A Trinitarian Theology of 'Family'

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A Trinitarian Theology of 'Family'

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Certificate of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at Charles Sturt University or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgment is made in the thesis. Any contribution made to the research by colleagues with whom I have worked at Charles Sturt University or elsewhere during my candidature is fully acknowledged. I agree that this thesis be accessible for the purpose of study and research in accordance with the normal conditions established by the Executive Director, Library Services or nominee, for the care, loan and reproduction of theses.”

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Abstract

‘The family’ and family life have long been regarded as an area of interest to Christianity, at least since Luther and the Reformation. Some theologians, historians, and sociologists have argued that Christianity has had a role in shaping the Western family. Despite this, there has been very little theological investigation of ‘family’. Feminists and others have critiqued the powerful concept of ‘family’ as an ideological, political, historical, and cultural construct. Despite the arguable significance of the subject, ‘family’ has not featured highly in any academic discipline.

The re-emergence of trinitarian theology has led to a reconsideration of Christian anthropology, specifically of the idea of ‘persons in relation’. There have only been a few, limited, attempts to extend this theological anthropological to the ‘family’. This is an understandably vexed area, due to the critiques of ‘family’, the current debate about the so-called ‘social Trinity’, and the particularly high risk of anthropomorphic projection in this specific arena.

This thesis is in two parts. After a review of the literature on both the trinity and family, the first half investigates claims by Gunton, LaCugna and Zizioulas that trinitarian theology took a number of ‘mis-steps’ in the first four centuries of Christianity, under the impress of Platonic and Neoplatonic substance ontology. This has had an enormous effect on theology, theological anthropology, and on Western individualism and society, and explains why so little theologising has occurred on the subject of household or family.
Since historic ‘trinitarian mis-steps’ have contributed to the present lack of theology about the family, the second half of the thesis attempts to re-conceptualise ‘family’ in the light of re-emerging, ‘relational’ trinitarian theology. Methodological and theological concerns are examined as I begin to construct an alternative view of ‘family’ and ‘familying’ that is consistent with this trinitarian theology. Of particular interest for family dynamics are the Trinitarian relational dynamics of hypostasis, perichoresis and ecstasis.

This thesis finds that the course of historic trinitarian theology is one reason for the absence of theology about ‘family’. Paradoxically, trinitarian theology, with appropriate methodological safeguards, has much to contribute to the important and contentious debate about ‘family’.
Introduction

'The family' and family life have long been regarded as an area of interest to Christianity, at least since Martin Luther and the Reformation. Feminist theologians, as well as historians and sociologists, are among those who have argued that Christianity has even had a role in shaping the western family in particular.\(^1\) Whether partially influenced by Christianity, as claimed, or indeed for other reasons, the 'family' carries a freight of significant and complex resonances politically, socially, developmentally, personally and emotionally. Yet, despite this apparent connection with Christianity, and the possible ubiquity and potential importance of the subject, strangely Christian theological consideration of 'family' has largely been conspicuous by its absence.\(^2\)

The 're-emergence' of trinitarian theology has had particular impact not only within theology but also on Christian anthropology. The concept of a tri-unity of 'persons' within the Godhead has gradually led to re-consideration of what it means to be human, as persons in communion, created in the image of God.\(^3\) Not surprisingly, this has


\(^2\) I examine if this is indeed the case, and why it may have been so. See Chs.2-4.

prompted a few calls for a trinitarian theology of the family⁴ and some early attempts.⁵

This thesis began by trying to explore whether trinitarian theology could indeed provide a missing theology for ‘family.’ It arose from a combination of a long-standing interest in the phenomenon of human family, the trinitarian teaching I received from an Egyptian Coptic theology lecturer, and reading Karl Barth’s ‘Man and Woman,’ just before the British Council of Churches began publishing its landmark series: ‘The Forgotten Trinity’.⁶ Subsequently, juggling duties as an Anglican minister with the privileges, responsibilities and flaws of being a partner and a parent gave added impetus for reflection on the subject of family, but insufficient time to pursue this research, which began at King’s College, London. For the record, because it is a potential source of multiple biases, I am a married, late middle-aged, middle class, white British male, father, and now a grandparent.

Prior to and since working in full-time Anglican ministry, I have spent some twenty three years in a range of social work posts with children, teenagers, and their families, and with adoptive, foster and

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kinship carers. Most of the individuals and families I met were facing highly challenging circumstances, including poverty, domestic violence, physical and sexual abuse, and neglect. As a consequence, I harbour few illusions that ‘families’ are automatically beneficial. I gleaned an appreciation of the difficulties many families face and of the complex interplay, for good and ill, of intergenerational and interpersonal relationships. Moving to Australia led to working again as a social worker only to discover that the issues I had encountered in the UK were also present here.

As an Anglican minister, I have also met families from a wide range of social economic backgrounds in pastoral situations, including birth, baptism, marriage, illness and death. I have witnessed the joys, sorrows and complexities of relationships, as well as evidence of self-sacrificial care for young, disabled, ill and elderly family members and also afforded to and by those who had no formal family connection.

Considering the subject of family from a trinitarian theological perspective is not as straightforward as it might appear. To begin with, re-emerged trinitarian theology is by no means unified or uncontested. There are weighty epistemological and methodological questions about theology (how can we know about God?), about divine ontology (what is the Trinity, or how does the Trinity operate?), about language (how are God and the ‘persons’ of the Trinity to be described?) and the ever-present risk of anthropomorphic projection (is this simply creating ‘God’ in our own image?). What is more, there are general apprehensions about any attempted correspondence (what exactly is the connection, if any, between triune divine creator and human creation?) The nature of the relationship between men and women and

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7 These posts have included residential care, work with young offenders and their families, specialist support in an Education department, an inner London child and family team, family therapy, working for CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health, in a hospital based team investigating complex child abuse cases and attempting to rehabilitate where possible), as a Guardian representing children in UK courts and delivering Domestic Violence awareness training, an Australian Care and Protection team, and now for Anglicare.
between parents and children has come under some scrutiny in this regard. Therefore, all of these are relevant issues for any possible trinitarian theology of family and require further investigation.

In addition to theological questions about the Trinity, there are some fundamental questions about what constitutes ‘family’ and how ‘family’ is defined? Critiques of any Christian interest in ‘family’, both from inside and outside Christianity, cite definitional, biblical, historical, cultural and socio-economic considerations, as well as significant concerns about ‘family’ as ideology, and even as idolatry. Together they place large question marks over what precisely is the focus of any theologising, what exactly are the motives for attempting to theologise, and to what extent Christian writers and commentators are conscious of these issues? Indeed, some evidence suggests that ‘the family’ has largely been unconsciously taken for granted. Anthony Harvey, for example, argues that it is not helpful for teachers of Christianity to merely:

Repeat that the church must continue to support ‘the family’. It is only now that the question is being asked whether it is really such a sacred institution, and there is disappointingly little in the Bible or in traditional Christian teaching which helps answer it.

Karl Barth’s criticisms of Schleiermacher’s sermons on the family together with Barth’s aversion to ‘natural theology’ are further factors suggesting caution. Consequently, unpacking and examining

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8 Although Stephen Barton, for example, has edited a book and written a number of articles on the family and theology, he argues that talk of the family is in fact ‘an abstraction’. From a historical and anthropological point of view, he says, ‘the family as such does not exist, and all we have are ways of talking about particular kinds of small-scale social organization’. Stephen Barton, "Towards a Theology of the Family," Crucible, no. January - March (1993): 6.

9 Nicholas Peter Harvey, "Christianity against and for the Family," Studies in Christian Ethics 9, no. 1 (1992); Anne Borrowdale, Reconstructing Family Values (SPCK, 1994).


these questions and critiques in more detail is a pre-requisite to any possible theologising.

Christianity, however, has not always been regarded as pro-'family'. Rosemary Ruether has claimed that Christianity was either anti-family or, at best, ambivalent about it, for three-quarters of Christianity's existence, prior to Martin Luther. Despite the length of this period, almost fourteen to fifteen hundred years, the details of this lack of Christian support are not widely known about. The pertinent extant works of particular writers from the second century onwards, together with commentary by more recent authors as diverse as O.M. Bakke, Denise Buell, Peter Brown, Roy Deferrari, Michel Foucault, and Halvor Moxnes, among others, suggest a complex, curious and unique admixture of Christianity, culture, social circumstances, history, heresy, philosophy, biblical awareness and patriarchy. The resulting multifaceted picture is relevant today. This is not just because it offers a variform and contrasting backdrop to the present. It is because this idiosyncratic background and highly mixed legacy continues to exercise an often unseen, but arguably quite pervasive, hold on the current debate, both in respect of family and theology.

The re-emergence of trinitarian theology has inevitably led to interest in the earlier heyday of trinitarian thinking, in the third and fourth centuries. Thus, for example, the works of Athanasius, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory Nazianzus are being mined anew.

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to help shed light on present trinitarian debates. Additionally, theologians such as Colin Gunton, Catherine LaCugna and Christoph Schwöbel have conducted autopsies on the subsequent demise of Trinitarian theology, tracing a gently diminishing trajectory from Greek East to Latin West. These theologians argue that this fading track had profound consequences for the course of theology and for Christian anthropology. Since Christian anthropology helped to influence the conception of human being during the Renaissance, and can be linked to Individualism, this may be no small matter. Indeed, although it was not the intention or interest of Gunton and others, I will argue that it is feasible to connect their analysis with the development of the so-called western ‘nuclear family’, as well as to its ideological significance. Furthermore, the very same aetiology and its knock-on effects may lie behind some of the major threats perceived to be assailing the western family, as well as help explain the curious absence of any theology.

This research initially set out to examine whether it was possible to have a trinitarian theology of ‘family’. If the foregoing is correct, however, trinitarian theology may have already had a profound impact upon the phenomenon of the western family, upon the debate about ‘family’ and, perversely, on the apparent absence of theology. Moreover, this hypothesized and potentially extensive influence has been scarcely recognised by Christians, let alone more generally.

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Colin Gunton has argued that there are significant subliminal themes of relationality and love that come from the earliest trinitarian formulations but have not occupied the mainstream of theological discussion in the West.\textsuperscript{15} These strands look potentially promising for developing a trinitarian theology of ‘family’ and therefore their absence may also help to explain why a theology of ‘family’ has been lacking. Furthermore, they resonate with some of the standout factors that some would say represent the essence, or ontology, of ‘family’. They include love, creation out of love, particularity (being a special and unique person within a relationship), the importance of mutuality and relationship itself, and an intimate connection with God.

Within Christian literature there is a partial division between those writing about the family and those who argue that this is a mistaken focus and who prefer to concentrate on the church instead.\textsuperscript{16} Trinitarian theologians, more recently on the scene, have begun to examine eccesiology (the structure and nature of the church) from a trinitarian perspective.\textsuperscript{17} A feature of these examinations has been a stress on the same factors referred to in the previous paragraph: namely, love, particularity and a quality of relationship in community and with God. This may be a coincidence but this thesis will argue that it is not. Therefore considering ‘family’ from a theological perspective properly entails looking both at human families and at how church should function as ‘family’. This further underscores what is most important about ‘family’ and facilitates its theological redefinition. I will

\textsuperscript{15} “The Concept of the Person: the One, the Three and the Many” in The Promise of Trinitarian Theology, Gunton, The Promise of Trinitarian Theology, 86-103.
\textsuperscript{16} An important exception has been the Roman Catholic emphasis on the domestic church. Please see p. 90.
argue that this would also accord with biblical data, and with the
dominical relativisation of family ties. It would link up with eschatology
and have some interesting ramifications for missiology, ethics and
hamartiology (the branch of theology concerned with sin).

**Defining ‘Family’ and ‘Theology’**

Both ‘Family’ and ‘Theology’ are central terms for this thesis, so
it is appropriate to consider at the outset what exactly they are
describing or expressing. The definitions of ‘Trinity’ and ‘Social Trinity’
are explored in the Literature Review in Ch.1.

‘Family’ is a widely used and multifaceted Anglophone term. The
complexity of meaning in form, content, symbolism and ideology is
examined in more detail in the literature review. Because i) it is not a
straightforward term, and ii) it is directly relevant to this thesis, one of
the results of this research is an attempt to redefine ‘family’ from a
trinitarian theological perspective. For now, however, with the possible
exception of quotations, ‘family’ or ‘families’ will be used to describe kin
and household entities or groupings, determined by blood or legal ties,
or by custom and practice, including cross-historically and culturally.
On occasion, this will be extended to include more voluntary
association, such as particular friends or colleagues, or indeed churches
or church groups when, in the view of the participants, these act in
mutually supportive ways that are regarded as akin to a family. I will
try to denote when this occurs.

‘Theology’ has been widely thought to be the ‘rational account of
the Christian Faith’, based on a number of sub-disciplines, such as
systematic theology, biblical studies, church history, theological ethics
and pastoral theology.\(^{18}\) One alternative definition is: ‘the art of

\(^{18}\) Alan Richardson and John Bowden, eds., *A New Dictionary of Christian
pursuing and clarifying the Christian understanding of God and things divine with scholarly integrity’. 19 It is a contention of this thesis that the particular process of the demise of trinitarian theology entailed the loss of the original semantic sense of ‘theo-logy’, as quite simply ‘talk about God’. 20 Instead, the ‘doctrine of the Trinity’ became one part of ‘systematic theology’ and is often subsumed within what is known as ‘the doctrine of God’. This sense of God as a body of learning to be taught, or rationally and critically examined, is arguably at some variance with the portrayal of God in the Old and New Testament. There the emphasis appears to be on the existence and particular nature of the revealed God, and upon human encounter and relationship with this same God. 21 I will use the accepted understanding of ‘theology’ and the conventional description ‘doctrine of God’ throughout this thesis. I will, however, also occasionally refer to ‘theo-logy’ as a way of drawing attention to the significance of paying close attention to the nature, character and identity of the Triune God, and the relational and other claims that may make upon us as human beings.

**Methodology**

One effect of the absence of theology in considering the family is the concomitant lack of a theological methodological approach to this research. Accordingly, I have utilized a specific methodology, drawn from practical theology, in order to consider both the phenomenology of ‘family’, and to attempt to do so from a theological perspective. This will form an architectonic for the whole thesis. It is briefly outlined

20 For example, a relatively recent thesis ostensibly on a ‘theological’ as well as a pastoral response to cohabitation, nowhere manages to talk about God, or the Trinity, out of 350 pages. The nearest it gets is a ‘theology of friendship’ but even that is not explored in a *theo*-logical way. Peter Manning, V. C., "Cohabitation in Contemporary Britian: A Theological and Pastoral Response" (Durham, 2008).
21 For a helpful brief discussion, please see the section “The Non-neutrality of the Theologian” in Alan J Torrance, Persons in Communion: Trinitarian Description and Human Participation (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 12-15.
below. I defend its choice in Ch.6 because by that point I can demonstrate more easily why such a methodology is appropriate for this thesis. Questions of methodology are delayed to give room for scoping chapters that first consider the history of thinking about both the Trinity and the family. It is only then that it is possible to see what needs to be done to put the two together in some constructive way, without also falling into some of the faults that these doctrines have encountered in the past. There are, in addition, a number of methodological issues, already heralded earlier, that currently fall squarely in the remit of ‘systematic theology’. I examine some of these in Ch.1 and consider them further in Ch.6.

Practical theology as a theological sub-discipline has a wide variety of expressions and focuses.22 One expression is essentially a distinctive methodological approach that deliberately starts with a given issue, question or circumstance in real life.23 It can be a very limited matter, or a large-scale one, such as Maori recognition and integration in New Zealand.24 In this thesis, the starting point is the question: can trinitarian theology supply a theology of family? There are then a number of stages. Stages 1 and 2 respectively gather the concerns and issues and begin to analyse them. This process of analysis

23 This starting point may at first glance appear to be similar to that of phenomenology. There are, however, significant methodological differences between the two approaches. In particular, the lived experience in phenomenology is often explored from the felt perspective and consciousness of a single act or. Cf. Jean-Paul Sartre, Nausea, trans. Robert Baldick (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965); M. Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge, 1962). Practical theology, on the other hand, can start not just from the perspective of a particular actor but from any issue or query, large or small. It will also attempt to use a variety of methods, in addition to the perspectives of the participants, including other disciplines, biblical study and theological reflection.
24 There are a number of versions of this particular methodology. The one I am adopting comes from Theology 100 – “Beginning Theology in Aotearoa New Zealand”, School of Theology, Faculty of Arts, University of Auckland, New Zealand. 2006-2013. Helpful critical studies of practical theological method can be found at: Neil Darragh, "The Practice of Practical Theology: Key Decisions and Abiding Hazards in Doing Practical Theology," Australian eJournal of Theology, no. 9 (2007); Emmanuel Larrey, "Practical Theology as Theological Form," in The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology, ed. James Woodward and Stephen Pattison (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000); Terry Veling, Practical Theology: On Earth as It Is in Heaven (Mary Knoll, New York: Orbis Books 2005).
may use other disciplines and expertise, and include statistical, policy and practice data. It involves asking why has this topic become an issue? What matters are potentially being overlooked? Whose stories may not be heard? The aim is to derive some critical questions. Stage 3 engages in theological reflection with the previous work. It comprises dialoguing with biblical material, theological teaching and insights about the nature and purposes of God and of being human. It also includes engaging with religious and secular history and tradition and discerning, or responding to, the prompting of the Holy Spirit, and prayer. Stage 4 articulates a ‘new theology’. It distils questions, answers, insights and reflections from Stages 1-3 to produce (i) a specific understanding ‘that engages with God and the situation critically’ and (ii) ‘a new vision for how to act’. The remaining Stages ask significant questions: (Stage 5) how might we live and engage in society that the present situation is changed for the better? Furthermore, (Stage 6) does the new theology shape ‘good practice and good theology. ...Is this practice and theology consistent with our understanding of God?’ The final element (Stage 7) is living out this new theology, hence the emphasis on ‘practical’ theology.

The Australian Roman Catholic practical theologian Prof Terry Veling describes practical theology as ‘a more integrated theological sensibility’ that “attempts to heal (the) fragmentation of theology”. Ballard & Pritchard refer to practical theology ‘drawing on the insights and challenges posed by historical and systematic theology’. Anderson, Darragh and Larney all underline the importance of biblical hermeneutics and theological analysis. In a similar vein, Darragh, a New Zealand practical theologian, also points to the value of non-theological disciplines: ‘Non-theological knowledge is required at the beginning of

25 “Beginning Theology in Aotearoa New Zealand” op.cit.
26 ‘This kind of living may be sacrificial but it may also bring about healing, restoration, connection and wholeness’, Ibid.
27 Ibid.
28 Veling, On Earth as It Is in Heaven, 3,4.
the process. The nature of this information may vary and commonly includes social science research, biological or physical research ..."³⁰

Lartey refers to this as:

Multi-perspectival rather than inter-disciplinary, in that it realizes that it cannot completely encompass the complexity of the various necessary disciplines. What it can and must do is bring selected perspectives from relevant disciplines to bear on the situation, in the hope of gaining a clearer understanding of what is going on. It is based on the understanding of creation which affirms that the God of all truth can be encountered in various disciplines and glimpsed through different perspectives.³¹

The amount of preparatory groundwork required in this thesis is such that I aim to reach Stage 4, and be able to reflect whether the theology that has been developed does indeed shape ‘good practice and good theology’. I will probably not have room to go far, if at all, into Stage 5, leaving others, if this thesis is sound, to extend the ramifications of this research into real life.

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³¹ Lartey, "Practical Theology as Theological Form," 132.
Chapter One

Scoping the theological and other relevant literature in respect of the Trinity and family.

This chapter reviews the literature on the Trinity and Family to ascertain how and why trinitarian theology might be of relevance. It also reviews the connection between Christianity and the subject of the family, the apparent lack of theology, critiques of Christian involvement in this area, and concern about Trinitarian theology and how it might be used. The concept of ‘Family’ itself is contentious, so this is also examined briefly through the literature.

The issues and questions that a literature review attempts to uncover overlap with those in Stages 1 and 2 of the Practical Theology methodology, referred to in the Introduction, so I am also attempting to fulfill these in this chapter.¹

The size of the combined literature on the Trinity and family is vast. Of necessity, this review is therefore somewhat selective. It is arranged in the following numbered sections:

1. The redefining of what it means to be human from a trinitarian theological perspective.
2. Information, issues and critiques concerning ‘Family’.
3. Existing literature on the Trinity and family, and relevant critical appraisal.
4. Highlighting the gaps in existing research.
5. Outlining the specific aims of this research, the principle findings and the structure of the following chapters

¹ Please see p20f. Chs. 2, 3 & 4 also review material that is relevant to Stage 2.
1.
The impact of the re-emerged trinitarian theology on theological anthropology: the redefining of what it means to be human?

‘In our day’, wrote Tom Torrance in 1996, Professor of Christian Dogmatics at Edinburgh University, ‘the relegation of the doctrine of the Trinity to the periphery of the Church’s life and thought is being radically challenged and to a large extent changed’. Ten years earlier, Catherine LaCugna had referred to ‘a renaissance of the doctrine’ citing nine books on the Trinity that had already been published in the first half of the 1980’s alone. William Hill, the writer of one of those books, prefaced it thus:

Among the doctrines and symbols of Christianity perhaps none has been as subject to theological neglect as that of the Trinity. Seemingly, it should occupy a central place in Christian thought because it is at once a doctrine concerning God in his own being and identity and a doctrine concerning God’s saving activity in history. Nonetheless, Karl Rahner is undoubtedly correct in his judgment that “Christians are, in their practical life, almost mere ‘monotheists’,” and were the doctrine to be eliminated as false, “the major part of religious literature could well remain virtually unchanged.”

Affirmation of the Trinity has clearly been an integral part of the Christian creeds, catechisms, benedictions, baptismal formula and hymnology for over 1680 years. Instead, it was in theology, more

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2 Torrance, One Being Three Persons, 9.
3 Catherine Mowry LaCugna, "Philosophers and Theologians on the Trinity," Modern Theology 2, no. 4 (1986). This was a considerable increase compared with the prior rate of publications on the Trinity in the twentieth century.
4 William J. Hill, The Three-Personned God: The Trinity as a Mystery of Salvation (The Catholic University of America Press, Bloomington, Washington D.C., 1982), ix, citing Karl Rahner, The Trinity, trans. Joseph Donceel (London: Burns & Oates, 1970), 10-11. There are numerous references that attest to the relatively recent re-emergence of Trinitarian theology. Feenstra and Plantinga, for example, noted that important twentieth century theologians such as Tillich, Bultmann, the Niebuhrs, and Pannenberg (prior to the publication of his Systematic Theology), made relatively little of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. Ronald J. Feenstra and Cornelius Plantinga Jr., eds., Trinity, Incarnation and Atonement: Philosophical and Theological Essays, vol. 1, Library of Religious Philosophy (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989). Gerald O’Collins similarly observed that the resurgence of interest in the Trinity occurred only towards the end of the twentieth century, after ‘many years of relative neglect’. Davis, Kendall, and O’Collins, The Trinity, 1.
specifically Western theology,\textsuperscript{6} where the doctrine fell into partial disuse, particularly under the glare of the Enlightenment.

Isaac Newton, though primarily known as a mathematician and a physicist, wrote over one million words on theology and scripture, the bulk of which were devoted directly or indirectly to the Trinity.\textsuperscript{7} Newton rejected the mixture of patristic and scholastic philosophical language with biblical revelation after studying the history of the period surrounding the Nicene Creed, and the use of ‘substance’ (\textit{ousia}) language. He also denied, in Socinian fashion, whether the Trinity could really be supported on the patristic biblical proof texts.\textsuperscript{8} Newton was not convinced that Christ ‘sent his apostles to preach metaphysics to the unlearned common people’,\textsuperscript{9} nor, following his close friend the philosopher John Locke, that increasingly important sense or experience data could apprehend the ‘substance of God’.\textsuperscript{10} Towards the end of the Enlightenment era Emmanuel Kant came to a different, but equally puzzled, conclusion:

\textit{From the doctrine of the Trinity, taken literally, nothing whatsoever can be gained for practical purposes, even if one believed that one comprehended it, and still less if one is conscious that it surpasses all our concepts.}\textsuperscript{11}

Fifteen years after Kant’s death, American William Ellery Channing’s manifesto for ‘Unitarian Christianity’ held that ‘the unity of


\textsuperscript{8}Socinianism was a late sixteenth century movement, named after Leilius Socinius and Faustus Socinius, who both denied the existence of the Trinity.

\textsuperscript{9}Newton, Keynes MS. 11 in Brewster, \textit{Memoirs}, II, appendix XXX, 532, quoted in Pfizenmaier, “Was Isaac Newton an Arian?.”

\textsuperscript{10}Isaac Newton \textit{The Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy} (3 vols.; London, 1803), II, Bk. III, 312-13, quoted in ibid.

\textsuperscript{11}Quoted in Jürgen Moltmann, \textit{The Trinity and the Kingdom of God: The Doctrine of God}, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1981), 6. Cf. the following line from Alexander Pope’s \textit{An Essay on Man} (1734) epitomises the Enlightenment view of God and Man: ‘Know then thyself, presume not God to scan / The proper study of Mankind is Man’.
God could not be reconciled with the doctrine of the Trinity'.

Around the same time, in Europe, Schleiermacher ‘relegated’ the Trinity to the end, the Postlegomenon, of his systematic theology. After Schleiermacher, the Bibliotecha Trinitariorum considered the doctrine of the Trinity largely disappeared ‘from the forefront of Protestant theological discussion’. Herrmann, for example, gave his reason for also placing the Trinity last in his Dogmatics:

To avoid burdening the clear and firmly founded true faith with obscure speculations.... There is serious question whether the idea of the Triune God expresses the faith accurately and unobjectionably, and it is not for us to pry into the inner life of the deity or speak of internal distinctions therein.

Nor were these beliefs confined to Protestant theology. Congruent with the Enlightenment and later views on the doctrine of the Trinity, Karl Rahner observed there was an almost complete absence of any new trinitarian doctrinal development. Instead, as he noted, the only works on the Trinity were historical studies. These were not widely read. Christians are consequently largely unaware of

12 Ted Peters, *God as Trinity: Relationality and Temporality in Divine Life* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1993), 38, n36, and see also n37. Peters was citing "Unitarian Christianity", in the Works of William E. Channing (Boston: American Unitarian Association 1875), 373.

13 The last 14 out of 750 pages: Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1928), 738-51. There is no necessary immediate connection between Channing and Schleiermacher, nor are their ideas identical, but it is likely that both had been influenced by the prevailing Enlightenment views. Schleiermacher’s theological method was derived from Kant, Cornelius Jnr. Plantinga, "The Hodgson-Welch Debate and the Social Analogy of the Trinity" (Princeton Theological Seminary, 1982), 4. For the debate about Schleiermacher’s ‘synthetic’ method and whether ‘relegation’ is a deserved description, see Peters, *God as Trinity*, 38.


their ‘trinitarian heritage’.\(^{17}\) This heritage, Jenson pointed out, contained 'sophisticated metaphysical dialectics with which the greatest thinkers of Christian history explored the truth of their God, perhaps more deeply than the thinkers of any other religious tradition'.\(^{18}\) Rod Horsfield refers to most Australian Anglican Christians as bemused by the Trinity and best described as ‘practical modalists ... They begin with the one God who manifests God’s self in three different modes’.\(^{19}\)

Tom Torrance and LaCugna were therefore signaling a radical change in the theological prominence of the doctrine of the Trinity. Trinitarian theology has emerged from the shadows into the limelight to such an extent that David Cunningham declared the doctrine was no longer ‘threatened by its relative scarcity’, and ‘more likely to be obscured by an overabundance of theologians clustered around it.’\(^{20}\) Torrance describes the doctrine of the Holy Trinity as the ‘innermost heart of Christian faith and worship, the central dogma of classical theology, the fundamental grammar of our knowledge of God’.\(^{21}\) In stark contrast to Kant, LaCugna began her book *God For Us* by stating as her thesis that ‘the doctrine of the Trinity is ultimately a practical doctrine with radical consequences for Christian life’.\(^{22}\) LaCugna expounded further:

The doctrine of the Trinity is ultimately not a teaching about the abstract life of God, nor about God in isolation from everything other than God, but a teaching about God’s life with us and our life with each other. Trinitarian theology could be described as


\(^{18}\) Ibid.


\(^{22}\) LaCugna, *God for Us*, 1.
par excellence a theology of relationship, which explores the mysteries of love, relationship, personhood and communion within the framework of God’s self-revelation in the person of Christ and the activity of the Spirit.23

LaCugna was not the first, or indeed the only, theologian to argue that a renewed understanding of God as Trinity might have anthropological as well as theological implications.24 Karl Barth has been credited with reintroducing Trinitarian theology, deliberately commencing his Prolegomena to the Church Dogmatics with the Trinity and making this theme the architectonic of his entire opus.25 Barth developed the idea that ‘if God is a communion of persons inseparably related’ then ‘it is in our relatedness to others that being human consists’.26 This concept is clearly evident in the reciprocity and mutuality of ‘Man and Woman’ described in CD III/4. There are some queries about, and weaknesses in, Barth’s approach. Wolfhart Pannenberg, Cornelius Plantinga and Alan Torrance, for instance, have each raised concerns about how trinitarian Barth’s theology actually was.27 Colin Gunton suggested that Barth’s anthropology appears more binitarian than trinitarian, focused as it is primarily on the pairing of Man and Woman.28 Furthermore, it has evoked feminist misgivings about gender complementarity and functional subordination.29

23 Ibid.
25 Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, (London: T & T Clark, 2009).
26 Gunton, The Promise of Trinitarian Theology, 116.
28 Gunton, The Promise of Trinitarian Theology, 115f, although Gunton does applaud the ‘mutuality’ and ‘communion’ found in CD III/2.
The British Council of Churches (BCC) Study Commission on the Trinity referred back to the Cappadocian Fathers: Gregory Nazianzen, Gregory of Nyssa and Basil of Caesarea, (as well as the Latin thinkers Tertullian, Hilary of Poitiers and Richard St. Victor), and specifically to Basil’s Fourth Century formulation for the Trinity: ‘a new and paradoxical conception of united separation and separated unity’. The Commission argued that the Cappadocian Fathers had produced an alternative ontology to the then prevailing philosophical view about God. The being of God was a ‘relational unity’, a ‘communion, a being in which the persons give to and receive from each other what they are’. The Commission saw the potential of this divine ontology for ‘created personhood.’

It will be seen to generate neither an individualist nor a collectivist conception of the person. Particularity is at the heart of what is given and received, but, rather than being the denial of social relations, it is in fact its basis, because reciprocity and relationship are present from the outset and not tacked on as an extra.

John Zizioulas, a member of the Commission, a Greek Orthodox theologian and Bishop, had previously directly linked the Cappadocian Trinitarian formulation with created 'Personhood' in his seminal article ‘Human Capacity and Incapacity’. He contrasted this formulation with

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own need and depriving her of her own subjectivity.’ Francis Watson, Agape, Eros, Gender: Towards a Pauline Sexual Ethic (Cambridge: C.U.P., 2000), 239f.


31 Ibid.

32 Ibid.

33 Zizioulas, "Human Capacity and Incapacity." Stanley Grenz stated that with this essay and Zizioulas’ later collection Being and Communion that the latter title ‘has become almost a methodological axiom of the order of Rahner’s Rule’. Grenz, The Social God and the Relational Self, 51; Zizioulas, Being as Communion. Zizioulas himself has reservations about Rahner’s Rule and might not be entirely flattered by this description – see B.C.C., "The Forgotten Trinity: 3  a Selection of Papers
the Boethian and Augustinian concept of 'man', which, he said, consisted of two components: 'rational individuality' and 'psychological experience and consciousness'. Zizioulas argued that these had led to a Western notion of 'person' as an 'individual', or 'autonomous self', with particular but relatively static characteristics of intellect, psychological and moral qualities, all 'centred on an axis of consciousness'. Instead, claimed Zizioulas, a 'person' is ontologically different from an individual. This is because 'personhood', trinitarianally defined, signifies an 'openness of being', or rather an 'ek-stasis of being' – which he further qualified as 'a movement towards communion'. It is in the process of this ek-static being and communion that a person becomes 'hypostatic' – 'the bearer of his or her own nature in its totality'. Zizioulas underlined the ontological difference with the following significant passage: 'in communion ... this being is itself and thus is at all. ... Communion does not threaten personal particularity; it is constitutive of it'.

Colin Gunton was another member of the BCC Study Commission. In *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* Gunton makes it clear that for humanity there is a double relatedness – first, humans are persons 'insofar as we are in a right relationship with God'. He then considers the 'second' or 'horizontal' plane.

The human person is one who is created to find his or her being in relation ... we are in the image of God when, like God, but in

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34 Zizioulas, "Human Capacity and Incapacity," 405f (author’s italics).
35 Ibid., 406 (author’s italics). An obvious example would be Descartes' 'I think, therefore I am' (*cogito ergo sum, je pense donc je suis*).
36 Ibid., 408.
37 Ibid., 409 (author’s emphases). Speidel, citing Schwöbel and Gunton, phrased it thus: 'Persons are free for “a mutually constitutive relationship with other persons” – genuine others who must not violate one another's particularity. They are not individual substances that enter into personal relations but are “made what they are” by personal relations'. Todd H. Speidell, "A Trinitarian Ontology of Persons in Society," ibid. 47(1994): 285; Schwöbel, *Trinitarian Theology Today*, 10f., 156.
38 Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 116. Gunton points out that this is 'a very real background' and dependent on 'the image' being 'reshaped' and 'realised in Christ'.
39 Ibid., 116f.
dependence on his giving, we find our reality in what we give to and receive from others in human community. One way into the content of this image, its concrete realization, is through the concept of love.\textsuperscript{40}

Gunton perceived that this \textit{relational ontology} of ‘persons’ transforms the nature, purpose and activity of love and also ‘relativises so many inherited dualisms’, particularly embracing our ‘embodiedness’.\textsuperscript{41}

This redefining of what it means to be human from a trinitarian theological perspective may not appear to be as groundbreaking as it was, and still is. It nonetheless represents a major paradigm shift from the alternative western ontological concept of individual human \textit{being} that Zizioulas referred to above.\textsuperscript{42} Gunton argues that both Irenaeus and Augustine had perceived the primary likeness of God in human beings as the human mind, soul or rationality, very possibly influenced by a Platonic, Stoic and Neoplatonic education.\textsuperscript{43} This dualistic approach rules out physical embodiedness\textsuperscript{44} as a favourable location of

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 117.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 117, 18.
\textsuperscript{43} Gunton, \textit{The Promise of Trinitarian Theology}, 106; Augustine, "The Trinity," in The Trinity: A Translation for the 21st Century, ed. John E. O.S.A. Rotelle (Brooklyn: New City Press, 1991), XI. Dillon’s study of the Middle Platonists has the following passage, ascribed to Plato, probably written by Zeno (thus Stoic influence) and found in Cicero’s \textit{De Legibus I} via Antiochus of Ascalon. ‘Man is the only creature in the world which has been endowed by God with Reason, and this is a bond between God and Man: Therefore, since there is nothing better than reason, and since it exists in both Man and God, the primary common possession of Man and God is Reason’. For Antiochus the mind (\textit{nous}) was the ‘leading part’ (\textit{hegemonikon}) of all the human senses. John Dillon, \textit{The Middle Platonists: 80 B.C. To A.D. 220} (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1977), 80, 67. See also Chs.2 and 4 below.
\textsuperscript{44} Dillon further notes a passage from Philo’s \textit{Allegory of Laws I} which uses the ‘famous’ Platonic soma-sema (body-sepulchre) formula found in \textit{Gorgias} 493A, that underscores this mind-body dualism: ‘when we are living, the soul is dead, and has been entombed in the body (soma) as in a sepulchre (sema); whereas should we die, the soul lives forthwith its own proper life, and is released from the body,
the image and instead lays stress on the ‘inner dimensions of the person’. Even more significantly, says Gunton, Augustine’s particular construal of the Trinity as God’s ‘self-relatedness’, and his predominant concern for the unity of God, thereby prevented any light being shone on human relationships, and ‘theologically legitimated’ the ‘tendency to individualism’ of the human person in the image of God. Stanley Grenz, in his review of the literature for his book *The Social God and the Relational Self*, consequently came to the conclusion that ‘of the various significant developments in theology over the last hundred years, none had had more far-reaching implications for anthropology than the rediscovery of the doctrine of the Trinity.’

1.1 The Social Trinity?

John Gresham noted that what he termed the ‘Social Model’ or ‘Social Analogy’ of the Trinity was not confined to the Cappadocian Fathers. It reappeared with Richard St. Victor and Bonaventure in the West. After Aquinas, however, ‘the interpersonal approach of the social analogy all but disappeared from subsequent trinitarian theology’. Gunton has argued that a ‘social’ concept of the Trinity remained a

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45 Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 106. Notice that it was Irenaeus and Augustine, among others, including Boethius, who were seeking the ‘Image of God’ (*Imago Dei*) in Man. Gunton was aware of the need to be careful about reference to the Image of God, based as it is on the first two chapters in Genesis, but found hardly anywhere else in the Bible, and whose exact meaning is disputed. Ibid., 112-19.


48 John L. Gresham, "The Social Model of the Trinity and Its Critics," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 46(1993): 327. Gresham notes that that the ‘ancient theologians’ were using ‘social analogy as an illustration of the Trinity’, whilst ‘modern theologians use the analogy as the basis for a model, a theoretical construct which determines and shapes their overall conception of God.’

49 Ibid., 325. Cyril Richardson discussed the ‘Social Trinity’ in 1958, acknowledging Hodgson (see below). Richardson believed that Richard St. Victor was the first to espouse the idea of love in the Godhead, with no mention of the Cappadocians, and that Aquinas objected to a community of love because of a Platonic view of love as a defect or deficit, citing *Summa Theologia (ST)* 1. 31. 1 ad 2, Cyril Richardson, *The Doctrine of the Trinity* (New York: Abingdon Presss, 1958), 90-97.
‘subliminal thread’ in the western theological tradition.\textsuperscript{50} He and previous others, notably Martin Buber, John MacMurray and Emmanuel Levinas, have exposed significant philosophical weaknesses in western individualism and proposed a re-think of what it means to be human, in inter-personal terms.\textsuperscript{51} Indeed, Gunton posited a connection between this historical subliminal ‘social Trinitarian’ thread and the particular inspiration for MacMurray’s philosophical work on the significance of inter-personal relationship for being human.\textsuperscript{52} Gresham, Claude Welch and Cornelius Plantinga also refer to further groundwork for this ‘social analogy’ being laid by British Anglican theologians.\textsuperscript{53} They comprised Wilfred Richmond (1900), J.R. Illingworth (1899 & 1907), a ‘social analogy’ statement by C.C.J. Webb (1918) and Leonard Hodgson’s Croall Lectures in 1943.\textsuperscript{54} Gresham described Hodgson’s doctrine of the Trinity as ‘until recently, the standard twentieth century statement of the social model of the Trinity’.\textsuperscript{55}

\textsuperscript{50} Gunton, \textit{The Promise of Trinitarian Theology}. Please see Ch. 4 of this thesis.


\textsuperscript{52} Gunton, \textit{The Promise of Trinitarian Theology}, 92-100. Gunton includes Hilary of Poitiers, Calvin, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Edward Irving – see Ch.4.

\textsuperscript{53} Gresham, "The Social Model of the Trinity," 326; Plantinga, "The Hodgson-Welch Debate," 9 n10; Welch, \textit{The Trinity in Contemporary Theology}.


\textsuperscript{55} Gresham, "The Social Model of the Trinity," 326. Hodgson himself summed up his lectures thus: ‘According to the revelation of Himself which God has given to us men in history there are three elements perfectly unified in the Divine life, and each of these elements is itself a Person. It is the main thesis of these lectures that the act of faith required for acceptance of the doctrine of the Trinity is faith in this unification, faith that the Divine unity is a dynamic unity actively unifying in the one Divine life the lives of the three Divine persons. It is a mystery, but not an irrational mystery. …The essence of our faith is that there is in the Godhead the perfect
The ‘persons in relation’ understanding of the Holy Trinity, variously termed ‘Eastern’, ‘Cappadocian’, ‘social model’, ‘social analogy’, ‘social Trinity’, ‘relational Trinity’, or ‘plurality model’, has proved attractive to a surprisingly large number and variety of theologians. So much so that Cunningham has pronounced the re-emergence of Trinitarian theology less of ‘a renaissance’ and more of ‘a bandwagon’. Metzler describes the ‘social analogy’ as ‘the most prominent and profound development in trinitarian theology today’. Cunningham, Metzler and Ted Peters have all considered that relationality is the ‘one single issue’ on which ‘recent trinitarian theologians have achieved the greatest degree of consensus’. This, they say, is partly because ‘an alternative’ was needed in place of ‘the metaphysics of substance, which ... so significantly shaped theological reflection on the Trinity’. Peters believed that ‘the idea of person-in-relationship seems to be nearly universally assumed’.

1.2 Critiques of the Social Trinity

Nevertheless, this extraordinary resurgence of interest and suggested unanimity does not represent the entire picture. Attractive as the ‘social Trinity’ might be for potentially constructing a missing theology of ‘family’, there are a number of significant impediments. To begin with, there is no one, wholly agreed, version for what might be an instance of the kind of unity of which we have imperfect analogies here on earth’. Hodgson, The Doctrine of the Trinity, 95-96.

56 Cunningham, These Three Are One, 19.
58 Cunningham, These Three Are One, 25; Metzler, “The Trinity in Contemporary Theology,” 272; Peters, God as Trinity, 7.
59 Cunningham, These Three Are One, 25. For an explanation of ‘metaphysics of substance’ please see Ch.4, 224-238. Peters describes this ‘ancient ontology’ as needing ‘some reconceptualization’. Peters, God as Trinity, 34.
60 God as Trinity, 34, 37.
constitute such a Trinity.\textsuperscript{61} Instead there are many differences of Triune emphasis, content and organization between proponents. Second, the ‘social model’ of the Trinity, in Stanley Grenz’s words, ‘has not only met with remarkable applause but also rigorous critique’.\textsuperscript{62} These critiques fall under logical, theological, historical, epistemological, terminological and methodological headings. Some cross more than one heading. Proponents, as well as opponents, express particular reservations.\textsuperscript{63} Third, there is considerable suspicion about the exact motivation for all the interest in a ‘social Trinity’. Is this interest justifiable theologically, or methodologically? Is transfer to anthropology appropriate and accurate? Is there not a high risk of anthropomorphism and projection, of attempting to make God in our own reconstructed image?

I explore the methodological questions in greater detail in Ch.6. Here I will briefly review some of the theological and logical objections. There is only room to give an abbreviated tour of the kinds and complexity of these issues from the literature. The immediate fear of many theologians, the moment a ‘social Trinity’ is mentioned, is that of tri-theism, or how is the unity of God achieved and protected?\textsuperscript{64} Keith Ward and the analytic philosopher Brian Leftow cannot see how logically each person can be God, as in the Athanasian Creed,\textsuperscript{65} and yet

\textsuperscript{61} For instance, Sarah Coakley chose to focus on Peter van Inwagen, Richard Swinburne and David Brown, precisely because ‘they represent rather different positions within this type’. Sarah Coakley, "'Persons' in the 'Social' Doctrine of the Trinity: Current Analytic Discussion and 'Cappadocian' Theology," in \textit{The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity}, ed. Stephen T Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins (Oxford: OUP, 2001), 126.


\textsuperscript{63} For an example of the latter, Alan Torrance’s doctoral research refers to Barth, Rahner, Zizioulas, Moltmann, Jüngel, LaCugna and Pannenberg as follows: ‘certain particularly influential theologians serve to exemplify a combination of important strengths while, at the same time, exhibiting some serious methodological weaknesses in addressing the subject’. Torrance, \textit{Persons in Communion}, 2.

\textsuperscript{64} Joseph Lienhard has suggested that this occurred even at the time of the Cappadocians with a push by Marcellus and his followers for there to be only one hypostasis, what Lienhard has termed the ‘\textit{miahypostatic} tradition’. \textit{Ousia and Hypostasis: The Cappadocian Settlement and the Theology of 'One Hypostasis'} in Davis, Kendall, and O'Collins, \textit{The Trinity}, 99-121.

\textsuperscript{65} Leftow quotes the Athanasian Creed from \textit{The Book of Common Prayer} (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), p 864f ‘we worship one God in Trinity … the Father is God, the Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God. And yet they are not three Gods,
God remain one.66 Alternatively, how can three Persons make up one God 'without transparently misreading the Creed'?67 Leftow equally finds logical difficulty with how proponents of the Social Trinity, such as David Brown and Stephen Layman, manage divine attributes such as omniscience, omnipotence and supreme goodness.68 Leftow dismisses attempts at what he terms 'group mind monotheism'. Nor is he impressed by 'Trinity monotheism' – making the Trinity more divine than the Persons – or Richard Swinburne’s version, which Leftow characterizes as making the Persons more divine than the Trinity.

Social trinitarians have proffered solutions to these difficulties, which may not answer Leftow and Ward’s objections. Hodgson posited an ‘organic unity’ that exceeds anything within our human experience, of which ‘human society’, among other analogues, are but imperfect instances.69 Leonardo Boff’s solution is to suspend Christianity’s membership from the club of monotheistic religions. For him, Christianity is not monotheistic, polytheistic or tri-theistic – it is Trinitarian. ‘It is the revelation of God as God is, as Father, Son and Holy Spirit in eternal correlation, interpenetration, love and communion, which make them one sole God’.70 Moltmann uses the Cappadocian


66 Ward, Keith, Unpublished paper delivered at Kings College, London, 1998. Cornelius Plantinga refers to this as ‘Baillie’s Challenge’, after Donald Baillie: ‘If we regard the three personae of the Trinity as quite distinct persons or personalities in the full modern sense, we seem to imply that they are parts of God, and it is difficult to remedy this by going on to speak of their being united in the highest conceivable kind of unity. If they are three distinct Persons, are they limited by each other, so that they are finite Persons? Or, if that is rejected as intolerable, and it is maintained that each has the divine attribute of infinity, is it not very difficult to think of three infinite Beings, of the same essence, coexisting with each other as distinct entities? Yet I do not see how the interpretation in question (the social analogy) can avoid that difficulty’, Donald Baillie, God Was In Christ: An Essay on Incarnation and Atonement (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1948), p. 141. Feenstra and Jr., Trinity, Incarnation and Atonement, 35.


69 Hodgson, The Doctrine of the Trinity, 96.

term ‘perichoresis’ to defend a very similar position to Boff: ‘Because of their eternal love, the divine persons exist so intimately with each other, for each other, and in each other that they themselves constitute a unique, incomparable, and complete unity’. 71

Cornelius Plantinga’s pivotal essay ‘Social Trinity and Tritheism’ deploys three linked defences against the charge of tritheism. (1) Biblical and patristic historical evidence justify ‘speaking of three persons in God, in a rich sense of person.’ (2) Compared with ‘classically defined tritheism’, social trinitarianism ‘falls safely on the monist side’. (3) The Trinitarian persons are ‘essentially and reciprocally dependent’ and therefore not the ‘autonomous’ ‘independent’ persons of tritheism. 72 Plantinga draws on I Corinthians 8 and Ephesians 4 to demonstrate the comparability for statements that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all God. 73 He then turns to John’s gospel – ‘a wide, deep, and subtle account of divine distinction within unity’. 74 Plantinga claims that the ‘only Son’ and ‘one and only Son’ of John 1.14 and 18, and John 3.16 and 18 suggest ‘Father and Son are not just members of the class of divine persons, but also members of the same family’. 75 This ‘divine kinship relation’, he says, is probably ‘something similar’ to the meaning of the Nicene homoousios, arguing that Christopher Stead supports such a finding. 76 Moreover, Plantinga points to John 1.1 and 17.5 and

72 Plantinga, “Social Trinity and Tritheism.”
73 Plantinga notes the reference to the Shema in Deuteronomy 6.4. ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.’ There is some discussion in trinitarian theology as to whether ‘one’ represents singularity or unity. A commentator has noted, however, that the present Jewish understanding of that verse translates ‘one’ as ‘alone’.
75 Ibid., 28.
76 Ibid., 29.
Philippians 2.6-9 that this arrangement is not temporary, nor temporal, and thus only for the Incarnation, but precedes and proceeds eternally.77

Vladimir Lossky, Cornelius Plantinga and Zizioulas all proffer the ‘Cappadocian’ solution to the problem of the trinity and divine unity, which is to ascribe only ‘one font of deity’ to the Father, because the Son and Spirit come from the Father.78 In a further double twist at this point Najib Awad has argued that the Cappadocians are too often viewed through a 'Basilian lens' and that they did not completely share the same stance on the monarchia (sole origin) of the Father.79 Awad states that ‘Gregory of Nazianzus is the one who, contrary to his elder compatriot, views the Godhead as the three hypostases together’ (‘reciprocally koinonial’) and casts doubt on Zizoulas’ interpretation of the Cappadocians.80 Richard Fermer is also concerned that the Cappadocians have been incorrectly ‘homogenized’ but arrives at the exact opposite conclusion about the same Gregory.81 Lossky and Zizioulas believed that it was the location of deity in the Father that makes God relational and personal and guarantees God’s freedom over against impersonal substance. Tom Torrance disagrees and sees the

77 Ibid., 30.
80 Ibid., 182, citing Gregory of Nazianzus Theological Orations 29. ‘Reciprocally koinonial’ is Awad’s own phrase.
81 Richard Fermer, "The Limits of Trinitarian Theology as a Methodological Paradigm," in Postgraduate Research Seminar paper delivered at Kings College (1998), 7. says of Gregory Nazianzus that the principle of unity is to be found in the monarchia of the Father, Theological Orations 5.10 Anthony Meredith has written on differences between the Cappadocians in “Divine Simplicity” (1988) and “The Cappadocians” (1995). Anatolios Khaled’s assessment is that the Cappadocians can be seen as a coherent whole. Khaled Anatolios, "Discourse on the Trinity," in From Constantine to C600, ed. Cassidy & Norris, Cambridge History of Christianity (Cambridge: CUP, 2007).
‘patro-centric hypostatization of the Godhead’ as a serious defect. I will note Weinandy’s critique in Ch.4.

Tom Torrance’s concern about Zizioulas’ concentration on the Father incidentally underwrites Leftow’s logical conclusion that Social Trinitarianism actually introduces inequality issues. This is obviously not what Ted Peters had in mind when he claimed that the Cappadocian Social Trinity is attractive precisely because it is egalitarian. Peters was concerned that the primary motivation for espousing social Trinitarianism is egalitarian social change, rather than the coming kingdom of God. Irrespective of how accurate Peter’s understanding of the Cappadocians might have been, or the merits of his methodological and motivation concerns, LaCugna is equally anxious that, historically, what she terms a ‘defective Trinitarian doctrine’ has already been used to justify a social system: namely, the subordination of women to men. This double dynamic of gender, and of hierarchy versus egalitarianism, has reignited third and fourth century disputes over Arian subordinationism, Christology and the Trinity in the twenty-first century Australian debate between Kevin Giles and the Anglican Diocese of Sydney over women and the church.
Social Trinitarians who go on to make links with anthropology appear to rely to a greater or lesser extent on a connection between *divine* persons and relations with human counterparts. Richard Fermer has queried whether this was ever the intention, or indeed mentioned, by the Cappadocians. Sarah Coakley’s review of three contemporary Social Trinitarians has suggested that insufficient attention has been given to what exactly is meant by ‘person’, and that modern notions of individualism have been anachronistically imported into the patristic texts about the Trinity. In arriving earlier at the same point Fermer cited R.P.C. Hanson’s study of ‘hypostasis’. Hanson had concluded that it could not be assumed that the Cappadocians ‘(or any other theologian in the ancient world) held the too popular modern theory that God is three persons in our modern sense, i.e. three centres of consciousness.’ Fermer also refers to Gregory of Nyssa’s explication of ‘hypostasis’ as ‘that which presents and circumscribes that which is

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87 For instance, LaCugna: ‘Since personhood and communion are the central themes of the Christian doctrine of God, it becomes apparent that the doctrine of the Trinity is intimately tied to theological anthropology’. LaCugna, *Freeing Theology: The Essentials of Theology in Feminist Perspective*, 94. Such a connection, of course, is not confined to Social Trinitarians, see W.A. Visser’t Hooft, *The Fatherhood of God in an Age of Emancipation* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982).

88 Fermer, “The Limits of Trinitarian Theology,” 13. There is some evidence for a possible association, for example, in Gregory of Nyssa’s *Ad Petrum*, with an unproven link to the thought of Plotinus and Porphyry. Porphyry used Socrates as a case example for a ‘unique collection of properties’ – please see the definition of *hypostasis* on the next page. Zachhuber has also shown there was a background of considering the relationship between nature and the individual in respect of people, Johannes Zachhuber, *Human Nature in Gregory of Nyssa* (E. J. Brill, 2000). Michel René Barnes comments that if Gregory ‘brilliantly took an old solution and applied it to a new problem, then it is also true that, sadly, nobody noticed’. Michel René Barnes, “Book Review: *Gregory of Nyssa and the Concept of Divine Persons* by Lucian Turcescu,” *Modern Theology* 23, no. 4 (2007): 640. Cornelius Plantinga disagrees that the patristics had only a ‘thin’ version of person, and cites Tertullian against Praxeas and Novation against the modalists that ‘Father and Son are as plainly two persons as are Paul and Apollos’. Plantinga, “Social Trinity and Tritheism,” 30f. Tertullian, *Adversus Praxeas 3*, Novation, *De Trin. 27.*


90 Fermer, “The Limits of Trinitarian Theology,” 9, quoting Hanson, R.P.C. The search for the Christian doctrine of God: the Arian controversy 318-81 (1988), 737. This is clearly Cornelius Plantinga’s position: Plantinga, “Social Trinity and Tritheism.”
general and uncircumscribed within any object by means of the peculiarities which are manifested'. 91 The famous question of Augustine about the Trinity is ‘Three whats? (Quid tres?)’ Nicholas Lash admits that answering ‘three things’ is ‘inelegant’ but supplying ‘person’ as Augustine ended up doing, even without individualistic or necessarily human overtones, may, says Lash, be ‘misleading’. 92 Michel Barnes has also cast doubt on the ‘canonization’ of the word ‘person’ by ‘post-patristic Trinitarian theologians’. 93 Coakley cites Harriet Harris in querying ‘incoherent … accounts of human personhood’ solely based on relation, and Harris’ concerns about ‘relational determinism’. 94 Harris is not as concerned about the term ‘person’ itself, whether as a divine or human description, or even ‘persons in relation’, but she objects to the idea that ‘person’ is wholly dependent on relationship. 95

The alternative option, taken by Karl Barth and Karl Rahner, to avoid using ‘person’, and attempt to be faithful to the original patristic term appears both Sabellian and impersonal. 96 Fermer himself

91 Fermer, "The Limits of Trinitarian Theology," 10. Gregory of Nyssa Epistle 38.3. For a detailed study of more than one meaning of hypostasis, see G.L. Prestige, God in Patristic Thought, 1st. ed. (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1936), 162-78.
94 Coakley, Powers and Submissions, 123.
95 See Ch.7, 332-34.
96 CD I/1, 351. Barth uses Seinsweise (modes of being). Peters defends Barth against the charge of Sabellianism on the grounds that Barth takes the link between the economic and the immanent Trinity very seriously. Peters, God as Trinity, 35. Cf. George Hunsinger, Disruptive Grace: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 191. Alan Torrance believes it ‘obscures the concept of communion in God. Whereas the heart of the New Testament suggests that there is communion between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, we find ourselves asking whether there is or can be communion between Seinsweisen – as Cornelius Plantinga expresses it, “modes do not love at all. Hence they cannot love each other”’. quoting Plantinga, C. "The Threeness/Oneness Problem of the Trinity", Calvin Theological Journal 23, 1 (April 1988), 49. Barth is following the Cappadocians’ ‘modes of subsisting’ (tropoi
concedes that not giving hypostasis a more ‘personal complement or qualifier ... seems to betray much of the scriptural witness’. In a careful examination of Karl Barth and trinitarian description, Alan Torrance makes a studied defence of the use of terms, like ‘person’, based on our revealed knowledge of the Trinity, the ecclesial context that confirmed its use, and Wittgenstein’s approach to language use.

Torrance comments:

The very openness of the triune life means that the ‘re-ferring’ of terms shaped by the divine communion to the ecclesial communion stands to extend and enrich our apperception, our whole sense of the purpose of the created order. There takes place, in other words, a kind of semantic theopoiesis which enables continuity in the use of terms in a manner that is precisely the opposite of mythological anthropomorphism... In sum, the whole conceptuality of personhood is semper reformanda and must not, without collapsing theology into anthropomorphism, be conceived in terms of the subliminal operation of categories which are anthropologically or ethically predetermined.

Gunton goes so far as to claim that the difficulty in defining ‘person’ is because it is a deeply ‘prior’ and ‘transcendental’ concept. This debate about language use, theological terminology, and the theological ‘commandeering’ of language is especially pertinent when considering a term such as ‘family’.

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hypaxeos). Rahner does the same, (distinct manner of subsisting) though he thought his an improvement on Barth. Rahner, The Trinity, 109, 12f.


98 Torrance, Persons in Communion, esp. 325-55.

99 Ibid., 333. Torrance makes the point that theology has employed many terms, from metaphysics, Aristotelian logic and juridical and contractual forms of thinking, 'without sufficiently reverent "ecclesial" revision'. Ibid., 334. 'Theopoiesis' probably means 'divine adoption and transformation' in this particular context.

100 Gunton, The Promise of Trinitarian Theology, 112f.

101 Michael Crosby and Earl Muller have demonstrated how ‘family language’ was appropriated in the recorded words of Jesus, and by the early church and in the New Testament accounts, to designate this new community, the church. Michael Crosby, H., House of Disciples: Church, Economics, and Justice in Matthew (Mary Knoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1988); Earl C. Muller, Trinity and Marriage in Paul: The Establishment of a Communitarian Analogy of the Trinity Grounded in the Theological Shape of Pauline Thought, vol. 60, American University Studies: Series VII - Theology and Religion (New York: Peter Lang, 1990). See Ch.8, 380-82.
A further related and significant issue in the literature is *theological epistemology* – how can we, and how do we, as created beings, know about God, and make meaningful and accurate statements about God? Tom Torrance earlier referred to the Trinity as ‘the fundamental grammar of our knowledge of God’ by which I believe he is indicating that the economic Trinity (God as revealed towards us – *Deus Pro Nobis* or *Deus Ad Extra*) is the primary source for understanding the nature and purpose of God (what God is like immanently in God’s self – *Deus in se*). ‘Rahner’s rule’ that the Economic Trinity is the Immanent Trinity and vice versa was followed by LaCugna.¹⁰² Molnar has inveighed against this because of the potential for the loss of God’s transcendent freedom.¹⁰³ Concern has also been expressed that Moltmann, for example, makes human history constitutive for God and Process theologians do the same with creation.¹⁰⁴ Trying to make sense of the New and Old Testament data has led scholars over centuries to quite different conclusions: hence the Christological controversies, and questions over the personhood of the Holy Spirit and the *filioque* clause.¹⁰⁵ Metzler, for example, is not entirely convinced, on the basis of

¹⁰³ ‘Unwilling and unable to distinguish God *in se* (in himself) from God acting *ad extra* (in relation to the world), this thinking invites pantheism and dualism. God is no longer the subject acting towards us and for us within history but becomes little more than our experiences of love and communion’. Paul D Molnar, *Divine Freedom and the the Doctrine of the Immanent Trinity: In Dialogue with Karl Barth and Contemporary Theology* (London: T & T Clark, 2002), 128.
scriptural evidence, that the Holy Spirit has the same ‘personal’ character or presence as the Father and the Son. He goes further to suggest that this particular difference might be the touchstone for querying whether the economic Trinity necessarily warrants ‘our describing God immanently as three equal interpersonal, social, communitarian entities’.¹⁰⁶

Coakley’s study of Gregory of Nyssa points to the polemical context in which much trinitarian theology has been formulated and also the extraordinary efforts and care that theologians have gone to in order to convey something of the mystery of the Trinity.¹⁰⁷ Thus Gregory, like Augustine and other theologians, deliberately used a range of metaphors and analogies. The allusion to a group of men, for example, is but one of these analogies, and by no means necessarily the most significant to him.¹⁰⁸ Gregory Nazianzus also used a family grouping, which was rejected by Augustine.¹⁰⁹ The latter came to the same judgment about a group of friends. Monographs on Augustine and Aquinas, however, have sought to show the extent and depth of these theologians’ thinking and rescue them from being too easily misjudged.¹¹⁰ All these studies resist the simple pigeonholing of East and West, customary since de Régnon, demonstrating that Gregory of

¹⁰⁷ Coakley, Powers and Submissions, 109-29.
¹⁰⁸ Gregory also used a rainbow, chain, spring, an arrow and the sun, rays and light.
¹⁰⁹ Augustine, "Trinity." XII. 6-7, 8-9
¹¹⁰ Michel René Barnes “Re-reading Augustine’s Theology of the Trinity” in Davis, Kendall, and O’Collins, The Trinity, 145-76. Anselm Kyongsuk Min “God as the mystery of sharing and shared love: Thomas Aquinas on the Trinity” in Phan, The Cambridge Companion to the Trinity, 87-107. There are a number of other authors who argue that Augustine has received an unfair share of the blame. For instance, Declan Marmion and Rik Van Nieuwenhove, An Introduction to the Trinity (Cambridge: CUP, 2011); Brad Green, "The Protomodern Augustine? Colin Gunton and the Failure of Augustine," International Journal of Systematic Theology 9, no. 3 (2007).
Nyssa at times appears more Latin or ‘psychological’ trinitarian than Eastern ‘social’ trinitarian and *vice versa* for Augustine.\(^{111}\)

Furthermore, it is striking how much these theologians have struggled with the complexity, enormity and responsibility of their task in considering the Triune God. Gregory of Nyssa talks of brains ‘beginning to reel’.\(^{112}\) They became exceptional terminological and conceptual innovators.\(^{113}\) Augustine’s *De Trinitate* took sixteen years to complete (400-416).\(^{114}\) Prior to that he had written a collection of *Eighty Three Different Questions*. He later talked of people asking ‘us these questions to the point of weariness...’.\(^{115}\) He is forced to use ‘person’ in Book X ‘not in order to say that precisely, but in order not to be reduced to silence’. Karl Barth’s letter to his close friend Eduard

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\(^{112}\) Gregory of Nyssa, having just used the analogy of the rainbow: ‘My argument thus teaches us, even by the aid of visible creation, not to feel distressed at points of doctrine whenever we meet with questions difficult of solution, and when at the thought of accepting what is proposed to us, our brains begin to reel’. *Letter* 38.5 quoted in Fermer, *The Limits of Trinitarian Theology,* 14.


\(^{114}\) LaCugna has an appreciation of Augustine’s ‘own struggles over the doctrine’ LaCugna, *Philosophers and Theologians on the Trinity,* 176f.

