

The Trinity, Timelessness and Temporality

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1. Introduction

Since the debate between Heraclites and Parmenides in early Greek philosophy, the relationship between time and eternity has been one of the most problematic issues in philosophy as well as in theology for a long time, and currently it is being raised as a focal point for debate on the understanding of the nature of God's eternity and its relation to time.¹ The Dutch theologian Berkhof once said that 'the relationship of eternity to time constitutes one of the most difficult problems in philosophy and theology' (Berkhof 1988:60). In this article I will analyse this problem within the context of recent developments in theology and philosophy. The interdisciplinary nature of the problem of time makes it imperative to also take into account the developments in the understanding of time in the natural sciences. This is perhaps too ambitious a task for this article and therefore I will limit my focus to only some aspects within the debate.

Timelessness is an age-old attribute given to God in philosophical and theological traditions. This concept of God reigned unchallenged from Aristotle and Augustine to Aquinas, and Duns Scotus was perhaps the first to break ranks on God's timelessness. Many philosophers and theologians followed and within the last century's development of Trinitarian theology new emphasis has been put on God's temporality. According to the theologian Robert W. Jenson, for example, the Trinity is indispensable to a Christian concept of God and divine temporality is essential to the meaning of the Trinity. Jenson speaks of the Trinity's time as 'temporal infinity' – a term which demonstrates God's self-liberation

1 The theologian Eunsoo Kim's book *Time, Eternity, and the Trinity* (2010) gives a good overview of the history of this problem as well as the latest developments. It also gives a good indication of all the recent publications in philosophy and theology about time and eternity and of the relevance of this debate. Kim (2010:2) says for example that: 'One of the red-hot issues in contemporary Christian theology is the problem of the renewed understanding of God's eternity and its relation to time'.

from temporal contingencies without extracting him from history. This description of God's time is for Jenson more biblical than the Greek concept of timelessness. A theologian who agrees with Jenson that God is not timeless, but on the basis of a whole different argument, is Antje Jackelén. She developed a 'theology of time' in which time is understood as relational and dynamic. This understanding of time led her to a perspective on the relation between God and time/eternity very similar to Jenson's perspective.

The question to Jenson and Jackelén, and the one which I will pursue in this article, is whether their concepts of the Trinity's time as 'temporal infinity' and time as relational/dynamic, are logically and philosophically tenable. Are their concepts coherent and how do these concepts deal with the critique (from philosophical and theological perspectives) on God's temporality and the implications thereof? The problems of the relationship between 'Timelessness, Trinity and Temporality' as it is mainly described by Jenson and Jackelén, will thus be investigated in this article. An analysis of Jenson's understanding of God's time as 'temporal infinity' will be made. I will argue that Jenson is in some agreement with Antje Jackelén's understanding of time within a Trinitarian model in which the emphasis on eschatology allows reflection upon time as multi-temporality or a complexity of times. Jackelén prefers this 'relationality and multiplicity' of time in physics instead of the understanding of time in Newtonian or static terms. She describes her theology of time as *dynamic* and *relational* and finds in the model of the Trinity space for this dynamism (as the open life of the three persons between them) and relationality (as the relationships between the three persons in the Trinity) of her understanding of eternity and time. Jenson's and Jackelén's argument against God's timelessness will be scrutinized in terms of the traditional philosophical view of God's timelessness.² Classical theisms as well as Paul Helm's arguments for God's timelessness will be discussed in contrast to Jenson's and Jackelén's view. I will also put their views in the context of how new developments in the metaphysics of time relate to God's nature, particularly recent developments of the A-theory (the dynamic model) and the B-theory (the static model). It seems that different theological and philosophical understandings of how God relates to time afford legitimate criteria for differing metaphysical decisions about the nature of temporality. Jenson's understanding of God's time as 'temporal infinity' might be compatible with some of these metaphysical decisions. Jackelén's theology of time

2 It will become clear that Jenson and Jackelén do not argue for a complete temporal understanding of God, but rather against a timeless understanding of God's eternity.

also makes some clear metaphysical decisions and the implications of both these theologians' proposals might thus be controversial within orthodox theology.

2. God's eternity as 'temporal infinity' – Robert W. Jenson

Robert Jenson is well known as a significant and prolific writer on Trinitarian theology and eschatology. Jenson is an American Lutheran theologian who has written extensively and very creatively about the Trinity, time and eternity, for more than forty years.³ Some of his main works as a Trinitarian theologian include his dogmatic works: *Systematic Theology* (1997, 1999),⁴ *God after God: The God of the Past and the God of the Future, Seen in the Work of Karl Barth* (1969), and *Alpha and Omega* (1963, 1969). He also wrote the more comprehensive *Triune Identity: God according to the Gospel* (1982), *Christian Dogmatics* (1984),⁵ *Unbaptized God: The basic flaw in Ecumenical Theology* (1992)⁶ and the short and popular *Story and Promise: A Brief Theology of the Gospel about Jesus* (1973). Of these books, his *Systematic Theology* should be singled out as his magnum opus in which he systematically synthesised his creative Trinitarian theology that has developed over many years. In *Systematic Theology* he builds his whole theology on his insights into the relationship between God and time.⁷ Jenson is thus an important theologian to take note of in this article,

3 Although Jenson is sometimes described as an American theologian, he is well known and respected internationally as a theologian. In the book *Trinity, Time, and Church: A Response to the Theology of Robert W. Jenson* (edited by Gunton, 2000), theologians from all over the world and from many different denominations contributed essays of appreciation and dialogue with Jenson's theology.

4 *Systematic Theology, Volume 1: The Triune God* (1997) and *Systematic Theology, Volume 2: The Works of God* (1999). Hereafter referred to as *ST1* and *ST2*. The theologian Carl Braaten says these books are undoubtedly the crowning fulfilment of Jenson's career.

5 *Christian Dogmatics* (1984) was written with his colleague Carl Braaten. Jenson wrote the chapters on the Trinity, the Holy Spirit and the Sacraments.

6 In *Unbaptized God* (1992) Jenson argues that Christian theology took over a Hellenistic divinity without 'baptizing' it. By that he means that God's impassibility and timelessness (as part of the Greek metaphysics) was not overcome in Christian theology and that it is exactly this problem that leads to a great extent to later ecumenical dividedness.

