

“AS THE FATHER HAS SENT ME, EVEN SO I AM SENDING YOU”: THE DIVINE MISSIONS AND THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

TOREY TEER*

Abstract: *Presentations advancing an ecclesiology that favors the church’s ontology before its function have become more common in recent years. Further, mission models employing a Trinitarian framework (viz., the *missio Dei*) have likewise become popular in contemporary conversation. This project explores the implications of the divine missions—of the Son and of the Spirit—upon the mission of the church while also drawing out some pneumatological emphases vis-à-vis ecclesiology. Specifically, I present a biblical-theological synthesis of the divine missions grounded upon Johannine language of “sending,” framed by Thomas Aquinas’s conception of the divine missions, and augmented by John Calvin’s notion of the “double grace” conferred via union with Christ. I then apply this synthesis to the mission of the church, showing that the church participates—analogically—in the Trinitarian agency carried out in the *missio Dei*. In so doing, I offer a unique line of reasoning that further supports the church’s ontology before its function as well as a Trinitarian framework for missions.*

Key words: *pneumatology, ecclesiology, *missio Dei*, Trinitarianism, Johannine theology, Thomistic theology*

When the concept of “missions” comes up in biblical, theological, or ecclesial discourse, it typically takes one of two forms: the Great Commission (Matt 28:18–20) or the *missio Dei*—though the two are not mutually exclusive. The former typically refers to the work of the church to bring the gospel to unreached people groups around the world (often called “church missions”), while the latter refers to the triune God’s redemptive mission to the world in which he graciously allows the church to participate. Perhaps in conjunction with the contemporary renaissance in Trinitarian studies, relatively recent scholarship has highlighted the essential relationship between the Trinity and the church’s mission and, consequently, the church’s ontology as preceding—and grounding—its function.¹ Relatedly, my re-

* Torey J. S. Teer is a Ph.D. student at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2825 Lexington Rd., Louisville, KY 40280. He may be contacted at torey.teer@gmail.com.

¹ For examples of those interested in the relationship between the Trinity and the church’s mission, see Chul-ho Youn, “*Missio Dei Trinitatis* and *Missio Ecclesiae*: A Public Theological Perspective,” *International Review of Mission* 107 (2018): 225–39; Eugene R. Schlesinger, “A Trinitarian Basis for a ‘Theological Ecology’ in Light of *Laudato Si’*,” *TS* 79 (2018): 339–55; Timothy C. Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-First Century* (Invitation to Theological Studies; Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010); Tormod Engelsviken, “*Missio Dei*: The Understanding and Misunderstanding of a Theological Concept in European Churches and Missiology,” *International Review of Mission* 92 (2003): 481–97; John F. Hoffmeyer, “The Missional Trinity,” *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 40 (2001): 108–11; Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Missions* (rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995).

cent work developing a Christological pneumatology and applying it to various loci of systematic theology has led me to appreciate the theology of the *divine missions* espoused by Thomas Aquinas.² Therefore, as I arrive at the locus of ecclesiology, I seek to examine the implications of a Trinitarian Christological pneumatology—specifically, the divine missions—for the doctrine of the church.

My interest here is not necessarily unique. For instance, John F. Hoffmeyer raises the following concerns:

It seems to me that one of the most important next steps in conceiving a missional church on the basis of the missional triune God is to focus more on the differentiation between the mission of the Word and the mission of the Spirit. As in all matters trinitarian, this is a differentiation not at the expense of unity, but in the service of unity. More specifically, I think that we need to focus on the particular function of the mission of the Spirit. With a more genuinely trinitarian understanding of the missions of the triune God, we can then better address the question: What is the mission of the church as participation in the mission(s) of God?³

Though I am not the first to employ the divine missions as the grounding for the church's mission, nor the first to highlight the Holy Spirit's prominent role in the church's actualization of its mission, I believe I can satisfactorily address Hoffmeyer's concerns and add to the richness of the discussion.

It is my contention that the theology of the divine missions contributes to a unique line of reasoning that further supports the priority of the church's ontology over its function and sheds greater light onto how the church participates in the triune *missio Dei*. After defining some central terms and concepts and setting the boundaries—or scope—of my discussion, I will articulate a theology of the divine missions as grounded in Johannine language, synthesized by Thomas Aquinas, and augmented by John Calvin's take on union with Christ. Then, I will apply the divine missions to the mission of the church, showing how the church participates—analogically—in the Trinitarian agency carried out in the *missio Dei*. Such creaturely participation in the *missio Dei* is the application of a Christological pneumatology to the locus of ecclesiology.

For examples of those who prioritize of the church's ontology over its function (especially based on Trinitarian premises), see Gregg R. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church* (Foundations of Evangelical Theology; Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012); Gary D. Badcock, *The House Where God Lives: Renewing the Doctrine of the Church for Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009); Brad Harper and Paul Louis Metzger, *Exploring Ecclesiology: An Evangelical and Ecumenical Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2009); Michael S. Horton, *People and Place: A Covenant Ecclesiology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008); John Webster, "On Evangelical Ecclesiology," *Ecclesiology* 1 (2004): 9–35; idem, "The Church and the Perfection of God," and "The Visible Attests the Invisible," in *The Community of the Word: Toward an Evangelical Ecclesiology* (ed. Mark Husbands and Daniel J. Treier; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005), 75–115.

² See, e.g., Torey J. S. Teer, "The Perfection of All Divine Acts: Inseparable Operations, the Holy Spirit, and the Providence of God," *BSac* (forthcoming).

³ Hoffmeyer, *Missional Trinity*, 111.

I. DEFINITIONS AND DELIMITATIONS

The church is the community of all persons who—by grace, through faith, on the basis of Christ’s life, death, resurrection, and ascension—have been united to Christ and incorporated into his body through baptism with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8; Rom 6:3–11; 1 Cor 12:12–27; Eph 1:13–14; 2:19–22; Heb 12:22–24). The Lord promised to create the church during his earthly ministry (Matt 16:18), and indeed he did at Pentecost when he poured out the Holy Spirit upon his disciples (John 7:37–39; Acts 1:4–5, 8; 2:4; 15:8–11; cf. Rom 5:5; Titus 3:5–7). The church, therefore, is distinct from Israel.⁴ As such, I will confine my discussion of the Spirit’s work to the NT data.⁵ Furthermore, the mission of the church consists of proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ and obeying his commands as the church anticipates Christ’s return as judge and king (Matt 28:19–20; Luke 24:45–49 // Acts 1:8; John 15:26–27; 20:21–23). For concerns of space, I will restrict my focus on the church’s mission to its proclamatory aspects—that is, announcing how salvation is appropriated in Christ and by the Spirit—as I apply the theology of the divine missions to the mission of the church.⁶ I should note, however, that the divine missions could also be applied to the obedience aspects of the church’s mission (viz. preaching and teaching the Word, baptism, and the Lord’s Supper), especially with regard to how the visible and invisible realities relate to each other.

Next, the divine missions can be defined, reductionistically, as the sending of the Son to accomplish redemption and the sending of the Holy Spirit to apply redemption. However, because the divine missions are inextricably bound up with a larger complex of closely related theological concepts, including inseparable operations, distinct personal appropriations, the Trinitarian *taxis* (or order), the eternal processions, and the temporal missions, these terms merit careful nuancing. The doctrine of inseparable operations affirms that all external works of the triune God are undivided (*opera Trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt*). That is, in every divine act in the world (*ad extra*; i.e. “toward the outside”), all persons of the Godhead work together as one, by virtue of their one shared nature, will, and power (*ad intra*; i.e. “toward the inside,” or who God is in himself). Thus, when the Trinity acts, there is only one action, not three. According to the attendant doctrine of distinct personal appropriations, a feature common to all three divine persons is attributed to—or appropriated by—one particular person *ad extra* if that feature especially reflects the

⁴ Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 88–89; Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids: Bridgepoint, 1993), 16–17, 49–51; Robert L. Saucy, *The Church in God’s Program* (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1972), 64–65, 70–71. I acknowledge, of course, that there exist several similarities between the church and Israel. Allison, adopting a “moderate discontinuity” view regarding the relationship between the church and Israel, provides a summative list of the similarities between the two entities (*Sojourners and Strangers*, 88).

⁵ Though I favor a moderate discontinuity view with regard to the Israel-church distinction, because I restrict my discussion to the NT data, scholars from across the theological spectrum should find my overall proposal quite agreeable.

⁶ As Tennent rightly asserts, “The church is, fundamentally, a community of proclamation. . . . This new proclamation [i.e. the gospel of Christ] was explicitly understood as an extension of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in and through the church” (*Invitation to World Missions*, 95).

properties of that person *ad intra*—that is, according to the eternal intratrinitarian order of subsistence.