\(^{115}\) Augustine, *Trinity.* Gregory Nanzianzus makes the same observation in the *Fifth Theological Oration,* II. Michel Barnes adds ‘it was not the persistent request of an old friend (Nebridius) which so wearied Augustine the bishop; it was the problem of understanding a trinitarian theology which one wanted to believe – even as that theology was, as *de Trinitate,* I.9 makes clear, still facing criticism and competition from an alternative theology (namely the theology of the Homoians)’. ‘Re-reading Augustine’s Theology of the Trinity’ in Davis, Kendall, and O’Collins, *The Trinity*, 157. Augustine himself describes it: *quae sunt fidei excedunt rationem humanum* – the things of faith are higher than human ability to reason.
Thurneyson gives a glimpse of the scale of the challenge. Pannenberg discerned that trying to re-attach ‘the eternal Trinity’ to its ‘biblical basis’ is also closely linked to the issue of the unity of the Father, Son and Spirit. Moreover, since the basis of that unity can no longer be ‘divine essence’, or the Father, because of Sabellianism or subordinationism, then in Pannenberg’s estimation, the ‘problems are greater than theology has thus far realised’. Hannah Bacon has aptly summed up the overall task and this cumulative endeavour:

The vast and complex debate which has historically surrounded this question and the controversy which has often accompanied it speak all too clearly of a doctrine which understandably baffles the best theologians! Christian history is indeed peppered with a seamless spread of theologians who have sought to espouse this doctrine and to set out its perimeters and technical complexity. That this debate still takes place today further evidences the difficulties theologians face when seeking to articulate the Trinity in clear tones. This doctrine is hard to commit to paper, puzzling to conceptualize and difficult to express in words. Indeed, there is quite rightly, I think, a sense in which anything we do say about who the Trinitarian God is and how this God operates must automatically be consigned to the realm of partiality. If God is unfathomable and beyond human grasp, then it is appropriate that we should struggle as we seek to map out our limited theologies.

Sarah Coakley has argued that a fuller understanding of Gregory of Nyssa’s approach to the Trinity requires an appreciation of his spiritual writings and apophatic approach. There is a deep sense in the Bible, in the history of theology, and in the accounts of mystics

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116 ‘A Trinity of being, not just an economic Trinity! At all costs the doctrine of the Trinity! If I could get the right key in my head there, then everything would come out right...’ quoted in W. Waite Willis Jr., Theism, Atheism and the Doctrine of the Trinity: The Trinitarian Theologies of Karl Barth and Jurgen Moltmann in Response to Protest Atheism (Atlanta: Scholars Press), 40.
118 Hannah Bacon, What’s Right with the Trinity? Conversations in Feminist Theology, Ashgate New Critical Thinking in Religion, Theology and Biblical Studies (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2009), 53.
119 Coakley, Powers and Submissions.
120 It may be objected that there are no direct references to the Trinity in the Bible. The following studies suggest this is not entirely the case: C. Kavin Rowe, "The Trinity in the Letters of St Paul and Hebrews," in The Oxford Handbook of the Bible, ed. Giles and Matthew Levering Emery (Oxford: Oxford Books Online, 2012). Scott R Swain, Trinity, Revelation, and Reading: A Theological Introduction to the
like Julian of Norwich and Elizabeth of the Trinity, that attempting to understand the Triune God is about developing a relationship with God in worship, prayer and contemplation.\textsuperscript{121} Coakley refers to this as ‘intimacy’ with God and develops this theme further in her latest book, the first of a four-part Systematic Theology, contending that there is a close relationship between contemplation and systematic theology.\textsuperscript{122} Thus, Coakley claims that prayer ‘is the chief context in which the irreducible threeness of God becomes humanly apparent to the Christian’.\textsuperscript{123}

In sum, this necessarily abbreviated survey of the theological literature on the Trinity suggests some fertile possibilities for Christian anthropology and, potentially, for a theology of ‘family’. The hinted-at evidence that the historic trajectory of Latin trinitarian theology veered


\textsuperscript{121} Father John-Julian, ed. \textit{A Lesson of Love: The Revelations of Julian of Norwich} (London: Dartman, Longman & Todd, 1988). ‘With good reason we speak of the mystery of the Holy Trinity, meaning that the Trinity is not simply a speculative theory, to be analysed by the reasoning brain: rather it is a living presence experienced in our prayer, the personal God before whom we stand in adoration. The best approach to the Trinity is through doxology and silence.’ Ware, “The Human Person,” 7. Marmion and Nieuwenhove refer to the idea that liturgy is the ‘primary theology’ where the ‘law of prayer’ establishes ‘the law of belief (\textit{lex orandi, lex credendi}), Marmion and Nieuwenhove, \textit{An Introduction to the Trinity}, 14. Aquinas is renowned for his scholastic reasoning but he nonetheless recognized the significant role of the insight of faith (‘\textit{interior instinctus Dei invitantis}). Adrian Pabst notes that for Gregory of Nyssa: ‘the limits of reason … suggest(s) that a rational affirmation of truth can only be upheld by faith. …The exercise of reason itself requires a super-rational trust (\textit{pistis} or faith) in its very possibility. Faith in the Holy Trinity is then a reasoned belief that God is both one and three and that we cannot understand either the triune Godhead or the three individual divine persons separately and in or by themselves but only in relation to God as whole and to each of the persons’. Adrian Pabst, \textit{Metaphysics: The Creation of Hierarchy}, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012). 71. Anne Hunt, \textit{The Trinity: Insights from the Mystics} (2010), 168-81. Christine Helmer refers to Mechthild of Magdeburg and Adrienne von Speyr Christine Helmer, "God from Eternity to Eternity: Luther’s Trinitarian Understanding," \textit{The Harvard Theological Review} 96, no. 2 (2003): 128. See also David Tracy, "Trinitarian Theology and Spirituality: Retrieving William of St. Thierry for Contemporary Theology," in \textit{Rethinking Trinitarian Theology}, ed. Robert J. Wozniak and Giulio Maspero (London: T & T Clark, 2012).

\textsuperscript{122} Sarah Coakley, \textit{God, Sexuality and the Self: An Essay on the Trinity} (Cambridge: CUP, 2013), 35f. She terms her approach ‘\textit{théologie totale}'.

\textsuperscript{123} Ibid., 55 and Ch.3.
towards a more individual and dualistic Christian anthropology may contain implications for some of the distinctiveness of Western society and families.\textsuperscript{124} The philosophical and patriarchal foundations on which the doctrine of the Trinity was partially built have subsided, or shifted, somewhat, although not totally crumbled. Theologians have been attracted to an alternative philosophical foundation of ‘re-lationality’. The theological details of this ‘social trinitarian model’, however, are neither agreed, nor without critics. There are significant theological issues that remain, some of which are not susceptible to easy resolution. Most of this theological development is still relatively new, in comparative terms, although there are claims that the ‘social model’ is congruent with Biblical data and has remained as a ‘subliminal thread’ resurfacing with the Cappadocians, Richard St. Victor and others. The more immediate antecedents to the ‘social Trinity’ include thinking about God from a personal and interpersonal basis, and these date back to the turn of the previous century.

Two further important themes have only been touched on very briefly so far. They are: first, feminist thinking about the Trinity, and, second, the specific concern of theologians that the Trinity might be used as a heuristic tool, or Platonic ideal, in a utilitarian or idolatrous manner. Please also see Section 3.3 below.

2. Literature Review on ‘Family’

The topic of family is not necessarily regarded as a wholly academic subject.125 This is reflected in the wide range of sources from novels, magazine articles, and topical books,126 to anthropological, psychological and sociological research. Christian resources on the family also span from ‘popular’ books and articles to monographs, theses and denominational reports.127 Consequently, the scale of possible literature is enormous. The Australian led International Anglican Project on the Family previously concluded there was ‘simply too much information to digest on the subject of the family.’128 Moreover, these sources afford an extraordinarily diverse range of evidence, opinions and hypotheses about family. In view of the sheer scope of the task, this review can only cover a tiny fraction of the secular and ‘Christian’ literature, and therefore is aimed at capturing the most salient issues in respect of this thesis.


One standout feature of the literature is the significance accorded to ‘family’. Eleanor Rathbone, the British MP, supporter of women’s rights and pioneer of Family Benefits, referred to the family as ‘the institution that mattered most.’ She added:

> It is at once indispensable as a means to all the rest ... the strongest emotions, the most universally accessible sources of happiness are concerned with this business of the family’.\(^{129}\)

Steven Covey’s personal message at the start of his book *The 7 habits of Highly Effective Families* echoes Rathbone’s view – ‘Never in all my life have I had a passion for a project as I have for writing this book – because family is what I care the most about, as I imagine you do also’.\(^{130}\) The UK Prime Minister David Cameron, speaking to the Conservative Party Conference in 2008, declared: ‘I'm a 41 year old father of three who thinks that family is that most important thing there is. For me. For my country’.\(^{131}\) The Anglican Consultative Council had found that ‘in every survey about what gives people the greatest satisfaction, family and personal relationships always come out on top.’\(^{132}\)


\(^{130}\) Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Families*, 2.


The significance of family stems from a number of overlapping factors. As the Australian Bureau of Statistics observes: ‘Families are a vital part of society, forming the basic unit of home life for most Australian people’.\textsuperscript{133} Lois and Paul Glasser noted that ‘most of us have more and more continuous contact with this social group than with any other in society’.\textsuperscript{134} This greater degree of contact has remained despite the much smaller size and ‘nuclearization’ of families, the increased geographical mobility of family members and the higher labour force participation rate for women.\textsuperscript{135} A defining constituent of families is the bearing and raising of children.\textsuperscript{136} Margaret Mead, the anthropologist, giving evidence to a United States Senate Subcommittee in 1973, noted: ‘We have never discovered any other way to produce responsible human beings except through the family’.\textsuperscript{137} Studies of feral children\textsuperscript{138} and orphanages\textsuperscript{139} appear to confirm this bald statement, though more

\textsuperscript{133} Australian Bureau of Statistics Website: accessed 21.9.12.
\textsuperscript{135} Townsend’s UK study The Family Life of Old People noted that despite the impact of nuclear family development in East London, it was the ‘continuity of relationships’ with extended family ‘over an individual’s lifetime... which is so striking.’ Peter Townsend, The Family Life of Old People: An Inquiry in East London (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957), 112. Finch and Mason’s study in Greater Manchester replicated this finding in their ‘negotiated arrangements’.
\textsuperscript{136} The bearing of children obviously may not apply in adoption and foster families, or where surrogacy has been used.
\textsuperscript{138} Such as the ‘wild boy of Aveyron’ found in South West France in 1800, thought to be deprived of human company from the age of 3 until he was 12 who was subsequently unable to develop language, or relate to anyone. Moira Eastman, Family: The Vital Factor: The Key to Society’s Survival (Melbourne: Collins Dove, 1989), 1-2.
\textsuperscript{139} John Bowlby argued that children’s attachment needs were such that they even manage better in ‘bad homes’ than ‘good institutions.’ John Bowlby, Child Care and the Growth of Love, 2nd. ed. (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1965). Jan Pryor adds the example of the street children in the Mexico City barrios ‘Psychological
may need to be said. Family upbringing occurs from a highly
dependent and impressionable age. It is therefore not surprising that
this upbringing exerts extraordinary and often lifetime effects on
‘behavioural dispositions’, on children’s sense of self, their relationships
with parents and siblings, other people, future partner(s), and their
own children. In addition to this substantial childrearing task, the
United Nations has highlighted the significance of families in the care of
older, sick and disabled persons. This is particularly true in the
developing world, but even in ‘advanced social policy situations’
families often provide the bulk of care needed, or are instrumental in
ensuring that extended family members receive the help that they
need.

Perspectives on the Family: Intimacy, Power and Change’ 43-53 in Robyn Dixon
and Vivienne Adair, eds., *What Is Family?* (Auckland: The Centre for Child and
Families Failed: The Treatment of Children in the Care of the Community During
the First Half of the Twentieth Century* (London: Victor Gollanz Ltd, 1971). One of
the Commissioners for the *Australian Royal Commission into Institutional
Responses to Child Sexual Abuse* (2013 -) described the testimony of a man in his
sixties who as a baby was placed and remained in an orphanage throughout his
childhood. The Commissioner noted that the man grew sadder and sadder as he
gave his evidence, finally and tellingly remarking that in his life he ‘had never ever
been loved’. (Briefing Session for the Commission).

Results from *kibbutzim* are more mixed.

′The majority of scholars concurred that “behavioural dispositions” laid down in
the first six years of life ‘affect each of us forever after, and the child’s most
extensive and almost inclusive contacts during this period are with parents and
Philosophy* entry ‘Feminist Perspectives on Reproduction and the Family’ similarly
notes: ‘almost every person in our society starts life in a family of some kind. The
kind of family one has influences the kind of person one grows up to be’.


Peter MacDonald’s chapter ‘Older People and their Families: Issues for Policy’
refers to studies from Australia and other countries documenting the pivotal
importance of family in the support of older relatives, Allan Borowski, Sol Encel,
and Elizabeth Ozanne, eds., *Ageing and Social Policy in Australia* (Cambridge:
Cambridge University Press, 1997), 194-210. Janet Eldred’s UK research showed
family contact was important to older single women, Janet Barbara Eldred,
"Community, Connection, Caring: Towards a Christian Feminist Practical Theology
of Older Women." (Leeds, 2002). The United Nations also underscored how
significant families are for refugees. ‘They provide a powerful example of the family
as a source of personal and group identity; as a place for intimacy, emotional and
spiritual nourishment; and as a provider of mutual support in time of crisis and
transition. The migrant unit is a general testimony to the importance of family in the
present-day world, and provides one more reason for turning attention to the family
as source of comfort and support on a planet where both are badly needed.’

*Family: Challenges for the Future*, 282.
Whilst the word ‘family’ often carries beneficial connotations, clearly children have no choice about the situation they are born into. The degree of variation in those situations can be very great, as can the consequences positively and negatively for the growing child (and later adult), as well as for other family members, for the community and the wider society. The UK social affairs commentator, Polly Toynbee, summed up some of the literature as follows:

(Family) has become a word so synonymous with good that it is worth stopping to contemplate what it means or what it can mean... the reality, again as described in literature and autobiography, is different. As a battleground for strife and hatred, for sibling rivalry and resentment, for bullying and recrimination, there is often nothing to beat it.

Studies on child abuse, delinquent behavior, domestic violence, inter-generational family cycles and kinship care, all confirm concerns that some families may be far from beneficial, if not lethal. Bateson’s ‘double-bind’ theory and the work of R. D. Laing suggested that particular communication patterns in families could prove seriously detrimental to mental health. Whilst the so-called ‘nuclear family’ has been regarded as the western desirable norm, Betty Freidan’s *The Feminine Mystique* questioned the segregation of gender roles, the

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144 Finch and Martin distinguished kinship relationships from friendships in that the former are not chosen or exchangeable, they begin at birth and can be literally life-long, and their permanency is independent of their quality. Finch and Mason, *Negotiating Family Responsibilities*, 160.
suburban isolation of mothers and housewives, and principally their obligation to search for unfulfilled meaning through a family and a home, influenced by social convention and slanted media.\textsuperscript{149} Germaine Greer and Philip Slater similarly suggested the nuclear family is a bad environment for women and for the raising of children.\textsuperscript{150} The sociologist Robert Nisbet thought the nuclear family ‘too psychologically intense’ and, stripped of previous functions of employer and educator, useless because family members cannot allow themselves any psychological distance.\textsuperscript{151} Lasch referred to Herbert Hendin who argued that even outwardly satisfactory middle class family relationships might hide unresolved conflicts and tensions and that students used drugs to suppress rather than intensify their resultant feelings’.\textsuperscript{152} Carver T. Yu quotes Rollo May, who claimed that ‘common preoccupation with the mechanics and technique of sex is symptomatic of the failure of deep relationship’.\textsuperscript{153}

The quality of mutual relationship, trust, love, communication, support, affirmation and care between family members appears to be


\textsuperscript{151} Nisbet, Robert \textit{The Quest for Community} (London: Oxford University Press 1953) 60-61 quoted in Stanley Hauerwas, \textit{After Christendom? How the Church Is to Behave If Freedom, Justice, and a Christian Nation Are Bad Ideas}. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), 122. In the Reith Lectures 1968 Sir Edmund Leach averred that ‘far from being the basis of good society, the family with its narrow privacy and tawdry secrets, is the source of all discontents.’ Quoted in Halsey, \textit{Change in British Society}, 94.


\textsuperscript{153} Rollo May, \textit{Love and Will} (New York, 1974), 21, quoted in Yu, \textit{Being and Relation}, 42.
the major determinants that distinguish between good families and disastrous ones. So much so that the expressions ‘family’ or ‘like family’ are used to denote a similar quality of mutual relationship, trust, love, communication, support, affirmation and care with another person (or group of people), even if they are not related by birth or marriage. The extent to which these characteristics are evident has a role in governing the wide variation in views about the family from Eleanor Rathbone to Polly Toynbee cited above, for instance.

It is hard to underestimate how important these characteristics of relationship, trust, love, communication, support, affirmation and care might be. Berger and Berger suggested ‘modern child psychologists’ were reaching the same conclusions as ‘human beings have always known’, namely that irrespective of the exact form of family, infants need ‘intensive interaction ... with caring adults’ not only to survive physically but to develop emotionally. The authors referred to Erik Erikson who emphasized a child’s need to trust ‘the love of adults who care for him’ and that this love will reliably continue. They also mentioned John Bowlby and his ‘Attachment theory’. Subsequent research in child development and child abuse

157 ‘Attachment theory’ is associated with John Bowlby, a psychologist, psychiatrist and psychoanalyst and student of Melanie Klein. He was unsatisfied with psychoanalytic explanations of child-parent love, based on his own experience of seeing his upper middle class mother for one hour a day (a common social pattern) and being sent to boarding school aged 8. He gathered data from Anna Freud and
appears to have reinforced Bowlby’s and Erikson’s findings. Mary Ainsworth, Kate Cairns, Paul Fonagy, Danya Glaser, and Vera Fahlberg are among many who have worked in this area and shown that 1) attentive, timely, reliable and responsive care for, and positive interaction with, infants leads to 2) secure ‘attachment’ with one or more particular adults. 3) which enables infants and children to have confidence to explore their world, reduces fight or flight responses, creates self-esteem, and facilitates the child’s abilities to make further relationships with other adults and children. Where this does not occur, or is not entirely reliable, children exhibit anxious, avoidant, ambivalent or disorganized attachment behavior, impacting some or all of their development.

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his own experience of World War 2 refugee children and orphanages, along with ground-breaking observational film of children away from home in hospital, and inspired Hinde’s ethological work with Rhesus monkeys, which showed the degree to which they would seek comfort more than food or the risk of physical punishment. Bowlby described parent-child attachment as ‘a rhythmic dance with exquisite attunement’. Bowlby (1977) cf. D.W. Winnicott, *The Child and the Outside World: Studies in Developing Relationships* (London: Tavistock Publications Ltd., 1957)., *The Family and Individual Development*.


Bowlby thought this needed to be the mother and referred to ‘maternal deprivation’ when this did not occur either for prolonged or short periods. Michael Rutter’s research was able to show that either parent could deliver ‘good enough’ care and therefore it was not necessarily gender specific. Bowlby, *Child Care and the Growth of Love.*, Rutter, *Maternal Deprivation Reassessed*. Mothers and fathers usually respond to infants differently. Yogman argues that gender roles do not have to be interchangeable or identical, there are advantages in them being reciprocal. Quoted in Vera I. Fahlberg, *A Child's Journey through Placement: Uk Edition*, UK ed. (London: British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering, 1994), 15. Cf. Victor & Paul Wilding George, *Motherless Families*, ed. John Rex, International Library of Sociology (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972). Bill Merrington’s research into child death in Lebanon, Tanzania, Uganda and the UK found that there was a particular and unique bond of affection on the parent’s side of the relationship as well. Bill Merrington, "The Loss of a Child : The Long Term Impact Upon the Parent-Child Bond." (University of Warwick, 2003).

the items in (3) above adversely. Whether securely attached, or any of the other categories, there are considerable consequences for the developing child, which can be observed. Furthermore, it entails three key areas of child (and human) development, namely cognition, emotion, and behavior. All three are controlled by, and contribute to, the human brain. Advances in neuro-physiological understanding, and the availability of brain imaging, now directly link the quality of parental relationship and care to the rapid rate of growth and effective capability of the developing infant brain.

The character of the parent-child relationship understandably has been an important focus of attention. Research and literature in areas such as domestic violence, family therapy, separation and divorce, however, also suggest that the relationship between parents, or a parent and a partner, possesses particular significance for the children, as well as for the parties themselves. In other words, the quality of


162 This is not just a one-way street. There is also evidence that infants and children influence their own environment and relationships. Aldgate, J. “Children, Development and Environment” in Aldgate et al., The Developing World of the Child.


relationship between parents A and B, for example, is of import for children C, D, in addition to the direct relationship between A/B:C/D. This is, of course, also true where parents have a high, or indeed indifferent, quality of relationship with each other. Nor are parent/child or parent/parent the only possible relational combinations that are noteworthy. Sibling relationships between C and D, and grandparent relationships play a part, as do those between parents and their own parents, and between children and aunts/uncles and cousins.¹⁶⁵ In short, the multiple relational aspects of ‘family’ are complex and each may be of some considerable significance. The dynamics of step-parent/step-child and blended families with step- and half-siblings are a further consideration in this equation.¹⁶⁶

2.1 Family as Symbol

Important as they may be, relational factors are not the only features of ‘family’ contained in the literature, that may be relevant to this thesis. ‘Family’, for instance, represents a powerful symbol. Part of this symbolic power derives from the formative experience of, or the desire for, family relationship. It is also influenced by socially and culturally constructed views of ‘family’, as evidenced by stories, images, advertising and the use of familial language. These contribute to a general picture of what is normal, acceptable and desirable, irrespective

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of a person’s, or a family’s, own actual circumstances or experience. These socially constructed views can also have the effect of making alternative forms appear inconceivable, abnormal, unacceptable or undesirable. The work of Ludwig Wittgenstein and Jaako and Merrill Hintikka demonstrated that these socially constructed meanings can be encapsulated and conveyed in specific words, and ‘family’ is an extraordinary example of one such word.

The word ‘family’ not only demonstrates singular symbolic power, but it can also be used to exercise ideological power. Jürgen Habermas drew attention to the hidden part language plays in ideology, or what he terms ‘systematically distorted communication,’ thereby...

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168 As Harris points out: ‘Confused as it may appear to be, the usage of the term “the family” and the patterns of social behaviour to which it refers are a distinctive part of our (Western) culture’. C.C. Harris, *The Family: An Introduction*, ed. Prof. W.M. Williams, Studies in Sociology (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1969), 63. Hellerman was obliged to spell out in detail how patrilineal kinship groups operated in the ancient near East because the pattern of relationships and priorities were so different from the modern western understanding. Joseph Hellerman, H., *The Ancient Church as Family* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001).

institutionalizing and legitimizing power. Stephen Lukes, the social and political theorist, argued that ideology is the most effective form of power, control and influence over others, because it is the power to influence the thoughts and wishes of people. Christianity is implicated in this process over the definition of ‘family’. One of the clearest examples of such an attempt was documented in Peter and Brigitte Berger’s book *The War Over the Family*. It concerned the title of the 1980 White House conference on the subject of the family promised to Religious Right groups in return for their vote. When other groups successfully objected to the use of the definite pronoun *the*, and ‘Family’ in the singular, conservative Christian leaders promptly repudiated this development for not defining *the family* as a heterosexual, two-parent household. Jerry Falwell’s ‘Moral Majority’ dubbed it the ‘Anti-Family Conference’, and the Alabama governor Fob James would not send any delegates ‘because the conference appears to oppose Judeo-Christian values.’

The war over defining ‘the Family’ was not without precedent. Seth Dowland’s paper traced three decades of leaders of the Christian Right in America deploying similar rhetoric in order to promote ‘the family’ and ‘family values’. These leaders, said Dowland, contended that abortion, feminism, and homosexuality represented a multifaceted

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170 Habermas, Jürgen ‘A Review of Gadamer’s Truth and Method,’ 272
172 Berger and Berger, *The War over the Family*.
173 Seth Dowland, "‘Family Values’ and the Formation of a Christian Right Agenda," *Church History* 78, no. 3 (2009). Whitfield similarly cites ‘Judaeo-Christian values’ as a determining factor. This is not an uncommon expression found in some of the literature but it begs questions about its validity and historical accuracy as an argument in relation to the family. Richard Whitfield, ed. *Families Matter: Towards a Programme of Action* (Basingstoke: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1987), 4-5. The sociologist, James Davison Hunter, argued that in America ‘the family’ became the most conspicuous field of conflict in a culture war and therefore defining it came to have ‘decisive political implications.’ Cited in Say, *Gays, Lesbians & Family Values*, 3. Stephen Barton acknowledges the ‘intimate and complex relation’ between religion and ‘the family’ and that ‘family’ is not a value-neutral word. He argued that a goal for Christian discussion is being sensitive to the oppressive and manipulative ways in which ‘family’ is used, though he does not explicitly recognise that Christianity may have been as much part of the problem as the solution. Barton, “Towards a Theology of the Family.”
‘attack’ on ‘the family,’ which they defined as ‘the fundamental institution of society, an immutable structure established by our Creator.’ In the UK, sociologist Deborah Chambers similarly pointed to the involvement of Church leaders in concern about ‘the family’ and ‘family values’. Muriel Porter claimed that in the Australian churches:

> Despite world wars, economic depression and the Holocaust, it was the maintenance of ‘family values’ and the shoring up of the nuclear family that dominated their core activity in the first half of the 20th century.

The literature on family contains a number of examples of the effect of ‘family’ as an ideology. Betty Farrell, for instance, refers to it being seen as overtly oppressive to its own members. Feminists, such as Rosemary Ruether and Judith Stacey, thus view ‘family’ and ‘family values’ as ‘coded messages’ for patriarchy. Stacey also believes the emphasis on ‘family’ hides homophobia, and shields middle class and racial biases as well. Marxist-feminists Barrett and McIntosh named this effect ‘familialism’, on a par with racism and sexism. Batten noted that the ideology perpetuated ‘a mythology’ in being at odds with the diversity of family forms actually encountered in contemporary Australia. Furthermore, they and Barrett and McIntosh claimed when

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174 Dowland, ""Family Values"".
175 Chambers, *Representing the Family*, 1.
179 Stacey, *In the Name of the Family*, 69-71, 73, passim. Stacey also argues that it is ethnocentric, ibid., 38f.
‘family life is placed on a pedestal and advocated as a natural or normal way to live’ it effectively renders a large number of families that do not reach this ideal invisible, inadequate, deviant, or dysfunctional, and disguises the fact that the family is changing. There is evidence that this ideological element or ‘dominant concept’ has also influenced social policy, legislation, research and research funding.

Marx and Engels pointed out the injustice, inequality and hypocrisy of ‘bourgeois’ families upholding a controlling paradigm of ‘family’ whilst denying it to the very people who made their more privileged lives possible. Until the mid-nineteenth century, when Marx and Engels conducted their survey of the conditions of the working poor, ‘it was accepted that marriage was beyond the reach of

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182 Say, Gays, Lesbians & Family Values, 4; Borrowdale, Reconstructing Family Values; Farrell, Family; Stacey, In the Name of the Family. Eichler looked at Canadian families and describes the ‘monolithic bias’, which emphasizes uniformity and universality of structure rather than diversity. Batten et al. saw parallels with their Australian experience: ‘assuming a monolithic model, professionals often speak about “the family” and “the problem of the family”. From this vantage point, deviations from the model are considered abnormal, leading to the counter image of the “broken” or “incomplete” family.’ Batten, Weeks, and Wilson, Issues Facing Australian Families, xvi. Peter Manning’s doctoral research on cohabitation found little evidence of consideration by the churches despite cohabitation becoming normative for many families and evincing distinct similarities of hopes, fears and issues to families with married parents. Manning, “Cohabitation in Contemporary Britain.” ‘Living in sin’ used to be an epithet applied to cohabiting couples.


184 Engels, Friedr, The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State (1884). ‘The bourgeois clap-trap about the family … about the hallowed co-relation of parent and child, becomes all the more disgusting, the more, by the action of Modern Industry, all family ties of the proletarians are torn asunder, and their children transformed into simple articles of commerce and instruments of labour.’ Marx and Engels, The Communist Manifesto, 101.
many and that most people would not grow up in the bosom of their families of origin'.

Whilst this situation no longer pertains in the developed world, Stanley Hauerwas, Murray Rae, Lisa Cahill, Rodney Clapp and Christopher Lasch are among those who have pointed out the impact of capitalism on the form and content of the western family.

The first four of those authors have also claimed that capitalism is a blind spot for middle class Christians. Thus there is a concern that when the Church is prescriptive about family it may overlook structural inequalities and injustices and their detrimental effects. Dowling, Gupta and Aldgate, for instance, list a number of studies that have shown the disadvantageous impact of poverty on parenting and on children. Stacey talks of ‘bad faith’ when laying a moral stress on ‘family’ ignores these factors. South African, Kenyan and the

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185 John Gillis, quoted in Tosh, A Man’s Place.


187 For example: Bob Holman argued that if middle class families were faced with the obstacles that afflicted the families in his study they too would disintegrate under the strain. Robert Holman, “Inequality in Child Care,” (London: Child Poverty Action Group, 1976). Susan Dowell believes that a focus on the family and sexual mores risks the Church becoming privatized and placing it only in the domestic sphere 'from which it is required to guard the nation’s private purity, while leaving the nation undisturbed in its “real” business’, thus preventing the church speaking about issues of injustice. Susan Dowell, They Two Shall Be One (London: Collins, 1990), xi.

188 Dowling, M., Gupta, A. & Aldgate, J. “The Impact of Community and Environmental Factors”, in Aldgate et al., The Developing World of the Child, 142-43. They include Michael Rutter’s concept of ‘permitting circumstances.’ The General Synod of the Church of England noted in one debate: ‘the point was made over and over again that family neglect and child abuse are symptoms of a breakdown of social justice as well of personal relationships.’ GS Misc 297 1988, 12. An older study on educational attainment observed: ‘in poor housing conditions even the most conscientious mother could do little.’ Douglas, J.W.B. The Home and the School, 14. Anglicare’s State of the Family Report (2012) noted that even in Australia 1 in 8 Australian children and families regularly lack food, 8-10. Whilst concern is often expressed about single parent families, studies show that it is often economic hardship rather than single parenthood per se that is a greater cause of difficulties, for example: Glevys Rondon, “Towards an Understanding of Women's Experience of Motherhood” (M.Sc. Dissertation, Surrey, 1994).

189 “Either we can come to grips with the postmodern family condition and begin to promote better living and spiritual conditions for the diverse array of real families we actually inhabit and desire. Or we can continue to engage in denial, resistance, displacement, and bad faith, by cleaving to a moralistic ideology of the family at the same time that we fail to provide social and economic conditions that make life for the modern family or any other kind of family viable, let alone dignified and secure.’

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Philipino representations to the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) reported that poverty and world economic forces drive husbands or wives into migrant labour long distances from their families. The economic links of Globalization similarly suggest there are connections between the developed world and, for example, Bangladeshi mothers spending long hours, and even dying, in industrial sweatshops, or children being abandoned or sold by their parents.

The western and Christian ideology of ‘family’ may have also partly underpinned past drastic and draconian actions that are only now beginning to be acknowledged, such as the voluntary and forced removal of children for adoption, and Australia’s ‘stolen generation’. Sarah Coakley cites Gramsci and Foucault in observing a...
link between ‘powerful discourses’ and their hegemonic impact. She writes:

Powerful discourses, especially ones that aspire to a total picture, can occlude or marginalize the voices of those who are already oppressed, or are being pushed into a state of subjection.\footnote{Sarah Coakley, “Is There a Future for Gender and Theology? On Gender, Contemplation and the Systematic Task,” \textit{Criterion} 47, no. 1 (2009): 6.}


\section*{2.2 Defining ‘Family’ and some other significant issues}

There are a few further factors about family referred to in the literature that are immediately relevant to this thesis. They include the subject of change in family and society, the difficulty of defining family,
and some variables and hypotheses that merit brief mention, before turning to the Christian literature on family.

A number of writers have drawn attention to an accumulation of changes that have occurred in western society over the past century, which have impacted on families in particular, and on the question how do you define ‘family’? These changes include reliable and available contraception, divorce law reform, increasing longevity, smaller family size, employment mobility, an increase in women in the workforce, feminism, growth of single-parent families, less childrearing years, higher school and college leaving age, much later date for marriage, greater sexual freedom and tolerance for lesbian and gay relationships and the previously mentioned increase in cohabitation. Developments in in-vitro fertilisation (IVF), donor insemination, egg donation, the use of surrogacy, and the desire of gay couples to have their own children are creating novel family configurations, as evidenced in the research papers of the Non-Traditional Families unit at the Cambridge Centre for Family Research.

The Anglican Consultative Committee noted: ‘there is a very distinct sense of “society” being under threat, as a result of the range and pace of change. Family, society and community are interlinked.’ Books like Philip Blond’s influential Red Tory: How Left and Right have
broken Britain and how we can fix it under a section entitled ‘Social Crisis’ makes specific references to collateral damage suffered by individuals and society due to ‘family breakdown’, Christian authors are numbered among similar publications. Betty Farrell captured the pivotal role that family occupies in this scenario: ‘Thus the Family can be both seen as a steadying influence and at the core of this decline’. It is a major reason why the subject of family has become a focus of such interest. Nonetheless, Judith Stacey, Deborah Chambers and Anne Borrowdale have each carefully critiqued the way in which the media, politicians, commentators, and organisations, including church organisations, and Christian writers, have sometimes been alarmist, selective and undiscerning in the use of data, not always considered other variables, and lacked a broader or more historical perspective.

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200 In a section entitled “Social Crisis”, Blond writes: ‘These are serious and unprecedented changes in what should be the most important and enduring relationships in our lives – relationships which shape our existence from childhood, giving us values and identity, guiding our decisions and forming our archetypes for further relationships; relationships which for previous generations would have extended through old age and infirmity’. Phillip Blond, Red Tory: How Left and Right Have Broken Britain and How We Can Fix It. (London: Faber & Faber, 2010), 73. In keeping with a number of commentators he proceeds to enumerate a litany of ills that Blond sees as direct consequences of these statistics: failure in formal education, drug and alcohol addiction, girls from fatherless homes becoming an overrepresented demographic in teenage pregnancies, and likewise for boys in criminal gangs. Ibid.


202 Farrell, Family, 1. The Church of England report similarly noted that ‘families are so fundamental to society that they easily become a focus for society whenever society is anxious about itself’. Board of Social Responsibility, Something to Celebrate: Valuing Families in Church and Society. (Church House Publishing, London, 1995), 1.

203 Borrowdale, for instance, has some wonderful quotations about the shockingly bad behaviour and attitudes of children and young people, dated 322 BC and c.1090 AD. Borrowdale, Reconstructing Family Values, 9. In an important Harvard
Counter-intuitively, Say and Kowaleski suggest that the very fact that 'family values' and the nature of the family itself has become the source of political and societal debate demonstrates that traditional understandings have lost their 'naturalness' and their fluency in public discourse. The 1994 United Nations 'Year of the Family' could be viewed in this guise. The United Nations' report accompanying it echoed this: 'One reason why the family is so important at present is because increasingly less is known about what the family is in reality.'

Families are themselves unique organisations that operate in a continuous state of flux. Birth, child development, puberty, teenage years, forming relationships, leaving home, sexual partnerships, marriage, having children, growing old, and death all change the form and the nature of relationships within families. One of the tasks of families is to manage and support these changes principally within the context of relationship. The continuously changing nature of families was one of the reasons Augustine could not accept the family as a social analogy for the triune God. This was because God was deemed in Platonic patristic and scholastic metaphysics to be impassible and immutable, meaning not subject to change. I examine the impact of this belief on Christian theology further in Ch.4.

Published study Kristin Luker makes a compelling case that the 'portrait of teenage mothers being shown is frequently the reflection of a public mood rather than a demographic reality.' Not only is insufficient attention given to the actual statistics but proper analysis of crucial variables was lacking. Luker demonstrated that it was not primarily 'broken' or fatherless families creating teenage childbirth and single parent situations, but poverty. The title of her book, Dubious Conceptions, is therefore an ingenious wordplay on jumping to ultimately unsubstantiated conclusions. Kristin Luker, Dubious Conceptions: The Politics of Teenage Pregnancy (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996). Say, Gays, Lesbians & Family Values.

Family: Challenges for the Future, 14. The United Nations report goes on to note that a paradox of social policy is that when 'Governments are turning to families for solutions, there is a significant lack of official information on families. In short, much about families is not known. Often what one claims to know about families is founded more on stereotypes, intuition, anecdotes and experience than on a rigorous and systematically constructed understanding of what families are. Furthermore, the family has undergone such profound changes recently that the view of families held by many policy makers, scholars and others may not be an accurate reflection of families as they currently are'. Ibid., 30-31.
A recurrent theme in the literature is the difficulty of defining ‘family’.\textsuperscript{206} The degree of variation between families has been alluded to. The United Nations also points out that: ‘No definition of the family is given because of the great variety of types, cultures, and customs existing in families throughout the world’.\textsuperscript{207} The changing and therefore uncertain nature of contemporary family has just been mentioned, as have political struggles for control of the definition. Family’s powerful symbolic and ideological connotations have a bearing on why it is far from easy to delineate.\textsuperscript{208} The sociologist, C. C. Harris, in his book \textit{The Family}, argues that ‘probably no other term’ he needed to use ‘is less clear than this one... and popular usage is extremely complex.’\textsuperscript{209} Anderson and Guernsey’s revolutionary concept that ‘family’ might be better understood not as a noun but as a verb: ‘familying’, is one that holds considerable conceptual (and epistemological) potential and appeal.\textsuperscript{210}

In addition to the quality and reliability of relationships, societal and cultural norms and expectations, and the factors governing change within and without families, there are other variables that influence families. One in particular has been flagged by Fraser Watts who takes Alistair McFadyen to task for what he terms ‘social imperialism’ and

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{206} ‘The definition of family remains an intractable problem’ Thatcher, \textit{Theology and Families}, 4. Lawrence Stone, in his history of the Family 1500-1800, noted the word ‘family’ can be used to mean many things. He opted to restrict his remit to a predetermined definition of ‘it is taken to mean those members of the same kin who live together under one roof.’ Stone, \textit{The Family Sex & Marriage}, 21. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation in the UK (a bit like the Smith Charity in Australia) also defined ‘family’ quite tightly to limit the scope of the Foundation’s work. David Utting, \textit{Family and Parenthood: Supporting Families, Preventing Breakdown} (York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 1995), 9.
\item \textsuperscript{207} United Nations Report “Guiding Principles on the Family” quoted in Stacey, \textit{In the Name of the Family}, 48.
\item \textsuperscript{208} Deborah Chambers points out that within social theory, debates about the family have been hampered by a ‘conceptual deficiency’ about ‘family’. She says framing it in inverted commas is necessary to ‘signify the ambiguity surrounding it’ and adds ‘the shortage of explicit definitions of the “family” indicates a denial of the diversity of actual family forms’. Chambers, \textit{Representing the Family}, 1f.
\item \textsuperscript{209} Harris, \textit{The Family}, 62.
\item \textsuperscript{210} Anderson and Guernsey, \textit{On Being Family}.
\end{itemize}
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failing to account for factors such as genetic influence. This dynamic has long fuelled the nature/nurture debate, made even more complex by recent research indicating the effects of nurture on genes.

Finally, there are many anthropological, ethnographical and sociological theories about family, community, ethnicity, culture and kinship. They include the critiques by Marx and Engels and Feminist criticisms that have already been referred to. There is space only to mention a few others here simply to give a flavour of the broad range of approaches and ideas. In the modern era of anthropology, Lewis Henry Morgan’s *Ancient Society: Researches in the Lines of Human Progress from Savagery through Barbarism to Civilization*, suggestive of Darwinian evolution, impressed Karl Marx. Ferdinand Tönnies’ theory of *Gemeinschaft* (community based on interpersonal interactions) and *Gesellschaft* (society based on impersonal rules, roles and formal agreements or organisation) epitomized some of the differences between rural and city dwelling that were partly explored in W. I. Thomas and W. W. Znaniecki’s *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, and also influenced Max Weber and Talcott Parsons’ work. Christopher Lasch described the nineteenth-century Victorian home as a domestic retreat from the world of work and from outside agencies in his *Haven in a Heartless World*. Talcott Parson’s functionalist theory coined the ‘nuclear family’ based on a gendered division of labour and home as a place of love, security and support, similar to Young and Wilmott’s ‘Symmetrical Family’. By contrast, Louis Althusser’s neo-Marxist approach regarded the family as an ‘Ideological State’

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212 Quoted by Dr Fiona Standing at an ARACY Webinar in Canberra, Spring 2014. (Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth).

213 But exclude the views of Plato and Aristotle, for example, which I will mention in Chapter 3.

214 Distinguished from the Ancient, Medieval and Enlightenment periods.

Apparatus' that prevented rebellion and supported the capitalist status quo in the same way as the Church or the school. More recently, Anthony Giddens has posited a transformed world of intimacy and ‘pure relationships’:

Where a social relation is entered into for its own sake, for what can be derived by each person from a sustained association with another; and which is continued only in so far as it is thought by both parties to deliver enough satisfactions for each individual to stay within it.  

The foregoing synopsis has attempted to outline some of the factors that are of direct relevance to considering ‘family’ in this research. There are complex and contradictory layers of meaning the moment the word ‘family’ is mentioned, including conscious and unconscious personal experience and hidden forces of social construction, power and ideology. That layering makes it hard to distinguish discrete variables, or their individual significance. Nevertheless, debates about family, whether for theological or any other reason, need an awareness of how much is bound up in the word ‘family’. A key set of constituent factors have been identified, namely the quality of mutual relationship, trust, love, communication, support and care, which appear to be of some importance. It remains to be seen if this is of theological significance.

The next section looks specifically at the Christian association with the family, and Christian literature on the subject.

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2.3 Christian Literature on the Family

The UK sociologist, Faith Robertson Elliott, not writing from any particular faith basis, avers that in Western societies Christianity is generally credited with having defined sexual relationships, procreation and childcare as properly taking place within the nuclear family, as constructing marriage as an indissoluble bond, and with sustaining women’s mothering and men’s authority. Further, she believes there is a specific affinity between ascetic Puritanism and development of the nuclear family as a sentimental reality. A number of writers have argued that Puritanism and the Evangelical Movement in the seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries placed considerable emphasis on salvation through a Godly life and made the family central to the creation of a Godly society.\textsuperscript{217} The renowned historian, Lawrence Stone, also cited the role of the church in the changes that occurred in the period he studied, 1500-1800, preparing the way for the ‘closed domestic nuclear unit’.\textsuperscript{218} Berger and Berger point to the influence of Puritanism and Methodism on American families and cite similar examples of specific church denominations in France and Germany.\textsuperscript{219} Therefore, some kind of a link seems to exist between Christianity and the western ‘family’, or, at the very least, Christianity is credited with a link.\textsuperscript{220} Rosemary Ruether’s book \textit{Christianity and the Making of the Modern Family} also traced the extensive influence of Christianity on the western family.\textsuperscript{221}

It is not hard to find evidence for widespread Christian endorsement of ‘family’ in the literature. There is a sizeable ‘popular’ corpus devoted to the subject, with titles like Australian Moira

\textsuperscript{218} Stone, \textit{The Family Sex & Marriage}.  
\textsuperscript{219} Berger and Berger, \textit{The War over the Family}, 98.  
\textsuperscript{220} In Chs.2 and 3, I argue that the roots of this connection go back much further, are more complicated, and the effects potentially much greater than these writers have realised. Here, though, I outline more recent Christian interest in this subject to demonstrate the continuing association between Christianity and the subject of the family.  
\textsuperscript{221} Ruether, \textit{Christianity and the Making of the Modern Family}.  

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Eastman's *Family: The Vital Factor, the key to Society's Survival*, and Whitfield’s *Family Matters: Towards a Programme of Action*. Other books and articles cover particular aspects, such as *Marriage Works, How To Succeed as a Parent, Parenting isn't for Cowards, How To Love Your Teenager, Happy Families, Love Must Be Tough, Grandparenting*, and so on. As Murray Rae, Rodney Clapp and others have observed, the family that is espoused frequently looks like the bourgeois nuclear family described by Talcott Parsons, and Young and Wilmott. Some writers have suggested that Christianity might have a vested interest in ‘family’ because of the role of churches in key rites of passage, such as infant baptisms and marriages. Rodney Clapp concluded:

I would not go so far as to say that twentieth-century evangelicals consider the family the foundation of the world, the ground they walk upon. But they have granted family an importance that, say, their Puritan forbears would never have imagined.

Interest in the family is not limited, however, to the Protestant churches. During Vatican II (1962-65) over two and half thousand Roman Catholic bishops debated ‘the dignity of marriage and the family’. The family has also been the focus of a number of significant Catholic publications and papal Encyclicals and Exhortations for well over a century pre- and post- Vatican II. These included *Arcanum, Rerum Novarum, Casti Connubii, ARCIC II, Humanae Vitae, Mulieris Dignitatem, Familiaris Consortio* and *A Letter to Families*.

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223 Porter, *Sex, Power and the Clergy*; Barton, "Towards a Theology of the Family." Clapp, *Families at the Crossroads*. He quotes James Davison Hunter, a sociologist, who suggests that within ‘today’s evangelical circles family has achieved a significance “perhaps never before seen”.’
225 They concluded: ‘Personal well-being, the well-being of human and of Christian society is closely bound up with the happy condition of the marital and family community. Christians, along with all those who place a high value on this community, feel genuine satisfaction at the various ways in which men today are helped to foster this in a community of love and cultivated in their lives, and to fulfil their exalted duty as married partners and parents.’ Emphasis mine – note the use of exclusive language.
Church statements about the family are not only made for the benefit of ‘Christian families’ but also appear to extend to society at large. Pope John Paul II’s Letter to Families was clearly timed to coincide with the United Nations’ 1994 ‘Year of the Family’ and phrased to a wider audience than just Roman Catholics. The aforementioned request for a White House Conference by church leaders was similarly aimed at a wider audience. In Australia the 1977 Royal Commission on Human Relationships had heavy representation and numerous submissions from the churches. One of the senior commissioners was the then Anglican Archbishop of Brisbane. There was also a separate report published by the churches, to accompany the Royal Commission’s final report which stated:

We believe that our task was to explore the profound personal and social changes which are taking place in moral and family relationships and in contemporary society and to make recommendations which would aid humanity, and make a better life for many.

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227 Witness these two statements from books by Americans Larry Christenson and Oscar Feucht: ‘The problem with the Christian family today is that we have neglected the divine order that God has established for it. This has to do with the relationship of Order and authority between the various members of the family. It has to do with the function of sex in marriage. It has to do with the place established by God for each member of the family unit’. Larry Christenson, The Christian Family, British, pubs. by Fountain Trust ed. (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1971). ‘The stability and effective function of the family is essential for society. This is clear from history, since both religion and culture are largely relayed from generation to generation by families. … Respect for law and order in the state is closely tied to the respect of children for their elders. … If families do not function effectively in nurturing wholesome emotions, attitudes and beliefs, it is questionable whether our civilization can survive.’ O.E. Feucht, ed. Family Relationships and the Church: A Sociological, Historical, and Theological Study of Family Structures, Roles, and Relationships., vol. 3, Marriage and Family Research Series (St.Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1970), 1.

228 ‘If the Church wishes to take part in this initiative (United Nation’s International Year of the Family) it is because she herself has been sent by Christ to all nations… In this way … the Church makes herself present in the world’. PiusXI, “Casti Connubii.”; PaulVI, “Humanae Vitae.”; John-PaulII, Familiaris Consortio; Letter to Families, 6.

229 Evatt, Arnott, and Deveson, “Royal Commission on Human Relations Final Report.”

230 Human Relationships: A Christian View - Foreword by Archbishop Arnott. In the USA, in addition to the aforementioned White House Conference (1980), was another forum in 1985 involving church leaders, academics, and ‘senior White House officials’. George Rekers, ed. Family Building: Six Qualities of a Strong Family (Ventura, California: Regal Books, 1985). The forum contributions were
A number of other denominations have followed the example of the Roman Catholic Church and the Australian churches in commissioning and publishing reports on subjects such as Marriage, Divorce and the Family. Denominational, cross-denominational and independent Christian organisations have also been established with the express aim of supporting family life and/or advocating for the family.

Churches have not confined themselves just to Royal Commissions, or writing open letters and reports. Porter claims that for over one and half centuries the Australian churches ‘used their powerful institutional role’ to try and prevent, or limit, supposed threats to the family. These included ‘female equality, divorce reform, the relaxation of sexual restraints, contraception, abortion and homosexual activity’. The Roman Catholic Church successfully delayed the ban on divorce being removed from the Irish Constitution, for example, until 1995 and the sale and then availability of contraceptives in Ireland until 1985; even then it was restricted.

collated in a subsequent book, which contained a statement about the importance of the family from President Ronald Reagan.

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232 For example, James Dobson’s Focus on the Family, the Australian John Paul II Family and Marriage Institute, UK’s Care for the Family, and parenting courses from bodies like the Irish Catholic Family Caring Trust. The worldwide (and Australia based) Marriage Encounter programme’s website states that its mission is: 'to proclaim the value of Marriage and Holy Orders in the Church and in the world.' www.wwme.org.au. This is a Roman Catholic organisation. ‘Holy Orders’ refers to the Roman Catholic priesthood.

233 Porter, Sex, Power and the Clergy, 71.

'As Christians we view the family theologically,'\textsuperscript{235} declared the Anglican Lambeth Conference 1988. Given the responsibility Christianity is credited with, or has assumed, in respect of the family, and the suggested significance of the subject, it might be reasonable to conjecture that family has been the subject of extensive theological enquiry. This, however, does not seem to be the case. Instead theology is largely conspicuous by its absence from the Christian consideration of ‘family’.\textsuperscript{236}

Anderson and Guernsey conducted a literature search in preparation for teaching a theological course on the family. They were surprised to find how little theology existed out of ‘hundreds, if not thousands, of popular books’. They quoted a colleague in pronouncing it a ‘massive gap’, describing the theology they did find as ‘shallow.’ They surmised that the ‘Christian public equates much of what has been written as thoroughly biblical and appropriately theological ... because there are very few models of social biblical exegesis and theological reflection to guide them.’\textsuperscript{237} The authors described their ‘theological anthropology’ as based biblically on the ‘co-humanity’ of the Genesis Creation accounts, contingent ‘upon the reality of God as a personal order of being, with human existence created in his likeness and image’.\textsuperscript{238} They develop some interesting lines of thought. However, their actual references to God refer to ‘the command of God’, and the ‘creative purpose of God’ and the ‘word of God’, Barthian style, but do not explore the nature of God contiguous with their introduction. Neither Christology, nor the Trinity, is mentioned, for example.

\textsuperscript{235} Lambeth Conference 1988 para. 143
\textsuperscript{236} Gibbons asserted in 1965 ‘the prime importance of the family is universally recognized. But its theological use is piecemeal rather than systematic: fatherhood is invoked to illuminate the doctrine of God, the family that of the church, and so on. There is little evidence of the Maurician vision of a comprehensive exposition of Christianity in terms of family.’ Cecil W. Gibbons, “The Theological Significance of the Family,” \textit{The Modern Churchman} VIII, no. 4 (1965): 246. Reference to F.D.Maurice (See Ch.3) Frederick Denison Maurice, \textit{The Kingdom of Christ, or Hints to a Quaker Respecting the Principles, Constitution, and Ordinances of the Catholic Church}, 2nd. ed., 2 vols., vol. 2 (London: MacMillan & Co., 1838).
\textsuperscript{237} Anderson and Guernsey, \textit{On Being Family}, 6, (my emphasis).
\textsuperscript{238} Ibid., 17f.
In 1995, the Church of England published its major report on the family - *Something to Celebrate: Valuing Families in Church and Society.* The report did contain a chapter on theology. Its author, Stephen Barton, is a New Testament scholar. He suggested that a theologian ought to undertake this task and be on the working party but he was overruled on the grounds that it was not thought necessary. The omission of theology, not just in this chapter, but also throughout the report, caused Professor Michael Banner, a Professor of Theology and Ethics at Kings College, London, to re-badge *Something to Celebrate* as ‘Nothing to Declare.’ Later, he was even more damning, finding the inability of the working party to see any contribution for theology in the ‘consideration of the form and character of the family’ as akin to ‘the methodology of the German Christians’ in the face of Nazism.

When I began this research a search for ‘Family’ and ‘Trinity’ located one third of a million books and articles with ‘Family’ in the title and one hundred thousand with ‘Trinity’. A substantial proportion of the latter related either to a name of an institution, ‘Trinity College’, for example, or a group of three entities, with no relation whatsoever to theology. Hits for a trinitarian theological connection to family were zero. There are now some books, which have been written since and I will review shortly. They still represent a distinct minority. A recent check of theses, for example, in the UK EthOs system found only one match for either ‘Family’ and ‘Trinity’, or ‘Family’ and ‘Theology’ out of over three hundred and fifty thousand theses. This was Gary Deddo’s thesis on Barth’s Special Ethics of Parents and Children.

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239 Conversation with Stephen Barton 7.11.97.
Gary Deddo himself noted that an emphasis in Christian literature on the family was upon 'right relationships.' He added, perceptively:

What seems to be lacking in many of these discussions, is an adequate theological foundation upon which to carry out the explorations. There are assumptions made about the nature of human relationships, which seem to have no connection to theological underpinnings or are only loosely, or thematically related. ... It seems that if considerations of the relationships in which we live are not connected to the heart of our Christian faith then 1) they may not be as faithful and helpful as they might be and 2) will fail to address the believing person’s motivational core and so tend to come across as optional, artificial or merely legalistic approaches (conservative or liberal) to right relationships.242

Anne Borrowdale, the Oxford Diocesan Social Responsibility and a member of the Church of England working party on the family, expressed her disquiet that the only theological work she had come across concentrated on the form of the family, rather than its content.243 Barth, Hauerwas, Molloy and Anderson have all noted the same with much of the Christian discussion of marriage. Attention has been on the legal or sacramental state of matrimony, the form, at the expense of the lived reality, the content.244 Atkinson and Brown came to the conclusion that 'the majority of Christian ethical texts which discuss family issues concentrate on marriage and divorce and do not develop a very full theology of family at all.'245 Michael Banner has also lamented the absence of a wider theological framework. He and Sherwin Bailey separately thought that vexed issues in sexual ethics would be greatly

243 Borrowdale, Reconstructing Family Values, 6, (my emphases).
244 ‘In considering contemporary Christian marriage in the light of traditional theology, and more particularly of recent theology of marriage, the question at once arises as to whether the two are in touch with one another at all…’ Cathy Molloy, Marriage: Theology & Reality (Dublin: The Columba Press, 1996), 67. Barth believed that there had been more theological investigation of the marriage service than marriage itself.
eased if a broader theological foundation were in existence. Although Ruether critiqued the adverse effects of Christianity in respect of the family for women, she too ends her book with an appeal for a theological approach to the subject:

The question now becomes, is there some new way of reading marriage, family, sex, and procreation *theologically* that can support a more just and more sustainable harmony of women and men, home and work? \(^{247}\)

Stephen Barton has written a number of other books and articles on the family, including an excellent published doctoral thesis on the relativisation of family ties in Matthew and Mark. \(^{248}\) After the Church of England report, he subsequently edited *Family in Theological Perspective*. In it he acknowledged the 'relative dearth of serious theology on the family' and expressed the hope that the eighteen contributions marked 'an important beginning' and 'would stimulate research and reflection on the theology of the family.' \(^{249}\) Although a valuable resource, there is very little theology in it. This was despite the title and the presence of several notable theologians among the contributors. \(^{250}\)

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\(^{246}\) Michael Banner proposed that many of the besetting difficulties the Church finds itself in on the subject of sexual ethics would be greatly eased if there were a wider theological framework of argument. In a separate review of the state of the current debate on sexual ethics, Banner found insufficient foundation in many arguments and agreed with Sherwin Bailey ‘who thought that Christian ethics cannot be founded on philosophical argument but must be founded on theology.’ Bailey had earlier acknowledged there were books and reports that appealed to theological principles, but he claimed that ‘so often theology and the bible are used in an eclectic and wholly adventitious way’. Michael Banner, "Directions and Misdirections in Christian Sexual Ethics: A Survey of Recent Books," *Epworth Review* 19, no. 3 (1992): 103.

\(^{247}\) Ruether, *Christianity and the Making of the Modern Family*, (emphasis mine).


\(^{250}\) The chapter that comes closest: “Right Relations, Forgiveness and Family Life” was written by Borrowdale, who is not a theologian, ibid., 203-17. In an earlier paper, Barton argued that you could not have just one theology of family because there were a range to choose from, such as a Protestant theology, a Roman Catholic theology, and so on, "Towards a Theology of the Family."
In 2006, Cardinal Ouellet, the Primate of Canada, reviewed all the Catholic publications on the family in a number of European languages, as well as Rahner and Schillibeckx’s respective work on marriage. He described theology of the family as ‘still a huge quarry waiting to be mined’, concluding:

The theology of the family is still in its infancy ... there remains a deficiency and in some ways a delay in developing the theology of the family. No comprehensive overview of the systematic theology of the family exists as yet.

Other potential sources for theological consideration of family reveal the same picture. Thus, Pannenberg’s *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, which preceded his *Systematische Theologie* on the Trinity, mentions both family and theology but without any overlap between them. Paul Fiddes’ (2000) book: *Participating in God: A Pastoral Doctrine of the Trinity* contains no reference to the family. Lisa Sowle Cahill’s *Family: A Christian Social Perspective* looked critically and carefully at the subject of family though theology is not addressed. Moltmann is seen as one of the theologians who reintroduced the ‘Social Trinity’ but he claimed he could ‘not make any concrete ethical suggestions because the circumstances of Americans and Koreans are so different’. Trinitarian approaches to Christian

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252 Ouellet, *Divine Likeness*, ix.
253 Ibid., 4-5. Ouellet refers to the impetus given by Pope John Paul II, the establishment of some institutes and some prior developments in the theology of marriage in Germany pre-War and marital spirituality in France post-War.
anthropology have led to some interesting work on what it means to be a person in community, and on human development, by authors such as Zizioulas, Alistair McFadyen, Elaine Graham and Todd Speidell. Extraordinarily, however, given their specific field of interest, none mention the family at all. Perhaps not surprisingly, secular academic research on the family demonstrates the same lacuna.

Don Browning was Professor of Ethics and Social Sciences at Chicago University’s Divinity School and noted for his contributions to Practical Theology and as Director of the Divinity School’s Religion, Culture and the Family Project. He has written or co-authored a number of books on marriage and the family and sponsored other researchers and writers, such as Lisa Cahill, as well as an ambitious multi-faith project. Nevertheless, his work has attracted criticism, among other concerns, for the absence of theology. Ray Anderson, a practical theologian himself, suggests Browning’s approach lacks a ‘christological concentration at the core and a trinitarian theology at the foundation.’

258 For example: John Archer and Barbara Lloyd, Sex and Gender, Revised ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Jorgensen, Investigating Families and Households. representing psychological and sociological approaches respectively, make no mention whatsoever. See Ch.4, 242-43.
259 A sample of his publications: Don S. Browning, A Fundamental Practical Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991); Wall et al., Marriage, Health and the Professions; Browning, Marriage and Modernization; Don S. Browning, Christian M. Green, and John Witte Jr., eds., Sex, Marriage, & Family in World Religions (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).
260 “The Discipline of Practical Theology” in Ray S. Anderson, The Shape of Practical Theology: Empowering Ministry with Theological Praxis (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter Varsity Press, 2001), 29. Anderson was critiquing other work of Browning but the same criticism holds for Browning’s approach to the family. A likely explanation of the disjuncture between Anderson’s criticism of Browning and Anderson’s own lack of reference to theology in On Being Family is that the latter was published before the main re-emergence of Trinitarian theology, which can probably be dated around the mid to late 1980’s. I met Anderson at a Conference at Kings College, London, on the Trinity in 1998 and talked with him about the Trinity and the family. As is evident above, the critique of Browning was published in 2001.
This lack of theology in the discussion of ‘family’ is no new phenomenon. It has a long history. I will examine reasons for this absence from the patristic period in Ch.2.\textsuperscript{261} Here I include just a few examples. Wingren, for instance, talks of Luther’s ‘lazy’ and un-theologically inspired adoption of ‘beruf’ (vocation) to justify his teaching on the family.\textsuperscript{262} Banner has a similar concern about Bonhoeffer’s reliance on ‘mandates.’\textsuperscript{263} Boyd’s detailed study, \textit{Scottish Church attitudes to Sex, Marriage and the Family from 1850-1914}, noted that, despite the many pronouncements on the subject of the family, the churches ‘rarely raised or developed explicitly theological points.’\textsuperscript{264}

Linda Woodhead, Muriel Porter and Maria Bingemeyer all suggest that an overwhelming preponderance of male and often celibate theologians throughout history, and a marked absence of female theologians until relatively recently, might account for some of the ‘deficiency and delay’ in formulating a theology of family, that Cardinal Ouellet referred to above.\textsuperscript{265} It also may have contributed to the absence of theology about women or children and the under-developed theology of love. Sarah Coakley has referred to systematic theology’s ‘classic blindness to questions of power, gender and

\textsuperscript{261} It could be argued that mention of ‘family’ during the patristic period is in fact anachronistic and therefore talking about an absence of theology would be meaningless. I also address this possible objection in Ch.3.


\textsuperscript{264} Boyd, \textit{Scottish Church Attitudes to Sex, Marriage and the Family}.

\textsuperscript{265} ‘Until recently there were in the history of theology no books or articles written by women, no chairs occupied by women, no courses run by women. … For all this time women’s ways of thinking and talking did not enrich theology with their own characteristics, did not shape it with their way of feeling and thinking, did not colour it with their own different accents. As a result, theology, the church and humankind were the poorer.’ Bingemeyer, 1989, p474, quoted by Convoy in Maryane Confoy, Dorothy A Lee, and Joan Nowotny, eds., \textit{Freedom & Entrapment: Women Thinking Theology} (North Blackburn, Victoria: Dove, 1995), 18f. Porter believes that male theologians were historically uninvolved with children and have a ‘blind spot between birth and adolescence’, Porter, \textit{Sex, Power and the Clergy}, 169. Williams reflected on the difficulties of celibate clergy writing on marriage, Charles Williams, \textit{Outlines of Romantic Theology} (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 9.
sexuality." Feminist theologians argue that androcentricity renders the distinctive existence, contribution and needs of women as unseen, and their attempts to articulate this situation as 'voiceless.' Maryanne Confoy describes it thus:

In the search for identity and faith in the Western Christian tradition, a feminine perspective is a relatively recent phenomenon. Entrapment in this context is being locked into a male-normative world-view that was for so long an invisible constriction for those who were 'other'.

