

Empowering Creation in Freedom: The Kenosis of the Holy Spirit

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Abstract

Contemporary conceptions of divine power are frequently framed in terms of sovereignty and unilateral control. This article proposes an alternative theological model by examining the kenosis of the Holy Spirit within the context of creation. The central objective is to explore how the Spirit's self-emptying presence constitutes a mode of divine empowerment that operates not through coercion but by enabling the freedom of creation. Employing a reflective theological methodology, this study integrates biblical exegesis—particularly of Genesis 1:2 and Psalm 104:30—with systematic theological reflection and critical engagement with the works of key theologians such as Jürgen Moltmann, Hans Urs von Balthasar, John Zizioulas, and Karl Barth. The analysis demonstrates that the kenotic action of the Holy Spirit should not be construed as divine absence but rather as a purposeful self-limitation that nurtures a relational and participatory cosmos. Accordingly, this study contributes to pneumatological discourse by articulating a paradigm of divine power grounded in relationality, humility, and ethical responsibility, offering constructive implications for theology, anthropology, and ecology.

Keywords:

kenosis; Holy Spirit; creation theology; divine paradox; power and humility

INTRODUCTION

The concept of kenosis, derived from the Greek κενόω (*kenóō*, "to empty"), has long held a central place in Christian theology. Traditionally, this idea has been applied to the incarnation of Christ, particularly in Philippians 2:7, where Jesus "emptied himself" in becoming human. However, an equally significant—yet underexplored—application of kenosis can be found in the role of the Holy Spirit in creation. While divine power is often understood in terms of sovereignty and omnipotent control, the self-limiting work of the Spirit introduces a theological paradox: God's power is revealed not through domination but through humility and restraint (Moltmann, 1993, p. 75; Balthasar, 1990a, p. 85). This study aims to examine that paradox and consider

how the Spirit's kenosis informs our understanding of divine action, freedom, and the relationship between God and the world (Howell, 2020).

The kenosis of Christ has been extensively studied in modern theology. Jürgen Moltmann (1993, p. 100–102) argues that God's self-limitation is a fundamental expression of divine love and solidarity with creation, proposing that power is most authentically revealed in voluntary vulnerability. Hans Urs von Balthasar (1990a, pp. 84–87; see also Williams, 2016) describes kenosis as a "theological aesthetic," in which divine greatness is expressed through the beauty of self-sacrificial love. Similarly, Karl Barth asserts that the cross reveals the true nature of divine sovereignty as humility (Barth, 1956, p. 245). However, these studies focus primarily on the Son's kenosis, with only marginal reference to the Spirit's role (Langby & Langby, 2024). As a result, the theological significance of the Holy Spirit's self-emptying in the context of creation remains largely undeveloped.

Other scholars have gestured toward this theme. Karl Barth and John Zizioulas propose Trinitarian models in which divine power operates through perichoretic (mutually indwelling) relationships, emphasizing relationality and participation (Barth, 1957; Zizioulas, 2006, p. 144). Pang and Putrawan (2020) describes the Spirit's presence as dynamically relational, though his analysis stops short of directly addressing kenosis. Phang and Putrawan (2020) also emphasize divine cooperation and empowerment rather than coercion, proposing that the Spirit works within creation by enabling freedom and growth. Yet in these works, the self-limiting dynamic of the Spirit is not systematically explored as a distinct pneumatological paradigm.

This article seeks to address that gap by focusing on the kenosis of the Holy Spirit in creation, as distinct from Christ's kenosis or general reflections on divine power. Contrary to traditional interpretations of divine omnipotence as domination, this study proposes that the Spirit's self-limitation allows creation to develop freely, fostering a relationship of cooperation rather than control (Barth, 1957). By reframing divine power as power-in-restraint, the study articulates a vision of divine engagement rooted in humility, relationality, and ethical empowerment.

