

Spring 2020

THE VULNERABILITY OF GOD: TOWARD A BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL AND PASTORAL VIEW OF DIVINE P ASSIBILITY

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THE VULNERABILITY OF GOD:
TOWARD A BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL AND PASTORAL VIEW OF DIVINE
PASSIBILITY

MASTER'S THESIS

PRESENTED TO

THE FACULTY OF THE SCHOOL OF DIVINITY
IN THE BARNETT COLLEGE OF MINISTRY AND THEOLOGY
AT SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS IN THEOLOGICAL STUDIES

BY

GARRETT SEDERHOLM

2020

THESIS COMMITTEE SIGNATURE PAGE

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Date 7/28/2020



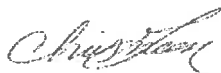
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ABSTRACT

The issues surrounding the debate of the aspect of God's passibility versus impassibility are important enough to give the topic its due respect and attention. Engaging with the debate itself promises to grant the hearer revelation of the nuances of who God is and how He works in the world. This author will in the end argue for divine passibility, but the intent of this work is not to stake a claim in the debate or merely contribute some nuance to one side of the discussion. Rather, it is to discover more richly a biblical, theological and pastoral vision for a God who is in relationship with human beings. Historical and modern perspectives across the spectrum of the discussion will be considered while giving attention to biblical/theological touchpoints for the subject and some major concerns for how the topic is approached.

To Layla and Lyssa

May you come to know a truly vulnerable God

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The Thesis and the Task

An endless spectrum of theological issues has been tugged at, prodded and pushed on from a myriad of angles for hundreds of years. And rightly so being that the truth about God, the world and human beings is exhaustive. Adventure awaits all those who take the journey into knowing and understanding who God is and how He works in the world. Of particular interest, however intentionally or passively, but certainly experientially, seems to be the interactions of God with human beings. The way scripture reveals those interactions and the way people experience those interactions is at front and center of many theological issues. It can be argued that the act of doing theology itself is an interaction with God. And the questions that arise when considering how those interactions actually happen as it relates to who God is and who man is are astounding. Does God enter a live, reciprocal relationship with human beings? Does God experience emotion or passions in His relationship with the world and His creatures? If so, how does that work being that He is God? In short, is God completely impassible or passible in some way? These are a few of the questions that will be approached and discussed in the remainder of this paper.

The issues surrounding the debate of the aspect of God's passibility versus impassibility are important enough to give the topic its due respect and attention. Engaging with the debate itself promises to grant the hearer revelation of the nuances of who God is and how He works in the world He created with the creatures He created. This author will in the end argue for divine passibility, but the intent of this work is not to stake a claim in the debate or merely contribute

some nuance to one side of the discussion. Rather, it is to discover more richly a biblical, theological and pastoral vision for a God who is in relationship with human beings.

To approach this subject fairly, there must be an authentic entering into the discussion at some depth in order to give a hearing to both sides of the argument. Robert Matz comments on the subject saying, “While the biblical data may seem to lean primarily (at least numerically) in the direction of passibility, and the patristic data primarily in the direction of impassibility (of some form), a responsible theological construction must not simply proof text its way to a view on passibility or impassibility”.¹ In this regard, there is some work that must be done first to lay out the varying angles of the discussion in order to arrive at any fresh perspective.

Clarifying Terms

It seems important to clarify some significant terms for the parameters of the subject at hand. Matz and Thornhill boil down the topic very simply to the “emotional life of God”.² Whenever instances of God being angry, grieved, loving, etc. are examined or discussed, the subject of God’s emotional life is front and center. This is where the debate between God being passible or impassible stems from. The impassible side of the discussion would by and large adhere to the view that God does not experience any emotional changes and is not affected by His creation in any way.³ The passible side of the debate would argue that God can be affected by His creation and in fact, because of His creation He experiences emotional changes.⁴

There is overlap in this discussion with many theological concerns, especially as it relates to the nature of God and His varying attributes. Of particular focus when it comes to the question

¹ Robert J. Matz and A. Chadwick Thornhill, *Divine Impassibility: Four Views of God’s Emotions and Suffering* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, an imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2019), 11

² Ibid, 1

³ Ibid, 2

⁴ Ibid, 2

of impassibility would be God's immutability. It is of concern in order to bring clarity for the sake of further mention and discussion of this attribute of God. Grudem has defined God's immutability as such, "God is unchanging in his being, perfections, purposes, and promises..."⁵ There does seem to be a distinction between God's immutability and His emotional life, especially as it relates to His relations with the world and people. Those adhering to a view of a passible God would make this distinction. God is unchanging in His being, but changes in how He relates to His creatures in different instances.⁶ On the other side of the discussion, those adhering to divine impassibility would make some connection between God's immutability showing that if God experiences passions and emotions, then in some way He changes and ceases to be immutable.⁷ It does seem clear though that there is a difference in the terms immutability and impassibility. Immutability refers to the unchangeableness of God in general while impassibility refers to the emotions of God in connection to His relationship with the world.

In the end, the focus of this work will be to zero in on the question of if and how God is affected by the world and human beings. This could be viewed as a particular part of the discussion of divine passibility/impassibility. But given the breadth of scriptural evidence that lends itself towards God's relationship with the world, it seems an unavoidable and important subject to get some perspective on. One cannot really discuss the question of divine impassibility without exploring God's interactions with His creatures and how those interactions work.

Structure and Flow of the Argument

⁵ Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 2000), 163

⁶ Robert J. Matz and A. Chadwick Thornhill, *Divine Impassibility: Four Views of Gods Emotions and Suffering* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, an imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2019), 93

⁷ *Ibid*, 25

The basic structure of this work will follow a pathway that will seek balance and depth. Chapter two will serve as a historical/modern juxtaposition of the two basic views on this subject. This will be done by comparing three historical thinkers/theologians with three modern thinkers/theologians in order to bring more nuance to the already briefly described subject. Chapter three will explore specifically chosen theological/biblical touchpoints to consider the subject from. This chapter will provide limited biblical lenses that focus the reader on particular biblical concerns that seem to matter for the discussion. Chapter four will wrestle with some seemingly important concerns when considering this topic as a whole, its development over time and how it has been approached. Chapter five will serve as a conclusion from this writer's perspective that finds a landing place while providing a Pentecostal and pastoral angle that lends itself to the closing synthesis.

The breadth and complexity of this topic is apparent. No one piece of work, especially as limited as this one, will be able to cover the subject completely. This writer enters this discussion knowing that much will be left out and many things left unsaid or unmentioned. This will be intentional as to keep the project focused. Hopefully the reader will enjoy the exploration. As the prophet Isaiah keenly pointed out, God's thoughts and ways are much higher than any persons (Isaiah 55:9). This can be viewed as an invitation from God who seems to desire those who are interested in Him to come higher and have an adventure trekking through the terrain of His truth. Rather than seeing this subject just as a debate with sides to pick from, it can be viewed as an experience that may have milestones in the form of revelation and insight into who God is.

CHAPTER TWO

HISTORICAL ORTHODOXY AND MODERN THEOLOGIANS

Introduction

In order to arrive at any viable conclusions on the matter of divine impassibility versus passibility, engagement with both historical and modern theologians and biblical scholars is necessary. Generally speaking, historical Christian orthodoxy lends itself toward a view of strong divine impassibility and immutability.¹ Although there was some attention given to this topic in historical Protestantism, it has not been since the last one hundred years or so that this doctrine has become a serious topic in evangelicalism. That being stated, the dialogue that continues on the matter is helpful when one juxtaposes the differing views and sees them side-by-side. No theological debate or discussion of differing opinions can be represented fairly without recognizing a certain amount of truth that may be in the varying viewpoints. The one traveling down the corridor of knowledge and truth must make a strenuous effort to open as many doors as possible in order to arrive at the proper destination. The destination here being the most biblical view of the subject at hand that considers the historical and modern work of those that have already traveled the journey. For this reason in the following, the author will engage some of the major contributors on both sides of the discussion of God's impassibility/passibility.