Specific examples of androcentric distortions are claimed, in Christian anthropology and ethics for instance, when sin is principally described in terms of pride and desire, or Christian love is primarily defined as self-sacrifice. Such views do not necessarily reflect women's concerns, agendas, or insights. Janet Martin Soskice has a thought-provoking reflection on the dualistic and androcentric view that equates spiritual with otherworldly contemplation, rather than the 'unselfing' tasks of love and attention that parents, principally mothers,

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266 Coakley, "Is There a Future for Gender and Theology?," 2. In the same paper, Coakley contends that on the rare occasions when 'male systematic theologians of any stature' (naming von Balthasar and Jürgen Moltmann) do 'take the category of gender as even a significant locus for discussion' they 'tend to import a gender theory from the secular realm without a sufficiently critical theological assessment of it.' ibid., 4. Cf. Myrtle S. Langley, "'The Best Men's Club in the World' Attitudes to Women in the British Churches," in Religion, State and Society in Modern Britain, ed. Paul Badham, Text & Studies in Religion (Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1989).


268 Confoy, Lee, and Nowotny, Freedom & Entrapment, 12.
undertake. 269 Linda Woodhead takes Nicholas Harvey to task not just for dualism but also for what she views as his ‘docetic’ Christology in failing to take the body seriously enough. She argues that once the importance of the body and ‘bodily relatedness’ is factored in then the family can be acknowledged as significant on the Christian grounds that ‘the family is simply a social unit which is organised around the ties of bodily relatedness’.270 These illustrations alone are of some import in contemplating a theology of ‘family’.271

Bakke found that ‘children and childhood have tended to be a neglected theme in most theological disciplines in modern times’.272 He quotes Marcia Bunge, who noted:

Until very recently, issues related to children have tended to be marginal in almost every area of contemporary theology. For example, systematic theologians and Christian ethicists have said little about children, and they have not regarded serious reflections on children as a high priority. What Todd Whitmore has claimed about the Catholic Church can be applied to Christian theology in general: there is no well-developed social

270 Linda Woodhead, "Love and Justice," Studies in Christian Ethics 5, no. 1 (1992): 41. I think there are a few flaws in her argument but the point is that her viewpoint stands out precisely because of the contrast with a ‘male-normative’ one.
271 A further layer of complexity is whether these gender differences are themselves the results of patriarchy. Sarah Coakley cites ‘overdependence and self-hatred’ as ‘cultural effects’ which indicate not just difference, but ‘self-negation’ or non-existence. Coakley critiques Valerie Savings’ 1960’s ‘early feminist’ work on ‘female’ sin, and adds a footnote to the effect that feminist theory is itself not fully decided on whether to concentrate on ‘gender difference’, ‘equality of opportunity’, or ‘gender fluidity.’ Coakley, Powers and Submissions, 66-67. Michelle Gonzalez acknowledges the spectrum of views in feminist thinking between essentialist and gender as wholly socially constructed, positioning herself in the ‘middle ground’, with some important qualifications about cultural influences, and ‘gender complementarity’ Gonzalez, Created in God’s Image, 134-45. Ruether takes issue with dualizing as a ‘fundamental social ideology’, that indulges in a false construction of ontology, Rosemary Radford Ruether, “Dualism and the Nature of Evil in Feminist Theology,” Studies in Christian Ethics 5, no. 1 (1992): 27.
272 Bakke, When Children Become People, 3. Bakke mentions just one exception – the following article: Dawn DeVries, "Toward a Theology of Childhood," Interpretation 55, no. 2 (2001). Defries echoes Bakke: ‘the field of systematic theology in the twentieth century has been largely silent on the question of children’ mentioning only a special edition of Theology Today, 4 (January 2000) as well as Marcia Bunge.
teaching on the nature of children and why we should care about and for them.\textsuperscript{273}

The prevalence of child abuse and neglect, including within the Church and church-based organisations, is further sad testament to the absence of priority for the significance and welfare of children and another reason why more, rather than less, theology might be required.

Werner Jeanrond has similarly suggested that there has been a dearth of new theological investigation into love for the past forty years. This seems a curious omission when, as Jeanrond points out:

\begin{quote}
Love is at the centre of Christian faith. God loves this universe in which human love as a gift of God is able to transform lives. God’s love and human love are of primary importance for theological reflection.\textsuperscript{274}
\end{quote}

Jeanrond notes that this situation is beginning to change with more theological interest in this field. Classical Platonic notions of love had seen it as a lack or need, and Nygren, for instance, had distinguished between Agape and Eros. Jeanrond agreed with Vincent Brümmer that:

\begin{quote}
Most of the comprehensive concepts of love developed within it (the Christian tradition) have been attitudinal rather than relational. Love has generally been taken to be an attitude of one person to another, rather than as a relation between persons.\textsuperscript{275}
\end{quote}

Kevin Vanhoozer has questioned precisely how love as reciprocal relation actually works?\textsuperscript{276} This is clearly a question of some relevance to this thesis and will need to be explored further.\textsuperscript{277}

There are some further critiques in the literature about Christian approaches to family that I have not included so far, which bear on any

\textsuperscript{273} Bunge, M, 2001 \textit{The Child in Christian Thought}, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 3-4
\textsuperscript{274} Werner G. Jeanrond, \textit{A Theology of Love} (London: T & T Clark, 2010), xi.
\textsuperscript{276} Vanhoozer, \textit{Nothing Greater}, 18-19.
\textsuperscript{277} See pp.338-40, 403-407.
theological consideration. Ray Anderson, for example, referred to the
‘cultural encapsulation’ of much Christian writing on the family and
admitted that he too had set ‘forth cultural specifics as if they were
biblical absolutes.’278 Auris Hung, Jung Lee, Siew Kiong Tham, Chul Won
Son, and Ruiping’s expositions of contemporary Asian family
functioning, and Mpyana Nyengele and Samuel Kunhiyope’s discussion
of African examples, highlight considerable differences of thinking and
living.279 Hung, Chul Son and Jung Lee have seen potential in Trinitarian
theology for addressing the rather different concept of Eastern family.
Separately, Germaine Greer, Michael Schluter, Stanley Hauerwas and
Tom Sine have each asked if serious consideration should be given to
resurrecting the extended family, because the nuclear family is not
capable of bearing the weight of expectation that is laid upon it, and
lacks the support it requires.280

The concentration on order, respect and authority, as much as
love, within Christian families, evident in the quotations from
Christenson and Feucht cited earlier, have been linked to concerns
expressed by Muriel Porter, Borrowdale and John and Olive Drane that
figures for child abuse and domestic violence are as high, if not higher,
in so-called ‘Christian families’ than in the population as a whole. Bartkowski and Ellison’s comparison of Christian and non-Christian material on child-rearing methods expressed concern about Christian over-strict and over-rigid parenting. As Anderson and Guernsey has put it, the question is not whether a family is ‘Christian’ but whether individuals are being Christian in families?

Linda Woodhead, Charles Taylor, Christopher Lasch and Nicholas Harvey all point out that ‘the Family’ has been left as sole claimant upon our ultimate loyalties. In modernity the family became ‘the heart of the heartless world’ and the primary place where people could locate meaning and value. Viewed in this perspective, the identification of a happy family with a godly Christian life can be seen as no more than a theological justification of one particular aspect of secular society. Ruether began her book on the family by juxtaposing two verses from Luke 14 with James Dobson’s mission statement for Focus on the Family, in order to highlight the apparent contrast between Christ’s relativisation of family ties and its more recent interpretation.

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281 Borrowdale, Reconstructing Family Values; John and Olive Drane, Happy Families: Building Healthy Families, ed. Marlene Cohen, Handbooks of Pastoral Care (London: Marshall Pickering, 1995); Porter, Sex, Power and the Clergy. Borrowdale comments: ‘It has been depressing to note how many of the secular books single out religious households as being particularly prone to damaging children emotionally and physically by their over rigid stances and their emphasis on the hierarchical ordering of family life’, Borrowdale, Reconstructing Family Values, 110. Archer & Lloyd cite research linking domestic violence to ‘Jewish and Christian beliefs about the subservience of women’, Archer and Lloyd, Sex and Gender, 133.


283 Anderson and Guernsey, On Being Family.

284 Ruether cites Luke 14.25-26 ‘If anyone comes to me and can not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brother and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.’ She then juxtaposes it with James Dobson, writing: ‘(Focus on the Family) attempts to ‘turn hearts towards home” by reasonable, biblical and empirical insights so people will discover the founder of home and the creator of families – Jesus Christ’. Ruether, Christianity and the Making of the Modern Family, 3.
Linda Woodhead acknowledges that Matt. 22.30 ‘they neither marry nor are given in marriage’ has been highly influential in the past for the church’s understanding and evaluation of marriage and the family.\textsuperscript{285} Theologians have been put off by the ideological and potentially idolatrous weaknesses inherent in ‘family.’ Karl Barth, one of these, famously noted that ‘the family is of no interest at all for Christian theology.’\textsuperscript{286} Rowan Williams put his finger on one telling omission from the Christian concentration on the family, namely the vocation to celibacy.\textsuperscript{287} Clapp, Hauerwas and Cunningham have argued that theological resources should be applied to the church rather than the family and in developing ecclesiology, which has also been a focus for social trinitarianism.\textsuperscript{288} In this regard the call by the Catholic Church for the family to be the Domestic Church appears to conflate two potentially opposing ideas.\textsuperscript{289}

Stanley Hauerwas wondered whether the nuclear family is merely an extension of individualism and perpetuates selfishness.

\textsuperscript{285} Woodhead, “Love and Justice.” Cf. Barton, Discipleship and Family Ties. There are other reasons why this may have been so – please see Ch.3.

\textsuperscript{286} Karl Barth CD III/4, 241. Brent Waters points out this is due to the corrupting political and social associations with family organization but he is puzzled by Barth’s apparently artificial severing of marital and parental love, ‘without presupposing a familial context’. Waters, The Family in Christian Social and Political Thought, 182. I will later argue that his particular Trinitarian theology was also partly responsible for this view – see ‘Karl Barth’ in Ch.3.

\textsuperscript{287} Rowan Williams, On Christian Theology, ed. Gareth Jones and Lewis Ayers, Challenges in Contemporary Christianity (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 228-30. The anthropologist Margaret Mead noted this some years ago in her submission to the American enquiry on families: ‘If we are to build a new image of womanhood, we cannot even subconsciously go on teaching little girls, as we do today, that marriage is the only state for men and women and that every other devotion – to work, art, society or God – is only a poor substitute for marriage’, cited in Evatt, Arnott, and Deveson, “Royal Commission on Human Relations Final Report,” Vol 5 p39, para 219. Enforced clerical celibacy is an exception but has a complex and chequered history, see “Celibacy: Is it to blame?” in Porter, Sex, Power and the Clergy, 135-61.


\textsuperscript{289} Most clearly articulated in Pope John Paul’s statement “On the Family” (1981). John-PaulII, Familialis Consortio; Letter to Families; Ouellet, Divine Likeness. This is not solely a Roman Catholic notion. Luther and the Reformation proposed a similar idea. See “Family as Church” and “Domestic Church” in Cahill, Family, 48-82, 83-110.
through being insufficiently outward looking. Linda Woodhead and Nicholas Harvey have gone so far as to argue that the nuclear family is a ‘licensed form of selfishness’ and Thomas Breidenthal that it is ‘radical individualism in disguise’.\(^{290}\) Real hardness of heart, they claim, may not be all that easy for an individual to sustain, but it can be very easy for a family to fall into. Too many families pull up the drawbridge on the ‘heartless world’ and refuse to open up their hearts to anyone outside the family circle.\(^{291}\) Harvey suggests that to allow love to be limited in this way is to fail to understand the full implications of the gospel. In this sense families ought to have fluid boundaries.\(^{292}\) Hospitality, adoption, fostering, fictive kinship and creative approaches to providing mutual support might all come under this heading.\(^{293}\)

It appears, for good or ill, that Christianity has had a clear association with the subject of the Family and theology has not kept pace with this development, or been particularly interested in the subject. As a result, there is a considerable gap between the degree of Christian attention to the family and the lack of theology. In so far as any theological attention has been paid, the focus of interest has been far more on the form of the family rather than on the content. I now turn to some first efforts at considering the family from a trinitarian

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\(^{291}\) Lisa Sowle Cahill similarly referred to this phenomenon: ‘I live in a wealthy suburb of Boston, which has many professionals and academics. These parents are down at the school every day making sure that their kids are getting the right services, that their kids are in the right classes. Their attitude is: "I don’t care about the kids being bused in--they’re dragging down the academic level. I want to make sure my kids get into the honors class." In this setting the emphasis on family can offer a morally respectable rationale for furthering one’s own status. It can be a reflection of values that Christians ought to be standing against’. David Heim, "Family Values, Christian Values: A Roundtable Discussion," *Christian Century* 113, no. 4 (1996).

\(^{292}\) Pope John Paul spoke of the need for families to offer hospitality as an antidote to the family becoming idolatrous. Quoted in *Priests and People*, 8. Aug-Sept 1994, 300.

perspective, as well as some further specific concerns about any attempts to do so.

3. Christian Literature on Trinity and Family, and specific concerns about any such combination

This section comprises four parts:

1. A review of the literature that has been written so far.
2. Mention of Orthodox literature on the family.
3. Some critical appraisals either of past attempts to write a theology of family that holds relevance for this thesis, or of the potential for mis-use of Trinitarian theology.
4. A brief examination of feminist concerns both about the Trinity and Christian approaches to the family.

3.1 Existing literature on the Trinity and Family

Influenced by the trinitarian theology of Karl Barth, Karl Rahner and von Balthasar, Pope John Paul II had called for trinitarian reflection on the family in both *Familiaris Consortio* and especially his *Letter to Families*. St. John’s Theological College Symposium on the Family also suggested this should be explored further, as did Sue Walrond-

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295 “The Holy Trinity offers a “role model” for our understanding of the family, not least because it provides a dynamic and relational rather than structural approach to the question. We would not like to suggest that only ‘Christian family’ is real family, as we regard the various social constructs of family as a creation ordinance. We have however a clear concern to centre the family in the Godhead, specifically in the revelation of the love of God in Jesus Christ: Jesus Christ is the head or Lord of the family as much as he is Lord of the individual or of the church. The theological and practical implications of this need future exploration, but the current resurgence of interest in the doctrine of the Trinity as the most appropriate context for Christian anthropology, and the implications that this has for our understanding of personhood in less individual terms, help see that our experiences of family can
Skinner, a well known UK Family Therapist, who was a member of the Board of Social Responsibility for Southwark Diocese.\footnote{296}

A literature search has found five books that have tackled the family and specifically cited trinitarian theology. Cardinal Ouellet took up Pope John Paul II’s challenge.\footnote{297} His book is a compilation of lectures given over a period of some four years to different audiences in Rome and the United States. Hence he believes it offers reflection, if not fully-fledged theology, which he hopes will carry forward Pope John Paul II’s legacy in ‘the theological and existential quest to bring the Trinity and the family into reciprocal illumination for the good of the contemporary world.’\footnote{298} What Ouellet does attempt is to extend the Christian concern with marriage into a wider appreciation of children and family. Some of his linkages with the Holy Family and the Domestic church, themes of both predecessor Popes, appear slightly artificial. A reviewer estimates that one third of all his references are to Pope John Paul II or von Balthasar, which, says Hackett, raises questions about the insularity of the theology.\footnote{299} Perhaps the most helpful part of the book is the conclusion to Chapter IV ‘The Trinitarian Mission of the Family’ where Ouellet sets out some of the unresolved issues. These include deepening the understanding between the immanent and economic Trinity, and exploring the nature of person, both human and divine, because he believes love and person are ‘more fundamental categories’ than nature be ultimately located in our understanding of God.’ Adrian Chatfield “A Vision for the Family” Unpublished paper. St. John’s College, Nottingham (1995).

\footnote{296} Walrond-Skinner, The Pastoral Care of Personal Relationships, 161. Her evidence for a Trinitarian likeness is drawn from the ‘trinitarian discourses’ in John 16 and 17. She adds: ‘Here we are given a model of relationships which postulates intimacy without fusion and differentiation without separation. The relationship between the three Persons is one of equality and mutual love. The functions of the Person are clear and boundaries are firm but permeable. The intimate union between the Person is given as a model for the unity and oneness of Christ’s followers with God and with each another.

\footnote{297} Ouellet, Divine Likeness, ix. ‘On the theological level, much work remains to be done in the way of developing a consistent and comprehensive vision that responds to the needs of theological science and the needs of pastoral action today’.

\footnote{298} Ibid., x.

and substance. He would like further investigation of ‘the complementarity between marriage, virginity and hierarchical ministry’ and examination of ‘conjugal and family morality’ from a ‘Trinitarian anthropology.’ He concludes:

Systematically putting into relation the Trinity and the family contains a surprising potential for the future of the Church’s theology and mission. At a time when theology risks being dissolved into anthropology under the pressure of an anthropocentric culture, God’s plan for marriage and the family brings theological reflection back to the terrain of the real and dramatic history of human persons grappling with love, sexuality, and fecundity.300

David Cunningham’s (1998) *These Three are One: The Practice of Trinitarian Theology* did look at the family but it is only mentioned on 26 pages out of 368. He queries concentrating on the family as a ‘base unit,’ preferring to start with the church.301 For Cunningham, ‘the doctrine of the Trinity ... is the Christian doctrine of God’ and provides a ‘grammar’ or a ‘structure’ for ‘our talk about God.’ He believes it summarizes the ‘biblical narratives’, distinguishes Christianity from other faiths and enables ‘talk about God from degenerating into a mere projection of our own greatest aspirations onto something outside ourselves’.302 Cunningham’s approach to the Trinity is characterized by the use of headings beginning with ‘P’ of which ‘Particularity,’ ‘Participation’ and ‘Peacemaking’ appear to hold some promise for this thesis, though his section on the family comes under ‘Pluralizing’. Cunningham has given some careful thought to children and this is a particular strength.303 His contribution is nuanced and elegant but, in respect of the family, does not explicitly go very far.

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301 Cunningham, *These Three Are One*, 285f.

302 Ibid., 7

303 Ibid., 288-97
Scott Hahn, an American lay and married Roman Catholic theology lecturer, has also produced (2002) *First Comes Love: Finding your Family in the church and the Trinity*.\(^{304}\) Despite his theological knowledge, evident in his position, qualifications and the footnotes, the text itself is not intended to hold a theological discussion. It is aimed at a mass Catholic readership, steering an ecclesiastically diplomatic course that adheres closely to the Magisterium. Thus contraception is not mentioned, the Virgin Mary is, and a functional divergence of roles and capabilities between men and women is floated, without any apparent reference to a theological or biblical basis, or to the social sciences.

Adrian Thatcher, a Practical Theology lecturer in Exeter, UK, has incorporated Trinitarian thinking is his (2007) *Theology and Families*.\(^{305}\) Thatcher has some helpful material, discussion and analysis. He emphasizes, like Borrowdale, the absence of children from theological purview. Nevertheless, one is still left with the impression that he has not quite delivered in developing the theological side and that had he done so, it would have benefitted his own arguments and intentions.

Jung Young Lee devotes a chapter to ‘Trinitarian Living’ including 8 pages on ‘Trinitarian Family Life’ in his (1996) *Trinity in Asian Perspective*.\(^{306}\) He finds ‘the ultimate paradigm’ for the family in the Trinity and sees links between the family, church, and society with the Trinity. He suggests that the Trinity can offer a theological basis that can bridge the differences he sees between East and West families. Lee makes syncretic reference to Taoism and Confucianism throughout his book and within this brief section. His reflections about the Trinity are closely linked to his description of Korean family life and his Asian

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\(^{304}\) Hahn, *First Comes Love.*

\(^{305}\) Thatcher, *Theology and Families*, 149f.

\(^{306}\) Lee, *The Trinity in Asian Perspective.*
'cosmo-anthropological and organic world-view', which he explicitly acknowledges.\textsuperscript{307}

It is perhaps no surprise that the actual amount of literature on the family from a trinitarian theological perspective is quite small, given how little theological attention the family has received generally. It is also relatively recent and again that is no surprise. There is clear evidence of theological thinking by Ouellet and Cunningham and of critical thinking about ‘family’ in Cunningham and Thatcher. There is no sign of any recognition of, for example, concerns of feminists about the church and the family, on the part of Ouellet, Hahn or Lee, but Thatcher exhibits a keen awareness of this issue. Ouellet is careful to point out that there are many Trinitarian issues that are unresolved. On this evidence, there does appear to be need and room for further research in this field.

\textit{3.2 Orthodox literature on the family}

Orthodox Christian literature on the family represents a potential special case, which is why it is included in a section on its own here. The stress on western theology post-Augustine suggests that Eastern Orthodox theology might have a more developed Trinitarian feel and in turn this might have influenced thinking about family. Nevertheless, Caroline Roth, John Chrysostom’s more recent translator, for instance, has claimed that ‘the theology of married love was largely neglected’ in the Orthodox Church since Chrysostom was preaching and writing, which was in the 4th century.\textsuperscript{308} Paul Evdokimov’s \textit{The Sacrament of Love} does equally value celibacy and marriage and presents marriage within a broader theological and Trinitarian setting.

\textsuperscript{307} Ibid.
(though not worked out in any detail), but John Meyendorff’s *Marriage: An Orthodox Perspective* does not make an explicit theological connection. The Orthodox approach in these two more contemporary texts, however, present some contrasts with both Roman Catholic and Protestant views about marriage and procreation, and the relationship between families and the church. Orthodoxy does confer equal status on marriage and celibacy. I should add the Australian Greek Orthodox lecturer John Chryssavagis’ brief article: ‘Love and Sexuality: An Eastern Orthodox Perspective.’ He starts by affirming that the ‘Trinitarian God’ is a ‘God of personal relationships’ and that love is an ‘established ontological category’ that characterizes both God and humanity.

3.3. Critical Appraisals of attempts to combine theology and/or the Trinity and family

F. D. Maurice, a past Professor of Divinity at Kings College, London, and of Moral Philosophy at Cambridge was regarded as a practical theologian. He was one of the first to advocate for a theology of the family and to consider that Trinitarian theology might offer such a theology. His own attempt is regarded more as ‘Incarnational theology’. Rowan Williams examined Maurice’s work and although not Trinitarian, William’s analysis is nonetheless pertinent. Maurice was writing at the height of the bourgeois family in Victorian England.

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312 Ibid.

Williams felt that Maurice's difficulties lay in beginning with the prevalent model and not questioning whether it was ‘fundamentally askew’. This was because, argued Williams, it risked ‘sacralising’ what already exists (by associating the Victorian bourgeois family with a particular theology of family), assumed its ‘givenness’, and underplayed the role of social constructive roles in its existence. Crucially, contended Williams, ‘it means any criticism of that order becoming a criticism of the doctrine and any “decay” in the “toxic” pattern making the doctrine less believable’. In other words, finding flaws in the bourgeois family necessarily entails also finding flaws in the theology. This latter effect is precisely what has occurred in some feminist thinking about Christianity. Furthermore, says Williams, it prevents asking awkward theological questions about what goes on in families, or even supporting the possibility of not belonging to them.

William’s other but significant critique of Maurice’s Incarnationalist theology is equally applicable to a Trinitarian approach, namely the danger of theology becoming ‘an abstraction’ from God. Gunton, McFadyen and Peters all share this concern about the ‘Social Trinity.’ It is important to note that McFadyen, for example, is not concerned about ‘the kind of anthropology’ that might be generated, rather about the methodology. He perceives that the Trinity

316 From Rowan’s analysis it can be deduced that part of the reason why Christianity has appeared reactionary and sensitive about perceived threats to the espoused view of the family and tried to maintain the ‘sanctity’ of marriage and the integrity of ‘the family’ with little or no theological foundation is because ‘the family’ has become integral to the Christian faith itself. Simultaneously, on the flip side of this process, from the perspective of any who, for whatever reason, can not, or do not, fit this ‘nuclear’ model then it risks the credibility of Christianity. Frank Turner’s study of the Victorian crisis of faith, based on diaries of young people and their parents, introduced a third possibility. He argued the ‘religious character and role of the evangelical family in and of itself fostered spiritual crisis’ since it got caught up in the normal maturation and individuation processes and young people were aware of the pain their disavowal created for their families. Frank Turner, "The Victorian Crisis of Faith and the Faith That Was Lost," in *Victorian Faith in Crisis: Essays on Continuity and Change in Nineteenth-Century Belief*, ed. Richard J. & Lightman Helmstadter, Bernard (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 20ff.
offers ‘great potential in practice as well as theory’ for ‘a genuinely positive and constructive anthropology.’ What concerns him is, firstly, the ‘considerable leverage’ that can be claimed in support as the Trinity becomes a model, metaphor, or ‘symbol of perfect community, relationship and personal identity.’ This would provide:

An archetype or a prototype of true human community and personhood, becoming at once both an authoritative source for a social critique and a moral imperative for the regeneration of personal and social relationships”.

An even more significant problem, though, is that it renders the Trinity ineffectual at the very point when it might be most needed, since such a model is unable to affect change. It has, in McFadyen’s expression, ‘no ostensive power’. The relationship is only that between analogans and analogatum. ‘God’s image is refracted through a ‘space’, which is logically and linguistically shaped and dimensioned but there is no real communication as such.’ But, says McFadyen, the whole point of the Trinity is that God creates and redeems, communicates and has relations with human beings. He feels that using the Social Trinity as a model is a form of Deism that lacks the power to effect change.

320 This was the criticism Edward Caird levelled at Kant in 1877. Caird thought Kant’s ideas of reason are heuristic, not ostensive; they enable us to ask a question, not to give an answer. Richardson and Bowden, A New Dictionary of Christian Theology, 254.
321 “This way of thinking about the social Trinity locks human beings into a heteronomous relationship with a God who stands outside and over creation, and imposes models of personal and social being on us from a place far above us.’ Ultimately it is incapable of communicating hope to people because it locks the Trinity and humanity into themselves. ‘Dangling a model of perfect community above the heads of fallen people does nothing to empower or enable us to reconstitute ourselves or our relationships; all it gives anyone with an appreciation of the brokenness of human persons, relationships and societies is a sense of guilt and hopelessness. For the redemption of human individuality and sociality what is needed is not a model but the communication of what he terms the energies of true relation and ‘individuation’ from the Triune being of God. ‘If the trinitarian God is only a regulative ideal and not an active, empowering agency in our lives, is there any ground for hope concerning humankind?’ Ibid. Sarah Coakley similarly notes
McFadyen concludes that for a social doctrine of the Trinity to be adequate, we must find a way of speaking about God’s ‘sociality’ that includes God’s creation and redemption. Such a properly trinitarian account of ‘the triune God’s creative and redemptive activity’ would then be an essential ‘feature in the corresponding anthropology.’

3.4 Feminist perspectives

The literature review so far has touched on some significant feminist critiques and issues affecting women, in particular: (1) ‘family’ as a coded message about patriarchy, (2) the incidence of ‘Christian’ homes where domestic violence is experienced, (3) androcentric, dualist and docetic predispositions within Christian anthropology, not unrelated to (4) the historical absence of female theologians, theology, or perspectives and (5) an explication of the functional subordination of women based on the subordination of the Son to the monarchial Father. Even before mentioning further feminist concerns, it will already be apparent therefore that the twin foci of this thesis, namely the Trinity and family, are contentious separately, let alone together.

Writing just before F. D. Maurice, the philosopher John Stuart Mill penned ‘On the subjection of women’. He argued that justice should extend from the public political realm to the private world of the family because women were treated unfairly. Feminists have been

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‘Gregory’s (of Nyssa) approach demonstrates how unwise it is to dislocate trinitarian debates from the matrix of human transformation that is that Trinity’s very point of intersection with our lives.’ “Social’ Doctrine of the Trinity” in Davis, Kendall, and O’Collins, The Trinity, 125.


324 Just one example of many from his monograph: ‘If the family in its best forms is, as it is often said to be, a school of sympathy, tenderness and loving forgetfulness from self, it is still oftener, as respects its chief, a school of willfulness, overbearingness, unbounded self-indulgence, and a double-dyed and idealized
accused of undermining the family, yet this charge does not reflect such injustices, or the actual history of feminism, or, crucially, address feminist concerns. Lisa Sowle Cahill suggests that appeals to altruism and sacrifice by women for the greater good of families fail to ‘provide a socioeconomic critique of internal family relations (especially male-female relations)’. The long history of patriarchy and imbalance of power creates levels of difficulty. For example, pro-feminists argue that men’s violence, which includes control and intimidation, is ‘normalised and made invisible within a patriarchal context.’ Kanyoro, an African theologian, talks of women being ‘socialized into a state of numbness’, and ‘silenced by culture’ – a ‘form of violence’ in itself, whilst relegated to a secondary position in relation to men in family and society. Ruether believes patriarchal perspectives overlook the different roles, work and achievements of women, and sees them as:

Either lesser or different, in ways that demand their confinement to supposedly unchanging and divinely ordained selfishness, of which sacrifice itself is only a particular form: the care for the wife and children being only care for them as parts of the man’s own interests and belongings, and their individual happiness being immolated in every shape to his smallest preferences. What better is it to be looked for under the existing form of the institution? Ibid. 469. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy notes that feminist scholarship has ‘continued, extended and deepened his attack on the conception of the family as a private personal realm. …The idea that “the personal (that is, the family) is political,” is the core idea of most contemporary feminism’. ‘Feminist Perspectives on Reproduction and the Family’ The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.


Cahill, Family.

Rakil, Marius, “Are Men Who Use Violence Against their Partners and Children Good Enough Fathers?” in Cathy and Stanley Humphreys, Nicky, ed. Domestic Violence and Child Protection: Directions for Good Practice (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2006), 191. The Hite report, which was based on self-reporting in the USA, found 27% of women reported being beaten, 12% regularly. The estimated figures for Papua New Guinea, for example, are very much higher. Kanyoro, Musimbi “Challenge of Feminist Theologies”, 177-78, in Nyengele, African Women’s Theology, 55.
family duties such as housekeeping, child care, and the care for the husband in his domestic and sexual needs...\textsuperscript{330}

Theology and the Church are both heavily implicated in patriarchy. Maddox points out that 'Christian feminists have repeatedly criticized abstract, theoretical and deductive models of theological reflection'.\textsuperscript{331} Feminists see the hierarchical and monarchial view of God together with a projection of masculine gender as idolatrous, exclusive, and contrary to the Biblical data about God and the church.\textsuperscript{332} Traditional appeal by Protestant and Roman Catholic churches to authority in the Bible and the Magisterium respectively are, in themselves, patriarchal moves. Furthermore, suggestions of a return to 'biblical standards' in respect of the family overlooks: (i) substantial cultural differences,\textsuperscript{333} (ii) the feminist argument that 'patriarchalism in

\textsuperscript{330}Ibid. Visser T'Hooft recalls overhearing a ‘famous professor of philosophy’, who he does not name, referring to a few women students sitting in a post First World War lecture: ‘There they sit in the School of Pure Reason ... while they ought rather to be producing children’. Visser't Hooft, The Fatherhood of God, 44.

\textsuperscript{331}Maddox, R. “Wesleyan Theology and the Christian Feminist Critique” 101-111


Scripture is descriptive of human sin', and (iii) queries about the exact provenance of the ‘Household Code’ in the New Testament. Similarly, Papal efforts to ban abortion, divorce, contraception and reproductive technologies, ostensibly for the sake of unborn children, ‘the sanctity of marriage and the family’, and for the benefit of society itself, cause a more heavy burden for women. The non-use of contraception in marriage has become a test of Catholic orthodoxy, and extraordinary recourse to claims of authority over moral matters has been made. Cahill expressed specific concern about the ‘failure of Catholic authorities’ to comprehend the degree of difficulty faced by women worldwide in ‘dreadful situations of poverty, violence, and devaluation’ whilst concentrating on anti-abortion campaigns and ‘scoring political victories over “feminists”.’

Hannah Bacon argues that the ‘obvious androcentric language’ in the Trinity is one of the main points of feminist contention. This is because it ‘reinforces men as more fully in the image of God’ pushing ‘women to the margins of the Imago Dei and of human personhood itself’, and ‘sacralizes patriarchal associations of power, authority and

334 Maddox, 105.
335 LaCugna, for example, notes that ‘The “household codes” of the post-Pauline and pastoral epistles show that a very early stage Christians had moved away from living out the shape of the new household established by Jesus Christ’. LaCugna, God for Us, 392.
336 Cahill, Sex, Gender and Christian Ethics, 8.
337 Humanae Vitae starts with an overwhelming assertion of the moral teaching authority of the church: ‘Let no Catholic be heard to assert that the interpretation of the natural moral law is outside the competence of the Church’s Magisterium. It is in fact indisputable, as Our Predecessors have many times declared, that Jesus Christ, when he communicated his divine power to Peter and the other apostles and sent them to teach all nations his commandments, constituted them as authentic guardians and interpreters of the whole moral law’. PaulVI, “Humanae Vitae,” 7. Cahill points out that Humanae Vitae overturned the recommendations of the papal commission on birth control that had carried majority recommendation ‘on the grounds of the interpersonal meaning of the marital relationship’. Cahill notes that twenty-five years later when Humanae Vitae was still causing ‘a furore’, the 1993 papal encyclical Veritatis Splendor simply defended the church in all matters of moral authority. Cahill, Sex, Gender and Christian Ethics, 7. The survey of Australian Catholic laity explicitly cites Humanae Vitae for excluding the voice of women in these decisions. MacDonald et al., “One in Christ Jesus,” 87.
338 Cahill, Sex, Gender and Christian Ethics, 215.
rule'.\(^{339}\) LaCugna and Visser T’Hooft are among those who have pointed to the ‘hopelessly entangled’ patriarchal understanding of God’s Fatherhood,\(^{340}\) which is significant for theology and Christian anthropology, especially on the subject of family. Sallie McFague has tried to untangle the metaphorical and analogical usage.\(^{341}\) Coakley has resisted any token feminization of the Holy Spirit.\(^{342}\) Elizabeth Johnson has made a strong case for the social Trinity entitled *She Who Is.*\(^{343}\) Ted Peters, Robert Jenson, Alvin Kimel and Elizabeth Achtemeier have all been drawn into an argument about the use of female names and pronouns for God that underscores just how emotive and deeply entrenched these issues are.\(^{344}\)

\(^{339}\) Bacon, *What’s Right with the Trinity?* Jürgen Moltmann similarly notes: ‘it goes without saying that there should be criticism of patriarchal and androcentric images of God by women who for centuries have been passed over, humiliated and at men’s beck and call, but who are now becoming aware of their own worth. That needs no further discussion here’. Moltmann, *History and the Triune God*, xiii. See also p137 for his critique of Barth on this point, and Paul Fiddes, “The Status of Women in the Thought of Karl Barth” in Janet Martin Soskice, ed. *After Eve: Women, Theology and the Christian Tradition* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1990), 138-53.

\(^{340}\) LaCugna, *God for Us*, 393. ‘It is easy to see how the confusion between God’s Fatherhood and human fatherhood could be so deep and longlasting, and could so profoundly (mis)shape Christian symbols and self-understanding’. Ibid. Cf. “Calling God Father” in Soskice, *The Kindness of God*.


LaCugna clearly saw that the Trinity offered a very different possibility for women and for male-female relationships but sadly she did not survive long enough to develop these insights further. She claimed that the doctrine of the Trinity achieved by the Cappadocians ‘dared the Christian imagination to relinquish all biological, cultural, political, and commonsense notions of fatherhood in order to think of God correctly, according to “the true theology”.’

Norskev Olsen has also claimed that Trinitarian theology offers a ‘new relatedness for men and women in Christ’. Yet I am not convinced that his argument would entirely impress a feminist scholar exercising the ‘hermeneutics of suspicion’. The situation for women has been such that feminist theology resembles liberation theology, which tests any theology to determine whether it is either for, or against, the oppressed. Sarah Coakley astutely notes that the existence of liberation and feminist theology is a witness to the lack of ‘sustained theological response’ to problems of ‘gender, race and class’ and represents ‘a telling comment on the state of (systematic theology)’.

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346 Olsen, *A New Relatedness*.

347 The ‘hermeneutics of suspicion’ begins by an analysis of social reality that questions the situation and attempts to see what is really occurring. A second level involves applying this suspicion to all ideological and theological superstructures that have supported the status quo. As a result of experiencing theological reality in a different way, the third level is being suspicious about how biblical texts, or theology, or natural law, or reductionist arguments have been previously selected or used. Drawing on the work of Juan Luis Segundo *The Liberation of Theology* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1976).


4. Indicating gaps in the existing research

The literature reviewed thus far suggests a number of historic lacunae when considering family theologically. The Christian approach to family has been characterized by avoidance for the first fifteen hundred years and over indulgence for the last five hundred, both of which have left their mark. In neither scenario has theology had a large part to play. Little is generally known about Christianity’s lack of interest in the family prior to the Reformation, and why exactly that was the case. Christians themselves also have little knowledge of the development of the doctrine of the Trinity. The criticism is that where theology has been employed in respect of the family, it is the form of relationships, rather than the content, that has been the focus of interest and concern. For whatever reason, the names that are regarded as foremost Christian theologians have not applied concentrated theological thought to one of the most important aspects of people’s lives.

The re-emergence of trinitarian theology, and particularly the so-called Social Trinity, has proffered a relational understanding of the Godhead that might replace an outmoded metaphysics of substance, or the contentious subordinationist Father/Son dynamic. In practice, however, there is not one ‘social Trinity’ but many versions and as many, if not more, critiques of each of those. The trinitarian renaissance is still relatively new and much work needs to be done. It is beyond the scope of this thesis and the ability of this researcher to resolve these matters but it is important to be aware of them, including the ‘partiality’ and ‘provisionality’ of human knowledge of God. Awareness of these theological issues is not always demonstrated in the Christian anthropology literature that has made appeal to the social Trinity in respect of ‘personhood’, or indeed the family. A similar gap exists when considering the possible limitations on what Barth referred to as God-God/Man-Man transference. Can human beings image a triune God? How exactly does that work? Might it be ‘family’? Whatever that might
look like it also requires a relationship with God to be factored in, and this is again another gap in some of the literature that is otherwise promising.

If a sufficient awareness of the theological problems marks a difficulty for some of the existing literature, then awareness of the critical issues about family, and its relation to Christianity and the Church, is undoubtedly a marked need elsewhere. ‘The family’ has almost crept in as part of the Christian Creed. That is not to say that the relationships with husband/wives/partners/children/parents are not important. It is instead to say that the responsibility to love God means taking extremely seriously the blind spots that prevent seeing the reasons why, for example, feminists have reason to be deeply concerned about ‘family’, or where action or inaction may inadvertently be making it much harder for others to have time for, or enjoy family at all. Furthermore, thinking through a theology of family may place an even higher premium on the quality of relationships between kith and kin as well as within church and with those who are without family. The fact that humans do not always do well in relationships, and can be greatly affected by them, also requires some thought, and potentially hooks in with some very important biblical, Christological and New Testament ecclesial themes. This takes immensely seriously the revealed trinitarian God.

The existing literature on the family from a trinitarian perspective is relatively recent, and very small. Authors, like Cardinal Ouellet, who have studied the field, acknowledge the need for more work.
5. Outlining the specific aims of this research, and the structure and content of the following chapters

The aim of this research is to see whether trinitarian theology does offer a missing theology for considering ‘family’ that is sensitive to:

1. The priority of relationship with God
2. Theological concerns surrounding trinitarian theology,
3. The contingency of ‘family’, historically, culturally, and eschatologically.
4. Critical concerns about ‘family’ as an ideology and even idolatry, including feminist and social justice perspectives.

At issue is whether trinitarian theology does indeed furnish a Christian anthropology, which is critically different and more relevant to the role and possibly significance of ‘family’, not solely as a biological and social phenomenon, but also as a shorthand term that points to the unique combination of person and relation and the quality of interaction that is the revealed Trinity.

The hypothesis underlying this thesis consists of two parts. Firstly, and retrospectively, that the history of trinitarian theology and Christian anthropology is of direct relevance in understanding present issues surrounding the western family, including many of the critiques in this debate.

Secondly and prospectively, that it is possible to conceive of a trinitarian theology of ‘family’, subject to a number of important caveats. Furthermore, when this occurs it has much broader implications for understanding what ‘family’ really means, including cross-culturally, as well as linking with ecclesiology, ethics, hamartiology (the understanding of ‘sin’), missiology and eschatology.
Key questions for this research are around the extent to which it is theologically legitimate to construct an alternative Christian anthropology on the basis of the existing and possible data we have about God? Furthermore, whether this might enable a theological redefinition of ‘family’ that radically changes the divide between biological and ecclesial family and therefore facilitates a rather different look at church as well as at human family?

5.1 The structure and content of this thesis

As outlined in the Introduction, this thesis is in two parts, divided after Ch. 4, with a retrospective first half and a prospective second. Ch. 5 also appears retrospective but its aim is to refute charges of projection and underwrite the substantive thesis.

Chapters 2 and 3 examine Christian attitudes to the family, as seen through particular Christian writers and theologians from Clement of Alexandria until Karl Barth and Karl Rahner. The aim is to discern not only what they were saying about family but also examining any underpinning theology or philosophy for their particular views. Chapter 2 covers the first fourteen hundred years from Clement to Aquinas and beyond. Chapter 3 starts with Luther and ends with Rahner.

Chapter 4 considers what Colin Gunton has termed ‘theological mis-steps’ in trinitarian theology that may have had enormous repercussions for the shape of the western family, for some of its inherent weaknesses and for the absence of any theology on the subject.

Chapter 5 looks at the at the ‘subliminal thread’ suggestion of Colin Gunton that there has been an underlying Social Trinitarian thread within the tradition that goes back to biblical data and can be
found not only in the Cappadocians and even Augustine but also specifically in John’s Gospel, Hilary of Poitiers, Richard St. Victor, Bonaventure, Julian of Norwich, Coleridge, Illingworth, and a possible connection with John MacMurray.

Chapter 6 begins with a summary of the thesis up until that point before examining Methodology further. It is deliberately placed this late because by then it is possible to have a more informed viewpoint on the relevant issues. The enormity of the theologian’s task is followed by an assessment of practical theological method and the introduction of systematic theological criteria. I conduct a debate between Volf, Tanner, Husbands and Kilby on divine-human correspondence, consider the use and abuse of Scripture, Gunton’s claim about and Wessling’s investigation into the univocity of love and Danher’s consideration of a postmodern correspondence theory of truth.

Chapter 7 introduces a trinitarian relational ontology with reference to hypostasis, ekstasis and perichoresis. These ontological processes are pondered in more detail separately and then together. I explore consequential effects, referring to John Milbank’s paper “Can a Gift be Given?” In turn I then look at the priority of God’s relationship with human beings, the effect of upbringing on the apperception of God, and what both these mean for human being without God.

Chapter 8 is in three parts. The first section is a continuation of Ch.7 examining the importance of relationship, ecclesiology and the role of hypostasis, with reference to a trinitarian ontology and biblical evidence. I then consider a number of ramifications including personal boundaries, friendship, loneliness, obedience, love, hierarchy, ethics and sin. The second section assesses the thesis against a number of concerns and critiques raised in this chapter and the final section contains a Summary and the Conclusions.
Chapter Two

The mixed Christian legacy on the Family:

Part 1 - From Clement of Alexandria to Aquinas

Introduction

This chapter and the next examine historical Christian approaches to the family, with a particular emphasis on ascertaining whether and what theological reflection may have been employed. The division into two chapters marks a divergence between when the subject of family was not primarily to the fore in Christian deliberation, and when it became more important. That change is normally dated and attributed to Martin Luther, although, as I will seek to demonstrate, the actual reasons for the greater prominence of family are somewhat more complicated. Accordingly, this chapter ends before Martin Luther and the next begins with him.

In Ch.1 I noted Rosemary Ruether’s observation that those who think Christianity has always championed ‘the family’ are ignoring ‘three fourths of actual Christian history’.¹ Instead, Ruether concluded:

For much of its history Christianity took a negative or at least a highly ambivalent view of the union of men and women in marriage, of sexual relations, and of procreation. The ideal Christian was seen as being unmarried, celibate and childless.²

¹ Ruether, Christianity and the Making of the Modern Family, 4.
² Ibid.
Ruether argued these views have continued ‘to plague’ Christianity, both the Catholic and the Protestant Church up to the present. This then is worth investigating further.

A key result of such an examination is that there is very little theological consideration of ‘family’ in the first three quarters of Christianity. Contrary to Ruether, not all of the patristic sources were anti-family. Nevertheless, for a variety of reasons, theology did not enter into the equation. The theologians who wrote about the subject included Gregory of Nyssa and Augustine, who, as is evident from the last chapter, were respectively at the heart of the Greek (Cappadocian) and Latin work on the Trinity. The absence of theological consideration is a legacy and a potential contributory factor to the absence of theology in the much more recent debate about family.

This lack of theological reflection and the mixed priority afforded to family, I will argue, was linked to a unique combination of Christianity, particular historical circumstances, cultural norms and, crucially, to some prevailing and pervasive philosophical threads that can be traced from before the so-called ‘Household Codes’, and which resurfaced with Aquinas. Hanson has argued that the interpretative exercise that the early Fathers engaged in with the nascent Christian tradition and Biblical texts is in some senses irreversible. He was considering the development of doctrine but I will contend it equally applies to their seminal thinking about family.

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3 Ibid.
4 This philosophical connection was not the focus of Ruether’s study. Yet Ruether laments the absence of theology in thinking about the family, which may have been caused by this connection, and she is incisively critical of the western family, and its particular association with Christianity, that was arguably one of its outcomes.
5 ‘The Fathers were, quite simply, those who first formed, or reflected the formation of, Christian tradition, who first made Christian tradition, who first decided what the Bible meant, its drift, its burden, its main impression, its message. We cannot stand apart from, emancipate ourselves from, loftily ignore, this primary tradition. Either we accept it, or we modify it, or we react against it. What we cannot do is behave as if it had never occurred. It must be the point from which all subsequent consideration of Christian doctrine starts’. J. Daniélou, A.H. Couratin, & J. Kent, *Historical Theology*, ed. R.P.C. Hanson, vol. 2, The Pelican Guide to Modern Theology (Middx.: Penguin Books Ltd., 1969). Cf. David G Hunter, *Marriage in the*
It is not possible to do justice to an entire period, spanning nearly one and a half millennia, in the course of one chapter. Instead, I can survey what some significant Christian thinkers wrote about the family. With the possible exception of Clement, their writing is remarkably lucid and transparent, providing an exceptional window into the authors’ reasoning and often their sources. Furthermore, their views can be triangulated against several studies that have examined parts of this extended period in more detail, particularly focused on the historical, cultural and philosophical background influencing these writers.

It could be objected that the writers’ views were not wholly representative of the particular period, or of all the people, or the actual practice, or was place specific. It will shortly demonstrate the attempt to provide a range of locales and historical circumstances, at least in the earlier centuries, and to limit some of the more extreme views. Concentrating on these written views, however, is defensible, partly in the absence of other data, but predominantly because it was these expressed views and attitudes that Ruether and others were referring to. In each case I will outline the particular issues they were addressing, the stance they took, how they arrived at that position and the biblical and other source material that they drew upon.


6 Several, like Clement and Chrysostom, were writing for students and congregational members who were in the upper strata of society.

7 For example: Brown comments: ‘... we know surprisingly little about the relations of men and women in the Christian communities of the second and early third centuries. The day-to-day life of Christians is a darkened landscape, intermittently lit up for us by flashes of polemical fireworks that crackled far overhead. Most of the evidence that has survived comes from the leaders of the Church, as they argued furiously among themselves. It was never intended to answer the sort of questions that a modern person would wish to ask of an early Christian community.’ Brown, *Body and Society*, 142. As Moxnes notes ‘strangely enough, although ‘family’ is such an important topic in Christianity, there have been few comprehensive studies of family in early Christianity.’ Moxnes, *Constructing Early Christian Families*, 1. We are also dependent on extant source material and it is possible that other views were written that were suppressed, have not been found, or no longer exist.
Patristic Views: Clement, Gregory of Nyssa, Jerome, Chrysostom, Augustine

Why these Fathers in particular? Clement is the first post-biblical and pre-Nicene writer to compose a treatise for Christian ethical and family life, in his *Paidagogos*. The other four, though roughly contemporaries, signify different post-Nicene strands in the tradition, Cappadocian, Syrian and Roman, Antiochene, African and Milanese, representing Greek and Latin, Eastern and Western positions. They are also writing at a time when the Empire was just officially Christian. Roman Catholic and Orthodox writers cite Augustine and Chrysostom as having decisive impact on their respective doctrines of marriage. I had not intended using Tertullian, Origen or Jerome, because even their contemporaries regarded their views on marriage and the family as extreme. However, such was the enduring influence of Jerome that I have included him.

Clement of Alexandria (ca.155-215)

Clement of Alexandria was educated and travelled. He grew up in a pagan household and converted to Christianity. He came to Alexandria in 180 and was ordained in 189. It is not known for certain if he was married but it is thought he might have been. He studied at and later took charge of the catechetical school in Alexandria. It attracted Christian and pagan men and women, some of whom may have been affluent and well educated. Alexandria was a centre of intellectual and

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8 This fluctuated both in the reign of Justin in the East and under the threat of invasion from the Huns, Persians and Visigoths.
9 Chrysostom, *On Marriage and Family Life*.
10 Tertullian famously said, with St. Paul in mind, ‘How far better it is neither to marry nor to burn.’ Tertullian’s views changed and became more radical as he came under the influence of the Montanists.
12 Origen similarly studied at the same school as a pupil and took over after Clement.
literary achievement.\textsuperscript{13} Not all of Clement’s works have survived. Of those that did, the second and third books of a trilogy, the \textit{Paedagogs} and \textit{Stromata}, furnish important information about Clement’s views on the family, clues about the situation he was facing and the biblical, theological and other resources that he drew upon. Clement differs from some of the later theologians in writing in support of marriage and the family.\textsuperscript{14} Michel Foucault describes Ch.10 of Book II of the \textit{Paedagogs} as ‘the first great Christian text devoted to sexual practice in married life’.\textsuperscript{15} What is of interest is the particular approach Clement took and the reasons he may have chosen to be less antithetical than his contemporary, Tertullian, or his successor, Origen.

\textit{Where two or three are gathered in My name} meant, for Clement, father, mother and child praying in a Christian home.\textsuperscript{16} He misconstrues Paul, who he believed to have been married,\textsuperscript{17} to suggest that husband and wife could serve God together without distraction. He employs the Alexandrian penchant for allegorizing biblical passages, especially when he needs to discard the apparently literal sense if it appears to contradict another biblical citation, or to allow for the domestication of a text if it is culturally shocking.\textsuperscript{18} Thus, Clement compares Luke 14.26 ‘anyone who does not hate his own father and mother, wife or children, \textsuperscript{13} Deferrari, \textit{Clement of Alexandria}, viii. & of Alexandria Clement, \textit{Stromateis; Books One to Three}, ed. Thomas P. Halton, trans. John Ferguson, vol. 85, The Fathers of the Church (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1991), Intr. 5f. Philo (20 BCE 50 CE) introduced Neoplatonism to Alexandria. Alexandria’s library housed over 700,000 volumes, was home to Euclid and a centre of astronomical, geographical, medical and zoological research.

\textsuperscript{14} Clement, ‘unlike other, more radical spiritual fathers … seems notably untouched by fear of family.’ Brown, \textit{Body and Society}, 135.

\textsuperscript{15} Foucault, \textit{The Use of Pleasure}, 2, 15.

\textsuperscript{16} Clement, \textit{Stromateis}, 85. \textit{Strom.} 3.10.68.1

\textsuperscript{17} Brown, \textit{Body and Society}, 138.

\textsuperscript{18} Or avoid the use of explicit and indecorous sexual terminology. Thus Clement equates marriage with procreation using an agricultural metaphor. He follows Plato in ruling out ‘illegitimate’ sexual activity with a ready-made biblical metaphor in the parable of the sower (Matt. 13.3-9). This he adapts to suggest there are times for sowing and for refraining from sowing, one should not sow in another man’s fields and to rule out all unfruitful sowing such as homoeroticism, pederasty and masturbation, without ever having to use any of the equivalent offensive Greek terms. Clement links Lev. 18.22 with the Platonic saying ‘do not sow your seed upon rocks and stones because it’s fruitful nature will not take root there.’ Buell, \textit{Clement of Alexandria}, 38-44.
cannot be my disciple’ with Exod. 20.12 ‘Honour your father and your mother’. He does not believe that Jesus Christ would have contradicted the commandment and concludes that the former text is not an exhortation to hate your family and therefore can be translated ‘Do not be ensnared by irrational impulses and do not get involved in worldly practices’.  

Clement’s first book in his trilogy Protrepticus (Exhortation) was written to persuade pagans to adopt Christianity. This apologetic motivation arguably forms a notable backdrop for his comments on the family and sexual activity in the other two books. Denise Buell contends that Clement found himself in a contest to define and defend ‘the contours of authentic Christian identity’. The reason that family and sexual activity became focal points was because both the ascetic Encratites from Syria and Valentinian Gnostics within the catechetical school were mounting challenges for converts and attempting to define what constituted the true faith. The Gnostics were offering instant redemption and the pleasure of sexual intercourse; effectively circumventing lengthy Christian discipleship. The Encratites proffered escape from the certain grave that was associated with the sexual activity of marriage. With the households in his own congregation in mind, and the need to be understood by pagan bystanders, Clement steered a middle course for Christianity to avoid shipwreck on the Scylla of Gnostic licence, as he saw it, or the Charybdis of Encratic asceticism.


20 The exact dating of these books is unknown. It is likely they pre-dated the persecution of Severus in 202-4, in which Origen’s father, Leonides, was martyred and when Clement left Alexandria.

21 Buell, Clement of Alexandria, 32.

22 Brown qualifies Buell’s view of the Valentinian Gnostics by suggesting that whilst sexual intercourse and procreation were not repugnant to them, their greater interest was in spiritual fellowship and spiritual birth. Therefore it is possible that they were the victims of unfair vilification by Clement and Tertullian in particular – see On the veiling of virgins. Brown, Body and Society, 105-21.
I must tell you our people’s view of the matter. We bless abstention from sexual intercourse and those to whom it comes as a gift of God. We admire monogamy and respect for one marriage and one only. Human self-control (I am referring here to the views of the Greek philosophers) professes to counter desire rather than minister to it, with a view to praxis. Our idea of self-control is freedom from desire. It is not a matter of having desires and holding out against them, but actually of mastering desire by self-control. It is not possible to acquire this form of self-control except by the grace of God. In the matter of food, marriage and all else we should never act from desire; our will should be concentrated on necessities. We are children of will, not desire. If a man marries in order to have children he ought to practice self-control. He ought not to have a sexual desire even for his wife, to whom he has a duty to show Christian love. He ought to produce children by a reverent, disciplined act of will.

Clement’s solution, of which the above is but a sample, appears strange in the twenty-first century. For his educated readership, however, they would have instantly spotted a number of specific allusions and methods as coming straight from Platonic, Aristotelian and Stoic sources. Peter Brown has described Clement as a ‘moral genius’ who synthesized Christian and Graeco-Roman teaching. The *Stromata’s* full title is *Miscellanies or Notes of Revealed Knowledge in Accordance with the True Philosophy*, underscoring its strongly Platonic roots. Clement cites Homer, Plato, Stoic and other Greek writers to substantiate his arguments, ‘the intellectual koiné of his age’, quoting 700 times from 348 such sources. He was similarly noted for his...
knowledge and use of scriptural material. Thus, when Clement compares God and a parent chastising their children, he can quote freely from both Plato and Wisdom literature. Foucault acknowledges that Clement’s output is supported by a large number of scriptural references, but ‘it also draws on a set of principles and precepts borrowed from pagan philosophy’.31

This borrowing had prior sanction from an important Alexandrian predecessor, the Hellenistic Jew, Philo, whose work influenced both Clement and Origen. Philo had received the ‘full Greek basic education’ (enkyklios paideia) and followed it up with extensive reading of Greek literature and philosophy, especially Plato and the Stoics. These he combined with his knowledge of the Jewish scriptures, a reverence for God and a fervent belief in the accounts that Pythagoras had been a follower of Moses and Plato a follower of Pythagoras. Whatever the truth of those accounts, Philo’s belief in them enabled him to view Greek philosophy in a rather different light. Clement deploys the exact same argument that Plato is safe to use because of Moses’ influence.35

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30 Plato Laws VII 808D. and Eccl.7.25, 1.9.75 Deferrari, Clement of Alexandria, 67.
31 Foucault, The Use of Pleasure, 2, 15., e.g. Clement uses photizo taken from pagan mysteries but applies it to baptism, Paidagogos 1.6.25. That is not to say that Clement does not take specific issue with pagan philosophy – see his discussion of the Peripatetics and Aristotle in the Protreptikos viz. 66.4. Jankiewicz refers to Clement seeing Middle Platonism as closely related to Christian theology and Christianity as ‘the final development of Greek philosophical ideals. God, he argued, gave philosophy to the Greeks as the Law of Moses to the Hebrews. Jankiewicz, Darius ‘Alexandrian School and the Trinitarian Problem’ in Petersen, Biblical and Theological Studies on the Trinity, 115.
32 Dillon, The Middle Platonists, 144.
33 Ibid., 140.
34 There is a Pythagoras legend in Iamblichus’ Life of Pythagoras (14) that he spent time ‘consorting with the descendants of Môchos the prophet and philosopher’. Eudorus and Posidinius both claimed Pythagoras’ direct influence on Plato. Ibid., 143.
35 Charles Taylor refers to Augustine as a founder of the view that Plato was an ‘Attic Moses’ but it clearly had occurred much earlier than Augustine. Taylor, Sources of the Self, 127.
These pagan principles and precepts also extended to Clement’s methodology. For example, his adoption of a middle course straight between both the Gnostic and Encratic challenges was not just a convenient solution. It was a purposeful device adopted from Aristotle. Aristotle defines virtue as a 'state of character concerned with choice, lying in a mean, and being determined by a rational principle'. The ‘mean’ for Aristotle and Plato is an ‘intermediate ... equidistant from each of the extremes’. It can readily be seen how this schema might have lent itself to the divisive ethical and doctrinal gap that confronted Clement.

Clement himself acknowledges drawing on Greek philosophy in the passage cited above. He goes on to use a number of Platonic and Stoic arguments in support of his position. A particular advantage of Stoicism was that it was a philosophy that provided a personal and social regimen, which would have already been familiar to his readers, and therefore could easily be adopted and adapted for their daily lives. Chiefly, it would demonstrate that Christians possessed a unique discipline, keeping them from the apparent licentiousness of Gnosticism, yet as demanding as any Encratic code, capable of being retailed, as a missionary selling point and discipleship tool, for pagan sceptics.

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37 Ibid.
38 Clement took on both these opponents directly. For example, he tackles those who believe the human body below the navel is not divine craftsmanship, and those who subscribe to the view that since God is our Father by nature everything He makes must be good. For each opponent he has simple ripostes: ‘don’t our mouths exist above our navels? Is eating not lust?’ and ‘What about the weeds?’ Clement names and shames both as ‘false prophets’ and two different kinds of ‘heresies’ – whether ascetic or licentious. The argument from nature was hotly debated. (Strom. 3.4.34 & 3.5.40).
39 His former tutor and predecessor at the catechetical school, Paentanus, was known as the ‘ornament of the Stoic school.’ Brown, *Body and Society*, 122.
40 This approach was not unique to Clement. Peter Brown points out that Justin Martyr had previously written in his Apology that ‘strict codes of sexual discipline were to bear much of the weight of providing the Christian Church with a distinctive code of behaviour’. Ibid., 60. Faced with charges of ‘impiety’ and ‘contempt for the human race’ (Tacitus, *Annals* 15.440), as well as persecution, Justin and
of pleasure from sexual intercourse, which is solely for producing children.\textsuperscript{41} His converts are the ‘true Gnostics’, sages who live serene Christian lives which include the ‘solemn duties of the marriage bed’, and the ‘microcosmic “providence” involved in the care of children and of a household’.\textsuperscript{42} Among the Stoic duties as a citizen was ‘the willingness to marry and raise sons’.\textsuperscript{43} Far from being barriers to spiritual perfection, Brown notes that these duties helped to produce eventually the Christian saint.\textsuperscript{44}

Clement’s mention of ‘self-control’ in the passage cited above is a further demonstration of Platonic and Stoic ideas, in which the body, desires and emotions are far less important than the ability to master them. Whilst urges or passions will occur, it was in the mind that they had to be dealt with. Not only did this require introspection,\textsuperscript{45} but it also required mastery of yourself. Logically, observed Plato in the Republic, this can only happen if you possess higher and lower parts of the soul, hence reason over desires. Desires are by nature insatiable, thus these cravings lead to constant agitation and to chaos. By contrast ‘when reason rules, the good souls enjoy order, concord and harmony’.\textsuperscript{46} It is no accident that these are the identical Stoic goals that Cicero espouses in Roman marriage.

Stoicism also relied on Aristotelian logic. It was a Socratic maxim that ‘to know the right was to do the right’. This twin emphasis on knowing and acting (praxis) Clement grafts to Christianity. This was the purpose of his ‘programmatic’ Paidagogos (Tutor), ideally suited for both his school and congregation:

\begin{quote}
Athenagoras had both defended Christian marriage as ‘exemplary’ and a positive good for the Roman Empire. Hunter, *Marriage in the Early Church*, 11f.\textsuperscript{41}

\textsuperscript{41} Paidagogos 2.10.83.3.

\textsuperscript{42} Brown, *Body and Society*, 125.

\textsuperscript{43} Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties*, 52. Barton cites the Stoic writer Musonius Rufus XIIIA, XIIIB, XIV, as well as Epictetus, Hierocles, Antipater of Tarsus and Paul.

\textsuperscript{44} Brown, *Body and Society*, 125.

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 129.

\textsuperscript{46} Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 115f.
\end{quote}
As for deeds, waking and reclining at table, eating and sleeping, marriage relations and the manner of life, the whole of a man’s education all become illustrious as holy deeds under the influence of the educator.\textsuperscript{47}

The ‘influence of the educator’ is a play on the word Logos, occupying the whole of Book 1. It carries the sense both of ‘the Word’ (\textit{Logos}: that in John’s gospel refers to the divine revelation of Jesus Christ and God, John 1.1), and Reason\textsuperscript{48} (also Logos: or the organising principle to life, for Hellenistic pagans).\textsuperscript{49} Clement defines the opposite as desire or pleasure, citing Matt. 6.24 and Luke 16.13.\textsuperscript{50} ‘It is impossible for those who are still under the direction of their passions to receive true knowledge of God.’ He reminds his readers that God ‘is purging the expectation of physical desire in the resurrection.’\textsuperscript{51} Therefore sin – passion, desire, and pleasure – is irrational, alogos: the opposite of reason. For Christians to be educated and disciplined, their whole lives, including their sexual and family lives, must reflect this discipline. The more so for Clement because to tip in the direction of either Encratic false abstinence, or Gnostic profligacy, would disturb the delicate balance between two extremes and bring Christianity into disrepute.