There is only one divine substance, and the three divine persons are all subsistences of the one divine substance simultaneously; therefore, they exist as eternal subsisting relations (or relations of origin). The Father is characterized by paternity; he is eternally unbegotten. The Son is characterized by eternal generation; the Father eternally generates (or begets) the Son. The Holy Spirit is characterized by eternal procession (or spiration); he is eternally spirated (or breathed) by the Father and the Son.⁷ The subsisting relations reveal the irreversible intratrinitarian *taxis*: the Father eternally begets the Son, and the Father and the Son together spirate the Spirit (Father → Son → Holy Spirit). The Trinitarian *taxis* represents not only the eternal subsisting relations (*ad intra*) but also how God acts in the world (*ad extra*). Every triune act of God is accomplished from the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit (Father → Son → Holy Spirit →→ creation).⁸

Accordingly, concerning the doctrine of appropriations, a feature appropriated by a distinct person *ad extra* reveals that person's *ad intra* relations because he acts per the order of subsistence.⁹ For instance, the Father alone sends the Son to become incarnate—by the power common to the Three—because the Father alone eternally generates the Son. One may also use the language of termination or *terminus* when discussing appropriations: “The notion of termination is that a work that is appropriated to one of the three Persons terminates in that Person in the sense of the goal or end of that work.”¹⁰ For example, the incarnation terminates in the Son because he accomplishes the goal or end of that work—securing the redemption of those who will believe in him. Thus, to say that the incarnation *terminates* in

⁷ For greater discussion on intratrinitarian relations, see Gregg R. Allison and Andreas J. Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit* (Theology for the People of God; Nashville: B&H Academic, 2020), 255–58; Gilles Emery, *The Trinitarian Theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas* (trans. Francesca Aran Murphy; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 78–102 (esp. 99–102); Stephen J. Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate: The Doctrine of Christ* (Foundations of Evangelical Theology; Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 409–11. For a graphic depiction of the double procession of the Holy Spirit, as well as a defense of the Latin *filioque* addition to the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, see Allison and Köstenberger, *Holy Spirit*, 237, 258–64. The biblical basis for the double procession of the Spirit will appear below in the section “Johannine Theology of Divine Missions.”

⁸ Gilles Emery, *The Trinity: An Introduction to Catholic Doctrine on the Triune God* (trans. Matthew Levering; Thomistic Ressourcement Series 1; Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2011). The arrow (→) represent movement within the life of God (*ad intra*), while the double arrow (→→) represents the action of God toward the created order (*ad extra*).

⁹ Emery, *Trinity*, 164–68 (esp. 165–66).

¹⁰ Allison and Köstenberger, *Holy Spirit*, 283. For a more nuanced discussion of the language of termination using the language of *principium-terminus*, see Adonis Vidu, “Trinitarian Inseparable Operations and the Incarnation,” *Journal of Analytic Theology* 4 (2016): 106–27 (esp. 114–22); Tyler Wittman, “The End of the Incarnation: John Owen, Trinitarian Agency and Christology,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 15 (2013): 284–300 (esp. 294–98). For a similar discussion, albeit using the language of “principle-subject,” see Kyle Claunch, “What God Hath Done Together: Defending the Historic Doctrine of the Inseparable Operations of the Trinity,” *JETS* 56 (2013): 781–800 (esp. 797–98).

the Son is essentially the equivalent of saying that the peculiar act of incarnation is *appropriated* to the Son.¹¹

One may also employ the procession-mission paradigm—that is, language of (eternal) processions and (temporal) missions. The processions are representative of the immanent Trinity (i.e. *ad intra*); they *just are* the eternal subsisting relations. The missions are representative of the economic Trinity (i.e. *ad extra*), specifically, the unique “sendings” of the Son and the Spirit for us and our salvation. The Trinitarian missions reflect *in time* what God is—via the processions—in *eternity*. In other words, the divine person’s new, unique mode of presence in the world expresses his unique relation of origin per the intratrinitarian order of subsistence (e.g. the Holy Spirit’s being sent by the Father and the Son at Pentecost expresses his eternal procession from the Father and the Son).¹² The Father eternally generates the Son (*ad intra*); he is never sent but, instead, sends the Son in the incarnation (*ad extra*). The Father and the Son eternally spirate the Spirit (*ad intra*); together, they send the Spirit at Pentecost (*ad extra*).

Having defined the terms relevant to this project (the church, the mission of the church, and the theological terms related to the divine missions) and delimited its scope (focus on NT data alone and the proclamatory aspects of the church’s mission), I am now in a position to explicate in greater detail a robust theology of divine missions.

II. THEOLOGY OF THE DIVINE MISSIONS

As intimated above, the divine missions are not new to theological discourse. Indeed, Fred Sanders indicates the centuries-old history of the procession-mission paradigm when he writes,

The most basic pedagogical decision to make in presenting the doctrine of the Trinity is whether to begin the exposition with the temporal missions and reason back from them to the eternal processions, or whether to take the opposite approach, beginning rather with the eternal processions and then working out and down to the temporal missions. Both procedures have much to commend them. ...

The former is the way taken by Augustine in his epochal work *The Trinity* [4.5.29, for example]. ...

The opposite approach, then, is to take what the missions make known about the Trinity and presuppose it from the start, beginning the exposition with the

¹¹ There are, however, some important distinctions between termination and appropriation, but those distinctions venture beyond the scope of this article. For treatments of these distinctions, see Vidu, “Trinitarian Inseparable Operations and the Incarnation,” 114–16; Allison and Köstenberger, *Holy Spirit*, 282–86.

¹² Allison and Köstenberger, *Holy Spirit*, 275–77; Stephen R. Holmes, “Trinitarian Action and Inseparable Operations: Some Historical and Dogmatic Reflections,” in *Advancing Trinitarian Theology* (ed. Oliver D. Crisp and Fred Sanders; Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 72–73; Michael Horton, *Rediscovering the Holy Spirit: God’s Perfecting Presence in Creation, Redemption, and Everyday Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 33–35.

processions and working out and down to the missions. This is how Thomas Aquinas develops the vast treatise on the Trinity in the *Summa Theologica*, where it occupies questions 27 through 43 of the *Prima Pars*.¹³

Though Sanders distinguishes between the approaches of Augustine and Aquinas, the latter draws upon the former in his synthesis of the divine missions,¹⁴ and both draw upon John the Evangelist's language concerning the "mission" or "sending" (*missio* in Latin) of the Son and the Spirit.¹⁵ Therefore, though I will ultimately retrieve Aquinas's theology of divine missions, which is much more developed than that of Augustine, I will first survey the biblical basis for the divine missions—or, at the very least, the language of "sending/being sent"—as it appears in John's Gospel.

1. *Johannine theology of divine missions.* Although the language of, or related to, "sending/being sent" appears elsewhere in the NT (e.g. Rom 8:3–4; Gal 4:4–5; 1 John 4:9–10, 14; cf. 1 Tim 1:15), the most prominent, sustained language appears in the Gospel of John. One could even argue that "sending" (or "being sent") is one of the major themes of the Gospel. Andreas Köstenberger asserts this very point: "John's mission theology is an integral part of his presentation of Father, Son, and Spirit," and his Trinitarian theology is a function of his mission theology, rather than vice versa.¹⁶

As discussed above, Jesus's mission is to take on human flesh and accomplish redemption. The much-beloved John 3:16–17 sums up his mission: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not *send* his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might *be saved* through him."¹⁷ Jesus self-identifies as being "sent" from the Father over a dozen times throughout the Gospel.¹⁸ He also says that he is "from God [the Father]" (6:46), "from above"

¹³ Fred Sanders, *The Triune God* (New Studies in Dogmatics; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 93–94.

¹⁴ For example, Thomas references Augustine's *On the Trinity* in Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica* (trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province; New York: Benzinger Bros., 1947), I.43.3 arg. 3, s.c.; I.43.4 s.c., ad. 2; I.43.5 ad. 1, ad. 2; I.43.6 s.c., ad. 1, ad. 2; I.43.7 arg. 5, ad. 2, ad. 6; I.43.8 arg. 1, arg. 3, s.c., co. Hereafter, I abbreviate *Summa Theologica* as *ST*. For Augustine's accounts of the sendings of the Son and the Spirit, see Augustine of Hippo, *On the Trinity* books 2–4 (esp. 2.4.6–5.10; 4.19.25–21.32), in *NPNI*², 3:17–228.

¹⁵ See, e.g., Augustine, *On the Trinity* 2.5.7–10; 4.19.26; 4.20.27–29; Aquinas, *ST* I.43 art. 1 s.c., co.; I.43.5 ad. 2; I.43.6 arg. 1; I.43.7 ad. 6. Both Augustine and Aquinas also draw from biblical passages other than John, but the Gospel features prominently nonetheless.

¹⁶ Andreas J. Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters* (Biblical Theology of the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 540. See also Andreas J. Köstenberger and Scott R. Swain, *Father, Son, and Spirit: The Trinity and John's Gospel* (NSBT 24; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008), 149. Furthermore, the evangelist mentions another mission (i.e. the mission of John the Baptist): "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light" (1:6–8).

¹⁷ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations come from the English Standard Version.

¹⁸ E.g. 5:36–38; 6:29, 38–39, 44, 57; 7:17–18, 28–29, 33; 8:16, 18, 26, 29; 12:44–45, 49; 14:24. See also Tennent, *Imitation to World Missions*, 154–55.