Historical Impassibilists

¹ Robert J. Matz and A. Chadwick Thornhill, *Divine Impassibility: Four Views of God's Emotions and Suffering* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, an imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2019), 14

Although some have claimed that a view of divine passibility can be traced back to the church fathers, it's safe to say that an open view of God or an admission of divine passibility flies in the face of historical, orthodox, Protestant tradition.² Pinnock comments on those who adamantly reject a passible view of God by saying, "They did not welcome an initiative that challenged conservative Reformation thinking and fell like a bombshell on the theological playground (to recall Barth's expression). For those with the conventional presuppositions found in Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Luther and Calvin, the model was too radical and impossible to accept. By breaking with a number of long accepted ideas, it waived a red flag in their faces".³ In light of Pinnock's comments, one must ask on what grounds those who hold tight to divine impassibility and reject a more open view of God stand on? Given there is such historical support on a more closed view of God, for an adequate discussion to be had, those views must be taken seriously. Dolezal fairly comments by saying, "Of course, the broad historical support by no means fixes the truth of the doctrine but it should give us occasion to seriously ponder its claims rather than dismiss them out of hand".⁴

Augustine was one of the earliest church fathers to adhere to a strong doctrine of divine impassibility. In Peckham's work on the love of God he comments on the Augustinian view, "Accordingly, God's love for the world is not acquisitive, evaluative or passible. God can neither desire nor receive any value or enjoyment from the world since he lacks nothing (aseity). As such, God does not love in the sense of Plato's eros (desire) or

² Clark H. Pinnock, *The Most Moved Mover* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2001), xi

³ Ibid, xi

⁴ Robert J. Matz and A. Chadwick Thornhill, *Divine Impassibility: Four Views of God's Emotions and Suffering* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, an imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2019), 14

Aristotle's *philia* (friendship), but divine love is unilateral beneficence (thematic *agape*)".⁵ By "unilateral beneficence" it is meant that God's love is one-sided. According to Augustine, God's love cannot be reciprocated back to Him in any way that it is extended to us.⁶ This would be impossible for a God who cannot receive any value from anyone or anything. Dolezal would speak of this view in terms of God being "purely actual".⁷ Meaning that God is never caused to be moved by anyone or anything. He acts, not as the result of some impression made on Him, but because He simply is. On whether or not God can receive enjoyment from His creatures Augustine said this,

"For God loves us, and Holy Scripture frequently sets before us the love He has towards us. In what way then does He love us? As objects of use or as objects of enjoyment? If He enjoys us, He must be in need of good from us, and no sane man will say that; for all the good we enjoy is either Himself, or what comes from Himself".⁸

Augustine's God was immovable. This view holds congruency with Augustine's view on the knowledge of God which he saw as unchanging and never-learning. That is that, God has never had to learn and is pure wisdom in its complete form.⁹ It seems logical that an omniscient God would not ever be affected by anything that happens since omniscience seems to imply that God knows all things at all times and therefore He cannot be impacted by the behavior and actions of His creatures.

⁵ John Peckham, *The Love of God: A Canonical Model* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, an imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2015), 18

⁶ *Ibid*, 19

⁷ Robert J. Matz and A. Chadwick Thornhill, *Divine Impassibility: Four Views of God's Emotions and Suffering* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, an imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2019), 23-24

⁸ Philip Schaf, *The Complete Works of Saint Augustine: The Confessions, On Grace and Free Will, The City of God, On Christian Doctrine, Expositions on the Book Of Psalms, ... (50 Books With Active Table of Contents)*, 22391, Kindle

⁹ *Ibid*, 22101, Kindle

Maybe even more influential than Augustine in championing divine impassibility was Thomas Aquinas. For Thomas Aquinas, a view of God's immutability was imperative for a correct view of God. For Aquinas, this was not just immutability that isolated God's character as unchanging but His total essence.¹⁰ Within the space of God's immutability is how He operates in relation to creation and, in a more specific sense, His apparent motion as it relates to His movement toward, upon or among creation. For Aquinas, immutability did not necessarily imply non-movement to God. Instead, it reapplies the idea of movement based on God's perfection of being and inability to be moved by anything.¹¹ In other words, God moves Himself from the inside as a response to Himself because He loves Himself.¹² God then is moving and acting in the world as He sees fit and working out His will with His creatures. And even if a person seems to not represent the will of God, still in the end the perfect will of God will be worked out, even if that means judgment of sin.¹³ God is not moved, He is the mover of all things. The emphasis on self-sufficiency and independence cannot be ignored. In the context of theology proper, one cannot avoid coming to terms with an all-sufficient, all-powerful, all-knowing and unchanging God who needs nothing from anyone. But Aquinas takes a stance firmly in impassibility. Dodds helps us get into the mind of Aquinas by noting, "Finally, motion implied by relationship to other things is excluded from God, who is always 'in the same way present to all things (*eodem modo omnibus praesens*).' Those things, however, are not always in the same way related to God. The

¹⁰ Michael J. Dodds, *The Unchanging God of Love Thomas Aquinas and Contemporary Theology on Divine Immutability* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 54-55

¹¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (Complete & Unabridged) (p. 40). Coyote Canyon Press. 732, Kindle

¹² Michael J. Dodds, *The Unchanging God of Love Thomas Aquinas and Contemporary Theology on Divine Immutability* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press), 2008, 54

¹³ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (Complete & Unabridged) (p. 197). Coyote Canyon Press., 4335, Kindle

relationship of things to God may change because of variations in things".¹⁴ But the relationship of God to things cannot change because God is in the same way present to all things, at all times.

Dodds helps every student of Aquinas understand that for Aquinas God was the cause of all things and therefore cannot be caused by anything but also subsequently, cannot be affected by anything from a causal perspective.¹⁵ Aquinas theology says God is the first mover and is moved by no other.¹⁶ What is at stake for Aquinas in many ways is God's perfection. Part of what makes Him perfect is that He needs nothing, cannot be changed and is not subject to anything or anyone.¹⁷ Perfection in God for Aquinas equals Him being entirely actual.¹⁸ This means that God is completely who He is in perfection and never has and never will need anything to complete Him. This could lead to the question of whether it is even logical, given God's perfection, holiness and righteousness that He could be affected in any way by an unholy and imperfect creation or creature.

John Calvin was also a proponent of God's passionless nature. He drew a sharp contrast between the emotions, affections and passions of human beings and those of God by adhering to the view that when scripture speaks of God's apparent grieving it was not literal but rather anthropopathic.¹⁹ When the scriptures speak of God's grieving, or other

¹⁴ Michael J. Dodds, *The Unchanging God of Love Thomas Aquinas and Contemporary Theology on Divine Immutability* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press), 2008, 56

¹⁵ Ibid, 96-98

¹⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (Complete & Unabridged). Coyote Canyon Press. Kindle Edition. 739, Kindle

¹⁷ Michael J. Dodds, *The Unchanging God of Love Thomas Aquinas and Contemporary Theology on Divine Immutability* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press), 2008, 101

¹⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (Complete & Unabridged). Coyote Canyon Press. Kindle Edition. 1126, Kindle

¹⁹ Samuel Renihan, *God without Passions: A Reader* (Palmdale, CA: Printed by Richard Barcellos for Reformed Baptist Academic Prefs, 2015), 46-47

forms of emotion, they are put in terms that human beings can receive and understand but they are not meant to lead us to believe that God is like us in His being and acting. The language then that seems to convey that God is emotional is not to be taken literally. Calvin believed strongly that God did not need human beings in any way. Therefore, because He does not need human beings they can have no effect on Him for good or bad.²⁰ The slippery slope for Calvin had to do again with God's self-sufficiency or His aseity.²¹ A God who is affected by creation is potentially a God who has weakness or at the least a need to be impacted at a fundamental level in His nature.

Modern Passibilists

Clark Pinnock, an open theist, was one of the most formative contributors among contemporary theologians who subscribe to a passible view of God. In beginning to explain the open view of God, Pinnock states, "God freely decided to be, in some respects, affected and conditioned by creatures and he established things in such a way that some things he desires may not happen".²² The open view of God encompasses more than just a passible view of God. However, the idea that God can and even wills Himself to be affected by creatures shows a sharp contrast from Calvin, Luther and Aquinas. Pinnock goes on to say, "God is for us and with us. He is not a metaphysical abstraction, but the one who makes his presence felt- actively, responsively, relationally, dynamically, and reciprocally. God is transcendent, but does not exist in isolation from the world. He is unchangeable in character, but not unchanging in his relation with us".²³ The divide between character and relation to

²⁰ James E. Dolezal, *All That Is in God: Evangelical Theology and the Challenge of Classical Christian Theism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2017), 12

²¹ John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* (p. 76), 3212, Kindle.

²² Clark H. Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover: A Theology of God's Openness* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2002), 5

²³ *Ibid*, 6

the world in terms of immutability is a high point in argument for the passibilist side of this debate. The passibilists will contend that God does not change in who He is, but He does change how He relates to the world. The question remains that if He changes in how He relates to the world, does this compromise a purely immutable view of God? Or can God relate differently at different times and be affected by creation without being categorized as a being who fundamentally changes?

Pinnock argues that historical/conventional theology did not leave enough room for God to be truly relational. The fear of God truly relating to a changing world leaves room for He Himself to change for those who fight for divine impassibility²⁴—that is unless there is a way for God to authentically relate to the world without actually or completely changing. Open theism goes down a path that unashamedly leads to a God who does not know everything that will happen. He intentionally leaves space for the unknown so He can partner with human beings to forge the future.²⁵ There is not enough room within the scope of this paper to give explanation of all of open theism but, suffice it to say, a lot can come with a passible view of God if allowed. However, the emphasis on God being truly relational with human beings to the extent that He is affected and moved by them is represented in open theism and Pinnock would be a major contender for this view of God.

Pinnock says this in regard to God's relationship with creation, "God's relationship with the world has real integrity. God binds himself to us and with us where we are and when we are. Creation is his living space and history the realm of his activity".²⁶ In this way Pinnock paints a picture of God who is not entirely separate from the world. He does qualify

²⁴ Ibid, 6

²⁵ Ibid, 5

²⁶ Ibid, 33

these statements by noting that, “This does not make God dependent on the world necessarily. Rather it means that God, through grace, has decided to be independent of the world in some respects and dependent on it in other respects”.²⁷ Pinnock goes on to argue that God does not have to completely avoid all dependence in order to be great or glorious but it is precisely in His limited dependence that He shows His greatness because He condescends to humanity in real relationship.²⁸ The independence of God seems at stake when seeking to comply with a passible view of God. If God is bound to the world in any way, it seems difficult to understand how He would not be dependent on it. If God has complete sovereign authority over the world and in certain respects does not choose to exercise that authority, then maybe His independence stays intact.

