the ongoing need for Scripture. "In my opinion," he writes, "the desire to have absolute truth is for many evangelicals stronger than their desire to accept the actual biblical witness."[28] While these reflections refer to biblical inerrancy, I believe that they reveal and illustrate the principles that Pinnock follows in his departure from Calvinism.

Opening Up

Pinnock's initial shift from five-point Calvinism is first to Arminianism, but is not yet a full departure from classical theism.[29] As mentioned above, one of the earliest signs of Pinnock's transition from classical theism to open theism (via Arminianism) was in an essay entitled "Responsible Freedom and the Flow of Biblical History." Published in 1975, this piece predates the term "open theism" and any clear or developed articulation of such a theology.[30] The major themes of this piece point to the major areas in which classical theism is thought to be deficient: freedom, responsibility, responsiveness, and relationality. This essay is significant because it is Pinnock's first published exploration of what is now a well established evangelical alternative to Calvinism.

Toward Renewal, 237.

[28]Pinnock: "How My Mind Has Changed", 237.

[29]The most significant departure that Pinnock will make from Arminianism is to reject the doctrine of foreknowledge. Daniel Strange, "The Evolution of an Evangelical" in Tony Gray and Christopher Sinkinson, eds., *Reconstructing Theology: A Critical Assessment of the Theology of Clark Pinnock* (Carlisle, U.K.: Paternoster Press, 2000), 11.

[30]I do not intend to suggest that Pinnock was the first to think this way, but to indicate that it was biblical study (rather than a theological fad) that was influencing Pinnock's thinking. This article even predates Richard Swinburne's book *The Coherence of Theism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977) which Pinnock named as influential in his turn toward open theology. Boyd, "Unbounded Love," 42 FN. 10.

Searching for Response-Ability

An important point of departure from traditional Calvinism for Pinnock in this Arminian phase concerns human responsiveness (what he will later call response-ability).[31] Stating his conviction that the biblical witness is clear that humanity is able to respond freely to God, he writes:

> The fall of man into sin through the misuse of the divinely given freedom constitutes an important clue as to the nature of God's rule. For at this point in history man *vetoed* God's will, deliberately disobeyed his commandments, and willfully rejected his plans. Like the Pharisees and lawyers later on, Adam 'rejected the purpose of God' for himself (Luke 7:30).[32]

Pinnock believes that what he takes to be deterministic views of the Fall must be rejected because they do not cohere with scriptural examples of humanity's responsibility and freedom. He repudiates Boettner for writing: "Even the fall of Adam, and through him the fall of the race, was not by chance or accident, but was so ordained in the secret councils of God."[33] For Pinnock, this statement is contrary to the biblical narrative and to human experience in general.[34] Not only does Boettner eliminate genuine human responsiveness, but also human responsibility and freedom. Consequently, Boettner's claim also threatens to make God responsible for evil. Pinnock, who himself adhered to Boettner's position at one time, initially saw the apparent contradiction as an "antinomy." In retrospect, he writes that he was happy "to discover that the Bible does not actually teach such an incoherence, and this particular paradox was a result of

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[31]Clark H. Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover: A Theology of God's Openness* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 2001), x.

[32]Pinnock, "Responsible Freedom," 100-101.

[33]Loraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* (Philadelphia, Penn.: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1965), 353, in Pinnock, "Responsible Freedom," 101.

[34] Pinnock, "Responsible Freedom," 107.

Calvinian logic, not scriptural dictates."[35]

Pinnock came to see the responsiveness here eclipsed by Calvinism as a central theme of the biblical covenant between God and humanity, going as far as to say: "Evidently God in his decision to create man placed a higher value on freedom than on sinless conformity to his will."[36] This valuation is a result of God's desire to create a creature in his likeness. In Pinnock's words:

> Having called the universe into being, and after creating organic life in plant and animal varieties, God introduced a qualitatively new kind of being–man, a creature who through the exercise of his freedom would be able to shape his own future, a "godlike" creature able to set purposes for himself, to decide and act and achieve, and thus to transform even himself within the historical process. . . . For man to be created in the 'image of God' can only mean that he has been made to reflect the personhood of God and made capable like him of self-awareness, of self-determination and of responsible conduct. . . . Because of his nature, man is the visible representative on earth of the invisible Lord, and is meant to exercise his powers in having dominion over the other creatures responsibly as unto his maker.[37]

Clearly rejecting deterministic conceptions of freedom, Pinnock believes that God created a true covenant partner who is able to respond in freedom and act with authority to shape the future.

In 1975, Pinnock believed that classical theism in adhering to a God who is absolutely transcendent (and thus un-relational), rendered humanity unable to respond to God's grace, with the consequence that it was difficult to locate the responsibility (and culpability) for evil anywhere other than with God. Later, in order to surmount these contradictions, Pinnock would come to hold freedom to be a central analogy between God and humanity; a characteristic shared (though different in proportion and nature) by God and humanity. In this way, Pinnock hoped to

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[35]Pinnock, "From Augustine to Arminius," 21.

[36]Pinnock, "Responsible Freedom," 100.

[37]Pinnock, "Responsible Freedom," 98.

emphasize the full human responsibility for evil and to account for a genuine relationship between God and humanity.

Although he is clear that humanity is given the authority to shape the future, he had not yet fully realized that he would now need to rethink the doctrines of divine omnipotence and omniscience. Emphasizing humanity as the genuine covenant partner he saw portrayed in Scripture would cause Arminianism to unravel in the same way that Calvinism had.

The following chart may help to illustrate Pinnock's movement from Calvinism to Arminianism, and finally to open theism. This three-stage progression is also presented as a two-stage movement from 'classical theism' to open theism. This calls for further clarification.

Although Arminianism has become an established position in the evangelical community and, as such, has become closely associated with classical theism for many evangelical critics of open theism, most would not agree with the following suggestion that forms of Arminianism actually fall under the category of classical theism. But the association is deeper than is normally recognized.

There are certainly some significant similarities between Calvinism and Arminianism that are not shared by open theism. The first is that both Calvinism and Arminianism reject the possibility that God took a risk in creating the world. Yet it is this risk-taking interpretation that becomes important to Pinnock as he continues to wrestle with the problem of evil. While in traditional theism, God either uses (foreordains) or permits (foreknows) evil, both positions are unacceptable to Pinnock, for both hold that God accepts evil to some extent.

The second similarity is that both Calvinism in holding to God's foreordination, and Arminianism, in holding to God's foreknowledge, are ultimately advocating compatibilist forms of freedom (even though Arminianism is not generally seen as a compatibilist position). Implicit

in the open theism position is the conviction that human freedom cannot be compatible with a future which is determined, either through foreordination or foreknowledge.[38] It is noteworthy that Pinnock rejects both Calvinism and Arminianism as he comes to believe that the biblical description of human freedom implies incompatibilism. In the following chart, this is taken as a major indicator of where classical theism ends and open theism begins.[39]

[38] It may appear to be a mistake to call the Arminian confession of God's foreknowledge deterministic, but it is a merely a different form of determination than that of foreordination. In foreordination, God ontologically determines the future. In foreknowledge, God epistemologically determines the future.

[39] A more thorough discussion of compatibilism and incompatibilism as the dividing point between classical and open theism can be found in the appendix.

	Calvinism ← **Classical Theism** → Arminianism *Compatibilism*		**Open Theism** *Incompatibilism*
	Foreordination	**Foreknowledge**	
Divine Sovereignty	God is 'specifically' sovereign because God foreordains history, including its specifics. Everything that happens is for a reason. God's knowledge of the future is grounded in God's will for the future.	God is 'generally' sovereign because God foreknows history and determines the overall (general) pattern on this basis.	God is sovereign as the creator of all possibilities. Because God knows all the possibilities, and thus the limited number of actualities, God can approach the world as a 'master chess player.'[40]
Human Freedom	Human freedom is compatible with God's foreordination through an emphasis on voluntarism. Because the will is the center of freedom, as long as it is not coerced, humans can be free. Thus, if individuals desire what God has foreordained, they freely will it.	Human freedom is compatible with God's foreknowledge because individuals are free both to desire and will what they please; God only foresees these desires and actions.	Human freedom is incompatible with an unopen view of the future; that is, any view of the future that can be 'determined' by foreordination or foreknowledge. Humans are free to create history within the boundaries of created possibilities.
Evil	God foreordains evil as instrumental to the divine plan (whether it be to build character or punish the unbeliever), but God is not responsible for evil in a sinful sense because it is only the human who sinfully wills it.	God does not foreordain evil, but knows all the evil that will take place in history before creation. God's decision to create is thus not risky, but calculated; God knows full well that the evil of history will be overcome by the end of history.	God takes a risk in creating the world with the possibility for evil. As the future is open for God, God could not know if humans would choose evil or not, but had to create the possibility of evil in order to create the conditions for love.

This chart shows how these views were important to Pinnock's development and they mark the major transitions in his journey towards open theism. Through his pilgrimage, he was able to open up evangelical theology (once dominated by Calvinism) to new and liberating possibilities. Pinnock's central concern was to stress the relational and loving characteristics of

[40]The "master chess player" analogy is often used by open theists to describe the sort of sovereignty God uses to relate to the world. Pinnock, *The Scripture Principle*, 2nd ed., 130.

God against what he believed to be the overly-transcendent and alienating aspects of God assumed by traditional Calvinistic theology. His passion for attending to the biblical witness even when it contradicted certain Calvinistic and Arminian doctrines of his evangelical community deserves our respect, as does his courage in forging a new theological paradigm beyond Arminianism.

God is Love

As Pinnock continued his pilgrimage, he realized that his understanding of freedom would now necessitate a re-articulation of the traditional characteristics of God's sovereignty (omniscience, omnipotence, immutability, and impassibility). To ground this re-articulation, he began searching for a root metaphor which he believed to be truer to the biblical narrative. In 1994, he began to use the metaphor of a *loving parent* for God and argues that such an image makes more sense in an openness model than it does in a classical one. He writes:

> Two models of God in particular are the most influential that people commonly carry about in their minds. We may think of God primarily as an aloof monarch, removed from the contingencies of the world, unchangeable in every aspect of being, as an all-determining and irresistible power, aware of everything that will ever happen and never taking risks. Or we may understand God as a caring parent with qualities of love and responsiveness, generosity and sensitivity, openness and vulnerability, a person (rather than a metaphysical principle) who experiences the world, responds to what happens, relates to us and interacts dynamically with humans.[41]

"God is sovereign in both models," Pinnock insists, "but the mode of his sovereignty differs."[42]

This shift in root metaphors only becomes stronger in the following year when Pinnock co-authored a book with Robert Brow entitled *Unbounded Love*. In this work nearly every

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[41]Clark Pinnock, "Systematic Theology" in Clark Pinnock, et al., eds., *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 103.

[42] Pinnock, *The Openness of God*, 103.

systematic doctrine is revised in light of love. In 1990, Brow had written an article for *Christianity Today* in which he observed what he calls an 'evangelical megashift.'[43] Pinnock and Brow subsequently collaborated in an attempt to define what this megashift might be, and determined that it was "an attempt to recover the good news for our time;" the good news being that God is love.[44]

In Pinnock's next book, *Most Moved Mover: A Theology of God's Openness*, the theme of God as loving Father is fleshed out more thoroughly, particularly in relation to human freedom. For this reason, *Most Moved Mover* is the primary text for our present purposes. Also, as one of Pinnock's most recent works, it is key for understanding where his pilgrimage has led him.

In the preface, Pinnock immediately dives into the contrast between the all-loving and all-powerful God:

> The open view of God invites believers to consider a new perspective on God in relation to the world. It asks us to imagine a response-able and self-sacrificing God of changeable faithfulness and vulnerable power. It invites us to see God as the power of love that creates personal agents able to freely love him. It is not a naked power. *Love is God's essence and power only an attribute*. His power, however great in physical terms, is an expression of love.[45]

Pinnock finds a point of contact with classical theism by confessing a fundamental tenet of Christian theology: that God's essence is love. Using this point of contact, he is able to

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[43] Robert C. Brow, "Evangelical Megashift" in *Christianity Today*, 19 February 1990, 12-14. This article does not anticipate the upcoming publication of the seminal works in open theism, but it does anticipate an openness in self-identified evangelicals, and thus the climate in which open theism was born into and out of.

[44] Clark H. Pinnock and Robert C. Brow, *Unbounded Love: A Good News Theology for the 21st Century* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 8.

[45] Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, x. Emphasis added.

challenge doctrines such as foreordination and foreknowledge in the name of a fundamental biblical and theological confession recognized by the tradition. This is a wise move as it is much more difficult to cling to a predetermining, omniscient, omnipotent, and especially impassible model of God when love and relationality become the focal point. For how can a God who is love before all else be a God who does not feel and suffer with creation? Pinnock argues that the heart of the Gospel reveals that God cannot be described as impassable. He writes that "in Jesus Christ we encounter a God who changes for our sake and suffers on our behalf."[46] The confession that God is love is key to both Pinnock's continuity and discontinuity with classical theism, and it is central to understanding his open theology.

Trinitarian Love

Like many contemporary theologians who are concerned about divine relationality, Pinnock turns to the doctrine of the social Trinity, specifically to ground his understanding of love. In particular, he writes that "from the Trinity we learn that the creator is not static or standoffish but a loving relationality and sheer liveliness. It informs us that creation is grounded in God's love and that grace underlies the gift of life itself."[47]

The Trinity, for Pinnock, serves as a way to affirm loving relationship as a primary characteristic of God and to reaffirm the contingency of the created world. While this is not unique to Pinnock's theology, it is essential for his insistence on true human freedom, which also finds its source in the Trinity. Our freedom is like God's freedom, and God's freedom is love. Our freedom finds its ground, goal, and character in God's freedom, the true freedom of love.

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[46]Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 27.

[47]Clark H. Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 23.

Trinitarian theology, therefore, allows Pinnock to distinguish himself from process theology, which, in its positing of a God of relationality, requires the eternal co-existence of the world. As Pinnock puts it:

> God freely enters into personal relationships with his creatures, not because he needs to (he already consists of a tri-personal community in which each gives and receives love), but because he wants to since relationality is an essential aspect of God. God does not *need* to create in order to love. He *chose* to create in order to *share love*.[48]

Because God is able to share loving relationships as (and thus between) the Father, Son, and Spirit, the world is not a necessary partner for this loving God. God's intra-trinitarian love is ontologically independent of creation because it is eternal.

God's choice to create is thus made in complete freedom. Here another fundamental distinction between classic theism and open theism becomes apparent: whereas in classical theism the doctrine of creation is thought to be a symbol of God's absolute sovereignty over the world, the emphasis now shifts to creation as the symbol of God's loving nature and desire to share Trinitarian love with an other.[49]

In *Most Moved Mover*, one quickly notices the extensive correlation between *love* and *freedom*. For Pinnock, to say God is Love is to say that God grants humanity genuine freedom. It is for this freedom, a genuine freedom given to us in and for love, that Pinnock has sought to offer an alternative to all forms of theological compatibilism.

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[48]Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 28. Emphasis added. For a more detailed discussion of how Trinitarian theology distinguishes open theism from process theology, see Pinnock, "Systematic Theology," 108-109.

[49]Pinnock is careful to maintain that creation was an act of power, while at the same time emphasizing that it was also an act of relational self-limitation (Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 31). This is an important balance for him, for if he does not emphasize God's power in creating strongly enough, he runs the risk of being categorized as a process theologian. Yet if power is emphasized at the expense of love, the open position risks slipping back into determinism.

