

NAMING THE WHIRLWIND:
PRELIMINARY THOUGHTS ON THE LITURGICAL CONSUMMATION OF
PHILOSOPHY

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Dr. Benefiel, Dr. Hahn, my esteemed colleagues, students, friends, and my friend from Trevecca, Professor Hoskins, this is a good day for me. I approach this day with a profound sense of gratitude. I am thankful for the love and support of my parents who taught me about the faithfulness and love of God before I could speak the words. I am proud and thankful to say that I am the son of Henry and Doris Spaulding from North Jacksonville, Florida. I am also aware that as I stand in this place of honor you do not immediately see my wife Sharon. She has quietly and persistently supported our ministry together for these thirty-four years. She is truly the better half in our marriage. I would not be here today without her constant love and support. She could not have known the places we would go in 1968 when we first met at a NYPS Zone activity. Yet in the day-to-day practicalities of love she has enabled whatever ministry God has called us to engage. I am also thankful for our children who are mostly grown at this point, Shelly and her husband Matt, Megan, and Hank, who have brightened my life and reminded me of the goodness of God.

I am thankful for my professors – Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, H. Ray Dunning, J. Kenneth Grider, Jackson Ice, John Carey (with a “C”) and others who were where they needed to be as God prepared me for this day. Each in their own way and through their own special idiosyncrasies has done their part to hand down the faith once delivered to the saints. Yet as I stand here now I, am most thankful for the graciousness and faithfulness of God who has called me and sustained me through these years. It is the vision of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and the Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ that I am able to stand at all. The vocation that God has called me to exceeds my ability, but it has never exhausted the resources of God. It is in His strength that I press forward to this new and exciting assignment at Nazarene Theological Seminary.

My particular assignment is to teach philosophical theology, Christian ethics, and contemporary theology. I am fully aware on this day that I stand on the shoulders of good people who have come before me. When Oscar Reed, who was my professor, stood here he was interested in asking the right questions. He argued in his induction address that “questions are a threat and danger to some people’s [men’s] faith. I am well aware of this. But a person [man] will never come to a sound theological perspective without asking them . . .”¹ Albert Truesdale, who followed Oscar Reed, called for engagement “in the diverse ethical and aesthetic, social, and political situations of our day where questions about life’s value and purpose are raised.”² Both Oscar Reed and Albert Truesdale stand in the tradition of Russell De Long and Delbert Gish who set Nazarene Theological Seminary on a solid path toward the intersections of philosophy and theology. Today I stand in the company of those who have preceded me in this assignment. This both excites and humbles me. It excites me because of the depths of

¹ *The Seminary Tower*, Summer 1974, 5.

² *The Seminary Tower*, Spring 1979, 4.

philosophical and theological wisdom ready to be critically engaged. It humbles me as I come to understand that some of the most pressing issues that confront the church today depend upon the resources of philosophical and theological wisdom. Some of these issues concern modern atheism, open theism, theodicy, emotivism, pluralism, relativism, human sexuality, stem cell research, terrorism, and so on. It will be my task to honestly address these concerns with students, colleagues, and the church.

I approach this assignment with the several convictions which will serve as the basis of my work. First, my questions and intellectual curiosity can never be allowed to overtake the deep conviction that God is real. I am reminded of the words of the medieval philosopher Francis Bacon who said, “A little philosophy inclineth one’s [man’s] mind to atheism, but depth in philosophy bringeth one’s [man’s] mind about to religion. . .”³ I am not so much afraid of sustained philosophical reflection as I am the naïve philosophical convictions that arise from too little philosophy. Therefore, I remain confident that faith is strengthened by philosophical reflection.

Second, philosophy is not an autonomous discipline that rules all intellectual discourse; instead philosophy is dependent upon the prevenient grace of God. John Milbank is certainly correct when he states that theology evacuates metaphysics as an autonomous discipline⁴. Therefore, it is only when philosophy and theology engage each other in a faith community that either discipline comes to its fullness.