Clement’s view of males and females employs a form of supra-sexual dualism and biological reductionism. Souls, and the attainment of virtue, are gender free: ‘where there is sameness, as in the soul, she

\textsuperscript{47} Paidagogos 1.12.100.
\textsuperscript{49} On the difficulties in translating 	extit{Logos} see David Ross’ footnote in Aristotle, \textit{Nichomachean Ethics}, 4. For the connection between Stoics and \textit{logos} see Kluxen, Wolfgang ‘Nature in the Ethics of the Middle Ages’ in Chumaru Koyama, ed. \textit{Nature in Medieval Thought: Some Approaches East and West} (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 29-31,35, also 96. See also Ch.4, 227.
\textsuperscript{50} Strom. 3.4.26.2.
\textsuperscript{51} Strom 3.5.43.1.
will attain to the same virtue.’\textsuperscript{52} The difference in ‘the peculiar construction of her body’, means her ‘lot is childbearing and housekeeping.’\textsuperscript{53} Not surprisingly, Clement sees the advantages of economics - a subject considered further below with Chrysostom.\textsuperscript{54} Denise Buell comments that there is no obvious or necessary link between pregnancy/parturition and housekeeping.\textsuperscript{55} She further takes issue with Clement over the ‘vocabulary of power.’ Notwithstanding the equality of women in soul and in virtue, the metaphors of procreation and kinship that he uses, she argues, ‘can serve as a means for naturalising power’ – thus making these differences ‘appear natural, inevitable, and God-given’.\textsuperscript{56} Clement notes Gal. 3.28, adding that it is only pre-heaven that male and female are distinguished, and quoting Luke 20.34:

\begin{quote}
For in this world, they marry and are given in marriage. ...There, the rewards of this life, lived in the holy union of wedlock, await not man or woman as such, but the human person, freed from the lust that in this life had made it either male or female.\textsuperscript{57}
\end{quote}

Are Clement’s strictures on household life and sexual activity based on his theology? I have already stressed the sources that appear to have influenced Clement, in particular scripture, Platonism, Aristotelianism and Stoicism. Molland claimed that it was very difficult to determine Clement’s exact schema as he had no theological system at all. Jülicher too felt the reason Clement was not repudiated, a fate that befell Origen, was because he was unintelligible.\textsuperscript{58} Nowhere will you

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{52}{Strom. 4.59.4-60.1. The Stoics also argued for the basic unity of virtue but Aristotle explicitly rejected this argument on the grounds that the position between men and women is ‘political’, the former ruling over the latter. Plato’s view tended to greater equality. Plato, \textit{The Republic}; trans. H.D.P. Lee, Penguin Classics Translation ed. (Ringwood, Victoria: Penguin Books, 1955), 201-15.}
\footnotetext{53}{Given Clement’s dualist stance, it is perhaps not surprising that there were later concerns that his Christology bordered on the docetic.}
\footnotetext{54}{Strom. 3.12.79.5, Strom. 3.12.82.3.}
\footnotetext{55}{Buell, \textit{Clement of Alexandria}, 48.}
\footnotetext{57}{Paidagogos 1.6.42 furnishes one example.}
\footnotetext{58}{Deferrari, \textit{Clement of Alexandria}, xiii. Paidagogos 1.4.10.}
\end{footnotes}
find Clement talking of the relationship of love in the context of marriage. It could properly be argued that, given the societal norms of the time, discussion of love in conjugal relations would have been anachronistic. Nor would Clement necessarily have argued that women should have equal relationships with men in a domestic setting, or indeed children be conferred with the same dignity as their parents.

Clement’s theology is unclear and to some extent unformed and it does not appear to inform his ethical teaching. What singles Clement out is his acceptance of human families within God’s purposes, but at the strangely and striking ascetic cost of any sense that sexual activity is other than a means to a procreative end, or any exploration or development of the basis for relationship either between men and women, or between parents and children.

Gregory Nyssa (ca.335 – 395)

It is a leap of about 150 years from Clement to Gregory Nyssa, younger brother of Basil the Great. The primary reason for including Gregory is due to one particular piece that he wrote De Virginitate

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59 What Clement does provide is more a philosophical than theological reflection on the relativisation of family ties, particularly paternal ties in a Patrilineal Kinship Group (PKG) culture. Clement contrasts allegiance to God the Father with that due to fathers ‘according to the flesh’. He does not call for a choice to be made, but for a hierarchy of loyalty to fathers and above them to God the Father, the original cause. For Clement paternity includes priority and authority: a father precedes his child as the source of the child’s existence and this priority provides a basis for the father’s authority over the child. By naming God as the ultimate source, Clement displaces the claims of human fathers over their children, without challenging the cultural presumptions about parents and children. One of Clement’s motivations, however, is neither discussing the family, nor necessarily theology, but faithful resemblance to the original source – the Logos, because this enables him to claim that he has patrilineal orthodoxy over his heterodox opponents, cf. Matt 23.9. See ‘Chain of Being’ on pp.176, 227 & 273 and Denise Kimber Buell, “Producing Descent/Dissent: Clement of Alexandria’s Use of Filial Metaphors as Intra-Christian Polemic,” Harvard Theological Review 90, no. 1 (1997).

60 Peter Brown comments that Clement ‘had allowed himself to be manoeuvred into a stance which pagan moralists had had the good sense to avoid’. Moreover even Plutarch had taken charis for granted – ‘the “graciousness” created by intercourse – that indefinable quality of mutual trust and affection gained through the pleasure of the bed itself’. Brown, Body and Society. 133, quoting Plutarch, Dialogue on Love 769AB and Michel Foucault, Le Souci de Soi, 239-239.
(Concerning Virginity) on behalf of Basil in order to promote the ascetic monastic and eremitical lifestyle. It was the first of a series of ascetical works.

Not surprisingly, given his brief, Gregory does not have a lot that is positive to say about family. Nevertheless, as Carol Harrison noted, ‘the odd thing is that we learn more about the Fathers’ attitude to marriage and family life through treatises advising, or urging the reader to adopt the ascetic life of a virgin, than anywhere else’.\(^61\) Gregory begins by lauding virginity.\(^62\) In case his readers are not wholly convinced, however, Gregory enumerates the difficulties of marriage. His phenomenological arguments employ observation and worst-case scenarios. Gregory pictures a chain being dragged along where each ‘passion’ represents a link. Marriage, or rather sexual activity, is by implication an essential link in a chain of greed and jealousy and lust and so on. ‘Do you see the succession of evils; how one passion follows upon the heels of another?’ he asks.\(^63\) Gregory deftly uses the rhetorical skills of hyperbole he was trained in:

Let the marriage be described as blessed in every respect: good family, sufficient wealth, harmony in age, the very flower of youth, much affection, and, what is divined in each by the other, that sweet rivalry in subduing one’s own will in love. Let there be added to these glory, power, renown, and whatever else you

\(^{61}\) In Barton, *The Family in Theological Perspective*, 93.

\(^{62}\) ‘Therefore since the power of virginity is such that it resides in heaven with the Father of spiritual beings, and takes part in the chorus of supramundane powers, and attains to human salvation, and since, by itself, it brings God down to a sharing in human life and lifts man up to a desire of heavenly things, becoming a kind of binding force in man’s affinity to God, and since it brings into harmony by mediation things so opposed to each other by nature, what power of words could be found to equal the grandeur of this marvel? These incorporeal powers are the ones “among whom there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage”.’ Virginity is therefore a gift from God ‘as an ally and an aid in his thought and lofty desire, as Scripture suggests, ... teaching those living in the flesh how to be more like the incorporeal nature’. R.J. Deferrari, ed. *Saint Gregory of Nyssa: Ascetical Works*, vol. 58, The Fathers of the Church (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1966), 11, 27.

wish, but see the smouldering grief necessarily attendant upon the advantages enumerated.\footnote{Saint Gregory of Nyssa, 13.}

There follow graphic descriptions of the possibility of early separation and death of a partner in say childbirth. Gregory continues:

But perhaps this is not the case. Let us assume that conditions are more favourable, that the mother survives the pains of childbirth and a child is born, the very image of the springtime of his parents; what then? Is the supposition of grief lessened because of this, or is it not rather increased? In addition to their earlier fears, they have added those in behalf of the child lest he encounter something unpleasant, lest something disagreeable chance befall him with regard to his upbringing, some unwished for casualty or suffering or mutilation or danger. These (concerns) are shared by both parents.\footnote{Ibid., 16 (parenthesis mine).}

In case he has still not persuaded his readers, Gregory adds that for wives there is the added discomfort of pregnancy, the ‘toil of educating a child’, and the ‘special heartbreak’ that whatever happens to each child happens to her.\footnote{Ibid.}

Gregory notes a ‘divine’ hierarchy in marriage. Therefore, loss of a husband represents loss of a governing head.\footnote{Ibid., 17.} Alternatively, virginity ‘does not bewail orphanhood, or lament widowhood’ for ‘it is always accompanied by an incorruptible Bridegroom, ... so that death effects, not a separation, but a union with what is longed for’.\footnote{Ibid., 18} Gregory argues that there are less concerns and emotional pain if you are living alone with no children. “Thus manifold and varied is the supply of evils that come from marriage. Children born and not born, living and dying, are alike sources of pain’.\footnote{Ibid., 19} If you wish for further corroboration, he says, do not rely on pagan myths of the Oedipal variety, instead study marital
law and you will rapidly appreciate the many travesties that represent the reality of marriage. He observes outside of marriage there is ‘no dishonourable lineage or distinction of birth, no glory or renown, no old legends, no vanity dependent on circumstances, no power over others or subjection to others’.  

Gregory goes so far as to entitle the fourth section of his thesis: ‘That everything wrong in life has its beginning in marriage which distracts one from the true life’.

The one who perceives the deceitfulness of this life with the pure eyes of his soul and rises above the earthly pursuits, and, as the apostle says, sees it all as ‘dung’ and refrains from marriage during his whole life has no share in human evils, I mean greed, envy, anger, hatred, the desire for empty fame, and all such things.

Marriage is self-induced misfortune over and beyond the external vicissitudes of treachery, adultery and separations. Indeed, ‘the difficult disease of pride, which someone has reasonably called the seed and root of every thorn connected with sin, has marriage as its original cause’.

Marital sexual pleasure is for rendering ‘customary debts’ and for reproduction used sparingly, ‘while spiritual considerations hold priority.’ Why? Because preoccupation with passion will make someone wholly flesh and blood in which God’s spirit does not reside. The weak by disposition especially will not be able to cope and they will become indulgers in pleasure instead of lovers of God. Gregory quotes from I Cor. 7.32, 33 in support of his argument.

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70 Ibid., 24.
71 Ibid., 20.
72 Ibid., 22. Gregory refers to the examples of Elias (Elijah) and John (the Baptist) and speculates that they would not have grown to their full spiritual height if they had been married. Ibid., 28f.
73 Ibid., 36.
Gregory quotes Jesus’ reply to Nicodemus: ‘that which is born of the flesh is flesh but that which is born of the spirit is spirit’ (John 3.6, cf. Rom.7.14) as clinching evidence for his dualist logic. Since flesh, because of sin, is subject to death\(^{74}\) and since the spirit is of God, incorruptible, life giving, and immortal, therefore, Gregory argues, the form of earthly life that should be sought will not have death as its consequence, \textit{ipso facto} virginity. Gregory uses two obscure texts, I Tim. 2.15 and Ps.112.9, to suggest that the children being born in this fashion (by adopting virginity) are in fact ‘life and incorruptibility’ spiritual children instead of the creation of mortal bodies ... which ‘everyone knows is the function of bodily union’. Indeed giving birth to children, claims Gregory (anxious about the reaction to his argument), is more ‘an embarking upon death than upon life for man.’ Virginity prevents the unceasing succession of destruction and dying. As fire cannot be sustained without wood or kindling so ‘death will not function if marriage does not furnish it with fuel and provide it with victims who are like condemned prisoners.’ You can become a mother without the pain of childbirth, or the ever-present threat of widowhood, says Gregory, quoting Matt. 12.50 and Mark 3.35.

Gregory’s controlling argument is that the \textit{imago Dei} in man ‘did not have the elements of passion and mortality essentially and naturally in himself from the beginning.’\(^{75}\) Virginity is thus linked to the \textit{unbodily} ‘incorporeal nature’ of Divine life.\(^{76}\) This need to divorce the divine from the passionate life, which causes men to be earthbound rather than heavenly minded, Gregory advances for neither Christ nor Mary being married. ‘It is for this reason, I think, that our Lord Jesus Christ, the source of incorruptibility, did not come into the world through marriage’.\(^{77}\) Paradoxically, Gregory is using the virgin birth and the Incarnation to argue that purity is a distancing from desires of the flesh.

\(^{74}\) Interestingly, Gregory cites 2 Cor. 12.2-4.
\(^{75}\) Ibid., 42.
\(^{76}\) Ibid., 11.
\(^{77}\) Ibid.
Furthermore, what occurred for Mary physically can be replicated for followers spiritually.\textsuperscript{78}

Deferrari \textit{et. al.} believe that Gregory’s approach to the subject in hand is that of ‘a man whose mind is imbued with the elements of Greek philosophical thought’;\textsuperscript{79} Hence he shares the same Stoic concerns about ‘passions’ as Clement did, and the need to control them. Cherniss pointed out, in \textit{The Platonism of Gregory of Nyssa} (Berkeley, 1930), that although Gregory does not mention Plato by name in this treatise, he did adopt the Platonic psychology: hence the emphasis on the dualism of man’s nature and the conflict of body and soul. Like Plato, Gregory stresses the unity of the virtues and defines virtue as the perfection of our nature. Moreover, Gregory, like Clement, employs Aristotelian logic to make doctrinal points.\textsuperscript{80}

For Gregory theology, the true pursuit of God and marriage are inimical. Gregory believes Holy Scripture furnishes the requisite evidence for this finding, tracing it back to the Genesis accounts of creation. Gregory’s sequential argument is that before they were thrown out of paradise Adam did not know Eve, and she was not condemned to the pains of childbirth. ‘Through this sequence of events, we, together with our first father, were excluded from paradise, and now through the same sequence may retrace our steps and return to the original blessedness.’ What was the sequence, asks Gregory? It was pleasure brought about through deceit that initiated the fall. Shame and

\textsuperscript{78} Gregory conflates and distinguishes the contingent and the transcendent by isolating Virginity and equating it with purity in spirit, as a peculiarly divine achievement and state.

‘For when you speak about the pure and incorruptible, you are using another name for virginity, writes Gregory. ‘Since, by reason of its lack of passion it exists with the whole of other-worldly nature and associates with the superior powers, it neither separates itself from things divine nor does it attach itself to their opposites’. Deferrari, \textit{Saint Gregory of Nyssa}, 10.

\textsuperscript{79} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{80} ‘Aristotelianism’ Meredith, A. in Richardson and Bowden, \textit{A New Dictionary of Christian Theology}, 41. This was despite Gregory also regarding Aristotle as a ‘patriarch of all heretics’. (\textit{Contra Eunomium} i.46, ii.411).
fear followed upon the experience of pleasure and they no longer dared to be in the sight of God. They hid and covered themselves.

As a result, says Gregory, Adam and Eve came as colonists to this place, which is full of disease and toil, and where marriage was contrived as a consolation for death. The logical point of deviation, the point at which we need to rectify this disastrous departure from the route mapped out is marriage. Therefore if we wish to seek out God we must refrain from marriage. What is of interest is that Gregory appears to be reading back into the Creation account his own interpretation to fit his particular argument. As I have already noted, this is precisely the same criticism that Borrowdale and others make about more recent pro-family literature.

Gregory is one of the most oft-quoted apparently anti-family saints, supplying, as he does, liberal copy on the ills and cares of marriage and family life. Contiguous with his rhetorical flourishes and argued points, Gregory’s intellectual problem is the inimical relationship between the passion, pride, death, sin and transitoriness he associates with human relationships on the one hand and God’s demands of purity and virginity on the other. Placed at the very epicentre of the Cappadocian solution to the Trinitarian issue, Gregory cannot and will not be able to conceive any connection whatsoever between this theology and the fragility and failure that he perceives the human family to be. The stated reason is scripture itself but the rationale is deeply ascetical and dualist and points ineluctably to Platonic and Stoic roots.

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81 Ibid., 46.
82 See Ch.1, p102, n.332.
83 Gregory was not unaware that marriage had some virtue and ‘God’s blessing’. He points out that as there is ‘sufficient support for it’ and because ‘the common nature of man … automatically inclines in this direction, whereas virginity somehow goes against nature, it would be superfluous to go to the trouble of writing a plea for marriage and a eulogy of it emphasising its indisputable inducement’. Deferrari, *Saint Gregory of Nyssa*, 31. He also admits that he cannot attain ‘the knowledge of the beauty of virginity’ and to choose ‘the better things’ presumably because he was married. Ibid., 12.
Jerome (c.a.345 – 420)

As already mentioned, Jerome’s inclusion here is due to the extent of his influence, even though his contemporaries rated his views as extreme. Jerome was a Latin speaker, born in the Roman province of Venice-Istria on the Dalmatian coast. His family were nominally Christian and wealthy enough to send him to Rome for his education in Grammar, possibly aged only 11 or 12, followed by Rhetoric, a standard preparation for law or a senior administrative post in the Roman Empire. He relished his education. He does not appear to have had particular teaching in philosophy but Kelly believes that the Roman education system was such that Jerome would have automatically been exposed to Hellenistic methods and the standard philosophical sources. Indeed, Jerome was so well versed in Cicero and Seneca, the Roman Stoic writers, as well as Roman poets and historians, that he could recite these sources from memory. He also began collecting a substantial library of copied classical texts that were to accompany him on his travels. In a later protracted dispute with his former friend Rufinus, Elizabeth Clark notes that Rufinus challenged Jerome’s constant citation of secular literature – ‘Cicero, Virgil and Horace had nothing to do with Christian truth’. Jerome’s riposte was not to deny the charge but to claim that Rufinus had clearly never studied literature at all!

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84 I have attempted to order these sections chronologically by the writer’s year of birth, but Jerome’s exact date of birth is not certain. Kelly and Chadwick place this as 331, making him older than Gregory of Nyssa, whilst a number of sources have 347 making him the same age as Chrysostom, or even possibly marginally younger. Cross and Livingstone argue for c. 345 and I have followed them. F. L. Cross, The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, ed. E. A. Livingstone, 3rd ed. (Oxford: OUP, 2005). Cf. J.N.D. Kelly, Jerome: His Life, Writings and Controversies (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., 1975), 1 & Appendix, 337-39.

85 Jerome, 15. Jerome: ‘My enthusiasm for rhetorical study and erudition was white hot’ Letter 52.1.


87 Jerome, Apologia I, 30. This tension between his enjoyment of classical literature and the claims of Christianity were to lead to a famous nightmare that Jerome recounted much later to Julia Eustochium, in which he had promised to renounce
Although the actual details are never spelled out, Jerome appears to have engaged in some sexual activity whilst a young man in Rome. He wrote that he and Rufinus had occasionally ‘gone astray’ together and admits much later to Pammachius in AD 393 that if he ‘exalted virginity to the skies’ it was because he did not possess it. A letter dated AD 376-7 also ‘seems to imply some recent sexual lapse’. Whilst living an eremitic life in the Syrian desert he described afterwards being troubled by lustful dreams of ‘bands of girls’ and, separately, likened himself to the prodigal son. He even attributed his beginning to learn Hebrew as a way of trying to control these passions. Thus it is the more ironic, bordering on hypocrisy, that Jerome went further than any of his contemporaries in seeing in the ascetic life, and virginity in particular, the most preferable route for Christians to follow.

Jerome spent some time in Trier (near present day Luxembourg), probably working in an administrative post, either for the government, or the church. It was in Trier, where Athanasius had also been, that he first contemplated the ascetic life that Athanasius had espoused. Jerome seems to have fallen out with his family on his return home, perhaps because of his changed priorities and maybe because he also persuaded his younger sister to become an ascetic. He never returned again to his hometown living instead in Antioch, Rome, Constantinople and Bethlehem, as well as the desert. His bad experience of the Syrian hermits - a combination of Jerome’s own

the former. Kelly notes: ‘There was … an irreconcilable conflict, of which he himself was all too painfully aware, between his enthusiastic world-renouncing aspirations on the one hand, and his wholehearted delight in the classical, humanist culture, to which everything he wrote at the time bears witness’. Coluccio Salutati (1331-1406) noted that Jerome’s citations were so extensive that he could be mistaken for a pagan professor. Quoted in Eugene F. Jnr. Rice, *Saint Jerome in the Renaissance*, vol. 13, The John Hopkins Symposia in Comparative History (London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1985), 85.

89 Ibid., Letter 14, 6.
90 Ibid., 20-21, Letter 22, 7, Apology I, 17; Comm. On Isaiah xii, pref.
91 Ibid., 50, Letter 125,12.
personality, their view of him as an educated outsider, and getting unwittingly embroiled in the raging Arian controversy - may have persuaded him that monastic life was a better form of ascetic life. Jerome was the first Christian writer after Origen to learn Hebrew and eventually produced a new Latin translation of the Hebrew Old Testament. He also learned Greek and probably Syriac, translating texts and writing Commentaries, books, treatises and hundreds of letters.

Jerome’s rhetorical prowess made him a formidable adversary. Not all fourth century Christians were convinced that celibacy was a more authentic form of Christianity, or equalled Christian perfection, even though there was considerable respect for self-control and sexual abstinence. Mary became the focus of this debate when it was asserted that she had been a perpetual virgin. Thus when Helvidius dared to argue, on the basis of biblical evidence, that Mary was no longer a virgin after Jesus’ birth, Jerome was persuaded to reply. His Against Helvidius deployed all the tactics of an experienced rhetorician, playing the man as well as the ball and refuting each of his points. Kelly believes it was Jerome’s success that led to the disappearance of Helvidius, to the perpetual virginity of Mary becoming orthodox faith, celibacy ‘the noblest state’ in Catholic Christianity, and to marriage seen primarily as ‘a remedy against sin’ and for procreation, rather than for ‘mutual enjoyment’.

Ten years later, in AD 393, Jerome was again enlisted, this time to riposte the monk Jovinian. Jovinian’s views are primarily known through Jerome, Ambrose and Augustine, as Jovinian’s own work has not survived. Jerome wrote a two book reply, the first and largest of which was wholly devoted to Jovinian’s main thesis that all baptized Christians were equal, regardless of whether they were married, widowed or single. Jerome by now had been in Bethlehem for eight

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92 Ibid., 106. As just one example of Jerome’s influence on exegesis: Jerome went against his usual feeling about the Septuagint to argue with special pleading for their translation in Isaiah that it is the virgin and not a young woman who shall bear a child. Ibid., 301.
years and was anxious to rehabilitate his tarnished reputation in Rome.  

‘So he poured all his dialectical skill and rhetorical art, all his learning and formidable powers of invective and satire’ into his response. 

Jovinian had apparently appealed to texts such as Gen. 1.28, Matt. 19.5, Heb. 13.4 and to the examples of Solomon and Peter. Jerome claims that Adam and Eve’s ‘marriage’ was preceded by their sin and served only to populate the earth whilst ‘virginity replenishes paradise’. 

Kelly notes that Jerome finds a way to explain the polygamy of the patriarchs. He further argued that the most saintly figures in the Bible were virgins, that Solomon wrote the Song of Songs after he saw the error of his ways and became celibate, and that Peter left his family behind to follow Christ (Matt. 19.27). Jerome managed to construct an ‘even greater aversion to marriage and second marriages’ in I Cor. 7 and I Timothy than Paul actually wrote. 

Jerome finished his book off with an extended depiction of less favourable features of marriage, and the actions of some ‘notorious wives’, all plagiarized from Seneca, Plutarch and a now missing manuscript from the Neoplatonist, Porphyry.

Eugene Rice’s study on the impact of Jerome on the Renaissance reveals the magnitude of Jerome’s influence. 

Rice notes that the ‘ascetic Jerome dominated the fourteenth century and remained a powerful image and model well into the seventeenth’. It is therefore a measure of Jerome’s influence that, like Augustine, his views will be

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93 This had been due to the extent of his campaign for asceticism, the death of one of his protégés, Blesilla, his naturally unbridled tongue, his turning a blind eye to Pope Damasus’s behaviour, and Jerome’s own unusual, though probably chaste, relationship with Paula, Blesilla’s mother, and his wealthy benefactress. It appears he had consequently been forced to leave Rome.
94 Kelly, Jerome, 182.
95 Against Jovinian 1, 16 quoted in ibid., 183.
96 Ibid.
97 Ibid., 184.
98 Rice, Saint Jerome in the Renaissance, 13. Although not entirely unusual, by 1400 CE there was even a widespread popular cult of St. Jerome, in addition to ‘Hieronymites’ who specifically followed Jerome, as Franciscans did St. Francis. A fifteenth century prayer book featured prayers attributed to Jerome. Christians appealed to Jerome to intercede for them, with prayers such as ‘Great love of Christ, famous, glorious Jerome! Help us live uprightly and love God as you have taught us to in your books. Lover of chastity, whose purity of heart shaped a life of purity, make us chastise our body and weep for our sins’. Ibid. 80-81.
99 Ibid.
evident in 11 centuries time when examining Luther and the
Reformation. Jerome was also significant for Aquinas. Jane Barr asserts
that it was Jerome’s views on women and his influence which
perpetuated much anti-female thought and that he was responsible for
many anti-female pieces of literature surviving, which might not
otherwise have done so.\textsuperscript{100} This is again ironic given the extensive
financial and other support that Jerome enjoyed from women like Paula
and Melania the elder. Due in no small part to Jerome, as the Church of
Scotland report put it:

The Christian mind ... became bound to the notion that chastity,
virginity, celibacy, abstinence etc. were the marks of truly
dedicated religion, superior spirituality, and apostolic living. The
shunning of eros became therefore a \textit{de facto} Christian duty or
goal, even in marriage\textsuperscript{101}.

It was eventually to lead to Pope Gregory VII’s late eleventh-
century prohibition on clerical marriage. Kelly sums up Jerome’s
contribution as follows:

We should not underestimate his contribution to the
establishment of monasticism as a major expression of Christian
life and culture in Europe. From the institutional angle younger
contemporaries, like Augustine and John Cassian, played a more
constructive role; but Jerome’s impact through his personal
example, his letters of advice, his fierce attacks on critics of
the movement, his translation of the Egyptian rules, was
impressive. ... At the heart of his teaching lay the conviction that
chastity was the quintessence of the gospel message, and that its
supreme exemplification and proof was Mary, the virgin mother
of the virgin Saviour. This complex of beliefs was to remain a
central bastion of Catholic spirituality in the west, and Jerome
was one of its chief architects.\textsuperscript{102}

\textbf{Chrysostom (c.a.347 – 407)}

St. John Chrysostom was the only son of a young Christian
widow, Anthusa, who ensured he received a classical education.

\textsuperscript{100} See Jane Barr, “The Influence of St. Jerome on Medieval Attitudes to Women”
in Soskice, \textit{After Eve}, 89-102.
\textsuperscript{101} Doctrine, “The Theology of Marriage Part I,” 11.
\textsuperscript{102} Kelly, \textit{Jerome}, 335.
Antiochene society, three centuries on from Matthew, was a metropolis of over a quarter of a million people, with pagan, Jewish, heretical, and sophistic cultural influences. Cicero had praised Antioch for its erudite men and breadth of study. Libanius, the famous pagan City Rhetorician of Antioch had studied in Athens and practised in Constantinople and Nicomedia (where Basil and Gregory Nazianzen had been his students). He returned to his native city to teach for forty years when Chrysostom was seven. When Libanius was asked whom he would choose to succeed him, he responded: ‘John, if the Christians had not stolen him.’ Chrysostom (Golden-mouthed) was to become John’s epithet, due to the quality of his rhetoric and preaching.

Caroline Roth notes that although this was an intense period of trinitarian theological development and debate for Athanasius, Basil and the Gregorys in the late 4th C, the practical problems arising for Christian life were the primary concern of Chrysostom. John offers a potential contrast with Clement for whilst their respective cities shared similarities, in place of the Alexandrian ‘relish for the allegorical sense,’ the Antiochene School was noted for its literal approach to biblical exposition. Furthermore, with the exception of a brief pagan period under Emperor Julian, Christianity had been established as the religion of the Roman Empire and the Catholic Church gained political recognition in Chrysostom’s lifetime. Huge numbers came to hear the

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105 Caroline Roth was one of Chrysostom’s translators and wrote the Introduction to: Chrysostom, *On Marriage and Family Life*, 7. Chrysostom would not have been immune to these theological struggles. Antioch had been riven by Arianism: Jerome describes coming to Antioch for the second time c.a. 377 and being besieged over whether he believed there were two persons (*hypostases*) in God or only one, resulting in Jerome beseeching the Pope to define the faith. *Epist.* 15 & 16 (ML 22, 355-9).
107 In 380 CE Emperor Theodosius established the Catholic faith. By 381 CE heretics could no longer hold onto churches in cities or convene publicly, which spelled the end of political power for the Arians in Antioch. Subsequently, laws
golden-mouthed preacher in Antioch’s Great Church, from all social ranks, including the elite.108

Another major difference from the time of Clement was the emergence of the monastic movement. St Pachomius, the founder of the common life, died just before Chrysostom was born. Chrysostom was about eighteen when St Antony died in Egypt in 365 and St Athanasius made him known through his Life of St Antony. Chrysostom refers both to Egyptian monasticism and this work in his Commentary on St. Matthew (Hom. 8 5; 57,89). Contemporaneously, St Basil and Gregory were giving shape to the ascetic monastic life, as I have just outlined. Chrysostom had access to these writings (Ad Theodorum Lapsum 47, 277-316). Chrysostom himself was inspired to live an eremitical lifestyle in the mountains above Antioch for six years and his early works emphasize the importance of celibacy. He advises Theodore (of Mopsuestia) to continue a monastic existence. John took on opponents of monasticism and defended Virginity.109 In Against the Enemies of Monasticism Book III, Chrysostom addresses the Christian father of a monk. Ill health, however, and recall by the bishop brought Chrysostom back to Antioch and caused him to reflect on whether it was possible to be virtuous and a priest without being a hermit.110

Chrysostom’s extant works outnumber any other Eastern Father and his Vainglory and the Education of Children is the oldest surviving Christian parenting handbook outside of the New Testament. Chrysostom composed relevant sermons on I Cor. 7, Col. 4.18, Eph.

were passed against Manicheans and their various branches, including the Encratites. In 389 CE Sundays and the Easter Season were declared state and legal holidays. Baur, John Chrysostom and His Time: Antioch, 1, 96.
108 See ibid. 2.
109 Brown suggests that the difference between Gregory’s De Virginitate and Chrysostom’s is that Chrysostom’s plays to this gallery and is even more exaggerated, if that was possible, for the sake of his immediate audience, Brown, Body and Society, 307.
110 In Palladius dialogue 5 (47,18) he notes of Lot, that he ‘lived in a city, with a wife, children and servants, among wicked and sinful men, and… shone like a light in the midst of the ocean, and was not extinguished, but his light only shone all the brighter.’
5.22-33\textsuperscript{111} together with homilies: On Marriage, How to Choose a Wife, and Hom.21 on Eph. 6.1-4 ‘Children obey your parents in the Lord’. Collectively these works demonstrate a confluence of his classical education, his reflection on Christian witness in the city, his particular take on some of the biblical texts, and his attempts to counter Encratic and Marcionite opponents.

Like Clement, Chrysostom was faced with Encratites who rejected the worth of anything to do with marriage, or sexual activity, or procreation. The Marcionites, in this regard, shared similar views. Chrysostom wrote, slightly enigmatically, ‘whoever rejects marriage, also destroys with it the true virginity!’\textsuperscript{112} Elsewhere he observed: ‘there is no greater and sweeter pleasure on earth than to possess a wife and children’\textsuperscript{113} and no greater consolation in death than ‘to leave children behind.’\textsuperscript{114}

Peter Brown points out that it is the son who is the object of Chrysostom’s attention as much as the soul. In Chrysostom’s accounts, the wonderful people of biblical history are men. Brown comments that it is hard to escape the male bias, the ‘soiled coin of classical misogyny’.\textsuperscript{115} Patriarchalism, Chrysostom’s Eastern high regard for scriptural inspiration\textsuperscript{116} and a particular rendering of Genesis 3 combined to provide additional ammunition for this view, subscribing to ‘a somewhat unbalanced explanation of male superiority on the basis

\textsuperscript{111} Chrysostom was a past master of the digression and manages to develop a sermon on marriage out of this Colossians passage. Homs.12, 19-20.
\textsuperscript{112} De Virginitate 10 (48, 564-565). For differences between both groups see Brown, Body and Society, 88f.
\textsuperscript{113} Hom. 37.7 Matt. (57,428).
\textsuperscript{114} Hom. 48.3 Matt. (58,490).
\textsuperscript{115} Brown, Body and Society, 318.
of greater female guilt’. It is not simply in disobedience, however, that the woman earns her inferiority; it appears to be a creation principle.

Similarly, Chrysostom uses I Cor. 11.9 ‘man was not created for woman but woman for man.’ Do you see, Chrysostom comments, how everything is made for man? A written note adds that women are not inherently and essentially inferior constitutionally but functionally because their divinely ordained purpose is to serve men. In Graeco-Roman society the woman’s sphere was the private one of the household and the man’s the public one of the city. Chrysostom, like the other Fathers, saw this as divinely ordained.

Chrysostom cites and provides commentary on Paul, arguing that St Paul must have had particular reason for stating: ‘Wives be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord.’ Paul, says Chrysostom, arranges the head in charge and the body to be obedient for the sake of peace. Paul, Chrysostom claims, is ‘laying the foundations of marital love.’ Chrysostom’s stated rationale is as follows:

Because when harmony prevails, the children are raised well, the household is kept in order, and neighbours, friends and relatives praise the result. Great benefits, both for families and

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117 The woman is punished before the man by ‘aggravating the pain of labour’, and ‘yearning for your husband … he will be your master.’ ‘Each time you give birth there is reason for great satisfaction in the generation of children but without fail, through the distress and pain of each birth, you will be aware of the magnitude of the sin of disobedience.’ He expatiates on this theme: ‘learn well how to be ruled … like a body being directed by its head, to recognize his lordship pleasurably.’ Homily 17 on Creation and the Fall.

118 See Homily 15 Chrysostom, Homilies on Genesis 1-17, 1, 197-200.

119 ‘In general our life is composed of two spheres of activity, the public and the private. When God divided these two He assigned the management of the household to the woman, but to the man he assigned the affairs of the city, all the business of the market-place, courts, council-chambers, armies and all the rest. A woman cannot throw a spear or hurl a javelin, but she can take up a distaff, weave cloth, and manage everything else that concerns the household … God provided for peace by reserving the suitable position for each.’ ‘How to choose a wife’ On Marriage and Family Life, 96-7.
states, are thus produced. When it is otherwise, however, everything is thrown into confusion and turned upside-down.\textsuperscript{120}

This combination of hierarchical order and 'harmony' points to Stoic and Aristotelian factors as much, if not more, than to Pauline, or theological underpinning.\textsuperscript{121}

Chrysostom noted the potential significance of Gen 1.26.\textsuperscript{122} He argued, contrary to Arius, that the words are directed to Christ and therefore demonstrate equality in the Godhead. Yet, probably because of his stated views on domestic hierarchy, he is unable to see any connection with male-female relations in the phrase ‘our’ (plural) ‘image and likeness.’ Chrysostom gave two reasons for not considering this as an anthropological reference. First, because likening the invisible God to anything in human form is heretical. Second, he links image with the next section on dominion, concluding: ‘so image refers to control, not anything else.’\textsuperscript{123} Hill notes that working from the Greek text,

\textsuperscript{120} In his sermons, says Brown, ‘John frequently reverts to a topic long congenial to Greek males: oikonomia advice on the creation of a model household.’ Brown draws on Michael Foucault’s work The Use of Pleasures. ‘Much of his preaching on marriage and sexuality falls under that well-worn rubric. Manipulating with ease a long tradition that reached back through Plutarch to Xenophon John made his position plain on the issues that lay close to his heart. The successful running of a Christian household demanded the close collaboration of husband and wife. It assumed the domination of the male within the family, or the husband over the wife, and of the father over his children. By successfully absorbing the young wife into his household, the husband would cut her off from the ‘vainglory’ (kenodoxiai) of civic life.’ Brown, Body and Society, 312. Foucault, The Use of Pleasure, 2, 143-84. Cf. Chrysostom, Homilies on Genesis 1-17, 1, 231. The age of the bride could be 15 and her husband twice her age. Plato recommended 16-20 years for women and 30-35 for men. Plato, The Laws (Ringwood, Victoria: Penguin Books, 1970), Book IV, 721.

\textsuperscript{121} It also opens up a further line of enquiry as to how much Paul himself may have been writing under the same influences? See David L Balch, Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter, ed. James Crenshaw, Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series (Chico: Scholars Press, 1981).

\textsuperscript{122} ‘Let us… divine the force concealed in these brief phrases. I mean, although the words may be few, immense is the treasure stored in them.’ Chrysostom, Homilies on Genesis 1-17, 1, 106.

\textsuperscript{123} To lend emphasis, Chrysostom writes: ‘Yet if, despite such great precision in terms, there are still those spoiling for a fight who would want to say ‘image’ is used in terms (73a) of form, we will say to them: that means he is not only man but also woman, for both have the same form. But this would make no sense. I mean, listen to Paul’s words; ‘It is not proper for a man to cover his head, being image and glory of God, whereas the woman is man’s glory.’ (I Cor. 11.7) One is in command, the other is subordinate, just as God has also said to the woman from
Chrysostom, who was a self-acknowledged non-Hebrew scholar, cannot see the Hebrew play on words ishah ... ish, or that in ‘the two will become one flesh...’ the Greek translators of the LXX tended to introduce an unnecessary future tense where the present more accurately renders the Hebrew.'\textsuperscript{124} Hence Chrysostom’s suggestion that it is the progeny that may represent the ‘one flesh,’\textsuperscript{125} Birth is thus linked to an inferior way of life not true to the original God purposed. As Baur puts it, the ‘awakening of passion had been first a result of sin.’\textsuperscript{126} Intercourse only occurred after the Fall. Before then they were like angels. This absence of passion is reminiscent of both Clement and Gregory and indicative of their common Platonist and Stoical heritage.

\textit{Homily 21} on Eph. 6.1-4 is very straightforward advice to children. When Chrysostom returns to the reciprocal duties of parents the image of God, and indeed God as God’s self, is strikingly singular:

Great will be the reward for us, for if artists who make statues and paint portraits of kings are held in high esteem, will not God bless ten thousand times more those who reveal and beautify His royal image (for man is the image of God)? When we teach our children to be good, to be gentle, to be forgiving (all these are attributes of God), to be generous, to love their fellow men, to regard this present age as nothing, to instill virtue in their souls, to reveal the image of God within them. This then is our task, to educate both ourselves and our children in godliness; otherwise what answer will we have before Christ’s judgment seat?\textsuperscript{127}

Brown believes that part of Chrysostom’s motivation was to convert the city and society and families were one of the means through

\textsuperscript{124} For a comment on the texts Chrysostom may have used and his absence of Hebrew see Baur, \textit{John Chrysostom and His Time: Antioch}, 1, 13.
\textsuperscript{125} Chrysostom, \textit{On Marriage and Family Life}, 75f.
\textsuperscript{126} Baur, \textit{John Chrysostom and His Time: Antioch}, 1, 377.
\textsuperscript{127} Chrysostom, \textit{On Marriage and Family Life}, 71.
which John could convey a new vision for the civic community’.\textsuperscript{128} Marriage still had a place but its existence is ‘a remedy to eliminate fornication’ - an ever present danger in Antiochene society.\textsuperscript{129} Furthermore, a combination of Chrysostom’s logic, a rhetor’s instinctive ‘feel’ for his audience and his pastoral responsibility all led Chrysostom to the conclusion that if virginity is not an obligation, then marriage and the family must be allowed to be something good in themselves.

Chrysostom attempted a further explanation of the expression ‘one flesh’ with Eph. 5.31: ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall become one flesh.’ This is another aspect of marital obligation, says Chrysostom. He claims that Paul is arguing the result of the ‘co-mingling of the two’ is a child.\textsuperscript{130} The child is born from the union of their seed, so the three are one flesh. Chrysostom adds that our relationship to Christ is the same; we became one flesh with Him through communion, more truly one with Him than our children are one with us, because this has been his plan from the beginning.

Caroline Roth, in pointing to the significance of Chrysostom in the Orthodox tradition on marriage, says that from St. Paul to the twentieth century ‘the best in Christian teaching on marriage is represented by St John’.\textsuperscript{131} Indeed that after Chrysostom, ‘the theology of married love was largely neglected.’\textsuperscript{132} Nor is his influence restricted to the East. Augustine had access to at least some of Chrysostom’s work and we will see similarities in his approach. Moreover, although Haidacher did not attribute Chrysostom’s authorship of \textit{Vainglory and the Education of Children} until the nineteenth century, it was brought

\textsuperscript{128}Brown, \textit{Body and Society}, 306.
\textsuperscript{130}For fuller explanation of co-mingling, which is wholly based on the Greek understanding of male and female physiology and how procreation occurs, see Brown, \textit{Body and Society}.
\textsuperscript{131}Chrysostom, \textit{On Marriage and Family Life}, 11.
\textsuperscript{132}Ibid.
out in Paris in 1656 and London in 1658 entitled: *The golden book of St. Chrysostom, concerning the education of children*.\(^{133}\)

There is no doubt that Chrysostom employs Christological and post-lapsarian arguments in his consideration of Christian marriage and the education of the young but a question mark remains over the extent of Chrysostom’s theology and indeed its use. I have pointed out that the bulk of his teaching is practical rather than theological. As with Clement, much of Chrysostom’s ‘theology’ involved non-theological as well as biblical resources, in creative responses to practical and pastoral concerns. His sermon subject matter was related, sometimes loosely, to his exegesis but his oratorical gifts were such that his exegesis was, as Julian of Eclanum noted, more by exhortation than by exposition, or more accurately, ‘his exposition was conducted only to the depth that would serve exhortation’.\(^{134}\)

**Augustine of Hippo (c.a.354 – 430)**

It is hard to overemphasize Augustine’s significance for this thesis, since many of the concerns about our understanding of the Trinity,\(^{135}\) of Western individualism\(^{136}\) and of male-female relations,\(^{137}\) are all traced to or through him.\(^{138}\) Henri Marrou referred to Augustine as the supreme theologian on Christian marriage in the Catholic tradition.\(^{139}\) He ‘lived on the frontier between the ancient world and medieval Western Europe’.\(^{140}\) Indeed he represents the ending of the ancient world and the beginning of the new. Augustine had access to at

\(^{133}\) Baur, *John Chrysostom and His Time: Antioch*, 1, 178 Footnote 63.

\(^{134}\) Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis 1-17*, 1.


\(^{136}\) Taylor, *Sources of the Self*.


\(^{139}\) Ibid.

least some of Chrysostom’s work. Like Chrysostom, he did not master an extra language, in his case Greek, relying on Cicero and Varro for his translations of Plato and the Stoics.

Augustine’s output was prodigious and his deliberations are not concentrated into one or two works. It is therefore worth noting that:

Like so much of his thought, Augustine’s reflections on sexuality, marriage and celibacy underwent considerable development during his lifetime and his works must therefore be treated with sensitivity to their different historical contexts and differing aims and audiences.

His many duties as Bishop and the amount of correspondence he engaged in meant that: ‘... important evidence for his key beliefs is often widely scattered; arguments are left incomplete and revived years later; problems are raised and pushed aside’. In particular, it is argued that his later views, especially in the area of sexuality, were maturer and more positive than he has often been credited with. Augustine’s writings are mostly the work of a controversialist, including arguments with himself and with the views circulating among his contemporaries, including Jerome. Augustine tries but does not always succeed in reconciling the complexities of the arguments, some of which he created.

In his ‘nineteenth year’, Augustine read Cicero’s Stoic Hortensius and was heavily influenced by it. Cicero argued that the pursuit of truth was more pleasurable than the food or drink or sex. Happiness

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141 Baur, John Chrysostom and His Time: Antioch, 1, 166-68.
146 Rist, Augustine, 11.
147 Augustine, Confessions, VIII, 145.
came not from physical pleasures of luxurious food, drink and sex, but from the pursuit of truth. Augustine became a follower of the Manicheai. They were put off by the physical world and by sex and particularly by procreation since this imprisoned souls in physical matter. According to the Confessions Augustine remained in association with the Manichees for ten years. Eventually Augustine found the 'supposed rationality' of the Manicheans wanting and turned to Cicero and the sceptics, but even these were insufficient. He was accordingly left short of authorities in which he could believe. Hannah Arendt once mentioned that Augustine turned to religion out of philosophical perplexity.

In his early Christian writings Augustine attacked the Manichees. Augustine’s defence of marriage reaches a high point in his 33 books Answer to Faustus a Manichean, composed immediately after his Confessions sometime between 397 and 400, especially where Faustus had criticized the mores of the patriarchs, which Augustine had himself found difficult. However, just as Clement had to steer a course between Encratism and Gnosticism (and with some similarities to Clement’s solution), Augustine had a tripartite offensive, to promote marriage against the encratic Manicheans, virginity for the anti-ascetic Jovinians and expose the excesses of Jerome’s riposte to Jovinian, which also bordered on the heretical rejection of marriage. I have earlier outlined that Jovinian had dared to suggest that all baptized Christians were on par: thus married Christians were the same as consecrated virgins. Jerome, being Jerome, had gone completely over the top in his reply to the embarrassment of many.

148 These descriptions seem very strange. Gnosticism was a version of theodicy, an attempt to account for the enigma of evil in the world. The Manicheai comprised the strictly celibate Elect and Hearers who could have wives or concubines but not children. Augustine was among the latter, and this may be why he only had one son with his concubine of some thirteen years, cf. Ibid., IV 2. 2.
149 Rist, Augustine, 2. CA 1.3-7; DBV 4.26; Conf. 5.10.19; 5.14.25.etc
150 Ibid., 57.
Augustine’s writings, as well as his personal life, reveal the ambiguities of his views. He maintained a relationship with a concubine for many years whilst a Manichee. After he abandoned his negative Manichee attitude to sexuality, he ends up dismissing her, then takes on another mistress for a time, and turns down an arranged marriage. He held a Platonic dualist view but points out that this ascribes all vices to the flesh and therefore renders a disservice to ‘our Creator’. He also thought there was some essential goodness in the procreative impulse yet the later Pelagian controversy led him to reassess that human reproduction could be the transmitter of irrationality and selfishness associated with sexual urges.

In his triple offensive Augustine is obliged to argue that marriage, while a lesser good than celibacy, is still something good. The Excellence of Marriage is thus a companion volume to De Virginitate. Augustine outlines his argument in the opening paragraph:

Every human being is part of the human race and human nature is a social entity, and has naturally the great benefit and power of friendship. For this reason God wished to produce all persons out of one, so that they would be held together in their social relationships not only by similarity of race, but also by the bond of kinship.

This description bears similarity to Chrysostom and is also significantly close to the Plotinian Neoplatonic concept of ‘procession’ from the One, an idea, states Brown, as basic to the thought of the age of Augustine as Evolution is to our own. Augustine continues: ‘The first natural bond of human society, therefore, is that of husband and wife.’

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152 Augustine, Confessions, VI xiii 23 & 25.
153 Marriage and Virginity, 9, XIV 5.
154 Ibid.
155 Brown, Augustine, 98. Note, however, that Augustine was not unaware of such influence. For example, he criticised part of Origen’s doctrine on the grounds that it belonged to the Neoplatonism of Plotinus that Augustine believed he had escaped from in his conversion to Christianity. The City of God (XI.23) Quoted in Fergus Kerr, Theology after Wittgenstein, 2nd ed. (London: SPCK, 1997), 40. who also cites R.J. O’Connell, Saint Augustine’s Early Theory of Man.
The second is the ‘bonding of society’ in the production of children: this is ‘the one honourable fruit’ of male and female sexual conjunction.\textsuperscript{156}

In keeping with his past Manicheanism, the ‘one honourable fruit’ is a telling phrase for the philosophical, theological and personal difficulties that the process of procreation presents for Augustine. In order to square his own reservations about the polygamy of the patriarchs he argues that before the time of Christ the patriarchs needed to ensure succession for the Covenant to be fulfilled, but now physical children are not as essential as spiritual ones. Indeed the end of the world would come sooner if the cycle of procreation could be halted.\textsuperscript{157} Logically, he asks, despite Gen. 1.28, would there have been a human race if Adam and Eve had not sinned? He believes that they only acquired mortal bodies through sinning, without which they could not have had sex. Might children therefore have been produced in another way, without physical union, or perhaps the ‘increase’ might not be in people but in the ‘development of mind and resources of spiritual strength’? He quotes Ps. 138.3 in support as continuity through descendants is only necessitated by death.\textsuperscript{158}

Augustine struggled with the social analogy of a family for the Trinity and rejected it. If it were correct, he argued, then the husband would only be in the image of God from the point at which he found a wife and had a child by her. He claimed that when scripture spoke of the image of God, it refers to individual persons. Augustine calls Paul in evidence when Paul describes the husband as the ‘image and honour of

\textsuperscript{156} Augustine, \textit{Marriage and Virginity}, 9, 33.
\textsuperscript{157} The population is enough. The Creator brings good out of illicit unions such that there is no shortage of offspring or lack of heirs in abundance, and so holy friendships may be fostered … an abundant provision of the spiritual kinship required for creating a true and holy society. Indeed the end of the world would come sooner (I Cor. 7.7 and then 29-34). Therefore the only ones who should marry are those who are unable to be continent.\textit{Ibid.}, 41.
\textsuperscript{158} Augustine approved of couples who early on abstained from carnal union by mutual consent, and noted that a marriage does not require children for it to be defined as such, because it is also due to ‘the natural sociability that exists between the sexes.’ Otherwise the elderly, those who had lost children, or had never had any, could not be called married. \textit{Ibid.}, 34f.
God’ and the wife only the ‘honour of the husband’ in 1 Cor. 11.7. From this Augustine concludes that the wife is the image of God only in so far as she is the man’s ‘helpmeet’, even though Augustine primarily sees the soul as the ‘image of God’ and the soul is gender free.159

James Wetzel points out that the Christian and Stoic sage are indistinguishable in Augustine’s De beata vita. 2.8 ‘Est autem aliquid, si manet, si constat, si semper tale est, ut est virtus.’ (Virtue is the only thing in the flux of the temporal order that shares the divine attribute of permanence).160 The loss of these temporal things is not to be feared because they are not desired. This is precisely the same Hellenistic background that controlled some of the effects Philo and Barton noted about the renunciation of family ties in and before the New Testament period.161 Augustine clearly came into contact with Manicheanism, Platonism, Stoicism and the Neo-Platonism of Plotinus, along with the asceticism and academic syncretism of Ambrose. The result of all these influences is a sophisticated dualism but a dualism nonetheless with very far reaching consequences.162

Ranke-Heineman offers an interesting view of the development of Augustine’s thought.163 She shows how the personal narrative of Augustine throws much light on the evolution of his theology of sin, sex and marriage. What emerges is a case study in how personal psychology influences the development of a highly intellectualised theological scheme.164 As mentioned, Augustine did briefly consider

159 Ibid.
161 Barton, Discipleship and Family Ties.
162 Cf. Augustine’s vivid mental struggles to avoid envisaging God in physical form. Augustine, Confessions, VII.
whether the ‘family’ might constitute a suitable analogy for the Trinity and specifically rejected it.\textsuperscript{165} Given the foregoing it is easy to understand why he might have come to that conclusion.\textsuperscript{166} This rejection, nonetheless, contributed to tilting the balance away from the Cappadocian and ‘social’ concept of the Trinity towards the more individual ‘psychological’ analogy, and its considerable impact on the West, about which more will be said later in Ch.4.

The problem is sex, or more specifically the loss of physical control caused, says Augustine, by lust.\textsuperscript{167} Part of Augustine’s reasoning is based on the observation, as in Chrysostom, that sexual union inculcates a sense of shame not only in brothels and amongst prostitutes but also in the very act of legal marriage.\textsuperscript{168} This shame, says Augustine, is linked to lust.\textsuperscript{169} Surely, quotes Augustine from Cicero, all right actions wish to be placed in the light of day. Therefore it is not the generation that is the problem, it is that sexual union is no longer possible without concupiscence, a fault, as Augustine puts it, of the mind as much as of the flesh, citing Gal. 5.19ff as evidence for his assertion. Sex comes as a result of the Fall, therefore is associated with both sin and death. Mind should be over matter, and reason should

\textsuperscript{165} Augustine, “Trinity.” XII Ch. 2.
\textsuperscript{166} Ibid XII Ch. 5. For Moltmann’s commentary on Augustine’s reasons see Moltmann, \textit{History and the Triune God}. Moltmann contrasts Gregory of Nazianzen’s analogy of the \textit{imago Dei} as the ‘nuclear family’ of Adam and Eve and Seth. (Ibid).
\textsuperscript{167} ‘Now in the order of nature the soul is certainly placed above the body, but here the problem is that the soul cannot govern itself... the soul neither has command of itself so effectively as to be entirely free from it, nor does it rule the body so completely that the shameful members are moved by the will rather than by lust.’ See \textit{Confessions} Ch. 24. Notice this only applies to males, Augustine did not consider the circumstances for women.
\textsuperscript{168} Ibid. XIV.18.
\textsuperscript{169} Ibid. XIV.20.
prevail over bodily reactions and over emotions. Instead the opposite happens, lust and emotion overtake reason.

Not brought up on Platonic ways of thinking, it may be hard for us to understand quite how serious a problem this was for Augustine. His own sexual experience and feelings of shame and guilt, as expressed in the *Confessions*, compounded the dilemma.\(^{170}\) Thus in trying to find arguments in favour of marriage, Augustine notes: ‘Marriages also have the benefit that sensual or youthful incontinence, even though it is wrong, is redirected to the honourable purpose of having children, and so out of the evil of the lust sexual union in marriage achieves something good.’\(^{171}\) ‘By his stress on ‘concupiscence’ (uncontrolled desire) he was to set the West on a path of identifying sin with sex; that was not his intention’.\(^{172}\)

Rist argues that for Augustine it was impossible for God to try and fail - a belief that surprisingly at first sight led him to many difficulties.\(^{173}\) It was this high view of God’s transcendence and his low view of sex that led to his Mariology and the concept not only of Immaculate Conception but also of perpetual virginity. Kim Power calls this a ‘must have’ argument that follows logically from Augustine’s demand that God must be born in a manner fitting to a God.

Mary is constructed as an asexual woman, who conceived directly through a pure spiritual principle, rather than one contaminated by original sin. Her *post-partum* virginity then

\(^{171}\) Ibid., 35.
\(^{172}\) Indeed his ideal marriage, as set out in Book XIV of *City of God* is sex free. It is a relationship controlled tellingly throughout by ‘reason and will’, never experiencing the frustration common to fallen mortals where the urge felt by one partner is not necessarily felt by the other at the same time; to both partners it was the source of the highest pleasure. ‘The love of the pair for God and for one another was undisturbed, and they lived in a faithful and sincere fellowship which brought great gladness to them, for what they loved was always at hand for their enjoyment. There was a tranquil avoidance of sin; and, as long as this continued, no evil of any kind intruded, from any source, to bring them sadness.’ XIV.10.
prevents the womb that has been sacralised by God being debased by normal sexual intercourse and birth processes.¹⁷⁴

Note the result of this was that sexually active married women, in Augustine's theology, had to endure the loss of the dignity of being birthgivers – the one role that had given them a raison d'être and respect within the Roman patriarchal society, and it had defined their nature and role within Augustine's own anthropology.¹⁷⁵ A Virgin Mary was an impossible model for women to follow since they could not be mothers and virgins at the same time. Power also notes that it is in the 4th C that the Church started legislating about sexual abstinence within marriage. Not only was abstinence required on Feast days but also clerics began to blame birth defects, stillbirths, epilepsy and leprosy on sexual incontinence. Parents of disabled and ill children were publicly shamed. She comments: 'It is quite probable that these very prohibitions designed to free Christians to pray undistracted and to achieve ritual purity would have had the opposite effect, charging marital sexuality with both heightened awareness of desire and a freight of sexual guilt.'¹⁷⁶

Part of the difficulty for Augustine is that Holy Scripture does sanction marriage. Augustine observes that it is not lawful for a woman to put aside her husband to marry another as long as the husband lives, or vice versa. Also Christ attended a wedding as a guest. Furthermore, if I Cor. 7.14 means that an unbelieving spouse is sanctified by a

¹⁷⁴ Power, Veiled Desire, 198. The idea may have come from Origen. See Kelly, Jerome, 307. and Jerome who for most of the time did not teach the virginity of Mary 'in partu' but used his Ezekiel commentary to liken her as did others to the shut gate of Ezekiel 44.2 through whom the lord God passed but was a virgin before and after giving birth.

¹⁷⁵ Power, Veiled Desire, 199. One explanation of a reinforced Mariology lay in the internal struggles of the church where groups were anathematising one another on the basis that they contained consecrated virgins or widows. Immaculate conception diminished the status of both. It also conveniently adversely affected churches, thereby deemed heretical, who permitted women to hold charismatic or clerical offices. This flouting of social roles was unacceptable in the post-Constantinian church, which came to control its virgins as the brides of Christ. Brown argues that sexual renunciation was a ‘carrière ouverte aux talents’ and that both women and the illiterate ‘could achieve reputations as stunning as any male.’

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 203.
believing one then Christian marriage cannot be evil.\textsuperscript{177} Procreation, like possessions and money, are some of the goods of the world and, \textit{contra} the Manichees, can be made use of by Christians.\textsuperscript{178} Augustine separately lists three ‘goods’ of marriage – children, fidelity and the sacramental bond.\textsuperscript{179} In a later anti-Manichean writing, ‘Augustine again invoked Paul as well as Jesus’ recorded words, to demonstrate that the Old and New Testament stood in fundamental continuity in their approval of sex and marriage. Augustine cited Matt. 13.3–9, where Jesus appealed to Gen. 1.27 and 2.24 to endorse the permanence of marriage; he also recalled the final verses of Eph. 5 where Paul also quotes Gen. 2.24 and refers the text to the great mystery (\textit{sacramentum magnum}) of Christ and the Church. Since both Jesus and Paul quote the Old Testament with approval and speak highly of marriage, Augustine argues, there can be no real contradiction between the Old and the New Testaments in regard to marriage.\textsuperscript{180}

Kim Power suggests, on the basis of Augustine’s thought in confessional and pastoral writings between 386 and 423 CE, that there is a consistency in his appraisal of women’s role and nature. Power believes that culture and not theology construct his perception of gender relationships although he has ‘attempted to give theological legitimation’.\textsuperscript{181} His paradigm for understanding woman’s nature and appropriate gender roles was the order of natural law in the Roman honour-shame culture. ‘Where proper order prevails, the superior is

\textsuperscript{177} The Catholic Way of Life I 35.79.
\textsuperscript{178} In \textit{City of God} 14.22. Augustine argues ‘We, however, do not in the least doubt that to increase and multiply and replenish the earth according to God’s blessing is a gift of marriage, and that God instituted marriage from the beginning, before man’s sin, in creating male and female, for the difference in sex is quite evident in the flesh. And the blessing of Genesis 1.28 is attached to the creation of male and female Genesis 1.27.’
\textsuperscript{180} ‘All things both in the Old and the New Testaments have been written and transmitted by one Spirit.’ \textit{Marriage and Virginity}, 9, 11. \textit{Answer to Adimantus} III.1-3. This was quite a change for Augustine to whom the Old Testament when he first read it was ‘cluttered up with earthy and immoral stories.’ \textit{Conf.} III vii.12 Brown, Augustine, 42.
\textsuperscript{181} Power, \textit{Veiled Desire}. 
rightly dominant over the subordinate and inferior; therefore man is always and everywhere to dominate woman, even a son his mother”.\textsuperscript{182} (In Ch.4 it will become apparent that this was closely allied to Platonic emanationism). Augustine, says Power, exceeds the slightly more egalitarian Tertullian and Ambrose who had discussed married partners as ‘yokefellows’ and ‘shifts the basis of power relationships far more fundamentally. He transforms a senior-junior partnership into a master-slave relationship’.\textsuperscript{183} Even when discussing the friendship view of marriage that Power applauds, for Augustine true friendship and kinship between the sexes consists of one ‘in charge, the other compliant.’\textsuperscript{184}

Peter Brown argues that Augustine’s mind was so powerful that he himself, in large part, ’created the “reality” which we now like to think his doctrines merely attempted to “explain”’.\textsuperscript{185} The influence of Platonism, neo-Platonism and Stoicism on his deliberations with his opponents and himself is evident. A curious combination of these philosophical influences, his personal circumstances, the need to refute competing alternative views, prevailing cultural norms, and biblical sources, has bequeathed a complex and contradictory legacy for theological consideration of the family, for women, for children, about marriage and about sex.

Summary of the Patristic thinking on the family

Not all the patristic writings, on the basis of the evidence just presented, were anti-family. Nevertheless, even those who might be deemed supportive, such as Clement and Chrysostom, left their readers and listeners in no doubt that this option was subject to significant qualifications, reservations and expectations. Despite the differences in

\begin{footnotes}
\item[182] Cf. Hellerman, \textit{The Ancient Church as Family}.
\item[183] Power, \textit{Veiled Desire}, 122.
\item[184] Augustine, \textit{Marriage and Virginity}, 9, 33.
\item[185] See “Augustine and sexuality” \textit{Colloquy} 46 (1983), 13.
\end{footnotes}
their personal circumstances, location, language and chronology, a number of common themes emerge. They have all demonstrated a dependency on Platonic, Aristotelian and Stoic thought. This philosophical combination did not readily permit the idea of passion, or change; women or children were not to be seen as close to God as men. In short, most of the things that characterized a family, in their view and from their educational and cultural background, could not be conceived as having a connection with divinity. It was this above all else that prevented the development of any theology.

In attempting to define the contours of Christianity in the social context of their day, faced with Civic and Pagan doubt, and competing heresies, these writers have created a complex and very mixed heritage on the family. As Hanson noted, their interpretation of the Biblical texts has left an indelible footprint. There is a great deal to support the feminist concerns about how Eve, Mary and women in general have fared as a consequence. Overall, the patristic conclusions on the family adopt a different and more restrictive approach than the Old or New Testament. Foucault remarks on how unusual it was, compared with Greek, Roman and Jewish thought, to equate sex with sin and true
discipleship with eschewing marriage and sex. Just as Foucault believes that Christians interpreted the ascetic life in a way that would have surprised the ascetics in regard to sex, so the early Fathers and Augustine in particular develop a ‘tendency to individualism’ in moral virtue (arete) in a way that would have horrified Plato, or Celsus, and distinguishes it from the ethical discussions in the Old and New Testament.

It could be objected that discussion of ‘family’ is simply anachronistic and incongruous given the period and the social circumstances. Thus, for instance, Chrysostom addresses the situations of households and makes reference to the treatment of slaves and servants. Yet, on the subject of marriage and children, and notwithstanding considerable cultural differences, many of the allusions, injunctions and illustrations are sufficiently recognizable that ‘family’ is not an entire misnomer.