(8:23), and “from heaven” (6:33–35, 38, 50–51, 58)—language indicative of his “sentness.” John himself articulates Christ’s mission in his prologue: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us [incarnation], and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father [sending]. . . . No one has ever seen God [the Father]; the only God, who is at the Father’s side [i.e. the Son], he has made him known” (1:14, 18).

The mission of the Holy Spirit is to apply salvation to the redeemed via indwelling. However, before he can come, Christ must ascend to heaven and return to the Father.¹⁹ Jesus intimates as much when he responds to the Pharisees, saying, “I will be with you a little longer, and then I am going to him who sent me. You will seek me and you will not find me. Where I am you cannot come” (John 7:33–34). Then, a few verses later, Christ proclaims, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water’” (v. 38). John himself provides the interpretation of this remark, connecting Christ’s ascension to the Spirit’s descension (or sending): “Now this [Jesus] said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified” (v. 39).²⁰

Christ provides greater detail about the Spirit’s coming in relation to his departure in the Farewell Discourse (John 14–17). Shortly after describing his return to the Father and promising his return to earth (14:1–4; see also vv. 12, 18–19, 28), Jesus tells his disciples, “I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you” (vv. 16–17). Later, Christ makes the connection more explicit: “I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you” (16:7).²¹ Therefore, after Christ’s ascent, the Father and the Son will send the Spirit to Christ’s disciples, and he will be with them via indwelling. As Köstenberger explains,

When the Spirit comes to dwell in believers, it is as if Jesus himself takes up residence in them (14:18). . . . Jesus’ departure will not leave them as orphans; just

¹⁹ Allison and Köstenberger, *Holy Spirit*, 361–62 n. 29; Horton, *Rediscovering the Holy Spirit*, 148–50, 158.

²⁰ Though the Spirit is not sent until Pentecost (i.e. the “fullness of time”; Gal 4:4), he is still active in the OT and the throughout the life of Christ—what one can refer to as his proleptic activity or “pre-mission.” For a discussion of the Spirit’s (and the Son’s) proleptic activity (which is beyond the scope of this article), see Allison and Köstenberger, *Holy Spirit*, 347–66 (esp. 347–50).

²¹ See also John 14:26 (“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you”) and 15:26 (“But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me”). Whether the Father sends the Spirit at the Son’s request (14:16) and on the Son’s behalf (14:26), or whether the Son sends the Spirit from the Father (15:26; 16:7), in essence, the Father and the Son jointly send the Spirit in time, just as the Father and the Son spirate the Spirit in eternity. Herein lies the biblical basis for the double procession of the Spirit.

as God was with them through Jesus, he will continue to be with them through the Spirit. The Spirit's role thus ensures continuity between Jesus' pre- and post-glorification ministry.²²

In accordance with a Christological pneumatology, then, the mission of the Spirit is Christological (or Christocentric) in emphasis. As Jesus explains in John 16:13–15, when the Spirit comes, he will teach the disciples on the authority given to him (by the Father through the Son), and he will glorify the Son, for he will take all that is Christ's and declare it to his disciples.²³

The final missional statement in the Gospel of John involves the mission of the Son, the mission of the Spirit, and Christ's commissioning of his disciples (i.e. the mission of the church). John 20:21–22 reads, "Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.' And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.'" Though Aquinas, as I will discuss below, sees Jesus's breathing the Spirit upon the disciples as a "visible mission" of the Spirit, the true mission of the Spirit awaited his outpouring on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Though interpretations of this passage are manifold,²⁴ it seems best—in canonical-redemptive/historical perspective—to regard this moment as representing a "symbolic promise of the soon-to-be-given gift of the Spirit," not its actual impartation.²⁵ Alluding to Gen 2:7, here Jesus constitutes the disciples "as the new messianic community in anticipation of the outpouring of the Spirit subsequent to his ascension."²⁶

This passage serves as the culmination of the evangelist's theology of divine missions. In sum, the Son is sent from the Father. The Spirit will be sent to the disciples soon—Jesus's breathing on his disciples serves as the promissory sign of that imminent event. And the church will participate in the divine missions (as I will discuss below).²⁷ While the Gospel of John provides the primary biblical basis for the divine missions, it is Aquinas's nuanced synthesis that grounds them theologically (or metaphysically). Hence, it is to the Dominican Master's theology that I now turn.

²² Köstenberger, *Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*, 542. See also Allison and Köstenberger, *Holy Spirit*, 73; Köstenberger and Swain, *Father, Son, and Spirit*, 153.

²³ See also Allison and Köstenberger, *Holy Spirit*, 234–35.

²⁴ See the summary in Myk Habets, *The Progressive Mystery: Tracing the Elusive Spirit in Scripture and Tradition* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2019), 76–77 n. 11, and Colin G. Kruse, *John* (NIBC 4; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 375–76. See also the discussion in Köstenberger, *Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*, 399–400.

²⁵ Allison and Köstenberger, *Holy Spirit*, 77, 234, 259; see also Köstenberger, *Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*, 399; Köstenberger and Swain, *Father, Son, and Spirit*, 101–2; contra Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel according to Saint John* (BNTC 4; London: Continuum, 2005), 498–99.

²⁶ Köstenberger, *Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*, 543; see also Köstenberger and Swain, *Father, Son, and Spirit*, 154.

²⁷ See also Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 156–57.

2. *Thomistic theology of divine missions.* Writing on Aquinas’s theology of missions, Gilles Emery avers, “The idea of the missions of the Son and the Spirit is thoroughly biblical. The *Summa Theologica* does not give detailed expositions of the Johannine and Pauline passages which he had expounded in his commentaries, but Thomas indicates that he is working from Scripture.”²⁸ Therefore, no matter how abstract Thomas’s musings may be (answer: *very*), one must remember that Scripture serves as one of the major pillars for his theological formulation.

For Aquinas, “The mission of a divine person is a fitting thing, as meaning in one way the procession of origin from the sender, and as meaning a new way of existing in another.”²⁹ Commenting on this language, Dominic Legge explains,

This ‘new mode of existing in another’ refers to ‘some effect in a creature . . . according to which a divine person is sent.’ There are, therefore, two key elements that constitute a divine mission: (1) the person’s eternal procession, and (2) the divine person’s relation to the creature in whom this person is made present in a new way, according to some created effect.³⁰

Matthew Levering clarifies that there are not truly two “coming forths” in God but one eternal “coming forth” that has a temporal (or created) effect.³¹ Thus, per Aquinas, “the procession may be called a twin procession, eternal and temporal, not that there is a double relation to the principle, but a double term [or terminus].”³²

The first aspect (i.e. eternal procession) expresses the divine person’s relation of origin (or eternal subsisting relation, as introduced above). The Father is the origin or principle of the processions; he proceeds from no one. The Son proceeds from the Father; he is eternally begotten. The Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son; he is eternally spirated.³³ Such relations are or “comings forth” that happen in God (i.e. *ad intra*). Since these relations are eternal and uncreated, they are relations of “unseparated equality.”³⁴ Thomas explains these processions as movements in the divine nature by way of (1) the intellect or understanding and (2) the will.³⁵ Legge provides some helpful legwork on this subject:

²⁸ Emery, *Trinitarian Theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 364. Emery acknowledges—as I implied above—that Aquinas cites John 8:18; Rom 8:16; Gal 4:4.

²⁹ Aquinas, *ST I.43.1 co.*

³⁰ Dominic Legge, *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 15. Quotation from Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputatae de Potentia*, in *Quaestiones Disputatae*, vol. 2 (ed. P. Bazzi, M. Calcaterra, T. S. Centi, E. Odetto, and P. M. Pession; Turin: Marietti, 1949), q. 10, art. 4, ad. 14. See also Emery, *Trinitarian Theology of Aquinas*, 364–65.

³¹ Matthew Levering, *Engaging the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit: Love and Gift in the Trinity and the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 190.

³² Aquinas, *ST I.43.2 ad. 3*. See also Allison and Köstenberger, *Holy Spirit*, 276; Bruce D. Marshall, “The Unity of the Triune God: Reviving an Ancient Question,” *Thomist* 74 (2010): 20–23.

³³ See Aquinas, *ST I.43.4 co.*

³⁴ Emery, *Trinitarian Theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 365. NB: The inseparable unity of the triune God (*ad intra*) grounds the inseparable operations of Trinity (*ad extra*).

³⁵ Aquinas, *ST I.27.5 co.*

Aquinas understands the first of these, a procession by way of intellect [i.e. the Son], as analogous to the act by which an intellect conceives a word as the “fruit” of its understanding. Such a word is distinct from, yet remains in, the mind that conceives it. In God, the Father “understands himself” by a single eternal act and so generates an eternal Word—as a conception proceeding from his act of understanding—that “expresses the Father” [ST I.34.3].