Third, knowing in its depths is not about how many ideas my mind can successfully copy and appropriately catalog, rather knowing is best understood as the participation in God that transforms the mind. To know is to participate in the life of God and the depths of that cannot be “enclosed” by formal logic or pure reason. God has a way of spilling over into the messiness of creation, flesh, crucifixion, and resurrection. I am reminded of the words of Paul, “For God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength.”⁵

Fourth, rationality should be broadened to include not only ‘pure’ reason, but most importantly ‘practical reason’. A shallow reading of Kant and modern philosophy has lured many into believing that pure reason is the only true and reliable understanding. Too often this conviction leads those who do know philosophy to pity the “poor publicans” who do not know any better. Kant’s *Religion within the Bounds of Reason Alone* can lead to an elitist understanding of reason and cuts us off from the depths of wisdom found in the minds and hearts of believers. I tend to think that practical reason is a testimony to a more vigorous doctrine of the Holy Spirit than Kant or modern philosophy ever entertained. Do we suppose that the Holy Spirit can only speak to those who have an M.Div.?⁶ I do fear, however, that the question is usually posed to the opposite point by all too many in the church. Practical rationality speaks to

³ Francis Bacon, *Essays*, ed. Gordon S. Haight (New York: Walter J. Black, Inc. 1942), 66.

⁴ John Milbank, “Only Theology Overcomes Metaphysics,” in *The Word Made Strange: Theology, Language, Culture* (Malden, MA; Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 50.

⁵ 1 Cor. 1:25 (New Revised Standard Version).

⁶ Sometimes in our tradition the question goes the other way, “Would a person with an M.Div. even hear God if he did speak?”

the conviction that there is something deeper than a narrowly conceived understanding of reason reserved for the elite.

Finally, philosophical and theological work is done in service to the church. The importance of an open dialogue with the church is essential for the kind of work that needs to go on at seminary. I fully understand that this approach can be frustrating. Sometimes it might seem that the church does not want what philosophy and theology have to offer. Other times the church may seem to unnecessarily restrict the insights of philosophical and theological thinking. But I believe in the depth of my heart that the church can trust its scholars and its scholars can trust their church. After all, it was around the altar of a little Nazarene church that I came to know Jesus as my savior at the end of Vacation Bible School. It was in that church that my faith was nurtured. It was through the ministry of higher education in the Church of the Nazarene that I came to appreciate the Christian tradition. And it has been the Church of the Nazarene that has opened its arms to me and extended opportunities for service beyond my imagination. Therefore, I understand that whatever I do with philosophy and theology is for the church and the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ. These five convictions will guide my work here at Nazarene Theological Seminary.

These preliminary thoughts have focused generally upon the role of philosophical reflection in a seminary education, but I would like to go a little further. I have titled my brief remarks “Naming the Whirlwind: Preliminary Thoughts on the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy.” Job 40:6a reads, “Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind . . .” Langdon Gilkey asks, “Is the God we seek to worship, preach, and serve, in church and out of it, in the old forms or in new ways, real or illusory, alive or dead” ?⁷ Talking about God is dangerous, but it is also doxological. Wolfhart Pannenberg states the basic problem set before philosophical theology in our time:

How can theology make the primacy of God and his revelation in Jesus Christ intelligible, and validate its truth claims, in an age when all talk about God is reduced to subjectivity, as may be seen from the social history of the time and the modern fate of the proofs of God and philosophical theology.⁸

How are we to talk to about God intelligibly? How are we to name the whirlwind in our time? The move to subjectivity which began in the late medieval period and the Renaissance has finally come to rest in the dust of the World Trade Center. Without over simplifying the matter naming the whirlwind has become something like choosing one’s favorite flavor of ice cream. Once the choice has been made it is self-justifying. And while this may seem to work, the carnage of our time should give all of us pause to consider what it means to validate our talk about God. Socrates once stood before the good men of Athens condemned for corrupting the youth and for atheism. When asked whether he would have chosen to live a different life in light of his fate he responded, “life without this sort of examination is not worth living . . .”⁹ Reading

⁷Langdon Gilkey, *Naming the Whirlwind: The Renewal of God Language* (Indianapolis and New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1969), 5.

⁸Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*. 3 vols. trans. by Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991, 1994, 1998), 1:128.