The central objective of this study is to offer a constructive theological model of the Holy Spirit's kenosis that affirms creation's freedom while preserving divine sovereignty. By examining the Spirit's role through the lens of kenosis, this article explores how divine power can be expressed through voluntary limitation. Furthermore,

the study reflects on the ethical implications of kenosis for Christian life—namely, how humility, service, and self-giving love mirror the Spirit’s way of empowering the world. Ultimately, this study contributes to contemporary theology by offering a relational and participatory paradigm of divine action that challenges classical models of unilateral power (Zizioulas, 2006, p. 150; Langby & Langby, 2024).

RESEARCH METHODS

This article adopts a reflective theological method to explore the concept of kenosis, focusing specifically on the self-emptying of the Holy Spirit in the doctrine of creation. The research is grounded in theological reasoning and textual reflection, drawing primarily from selected biblical passages—such as Genesis 1:2 and Psalm 104:30—not for exegetical analysis in the technical sense, but to serve as theological anchors for conceptual development. These texts are interpreted within the broader tradition of Christian theology to illuminate the paradox of divine power expressed through restraint.

The study engages deeply with systematic theology and critical theological discourse, drawing upon the works of Jürgen Moltmann (1993), Hans Urs von Balthasar (1990b), and Karl Barth (1957), who offer key perspectives on kenosis, divine love, and the relational nature of God’s action in creation. Their contributions are examined to develop a theological understanding of the Spirit’s kenotic activity—not as absence or weakness, but as divine empowerment that affirms the integrity and freedom of creation.

To broaden the theological horizon, the article also engages contemporary voices such as Nimmo & Johnson (2022) and John Zizioulas (2006), whose relational and trinitarian insights further reinforce the notion of divine self-limitation as a constructive paradigm for both doctrine and Christian ethics. Rather than applying empirical or historical-critical methods, this theological approach seeks to integrate doctrinal reflection, spiritual insight, and ethical implication, thereby offering a comprehensive account of the Holy Spirit’s kenosis as a source of freedom and empowerment in creation.