Aquinas (c.a.1225 – 1274)

It is a leap of over 800 years from Jerome and Augustine to Aquinas. However the tone and content of Aquinas’ reference to marriage, women and the family, indeed his own monastic vocation, were set by the pre- and post-Nicene Fathers we have examined, under the impress of a remarkably similar philosophical climate to theirs. The inclusion of Aquinas at this point demonstrates that as late as the thirteenth century the patristic views on marriage, family, monasticism and women, inter alia, were still finding expression. Aquinas was steeped in the patristics. He is also associated with the rediscovery of the same classical Greek texts, and hence cultural views, as I argue

187 Chrysostom observed this in De Virginitate ‘True virginity was not known among the Jews for they did not esteem it’. Baur, John Chrysostom and His Time: Antioch, 1, 9.12.
earlier in this chapter, that had influenced, in a complex fashion, some of the particular and peculiar approaches the patristic theologians took towards the family. This is evident in the relatively scant attention Aquinas pays towards this subject and the visible imprint of Plato and particularly Aristotle in his treatment of the household and of women. Lastly, Aquinas is included because he is an important figure for Roman Catholic theology, whose views on the family are canvassed in this thesis.

Aquinas’ own ‘influence on Christian thinking is second only to ... St. Paul and Augustine’. He regarded Augustine as his teacher. He completed his education at the University of Naples, whilst still a teenager. The significance of this was that at the Naples the study of Aristotle had been resurrected. Aristotle’s work had not been as a whole since Boethius in the fifth century. Aristotle’s treatises became available only around the turn of the thirteenth century. One of Aquinas’ teachers, Peter of Ireland, was a noted Aristotelian. As a Dominican monk, Aquinas transcribed Albert the Great’s lectures in Paris on Dionysius the Areopagite and in Cologne on the *Ethics* of Aristotle. Aquinas himself wrote a short text *De principiis naturae* outlining some of the concepts in Aristotle’s *Physics* and several commentaries on Aristotle’s works, including the *Nichomachean Ethics*. He was the first to translate Aristotle’s *Politics* and appears to have instigated other translations. His knowledge of Dionysius the Areopagite and several similar Neoplatonic sources underscores the similarity of his background to Augustine.

Like Augustine, his writing runs to thousands of pages but unlike his predecessor his thought is much more systematic. The subject of marriage, women and children and the themes of ‘family’ feature much

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190 ‘Aristotelianism’ Meredith, A. in Richardson and Bowden, *A New Dictionary of Christian Theology*, 41f. They were not universally approved and were even banned at the University of Paris in 1215.
191 vii-ix.
less than they do in Augustine. Where they do occur they reveal a gap in his systematic thinking. Should women have been created in the beginning? Yes, says Aquinas, but only to help man in the work of procreation. Women, he suggests, are naturally defective. They are 'by nature subordinate to man, because the power of rational discernment is by nature stronger in man.' They 'seldom keep a firm grip on things.' ...They are not tough enough to withstand their longings. Davies comments that this is not the stuff of which modern theology is made.

Aquinas' greatest contribution, the *Summa Theologia*, was the first systematic text for the study of theology. However, the subject of the family did not detain Aquinas for very long and the imprint of Plato and especially Aristotle on what he did write is very clear:

Clearly the household comes midway between the individual person and the state or realm, for just as the individual is part of the family, so the family is part of the political community ... the final purpose of domestic management is the good life as whole within the terms of family intercourse.

As a human being is part of a household, so a household is part of a state which, according to Aristotle, is the complete community. And as one individual's goal is not an ultimate end, since it is subordinate to the common good, so the good of the household is subordinate to the good of the political community.

Why did Aquinas not devote much thought to the family? The immediate answer is that he was not only heavily influenced by Augustine and his reading of Paul, but also by the same asceticism and Hellenistic thinking that I have examined in the pre- and post-Nicene

193 1a 92.1 See Hampson, *Theology and Feminism*, 17. on this.
194 ST 1a 92.1 ad 1 and 3.
195 ST 2a2ae. 156. 1 ad 1.
196 ST 2a2ae. 149. 4.
198 36.91 & 28.15.
Fathers. The re-surfacing of Aristotle in Aquinas’ immediate time and education are especially pertinent here, as are his own monastic life and the by now considerable history of the monastic movement post Basil the Great.

Summary

This chapter has reviewed key patristic exponents and one early medieval Christian thinker on the subject of the family. The review has demonstrated that theological consideration of the family has not been to the fore. Instead, other sources and forces have exercised considerable influence on Christian thinking about the family. As Carol Harrison concluded, the subject of the family:

Lurks, rather apologetically and shamefacedly, the result of weakness and compromise, in the dark shadow cast by the glorious ideal of virginity. It must necessarily be sought in a rather negative, roundabout way: we are told what is wrong with marriage, why one should refrain from sex, why children are to be avoided, but rarely, very rarely, find any mention of the positive aspects of family life.

The next chapter examines how Luther came to reverse the importance of family and again looks for any theological underpinning in his work and in subsequent writers.

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199 D’Avray’s study was of ‘model sermons’ before 1300. These were sent to priests from Paris who preached on marriage at the second Sunday after Epiphany. John 2 would be read. The sermons followed a particular style ‘of fides-proles-sacramentum, which could not have been predicted if it had not been invented’, possibly by Augustine, De bono coniugali, stressing the three goods of marriage, alongside ideas such as officium (marriage’s initial function of populating the earth, remedium (marriage as a remedy for incontinence after the fall) and debitum (each partner’s duty to have intercourse) and the heinousness of adultery. However marriage was also regularly treated in the non-literal sense: the ‘marriage’ of Christ’s divine and human natures, the Church to Christ, the soul to heaven. D.L. d’Avray, The Preaching of the Friars: Sermons Diffused from Paris before 1300 (Oxford: O.U.P., 1985), 969-70, 249-59.
Chapter Three

The mixed Christian legacy on human family:

Part 2 - From Luther to Rahner

This chapter considers the more recent ‘quarter’ of Christianity, from Martin Luther up until Karl Rahner, when the subject of the family has been more prominent and promoted in Christian thought. It ends with Barth and Rahner only because I am primarily investigating the legacy that has been bequeathed to the present situation. Karl Barth, in particular, represents a transition between Christian thinking about the family (or, more accurately, in Barth’s terminology, about men and women, and parenting), on the one hand, and the re-emergence of Trinitarian theology, on the other. As with the previous chapter this examination is primarily focused on the writings of some key thinkers during this time period, but it also includes reference to two influential and significant overlapping movements and groups, in the Humanists and the Puritans. The intent is again to examine the drivers for their respective interest in the family and any theology that was employed.

Luther, the Humanists and the Puritans

Martin Luther marks a watershed in the Christian perception of the family. From Luther onwards, the Protestant Churches,¹ and in turn the Catholic Church, thought of marriage and the family differently. Among some of the pre-disposing factors to Luther’s views and influence, were the circumstances of marriage and monasticism, which of course had been affected by the emphases of the early Fathers. The Humanists, who were seeking the re-introduction of the classical academic disciplines, were also influential, especially in their mockery of the abuses of celibacy among the clergy and their searching for

¹ Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican, Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, and so on.
classical inspiration for the ordering of society, including government and family life. The Protestant appreciation of marriage and the family was given added impetus by the Puritans, who are in turn regarded as seminal for their influence on the British and American understanding of the Family.²

Martin Luther (1483-1546)

Luther did not intend to wed. He daily anticipated a heretics’ death. So when he did marry Katherine von Bora in 1525 at the age of 42 it came as an unwelcome surprise to his close collaborator, Phillip Melancthon, who thought it would derail the Reformation.³ Martin Luther had written a small section on marriage as part of the second of three Treatises in 1520 setting out his concerns about the Church.⁴ Two years later he penned a treatise specifically on marriage.⁵ In the latter he observed that ‘marriage has universally fallen into awful disrepute,’ and hawkers were vending ‘pagan books which treat of nothing but the depravity of womankind and the unhappiness of the estate of marriage’.⁶ This, says Steven Ozment, was ‘a reference to the classical misogynist and anti-marriage sentiments’ mentioned in connection with Jerome and other patristic sources.⁷ Jerome was much in vogue and much quoted, primarily at this point because the Humanists wished to demonstrate his use of the classical texts but in so doing they were to read his strictures on women and marriage and indeed similar material that the early Fathers had written on women, sex and celibacy.⁸ Luther

⁵ “Vom ehelichen Leben” (“On the Estate of Marriage”, 1522).
⁷ Ibid.
⁸ Rice, Saint Jerome in the Renaissance, 13, Ch. 4. Ozment comments: ‘The connection between the celibate ideal and misogyny was revealed in Sebastian
felt parents were ‘buffeted by such sentiments and by the religious propaganda in praise of celibacy; in response they turned their children away from marriage and encouraged them to enter the cloister’. Thus, although there was an enormous historical gap of over a thousand years between Jerome and Luther, monastic life, issues around celibacy, particularly for priests, and the patristic views about marriage and family examined in the last chapter were still salient.

Luther responded practically and effectively. Consequently, ‘what set the efforts of Protestant reformers apart was the merit attributed to marriage and family relative to celibacy’. He denuded the monasteries and nunneries in Germany. The Reformed Church re-wrote the marriage service and instigated new arrangements for marriage from Switzerland to Scotland. Furthermore, by denying the divide between the clergy and the laity, Luther, in Charles Taylor’s memorable phrase, ‘affirmed the ordinary life’ as potentially divine. This meant Franck’s collection of popular German proverbs (1541) which preserved a proverb of St. Jerome to defend the single life: ‘If you find things are going too well, take a wife’ – a proverb Franck paired with another ‘If you take a wife, you get a devil on your back.’ Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled*, 3. Worcester uses Eugene Rice, Peter Burke and the preaching of Camus in France to demonstrate that different saints, like Jerome, were venerated for different aspects according to the values of the culture in which they were ‘perceived in a heroic light’. Thus the cult of Jerome in the Renaissance shifted from ‘an ascetic to a literary Jerome, and then to a Counter-Reformation Jerome who upheld the value of celibacy and papal authority’. Thomas Worcester, *Seventeenth-Century Discourse: France and the Preaching of Bishop Camus*, ed. Luther Martin and Jacques Waardenburg, vol. 38, Religion and Society (New York: Mouton de Grutyer, 1997), 131f.

Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled*, 3. For a further excellent summary of the views about women and marriage in the fifteenth century, see ibid., 10-12.

Ian Hazlett observed that marriage was not on the agenda of the first seven Ecumenical councils, nor, with one exception, ever the subject of a judgement from the See of Peter in the first thousand years or more of Christianity. Doctrine, “The Theology of Marriage Part I,” 21.


Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 211-33. Australian writer, Muriel Porter, has pointed to the extraordinary difference wrought by a married clergy and charted how turbulent this time was in English history. She notes that ‘the changes brought about by this far reaching development … have in fact created the basis of the sexual morality and doctrine now upheld substantially by all churches, including the Roman Catholic. It is the changed pattern that is now the norm; we have forgotten that there was any other. To compound our misunderstanding, we tend to read back into Scripture and other texts the presuppositions we bring from our post-
the inclusion of family life, which ever since the post-Nicene Fathers had been associated with an inferior form of Christian living. In keeping with this stance was the notion of *Beruf*, vocation, which Luther developed and included the offices of mother, father, and child. The family he describes is a ‘nuclear’ family of parents and children, with mutual obligations.14

In *Lectures on Genesis*, Luther declares the household to be instituted by God when He created Eve to be a wife for Adam, and draws a parallel between the establishment of domestic life and that of civil government, suggesting that God ordains both orders for the good of humanity. Luther argues that men and women should come together in order to multiply and it is within the family that Christian virtues will be learned and matured. Therefore he can extend the notion of vocation to parenting, for bearing and raising children is a sacred calling. Married persons, Luther asserts, ‘can do no better work and do nothing more valuable either for God, for Christendom, for all the world, for themselves, and for their children than to bring up their children well’. According to Luther, marriage and family ‘is a divine kind of life’.15

Luther not only lent a different theological emphasis to the significance of marriage but he was concerned to do something about the practical abuses of both marriage and celibacy that were occurring in German society. Therefore his reforms need to be seen as a reaction to those circumstances. On the one hand exaggerated clerical ideals of celibacy and virginity had led to a distrust and prejudice against marriage and family responsibility. Children found themselves placed in the cloister to avoid paying expensive dowries, due to the imbalance of marriageable women, or as a means of punishment for the recalcitrant

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14 Stone notes that Germany was unusual in this respect compared with England at the same period where the ‘Open Lineage’ family still held sway. Stone, *The Family Sex & Marriage*.
or protection for the vulnerable.\textsuperscript{16} Erasmus had mocked the clergy for their hypocrisy in the existence of ‘wives’ and children to the supposedly celibate priests.\textsuperscript{17}

The arrangements for marriage were open to abuse both in the manner in which marriages occurred, or could be voided, and in the lengthy list of theoretically prohibited marriages. Luther caustically refers to the ‘angelic Summa’ that cited eighteen impediments to marriage.\textsuperscript{18} You could buy your way out of these impediments which led Luther to surmise that \textit{pudendae} (female reproductive organs)\textsuperscript{19} were for sale. He proposed a much simpler table of degrees in which marriage is forbidden. Luther wished to end ‘clandestine’ marriages that took place without parental permission or witnesses. He also wanted to prevent marriages being summarily and legally ended when a husband had carnal relations with another woman or entered ‘holy orders’.\textsuperscript{20} He viewed this as promises being rendered null and void.\textsuperscript{21}

Luther’s remedies for these abuses have been immensely significant. Luther stressed the obligations that husbands had towards their wives and families, the need for marriage and the development of a church wedding service. Indeed Luther’s revolutionary advocacy of

\textsuperscript{16} Luther attributed his own entrance in 1505 to his behaviour and his parents’ very strict discipline. Luther later claimed the statistic that only 1 nun in 1000 performed chores happily \textit{mit lust}, and was not coerced. Luther further argued that ‘unchaste’ celibacy was forced upon sons because of their greed and that of their parents in seeking an appointment without work or worry, ‘not with the idea of living in chastity’.

\textsuperscript{17} Erasmus himself was the child of one such union. An anonymous tract written in 1545 by self-critical clergy urged the Council of Trent to allow the clergy to marry and accused the Catholic clergy themselves of undermining marriage and family life by their lax and hypocritical sexual lives and confessional practice.

\textsuperscript{18} The \textit{Summa de casibus conscientiae}. It had 31 editions between 1476 and 1520 and was one of the papal books Luther burned. As well as buying your way out you could use them to annull an unwanted marriage. M.M. Knappen, \textit{Tudor Puritanism: A Chapter in the History of Idealism} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 457.

\textsuperscript{19} A plural noun derived from the verb ‘to be ashamed of’.

\textsuperscript{20} cf. Luther’s concern about Article XXIII ‘Sacerdotal Marriage’ and the annulment of marriages that ‘human regulations cannot abolish’. In Jaroslav Pelikan, \textit{Spirit Versus Structure: Luther and the Insitutions of the Church} (London: Collins, 1968), 108-09.

\textsuperscript{21} Luther, \textit{Three Treatises}, 208.
marriage for clergy after two hundred years of papal prohibition, coupled with his belief that women and men were wasted in the cloisters, and his concern about the abuses and constraints of medieval canon law on marriage formed, as noted above, an integral part of the Reformation itself.

Luther both followed and differed from Augustine. Luther recognised the frailty and weakness of human beings and, like Augustine, the power of sexual desire. He agreed that celibacy was a gift of God but believed it was reserved for the very few. Since God had created and ordained that men and women by nature should be fruitful and multiply, then marriage prevented unchastity, fornication and adultery.

Where Luther departed in particular from the Catholic teaching on marriage was over its status as a 'sacrament'. He discounted this description on theological, biblical and etymological grounds, with the aid of the recent Greek translation of the New Testament by Erasmus. ‘Not only is marriage regarded as a sacrament without the least warrant in scripture, but the very ordinances which extol it as a sacrament have

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22 Luther cites Matt 19.6, in Sola Scriptura fashion: ‘no man shall put husband and wife asunder’ to defend clergy cohabitation as marriage, whatever papal law decreed. Lohse argues that Luther was not simply ‘biblicistic’ in his approach to issues and was firstly a theologian. Bernhard Lohse, Martin Luther: An Introduction to His Life and Work (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1987), 79.

23 For example, Luther’s To the Christian nobility of the German Nation (1520) was ‘one of the most significant documents of the Protestant Reformation’. Luther used part of this treatise to outline issues that impacted on marriage and the family. Inter alia., he contrasted pilgrimages to Rome with the support of married life. ‘Frequently it is evil and misleading, for God has not commanded it. But God has commanded that a man should care for his wife and children, perform the duties of a husband, and serve and help his neighbour’. Luther, Three Treatises, 59, 66f, 108f.

24 Ibid., 220-37. Calvin explores this issue. He attributes the first use of the term ‘sacrament’ for marriage to Gregory and suggests you would have to be drunk to concur. Calvin pondered the irony: ‘Marriage being thus recommended by the title of a sacrament, can it be anything but vertiginous levity afterwards to call it uncleanness, and pollution, and carnal defilement? How absurd is it to debar priests from a sacrament?’ John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, trans. Henry Beveridge, 3 vols., vol. 3 (Edinburgh: The Calvin Translation Society, 1846), 515f.
turned it into a farce’. Luther points out that marriage is not a specific means of God’s grace and since it has existed since the beginning and is found among unbelievers it is not exclusive to the church.

This reactive approach of Luther’s to the social and ecclesiastically dominated mores of his day is, as I have indicated, crucial for critically evaluating Luther’s contribution to the change that occurred in the Christian perception of the family. *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of the Reformation* notes that ‘the dictum that all people should marry to avoid the sins of the flesh hardly served as a functional, positive model of familial life’. Although Luther introduces an important change in the appreciation of family life in asserting unlike Augustine that marriage and the begetting of children is a creation principle, Luther does not entirely lose Augustine’s concern about sex and its link with the Fall. Luther believed that sexual intercourse, while it was not unchaste and could be enjoyed with a good conscience, was nonetheless to some degree sinful. One clear example of this ambivalent view can be found in the early Lutheran and Reformed marriage liturgies, with a large penitential section and rather heavy overtones. Luther himself had ambivalent views about marriage as we
can see above.\textsuperscript{28} Luther, Calvin and Zwingli assumed a degree of affection within the family but their comments on marriage are ‘tepid testimonials at best’.

Luther’s concept of vocation, \textit{Beruf}, also looks at first sight a positive endorsement for the offices of father, mother and children but it too should be read with caution. Luther saw these offices as distinctly earthbound, for whilst they preserved the transcendence of God, they were duties to one’s neighbour to be performed for the sake of this world and not integrally connected to the next.\textsuperscript{29} Luther understood that ‘good works’ are a result of justification. Nevertheless, his emphasis was on righteousness by faith alone (\textit{sola fide}).\textsuperscript{30} For example:

If the woman live chastely, be subject to her husband, care diligently for her home, bring up her children well (which are indeed lofty and distinguished works); nevertheless all these things mean nothing as righteousness before God.\textsuperscript{31}

Vocation is not about what people receive but what they can do for others. Since the Christian must die daily to the clinging old self, God has given all the vocations a ‘divine mandate of “trouble and toil”.’\textsuperscript{32} Luther uses Romans 6 to suggest that vocation is in effect a ‘cross of

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item Secondly, It was ordained for a remedy against sin, and to avoid fornication; that such persons as have not the gift of continency might marry, and keep themselves undefiled members of Christ’s body. Thirdly, It was ordained for the mutual society, help, and comfort, that the one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and adversity. Into which holy estate these two persons present come now to be joined. Therefore if any man can shew any just cause, why they may not lawfully be joined together, let him now speak, or else hereafter for ever hold his peace’. – (Italics mine)

Note that the words ‘holy matrimony’, ‘honourable estate’, and ‘holy estate’ above are so reasonably familiar that they are taken for granted and now arouse no particular interest. This description of marriage, however, would have been revolutionary when it was first used.


\textsuperscript{29} Cf. ‘Here below man must obey rulers, love his wife. “Such works have their place in this life. In the other life we shall not have wife or child, and offices will have come to an end. There all shall be alike. Therefore the law shall not hold sway there”’. Wingren, \textit{Luther on Vocation}, 12, quoting Luther WA 34II, 27.


\textsuperscript{31} Commentary on Galatians, 1535 WA 40\textsuperscript{1}, 543, quoted in Wingren, \textit{Luther on Vocation}, 108.

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid. Quoting Luther WA 2, 734.
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sacrifice’ that identifies people with Christ and is borne for the sake of others. As Bornkamm notes: ‘suffering, suffering, cross, cross, is the Christian’s prerogative – that and no other’. 33 If you want to ask where suffering can be found, says Luther, you need look no further than ‘all stations of life’. 34 Thus whether a servant, a Prince, or a mother who gets up to a crying baby in the night, all have particular crosses to bear.

Furthermore, Wingren notes that, for Luther, God’s ongoing creative work is accomplished through the existence of ‘orders’ such as marriage, government, and so on. These ‘orders’ are designed to serve others and do so, almost despite the natural inclinations of the participants. 35 The following important passage from Wingren highlights this distinction:

Here we come across what for Luther is the decisive contrast between God’s self-giving love and man’s egocentricity. The human being is self-willed, desiring whatever happens shall be to his own advantage. When husband and wife, in marriage, serve one another and their children, this is not due to the heart’s spontaneous and undisturbed expression of love, every day and every hour. Rather, in marriage as an institution something compels the husband’s selfish desires to yield and likewise inhibits the egocentricity of the wife’s heart. At work in marriage is a power which compels self-giving to spouse and children. So it is the “station” itself which is the ethical agent, for it is God who is active through the law on earth. 36

The French anthropologist, Louis Dumont, noted that ‘a close parallelism’ has been observed between ‘the justification of institutions, as results of and remedies to men’s inhumanity’, by the Roman Stoic Seneca, and ‘similar Christian thoughts’. 37 In view of Seneca’s

33 Heinrich Bornkamm, Luther’s World of Thought, trans. Martin H. Bertram (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1965), quoting Luther Ermahnung zum Frieden (1525): 18; 310, 10.
34 Luther, An die Pfarrherren wider den Wucher zu predigen (1540), 404, quoted in Wingren, Luther on Vocation, 29.
35 WA 15, 625.
36 Wingren, Luther on Vocation, 6.
importance to the Christian Humanists and the Humanist influence on Luther (please see the next two sections), it may not be too far fetched to wonder if this contributed to Luther’s thinking.

Karl Barth suggests that the ‘later’ Luther bears part of the responsibility for the difficulties that Evangelicals get into in their endorsement for the ‘order’ of marriage. Barth’s argument is worth quoting in full:

The tradition of Evangelical ethics is not very happy in this regard. It arises from the justifiable conflict which the Reformers had to wage against the Roman doctrine of the superior excellence of celibacy and therefore for the equal status of marriage. But even among the Reformers themselves ... this conflict unfortunately led to the inversion which would have it that marriage, understood mainly and almost exclusively from the standpoint of the procreation of children, is the better state, more pleasing and possibly alone pleasing to God. Christian joy in marriage seemed to know no further limits. As this hardened itself into a doctrine of the universal obligation of marriage on the supposed order of creation Paul Althaus can still write: ‘Marriage is the instrument by which new life is produced – no one has the right to evade the creative will of God, who in our human situation and natural impulses commands us to be fruitful. And marriage is the supreme task of personal fellowship – no one has the right to evade it’ (Grundrisss der Ethik, 1931, p.91). From this standpoint the life of man and woman outside marriage can only be understood as a notable, individualistic exception, which limits but also proves the rule. But when we consider the whole complex of which marriage is the centre and the unmarried state the circumference, there can be no question of pursuing this militant thesis. For it undoubtedly means, contrary to the Evangelical principle, that a human tradition – later grounded in natural law – is set above Scripture.38

Ian Hazlett made the observation, in the background material he prepared for the Church of Scotland report on marriage, that the Reformers liberated marriage ‘from a stigmatised spiritual status - but at a price’.39 He added:

38 CD III.4, 141.
The weakness of Reformation thinking (was to make marriage) almost a religious and social obligation, with little obvious concern for the subjective or internal side of the marital relationship.\textsuperscript{40}

Sacvan Bercovitch’s study \textit{The Making of the American Self} notes that Luther’s principle of \textit{sola fide} (faith alone), ‘one of the furthest-reaching tenets of the Reformation’, also had the effect of removing ‘the center of authority from ecclesiastical institutions and relocating them in the elect soul.’\textsuperscript{41} Luther’s emphasis on the individual arose from his wrestling with a number of matters simultaneously. First, whereas Augustine wavered between the church understood as temporal hierarchy or as the eternal invisible church, the Reformers had no doubt that it was the latter. The point of entry to the invisible church was the relationship between the individual believer and Jesus Christ. Bercovitch refers to the concept of \textit{micro christus} (little Christ) which shifts the grounds of private identity from the institution to the individual, for ‘everyman, individually, is an epitome of Christ … mystical’.\textsuperscript{42} Second, Luther could not easily concede commonality with fellow mankind because mankind was tainted with the sin of Adam; therefore it was essential that the individual rose above the rest.\textsuperscript{43} Third, since the temporal hierarchical church by definition no longer had authority over the individual believer, Luther needed to provide some mechanism for order and cohesion to prevent disorder and fragmentation. For this Luther and his followers were to advocate at least three mechanisms of which two related to the family. Primarily the focus was Christological in the sense that all the believers were One in Christ. The family mechanisms were a combination of the authority of the human father and the joint authority of both parents. This,

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 21 (parenthesis mine).
\textsuperscript{42} Quoted in ibid., 11.
\textsuperscript{43} Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen points out that Luther had a concept of divine and human love but harboured a concern that the latter had a propensity to become ‘perverted’. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, ”The Christian as Christ to the Neighbour’ on Luther’s Theology of Love,” \textit{International Journal of Systematic Theology} 6, no. 2 (2004): 115.
combined with his humanist background, may help explain why Luther deliberately linked civil government and domestic life in his lectures on Genesis, and claimed they were both divinely ordained for the good of humanity.44

In 1528 Luther boasted of bringing order, discipline and obedience to the family, as well as to society as a whole. ‘Among us’, he wrote, ‘there is now knowledge of the Scriptures and also ‘of marriage, civil obedience, the duties of father and mother, father and son, master and servant.’ Feminists have a long list of concerns about this achievement of Luther’s, particularly where women are concerned, and specifically in relation to the family. 45 Martin Luther compared himself to Aquinas in being steeped in both Aristotle and St. Augustine, which, combined with his monastic past, is likely to have had some impact on his views about women.46 Luther’s own direct comments about women

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44 F.D. Maurice argued that Luther inherited the problem of the individual, that he struggled with the issue and, unable to overcome it, resolved that the safest position of the individual was not in rebellion but in allegiance – the ‘subjection of the whole soul to a righteous and divine government.’ Frederick Denison Maurice, The Kingdom of Christ, or Hints to a Quaker Respecting the Principles, Constitution, and Ordinances of the Catholic Church, 2nd. ed., 2 vols., vol. 1 (London: MacMillan & Co., 1838).

45 Merry Weisner points out that the range of opinions about Luther’s views on women, and how much impact he actually had, is very broad. She adds that there is ‘ammunition enough’ in Luther’s ‘writings to support any position’. Merry Weisner, "Luther and Women: The Death of Two Marys," in Feminist Theology: A Reader, ed. Ann Loades (London: SPCK, 1990).

46 Weisner is convinced that Luther ‘essentially agrees with Aristotle and the classical tradition’ using the following quotation in her evidence: ‘The man has been given so much dominion over women, that she must name herself according to him. For that reason, a woman adopts her husband’s names and not vice versa. This has happened because of God’s gracious will so that she stays under her husband’s rule, because she is too weak to rule herself’. Martin Luthers sämmtliche Werke, 33, 112 in ibid. Luther acknowledged the impact of tradition when he addressed students in 1531 ‘We old men soaked in the pestilent doctrine of the Papists which we have taken into our very bones and marrow … cannot even today in the great light of truth, cast that pernicious opinion out of our minds. For habits acquired in tender years cling with the utmost persistence’. Quoted in G.R. Elton, Reformation Europe: 1517-1559, ed. J.H. Plumb, Fontana History of Europe (London: Fontana Press, 1963), 210. Barth notes that the Reformers adopted an ‘eclecticism’ and a ‘freedom … vis à vis the great theological authority of the early church’, and that Luther himself acknowledged his qualified admiration for the patristics and the scholastics. Barth, John Calvin, 20, citing Table Talk, EA 62, 109 & 14.
demonstrate opposite extremes.\textsuperscript{47} His insistence upon marriage, and the responsibility to bear children, combined biological and divine dualistic determinism,\textsuperscript{48} deprived women of what was sometimes the sanctuary and liberation of nunneries and celibacy,\textsuperscript{49} and subjected them to a male head of the household whose added religious responsibilities made her dependent upon him for her soul as well as her body.\textsuperscript{50} This effectively meant oppressed wives could not turn to the church or the priest and were even more vulnerable to an abusive husband.\textsuperscript{51} Arguably the ‘office of vocation’ and ‘cross of self-sacrifice’ fell far more heavily on women, expected primarily to be wives and mothers, and rendered them susceptible to exploitation in this regard.\textsuperscript{52}

In Weisner’s words: ‘Woman has become wife, the two Mary’s have been replaced by a Martha’.\textsuperscript{53} Hampson contends that in Luther’s Christian anthropology there was also a collateral loss of the feminist sense of a ‘connectedness’ with others, of continuity and of growth.\textsuperscript{54}

\textsuperscript{47} Weisner has several contrasting quotes, here are just two, the first of which is by no means the most graphic: ‘Women are created for no other purpose than to serve men and be their helpers. If women grow weary and even die whilst bearing children, that doesn’t harm anything. Let them bear children to death; they are created for that’; and: ‘There is nothing better on earth than a woman’s love’. \textit{Martin Luthers sämtliche Werke}, Erlangen and Frankfurt, 1826-57, 20, 84; 61, 212 in Weisner, "Luther and Women."

\textsuperscript{48} Weisner found that the word Luther used ‘again and again’ was ‘natural’ both in the sense of created human nature and God ordained order. Ibid.

\textsuperscript{49} Ozment, \textit{When Fathers Ruled}, 1.

\textsuperscript{50} Todd, \textit{Christian Humanism}.

\textsuperscript{51} ‘But if a woman forsakes her office and assumes authority over her husband, she is no longer doing her own work, for which she was created, but a work that comes from her own fault and from evil. For God did not create this sex for ruling, and therefore they never rule successfully’. \textit{Luthers Works}, American edition, Philadelphia, 1955-, 15, 130 in Weisner, "Luther and Women," 126.

\textsuperscript{52} Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza discusses this in regard to the use of Biblical texts: ‘Feminist-neutral or even feminist-positive texts of the Bible can also function to reinforce patriarchal structures if they are proclaimed or taught in order to assure patriarchal behaviour and inculcate oppressive values. For example, if a battered woman is told to take up her cross and suffer as Jesus did in order to save her marriage, then the feminist-neutral biblical motives are used to reinforce patriarchal values. Similarly, in a culture that socializes primarily women to altruism and selfless love, the biblical commandment of love and the call for service can be misused to sustain women’s patriarchal exploitation’. Fiorenza, \textit{Bread Not Stone}, 18.

\textsuperscript{53} Weisner, "Luther and Women," 134.

\textsuperscript{54} Hampson, \textit{Theology and Feminism}.
Furthermore, says Hampson, from a theological perspective, Luther’s God ‘conceived as exterior, other and in apposition to the self, is a striking instance of male thought-forms’.\textsuperscript{55} Luther’s opposition to Mariology and his stress on the Son of God, Jesus Christ and on the Father risks transgressing the self-imposed transcendent rule of the post-Nicene Fathers that God has no gender. This left instead a \textit{de facto} engendered male God, coupled with theologically endorsed male heads of families, and has led to considerable repercussions both for the perpetuation of patriarchy and how God may be viewed.\textsuperscript{56} Ann Douglas, for instance, describes twentieth century feminist theologians attempting to go ‘Beyond God the Father’.\textsuperscript{57}

The prominence Luther affords the family can be seen as a reaction to ecclesiastical and societal abuses of marriage and celibacy, and to the need to create new sources of authority and order. As just reviewed, this new ‘family’ structure has not necessarily been beneficial for women, and has impacted on theology. It is noticeable that despite seeing family as a ‘divine form of life’ Luther’s theology was more related to marriage than to the family, and to the structure and demands of the family rather than the quality of its relational content. He ends up continuing the Augustinian penchant for self-examination with the individual soul before God and thus unintentionally perpetuating individualism\textsuperscript{58} and, in Weber’s thesis, paving the way for the Puritans and for capitalism.\textsuperscript{59}

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 223. Hampson refers to her \textit{Theology and Feminism} (Oxford Basil Blackwell, 1990) ch.5.

\textsuperscript{56} Which instantly brings Mary Daly’s much quoted aphorism to mind that ‘if God is male, then the male is God’. Thomas Cobbett’s \textit{Discourse} (1654) advised children to ‘Present your Parents to your minds, as bearing the image of God’s Fatherhood, and that also will help your filial awe and Reverence to them’. Quoted in Loades, \textit{Feminist Theology}. 19.


\textsuperscript{58} Daphne Hampson contends that Luther may not have had the term ‘self’, or the ‘post-Enlightenment conception of the “self”’. Furthermore, she acknowledges that for Luther human sinfulness equalled being caught up in oneself (\textit{incurvatus in se}).
The Renaissance Humanists

The Humanist movement, of the late fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which began in Italy and spread across Europe, may appear to be the odd one out in a line up of Christian thinkers and writers on the family. The reason for their inclusion, however, is precisely because of their impact not only on Luther, but also on the Puritans, particularly on the subject of the family. Furthermore, this influence of the Humanists provides the key to understanding why, surprisingly, the Roman Catholic Church changed its attitude towards the family, if not towards clerical celibacy, in almost lock step with the Reformation.60

What marked out the Humanists was a combination of re-discovery of the ancient Greek and Roman philosophical texts,61 a particular pedagogy that favoured rationality, and an intense interest in humanity, hence their name. The subjects they studied, Greek and Latin grammar, rhetoric, history, poetry and moral philosophy, became known as the ‘Humanities’. They were in part reacting to the structures and strictures of scholasticism, and in turn they became the precursors

Hampson quotes Pannenberg in suggesting that Luther’s ‘profound insight’ was that a Christian lives outside themselves, (*extra se*, or ecstatically) in Christ and in their neighbour. Pannenberg suggests that neither Melancthon nor Calvin realized that ‘the very foundation of the traditional concept of the personal self was shaken by Luther’s discovery concerning the nature of faith’. “Freedom and the Lutheran Reformation”, Theology Today, 38:3 (Oct. 1981), Hampson, *Theology and Feminism*, 216.

61 The *Oxford Encyclopaedia of the Reformation* makes the point that it was not wholly true to cast the Catholic Church as anti-marriage and anti-family. Hillerbrand, *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of the Reformation*, 93.

Petrarch, for example, was in holy orders, and was known as the ‘Father of Humanism’ for his ‘devotion to Greek and Roman scrolls’. In 1345/6 he found letters of Cicero that had been lost for 1200 years. In 1417 Poggio Bracciolini discovered *De Rerum Natura* by Lucretius, on Epicureanism, which had also been lost for centuries. Poggio also recovered 225 letters of Jerome. *http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renaissance_humanism* (accessed 23.05.14). They prized the patristic classical erudition ‘before Roman eloquence was corrupted (as they believed) by Gothic barbarism’. 84. Ferguson defined ‘humanism’ as: ‘The conscious reinterpretation of the literature and history of Greek and Rome, of *literae humaniores* ... made within the specific historical context of a society in the process of transition from a medieval to a modern form’. Wallace K. Ferguson *Renaissance Studies* (New York, 1970).
of the Age of Discovery and the Enlightenment. They also scorned the corruption of the medieval Church, by comparison with ‘the intellectual, political and social achievements of ancient civilization’. In their view, ‘both Roman Stoics and primitive Christians evinced more purity of life and a more godly social and political ethic than the medieval church had achieved’. ‘Their highest regard’, found Margo Todd, was for the Roman Stoics who ‘put scholarship to the service of individual and social reformation’. In Dumont’s words: ‘Seneca was felt as a closely related neighbour’.

The development of large scale printing in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was as significant as the introduction of the ‘World Wide Web’ in the late twentieth century. It made the rediscovered ancient Graeco-Roman material, and the patristic works like Jerome’s, much more accessible. It also enabled the dissemination of new Greek, Latin and vernacular translations of the Bible, together with the humanists’ own works, such as Erasmus’ Enchiridion. The mix of sources, from Biblical to Graeco-Roman and patristic, can be clearly seen.

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62 Here, one felt no weight of the supernatural pressing on the human mind, demanding homage and allegiance. Humanity — with all its distinct capabilities, talents, worries, problems, possibilities — was the centre of interest. It has been said that medieval thinkers philosophized on their knees, but, bolstered by the new studies, they dared to stand up and to rise to full stature’. "Humanism". The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy, Second Edition. Cambridge University Press. 1999, p.397, quoted in Rice, Saint Jerome in the Renaissance, 13. For an assessment of the impact of humanism on western culture and its deficiencies, please see John Carroll, The Wreck of Western Culture: Humanism Revisited (Melbourne: Scribe Publications, 2004).

63 Todd, Christian Humanism, 22.

64 Ibid.

65 Ibid., 27-39.


67 Enchiridion means Handbook. The full title was Enchiridion militis Christiani (Handbook of a Christian soldier) and was intended to encourage Christians to live out their faith rather than hypocritically go through the motions. Raymond (ed) Himelick, The Enchiridion of Erasmus (Indiana University Press, Bloomington,, 1963), 72-83.

68 See for example chapter 7 on the ‘Inner and Outer Man’ and chapter 8 on ‘the Three Parts of Man: Spirit, Soul and Flesh’, ibid.
Notwithstanding the brilliance of Abelard, Anselm and Aquinas, the Renaissance Humanists, like Erasmus, viewed ‘the centuries between St. Augustine and their own day ... (as) uniformly dark, barbaric and intellectually stagnant’.\textsuperscript{69} Whether Christian, humanist or both, they wished to do away with the darkness of tradition, redesign individual, ecclesiastical, political and social behaviour and return to the original sources and authoritative texts of the Bible, the Church Fathers and Greek and Roman moralists, especially Stoicism. Margo Todd’s thesis is that having this syncretic reading matter in common eradicated future possible differences between Northern Catholic and Protestant family upbringing.\textsuperscript{70} Her detailed study of publications, private libraries and student university lecture notes is particularly important in this regard. She examined the transmission of humanist ideas in literature, sermons, and at University and concluded that ‘it was a common, humanist approach to social order ... which established the consensus of Catholics and Protestants for most of the sixteenth century on the nature and aims of family life’.\textsuperscript{71}

In her study of hundreds of notebooks, ‘commonplace books’, from students at Trinity College, Cambridge, Todd discovered an eclectic and critical appreciation from Aristotle to Augustine, Pythagoras to Plutarch, with Virgil, Ovid, Cicero and Seneca, studied on subjects that included love, family, adultery, education and justice preferably read in the original language. In fact, if these commonplace
\begin{footnotesize}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{69} Todd, \textit{Christian Humanism}, 22.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{70} Thus Erasmus produced not only a new Greek New Testament but also edited and published Plutarch, Cicero’s \textit{De Officiis} and Seneca’s complete works. Thomas Lupsett’s \textit{Exhortation to younge men} (1534) included a reading list of the Bible, Plato’s \textit{Republic}, Aristotle’s \textit{Politics}, Xenophon’s \textit{Oeconomia}, and Erasmus’ \textit{Enchiridion} (to be learned by heart). Thomas More’s \textit{Utopia} deserves mention. As mentioned in chapter 2, Haidacher produced an early English version of Chrysostom’s \textit{Vainglory and the Education of Children}.}
\end{footnotesize}
books are anything to go by, the theological element was relatively subordinate. Furthermore, following Erasmus’s dictum that to have 'brought up a child well is an office belonging to the father and the mother more than to have begotten it or borne it', students mined these sources for advice on parenting. In turn these ideas were reproduced for the Puritan Heads of families concerned with the instruction of their children in godly behaviour. William Gouge’s seventeen hundred page Domesticall Duties was 'liberally sprinkled with ancient and humanist authorities'. Nehemiah Wallington, for example, recorded:

This year, 1622, my family increasing and now having a wife, a child, a manservant and a maidservant, and thus having charge of so many souls, I then bought a copy of Mr. Gouge’s Book of Domesticall Duties that so every one of us may learn and know our duties and honour God every one in his place where God has set him...  

The ‘place where God has set him’ echoes Luther’s ‘stations of life’. Both owe their origin to a Neoplatonic idea, found in Augustine and throughout the Renaissance, known as the ‘Great Chain of Being’. This cosmological theory, with elements of Plato and Aristotle, systematized by Plotinus, posits a hierarchy or gradation of forms, starting with God and working down. In effect, each person in society has a set role that needs to be fulfilled. Irrespective of any individual merit, or of inequality, the harmony of the universe requires their respective participation. It is clear, from their study and output, that Humanists including Luther, were deeply imbued with this notion.  


I examine the philosophical basis of ‘the Chain of Being’ and ‘Substance ontology’ in the next chapter. Please see pp.224ff.

For example, Sir Thomas Elyot wrote, in The Governor in 1531, ‘the common weal (welfare) is a body living compact of sundry estates and degrees of men’. Chaos, he argued, would erupt if that order were disturbed by the introduction of equality. Quoted in David Roberts, Paternalism in Early Victorian England, ed. J.F.C. Harrison and Stephen Yeo, Croom Helm Social History Series (London: Croom Helm Ltd., 1979), 12.

Kathryn Tanner states that ‘chain of being’ and ‘chain of command’ hierarchies were ‘much the same’. ‘God’s influence on and relation to the created world proceed by way of superiors and subordinates’. She cites Luther as he pictured a
as Todd notes, the very fact that Humanists were advocates for political, ecclesiastical and social change ‘ultimately spelled the defeat of a model in which the social order, like the cosmological, is a given, a matter of being’.76

In respect of the family, the mixture of Graeco-Roman philosophy with patristic sources in the humanist reading material not surprisingly produced some other odd results. For example, the Catholic humanist and reformer Juan Luis Vives (d.1540) wrote a famous tract in praise of marriage as ‘a community of life and indissoluble companionship’,77 but also ‘recoiled from sexual intercourse as a “beastly activity” that turned the mind away from spiritual contemplation.’78 He somehow manages to incorporate Jerome’s misogyny with Euripides’ praise of marriage and quotes from Homer as easily as from St. Paul or Matthew’s gospel.79 He also revised his work several times clearly finding it a difficult subject to pitch, not only for his readers, but also given the rather radical differences in his source material. By contrast, John Colet (d. 1519), an English pre-Reformation humanist, scholar and priest, took an entirely opposite tack. He believed celibacy was the ideal for all, and marriage solely a concession to human weakness.80 Like Augustine, he thought the ‘day of the Lord’ would come sooner if there were no procreation.
Colet’s friend and biographer was Desiderius Erasmus. Although a Roman Catholic priest and theologian, Erasmus wrote a monograph in praise of marriage *Encomium Matrimonii*, prior to Vives, with a vision of married life that was ‘positive, warm, and attractive’. Erasmus is known as the ‘Prince of the Humanists’ and he claimed this essay was only supposed to demonstrate the art of rhetoric to one of his pupils. The contrast in theme with Gregory of Nyssa’s praise of virginity, however, is evident. Erasmus had a further motive. Although Chrysostom and Augustine had felt that the population was enough and there was no need to replenish the earthly City, Erasmus was concerned at the expansion of the Turkish Empire and thought celibacy inhibited the relative growth of the European population.

‘Marriage was portrayed by the Elizabethan humanist Edmund Tilney as something akin to civic duty, a necessity for the preservation of the realm’. Todd points out that it was not Protestant theology that underpinned this belief but the Aristotelian concept of the household as the essential building brick of the state. She adds ‘Christian humanism is responsible for the combination of Roman civic mindedness and Greek notions of the family as the natural basic unit of society’. Todd suggests further evidence that the source was humanism can be found in the embracing of the family by the Counter-Reformation Catholic

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81 Porter, Sex, Marriage and the Church: Patterns of Change, 41. Although Dutch, Erasmus was invited to England and was Professor of Divinity at Queen’s College, Cambridge.

82 Gregory describing his own work: ‘the entire discourse ... tends to be an encomium of virginity’. Deferrari, Saint Gregory of Nyssa, 7 (my emphasis).

83 Ozment, When Fathers Ruled, 7.

84 Todd, Christian Humanism, 101-02. Sir Edmund Tilney was the Master of Revels, or official censor, to Queen Elizabeth and King James during virtually the whole of Shakespeare’s output.

85 Ibid., 101.
church, under the influence of the same humanist Renaissance resources.\textsuperscript{86}

\textbf{The Puritans}

'Of the making of many books on the Puritans there is no end - a testament to their significance in Anglo-American culture'.\textsuperscript{87} There are questions about the exact parameters in defining 'Puritan' and 'The Puritans'.\textsuperscript{88} They spanned two centuries – the sixteenth and seventeenth - and two continents, Europe (principally the British Isles and the Netherlands) and, significantly, New England. They variously comprised Church of England clergy, Cambridge academics and, later, Dissenting, Separatist or Nonconformist ministers and laity. They are closely associated with the American Pilgrim Fathers and with Oliver Cromwell and the English Civil War. These were turbulent times ecclesiastically and politically, as existing structures were challenged and either changed, or resisted change. Lawrence Stone has suggested that the Puritans have disproportionately dominated our understanding of the Family during that historical period solely because of their zeal and the sheer volume of material in books, sermons and diaries that they produced.\textsuperscript{89} Whilst Stone is entering this caveat to minimize inaccurate historical reporting of the era, the scale of their efforts assists rather than detracts from the present task of comprehending their support for the family, and any theological and philosophical underpinning for this enthusiasm.\textsuperscript{90}

\textsuperscript{86} Pope Paul IV made all of Erasmus’ works anathema in 1559, after the Counter-Reformation had begun, and 23 years after his death, but by then it was too late and there were also a wealth of other sources that were being studied and used. 
\textsuperscript{87} Coen, Charles Lloyd.
\textsuperscript{88} Todd, Christian Humanism, 10, n25; Stone, The Family Sex & Marriage in England 1500-800, 16.
\textsuperscript{90} The one exception that proves the rule is the absence of much material on sex. Anne Gilmour-Bryson’s 2007 review of more recent source texts in medieval marriage, family and sexuality points out that until the early 1990s medieval sexuality was an ‘unusual subject’ with few printed resources. Anne Gilmour-
Christopher Hill, the ‘master’ of all the historians of the period, has identified the Puritans with the phenomenon he calls ‘the spiritualization of the household’. Hill portrays the Puritans as the creators of an exalted notion of the family in the role of a fundamental spiritual unit of society. The Puritans were so named for their efforts to continue the Reformation. In this the family featured highly as a ‘little commonwealth’, set against traditional forms of order and relationship, and as a ‘little church’ challenging the notions of ecclesiastical hierarchy. The marriage relationship was prized, along with an expectation of household religious education and discipline, and arguably an increased role for women, albeit within the household.

Rarely is it suggested by historians such as Hill, or Fletcher, or sociologists like Weber, that the Puritans might have gone beyond either the Bible, or their immediate Reformed heritage, for their ideas. Margo Todd’s research, though, as just reviewed, suggests that the key to understanding the Puritans’ solution is to be found not just in the Bible, or in the Reformation, but also in Renaissance humanism with its combination of philosophical and patristic sources and desire for change. To do otherwise, suggests Todd, is to wrench the Puritans ‘not only from their social, political and ecclesiological mainstream, but from their intellectual mooring as well’. Todd argues that ‘as social theorists they were instead a vitally important group of popularizers and practitioners of earlier ideas – more properly associated with the

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92 See, for instance: Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, 89f. Weber argued that the Puritan Reformers were only interested in the salvation of souls and not in social or ethical reform because he did not sufficiently take into account the influence of Humanism. Anthony Fletcher was professor of history at Essex University. There is no mention of the Humanist influence in the following chapter. Fletcher, "Family, Marriage and Children in Protestant England."

93 Trueman also refers to the significance of the Patristic writers and the Humanists upon the English Reformers. Trueman, *Luther's Legacy*, 31-53.

Renaissance than with the Reformation’. Knappen further notes the association between Puritanism and asceticism and its connection with the patristics.

If Hill is correct that a concentration on the Family is significantly associated with the Puritans, then one overriding reason may be that the Family functioned as a powerful solution to the problems they were dealing with. Charles Taylor cites Michael Walzer in believing that one of the driving motives in the specifically Calvinist and ‘Puritan brand of reformation was horror at disorder’. The task, therefore, for the Puritans, was to underline the importance of the family, research for suitable models of how it might work best in practice and provide evidence for their views: hence their astonishing output. The Puritan William Perkins, for example, thus uses Aristotle to make his case that the family is a ‘seminary of all other societies (which righteously governed), was a direct means for the good ordering both of church and commonwealth’.

Looming large over the Puritans was the pragmatic theologian and Reformer, John Calvin (1509-1564). William Haller noted:

The Puritans were Calvinists . . . Calvinism supplied a current formulation of historic doctrine in lucid, trenchant terms, strikingly supported by the success of the state which Calvin’s genius has called into being in Geneva.  

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95 Ibid., 16.
96 Knappen, Tudor Puritanism: A Chapter in the History of Idealism, Ch. XXIII, 424-41.
97 Taylor, Sources of the Self, 229.
98 ‘It followeth that the holy and righteous government thereof, is a direct means for the good ordering both of Church and Commonwealth, ... to prepare and dispose men to the keeping of order in other governments. For this first society is as it were a school, wherein are taught and learned the principles of authority and subjection.’ William Perkins, Workes (Cambridge, 1618), vol. 3, 669, 698; quoted in Todd, Christian Humanism, 101.
99 William Haller, The Rise of Puritanism, 2nd. ed. (New York: Harper Torchbook, 1957), 8. Calvin was well known to the Puritans through his later influential student, John Knox, through Calvin’s works, which were widely read among ministers and academics, and through his translated Geneva Bible, which preceded the King James’ version by half a century and was prevalent in Elizabethan England, the Scottish Reformation and further exported to America by the 20,000 New England Pilgrims.
Calvin was a Humanist, who found himself ranged against the more conservative scholastic theology of the Sorbonne. He was also an academic versed in jurisprudence, Greek and Latin, Hellenistic and scholastic philosophy, and the patristics. His first published book was a commentary on Seneca, whose philosophical works, as I have already mentioned, ‘played a large role in the revival of Stoic ideas in the Renaissance’. Barth notes that Calvin’s book had only three biblical quotations in a ‘sea of classical references’. Paul Helm’s more recent study of Calvin’s ideas argues that the relation of Calvin ‘to his forbears ... is in the process of being severely reshaped, if not totally dismantled’. Helm refers to the ‘cultural air that (Luther and) Calvin breathed’, adding:

The days are past when Calvin could be seen as a purely ‘biblical’ Reformer, a theologian of ‘the Word’. As if he wrote his Institutes and his voluminous (biblical) commentaries, preached and carried on controversy, in a way that was uncontaminated either by Renaissance or Scholastic influences...

Anthony Lane carefully researched the patristic sources Calvin drew on. Lane found that in the Institutes Calvin cited Chrysostom 35 times, Augustine (over 450), Gregory Nazianzus (3), Basil (3), Gregory

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101 Barth, John Calvin, 136-7, 42. Barth believes it was published before Calvin’s conversion, which he dates as 1532. G. R. Elton suggests 1533-4 for Calvin’s ‘conversion in some form’, Elton, Reformation Europe, 212.
103 Ibid., 364. My parenthesis but Helm earlier included Luther in a similar phrasing.
104 Ibid., 4. (parenthesis mine). Barth reached a similar conclusion but in respect of the occurrence and influence of political events at the time, in a memorable passage to his Reformed theological students: ‘Naturally everything that takes place in history, absolutely everything, has a human face, and the more closely we look, a not very edifying face. Educated people like ourselves are much too easily tempted to forget that this is true of all the processes of history and to regard what happened in the studies of Humanists and theologians during the Reformation years as something pure and detached and free’. Barth, John Calvin, 251 (emphasis mine).
105 Anthony N. S. Lane, John Calvin: Student of the Church Fathers (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999). This was not entirely easy for, as Lane notes, Calvin was under no obligation to cite his sources, he made use of secondary compilations and, often under time pressure, he did not always double check the accuracy of his quotations or citations. His commentaries showed a higher degree of accuracy in these regards.
of Nyssa (81), Hilary of Poitiers (7), Irenaeus (11), Jerome (26), and Tertullian (11).\footnote{106} Calvin’s single largest contemporary source was Luther. Calvin’s main source, of course, was biblical material, with Paul a particular favourite. Lane is careful to point out that the fact Calvin cites patristic, or philosophical, sources did not necessarily mean they had influenced him. Calvin himself drew distinctions with those he called ‘the philosophers’.\footnote{107} Nevertheless, Calvin’s humanist education, his knowledge of Seneca, Hellenistic and scholastic philosophy, and his indebtedness to patristic sources, especially Augustine, deserve to be factored into fully comprehending Calvin’s expressed views, and his influence on the Puritans. This is as true for his grasp of the Trinity, as for matters to do with ethics and the family.\footnote{108} Furthermore, as I will seek to show in due course, Calvin holds particular relevance for understanding Karl Barth.

Augustine, Jerome and Luther’s influence can be seen in Calvin’s assessment that: ‘The mantle of marriage exists to sanctify what is defiled and profane; it serves to cleanse what used to be soiled and dirty in itself.’\footnote{109} Like Luther, he saw marriage ‘as a divinely ordained institution that should be performed in the church’.\footnote{110} Also, as with Luther, it is possible to sense the question: how should this vital family unit be ‘righteously governed’? Take, for instance, his commentary on I Cor. 11.7f: ‘forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God; but the

\footnotesize{\begin{itemize}
\item \footnote{106} Ibid., 55-59.
\item \footnote{107} For instance: Calvin notes in his commentary on Ephesians 4.19 ‘And lest we should adopt the opinion of philosophers, that ignorance, which leads into mistakes, is only an incidental evil …’ John Calvin, Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians, trans. William Pringle (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1957), 292.
\item \footnote{108} Ronald Wallace is an example of the tendency Helm is criticising, when Wallace claimed that Calvin ‘derived both his ethics and his theology directly from Holy Scripture’, with no reference made to any other possible sources. Ronald Wallace, S., Calvin, Geneva and the Reformation: A Study of Calvin as Social Reformer, Pastor and Theologian (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1988), 259.
\item \footnote{109} Quoted in Browning, Green, and Jr., Sex, Marriage, & Family in World Religions, 132.
\end{itemize}}
woman is the glory of man...’ Calvin states that the following verses establish two arguments:

For the pre-eminence, which he had assigned to men above women. The first is, that as the woman derives her origin from the man, she is therefore inferior in rank. The second is, that as the woman was created for the sake of the man, she is therefore subject to him, as the work ultimately produced is to its cause.112

Calvin makes it clear in respect of verse 7 that it is both men and women who are created in God’s image, and that both sexes need reforming. Nevertheless, Calvin, goes on to claim that Paul, in this passage, is referring to ‘order’ in marriage, noting that God has conferred: ‘superiority over the woman. In this superior order of dignity the glory of God is seen, as it shines forth in every kind of superiority’.113 Tom Torrance is convinced that for Calvin it is the mutual society of men and women that image God, quoting Calvin’s sermon on Job 10.7f: ‘the image of God is imprinted on us ... because men are born to have some common order and society among themselves’,114 I am not convinced that Calvin saw this in quite the same way. He does appear to be extracting more from, and reading more into, the texts than may be there. Francis Watson, for example, has a very different reading of this passage that casts significant doubt on Calvin’s interpretation.115 Furthermore, both the Corinthian’s commentary and the Job sermon can be seen in an entirely different light when the Neoplatonic ‘chain of being’ is considered as a possible factor in Calvin’s conceptualization.116 This would account for the

112 Ibid., 357. (Emphases are taken from this English edition).
113 Ibid.
114 Thomas F. Torrance, Calvin’s Doctrine of Man (London: Lutterworth Press, 1949), 45.
115 Watson, Towards a Pauline Sexual Ethic, 40-89. Watson argues that this passage is not about marriage at all but about the particular place of women in the church. In fairness, Watson notes that Paul himself comes ‘perilously close to losing sight of his true theme – the oneness of man and woman in Christ’, 71.
116 Torrance, Calvin’s Doctrine of Man. Please see pp.176-77, 227, 273. Evidence of other importation can be adduced. For example, Calvin refers to Adam as the image of God in having ‘affections in harmony with reason’ (Commentary on
otherwise unusual last phrase above: ‘as the work ultimately produced is to its cause’. Torrance does not appear to notice any such connection or influence.

Calvin’s use of ‘image’ is also instructive. God is referred to as ‘he’ and seems singular in the passages mentioned above. Calvin claims Pauline support in the Institutes for stating:

I make the image of God to consist in righteousness and true holiness ... that the nearer that anyone approaches in resemblance to God the more does the image of God appear in him.\(^\text{117}\)

Furthermore, Torrance believes there is a Thomist relation of ‘proportionality between the imago-relation between Christ and the Father on the one hand and the imago-relation between the woman and man on the other hand’.\(^\text{118}\) Torrance summarises Calvin:

When the image is defaced (by sin), the order of nature is inverted, and decay and ruin set in. The life and integrity of man depend on keeping the divinely appointed order: complete dependence on God the heavenly Father.\(^\text{119}\)

The corollary of this line of thinking is that there would be a lack of integrity, or sin, if a wife did not conform to the ‘divinely appointed order’.\(^\text{120}\) Furthermore, the image both in respect of God and

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humankind is primarily individual: I explore this further in the next chapter.

In his chapter “The Reinforcement of Patriarchy” Lawrence Stone noted that ‘a new interest in children, coupled with the Calvinist premise of Original Sin, gave fathers an added incentive to ensure the internalized submissiveness of their children’.121 A combination of reasons drove this interest, including Calvin’s Augustinian belief in inherited depravity arising from the Fall.122 As Sir Simmonds D’Ewes wrote in his commonplace book: ‘Parents are ... especiallie bound to instrinct the children, pray for them and traine them up in the feare of God because they drew original corruption from their loines.’123

A further factor was the considerable proportion of the population who were children. Diarmaid MacCulloch notes that in England those aged fourteen and under were 37% of the population at the highest in 1556 and 29% at the lowest in 1671. He comments that this large proportion was ‘a great incentive for the society on either hinderer’. Women’s role in the household and the education of children was also important, but Todd sums up: ‘It must not be concluded that the Puritan marriage relationship was actually egalitarian, or that Puritan women were completely “liberated” from the control of their spouses’. Todd, Christian Humanism, 114-15. Cf. Fletcher, “Family, Marriage and Children in Protestant England,” 109-16. Fletcher points out that the Puritans did make use of ‘a doctrine of mutuality in marriage’ based on texts such as Col. 3.18-20 and Eph. 5.21-33. Fletcher found, however, that none of the Puritan clerics were willing to go all the way with Paul in his analogy of Christ and the church. Fletcher adds: ‘The fact is Paul was too radical for these conservative men. The sticking point, which prevented them opening their minds to a proper mutuality, was their conviction that women were inferior’. (114).

121 Stone, The Family Sex & Marriage, 151.; Augustine, City of God, XIII, Ch. 3. 122 Instit 3. 3. 9; Confessions, I, Ch. 7. Barth commented that Calvin was ‘much more sceptical than Luther. For him the little heaven of fathers, mothers and children lay much more under the shadow of original sin’. Barth, John Calvin, 86. 123 Cited in J.T. Cliffe, The Puritan Gentry: The Great Puritan Families of Early Stuart England (London: Routledge Kegan Paul), 69. Erasmus pointed out to the Duke of Cleves that whilst the ‘pagan philosophers’ were aware of children’s propensity to evil, they were ‘unable to penetrate the real cause, and it was left to Christian theology to teach the truth that since Adam, the first man of the human race, a disposition to evil has been deeply engrained in us’. Nevertheless, added Erasmus, ‘corrupting relationships’ and ‘misguided education’ also have ‘a part to play’. Erasmus, 1529, quoted in Todd, Christian Humanism, 30.
side of the Protestant and Catholic divide to emphasize and enforce hierarchy and obedience, both in rhetorical terms and with the rod.'\textsuperscript{124}

Margo Todd reflected that the whole tenor of Puritans’ classical education lent towards achieving the common weal ‘not by authoritarian means, but by inculcating virtuous behaviour in the individual citizen’. She quickly adds: ‘This non-exercise of authoritarian means of course did not extend to children’.\textsuperscript{125} ‘Training up a child in the way that they should go’ meant ‘if you spare the rod you spoil the child’.\textsuperscript{126} William Gouge, mentioned earlier, recommended the use of stripes and blows ‘to helpe the good nurture and education of children’.\textsuperscript{127} For the Puritans this was all the more important, ‘for it was only by the mass conversion of the younger generation that they could hope to create or perpetuate the godly society to which they aspired’.\textsuperscript{128} Whilst some parents were affectionate and careful in this discipline and salvation of their children’s souls, many were not so.\textsuperscript{129}

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\begin{quote}
Q: Who are meant by father and mother?  
A: All our superiors, whether in family, school, church and commonwealth  
Q: What is the honour due to them?  
A: Reverence, obedience, and (when I am able) recompense.
\end{quote}

Stone, \textit{The Family Sex & Marriage}, 152. ‘If thy children be rebel and will not bow them low / If any of them misdo neither curse nor blow / But take a smart rod and beat them in a row / Till they cry mercy and their guilt well know’. Quoted in Pinchbeck and Hewitt, \textit{Children in English Society Volume I; from Tudor Times to the Eighteenth Century}, I, 15.  
125 Todd, \textit{Christian Humanism}.  
126 Proverbs 22.6 & 13.24.  
128 Stone, \textit{The Family Sex & Marriage}, 176. Richard Greenham wrote ‘if ever we would have the church of God to continue among us, we must bring it into our households and nourish it in our families’. Quoted in Fletcher, "Family, Marriage and Children in Protestant England."  
129 Stone has a number of accounts by adults of the punishments, whippings and privations they suffered as children at the hands of their parents. Today, their recollections would be described as having suffered physical and emotional abuse. Stone, \textit{The Family Sex & Marriage}, 154-77. Fletcher notes the adverse impact that this also had on school physical discipline, particularly for boys. Fletcher, "Family, Marriage and Children in Protestant England," 122-23, 27-28. Todd assembles some contrary contemporary sources that urged reasoning and affection for children’s good behaviour. Todd, \textit{Christian Humanism}, 111-12.
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The Puritans, like Luther, have been associated with setting in train developments that they themselves would not have intended. They did not believe that marriage and the family should become ends in themselves. Nevertheless, together with Luther and Calvin, they set the scene for Western family, for romantic love, and for an ambivalent relationship between church and state over the family, marriage and eventually divorce. They completed the task in the Protestant church of affirming the equality of the married state alongside the celibate one. They provided some of the content to marriage and family that Luther may have failed to supply, employing Luther’s notion of ‘office’, but they too have left a confused legacy over patriarchalism and individualism, not to mention discipline and punishment. Although they were acutely aware of their vocation before God, already there is a hint that the God they worship, whilst concerned about their everyday lives as saints on earth, is slightly distant. Discussion of the nature of the Godhead itself appears non-existent. Finally, I noted that the synthetic research for the significance, form and content of the family was instigated more by a backdrop of intellectual, social and ecclesiological change and less by a theological imperative, and was heavily influenced by Hellenistic and Roman philosophy.