The Freedom of Love

To return to Pinnock's pilgrimage from classical theism, it is helpful to remember that his theological transformation also centers on his understanding of God as Love. The significance of this center for the topic of this thesis is that he believes that love and freedom are inseparable. In one of his most revealing statements, he writes that in creation "love was the goal and freedom was the means to the goal."[50] By freedom here, Pinnock means *libertarian freedom*: the freedom of the human to make choices for or against God (or love, life, etc.) which are not known by God in eternity. The creation of genuine love, for Pinnock, requires libertarian freedom in this sense. That said, implicit in this statement is the idea that true freedom finds its goal in love.

It may be helpful to understand the above quotation as an expression of a particular understanding of the relationship between *nature* and *grace*. For Pinnock, freedom (the means) is nature (the created structure of the world) and love (the goal) is grace (that which fulfills and completes nature). Human nature, which at creation is free in the libertarian sense, anticipates the fulfillment of love as grace.

What is important to recognize is that, normatively speaking, Pinnock indicates a movement in history from nature to grace. For humans, libertarian freedom (for or against love) makes way for the freedom of love. In this way, we grow into the likeness of God, for whom love and freedom are never separate. Although this is more implicit than explicit in Pinnock's thought, I see the potential here for developing a model of genuine freedom that moves beyond autonomy.

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[50]Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 126.

Open Theism and the Challenge of Evil

As we move into the final portion of this first chapter, I will briefly lay out a few important differences between classic and open theism. I will illustrate the former by turning to Calvin to illustrate the above-mentioned tenets of classical theology. While many of the deterministic and compatibilistic understandings of human freedom come from much earlier than Calvin (here Augustine is a seminal figure), Pinnock is particularly responding to evangelicals who find their roots in the Reformation and especially in Calvinistic theology, so this makes Calvin a key figure on whom to focus.

Calvin is a careful pastoral thinker when he is writing theology and it is evident from his commentaries that he is thorough in his biblical scholarship. While all theologies are made up of central and peripheral beliefs, in some segments of the *Institutes*, it is clear that some theological categories do not just relativize, but actually displace others. Calvin's understanding of sovereign omnipotence, in particular, causes him to proclaim that God in some sense ordains evil, including the initial fall into sin. Addressing his opponents on this point, he writes:

> They say it is not stated in so many words that God decreed that Adam should perish for his rebellion. . . . They say that he had free choice that he might shape his own fortune, and that God ordained nothing except to treat man according to his own deserts. If such a barren invention is accepted, where will that omnipotence of God be whereby he regulates all things according to his secret plan, which depends solely upon itself? Yet predestination, whether they will or not, manifests itself in Adam's posterity.[51]

While Calvin may be able to support divine *involvement* in the Fall with scriptural resources, the biblical narrative never claims that God is *responsible* for the Fall or for the evil which is the result. Placing God in relationship to evil – as the God of a fallen creation in need of redemption

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[51]John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Vol. II, John T. McNeill, ed., Ford Lewis Battles, trans. (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 955.

– and making it sound as if God is culpable for it – as the God who ordains all things – are two distinct matters.

Pinnock is right to critique Calvin's theological assumptions by claiming that they are inconsistent with the full biblical narrative. He contends that God weeps with us when we suffer evil, and thus cannot be responsible for ordaining it:

> Rapes and murders, for example, are tragedies that make God weep. God did not send them and thus God can be 'a very present help in time of trouble.' . . . Some things are genuine evils: things that should not have happened, things that God did not want to happen.[52]

In saying that evil is neither ordained nor permitted, Pinnock is insisting on an alternative to the multitude of theodicies constructed in classical theology. Humans, according to Pinnock, are given freedom to do good or evil apart from divine foreordination and foreknowledge and for this reason, they are almost completely culpable in their decision-making.[53] Pinnock's account of evil becomes a more robust form of the free will defense than is offered by Arminians, for God does not even foreknow and thus does not permit evil choices. For open theism (unlike Calvinism and Arminianism), God's creation of a free humanity does not entail knowing that creation would fall into sin and suffering.

Pinnock is also able to deny that all evil is intended for good by God. While he affirms God's ability to redeem evil actions, he denies that there is always a reason for every occurrence

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[52]Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 47. An Arminian would not be able to make this statement, because if God foreknows all, then all things *should* happen. Here Pinnock, as an open theist, is able to be more sensitive to genuine evil.

[53]"Almost full" because Pinnock still attributes some responsibility to God via the risk taken in creating free agents: "God knew the creature and is, therefore, responsible for the possibility of evil but not for its actuality." *Most Moved Mover*, 47. I will address this in later chapters.

of evil.[54] Calvin cannot say the same; in fact, for the sake of (his understanding of) omnipotence, he must say that every evil is for a God-given reason of some kind. Evil occurs, for Calvin, either to make the believer stronger, or to torment the unbeliever. In his words:

> Now because God bends the unclean spirits hither and thither at will, he so governs their activity that they exercise believers in combat, ambush them, invade their peace, beset them in combat, and also often weary them, rout them, terrify them, and sometimes wound them; yet they never vanquish or crush them. But the wicked they subdue and drag away; they exercise their power over their minds and bodies, and misuse them as if they were slaves for every shameful act.[55]

Pinnock wisely responds by noting that "Jesus did not attribute things like deformity, blindness, leprosy and fever to the providence of God. He viewed them as evidence of the reign of darkness, which he was engaged in defeating."[56] To be fair, Calvin does not attribute evil to God either; he only argues that it is subject to God's use and control. However, what Pinnock seems to suggest is that Calvin – in his desire to affirm a divine sovereignty that uses and permits evil – legitimates, and thus justifies, evil. For many Christians (myself included), any justification of evil is unacceptable, even if this requires compromising or, better, re-articulating the concept of omnipotence. One of Pinnock's most important contributions is that he has given many evangelical Christians who take the problem of evil seriously a way to reconceive the nature of God.

The differences that have been cited between classical theism and Pinnock's open theism revolve around evil, in response to which open theism is at its strongest. Classical theism in many ways spoke its last word when it said that God was absolutely omnipotent and thus

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[54]Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 133.

[55]John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Vol. I, John T. McNeill, ed., Ford Lewis Battles, trans., (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 176.

[56]Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 134.

omniscient. It left itself with nothing to say except to attempt to relieve the all-powerful God of culpability for evil by invoking divine inscrutability. Clark Pinnock (for his part) has opened classical theism so that theology has something to say in the face of radical evil.

An absolute or closed understanding of omnipotence and omniscience has created a blockage in theology, and with its removal we are again free to plumb the depths of theology. However, I believe that an autonomous view of freedom is also a blockage, and that if we remove this as well, we may be able to explore even greater depths. I invite Pinnock to consider whether the autonomous, libertarian self is necessary for an understanding of freedom, or whether, perhaps, we can conceive of an alternative that will open theology to a greater freedom. This is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER II

FREEDOM AS OBEDIENCE: THE BARTHIAN RESPONSE

In the first chapter I sought to honor Clark Pinnock as an innovative and honest theologian whose explorations into the openness of God have given many evangelicals a new way to articulate their relationship to the divine. At the same time, I pointed toward my critical analysis of Pinnock, particularly on the issue of libertarian freedom. In this chapter I will begin to build what is intended to be constructive criticism using Karl Barth as a central figure. Like Pinnock, Barth struggled with the tensions between divine sovereignty and human freedom, but in the context of the theological developments of his day (particularly that of liberal theology and 'German Christianity'), he came to a different conclusion.[57] I intend to flesh out the contrast between Barth's and Pinnock's notions of human freedom in order to better appreciate and critique Pinnock's view of freedom as libertarian.

Both Barth and Pinnock believe that humanity can experience true freedom in obedience to God; thus this contrast between them must be articulated in a nuanced way, as it often seems that both are working with a similar understanding of human freedom. However, unlike Barth, Pinnock cannot make obedience the center of human freedom because of the way he is intent on setting himself apart from determinism. For Pinnock *true* human freedom is found (in part) in the ability to say 'No' even (and perhaps especially) to God. For Barth *true* freedom is always preceded by obedience: to say 'No' to God is to say 'No' to (the source of one's) freedom. Barth's sentences always seem to be half as long as they should be when they are written about

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[57]John Macken, *The Autonomy Theme in the Church Dogmatics: Karl Barth and his Critics* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 22-4.

freedom. For example: "Human freedom is the God-given freedom to obey"[58] and "he [humanity] is free on his side to know God, to obey Him and to call upon Him freely."[59] Read in a libertarian climate such as ours, it is as if all Barth's statements on freedom are missing the "or not" qualifier, as if he somehow ignores the fact that humans often do not choose to obey God. This is what a libertarian view of freedom requires: the ability to obey God *or not* (this is also known as *contra-causal freedom*);[60] however, Barth continually (and I would argue purposely) omits the "or not" when he writes of freedom and obedience. Freedom, for Barth, is always grounded in obedience to God.

Before I delve more deeply into Barth's understanding of human freedom, I want to make it clear that I intend to later qualify the meaning of obedience. Obedience as traditionally conceived is too closely tied to theological determinism, and I intend to open up its meaning in the third chapter of this thesis. As for Barth's position, I am unconvinced that he had submission to God's predetermined will in mind when he used the word "obedience" and I hope that becomes clear in the following exploration of freedom in his work.

To set some historical context to Barth's reaction against autonomy, I will turn to John Macken's excellent analysis of the theme of autonomy in the Church Dogmatics. Macken traces this modern idea of freedom from its beginnings in Kant, via its transformation through Fichte, to its use in the liberal theology that Barth would later denounce.

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[58]Karl Barth, "The Gift of Freedom" in *The Humanity of God*, John Newton Thomas and Thomas Wieser, trans. (Louisville, Ky.: John Knox Press, 1960) 82.

[59]Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. III/2, *The Doctrine of Creation*, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1960), 193.

[60] Barth used the term 'contra-causal' to describe the account "in which free persons are those who can refuse God." John Webster, *Barth's Moral Theology: Human Action in Barth's Thought* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 111.

Kant, Fichte, and Beyond: Autonomy in Historical Context

Kant

Kant turns to the autonomy of the will to secure the freedom of all because of his conviction that individual autonomy makes for an egalitarian society. As Macken points out:

> [Kant] had inherited from Stoic philosophy the idea of autarchy, that is of rational self-sufficiency and independence on the part of the free individual. However, he reinterpreted the ideal of aut*archy* as auto*nomy*, in which the rational law-giving function of each individual should ensure the harmony of the freedom of each one with the freedom of every other individual.[61]

Autonomy as self-rule for Kant is self-rule *for* others, not over against them.[62] True freedom could only exist in a society of individuals who are rationally able to understand the ethical imperative. Much like what will be explored in Barth later, autonomy for Kant means *obedience* to the ethical imperative.[63] Ideally autonomy is freedom, but it is freedom for all, not only for

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[61]Macken, *The Autonomy Theme*, 5. Emphasis original.

[62]Karl Ameriks makes this point in the introduction to his study of the development autonomy after Kant:

> For Kant, our freedom involves a capacity to be not merely an occasional uncaused or self-directed force; above all, it is a power whose action is ever present in an internally generated and law-governed way. The Kantian self is literally 'auto-nomous,' that is, defined by a *self-legislation* that is carried out on itself as well as by itself.

Karl Ameriks, *Kant and the Fate of Autonomy: Problems in the Appropriation of Critical Philosophy* (Cambridge U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 4. Emphasis original.

[63]While most accept this reading of Kant as true, Herbert Marcuse points out that even so, Kant still assumes autonomous freedom as *a priori* self-determination. He writes:

> Freedom for Kant is a transcendental 'actuality,' a 'fact'; it is something which man always already has if he wants to become free. . . . Admittedly freedom 'exists' for Kant only in activity in accordance with the moral law, but this activity is, in principle, free to everyone everywhere.

Herbert Marcuse, "A Study on Authority" in Eduardo Mendieta, ed. *The Frankfort School on Religion: Key Writings by the Major Thinkers* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 141.
Thus while Kant maintains that freedom is only in obedience to moral law, it may be argued that he still operates with a transcendental concept of freedom found in all human beings regardless of their relationship to moral law.

the individual. As Macken writes: "Autonomous obedience to universal, rational moral law turns the Stoic ideal of self-sufficiency into the political ideal of the free citizen within the state, whose rational and moral relationship with everybody else ensures the harmony of each person's freedom with the freedom of all."[64]

In order to export the freedom of one into the freedom of all, Kant maintains a duality between the individual subject and the universal moral law: the universal is always located outside of (or above) the subject, an other which the subject encounters and in so doing is made aware of his or her relationship to it. According to Macken, this duality is key for Kant in order to curb pure individualism and produces a very different kind of autonomy than that which has since been adopted.

Fichte

Macken places the blame for distorting Kantian autonomy primarily on Johann Gottlieb Fichte.[65] While Fichte ought not to be held absolutely responsible for the path of autonomy beyond his own writing, Macken makes it clear how Fichte opens the way for autonomy to become radically individualistic. Fichte's guilt revolves around his removal of Kant's dualism, making the subject *absolutely* autonomous. This is possible because Fichte makes the *Ich* – the Ego – the first principle of philosophy. The problem, according to Macken, is that Fichte opens

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[64]Macken, *The Autonomy Theme*, 11.

[65]Ameriks makes a similar argument in much greater detail. However, Ameriks describes in great detail how K.L. Reinhold cleared a path for Fichte's assumptions. In regards to freedom specifically, Ameriks argues that while Kant believed autonomy to be morally demonstrable, Reinhold made it a "fact of consciousness" which " is immediately accessible to all and so has a full popular warrant." Ameriks, *Kant and the Fate of Autonomy*, 151. In other words, Reinhold makes Kant's claim of autonomy that which it was previously not: a dogmatic, absolute claim. Fichte then criticizes Reinhold's ungrounded assertion of freedom, yet – according to Ameriks – makes an even greater unjustified assertion of freedom. (184-5)

the possibility for the autonomous subject to be responsible only to him or herself. If moral imperatives are given by the Ego, then what is to prevent the collapse of the subject/object duality and thus the reductionistic internalization of ethics? In other words, if the individual contains both the object (Ego) and subject (will) in themselves, what prevents moral relativism?

Fichte argues, however, that his first principle does not lead to radical individualism, and those who identify the Ego with their own individuality are weak in character.[66] Similar to Kant's position, Fichte's understanding of freedom is grounded in moral obligation. The important point at which he diverges from Kant is his location of this obligation within the individual:

> Our contention is not: I ought since I can; it is rather: I can since I ought. The I ought and what I ought to do comes first and is most evident. *It requires no further explanation, justification, or authorization.*[67]

The ought remains, only it no longer requires validation beyond the individual; there is no need to turn to a universal moral law that exists outside the person.

While Fichte may have rid modern autonomy of Kantian duality, he still maintains a dialectical process by positing a teleological (yet unattainable) goal of absolute freedom.[68] Significantly, this goal cannot be achieved individually, for one is always limited by the activity of another. Thus, striving toward the unattainable goal takes place within the human community, intersubjectively.

According to Macken's reading, "ethical progress toward the ideal of absolute self-

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[66]Macken, *The Autonomy Theme*, 16.

[67]J.G. Fichte, "On the Foundation of Our Belief in a Divine Government of the Universe," trans. Paul Edwards, in Patrick Gardiner, ed., *Nineteenth Century Philosophy* (New York: Free Press, 1969), 23. Emphasis added.

[68]Macken, *The Autonomy Theme*, 14.

determination takes place in ethical interaction within this community. If one falls short, the other seeks to raise him to the ideal. In this process the morally better man, Fichte declares, will always win and so society brings about the perfection of the human species."[69] Fichte's modification of Kantian autonomy makes the transition to absolute individualism possible: the person can become a rule unto himself apart from other human beings. However, because he believes humanity to be communal by nature, Fichte never suggests absolute individualism himself. Fichte opens the door to absolute autonomy, but never crosses the threshold.