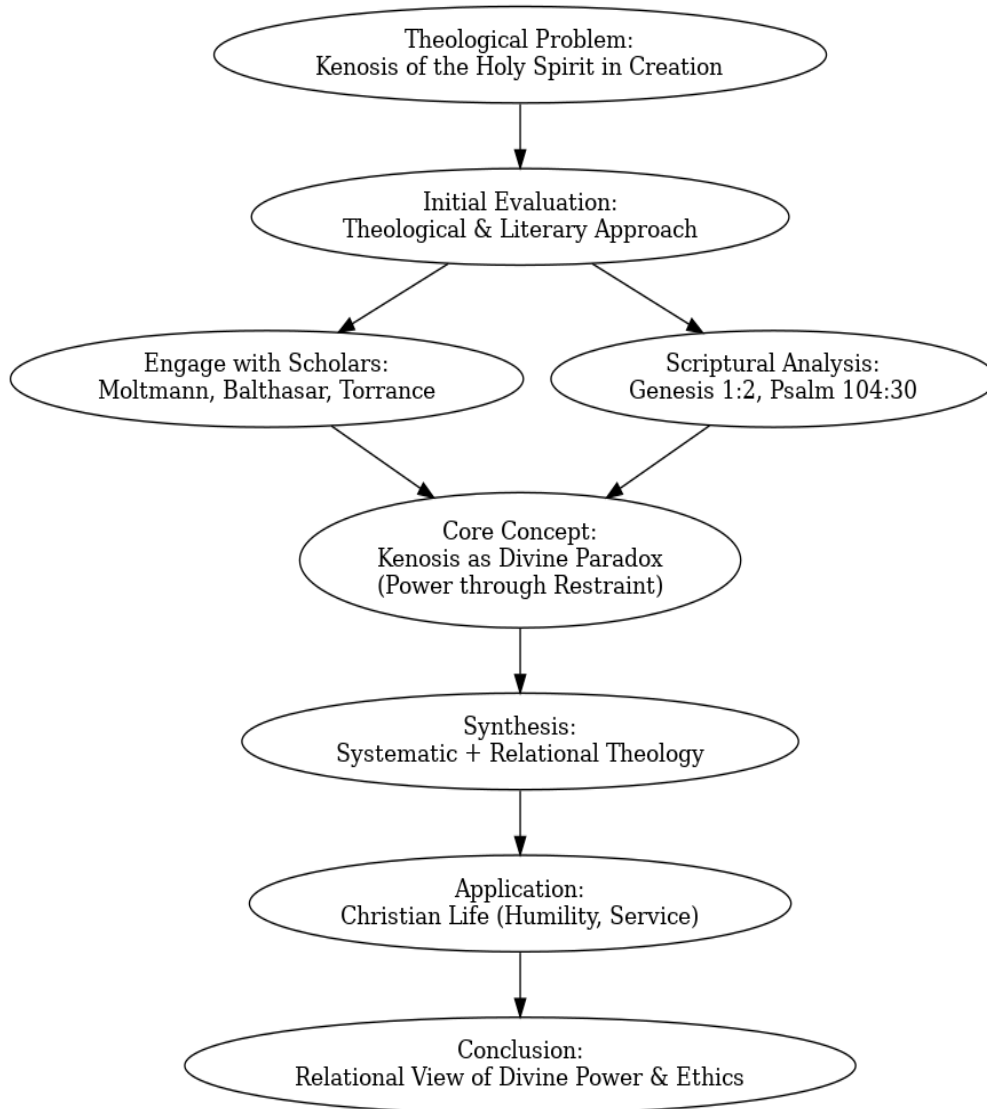


Figure 1. The Method Flowchart

RESULT

Understanding Kenosis in Theology

Kenosis, a term derived from the Greek word *κενόω* (*kenōō*), meaning "to empty," refers to the self-emptying of one's will and power. It is often used to describe the voluntary act of God limiting Himself for the sake of others, particularly in the person of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit (Balthasar, 1990b, p. 71). In Christian theology, kenosis highlights the paradox that divine power can be expressed through self-limitation rather than through coercive control. This concept is most famously discussed in Philippians 2:7, where Christ is described as emptying Himself to become human—a model of humility and service. Kenosis is not merely an act of submission, but a

deliberate choice by the divine to foster a genuine relationship and freedom within creation (Barth, 1957).

Theologically, kenosis has profound implications for understanding the nature of God. It suggests that God's omnipotence is not exercised through domination but through an act of humility that creates room for freedom, love, and cooperation (Moltmann, 1997, p. 128; Langby, 2025). This self-emptying allows creation to be co-creators with God, engaging freely in the divine purpose (Cassidy-Deketelaere, 2022; Simmons, 2021; Jersak, 2023). In the case of Jesus Christ, His kenosis becomes the model for how divine power operates—not through the imposition of might, but through the willingness to become vulnerable and self-sacrificial (Balthasar, 1990a, p. 105; Mdingi, 2020). Thus, kenosis challenges our traditional understanding of power, inviting us to see it as a force that empowers rather than enslaves (Moltmann, 1993, p. 91; Nthakheni & Mudau, 2025, p. a.53).

Kenosis is most notably discussed in the context of Jesus Christ, particularly in Philippians 2:7, where Paul writes that Christ "emptied Himself" by taking on human form. This act of self-emptying is central to Christian theology because it demonstrates how God can be fully divine and fully human, participating in the human condition without diminishing His divinity (Mdingi, 2020; Ottuh, 2020, a2081). Jesus' kenosis is a revelation of divine love, humility, and the willingness to suffer for the sake of others. This voluntary act of self-limitation reflects the core nature of divine interaction with creation—one that respects freedom while still engaging fully in the unfolding of divine will (Nimmo & Johnson, 2022; Phang & Putrawan, 2020; Wenk, 2022, p. 191). The kenosis of Christ thus not only reveals the nature of God's interaction with humanity but also sets the stage for understanding how the Holy Spirit engages with creation.