130 John Cotton warned against men and women forgetting their Maker and aiming ‘at no higher end than marriage itself’. Those who are married should aim to be ‘better fitted for God’s service. … We must … moderate our affections and constantly remember that marriage ceases at death’.

131 Jean Jacques Rousseau grew up in Geneva, 150 years after Calvin’s death. His Émile, Or Treatise on Education, written 1757-1760, was in part a reaction to the treatment of children on the basis of Original Sin and the Fall. Rousseau’s work was influential in the French Revolution (1789-1795) and Émile became the basis for the subsequent French Education system. Jean Jacques Rousseau, Émile, or Treatise on Education, trans. Barbara Foxley (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1911).

132 Margo Todd summarised that the ‘rational and spiritual equality of the sexes, as well as the elevation of marriage and the household as spiritual entities, are humanist, rather than puritan, propositions’. This does not, she argued, diminish the importance of these ideas, or the impact that Puritans may have had in spreading them. Nevertheless, her conclusion was that ‘the puritans did not invent these ideas; they were simply carrying the Erasmian tradition of the family as church and commonwealth in microcosm’. Todd, Christian Humanism, 116f.
Schleiermacher, F. D. Maurice, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Karl Barth and Karl Rahner

The Church of Scotland’s Panel on Marriage claimed that in three or four centuries after the Reformation up until the 20th century ‘the Church – universally – and Church-approved theologians – experienced a famine of thought on the matter of marriage’, even though the world and society changed a great deal.\footnote{133}{Barton's \textit{The Family in Theological Perspective} similarly has no entry in its historical section between the Puritans and G. K. Chesterton, a Catholic writer (but not a theologian) early in the twentieth century. Two writers, however, both Protestant, deserve inclusion prior to the twentieth century - Friedrich Schleiermacher, and F. D. Maurice. Two more Protestant theologians stand out in the twentieth century - Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Karl Barth. I have briefly added the voice of Karl Rahner to provide some Roman Catholic counterbalance to this overwhelmingly Protestant assembly.}

Schleiermacher (1768-1834)

Karl Barth used Schleiermacher’s own phrase to describe him as founding ‘not so much a school as an era’, notably in liberal theology. Schleiermacher is said to have inaugurated the modern period in religious thought, and has been regarded as ‘one of the very few giants of Christian thought from whom theology will always have to take its bearings’ alongside Augustine, Aquinas and Luther: the ‘great Niagara Falls to which the theology of two centuries was drawn’.\footnote{134}{Standing within the Reformed tradition, and overlapping with Kant (1724-1804), Schleiermacher became famous for his \textit{On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers}. However, neither here, nor in \textit{Glaubenslehre (The Christian Faith)} where his main contributions to theology are to be found, does Schleiermacher discuss the family, apart

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from a few references. Instead, the family is the focus of nine sermons delivered in 1818.\textsuperscript{135} This does not necessarily detract from his theology. Indeed, Barth asserted that one of the most important insights about Schleiermacher is that it is precisely in his sermons that his theology can and should be discerned. It was also, Barth claimed, where Schleiermacher was at perhaps ‘his best and most brilliant’.\textsuperscript{136} The Speeches, however, reveal the controlling schema for Schleiermacher’s approach to a theology for the family. His limited reference to the Trinity, as mentioned in Ch.1, is famously at the end of The Christian Faith.

The intellectual and philosophical background to Schleiermacher’s work had changed subtly but significantly from that which Luther had faced. Both the Enlightenment and Romanticism, says Keith Clements, saw ‘themselves as the champions of human interests in opposition to all obscurantism, dogmatism, and subjection to a ‘God’ conceived of as a limit or a threat to human freedom and fulfillment’.\textsuperscript{137} The spectacle of the religious wars from 1524 – 1648 with each side claiming they represented God undermined the credence for God and the Church as sole authority.\textsuperscript{138} German historical study was casting doubt on the literal truth of the Bible.\textsuperscript{139} The exaltation of man with his attributes and powers, heralded by the Renaissance, continued unabated. Following Kant, each person was their own autonomous moral agent and God can only be discerned by the faith of moral or ‘practical’ reason, not by pure reason. Schleiermacher enjoyed reading

\textsuperscript{135} These were published in 1820, with a second edition in 1825. Two sermons are on marriage, three on the upbringing of children, two on servants, one on hospitality and one on philanthropy. Friedrich Schleiermacher, Schleiermacher’s Sermons, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll, trans. Mary Wilson, F., The Foreign Biblical Library (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1890).

\textsuperscript{136} Barth, The Theology of Schleiermacher, 109.


\textsuperscript{139} Notably H. S. Reimarus (1694-1768), J. S. Semler (1725-1791) and G. E. Lessing (1729-1781).
Plato, Aristotle\textsuperscript{140} and Kant, whilst a theology student, and was influenced by these rational and critical developments.\textsuperscript{141}

Schleiermacher’s own distinctive contribution was:

A daring but highly creative option for theology, faced with such assumptions, ... to challenge the age at the core of its citadel-belief: humanity. Suppose that theology was to agree with Enlightened and Romantic alike that man’s real business is to be true to his nature, to be truly and fully human, and yet to claim that the age has not properly discerned what it is to be human? Suppose that religion was to be re-defined as something that was unique, yet at the heart and source from which all that is worthy in humanity arises? In other words, religion as the core and essence of being human? And suppose further that ‘God’ was to be viewed not as a doubtful or speculative extra to the natural world and the realm of human experience but as the ineluctable moment of human consciousness? Suppose all this, and a whole new vista of theological possibilities arises.\textsuperscript{142}

There is an essential subjectivity and indeed phenomenology in this formulation for theology. By connecting theology with the realm of feeling, the knowledge of God became experiential and inward. This is an emphasis that has been continued by Kierkegaard, Ritschl, von Harnack, Troeltsch, Otto, Bultmann, Tillich and Baillie. Schleiermacher has thus been associated with a more individualistic and human focus for faith than necessarily a relationship with God.

Schleiermacher’s construction, however, is more nuanced than self-absorbed religion. His self is self-in-relationship. The imperative of his approach to theology is in holding an ‘intensely relational’ view of

\textsuperscript{140} Friess points out that Schleiermacher was writing at a time when there was again ‘renewed interest in the workings of the Graeco-Roman world’. Horace Leland Friess, \textit{Schleiermacher’s Soliloquies; an English Translation of the Monologen with a Critical Introduction and Appendix}, trans. H.L. Friess, Reprint ed. (Westport: Hyperion Press Inc., 1979), xxvi & xxviii. Schleiermacher later translated Plato and was also influenced by Spinoza.

\textsuperscript{141} Clements, \textit{Friedrich Schleiermacher}, 15-18. As a result, he confessed to his father, a Reformed Pastor and Prussian army chaplain, that he harboured doubt about whether Jesus was the Son of God and about the Atonement. These were key beliefs of the pietistic Moravians whose boarding school he joined, aged fourteen, and later seminary he attended. They were not open to engaging with Enlightenment thinking, although he was impressed by their sense of community and faith.

\textsuperscript{142} Ibid., 14.
humanity'.\footnote{143} This was, in part, due to his experience of the Moravian community, and as a private tutor for a time in a cultured aristocratic household where he developed a particular fondness for family life. For Schleiermacher, emotions are therefore not important for their subjective experience but because they are clues and response to realities other than the self. Clements writes:

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In the second of the \textit{Speeches} Schleiermacher, with great delicacy, uncovers how in every perception of objects external to ourselves, there is a primary moment of encounter, of which we are barely conscious because it is so fleeting, when we are virtually one with that object in consciousness.\footnote{144}

It is this true religious consciousness that takes us out of ourselves into finite and infinite realms.\footnote{145} This is not, as Clements points out, the religious awe of the numinous, as later described by Rudolf Otto, since it is normal everyday encounter and experience that leads to this transcendental state.\footnote{146}

Not surprisingly, therefore, family held a particular importance within Schleiermacher’s theology, as a primary means and place where such encounters and emotions occur on an everyday basis. Thus, albeit for somewhat different reasons from the post-eremitical Chrysostom, Schleiermacher affirms spiritual encounter with God can transpire in the midst of ordinary domestic life.\footnote{147} Schleiermacher describes ‘family’

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broadly as ‘a society of relatives either of blood or of one’s own choosing’ and as a ‘haven’ from the vicissitudes of life.\textsuperscript{148}

Schleiermacher regarded the domestic scene and family happiness as some of the chief human goals. The relatedness of human existence was thus axiomatic in life as well as in theology. ‘The family was for him the narrowest, most intimate, and most important circle within the concept of community that dominated his ideas of Christian ethics’.\textsuperscript{149} Like Clement of Alexandria, the local congregation then becomes the ‘sum of the Christian households of the same confession living in the same place and united in common piety’.

For Schleiermacher the key relationship in a family is the parental partnership. Marriage is a ‘holy bond’ which must be regarded as mans’ first appointment after being called into existence by God’s Holy Word. ‘Out of this sacred union are developed all other human relations; on it rests the Christian family, and of such Christian families Christian communities consist’.\textsuperscript{150} If this is the case, then marriages that do not match this pattern are failing the partners, God, the church and the wider society. Schleiermacher perceptively catalogues three types of such marriages, and adds one other. The first, ‘truly dreadful’, epitomized by dissension, anger and strife. The second, ‘troubled’, where conflict is avoided but it is more a contractual obligation than genuine love or unity. The third, Schleiermacher says, has a ‘repulsive aspect’, where there is so little in the relationship, that real satisfaction is only found in other relationships in life.\textsuperscript{151} Even if a marriage is a

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\textsuperscript{148} A theme later taken up by Lasch, \textit{Haven in a Heartless World}. Also used in Banner, "Who Are My Mother and My Brothers?".
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\textsuperscript{149} Barth, \textit{The Theology of Schleiermacher}, 109. (Author’s emphasis).
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\textsuperscript{150} Schleiermacher, \textit{Schleiermacher's Sermons}, 109.
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\textsuperscript{151} Ibid., 132-34. (author’s emphases). Schleiermacher had an earlier seven-year relationship with a married woman, before his own marriage.
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wonderful relationship it may not be founded on the sanctification of each other and ‘correspond with the picture of Christ and the Church’.\textsuperscript{152}

In Schleiermacher’s theology God is ‘the non-objective cause whose effects are objective in terms of feeling, as opposed to being simply cognisable’.\textsuperscript{153} In other words, for Schleiermacher, God exists and is far from being (only) a projection of the spiritual mutuality, say, of a marriage relationship, just as God is not derivable solely by reason. Schleiermacher struggled with Christology and with the Trinity, which he correctly saw as integrally linked. For Schleiermacher, Jesus, and indeed the Holy Spirit, did not exist before the birth of Jesus.\textsuperscript{154} Jesus enables people to come to an absolute dependence on God because of his God-given God consciousness.

Karl Barth was not able to commence his \textit{Church Dogmatics} until he had first dissected Schleiermacher. His major concern was that Schleiermacher’s theological method meant ‘religious self-consciousness and the possibility of revelation are one and the same thing’, which led to his famous critique of Schleiermacher’s thinking on marriage.\textsuperscript{155} Gordon Watson comments that paradoxically Barth was criticising Schleiermacher for ‘exactly what Schleiermacher strove so hard to avoid: the identification of God with a state of being in

\begin{footnotes}
\item[152] ‘Married love is Christian only when each party receives a spiritual stimulus from the other’. Ibid., 135.
\item[155] Watson, \textit{The Trinity and Creation}, 11. citing Barth, Die Christliche Dogmatik, 306. Karl Barth wrote: ‘in so far as the relationship of male and female in marriage is seriously regarded as mutually inspired ecstasy or mutually administered sacramental grace, there is an end of man’s confrontation by the command, by which God takes him up, humbling him but also directing him to freedom. This exaltation of marriage is dearly bought. Its consequence is that man has no longer any God to whom he can look and from whom he can expect help as man expects it from God, the transcendent, strange and only Helper. No longer can we cling to Him if we ourselves are the participants in an apotheosis and dispensers of sacramental grace’. \textit{CD} III.4 p125.
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contingent existence'. Nevertheless, Schleiermacher’s God is not easily, or clearly, or consistently, perceived. This is a theistic God, a phenomenon I examine in the next chapter.

Although Schleiermacher stresses genuine companionship, love and mutual support, the husband remains firmly the head of the wife, in keeping with Schleiermacher’s Reformed tradition and cultural norms. Schleiermacher could claim some scriptural support for this assertion, but the following lines also owe their origin to the Roman concept of *paterfamilias* (male head of the household) and the Hellenistic public/private divide:

> It is the part of the man, to whom God has assigned the binding word and the public deed, to represent the household; and it is never well if the wife takes a direct part in these larger concerns. The rule stands; and yet we find no painful contrast with the higher union, but one which resolves itself into the most glorious likeness.  

Schleiermacher conformed to the Puritan Augustinian task of ‘restraining and cleansing away the corruption inherent in ... children of sinful men’. Their ‘earliest longings after fellowship with God’ should encouraged and ‘training and exercise’ be provided ‘for future usefulness in every good work’. His sermons on children are entitled: “The Christian Training of Children”. This is not a task that can be undertaken by only two or three. Thus it is not solely the responsibility of the parents, or the parents and specific help they have engaged, but the whole Christian community. Schleiermacher pondered how little New Testament teaching on the subject exists, pointing to Col. 3.21 and Eph. 6.4 and the singular emphasis on fathers not provoking their children - ‘if we were only watchful enough against that, everything

156 Ibid., 10.
157 Ibid.
158 Schleiermacher, *Schleiermacher’s Sermons*, 141, cf. 37-38, 42-44. A little while later, Schleiermacher refers to ‘the depravity that lies hidden’ in a child’s nature, and the ‘evil tendencies’ of a child. 149f.
159 Ibid., 146.
else would be of much less consequence’. He gently expounds on this theme in ways that remain highly relevant, including the necessity of demonstrating that a parent has the genuine interest of their child at heart. As with his perception of the dynamics of marriage relationships, Schleiermacher is similarly insightful and empathetic about the actions, thoughts, and responses of parents alongside their children’s needs. He does not, however, apply his theological approach with children, as he did with marriages, except to remind parents that their greater concern is with ‘the unfolding’ of their children’s ‘spiritual faculties’.

Whilst ‘Schleiermacher’s emphasis upon the inward has become the stamp of much modern Protestant theology ... his emphasis upon relatedness, on human interdependence, on community in history, has not always been followed so conspicuously’. There is much practical wisdom contained and expressed in his sermons, worthy indeed of editing for a present generation.

It is easy to conclude that Schleiermacher did not have a Trinitarian theology of the family, solely on the demonstrable basis that he did not subscribe to a Trinitarian theology. His particular approach, however, did entail some consideration of theology and the context of marriage, if not to the same extent with parenting or family life as a whole. As Barth subsequently highlighted, slightly erroneously, a question mark hangs over precisely who, or what exactly Schleiermacher’s God is?

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160 Ibid., 147. Schleiermacher does not refer to the gospels and Jesus’ recorded words about children.
161 Ibid., 149.
163 See The Christian Faith, 738-51. Marmion and Van Nieuwenhove note that Schleiermacher’s ‘theocentric stand does not ... imply a trinitarian stance. ... Given his methodological and hermeneutical presuppositions, Schleiermacher rejects the traditional doctrine of the Trinity, especially the doctrine of the immanent Trinity’. Marmion and Nieuwenhove, An Introduction to the Trinity, 145.
F. D. Maurice (1805-1872)

I have referred to the critique of Maurice by Rowan Williams in Ch.1, but not to the content of Maurice’s contribution, which is relevant to mention here.\textsuperscript{164} Frederick Denison Maurice, known as F. D. Maurice, was the son of a Unitarian minister. Maurice later became an Anglican, not least because he discovered a belief in the Trinity.\textsuperscript{165} He was a Professor at King’s, London and later at Cambridge, a founder of the Working Men’s College and the Christian Socialist Movement, which later heavily influenced the British Labour party.\textsuperscript{166}

Of Maurice’s work, two publications in particular touch on the family: The Kingdom of Christ (1838), and Social Morality (1869).\textsuperscript{167} The first was written for a Quaker, as the full title explains, whose dilemma was the spiritual status of children and the linked moral and spiritual responsibility of becoming parents. If children are unable to ‘consciously follow the light’ then they ‘are of the world’. As such it might be a ‘sin’ to be, or become, agents in giving children existence, but Maurice noted, feeling and conscience compel another answer.\textsuperscript{168} He observed in searching for an appropriate reply that the family was a neglected theme in theology. The problem for Quakers, or Calvinists, said Maurice, is that on the one hand, they regard the family with

\textsuperscript{164} Please see Ch.1 pp. 97-99.
\textsuperscript{165} He was unable to graduate for his first degree in law at Cambridge because he could not assent to the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England at that stage. This changed and Maurice later wrote: ‘I not only believe in the Trinity in Unity, but I find in it the centre of all my beliefs; the rest of my spirit, when I contemplate myself, or mankind. But, strange as it may seem, I owe the depth of this belief in a great measure to my training in my home. The very name that was used to describe the denial of this doctrine is the one which most expresses to me the end that I have been compelled, even in spite of myself, to seek’. Maurice, Frederick Denison (1884). The life of Frederick Denison Maurice: chiefly told in his own letters. London: Macmillan, 41, quoted in wikipedia.org/wiki/Frederick_Denison_Maurice, accessed 9.07.14.
\textsuperscript{166} Maurice and Karl Marx overlapped in London after Marx was exiled there in 1849. For the next twenty years Maurice held three posts less than 2 kilometres from Marx’s main domicile in Soho. Their respective views on the family were much further apart. It is not clear whether they ever met but Maurice saw himself on the front line, in his words, between ‘unsocial Christians and unchristian Socialists’.
\textsuperscript{167} Maurice, The Kingdom of Christ, 2; Social Morality: Twenty One Lectures Delivered in the University of Cambridge (London: Macmillan & Co., 1869).
\textsuperscript{168} The Kingdom of Christ, 2, 327.
reverence, and historically have ‘preserved family life in great purity’ yet, on the other, ‘they cannot connect the institution of the family as such, with its religion’, since that involves the individual choice of each person or child.\textsuperscript{169} The more parents espouse the family, the higher the risk their denominational fervor will decrease. Maurice’s bigger picture is that if the state is dependent on the ‘religious sects’ for the wellbeing of the family, when, in his view, so many influences are threatening ‘household sanctities’, then there is a risk to these sects, the family in general and society at large. Maurice is not convinced by the Quaker position, not only because it seems wrong and contrary to conscience, but also because he views the gospel ‘as the revelation of truths which are expressed in the forms of family society’.\textsuperscript{170} There may well be some verity to Maurice’s observation, but it does appear the family Maurice has in mind may not be quite the ‘family’ being described in the gospel.\textsuperscript{171}

At one level, Maurice was ostensibly travelling on the opposite theological journey to Schleiermacher. Starting as a Unitarian he ends up embracing the Trinity seeing a possible model for the absent theology on the family. In the estimate of Gibbons, a century later, Maurice was the first theologian to suggest that there ought to be a

\textsuperscript{169} Ibid., 329-30.
\textsuperscript{170} Ibid., 1: 313. (My emphasis).
\textsuperscript{171} Ibid., 315. Indeed it appears that the ‘Kingdom of Christ’, the title of his book, is primarily a kingdom of this world. In a discussion about the baptism of infants, Maurice tellingly concludes an argument in favour of universal ‘paedobaptism’ against Quakers and Anabaptists on the grounds that ‘so far as the operation of Baptism is restricted, just so far does the belief of a human society become impossible’. This may have been due to an early version of realised eschatology, or under the influence of Coleridge’s concept of the ‘Nationalist Church’. For the latter please see: “Coleridge and Maurice” in Alec R. Vidler, \textit{The Church in an Age of Revolution}, ed. Owen Chadwick, vol. 5, The Pelican History of the Church (Middx.: Penguin Books Ltd., 1961), 78-89. Vidler also suggests that Maurice may have been trying to steer clear of deep denominational divisions, and indeed divisions within the Church of England. Maurice’s own family were affected. Vidler comments: ‘This distressing state of division in his own family drove Maurice to seek a ground for unity between men other than that of their religious opinions’. Ibid., 84.
theology of the family, and the first to proffer a Trinitarian link.\textsuperscript{172} Maurice himself wrote:

\begin{quote}
When we assert the doctrine of the Trinity, we do so because we believe it to be the grand foundation of all society, the only ground of universal fellowship, the only idea of a God of love.\textsuperscript{173}
\end{quote}

Maurice comes closer to Schleiermacher when he suddenly inverts this process and suggests that the human family can in fact enable us to see what God is like. Maurice appears to claim that the family is the unique and indispensable epistemological source for our knowledge of God. His logic is as follows: ‘man being made in the image of God, all human relationships are images of divine relationships; that through them God acquaints us with His character and government’.\textsuperscript{174} In perhaps his strongest statement, Maurice asserts: ‘human relationships are not artificial types of something divine, but are actually the means, and the only means through which man ascends to any knowledge of the divine’.\textsuperscript{175} Gibbons, commentating on Maurice’s contribution, went so far as to claim:

\begin{quote}
I suggest we have reached a state of knowledge at which the Christian faith can be expressed in terms of a single image or model – the model used by Jesus. As Maurice foresaw, the Faith must be re-interpreted in terms of the family.\textsuperscript{176}
\end{quote}

Incrementally and imperceptibly the status and role of the family has shifted even further than the Reformation, such that they are now at the opposite extreme from the patristic theologians’ views of the family. Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine or Aquinas would not find much common ground with Maurice’s views on the family, or his theology, and, in a number of theological respects, nor would Luther or Calvin. Ironically, however, an essential part of Maurice’s evidence would be very familiar to them all, for Maurice, just as they had done, had studied

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{172} Gibbons, "The Theological Significance of the Family."
\textsuperscript{173} Maurice, \textit{The Kingdom of Christ}, 1, 61.
\textsuperscript{174} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{175} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{176} Gibbons, "The Theological Significance of the Family," 249.
\end{footnotes}
Plato and Aristotle, Homer and Vergil. He quotes liberally from these sources in support of his arguments. In fact such references dwarf any development of trinitarian theology itself in the publications I have cited. For instance, Maurice discusses the significance of trust in a marital relationship, on the scriptural basis that they are one in the Lord. For further evidence of this principle he has already appealed to The Iliad and The Odyssey.

One area all these theologians would collectively agree upon would be the pre-eminence of the man. Robert’s work makes it clear that Maurice was writing at the height of Victorian paternalism. Maurice refers approvingly to the Roman Patria Potestas (legal power of a father). Where the authority, as opposed to the dominion, of the Father was strong, Maurice asserts, so was society strong, quoting Virgil to underline his case.

The primary relationship for Maurice within the Trinity is that of the Father and the Son. It is hard not to perceive a link between this preference and Maurice’s patriarchalism. Gary Deddo, whose doctoral

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177 Frederick Denison Maurice, Social Morality: Twenty One Lectures Delivered in the University of Cambridge, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan & Co., 1872), 249-50. Maurice includes Greece and Rome as indispensable links in God’s revelation of a ‘Christian Society’. His rationale for their inclusion is as follows: ‘If we assume Him to be the first cause of the Society, we shall of course admit secondary causes … provided they are homogenous with the character of Him who has established it and with the character of Society itself. Believing in a God who has constituted families, who has constituted Nations, we may ask whether there is any Universal Human Constitution, which is in harmony with these; for which these may prepare us. We may joyfully admit that Judaea, Greece, and that Rome had the preparation of these secondary causes; and that without them the Christian Society would have been utterly unintelligible to those among whom it first appeared. If we do not acknowledge their worth it will be unintelligible to us; the most incredible of all anomalies’.

178 Social Morality, 63.

179 Ibid.


181 Maurice, Social Morality, 40. ‘The patriarchalchieftain is as necessary an ingredient in the notion of the family group as a fact (or assumed fact) of its having sprung from his loins’. It is no surprise to find him singing out Matt 5.48 when he discusses the Beatitudes, misquoting: ‘Be like your Father in heaven’, ibid., 462.

182 There are clearly discernible elements of chauvinism in Maurice’s inclusion of women as mothers. He talks of them not being as intellectual, but of their softening, and humanizing tendencies, of their feminine devotion and self-sacrifice. Ibid., 31, 46, 47.
thesis was on Barth's special ethics of parents and children, has commented that this particular focus of Maurice anticipated Barth to 'an amazing degree ... His theological emphasis on the Triune God and the Father-Son relationship being the ground for a relational ontology align with Barth’s own position decades later'.

Deddo also perceives some likenesses in Maurice's Christological anthropology. Deddo, however, is quick to point out that is where the similarities end. If Barth was seriously concerned about Schleiermacher, he would be apoplectic at Maurice's idea of the family as the 'foundational reality for access to God'.

Rowan Williams' grave reservations about Maurice's approach have already been aired in Ch.1. In particular, Maurice appears to uphold a particular form of the family, the very form that Marx had such concerns about. In so doing, Maurice allows little or no room for any critique, or for the shortcomings of this model, or for much theological discussion of the actual content, or for the alternative of celibacy. It is also difficult to see quite how or where the church and ecclesiology fit into Maurice's schema. The question of whether a church is simply a collection of families is raised by the apparent assumption of this in Maurice, Clement, and Chrysostom, and is considered in Ch.8.

Maurice himself notes in his Preface that a contemporary critic had accused him of 'rendering into a theological dialect the conceptions of humanity that prevail in our age'. One cannot escape the impression from the methods and conclusions that Maurice reached, that his critic may have had some justification for this comment.

Elsewhere, Maurice argued that he differed from Auguste Comte (1798-1857), because the latter's view of humanity was Godless and therefore idolatrous, whilst Maurice refers to, and depends on God as, among

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183 Gary W. Deddo, Karl Barth's Special Ethics of Parents and Children in the Light of His Trinitarian Theological Anthropology (Aberdeen University, 1990), 240.
184 Ibid.
185 Maurice, Social Morality, 427-28.
other epithets, Creator, Head and Judge of men’. Maurice’s inclusion of, and repeated reference to, God, however, does not necessarily detract from the charge of potentially constructing God anthropomorphically in man’s, or society’s, or the family’s own image. He does not seem to have answered his own call to develop a Trinitarian theology of the family.

One of Maurice’s Professorial Chairs was in Moral Philosophy. In the Lectures on Morals Maurice argued that it was impossible for him to write on social morality as if people were wholly independent from one another. The very subject continuously reminded him of dependencies, which were experienced and learned, first and foremost, within the family. Being related to a father or a mother is ‘a primary fact of our existence’. The reason the family should be the focus for theological attention is partly because we have little choice about these relationships, and mostly because it is out of these ‘affections’ that ‘a Nation is developed’. In sum, the phrase ‘independent morality’ is a contradiction and the starting point for ‘social morality’ is therefore ‘domestic morality’. Maurice’s reaction to individualism in the mid to late nineteenth century is interesting, and his perception about the interdependency implied in the notion of ethics is of some value. Maurice similarly noted the tendency to individualism in churches. I explore these themes further in the next chapter.

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186 ‘Otherwise humanity is headless, which has no deeper root than our own nature, which can only be understood and adored in ourselves and our fellow creatures’. Ibid., 18.
187 Please see Ch.6
188 Maurice, Social Morality, 67.
189 ‘If we do not take account of those societies in which we must exist, we shall attach a very disproportionate value to those in which we may exist. The Class and the Club will be superlatively precious and dear as the Family is lost out of sight’. (original emphasis)
190 Maurice, The Kingdom of Christ, 2, 34-42
191 The phrase ‘independent morality’ Maurice appears to have gleaned from Dr Whewell.
192 See, for instance, his observations about prayer, Maurice, The Kingdom of Christ, 2, 34-42.
Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945)

Academic, theologian, Lutheran pastor, ecumenist, prisoner and martyr; Dietrich Bonhoeffer is associated with the start of what later became the Confessing Church, his active opposition to Hitler (for which he was executed in the closing stages of the War), and with one book in particular: The Cost of Discipleship. Bonhoeffer offers a different approach to the family than that found in Maurice. The political circumstances were certainly very different. The ascendancy of Nazism in Germany, Bonhoeffer’s experience of encountering social injustice and racial prejudice in the USA, the failure of respective national churches, including the Lutheran church, in tackling these issues, and the start of World War II, all frame a stark backdrop to Bonhoeffer’s prophetic theology and ethics. When Bonhoeffer says ‘the Church must offer solutions for the unsolved problems of the world’ these were the weighty matters he had in mind.

Given the size and pressing nature of these problems, it is interesting that Bonhoeffer chose to include the family, which he referred to as ‘the oldest of all human institutions’, within his work. Bonhoeffer deliberately drew on biblical material and the recorded words and example of Jesus Christ in his attempts to consider these big issues. This is a different method from Maurice and from

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193 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, Rev ed. (NY: Collier Books, MacMillan Publishing Company, 1963). This is the English title. In German it was simply *Discipleship (Nachfolge)* originally published in 1937. Other works included *Sanctorum Communio*, an attempt to work out a theology of the person in society, *Act and Being*, on theological anthropology, *Creation and Fall*, on the Genesis account, *Life Together*, on the nature of Christian community, and his unfinished *Ethics*, whose manuscript was buried in a tin in his garden before his arrest by the Nazis and was published posthumously by his student, Eberhardt Bethge.

194 Bonhoeffer was so academically gifted that he had finished the equivalent of two doctorates and was still below the minimum age of 25 for Lutheran ministry. He thus spent 1930 in postgraduate study in the USA where he was lectured by Reinhold Niebuhr. He met African-Americans through a fellow seminarian, and taught Sunday school at the 10,000 strong black Baptist church in Harlem. He was not impressed with the response of the white led churches to the treatment of African Americans.


196 Ibid., 128.
Schleiermacher, and has far more in common with Luther and Calvin.197
Bonhoeffer notes both that Jesus ‘did not enjoin his disciples to marry’
and that he set marriage on ‘a firmer basis’.198 Nor would Maurice
necessarily understand why Bonhoeffer made a distinction between
‘bourgeois’ and ‘Christian’ conceptions of marriage.199

On the basis of this method, Bonhoeffer proceeds from God to
human relationships (contrary to Schleiermacher’s approach).
Furthermore, unlike Don Browning and much Christian interest in the
state of the western family over the past forty years, Bonhoeffer does
not advocate beginning with issues arising from society. Instead,
Bonhoeffer claims:

It is necessary to free oneself from the way of thinking which
sets out from human problems and which asks for solutions on
this basis. Such thinking is unbiblical. The way of Jesus Christ,
and therefore the way of all Christian thinking, leads not from
the world to God but from God to the world. This means that the
essence of the gospel does not lie in the solution of human
problems, and that the solution of human problems cannot be
the essential task of the Church.200

Bonhoeffer qualifies this by adding that this does not absolve the
Church of all responsibility, but ‘we can perceive what is her legitimate
task only when we have found the right point of departure’.201

Furthermore, once engaged with this approach, Bonhoeffer
argues that it is not possible to consider human relationships

197 Bonhoeffer was not entirely immune from Maurice’s habit of seeking validation
from other sources, such as quoting Goethe. Cf. Bonhoeffer Ethics quoted in
James M. Gustafson and James T. Laney, eds., On Being Responsible: Issues in
Gustafson and James T. Laney, eds., On Being Responsible: Issues in Personal
198 Bonhoeffer, Cost of Discipleship, 149.
199 Ibid. Please note that Bonhoeffer does not in fact spell out the nature of this
particular distinction either here or elsewhere in The Cost of Discipleship, it is
simply that he perceives there is a distinction.
200 Ethics, 320.
201 Ibid.
independently from God’s ongoing relationship with human beings. He uses the illustration of love:

The relation between the divine love and human love is wrongly understood if we say that the divine love precedes the human love, but solely for the purpose of setting human love in motion as a love which, in relation to the divine love is an independent, free and autonomous activity of man. On the contrary, everything which is to be said of human love ... is governed by the principle that God is love.202

Bonhoeffer has a concept of ‘vicarious representative action’ (Stellvertretung), in what he termed the ‘structure of responsible life’, where a person is required to act on behalf of others and is directly accountable to God.203 He chose three sample contexts, which Stephen Plant suggests were not random: political, socio-economic and domestic.204 Bonhoeffer eschewed the exegetical basis for Luther’s concept of ‘vocation’.205 Nevertheless, Plant argues that Bonhoeffer did inherit ‘a theological vocabulary’ from Luther, including Luther’s notions of ‘office holder’ and ‘orders of creation’.206 Thus a person stands in ‘a social relationship in which God is encountered “within an earthly relationship of authority, within an order that is clearly determined by above and below”.’207 Plant describes this idea as being ‘oddly archaic’ even when Bonhoeffer was writing about it, despite

202 Ibid., 175f.  
203 Ibid., 224-62. There may or may not be a connection between this formulation of Bonhoeffer’s and the later book on Christian moral philosophy by H. Richard Niebuhr, Reinhold’s brother, entitled The Responsible Self. Richard Niebuhr was clearly aware of Bonhoeffer’s work but not entirely approving of Bonhoeffer’s ‘theological ground’, or of any inference that Christian ethics may have an automatic claim to superiority, or of the biblicistic approach he believed was present in Bonhoeffer and Barth. In these last two regards he found F. D. Maurice’s approach more congenial. James Gustafson’s Introduction” to H. Richard Niebuhr, The Responsible Self: An Essay in Christian Moral Philosophy (London: Harper & Row Publishers, 1963), 14, 18, 20.  
205 Bonhoeffer’s Ethics quoted in Gustafson and Laney, On Being Responsible, 66f.  
206 Please see p.79.  
207 Plant, Taking Stock of Bonhoeffer, 79, 80, quoting Bonhoeffer and Bethge, Ethics, 391.
Bonhoeffer's attempts to convey that it was about personal relationship, and his awareness that it was potentially exploitative by those occupying the ‘above’ position.\textsuperscript{208} The impact of pro-Nazi theologians using the same language caused Bonhoeffer to change the terminology to ‘divine mandates’ to underline the responsibility to God above all others.\textsuperscript{209} Bonhoeffer was arrested in 1943 when he was working on this section, so it was unfinished. Plant summarises Bonhoeffer’s thinking up to that point:

The mandates – Church, marriage and family, culture and government (elsewhere Bonhoeffer includes work and friendship) – exist for and not in competition with one another. The authority and sphere of each mandate is limited because God is the source of its authority; it is limited by each other mandate (such, for example, that government has no mandate to alter the institution of marriage); and it is also limited by those below within each mandate (children placing proper limits on their parents, a wife placing proper limits on her husband, a citizen placing proper limits on her government, etc.).\textsuperscript{210}

Stephen Plant argues that whilst Bonhoeffer’s conception of human relationships can seem like ‘listening to a voice from a different era’ and out date to our more egalitarian ears, this does not necessarily mean that Bonhoeffer was wrong. Plant avers that in ethics ‘because things are this way they ought to be this way is logically fallacious’.\textsuperscript{211} Plant is using this assertion to claim that our modern perspective might not be correct. This could be true, but the same argument can of course be applied to Bonhoeffer, as it could to Luther, that they both ran the risk of enshrining ethical norms on the basis of the societal status quo (the existing state of affairs). As I have sought to show earlier, the ontological ‘chain of being’, or ‘chain of command’, approach that underlay both Luther’s ‘orders of creation’, and the hierarchy inherent

\textsuperscript{208} Ibid., 79. Plant quotes Barth referring to this point that it contained ‘a suggestion of North German patriarchalism.’ n31, K. Barth, \textit{CD} III.4, 22.
\textsuperscript{209} Bonhoeffer, \textit{Ethics}, 254.
\textsuperscript{210} Plant, \textit{Taking Stock of Bonhoeffer}.
\textsuperscript{211} Ibid. Professor of Ethics, Michael Banner, quotes Marx and Engels, whose project was to challenge the status quo, including in respect of the family: ‘It is not consciousness that determines life but life that determines consciousness’. K. Marx & F. Engels \textit{The German Ideology}, Vol. v of Collected Works (Moscow, 1976), 37, cited in Banner, "‘Who Are My Mother and My Brothers?’", 3.
in Bonhoeffer’s ‘divine mandates’, owe their origins to a non-biblical source, contrary to Bonhoeffer’s own method.212

Michael Banner, who, in the same section of his paper, was so scathing of the lack of theology in the Church of England report on the family, is much more charitable towards Bonhoeffer, precisely because Bonhoeffer does stress the significance of a direct link to God.213 He quotes Bonhoeffer:

It is only from above, with God as the point of departure, that it is possible to say and to understand what is meant by the Church, by marriage and the family, by culture and government.214

Banner also considers that Bonhoeffer was trying to overcome an antinomianist tendency since Luther of neglecting theologically the daily life of church members due to the risk that such life was inherently evil.215 Sadly, Bonhoeffer’s section on Divine Mandates about the Family was never written. Bonhoeffer had earlier indicated that marriage was not just about ‘producing children, but also of educating them to be obedient to Jesus Christ’.216 Banner believes Bonhoeffer would have ‘surely’ wished to have said more about marriage than simply being a kind of Christian production line. ‘After all, very little is said or implied here regarding the good of marriage or the family as such’.217 In Ch. 10 of The Cost of Discipleship, Bonhoeffer uncompromisingly quotes from Matthew 5.27-32, 19.9, I Corinthians 6.13-15 and Gal. 5.24 on the subjects of divorce, adultery and lust.218 Banner thinks that Bonhoeffer’s Life Together, based on his experience

212 Please see pp.176-77.
213 Banner, "'Who Are My Mother and My Brothers?'" See Ch.1, p.79.
214 Bonhoeffer, Ethics, 255; Banner, "'Who Are My Mother and My Brothers?',' 7.
215 Bonhoeffer, Ethics, 85ff. Bonhoeffer was clearly addressing this in his discussion of ‘the penultimate’ and ‘the ultimate’. Please see further below. Chp 3 “The Last Things and the Things Before the Last”.
216 Ibid., 183.
217 Banner, "'Who Are My Mother and My Brothers?','. 8.
218 Bonhoeffer, Cost of Discipleship, 147-50.
of Christian theological community in England, also ‘consciously had
the family in view’. Banner concluded:

But to tell us how the family should live is not directly to tell us
what is the ‘mandate’ or ‘commission’ which belongs to the
family. We have an account (of some of the practices) of its life ...
but not the theory which lies behind the practice...

Finally, in more ways than one, Bonhoeffer not only re-
introduced an ecclesiological dimension to human relationships, closely
linked to mission in the present world, but also an eschatological
dimension in his consideration of human family and the other ‘divine
mandates’. He referred to them as the ‘penultimate’, which are
determined by the ultimate. These present and penultimate
structures do not have value in themselves, argued Bonhoeffer, but the
ultimate ‘leaves open a certain amount of room for the penultimate’ and
damage to the penultimate does have serious implications for the
ultimate. Theology’s interest in penultimate things is ‘because they
precede and in some way prepare for the ultimate in a Christian life’. Again, his imprisonment precluded any further development of this
theme in respect of the family.

Karl Barth (1886-1968)

Karl Barth is significant for this research because he is one of the
few theologians who have considered some key aspects of family from
an avowedly theological and trinitarian perspective. Indeed Barth is
acknowledged as the theologian who attempted to renew the
significance of the doctrine of the Trinity in the West. His approach

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219 Banner, “Who Are My Mother and My Brothers?”, 9. In this earlier work, for
example, Bonhoeffer says: ‘community is constituted by the complete self-
forgetfulness of love’. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Sanctorum Communio (London: Colins,
Bonhoeffer’s Theological Critique of Hegel,” 435.
221 Bonhoeffer, Ethics, 92.
222 Ibid., 91-92.
223 Ibid.
contrasts sharply with that of Schleiermacher’s by beginning his *Church Dogmatics* with the Trinity and by arguing, like Bonhoeffer, that the proper methodology for the Christian theologian is from God to the world, and not *vice versa*. As Stuart McLean puts it: ‘For Barth the object of theology is God...’

Barth was acutely aware of the ontological difference between Creator and creation and refers to it frequently. He disparages the natural theology which he believes lies at the source of Schleiermacher’s approach. As noted, he critiqued Schleiermacher for the loss of the revelation of Christ Jesus in making God known. He would similarly resist Maurice’s attempt to deduce or ascertain the Triune God from the family, or from anything in creation, and hence is equally critical of Augustine’s ‘psychological analogy’ and his *vestigia trinitatis* (traces of the Trinity). Barth’s fear was that natural theology and ‘traces of the Trinity’ would ultimately eliminate any need for God, render God’s own revelation of Godself redundant, and prevent human relationship with God. Barth uses the memorable illustration of the Trojan horse to underscore the hidden risk.

It is also significant that Barth is careful not to discuss the family or marriage *per se*, thus attempting to avoid the kind of trap Williams believes Maurice fell into of failing to take sufficient account of cultural and historical differences, or of assuming that current norms are divinely inspired. What Barth does do is examine the relationship between Men and Women and between Parents and Children. As Deddo puts it, Barth inherited ‘ethics rooted in the Christian tradition (that)

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225 See “Vestigium Trinitatis” *CD* I. 334-347. Barth continues: ‘Do we not have in this idea of the *vestigium trinitatis* an ancient Trojan horse which one day … was unsuspectingly allowed entry into the theological *illium*, and in whose belly … we can hear a threatening clank, so that we have every cause to execute a defensive movement … by declaring … that we do not want to have anything to do with it?’ (336).
was the standard throughout Europe'.

Barth believed that the result of Schleiermacher and others was the reduction of theology to anthropology and ethics. Like Bonhoeffer, he witnessed the result of this in Nazi Germany with the failure of the Church to establish a widespread and theologically informed resistance. Having seen this failure, 'the challenge fell to him to properly reconnect theology and ethics, faith and obedience. In fact Barth's lifework can be regarded as a major reworking of how theology and ethics are interrelated'.

In keeping with his self-confessedly theological stance, Barth refers his readers to the relevant previous theological sections at the outset of these two sections of his Church Dogmatics. Questions have been raised about Barth's theological method and his understanding of the Trinity. I will mention his dialectical approach in the next chapter. Based on his exegesis of Genesis 1.26-27 Barth relentlessly pursued the differentiation and relationship between men and women, in particular.

This Mitmenschlichkeit (fellow-humanity) is how God calls human beings to be in the Image of God. This God cannot be mirrored in a homo solitarius (solitary human), argues Barth, precisely because God is not solitarius (solitary) but triunus (triune).

Barth also suggested an inversion of Clement and Maurice in that the Church is the 'original household' and human 'family is the copy'.

Elizabeth Frykberg argues that many misread Barth because they too quickly leap from his analogy relationis (analogy of relationship) between the persons of the Godhead and human relations

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227 Ibid. 1f Barth argues for this interrelationship in his “General Ethics” CD II/2 and at the beginning of his Special Ethics CD III/4.
228 Frykberg notes that the key for Barth 'to understanding the Imago Dei is the uns and unserem in the verse'. Barth underscores his interpretation by translating verse 26 as “Lasset uns Menchen machen in unserem Urbild nach unserem Vorbild, where Urbild conveys the idea of an original image or prototype and Vorbild a 'before image' or 'pattern'. Elizabeth A. Frykberg, "The Child as Solution: The Problem of the Superordinate-Subordinate Ordering of the Male-Female Relation in Barth's Theology," Scottish Journal of Theology 47, no. 3 (1994): 330.
229 Deddo, Karl Barth's Special Ethics of Parents and Children, 279.
and forget his tertium relationis (third relationship), that all is dependent upon the relationship between God the Father and God the Son and the relationship between us as men and women and Christ. Alan Torrance points out that for Barth the 'I-Thou relationship of Father and Son, and the I-Thou relationship of man and woman ... (provides) the profoundest expression of interpersonal relationship in the human realm'. Furthermore the correspondence involving Christ is in three overlapping parts: an analogy between Christ and God, an analogy between Christ’s divinity and humanity, and an analogy between humanity generally and Christ’s humanity.

Deddo devotes some space in his Preface pointing out that Barth is frequently dismissed or disagreed with by those who have not read him, that his Parents and Children section has been neglected despite being a third of his humanity section, and that the other sections should be read in conjunction with this one. Furthermore, Deddo claims that part of the reason Barth is not always read is the sheer size of his output, and the particular way in which he tackles the material. For example, Barth never synthesized a comprehensive treatment of relationality into one section. Thus his most in-depth understanding of relation appears in his anthropology and not, surprisingly, says Deddo, in his theology, or his doctrine of the Triunity of God.

Like Frykberg and Torrance, Stuart McLean also believes that Barth is pointing to ‘a complex set of actions and relationships which are central to his theology’. Indeed McLean describes Barth’s discussion of humanity as one of the most profound in Western literature, and Deddo likewise refers to Barth’s work on parents and

\[231\] Ibid., 181-83. CD III 2. 218-19. Alan Torrance suggests that Barth’s analysis of John 17 is a good example of these three analogical parts together. CD III 2. 220
\[233\] *Humanity in the Thought of Karl Barth*, vii.
children as ‘perhaps the finest theological discussion of parenting available in the English language’.\textsuperscript{234}

Not everyone agrees with these assessments. Jürgen Moltmann has queried whether Barth’s Trinity accords with the New Testament account, and suggested that Barth’s concept of hierarchical order and of God-Human correspondence is Aristotelian.\textsuperscript{235} Frykberg has also argued that Barth effectively used the christological \textit{ad extra} vertical dimension, rather than the triune Godhead, to validate a superordinate position for men over women in relationships.\textsuperscript{236} She has suggested that a better model for male-female partnerships would be the mutual self-giving service of the triune relations themselves, quoting Phil. 2.5-8 & 9-11, and that the vertical dimension would be more appropriate for parent-child relations.\textsuperscript{237} Frykberg thinks Barth discounted the age factor as a structural variable, ignoring Genesis 1.28, and thus ‘inferred that sexual dimorphism is the one and only structural differentiation of human existence’.\textsuperscript{238} Barth’s friend, Henriette Visser’t Hooft, took him to task at the time for his patriarchal approach. She wrote in 1934: ‘has not Christ made us free? Is not every human being, man or woman, now in a direct relationship to God?’ Barth retreated variously behind Paul, the difference between God and humans, the presupposition of patriarchy in the entire Bible, and the gender of Christ and Adam. Henriette responded: ‘isn’t there something different from superiority, namely love. Love knows no superiority or inferiority’.\textsuperscript{239} She was not able to persuade him. Much later her husband, who become the first

\textsuperscript{234} Deddo, \textit{Karl Barth’s Theology of Relations}, 4.xv.
\textsuperscript{235} Moltmann, \textit{History and the Triune God}, 82, 85, 135, CD III 1.69. Although not referred to much in the literature it is interesting to speculate how much Barth was influenced by Calvin. Barth worshipped and lectured in the same church in Geneva where Calvin preached. Even before he tackled Schleiermacher Barth studied Calvin and lectured on him. Barth, \textit{John Calvin}. The other striking resemblance is to the ‘hierarchy of love’ in Augustine. Cf. Hannah Arendt, “The Order of Love,” in \textit{Love and St. Augustine}, ed. Joanna Vecchiarelli and Judith Chelius Stark (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 36.
\textsuperscript{236} Frykberg, “The Child as Solution,” 341-42. See: CD III/4, 169 and Hampson, \textit{Theology and Feminism}, 154-55.
\textsuperscript{237} Frykberg, “The Child as Solution,” 346f.
\textsuperscript{238} Ibid. 346, Moltmann, \textit{History and the Triune God}, 430.
\textsuperscript{239} Quoted in ibid., 137.
ever President of the World Council of Churches post war, wrote on the subject of emancipation from patriarchy, after she had died, and stated that he believed his wife had been right and Barth wrong.\textsuperscript{240}

Alan Torrance wrestled with Barth in his doctoral thesis on theological descriptive language and human participation. He found that Barth had misread Aquinas and there was far less clear water between \textit{analogia entis} (analogy of being) and \textit{analogia relationis} than Barth had supposed.\textsuperscript{241} Torrance was also critical of Barth’s choice of ‘\textit{Seinsweise}’ (modes of being) over ‘Persons’ to describe the Godhead, since it sets up a strange difference in the I-Thou divine and human correspondence.\textsuperscript{242} Torrance concludes that Barth’s attempts to establish a relational anthropology on the basis of a Trinitarian God thus came unstuck, leaving ‘the dis-integration of a sorely needed unified and \textit{a posteriori} theory of the relationship between divine and contingent orders’.\textsuperscript{243} Furthermore, since the use of neither ‘being’ nor ‘person’ necessarily entails exact correspondence between God and humanity, Torrance could not understand why Barth did not see ‘their potential for bringing out the participative \textit{koinonia} which is God’s intention for the created order ... as this is ground in the divine Trinity’.\textsuperscript{244}

In his \textit{Anthropology in Theological Perspective}, Pannenberg acknowledges the danger of ‘anthropologically bracketing theology’ but suggests that theologians need to understand ‘the fundamental importance of anthropology for all modern thought and for any present-day claim of universal validity for religious statements’.\textsuperscript{245}

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\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{242} Barth, CD I/1, 355. Torrance quotes Jung Lee: ‘The I-Thou relationship in God takes place in the one and unique individual, while the I-Thou in man takes place in two different individuals, the man and woman’. ‘Karl Barth’s Use of Analogy in his \textit{Church Dogmatics}’, S.J.T. 22, 2 (1969), 144, quoted in ibid., 181.
\textsuperscript{243} Ibid., 186-87.
\textsuperscript{244} Ibid., 187.
\textsuperscript{245} Pannenberg, \textit{Anthropology in Theological Perspective}, 15-16.
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Pannenberg therefore claims that Barth's rejection of anthropology was perversely itself due to a form of dependence on anthropological suppositions and that he ended up 'adopting the most extreme form of theological subjectivism'.

Given Gary Deddo's support for Barth's theological approach, it is interesting to note that Deddo too has some reservations about the effect of Barth's dialectical and dyadic concentration, as consequently Barth found no biblical precedent for 'addressing the family as a corporate structure'. Deddo notes:

This produces the awkward situation of offering nothing to say theologically concerning such a constellation of relationships. Certainly we must acknowledge that the family as such does indeed constitute a natural reality. Has the theologian nothing to say about this natural reality even it is secondary to a more essential relationship? Does it have no theological meaning, is it impervious to theological interpretation? We believe that Barth missed an opportunity here implicit within his theological grammar.

Karl Rahner (1904-1984)

Karl Rahner completes these two chapters: an historical line up of theologians, pre- and post-Luther, who have written on the subject of the family. Stanley Grenz sees ‘striking resemblances’ in the theologies of Barth and Rahner, despite their Protestant and Roman Catholic traditions, and ‘radical differences’ over theological approach, the place of philosophy and divine revelation.

Like Barth, Karl Rahner is also noted for his contribution to Trinitarian theology and for a remarkably similar approach to the divine persons, describing them in his eponymous rule that the Immanent Trinity is the Economic Trinity. Rahner was a prolific writer

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246 Ibid., 16.
247 Deddo, Karl Barth's Special Ethics of Parents and Children, 278.
248 Ibid.
249 Stanley J. Grenz, Rediscovering the Triune God: The Trinity in Contemporary Theology (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 56.
although primarily in essay form and thus ‘relatively unsystematic’. He was a celibate priest and described as the ‘Father of the Catholic Church in the twentieth century’. His main contribution to the subject was on marriage in a chapter of his Theological Investigations “Marriage as Sacrament”. He asks:

What is, precisely on a Christian understanding, the heart and centre of marriage? ... Is it not necessary to view the institution of marriage once more in its theological and spiritual origins, seeing that at the deepest level it is on this basis alone that the concrete problems of life can be endured and solved.

This looks potentially encouraging, as does his statement that there are three additional aspects to be aired about marriage: (i) how this love is to be exemplified (ii) how it relates to God, and how personal love is thereby re-energised (Rahner says acquire ‘fresh roots’) through ‘grace’ (iii) and unites us with wider communities. It is at this point that his essay style interferes. He admits that this would commit him to ‘give an account of the entire theological problem of the unity which exists between love of God and love of neighbour’ but then he is not able to deliver on this.

He does, however, have some particular but undeveloped insights that do have a bearing on this research. For example he notes that ‘love of God and love of neighbor mutually condition one another’. His brief explanation of this looks remarkably like Schleiermacher’s approach. Hence, Rahner says: ‘God can be “recognised” ... first and last ...(in) the world of personal relationships’.

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252 Ibid., 203.
253 Ibid., 204.
254 Ibid., 204.
255 Ibid. (parenthesis mine)
Rahner affirms the official doctrine of the Catholic Church that marriage is one of the seven sacraments. He resists marriage as a selfish, or ‘egotistical’ retreat from the world:

Marriage is not the act in which two individuals come together to form a ‘we’, a relationship in which they set themselves apart from the ‘all’ and close themselves against this. Rather it is the act in which a ‘we’ is constituted which opens itself lovingly precisely to all.256

In turn he connects this to the fact that the same couple have come from a community and that any children they have should not solely be enclosed within their parents’ ‘we’ relationship, but also encouraged to become part of the wider community.257

He has three further interesting observations. He talks briefly about the particularity of love: ‘In the specific love for the concrete individual man must precisely experience what ‘love’ is in general.258 Not only is love particular but there is also an intention of a ‘universal concrete’ in which the individual is part ‘of the people of God’ ... as belonging to the unity of mankind.259 Lastly he describes what he terms ‘ecstasy’ and I examine further in Chs.7 and 8, as follows:

Married love too is a readiness, an exercise, a promise and a task, to love man in himself – something which is more than merely ‘respecting’ him, merely giving him ‘his due’ instead of being ready again and again to trust him with one’s self, to commit one’s self to him ‘with one’s whole heart and with all one’s resources’. We are always in debt to all, often perhaps to those most remote from us even more than to those who are closest. Marriage is the concrete state in which we begin to pay this

256 Rahner, “Marriage as Sacrament,” 207 (author’s emphasis).
257 Ibid.
258 Rahner, “Marriage as Sacrament,” 208 (author’s emphases). Rahner’s book was published just over forty years ago – it is jarring nonetheless to hear his exclusive language afresh.
259 Ibid., (author’s emphases).
endless debt, not a dispensation from the endless task which can only be fulfilled by God's help.260

In all cases, whether to a partner, or to children (who do not feature heavily) or to one’s far off neighbour, Rahner is clear that this outgoing love or caritas is only sustained by God's grace and that this is part of God's salvation.261 No reference to the Trinity appears in Rahner's foregoing discussion, even though his trinitarian work preceded this volume of *Theological Investigations*. Mark Taylor has, however, observed the feature in Rahner that I have just mentioned – namely ‘self-giving ecstatic love’. Taylor comments: ‘Rahner holds that the divine love of others is similar to human love in that it involves an ecstatic self-giving on the part of the lover, in this case God’. 262

**Summary**

This chapter has reviewed key Christian thinkers on the subject of the family from Martin Luther onwards. Compared with the previous chapter and the overall views of the earlier patristic and scholastic eras, there has been far greater ecclesiastical acceptance of marriage and family, heralded by the Reformation. Nevertheless, the reasons for this change lay less in theology and rather more in a combination of abuses within the Church and the rediscovery, during the Renaissance, of the Platonic, Aristotelian and Stoic ordering of society. Indeed, the same Graeco-Roman sources that so influenced the asceticism, monasticism and celibacy of the patristic and scholastic eras, also continued to influence many of the writers from Luther onwards in a number of important ways.

Given the renewed Christian interest in the family from Luther onwards, striking omissions include a general lack of theological

260 Ibid.
261 Ibid., 206. Please see p.254 on the theme of salvation.
reflection and a specific lack in considering the content as opposed to the form of relationships. Schleiermacher marks a contrast but his theology of family is deliberately designed to address a loss of the sense of God. Whilst Maurice suggests the Trinity might offer a model for family, and *vice versa*, he hardly pursues this. Barth does so but there are a number of question marks over his attempt. Like Bonhoeffer, Barth always intended doing more, but neither was able to do so. In short there is still some way to go before it can be confidently argued that there is a theology of family, let alone a trinitarian theology of the family.

The next chapter examines how some of those same philosophical sources influenced thinking about the Trinity and in turn have impacted on the Western family.
Chapter 4

Trinitarian theological mis-steps?

Introduction

For the past two chapters I have described how salient Christian theologians have tackled the subject of the human family, their rather mixed motivations for doing so, and the diverse legacy they have bequeathed. Much of this history is unknown or unreferred to in contemporary Christian books on the family.\(^1\) I have sought to demonstrate that the Christian consideration of family has, for a number and considerable variety of reasons, proven to be theologically light. Furthermore, it has been considerably influenced by Graeco-Roman philosophy, albeit with rather unusual and highly divergent results, depending on the historical period.\(^2\)

This chapter examines the approach of theologians, not to the subject of human family, but in the historical development of the

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\(^1\) The Scottish Doctrine Panel on Marriage, for example, noted that: ‘Most Church members probably assume that there is a stable and consistent understanding of what “Christian marriage” is. It came as a surprise to members of the Working Party to discover how diverse the tradition is, in terms of the Church’s teaching and also of social custom’. Doctrine, "The Theology of Marriage Part I," 2. Walter Kasper makes only a brief three sentence mention of this history in respect of marriage: ‘The Catholic ethos of marriage has often only been able to make headway in the face of difficulties in opposition to dualistic and Manichaean tendencies. Sexuality and marriage have frequently been devalued in the history of Christianity. This is beyond dispute, as is the fact that, in the course of history, the Christian and human dignity of marriage has again and again been defended against many dangerous tendencies’. Walter Kasper, *Theology of Christian Marriage*, trans. David Smith (London: Burns & Oates Ltd, 1980), 7.

\(^2\) The Church of England’s Report on the Family compressed the period covered by the last two chapters into less than four pages, despite the Bishops of Liverpool and Bath and Wells introductory statement that ‘it is vital that discussion of family life should be clearly based on an understanding of the Christian tradition…’ Whilst the report noted an ascetic theme influencing the patristic accounts it did not observe any Hellenistic philosophical influence. It also quoted from Augustine and the Puritan Richard Baxter, without noticing the Hellenistic similarities. Responsibility, *Something to Celebrate*, x, 19-23.
doctrine of God. Specifically, I am investigating claims that, under the same influences of Hellenistic philosophy, these developments took a number of unforeseen directions that have greatly affected the subsequent course of trinitarian theology, theology in general, theological anthropology in particular, and even Western society.

Reflecting theologically on the family from a Christian belief in the triune God is no simple or straightforward matter. It depends, for instance, on what precisely is meant by trinitarian theology? It further hinges on the view held of God and indeed of God’s relation to the world. It is also a function of how ‘family’ itself is perceived. In this chapter, I intend to demonstrate that all of these crucial variables have been strangely and quite strongly affected by the particular historic formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity, under the influence of Hellenistic philosophy. Unintentionally, in the process of formulating this doctrine, the Christian conception of God became less triune, God became more remote from everyday life, theology became divorced from the revelation of God in the Old and New Testaments, and the image of what it is to be human ‘in God’s image’ became primarily individual and rational.

Colin Gunton has described the sequence that led to these developments as ‘theological mis-steps’. He is not alone in this analysis. Robert Jenson, John Zizioulas, Jürgen Moltmann, Catherine LaCugna, Christoph Schwöbel, and Wolfhart Pannenberg are among other theologians who have traced similar trajectories that they maintain have had significant repercussions for trinitarian theology. Nor is this solely about the influence of Augustine and the ‘psychological’ analogy for the Trinity, important though this may have been. LaCugna, Pannenberg, and Weinandy, for example, have equally found weaknesses in the Cappadocians’ solutions that, they claim, are similarly linked to later theological difficulties. While a mis-step may imply that there is a single, right path on which orthodox theology must tread, in fact orthodox trinitarian theology is much more varied and
contested than this. For Gunton et al., mis-steps allow for variation within orthodox theology, but draw the line at assumptions that derive primarily from Greek philosophy with little basis in Christian theology.

Arguably, and indeed equally, momentous for western society and the family, however, is the association that Gunton, Speidell, James Torrance and Zizioulas have drawn between some of the same theological mis-steps and their effects upon theological anthropology. James Torrance, for instance, suggested that the ‘counterpart of the rugged individualism of Western culture is the concept of a Sovereign Individual Monad “out there”,’3 Whilst this might appear that Torrance is arguing God has been made in the image of the Western individual, the context suggests that he is in fact making the precise opposite claim. Furthermore, rationality rather than relationality was perceived to be the most Godlike human attribute and analogue. LaCugna, James Torrance and Gunton all point to Boethius’ sixth century definition of what it meant to be human, in the image of God, as ‘naturaes rationabilis individua substantia’ (an individual substance of a rational nature).4 They and others have suggested that these twin emphases of individuality and reason became the defining ontological characteristics of being human and thereby exercised enormous influence over western society, philosophy and ethics.5 Boethius’ definition simultaneously downplays the significance of emotion, and, as I will demonstrate, the importance of women and children.

Some theologians have recognised the effect this theological anthropological change has exercised on ecclesiology, as well as upon

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3 James Torrance “Introductory Essay” to Olsen, A New Relatedness, 15.
4 Against Eutyches II 1-5, 28-37, John Thompson, "Modern Trinitarian Perspectives," Scottish Journal of Theology 44(1991). Boethius was actually defending the unity of Christ. Angelici explains that the generic term substance could include rational and irrational beings and can be applied to describe both universals and particulars. “Person,” instead, pertains only to particular substances that are part of the rational sphere.
western society, but none have specifically considered how the same factors might have impinged on the phenomenon of the western family, even though their combined effect may have been substantial.\(^6\)

Moreover, contemporary Christian and secular writers on the western family, whilst sometimes noting the impact of individualism, do not appreciate that the Christian doctrine of God and theological anthropology might have had instrumental roles to play.

This chapter is divided into four main sections:

1. Outlining some of the alleged theological ‘mis-steps’

2. Explaining how they have been related to developments in theology and anthropology

3. Examining these developments for their potential impact on the phenomenon of the Western family, and the Christian debate about ‘the Family’.