Jurgen Moltmann can most certainly be named among the modern theologians who adhere to divine passibility. Moltmann specifically places emphasis on the fact that God suffers. In commenting on what is referred to as the pathos of God, Moltmann writes, “...it is his interest in his creation and his people, by which God transfers his being into the history of his relationship and his covenant with man. God takes man so seriously that he suffers under the actions of man and can be injured by them. At the heart of prophetic proclamation there stands the certainty that God is interested in the world to the point of suffering”.²⁹ This is not the time to unpack completely the idea of God suffering. However, a God who can suffer is certainly a God of passions and a God who is acutely affected by His creatures. One cannot suffer because of another without being open and vulnerable in some way to that other person. In speaking of the emotions of God Moltmann writes this, “It

²⁷ Ibid, 33

²⁸ Ibid, 33

²⁹ Moltmann Jürgen, *Crucified God: 40th Anniversary Edition* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 405

has nothing to do with the irrational human emotions like desire, anger, anxiety, envy or sympathy, but describes the way in which God is affected by events and human actions in history”.³⁰ This seems an important distinction if one is going to take the side of divine passibility. God certainly can't be subject to sinfully-tainted emotions or ruled by emotions. As emotional beings, humans can be overcome by emotion and even controlled by them. If this is said of God, then He becomes completely unpredictable and even unreliable like human beings. It must be said that this is not just a distinction between rational thought and emotional thought but the possibility that God's emotions are always informed by His sinless, perfection of being which in this sense is largely different from human emotions.

Moltmann goes so far as to say that the wrath of God is actually “injured love” and that “Love is the source and basis of the possibility of the wrath of God....the wrath of God is not something that is inflicted, but a divine suffering of evil”.³¹ This angle opens a window into the inner workings of a God who is emotional. God actually experiences and is affected by human beings and the world. Because of His passionate interest in the world He is affected by it. Moltmann put the event of Jesus' death on the cross at the center of the idea that God can suffer. On the cross the Father endured, grieved and suffered the death of His son for the redeeming of sinful humanity.³² Moltmann made the argument that a God who doesn't suffer cannot be involved and also cannot love and this would make God a loveless being.³³ Moltmann may or may not be right in this statement but, suffice it to say, that his God is affected by humans in significant ways.

³⁰ Ibid, 404

³¹ Ibid, 407

³² Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology an Introduction* (Chichester, West Sussex: Blackwell, 2017), 184

³³ Ibid, 185

The idea that a lack of suffering equates to a lack of involvement from one angle seems probable. What one does not see in the story of scripture is a lack of involvement of God in the world. On the contrary, He is involved from start to finish. However, both ends of the spectrum of this argument agree that God works and is involved in the world. The passibilist though would agree with Moltmann that God's working in the world is often a direct result of His being affected by people in the world. This is the categorical difference between seeing God as open and vulnerable in His relationship with the world versus viewing Him as unaffected and unmoved by creation in any way, though not lacking love and affection for His world.

Gregory Boyd, a proponent of open theism, is also a passibilist. He argues for man having a real reciprocal relationship with God:

“On the contrary, since God is the epitome of everything we deem praiseworthy, and since we ordinarily consider responsiveness to be praiseworthy, should we not be inclined to view God as the most responsive being imaginable? He never changes his perfect character, of course, for this would not be praiseworthy. But as Scripture indicates, he is wonderfully willing and able to adjust his plans and emotions as his relationship with us calls for it”.³⁴

Boyd contends that God's passions and His being affected by His creatures is a strength rather than a weakness. He also makes a distinction between His character and emotions in regard to changeability. God does not change in His character but can and does change in His emotions, behavior and plans. God does interact with us moment by moment in real time and works within the constructs of our current reality.³⁵

³⁴ Gregory A. Boyd, *God of the Possible* (p. 78). Baker Publishing Group, 1082, Kindle

³⁵ *Ibid*, (pg. 132), 1846, Kindle

Boyd puts God's passibility under the banner of love. A God who loves is one who is in real relationship with human beings as a human being would understand any loving relationship. "While we must certainly think of God as being necessarily unchanging in all the ways in which it is virtuous for a person to be unchanging, we must also conceive of God as being supremely open to change, supremely open to being impacted by others, and supremely open to doing new things and having new experiences when it is loving to do so".³⁶ God's perceivable changes in scripture paint a picture of a God who opens Himself to humans in order to affectionately love them.

Summary

A review and further explanation for clarity of the divine passibility/impassibility discussion seems appropriate as this chapter comes to a close. Divine impassibility adheres fairly strictly to the idea that God is unaffected by His creatures or creation in any way. He is passionless because having passions would imply that He is affected by something or someone outside of Himself. For impassibilists, the perfection, aseity and immutability of God are at stake in this discussion. Divine impassibility leaves no room for God to change or be changed in His willful actions toward humankind as that would mean that His experience of interacting with humankind would essentially add something to Him or take something away. Even if He is emotional in some sense, He is never changed emotionally, but only expresses some emotion out of His unchanging essence. God is purely actual in His character and nature for the impassibilists. By example, He is pure love that has an effect on human beings and the world through relationship but is never really acted upon or affected

³⁶ "God's Moral Immutability - Greg Boyd," ReKnew, October 4, 2016, <https://reknew.org/2016/10/gods-moral-immutability/>

in any way. Although He works in the world by divine providence, He does not engage in a truly reciprocal relationship with human beings. He acts upon people and affects them, but they cannot affect Him in any way and if they could He would not truly be God.

Divine passibility says that God can and is affected by His creatures and creation. In fact, the very essence of what being relational means depends on God having a truly reciprocal relationship with humanity. And those instances of God being portrayed in scripture as being emotional for the passibilists are literal and not figurative or anthropopathic. God responds in real time to His creatures and does even change how He works with them in His relationship with them. God is emotional but not ruled by emotion. He is rational and just in His being, acting and emotions. He is emotional, but also volitional and even evaluative. He is not moved by emotions at every turn, but is measured emotionally and the measurement comes from His perfect nature as a whole. This prevents God from having flawed or sinful emotions like human beings do. In the end, the passibilist view cannot see a way for God to be in loving relationship with human beings without Him being affected by them. Even if by His own choosing and not out of necessity, He is responsive and impacted by the actions of those He made.

Both views seem to agree that God works in the world. The impassibilist generally believes that God works in the world by what He has decreed or what has been predetermined. In this case, any apparent response that God shows to His world or creatures is real but not actually affecting God in any way, but merely allowing God to do what He already decided He would do. In this way God's perfection, self-existence and independence are maintained. The passibilist, on the other hand, subscribes to a more open view of God—to varying degrees—and allows for a reciprocal relationship between God and humans. God

works in the world with human beings as real partners and He allows Himself to be affected by them while He also has an effect on His partners.

Although the discussion seems to have various rabbit trails and overlapping theologies, what seems to be at the center is the question of God's being entirely actual versus Him being in some way vulnerable.

A Way Forward

Some outlining has been done of the historically orthodox view of divine impassibility with juxtaposition to some modern views on divine passibility. Some touchpoints have been made here and there to show the theological breadth of this subject and the overlap it has with various theologies. To this point, it has been made clear that the debate finds its greatest tension with the argument of God's being open and affected by His creation versus a view that says He cannot and will not ever be affected by His creation at all. Both sides of the argument agree that God still works in the world. To find a way forward it seems helpful to try to move beyond the debate itself and discover what other biblical and theological touchpoints can be used to discover more about God in this discussion.

Given the historically orthodox view on the impassibility of God and that view having only fiercely been questioned in the last one hundred years or so, it begs the question as to how one can move toward discovering what needs to be discovered about God, how He works in the world, and His relationship with human beings. As important as it is to categorize the various views on this subject, it seems beneficial to find a way forward that lends itself toward biblical coherence rather than just floating opinions or established

classical theism. To move beyond the debate as it stands, it seems profitable to find some biblical and theological touchpoints that can further the discussion from various angles without claiming to have lifted every stone concerning the matter.

Truth can be found in both trenches of perspectives so neither one should be totally dismissed. The goal of this work is not to further entrench those on either side of the debate but rather to open new doors and discover new truth that may not have been examined in quite this way. In the coming chapter, the pursuit will be one of truth not just proving or defending a perspective. As has been stated, a view of divine passibility will be ultimately argued for but this will not be done dogmatically or without accepting the truth of the varying views and seeking to reconcile those with a passible view of God.

CHAPTER THREE

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL TOUCHPOINTS

Introduction

To move beyond debate on this subject, it seems the most fruitful pathway may be to find some biblical/theological touchpoints that can serve as fresh discussion ground for the purpose of avoiding circular arguments. One of the joys of theology is that no theologian is ever done. It often seems that many subjects, this being one of them, cannot be exhausted. There is not enough room within this work to discuss or even outline every biblical instance that has bearing on the subject at hand. For this reason three touchpoints have been chosen to further this discussion and hopefully enrich it. Covenant, the image of God in man and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit have been selected to ground this work biblically and head toward a conclusion.