7 For a discussion about the link between Jenson's narrative theology and his understanding of time/eternity, see Verhoef's article: 'How is Robert Jenson telling the story?' (2008).

especially because he connects the Trinity with temporality, a somewhat controversial conceptual move in both theology and philosophy.⁸

Jenson's theology is to a great extent a reaction to the Hellenistic influences on the early church's theology, especially in regard to concepts like the timelessness and impassibility of God.⁹ The very definition of God's eternity as 'timeless' is something Jenson regard as unbiblical and incompatible with the story of creation and redemption.¹⁰ God is not timeless, but God is 'identified by specific temporal actions and is known within certain temporal communities by personal names and identifying descriptions thereby provided' (ST1:44). God is not timeless, but lively, active, an event. Jenson follows Gregory of Nyssa's thoughts and says 'God ... refers to the mutual *action* of the identities' divine 'energies', to the perichoretic *life*' (ST1:214) and '*This being of God is not a something, however rarefied or immaterial, but a going-on, a sequentially palpable event, like a kiss or a train wreck*' (ST1:214). This 'temporality' of God is described by Jenson as God's 'temporal infinity'. Jenson prefer to use the term 'infinity' (limitlessness) instead of 'timelessness' about God, because God is not infinite in the sense that he 'extends indefinitely, but because no temporal activity can keep up with the activity that he is' (ST1:216). God is infinite not by having no boundaries, but by overcoming the boundaries. Therefore Jenson says God's being should be described as *temporal infinity*.

8 The philosopher Richard Rice explains why Jenson is an important theologian in the discussion about eternity and time: 'The question therefore arises as to how one might conceive of divine temporality without a temporal world for God to experience. The resurgence of Trinitarian thought in recent decades provides a possible resource for dealing with this issue. The work of Robert W. Jenson, in particular, is notable for the way it connects Trinity and temporality' (Rice 2007:328).

9 Jason Curtis (2005:23) explains that: 'According to Jenson, the Greeks, in an effort toward security of existence over against time's fleetingness, defined eternity in terms of timelessness. Since humanity cannot embrace our past, present, and future giving us the coherence of life that we naturally desire, the ancient Greeks projected that ability onto God and therefore defined deity in terms of persistence or immutability. Jenson asserts that while the early church did not simply assimilate Hellenism into its theology, it nonetheless failed to rid itself of certain debilitating features, the pinnacle of which is the notion of divine timelessness.'

10 Pannenberg (2000:49) says: 'Jenson is surely right in contending that the God of the Bible is identified by temporal events, and indeed by a history of such events. He boldly integrates this insight with his Trinitarian theology by conceiving of the biblical narrative as "the final truth of God's own reality" in the mutual relations of God the Father, His incarnate Son, and the eschatological accomplishment of their communion by the Spirit'.

For Jenson this term demonstrates God's self-liberation from temporal contingencies, without extracting him from history.

Jenson says that the 'biblical God's eternity is his *temporal infinity*' (ST1:217) and this description of God is for Jenson more biblical than the Greek concept of timelessness. It is a description of God that implies that 'while one might believe that divine temporality necessarily leads one to a god in process or one lacking sovereign lordship ... it is precisely this 'overcoming' of boundaries that demonstrates God is Lord' (Curtis, 2005:27). God is God because he overcomes all boundaries.¹¹ He is therefore identifiable by his temporal acts of creation and redemption, but also infinite in the sense that he is not bound by temporality. The implication of this understanding of God is that he is not impassable or immutable, not immune to suffering and change, but a god who is alive and active and involved in the world and its history. God is present, loving, encompassing in our time and place – a timely and timeful God.¹²

According to Jenson, this temporal infinity or 'timefulness' of God is not just something ascribed to God, but it is part of the being of God, it is central to the relationships within the Trinity – it defines God. For Jenson there is a clear connection between the poles of time and the mutual triune roles of Father, Son, and Spirit. According to him the 'Father is the "whence" of God's life; the Spirit is the "whither" of God's life; and ... the Son is that life's specious present' (ST1:218–219). So for Jenson, God possesses a past, present, and future in himself, not only as pure duration (as Karl Barth understood it, with no conflict but only peace between source, movement and goal), but as a *temporal infinity*.¹³ Jenson says God 'is *temporally* infinite because "source" and "goal" are present

11 Jenson explains: 'Any eternity is some transcendence of temporal limits, but the biblical God's eternity is not the simple contradiction of time. What he transcends is not the having of beginnings and goals and reconciliations, but any personal limitation in having them... The true God is not eternal because he lacks time, but because he takes time' (ST1:217).

12 These terms as a consequence of God being 'temporally infinite' are discussed in more detail by Ted Peters in his article 'God happens: The timeliness of the triune God' (1998).

13 Jenson agrees with the pure duration of Barth in the sense that 'nothing in God recedes into the past or approaches from the future' but he differs from Barth when he adds: 'But the difference is also absolute: the arrow of God's eternity, like the arrow of casual time, does not reverse itself. Whence and whither in God are not like right or left or up and down on a map, but are like before and after in a narrative' (ST1:218).

and asymmetrical in him, because he is primally future to himself and only thereupon past and present for himself' (ST1:217).¹⁴

So to be God is not only to be infinite (by overcoming boundaries) but *temporally* infinite and for Jenson that means that time is functioning as a real past, present and future in God himself, and that it is only in the Spirit, the future, that God is able to be freed from the past and present, to be freed from 'the timelessness of mere form or mere consciousness' (ST1:217). To be God is thus to be always open to a future and to always open a future.¹⁵ But Jenson is careful not to let the whence (Father) and whither (Spirit) fall apart in God's life and says this does not happen, God's duration is without loss, because 'origin and goal, whence and whither, are indomitably reconciled in the action and suffering of the Son' (ST1:219). So it is in the Son, the specious present, that the Father and Spirit (source and goal) finds their unity and are reconciled. With this structure of time within the Trinity Jenson is trying to avoid timelessness on the one hand and to maintain *perichoresis* on the other hand.

The climax of Jenson's theology is that the end will be *theosis*. Jenson says: 'God and only God is the creature's future. God the Spirit is God's own future and so draws to and into the triune converse those for whom the Trinity makes room' (ST2:26).¹⁶ We can thus say that the unity of Jenson's theology lies in the fact that the Trinity is temporally defined, in relation to the claim that God is in fact the mutual life and action of the three persons, Father, Son and Spirit, as they move toward the future. This relationship between God and time is central to Jenson's Trinitarian thought, but the relationship between time and space – and consequently our space in God – needs to be clarified if we want to understand what Jenson means by a Trinity that 'makes room' for us.

As we have seen, for Jenson time is no longer what separates God and world, but time is what they have in common. But while time is something 'outside' us, Jenson says that time is inside the divine subjective centre. Jenson follows Augustine's description that time is 'the "distention"'

14 Jenson's eschatological focus is clear here – a theme that is also central in Jackelén's theology of time.

15 Jenson says that to be God is to 'always creatively open[s] to what he will be; not in that he hangs on, but in that he gives and receives; not that he perfectly persists, but in that he perfectly anticipates' (ST1:217).