The procession according to will [i.e. the Holy Spirit] is the “procession of love, by which the beloved is in the lover, like the reality spoken or understood through the conception of a word is in the one understanding” [ST I.27.3]. This procession is ordered to the procession of the Word, since “nothing can be loved by the will unless it is conceived in the intellect” [Ibid.].³⁶

Thus, “the term ‘procession’ ... designates an immanent action in God that ‘does not tend into something exterior but remains in the agent himself.’”³⁷

The second aspect of a divine mission is the temporal side of a procession in which a divine person is sent to, and is present in, a creature in a new mode; “it includes the eternal procession, with the addition of a temporal effect.”³⁸ As Legge summarizes, “A divine mission is the sending of a divine person as really present in time according to a created effect,”³⁹ and “not just any created effect will serve: it must somehow imply ‘a relation [of the person sent] to the terminus to which he is sent, so that he begins in some [new] way to be there.’”⁴⁰ Thomas employs the notion of a “mixed relation” to explain the new mode in which a divine person is truly present in a creature: “The relation is ‘real’ in the creature, in whom the mission brings about something new, but it has a being of ‘reason’ in the divine person.”⁴¹ Furthermore, on the doctrine of inseparable operations, creatures experience a real relation not only to one divine person but also to the entire Godhead:⁴²

All three divine persons together efficiently cause a divine mission’s created effect, so ... there is a real relation [in the creature] to all three divine persons as a single principle. (For example, all three divine persons efficiently cause Christ’s human nature to be united to the Son in person.) But a divine mission’s created

³⁶ Legge, *Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas*, 15. The close ordering of the processions—not to mention the missions—supports a Christological pneumatology.

³⁷ Legge, *Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas*, 15. Quotation from Aquinas, ST I.27.3 co.

³⁸ Aquinas, ST I.43.2 ad. 3.

³⁹ Legge, *Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas*, 17–18 (emphasis original). For a discussion of the difference between a generic (e.g. human) mission and a divine mission, see Emery, *Trinitarian Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, 365–66.

⁴⁰ Legge, *Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas*, 18. Quotation from Aquinas, ST I.43.1 co.

⁴¹ Emery, *Trinitarian Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, 368. For a more detailed discussion—plus a helpful example—of “mixed relations,” see Legge, *Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas*, 19–21.

⁴² This actuality is also related to, and supported by, the mutual indwelling of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—called “perichoresis.” See Gregg R. Allison, ed., *The Baker Compact Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2016), s.v. “perichoresis.” See also Allison and Köstenberger, *Holy Spirit*, 228, 278–79.

effect has a second relation, also “really in” the creature, by which it “terminates to” the one divine person [i.e. the subject] who is sent—and *not* to the others.⁴³

Next, the missions do not signify a change in the divine persons themselves—that is, in the intra-divine life. It is creatures who experience God in a novel manner. As Aquinas explains, “That a divine person may newly exist in anyone, or be possessed by anyone in time, does not come from change of the divine person, but from change in the creature.”⁴⁴ Moreover, according to Levering, “The change described by a divine ‘mission’ consists in a creature gaining a new real relation to the Son or Holy Spirit, a relation of intimacy that elevates the creature into a participation in the trinitarian community.”⁴⁵

Adonis Vidu explains this divine-human distinction—where the latter experiences change, while the former does not—in terms of the lack of sequentiality between the acts of God:

This is where the inseparability principle [i.e. inseparable operations] meets the doctrine of divine simplicity. . . . The action of God is one, and that is to be Godself. However, as this action is “refracted” in the medium of human history, it fans out, so to speak; it is stretched and *appears* to be composed of a variety of divine actions. It is tempting, yet a mistake, to take this sequentiality as basic.⁴⁶

Vidu concludes his discussion on sequentiality with the following thesis: “The economic works of God originate in an eternal unity of intention and execution in the ‘divine counsel.’ Their temporal ordering to one another is a ‘consequent condition’ of their ‘externalization’ in time and is in no way part of their ‘immanent constitution.’”⁴⁷ But, though the divine person does not change *in se* (i.e. in himself), he still maintains a real relation to the creature—he is *truly present* in the one to whom he is sent.

To summarize, a divine mission is an eternal procession plus a created effect. It involves a real relation—to the whole Godhead (as its principle or source) and to the one sent person (as its terminus or subject)—in which a divine person is truly present in the creature according to a new mode of being. The relation is a “mixed

⁴³ Legge, *Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas*, 22 (emphasis original). See also Emery, *Trinitarian Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, 370–72; Emery, *Trinity*, 2.

⁴⁴ Aquinas, *ST* I.43.2 ad. 2. See also Adonis Vidu, “The Place of the Cross among the Inseparable Operations of the Trinity,” in *Locating Atonement* (ed. Oliver D. Crisp and Fred Sanders; Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 32; Tyler R. Wittman, “On the Unity of the Trinity’s External Works: Archaeology and Grammar,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 20 (2018): 369.

⁴⁵ Levering, *Engaging the Holy Spirit*, 189. See also Allison Köstenberger, *Holy Spirit*, 275 n. 3; Legge, *The Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas*, 27.

⁴⁶ Vidu, “Cross among Inseparable Operations,” 35–36 (emphasis original).

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 36. Wittman similarly writes, “Though external works [of creatures] have some intermediary existence between their subjects and objects, God’s external works do not because God acts *per se*. This means that when God acts externally, God posits effects. That is to say, God’s activity is not a ‘successive’ motion that develops and has an intermediary existence; God acts simply by disposing effects, among which are included creatures’ self-movement” (“On the Unity of the Trinity’s External Works,” 370).

relation”; the creature experiences change (i.e. something new), whereas the divine person does not (his is a relation of reason). Consistent with their respective immanent processions, then, the two temporal sendings—the mission of the Son and the mission of the Spirit—represent new modes in which the Son and the Spirit relate to the created order:⁴⁸ “The human nature of Jesus is the created effect through which the Son is present to us in a new way,”⁴⁹ and the outpouring and indwelling of the Holy Spirit are the created effects indicative of his new mode of presence.⁵⁰ Thus the mission of the Son consists of his temporal sending by the Father to become incarnate and accomplish redemption, and the mission of the Holy Spirit consists of his temporal sending by the Father and the Son to apply redemption to the saints. These divine missions represent salvific realities that believers experience, and they are consistent with the biblical (mainly Johannine) language of missions discussed above.

However, Aquinas distinguishes between the visible missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit, on the one hand, and their invisible missions, on the other.⁵¹ Taking the Spirit first, the visible mission of the Spirit consists of his powerful manifestations as a dove at Jesus’s baptism (Matt 3:16; see also Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22; John 1:32–33), the cloud of glory at the Transfiguration (Matt 17:5); the breath Christ breathed upon his disciples after his resurrection (John 20:22); and the sound of a great wind, the tongues of fire, and the speaking in tongues that the disciples experienced at Pentecost (Acts 2:1–4).⁵² The invisible mission of the Spirit consists of his impartation of sanctifying (or habitual) grace to believers via indwelling—indeed, the Spirit *is* the gift (i.e. the gift of charity; Rom 5:5; Gal 4:6).⁵³ Next, the visible mission of the Son is the incarnation (John 1:14; Rom 8:3–4), and his invisible mission is the illumination of the mind by the impartation of wisdom—and Christ *is* Wisdom (John 14:23; see also Wis 9:10).⁵⁴ Notably, both the visible and invisible missions of the Son never occur apart from a corresponding invisible mission of the Holy Spirit.⁵⁵

Taking the invisible missions together, then, an “invisible mission” refers to the sending of a divine person to a human being (or an angel) ‘through invisible grace,’ and it ‘signifies a new mode of that person’s indwelling, and his origin from

⁴⁸ Emery, *Trinitarian Theology of Aquinas*, 367–68, 373.

⁴⁹ Vidu, “Cross among Inseparable Operations,” 34.

⁵⁰ Allison and Köstenberger, *Holy Spirit*, 276–77.

⁵¹ On Emery’s account, Thomas took this distinction from Peter Lombard, who, in turn, took it from Augustine (*Trinitarian Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, 372).

⁵² Aquinas, *ST* I.43.7 ad. 6.

⁵³ Aquinas, *ST* I.43.3 ad. 1–2. See also Levering, *Engaging the Holy Spirit*, 191–92; Marshall, “Unity of the Triune God,” 20.

⁵⁴ Aquinas, *ST* I.43.5. In ad. 2 and ad. 3, Thomas says that the created effect of the Son’s invisible mission is the illumination of the intellect that breaks forth into love. In ad. 1 and ad. 2, Thomas cites Augustine: “The Son is sent, whenever He is known and perceived by anyone” (*On the Trinity* 4.20.28).