Post-Fichtean Autonomy

Macken writes that even during Fichte's lifetime, other German Idealists and the proponents of the French Revolution began to distort his understanding of autonomy.[70] Macken notes that, while avoiding Fichte's "depreciation of individuality and his pantheist mysticism, [proponents of the French Revolution] made their own selection from his ideas in order to affirm the comparatively simple (and ultimately destructive) concepts of freedom, absolute self-determination and ethical progress that they found in his earlier philosophy."[71] By ignoring the *transcendental* Ego which, in effect, fills the place of a Christian divinity for Fichte, those following him (political activists such as the proponents of the French Revolution and philosophers such as Hegel and Schelling) make the *individual* ego ultimate. Autonomy as absolute individualism now resists anything it believes to be heteronomous (including theism). In Macken's words:

Thus the autonomy theme became a persistent strand in modern atheism: man the subject

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[69]Macken, *The Autonomy Theme*, 15.

[70]Macken, *The Autonomy Theme*, 17.

[71]Macken, *The Autonomy Theme*, 18.

> must be affirmed in opposition to the divine subject that is independent of and superior to man. Here autonomy is understood as autarchy: man is self-sufficient and any point of reference superior to man is excluded.[72]

Surprisingly yet significantly, this newly defined autonomy is not limited to atheistic systems, but as Macken points out, is quickly picked up by both Christian philosophers and theologians.[73]

Placing Pinnock

It appears that this post-Fichtean climate of autonomy contributes greatly to Pinnock's definition of libertarian freedom. That is not to say that he is simply employing a Fichtean autonomy. Instead he combines absolute self-determination with absolute dependence on a divine other. He seems to rely upon a pre-Kantian ontology (which assumes dependence upon a heteronomous divinity) to found a post-Fichtean autonomy (which rejects dependence upon any heteronomous force).

This is a philosophically inconsistent position, for we cannot both rely upon God and yet rely upon ourselves. Our freedom is either found in God or apart from God, but Pinnock attempts to have it both ways. Relying on the theological method of analogy, Pinnock grounds human freedom in divine freedom: human self-determination is like, but not equivalent to, divine self-determination. This combination leads to statements such as: "God gives us room to rebel against him."[74] In other words, we are free to determine whatever God has given us the freedom to determine, but Pinnock is not clear whether God gives us the freedom to rebel or whether we have that freedom ourselves.

For Pinnock freedom is founded metaphysically (our freedom is derived from God) and

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[72]Macken, *The Autonomy Theme*, 21.

[73]Macken, *The Autonomy Theme*, 21.

[74]Pinnock, *The Openness of God*, 115.

autonomy is founded via the individual ego (our freedom to say 'no' to God is derived from our ability to be a law unto ourselves). While Pinnock is describing something both theologically important and existentially meaningful, I believe he is wrong to describe freedom as autonomy (libertarian) and make it central both to theology and the possibility of love. I agree that God grants humans freedom and that humans make self-determined choices, for such observations describe human life as we know it. However, self-determined choice does not adequately name the gift of freedom. Pinnock is pre-Kantian when he theologically locates the origin of freedom in God, but post-Fichtean when he philosophically describes freedom as the choice to ignore moral obligation (regardless from where such obligation originates).

Pinnock's definition of freedom contradicts Kant's definition: "A free will is the same thing as a will that conforms to moral law."[75] Neither Kant nor Fichte describe freedom as the human ability to ignore or reject the ought. For both thinkers, the ought makes us aware of our freedom, but our freedom is then only realized when we act for that ought (not when we act against it). It is in his insistence that we can choose against the ought, yet remain free, that Pinnock is philosophically post-Fichtean. However, it is in his insistence that this is our God-given freedom that he is theologically pre-Kantian.

This position is untenable because our freedom cannot be grounded both in God and in our autonomous selves. We are either free because God makes us free (pre-Kantian) or we are free because we make ourselves free (post-Fichtean). It is for this reason that I am dissatisfied with Pinnock's description of freedom, and I invite him to further open the possibilities of

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[75]Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Thomas E. Hill Jr. and Arnulf Zweig, eds., Arnulf Zweig, trans. (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 114.

freedom philosophically, theologically, and biblically.[76]

I believe that Pinnock's open view of the divine/human relationship would be greatly enriched by a more consistent view of freedom which, while attending to the human choice to rebel, also takes into account the freedom one is said to have in Christ: the freedom *from* sin and death and the freedom *for* ever greater freedom.[77] This is more than an argument over semantics – what one calls freedom another calls autonomy – but a founding theological assumption which comes to bear on many aspects of the Christian life.

Pinnock places significant emphasis on the relationship between divine authority and human freedom. However, he thus far assumes a modern, liberal understanding of freedom which must be critically examined. If unchecked, this assumption will imbue open theology with a particular moral, political, and economic philosophy which may be unintended.[78] It is for this

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[76]Regarding biblical definitions of freedom, I feel Pinnock often describes two different kinds of freedom, but fails to articulate them. In his book written with Robert Brow (quite some time after the beginning of his pilgrimage toward open theism), they clearly maintain a association between freedom and salvation. They write:

> Reconciled to God by faith, believers are free of bondage and free to be all they were meant to be. They are justified by faith, sanctified in love and called to a life of hope. Salvation as freedom begins with *justification*, God's acceptance of us despite our sins. The broken relationship is restored, and we are placed on the path to new life. We are freed from the necessity to justify ourselves, since we are accepted freely by grace.

Pinnock and Brow, *Unbounded Love*, 112. I would be interested to see how Pinnock relates this freedom with the libertarian freedom which requires the ability to refuse salvation.

[77]Arguably a key message of Galatians 5, i.e.: "It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery." Gal. 5:1, NASB. One of the problems that I will discuss in greater detail later will be the necessary loss of libertarian freedom in the eschaton. Every open theist has this problem: how can we be free to say 'No' and still maintain the promise of the eschaton? Paul's statement in Galatians suggests that we will not lose freedom, but experience it more greatly. This is a contradiction between open theology and the Bible that must be attended to.

[78]Pinnock is always careful to defend himself against more orthodox theologians who accuse him of allowing philosophy to dictate his theology. In fact, he often turns the critique around by pointing to the Hellenic ideas prevalent throughout classical theism: "The exact

reason that I turn to Barth whose definition of human freedom takes on substantially different content. Ironically, Pinnock praises Barth for breaking free of Hellenistic influences by centering his theology on Christ,[79] yet if he were to follow Barth's Christology fully, I believe he would construct a radically different–and more open–conception of freedom.

Freedom for Barth

By the time of Barth, the concept of individual autonomy (which by then had become developed autarchy) had deeply affected the climate that Protestant theology inhabited, heavily influencing the liberal theology of the day. During his schooling, Barth embraced this liberal theology until the majority of his professors began to support the First World War. He reacted strongly against it and as a result his theology began to take a very different direction.[80]

This radical reorientation led Barth to vehemently reject natural theology, which is most famously demonstrated in his *"Nein!"* to Emil Brunner.[81] It also led his theology to be radically centered on Christ, from which and from whom his work radiates. Both of these characteristics had a deep impact on what will be the focal point of this chapter: Barth as a theologian of

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relation between ancient Greek philosophy and conventional theism is certainly complex, but one does not have to be an expert to sense the significant struggle to align these two orientations." *Most Moved Mover*, 66. However, Pinnock seems less willing to own up to the philosophical orientation which motivates his defense of libertarian freedom.

[79]Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 73-74.

[80]Macken, *The Autonomy Theme*, 23-4.

[81]"Ever since about 1916, when I began to recover noticeably from the effects of my theological studies and the influences of the liberal-political pre-war theology, my opinion concerning the task of our theological generation has been this: we must learn again to understand revelation as *grace* and grace as *revelation* and therefore turn away from all 'true' or 'false' *theologia naturalis* by ever making new decisions and being ever converted anew. Karl Barth, "No!: Answer to Emil Brunner" in Emil Brunner and Karl Barth, *Natural Theology*, Peter Fraenkel, trans., (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002), 71.

freedom. Both his rejection of the assumptions made by his liberal professors and his focus on Jesus as *the* revelation of God led him to a unique, though not unprecedented, doctrine of freedom.

In his introduction to a collection of Barth's writings, Clifford Green describes how Barth's view is different from his contemporaries:

> [W]e must say at once that Barth's doctrine of freedom is not the libertarian, laissez-faire notion that popular culture has adapted from John Locke, John Stuart Mill, Adam Smith and others. Rather, in the tradition of the Bible, Augustine and classical theology, genuine freedom has content; it is not merely the power to choose without any regard for *what* one chooses. Hence freedom is both a freedom *from* evils and oppressions – in a word, sin – and above all a freedom *for* an authentically human life with God and with our human companions – in a word, humanity. That is the import of Barth's reference to John 8.36: 'If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.'[82]

The remainder of this chapter will focus on Barth's doctrine of freedom and how it may be able to speak to Pinnock's open theism in a positive way. In other words, I will argue that freedom as obedience may be a more helpful model of human freedom for a genuinely open theism than libertarian freedom.

Perhaps one of Barth's strongest and most succinct statements regarding freedom comes in a later lecture entitled "The Gift of Freedom: Foundation of Evangelical Ethics," where he states: "Human freedom is the God-given freedom to obey."[83] While in a libertarian climate this statement might seem totalitarian and oppressive, as Barth's doctrine of freedom is unpacked, its liberating potential will, I trust, be revealed.

Rather than a doctrine of absolute human submission, Barth's obedience imperative is grounded in the hope that through obedience, humanity can achieve true freedom. At first

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[82]Clifford Green, *Karl Barth: Theologian of Freedom* (London: Collins Liturgical Publications, 1989), 12.

[83]Karl Barth, "The Gift of Freedom," 82. Emphasis added.

glance, this may seem like a rhetorical trick, as if Barth is attempting to disguise determinism in more palatable language, but this seems unlikely. Barth never uses language that suggests a God who *foreordains* both humanity's positive and negative response to the divine call. In fact, Barth calls humanity's refusal of God an "impossibility." He writes:

> Man does actually *will the impossible*. He does actually will not to know God as he might and should know him thanks to the freedom in which the man Jesus does so for him, in the bright light of the existence of this Fellow and Brother. And his thoughts and attitudes and actions express this non-willing, this refusal. He sets himself in mortal self-contradiction.[84]

It would be difficult if not impossible for a strict determinist, particularly a Protestant scholastic, to talk about humanity's *willing* in such a way.[85] For Barth, the human is not preordained to remain in his or her natural state of refusal, but actively wills that which is not possible – to refuse God. He does not argue that those who refuse God have failed to receive irresistible grace; instead they have chosen against themselves and against God. This will become important when dealing with the problem of evil, to be discussed in the third chapter.

God's Freedom

Humanity's freedom, for Barth, is derived from God: God is free *for* humanity (positive freedom). Already Barth's doctrine is substantially different from Pinnock's in that God is not free *from* humanity (negative freedom).[86] It is important for Pinnock to stress God's freedom

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[84]Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. IV/2, *The Doctrine of Reconciliation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1961), 411. Emphasis added.

[85]For example, Barth writes: "The electing God creates for Himself as such man over against Himself. And this means that for his part man can and actually does elect God, thus attesting and activating himself as elected man." *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. II/2, *The Doctrine of God* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1957), 177. A five point Calvinist would not likely use similar language.

[86]I believe that this is one key motivation of social trinitarians. Because they stress divine relationality, they have to derive a doctrine that allows God to be relational *apart* from humanity,

apart from humanity for two reasons. First, it separates him from process theists who argue that the world is co-eternal with God.

> The openness view asserts that God sovereignly created the world out of nothing and does not exist in a kind of dualistic relationship with everlasting and primordial matter. It denies the process conviction that God is ontologically dependant on the world and that God always has and must have a world to experience.[87]

For Pinnock, God's freedom is maintained by separation from and sovereignty over the created order. Creation *ex nihilo* is important to maintain God's absolute autonomy, for any heteronomous substance eternally co-existing with God would impede God's libertarian freedom. This autonomy acts as a divine attribute for Pinnock: "He [God] does not need a world in order to be God."[88]

Second, God's freedom in relationship to the world serves as a model of libertarian freedom for humanity. God's *choice* to create is made in a vacuum. Nothing calls God to create, not even God's own nature which is already "complete and fulfilled."

> He [God] did not have to create the world to experience relationships of love because he exists as Father, Son, and Spirit. This implies that creation was a free gift and not something that God needed to do.[89]

He goes on to write: "It seems that God has chosen to express himself in creation such that

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and they find this in the ontological Trinity. In this manner, God can be God apart from creation while remaining a relational entity. As Pinnock writes: "Social trinitarian metaphysics (a relational ontology) gives us a God who is ontologically other but at the same time is ceaselessly relating and responsive." (*The Openness of God*, 112) This is a theological error which, while attempting to protect an orthodox doctrine, projects a particular view of freedom upon God. I believe that it is unhelpful to speak of God's freedom *before* creation, because we can only know God in relation to creation.

[87]Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 145.

[88]Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 145. He goes on to write that "God's nature would be complete and love fulfilled even without a world to love."

[89]Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 83.

creation would mirror God-self back to him."[90] While it may not be Pinnock's intent, this is the freedom we mirror back to God in open theism: the freedom to choose in a vacuum, to choose apart from a relational calling. If God's freedom is *for* anything, it is to maintain autonomous sovereignty over creation and to establish our freedom in a similar vein.

In contrast, Barth writes that "we may not speak of God's own freedom apart from the history of God's dealings with man."[91] We may only reflect upon God's freedom in relationship to creation. While Barth grounds God's freedom in the Trinity, he writes that "God's freedom is essentially not freedom *from*, but freedom *to* and *for*. God is free for *man*, free to coexist with man and, as the Lord of the covenant, to participate in his *history*. The concept of God without man is indeed as anomalous as wooden iron."[92] Trinitarian theology, for Barth, is not a way to set God apart as independent *from* humanity, but a way to recognize God *for* humanity. God's freedom is not autonomous choice made in a vacuum. In Barth's words:

> God's freedom is not merely unlimited possibility or formal majesty and omnipotence, that is to say empty, naked sovereignty. Nor is it true of the God-given freedom of man. If we so misinterpret human freedom, it irreconcilably clashes with divine freedom and becomes the false freedom of sin, reducing man to a prisoner. God Himself, if conceived of as unconditioned power, would be a demon and as such his own prisoner. . . . In God's own freedom there is encounter and communion; there is order and, consequently, dominion and subordination; there is majesty and humility, absolute authority and absolute obedience; there is offer and response.[93]

Here Barth stands in contradiction to Pinnock, for he is distinctly aware that a theology which

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[90]Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 84.

[91]Barth, "The Gift of Freedom", 70.

[92]Barth, "The Gift of Freedom", 72. Emphasis original.