4. Conclusions

1. Trinitarian theological mis-steps?

How was the distinctive trinitarian doctrine at the centre of Christianity formulated? And how did it come to be relegated to the outer margins of the Christian faith? Whilst it was the first of these questions that has predominated historically, the re-emergence of trinitarian theology since Barth, and particularly towards the end of the twentieth century, has provoked considerable interest in the second question. These studies have revealed that trinitarian theology was not developed in a vacuum. Indeed a significant focus was instead on Christology and soteriology. The early theologians had to contend for the proposition that Jesus Christ was fully God and fully human within

and against the powerful schema of prevailing Greek philosophies, and prompted by objections, such as those of Arius and Eunomius. This enterprise was rendered even more complex by occurring over a period spanning more than two centuries, in places as far apart as present day northern France, Syria and Alexandria, being conducted in two languages, and against a backdrop of some turbulent temporal and ecclesiastical politics.\(^7\) Developing new terms, and new conceptual meanings for existing ones, created additional confusion.\(^8\) There was also the constant problem that, in LaCugna’s words: ‘what was more clearly expressed in the thoughts and works of the author(s) were not replicated or adhered to with the same degree of subtlety and care by their successors’.\(^9\)

Of all these factors listed above, the prevailing Greek philosophies were to prove particularly significant. Differences exist on this point between the various studies of the history of the doctrine of the Trinity. A number of the older studies, for example, accepted the historical philosophical background as a given, although some questioned the degree of philosophical influence on Christianity.\(^10\) The more recent studies agree that the early theologians were inevitably working, and obliged to convey their views, within the prevailing Hellenistic and Roman conceptual understandings. They also tend to note that considerable effort was made to re-schematicise Greek philosophy to explain the mystery of God as revealed in Jesus Christ,

\(^{7}\text{See, for example, Mark Weedman, "Hilary and the Homoiousians: Using New Categories to Map the Trinitarian Controversy," Church History 76, no. 3 (2007).}\)

\(^{8}\text{For example, Hilary of Poitiers gave new meanings to sacramentum, dispensatio, and substitutio and is credited with coining neologisms: abscissio, incarnatio, innascibilitas, initiabilis, supercreo, and consubsisto. In Fathers of the Church, St Hilary of Poitiers, the Trinity, p.xiii. Boff, Trinity and Society, 62. As Illingworth put it: ‘Such novelty of language implies some degree of novel thought’. J.R. Illingworth, The Doctrine of the Trinity: Apologetically Considered (London: MacMillan & Co. Ltd., 1907), 16.}\)

\(^{9}\text{LaCugna, God for Us, Preface (parenthesis mine).}\)

\(^{10}\text{G. L. Prestige, for example, made a defence of the rational philosophical basis of the doctrine, against Harnack and James Mackinnon and their concerns about the ‘Hellenisation of Christianity’ Prestige, God in Patristic Thought, xiii-xviii.}\)
hence inventing new conceptual terms. Nevertheless, Jenson came to the conclusion that the 'Hellenistic conceptualisation was tangentially, if not diametrically, opposed to the revealed Christian God as recorded in the New Testament'. It follows that if Jenson was right, then trying to comprehend and convey the revelation of God against this conceptual backdrop might have proved problematic. This indeed appears to have been the case. Gunton and LaCugna are among those who have joined Jenson in arguing that these non-Christian philosophical sources influenced not only the development of the doctrine of the Trinity, but also sowed the seeds of its demise. It is pertinent, therefore, to consider the way in which these philosophical sources may have unintentionally affected the Christian doctrine of God and also influenced theological anthropology.

Gunton's research for the origins of the Hellenistic ideas that would turn out to be so problematic took him back even further than Plato, to Parmenides. Unlike Heraclitus, who had seen the universe as operating in a constant state of flux, Parmenides defined reality in a totally different way. The really real were the things that did not alter. These metaphysical beings were eternal and totally unchanging.

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12 Jenson, *Systematic Theology: The Triune God*, 1. There is a danger because of lack of space in oversimplifying and suggesting that Hellenistic thought was settled, uniform and uncontested, which was not the case. For a detailed study of the complexities of just one concept see Christopher Stead, *Divine Substance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977).


14 Parmenides birth date is uncertain, from 540 to 515 BCE.

15 Robert Jenson has outlined how the particular and traumatic history of Greece led both Heraclitus and Parmenides to their respective conclusions, including Greece's arbitrary overthrow by the Dorian tribes and the Greek's subsequent post-traumatic search for meaning and 'timeless reality'. Jenson, *The Triune Identity*, 57-61.
'Ordinary things, the material world and its contents, cannot really be said to be, because they are subject to decay and destruction'.\(^{16}\) This also applied to humanity. You may recall, from Ch.2, that this was precisely the same reason, nearly nine hundred years later, that Augustine did not think the family analogy of Gregory Nazianzus for the Triune Godhead could be applicable.\(^{17}\) From this perspective both human beings and the material world are alike transient and inferior forms of being. As well as the dualism of the eternal and the material, Parmenides also introduced a further dualism: between sense data and reason. Perception and feelings are unreliable. Gunton quotes Guthrie’s commentary on Parmenides’ approach: ‘reason alone is to be trusted. It is a decisive moment in the history of European philosophy’.\(^{18}\)

This Parmenidian predominance of reason, and the dualistic downgrading of human physical and material existence, makes sense of the later Stoic, Encratic and Manichean worldviews that I have referred to in the previous chapters. The primary word used for this Parmenidian, and later Platonic, idea of permanent and unchanging being was ‘ousia’, translated by the Latin term ‘substantia’, and often referred to as ‘substantialism’ or ‘substance ontology’.\(^{19}\) Tom Torrance defines ousia as: ‘that which is and subsists by itself’.\(^{20}\) Stead points out the use of the word and concept of ousia was not necessarily precise but it is possible to discern some of its contours by Plato’s contrast with other terms, such as pathos (‘state’) and genesis (becoming or birth).\(^{21}\)


\(^{17}\) See p.146f.


\(^{19}\) Other Latin translations also existed, including essentia, existentia, and natura. Other Greek words were also used for ousia, including hypostasis, hyparxis and physis. Stead, *Divine Substance*, 19. These synonyms and their exact meaning became part of the Trinitarian debate.

\(^{20}\) Torrance, *One Being Three Persons*.

After Parmenides, classical Greek cosmological thought divided the world into two: *ousia* and *pathos*: unchanging substance and changing condition. Ordinary things and indeed people literally cannot be said to *be*, in this schema, solely because they are subject to birth, decay and destruction. Again, the Stoic emphasis on *apathaeia* (statelessness, or not subject to transient change) begins to make more sense. Overall, as Gunton points out, this is a vastly different view from the positive assessment of material and human creation made by the Genesis writer.

This Hellenistic schema also crucially affected the concept of God and the understanding of what constitutes divinity. By definition God *is* *ousia*. God therefore cannot be material, must be eternal, cannot change and must be monarchical and monadic, since any partition implies change. Furthermore, God is the opposite of the *insubstantial* human limitations in time and space and so human beings can only conceive of God negatively. To human beings 'God is “invisible”, “intangible,” “impassible” (i.e. unaffected by external events), “indescribable”. It may already be apparent that Jesus Christ’s birth, his physical incarnation, suffering and death would have challenged most of the Hellenistic criteria for divine *being*. It was for this reason that Origen needed to make the Logos *eternally* begotten (of the Father) for his Greek thinking audience to comprehend the divinity of Christ.

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22 Vergil’s description of Dido and, by extension, of women more generally in the *Aeneid* 4.569f as ‘*Varium et mutabile semper femina*’ (‘A woman is at all times a changing and inconstant thing’) can be seen in this context as even more debasing. latinlanguagephrases.com/quote/vergil, (accessed 13.6.1). For an overview of the Platonic, Cynic, Stoic and Epicurean influences on Vergil, who intended to take up the philosophic life after writing the Aeneid, see W. F. Jackson Knight, *Roman Vergil*, rev. ed. (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1966), 16-23.

23 ‘And God saw that it was good’ repeated seven times, Genesis 1, Gunton, *The Triune Creator*, 27.

24 Jenson, *The Triune Identity*, 60.

25 Thus Tertullian affirmed the incredible ‘humiliations and sufferings of God’. ‘What is unworthy of God is needed for me … The Son of God has died; it is to be believed just because it is unlikely.’ ‘God can be changed into all things yet remain as he is’. Tertullian *On the Flesh of Christ* 5.1, 5.3-4, 3.5, quoted in ibid., 71.
The gap between timeless divine substance and temporal human inexistence was so great that the problem for the Greeks was how it might be bridged. There were three main overlapping solutions. One was mediatorial demiurges, or demi-gods. The second was the divine logos, which performed double duty as ‘the deity’s self-revelatory discourse and the reasonable Order of the cosmos’. John’s gospel makes particular use of this Greek concept and so did the second century Christian apologists. The third solution was ‘subordinationism’. ‘Subordinationism’ owes its origins to Platonic emanationism and is closely linked to later Plotinian thought in which the Originator of the universe must be by definition greater than that which is created and thereby begins a great chain or hierarchy of being. The Apologists, from Justin Martyr to Origen, also harnessed this to explain how the Son and the Holy Spirit could be both distinct from God and from the Father and yet divine because they both shared, through emanation, in his one divine ousia. In the ‘Origenist system’ the Son is the image of the invisible God, an accommodation to human capacity to comprehend God and as close to God as you can get, but not absolutely God.

Nevertheless, says Weinandy, ‘this principle could not bear the strain of biblical revelation, which demanded that God be one and that the Son and the Holy Spirit be equally God’. It was also, as Weinandy points out:

Incompatible ... with philosophical consistency – the Son cannot emanate from the Father if the Father is to be one, for that which emanates from the source carries with it the additional philosophical difficulty of thereby bringing division and mutation to the source.

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26 Ibid. A more detailed exposition of logos, or ‘the Word’, can be found in Prestige, God in Patristic Thought, 112-28.
27 Jenson, Systematic Theology: The Triune God, 1, 78. Prestige consequently refers to Origen as ‘the common father’ of Arianism and the Cappadocians, Prestige, God in Patristic Thought, xiv.
29 Ibid. Stead is among those who note that this premise attracted criticism of the Stoics and Pythagoreans because, logically, if like generated like in creation, then the ultimate source must be either composite or corruptible beings cannot be
In taking logic to its conclusion, Arius denied that the Son and the Holy Spirit could be God. In Ted Peters' words, for Arius: 'the Son does not share the same ousia with God'. This was to pose almost insuperable theological and philosophical difficulties for the nascent church. Influencing this dispute was also a doctrine of simplicity that automatically favoured the oneness of God over any more complicated arrangement, coupled with a fear of tri-theism, again because these both contradicted the prevailing concept of divine ousia.

Tertullian, Irenaeus and Athanasius all stand out in their deliberate attempts to oppose the constraints Hellenistic thinking placed on Christian beliefs. Tom Torrance, for example, commends Athanasius for his resistance to the Arians in arguing that God's ousia is defined, 'not speculatively from some point outside of God, but from within the actual definite self-revelation of God in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour in the economy of redemption'. Whilst the Arians wanted to assert that sonship automatically implied derivation and creation, Athanasius famously turns the argument upside down by asserting: 'It would be more godly and true to signify God from the Son and call him Father, than to name God from his works alone and call Him Unoriginate'. Torrance suggests that when Athanasius used the term ousia he did so in the transformed light of biblical inspiration that 'the Son and the Spirit are each of one and the same being or homoousios with God the Father'. Thus, while I argue that patristic trinitarian

compared with the source, which then undermines the doctrine of creation. Stead, Divine Substance, 195-99.

30 Peters, God as Trinity, 60. Arians declared ‘As the monad, and the Source of all things, God is before all things. Therefore he is also before the Son’. Arius, Alexander, in Bardy. Recherches, 267, quoted in Jenson, The Triune Identity, 82 (author's italics). Peters makes the point, based on Gregg and Groh’s work, that Christ was still revered soteriologically by Arians as the means and model for human salvation, Robert C. Gregg and Dennis E. Groh, Early Arianism - a View of Salvation (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1981).

31 Torrance, One Being Three Persons, 117.

32 Athanasius, Contra Arianos, 1.34; De decretis, 31, quoted in ibid.

33 Ibid., 116. Torrance suggests that there is such clear water between Athanasius’ use of ousia as a personal, active and responsive God on the one hand and the Greek ‘metaphysical and static sense’ of the same word, on the other, that it is in
theology was greatly influenced by Greek philosophy, it was never fully subverted by it.

An alternative resolution to subordinationism was modalism or Sabellianism. Here the essence or substance of God remained the same but the three differentiations of the Father, Son and Spirit are simultaneous or, more usually, successive manifestations of God. It confirmed the unity of the Father and the Son in redemption, although it undermined and also contradicted the doctrine of God’s immutability. (Since it too introduced change into the Godhead, particularly through the Incarnation, which contradicted the Greek definition of divine).

Perhaps more significantly, Jenson argued that modalism ‘blatantly betrays the triune narrative’ and ‘allows God to be identified with none of his triune personae.’ Tertullian’s *Contra Praxean*, the early Creeds, and Basil the Great all comprehensively challenged this Sabellian view. It is claimed, however, that theologians from Barth to Rosemary Radford Ruether, Elizabeth Fiorenza, and Sallie McFague have still succumbed to describing members of the Trinity in this *de facto* impersonal way.

The difficulty of avoiding suffering and thus change in the Godhead was resolved, according to LaCugna, by introducing the idea that Christ suffered in his humanity but not his divinity, thus creating a vital breach between the immanent, or eternal being of God, in which God and the divine Christ were equal, and the economy of salvation in which they were not. This ‘development of trinitarian metaphysics ...
served Christian theology well by providing a precise way to refute’ not only Arianism but also Eunomianism and Sabellian modalism.\(^{37}\) LaCugna’s thesis, however, is that this breach between the immanent and economic Trinity has had a number of completely unintended but important effects.

Because of the particular direction the history of dogma took, many people now understand the doctrine of the Trinity to be the esoteric exposition of God’s ‘inner life’, that is, the self-relatedness of Father, Son and Spirit (sometimes called the ‘immanent’ Trinity).\(^{38}\)

Unlike Irenaeus, the Cappadocians and Augustine pursued immanent Trinity, post-Nicea. LaCugna indicates the twin disadvantage of this split between the economic and immanent Trinity. On the one hand, a doctrine of the Trinity ‘locked up in itself and unrelated to us’ is ‘intrinsically uninteresting’, and quite ‘unrelated to other theological doctrines, much less to the Christian life.’ On the other, ‘the highly abstract approach to Trinitarian theology’ has put off theologians such as Hans Küng by its abstruse language or because it ‘strikes them as presumptuous prying into something about which we know nothing: God’s “inner” life.’\(^{39}\)

The church named Gregory of Nyssa ‘Theologian’ because his ‘Theological Orations’ were written contra Eunomius precisely to argue that we cannot intellectually know the ousia of God. For Gregory, this
‘apophatic’ theology, as mentioned in Ch.1, is a matter of faith and contemplative awe, not human reason.\textsuperscript{40} The difficulty, says LaCugna, is that because all three members of the Trinity shared this ousia, Gregory’s retreat into the utterly ‘unknowable and incomprehensible’ ousia and ‘the manifestation of God through divine energies (energeia)’,\textsuperscript{41} coupled with the split between the economic and the immanent Trinity, simultaneously obscured the dynamic, passionate and inherent connection between the dramatis personae (dramatic characters) of redemption history and the divine Godhead. Tellingly, LaCugna concludes that what the Cappadocians should have done was link ‘the incomprehensibility of God’ to the fact that he comes to us ‘in this way in the economy: through the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit.’\textsuperscript{42}

The problem was how to explain the Immanent Trinity against a backdrop of Substance ontology and apophatic theology. Using Aristotelian and Stoic ideas of \textit{being} and \textit{relation} enabled them to describe how God \textit{is} Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but without partition, or presumptuously portraying God any further. The Cappadocian formula of \textit{mia ousia, treis hypostaseis} (one substance, three hypostases) prevented God from being seen as either one individual, or three distinct beings. LaCugna argues ‘the heart of the doctrine of the Trinity lies here’.\textsuperscript{43} Zizioulas declares that the distinctive contribution of the Cappadocian theologians was to dissociate \textit{hypostasis} from \textit{ousia}, where both terms had previously meant “being” or “existence”, and attach \textit{hypostasis} to \textit{prosopon} (person). ‘None of the three “persons” can exist without, or be in separation from, the other “persons”.’\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{40} See Ch.1, p.48f.  
\textsuperscript{41} LaCugna, \textit{God for Us}, 72.  
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{43} LaCugna, \textit{God for Us}, 69.  
\textsuperscript{44} John D. Zizioulas, “The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity: The Significance of the Cappadocian Solution,” in \textit{Trinitarian Theology Today: Essays on Divine Being and Act}, ed. Christoph Schwöbel (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1995). Christopher Stead concludes that Gregory of Nyssa, for one, ‘fails at this point because his philosophical equipment is not handled with the seriousness which is needed in
The three constitute such an unbreakable unity that individualism is absolutely inconceivable in their case. The three persons of the Trinity are thus one God, because they are so united in an unbreakable communion (koinonia) that none of them can be conceived apart from the rest. The mystery of God in three persons points to a way of being, which precludes individualism and separation (or self-sufficiency and self-existence) as a criterion of multiplicity. The ‘one’ does not precede logically the ‘many’, but, on the contrary, requires the ‘many’ from the very start in order to exist.45

The Cappadocian trinitarian immanent formula, however, follows Tertullian and Origen in economic subordination, defending the Father as the source of the Son and the Spirit. The Cappadocians were anxious that the homousios (same substance) of Athanasius and the ‘Nicene’ Creed still suggested Sabellianism. ‘The Father alone ‘embodied the Godhead’ for the Cappadocians. ‘The Son was begotten out of him and the Holy Spirit proceeded out of him’,46 Weinandy claims that Athanasius’s espousal of homoousios had shattered Platonic emanationism47 but it is arguable that the Cappadocian formula allowed emanationism in by the back door.48

The Cappadocian Fathers did not set the scene for the doctrine of the Trinity alone at the end of the fourth century. Augustine, following hard on their heels but struggling both with their conceptualisation and the language barrier,49 pondered the Trinity intensely. He came to two interim conclusions, both of which were to have profound effects for Western society. First, ‘unlike the Greeks who

order to do justice to his theological and Christian intuitions’. “Ontology and Terminology in Gregory of Nyssa”, in ibid., 45.
45 Ibid.
46 Christopher Stead, Substance and Illusion in the Christian Fathers (London: Variorum Reprints, 1985), IX, 119.
48 Ibid., 13.
49 ‘They intend to put a difference, I know not what between ousia and hypostasis’ Augustine De Trin V.10 He argues that he would normally translate mia ousia, treis hypostases as ‘one essence, three substances’, but after debating the matter, he opted for ‘one essence or substance and three persons.’ Famously, he claims he was forced to make some statement solely to avoid remaining silent on the point. Cf. De Trin. V9, V11, 4.
began by affirming their belief in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit according to the Scriptures ... it seemed better to begin with the unity of the divine nature’.\textsuperscript{50} Gunton observed that the translator to the Catholic University Press edition added ‘since this is a truth which is demonstrated by reason... the logic of this arrangement is today commonly recognised, and in the textbooks of dogma the treatise \textit{de Deo Uno} precedes that of \textit{De Deo Trino}.\textsuperscript{51} Instead of blurring the distinctions between the economic and immanent Trinity Augustine made them more distinct. LaCugna believes we now effectively think of God somewhat independently of Father, Son and Spirit and that this is Augustine’s unintended legacy.\textsuperscript{52}

Gunton points out the apparent perversity of accusing Augustine of ‘undermining the doctrine of the Trinity’ when his ‘treatment of the topic is among the glories of Western theology’.\textsuperscript{53} However, Gunton refers to Rahner’s concern that the limitation of Augustine’s approach ‘is that “it looks as if everything which matters for us in God has already been said in the treatise \textit{On the One God}”.’\textsuperscript{54} Gunton summarises Rahner:

\begin{quote}
The result is that salvation history comes to appear irrelevant to the doctrine of God. The implication for conceptions of the knowledge of God we can then suppose to be something as follows. Because the one God is the real God, and known in a different way from the God who is three, God as he is in himself would appear to be, or at least conceivably is, other than the God made known in salvation history. The outcome is either a
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{52} Peters thinks we now ascribe three meanings to the word ‘God’ a) a ‘general notion of divine reality’ including Yahweh, b) God who is ‘the Father of Jesus’ and c) ‘the entire Trinity’. He comments ‘despite these three rather different uses, few people seem confused. We proceed to speak glibly of God as if we knew what we are talking about’. Peters, \textit{God as Trinity}, 13.

\textsuperscript{53} ‘Augustine, the Trinity and the Theological Crisis of the West’ in Gunton, \textit{The Promise of Trinitarian Theology}, 33.

\textsuperscript{54} Rahner, \textit{The Trinity}, 17, quoted in “Augustine, the Trinity and the Theological Crisis of the West” in Gunton, \textit{The Promise of Trinitarian Theology}, 33.
modalistic conception of God, or two competing sources of knowledge which tend to discredit each other.\textsuperscript{55}

Second, Augustine's search for a human hallmark or analogy of the Trinity led him not to inter-human relations but to the intra-human: mind, knowledge and soul, or memory, understanding and will.\textsuperscript{56} He did contemplate an analogy of friends but explicitly rejected it because he could not equate the element of voluntariness in human relationships with what he understood of the nature of the divine Godhead. He had also proposed an earlier ‘psychological’ analogy of lover, the beloved and the love between them, based on 1 John 4.7, and on a number of other biblical texts.\textsuperscript{57} However, he dismantled this analogy, partly because it did not sufficiently satisfy the criterion of the unity of substance, and partly because narcissism would conceivably eliminate the third party: the beloved.\textsuperscript{58} Therefore he searched for other human analogies or hallmarks of the trinity, which turned out to be within individuals rather than between them. Herbert Deane has observed the influence of Plotinian thought in this move – ‘the flight of the alone to the Alone’.\textsuperscript{59} Deane comments: ‘so even the search for God is turned in on the mind’s self reflection, and it is perhaps hardly surprising that it is where Augustine looks for “the marks of the Trinity” \textit{Vestigia Trinitatis}.\textsuperscript{60} Daniélou, Couratin and Kent are in agreement with E. von Ivanka's study that Augustine is nearer the Neoplatonists than even Gregory of Nyssa. In Gregory the sense of God’s transcendence is sharper. Nevertheless, Daniélou \textit{et al.} suggest that both Augustine and Gregory share a Neoplatonic heritage. They wonder if this could have been due to ‘a common indebtedness to Plotinus’, or from the effect of

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{58} Augustine, \textit{De Trin.} IX 2.2.
\textsuperscript{59} Deane, \textit{The Political and Social Ideas of St. Augustine.}
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid. 58.
Gregory on Ambrose, or there is even the possibility of Augustine having had direct access to Gregory’s works.\(^{61}\)

Augustine argued that relationships within the Trinity could not be depicted, because the Trinity always acts externally in an undivided way and as a unity.\(^{62}\) Moltmann queries whether, as a result, Augustine’s formula is sufficient to comprehend the event of the cross, and thus divorces God from salvation history.\(^{63}\) Augustine also ends up in a strange position in respect of the Holy Spirit. Deferrari et al. claim that was principally because the early church had been pre-occupied with the relationship between the Father and the Son within the *oikonomia*.\(^{64}\) The Cappadocian Fathers saw the Holy Spirit as possessing a *hypostasis*,\(^{65}\) but Augustine consigned the third member of the Godhead to being the *relationship* between the Father and the Son – the *vinculum amoris (caritatis)* ‘the bond of love.’\(^{66}\) Bishop Kallistos of Diokleia objects to Augustine’s analogy of the Trinity as lover, beloved and love, since this model makes God ‘bipersonal rather than tripersonal.’\(^{67}\)

Following on from Augustine, Aquinas did not assist any understanding of Divine Relations by suggesting that God is not only the supreme being but also the reality whose essence is pure being: ‘self-subsistent being itself.’\(^{68}\) As Aquinas puts it, ‘It is impossible for

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\(^{62}\) *Opera Sanctae trinitatis ad intra sunt divisa, ad extra sunt indivisa* (Augustine, *Quaestiones de trinitate et de Gen.* 1 V111, 1173) quoted in Moltmann, *History and the Triune God*, 62.

\(^{63}\) *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*, 160f.


\(^{65}\) Basil had affirmed the divinity of the Holy Spirit, as did Gregory Nanzianzus’ *Fifth Theological Oration*, Marmion and Nieuwenhove, *An Introduction to the Trinity*, 73-6.

\(^{66}\) *De Trin.* Bk IX.12.17, cf. Bk VI.5.7

\(^{67}\) Quoted in Peters, *God as Trinity*, 207.

natural reason to arrive at the knowledge of the divine persons. By natural reason we may know those things that pertain to the unity of the divine essence, but not those things which pertain to the distinction of the divine persons.’

Aquinas’ theology is a Hellenistic negative one, via negativa – we can only say what God is not, not what God is. Berdyaev quotes Laberthonnière in noting that if patristic thought was impregnated with Platonism, ‘Western Scholasticism was penetrated by Aristotelian philosophy... This was especially true of Aquinas, who strictly subordinated theology to Aristotelian philosophy’. Medieval philosophy was not so much a servant of theology as the other way round.

Accordingly, Aquinas’ solution to the three distinctions of God characterises them as specific actions, missions, or processions of sending the Son and the Spirit – incarnation and inspiration. These missions imply what Aquinas terms ‘real relations’ of begetting, being begotten, breathing out and being breathed. From these we can deduce three unique relations of begetting, being begotten, and being breathed forth. These are the ‘subsistent relations’ that are named Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This differs from the Cappadocians in that Aquinas deduces them from movements or actions within God. They themselves are not subjects who act. Their subsistence is dependent upon the substantialist notion of one God with which this section began. As Paul Fiddes puts it ‘unfortunately the potential here for developing a dynamic concept of being (an ontology) based on action and relationship is spoiled ...the “relations” seemed swallowed up into one essence with the loss of any real threeness and “otherness” of persons within God.’

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69 Summa i.32.1
70 Küng, Does God Exist? An Answer for Today, 501. There was concern about the impact of Aristotelian philosophy on theology in Aquinas’ own period, including a condemnation of its use in the Universities of Paris and Oxford in 1277.
72 Fiddes, Participating in God, 35.
It is hard to do justice to the complexity of both the history and the subject matter in just this one section. Much has had to be omitted. The aim has been to demonstrate that there is substance to Gunton’s suggestion that the historical development of the doctrine was subject to a series of theological mis-steps. What Gunton and a number of other theologians have done is provide some compelling evidence to link the later demise of Trinitarian theology to the particular and peculiar routes that the third, fourth and fifth century theologians, as well as Aquinas were obliged, or chose, to take. According to this line of thinking, consequently, and crucially, the concept of God became unintentionally divorced from the God revealed in the New Testament, and thus more Platonic, remote, impassive, monadic and mysterious. The concentration on the Father and the Son, as well as Augustine’s own contribution, left the West with at best a binitarian rather than a trinitarian God, and a legacy of a largely undeveloped Pneumatology.

Several writers have objected to Gunton’s thesis about Augustine in particular. Others have suggested that Augustine, in general, has been unfairly criticized, often by those who have read him insufficiently. This section has shown that, influential as Augustine


was, he was far from being the only, or even the first, theologian who unwittingly sowed seeds of future difficulties for the doctrine of the Trinity. Furthermore, as I have just outlined, Gunton is only one of many theologians to express concerns about the development of the doctrine. Notwithstanding, part of Gunton’s argument is based on the undeniable fact that Augustine produced *De Deo Uno* considerably ahead of *De Deo Trino*, and Gunton is clear that he is following Rahner in this analysis. Although there have been misgivings about some of LaCugna’s theological conclusions her scholarship and her forensic diagnosis of the trajectory of the doctrine have been commended.75

2. The effect of ‘theological mis-steps’ on theology and anthropology

The previous section has examined the trajectory that Trinitarian theology took under the influence of a number of factors, including the prevailing Hellenistic schemas. Theologians forensically investigating this history have made other discoveries and connections. These include the subsequent course of theology itself, as well as developments in theological anthropology. It is these two that are the focus of this section. I have also included a subsection on the Church, for reasons that will be explained.

2.1 The perceived impact on the doctrine of God

In the literature review in Ch.1, I referred to the large-scale and acknowledged disappearance of Trinitarian thinking, from the Enlightenment until the twentieth century.76 An obvious question in the re-emergence of Trinitarian theology was how did the Trinity become relegated to the outer margins of Christian faith, given that there was so

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much theological enquiry devoted to this theme in the third, fourth and fifth centuries? The previous section has outlined some of the theological mis-steps that occurred in the process of trying to explicate the doctrine against a backdrop of Hellenistic philosophy and conceptualization. What Gunton, Schwöbel, LaCugna, Moltmann and Pannenberg found was not just a sequence that arguably led to the distortion and demise of Trinitarian theology, but also critically affected the perception of God and of theology more generally. In short, as I will show, they argue that the same processes led inexorably to Theism and Deism, Agnosticism, Secularism and Atheism, accompanied by the demotion of theology, and a widespread loss of the sense of the God depicted in the New Testament, within Western thought and society.77

Aquinas’ substantialism was the underlying premise in his scholastic theology. Establishing God’s existence therefore preceded all other investigation, including about God’s Self. To make matters more complicated, given human limitations vis a vis God, how is it possible as creatures know how God is, God’s constitution, rather than just the fact that God is? Substantialism provided the key for Aquinas because human beings (indeed creation) and God share in common the fact of their existence. So although we cannot speak univocally about them both, it is possible to compare them analogically. When combined with his negative theology, the how of God became the antithesis as well as the perfection of all that we see in human existence. Thus our complexity, location in space and time, suffering, mortality, and imperfection are inverted into the very characteristics that defined and typified the theistic God – simplicity, infinity, impassibility, immutable and eternal.

LaCugna sums up the unintended effects of these extended and complex deliberations, particularly the loss of the sense of the God revealed in the New Testament:

The economy [economic Trinity] became less and less decisive in shaping conclusions about the intratrinitarian relations. By the medieval period in both Byzantine and Latin theology, the divine persons were thought of as existing ‘in’ God, in a realm cut off from the economy of salvation history by virtue of an unbreachable ontological difference. In scholastic theology, the doctrine of the Trinity was identified as the science of God’s inner relatedness. The result of this was a one-sided theology of God that had little to do with the economy of Christ and the Spirit, with the themes of Incarnation and grace, and therefore little to do with the Christian life. Greek medieval theology took refuge in an exaggerated agnosticism that relegated the Trinitarian persons far beyond our capacity to experience or understand. Hence the defeat of the doctrine of the Trinity.

Scholastic theological reflection on the Trinity did not stop with Aquinas. Henry of Ghent, Duns Scotus, Peter Auriol, William of Ockham and Gregory of Rimini all examined this conundrum in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The Reformers of the sixteenth century did not do much to advance the mainstream development of trinitarian theology. Calvin opted for ‘a reasoned order’ to distinguish the ‘persons’ on the basis of their ‘incommunicable qualities’ instead of

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78 Marmion and van Nieuwenhove make a pitch, based on Giles Emery, that Aquinas’ approach was neither abstract, nor that the Trinity was locked within itself and did not connect with the economy of salvation. They concede, however, that this view existed even at the time. Marmion and Nieuwenhove, An Introduction to the Trinity, 123. LaCugna, God for Us, 209-10.

79 (My parenthesis) McGuckin notices the irony that Athanasius and Gregory of Nyssa were at the ‘top of (their) game’ as professional philosophers of religion, yet the ‘patristic subtleties are in danger of becoming wooden dogmas, or worse, examples of pedantic obscurity, to subsequent generations.’ McGuckin, John Anthony, ‘The Trinity in the Greek Fathers’ in Phan, The Cambridge Companion to the Trinity, 66.

80 Marmion and Nieuwenhove, An Introduction to the Trinity, 124.

81 Christine Helmer, drawing on work by Risto Saarinen, Reiner Jansen, Eberhardt Jüngel and Albrecht Peters, has argued persuasively that there is more trinitarian development in Luther than previously thought. Her data is based on Luther’s later use of disputation (a teaching device for his doctoral students), his hymn ‘Dear Christians One and All’ (Nun freut euch, lieben Christen gmein) and two sermons preached on Romans 11.33-36 on 27 May and 3 June 1537. Helmer, “Luther’s Trinitarian Understanding.” She presents no evidence, however, that Luther’s work influenced trinitarian theology more generally. See Ch.7, 327 & 342, n.57.
relational models to distinguish the persons. With the important exception of the subliminal thread that I examine in Ch.5, however, and the continuing presence in the creeds and liturgy, the subject of the Trinity became less and less discussed to the point of Kant’s conclusion referred to in Ch.1 that ‘nothing whatsoever can be practically gained from the Trinity’. As I noted there also, Schleiermacher, who overlapped with Kant, famously considered the Trinity only in the last 14 pages of his 751-page tome *The Christian Faith*. Marmion and Nieuwenhove make it clear that Schleiermacher ‘rejects the traditional doctrine of the ‘Trinity’, based on his reading of Kant, his concern about Old Testament proof texts and, in Schleiermacher’s own words: ‘the assumption of an eternal distinction in the Supreme Being is not an utterance concerning the religious consciousness, for there it could never emerge’.

Classical theism attempted to derive a concept of God by the use of reason. The development of Theism and Deism during the Enlightenment is well documented. It may be coincidental that these emerged as Trinitarian theology diminished but LaCugna and Waite Willis Jnr. are among those who argue that it is not. The distancing of God in ‘classical metaphysical properties’ of omnipotence, omniscience, impassibility and simplicity’ was ‘nonsoteriological’ said LaCugna, and

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82 J. P. Mackey ‘Doctrine of the Trinity’ in Richardson and Bowden, *A New Dictionary of Christian Theology*, 587-8. Smit concluded that whilst Calvin clearly saw the Trinity as central to his work, he ‘did not draw practical conclusions based on the inner life of the immanent Trinity. His arguments are not built on notions of relationality, identity, and difference, or the social nature of the divine life … which makes it very difficult to draw conclusions … with a view to ecclesiology, ethics, or anthropology’. Dirkie Smit, “The Trinity in the Reformed Tradition,” *Journal of Reformed Theology* 3(2009): 72.


86 “Deism” is used to refer to belief in the existence of a supreme being who is regarded as the ultimate source of reality and ground of value but as not intervening in natural and historical processes by way of particular providences, revelations and salvific acts. The common use of “theism”, in contrast, does not have these negative implications’. Richardson and Bowden, *A New Dictionary of Christian Theology*, 148. Cf. “Deism v. theism” in Brown, *The Divine Trinity*, 3-51.
proved unable to answer the many questions that arose, for example, concerning theodicy, and who God is? Waite Willis Jnr. noted:

While the conception of this supreme being is developed in divergent ways, a typical result of this method is that God is conceived of in absolutist terms as the omnipotent, immutable, impassible, infinite, simple one. Only after having established the legitimacy of belief in God and the truth of religion on these grounds, does theism move on, if at all, to speak of the specifically Christian doctrine of the triune God. Thus, while theism may speak of God as loving, merciful and related, these attributes are often placed in a secondary position and rendered problematic by what has already been said. By the time one arrives at them, a one-sided conception of God is already operative.\(^87\)

Theism and its derivatives dominated both theology and philosophy throughout the Enlightenment and set the agenda for the nineteenth and twentieth century debates.\(^88\) Willis' thesis is that, in the absence of an understanding of the Triune God, Theism, in chronological turn, led to Deism, and when Deism could not adequately address the questions being posed of it, to Atheism.\(^89\) The effect of both Theism and Deism was to take the 'logy' out of Theology. There simply became less to talk about in respect of God. The theo of theology, in Catherine LaCugna's words, was 'neglected, utterly abstract, and even regarded as contrary to reason'.\(^90\) A repeated theme in Luther is that of the 'hidden God' (Deus Absconditus).\(^91\) In the Enlightenment, God became restricted to the 'God of the gaps' - many of which were closed.

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89 Diderot was a typical example of someone who switched from Deism to radical atheism. Nietzsche, eight decades later, famously declared the death of God.


91 This theme permeates Luther’s extensive work. Bernhard Lohse argues that Deus Absconditus was Luther’s “greatest contribution to the Christian theology of God.” Bernhard Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology: Its Historical and Systematic Development*, trans. Roy A. Harrisville (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 217.
by the scientific advances of the post-Enlightenment period. 92 Fichte (1762-1814) thought that dogmatism also led to a loss of freedom for humanity and headed inevitably to atheism, whilst MacMurray, much later, reflected how unusual atheism actually is.93 The intimate and immediate connection with the world depicted in New Testament soteriology and pneumatology appears absent in Theism and Deism. God does not seem as relevant to the everyday.

Secularism was born in the nineteenth century. It derived part of its impetus from opposing the power of religious influence in the State and in education particularly, but it was also fuelled by theism, deism and atheism. Stanley Hauerwas astutely observed that the combination of the elevation of the human (unintentionally given impetus by Boethius, as I explain in section 2.2, and developed in the Renaissance and the Enlightenment), together with the distancing of God, contained further implications for both theology and for ethics.94

The image of man the maker has therefore had a detrimental effect on Christian theology and ethics. God has been driven into the universe of the ‘wholly other’, leaving the world to whatever fate man’s absolute freedom determines for it; even if he is present or is the God of history, he does little more than confirm the irrepressible march of human creativity. On such a view, any

92 As just one example, George John Romanes wrote A Candid Examination of Theism in 1878. He sorrowfully confessed his loss of faith because his contact with Darwinian friends and his own scientific work meant ‘he was no longer assured of the presence of God behind the appearances and operations of nature’. Cited in Turner, “The Victorian Crisis of Faith,” 22-23.
93 MacMurray, The Self as Agent, 1. MacMurray commented: ‘The long argument which Descartes initiated has moved decisively in the direction of atheism’. Ibid. Hume (1711-1776) is a fascinating example of this process. Descartes re-wrote contemporary philosophy by being interested in the role of emotion and of sociality but saw in religion the antithesis of both of these trends. Accordingly his ethics and works on human nature were noted for their secularism. Stuurman charts the change in an eighteenth century French theologian from Calvinist to Deist. Willis found that ‘protest atheism’ was not only ‘formulated within the context of traditional theism’, but was also ‘tied to its method’. Waite Willis Jr., Theism, Atheism and the Doctrine of the Trinity: The Trinitarian Theologies of Karl Barth and Jurgen Moltmann in Response to Protest Atheism. See also and Ch.IV “Protest Atheism, Theodicy and the Trinity” 79-115 quoting Albert Camus, Max Horkheimer, and Theodor Adorno.
94 Manetti, Montaigne, Petrarch and Pico della Mirandola are among the many Renaissance writers who concentrate on ‘man’. Perhaps the most famous was Pico della Mirandola’s “Oration on the Dignity of Man” (Oratio de Hominis Dignitate) in 1486. See p.250f.
life-directing attraction toward God’s creative and redemptive being becomes unintelligible. Christian ethics in such a context inevitably tends to be Pelagian; the aim of the Christian life becomes right action rather than the vision of God.95

Muncie et al. argue ‘that the diversity of contemporary society demands interdisciplinary forms of analysis if we are to capture its true complexity’.96 This thesis will follow the argument that theology is both implicated in its own demise and that understanding this history is also key to other disciplines, such as sociology, psychology and psychiatry, in fully comprehending some of the personal and societal issues they investigate in respect of the family. ‘Theology was deposed as “queen of the sciences” during the Enlightenment, with theologians agreeing’.97 Hall points out that theology was excluded from Australasian universities from their inception until the 1960’s, and thus was on the ‘academic fringes for well over a century’.98 The suspicion about theology was related to the distancing of God, to inter-denominational turf wars and increasing secularization.

Dalferth believes that it is only in the past century that theology has been able to free itself from the shackles of Enlightenment Theism and to see in the Trinity the possibilities for addressing the serious criticisms of theology by Feuerbach, Marx, Freud and Nietzsche.99

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97 Doctrine, "The Theology of Marriage Part I."
2.2 The perceived impact on theological anthropology

If the impact of trinitarian theological mis-steps on theology was great, then the effect of the same mis-steps on theological anthropology was equally momentous for creating and defining ‘Western’, or so Gunton, Zizioulas and LaCugna, among others, have argued. Take Augustine for instance. LaCugna referred to William Hill’s analysis of Augustine: ‘the fullest implications of Augustine’s thought are that God is one “Person”, within whose divine consciousness there is a threefold self-relatedness’. Hill went on to add that Augustine had:

Already grasped that the trinitarian use of the term personae conveys relationship, but – proceeding introspectively and using human consciousness as an analogue of divine conscious reality – he understands this as a relationality internal to individual consciousness. 101

Thus the soul’s journey towards God is introspective and self-reflective, in keeping with Augustine’s Confessions and with Plotinian thought. 102 But, says LaCugna, ‘this makes the social, communal, toward-another character of personhood rather difficult to see’. LaCugna, in keeping with Gunton, then cites Boethius (474-524) for solidifying ‘the individualistic connotation of person as a center for consciousness’. 103 Boethius had been grappling with a Christological issue. He was fluent in Greek, which was unusual, and steeped in Neoplatonism. He ends up describing the relational realities in the Godhead as scarcely comprehensible (De Trinitate V 33-40). His logical difficulty was that ‘person’ straddled the firm conceptual boundaries of ousia or substance, which could either be a universal predicate or a particular individual, animate or inanimate. His solution was that what distinguished them was their ability to think rationally. Hence Boethius’ definition of a ‘person’ became naturae rationabilis individua substantia

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100 LaCugna, God for Us, 247, quoting Hill, The Three-Personned God, 61.
101 Hill, The Three-Personned God, 61.
102 See “In Interiore Homine” in Taylor, Sources of the Self, 127-42.
103 LaCugna, God for Us, 247.
104 Ibid.
(an individual substance of a rational nature). Ruben Angelici points out that ‘this overstressed oneness without even mentioning relationality, and his (Boethius’) description of person remained unchallenged in the West throughout a great proportion of the Middle Ages’.

Gunton and LaCugna argue it was this combination of Augustine’s Trinitarian theology and Boethius’ formulation that led to the idea that the defining characteristics of being human, in the image of God, are primarily in being a rational individual, rather than a relational person. In fact, Gunton perceives the problem as starting even further back with Irenaeus, who ‘saw all of the characteristics are static possessions of the human as individual, rather than (say) characteristics implying relation’. The emphasis on reason of course resonated with the Platonic dualistic notion that it was the mind or soul that was the most Godlike correspondence in human beings. LaCugna alludes to Augustine’s ‘deep influence on … aspects of Western culture’ and this individualistic orientation is one of them, affecting both God and Human Beings. He paved the way for God to be conceived not as Trinitarian but as Deistic and for human likeness to God to be perceived

105 Against Eutyches II 1-5, 28-37, Thompson, "Modern Trinitarian Perspectives." Boethius was actually defending the unity of Christ. Angelici explains that the generic term substance could include rational and irrational beings and can be applied to describe both universals and particulars. ‘Person’, instead, pertains only to particular substances that are part of ‘the rational sphere’. Cf. Anatolios, "Discourse on the Trinity," 451-52.

106 Victor, "On the Trinity," 48f (author’s emphasis, my parenthesis).

107 ‘Augustine’s quest for the Trinity within the soul, the inner Trinity, risks reducing the Trinity to theological irrelevance … the heart of the matter is perhaps in the doctrine of relations. Since relations are qualifications of the Trinity, and not relations between persons, it becomes difficult to see how the triune relatedness can be brought to bear on the central question of human relatedness. God’s relatedness is construed in terms of self-relatedness, with the result that it is as an individual that the human being is in the image of God, and therefore truly human. The outcome is another, theologically legitimated, version of the tendency to individualism …’ Gunton 'Trinity, Ontology and Anthropology: Towards a Renewal of the Doctrine of the Imago Dei’ in Schwöbel and Gunton, Persons Divine and Human: Kings College Essays in Theological Anthropology, 49.

108 Ibid., 48. (Author’s parenthesis). Also Gunton, The Promise of Trinitarian Theology, 105.

109 LaCugna, God for Us, 82.
in individual qualities. This was to have enormous repercussions for the history of Western thought, for Western society and for the Church.

I will concentrate on individualism first before turning to rationality. The notion of individualism is so ingrained in the Western psyche that it is taken for granted. The French anthropologist, Louis Dumont, described modern individualism, 'set against the background of other great civilizations that the world has known', as 'an exceptional phenomenon'. The historian, Lawrence Stone, asserts that individualism is such a familiar tenet of Western society, it should not be accepted unthinkingly. He notes that it comprises 'culturally determined values, which most societies in world history have despised or deplored, and (at the time he wrote) which most still do'. As already mentioned in chapter one, John Zizioulas, for example, contrasts the Western notion of the autonomous self, which he specifically ascribed to Trinitarian theological mis-steps, with a more relational model. Carver Yu, Jung Lee, Fan Ruiping and Auris Hung point out the considerable differences between Western individualism and Eastern conceptions of being human, whilst Mpyana Fulgence Nyengele and Samuel Kunhiyop do the same with African notions. Along these lines, Gunton distinguished a person from an individual on

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110 Alistair McFadyen, for instance, claims that 'the presuppositions of individualism are so deeply ingrained in our culture that it is impossible to carry on using our normal language for talking about personhood and individuality without slipping into its misconceptions'. McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood*, 9.
111 Dumont, "The Christian Beginnings of Modern Individualism."
the grounds that an individual is ‘separate from other individuals’.115 By contrast:

Persons are free for a ‘mutually constitutive relationship with other persons’ – genuine others who must not violate one another’s particularity. They are not individual substances that enter into personal relations but are ‘made what they are’ by personal relations.116

In linking individualism to trinitarian theological mis-steps, Gunton, LaCugna, Speidell and Zizioulas are effectively giving a very early dating and connection, from Augustine and Boethius, for the start of Western individualism. The historian, MacFarlane, for instance, makes a determined case for English individualism preceding European, but he was referring to considerably later, around the thirteenth century.117 Dumont concluded there was no agreement on the origins of individualism but he argued that it ‘bears on the first centuries of Christianity’.118 He believed it was further apparent in Calvin, and took some seventeen hundred years of Christian history to be completed, ‘if indeed it is still not continuing in our times’.119

115 Speidell, “A Trinitarian Ontology,” 285 (author’s emphasis) citing Gunton, The Promise of Trinitarian Theology, 10f, 156.
116 Ibid.
117 MacFarlane’s study began with the early medieval period so he was unable to go back any further. He conceded that work by Stephen Lukes, for example, demonstrated a much earlier dating for individualism and not necessarily confined to England. Alan MacFarlane, The Origins of English Individualism: The Family, Property and Social Transition (Basil Blackwell Publisher Ltd., 1978), 196. Thurmer notes that it is difficult to date when individualism started Thurmer, A Detection of the Trinity, 43. He refers to Morris who claims it was during the period of the title of his book: Colin Morris, The Discovery of the Individual, 1050-1200 (London: S.P.C.K. for the Church Historical Society, 1972). A further problem in the literature is the definition of ‘individualism’. Stone, for example, notes that ‘Individualism is a notoriously slippery concept’. Stone, The Family Sex & Marriage, 223.
118 Dumont, "The Christian Beginnings of Modern Individualism."
119 Ibid. Dumont only refers tangentially to the Trinity. As an anthropologist his interest is not primarily biblical or theological and he admits that his guide in his survey was Ernst Troeltsch’s 1911 study The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches and Groups. Although a theologian, Troeltsch was writing as a church social historian and that date precedes the re-emergence of the Trinity with Karl Barth by over 20 years. Troeltsch’s own formulation was that man was ‘an individual-in-relation-to-God.’ Dumont noted that Christianity was not the sole cause. In particular he singled out the Stoic concept of the wise man detached from social life, contrasting this with Plato and Aristotle who had both seen that humans
One important clue that supports the thesis of Gunton and others is the seventeenth century Cartesian description of the human being as a ‘thinking substance’. Carver Yu comments that for Descartes substance is the ‘ultimate hypokeimenon’ (underlying condition) and understood as ‘nothing else than an entity which is in such a way that it needs no other entity in order to be’. This concept of ‘thinking substance’ is very close to the Boethian definition of person. The self sufficient and self-contained ‘entity’ similarly overlaps with the understanding of singular indivisible independent ‘substance’ (ousia) and the Platonic monadic view of God, referred to earlier. Now, however, it clearly refers to individual human beings. It led to Descartes’ famous dictum ‘I think, therefore I am’. The double stress on the first person singular is significant, underlining Descartes’ axiomatic association with western individualism.

The impact of individualism is arguably immense. In his monumental study The Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity, Charles Taylor observed that the search for the origins, or the ‘diachronic causation’, of ‘the modern identity’ is the ‘really ambitious question’. Taylor recognized that questions about ‘the rise of capitalism, the industrial revolution’, the development of democracy, ‘or any of the other features particular to emerging Western civilization’, were likely to be related to this question of origin.

I noted in the last section that anthropocentrism exercised an additional deleterious effect on the standing of theology and ethics. The loss of a sense of God, also referred to in the last section, similarly led to were social creatures. This accords with Philo, early Chrysostom, Jerome, Ambrose and Augustine’s espousal of the celibate contemplative or eremitic life. Yu, Being and Relation, 99f, 141.

Taylor, Sources of the Self, 202. Taylor is interested in how self-identity changes and points out that the answer is not merely historical, it is about subtle but ultimately significant changes in perception. Moreover, he suggests those changes must contain idées-forces which draw people (so it is not simply something forced upon them).

‘Digression on Historical Explanation’ in ibid., 199-207.
a loss of a corrective counterweight for individualism, as James Torrance explains:

The older individualism grew out of a belief in the objectivity of God as the Creator of natural and moral law and of the individual, with rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness (the American Constitution). But what happens in a culture when belief in the objectivity of God and moral law recedes? The result can be retreat into a preoccupation with the self – *my* rights, *my* life, *my* liberty, *my* pursuit of happiness. Then religion degenerates into becoming a means of self-realization, with a narcissistic interest in self-esteem, self-fulfillment, self-identity – the human potential movement leading to the neognosticism of the New Age movement, which then identifies the self with God. Know yourself! Realise your own identity! Then you will know God in the depths of your own “spirituality”!

Individualism was not the only theological anthropological development affected by trinitarian theological mis-steps. Rationality also came to define being human. This *intellectual* capacity was an essential part of the extraordinary potential for human achievement celebrated in Pico della Mirandola’s famous *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, 1486, which became known as ‘The Manifesto of the Renaissance’. The stress, therefore, was not only on the ‘I’ in Descartes’ formula but also on the capacity for reason and consciousness to distinguish human existence: ‘I *think*, therefore I *am*’.

Zizioulas addressed this development in his seminal paper ‘Human Capacity and Incapacity’. He suggested that the cross-fertilisation of Augustine and Boethius created ‘a concept of man’ from ‘a combination of *rational individuality*’ and ‘*psychological consciousness*’.

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125 Zizioulas, “Human Capacity and Incapacity.”
and experience'.\textsuperscript{126} Zizioulas describes this as a ‘matter of paramount importance’ for Western philosophy and culture, since human beings became defined as autonomous ‘units endowed with intellectual, psychological and moral qualities centred on the axis of consciousness’.\textsuperscript{127} Contrary to Pico della Mirandola, Zizioulas does not believe this increased our ability to understand, or adequately encapsulates, what it means to be a human person. For Zizioulas personhood:

Implies the ‘openness of being’, and even more than that, the ekstasis of being, i.e. a movement towards communion which leads to a transcendence of the boundaries of the ‘self’ and thus to freedom.\textsuperscript{128}

One corollary of the belief that rationality and independent self-subsistent individuality are what principally define being ‘human’ is that those who are not regarded as meeting these criteria may automatically or unconsciously be deemed as less than human. This can apply to infants and children, to those who are mentally or physically disabled, or suffering from mental illness or dementia.\textsuperscript{129} A perception that there are gender differences in the level and kind of rationality has also been cited as a reason why women have been seen as less than and different from educated men – the benchmark, on this basis, of what it is to be truly human.\textsuperscript{130}

A further corollary of Descartes’ formulation is that besides being individualist, it is also dualist. The body, as Descartes himself realised, does not feature in this definition. Gunton summarises

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{126} Ibid., 405f (author’s emphasis).
  \item \textsuperscript{127} Ibid., 406. Zizioulas argued that this remained the primary idea of person into the twentieth century, citing Webb, God and Personality. Also J. H. Walgrave, Person and Society, 1965.
  \item \textsuperscript{128} Zizioulas, “Human Capacity and Incapacity,” 408 (author’s italics).
  \item \textsuperscript{130} It is, of course, a self-fulfilling concept. Women’s education was delayed by millennia, and abbreviated, thus perpetuating this belief.
\end{itemize}
Descartes’ quandary: ‘How do we know, he asks at one stage of his argument, that what I think are other persons are not simply machines wearing hats and coats?’

Thus theological anthropology, in order to recover from the effects of these trinitarian mis-steps, needs to address the whole person (body, mind and soul) and recover a new ontological and relational view of human being.

2.3 The perceived effect on western Christianity, the church and ecclesiology

There are five pertinent reasons for including this subsection, which may otherwise not seem immediately relevant to this thesis. (1) Christianity and the Christian church have been prominent, though declining, features of western society. (2) As noted in the preceding chapters, it is not easy to talk about the family and theology for very long before the question of the relationship between the church and human family arises. (3) The same theologians who have been involved in examining the trajectory of Trinitarian theology have also turned their attention to its impact on ecclesiology and the church and in re-examining both of these in the light of the re-emerged trinitarian theology. (4) Their work in this sphere provides possible pointers for similarly theologising about family. (5) It may be the case that the epistemological and ontological links between family and church are far greater than is generally realised and that trinitarian theology provides a common key to understanding this. This will be a theme within Ch.8.

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The UK inter-church Lenten study programme for 1986 was entitled “What on earth is the church for?” Colin Gunton argued that far from knowing the answer to this question, other than its existence historically and sociologically, and the creedal formulation: ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’, the ‘question of the being of the church (was) one of the most neglected topics of theology’.

Furthermore, he continued:

The manifest inadequacy of the theology of the church derives from the fact that it has never seriously and consistently been rooted in a conception of the being of God as triune. ... in the British context, the deficiencies of ecclesiology are matched only by a failure to give due place as a matter of general practice to trinitarian theology.

Gunton adduced evidence in support of this hypothesis from Harnack’s History of Dogma who examined the development of ecclesiology and could find no systematic treatment of it in John of Damascus, or in Eastern Orthodoxy. In the West Gunton claimed the primary focus has remained on the clergy, and was complicated by the Constantinian official recognition of the Church and by consequent Augustinian questions concerning the visible and invisible church. Indeed, it could be argued that one reason why the family has been co-opted at times by the church, as I have mentioned in Chps.2 and 3, is the

133 Gunton and Hardy, On Being the Church, 48.
134 Ibid.
failure to address the question about the being, or ontology, of the church.\textsuperscript{136}

It is hard to read the books of the Old or New Testament, including the gospels and the letters addressed to individuals, without a sense that they were written for community consumption, or, in the New Testament, with the ecclesial community firmly in mind. Furthermore, as I will develop in Ch.8, a good deal of the teaching is geared to fostering these communities, such as those pictured in Acts Chs.2 and 4, and addressing internal threats to their effective functioning as communities. The family language for church, as I will also review in Ch.8, is prevalent throughout the New Testament.\textsuperscript{137} Hellerman noted that this same sense of community and ‘family’ is not so evident in contemporary western churches. He comments that his book The Ancient Church as Family ...

Is about the church as a loving, supportive family. For many readers, the contrast between community as it was experienced in the early house churches and what passes for Christianity in the West today will be regrettabley obvious.\textsuperscript{138}

Individualism is one of the factors that has influenced the privatization of the Christian faith. Ironically, Lawrence Stone traced part of this to the personal introspection and sense of self that accompanied the Protestant Reformation with its overpowering sense of sin, pre-occupation with individual salvation and the increasing literacy, which provided a multi-faceted vehicle for self-awareness.\textsuperscript{139} This stress on personal salvation and faith contrasts with the African

\textsuperscript{136} John-PaulII, Letter to Families; Cahill, Family.
\textsuperscript{138} Hellerman, The Ancient Church as Family, xiv.
\textsuperscript{139} Stone, The Family Sex & Marriage. Alan Torrance points out that whilst Calvin linked knowledge of God with knowledge of self in his Institutio, the Enlightenment and Descartes stressed the latter. Alan J. Torrance, “The Self-Relation, Narcissism and the Gospel of Grace,” Scottish Journal of Theology 40(1987): 484f. Gunton and LaCugna’s argument is that theology had inadvertently encouraged this process. It is also possible, of course, to view such individual introspection and literacy a thousand years earlier, in Augustine’s Confessions. Augustine, Confessions.
perspective. Emmanuel Asante, the President of Trinity Theological Seminary in Ghana, reflected on the Greek and Hebrew words *soteria*/*sozo* and *yada*, meaning ‘to save’. He quotes Roger Hazleton favourably arguing that ‘salvation is the gracious act of God whereby (the human) is delivered from sinful selfhood ... into newness and fullness of life’. Consequently, says Asante, to experience newness of life through Christ is to experience a heightened sense of *koinonia* (community) and a different identity. Instead of Descartes’ *Cogito ergo sum*, Asante uses the Latin phrase *Cognatus ergo sum*, translating it as ‘I am related, therefore I am’.141

The combination of rationality and theism has also affected Western Christian faith and church. Countryman has argued that, since the Scholastic period, the development and dominance of dogmatic and systematic theology ‘has created the unfortunate illusion that the gospel is a system of ideas which can be fully comprehended by any person of adequate intelligence quite apart from any necessity of personal transformation’. Nothing, says Countryman, could be further from the teaching of Jesus, as presented in the Gospel. The teaching may be unsystematic but it is aimed at the transformation (*metanoia*) of the hearer rather than the creation of a theological system and its goal is an encounter with God. As I noted in Ch.1, this was the definition of a theologian. As explained in section 2.1 above, this has contributed to growing atheism and secularism, which in turn have also impacted on the perception and mission of the church.

Arguably, the failure of the Western church to be the church, as Gunton and others have argued, has added to the pressure on families in a number of ways. As indicated in Chs.1 and 3 above, the Western

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141 Ibid.
church has placed a focus on the family since Luther. I have already reviewed some of the weaknesses of this position in Ch.1. This focus has not on the whole included consideration about whether the church was living up to its own calling, and indeed has deflected from such consideration. Both the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches have encouraged procreation, particularly the Roman Catholic church. As a *de facto* means of growing the numbers of the faithful, it casts some questions about the active mission of the church. Both the Protestant and Catholic churches have attempted to sub-let responsibility for the church to families, as ‘domestic churches’.143

The perceived connection between the church and its apparent concentration on the form, rather than the content of family life, not to mention the stress on the ‘nuclear’ family, has proved off-putting and stigmatizing to those who do not feel that they thereby can meet this entry condition for church. To this extent, advertised ‘Family services’ may therefore not convey either welcome, or inclusion.

The divorce of God and theology from the everyday, and insufficient attention to the specific needs of women and children, have meant that some of the most important and pressing matters of family relationships are not thought about, or taught in church. Nor do they form part of the liturgy or hymnology in church. The lingering male hierarchy has sometimes only reinforced this sense of disconnect and neglect.144 The tragedy is that the church does have access to some of the most significant information available about human relationships.

Given the demands on Western families, and often the paucity of immediately available outside practical and emotional support, an often

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144 “One in Christ Jesus.” For example, an Australian in her fifties who had worshipped in Anglican churches for most of her life and been a victim of domestic violence had never once heard a sermon on this topic.
unfulfilled need is for families, family members, and those without families (whether churchgoers or not) to experience the kind of unconditional outgoing inclusive support, that come about through *metanoia, ekstasis* and *perichoresis or koinonia*, which should arguably *be* the trinitarian hallmarks of the church (see Chs. 7 and 8).

3. Extrapolating the impacts of theological ‘mis-steps’ on the doctrine of God and on theological anthropology, in respect of the family.

This section mirrors the previous one by looking in turn at the doctrine of God and theological anthropology. Here, though, the focus is on how the impact of theological mis-steps on both the doctrine of God and theological anthropology, which I have been examining through a number of theologians, may also have considerable repercussions for the Western family, the absence of theology, and on the Christian and secular debate.

3.1 The impact of theological mis-steps on the Christian doctrine of God and its flow on effects in respect of the Western family, theology, society and the debate.

The distancing of theology, and the loss of any trinitarian consciousness, is part of the reason why there has been so little theological consideration of human family relationships, despite their significance for people’s lives.\(^{145}\) Within a broader context of other forces at work, including secularism as previously mentioned, theology became divorced from everyday life. Donald Gelpi, for example, attributes the growth of the cult of the Virgin Mary to this effect:

> Scholastic trinitarian discussions of subsistent relations, notional predicates, eternal processions, and the tri-personal reality of an infinite divine substance did little or nothing to

\(^{145}\) Please see Ch.1, 78-84.
nourish the lived piety of the ordinary believer. Ordinary folk found the cult of the virgin far more appealing and immediate.146

Mariology was seen as a counterpoint to this abstract, rational, impersonal and masculine debate about deity. As Kim Power has shown, Mariology, with its unattainable virginal maternal emphases, was ultimately not an entirely helpful model, particularly for women.147

The theological vacuum about family relationships was filled with a mixture of accepted social culture, which was largely patriarchal throughout the two millennia I have been examining. It was also supplemented from time to time, as I have shown, by Graeco-Roman models, as well as the selected use of, and reading back into, biblical teaching. The masculine engendering of a remote impassive God, coupled with patriarchalism, male ecclesial power, and the social inferiority of women, have affected women’s views of themselves, of God and of the church. The figures for domestic violence and over-strict and rigid parenting in a proportion of ‘Christian’ homes and the consequent impact on generations of children affected give additional pause for thought.148 Part of the rationale that lies behind this thesis is a search for a theology which, when lived, would not lead to or justify domestic violence and abuse of children. Indeed, one that would promote a much higher quality of these significant human relationships.

The concept of a rather distant deistic and theistic deity and the absence of a trinitarian theology of human relationship left philosophers, such as Emmanuel Levinas, as well as anthropologists, unconvinced that theology had anything to offer in terms of illuminating human relationships.

I do not wish to define anything by God, because what I know is human. I can define God by human relations, not the other way

147 Power, Veiled Desire.
148 Please see Ch.1, 88f.
around. God knows I am not opposed to the idea of God. But should I say anything about God, it is always on the basis of human relations. God is the inadmissible abstraction ... the abstract idea of God is an idea that cannot illuminate a human situation. The reverse is true.\textsuperscript{149}

A flow on effect of not perceiving that theology has anything to offer the human and social sciences has been evident at university teaching and research level, as mentioned above. Even though it was finally admitted as a university subject in Australia in the 1960’s, it has predominantly not been a mainstream university department.\textsuperscript{150}

Frank Turner’s study showed that the mixture of theism with philosophical and scientific scepticism led to the loss of faith and to family tensions within Victorian homes.\textsuperscript{151} A number of church reports have also referred to the impact of secularization on families. Cardinal Ouellet links secularization to the loss of connection with what he refers to as ‘religious values and mores’. He argues that this has an impact on marriage, private morality and public policy about families.\textsuperscript{152} Michael Banner mentions the effects of ‘vertigo’ where children are growing up in Christian homes but living in secular society.\textsuperscript{153} The pull of a predominantly secular society also renders it much harder for families to be counter-cultural.\textsuperscript{154}

A further risk mentioned in Ch.1 is that of idolatrously elevating the family in the place of God. This is not solely found in secular society but is clearly a concomitant danger of the Western Churches’ espousal

\textsuperscript{149} TH 110, cited in Smith, The Argument to the Other: Reason Beyond Reason in the Thought of Karl Barth & Emmanuel Levinas, 199. Levinas was a Jew and therefore it could be said that this reflects Jewish thinking. He studied philosophy at Freiburg and Strasburg, meeting Husserl and Heidegger. I believe he was also reflecting a widespread European philosophic view.
\textsuperscript{150} Hall, “Australia and Oceania,” 545.
\textsuperscript{151} Turner, “The Victorian Crisis of Faith.”
\textsuperscript{152} Ouellet, Divine Likeness, 7-8.
\textsuperscript{153} Banner, “Who Are My Mother and My Brothers?.”
\textsuperscript{154} Cahill notes that Christian family evangelization today needs to improve on the models of Luther and the Puritans ‘by refusing to capitulate to any hierarchies of sex, class, and wealth that contradict the essence of Christian social ethics’ Cahill, Family, 83.
of the family. It is evident, for example, when churchgoers utter the maxim ‘family comes first’ as an accepted reason for not participating more at church. It is arguably also due to the loss of a sense of an intimate relationship with God.