⁹*Apology*, L 38.

that account in our time has often been understood as giving warrant to some sort of introspective self-realization. Nothing could be further from the truth. Socrates understood that the examined life is coming to see the eternal and to willingly participate in that eternal. Life is to be examined in light of the unchanging reality of the eternal. Any other approach to life would lead to dancing with shadows. Looking at this from the cross helps us to understand that the “Crucified God” judges the world and calls it to see a God who has made room for us. Too often in our time we have thought that somehow God needs to find room in our minds when the reverse is actually the case. God makes room for us and it becomes our task to examine our life in the shadow of the cross.

The primary task of philosophical theology is to avoid the reduction of God-talk to the subjectivity of our time which trades on the false humility of the church. Nietzsche’s ‘Mad Man’ bursts into the market place seeking God only to find that God has become a joke on the lips of post-Enlightenment culture. While Nietzsche’s critique of Western European culture is correct his celebration of the death of God is premature. It is the business of philosophical theology to avoid the implications of Western subjectivity and find in the cruciform life the reality of a God who can be found in the practices of the Christian faith. After all God may have become a joke among the erudite neo-pagans of our ‘post-Christian’ time, but God remains real amid the hurts and joys of those who understand very well the meaning of crucifixion. The Book of Job presents the stark contrast between the God of the Comforters and the God of Job. Part of the insight of this ancient book is that God is eclipsed by the conceptual schemes of the so-called comforters. Therefore, they could not say what Job is finally able to say, “I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know” (42:3b). Because God had become a concept for the comforters they could not see the wonder of the God Job is able to name. They certainly could not see the God who leads with cords of human kindness and with bands of love. Perhaps it is in the lament of Job that we can begin to see that nothing in all of creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. When philosophy declares itself free of the reality of God it condemns itself to conceptual frameworks that fail one-by-one. The near demise of metaphysics in modernity does not so much render God-talk meaningless as it re-directs it back to the crucified, now resurrected God. Rowan Williams speaks powerfully to this point:

The central image of the gospel narratives is not any one apparition but the image of an absence, an image of the failure of images, which is also an absence that confirms the reality of a creative liberty, an agency not sealed and closed, but still obstinately engaged with a material environment and a historical process. Perhaps, we really cannot say much more, not least because . . . ‘There is a kind of truth which, when said, becomes untrue’. The theologian’s job may be less the speaking of the truth, in a context such as this, than the patient diagnosis of untruths, and the reminding of the community where its attention belongs.¹⁰

¹⁰Rowan Williams, “Between the Cherubim: the Empty Tomb and the Empty Throne,” in *On Christian Theology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 195-196.

This gets at the task Pannenberg suggests as primarily charting a path toward talking about God without lapsing into the subjectivity that finally fashions God in our image. Such a path turns philosophy into the quest for false idols.

The other side of my title suggests that it is only when philosophy turns to doxology that it finds its own depth. Such a statement assumes that all things depend upon God. The explicit and implicit truth of this reminds us that when true depth is found it becomes evident that doxology is the only sufficient language. Perhaps, the nihilism which characterizes some philosophy of our time is really a refusal to see the God who inspires worship. After all we speak of things we do not know, things too wonderful for our categories. Catherine Pickstock agrees when she states, “Liturgical language is the only language that really makes sense”.¹¹ She makes this even more clear later in the book, “The philosophic life . . . involves the perpetual discernment of divine mediation through physicality . . .”¹² It is not just when words begin to fail us that we must come to recognize the essential doxological character of philosophy, but from the very start with the gift of the Holy Spirit who graciously inspires all participation in the divine that we need to name the whirlwind. When we are able to do this our conception of God will expand and we will resist the temptation to accept ever smaller regions where God can be talked about. According to Pickstock, “Our praise of God is always issued from within an already received context of sociality, not only that of the Trinity . . . but also of the Church, as that which has always received and is forever yet to receive its repeated relationality with Christ”.¹³ We can see traces of this throughout the scripture and Christian tradition, but it is crucial to my thesis that we come to see that this same doxology can be seen in those moments of greatest depth and profundity in all of Western philosophy. The God we seek to name in the witness of faith is the same God who creates and governs the world, both in explicit and implicit ways. If this is true, then the long shadow that Nietzsche thinks witnesses to the death of God may really be a testimony to the persistence of a long-forgotten doxology, one that we the church can miss in the loud drumbeat of modern atheism.