Covenant

The biblical narrative centers God's relationship with humanity around the idea of covenant.¹ Wellum and Gentry say this about covenant, "At the heart of covenant, then, is a relationship between parties characterized by faithfulness and loyalty in love".² Covenant then, is at the heart of the narrative of scripture. One cannot make it very far in the first several chapters of the Bible before they run into the word covenant itself, let alone the concept. There is some consensus that at least five covenants are revealed in scripture between God and humans.³ Gentry and Wellum argue that there are six since it seems probable that there was an implied covenant at creation that was renewed or upheld with Noah and his family.⁴

¹ Ibid, 21-22

² Ibid, 141

³ Peter John. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 135

⁴ Ibid, 152-153 & 177-178

Covenants in the Ancient Near East did not necessarily form a new a relationship between two parties but affirmed a relationship that was already present.⁵ They included oaths, promises and even a legal binding in the relationship between the two parties.⁶ To a certain degree, one must extrapolate from human-to-human covenants in the Ancient Near East to understand how a covenant between God and humanity would function. It is at least safe to conclude that in covenant relationship with God, He has created or affirmed an already existing relationship with human beings characterized by loyalty and faithfulness with the aim of intimate love in order to bind Himself to them using oaths and promises. It should be noted that God reveals Himself to Abraham in His covenant with him in Genesis 15 as the one who will ultimately fulfill both sides of the covenant arrangement between Himself and humans.⁷ That is because human beings, in the scope of the scriptural narrative, cannot fulfill their end of the covenant agreement. Only God can be completely faithful to keep the covenant valid. This is most clearly revealed in the person and work of Jesus Christ who lived the life humans couldn't live and died a death on behalf of human beings in order to be faithful to the covenant agreement with God for humanity. This is what makes it ultimately a covenant of grace.

Covenant as a theme is a crucial paradigm for following the storyline of the Bible and gives some context for discussion in regard to the divine passibility/impassibility discussion. If the ultimate aim of God covenanting with humanity is to pursue intimate loving relationship, then how does this actually occur? Is God really interacting with people in a relational way as we know human relationships to be or does it function entirely different? In God's covenant with Abraham (Genesis 15), God makes a binding commitment to Abraham and his descendants that

⁵ Ibid, 153

⁶ Ibid, 152

⁷ Ibid, 257

He will be faithful in His covenant with them even when they are not faithful. This makes this to some degree a one-sided covenant.⁸ One could argue then that because it is one-sided it then affirms the “purely actual” view of God that Dolezal holds to.⁹ That would mean that in the context of covenant relationship God may have bound Himself to His people, but not in a way that He is affected by them. Theoretically, it may be possible for God to enter covenant with humans while remaining impassible. Dolezal comments on an unchanging God covenanting with people:

“The immutable God may commit to bring about certain blessings or curses on His creatures via covenant (see for example, Deuteronomy 11:26-28; 1 Kings 2:3-4; Isaiah 1:18-20), but this is not to be considered as God’s placing Himself in a position in which He depends on His creatures or receives anything from their hands. God is not voluntarily subjecting Himself to being moved by His human covenantal counterparts when He makes certain promises or sets down certain conditions and stipulations”.¹⁰

This would seem to make God’s covenanting one-sided from both a relational and operational perspective. Relationally, God is giving to and moving His covenantal partners but never getting anything from or being moved in any way by them.

Operationally then, it would seem that what God wants to accomplish in His redemptive plan through partnering with humans in covenant is essentially entirely brought about by God. Even if effort is put forth by people based on the covenant relationship, it would seem that God does not gain anything operationally for the accomplishment of His plans in the earth because man has nothing to offer God. This does provide, in some sense, a large view of God that is extremely independent and self-sufficient.

⁸ Walter A. Brueggemann, *Genesis* (Atlanta: J. Knox, 1982), 150

⁹ Robert J. Matz and A. Chadwick Thornhill, *Divine Impassibility: Four Views of God’s Emotions and Suffering* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, an imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2019), 23-24

¹⁰ James E. Dolezal, *All That Is in God: Evangelical Theology and the Challenge of Classical Christian Theism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2017), 18

Gentry and Wellum draw a comparison with a modern-day contract and ancient covenant in order to get to the bottom of understanding biblical covenant and more specifically divine covenant.¹¹ They identify a major distinction of a biblical covenant from a mere contract is that of personal loyalty in faithfulness and love.¹² Loyalty could and should go both ways but in the context of God's covenant with humans it is only God who is actually able to remain completely loyal. The aim, though, it seems is that from God's perspective He is looking for loyal commitment from His people. God's covenants with people then, in some sense, can assume a reciprocal relationship. That is that God covenants with humanity, at least in part, in order to get faithfulness, loyalty, trust and love from them. This could be reconciled with an impassible view of God if one views any loyalty, trust and faithfulness of persons as never adding anything to God or moving Him in any way. On the other hand, this understanding of covenant could swing the discussion toward a passible view of God being that this implies He will receive loyalty and trust from human beings. Again, it could be argued that even though God might be looking for loyalty from humankind He does not actually get anything from that loyalty. That is, it does not add anything to Him or affect Him in any way. It seems this might paint a fairly cold picture of God's covenanting with man. The outlook would be that man gets invited into covenant with his creator to find a relationship that does not really exist in conventional terms. There is no give and take. There is only real affection, as it is understood from a human-to-human perspective, flowing from one side of the relationship. There is also no real exchange of value from both sides. This is not to argue for a passible view of God but to makes sure the impassible view is

¹¹ Peter John. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 141

¹² *Ibid*, 141

clearly understood. The passibilists may argue that this picture is not one of warm intimacy but one of cold arrangement.

Moltmann sees God's covenanting with humanity as a place in which God has "opened his heart" to people: "The more covenant is taken seriously as the revelation of God, the more profoundly one can understand the historicity of God and history in God. If God has opened his heart in the covenant with his people, he is injured by disobedience and suffers in the people".¹³ In this view then, as much as God can be injured by people He can certainly feel the affectionate love and loyalty of people. Assuming God has some kind of universal love for all of humanity and a more focused love for those whom He enters into covenant relationship with one has to ask what kind of focused or special love that covenant brings to any person? What would be the purpose of covenant relationship if it is only truly one-sided? Does God act in covenant-making purely from a volitional love that is totally unaffected by the state that humanity is in?

In the narrative of scripture, it does seem that some of those who covenanted with God saw the context of their covenant with God as a reciprocal relationship. God covenanted with Israel and Moses served as mediator for that covenant. Moses acted and related to God in the context of how he understood God's covenant. In Exodus 32, Moses finds God's people turning toward rebellious idol worship as they cling to a golden calf that Aaron allowed to be created. In verse 10, God essentially tells Moses to get out of His way so His anger can have full range of motion in order to wipe the people out and start over with just Moses and his family. What happens next has direct bearing to the current discussion:

"But Moses implored the Lord his God and said, "O Lord, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians say, 'With evil intent did he bring them out, to kill them in the mountains and to consume

¹³ Moltmann Jürgen, *Crucified God: 40th Anniversary Edition* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 406

them from the face of the earth'? Turn from your burning anger and relent from this disaster against your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, to whom you swore by your own self, and said to them, 'I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your offspring, and they shall inherit it forever.'" And the Lord relented from the disaster that he had spoken of bringing on his people" (Deut. 32:11-14)¹⁴

On the surface, it seems that Moses prays and God relents. God has compassion, feels sorry for Israel, shows pity, changes His mind or is simply moved by Moses' prayer to change what He was going to do. It seems Moses is praying in the context of how he understands covenant. Moses prays expecting that what he prays will have some impact on God. For Moses, covenant with God could be an invitation to have a relationship of some reciprocity with Him. And argument could be made that Exodus 32 seems to reveal a God who responds to a man. And the narrative does not explain or qualify this interaction. It seems to simply be there in the story that God wanted to tell.

An impassibilist perspective would conclude that the language of God "relenting" is anthropopathic.¹⁵ Because God is purely actual, any language that implies a change in God or that He is affected by people in any way, is not actual reality for God.¹⁶ The language cannot be literal for one with an impassible view of God because the implication is that if God actually relents as a result of Moses' prayer then that means a part of who God is, in His very being was caused to be by Moses. That is, Moses' prayerful dialogue with God impacts in the space-time continuum and changed God's mind. Instead, the impassible view would argue that what is actually taking place is that God is showing mercy toward His people based on Him being pure. Moses' prayer does not incite mercy in God. God is already full of mercy. Rather, God shows

¹⁴ Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the *English Standard Version*

¹⁵ Robert J. Matz and A. Chadwick Thornhill, *Divine Impassibility: Four Views of God's Emotions and Suffering* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, an imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2019), 34

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 24-25

mercy simply because of who He is. Moses' prayer then can be seen not as the catalyst for God changing His mind, but Moses aligning his perspective and will to what God already wanted to do. Covenant with God then becomes a situation where human beings are learning what the will of God is and carrying it out as God intends based on His perfection.