The Holy Spirit's kenosis is a vital extension of this divine paradox. Just as Jesus emptied Himself in His incarnation, the Holy Spirit, as the third person of the Trinity, participates in the divine kenosis (Behr, 2004; Wenk, 2022, p. 191). The Spirit's role in creation is not that of an overpowering force but of an empowering presence that allows creation to develop in freedom. The Spirit does not impose divine will through force; instead, through self-emptying, He works subtly to sustain and guide creation (Cassidy-Deketelaere, 2022; Barth, 1957). This self-emptying does not diminish the Spirit's power but channels it in a way that respects the autonomy of creation while continuously upholding and renewing it (Simmons, 2021; Phan, 2022). The Spirit's

kenosis allows creation to grow and develop in alignment with God's purposes, with freedom and independence in the unfolding of divine order (Nimmo & Johnson, 2022).

In understanding the Holy Spirit's kenosis, it is essential to recognize that His self-emptying does not equate to withdrawal or inactivity. Rather, the Spirit actively participates in the preservation and sustenance of creation while simultaneously allowing space for creation to exist freely (Jersak, 2023). The Holy Spirit's role is not to dominate or control but to empower and nurture, working in subtle ways that honor the freedom of creation (Johnson, 2009). This dynamic of empowerment through self-limitation reflects the paradoxical nature of divine power—power that works within creation without overpowering it (Nthakheni & Mudau, 2025, p. a.53; Zizioulas, 2006, p. 155). By emptying Himself, the Spirit allows creation the space to flourish, thus participating in a divine act of relational love and cooperation (Howell, 2020).

The kenosis of the Holy Spirit has profound implications for the doctrine of creation. It suggests that creation is not a static or passive reality but a dynamic, ongoing process in which the Holy Spirit continues to engage with creation. Through His self-emptying, the Spirit empowers creation to live according to its inherent laws, sustaining it through a cooperative relationship (Cassidy-Deketelaere, 2022; Moltmann, 1993, p. 108). The Spirit's kenosis does not impose limitations on creation but makes room for a fuller, richer expression of God's purposes in the world. Thus, creation becomes a co-creative process where both divine action and creation's freedom contribute to the unfolding of God's will in the world (Barth, 1957; Nimmo & Johnson, 2022).

Kenosis, both in the context of Christ and the Holy Spirit, redefines how divine power operates in the world. It invites us to understand power not as domination but as empowerment and self-giving. The kenosis of the Holy Spirit, like Christ's, is an active presence that continually sustains and empowers creation without overpowering it (Jersak, 2023; Ottuh, 2020, a2081; Balthasar, 1990a, p. 111). Through His self-emptying, the Spirit fosters a cooperative relationship with creation, one that allows for freedom, growth, and participation in the divine plan (Phan, 2022). This theological understanding of kenosis challenges us to rethink our own relationships with God, creation, and one another, calling us to embody humility, service, and self-sacrifice in our lives (Barth, 1957; Johnson, 2009).

The Holy Spirit in Creation

The Holy Spirit's role in creation is foundational for understanding how God interacts with the world. In Genesis 1:2, the Spirit is described as "hovering over the waters" during the creation of the world. This suggests that the Spirit's involvement in creation is not passive but actively participates in shaping and forming the cosmos (Barth, 1957, p. 112; Balthasar, 1990a, p. 45). Throughout Scripture, the Spirit is depicted as bringing order out of chaos, acting as a force that moves and empowers creation (Barth, 1957, p. 137; Phang & Putrawan, 2020). This illustrates the idea that the Holy Spirit is integral to the ongoing process of creation—not only its initiation but also its continuous sustenance and development (Barth, 1957; Zizioulas, 2006, p. 98). Through His active presence, the Spirit is portrayed as a life-giving force, enabling life to flourish in the created order (Moltmann, 1993, p. 43; Cassidy-Deketelaere, 2022).

The Holy Spirit's role in creation is not limited to an initial act but is ongoing. In Psalm 104:30, it is stated, "When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth." This passage reinforces the idea that the Holy Spirit's involvement in creation is continuous, as He is responsible for sustaining and renewing life within the natural world (Howell, 2020; Barth, 1957, p. 137). The Spirit's creative action is not confined to the past moment of creation but continues in the present, bringing life and vitality to the universe. Thus, the Spirit's power is both generative and sustaining, ensuring the ongoing vitality of creation (Cassidy-Deketelaere, 2022; Muis, 2016). This continuous creative involvement emphasizes the necessity of the Holy Spirit in the life cycle of creation (Moltmann, 1993, p. 64; Muis, 2016; Nimmo & Johnson, 2022).