⁵⁵ Aquinas, *ST* I.43.5 ad. 2. See also Levering, *Engaging the Holy Spirit*, 192; Legge, *Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas*, 17. This fact also supports a Christological pneumatology.

another.”⁵⁶ Because the Son and the Spirit are sent from another, it is fitting that they are sent invisibly through grace.⁵⁷ Thus, their new modes of presence—the created effects of their processions—are according to sanctifying (or habitual) grace: “In these created effects, the divine persons are sent in person and really begin to dwell in the creature: the Son in wisdom, and the Holy Spirit in charity.”⁵⁸ However, undifferentiated sanctifying grace only imparts the presence of the whole Trinity.⁵⁹ The distinct processions of the divine persons are disclosed when the gifts imparted by sanctifying grace (i.e. “perfection” of the intellect [vis-à-vis the Son] and the will [vis-à-vis the Spirit]) assimilate—or conform—the soul of the creature to the Son and the Spirit according to their eternal processions.⁶⁰ “The charity that always is given in habitual or sanctifying grace is the created dimension of an invisible mission of the Holy Spirit in person. (The same can be said for the Son’s invisible mission by the gift of wisdom informed by love).”⁶¹

Next, a visible mission is similar to an invisible mission: They both include a divine person (1) being sent from another and (2) being present in another according to a new mode of presence. However, a visible mission adds a third element: either (1) or (2) is manifested through some visible sign.⁶² When the eternal Son assumes a human nature, he makes an invisible divine person visible—and truly present—as a man (element #2; see, e.g., 2 Tim 1:9–10). Furthermore, in accord with the Johannine account of divine missions articulated above, Christ manifests

⁵⁶ Legge, *Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas*, 25. Quotation from Aquinas, *ST* I.43.5. See also Emery, *Trinitarian Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, 373.

⁵⁷ The Father also indwells human beings through grace (through the Son by the Spirit), though he is not sent because he is not “from another.”

⁵⁸ Legge, *Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas*, 25 (original emphasis removed). On pp. 27–29, Legge goes on to explain that when the habitual grace elevates the creature’s nature (to participation in the divine nature), the creature receives supernaturally infused habitual gifts (such as the theological virtues of faith and charity). “These gifts are included *virtualiter* in habitual grace but are really distinct from it; habitual grace (which is ‘in’ the soul’s essence) is their principle and root, and they flow from it” (28). “Habitual grace elevates human nature . . . , while the infused virtues . . . perfect its powers” (29).

⁵⁹ Aquinas, *ST* I.43.5. See also Legge, *Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas*, 30; Emery, *Trinitarian Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, 373–74.

⁶⁰ As Emery explains, “The divine person is sent to transmit a participation in his eternal property: the Son conveys a likeness or resemblance to the modality through which he is referred to the Father; the Holy Spirit communicates a resemblance to the mode through which he proceeds. This resemblance is the imprint with which the Son and Holy Spirit mark the saints, for their union to God will come about through being integrated into the personal relations which Son and Holy Spirit have with the Father.” (*Trinitarian Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, 376–77)

⁶¹ Legge, *Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas*, 42. See also Emery, *Trinitarian Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, 375–79. In addition, both Legge (pp. 36–48) and Emery (pp. 377–78) point out Thomas’s distinction between efficient and exemplar causation—the former relates to the united act of the whole Trinity, whereas the latter relates to the single sent divine person to whom a creature is assimilated.

⁶² Legge, *Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas*, 48–49. Here, the author is drawing from Aquinas’s commentary on Lombard’s *Sentences*. See Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum*, ed. Pierre Mandonnet (Paris: Lethielleux, 1929), book I, d. 16, q. 1, art. 1. See also Emery, *Trinitarian Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, 405–7.

his “being sent from the Father” (element #1).⁶³ The visible mission of the Spirit, however, is different:

The Holy Spirit is not united to the visible creature that serves as a sign. Rather, that sign points to the Holy Spirit’s invisible presence according to a new mode [element #2] that also remains unseen in itself. ... For example, the dove at Christ’s baptism [see, e.g., Matt 3:16] points to the Spirit’s [invisible] mission to, and presence in, Christ, and the tongues of fire [see Acts 2:1–4] point to the Spirit’s [invisible] mission to, and presence in, those gathered in the upper room.⁶⁴

The significance of the visible missions cannot be overstated. “They constitute the summit of the historical revelation of the Triune God within the manifest events which give rise to the New Covenant.”⁶⁵ As Legge explains, “The visible missions are therefore (1) a revelation of the divine persons, making known the invisible things of God, and (2) the historical events at the center of the economy of grace (since all grace comes to us through, and in virtue of, Christ’s incarnation).”⁶⁶ The visible missions are, therefore, ordered to the invisible missions, the former being the visible, sensible manifestations of the latter: “The two visible missions of Son and Spirit are drawn together in their being oriented to the *sanctification* which an invisible mission brings about.”⁶⁷ Thus, it is the invisible missions that are ultimately salvific, though they have the visible missions as their grounding. Finally, “the missions of the Son and Spirit in sanctifying grace are reciprocal, and hence simultaneous and inseparable.”⁶⁸

There remains one more crucial aspect of Aquinas’s theology of divine missions that I have yet to mention, and that is Thomas’s dual conception of *exitus* and *reditus*.⁶⁹ Legge articulates that “Aquinas builds his theology of the divine missions on the fundamental principle that the eternal processions ground both the *exitus* [“going out”] of creatures from God and their *reditus* [“return”] to God.”⁷⁰ He continues,

⁶³ Legge, *Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas*, 50.

⁶⁴ Legge, *Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas*, 50.

⁶⁵ Emery, *Trinitarian Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, 405.

⁶⁶ Legge, *Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas*, 54.

⁶⁷ Emery, *Trinitarian Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, 407 (emphasis mine).

⁶⁸ Legge, *Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas*, 151. The author then cites, as an example, Aquinas, *ST* 1.43.5 ad. 2. The close ordering of the missions of the Son and Spirit support a Christological pneumatology. For more on the visible and invisible missions, as well as the relationship between the them, see Emery, *Trinity*, 178–94.

⁶⁹ Here, I depend on Legge’s work on Thomas’s *exitus-reditus* paradigm. For more, however, see Emery, *Trinitarian Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, 359–60, 363, 375, 377–78, 412–14.

⁷⁰ Legge, *Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas*, 12 (original emphasis removed). On p. 12, Legge offers a lengthy yet deeply informative quotation from Aquinas’s commentary on the *Sentences* (book 1, d. 14, q. 2, art. 2). On p. 13, he explains that the *exitus-reditus* paradigm is “part of the common Dionysian heritage that [Thomas] received from his master, Albert the Great (and that he shares with St. Bonaventure)”; however, Aquinas extended the paradigm so that the processions ground “creation *and the Trinitarian dispensation of grace*” (emphasis his).

The scope of St Thomas’s principle is vast: it extends to the whole range of the divine missions, both visible and invisible. The eternal processions of the Son and the Holy Spirit are the path of our return to the Father, as those persons are “sent” to us in time. . . . The visible mission of the Son in the incarnation—accompanied by the missions of the Holy Spirit to Christ and, at Pentecost, to the Church—are the means, “the way,” by which all of creation is brought back to the Triune God as its final end.⁷¹

In his commentary on Rom 5:5, Aquinas discusses the invisible mission of the Holy Spirit. He reasons that the two “loves of God” (i.e. God’s love toward us and our love toward him) “are poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. For the Holy Spirit, who is the love of the Father and of the Son, to be given to us is for us to be drawn into a participation in the Love who is the Holy Spirit, by which participation we are made lovers of God [*reditus*].”⁷² Concerning the Son’s visible mission, then,

the Word occupies a unique place in the *dispensatio* [“economy”] because he is the one through whom the Father [and, thus, the whole Trinity] is manifested to the world. . . . [T]he Word’s special role of manifestation [through the incarnation] is conceived there as the heart and the completion of the whole movement of the procession of creatures from God [*exitus*] and their return to him [*reditus*].⁷³

The *exitus-reditus* paradigm is simply expressive of the Trinitarian *taxis*. Concerning the *exitus*, just as God exists (*ad intra*) according to eternal subsisting relations (Father → Son → Holy Spirit), so also does all divine action (*ad extra*) occur from the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit (Father → Son → Holy Spirit →→ creation). Concerning the *reditus*, just as the Holy Spirit’s temporal missions reflect his eternal procession (Father ← Son ← Holy Spirit) and the Son’s temporal missions reflect his eternal procession (Father ← Son), so also does creaturely participation—via created effects—in the divine nature reflect the Trinitarian agential chain (Father ← Son ← Holy Spirit ←← creation).⁷⁴ As Tyler Wittman summarizes, “God’s missions will not return to him void because they repeat the ordered fullness of love that is God’s perfect life.”⁷⁵

⁷¹ Legge, *Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas*, 13. See p. 13 n. 11 for several citations from Thomas’s *Sentences* commentary (and other writings). Elsewhere, Legge expounds, “The rational creature’s *reditus*, like its *exitus*, has those eternal processions as its origin, *ratio* [‘reasoning’ or ‘cause’], and exemplar” (33). See also Emery, *Trinitarian Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, 375, 213–14.

⁷² Thomas Aquinas, *Super Epistolam ad Romanos Lectura*, in *Super Epistolam S. Pauli Lectura*, vol. 1 (ed. R. Cai; Turin: Marietti, 1953), c. 5, lect. 1 (no. 392), quoted in Legge, *Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas*, 46. See also Wittman, “On the Unity of the Trinity’s External Works,” 371.

⁷³ Legge, *Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas*, 79. Elsewhere, Legge submits, “Aquinas deploys [the theme of the Son as Wisdom] to great effect to explain that the Son is at the center of the entire movement of *exitus* and *reditus*” (69).