16 Pannenberg says that it is at this point where Jenson's systematic unity of his theology is found: 'unity is provided by the trinitarian perspective: from the beginning, the creation was intended for "inclusion" in the triune community by virtue of union with Christ, the purpose being a "perfected human community". That is the promise of the gospel which is anticipated in the life of the Church and is finally achieved in the final advent of the Kingdom' (2000:49).

of a personal reality ... That is: the “stretching out” that makes time is an extension not of finite consciousness but of an infinite enveloping consciousness’ (ST2:34). So it is in this ‘enveloping consciousness’ of God that time is internal. So it is not outside God, but inside Him, asymmetrical in his *perichoresis* that time exists.

Furthermore, for Jenson it is ‘exactly the divine internality of time that is the possibility of creaturehood at all’ (Cumin, 2007:173). And here we find the strong relationship of time and space when Jenson says: ‘for God to create is for him to *make accommodation* in his triune life for other persons and things than the three whose mutual life he is. In himself, he *opens room*, and that act is the event of creation... We call this accommodation in the triune life “time” ... creation is above all God’s taking time for us’ (ST2:25). So for Jenson created time is accommodation in God’s eternity for others than God and therefore we can speak about ‘God’s *roominess*’ (ST2:25). The implication of this is that *everything* seems to exist in God and that there is no other way possible for things to exist.

Of course this viewpoint of Jenson is not without critique from theologians and philosophers.¹⁷ One problem is that, in Jenson’s words: ‘Those on the one side of the argument accuse those on the other of so identifying God with history among us as to make him dependent on us. Those of the latter party accuse those of the former of continuing so to construe eternity by categories alien to the biblical account of God – for example, by timelessness’ (2006:33). Of course the different sides have different implications, and Jenson admits that he is among those accused of confusing God and creation. Jenson’s defence is, however, that this is an age-old clash that ‘has recurred throughout theological history, between Alexandria – my side – and Antioch, East and West, Lutheran and Reformed’ (Jenson, 2006:33) and it must be added that Jenson at least tries to develop a new understanding of God’s relationship to time – the success of which judgement must be reserved at this stage, because the ‘theology of time’ of Antje Jackelén will help to put Jenson’s theology within a broader context.

17 Richard Rice is in general very positive about Jenson’s attempt to make a persuasive case that the Trinity involves temporality, but he also has critique: ‘Jenson’s insights are obscured, however, by problematic references to time as a sphere to which God is related’ (Rice, 2007:321). In my view this need not be a problem and the ‘obscurity’ is rather a complexity which creates various possibilities.

3. A theology of time – Antje Jackelén

The theologian Antje Jackelén, Bishop of Lund, Sweden, is in general very much in agreement with Jenson regarding the relationship between God and time. In her book, *Time and Eternity, The Question of Time in Church, Science, and Theology* ([2002] 2005)¹⁸ she gives a thorough and carefully presented theology of time and, by its very essence, an incomplete and open thought model because time will always be, according to her, *dynamic* and *relational*. In contrast to Jenson, Jackelén does not present a whole systematic theology based on her understanding of God’s relationship to time, but develops instead a ‘theology of time’ as part of an interdisciplinary dialogue between natural science, philosophy and religion. She starts with an investigation of time and eternity in Christian hymn-books and links her findings then to a discussion of time in the Bible and theology. She also investigates the notion of time in the structure of scientific theories, and finally develops her *relational* and *dynamic* theology of time within the context of the natural sciences.¹⁹ What makes Jackelén’s work so promising is the fact that her work is very interdisciplinary (much more than Jenson) and therefore her understanding of time and eternity has a broader appeal to philosophy and natural science. Jackelén’s theology of time can thus help to give more philosophical and scientific grounds for proposals of the relationship of God and time than we find in, for example, Jenson’s theology.²⁰

Jackelén follows Ricoeur’s understanding of time as something that must be narrated²¹ and that cannot be confined within a simple, unambiguous concept.²² She says that ‘because time cannot be abstracted,

18 This book is a revised version of her doctoral thesis accepted by Lund University, originally published in German and Swedish and later in English.

19 Jackelén (2005:226) specifies that it is ‘without thereby making theology dependent upon scientific theories or “exploiting” physical theories theologically, [it is] a hermeneutics that rests on the self-evidence of the discussion and the desire for contact [that] leads here to an enhanced understanding’.

20 Space doesn’t allow us to examine Jackelén’s whole theology of time or the development of it, and only her main findings and proposals will be discussed here to seek similarities with Jenson’s proposals.

21 According to Ricoeur (1988:241), ‘each attempt to analyze time directly only multiplies the problems that occur anyway. For this reason, there is no conception of time without narrated time.’

22 Strauss came more or less to the same conclusion in his article, ‘Do we really comprehend time?’ (2010), when he says: ‘What is indeed *baffling* about *ontic time* is that it exceeds every possible concept of time we can obtain and therefore ultimately it can only be approximated in a *concept-transcending idea*’ (2010:175) [his italics].

but occurs instead as lived time, it cannot be captured theologically in a fixed system. It can be talked about only under the auspices of dynamism and relationality' (Jackelén 2005:226). Jackelén prefers this relational and dynamic understanding of time, supported (according to her) by scientific theories like relativistic and quantum physics, thermodynamics and chaos theory, instead of the chronological linear concept of time of Newton which leads too easily to a deterministic view of God.²³ The question, however, is what does Jackelén mean with the nature of time as being *relational and dynamic*?

With a relational understanding of time Jackelén tries to avoid her own criticism of understanding time as one single generally valid concept. She admits that one can view time as a convention or a construction, but 'one can come close to it only as lived time and narrated time. From the anthropological perspective, time is "life-time" and, just so, the medium of relationships: relationships to living things and nonliving things, to one's self, and to God' (Jackelén, 2005:227). So time is life with all its connections. To have time is to be related and therefore death is *the* crisis of relation, since in death relationship is lost. Jackelén develops therefore a Christian understanding of death in which the notion of God's faithfulness and constancy in building consistent relations with humankind, even in the case of death, is central. This leads Jackelén to reflect on eternity as the *other* of time – an insight developed in relation to Emmanuel Levinas.²⁴ Important for her is that Levinas (1987:32) does not describe time as a degradation of eternity, but as the relationship to that which would not allow itself to be assimilated by experience. For Jackelén there is thus a dynamic relationality between time and eternity, and she rejects models that contrast dualistically the temporal world to an eternal God and models that merge eternity and time. She says that 'time is more than a deficient eternity, and eternity is something other than multiplied time' (Jackelén, 2005:116).