The task for philosophical theology is threefold. First, it must challenge the prevailing subjectivity of our time by showing its inherent limitations and pointing to a historically mediated and practiced Christian faith. Second, it must resist the tendency to reduce theology to either morality or ontology. Third, it must allow for an understanding of the Holy Spirit vigorous enough to name a God who has made room for us. Together these three moves will define a liturgical consummation of philosophy which will come to understand that finally philosophical theology may be best described as doxology. Above all, philosophical theology is about a God who seeks, redeems, and loves all humankind. Our response can be none other than worship. Philosophy will remain restless until it comes to rest in God.

First, philosophical theology must challenge the prevailing subjectivity of our time by showing its limitations and pointing to a historically mediated and practiced Christian faith. The subjectivity of our time is multifaceted. When Descartes declares that the fundamental intuition is *cogito ergo sum*, he defines a new foundationalism upon which he believes everything else can

¹¹Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 1998), xv.

¹²Pickstock, 20.

¹³Pickstock, 249.

rest. Even the existence of God depends upon our ability to think Him. Perhaps, Descartes would be uncomfortable with the direction his basic insight has taken, but it cannot be realistically doubted that modernity represents the primacy of subjectivity. Sartre speaks directly to this, “This is humanism, because we remind man that there is no legislator but himself; that he himself, thus abandoned, must decide for himself . . .”¹⁴ Camus’ version of the “Myth of Sisyphus” defines life as the disdain for the gods. Yet, even Nietzsche’s Zarathustra who reverses everything is afraid in the presence of the ugliest man who exists at the end of the reality he wishes to name. It is ironic that the very subjectivity borne in clear and distinct ideas comes to rest in the alienation and guilt of the twenty-first century. Mark C. Taylor, the theologian of alterity, recognizes that the death of God leads to the end of the book/history and the death of the self. The lonely self cast into the world of Martin Heidegger confirms that Western subjectivity has reached the end of its resources. While some wish to celebrate the Dionysian achievement most see that subjectivity is insufficient as a sole resource.

Even theology can fall victim to the lure of subjectivity as it locates itself in the hardened categories of doctrine as assent or the lazy categories of experiential-expressiveness. Part of what theology must do is point beyond these false alternatives toward the richness of the Christian faith that has the capacity to provide a grammar for life. The Christian faith does not need the metaphysical categories of philosophy from which to hang its doctrines. Rather it is from the historical revelation of Jesus Christ who was born, crucified, and raised that a basic grammar begins to emerge. The historical mediation of this unfolds in history and as such anticipates the consummation of all things and the full revelation the kingdom of God in history. It is because we live between the ‘already’ of the proleptic defeat of sin and the ‘not yet’ of the evacuation of the very presence of sin that we have the practices by which to sustain life. The Christian faith is not so much an orphan on the corner peering into the sky as it is an expectant child living in hope. There can be no real doubt that the Christian faith represents a decision, but it can never be reduced to that decision. Therefore, philosophical theology can admit to the subjective dimensions of the faith and yet locate its resources beyond mere experience. Likewise the Christian faith does not need the false safety of the arbitrary to warrant its faith. Philosophical theology is part of the practiced hope of the church that surpasses the resources of Western subjectivity through the means of grace.

Second, philosophical theology must lead the way in resisting the reduction of the Christian faith to morality and ontology. Let me be very clear at this point, Christianity involves radically transformed behavior and it involves making and defending truth claims. The point here is neither to avoid naming Christian virtue nor to surrender the faith to merely expressive claims. Rather it is important to suggest that the Christian faith is more than morality and ontology. After Kant dismantles all the arguments for God’s existence in his time he chooses to argue for God’s existence using a moral argument. While this argument is no better than the ontological, cosmological, and teleological arguments he has just dismantled, it suggests that for some what is really important about Christianity is its moral claims. From Kant forward there has been a not so subtle reversal between theology and morality. Faith evaporates into a subjective pietism that is more about feeling than truth. Theological reflection then is relegated to something that we may choose to talk about, but should not expect the same respect as the

¹⁴ Jean Paul Sartre, “Existentialism is a Humanism,” in *The Existentialist Tradition*, ed. Nino Langiulli (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1971), 415.