Despite His active role in creation, the Holy Spirit's presence in the world is often shrouded in mystery. The Spirit is not always visible or directly perceptible, and His influence on the world is often indirect. This hidden nature of the Spirit's work challenges conventional understandings of divine interaction, where God's presence is typically seen as grand and overt (Barth, 1957; Nimmo & Johnson, 2022). Yet, the Spirit's mysterious presence does not diminish His role; instead, it demonstrates a unique form of divine action that allows creation to unfold freely. The Spirit's subtlety and restraint in His work reflect His kenotic nature—He chooses not to dominate creation but to work within it in ways that allow for freedom and autonomy (Zizioulas, 2006, p. 105; Gavrilyuk, 2005). This paradoxical involvement emphasizes the humility

of God, who works powerfully yet discreetly (Cassidy-Deketelaere, 2022; Balthasar, 1990b, p. 89).

The kenosis of the Holy Spirit—the voluntary self-emptying of His divine attributes—further complicates the mystery of His presence in creation. Although the Spirit is omnipresent and all-powerful, His kenosis means that He does not exercise this power in an overt or domineering way. Instead, He works through the created order, allowing it to develop according to its inherent potential. This is particularly evident in how the Spirit sustains life without coercing or manipulating the natural world. The Spirit's self-emptying does not indicate a lack of power, but rather a deliberate choice to allow creation the freedom to unfold on its own (Barth, 1957). In this way, the Holy Spirit's presence is both pervasive and subtle, continually active but never overwhelming (Zizioulas, 2006, p. 119; Howell, 2020).

The relationship between kenosis and creation is crucial in understanding the Holy Spirit's role in the world. Kenosis involves a self-limitation or self-emptying, which does not mean that the Spirit withdraws from creation. Instead, it means that the Spirit allows space for creation to exist freely. The Spirit's self-emptying does not restrict creation but makes room for a richer and more dynamic world to emerge (Balthasar, 1990a, p. 89; Moltmann, 1993, p. 78; Langby & Langby, 2024). This act of self-limitation allows creation to unfold naturally, with room for human beings and other creatures to participate in the divine work of creation (Barth, 1957). The Spirit's kenosis creates a partnership between God and creation, where the Creator is present and active but also allows creation to retain its own integrity and autonomy (Cassidy-Deketelaere, 2022; Howell, 2020).

The Holy Spirit's kenosis and His work in creation reveal a profound theological truth about the nature of divine power. In many theological systems, power is often understood as the ability to control or dominate. However, the Spirit's self-emptying power demonstrates that true power, in a divine sense, is the ability to allow freedom and creativity to flourish. By limiting His direct intervention, the Spirit fosters a cooperative relationship with creation, giving room for the unfolding of life in all its complexity (Phan, 2022; Phang & Putrawan, 2020). This paradox—where divine power is expressed through self-limitation—challenges traditional conceptions of divine omnipotence, suggesting that God's ultimate power is revealed not in domination, but in loving restraint (Moltmann, 1993, p. 74).

In understanding the kenotic relationship between the Holy Spirit and creation, we also see a reflection of the broader theological concept of divine humility. The Spirit's work in creation is an expression of God's humility, as He chooses to work through creation rather than against it. This humility is also reflected in the way the Spirit empowers creation to grow and develop according to its own laws and rhythms (Nimmo & Johnson, 2022; Blokhin, 2024; Cassidy-Deketelaere, 2022). Rather than imposing His will, the Spirit works with creation, guiding and sustaining it in ways that honor its freedom and inherent goodness. This approach allows for a more dynamic and participatory relationship between God and the created world (Zizioulas, 2006, p. 143).