⁷⁴ For this language of Trinitarian agency, I am indebted to Vidu, “Trinitarian Inseparable Operations and the Incarnation,” 115.

⁷⁵ Wittman, “On the Unity of the Trinity’s External Works,” 372.

Though much more could be said about Thomas's theology of divine missions, I have offered a sufficient summary to now turn to evaluation, augmentation, and synthesis.

3. *A biblical-theological synthesis of divine missions.* Thomas's formulation of the procession-mission paradigm has much to commend it. Indeed, I champion this paradigm inasmuch as it accords with biblical language and concepts (especially the Johannine theology of missions discussed above), divine simplicity, impassibility, inseparable unity (*ad intra*) and operations (*ad extra*), distinct personal appropriations, Chalcedonian categories, and a Christological pneumatology. However, there is a potential deficiency of this paradigm that I would like to address in service of constructing a more robust theology of divine missions: Aquinas's overemphasis on sanctifying grace and, correspondingly, his seemingly higher valuation of the invisible missions over the visible missions.

For example, Thomas supposes that the Son's visible mission as man "leads to another coming of Christ, which is into the mind. It would have been worth nothing to us if Christ had come in the flesh unless, along with this, he would come into the mind, namely, by sanctifying us" (concern #1).⁷⁶ "In fact," Legge argues, commenting on the same passage, "all of Christ's activity in his earthly life—the whole of his visible mission—is ordered to, and reaches its accomplishment in, the invisible missions of the Son and Holy Spirit, and the Father's indwelling presence that accompanies them" (concern #2).⁷⁷ Based on what Legge writes elsewhere in his masterful exposition of Thomas's theology of divine missions,⁷⁸ it is evident that Aquinas values the appropriate salvific realities. In fact, the magisterial Reformer John Calvin shares Aquinas's concerns. The French theologian supposes, "So long as we are without Christ and separated from him, nothing which he suffered and did for the salvation of the human race is of the least benefit to us [concern #1]. To communicate to us the blessings which he received from the Father, he must become ours and dwell in us [concern #2]."⁷⁹ Therefore, it is not Thomas's formulation of the divine missions with which I take issue but one of his pre-suppositions.

⁷⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Super Evangelium S. Ioannis Lecture* (ed. R. Cai; Turin: Marietti, 1952), c. 17, lect. 6 (no. 2269), quoted in Legge, *Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas*, 55.

⁷⁷ Legge, *Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas*, 55.

⁷⁸ See, e.g., *ibid.*, 56 (the visible missions found the economy of grace and establish the pattern of our return to God); 77 (the more we are conformed to Christlikeness [i.e. wisdom], the more we participate in the life of the Trinity); 86 (filial adoption by the Spirit [Rom 8:14–17] allows us to participate in the Son's filial adoption); 88 (the Spirit renders union with, and conformation to, Christ and filial adoption); 190 (all that Christ did in the flesh is salvific for us; he gives grace to us by the Spirit); 224 (the Holy Spirit makes Christ [and, therefore, the Father] known by faith and allows us to share in Christ's sonship and holiness).

⁷⁹ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (ed. Henry Beveridge and Robert Pitcairn; Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1845), 3.1.1. Michael Horton frames Calvin's concern as a question: "What does it mean that the entire focus of our salvation is Christ and his redemptive work in history, apart from us, if we do not participate in that accomplishment?" (*Justification*, vol. 1 [New Studies in Dogmatics; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018], 195).

Thomas’s conception of sanctification is blended with justification.⁸⁰ For Aquinas, “justification—at least the first justification—is an unmerited gift, but it is indistinguishable from sanctification.”⁸¹ Final justification, then, would come at the end of the sanctification process, which likely would not follow until an individual completed a certain duration of refinement in purgatory.⁸² Furthermore, as Michael Horton rightly contends, “the primary emphasis in scholastic theology—specifically that of Aquinas—is more Dionysian: union with God as the telos of the justifying process. The Reformers, by contrast, focus on union with Christ and see this union as the source rather than the goal of final salvation.”⁸³

Aquinas and the Reformers share many of the same salvific concerns. Hence, I want to keep Thomas’s procession-mission paradigm intact, except with the understanding that the ordering of justification-sanctification is flipped: justification is not the telos of sanctification but the basis of sanctification—albeit also its guarantor. Therefore, the created effect of the invisible missions is not Aquinas’s rendering of “sanctifying grace” but, on Calvin’s account, the “double grace” effected by union with Christ:

Christ was given to us by God’s generosity, to be grasped and possessed by us in faith. By partaking of him, we principally receive a *double grace*: namely, that being reconciled to God through Christ’s blamelessness, we may have in heaven instead of a Judge a gracious Father; and secondly, that sanctified by Christ’s [S]pirit we may cultivate blamelessness and purity of life.⁸⁴

As J. Todd Billings explains in greater detail, “In union with Christ we receive two distinct yet inseparable gifts: justification, in which we are declared righteous before God as ones who are clothed with Jesus Christ, and sanctification, the gift of a new life, a new creation, which manifests itself in Spirit-empowered gratitude.”⁸⁵ With this one substitution, then, I move on to offer my biblical-theological synthesis of divine missions.

In the fullness of time, through the agency of the united Godhead, the Son and the Spirit were *sent* for us and our salvation—the Son to accomplish redemp-

⁸⁰ See, e.g., Aquinas, *ST I-II* 113 art. 1 co.; art. 4 ad. 1; art. 6 co.

⁸¹ Horton, *Justification*, 1:124.

⁸² Aquinas, *ST* “appendix 2.”

⁸³ Horton, *Justification*, 1:199–200.

⁸⁴ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (ed. John T. McNeill; trans. Ford Lewis Battles; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 3.11.1 (emphasis added), quoted in Horton, *Justification*, 1:215. Horton summarizes this concept thus: “All of our justifying righteousness is found in Christ, not in us. The Reformers did not thereby exclude the process of becoming holy. Rather, they argued that through union with Christ we receive both justification and sanctification, and these distinct acts must never be confused or separated” (*Justification*, 1:25).

⁸⁵ J. Todd Billings, *Union with Christ: Reframing Theology and Ministry for the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 26. See also Billings, *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift: The Activity of Believers in Union with Christ* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 107–8. However, Horton’s caution should be heeded: “Union with Christ does not provide a basis for God’s discerning in us a righteous imparted; rather, on the basis of justification we partake of Christ’s vivifying life. The same act of faith that looks to Christ alone for justification looks to Christ alone for sanctification and glorification” (*Justification*, 1:215).

tion (John 3:16–17; Rom 8:3–4; Gal 4:4–5a) and the Spirit to apply (or seal) redemption to the saints (John 14–16; Rom 8:14–17; Gal 4:5b–7; Eph 1:13–14). The temporal missions reveal the Son and Spirit’s eternal processions. The Son is begotten of the Father (*ad intra*); he is sent by the Father (*ad extra*; John 5:36–38; 8:16; 12:44–45). The Spirit is spirated by the Father and the Son (*ad intra*); he is sent by the Father and the Son (*ad extra*; John 14:16–17, 26; 15:26; 16:7). The missions of the Son and the Spirit include, and are expressive of, the eternal processions, with the addition of a temporal effect whereby a divine person is present in a new mode. The visible mission (primary) of the Son is the incarnation—that is, his life (active obedience), death (passive obedience), and resurrection (destruction of death; victory over sin). The Son’s assumption of a human nature is the created effect through which the Son is present in creation in a new way.

Upon the completion of his mission, Christ ascended into heaven, from whence he and the Father sent the Holy Spirit to the church at Pentecost. The Spirit’s outpouring (Acts 2:1–4) reflects both his visible mission (heavenly sound of a mighty rushing wind, tongues of fire, and the disciples’ speaking in tongues)⁸⁶ and his invisible mission (indwelling). This unique moment in salvific history institutes the Spirit’s primary mission in the world; it expresses his new mode of being according to a created effect. Specifically, the Spirit’s indwelling of believers imparts the double grace of justification and sanctification through union with Christ. In union with Christ by the Spirit’s indwelling (invisible mission of the Spirit; Rom 5:5; 1 John 2:27), believers experience all of Christ and his saving benefits (invisible mission of the Son; e.g. *knowing* Christ [Eph 3:17–19], new identity [2 Cor 5:17], adoption as sons [Gal 4:5–7]). Consequently, believers are assimilated (or conformed) to the person of the Son (through justification, his righteousness is forensically imputed to them; Rom 4:22–25; 2 Cor 5:21), and they are assimilated to the Spirit (through sanctification, they grow in the holiness characteristic of the Spirit; 2 Thess 2:13; 1 Pet 1:2). In actuality, however, they are conformed to the image of Christ *through* the Spirit, since Christ being the God-*man*, believers are increasingly assimilated to his glorified humanity (Rom 8:29–30; 2 Cor 3:18). Finally, by the power of the Holy Spirit, through the agency of the Son, believers experience full, uninhibited access to the presence of the Father (Eph 2:18; Heb 10:19–22). In short, the Spirit fills “believers and the church with the presence of the triune God.”⁸⁷

The mission of the Son and the mission of the Spirit are uniquely tethered. As Christopher Holmes offers, “The mission of the Holy Spirit is coextensive with the mission of the Word (the Lord Jesus Christ).”⁸⁸ And really, “though it is common to speak of two missions, . . . because of the inseparable operations of the triune God, these two missions are ultimately the one divine mission”⁸⁹ that human crea-

⁸⁶ As rehearsed above, the Holy Spirit’s other visible missions include the dove, the cloud of glory, and Christ’s breath.