Clark Pinnock says, "God goes in for partnerships where the junior partners make a real contribution. It is a covenantal-historical way of understanding based on mutual vows and obligations".¹⁷ Pinnock and open theism would go on to say that God partners with people to forge a future that God is not completely in control of and that He does not actually know about.¹⁸ Without completely jumping into the trenches with open theism in general, one might be able to see the logic in God being open, as in vulnerable, to humanity through covenant relationship. The vulnerability God exhibits is not weak, but vulnerable in the sense of being exposed for who He really is. He is really loving, kind, merciful, longsuffering and at times angry and grieved. And who He really is, in the context of covenant, would not be divorced from the actions of humanity and what goes on in the world. The passibilist would say that God has chosen to covenant with humankind in order to move towards Him. Covenant was a giant step God took to be with humanity in close proximity and expose Himself to them for all that He is. And in some way shape or form, it seems that humanity was invited by God to have some kind of impact on God Himself.

The covenant that supersedes all covenants in scripture is the New Covenant. As Gentry and Wellum state, "...ultimately all of the covenants find fulfillment, terminus and telos in the new covenant...".¹⁹ And at the heart of the New Covenant is forgiveness of sins based on

¹⁷ Clark H. Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover: A Theology of God's Openness* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2002), 35-36

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 36

¹⁹ Peter John. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 644

Christ's death on the cross in order to put an end to the wrath of God for those who put their faith in Christ.²⁰ This wrath that is expressed by God toward unrighteousness is a part of God's nature (Romans 1:18). Those who put their faith in Christ get access to the forgiveness that has been offered through the shed blood of Christ (Hebrews 9:22). Those inside a New Covenant relationship with God have had their sins forgiven and forgotten and the anger that God had toward that sin found its fulfillment and ultimate expression in the torturing death of Christ. However, the wrath of God still exists. But for those within the New Covenant, Christ stands in-between the wrath of the Father and the sinner. The impassibilist may argue that the wrath of God is only revealed in time and history because God's justice, righteousness and love are purely actual and when that actuality meets sin, the wrath of God is revealed. A passibilist might view this as creating a picture of God that expresses some indifference on the part of God in the context of the New Covenant. If God is completely impassible then his wrath toward sin is not actually a result of that sin. It can't be if God is completely unaffected by sin.²¹ The only explanation would seem to be that the sinner did not really affect God in any way but simply bumped up against His love, righteousness and holiness. Scripture does reveal that Christ, the final sacrificial lamb, was already foreordained to be put to death for the sins of the world at the time of creation or maybe before (Revelation 13:8). But even with God's foreknowledge of a fallen world an argument can still be made that his foreknowledge actually had an impact on him. How this might work itself out in the mind of God seems mysterious.

Following logical or even intuitive pathways to discover more about whether God is actually moved or unmoved by his creation is helpful. However, what seems to matter most in

²⁰ Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 2000), 578

²¹ Robert J. Matz and A. Chadwick Thornhill, *Divine Impassibility: Four Views of God's Emotions and Suffering* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, an imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2019), 23

this specific case is what the narrative of the New Covenant is actually intending to reveal in scripture. If the goal of covenant biblically is loving loyalty with an aim of intimate relationship then the New Covenant is the climax of the covenant narrative and reveals the intended outcome of God's loving pursuit of humankind. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). A passible view of God would invoke feelings of discomfort if forced to dig between the lines of a passage like this and begin to conclude that God so loved the world but remains totally unaffected and un-impacted by it and has no real live emotions about it that are like those of human beings. The crux of the New Covenant narrative seems to clearly reveal a God who has stepped down and moved toward His creation in real time in order to respond to real realities that are happening concerning the welfare of human beings and the world. Divine emotion seems right at the center of this narrative. This does not, however, mean that the state of the world completely determined God's executing of the New Covenant. As Peckham states, "...divine emotions are affected but not determined by external stimulus in a way that does not exclude or override divine volition and evaluation".²² Peckham's words here could complicate or even confuse one's understanding of how God has relationship with people. If God has a perfect will that He wants carried out in the world, could He not do it from a purely actual position? God could be perceived as having emotion from a surface level reading of scripture, but it seems simple enough to see God as acting in the world from His perfectly unchanging being having an effect on people while remaining totally unaffected by them. In chapter four, the question of what God really intends to be revealed in scripture will be returned to and examined more thoroughly.

The Imago Dei

²² Ibid, 99

Humanity, as the apex of God's creation, finds the fullest potential if and only if they live up to the original design of being created in the image of God. Having the ability and potential of being like God is what distinguishes human beings from the rest of creation.²³ This truth ties humankind to a relationship with God in a unique and specific way compared to the rest of the creation. Part of the massive potential in people being God's image bearers is that they are meant to take on responsibility under the authority of God as it relates to their relationship with other human beings and the world at large.²⁴ The image of God in people is largely what puts God's relationship with humans at front and center in the biblical narrative. God has a vested interest in humankind because they bear His image. Therefore, God relates to people intentionally and centers His plans around them as His story unfolds in the world. For the sake of discussion in this work the question to be asked is what bearing, if any, does the image of God in people have on God's interactions with human beings? Does the image of God in human beings speak to the discussion of divine impassibility versus passibility?

Since the *Imago Dei* is undoubtedly tied to the relationship that God has with human beings, it seems helpful in many ways to consider its implications for the question of whether or not humankind has any effect on God. For the purpose of making this section exploratory, two questions will be used to dig deeper into whatever connection there may be between humans bearing the image of God and divine passibility/impassibility.

The first question is this: In God's unique relationship with his image bearers does He operate in a reciprocal relationship with humanity since he has delegated some of his authority to them? According to Gentry and Wellum the term image of God in Genesis 1:27, in its Ancient

²³ Francis A. Schaeffer, *Genesis in Space & Time* (Downer Grover, IL.: InterVarsity Press, 1972), 46

²⁴ John H. Walton, *Genesis: the NIV Application Commentary: From Biblical Text ... to Contemporary Life* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2001), 137-139

Near Eastern context conveys the ideas of sonship and rulership.²⁵ This can help the reader of Genesis conclude that human beings, as God's image bearers, were meant by divine design to partner with God to rule over the earth. This ruling was meant to flow out of a covenant relationship with God based on loyalty, trust and love. This is further enforced by God's command to Adam and Eve to have "rule" over certain creatures and to "subdue" the earth in Genesis 1:27-28.²⁶ The kind of relationship that God had with Adam is described by Luke in his gospel as being one of a son/father relationship as Luke calls Adam the "son of God" (Luke 3:38).²⁷ This of course links the first Adam to the "Last Adam" (1 Cor. 15:45), who is Christ.²⁸ It is in Christ that we find the truest sense of what the Imago Dei is. In him we find all that there is to know about who human beings were originally designed to be.²⁹ One implication is that cues can be taken from how Jesus relates to the Father for understanding how a human being, created in the image of God, can have relationship with Him.

In Romans 8:29, Paul called Jesus the "firstborn among many brothers".³⁰ The brothers are those who will be conformed to the image of God's perfect son Jesus.³¹ This puts followers of Christ in the family of God but more specifically as "brothers and sisters" of Christ. Of course this does not make those "brothers and sisters" of Christ equal to Him. But it does seem to draw a line from believers to Jesus as it relates to sonship under God. There is a call in Romans 8:28-29 that Paul is referring to not just to embrace a belief in the gospel but "an effectual summoning

²⁵ Peter John. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 192

²⁶ Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the *English Standard Version*

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ Amos Yong, *Renewing Christian Theology: Systematics for a Global Christianity* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014), 274

³⁰ Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the *English Standard Version*

³¹ Robert H. Gundry, *Commentary on the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010), 601

of people into relationship with Himself”.³² What God has in mind is intimacy. It seems what God has in mind is to have sons and daughters who are conformed into His image and are meant to rule the earth under God’s authority.

If these scriptural references lead to the conclusion that the way Jesus related to the Father gives some clues into how people, as followers of Christ, can relate to the Father then there are some comments to be made from both sides of the divine passible/impassible discussion. In John 17, Jesus prays an intimate prayer to the Father as He heads toward His death on the cross. In 17:5 He prays, “And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed”. Here Jesus speaks of sharing a “glory” with the Father that He once shared with Him in Heaven.³³ The word “glory” is δόξα which means dignity, honor, praise or worship.³⁴ This glory, according the Jesus, was something He and the Father shared. Jesus and the Father honored each other and valued each other. There are other references to this kind of relationship between the Son and Father elsewhere (Matt. 3:17, John 5:19). Jesus and the Father seem to have a mutual and reciprocal relationship.