In order to find the best understanding of the relationship between time and eternity, Jackelén examined three differentiating models, namely

23 Hubert Meisinger summarises Jackelén's view on this point clearly: 'Time – and this is her final conclusion – is no abstraction but is "lived time", dynamic and relational. Time is time of life with all its connections. Thus there cannot exist a closed, for all time existing theology of time but only a thought model that leaves room for openness. God is not deterministic but has long ago left the house of Newton – or has never been in it...' (Meisinger, 2009:987).

24 It is, however, important for Jackelén that God's eternity cannot simply be the negative Other of time. That will make God timeless and will not result in a positive relation between God and time (temporal world).

a quantitative model, an ontological model and an eschatological model. She chooses then the eschatological model, firstly because of its power to overcome the dualism of time and eternity; secondly it implies the possibility of speaking reasonably about the temporal openness of God (that would contribute – very importantly for her – to the comprehensibility of the ‘already’ and the ‘not-yet’); and thirdly it corresponds according to Jackelén (2005:226) ‘in a most promising way to the scientific theories that speak of dynamic development and complexity’. This choice of an eschatological model makes Jackelén’s relational understanding of the nature of time very dynamic. Relational and dynamic time belong together for her, because a static and one-dimensional understanding of time is just not possible (at least not any more, although she admits that Newtonian mechanics functions often perfectly in the realm of our everyday life). In *Time and Eternity* Jackelén discussed time in Newtonian, relativistic and quantum physics, thermodynamics, and chaos theory and concludes then with a relational and multiplicity of time in physics which has supplanted the strong principle of causality, and which is open toward the future – a much more dynamic understanding of time than the Newtonian. Meisinger (2009:983) mentions in this regard that ‘the notion of chance also plays an important role because its scientific understanding can build up a creative tension to a theology in which there is a primacy of potentiality over against actuality/reality’. An open understanding of time marked by the ‘already’ and the ‘not-yet’ is therefore indispensable in Jackelén’s theological reflection about time.

As mentioned before Jackelén chooses the eschatological model for the relationship between time and eternity. This eschatologically qualified relationality of time has consequences for understanding the future, namely that the ‘future becomes comprehensible as a relational structure consisting of future and advent’ (Jackelén, 2005:230).²⁵ Eschatology is therefore for Jackelén primarily the expression for the relationality of old and new, of future and advent, of identity and alterity. A relational dynamic understanding of time understands the future thus as open, and it assumes the temporal openness of God which is qualified eschatologically. Jackelén

25 The advent is the ‘truly new’ or that which comes (*adventus*) and the future is an extrapolation of the past and present (*futurum*) of which we can only talk from the perspective of our present and which correlates to scientific progress. Meisinger shows in his article, ‘The Rhythm of God’s eternal music: on Antje Jackelén’s *Time and Eternity*’ (2009), that Jackelén is probably in agreement with the German mathematician that the reduction of time on a straight line is functional in classic mechanics, but does not adequately represent the reality of time. Meisinger adds that Muller’s matrix of time can be helpful for Jackelén’s description of ‘advent’ and ‘future’.

says we can speak of the 'constitution of our time through God's selection from divine time and also of eternity as the internal ground that enables temporal life' (2005:229). Jackelén thus moves away from the static-dualistic way of thinking of separating the temporal world and the eternal God; of understanding time as the antithesis of eternity, and instead considers an increase in complexity that occurs 'in, with, and under' nonlinear interactions. In this way time can be acknowledged as lived time and life time. This of course has implications for the understanding of God's relationship to time/eternity. First of all God cannot be described as timeless, because He is in relation to time, He is 'temporally open' and relates to everything always anew (eschatological). It is according to Jackelén precisely God's eternity that grounds and enables our temporal life and therefore God has a very positive relationship with the temporal world.

This strong relational and dynamic understanding of time of Jackelén has the implication for theology to get rid of an absolute, static, theistic notion of God, in order to gain a dynamic and relational notion of God that gets along more easily with modern scientific insights in physics. A Trinitarian model fits here very well into the thinking of Jackelén, because it notes the complexity of God and has better possibilities for the relation of God, time and eternity than a one-dimensional understanding of God. Jackelén says that 'the strength of Trinitarian models lies in the possibility of conceiving multi-temporality and relational dynamics between time and eternity' (2005:190). It is at this point that there is a strong link between Jackelén's theology of time and Jenson's Trinitarian understanding of God's relationship to time and eternity. Both agree that God should not be viewed as merely timeless, and that the timeless and temporal eternities of God are no longer mutually exclusive. Jackelén says the two belong together 'because God, based on the concrete event of God's temporal self-revelation, is seen in Trinitarian differentiation as Father, Son and Holy Spirit; and, correspondingly, God's relationship to time should also be viewed in a Trinitarian manner ...' (Jackelén 2005:99). They thus both agree that in the complexity of who God is, timelessness and temporality will be in a relation. They do however disagree on precisely how this is the case, with Jenson describing God's time/eternity as 'temporal infinity' and linking the different temporal times with the different persons in the Trinity, and Jackelén preferring the term 'multi-temporality' and seeking in the Trinity a unity of timelessness and multi-temporality. She follows the theologian Dalferth's suggestion that the differences are expressed as the timeless eternity of God the Creator, the multi-temporality eternity of the Spirit, and the temporality of the Son. In contrast Jenson links the past to the Father, the future to the Spirit and the specious present to the

Son. With no anticipated compromise between the two, it is no surprise that one of the biggest problems Jackelén has with the Trinitarian model is the 'arbitrary' assigning of aspects of the Trinity to various aspects of time/eternity.²⁶

Without going into too much detail in the differences between Jenson and Jackelén, it is important to notice the attempt of both to revise (or rather to dismiss) the understanding of God as timeless, but at the same time not to understand God as completely temporal. In their effort Jenson maintains less the difference between God and creation and may be guilty (as many of his criticisms suggest) of mixing time and eternity by eternalising time and temporalising eternity.²⁷ Jackelén, on the other hand, puts more emphasis on the eschatological difference between old and new and says that the ontological difference between eternity and time should be interpreted from that basis and not vice versa.²⁸ Within the Trinitarian model she is able to differentiate eternity and time, and still allows eternity to encompass the entire course of history. For Jackelén (and Jenson) eternity is thus not just opposed to time, but positively related to it, embracing it in its totality.²⁹ Here she agrees with Wolfhart Pannenberg, who says: 'the true Infinite ... is not just opposed to the finite but also embraces the antithesis' (Pannenberg 1991:408). At this point we need to ask if Jenson's and Jackelén's understanding of God and time/eternity is philosophically tenable. Are their understanding of time and their Trinitarian link with temporality and eternity logically coherent and do they sufficiently deal with critique that is normally given to this viewpoint? In answering these questions it is necessary to understand something of the broader philosophical debate about time and eternity. Before I focus on that I want to discuss an opposite viewpoint to those of Jenson and Jackelén, namely the understanding of God as timeless. This

26 Jackelén (2005:109) says: 'The question still remains whether the assigning of aspects of the Trinity to various aspects of time/eternity can occur only more or less arbitrarily or whether tenable criteria for such an assignment can be formulated.'

