Introduction

On a number of occasions during the last century, the dialogue between theology and science stalled because of unresolved underlying issues between the two disciplines. It is not a case of the now largely discredited notion of science and theology being locked in ongoing conflict. Rather it is in reality that their relationship is and always has been much more complex and intimate. Nonetheless, there remain significant issues where there is substantial, if not disagreement then a failure to reach common ground. It is a concern that in some important discussions one seems to be talking apples and the other oranges. The difficulty is compounded when we realize that for quite a number that discussion is internal as believers seek to reconcile in their own minds and faith their understanding and working commitments in both areas. Despair at the possibility of resolving such underlying issues increases pressure to either abandon the notion of divine action in the world or alternatively to heavily revise the Christian faith. No such revision has received broadly based support across the disciplines.

This book seeks to address one issue—how to describe the hand of God. How can we say how God actually and personally acts in the heart and life of humans and possibly in the world? That is, what is the nature of divine agency? An understanding of divine agency developed out of the interaction of three factors in early modernity. Two factors are already well established as influences, late medieval perfect-being theology and the early modern application of the notion of the two books of God's revelation to the understanding of the natural order. The case is made that the third is the early modern appropriation of the doctrine of inspiration, which contains a description of divine agency in humans, which became applied more generally to divine agency in nature. The description of divine agency that

developed presumed the existence of the soul and that attributes of a divine perfect-being must be reflected in the natural order. Both of these assumptions, while generally accepted in the seventeenth century, faced serious challenges by the nineteenth.

The status of this description of divine agency changed from that of unquestioned acceptance among natural philosophers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to becoming a stumbling block to the scientists of the nineteenth century and beyond. If, however, it is possible to describe divine agency, including inspiration, without implying or requiring that perfection or the metaphysical soul is essential, then the underlying issue can be resolved. Therefore, an alternative description of divine agency based in the christological notions of *anhypostasia* and *enhypostasia* is proposed to overcome these problems. This proposal warrants serious consideration only if it is theologically coherent and remains plausible while resolving or avoiding a range of known difficulties. The last section of the book establishes this coherence and plausibility.

The proposal sets out to change the relationship between the three factors: inspiration, divine perfection, and the notion of the two books of God's revelation. In early modernity each of these three factors could be expressed generically, without reference to Christology or the Trinity. It is argued that this is problematic. Augustine's description of inspiration and its understanding of divine agency in humans could be and was re-expressed generically without referring to who God is, rather as a good all powerful divine being. Augustine's description can be traced back through Tertullian and be shown to draw on Aristotelian and classical medical ideas including those of the philosopher Cleanthes and the gynaecologist Soranus of Ephesus. The Augustinian description of inspiration understands the soul to be a metaphysical element of a human that necessarily is stood aside during the direct action of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, *ekstasis* is automatic when the Holy Spirit acts. Thus understood inspired divine agency is solely God's action and thus perfect, as epitomized in the production of Scripture.

Newton extended such a non-Trinitarian revision of the Augustinian notion of divine agency in humans to divine agency in the world. In spite of being cautious about publishing it, Newton firmly believed the mind of God relates to the universe as a sensorium in a manner similar to the Aristotelian understanding of the way the human mind relates to the sensorium of the body—its five senses, as well as the abilities to use memory and to command movement. This was Newton's way to ensure that God as the Lord of all times and places. Moreover, Newton's analogy becomes complete only if the mind of God by the Holy Spirit stands aside a fictive mind of the universe in

the same way that the Holy Spirit was understood to stand aside the human mind in Augustinian *ekstasis* inspiration.

Newton's scientific successes led to a growing confidence in human ability to understand the laws of God in nature, thereby spurring an interest in natural philosophy. This same success later became an obstacle to interaction between theology and natural philosophy or "science" as it later became known during the nineteenth century. Through the better part of three centuries the unquestioned essential foundations of the Christian faith were thought to include divine perfection, which would be expressed in an harmonious nature in which all creation had purpose and which was the best of all possible worlds. Paley, for example, asserted that the perfect harmonious design in nature was a proof of the Christian faith. A young devotee of Paley's was to later turn him on his head. This was Charles Darwin. While personal tragedy led to Darwin's rejection of traditional Christianity, he rationalized this as a rejection of Paley's argument that perfect harmony proves God's purpose. Darwin's supporter Huxley further rejected traditional Christianity as he described evidence that refuted Aristotelian metaphysical anatomy.

Given that assumed perfection and metaphysics do not hold, this led to serious questioning of the reality of divine agency. However, divine agency is meant to describe the nature of God's personal contact with humans. As such, theologians cannot easily abandon the notion. Nevertheless, it is possible to highlight a formal logical fallacy at work at the root of this "impasse" between theology and science. The impasse can only hold if it is true that divine agency in the world must arise from the description of divine agency in the Augustinian manner and a consideration of divine perfection. My argument is that revision of inspiration and divine agency are needed, not their abandonment. The theological task becomes to offer an account of divine agency not linked to presumptions regarding perfection or metaphysical anatomy.

In the proposed incarnational description of divine agency, the Holy Spirit's action in humans derives from the unique action of the Holy Spirit in the humanity of Christ.

Bringing the incarnational description of inspiration into conversation with the pneumatology of Karl Bath determines whether the proposed incarnational description warrants serious consideration. Barth's incarnational or christological Pneumatology offers an account of the Holy Spirit's work, which also is not dependant on perfection or metaphysical assumptions. Engaging with Barth establishes that the description of divine agency proposed is worthy of serious consideration. The incarnational description also cautiously goes beyond Barth in providing useful detail for resolving

issues underlying the development of the dialogue between theology and science. This revised description ceases to depend on any given theological understanding of creation and anthropology. As a description of the Holy Spirit's work, it can be seen as an element of a consistent broader pneumatology rather than as a special case to be treated in isolation.

The revised proposal offers the possibility of resolving one significant underlying issue thus renewing the theology/science dialogue by removing a stumbling block. While insufficient in itself, this revision is a necessary step in providing such a renewed basis for dialogue between theology and science.