[93]Barth, "The Gift of Freedom", 71.

purports "naked sovereignty" in God will lead to a mirroring of such in humanity.[94] Thus he warns, "The well-known definitions of the essence of God and in particular of His freedom, containing such terms as 'wholly other,' 'transcendence,' or 'non-worldly,' stand in need of thorough clarification if fatal misconceptions of human freedom as well are to be avoided."[95]

While Barth is often content to describe God as 'wholly other', here he is acutely aware of how such definitions impact doctrines of human freedom. Thus, he writes that such definitions "most certainly miss the very center of the Christian concept of God, the radiant affirmation of free grace, whereby God bound and committed Himself to man, making Himself in His Son a man of Israel and the brother of all men, appropriating human nature into the unity of his own being."[96] A theology which maintains the absolute autonomy of God as a central attribute will distort the revelation of God through Jesus Christ and, in turn, distort the divine/human relationship. Unfortunately, though Pinnock's intentions are to conserve an important distinction between Creator and creation, he utilizes the autonomy of God in a way that runs the risk of distorting what has been revealed to us in Christ.[97]

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[94]Though, to be fair to Pinnock, Barth does at times stress the self-determination of God, particularly in his earlier works. One such example is found in the beginning of his treatment of the doctrine of election, where he repeats the phrase "God's choice" or "God's self-determination" several times. See: *Church Dogmatics* Vol. II/2, 54. However, one cannot assume that Barth believes God would choose *against* creation or humanity. While this assumption would logically follow God's choice *for* humanity, I am not convinced it is by accident that Barth never states such explicitly.

[95]Barth, "The Gift of Freedom", 72.

[96]Barth, "The Gift of Freedom", 72.

[97]I think that this important distinction between Creator/creation is maintained in Barth. As he writes: "The king does not become his own messenger, and the messenger does not become king." ("The Gift of Freedom", 75.) However, it is important to remember that Barth writes that God is always *for* humanity. The king is always *for* the messenger. We cannot speak of God's freedom outside of God's relationship to humanity. In his lecture series on Barth, Colin

Humanity's Freedom

We have now arrived at the central question of this study: What is human freedom? I intend to answer that question using Barth's work, contrast it with Pinnock's, and then begin to make a few of my own proposals.

I believe that the nature of human freedom is always central in theological reflection, and that its nature should be discerned in relation to the important issues in our current context. The ecological crisis is one particularly clear contextual example of how doctrines of divine sovereignty and human freedom deeply influence action. Faced with the realization that we as humans may very well be able to obliterate life on this planet, the adherents of North American Evangelical theology (if they have not been in outright denial) have been unbearably slow in responding. I believe this is greatly due to doctrines of human freedom which ultimately relieve us of the responsibility for the world we live in. In matters of preventable disasters, God's sovereignty is placed before human responsibility. While I would agree with Pinnock that this is because humans are not granted enough freedom in deterministic models, I would argue that libertarian freedom is a reactionary alternative which does little to correct the deeper problem of ethical responsibility in the Christian life. Wrestling with the concept of human freedom is extremely important when confronting issues such as the ecological crisis.

Barth understands how central freedom is to such pragmatic, ethical issues. For him, to reflect on any human characteristic (including freedom), one must always start with Christ, who

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Gunton writes about Barth's struggle to maintain God's otherness from the world without opposing God to the world. He writes that Barth prefers the Latin word *aseitas* ('from himselfness') over the term *independentia* which connotes God's opposition to the world. Both words suggest a sort of self-sufficiency, but *aseitas* stresses self-sufficiency *for* the other. Colin E. Gunton, *The Barth Lectures* (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 101ff. Thus, it makes little sense to speak of God's self-sufficiency apart from God's relationship to creation.

is not only the electing God, but also the elect human.[98] Jesus serves as the example *par excellence* of true humanity through his obedience and freedom. Through his prayer and obedience – which lead to complete self-giving – he reveals at once both true God and true humanity.[99] Barth describes how Jesus is both completely free and completely obedient in this way:

> All that man can and will do is to pray, to follow and to obey. The honour of the Son of Man adopted to union with the Son of God can and will consist only in promoting the honour of his heavenly Father. Only as the Son of Man is adopted into this union can He receive, receive His own task, receive the co-operation in suffering which is laid upon Him, receive finally the attestation from above and His own exaltation and glorification. 'Not my will, but thine, be done.'[100]

Christ, in obedience, brings God and humanity together, though, for Barth, the initiation always begins with God. However, it is not as if Jesus is following a predetermined script:

> The man Jesus is not a mere puppet moved this way and that by God. He is not a mere reed used by God as the instrument of His Word. The man Jesus prays. He speaks and acts. And as He does so He makes an unheard of claim, a claim which makes Him appear the victim of delusion and finally brings down upon him the charge of blasphemy. He thinks of Himself as the Messiah, the Son of God. He allows Himself to be called Kyrios, and, in fact, conducts Himself as such. He speaks of His suffering, not as a necessity laid upon Him from without, but as something which He Himself wills. . . . *In His wholehearted obedience, in His electing of God alone, He is wholly free.*[101]

Jesus the man is Messiah because he completely obeys God, yet in this obedience, he is completely free to act as the Messiah. In this manner, Christ (re)opens the possibility of true human freedom.[102] In obedience, humanity is able to be free.

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[98]Barth, *Church Dogmatics* Vol. II/2, 54.

[99]Barth, *Church Dogmatics* Vol. II/2, 177.

[100]Barth, *Church Dogmatics* Vol. II/2, 177.

[101]Barth, *Church Dogmatics* Vol. II/2, 179. Emphasis mine.

[102]However, as Macken points out, Barth leaves a gap between the freedom Jesus is able

Barth, like Pinnock, stresses that human freedom can only be the gift of God, derived from God's own freedom. However, the similarity ends once the content of that freedom is described. Barth writes:

> It is true that man's God-given freedom is choice, decision, act. But it is *genuine choice*; it is *genuine decision* and act *in the right direction*. It would be a strange freedom that would leave man neutral, able equally to choose, decide, and act rightly or wrongly! What kind of power would that be! Man becomes free and is free by choosing, deciding, and determining himself in accordance with the freedom of God.[103]

Thus true human freedom is not choice made in a vacuum: choice without direction. Human freedom is found in answering in a particular direction, in responding not just 'yes' *to* God's 'Yes', but 'yes' *with* God's 'Yes'.[104]

This definition of freedom stands in distinct contrast to Pinnock's libertarian freedom, which requires the capacity to choose against God and for evil. Barth strongly contends that sin cannot be grounded in the freedom that God gives to humanity:

> Sin as an alternative is not anticipated or included in the freedom given to man by God. Nor can sin be explained and theoretically justified by this freedom. No excuse can be provided for sin. In human freedom there is no room for sin by fiat. Sinful man is not free, he is a captive, a slave.[105]

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to experience as Christ and the freedom that fallen humans are able to experience. He writes: "The difficulty with Barth's concept will arise . . . when he tries to approach the human phenomenon of freedom in its necessary distinction from the freedom of Christ." (Maken, *The Autonomy Theme*, 45.) While I agree this is a possible problem for Barth, I wonder if he would argue that Jesus' freedom is found in his full obedience as a human and thus achievable for all humans as such. In Barth's description of Jesus at his baptism, it appears that his commitment to be "God for man and man for God" is grounded in his humanity. *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. IV/4, *The Christian Life (Fragment): Baptism as the Foundation of the Christian Life*, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1969), 60.

[103]Barth, "The Gift of Freedom," 76-77. Emphasis mine. Note the difference between "in accordance *with* the *freedom* of God" and "in accordance *to* the *will* of God."

[104]Barth, "The Gift of Freedom," 81.

[105]Barth, "The Gift of Freedom," 77.

Thus, the Barthian response to libertarian freedom must be 'No!' Libertarian freedom, while understood to be the gift of God, allows humanity to turn away from God. In turning away from God, humanity turns away not only from the source of their freedom, but also from their true humanity. Choosing against God is a simultaneous choosing against freedom.

The Love of Freedom

While Pinnock writes that "the open view of God is about celebrating the loving project that God has set in motion and entered into; it is not about human beings demanding autonomy from God,"[106] his understanding of freedom and its relation to love causes me to question whether, for him, a loving God can be separated from human autonomy. Pinnock writes: "God [is] a triune communion who seeks relationships of love with human beings, having bestowed upon them genuine freedom for this purpose. *Love and not freedom was our central concern because it was God's desire for loving relationships which required freedom.*"[107] While he argues that freedom is not the primary concern of open theism, his logic makes it impossible for there to be love without libertarian freedom. If love is primary, if it is God's very 'essence', and if freedom is absolutely necessary for the experience of love, then for God freedom must also be primary and established in the essence of God.

Libertarian Freedom: Love as Choice

What exactly does Pinnock mean by freedom? It is not freedom itself that is problematic, but the kind of freedom that is assumed. Libertarian freedom is the freedom to choose between options regardless of relational obligations (to put it philosophically: free to choose regardless of

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[106]Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, x.

[107]Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 3. Emphasis added.

causal determination).[108] Pinnock gives his clearest definition of libertarian freedom in *Most Moved Mover*:

> What I call 'real freedom' is also called libertarian or contra-causal freedom. It views a free action as one in which a person is free to perform an action or refrain from performing it and is not completely determined in the matter by prior forces – nature, nurture or even God. Libertarian freedom recognizes the power of contrary choice. One acts freely in a situation if, and only if, one could have done otherwise. Free choices are choices that are not causally determined by conditions preceding them.[109]

True to his scriptural commitment, Pinnock bases this freedom in his interpretation of the Bible: "Scripture, like human experience itself, assumes libertarian freedom, i.e. the freedom to perform an action or refrain from it."[110] He also writes: "God granted us the libertarian freedom necessary for personal relationships of love to develop."[111] Thus, libertarian freedom finds its justification *ontotheologically* in the Trinity (as discussed in the first chapter, Pinnock grounds freedom in the trinitarian relationship), *necessarily* for the experience of love, and *biblically* in those accounts which Pinnock reads as consistent examples of humans thwarting God's will.[112]

Pinnock strongly believes that love is not possible without libertarian freedom – the freedom to say 'no'.

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[108]Thomas Pink writes:

> Libertarianism says that when as free agents we determine how we act, it really must be we ourselves who do the determining. For our control over how we act to be real, it must come from us, and not from prior causes distinct from ourselves. As free agents, it is we ourselves, and not anything else, who must be the ultimate determinants of how we act.

Free Will: A Very Short Introduction (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 81.

[109]Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 127.

[110]Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 41.

[111]Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 5.

[112]Beginning with the Fall, Pinnock systematically reads accounts of humans choosing against God as examples of God-given libertarian freedom.

> God created the world out of love and with the goal of acquiring a people who would, like a bride, freely participate in his love (Rev. 19:7). He could have pre-programmed creatures to love him, but instead created them with the liberty to choose to love him freely. Love was the goal and freedom was the means to the goal. Humankind had to be granted real freedom, i.e. a capacity to respond, if we were to be able voluntarily to enter loving personal relations with God. He values freedom, not so much as an end in itself, but as an instrument to make possible what he really longs for, love. God gives us real freedom because of his desire for loving relationships.[113]

In an expansion of the metaphor of *bride*, a fellow open theist, Gregory Boyd, explains why libertarian freedom is necessary for true love. He illustrates the deterministic model by picturing a wife who has a computer chip placed in her head which causes her to love her husband no matter what.[114] While this may be an adequate example of the deterministic model, the only alternative Boyd (and Pinnock) can see is the libertarian model. A wife in the libertarian model is always confronted with the choice of whether to say 'yes' or 'no' to her husband. Adultery and abandonment are the necessary counterparts to a genuine, faithful relationship for open theists.[115] These are the only two choices that open theists see: either one is programmed to always say 'yes', or one must necessarily have the possibility of saying 'no'.

Libertarian Freedom as Death

Here it is important to recognize that the freedom to say 'no', or to choose otherwise, is not a mere decision between relatively harmless options. The freedom to say 'no' (that which

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[113]Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 126.

[114]Gregory A. Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil: Constructing a Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 55.

[115]I must be careful here to distinguish this analogy as Boyd's and not my own. Certainly within a marriage, saying 'no' is necessary to escape oppressive and abusive relationships, but such a situation does not enter into Boyd's own analogy. The choice to say 'no' has nothing to do with escaping abuse; rather, the choice not only to say 'no', but to commit adultery is that which makes the relationship genuine. The further problem with this analogy is that it falls apart in scope. A wife choosing to no longer love her husband cannot be equated with the choice to say 'no' to God.

makes love possible) is the freedom to choose *evil*. For those who may not see adultery as evil, a more violent example may be necessary. Freedom to choose otherwise involves the choice to commit murder – to be able to say the *ultimate* 'no' to the other. A choice against romantic love is not necessarily evil (many of us have been significantly disappointed or hurt in romantic relationships, yet once time has passed would most likely not describe the experience as *evil*). Pain is not necessarily evil, but may be seen as an important part of life. But a choice against Love – or against the ultimate calling of the other (beginning with the calling of God) – is a choice against Life itself.[116]

We only need to consider the first choice "otherwise" given in the biblical narrative to prove the force of choosing against Love. In the garden narrative, Adam and Eve are told not to eat from the tree in the center of the garden, lest they die (meaning that they would be cut off from the source of Life). Yet they both make a choice for autonomy and in so doing choose against God. In their action they cut themselves off from their relationship to God/Love/Life. The consequences of their choice (the idolatry of the self) is, as promised, death. However, the consequences of the first choice against Love are not only physical death. Autonomy affects the entire web of relationships including the relationship with other humans,[117] with the earth,[118] and

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[116]I have chosen to capitalize Love and Life in order to remind us that open theists are not merely talking about romantic love or earthly relationships, but actually talking about our relationship to God. Ultimately libertarian freedom is the ability to choose against God who is both Love and Life. It is much easier to agree with libertarian freedom when discussing fallen human relationships, but in reality we are using human relationships as an analogy for the divine/human relationship.

[117]Gen. 3:16. While the curse only directly relates to the husband/wife relationship, it seems foolish to assume that this is the only relationship that is affected. All human relationships are cursed because of autonomous action, and their relationship is one particular example.

[118]Gen. 3:15 and 17-19. The vast web of interrelationship – from the creatures to the

with the future.[119]

It is not much later in the narrative that the choice against Love finds its ultimate expression in the murder of Abel. The choice for oneself, if taken to its end, results in murder, for it is always a choice against another. Ultimate autonomy requires freedom from relational obligations, and thus requires the annihilation of all others. The biblical narrative gives us a much better analogy of the true nature of libertarian freedom than does the wife with the chip in her brain. The ability to choose otherwise is much more serious than saying 'no' to a romantic possibility. It is the ability to say 'No' to Life itself.

It is not as if I have injected the problem of evil into Pinnock's understanding of libertarian freedom, for it is libertarian freedom that founds his theodicy. As he himself puts it:

> God took a risk when he made this kind of a world since freedom entails the possibility, if not the necessity, of genuine evil because love can be refused. Risk was involved in creating this kind of non-divine order because rebellion and defection are possibilities. Evil was not what God willed, though he did make it possible by giving freedom for the sake of love.[120]

Evil is possible because Love can be refused, yet for Pinnock, this Love can only be experienced as love if it exists alongside the possibility of genuine evil. It is, in the strongest sense of the term, a vicious circle. Genuine evil is not (necessarily) experienced in the pain of failed romantic love. Genuine evil is associated with ultimate choices against the other: rape, murder,

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earth – is swallowed up in the human choice otherwise.

[119]While perhaps not explicit, the future has certainly closed down in creation. Future generations will come with great pain, and sustenance in the form of tomorrow's bread becomes threatened as the ground now struggles against humanity.

[120]Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 132. As per the discussion above, it must be remembered that when Pinnock is using the word 'love' he is not speaking of romantic love, but the love of God. It is the love which I have designated by a capital 'l' and which is fundamental to life. It also must be remembered that anytime Pinnock uses the word 'freedom,' he means libertarian freedom.

genocide, etc. Genuine evil is violence, and it is violence because it is a valuing of the self at the expense of all else. Hence, the choice described by libertarian freedom is the ultimate idolatry: autonomy. This autonomy does not only lead to pain which heals; it naturally leads to death. The choice to eat from the tree in the center of the garden does not lead to death because of some deadly quality within the fruit. Rather, the choice leads to death precisely because it is an act of autonomy.