27 Jenson (1995:40) says for example: 'Time ... is the accommodation God makes in his living and moving eternity, for others than himself.'

28 Jackelén follows the theologian Dalferth's formulation here: 'God is related to creation, in triune fashion, as a differentiated unity of Father, Spirit, and Son: as the timeless foundation of everything, as the multi-temporal companion of everyone, and as the temporal mediator of salvation in the specific life-time of Jesus Christ and of all who believe in him. God's eternity is the epitome of these time relationships and cannot be identified with any one of them as such' (Jackelén 2005:100).

29 This is, of course, reconcilable with Jenson's notion of *theosis*.

I will do by discussing the reasons why classical theism understood God as timeless.³⁰

4. God's timelessness in 'classical theism'

In classical theism, God has been conceived as a timeless Being, who exists totally outside of time and has no temporal duration.³¹ The reason why classical theists saw God as timeless is because time had been understood in the category of change and movement and these characteristics (change, motion) could not be applied to God as the most perfect Being, because change would imply improvement or decay.³² In Anselm's view for example, if God exists in time, then He must be temporally composite, be temporally contained, and subject to temporal change, but the simple God cannot be so. Since God is supremely simple and immutable and eternity is nothing but His essence, it is timeless. Therefore God is timelessly eternal in the sense that He exists absolutely outside of time. Kim concludes thus that 'the concept of absolute timeless eternity is basically constituted according to the Greek ontological paradigm: the Perfect Being – simplicity – immutability – timeless eternity' (Kim 2010:100).

God's timelessness is further derived in classical theism from the concepts of divine omnipresence and omniscience. All these doctrines are inseparably interrelated to each other, and they are the irreducible divine attributes in classical theism. It is especially in Thomas Aquinas's theology that we find the logical and ontological basis of God's eternity in God's simplicity and immutability. For Aquinas (as with Anselm),³³

30 Classical theism can, according to Kim (2010:61) be 'attributed to the traditional concept of God, which was mainly formulated in the period from Augustine to Thomas Aquinas'. . Katherine Rogers (2007:5) says that 'classical theism has come to mean the view that God is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnibenevolent ... simple and immutable'.

31 Nash (1983:21) describes this kind of timelessness of the classical theism as follows: 'It means that God exists totally outside of time; that is, God has neither temporal duration nor temporal location. God does not exist at any particular moment of time and His existence does not occur during any period of time. He is 'outside' of time. For a timeless God, all time exists in one eternal present; there is no past or future for God.'

32 For a historical background to the conception of God's timeless eternity in classical theism (traced through the Neo-Platonists, Plato and up to Parmenides, and also through Augustine, Boethius, Anselm and Aquinas), see Kim's *Time, Eternity and the Trinity* (2010:61–102). I will follow much of Kim's description in my discussion here.

33 There is an interesting difference between Aquinas and Anselm. According to Feinberg's analysis, 'whereas Anselm moves from God's perfection to his eternity in *Proslogium* and from God's simplicity directly to his eternity in the *Monologium*, Aquinas's basic line of

God's simplicity entails His immutability, and His immutability entails His eternity. Therefore, God necessarily exists outside of time and for God all time exists in one eternal now. This view of timeless eternity has been maintained by Augustine, Boethius, Anselm, Aquinas and recent advocates of this view are Paul Helm and Brian Leftow, among others.³⁴

The classical theism's view of God's timeless eternity emphasises the absolute transcendence of God over the temporal world. It does succeed thus to maintain the difference between God and creation, but it does not allow a positive relation between God and time. The problem is that God becomes the other (denial) of time and the question arises how can God positively relate to the temporal world if he is the 'denial' of time? In other words: If the eternal God exists absolutely outside of time, how can God relate to human time? This question led to diverse answers to supporters of the timelessness of God – from the notion of 'supertime' of Anselm, to the notion of 'typical temporal properties' of Brian Leftow.³⁵ I will not discuss these answers here, because they are not part of the scope of this article, but would rather now put the problem of God's timelessness (or 'temporality' according to Jenson and Jackelén) in the broader philosophical and scientific debate about time and eternity. This will hopefully help us to understand and evaluate Jenson and Jackelén's proposals better.

5. Contemporary philosophical and scientific debates on the nature of time

It is impossible to give a full account of the contemporary philosophical and scientific debates on the nature of time within the limits of this article, and therefore I will only focus on the contemporary analytic philosophical understanding of time and on some insights gained in this debate from

thought moves from simplicity to immutability and from immutability to timeless eternity' (Feinberg, 2001:384).

34 Paul Helm's view will be partly discussed in this article, but for more on Leftow's views see his: 'Time and Eternity' (1991), 'The Eternal Present' (2002) and 'Eternity' (2003).

35 In his essay 'The Eternal Present' (2002), Brian Leftow defends the coherence of the claim that God is not temporal yet is present. He introduces the idea of a typically temporal property (TPP) and argues that 'there is in fact a continuum of possible views of God's relation to time' (Leftow 2002:23) and that even most of those who hold God is eternal think God's life has some TPP's. Leftow's whole argument cannot be explained here, but for a discussion on it, see Manson's *God and Time* (2005).

the natural sciences about the nature of time.³⁶ In short, the consensus is more or less that time is conceived as ‘change’, and ‘the debate is whether the nature of time is dynamic (tensed) or static (tenseless)’ (Kim, 2010:11). This debate is important (also for this article’s argument), because some of the most powerful arguments against the timeless eternity of God come from the analytic philosophical conception of the nature of time. In the area of philosophical theology, the debate on the nature of time is thus very significant for our understanding of God’s eternity and its relation to time. Kim (2010:10) explains that ‘there are two competitive theories of time, the tenseless (static, B-series) and the tensed (dynamic, A-series) theory of time’. He adds that some philosophers and theologians argue that the traditional conception of God’s timeless eternity is only consistent without any serious problems with the tenseless (static) theory of time (for example Paul Helm), and others argue that the tensed (dynamic) theory of time is correct, and that God is therefore temporal (for example Jackelén). In this debate, time is conceived as ‘change’ – that is to say, they debate whether the nature of time is dynamic (tensed) or static (tenseless). To understand this debate better I will analyse and summarise the main conceptions of the two competitive theories and will briefly discuss some aspects of the nature of time.³⁷