natural/empirical sciences. Yet at the same time it is moral discourse that warrants religious discourse or even more dramatically moral discourse is religious discourse. This move effectively dismantles religious discourse all together and in its place seeks to engender moral discourse alone. This argument has been particularly compelling for holiness theology since we have been drawn to lifestyle issues in the movement. Ironically, we have rejected Kant's anti-theology as we have accepted his moral imperative. This leads some to claim that the essence of Wesley is the presence of the moral imperative in his theology. Yet a close inspection of Wesley's theology reveals that it is his theological claims that support his moral claims and not the reverse. Philosophical theology can help by calling attention to this and reinstating genuine theological reflection as the basis upon which moral reflection takes place. Theological reflection cannot be separated from moral reflection and any attempt to do so is ill-fated. The almost complete separation of theology and morality in our time is a symptom of a larger move to subvert the importance of theology all together.

If theology cannot be reduced or even replaced by moral reflection, it cannot be reduced to ontology either. There are many reasons for this, but none is more important than the fact that the crucifixion stands at the center of the Christian faith. When Jesus Christ hangs on the cross he dismantles the wisdom of the world and our attempts to conceptualize and ultimately manipulate reality. It is because Christian theology is Christological from beginning to end that ontology can never be finished. Ontology exists between the competing polarity of Parmenides and Heraclitus. The history of philosophy represents a noble attempt to arbitrate this polarity, but finally the ontological exhaustion of Western philosophy gives way to the epistemological strategies of modern philosophy finally coming to an end in Nietzsche's claim that it is all genealogical after all. My point is that a Christian philosophical theology need not walk this path at all. Rather we name reality through the "being-in-communion," the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. While it is too much to claim that the Trinity is an ontology, it is as Robert Jenson describes it a compressed telling of the entire Christian narrative. And it is in the unfolding doxology of the Three-in-One God that we begin to define reality. The fact that the Crucified Christ is raised to new life and is now with the Father and the Holy Spirit in everlasting praise as the Son bears the marks of the Cross, renders the Trinity as a particularly clear statement of Christian truth. Yet it is the everlasting mystery of the Trinity that continues to crucify our conceptual categories and effectively renders all onto-theology as problematic. Just as morality cannot render theology relevant ontology cannot render theology true. Ultimately, our need to harden the categories will fail because theology will always be unfinished given the immensity of its object. All of this is to say that philosophy cannot and should not be allowed to rule theology by turning it into either morality or ontology.

Third, philosophical theology must allow for a doctrine of the Holy Spirit vigorous enough to name a God who has made room for us. The West has generally not developed a vigorous doctrine of the Spirit. I will leave the full explanation of this to the historical theologians present. My point is rather simple – the so-called eclipse of God in modern philosophy is not so much a testimony to the irrelevance of God as the Church's willingness to define God as Absolute and cast all God talk in terms of 'Perfect Being Metaphysics'. This has resulted in linking God talk to failing metaphysical categories of Western philosophy resulting in modern atheism. The task of theology, even Christian philosophical theology, is to avoid this trap and begin to talk about a God who makes room for us. We might heed the words of Jenson, "It is the fact of God's Trinity which requires that his concluding gift to us . . . must be inclusion

in his own life, the gift not of something other than God but of ‘all he is’¹⁵. One of the ways that we can come to terms with this is through the eschatological gift of the Holy Spirit as a testimony to the Spirit of life and the sanctifying presence of the Holy Spirit. The reality of God is not an experience nor is it a rationally justified belief; rather it is the presence of the Holy Spirit in the world. The God who makes room is the God who is always seeking us through the superabundant grace of the Trinity.

Let me say it simply – the practice of philosophical theology, at least in the sense in which I intend, is a manifestation of the work of the Holy Spirit. Thus the Spirit frees the church to be and to see so that we might join in the heavenly chorus praising the God of creation. According to Jenson, “The chief thing remains to be said, or anyway drawn out. The End, human and cosmic, will be the great triumph of the Spirit, that is, freedom and love.”¹⁶ The work of the Holy Spirit is in part explained in the grand wisdom of Greece and Rome, but its depth is found in the work of bringing the passion to know into the presence of the Christ who was from the beginning with God bringing all things into being so as to be the life and light for all people (John 1:1-5). The kind of philosophical theology I am talking about cannot be delineated apart from the Christ who is the everlasting expression of the wisdom of God through the Spirit. It is in this way that the Spirit opens the entire horizon, all of history, and all that can be called true to the Christian philosophical enterprise.