One can begin to see the quandary that Pinnock places himself in through the centrality of libertarian freedom and the association of that freedom with Love. If God is Love, and the experience of that Love requires libertarian freedom, is God also Choice?[121] Is Love autonomy? Tellingly evil always follows closely behind choice for Pinnock, which raises the question of whether Love will always be shadowed by evil – even into the eschaton. As Boyd writes: "The possibility of evil is not a second decision God makes; it is implied in the single decision to have a world in which love is possible. It is, in effect, the metaphysical price God must pay if he wants to arrive at a bride who says 'yes' to his triune love."[122] If the possibility of love requires the possibility of evil, how can we hope for love and not evil in the eschaton? I will deal with this question more thoroughly in the third chapter.

If, for Pinnock, Love requires freedom, and freedom is autonomy, and autonomy is an idolatry of the self which ultimately leads to genuine evil, it appears difficult to avoid the

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[121]While Pinnock would never put it in such a way, he does divinize libertarian freedom, and hence justifies the capitalized (as the symbol of the divine) Choice. This divinization of libertarian freedom is, in part, how Pinnock distinguishes open theism from process theism. (Pinnock, "Systematic Theology," 111-112) Libertarian freedom is ultimately God's, for the choice to create was made out of complete freedom. Creation was a choice completely free of relationship and therefore the ultimate act of libertarian freedom. This is opposed to the process position which suggests that the world is necessarily co-eternal with God.

[122]Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 55.

conclusion that Love leads to the possibility of genuine evil. For Pinnock, the root of the problem of evil lies in his definition of freedom (instead of omnipotence, which is the root of the problem for classic theology). It is the problem of evil, I suggest, which asks us to question whether human freedom can be defined otherwise, particularly in its relationship to Love/Life/God.

Obedience and Open Theism

I believe that Pinnock could potentially adopt something similar to the Barthian doctrine of freedom as obedience – which I explicated above – without risking what he considers essential. In fact, Barth's notion of freedom could help him articulate a more consistent explanation of what it means for the Christian to be free. However, the suggestions I have made do place some of Pinnock's theological tenets at risk. In particular, what I have suggested in this chapter requires a progressive conception of God and humanity's freedom, a relocation of the origin of evil, and an alternative understanding of freedom in the eschaton. While these proposals sound significant, I do not believe that they deviate so far from the openness model that they are incommensurable with its deepest concerns.

In the third and final chapter, I intend to flesh out my position so that it is comprehendible and definite in relation to Pinnock's position. I also intend to open up what I have described above as the Barthian doctrine of human freedom, expanding it from obedience to faithfulness. This position, like Pinnock's, will be clearly distinct from deterministic theologies, but without relying upon libertarian freedom. To put it succinctly, I intend to define a position that is beyond the binary between compatibilist freedom (meaning "freedom" that is philosophically qualified as compatible with determinism) and libertarian freedom.

CHAPTER III

FREEDOM AS FAITHFULNESS: 'YES' TO THE CALL OF LIFE

In this final chapter, still in close conversation with Pinnock's writings, I will offer my own proposal for how to best understand the nature of human freedom. At the end of the previous chapter, I indicated issues that must be dealt with if a sound alternative to the libertarian paradigm is to be developed. These include the opening up of Barth's conception of obedience, the relocation of the origin of evil, and the recognition of freedom's expanding, eschatological character. The alternatives I will propose to these issues are not necessarily incommensurable with open theism; in fact, I believe that a redefinition of freedom will strengthen the open position.

Freedom as Faithfulness: More than Obedience

In articulating my own position, I want to make it clear that while I am drawn to the Barthian understanding of freedom I described in the second chapter, I am not completely satisfied with some of its implications. While I do not believe that Barth implied that freedom can be understood as "mere" obedience in his own work, I do think that his claim that freedom is found in obedience is vulnerable to being read as a form of compatibilism.[123] Thus I wish to

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[123]To again turn to Thomas Pink's short, yet helpful definitions: "Compatibilism says that the up-to-us-ness of our actions – our freedom to act otherwise – is entirely compatible with our actions having been all along predetermined by causes outside of our control." *Free Will*, 18. Pink is here referring to philosophical compatibilism, which may include fate or causation as the outside forces which determine our actions, but the same applies to traditional theism's description of God's foreordination and/or foreknowledge. Pink contrasts compatibilism with what he defends as a better version of freedom, or *incompatibilism*, "so-called because it says that freedom is incompatible with the causal predetermination of how we act by factors outside our control." He goes on to write: "Libertarians are incompatibilists who believe that we really are free." *Free Will*, 13. Thus, compatibilism seems a fair and fitting description of traditional theism (whether it views history as more or less strictly determined), and *incompatibilism* seems to be a good description of Pinnock's freedom as the ability to do otherwise.

further qualify my use of Barth's definition of freedom.

A fundamental problem with the language of obedience is that it does not fit the model of divine/human interaction portrayed in the biblical narrative. Pinnock is right to point out the biblical passages that describe humanity's freedom in relationship to an open God, and I do not wish to ignore one of the strongest points of his work. Pinnock rejects any freedom that would be "compatible" with determinism as a "freedom only in name,"[124] and he is right to do so. There is no freedom worthy of the name in a deterministic model and my affirmation of freedom as 'obedience' is not meant as a return to determinism of any kind. To say that human freedom is found in obedience is to say that freedom cannot be found outside of a right relationship with God, but this should not be taken to imply that right relationship can only be found in submission to outside determination.

Right relationship here evokes the language of covenant. Submissive obedience, by contrast, does not allow for a true covenantal relationship to take place. Because covenantal language assumes that both parties are response-able, if one of the parties is deprived of their ability to respond (this being an important dimension of their freedom), Scripture's insistence that the relationship between God and humanity is covenantal makes little sense.[125] But this is a deep assumption of the biblical narrative. To cite one striking example, textual criticism indicates that earlier versions of what is now Genesis 18:22 portrays God waiting for Abraham's

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[124]Clark Pinnock, "Clark Pinnock's Response to Part 1" in: Tony Gray and Christopher Sinkinson, eds., *Reconstructing Theology: A Critical Assessment of the Theology of Clark Pinnock* (Cumbria, U.K.: Paternoster Press, 2000), 84.

[125]Pinnock says it well when he writes: "If we are God's covenant partners and co-labourers, it is important that the future not be completely settled, because that would mean there is no room for us to participate in shaping the future in the service of God as we are called to do." Gray, *Reconstructing Theology*, 151.

response concerning the decision to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah.[126] If God has determined or even foreknown Abraham's response, it seems that Abraham's true ability to respond in a potentially surprising way is lost.

Rather than *obedience* (whether predetermined or not), *faithfulness* serves as a better description of covenantal freedom. Abraham's freedom in the above-mentioned narrative is not found in merely saying: 'Yes God': it is not blind obedience. Abraham negotiates with God, and his ability to respond to God is his freedom. *Faithfulness* is a better description of Abraham's relationship to God, because he is not asked to answer yea or nay, but is asked for his judgment. This is why God is described as waiting to hear what he has to say.

The question is whether we are faced with a binary opposition between determinist and libertarian understandings of freedom. If we reject determinism, must we thereby accept a libertarian definition of freedom? I do not believe so, and an important goal of this chapter is to argue that there is an alternative to determinism and libertarianism, compatibilism and incompatibilism. Both deterministic and libertarian descriptions of freedom fail to adequately describe the fullness of a covenantal relationship. Freedom is found in responding faithfully, not in the binary opposition between obedience and disobedience.

The (Impossible) Anthropocentric Origin of Evil

Perhaps in a postlapsarian world we should recognize that libertarian freedom is a part of the human condition, but to see libertarian freedom as belonging to human nature in a normative sense is, I suggest, mistaken. If we are originally given libertarian freedom then we are by nature given not only the ability to choose, but are presented with the possibility of choosing

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[126]God and Abraham have been reversed in the Masoretic Text, but the 'harder reading is to be preferred. See: Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Atlanta, John Knox Press, 1982), 168. Cf. Gen. 18:22 in the New Jerusalem Bible.

otherwise. In Pinnock's libertarian paradigm, humanity in the beginning is structurally neutral towards God: we may choose for or against the Word of life. In creating the world in this way, God takes more than a risk that someone will choose evil at some point. The Fall is an accident waiting to happen.

In order to propose that God did not create humanity with the ability to choose for or against their calling (a calling which is oriented toward God as the source of life), I must articulate an alternative understanding of the origin of evil that centers upon the human capacity to create, and not just realize, fundamental possibilities. I owe this reading to Nicholas Ansell, who offers a non-traditional reading of Genesis 3 in this respect.[127] Rethinking the origin of evil has been central to my reflection on human freedom, and the alternative understanding I wish to suggest would be impossible if humanity were not responsible for creating the possibility of evil.

To briefly summarize the key elements of Ansell's article, he begins by rejecting the assumption that the serpent in the Fall narrative is Satan.[128] While such a suggestion may initially strike one as biblically impossible, Ansell carefully and convincingly turns to the biblical narrative itself as well as to several commentaries to support his proposal. What such a reading of Genesis 3 allows is an absolutely anthropocentric origin of evil. As Ansell writes:

> Contrary to popular opinion, there is no biblical evidence for the widespread belief that Satan fell prior to the disobedience of Adam and Eve. *There is, in other words, no Fall before the Fall.* . . . When we first meet the serpent in 3:1, there is no textual evidence whatsoever that anything bad has happened in or to the good creation described in Gen.

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[127]Nicholas John Ansell, "The Call of Wisdom/The Voice of the Serpent: A Canonical Approach to the Tree of Knowledge," *Christian Scholar's Review* vol. 31/1 (Fall, 2001): 31-57.

[128]This is supported by the commentary in *The Jewish Study Bible* which states that "unlike some later Jewish and Christian literature, Genesis does not identify the talking snake with Satan or any other demonic being." Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds., *The Jewish Study Bible: Jewish Publication Society* Tanakh *Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 16.

> 1-2. To assume that we are supposed to understand a "fallen angel" in this context is unwarranted.[129]

If there is no Fall before the Fall, it is easier to locate the origin of evil in humanity, but to make this plausible we must reject the libertarian assumption that God left humanity with a choice in a moral vacuum.[130] Ansell goes on to write:

> If Gen. 3 does not present us with the traditional view of the serpent, neither does it lend clear support to the 'free will defence,' which is probably the theodicy that is most popular with philosophers of religion who aim to root their views in the Scriptures. When Adam and Eve sin, God's reaction is not that of a Deity who knows full well that disobedience is always a possibility with creatures who have been given sufficient autonomy that they may choose to reject God rather than freely love him. . . . Divine incomprehension in the face of evil highlights the fact that the Fall of creation is not an 'accident waiting to happen.' There is no hint in the text that it is somehow 'permitted' (let alone part of some secret divine plan).[131]

In other words, humanity is not dropped into creation with an immediate and undirected choice for or against evil while God looks on wondering what might happen. It is reaching beyond the biblical narrative to suggest that God decreed the Fall as part of a predetermined plan (Calvin

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[129]Ansell, "The Call of Wisdom," 36-37. Emphasis added.

[130]Oddly enough – in contradistinction to his own argument that God ordained the Fall (as included in the first chapter) – Calvin's description of the original position is similar to Pinnock's. For Calvin, Adam (unlike his descendants) was given an original choice to remain upright or to disobey God's commandment.

> Therefore Adam could have stood if he wished, seeing that he fell solely by his own will. But it was because his will was capable of being bent to one side or the other, and was not given the constancy to persevere, that he fell so easily. Yet *his choice of good and evil was free*. . . .

John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Vol. 1, 195. Emphasis added.
It is at this point that I would make the same critique of both Calvin and Pinnock (a rare position for Pinnock to be in), as both place Adam and Eve in a morally neutral vacuum. Humanity, in their original state, cannot be created with the choice for or against evil. If they are, evil becomes justified in God's creation of "freely" choosing beings, and this is unacceptable. There ought to be no justification for evil.

[131]Ansell, "The Call of Wisdom/The Voice of the Serpent," 45-46.

does not even seem to suggest this),[132] but it is a similar stretch to suggest that the narrative tells us that God created the possibility for evil.

This idea, that God creates the possibility for evil, is based on (or is the base for) a deprived sense of freedom that Simon Francis Gaine calls the "freedom of indifference." He writes:

> Not only the power to act, but also the opportunity to act are often held to be essential to freedom. . . . Although there is no universal agreement on exactly how to define freedom, of immense influence is the 'freedom of indifference': what is crucial to human freedom is not simply that a course of action be the one the agent desires and causes without being determined to do so, but that the agent has chosen it from among alternative choices of action. Freedom of will comes down to choice, and the freedom of indifference means that each course of action is a genuine possibility for the will's choice.[133]

This denatured sense of freedom (as indifference) operates as a fundamental presupposition in the libertarian paradigm, and often goes unquestioned because it is so deeply imbedded in our modern, Western culture. As Genesis does not suggest that God places man and woman in a position of moral indifference, to uncritically accept this libertarian assumption is philosophically and theologically irresponsible.[134]

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[132]Calvin, *The Institutes*, Vol.1, 195 and 307.

[133]Simon Francis Gaine OP, *'Will There Be Free Will In Heaven?': Freedom, Impeccability and Beatitude* (London: T & T Clark, 2003), 12.

[134]Whether or not one agrees with Marx's utopian vision, his critique of the depraved understanding of humanity in liberalism is quite startling:

> What constitutes liberty? . . . It is a question of the liberty of man regarded as an isolated monad, withdrawn into himself . . . not founded upon the relations between man and man, but rather upon the separation of man from man. . . . None of the supposed rights of man, therefore, go beyond the egoistic man. . . . The only bond between men is natural necessity, need and private interest, the preservation of their property and their egoistic persons.

Karl Marx, "On the Jewish Question," in Robert C. Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd ed. (New York: Norton, 1978), 42-43.

While I would not proclaim Marxist anthropology as *the* Christian understanding of

One might counter this claim by arguing that the prohibition against eating in the center of the garden presupposes human autonomy and neutrality which is here being put to the test. But this would involve a reading which is not supported by the Genesis narrative itself. God's prohibition does not have to be understood as a test at all. It only appears to present us with an alternative between eating and not eating after the Fall, but it is possible to read the prohibition as a warning which does not *expect* trespass: a warning for humanity's "own good." In other words, God tells the human couple not to eat from the tree not to test their obedience, but because God knows that it will bring death.

Parents often give such warnings to their children. These warnings do not assume that children may be disobedient, only that they do not possess the maturity to understand the danger. I remember a time as a child in which my mother warned me not to touch the curling iron because it was hot. She did not make this prohibition because she expected or suspected my disobedience, and her surprise after I did grab it suggests that my disobedience never even crossed her mind. My mother's warning only assumed my immaturity and my inability to recognize the danger. It was not as if the prohibition against touching the curling iron was a test of my obedience or love for her. Similarly, the Genesis prohibition makes more sense as a warning considering the newly created humans' immaturity (meaning that they were meant to grow in wisdom) than as a test of their obedience or love for God. God did not expect them to eat from the tree any more than my mother expected me to grab the curling iron.