The tenseless (static or B-series) theory of time can be summarised as follow (Kim, 2010:112): (1) Time itself is real, but our experience of the flow of time is a mere mind-dependent illusion. Notions of past, present and future are subjective properties and not ontological or objective reality. (2) All times – past, present and future – are essentially and equally real and this leads to determinism for the future. (3) The A-determinants (pastness, presentness and futurity) are not essential to understanding the reality of time, but rather the realities lie in the B-relations of time as earlier than, simultaneous with, and later than. The tenseless (static or B-series) theory of time has been generally supported by a metaphysical rejection of the objective reality of temporal becoming;

36 Jackelén devotes her Chapter Four ‘Time in the Formulation of Scientific Theory’ (121–181) in her book *Time and Eternity* (2005) to the current scientific debate on the nature of time. In contrast, Jenson does not make any parallel to the scientific understanding of time in his theology. Eunsoo Kim also devotes a chapter (Four, 103–145) in his book, *Time, Eternity and the Trinity* (2010), to the contemporary philosophical and scientific debates about the nature of time. I will follow mainly Kim’s exposition in my argument.

37 There are very diverse concepts and competitive theories and explanations in conceiving the nature of time. See, for example, Strauss’s article ‘Do we really comprehend time?’ (2010). I will however focus here only on the tenseless (static) and the tensed (dynamic) theories of time.

scientific arguments from the deterministic interpretation of Einstein's special theory of relativity; and arguments from the tenseless theory of linguistic-analytic philosophy.

In contrast, the tensed (dynamic or A-series) theory of time has the following essential tenets (Kim 2010:120–121): (1) Time itself is real and the idea of temporal becoming, the flow of time, is not a mere mind-dependent illusion, but an ontologically objective reality of the world. (2) The existence at 'now' is only real (presentism), for the past has ceased to exist and the future does not yet exist. (3) The A-determinants (pastness, presentness and futurity) are essential to understanding the reality of time, for there are ontological differences between the temporal properties. The tensed (dynamic or A-series) theory of time has been supported by the metaphysical understanding of the objective reality of temporal becoming; arguments from the indeterministic interpretation of Einstein's special theory of relativity; arguments from the tensed theory of linguistic-analytic philosophy; and arguments for the 'arrow of time' in thermodynamics, quantum physics, cosmology, biology, and causation theory.

Which theory is correct between the tenseless (static) and the tensed (dynamic) theory of time? The philosopher Michael Tooley (1997:13) points out, it is 'the most fundamental question in the philosophy of time'. Unfortunately there is not yet any consensus between these two rival theories. With Antje Jackelén's theology of time we saw that she has chosen a relational and dynamic understanding of time. This conception of time is a choice for the tensed (dynamic or A-series) theory of time. Jackelén did not, however, make her choice on arbitrary grounds, but argued that her position was the best supported by the scientific theory of time. She says that 'neither Newton nor Einstein could explain time definitively. Quantum physics and chaos theory add greater meaning to the concepts of relation, dynamics and openness...' (Jackelén 2005:181). It is especially this openness of time which is very important for Jackelén and which is so meaningful from a theological perspective. Jackelén's acceptance of a dynamic and relational understanding of the nature of time is also in accordance with philosophers and theologians like Padgett, Yates, and Craig.³⁸ They, with others (like Eunsoo Kim³⁹) hold a relational-dynamic conception of time. Jackelén is also in agreement with Kim that she focuses on objective (real) and relational time and not on subjective and

38 See Padgett 1992. *God, Eternity and the Nature of Time*: 82–121; Yates 1990. *Timelessness of God*: 95; and Craig 1978. *God, Time and Eternity*: 497–503.

39 See Kim's view in his *Time, Eternity and the Trinity* (2010):137.

absolute time.⁴⁰ In contrast to absolute time (Newtonian), the conception of the nature of time as relational understands time not as something in itself for it cannot be separated from concrete changes occurring in it. So, according to the relational view of time, time is not identical with change but comes from our awareness of time in the changes of things. Time is thus the ‘form of the relationship between beings (things) and events, and with other beings’ (Kim 2010:139). Jackelén’s understanding of time (influenced by Ricoeur) as something that must be narrated and as something that cannot be abstracted, but occurs instead as lived time, fits in very well with the dynamic and relational view of time described here.⁴¹ The conclusion can thus be made that her (Jackelén, and by implication Jenson’s) understanding of the nature of time can be seen as philosophically logically coherent within the tensed view of time.

As mentioned before, the choice for a tenseless (static) theory of time is consistent with the traditional conception of God’s timeless eternity, while the choice of the tensed (dynamic) theory of time as correct is consistent with God as temporal. The different choices thus have hugely different implications. However, with Jackelén’s and Jenson’s choice of the tensed view, they do not accept God as completely temporal – as Nicholas Wolterstorff for example does – but specified the type of temporality in God.⁴² The dangers (or problems) of accepting God as totally temporal are very well stated by those who accept the tenseless view of time and also the timelessness of God. The philosopher Paul Helm is a good contemporary example to take note of here. I will briefly discuss his position in this debate to understand some of the potential weaknesses in Jenson’s and Jackelén’s position.

40 Kim (2010:137–149) cites Bunge who classifies the four possible consistent theories of time as: AS – time is Absolute and Subjective (Kant), AO – time is Absolute and Objective (Newton), RS – time is Relative and Subjective (Berkeley), RO – time is Relative and Objective (Lucretius). Bunge prefers the relational-objective view of time and insists that time is not out there, by itself and ready-made, as the absolute view of time had it: time is in making alongside happenings.

41 Kim (2010:144) explains that ‘in the tensed theorists’ view, it is an absurd idea that a concrete person (or object) and its history are different. In this sense a tensed theorist, D. Lewis, recently insisted, that the tenseless view of the temporal parts theory of personal identity cannot be reconciled with the moral agent. He says, ‘if the tenseless view is correct, there are no agents which persist while performing any action’.

42 In his well-known article, ‘God Everlasting’ (1975) and more recently in ‘Unqualified Divine Temporality’ (2001) Wolterstorff clearly asserts that the biblical God is not eternal in the timeless sense, but temporal, and therefore *everlasting*.