Although it is true that Jesus shares a “glory” with the Father, it must be noted that the exaltation that Jesus prayed for in John 17 is not an exaltation that anyone has received or may receive in the quite the same way. The writer of Hebrews says of Jesus that “He upholds the universe by the word of his power” and that “He has sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high” and finally that He is superior to angels (Hebrews 1:1-4). This could very much draw a line in the sand as it relates to comparing Jesus’ relationship with the Father to other people’s

³² D. A. (ED.) Carson, *New Bible Commentary: 21 St Century Edition* (Inter-Varsity Press, 2002), 1141

³³ F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1994), 330

³⁴ “G1391 - Doxa - Strong’s Greek Lexicon (KJV),” Blue Letter Bible, accessed May 8, 2020, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongsg=G1391&t=KJV>

relationship with Him. Meaning that if Jesus has a unique status with the Father, which He does, then it seems one need be careful with thinking that a regular person can have the same kind of relationship of reciprocation. It seems the divine impassibility argument would align with this view. Jesus receives glory from the Father and vice versa. The impassibilist view says that God does not ever receive anything from humankind.³⁵ As Dolezal says, “We add nothing to Him and we deduct nothing from Him”.³⁶ In regard to Jesus and the Father’s relationship, for the impassible view, there is no room for comparing it to humankind’s relationship with God. The impassible view does not allow for a give-and-take relationship between people and God. God’s aseity and pure actuality set Him distinctly apart from humankind to the degree that people cannot affect God. It could be concluded that Jesus, being part of the Trinitarian fellowship, has a relationship with the Father that cannot be mirrored by any other person.

Viewing the passibilist position through the lens of the *Imago Dei* may cause one to indulge in the possible connection between Jesus’ relationship with the Father and the possibilities for humankind to enter a reciprocal relationship with God through Christ. If anyone is to reach a conclusive view of God as a “...dynamic, relational person; vulnerable, sympathetic, accessible and committed to relationships” then the relationship that Jesus had with the Father becomes a blueprint in many ways for how the people of God might follow Christ into the same kind of relationship with Him.³⁷ If this becomes true, then followers of Christ could have a real, reciprocal relationship with God that follows a pattern of give and take with humans having some kind of an effect on God and vice versa.

³⁵ James E. Dolezal, *All That Is in God: Evangelical Theology and the Challenge of Classical Christian Theism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2017), 12

³⁶ *Ibid*, 12

³⁷ Clark H. Pinnock, *The Most Moved Mover* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2001), 7

The connection between Jesus' relationship with the Father, the image of God and humankind's relationship with God will be brought to some conclusions in chapter five. However, at this point it is safe to say that there is a strong connection theologically and biblically between the Imago Dei and the divine passibility/impassibility discussion. God's investment in and pursuit of human beings in the overall storyline of scripture, from Genesis to Revelation is largely based on them being created in His image. The connection between God and people cannot be talked about without discussion around the image of God. As the crown of God's creation, humankind can enjoy an intimacy with God in a way that other members of creation cannot.

Indwelling of the Holy Spirit

In John 14, Jesus famously begins to explain to His disciples that there is another "helper" coming, which is the Holy Spirit (John 14:15-17). And He ends by being very specific with regard to how the Holy Spirit will operate and be in relationship with them. He tells them the Holy Spirit "will be in you" (v. 17). The Holy Spirit was sent by Jesus to continue the ministry of Jesus with His followers in a very intimate way. Later in that chapter He says the Holy Spirit will make his "home" in them (v. 23). Humankind became God's home for those who chose to put their faith in Jesus. This closes any space that was left between God and humankind after the incarnation of Jesus. It is without doubt that the indwelling Spirit of God has much bearing on the narrative of scripture in connection to how God comes into and remains/operates in relationship to a person. Certainly, this can serve as yet another touchpoint for understanding more about the divine passibility/impassibility discussion.

The picture painted in John 14:23 of God making a home in people by the Holy Spirit seems quite comforting. Through the Holy Spirit, God comes close and personal with a person.

Being in someone's home is often an intimate setting. It should be noted that in verse 23 Jesus made it clear that the Father and Son coming by the Holy Spirit to make a home in a person is directly connected with that person's love and obedience toward God. Looking at this through the lens of divine passibility could easily cause one to see an intimacy between God and people that has allowance for those people affecting God in some way. Can love and obedience toward a God who has made His home in a person have no effect on Him at all? The picture of intimacy painted here seems to at least suggest that a real relationship is meant to occur as one follows Jesus and the Holy Spirit indwells them making a home in them. Using the term real relationship means there is a give and take, even if that give and take is slightly different than the normal reciprocity found in human-to-human relationships. Peckham argues for God's love toward people being "ideally reciprocal".³⁸ That is that, God loves all but only enters into the most intimate loving relationships with those who reciprocate that love through obedience and loyalty.³⁹ In this way God's love does seem like a horizontal person-to-person kind of love as many try to have a general love and kindness for all, but only enter into truly intimate reciprocal loving relationships with a few. However, God's love and intimacy with people, for some passibilists, can be viewed as evaluative. That is that, God perfectly evaluates what kind of reciprocal loving relationships He enters into based on his perfect perspective not because He is essentially united in such a way to every human being.⁴⁰ From this perspective then, if the Holy Spirit indwells a person and makes His home in them, then it has been decided by God's perfect evaluation that a reciprocal loving relationship can be had with them.

³⁸ John Peckham, *The Love of God: A Canonical Model* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, an imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2015), 227

³⁹ Ibid, 227

⁴⁰ Ibid, 118

The impassibilists view cannot possibly see the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in quite the same way as the passibilists. Augustine's view of the love of God as being "unilateral beneficence" leaves no room for a reciprocal relationship with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.⁴¹ Because God's love is one-sided, then the indwelling of the Holy Spirit moves in to have an intimacy that is ultimately one-sided. That is that, the reality of God coming to indwell a person gives that person intimate contact with all of who God is in a way that would not be possible other than for God to make His home in them. But the person in turn adds nothing and contributes nothing to God at all. For the impassibilist, God cannot in anyway be made out to be in need of anything from a human being.⁴² It does seem that the purpose of human beings having a unique intimacy with God by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit can remain completely intact while holding to an impassibilist view.

Paul directed believers not to "grieve the Holy Spirit of God" in Ephesians 4:30. This command was in the midst of Paul encouraging them to purge themselves of things like "bitterness" and "malice" and to pursue kindness with one another (v. 31-32). It has already been mentioned in previous chapters that the impassibilists would view the language of the Holy Spirit being grieved as anthropopathic meaning that the Holy Spirit, who is God, cannot be literally grieved in the sense that a human being has an effect on Him. This is only language that is anthropomorphized in order for human beings to understand that their unrighteous inner and outer workings are viewed negatively in the eyes of God. Passibilists would of course argue that the language is literal and is meant to convey that, within a truly intimate relationship, God is affected in a grievous way by the inner thoughts and actions of the people He indwells.

⁴¹ Ibid, 18

⁴² Robert J. Matz and A. Chadwick Thornhill, *Divine Impassibility: Four Views of God's Emotions and Suffering* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, an imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2019), 14

A major point of contention between the two views seems to be as to how the intimacy that God has with people as He indwells them is defined. Does God come close to human beings and even indwell them without ever being impacted by them in any way? Or does God engage in a reciprocal relationship that does allow Him to be affected in some way by those He comes close to? Intimacy in human terms requires give and take and one person to impact another positively and negatively and vice versa. At the same time, to view God as operating in His intimacy with people according to human terms seems to presuppose that humanity fully understands God's reality based on an earthly vantage point. The reality of the Holy Spirit is mysterious and all of His workings may not be subject to logical scientific analysis. And God Himself exists on a different plane and in a different reality than human beings do (although His existence overlaps into our world). In this way, the workings and dealings of the Holy Spirit in relation to the passible/impassible discussion may lead one into further mystery and that may be appropriate since faith and an imperfect understanding is what is necessary for the believer to depend on God and His indwelling Spirit.

Summary

In this chapter, three biblical touchpoints have been highlighted, briefly discussed and analyzed as it relates to the divine passibility/impassibility discussion. Covenant, the image of God in man, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit have been leveraged to, at the very least, raise more questions about whether or not God is affected by people in any way in His relationship with them. All three touchpoints carry a theme of intimate relationship between God and human beings. God chooses to covenant with people in order to enter into relationship with them for the purpose of having a loyal loving trust at the center of that relationship. Because human beings were created in the image of God, they hold a special place in God's perspective of His creation

as a whole. His relationship with them is based uniquely on the fact that they bear His image. And He relates to them differently than He does other creatures who do not bear His image. God chooses to indwell by His Holy Spirit those who put their faith in His son Jesus as their Lord and Savior. This also makes God's relationship with those human beings one of unique intimacy. These touchpoints must continue to have bearing on the discussion of how God relates to man and the issues concerning God's impassibility/passibility.

The idea of intimate relationship between God and human beings brought to the surface by these three touchpoints might point to a bigger picture while seeking to think about divine passibility/impassibility from a biblical perspective. In the final chapter that bigger picture will be explained and expounded on.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION: AN INTENTIONALLY VULNERABLE GOD

Introduction

In the task of theology and the search for biblical truth, the largest prize should be what is discovered about God and His plan. In the debate of God's impassibility, it can be easy to look at the data and choose a side. However, this writer has not set out to do just that. The treasure of entering the discussion seems to be to find another route in heading toward some conclusion rather than just staking a flag in one position. That being said the plane must be landed in some way. One cannot fly in circles endlessly without seeking to arrive somewhere. What follows will be a portrait of sorts that could be used to continue to see nuances in the topic at hand and maybe even add some breadth to the discussion as a whole. The hope would be that those entrenched in the debate can begin to look above and beyond the two opposing sides and see more of what God wants to reveal. Most of all, it seems helpful to connect this discussion to the larger narrative scripture that points to a center where many exploring this territory can find common ground.