Unfortunately, Pinnock's reading of the Fall (and the falls that continue to take place as a

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humanity, there is no reason to assume that the anthropology of liberalism is any better. I believe that both are depraved to some extent, but find it necessary to be critical of the way liberal anthropology (and the definition of freedom that follows) is assumed by North American, Evangelical theologians. We should be careful not to assume that we have reached "the end of history" and that liberalism has won the day.

result) assumes that humans were created with a moral choice for or against God. He writes:

> God sovereignly decided to create a world containing morally free beings who had the possibility of serving God or not. This was something for them to decide such that sin was a *possibility*, though not a certainty, at the time of creation. God knew the creature and is, therefore, responsible for the *possibility of evil* but not for its actuality. It is a good thing for us to have the freedom to choose between good and evil, even though it entails the possibility of making wrong choices.[135]

To assume that the possibility for evil was created by God (for whatever reason), is to read *against* the Genesis narrative. Pinnock often makes the point that God is genuinely surprised by humanity's disobedience, but he does not take this surprise seriously enough.[136]

Original creation does not have to be understood as some sort of testing ground in which man and woman are given the choice for or against God. Instead, I believe that humans are originally created in right relationship with God rather than in a state that is structurally neutral towards God. It is possible to remain true to the biblical story, and say that God never saw the Fall coming. And this means that evil is not a possibility given in the original creation; rather, humanity creates the possibility *in* their unforeseen disobedience.[137]

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[135]Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 47. Emphasis added.

[136]Pinnock, *The Openness of God*, 123. God's surprise by the future (in this case, humanity's choice for evil) is an opening in Pinnock's theology which suggests that he may be willing to hear my critique. If God did set the tree in the middle of the garden as a test (or a way for humanity to exhibit their libertarian freedom), then it seems God would have been angry *before* being surprised.

[137]Such a proposal puts God's omnipotence and omniscience into question, but not much farther than Pinnock's own challenges to these Greek categories. While my understanding of omnipotence differs from Pinnock's, it is not important to discuss at this time. However, concerning omniscience, I will say that I do not believe that God foresees *all possibilities*, because I do not believe that God foresaw the possibility of evil. Humanity is *completely* responsible for the origins of evil, and that includes their creation of the possibility. Pinnock writes that "God as temporal knows the world successively and does not know future acts, which are freely chosen in a libertarian sense. The absence of such knowledge does not negate God's omniscience because he still knows every possible choice and every possible consequence of it." *Most Moved Mover*, 101. While I am not convinced that it is worth defending such extra-biblical

This claim breaks not only with traditional theism, but also with the dominant philosophical tradition, for it means that possibility does not always precede actuality, but that possibility may be created in the actuality of an event. This is what the pragmatist philosopher Roberto Unger means, criticizing what he describes as the philosophical tradition's 'spectral' understanding of possibility, when he claims that "the possible is not the antecedent of the actual but its consequence."[138] He goes on to write:

> Something new has emerged in the world, something we may have ourselves created. It may have arisen in violation of the rules of possibility and propriety codified in the preexisting regimes of society or thought. We then rearrange our view of the constraints on the transformation of certain pieces of the world. This rearrangement is our image of the possible. Correctly understood, it is an afterglow that we now mistake for an antecedent light.[139]

This is what I mean when I write that humanity created the possibility of evil: the possibility is the afterglow of the actuality of our disobedience, not its antecedent light.

This coheres with Ansell's claim that in Genesis,

> The origin of evil is deeply mysterious, as evil has no legitimate place in the order of things. . . . What we are actually told [in Genesis], I suggest is that human beings alone *are responsible* for the historical origins of evil, while God *takes responsibility* for liberating us and the rest of creation from the effects of our disobedience.[140]

Locating the origin of evil in humanity alone opens up the possibility for a redefinition of freedom that is far more radical than Pinnock's libertarian challenge to classical theism.

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categories, I will argue that my understanding of the Fall does not necessarily detract from God's omniscience either. My argument only goes one step further to suggest that God, having given humans power to even create new and surprising possibilities (though not in a libertarian sense), cannot know all future possibilities. However, God still knows all that can be known.

[138]Roberto Mangabeira Unger, *The Self Awakened: Pragmatism Unbound* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2007), 61.

[139]Unger, *The Self Awakened*, 61.

[140]Ansell, "The Call of Wisdom/The Voice of the Serpent," 46.

However, while I may be taking divine omnipotence one step farther away from the traditional description, it is my hope that I am being true to Pinnock's desire to absolve God of culpability for the creation of evil. Eliminating God's responsibility for creating the possibility of evil offers the open position greater consistency. It also expands open theism's understanding of our responsibility for the direction of history even further.[141]

God-given Freedom

If I am removing the possibility of/for evil from the originally created human condition, then how do I account for the reality of genuine human freedom? For Pinnock, the possibility to choose *against* God is a necessary condition for freedom (and love), so if God did not create this possibility, how can humanity be free? While I have already argued that freedom is available to humanity through obedience, how can I still call this freedom without falling into compatibilism? Because, as I will argue below, the form of 'obedience' I am advocating is not a matter of answering submissively to divine directives.

Like Pinnock, I wish to affirm that God wishes to be surprised by creation and offers men and women true freedom to this end.[142] As Pinnock writes, freedom means that:

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[141]I diverge from Barth at this point as well, for while he maintained a very strong position on human freedom, I do not believe he allows for the human creation of possibilities. Macken writes that later in the *Church Dogmatics* Barth "affirms a real distinction between the action of God and human action. The human being has a proper sphere of activity. But this is admitted at the cost of allowing nothing of ultimate significance to happen within this sphere." *The Autonomy Theme*, 181. I affirm Barth's desire to ground all human action in God, but I believe that this ought not limit the human's co-creational possibilities.

[142]Whether or not God grants this freedom beyond the human sphere is a question for another paper. I would want to affirm more than an anthropocentric understanding of the freedom I am speaking of, yet I believe that humanity is called to exercise freedom in a different way. There are biblical examples of creation breaking possibilities; i.e. the parting of the Red Sea, the speaking of Balaam's ass (Num. 22:28), rocks crying out, etc. The narratives use language of God's direct action in these events, but must not creation be open for in order for God to intervene? Do the stones cry out solely because God causes them to, or is it possible that

> God created a dynamic and changing world and enjoys getting to know it. It is a world of freedom, capable of genuine novelty, inexhaustible creativity and real surprises. I believe that God takes delight in the spontaneity of the universe and enjoys continuing to get to know it in a love that never changes, just as we love to get to know our children as they grow up.[143]

However, I contend that this freedom can only be realized by human choice *for* God. To speak only of choice *for* does not necessarily limit possibilities. I am thinking particularly of the first task given to Adam (other than to respond by breathing): to name the creatures God has created. It is written that God brought the creatures before Adam "to see what he would call them."[144] God did not bring the creatures before Adam to see whether or not he would name them (a libertarian understanding of freedom), but to see (and be surprised by) how he would name them. Adam's freedom is found in the act of naming, not in the choice whether or not to name. His freedom, in other words, is in relationship to his calling. Prior to the naming of the animals, naming was God's office, but God gives it to the human in order to be surprised by his acts of freedom. This is an example of *true* freedom – it is an act of unlimited possibility directed *from* the giftedness of God's creation and *toward* God's call.

In other words, our *God-given freedom* is only realized in an ultimately positive response to God. Our freedom finds its grounding in God's gift, and a misuse of this gift will only result

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in the face of human evil that even they break previous possibilities?

[143]Pinnock, *The Openness of God*, 124. I am in complete agreement with Pinnock on this statement; I believe that God takes joy in the surprises that creation brings to him. I am just pushing the possibilities of these surprises even further. If God is aware of all the possibilities, the surprise is still somewhat limited – God is left waiting for humans to actualize the possibilities that have already been created.

[144]Gen. 2:19

in its loss.[145] Therefore, as I understand it, the very definition of libertarian freedom includes the possibility of the loss of true freedom. To choose against God's gift is to choose death over life, slavery over freedom, but to respond to God's gift results in finding life and freedom. This dynamic is what Barth points to through his use of 'obedience', and what I intend to point to via the language of 'faithfulness'. Obedience as faithfulness is not a strict 'yes' to God's 'Yes', even though the response which gives freedom must ultimately answer 'Yes' to God's calling.

An example that open theists often use in their defense of libertarian freedom, but which I will argue points in a different direction, is the story of the prodigal son. Pinnock writes that this is a parable "in which Jesus represents God as a father longing for a loving relationship with two sons (Lk. 15:11-32). The boys enjoyed *real freedom* and were *free to leave home and reject* the father's love, if they chose to."[146] The story is read by Pinnock as an example of God allowing autonomy as an expression of true love and freedom. God has to be willing to allow the prodigal to leave in order for the son to experience love.

However, according to the narrative, what does the prodigal son actually find in his autonomous choice? Slavery. It is not the son's ability to leave his father and misuse the father's gift of inheritance which is an example of freedom, for the son's misuse of the gift only leads to slavery. What is remarkable about the story is that the son is welcomed back and slavery does not have the last word. Yet only in returning to the father is the son able to return to freedom.

Once the gift of freedom is possessed in an act of autonomy (and here I am using the word in its post-Fichtean sense), freedom is lost. This is a recurring biblical theme: when

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[145]Matt. 16:25

[146]Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 3. Emphasis added.

humanity attempts to possess the gifts that God has given, they lose them. The first example is the Fall (Gen. 3), but beyond that, the theme reoccurs in the Tower of Babel narrative (the gift of power must be scattered in order to keep humans from lording it over one another: Gen. 11:1-9), in the story of the manna (if it is kept, it will spoil: Ex. 16), in Israel's gift of the land (once they forget it is God's gift, they are expelled from it).[147] Autonomy, in the libertarian sense, always leads to the forfeiture of freedom. Libertarian 'freedom' may describe something that we experience in a postlapsarian world, but it *cannot* lead to God-given freedom.

A Multiplicity of 'Yeses'

Instead of a morally indifferent choice, freedom can be construed as a 'directed response'. In other words, freedom is found in responding positively to the call of the loving other.[148] I believe this is the *normative*, or originally created, expression of freedom.[149]

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[147]For a discussion of the gifted nature of the land, see: Walter Brueggemann, *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2002).

[148]I add "loving" here as a result of Ricoeur's discussion of the divine imperative to love. He asks the question: "Can loving be a commandment? Can love be the object of an order, and injunction?" He answers his question by distinguishing between *law* and *commandment*:

> This commandment is simply the one addressed by the lover to the beloved: 'Love me, thou!' But then is it still a commandment? Yes it is, if behind the commandment we understand the conjuration, the supplication, of love insistently appealing for reciprocity. 'The commandment of love can only come from the mouth of the lover. Only one who loves, but that one indeed, can say, and indeed says, 'Love me.' And, unexpectedly the Sinai imperative ['You shall love the Lord, your God'] rings like the Song of Songs."

Paul Ricoeur, "Theonomy and/or Autonomy" in Miroslav Volf, Carmen Krieg, and Thomas Kuchraz, eds., *The Future of Theology: Essays in Honor of Jürgen Moltmann* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 288. Law cannot come from a lover, but a commandment can, as long as its imperative calls for reciprocity.

[149]Here, I am making a distinction between *normative* and *descriptive* language. What is describable is not necessarily normative. My purpose in making this distinction is to account for what we now experience as libertarian freedom without assuming it is the universal norm for humanity. I believe that autonomy in a post-Fichtean or libertarian sense should only be *descriptive*; it is theologically problematic if it is used *normatively*.

However, positive responses can be made in the freedom of singularity; there are a multiplicity of 'yeses' which can be used to respond to the original calling. For example, Adam's naming of the animals is limited only by his imagination and his freedom is found in responding positively to his calling to name. It is even possible to read his response to God as revealing his loneliness or lack of a suitable partner. Adam's response gives him freedom, even the freedom to reveal something new to God. However, if he responded against God, he would have lost his freedom.

In their rejection of God's call, Adam and Eve cut themselves off from their source of response-ability through autonomous action. In eating from the tree, they remove themselves from their communion with God, essentially responding 'No' to God's imperative. As I argued earlier, I do not believe that this was a previously created possibility. God did not expect humanity to sever the relationship, and is surprised by their unfaithfulness. Admittedly, this 'No' seems inconsequential compared to the evils that follow as a result (beginning with Cain's murder of Abel), but it marks the beginning of something horrible in creation and in the relationship between God and humanity.

Before I go further, I need to qualify my understanding of 'Yeses' and 'Noes', because I wish to distinguish between ultimate 'Noes' (those which lead to evil and death) and 'noes' which are ultimately a 'Yes' (meaning that they serve life). Particular situations require us to respond 'no!', even to God, but they are responses that ultimately open up life rather than close it down.[150] These 'noes' may be *painful*, but they are not *evil*. Part of my rationale for this

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[150]Biblical examples of faithful 'noes' include Abraham's argument with God concerning the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 1816-33), Moses' begging God to spare the Hebrew people (Deut. 9:12-29), David's laments, the prophet's intercessions on the part of the Israelites, etc. I would identify these 'noes' as the same examples Pinnock gives for God changing God's mind as a result of human interaction. There are certainly times when 'noes',

distinction involves an analogy used by open theists. They compare God's relationship with humanity to a marriage, and ask if a spouse could not commit infidelity, how can they truly love? I take issue with this analogy, because I do not believe that the possibility of adultery is ultimately necessary for the experience of love. Freedom is not found in the possibility of adultery; it is found in the continual choice for the other person.

In a fallen world, it is sometimes necessary for a spouse to leave their partner because of abuse (physical, spiritual, or emotional) or because their partner refuses to love them (yet demands love nevertheless), but this kind of freedom is different than that described in the open theists' analogy, as it is a freedom for life. Leaving a partner in an abusive situation may be painful, but it is a 'no' that is necessary for life. The analogy for the God/human relationship breaks down here, because God is neither abusive nor ceases to love. Saying 'No' to God is always saying 'no' to the source of freedom and life (unless it is a faithful 'no' as described in footnote 150 or as demonstrated by Moses in Exodus 32:11 ff.). However, there may be theological articulations of God which have to be rejected in the service of a life-giving 'Yes'. These rejections may be very painful for a community (particularly one which bases its identity on its conception of God), but it is a 'no' that must be proclaimed.[151]

'Yes' to the Gift of Life: Responsive Freedom

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even to God, ultimately serve 'Yeses'.

[151]I have in mind two examples: First, the early Hebrew conception of God as Baal that Hosea rejects. When God is being construed as a sexually abusive partner, we must proclaim 'no'! Second, the modern conception of God as a determining, static figure who has to be held somewhat responsible for evil. I believe that the community which has demeaned Pinnock is under the impression that he is saying 'No' to God, when he is, in fact, saying 'no' to a particular construal of God. We must be careful to keep this distinction in mind when we are practicing theology.

In my understanding, obedience is ultimately faithfulness to the 'Yes of life'.[152] Faithful obedience ought not to be considered thoughtless submission to divine imperatives, but openness to responding in a life-giving direction. Faithful obedience requires creativity and demands singularity both from the individual and their situation. It is the openness of faithfulness in a multiplicity of 'yeses' and 'noes' that allows for true freedom.

Following Jacques Derrida, John Caputo and writes of a 'yes more ancient', which "performs (and pre-forms) us before we perform it," meaning that we are always *responding* to this originary 'Yes'.[153] James Olthuis confesses that this 'yes more ancient' is God's 'Yes', a 'yes' to life – a 'yes' that both gives life and promises it.[154] In faithfulness, we respond to this originary yes, accepting it as a gift, and in true faithfulness (true obedience) we work for the fulfillment of the promise of this originary yes. To God's 'Yes' we respond "'yes, yes', with passion."[155] Our 'yes' is not a repetition of the 'yes more ancient'; rather, our 'yes' draws (in response) on the originary Yes and makes it present: our 'yes' to life incarnates God's originary Yes. This response is the heart of faithful obedience, and therefore, freedom.