The relationship between kenosis and creation has profound implications for how we understand the divine economy of salvation. If the Holy Spirit's self-emptying allows creation to flourish in freedom, then it follows that the Spirit's work in redemption follows the same pattern. In the same way that the Spirit works subtly and gently in creation, He works in salvation, inviting humanity into a redemptive partnership without coercion. The Holy Spirit, in His kenosis, calls humanity to collaborate in the unfolding of God's kingdom, fostering growth and transformation without overwhelming the will of the individual (Cassidy-Deketelaere, 2022; Howell, 2020). Thus, the Holy Spirit's work in creation is both a model and a metaphor for how God desires to work in our lives—gently, with humility, and with respect for our freedom (Barth, 1957).

DISCUSSION

Divine Humility and the Freedom of Creation: The Paradox of Kenosis

The concept of the divine paradox that arises through the kenosis of the Holy Spirit presents a profound theological mystery. Traditionally, divine power has been associated with dominance and control, but the self-emptying nature of the Spirit demonstrates a paradox in which power is exercised through restraint and humility. The Spirit continues to sustain and empower creation while choosing not to impose control over it, allowing for freedom and autonomy within the created order (Moltmann, 1993, p. 85; Balthasar, 1990a, p. 112). This paradox reveals that true divine power is not displayed through coercive force but through the act of self-limitation, which makes room for the flourishing of creation. Through kenosis, the Holy Spirit exemplifies a model of divine engagement where power is expressed through love, humility, and

empowerment, rather than domination (Nthakheni & Mudau, 2025, p. a.53; Barth, 1957).

Building on this paradox, it becomes evident that God's self-limitation is not a sign of weakness, but the foundation of a relational mode of divine power. By voluntarily limiting Himself, the Spirit demonstrates that true strength lies not in the ability to control all things but in the willingness to allow creation to develop freely according to its own laws. This limitation does not diminish God's sovereignty; rather, it reveals a more profound, relational power that fosters cooperation and partnership with creation (Jersak, 2023). The paradox is that God, in His infinite power, chooses to act in humility, creating space for creation's autonomy. This reveals that God's greatness is not found in control, but in His willingness to empty Himself for the sake of others (Barth, 1957; Nimmo & Johnson, 2022).

In theological terms, kenosis challenges the traditional view of divine omnipotence as the ability to exercise absolute control over the world. Rather than enforcing His will, the Holy Spirit works in the world by empowering creation to fulfill its potential without dominating it. The Spirit's kenosis involves self-limitation that enables creation to evolve and participate in the divine plan freely (Moltmann, 1997, p. 133). This act of divine self-emptying is not an absence of power but a profound expression of power that makes room for others, allowing creation to unfold in its own freedom (Evans, 2006). Thus, the divine paradox of kenosis redefines how we understand power in the context of creation and divine interaction.

Creation itself is not a passive act of the Holy Spirit but an active engagement in which the Spirit collaborates with creation to bring it into being and sustain it (Howell, 2020; Simmons, 2021). The Holy Spirit's kenosis does not involve withdrawal from creation, but rather a deepening of His involvement in it, albeit in a way that respects the freedom and autonomy of creation (Cassidy-Deketelaere, 2022). The Spirit empowers creation by allowing it to function according to its own nature, enabling the world to develop according to its God-given potential (Howell, 2020). This active participation in creation reveals that creation is a dynamic process in which both God and creation work together, with the Spirit's self-emptying allowing creation the space to flourish (Balthasar, 1990a, p. 117; Zizioulas, 2006, p. 144).

The paradox of kenosis is most evident when we consider the relationship between the Spirit's power and creation's autonomy. The Holy Spirit does not exercise

His power in a domineering way but works in subtle, indirect ways that allow creation to participate actively in its own development. This cooperative dynamic is a key aspect of the divine paradox—creation is not a passive recipient of divine action but an active partner in the ongoing work of creation (Moltmann, 1993, p. 120; Balthasar, 1990a, p. 118). The Spirit's self-emptying does not signify withdrawal, but a more profound and empowering presence that allows creation the freedom to unfold while still being sustained by the Spirit's grace (Johnson, 2009; Cassidy-Deketelaere, 2022).