A Bigger Picture

Simply put, the bigger picture is Jesus Christ. Regardless of what exact position is taken on the matters at hand, when approaching the biblical narrative at face value the person of Jesus stands at the center. He is both the catalyst and climax for all that God has revealed for what He wants to do with humanity and the world.¹ For this reason a discussion of how God's overall plan for humankind relates to who Jesus is and what He represents provides common ground for moving the discussion of divine passibility/impassibility along.

¹ Osborne, Grant R. *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010., 347-348

Humanity was made as the crown of God's creation and yet because of sin humanity has never lived up to that title. And certainly, human beings have never lived up to the potential inherently put in him or her being they were created in the very image of God. In commenting on Psalm 8, James Jordan says this in regard to the creation of humankind,

“Man was originally created, says David, only a little lower than God Himself. Of course as a creature, man was infinitely ‘lower’ than God; yet as God’s viceroy over creation, man was just under him in the chain of command. This is not the end of the story, though, says David. It is only the beginning, because man is to grow and develop and eventually be crowned with glory and majesty”.²

Jordan presents the idea that the program and pattern that God had for humankind was meant to be progressive from the beginning. That is that, human beings were created to grow and progress as they maintained trust with and loyalty to God. That progression finds its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ who stands as the prototype for new creation humanity. If this is true, then it can serve as a foundation for understanding God's unique relationship with human beings and how it operates.

John C. Peckham's view on divine passibility can be linked to the bigger picture being pursued in this section. Peckham has found a middle-of-the-road way of thinking about divine passibility. He states this concerning a “qualified passibility” of God, “Put simply, qualified passibility maintains that God is voluntarily passible in relation to the world, meaning God freely chose to create this world and freely opened himself to being affected by this world in a way that does not diminish or collapse Creator-creature distinction”.³ Peckham has a specific view of God's love for the world in light of God being passible. He subscribes to an evaluative form of God loving His creatures.⁴ He says this in regard to how God loves the world, “...God does

² James B. Jordan, *Through New Eyes: Developing a Biblical View of the World* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1999), 141

³ Ibid, 138

⁴ Ibid, 139

appraise, enjoy and receive value from humans, but voluntarily and discriminately according to his perfect evaluation”.⁵ In other words, God loves from a place of evaluation that is thorough and perfect. God is not merely moved from the outside in, but He responds to human beings from the inside out based on His perfect outlook on the world and people.

Peckham’s view on God’s passibility can be taken a step further and can connect very nicely with scripture’s overarching narrative of God’s purpose for human beings that Jordan presents. Jordan shows that humankind was meant to bring about the progression of God’s world as he or she matured in their relationship with God.⁶ As it relates to humankind’s relationship with God, they were meant to take on the role of prophet among other things.⁷ Jordan presents the role of a prophet in a holistic sense as one invited into the council of God and not merely a messenger or mouthpiece for God.⁸ In essence, humans were meant to consult with God. This, however, could only happen as humankind matured in their understanding of God and their ability to consult with God as His image bearers in the earth. It could be then that God chooses to be affected by humankind not just by perfect evaluation but very intentionally.

What this means is that God is intentionally vulnerable with a person as he or she matures into Christ-likeness. In the grand plan for human beings to be invited into intimacy with the trinitarian God, there is a progression and maturation process whereby a person progressively has an impact on God as he or she is able and is allowed by Him. Jesus, as a man who perfectly bears the image of God, prayed and acted with the Father and the Holy Spirit while He was on earth. This provides a model of God’s will for the rest of humankind. With the exception of being fully

⁵ Robert J. Matz and A. Chadwick Thornhill, *Divine Impassibility: Four Views of Gods Emotion’s and Suffering* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, an imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2019), 88

⁶ John Peckham, *The Love of God: A Canonical Model* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, an imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2015), 118

⁷ Ibid, 118

⁸ James B. Jordan, *Through New Eyes: Developing a Biblical View of the World* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1999), 20

divine, Jesus represents in many ways everything human beings were supposed to be from the beginning. In this way then, one can come to some understanding of how humanity is meant to operate with God by looking at the way Jesus operated with the Father. This was touched on in chapter three when Jesus' prayer to the Father was examined in John 17. The relationship of reciprocity that Jesus had with the Father serves as a target for all those who are disciples of Jesus. And as the image of God is restored little by little in the disciple of Christ, they are further invited into having an intimacy with God that has increased reciprocity. This is because they come to a greater understanding of who God is and what His purpose is for the world.

God's intentional vulnerability fits nicely with not only the *Imago Dei* but within the purposes of covenant in the overall biblical narrative. Furthermore, the impassibilist view of God being "pure act" or "purely actual" seems a tough pill to swallow given the narratives of scripture that reveal God's overall purposes for bringing humankind into covenant relationship with Himself.⁹ It does not seem that language in scripture that depicts God as being affected by humankind deemed purely anthropopathic is true to the story the Bible tells about a covenant-making God.¹⁰ The intention of God drawing close to people through covenant in intimate relationship seems to point toward a real relationship of give and take. This exchange though must not be viewed from a merely one-dimensional perspective. To assume that God's immutability or aseity would be compromised if God were to allow Himself to be affected by human beings is to assume that one can always have perfectly clarity about how God works to begin with. If scripture reveals that God is affected by His creatures in some way then why can't an element of mystery remain intact in regard to how His perfection of being and self-sufficiency

⁹ James E. Dolezal, *All That Is in God: Evangelical Theology and the Challenge of Classical Christian Theism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2017), 11

¹⁰ Samuel Renihan, *God without Passions: A Reader* (Palmdale, CA: Printed by Richard Barcellos for Reformed Baptist Academic Press, 2015), 46-47

can remain intact? A God who incarnates Himself to take on the very nature of those to whom He wants relationship with seems to be outside the bounds of natural measurements of human relationships. This being the case, certain clarity as to how God can be moved by His creation without changing may remain undiscovered. And in search for clarity, scripture must be able to speak literally about how God relates to humankind without the reader demanding answers on his or her own terms. God discloses what He chooses and leaves mysterious what He chooses. This does not make His word any less true. Unanswered questions do not have to dilute the story God wants to tell.

The intentional vulnerability of God is consistent with God's overall plan to partner with human beings and bring them to maturity in Christ. Maturity is required for progressive reciprocity to occur. Without it, the effect that humanity will have upon God is limited even if they remain His covenant partners. This puts discipleship to Christ at the center of understanding how God relates to people and is affected by them.

A Better Picture

The idea of a God who is passible in a way that He is intentionally vulnerable towards those who come into relationship with Him does not solve all the problems of the debate of whether or not God is impassible. And as stated earlier, this writer has not set out to solve all the problems of this discussion or even to argue completely for one side. Aside from the bigger picture of the biblical narrative that finds its center in Christ, an intentionally vulnerable God offers a better picture of God than merely seeing impassibility or passibility. It seems to be better because God is painted as neither an all-powerful but untouched ruler nor a moldable piece of clay that humankind can shape into anything he or she wants. Instead, God can be viewed as an unchanging yet dynamic creator who seeks relationship with humans that is connected to an

intentional plan. The plan is for humankind to know Him and represent Him rightly in the world. This can only happen progressively as human beings have a real give-and-take relationship with Him. People engage in a wrestling that allows for true dialogue which includes push-back and concessions. Humility is needed on the part of the person, but there is room for entering a true conversation with God that is embedded in a truly reciprocal relationship.

An intentionally vulnerable God is also a God who is explicitly touched, affected and moved by His creation at large. The larger backdrop of a God who is intentionally vulnerable with those who come into relationship with Him is that God has a universal love for all of creation to the extent that He is evaluatively and intentionally affected by it. This simply means that God has chosen to open Himself up to His world based on His own agenda of loving His world and having a vested interest in it. God is moved by sin, evil, pain and suffering just as much as He is moved by goodness, beauty and righteousness. And in light of the mystery of the way this works remaining a mystery not every loose end has to be tied up. A comparison between how God has relationship with how humans have relationship seeks to anthropomorphize Him. God can be who He is without fully explaining how it is possible.

A Pastoral/Pentecostal Picture

It seems necessary to ask how the discussion of God's intentional vulnerability is of concern for the average church-going Christian who does not engage in academic theologizing. The idea of an intentionally vulnerable God has great bearing on those who come into relationship with God and especially who do so through Charismatic/Pentecostal communities. These Charismatic/Pentecostal communities invite people into an experiential relationship with God. This is expressed through church services that are in the words of Kenneth Archer, "...structured

improvisation, like jazz.”¹¹ Although the experiential nature of the Pentecostal church is not limited to just the services in these circles, they are an example of an overall outlook on Christianity and relationship with God that is indicative of a view of God that seeks real interaction with Him.