⁸⁷ Allison and Köstenberger, *Holy Spirit*, 294.

⁸⁸ Holmes, *Holy Spirit*, 21.

⁸⁹ Allison and Köstenberger, *Holy Spirit*, 275.

tures experience in temporally successive moments. In other words, since there is genuinely only one eternal act, the temporal effects of the Spirit (i.e. his mission) are intrinsically connected to the temporal effects of the Son (i.e. his mission). On the account of inseparable operations, just as the Trinity jointly undertakes the project of creation (Father → Son → Holy Spirit →→ creation [*exitus*]), so also do they jointly complete the mission of salvation, which draws the redeemed into participation in the life of God (Father ← Son ← Holy Spirit ←← creation [*reditus*]). This actuality is, in effect, the *missio Dei*—the triune God’s redemptive mission toward creation in which he graciously allows the church to participate. With this synthesis and summary, then, I can now articulate how the divine missions correspond to the mission of the church.

III. THE DIVINE MISSIONS AND THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

Under the direction of the Son, by the power of the Spirit, the church participates—analogically—in the Trinitarian agency carried out in the divine missions.⁹⁰ Emery defines “mission” generically and shows its analogical application to the divine side:

The meaning of “being sent” implies two things: one is the orientation of the one who is sent to the sender; the other is the orientation of the one sent to the goal to which he is sent. This generic definition is formulated in terms that could be applied to any mission whatsoever, whether that of a creature or a divine person. As is his wont, Thomas uses analogy as a way into the topic, because it is by an analogous usage that we can say that a divine mission genuinely takes places, and in the proper sense of the word “mission.”⁹¹

Just as Thomas reasons analogically regarding the divine missions (to preserve the Creator-creature distinction), so also it is by way of analogy that one can understand how the mission of the church corresponds to the divine missions.

A divine mission entails (1) a procession of origin (or relation to sender); and (2) a new mode of presence according to a created effect (or relation to the objective, or the recipient, of the mission). The church’s (temporal) relation of origin is its commissioning from the resurrected Lord—by the authority of the Father, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Of particular importance, every commissioning text—with the exception of Matt 28:19–20 (which is more broadly Trinitarian)—highlights the cruciality of the Holy Spirit for the actualization of the church’s

⁹⁰ As Jürgen Moltmann avers, “It is not the church that has a mission of salvation to fulfil to the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the church, creating a church as it goes on its way” (*The Church in the Power of the Spirit* [trans. Margaret Kohl; New York: Harper & Row, 1977], 64). See also Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 146–48; Harper and Metzger, *Exploring Ecclesiology*, 20.

⁹¹ Emery, *Trinitarian Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, 364–65. Said another way, “The notion of mission peculiar to creatures will imply, on the one side, distance, and, on the other, movement or change in the one sent, whereas, the notion of mission which is peculiar to the divine person is characterized by, on the one side, the person’s having an eternal origin, and, on the other, a new mode of being for the person who is sent” (366).

mission (Luke 24:45–49 // Acts 1:8; John 15:26–27 [cf. 7:38–39; 16:13–15]; 20:21–23). This ordering is essential for the church’s participation in the *missio Dei*, for the church locates at the end of the agential chain of which the Spirit is the nearest agent (Father → Son → Holy Spirit →→ church →→ rest of world).⁹² In short, the church is sent from the Father, by the Son, through the Holy Spirit.

Concerning the church’s new mode of presence according to a created effect, the church *is* the new mode of presence; Christ’s taking individuals and incorporating them into “one new man” (ἓνα καινὸν ἄνθρωπον; Eph 2:15; cf. Gal 3:28) *just is* the created effect of the church’s procession—its “sentness” by the united God-head. In other words, *people* relate to the world in a new way, namely, *as the church*. The Holy Spirit effects this new mode of presence through his mission; he regenerates, indwells, and incorporates individuals into the church.⁹³ The invisible mission of the Spirit, which entails the invisible mission of the Son, assimilates the church into the personalizing properties of its senders; hence, the church is called the “body of Christ” and the “temple of the Holy Spirit.”⁹⁴

It may seem that I am describing the mission of the Son and of the Spirit, not the mission of the church *per se*. However, the missions of the Son, the Spirit, and the church are mutually entailing.⁹⁵ The mission of the Son was to accomplish redemption, the mission of the Spirit was and is to apply redemption to believers,⁹⁶ and the mission of the church is to proclaim redemption. As Gregg Allison correctly suggests, “The salvation that the Son accomplished as his mission would be an-

⁹² For greater discussion, see Emery (*Trinity*, 10–11), who interacts with the voices of Irenaeus of Lyon, Basil of Caesarea, and Thomas Aquinas on this subject.

⁹³ Because the church is a contingent reality, dependent upon the triune God for its very existence, “the Holy Spirit’s presence and empowerment are absolutely necessary for the church to be the church” (Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 121). See also John Webster (upon whom Allison depends here), *Word and Church: Essays in Christian Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2001), 195–96; idem, “On Evangelical Ecclesiology,” 26–27.

Individuals are incorporated into the church via baptism with the Holy Spirit. Although, as Gregg Allison correctly notes, it is actually *Christ* who baptizes believers *by the Spirit* (“Baptism with and Filling with the Holy Spirit,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 16 [2012]: 5–8). So, even in this work, the Son’s and the Spirit’s activity are united, following the Trinitarian *taxis*.

⁹⁴ For “body of Christ,” see Rom 12:4–5; 1 Cor 12:12–27; Eph 1:22–23; 4:4, 12–16; Col 1:18. For “temple of the Holy Spirit,” see 1 Cor 3:16–17; 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:21–22. For greater discussion on these two themes reflecting the church’s identity, see Badcock, *House Where God Lives*, chap. 3 (“Body of Christ”; esp. pp. 78–85) and chap. 4 (“Temple of the Holy Spirit”; esp. pp. 124–28).

⁹⁵ I.e. the mission of the church (and the church itself) cannot exist without the missions of the Son and the Spirit. The missions of the Son and Spirit, on the other hand, entail the mission of the church via contingent necessity—because Christ declared it to be so (John 15:26–27; 20:21). In this regard, Allison contends, “It does not seem too far a stretch to say that Jesus’ mission of accomplishing salvation and of constructing the church is all of a piece. If this is the case, then the church becomes an ingredient in the Son’s mission to rescue humanity from sin” (*Sojourners and Strangers*, 58; see also 141–43).

⁹⁶ Concerning the phrase “to apply redemption to believers,” for the purposes of this project, it matters not whether regeneration precedes conversion or vice versa. For greater discussion on this issue (i.e. the *ordo salutis*), see Bruce Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation: The Doctrine of Salvation* (Foundations of Evangelical Theology; Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1997), 36–44.

nounced by the disciples as their mission.”⁹⁷ In order for the church to *announce*, it must first *exist*. After all, ontology precedes function.⁹⁸ The church’s existence requires the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, which renders present Christ and all of his benefits. Its existence is founded upon Calvary and Pentecost—that is, the completed and inaugurated missions of the Son and the Spirit, respectively.⁹⁹ In turn, when the church executes its mission of proclamation, the Spirit vivifies individuals through the living Word (i.e. the gospel message preached and the presence of Christ), thus incorporating them into the church.¹⁰⁰

On both sides, then, the church’s new mode of presence according to a created effect is that God transforms men and women from hearers to speakers, from recipients of the message to witnesses who testify about the message.¹⁰¹ The church proclaims the message—Christ and him crucified—while the Spirit enlivens hearers to receive the message and, therefore, Christ himself (Rom 10:14–17; 1 Pet 1:23, 25; cf. Titus 3:4–7). To draw on speech-act theory, the Spirit accomplishes inwardly the *perlocutionary* effect of the *illocutionary* speech publicly proclaimed by Christians.¹⁰² Thus, the church participates—according to its creaturely mode—in the Trinitarian agency of the *missio Dei*. Although I have summarized how the mission of the church corresponds to the divine missions, broadly speaking, further nuancing will prove to be beneficial.

Like the missions of the Son and Spirit, the mission of the church can be differentiated into its visible and invisible aspects. Taking the latter first, the invisible mission of the church involves its sending according to invisible grace. The church functions as a means of grace inasmuch as it is the *instrument* through which the Spirit executes his own divine mission—indwelling believers and rendering the double grace of union with Christ. As Calvin comments on Rom 6:5, being grafted into Christ’s body “designates not only a conformity of example, but a secret union,

⁹⁷ Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 142–43. See also Allison and Köstenberger, *Holy Spirit*, 422–24.