Christ-like Freedom

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[152]To give credit to a theologian who has greatly influenced my ideas concerning responding in the direction of life, I must name Sallie McFague and her cruciform ethos which calls us to honor the abundance of life. What follows greatly influences my theological thinking:

> The love of God and the love of the earth are summed up in Irenaeus's statement . . . : 'The glory of God is every creature fully alive.' We love God, give God glory, by loving the earth, helping all creatures flourish.

Sallie McFague, *Life Abundant: Rethinking Theology and Economy for a Planet in Peril* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2001), 24.

[153]John D. Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion without Religion* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1997), 35.

[154]James Olthuis, ed., *Religion With/Out Religion: The Prayers and Tears of John D. Caputo* (London: Routledge, 2002), 111-112.

[155]Captuo, *Prayers and Tears*, 114.

Jesus as Christ not only revealed God to humanity but also revealed what it means to be authentically human. Included in this revelation is a living example of authentic freedom. It is difficult to find a libertarian ethos in Jesus' example, and this may appear to be a strength of the compatibilist position. It seems as if Jesus' every action was synchronized with the divine will – as if his entire life was pre-scripted. The Gospels do not describe Jesus' life as one obsessed with choices where he always finds himself deciding for or against a moral action.

Jesus finds (rather than exercises) his freedom in obedience; in answering 'Yes' to the divine imperative of life. However, contrary to the deterministic position, Jesus' answer was *his own*. This differs from the compatibilistic attempt to argue that our actions are our own, yet are somehow predetermined. Obedience can be manifest in a multiplicity of ways, all of which are truly faithful to the divine call, yet are not limited by God's eternal determination. Each particular faithful response to God's loving call is unique and is the creature's own. In this way, creation can surprise the Creator.

To press the possibilities of obedience even further, suppose that obedient responses made in wisdom have the power to make the impossible possible. What if we were to see the human side to the resurrection in this light? The resurrection is widely understood as a divine intervention in creation, and while I believe this to be true, perhaps we ought not forget that Jesus was resurrected as a *human*. The imagery of 1st Corinthians 15 suggests that it is the humanity of his resurrection that makes our own possible. If Jesus had not been "obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross" (Phil. 2:8), would he have experienced the freedom of resurrection? If he had understood the power of *choice* that he had in the garden of Gethsemane as his true freedom, would resurrection be possible today? Jesus makes the decision to go to the cross as a human. If he did not make the decision in his humanity, then we are left with little

hope for our own humanity. For his human obedience serves as an example of the potential of our own obedience. The results of covenant faithfulness can be surprising both to us and to God – in fact, the results can be miraculous.

'Yes' to the Promise of Life: Transformative Freedom

Leonardo Boff offers an excellent understanding of the cross as demonstrative of both Jesus' obedience and his creation of new possibilities. It is unfortunate that Pinnock's misgivings about Latin American liberation theology may have kept him from utilizing the depth of Boff's theology.[156] Boff is better able to argue that evil should not exist, because he understands freedom as the liberation from evil rather than the ability to choose for or against it. While Pinnock is able to argue that evil ought not exist, it must always remain a possibility for both freedom and love to continue.

Boff writes that there are three responses to oppression (social evil): resignation, revolt, and acceptance. Resignation is often theologically justified as submission to a divine plan. Boff calls this "fatalism." He writes that this way of preaching the cross must be avoided because it

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[156]While Pinnock had a period of more "radical" political affiliations, he has since held a very negative view of liberation theology's socialistic tendencies. See: Ray C.W. Roennfeldt, *Clark H. Pinnock on Biblical Authority: An Evolving Position* (Barrien Springs, Mich: Andrews University Press, 1993), 120-4. Pinnock writes: "If we are serious about 'God's preferential option for the poor' (to use the jargon of liberation theology), then it is neither wise nor prudent to side with an ideology [socialism] which, as I will argue, has such a bad record in regard to reducing the misery of poor people." "The Pursuit of Utopia" in Marvin Olasky, ed., *Freedom, Justice, and Hope: Toward a Strategy for the Poor and Oppressed* (Westchester, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1988), 66. While Pinnock makes a point about the history of socialism, we should be careful to listen to those who have suffered from the result of the uncontrolled capitalism of North America. We have our own bad record in regards to the poor. I also agree that we must be careful of "self-styled liberation theologians who link the gospel and socialism in a very exclusive way." "The Pursuit of Utopia", 77. However, we must equally be wary of those who link free-market capitalism with the gospel in an exclusive way, and Pinnock comes dangerously close of doing so.

"ends by legitimating abominations, or representing them as a providence of the will of God."[157]

Of this response to oppression, Boff writes:

> Those who simply resign themselves to their unjust, inflicted death and cross reason that, because they cannot avoid the suffering confronting them, they should accept it. These may preserve their interior sovereignty. But they surrender to the cross. The cross emerges the victor, and continues to rend human beings' experience. The resigned have neither the courage of a rebel nor the powerful patience of a Job. Once again on the face of the Earth, truth and justice go down in defeat. Once again the cross has conquered.[158]

An attitude of resignation in the face of oppressive evil leaves little room for hope or motivation toward change. The oppressed are taught to accept their oppression just as Jesus is said to have done. They are told: "This is God's will!" Suffering as a result of evil is said to be the divine method of tormenting the unbeliever and strengthening the believer.[159] While submission to evil is not promoted, submission to God's use of it is. Resignation to God's alleged use of evil is a result of theological principles which have strayed from the Gospel. By contrast, Christ does not resign himself to the evil of the cross – he overcomes it.

The second response Boff identifies is revolt. For Boff, this response only answers evil with evil by attempting to overcome oppressive power with power of the same sort. While he understands the pathos that lies behind such a response, he refuses to justify it as a fruitful response. He writes:

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[157]Leonardo Boff, *When Theology Listens to the Poor*, Robert R. Barr, trans. (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988), 111.

[158]Boff, *When Theology Listens*, 117.

[159]For example, Calvin writes that "because God bends the unclean spirits hither and tither at will, he so governs their activity that they exercise believers in combat, ambush them, invade their peace, beset them in combat, and also often weary them, rout them, terrify them, and sometimes wound them; yet they never vanquish or crush them. But the wicked they subdue and drag away; they exercise power over their minds and bodies, and misuse them as if they were slaves for every shameful act." *The Institutes*, Vol. 1, 176.

> The spirit of rebellion may reveal a final human dignity that refuses to accept humiliation. The rebel prefers a glorious death to a shameful survival, and there are many who come to this point of desperation. The guilty ones here are not so much those who stubbornly refuse to yield, but rather those who have forced them to this extremity. Rebellion, however, does not overcome the cross. It succumbs to it.[160]

Where there is violence, evil power structures will remain, and this is the foundation of oppression.

Often we lack the wisdom to imagine the radicality of non-violent resistance, but Boff believes this is exactly what Jesus does in the third possibility. The response that Boff finds in the Gospel is neither of resignation nor revolt. He proposes instead an attitude that finds its true hope in the resurrection. Following Christ, Boff argues that the only response which will overcome the power-structures behind crosses and those who build them is acceptance.

> A third attitude–and the only really worthy, dignifying, and exalting one in the face of death and the cross–is that of acceptance. Death and the cross are still real, still inflicted, still inevitable–but suddenly they are welcome. We see that death and the cross need not have the last word.[161]

It is important that we do not read "welcoming the cross" as resignation; we are never to welcome crosses as just or necessary. How, then, is acceptance different? Because the only way to overcome the power-structures of violence is by transforming them with non-violent answers. The evil of the cross is not accepted as a transcendent necessity (part of God's supreme will).[162] It is abhorrent and never used as a tool by God for any purpose whatsoever. Jesus

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[160]Boff, *When Theology Listens*, 117.

[161]Boff, *When Theology Listens*, 117.

[162]Boff does not allow the cross to be seen as a necessary fulfillment of blood sacrifice. He argues that Jesus had to die not because of "some sadistic plan concocted by the Father," but because it "was a historical necessity." The prophetic articulation that the Messiah had to die was not one of transcendental necessity, but because it was recognized that one who lived faithfully to the calling of the Messiah would be murdered by the political forces of their time. *When Theology Listens*, 115.

accepts his cross as a loving gesture toward those who build the crosses and in doing so opens the possibility for overcoming the power of evil.[163] Boff continues:

> Thus we find ourselves able to accept [crosses] as an expression of love. We embrace them as a way of proclaiming our love for, and communion with, the very ones who have perpetrated this horrible evil. In this cross we find the strength to experience a healing, a reconciliation with the very persons who have caused the catastrophic wound and breach. This is not a refined escapism, or a supersophisticated transfiguration of the spirit of vengeance burning within us. If it were, we would be bitter. Instead, we love.[164]

Only through acceptance can love overcome the evil perpetrated by the crosses of a violent world.

However, Boff is not arguing that we accept crosses quietly. Crosses are abhorrent and to be resisted at all non-violent costs. The cross is a crime, and it has always been a crime, not least when Jesus was murdered on one. But Jesus, as God, experiences the cross in solidarity with the murdered. Jesus' death made it possible to convert the meaning of the cross. However, this is only possible through the hope in bodily resurrection.

> Without the Resurrection, Christ would be an admirable human being, surely, a prophet who had chosen the most difficult path to tread in the defense of the cause of the oppressed, a martyr who sacrificed his life in the hope of something greater. But admirable is all that he would be. The cross would have meant the end of him. With the Resurrection, the truth about utopia has come to light: not death, but life is the last word pronounced by God on human destiny.[165]

Jesus' resurrection is the promise to the poor that they will experience justice. Jesus was "one of

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[163]"Cross" is not necessarily literal. It is a word employed to recall the passion of Jesus as well as to indicate death at the hands of one who holds power over another and causes them to suffer. The "cross" can refer to starvation, genocide, economic injustice, etc.

[164]Boff, *When Theology Listens*, 117.

[165]Boff, *When Theology Listens*, 129.

the crushed and crucified ones."[166] He is the hope that those who die nameless will see justice and new life. At the same time, they also are able to participate in creating that new life. The new quality of life experienced in resurrection breaks through beginning with Christ and continues to burst forth in this world through those who give themselves through the work of proclaiming love.[167]

The connection between Boff's response of acceptance and the view of freedom that I want to propose is found in Jesus' creation of new possibilities. Consonant with Ansell's anthropocentric origin of evil, Jesus can be seen as filling the role of the new Adam in a new light: Adam (apart from God) created the possibility of evil and death, Jesus (with God) creates the possibility of overcoming death. Jesus finds his true freedom in being obedient to the calling of the Messiah. However, his obedience was not absolutely determined. The calling of the Messiah certainly contained certain promises which Jesus did fulfill, but he did so in his individual and singular God-given freedom. He answered the divine call in a way that only Jesus of Nazareth (the human) could. His answer was his own, but it was always a 'yes' to God's 'Yes'. We are called to follow Jesus in this very manner: to achieve the freedom of God by responding faithfully in our own singular and surprising ways.

I believe this is the definition of freedom given to us by the Gospel. Free will, in the

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[166]Boff, *When Theology Listens*, 134.

[167]It is important to note that Boff stresses the fact that Jesus did not seek out death. Jesus was a prophet who cared for the poor and healed the sick. See: Donald E. Waltermire, *The Liberation Christologies of Leonardo Boff and Jon Sobrino: Latin American Contributions to Contemporary Christology* (New York: University Press of America, 1994), 30. Jesus sought to live as God commanded, and the religious and political authorities had him murdered for this reason. In the same way, the Christian ought not to seek death at the hands of oppressors as the ultimate end to the Christian life. Rather, the Christian ought to seek the life of the prophet and maintain an awareness that such a way of living may cost their life.

libertarian sense of the possibility to choose evil, plays no role in Christ-like freedom. The moment of a moral decision is not the moment of freedom. Freedom is not found at the fork in the road. Freedom, properly defined, is not the moment of decision between the path toward life and the path toward death. Instead, freedom is found *on* the path of life. Choose life, and choose it more abundantly![168] Disobedience and infidelity, while they may have something to do with choice, have nothing to do with freedom.

Following the path of life leads to ever abundant freedom for all of God's creatures, and even for God. God's ability to work through the faithful allows greater divine freedom and sovereignty, and in this way we escape the zero-sum game that the understanding of the divine/human relationship has become. God does not have to give up freedom in order for us to gain it, or vice versa. Our freedom *grows* in covenant; freedom becomes progressive rather than remaining static, by which I mean there is not a pre-set amount of freedom at the beginning of time which we must somehow divide.

Our admiration of libertarian freedom might betray our North American socioeconomic assumptions. It is for this reason that I turned to a Latin American theologian who approaches theology with different assumptions. This is not the place to hold one set of socioeconomic assumptions over another (and I am not convinced that theology is the best arena for this discussion), but it is helpful to be critical of such influences.

Under a different set of socioeconomic assumptions, freedom is not part of a zero-sum economy in which there is a limited amount to begin with. In such a closed system (as in Kantian autonomy), one must limit one's own freedom in order for it to be shared. Such an

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[168]A combination of the imperative proclaimed by Moses in Deut. 30:19 and Jesus' declaration in John 10:10.

economy leads to a limited amount of wealth (in this case, a limited wealth of freedom) that must be fought for. The rich become richer and the poor become poorer as the limited wealth becomes more concentrated. There is, in essence, no creation of new wealth, only the exchange of what is left.[169] Libertarian freedom is closely tied to such an economy, it points to a limited amount of freedom which must be divided between God and humans and between humans themselves. The result is that those who are evil selfishly grab at freedom, end up with more, and leave others with less.

Alternatively, we can imagine an economy of freedom which continually grows as it is shared. This freedom is progressive: it continues to create greater freedom as long as its participants live their lives in service toward life and toward one another. The result is an economy of abundance or giftedness which is drastically different from our current form of capitalistic economy.[170] Freedom conceived in this abundance will take on a different form, namely one which does not require limitation. Freedom in the direction of life will be continually generous to all participants. This is the economy of freedom that can significantly contribute to Pinnock's open theism. Freedom becomes genuinely shared and does not require division. It becomes as open as its future.

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[169]I am not condemning capitalism as a completely inadequate model of economy. In fact, I believe that capitalism may, at its roots, speak to the openness of creation. For a good example of such an argument, see: Brian Griffiths, *The Creation of Wealth* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1984). However, the form of consumer capitalism that involves the ravenous consumption of resources leads toward death. Such an unbalanced consumption not only sets the limits of what is available (because it is not sustainable), but also results in a radically disproportionate distribution of wealth and resources.

[170]For a critique of our current form of economy, see Bob Goudzwaard, *Capitalism and Progress: A Diagnosis of Western Society*, Josina Van Nuis Zylstra, trans. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979). On page 230, he suggests a more open economy that is similar to the one I have suggested above.

The Future of Freedom: Opening to the Eschaton

The understanding of freedom described above maintains greater consistency between the freedom given in creation and the freedom promised in the eschaton. In Pinnock's model, the prospect of eschatological freedom raised a serious dilemma: either libertarian freedom must be revoked in order to maintain the perfection of the eschaton, or we must acknowledge that the promised perfection might be lost due to the future possibility of evil. Pinnock nowhere seems to suggest that the perfection of the new creation can be lost, so the question becomes how is libertarian freedom revoked? Given Pinnock's framework and his elevation of this kind of freedom, its passing away is very problematic. Pinnock stresses throughout several of his most recent works that libertarian freedom is necessary for love.[171] But if the eschaton is meant to be the most perfect experience of divine love, how is it that libertarian freedom will no longer need to be exercised? I am unable to find a satisfactory answer for such a question in Pinnock's work.