These three tasks of philosophical theology suggest a rather different perspective for viewing philosophy than is usually assumed. Socrates, ‘the gadfly of Athens’ has tended to suggest that it is the philosopher who deconstructs all systems and all false beliefs. While philosophy is too rich to be reduced to any one image, the fact is that in the Western philosophy has been identified more often as critique than construction. Naming the whirlwind suggests a different image. I have suggested three essential tasks for philosophical theology – challenge the exclusive claims of subjectivity, avoid the reduction of theology to either morality or ontology, and define a God who makes room for us. The image of philosophy suggested by these three tasks is one of liturgical consummation. Therefore, philosophy in order to accomplish its noble ends must finally become an act of worship. Socrates begins to get at this in the *Phaedrus* as he talks about the philosopher:

Therefore it is meet and right that the soul of the philosopher alone should recover her wings, for she, so far as may be, is ever near in memory to those things a god’s nearness whereunto makes him truly god. Wherefore if a man makes right use of such means of remembrance, and ever approaches to the full vision of the perfect mysteries, he and he alone becomes truly perfect. Standing aside from the busy doing of mankind, and drawing nigh to the divine, he is rebuked by the multitude as being out of his wits, for they know not that he is possessed of deity.¹⁷

¹⁵ Robert Jenson, *The Works of God*, vol 2 of *Systematic Theology* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 311.

¹⁶ Jenson, 2:351.

¹⁷ *Phaedrus*, L 249d.

Philosophy, when it is true to the depths of its discipline, is best described as liturgical. It is a liturgy because it is a practiced hope that renders the mind and heart one with the grace of God that comes to those who participate in God. Paul says it even better than Socrates:

So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.¹⁸

The liturgical consummation of philosophy does not so much take us away from the world as it helps us to see the world in light of the eternal. When philosophy is true to its subject it must finally be a doxology shaped by the grace of God. After all, naming the whirlwind comes into focus in the testimony of the disciples of Emmaus, “Were not our hearts burning within us?”¹⁹ There have been moments in my life, in and out of the classroom, when I was able to say the same thing because my eyes were opened and then I saw the Christ. These last several years as my son, who is preparing for the ministry, sits with me to talk about philosophy and theology my heart has burned with the presence of the Holy Spirit. This is the liturgical consummation of philosophy.

I moved with my family to Nashville in 1995 to begin teaching at Trevecca Nazarene University. About a month later my wife’s father and mother moved to Nashville as well. During that year we noticed that her mother was becoming forgetful, first about little things, then important things, and finally about the most essential things. Her mother began a slow, but steady decent into the terrors of Alzheimer’s. The dehumanizing cruelty of this disease cannot be fully described. Then the moment came when her mother made a sudden decent into the abyss from which she was not to return. When we visited her in the hospital she could not name a person in the room as she looked up from her chair in childlike confusion. Sad does not really get at this moment. One Sunday afternoon a church group arrived to minister to the patients in this wing of the hospital. The church group began to sing “Amazing Grace” and at that moment her mother perked up and began to sing every word of the song. Suddenly we were in the room as the family watched with utter amazement as her mother sang those words over and over again. It was if God was saying on that afternoon “She may have forgotten her name and your name, but she has not forgotten my name and I have not forgotten her.” No matter how deep the disease goes God goes deeper. The liturgy of grace was deeper than anything in the mind of my wife’s mother.

I approach philosophical theology with the deep and abiding conviction that there is no depth and no height that I can go where God is not present. “When we’ve been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun, We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise than when we first begun.” When those moments of insight and clarity come it is not Prometheus that I see, but a simple carpenter with scars in his hands. One day “every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of the Father.”²⁰ On that glorious day the philosopher will kneel at the

¹⁸2 Corinthians 4: 16-18 (New Revised Standard Version).

¹⁹ Luke 24:32 (New Revised Standard Version).

²⁰ Philippians 2:11 (New Revised Standard Version).

place where the theologian has always been kneeling at the foot of the cross, but until that day I will engage philosophical theology as a Christian practice, one that is constantly amazed by the grace of God.