⁹⁸ As Webster writes, “There can be no doctrine of the church which is not wholly referred to the doctrine of God, in whose being and action alone the church has its being and action” (Webster, *Word and Church*, 195). See also Harper and Metzger, *Exploring Ecclesiology*, 19–20.

⁹⁹ See Allison and Köstenberger, *Holy Spirit*, 422 (esp. n. 13).

¹⁰⁰ Horton offers helpful words in this regard: “The Spirit’s witness adds nothing to the content of revelation; rather, the Spirit inwardly illumines the heart to understand its meaning and convinces people of its truth. Just as Christ’s saving person and work are outside of us (*extra nos*) while the Spirit works within us, the external Word proclaimed is never to be set over against the Spirit’s work in our hearts to cause us to cling to Christ by his Word of promise. We require both, since we are not only condemned objectively but are in bondage subjectively to spiritual death, incapable of embracing the truth apart from regeneration” (*Rediscovering the Holy Spirit*, 248).

¹⁰¹ As Horton aptly notes, “Paul’s logic [in Rom 10:6, 15–17] is consistent: salvation is by grace because it is through faith; this faith comes through the receiving event of hearing; this event itself is the result of God’s having sent someone to declare the gospel to us” (*People and Place*, 68).

¹⁰² The *locution*, of course, is the content of the gospel message (Horton, *People and Place*, 18). See also Allison and Köstenberger, *Holy Spirit*, 309–11, particularly the following: “The Holy Spirit is especially associated with the perlocutionary aspect of a divine speech act. The Spirit plays a particularly crucial role in helping the hearers/readers of Scripture understand it correctly and respond rightly to God’s Word. The Spirit stirs up obedience to its commands, ignites faith in its promises, prompts a sense of dread to its warnings, and the like” (310).

by which we are joined to him; so that he, reviving us by his Spirit, transfers his own virtue to us."¹⁰³ Hence, a believer's fruitfulness in mission—and, thus, the efficacy of the church's mission—is the result of participation in Christ through the Spirit.¹⁰⁴ As Gregg Allison and Andreas Köstenberger affirm, "There is one mission of the triune God, and it is given to the church as its witness empowered by the Holy Spirit."¹⁰⁵

Next, the visible mission of the church must include a visible, sensible action or event that is a sign of the church's relation of origin (or relation to its sender; mission aspect #1) and its new mode of presence (or relation to the goal, or recipient, for which it is sent; mission aspect #2). The visible sign of the church is its proclamation of the gospel message—that is, Christ crucified and salvation in his name alone for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 4:10–12; 13:38; cf. 1 Cor 1:23). The proclaimed message (visible sign) is itself a testimony that the church is sent by God (mission aspect #1) and, as such, constitutes God's chosen vehicle of salvation for the rest of the world (mission aspect #2). Christians, therefore, are ambassadors of Christ, administering the ministry of reconciliation—namely, "the message [τὸν λόγον] of reconciliation"—to a lost world (2 Cor 5:18–21). They are sent out from God (*exitus*) in order to urge the world to return to God (*reditus*)—and so have peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom 5:1).¹⁰⁶

Moreover, like the divine missions, the visible mission of the church is ordered to its invisible mission.¹⁰⁷ The proclamation of the church itself does not save; its "new mode" (i.e. regenerated individuals preaching the gospel) is not inherently salvific. It is the invisible realities—the double grace of union with Christ applied by the Spirit through the proclaimed message—that are salvific. The church, though the body of Christ, is not Christ. It does not, therefore, replace Christ. Christians simply point to the finished work of Christ, while it is the Spirit, who blows where he wishes (John 3:8), who applies the gospel to the hearts of its hearers.¹⁰⁸ In a very real sense, then, the church is merely a vessel for the ongoing mis-

¹⁰³ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans* (ed. and trans. John Owen; Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1849), 222.

¹⁰⁴ For further discussion on the Spirit's working through creaturely means—viz., the preached Word—see Horton, *Rediscovering the Holy Spirit*, 258–61.

¹⁰⁵ Allison and Köstenberger, *Holy Spirit*, 422. The authors add, "This point does not contradict ... that there are two sendings or two missions, one of the Son and one of the Spirit. Those two commissions are ultimately part of the one mission of the triune God, which also engages the church" (p. 422 n. 11).

¹⁰⁶ See Harper and Metzger, *Exploring Ecclesiology*, 22, 33.

¹⁰⁷ It is at this juncture that a discussion of the preaching and teaching of the Word and the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper would be fruitful for further understanding how the theology of the divine missions applies to the mission of the church. However, as mentioned earlier, such a discussion would require much more space than is available here.

¹⁰⁸ As Horton correctly suggests, "The *hypostatic* union of deity and humanity in Christ is distinguished from the *mystical* union of Christ with his body. Christ is the federal head of his body, rather than the corporate personality. The person and work of Christ then and there, completed once and for all, is in no way extended or completed by the church; nevertheless, the Spirit's work here and now is just as crucial if there is to be an actual union with Christ and his benefits" (*People and Place*, 187; see also 189).

sion of the Spirit, though the church remains an active agent.¹⁰⁹ And it is in this manner that God graciously allows Christians to participate—analogically—in the Trinitarian agency carried out in the *missio Dei*. Such participation reflects a Christological pneumatology in that the church, by the power of the Holy Spirit, testifies to the person and work of Jesus Christ in his first and second coming.¹¹⁰

In closing, it would be wise to articulate some of the limitations of applying an analogous usage of the divine missions to the mission of the church. Human beings are not part of the undivided Godhead, they always operate *in time*, and they do not indwell other creatures by invisible grace. Furthermore, a human mission simply implies completing an objective given by another. Hence, a “new mode of presence” is merely the means by which one completes the assigned task (e.g. appearing in person, making a phone call, sending an email or text message). Unlike a divine mission, a human mission does not exclude elements of change because, unlike a divine person, one of the central elements of creatureliness *is change*. In short, one must be careful not to apply a one-to-one correspondence between the divine missions of the Son and Spirit and the mission of the church. While they are all coextensive, the Creator-creature distinction requires an analogical leap between the divine missions, on the one hand, and the church’s mission, on the other.¹¹¹ When done responsibly, such theologizing should provide, as I hope to have accomplished here, rich implications for the relationship between the *missio Dei* and the mission of the church.

IV. CONCLUSION

In inseparable union, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit undertook the project of redemption. In the fullness of time, they did so by executing the divine missions toward creation: the sending of the Son by the Father to accomplish salvation and the sending of the Spirit by the Father and the Son to apply salvation to believers. The Son and the Spirit are sent out into the world (*exitus*) that they may draw redeemed humankind back into participation in the divine life (*reditus*). Then, having been reconciled to the Father through the Son by the Spirit, believers are called to participate in God’s mission in the world; as the church, they are sent out (*exitus*) to preach the gospel and, thus, beckon the lost world to return to God (*reditus*). In so doing, the mission of the church joins—analogically—the Trinitarian agential chain that is the *missio Dei*.

I have endeavored to show that the theology of divine missions contributes to a unique line of reasoning that sheds greater light onto how the church participates in the triune *missio Dei* and, consequently, further supports the priority of the

¹⁰⁹ Again, Horton offers, “The church is never the effectual agent; instead, it is the recipient and field of God’s sanctifying work in the world [through the Spirit]” (*People and Place*, 197). It should be noted, also, that the church is not the Spirit—that is, the church is not the incarnation of the Holy Spirit. For more on this issue (and other related issues), see Horton, *Rediscovering the Holy Spirit*, 290–307 (esp. 290–98).

¹¹⁰ See Horton, *People and Place*, 235; Harper and Metzger, *Exploring Ecclesiology*, 35–37.

¹¹¹ See Webster, *Word and Church*, 196–98; Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 121.

church's ontology over its function. I began by defining relevant terms and establishing the parameters of my project, focusing specifically on the theological concepts and NT data related to the missions of the Son, the Spirit, and the church. Then, I surveyed a broadly Johannine theology of divine missions in order to establish the biblical basis for the largely metaphysical synthesis offered by Thomas Aquinas. After critiquing Thomas's notion of sanctifying grace and substituting it with John Calvin's espousal of the double grace of union with Christ, I proposed an augmented biblical-theological synthesis of the divine missions. Finally, I applied my synthesis to the mission of the church, showing how Christians participate—according to their mode as creatures—in the Trinitarian agency carried out in the *missio Dei*.

It is my hope that such an exercise has provided rich insights into the relationships between the *missio Dei* and the mission of the church, between a Christological pneumatology and ecclesiology, and between the ontology of the church and its function. To be sure, I have only focused on the proclamatory aspects of the church; so, there are certainly more areas of ecclesiology that merit further consideration vis-à-vis the divine missions, specifically, and a Christological pneumatology, more broadly. This project, hopefully, will serve as a launching point for future investigation into such areas.¹¹²

¹¹² I extend my deepest appreciation to Gregg R. Allison for his feedback on a preliminary version of this article.