6. A contemporary understanding of God's timelessness – Paul Helm

The question that should be asked now is: If time is tensed, should we discard the classical conception of God's eternity? In recent theological discussions on the issue there are mainly four possible options concerning the relationship between God's eternity and human time: 'absolute timelessness' (P. Helm), 'everlastingness' (N. Wolterstorff), 'relative timelessness' (A.G. Padgett), and 'accidental temporalism' (W.L. Craig).⁴³ Although the idea of atemporality of divine eternity has recently been widely criticized and rejected by many theologians and philosophers for many reasons, it is still advocated on the philosophical basis of the tenseless view of time with other theological reasons.⁴⁴ Paul Helm is one of the most rigorous advocates in this regard and he states 'God exists 'outside' time' (Helm 2001:29).⁴⁵ According to Helm (2001:34) biblical data do not directly support either eternalism or temporalism and God's timeless eternity comes rather from the following three basic theological arguments: (1) the idea of the divine fullness or self-sufficiency (aseity); (2) the Creator-creature distinction; and (3) the conclusion of the cosmological argument for God's existence. These are all considerations that need to be taken into account when one opts for the temporal view of God.

Helm is aware of the critique against the timeless view of God, which asks how God's action of the temporal world can be explained. For example: Does not this temporal act change God's mode of existence to temporal? Helm's answer is that God's creation of the universe is not a temporal event, nor was there a temporal beginning-point for the universe to exist because it is co-eternal with God. Thus, for him, 'God has a timelessly eternal relation with the temporal world, but a relation that is nevertheless contingent' (Helm, 2001:49). Helm explains thus God's action in the world as the temporal effects of his eternal will. Helm says, 'As an analogy

43 For a discussion of the different possibilities, see Ganssle's *God and Time: Four Views* (2001).

44 Brian Davies summarises several major objections to God's timelessness as follows: '1. If God is timeless He cannot be a person. 2. If God is timeless, his knowledge entails absurd consequences or is restricted. 3. If God is timeless, he cannot act. 4. If God is timeless, he cannot command our admiration or love. 5. There is Biblical precedent for rejecting the view that God is timeless. 6. There is no good reason for supposing that if there is a God, then he is timeless' (Davies 1983:215).

45 Paul Helm is a strong representative of the contemporary view of God's timelessness. He 'and Brian Leftow hold fast to the timelessness of God' (Jackelén 2005:83). See for example Paul Helm's *Eternal God: A study of God without Time* (1988) and 'Divine Timeless Eternity' (2001).

we may think of a person's action in setting the timer on her central heating system. This is (we may suppose) one action, analogous to God's eternal willing. But this one action has numerous temporally scattered effects, analogous to the effects in time of God's eternal act of willing' (Helm, 2001:53). Although Helm does try in this analogy to answer this main critique against the timelessness of God, there are still many other critiques against this position. One is the inner incoherence regarding the problem of 'simultaneity'; another is the implied immutability and impassibility that is implied by divine timeless eternity; and another is that many temporalists assert that a timelessly eternal God cannot be omniscient because he cannot know what time is 'now'. For Eunsoo Kim, one of the 'most implausible thoughts is that, as Helm says, the temporal world itself is co-eternal with the eternal God in tenseless sense. If ... God created the world *ex nihilo*, how then can the world be co-eternal with the Creator?' (2010:158).

Helm's understanding of God as timeless succeeds thus in emphasising the absolute transcendence of God the Creator beyond the world, but Helm lacks in describing a positive and real relationship of God with his creatures and a positive relation of God to time. Of course this is a very brief look at Helm's view, but the implication for my study about Jenson's and Jackelén's understanding of God and time, is that Helm's insistence on the timelessness of God does not necessarily make Jenson's and Jackelén's view invalid or wrong. The opposite is rather true, because it indicates how Jenson's and Jackelén's view of God and eternity is an attempt to overcome the type of critique that is offered against the timeless view of God. We can thus conclude that also in this sense Jenson's and Jackelén's view is philosophically and theologically tenable. However, the critique of the timeless view of God (as presented by Helm) against the temporalists should be raised against Jenson's and Jackelén's view in order to determine how convincing it is. In this regard it can be said that it is more Jenson than Jackelén that will have difficulties in answering the two theological motivations for God's timeless eternity, namely (1) the idea of the divine fullness or self-sufficiency (aseity); and (2) the Creator-creature distinction.⁴⁶

46 I mentioned before that Jenson is often criticised for failing to maintain the distinction between Creator and creation. Jenson also identifies the second person of the Trinity, the Son Jesus, so completely with the church (as *totus Christus*) – see my article 'Trinity, time and Ecumenism in Robert Jenson's theology' – that the critique of not maintaining God's aseity or self-sufficiency can be lodged against him. Jackelén, on the other hand, tries to maintain this distinction between God and world in her eschatological model.

7. Conclusions

The question explored in this article is whether Jenson's and Jackelén's understanding of the relationship between God and time (as 'temporal infinity' and as relational/dynamic) is logically coherent and if it is philosophically and theologically tenable. My answer to this question is yes, but not an unqualified yes. On the positive side of my answer I must emphasise the creative space and possibilities their theologies offer to the understanding of the nature of time, as well as the relation between God and eternity. Especially Trinitarian theology has the ability to accommodate the tension between God and time/eternity in a relational way. It makes sense that Jackelén (2005:109) says: 'Trinitarian models enable us to conceive of multi-temporality and relational dynamics between time and eternity'. Jenson used this possibility to accommodate the different poles of time within the Trinity and to connect them to the different persons in the Trinity.⁴⁷ Jackelén's critique is, however, valid: 'The question still remains whether the assigning of aspects of the Trinity to various aspects of time/eternity can occur only more or less arbitrarily ...' (Jackelén 2005:109).⁴⁸

Another positive aspect of Jenson's and Jackelén's proposals is that they shift the understanding of the nature of time as 'change' to 'life'.⁴⁹ Jenson allocates this 'life' to the *perichoresis* of the Trinity and Jackelén focuses more on the relational aspect of it. She says about the advantages of relational time that 'it does not tolerate a flattening of time into the simple infinity of a super-continuity or a total synchronicity in which everything is available non-stop. In a relational understanding of time, time is conceived as 'time for,' which always stands in relation to an

47 In contrast to Jenson's effort, the classical theists tried to avoid locating time in the 'simple' God. Eunsoo Kim says that the problem with classical theism is its one-sided emphasis on the absolute difference between time and eternity because of the unity of God (i.e. *Deo Uno*). He therefore suggests that 'a positive relationship between God's eternity and time, along with the qualitative difference between them, can be fully conceived in Trinitarian thinking (i.e. *Deo Trino*)' (Kim, 2010:102).