Pentecostal spirituality is largely built on the giving of one’s affections to God in love and intimacy.¹² A vulnerable God opens Himself up to this kind of affection and intimacy voluntarily. Often the person approaching God with their affections expects to be in a relationship with a God who is touched by those affections in some way. And the scripture seems to tell the story of a covenant-making God who is inviting His creation into relationship with Himself in order to engage in real exchanges of affection. In this way, a vulnerable (passible) God is compatible with Charismatic/Pentecostal Christianity.¹³

Because narratives in scripture that depict God as being affected by His creatures can be taken literally, it opens the door for a theology of pastoral practices that seek to make disciples of Christ who interact with a vulnerable God. Church leaders seek to empathize, sympathize and show compassion for those in the church who have various physical, emotional and spiritual needs. Church leaders are moved and touched by those congregants as a reflection of a God who is moved and touched by His people. It seems it would prove complicated and difficult to explain to a person grieving the loss of a loved one or mourning because of a personal moral failure that God is impassible and essentially unaffected by their difficulties. But a God who grieves with them and mourns with them because He has a vested interest, concern and love for them creates a proper framework for doing pastoral ministry to begin with. This seems to be particularly true

¹¹ Kenneth J. Archer, *Gospel Revisited* (Eugene OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011), xviii.

¹² Steven J. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2010), 128.

¹³ Kenneth J. Archer, *Gospel Revisited* (Eugene OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011), 92

in Pentecostal communities where it is believed that the Holy Spirit moves upon and in every sphere of a person's life including their emotional life. Ultimately, in Charismatic/Pentecostal churches we have people responding to God and God responding to people as each party is moved by the other with the undergirding purpose of God working out His will in the lives of His people in order to bring them to maturity in Christ.

Summary/Conclusion

The bigger and better picture presented here, as it relates to the divine passibility/impassibility discussion, is one that sees God as intentionally vulnerable. God chooses to be vulnerable based on His perfect evaluation of His creation. He has a universal love for His creation while also inviting as many as will accept the invitation into a covenant relationship with Himself that is progressively reciprocal. This is based on God's original purpose revealed at creation to have people who bear His image, partner with Him and represent Him in stewarding the world. His intentional vulnerability is progressive because it is linked to a maturation process that increasingly transforms a person into the image of His Son who is His perfect image bearer.

Within the framework of God's universal affection for the world and covenant relationship with those who put their faith in Him we find a vulnerable God. We find a God who is really affected and moved by those who He comes in contact with. He is a God who does not change in His essence but does change in how He relates to individuals. He grieves with those who grieve and He is bothered and sometimes angered by evil and sin. He also takes delight in the goodness of His creatures and creation because what He created He intended to enjoy since all was meant to bring Him glory. The prayers of His people move Him to action—never outside of His intended and ultimate purposes, nonetheless they move Him. God cannot be turned into someone else or marred in any way by forms of evil. However, He does sovereignly choose to

subject Himself to human and sinful narratives that have played out in history. The greatest atrocities have not left Him unaffected.

Scripture seems to reveal a God who has exposed Himself to the world and humanity in His own ways. And that exposure has showed time and time again who He really is. He is perfect love that is resilient, patient, fierce and penetrable. He is not weak, but He is vulnerable because He chooses to be. He is resilient because in His vulnerability He never lacks endurance to see every relationship through perfectly. He is patient because His vulnerability subjects Himself to the frailties and imperfections of sin-saturated humanity. He is fierce because His commitment to opening Himself to creation is intense and never fading in faithfulness. He is penetrable because people can get through to Him. The loving affections and/or cold shoulders of humanity find their way to His heart. God does not stand as a cold immovable mountain that people run into instead He is an open body of water that humanity can submerge in.

In the end, those entrenched on either side of the passible/impassible discussion must decide what God is revealed through the story the Bible tells and what kind of God they themselves have experienced. This writer has found and known a vulnerable God.

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Grade: PASS

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The grading levels are fail, pass, and pass with distinction. The first and second reader should each provide a one-page rationale for the level they deem appropriate for a thesis.

PASS WITH DISTINCTION

The argument and presentation of the argument are superior. The paper demonstrates mastery of supporting literature. Strong original information is presented. The introduction is exceptional and grabs the interest of the reader. It states background information, thesis and all subtopics in proper order. Thesis is exceptionally clear, arguable, and well developed. The work is exceptionally research, extremely detailed and historically accurate with critical evidence from a wide variety of properly cited sources. The analysis is critical and relevant. Connections are made between arguments, evidence, subtopics, and overall thesis. The organization is clear, logical, and mature. The thesis contains a thorough development of the subtopics that support the thesis with excellent transition between sections and paragraph. The conclusion is an excellent summary of topics with no new information; thesis and all subtopics are in proper order with concluding ideas that leave an impact on the reader. The work is concise and clear with proper grammar, spelling and paragraphing. The footnotes are detailed, formatted correctly, and validate evidence in the thesis. The bibliography is detailed and correct CMS format. The paper would be desirable for presentation at an academic conference or other formal academic setting. The paper is publishable.

PASS

The paper presents a coherent argument. The paper demonstrates quality originality. The introduction is proficient and states background information, the primary topic of the thesis, and all subtopics in good order. The well-researched document engages details that are accurate and that provide critical evidence from a variety of properly cited sources. The writing provides consistent connections between evidence, subtopics, and arguments, demonstrating good analysis. The thesis contains clear and logical subtopic order that supports the thesis with good transitions between paragraphs. The conclusion exhibits a good summary of the topic and all subtopics. The work is clear with proper grammar, spelling and paragraphing. Footnotes are consistent with correct format inserted to validate evidence. The thesis engages proper use of CMS. The bibliography contains proper CMS format used in correct (alphabetical) order with all sources shown. The thesis is supported with a variety of sources (generally 50+). The paper positively contributes to the field. The paper would represent quality work at an academic conference or other formal academic setting.

NO PASS

The introduction is weak and lacks a coherent, arguable position. The thesis is presented poorly, containing limited new information on the topic with a lack of research, demonstrated with details insufficient details or historically accurate evidence and limited connections between evidence, subtopics, and counterarguments. The project lacks clear and logical development of ideas. Transitions between ideas and paragraphs are weak. The conclusion lacks a summary of topic and subtopics. Grammar, spelling and paragraphing are inconsistent. The use of CMS is inadequate or inappropriate, particularly with regard to footnotes that reflect limited details and improper format. The bibliography lacks the proper format, contains limited details, and is incomplete. The writing has few possibilities for presentation within an academic conference or other formal academic setting.

Assessment Notes:

We agree that this is a master's thesis that clearly meets the criteria for a pass grade. Furthermore, with some additional research and revision, an essay could be span out that could submitted to a peer-review journal or presented at academic conference. We would suggest further work in three areas. 1). Need to more carefully distinguish impassibility, immutability and simplicity in ways that make clear how these doctrines inter-relate without losing their distinctiveness; need to show how these doctrines are distinct but not separate. 2). Be careful not to let passibilists like Boyd or Pinnock explain the impassibility position, and vice versa; 3). For even more further

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research, consider in more depth how the conversation on these issues changes if one has a different perspective say on how Scripture should be interpreted (other than traditional protestant perspective of perspicuity), or does it matter how one perceives metaphysics.

Thesis Evaluation Rubric

Criteria	Exceeds Expectations contributing to a Pass with Distinction	Meets Expectations contributing to a Pass	Does not Meet Expectations contributing to a No Pass
Theological Argument	<input type="checkbox"/> Argument superior <input type="checkbox"/> Mastery of literature and artifacts <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Theological/ Exegetical Depth <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly original	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Argument coherent <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Literature and artifacts adequate <input type="checkbox"/> Sufficient Theological/ Exegetical Depth <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Originality	<input type="checkbox"/> Argument coherent <input type="checkbox"/> Literature and artifacts poorly represented <input type="checkbox"/> Limited Theological/ Exegetical Depth <input type="checkbox"/> Limited Originality
Contribution to Scholarship	<input type="checkbox"/> Quality contribution to the field of scholarship <input type="checkbox"/> Methodology valuable and important <input type="checkbox"/> Should be considered for publication or presentation at an academic conference	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Makes contribution to the field of scholarship <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Contributes to methodology <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> May be considered for presentation at an academic conference	<input type="checkbox"/> Limited contribution to the field of scholarship <input type="checkbox"/> Limited contribution to methodology <input type="checkbox"/> Few possibilities for publication or for presentation at an academic conference
Writing Quality	<input type="checkbox"/> Superior writing <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Organization excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Citations are strong <input type="checkbox"/> Quality supporting sources and artifacts (bibliography) <input type="checkbox"/> Chicago style superb	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Quality/coherent <input type="checkbox"/> Organization logical <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Citations adequate <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Appropriate supporting sources and artifacts (bibliography) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chicago style adequate	<input type="checkbox"/> Coherence needs significant work <input type="checkbox"/> Organization poor <input type="checkbox"/> Citations insufficient <input type="checkbox"/> Inappropriate or inaccurate supporting sources and artifacts (bibliography) <input type="checkbox"/> Chicago style inadequate
Holistic Perspective	<input type="checkbox"/> Reflects superior contribution to scholarship	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reflects a positive contribution to scholarship	<input type="checkbox"/> Does not reflect a positive contribution to scholarship

Signature of Readers