Simon Francis Gaine deals with this problem in detail in his book *Will There Be Free Will In Heaven?*. He writes that the inspiration for the book came from a BBC program that put this question to several people. The answers were split depending on whether an individual prioritized "freedom" or "moral perfection" in the eschaton.

Relying heavily on Servais Pinckaers' *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, Gaine argues that there are two different theological understandings of freedom at work here. The first is that of the early church Fathers, which he calls "freedom for excellence." This freedom "is based on the question of happiness (beatitude) and the virtues."[172] The second understanding of freedom, or

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[171]See Pinnock's, *The Flame of Love*, 74-5, 162, 190, *Most Moved Mover*, 4, 12, 29, 45-47, and *The Openness of God*, 113.

[172]Gaine, *Will There Be Free Will In Heaven?*, 88.

the "freedom of indifference," is a result of the modern era and is "dominated by theories of obligation and commandments."[173] Gaine proposes that the dichotomy between moral perfection and freedom only arises after one assumes that freedom is the ability to choose "indifferently." Those who value the "freedom for excellence" tend to believe that there will not be free will in heaven, while those who value the "freedom of indifference" believe that free will must continue.

Gaine finds the transition to a freedom of indifference in William of Ockham, who promotes "a radical primacy of free will."[174] He writes:

> Being so fundamental, there were no prior principles from which freedom could be demonstrated: it was postulated as a first fact of human experience. Freedom lay in the power of the will to choose between contraries, a power that resided in the will alone. 'It was the power to opt for the yes or the no, to choose between what reason dictated and its contrary, between willing and not willing, acting and not acting, between what the law prescribed and its contrary.'[175]

Gaine argues that for Ockham, autonomy becomes the normative human characteristic: to be human is to be able to choose. The result of this view is freedom in a vacuum or freedom without direction. In a system which assumes the primacy of the will, humanity is not created facing God, but facing a choice.

The libertarian understanding of freedom is similar to Ockham's in that it is prior to (though, for Pinnock, not more primary than) the human relationship to God. Freedom is thus not indexed to relationship with God, but is a foundation unto itself. The human encounters a

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[173]Gaine, *Will There Be Free Will In Heaven?*, 88.

[174]Gaine, *Will There Be Free Will In Heaven?*, 89.

[175]Gaine, *Will There Be Free Will In Heaven?*, 89. Included quote from Fr Servais Pinkaers OP, *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, Sr Mary Thomas Noble OP, trans. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 332.

choice for or against God upon being created; a choice is part of human nature. This understanding takes what we experience now as the possibility of disobedience and reads it back into creation, before the fall.[176] Such a reading of the first chapters of Genesis is not necessary. It does not necessarily follow that because humanity made a choice against God that humans are, by virtue of creation, autonomous decision makers. I believe that a more responsible reading suggests that, rather than being indifferent, humanity was created with an inclination toward God. As Barth emphasizes, *to choose against God* is *to choose against human nature*: it is to be inauthentic.[177]

The inconsistency of a freedom of indifference (or libertarian freedom) is that it must be revoked in order to guarantee the promise of the new creation. The freedom of indifference must become (or make way for) the freedom for excellence. Once we have reached the eschaton, we can no longer choose against God, otherwise the promised blessing and perfection will be lost. Some suggest that our character has been so strongly solidified by this point that we only make choices for God,[178] but this imprisons us within our own character. The freedom to choose is

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[176]Pinnock sets up the origins of the world in a way that maintains a dichotomy between good and evil: God was good, the formlessness and void was evil. By doing so, he legitimates his assumption that humanity experiences a freedom of indifference *by nature*. Not all was good in the beginning. In a sense, God had to overcome evil in order to create, and this is in no way biblically suggested. We are not forced to assume that formlessness and void are by nature evil. He writes: "Evil is not even only of human making. Genesis shows us that eve in the act of creation God confronted formlessness and darkness and had to establish a life-sustaining order against it." *The Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 74.

[177]Barth, *The Humanity of God*, 80.

[178]St. Augustine suggests this sort of change in his continuum from before the fall when humanity was able not to sin to the eschaton when humanity will be not able to sin. *On Admonition and Grace* Ch. XXXIII. Boyd also suggests character solidification in *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 191.

still lost, no matter *how* it is lost.

Faithfully Open Freedom

A more consistent position would hold that freedom is only ever found in excellence (or obedience/faithfulness), and that indifferent choice is something other than freedom. Pinckaers offers a helpful analogy of the freedom of excellence by asking us to consider the example of a child learning to play piano. In order to achieve the freedom that can be had in playing piano (improvising, composing, etc.), the child first has to have a desire for the piano, and to be predisposed to making music. This implies directionality as the choice to play the piano must come from somewhere deeper than indifference. Then the child must follow the rules and limitations of the piano; they must strive toward excellence. It is only through obedience to the rules of piano that the child is able to develop as a pianist. However, as they begin to master the rules and limitations, they are able to develop individually in the areas of talent and taste, this giving them greater freedom.[179] If they are able to master the rules to a level of excellence, they attain a freedom that allows them to seemingly transcend them.

The greatest musicians have used the rules of music to do seeming impossible things, to break away from that which came before, yet remain recognizably musical. Freedom, related to excellence, is progressive (meaning open-ended) and requires attentive faithfulness in order to grow into greater freedom. The freedom of indifference can never become more than it is, because it is static by its structural and formal definition. But freedom for excellence is able to transcend its own perceived boundaries as it is always growing.

An open definition of freedom is closer to the biblical narrative, and much easier to

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[179]Pinckaers, *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, 349-51.

square with the freedom we hope to experience in the eschaton. Freedom, in this sense, is not lost in the eschaton, but continues to progress to unimaginable levels. This is Gaine's conclusion as well: "I say there is free will in heaven. It is a more powerful freedom than freedom had on earth, because it is a more profound sharing in the divine freedom."[180] Unlike libertarian freedom, progressive, faithful freedom need not be revoked in the eschaton.

I believe that Pinnock would benefit from understanding freedom in relationship to excellence rather than to indifference. Not only would he be able to maintain human freedom in the eschaton, but he would be able to rethink God's power. If power is related to freedom (and for Pinnock, it is), and both exist in a static amount, then God has to give up power to humanity in order for them to be free. However, if power and freedom can be progressive, if they can be further opened, we can say that God's power and freedom grow with our own.[181] Instead of existing in its final form prior to history, freedom opens with history.

To summarize this final chapter, I began by qualifying Barth's obedience as faithfulness to the call of life. I argued that the concept of faithfulness better describes the covenantal relationship between God and humanity, giving freedom direction, yet allowing for a multiplicity of responses. I then suggested an alternative reading of Genesis 3 which places the full responsibility for the creation of evil upon humanity, rendering God's creation of the possibility of evil unnecessary.

I then described how freedom is *responsive* to the 'yes more ancient': God's call to life. This response-ability is not limited as long as it is faithful to the 'Yes' of life. In fact, our response in freedom is unlimited as long as it responds positively to God's call to life, and this is

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[180]Gaine, *Will There Be Free Will In Heaven?*, 136.

[181]At this point I have deviated from Gaine who believes God's freedom to be at its fullest from eternity past. *Will There Be Free Will In Heaven?*, 136.

what I mean by *transformative* freedom. We, as humans, are given the capacity to change the conditions for possibility in the world: we are able to make the impossible possible. As an example, I used Boff's theology of the cross to describe how Jesus – as the exemplar of our true humanity – was able to overcome the power structures of violence. These two modes of freedom (responsive and transformative) lead to freedom that is truly unlimited. In response to the call of life we find our freedom, and oriented toward the promise of life, we are able to transform the world.

And finally, I discussed the future of freedom: how freedom will continue into the eschaton. Using Gaine's distinction between the 'freedom for excellence' and the 'freedom of indifference', I argued that we will only be able to secure the promise of the eschaton if we have something similar to a 'freedom for excellence'. However, unlike most who appeal to the 'freedom for excellence', I contended that our ability to respond in creative and surprising ways will not be revoked. Our faithful responses will not be predictable because our 'characters have been solidified'.[182] Instead our freedom will continue to grow; our freedom will be unlimited.

[182] Referring to the sort of final solidification cited in footnote 178.

CONCLUSION

In this work, I have critically examined Clark Pinnock's understanding of freedom and invited him to consider an alternative to libertarian autonomy. I have written with great respect for Pinnock's desire to practice theology with a careful (and ever deepening) understanding of Scripture, as well as for his desire to emphasize God's love and relationality. It is out of this respect that this work began, and at its completion, I hold Pinnock in even higher esteem.

I have argued, however, that Pinnock's understanding of freedom as libertarian is derived not from the biblical narrative, but from the post-Fichtean world in which we find ourselves. This understanding of freedom conflicts with any theism which attributes our freedom to our dependence upon God. I then explored Barth's understanding of freedom as obedience, believing it to offer a promising alternative. Using the Barthian understanding of freedom, I argued that Pinnock makes libertarian autonomy necessary for love, and thus privileges autonomy. This privileging of autonomy means that the possibility of evil always haunts what Pinnock believes to be 'true freedom'.

Finally, I offered an alternative understanding of freedom which qualifies Barth's obedience as faithfulness, giving humanity unlimited freedom in response to God. Freedom as faithfulness responds to the 'Yes more ancient': God's call to life. I argued that in fidelity, freedom is unlimited, giving humanity the power to transform the conditions of possibility, and in turn, create even greater freedom. This freedom is then able to be carried into the eschaton, not needing to be revoked in order to guarantee the promise of the kingdom of God.

The alternative freedom that I have proposed in this work is potentially able to strengthen Pinnock's open theism. I have not intended this work as a negation Pinnock's position, but rather as an invitation to open it more fully. An understanding of freedom which is qualified by

faithfulness (close to Barthian "obedience") and eschatological openness strengthens Pinnock's open theism in several ways.

First, freedom understood as obedience or faithfulness respects the language of classical theism, even if its responsiveness to, and thus 'compatibility' with, God's call is so different from an understanding of freedom that is compatible with determinism.

Second, it separates true freedom from the "freedom" of the possibility of evil. As we saw above, Pinnock makes this distinction himself, but fails to take it up in his works that deal specifically with open theism.[183]

Third, and perhaps most importantly, this alternative to libertarian freedom fits better with the biblical narrative. The stories leading up to (and culminating in) Christ recount how freedom is found in faithfulness to God's call and not in disobedience (or the possibility of it). However, in keeping with Pinnock's work to develop an open theology, this faithfulness is not predetermined in any way; faithfulness can be as singular and surprising (and I would argue more so) than unfaithfulness.

Fourth, it fully removes God from the creation of (the possibility of) evil. Pinnock understands the seriousness of making God culpable for evil, but his understanding of freedom limits the extent to which he can rethink this issue. Instead of making God directly responsible for the creation of evil, he argues that God only created the *possibility* of evil. However, this does not go far enough, for God is still bound by Pinnock's criteria for freedom. Pinnock makes it impossible for God to create free, loving creatures without including the possibility of evil. The alternative I have argued above makes God free to create freedom without evil (or the possibility of it), thus placing the full responsibility for evil on humanity.

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[183]Pinnock and Brow, *Unbounded Love*, 112.

Finally, freedom qualified as faithful and open is a freedom that can be consistently maintained into the eschaton. Instead of losing the libertarian choice that is necessary for freedom in this world, the freedom that we were created with is the freedom that we will carry into the Kingdom of God. This would add significant strength to Pinnock's position, for the eschaton would not require the loss of creational freedom (as it does if we assume that creational freedom is libertarian), but would require instead an expansion of creational freedom. This is how I understand Paul's statement that "it is *for freedom* that Christ has set us free" (Gal. 5:1, NIV).

If Pinnock were to open up his understanding of freedom, his theology would open even further to new possibilities. I believe that we can move forward to a concept of freedom that is beyond the current dichotomy of compatibilism and libertarianism. Such an understanding of freedom responds to the gift of life given in God's act of creation, empowering us to transform the world as we faithfully anticipate God's promise to dwell with us. Freedom is given to us so that we might be free, not so that we might risk enslaving ourselves. True freedom is the gift and promise of life without the possibility of evil and death.

APPENDIX

Compatibilist and Incompatibilist Views of Freedom

It is important to make explicit the differences between Pinnock and the dominant theological paradigm he is opposing. I propose that his interlocutors hold something in common which is not exclusive to any one theological system. In order to better understand Pinnock's position, it will therefore be helpful to isolate his disagreement with traditional theology as a whole.

In the chart on beginning on page 16, I suggest that Pinnock's open theism may be contrasted, most fundamentally, with classical theism, the latter being made up of a spectrum of theologies ranging from the Calvinist to the Arminian. What all of these 'classical' theologies have in common, I suggest there, is that they hold to a compatibilist view of freedom: the view that asserts that divine determinism and human freedom are compatible.

My claim that compatibilism is co-extensive with this broad understanding of classical theism finds support in the way a variety of theologians who describe themselves as compatibilists or determinists nevertheless differ as to whether they are closer to the Calvinist or Arminian ends of the spectrum.

As a self-styled "soft determinist" or "soft Calvinist," John Feinberg proudly defends theological determinism in his essay "God Ordains All Things," but does not feel that this contradicts human freedom.[184] Feinberg wishes to affirm specific (not just general) divine sovereignty, and as such believes that God foreordains all human action, yet does not void human freedom, for the individual is able to "choose *according* to his desires and thus (on a soft

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[184]Feinberg even chastises those Calvinists who believe that God's sovereignty must rule out human freedom. "God Ordains All Things" in Basinger and Basinger, eds., *Predestination and Free Will*, 24.

determinist account) freely."[185]

Another compatibilist position, which is very close to Arminianism, claims that God foreknows the future without foreordaining it. Norman Geisler defends God's absolute foreknowledge as the biblically sound doctrine that holds humanity truly responsible for their actions and yet maintains God's (traditionally conceived) sovereignty. Geisler believes that specific sovereignty proponents such as Feinberg, John Edwards, and Gordon Clark are "hyper-Calvinists"[186] who end up attributing evil to God.[187] Geisler advocates a position known as 'general sovereignty' because it holds that God is sovereign over the whole of history (and foreknows it in its entirety), but does not foreordain specific actions. This position stresses human responsibility for evil and divine responsibility for bringing creation to its good end.

Geisler stresses human volition in evil acts, but insists that God is in control. He writes: "Consider the mysterious relation of God's sovereign will and the culpable, free human choice in the following passage: 'This man [Jesus] was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and *you . . . put him to death* by nailing him to the cross.' (Acts 2:23)."[188] For Geisler, as an advocate of general sovereignty, God knows the horrific evil that will be perpetrated by humans, but chooses to create because God is certain that these evils will be overcome by the foreknown greater good. For the position that Geisler represents, the divine decision to create is not a risk because God knows the future.

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[185]Feinberg, "God Ordains All Things," 28. Emphasis original.

[186]Basinger and Basinger, eds., *Predestination and Free Will*, 48.

[187]Norman Geisler, "God Knows All Things," in Basinger, eds., *Predestination and Free Will*, 75.

[188]Geisler, "God Knows All Things," 65. Emphasis original.

There is a broad range of positions in evangelical theology, and Feinberg's and Geisler's only serve as examples. It is my sense, however, that both represent a 'compatibilist' position. Both claim some form of divine determinism (whether ontological or epistemological) which does not negate human freedom. Only open theism, with its insistence that the future is open even for God, unambiguously advocates incompatibilism. I believe that Pinnock's disagreement with traditional theology – with classical theism in its Calvinist and Arminian forms – is centered around its compatibilist view of freedom.

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