In this divine paradox, the Holy Spirit's kenosis reflects the nature of divine power as something that works through cooperation and mutual participation rather than control. God's power, as expressed through the Spirit's self-emptying, is not one of coercion but of invitation, where creation is given the freedom to act and participate in the divine will (Evans, 2006; Phang & Putrawan, 2020). The paradox of kenosis shows that divine power is not about maintaining control, but about giving space for creation to develop, grow, and become what it is intended to be. This relational power is transformative, as it invites creation to participate in God's ongoing creative and redemptive work (Barth, 1957; Moltmann, 1997, p. 134).

Kenosis also teaches us about the nature of divine humility. Rather than asserting His divine rights over creation, God humbly allows creation to function in its own autonomy, while still sustaining and guiding it through the Spirit's self-emptying presence. This humility is not a sign of weakness but of profound strength, as God chooses to give up control in order to allow creation to flourish freely (Balthasar, 1990b, p. 119; Mdingi, 2020). The humility expressed in kenosis is a divine attribute that Christians are called to reflect in their own lives, particularly in how they relate to others and to the world (Nthakheni & Mudau, 2025, p. a.53). This challenge to the traditional understanding of divine power invites believers to adopt an attitude of humility and service, following the example of the self-emptying Spirit (Johnson, 2009; Mdingi, 2020).

Theological Implications of the Holy Spirit's Kenosis in Creation

Understanding the kenosis of the Holy Spirit profoundly impacts our view of God as both loving and humble. Kenosis reveals that God, in His omnipotence, chooses to limit Himself for the sake of creation, allowing the world to develop in freedom (Moltmann, 1997, p. 92). This act of self-emptying demonstrates divine humility, as God

willingly sets aside His power to allow creation its own agency (Balthasar, 1990a, p. 118). Rather than enforcing control, God invites creation to participate in the divine plan, revealing a love that seeks the flourishing of others (Evans, 2006, p. 149; Nthakheni & Mudau, 2025, p. a.53). Through kenosis, we see a God who does not dominate but humbly serves creation, making room for the autonomy of the created order.

The implications of this humility are profound for how we perceive God's relationship with creation. By choosing to empty Himself, God demonstrates that love and power are not mutually exclusive but are intertwined in divine action (Cassidy-Deketelaere, 2022). The self-limitation of the Holy Spirit reflects the nature of divine love—one that is freely given and allows creation the freedom to develop according to its own laws (Moltmann, 1993, p. 110). This humility in kenosis challenges traditional understandings of power, inviting a reevaluation of divine sovereignty. God's sovereignty is revealed not through domination, but through the empowerment and nurturing of creation (Jersak, 2023).

Understanding the Holy Spirit's kenosis also challenges our perception of divine power. Kenosis shows that true divine power is not about exercising absolute control, but about enabling freedom and growth within creation (Nimmo & Johnson, 2022). The Spirit's self-emptying creates space for creation to flourish and allows for the dynamic participation of both God and creation in the unfolding of the divine purpose (Johnson, 2009). This highlights the paradoxical nature of divine power: that in limiting Himself, the Spirit actively sustains and empowers creation, demonstrating that true strength lies in self-giving love (Moltmann, 1997, p. 106). By emptying Himself, the Holy Spirit fosters a cooperative relationship with creation, where both divine and created agency work together for the good of the world (Balthasar, 1990b, p. 125).

The impact of the Holy Spirit's kenosis on creation is seen in the way it sustains and nurtures life. Creation is not a passive event, but an ongoing process in which the Spirit plays an active role, allowing creation to develop freely while still guiding and sustaining it (Simmons, 2021). The Spirit's kenosis does not mean He withdraws from creation, but rather that He chooses to work with creation in a way that respects its autonomy (Phan, 2022). This self-emptying nature of the Spirit ensures that creation remains free to evolve, yet always under the sustaining power of the divine presence.

The paradox is that the Spirit's humility allows for creation's flourishing without limiting its freedom (Howell, 2020).