48 It must, however, be said that the Trinitarian model does remain a good model to incorporate the tensions. A recent good example is that of Eunsoo Kim who develops a 'Trinitarian analogical understanding of God's eternity and its relation to time ... a kind of *via analogia* through the following Trinitarian triple analogy, *analogia vitae*, *analogia relationis*, and *analogia communicationis*, centred in the ... God given analogy, Jesus Christ ...' (Kim 2010:2).

49 This notion has opened up various theological possibilities and Eunsoo Kim (2010:341), for example, also works with 'a biblical and theological conception of the nature of time as life against the philosophical conception of the nature of time as change'.

Other' (Jackelén 2005:229). This understanding of the nature of time as *life* has thus a much more *open* view on the future and includes a possible relation between God and creation. Jackelén can therefore speak about the future as 'dance with God' and Jenson uses a similar metaphor for the future, namely music – a *fugue*.⁵⁰ Both metaphors include time and also a playfulness, an openness. This 'open theology' of both affirms Polkinghorne's understanding that 'different accounts of the nature of time will be consonant with different theological understandings' (Polkinghorne 2006:982). Jenson and Jackelén work thus (in the terms of Polkinghorne)⁵¹ with a 'universe of becoming', instead of a 'block universe'. The question remains however how much Jenson and Jackelén should be regarded as implicated by their views as 'open theists' or 'process theologians'.

Also positive about Jenson's and Jackelén's proposals about God's eternity/time is that they are in agreement that a very static, distant, closed, timeless eternal and transcendent concept of God is not at all consistent with the biblical teaching. Jenson reached this conclusion from arguing from the narrative of God (and from God's Trinity), and Jackelén reached this conclusion from arguing from the narrative of various Christian hymns' description of God. Both emphasise very consistently a personal, dynamic, relational, open, temporally everlasting and immanent concept of God. They both assert that this is a more biblical concept of God and Jackelén also adds that this is a more logical and scientifically consistent concept of God.

A final positive remark about Jenson and Jackelén is that they both, in the development of their theologies, do not first of all adhere to the analytical philosophical theories of time (which essentially conceive of time as change). Jenson does not discuss the philosophical options

50 Jackelén (2005:174–175) says 'openness to the future based on unpredictability does not therefore essentially cancel the determination by the initial conditions ... The static idea of a cosmology with an infinitely uniform flow of time by no means corresponds to this scenario, which is represented more adequately by the image of a dance ...' and 'a possible story of time ... is the narration of time as dance ... This flexibility and openness is simultaneously also its weakness ...' (Jackelén 2005:230). Jenson's metaphor is that of music. He says that 'the final word about God is that he is beautiful, and that as he is the biblical God, who is Whence and Whither, he is beautiful with the kind of beauty that music has. Indeed, I proposed that he is beautiful with the kind of beauty that a certain *kind* of music has. The last word about God, I said, is that he is a great fugue, of Father, Son, and Spirit. So the last word about us is this: the end is music' (Jenson 2002:41–42).

51 See Polkinghorne's article 'Space, Time, and Causality' (2006).

of tenseless or tensed views on time in his theology, but he works with a Trinitarian concept and develops his whole theology in reaction to the influence of the Greek philosophers' view of God's timelessness. Jackelén also does not develop her theology of time primarily from a philosophical perspective, but from Christian hymns and the nature of time as life.

Although Jenson's and Jackelén's conceptions of the nature of time can thus in my view be largely regarded as philosophically tenable, especially for those who agree on their acceptance of the dynamic understanding of time,⁵² both Jenson's and Jackelén's proposals will probably receive a lot of critique from orthodox theology. Some of these critiques have already been mentioned in the separate discussions of Jenson and Jackelén and therefore I will mention only one here, which is probably the most important one. The Patristic Fathers and the Reformers (and Karl Barth) always emphasised the difference between God and his creatures, God and his creation, God and time. They argue that for God to be God (Biblically), this distinction needs to be maintained. The problem is that by understanding God as temporal, God will thus be like his creatures, like his creation, and therefore there exists a strong traditional theological argument that God is timeless in spite of recent developments.⁵³ This problem opens up two further problems. The first problem is God's relationship to his creation. With a temporalist view God is often understood in pantheistic terms and even Jenson is often accused of 'panentheism' and even 'pan-en-trinitarianism'.⁵⁴ This also leads to questions about God's aseity or self-sufficiency. The second problem is

52 Of course, the debate between the tenseless and tensed views has not yet been concluded. It is also necessary to analyse Jenson's and Jackelén's understandings of God and eternity in terms of the three remaining possible options concerning the relationship between God's eternity and human time, namely: 'everlastingness' (N. Wolterstorff), 'relative timelessness' (A.G. Padgett), and 'accidental temporalism' (W.L. Craig). My findings on their conceptions of time and eternity are thus preliminary and further research on this point may be a fruitful enterprise for the future.

53 Recent development includes, for example, efforts by Karl Barth, who uses the term 'pure duration' to speak of God's time, which means all time (past, present and future) is 'simultaneous' in God. In contrast, 'human time' is for Barth 'successiveness'. Barth tries not to see God as timeless, though, and says: 'His eternity is not merely the negation of time, but an inner readiness to create time, because it is supreme and absolute time, and therefore the source of our time, relative time' (Barth 1960:521). This concept of 'pure duration' is, however, according to Jenson, still too strongly linked to timelessness rather than to temporality.

54 Mark Mattes says for example: 'The logic of Jenson's view of God is led by a conceptual commitment to a "pan-en-trinitarianism" in which all

about God's relationship to the future. The problem is that 'temporalists' such as Jenson and Jackelén can easily be understood as 'open theist' or 'process theologians' who assert, based on their understanding of God and time, that God does not know the future. Although this might not be necessarily a philosophical problem, it does open up a whole new wave of critique within the theology about God's omniscience and God's omnipotence.⁵⁵

Jenson's and Jackelén's proposals about the relationship between God and eternity/time emphasise the complex relation between 'Timelessness, Trinity and Temporality'. This complexity can, however, be viewed in a positive way, because in this complexity lie possibilities for a more creative understanding of God's time than that of classical theism. It seems to me that the direction of relating God and time is from Timelessness to Trinity to Temporality.

55 histories are called to their fulfilment by the very life of the triune God finding itself in, with, and under these histories' (Mattes 2000:484).
The philosopher Richard Rice discusses, for example, Jenson's theology as an example of open theism in a very positive light in his article 'Trinity, Temporality, and Open Theism' (2007). See also his positive view of open theism in his article 'Process theism and the open view of God' (2000).