Kenosis also has profound implications for how we understand the ongoing sustenance of the world. The Holy Spirit does not merely initiate creation but is continuously involved in its maintenance and development. The Spirit's self-emptying allows for the ongoing process of creation, not as a one-time act but as an unfolding partnership with God (Nthakheni & Mudau, 2025, p. a.53; Cassidy-Deketelaere, 2022; Mdingi, 2020). Through kenosis, the Spirit empowers creation to continue its dynamic existence while ensuring that it remains rooted in divine sustenance. This continuous engagement underscores the intimate relationship between God and creation, where creation's autonomy is sustained by divine grace (Langby & Langby, 2024; Barth, 1957).

The theological implications of kenosis in creation extend to how we understand the relationship between the Creator and the created. The Holy Spirit's role is not to dominate but to empower, sustaining creation in ways that allow it to flourish according to its own nature (Balthasar, 1990b, p. 126; Zizioulas, 2006, p. 147). This view of creation challenges the idea that God's power must be imposed to ensure order, instead emphasizing that true divine power works in collaboration with creation's inherent potential. The Spirit's self-emptying allows for the unfolding of creation's purpose, inviting the world to participate in the divine plan freely and fully (Nimmo & Johnson, 2022; Barth, 1957).

Kenosis in the Holy Spirit is not only a theological concept but has practical implications for the Christian life. The paradox of kenosis calls Christians to embody humility and self-giving love in their own lives. If the Spirit can empty Himself for the sake of creation, then Christians are called to follow His example in their relationships with others (Cassidy-Deketelaere, 2022; Johnson, 2009). The lessons drawn from the Spirit's kenosis include the importance of serving others without seeking control, fostering an attitude of humility and self-sacrifice in all aspects of life (Mdingi, 2020; Barth, 1957). By practicing humility and service, Christians reflect the divine love and power expressed through kenosis.

The paradox of kenosis also challenges Christians to reconsider their understanding of divine power. Instead of seeing power as something to be wielded over others, the Christian life calls for a power that is exercised through humility and love. The Spirit's kenosis teaches that true strength lies in the ability to serve and

empower others rather than dominate them (Moltmann, 1993, p. 108). This understanding of power as self-giving love reshapes how Christians interact with the world, encouraging them to cultivate relationships built on cooperation, humility, and respect for the freedom of others (Phang & Putrawan, 2020).

The Holy Spirit's kenosis also invites Christians to reflect on their role in the ongoing work of creation. As co-creators with God, Christians are called to participate in the care and stewardship of the world, working alongside the Spirit to sustain and nurture creation (Zizioulas, 2006, p. 150). This view of creation as a cooperative act between God and humanity challenges the idea of domination over nature, urging Christians to act as humble stewards who care for the world with love and respect (Nthakheni & Mudau, 2025, p. a53; Cassidy-Deketelaere, 2022). Through this understanding of the Spirit's self-emptying, Christians are empowered to work in partnership with God for the flourishing of all creation.

CONCLUSION

The kenosis of the Holy Spirit offers a powerful theological lens for rethinking divine power in the act of creation. Unlike models that emphasize domination or unilateral control, the Spirit's self-emptying is a paradoxical act of power—one that empowers creation by stepping back, granting it space, and allowing it to exist and grow in freedom. This vision of divine restraint affirms that creation is not a product of force but of relational love, where the Spirit sustains and accompanies rather than controls. Through engagement with scriptural texts and theological sources, this study reveals that the Spirit's kenotic action fosters a dynamic cosmos grounded in divine presence and liberating grace.

This kenotic understanding of the Spirit has important ethical and doctrinal implications. It invites a reconfiguration of power as service, presence, and humility—not only in divine action but also in human reflection and practice. As creation is empowered in freedom, humanity is likewise called to mirror the Spirit's posture: embracing mutuality, responsibility, and reverence for life. The study thus contributes to pneumatology by presenting a relational paradigm of divine action—one that challenges triumphalist theologies and opens space for a more participatory and compassionate worldview.

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