3.2 The impact of theological mis-steps on theological anthropology and its flow on effect on the Western family and the Christian debate.

The theological mis-steps that led to individualism and rationalism in the West have influenced the specific forms of family found in the Western world. Auris Hung’s and Mpyana Nyengele’s respective experiences of living in the USA compared with their ethnic Chinese and African cultures demonstrates just how different western individualism is when it comes to families. Hellermann has a helpful and necessary chart of the extent of the differences between western kindred groups and patrilineal kinship groups. It is not surprising that the predominance of the individual would have an impact on the family. Christopher Lasch, whose name is more associated with The Culture of Narcissism, had already written a book on the Family two years previously. He pointed out that the nuclear family was affected by the individualism within Western society. ‘Relations within the family took on the same character as relations elsewhere; individualism and the pursuit of self-interest reigned even in the most intimate of institutions.’ Deborah Chambers refers to Beck and Beck-Gernsheim’s study that examined how love has gained in significance and fragility. Chambers summarises: ‘As a central part of the rise of individualism in late modernity, love has come to be the crucial way of finding meaning in life and yet it has become more fragile and

155 Lee, The Trinity in Asian Perspective; Hung, "The Concept of Differentiated Oneness."
156 Hellerman, The Ancient Church as Family, 57.
157 Lasch, Haven in a Heartless World, 35.
precarious’. Anthony Giddens’ ideas about ‘pure relationship’ clearly reflect an individualist stance towards relationships.

Thornton and Young-DeMarco’s careful survey of four decades of attitudes to the family in the USA from 1960’s through 1990’s similarly point to the impact of individualism as being one of the most significant factors in a number of studies of American social and family change. Given the much earlier dating for individualism it would not be a surprise to find instances of previous difficulties and this does appear to be the case.

Stanley Hauerwas lays out the problems presented by modern Western society for the survival of marriage as a vital institution for the bearing and raising of children and for promoting the health of human community as a whole. In a short essay entitled ‘The Family: Theological Reflections’, he examined the effect on the family of allowing the autonomy of the person to become the highest moral ideal. He argued that the prevalent concern in contemporary Western society

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161 This was recognized as a potential difficulty at the time. Enlightenment thinking on contractual marriage made much of the notions of “self-realization”, personal wellbeing and “utility” - that is, marriage is only good and worthwhile if it is useful and beneficial (positive partnership, needs of children etc.). This utilitarian way of thinking (Hutcheson, Bentham) was viewed with distaste by the Church, as it was seen as earthing the moral quality of marriage in its utility and not in God’s command or institution. Further, the alleged preoccupation with “self” was contrary to the theoretical Christian concern with the “other” - even though Christian philosophers of the Enlightenment, like Francis Hutcheson, often pointed out that Church preachers’ preoccupation with the salvation of individual souls encouraged in fact self-interest and ego-centricity’. MacMurray, *The Self as Agent*, 1. Viz. “Clarrisa Harlowe and Her Times” in Christopher Hill, *Puritanism and Revolution: Studies in Interpretation of the English Revolution of the 17th Century* (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1958).
is for the independence of every individual and that this militates against the continuance of the family, depriving parents, children and even spouses of any truly significant role in relation to one another.\textsuperscript{162} As Earl Muller has put it: ‘once the consciousness of the individual becomes central, (the) relationship between individuals and the society in which they live is loosened’.\textsuperscript{163} Hauerwas recognised that ‘traditional Christian teaching had contributed to this state of affairs’ but other writers on the family, such as the late Pope John Paul, critiqued the impact of individualism without acknowledging or seemingly realising there might be any connection with Christianity.\textsuperscript{164}

Anderson and Guernsey noticed a rather different effect of individualism and that was the narrow focus of psychology, psychiatry and psychotherapy.\textsuperscript{165} They expressed their concern that ‘contemporary Christian approaches to the study of the family’ were, in their opinion, too ‘naively influenced by psychology’. They felt that this was in part a reflection of ‘cultural encapsulation’ but their main concern was that psychology was too \textit{individual} as a discipline in its origin and orientation to comprehend the dynamics of the family as a social unit. They instead advocated the disciplines of sociology and social psychology along with general systems theory.\textsuperscript{166} This last is used in family therapy, which recognises that some seemingly individual problems in fact emanate from unsolved interpersonal family problems

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\textsuperscript{163} Muller, \textit{Trinity and Marriage in Paul}, 60, 23.
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\textsuperscript{165} Anderson and Guernsey, \textit{On Being Family}.
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and dynamics.\textsuperscript{167} Attachment theory and practice is also changing this therapeutic landscape. Even traditionally strictly individual-based psychotherapy is finally acknowledging the ‘inter-subjectivity’ that affects the identified patient.\textsuperscript{168}

The impact of rationalism has arguably been equally important to the family. I have already explained how it was used to discriminate against women and children on the grounds of supposed lesser intelligence and mental capability. Cunningham quotes from Thomas Wiedemann’s study of the Roman Empire about children lacking the capacity for reason: ‘the child’s inability to communicate in the way adults do make him a symbol of non-participation in the rational world of citizen’.\textsuperscript{169} Whilst Cyprian and Augustine gave higher credence to children, it is conceivable that the Christian humanists absorbing this classical thinking were thereby influenced into not regarding children as important as adults.\textsuperscript{170}

I previously referred to Linda Woodhead’s concern that the dualism implicit in rationalism pays insufficient attention to the importance of the body. She argued this was yet another reason why the family has lacked a theological perspective.\textsuperscript{171} I have also mentioned that the focus on rationalism downplays the importance of emotion and what is now referred to as emotional intelligence. Research is demonstrating how false this view was. In particular, ‘right side’ emotional intelligence is now seen as vital as logical ‘left side’ brain activity.\textsuperscript{172} “The ability to express emotion and recognize emotions in

\textsuperscript{167} Cf. Walrond-Skinner, \textit{The Pastoral Care of Personal Relationships.}
\textsuperscript{168} Nicola Diamond and Mario Marrone, \textit{Attachment and Intersubjectivity} (London: Whurr Publishers Ltd, 2003).
\textsuperscript{170} See Ch.3, pp.176-177.
\textsuperscript{171} Please see p.86, Woodhead, "Love and Justice."
others is a key element in good communication, and communication is recognized as a vital element in relationships. The Australian writers on the family, Steve and Sharon Biddulph, for example, referred to the numbers of Australian adults they have met who are ‘markedly stunted in emotional growth, and have basically lost trust in relationships’. They indicate that many children growing up in western countries experience emotional pain, confusion and loneliness.

3.3 The impact on Ethics

I have already referred to the impact on ethics in both Sections 2.1 and 2.2 above. Here I will simply quote an astute observation from the Christian ethicist, Stanley Hauerwas, about the difficulties that have occurred in ethics, in large part due the Western concentration on the individual and on rationality. He perceived these effects not only in preventing ethical debate and resolution, but also in perpetuating a solipsistic, unhelpful and ultimately 'self'-defeating concentration on separate ‘selves’.

Rather than attempting to free each man from his paralyzing preoccupation with himself, modern moral philosophy has only increased and legitimatized this excessive self-concern. For our self-centeredness it only prescribes further self-reflection, since it has thought that our main moral errors result from adherence to illogical and confused moral reasons or arguments. Thus the primary responsibility for determining the reality of events still rests on the individual person. Both analytic and existentialist ethics share ‘a terror of anything which encloses the agent or threatens his supremacy as a center of significance. In this sense both philosophies tend toward solipsism’ i.e. just the condition that is the main cause of man’s moral failure. Self-knowledge, the minute understanding of one’s own machinery, does not free the self; it only mires us deeper in our illusion of individual

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significance. When we achieve clear vision the self becomes a correspondingly smaller and less interesting object.\textsuperscript{175}

Among the casualties in this scenario is the sense and exercise of personal responsibility for others, alongside the loss of community, support, recognition and restoration that flow from encounter with, and openness to, others.\textsuperscript{176}

4. Conclusion: theological mis-steps and a theology of ‘family’?

This chapter has surveyed the arguments of Gunton and LaCugna and other theologians who have claimed that mis-steps in trinitarian theology have had significant unintended effects not only in theology, but also in theological anthropology. The complex combination between Hellenistic conceptualisations and the theological attempts to defend the New Testament accounts of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit led eventually to the predominance of a more monadic, impassible and remote God. The bifurcation between the economic and the immanent Trinity caused the dynamic relations between the revealed Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the economy not to prevail in the consideration of the Immanent Trinity. Furthermore, the Immanent Trinity was seen as more definitive for understanding God. The prevailing notion of humanity formed in this particular image of God was individual, rational and, by default, predominantly male.

Gunton, LaCugna and other theologians, such as Waite Willis Jnr., have linked these developments to the later patent loss of trinitarian theology and to a number of distinctive features of Western society, including the growth of individualism, rationalism, theism and secularism. As I have indicated, neither they, nor I, are arguing that this

\textsuperscript{175} Hauerwas, \textit{A Community of Character}, 34.
was a simple uni-causal model, not least because there were a large number of factors at play (including the unpredictable combination of Hellenistic philosophy and Christian revelation), and because there were a sequence of ‘mis-steps’, over a considerable period of time, rather than any simple accident or, indeed, deliberate design. Nor is it possible to draw definitive conclusions about these connections within the scope of this thesis. Nevertheless, to the extent that their theses may be correct, and theological mis-steps may have had a part to play, I have argued that the effects for the phenomenon, symbol and debate about human family have been enormous.

Whilst theologians have contemplated the impact that these developments may have had on Western society and on the Western Church, they have not yet considered its ramifications for the Western family, with the possible exception of LaCugna, briefly, and Zizioulas, rather tangentially. It is apparent, however, that what happens in a society also holds repercussions for human families. As the United Nations’ report noted:

The relative strength of a nation or a society depends largely on the strength of its families. What occurs in families affects the whole of society, and *vice versa*. There is a complicated relationship between the two.\(^\text{177}\)

I have referred to the effects of both theological and anthropological changes in respect of Western family. I have suggested that, theologically, the loss of a trinitarian consciousness has impeded the development of a theology of family, and of human relationships more generally. The remoteness and apparent impassibility of God has appeared alien to the realities of family relationships and the joys, struggles and tribulations of family life, and scarcely recognisable from the God revealed in the New Testament. Conversely, the family has not been visible in theological discussion. Theology, as an academic pursuit, has been sidelined by scepticism about faith in a theistic God in an

\(^{177}\) *Family: Challenges for the Future*, 37.
increasingly agnostic, atheistic and secular society. The collective roots of all these developments, in this analysis, owe part of their origin to trinitarian mis-steps. Secular society also exercises a considerable influence on Christian families. Furthermore, the Church is relying more on families than supporting them because the Western church, among other factors, has also been influenced both by secular society and by individualism.

Anthropologically, I have highlighted why the primary identifying Western features of individualism and rationalism might be at variance with some of the key characteristics of families, including the significance of relationships and of emotions. Indeed, it could be argued that stress on the individual and the rational has helped to perpetuate patriarchy, and delayed recognition of the importance of emotional intelligence and interpersonal communication.

These findings are of no small significance. At the very least they suggest that when Christian writers and organisations lament what they see as the deleterious impacts of individualism and secularism on the family, they might need to be aware that these forces could have been the unexpected partial outcome of Christian trinitarian theological mis-steps.\(^\text{178}\)

It could further be argued, as indeed Christopher Lasch does, that one reason why the family has assumed a particular significance in Western society, as well as the influences referred to in Ch.3, is because the family was increasingly seen as an antidote to the competitive individualistic rationalism and capitalism of western society.\(^\text{179}\) At the end of the previous section I also indicated why the family has not been the focus of academic attention because of its assumed association with

\(^{178}\) McFadyen notes how secularized the debate about human being has become, with little or no reference to God. He is also ostensibly working from a trinitarian theology to critique individualism but does not appear to make connections between historic trinitarian theologising and present Western secular Individualism. McFadyen, The Call to Personhood, 10. See Ch.7, 359-60.

\(^{179}\) Lasch, Haven in a Heartless World.
irrationality and with the private world of women, in addition to its lack of sustained theological reflection.

The flipside of the arguments advanced by Gunton, LaCugna and Zizioulas is that a properly trinitarian conception of God might lead to a rather different theology and indeed theological anthropology. This is precisely the approach that Gunton took in respect of the church, as I alluded to above. He lays out his rationale for doing so in a discussion about Augustine.

We shall find that the problems with the theology of the church run in parallel with some of the chief weaknesses of Augustine’s theology of the Trinity, among which lies his failure to establish adequate distinctions between the modes of action of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Because the differences between the persons become effectively redundant, they no longer bear upon the shape of thought about the realities of life in the world, and in this case are not able to shape ecclesiological thinking. ... because (the Trinity) has been neglected, the church has appropriated only a part of its rich store of possibilities for nourishing a genuine theology of community.¹⁸⁰

My argument runs along the same lines in relation to the absent theology of the family. William Hill provides further support for re-examining past theological thinking and conclusions:

Theology cannot rest content with being a mere repetition of the past, not least because of its substance matter: God. The theologian has to work with the accepted texts and the already formulated doctrines and symbols of a tradition, but he also has to enter into a living dialogue with the subject matter himself.¹⁸¹

Hill also furnishes a rationale for the exercise I have been undertaking in these three last chapters: ‘the past must be mined, in its achievements and its failures, for such a past is determinative, to a degree, of the present’.¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰ Emphasis mine.
¹⁸¹ Hill, The Three-Personned God, x.
¹⁸² Ibid.
Finally, Hill offers encouragement and warning that contemplating theology is strictly subject to the subject matter: God.

A view that theology can still afford insights and that the Trinity is not a self enclosed absolute being but a self-communicating God of salvation, a God of men who live in history. This can be maintained and pursued without even calling into question (even surreptitiously) the radical incomprehensibility of God. Indeed this latter must remain operative in theological consciousness to prevent any collapse into ideology that is both irrelevant and alienating.183

Re-tracing theological mis-steps may provide a theology for family where none exists, re-connect with the economy of salvation and re-examine a theological anthropology based firmly in the doctrine of the Triune God in which there is a distinction of persons (*hypostases*), a oneness of being (*perichoresis, or koinonia*) and an openness to others (*ekstasis*).

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183 Hill, *The Three-Personned God.* (author’s parenthesis).
Chapter Five

Retracing Trinitarian Theology

Introduction

This chapter marks the transition between the two parts of this thesis. The first part has been deliberately retrospective. Chs.2 and 3 charted the historical background and particular approaches of significant theologians and groups, spanning one and three quarter millennia, and the rather mixed, even contradictory, legacy they have collectively bequeathed on the subject of human ‘family’.

Ch.4 has just examined a quite different diachronic account. Here the focus was on the historic development of the trinitarian doctrine of God. I have followed the thesis of Gunton and others that theological ‘mis-steps’ in this development may have contributed to profound effects for the doctrine and understanding of God, for theological anthropology, for Western society and, paradoxically, in the demise of trinitarian theology itself. I then extrapolated how this account may have also greatly impacted the form, role, perception, and even the vulnerability, of the Western family.

One notable finding of this research so far, from both of the foregoing historical accounts, has been the remarkable prevalence and influence of Platonic, Aristotelian, Stoic and Neoplatonic philosophy, so much so that they could be described as a significant common factor. There are, of course, many obvious reasons for this crossover between the two accounts, not the least being that some of the contributors were the same theologians, steeped in Hellenistic rhetoric, logic and
philosophy, and writing on both trinitarian theology and the family. Augustine and Gregory of Nyssa would fall into that category.

Nevertheless, even where authors were writing about the family, as with Clement on Chrysostom, on the one hand, or predominantly about the doctrine of God, like Aquinas, on the other, they still demonstrate a notable resemblance of thinking that owes its origin to these extraordinarily pervasive and persistent philosophical influences. In no small part this was due to the ubiquity and common form of classical education throughout the patristic period (despite the two languages of Greek and Latin) and the revival of the same classical education and philosophical influences in the Scholastic and Renaissance eras.

As I have attempted to show, the mixture of Christianity and Hellenistic thinking has separately proved problematic for the development of the doctrine of the Trinity and for Christian thinking about the family. It is now possible to consider just how significant the combination of these two diachronic accounts, under a common and heavy influence of these philosophical sources, may have been. For instance: the absence of a theology of family could be ascribed to the relativisation of family ties in the _verbum Christi_ (the recorded words of Jesus Christ in the New Testament gospel accounts). An alternative and potentially overlapping hypothesis that I am pursuing, however, is that theological mis-steps, under the influence of Hellenistic philosophy, led to a subsequent loss of ‘trinitarian consciousness’ and thereby removed from theological purview the motive, means and opportunity for theologically considering the family and inter-personal family relationships. A curious casualty in this process was the lack of theological attention devoted to the subject of love.

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Under the influence of the same Hellenistic philosophy, the family itself was not viewed as an appropriate candidate for theological reflection. This was because a number of salient aspects about families appeared to contravene or compromise the Hellenistic concept of the impassible and ineffable divine, including women, birth, death, and emotions. Moreover, as I have outlined, the combination of Hellenistic thinking and Christianity produced some rather odd results, with theologians creating entirely new dualistic concerns: equating sex with sin, procreation with its transmission, and celibacy as the preferential state, even in marriage. Even when the Humanists, Reformers and Puritans eventually changed the ecclesial thinking about marriage and the family, some of these concerns were not entirely lost. Luther, Calvin and the Puritans themselves unintentionally bequeathed a legacy of the form of relationships being more important than the quality of their content. Furthermore, their unconscious adoption of the Platonic and Plotinian ‘chain of being’ preferentially promoted patriarchy, discipline and control as prominent family values.

A further reason why it has been necessary to investigate these historical accounts is because any attempt now to develop a theology in respect of family is not starting from a tabula rasa (a blank slate). To change the metaphor, it has been necessary to trace a journey that has already taken theology, the Christian legacy on the human family, and Western society itself, arguably somewhat off-course. The effect of Hellenistic philosophy in this process has been akin to a magnetic force causing a compass to mis-read the intended direction of travel. Appreciating the distance that has been traversed and how far off course theology might be is part of comprehending a new route that needs to be plotted. Even though this history cannot be undone, there is a responsibility placed on contemporary theologians to consider how

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2 Even Stephen Barton’s study found that ‘the subordination of conjugal and consanguineous ties for the sake of the greater good – namely conversion to philosophy’ in the Greco-Roman world predated Jesus’ call to relativisation and would have helped make sense of it. Barton, Discipleship and Family Ties, 220-21.
best to re-trace the combined mis-steps in trinitarian theology and in Christian thinking about the family.

I now turn to the second and prospective part of the thesis: to see whether it is possible to derive a missing theology of ‘family’ from the re-emerging Trinitarian theology. What would that look like? And what difference might it make? Would it address some of the concerns that were aired in Ch.1: for example, those by feminists, or about familialism, or form being more important than content, or being relevant cross-culturally? Furthermore, would it include God, and not omit the Christology and soteriology implicit in the Trinity, as McFadyen fears it might?

The purpose of this present chapter is both modest and important. I am arguing that within the Western Trinitarian tradition there has always been a third alternative to both the predominant ‘psychological’ analogy of Augustine, and to the Cappadocian schema, which though described as ‘social’ is also quasi-hierarchical and emanationist. Colin Gunton has referred to this third way as a ‘relational’ view of the Trinity. He argued:

What appears to have happened is that ways of thinking about God relationally have survived in the West in almost subliminal manner, continuing to find a place in an otherwise inhospitable tradition...³

Thus, the importance of this chapter stems from demonstrating that the so-called ‘social’ or ‘relational’ model for the Trinity is not constricted to the Cappadocians’ quasi-emanationist approach. Nor is a ‘relational’ view of God a new invention, hence reducing the charge that it is only a Feuerbachian projection of present society’s norms or aspirations.⁴ Indeed, Gunton argues that the more contemporary

relational view of the person, seen in MacMurray, for instance, came from this subliminal relational view of God and not the other way around. Therefore, this subliminal ‘relational’ view of Trinitarian theology may provide a different theological understanding of interpersonal human relationships and their significance, and an alternative conception of love.

There is a further reason why retracing trinitarian theology may be important. A general recognition now exists among theologians that substance ontology, so closely associated with Hellenistic metaphysics, is no longer viable and therefore an adequate basis for trinitarian theology. The significant Augustinian ‘psychological’ analogy and the Cappadocian emanationist social model both owe their origin and continuation to a Hellenistic metaphysical substance ontology that is finally defunct. The stress on *rationality*, as the point of greatest correspondence between God and human beings, was also dependent on the same schema, and is therefore equally compromised. A number of theologians have referred to ‘a relational model’ for the Trinity in place of substance ontology, the psychological analogy, or the social model, but rarely is this ‘relational model’ defined or explained. Thus, mining the past may be one way of unearthing some potentially helpful material to help build a new understanding of the Trinity.

I am confining the scope of this excursus to St. John’s Gospel, Hilary of Poitiers, Richard St. Victor, Bonaventure, Julian of Norwich, Edward Irving, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and J. R. Illingworth. There are more who could have been included, such as Athanasius and John of Damascus, but the primary aim is to demonstrate that there have

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5 Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 90-91. ‘The way things have happened historically suggests that the dependence is otherwise: that anthropology stems from theology, and not the other way round … it is the thought about God that is determinative’. 91

6 Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, and “The Triumph of Relationality”; *Rediscovering the Triune God*, 117-62. Grenz reviews examples from Boff, Zizioulas and LaCugna, following on from Jenson, Moltmann, and Grenz’s own mentor, Pannenberg, yet it is by no means clear that there is a single clear or consistent relational model.
always been alternative voices within the trinitarian tradition. These voices are not wholly free of Platonic and Plotinian influence. What marks them out, however, is their various original attempts to consider the Trinity.

**John the Evangelist**

Colin Gunton did not specifically investigate the gospel of John in his account of a relational theological thread within the Western tradition, but he did suggest that this thread ‘ultimately had its roots in the Fourth Gospel’s profound meditations on the way Jesus and the Father exist only “in” each other’. Gunton added: ‘Such biblical ways of thinking have enabled and fertilized two millennia of thought about the person’. Patristic and scholastic theologians, East and West, scoured the Biblical resources, including the Johannine account.

John’s gospel is widely regarded as the most trinitarian of the gospels, even if, says Jenson, it was left to later theologians to reconcile how the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, to whom John refers, were one God. George Tavard, however, in his book *A Way of Love* suggests that John formulated:

The key to Trinitarian theology ... the mystery of God as one in three is the mystery of love. God’s essence is to love. ... At each level, love instances identity in distinction. It unites persons, making one at the very moment when they remain other.

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7 Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 89.
8 Williams notes that Hilary of Poitiers, see below, did not originally make use of some of the Johannine proof texts used in the Nicene-Arian debate, such as John 6.38, 10.30, 10.38 and 14.11. Daniel H. Williams, “Defining Orthodoxy in Hilary of Poitiers’ Commentarium in Matthaeum,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 9, no. 2 (2001).
9 Jenson, *The Triune Identity*.
Cornelius Plantinga, mentioned in Ch.1, similarly refers to John’s gospel as ‘a wide, deep, and subtle account of divine distinction within unity’.11

Geoffrey Wainwright set himself the task of discovering whether the New Testament writers were themselves aware of this difficulty of reconciling divine persons in one God, in either a trinitarian, or primarily a binitarian form, ‘since the Holy Spirit was not the main problem for New Testament writers’.12 He concluded that Paul, John and the writer to the Hebrews were conscious of the difficulty of explaining the relationship of God and Jesus Christ and employed ‘the Father-Son terminology to interpret it’. The recognition of Jesus as God was the deliberate intent of the writer of the Fourth Gospel. Wainwright says:

There is nothing incidental about these references. The evangelist intends to state that Jesus is God, and in various passages attempts to show how the only-begotten Son of God who is also the only-begotten God is related to God the Father.13

Jürgen Moltmann and Tom Torrance both support this line of argument. Torrance talks of God revealing Godself as God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, such that New Testament writers thought of God as both One and Three. ‘This is, I believe, how the Trinitarian self-revealing of God to the disciples took place, and was absorbed by them in the form to which the New Testament scriptures bear witness’.14 Moltmann, of course, is seeking evidence for a social Trinity and has no difficulty finding it, especially in the Fourth gospel where, he says, there is a ‘developed Trinitarian language’.

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13 Ibid.
14 Torrance, One Being Three Persons, 34.
Biblically, Father, Son and Spirit are in fact subjects with a will and understanding, who speak with one another, turn to one another in love, and together are ‘one.’ ... ‘I’ and ‘you’ points to the unity which consists not only in knowing and willing but also in mutual indwelling: ‘I in the Father - the Father in me’ (14.11; 17.21, etc.). So the Father and the Son cannot be understood as being two modes of being of a single divine subject. They are not ‘one’, i.e. united, as is expressed by the plurals ‘we’ and ‘us’.15

The Professor of New Testament Exegesis at Durham University, Francis Watson, understands well that looking for signs of the Trinity in the biblical texts is scarcely popular among modern biblical scholars. Nonetheless, Watson avers there are three reasons why scholarly biblical anti-trinitarianism should be resisted. First, it is still affected by Socinianism.16 Second, Old, and particularly New, Testament scholarship is not normally acquainted with the patristic texts that developed the doctrine of the Trinity and hence the biblical research that they engaged in. Third, the re-emergence of Trinitarian theology has enabled ‘more nuanced and flexible accounts of the patristic doctrine and its biblical basis’.17 As a New Testament scholar himself he is well aware that a ‘non-incarnational’ and ‘non-trinitarian reading’ of the Johannine text has been extant since Schleiermacher.18 Nevertheless, he engages in a Trinitarian or Triadic reading of John 17: ‘that they may be one, even as we are one.’ He notes that the compass of this prayer is extended to future believers. In verse 21 there is not only ‘an analogy between the oneness of Jesus and the Father and the oneness of the believers’, but ‘also an opening up’ of this ‘oneness ... to embrace within itself the oneness of believers.’ Watson suggests that the point of the phrase ‘they may also be in us’ is when ‘the distinction between pattern and copy’ in the analogy ‘breaks down’.19 He concludes

15 Moltmann, History and the Triune God, 85.
16 See Ch.1, 27.
18 Ibid., 168.
19 Ibid., 170.
that in John 17 ‘the two themes of Trinity and community are interdependent’.  

Christoph Schwöbel and Frances Young argue along similar lines to Watson. Schwöbel, for example, refers to Young’s assertion that ‘Trinitarian theology is the product of exegesis of the biblical texts, refined by debate and argument, and rhetorically celebrated in liturgy’. In the following quotation, Schwöbel emphasizes the doctrinal significance the patristic theologians found in the biblical material:

Approaching trinitarian theology in this way directs the attention not only to the way in which the biblical texts were employed in order to try settling doctrinal questions in the early church, but also invites us to focus on what it is about the biblical texts that made them amenable to such interpretation.

Hilary of Poitiers (c. 315-367)

Hilary, the Bishop of Poitiers, in Gaul (western France), composed ‘one of the finest writings that the anti-Arian controversy produced’. He has been described as the ‘Athanasius of the West’ and

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20 Ibid., 171. Watson argues that the ‘paraclete passages’ in John 14-16, and the Johannine emphasis and role of the Spirit in truth and in mission means that the Holy Spirit is implied if not mentioned in chapter 17 and ‘therefore, John 17 sets forth a genuinely trinitarian account of human participation in the eternal intradivine life’. Ibid., 181-82 (Author’s emphasis).
22 Ibid. Schwöbel later says of John 14-17 that the early Christians’ ‘discourse about God displays a depth structure that supports the protunitarian grammar of talking about God’. Ibid., 39.
was the first to write about the Trinity in Latin.\textsuperscript{24} Hilary was a casualty of the post-Arians’ (the \textit{Homoians or Anomoeans}) temporary ascendancy. Whereas Athanasius had been exiled in the West, Hilary’s exile took him to Phrygia in the East. Mark Weedman has argued persuasively that in Phrygia Hilary struck up an unlikely alliance with Bishop Basil of Ancyra, who may have helped him understand additional complexities in the controversy.\textsuperscript{25} Indeed D. H. Williams makes a case, based on Hilary’s earlier \textit{Commentary on Matthew} that Hilary neither knew of the Nicene Creed, nor much, if anything, about the Arian controversy before his exile.\textsuperscript{26} It was there that he wrote \textit{De Trinitate}, probably between 356-360, although he may have composed the first three books just prior. Its polemical basis, compared with the earlier Commentary, is evident. Hilary took great care over its composition praying that he might be granted the ‘the nobility of diction’ in keeping with the high responsibility of writing about the triune God.\textsuperscript{27}

Hilary is writing from within the Hellenistic conceptual understanding of ‘substance ontology’, at the very time that this metaphysics was posing acute problems for the post-Nicene church in affirming the divinity of Christ and the oneness of God.\textsuperscript{28} Even though Hilary is undoubtedly culturally and academically influenced by substance metaphysics, what makes his contribution unique and interesting is that he is clearly refuting emanationism and modalism

\textsuperscript{24} Although Tertullian was earlier his references to the Trinity were limited. Hilary is sometimes portrayed as the pre-eminent and sole western rescuer of the Trinity but Weedman points out that R. P. C. Hanson’s account of Hilary, like others, is hagiographically influenced and refers to Daniel Williams and Lewis Ayres \textit{Nicea and its Legacy} (Oxford: OUP, 2004) 186-97. Daniel H. Williams, "The Anti-Arian Campaigns of Hilary of Poitiers and the "Liber Contra Auxentium",” \textit{Church History: Studies in Christianity and Culture} 61, no. 1.

\textsuperscript{25} Weedman, “Hilary and the Homoiousians: Using New Categories to Map the Trinitarian Controversy”. Hilary mentions Basil himself in \textit{de Synodis}.

\textsuperscript{26} Williams, "Defining Orthodoxy in Hilary of Poitiers’ Commentarium in Matthaeum". LaCugna suggests that Hilary later contributed to plugging this ‘all-important gap’ in the West’s understanding of what was happening in the East. LaCugna, \textit{God for Us}, 122.

\textsuperscript{27} Stephen McKenna “Introduction”, Poitiers, \textit{The Trinity}, 25, xiv.

\textsuperscript{28} Please see Ch. 4, 226ff.
and any attempt to either detract from the full divinity of Jesus Christ, or from the oneness of the triune God. Hilary suggests that a firm faith is required in order to reject the ‘captious and useless questions of philosophy’. He is not eschewing reasoning about God but insists the incomprehensibility of the Trinity can only be accepted by faith.

His own evidence in refutation is largely drawn directly from Old and New Testament texts, including some that the post-Arians have been using in their own arguments. As footnote 31 below makes clear Hilary knows his opponents are deliberately bowling a curved ball. Like Clement, he uses Aristotelian midway logic to frame his straight bat reply:

We have adopted a middle course between these two opinions. We do not deny the one God, but teach that there is God and God on the testimony of the very man who proclaimed that there is one God. We do not teach that there is one God as a consequence of a union, and again we do not divide Him into a number of contradictory gods, nor do we, on the contrary, acknowledge only a nominal distinction, but show Him as God and God...

The grounds for Hilary’s confident stance in the face of his opponents, exiled from his hometown and deprived of his bishopric, is

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29 De Trin. 1.13.
30 Some early writers referred to Hilary’s De Trinitate as De Fide (the Faith).
31 For example, Hilary mentions that they have appealed to the Shema in Deut. 6.4 and Mark 12.29 ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is One’. He comments: ‘The wisdom of the world, which is folly before God, would practice its deception under the guise of a faltering and pernicious simplicity, since it would take as the starting point of its faith that which it would be blasphemous either to accept or to deny. As a consequence of this dilemma, they would wring from us the admission that the Son of God is not God, because there is one God, or they would force us into another heresy, so that, if we acknowledge the Father as God and the Son as God, we would be regarded as proclaiming the one God in accordance with the teachings of Sabellius. Thus by their manner of teaching about ‘the one God’ they would thus exclude another God, or, if there is another God, there would not be one God, or they would only be one in name, because unity does not recognize another God, and another God does not permit a union and two cannot be one’. De Trinitate, Book 5.1.
32 Please see Ch.2, 119.
33 Ibid. There are very few other surviving Latin documents in the first half of the fourth century, according to D. H. Williams. A couple of fragments from Fortunatianus, however, similarly contain a reference to Jesus Christ as ‘God’. Describing the entry into Jerusalem on a donkey, Fortunatianus writes: ‘the Christian people therefore have God as their rider’. CCL 9:368.30 cited in Williams, ‘Defining Orthodoxy in Hilary of Poitiers’ Commentarium in Mattheum’. 154.
the New Testament evidence that Jesus Christ was God and this divine Christ clearly states that God is one. Hilary acknowledges this is the evidence on which he is relying: ‘Thus our reply is not in opposition to his authority but is drawn from it’. Compared with the later Cappadocians, Hilary can acknowledge the Father as the eternal begetter of the Son, but ‘there is hardly a chapter in his work where the true equality between the Father and the Son is not emphasized’. Hilary thus resists emanation, ontological and functional subordination, and Sabellianism. The Holy Spirit's absence here, and no direct reference to the Holy Spirit as ‘God’ in De Trinitate, are both discounted by his translator as any detraction from the divinity of the third person of the Trinity, because of the number and nature of Hilary’s other references to the Spirit.

I believe Hilary was also challenging some critical elements of Plotinus’ Neoplatonism by questioning whether the doctrine of simplicity was applicable, and whether God was indeed solo and alone, again utilising Biblical evidence. Augustine read Hilary and quotes from him in Book 6 of his own De Trinitate on the Holy Spirit. He did not, however, appear to heed Hilary’s reticence about Plotinus in this particular respect. Aquinas was also acquainted with Hilary but the latter’s trinitarian theology does not have the same sense of mutuality and cooperation as Hilary’s straightforward formulation does. In effect, Hilary is doing exactly what LaCugna suggested the Cappadocians

34 Ibid.
35 Poitiers, The Trinity, 25, x.
36 Ibid.
37 De Trin. 4.17 ‘Both expressions “let us make” and “our” cannot be reconciled with a being that is unique or who is one and the same, likewise they do not signify one who is different from or alien to Him. Insofar as His not one and the same He will not be found as one who is alone. Hence to one who is alone, the words “I will make” and “mine” are appropriate but to one who is not alone the words “let us make” and “our” are appropriate’. Hilary does, however, talk of his soul’s quest and journey to the knowledge of its Lord, which is pure Plotinus. De Trin. Book 1.5
should have done in linking the incomprehensibility of God with the economy of salvation.\textsuperscript{39}

\textbf{Richard St. Victor (d. 1173)}

Richard, known as St. Victor, after the name of the hermitage on the southeast outskirts of medieval Paris, may well have been Scottish. Zinn says almost nothing is known about his life and therefore even this origin may be incorrect.\textsuperscript{40} Henry St. Victor had died some ten years earlier and Richard entered St. Victor around 1152 at about the time of Bernard of Clairvaux’s death. St. Victor was already noted for its biblical study, sensitive liturgy and ‘theologically sophisticated spirituality’ and later became part of the foundation of the University of Paris. Richard ‘must by any account be seen as a major spiritual writer of the 12\textsuperscript{th} C – and of any century’.\textsuperscript{41} Yet despite this Professor Jean Chatillon contends that from the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries only a few theologians or scholars read the manuscripts from the Abbey of St. Victor, which was later destroyed in the French Revolution. Thus, the first English translation of Book 3 of Richard’s \textit{De Trinitate} only became available in 1979 and Ruben Angelicus’ translation of the whole work is as recent as 2011, approaching eight hundred and fifty years after it was written.

Influenced by Augustine and Anselm, Richard defended the importance of faith first and then the use of reason to explicate that faith.\textsuperscript{42} In \textit{De Trinitate} Richard set out in a carefully and symmetrically

\textsuperscript{39} Please see Chp. 4, 230-32. LaCugna herself notes that this is what Hilary did. Hilary is pre-Chalcedon so some of the difficulties over the divine and human nature of Christ were yet to be debated. LaCugna, \textit{God for Us}, 44.


\textsuperscript{41} ibid.

\textsuperscript{42} Chatillon says some are put off by the attempt to demonstrate a mystery rationally that can only be known by revelation but he argues Richard knew perfectly well that the mystery of the Trinity is inaccessible to human reason. His ‘demonstration’ is that of a ‘contemplative whose meditation has so familiarized
constructed argument to parse the Athanasian Creed. In Book 1 V he notes the he ‘frequently’ reads and hears about the Trinity, outlining its perplexing paradoxes and descriptions. Richard adds:

But I do not recollect having read anything about the reasons that prove them. Authorities are abundant over all these subjects, but demonstrations are not as copious. On all these themes, there is a lack of evidence and a rarity of arguments. ... I believe I will have accomplished something if, in this research, I can offer even a little help to the searching minds, even though I will not be able to (fully) satisfy them.43

Kenan Osborne has described Richard as ‘radically Augustinian’. 44 Where they differ is that Richard took Augustine’s ‘mention of human love as his primary analog for Trinitarian theology (whilst) Augustine selected the intellectual life as his primary analog’. 45 Richard struggled with Boethius and the philosophical conundrum of how you could have three individual substances because that would affect their equal divinity. He refers to them as three aliquos ‘someones’, and opts for existentia as a better alternative term to substantia. As ‘existencies’ the divine persons could be conceived of as ecstatic, social realities and their relationship with one another could be conceived on an analogy with human social experience. 46 Following Anselm, Richard saw the Godhead as the supreme exemplification of all perfection, including those of goodness, happiness and love. The sharing of divine goodness is a supreme act of love. The loving communion among the divine persons constitutes supreme happiness (De Trinitate III.i-i-vi), what Gerald O’Collins refers to as ‘the absolute communion of love’. 47 Professor Chatillon comments that Richard:

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46 Angelici refers to Richard deconstructing the word ‘existere’ into ‘ex’ meaning ‘from’ and ‘sister’ meaning ‘to be’, or ‘to stay’ in Latin. Ibid. 52, cf. Moltmann, The Trinity and the Kingdom of God, 173-74.
47 Gerald O’Collins, “The State of the Questions”.

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Shows to what point a deep pondering on the nature and demands of love can illuminate the fathomless mystery of God in three persons. Love is, in fact, gift and exchange. If then God is love, there meet in Him a plurality of persons without which there could be neither gift nor exchange. 48

Angelici points to the 'very subtle and almost furtive' original in the Latin, that is lost in the English translation, which reads: He who donates love is other to him who returns it'. What Richard actually says is simultaneously quiet and radical: that 'distinction' is 'detectable in the one essence of God'.49 As part of his argument, Richard not only suggests that love (caritas) equalizes the persons of the Godhead but also, in his rationale, 'requires a Trinity of persons', unlike Augustine's approach to the Holy Spirit.50

Because self-love cannot be true love, supreme love requires another, equal to the lover, who is the recipient of that love. Furthermore, because supreme love is received as well as given, it must be a shared love, in which each person loves and is loved by another. Finally, because supreme love must desire that the love it experiences through giving and receiving be one that is shared with another, it is not merely mutual love between two but is a love that is fully present among three and only three.51

Richard coined a new word to describe the third Person – 'condilectus' (co-beloved), and for this 'co-love' – 'condilectio'.52

Although Bonaventure took up some of his arguments and despite Thomas Aquinas' acquaintance with Richard St. Victor's work, Gresham believes that 'the impact' of Richard's 'trinitarian theology was overshadowed by the dominant influence of Aquinas with his masterful use of the psychological analogy to probe and illuminate the inner being

49 Ibid., Book 3, III. 118, n3.
50 Ibid., Book 3. XI & XII, 126-27.
51 Grenz, Rediscovering the Triune God, 11.
of the trinity’. Thus, due to the Thomist influence and the lack of availability of Richard St. Victor in English his views on the Trinity are much less known. Grenz cites Olson and Hall who claim that Aquinas synthesized some aspects of Richard’s ‘communal-social’ model, but was not so enamoured of Richard’s claim that God’s triunity could be known by reason rather than by revelation. Aquinas also later critiqued Richard’s idea of love needing to be shared.

Marmion and van Nieuwenhove express some reservations about whether Moltmann’s appeal to Richard in support of a social model of the Trinity is justified. Gunton himself refers to ‘individualistic’ and ‘relational strands’ existing ‘side by side, sometimes in the same thinker’. Since he immediately then goes on to mention Richard it appears that Gunton might have had the Victorine in mind. What Gunton actually said was: ‘What we find in Richard is an approach to the doctrine of the Trinity that contains possibilities for the development of a relational view of the person’. Gunton and Tom Torrance also trace a possible connection between John Calvin who studied Richard St. Victor and a link with Scotland through Calvin's writings that may have influenced the Scottish philosophers Sir William Hamilton and later John MacMurray, particularly as Gunton is able to

54 See also footnote 42 above. Angelici points out that there was a long history and debate in patristic and scholastic theology between the place of reason, revelation and faith. Rationes Necessariae, the ‘logical necessary reasons’, were essential to understand the Auctoritates, ‘the revealed truths’. Augustine had argued that ‘Authority requires faith and prepares man to reason. Reason leads to understanding and knowledge’. (Religione, XXIV.45) Anselm had corrected John Scot Eriugena by placing the emphasis on faith ‘Unless I believe I shall not understand’ (Prosologion I.1,87). Richard’s Prologue is explicit about the significance of faith. Angelici concedes, however, that Richard added a unique distinction ‘If faith is the origin of all good, knowledge is its consummation and perfection … let us always strive … to comprehend by reason that which we hold by faith’ (889BC) Victor, “On the Trinity,” see 17-23 and 65-70.
55 Grenz, Rediscovering the Triune God, 12, citing Roger E. Olson and Christopher A. Hall, The Trinity, Guides to Theology (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 55; Marmion and Nieuwenhove, An Introduction to the Trinity, 104f, ST I.32.2 ad 2.
56 An Introduction to the Trinity, 104.
57 Gunton, The Promise of Trinitarian Theology, 91.
58 Ibid.
quote a passage from MacMurray that bears striking similarity to Richard's logic about persons in relation.\textsuperscript{59}

\textbf{Bonaventure of Bagnoregio (1217-1274)}

A contemporary and compatriot of Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure, taught at the University of Paris, writing roughly a century after Richard St. Victor.\textsuperscript{60} He produced 'five major and two minor texts' on the Trinity, until his election as the Franciscan Minster General in 1257 when his lecturing and writing ceased.\textsuperscript{61} Theodore de Régnon claims that there were only two scholastic schools of thought on the Trinity. One was Aquinas based on Augustine, Anselm and Peter Lombard. The other was Bonaventure, relying on Dionysius, Richard St. Victor, William of Auvergne, William of Auxerre and Alexander of Hales.\textsuperscript{62} In 1966, however, Olegario Gonzalez de Cardedal argued in a book on Bonaventure's trinitarian theology that Bonaventure constructed 'a third theology of the Trinity' that was 'radically different from both those of Augustine and Richard St. Victor'.\textsuperscript{63}

For Bonaventure, therefore, the issue is not a choice between emphasis upon the oneness of the divine nature on the one hand, and the threeness of the divine Persons, on the other hand. In his understanding, the one divine love is shared among the three Persons, and oneness and threeness do not exclude but rather strengthen one another. It is only in the divine Persons that we find the unity. There is nothing else but the Persons and each of these Persons is of one essence, which is utterly simple.\textsuperscript{64}


\textsuperscript{60} Both Bonaventure and Aquinas were due to attend the Council of Lyons in 1274. Aquinas died \textit{en route} and Bonaventure died at the Council.

\textsuperscript{61} Osborne, "The Trinity in Bonaventure," 108.


\textsuperscript{64} Marmion and Nieuwenhove, \textit{An Introduction to the Trinity}, 108f.
Bonaventure is taking the doctrine of simplicity here and redefining it. You will recall that anything that divided substance, or essence, brought change and mutation to the source, which contradicted the concept of divine being. Like Richard, Bonaventure was influenced by the Neoplatonism of Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite as well as number of other sources, including the Bible, his Franciscan training, Augustine, Anselm, John Damascene and both Henry and Richard St. Victor. An exceptional scholar, he used the concept of primacy for God, also meaning first in Latin, to imply that there was more than one and therefore it is possible for substance to equal the relationship of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

In Bonaventuran theology two important themes are made. First relationship is the basis for a trinitarian theology of God, and not vice versa. God is not first trinitarian and then relational. Rather God is relational, and therefore we can speak of God as trinitarian. Second, the very nature of God in itself is relational. Were one to exclude any and all relational aspects from God, the theology of a trinitarian God would be meaningless.

Emmanuel Durand has described Bonaventure's contribution as 'fundamental' in identifying that perichoresis 'integrates unity of essence and personal distinction'. Durand believes this understanding is still relevant today. This represents a different approach to Augustine and Aquinas and Richard. It also differs from the Cappadocians because the Father is not the cause or originator of the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is, however, candidly emanationist, using an idea of overflowing blessing and love (beatitudo et caritas). Bonaventure encapsulates his own metaphysical approach in the Haexameron: 'This is the sum total of our metaphysics: concerned with emanation, exemplarity and consummation'. Later, he adds: 'For no one can have any understanding

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65 Bonaventure had access to a twelfth-century translation of John of Damascus’ *De Fide Orthodoxa.*
66 Ibid. 116.
unless he considers where things come from, how they are led back to their end and how God shines forth in them’. 68

Julian of Norwich (1342 – ca. 1416)

In 1964, Thomas Merton called ‘Julian of Norwich’ the greatest English theologian alongside Cardinal Newman. 69 ‘A retiring, obscure, fourteenth century Anchoress’, even her real name is not known: she is called Julian after the church in Norwich where her cell was built. 70 Norwich was the second largest city in England at the time but three successive ravages of the Black Death almost halved its population. Julian became severely ill herself when she was aged 30 and had a series of visions or ‘showings’ based on Christ dying on the cross, which she dates as ‘the year of our Lord, 1373, the 8th day of May’. 71 These ended when she recovered. She wrote about them in the Short Text in vernacular Middle English, believed to be the earliest surviving English text by a woman. 72 Fifteen to twenty years later, she wrote a much longer theological explication with the same title: the Revelations of Divine Love. These visions are remarkable for their irenic confidence in a loving and compassionate God, their trinitarian perspective, their gender inclusivity, and their sense of God’s presence in the everyday

70 Ibid.
71 Ibid., 4. She recounts the curate placing a crucifix in front of her eyes when summoned to conduct the last rites for her.
and in extreme misfortune, making her the most significant English mystic.\textsuperscript{73}

Edith Humphrey refers to ‘the unschooled but spiritually informed Julian of Norwich’,\textsuperscript{74} Humphrey makes the point that:

It is not just theologians who are called to dwell upon the Triune name. The most profound Christian mystics (or as I prefer to call them, spiritual theologians) are to be seen, in their communion with God, absorbed wholly in the contemplation upon the One who became incarnate, and so gaining more and more insight about the Godhead – Father, Son, and Spirit.\textsuperscript{75}

Julian makes an astonishing Christological and Trinitarian affirmation in her first Revelation. Seeing a suffering Jesus Christ:

I conceived truly and powerfully that it was He Himself (both God and man, the Same who suffered thus for me). ... And in the same showing suddenly the Trinity almost filled my heart with joy (And I understood that it shall be like that in heaven without end for all that shall come there). ... For the Trinity is God, God is the Trinity;
the Trinity is our Maker,
the Trinity is our Keeper,
the Trinity is our everlasting Lover,
the Trinity is our everlasting Joy and Bliss,
by our Lord Jesus Christ.
(And this was shown in the first revelation and in all of them, for wherever Jesus appears, the blessed Trinity is understood, as I see it.)\textsuperscript{76}

Julian takes the Trinity as read. Kerrie Hide also observes that what is most noticeable in Julian’s visions ‘of the Trinity is the emphasis she gives to the communion of persons’.\textsuperscript{77} Hide points out that an essential part of Julian’s trinitarian theology is the concept of ‘oneing’

\textsuperscript{73} For example: ‘For as the Blessed Trinity created all things from nothing, just so the same Blessed Trinity shall make well all that is not well’. John-Julian, The Revelations of Julian of Norwich, Ch. 32, 71.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 9. Cf. Soskice, The Kindness of God, 125f.
\textsuperscript{76} John-Julian, The Revelations of Julian of Norwich, Chp. 4, 9.
\textsuperscript{77} Hide, "Oneing in the Trinity," 49f.
(onyng).\textsuperscript{78} ‘Oneing is about communion (koinonia): a permanent process of active reciprocity’.\textsuperscript{79} Julian adds other ideas that contribute to ‘oneing’. These include ‘knitting’ and being ‘closed’, or ‘enclosed’. Hide describes Julian’s conception of the Trinity as even more profound than \textit{perichoresis}. ‘The persons of the trinity are within one another, they contain one another and at the same time they open their personhood to the other’.\textsuperscript{80}

Far from the Trinity being removed from the everyday, Julian stresses the ‘oneing’ not only between the persons of the Trinity, but also between the Trinity and humanity. Hide believes this ‘sense of \textit{perichoresis in the God-human relationship}’ is a very significant theological assertion that has not been made to her knowledge by any other theologian ‘so powerfully’.\textsuperscript{81}

Through this idea of oneing, Julian creates an ontology of being-in-relationship. She confirms that it is intrinsic to the nature of the Trinity not to stay self-enclosed but to reach out to human beings in relationships. She reinforces that there are not two sets of trinitarian relationships, one within the divine being and the other with human beings. ... It implies an inherent relationship between theology and anthropology.\textsuperscript{82}

This vertical dimension, says Hide, means that through the reciprocal sharing of divine life the Father, Son and Holy Spirit fulfil the potential in human beings set in Creation ‘to participate fully in the life of God’.

What is also striking is the importance of the trinitarian familial and primarily parental relationship with human beings, which are gender inclusive as Father \textit{and} Mother. Julian of Norwich’s translator, John-Julian, refers to her ‘unapologetic treatment of Christ as Mother’, describing it ‘as without doubt, the finest and most sophisticated

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{78} Ibid., 47.
\item \textsuperscript{79} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{80} Ibid., 57.
\item \textsuperscript{81} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{82} Ibid., 57-8.
\end{itemize}
treatment of that subject in ALL Christian literature'. John-Julian points out that this motif is by no means unique to Julian, listing many other theologians who have done the same. John-Julian further points out that:

Julian never characterizes Christ as: 'like our mother,' but the direct opposite – she describes motherhood (as she describes humanity itself) as pre-existing in Christ. Our mothers and what we call 'mother love' are only emanations and imitations of Christ's own eternal and timeless Motherhood. John-Julian further points out that:

Julian emphasized this by explaining how the bond between mother and child is the only earthly relationship that comes close to the relationship a person can have with Jesus. Indeed 'oneing' at this point looks very similar to Attachment theory.

Hide's conclusion has six points about Julian's concept of Trinitarian 'oneing and praxis'. She claims they:

(1) Place a question mark against 'our human concepts'.
(2) Compel 'us to engage deeply with what it means to be one'.
(3) Radically connect God's being and God's actions in salvation.
(4) Create 'an intense theology of presence'.
(5) Give a community and value to each human being.
(6) 'Place communion and relationship at the centre of what it means to be human'.

Hide sees echoes in Julian of the Ephesians' writer's assessment of the height, depth, length and breadth of God's Triune love. Indeed it is this love of God that comes out so strongly from Julian's revelations

85 See Ch.1, 57-59.
86 Hide, "Oneing in the Trinity," 58-60.
87 Ibid., 60. Cf. Ephesians 3.14-21. Whilst verse 17 refers to the 'love of Christ' the context specifically includes the Father and the Spirit. (My observation, not Hide's).
and is intrinsic to the quality of these intra-divine and divine-human relationships.

Edward Irving (1792-1834) and Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834)

Edward Irving and his anthropology was one of the first conceptions that reflected both the modern insistence on personhood as beings in-relation and beings on the way and the modern experience of estrangement, and he integrated them in a framework of a trinitarian conception of the divine economy. Irving spotted the pivotal position of Jesus Christ between the distinctively triune God and mankind; ‘the historic hypostasis, ... utterly human, tempted as we are; and yet through the Holy Spirit the basis from all eternity of a personal and communal relationship with God’.\(^{88}\) Gunton comments that Irving’s Christology, which echoes John Owen’s, has much to teach us:

> It is the utter and complete self-giving of the eternal Word, obedient to the Father and dependent upon the Spirit, that makes the particular historic person, Jesus Christ, at the same time the way of the many to God.\(^{89}\)

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was a friend of Edward Irving and the first person to ‘have a developed a trinitarian understanding of God and a relational view of the human person’.\(^{90}\) Coleridge was reacting to the impersonal mechanistic philosophy of his nineteenth century era. If God was not solely a monotheistic part of pre-determined universe but a unity of free persons in relationship, ‘taking their being and particularity from one each other, then we may understood how it is that we have a world fit for the creation and redemption of persons’.\(^{91}\)

\(^{88}\) Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 99.
\(^{89}\) Ibid., 100.
\(^{90}\) Ibid., 98.
\(^{91}\) Ibid., 99.
J. R. Illingworth (1848-1915)

J. R. Illingworth also understood human personality and divine personhood to be both irreducibly trinitarian. Human personality is ‘essentially triune, not because its chief functions are three – thought, desire and will – for they might conceivably be more, but because it consists of a subject, an object and their relation’. For Illingworth there is a special character to human personality, which, in the process of realisation of its potentiality, forms personal relations with others. Illingworth argues that the Trinity is how God has chosen to reveal himself, indeed he goes further and says it is how Christ has revealed God to be. This doctrine has always been taught. Neither Athanasius nor Augustine claimed any greater knowledge of God than St. John or St. Paul and the efforts of the Fathers were to be true to this object. This is a defiant statement just after the turn of the twentieth century. Illingworth is well aware that:

It is nowadays often contended that this definition was expressed in the terms of a philosophy that we have outgrown, implying modes that are no longer ours, and need not be accepted by Christians of the present day.

To critics who protested that the Trinity imported ‘fresh difficulty into the already difficult conception of God’ Illingworth replied, can anything increase that difficulty? Illingworth argues that if God is a Trinity then we might expect to find tangible evidence of this in God’s creation. The following quote shows that he is hedging his bets on both a social and psychological Trinity.

If the doctrine is true – if there is Trinity in the Godhead by which the world and mankind were created, we should expect to find adumbrations of it present in creation, as we believe divine attributes to be reflected in the beauty and order and purpose of

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92 Illingworth, *The Doctrine of the Trinity*.
93 Ibid.
94 Ibid.
95 Illingworth, *The Doctrine of the Trinity*, 128f.
96 Ibid., 131.
97 Ibid.
the world, and in the justice and love and holiness of man. When therefore we see that the unit of human society, the family, is essentially a trinity of father, mother, and child, and that there is a psychological trinity involved in the very structure of the human mind, we may well regard these things as the created reflections of a Triune Creator, not causes that suggested an untrue doctrine, but effects of the fact that it is true.98

Finally, Illingworth’s clinching argument is that the Church should be the ‘living Creed’. If people wish to encounter what God is like they can do so not ‘primarily as a doctrine’:

But as a living, breathing and organized society of men and women all around us, whose creed is only the intellectual explanation of their actual life. And that actual life consists of the conviction of those who are sincerely living it, in progressive communion with the Father, through fellowship in the mystical body of his son, effected the operation of the Holy Spirit within them.99

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been twofold. First, it has furnished some evidence that a ‘Social Trinity’, rather loosely defined, is by no means a wholly late twentieth century invention. These very few examples would of course ordinarily never qualify for any statistical significance whatsoever, given the time period of nearly two millennia they cover and their numbers relative to the sum of theologians over the same period. It is simply the fact that they do exist that is of such importance. This is particularly true of the Johannine author. Collectively, spanning eighteen centuries from the end of the first to the beginning of the twentieth as they do, their existence also effectively prevents the notion that a ‘Social Trinity’ is only a present-day Feuerbachian projection.

The second purpose of this chapter was to introduce alternative voices into this research - the very faint but remarkable sound of a

98 Illingworth, The Doctrine of the Trinity, 129.
99 Ibid., 240.
different way of thinking about God, and hence about theology and indeed anthropology. These gentle voices challenge the combined might of either substance or western individual ontologies. The sounds they whisper are beautiful and attractive. They strike chords about God’s love for people and about the significance of human love. They are suggestive of a wholly different form of existence. They are part of the inspiration for the alternative theological proposition I make in the last two chapters. But before I can proceed there, it is necessary to consider methodology further.
Chapter 6

Questions of Method?

Introduction

This chapter begins with a summary of the thesis findings up until this point, as a lead-in to an exploration of research issues and methods. It is relatively late in a thesis to consider methodology. This is not the first reference, however. That was made in Ch.1 where I outlined a methodology from practical theology that has been acting as an overarching schema for this research so far. In addition, part of the rationale for Ch.5 was to address a particular liability in this research, namely anthropomorphic projection. The main reason, though, for postponing methodological deliberation thus far is because the foregoing chapters have laid an essential foundation without which a detailed discussion of method would have been premature and difficult to develop. This foundation has included deconstructing some of the complex issues around ‘family’ and tracing the course and effects of ‘trinitarian mis-steps’. The plan for the remainder of the chapter can be found on page 301 below.

Summary of Chs.1-5: the state of play so far

The overall aim of this thesis has been to explore whether the re-emerged Trinitarian theology might enable a theology of ‘family’ where little or none presently exists. Gary Deddo’s queries about Karl Barth’s approach, quoted earlier, could well summarize the wider state of affairs about theology and family:

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1 See Introduction, 19-22.
2 Ch.3, 214.
Has the theologian nothing to say about this natural reality even if it is secondary to a more essential relationship? Does it have no theological meaning, is it impervious to theological interpretation?³

The literature surveyed in Ch.1, however, suggested that any such endeavour is fraught with methodological, anthropological, cultural, historical, political, sociological, definitional, ethical, epistemological and theological difficulties. Attempting to chart a successful course through all these issues requires a level of awareness and care akin, metaphorically, to clearing or crossing a minefield. Chs. 2 and 3 then examined how the combination of different historical circumstances, contemporaneous Christian writing, and the remarkable persistence of Hellenistic philosophy have bequeathed an extraordinary and rather mixed legacy on the subject of family. If anything, this lengthy and ambivalent Christian inheritance has contributed considerably to, rather than simplified, the contemporary complexity of the issues surrounding ‘family’, and the divided debate about it.

The focus of Ch.4 was in tracing the particular and momentous historical routes that the doctrine of God and theological anthropology each took, partially influenced by what have been termed ‘trinitarian mis-steps’, and both under the same impress of Hellenistic philosophy. I followed the argument that the course of the theological and anthropological trajectories diminished the significance and relevance of trinitarian theology and thus rendered theologians theologically ill-equipped to consider the import of relationships for what it means to be human, and inadvertently fostered the notion that human beings created in God’s image were primarily individual and rational. Both of these trajectories, I contended, were therefore antithetical to the development of a theology of human relationships and consequently to any potential theology of family.

³ Deddo, Karl Barth’s Special Ethics of Parents and Children, 278.
Thus the first half of this thesis has underscored why approaching the task of a theology of ‘family’ is far from straightforward, or risk free. This research has also suggested that the course of historical trinitarian theology may have actually contributed to some of the factors, such as individualism and rationality, which have in turn exercised an enormous impact on Western society and the Western family, including the latter’s perceived vulnerability. This finding is conspicuous by its absence in the Christian literature on the family, let alone in secular academic studies. What has passed almost totally unrecognised by this extensive literature, and also by its critics, is the possibility that some of the concerns about families and society that have prompted its production may have been partially caused by the course of Christian thinking and specifically Christian theology itself.4 In addition, as just mentioned, I have shown how historical trinitarian theological mis-steps severely limited the ability to theologize in this particular sphere.

Clearly it is not possible to undo nigh on two millennia of history, of theologizing, and of complex cultural influences. Nevertheless, the logic of the scenarios I have been investigating is that if trinitarian theological mis-steps have been contributory to the present phenomenon of, and issues surrounding, ‘family’ then the re-emerged trinitarian theology might provide a significant and surprising key to reframing the debate, particularly now that the influence of Hellenistic philosophy is finally waning. Indeed, one test of this hypothesis is the extent to which a number of the difficulties I earlier reviewed in Ch.1 could thereby be addressed. This is examined in Ch.8.

The second half of the thesis has begun with Ch.5 adducing evidence that a relational trinitarian thread preceded the trinitarian mis-steps and remained within the tradition, albeit subliminally and

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4 Ruether’s work is the exception that proves the rule here although she does not consider the theological background to these difficulties. Ruether, *Christianity and the Making of the Modern Family*. 
sotto voce. I have claimed that the existence of this thread represents an important bulwark against the charge that ‘social trinitarianism’ is simply a mid- to late twentieth century anthropomorphic projection. In addition, the more recent attempts of Barth, Rahner, LaCugna, Moltmann, and others, at reconnecting the somewhat artificially divorced economic and immanent Trinity, has focused greater attention on the biblical accounts of the economic Trinity for mining important data about the doctrine and nature of God. The congruence of that material with this subliminal thread provides further evidence that this is not a speculative or improper line of enquiry.

At this juncture it is important to make the theological and methodological disclaimer that attempting a trinitarian theology of the family is not to presume that all the questions and issues in respect of the Trinity are resolved. It is clear from the debate that is currently raging, in the wake of the re-emergence of the doctrine of the Trinity, that this is not the case. Moreover, it would quite properly be regarded as foolishly illusory, and dangerously presumptive if theologians were in a position to know the answers to all these queries. Isaiah 55.8-9 encapsulates this inbuilt inability. Moltmann has articulated the situation as follows:

The more you reflect on the mystery of the Trinity, the less you seem to understand it definitively. What had been settled becomes an open question, and what you understood proves elusive again. You keep beginning again from the beginning. Therefore the doctrine of the Trinity remains incomplete. For those theologians who are preoccupied with it, indeed caught up in it, it is an ongoing process of learning. But for that reason the doctrine of the Trinity also remains indispensable … For theologians, a doctrine of the Trinity is the supreme but certainly also the most humbling task that is posed to them.

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6 Moltmann, History and the Triune God, 80.
Questions of method: a plan of attack

Armed with some interim conclusions, a Moltmannian sense of awe and humility and an awareness of the variety and sheer number of difficulties this research poses, there are still some important methodological considerations to attend to.

Accordingly, the remainder of this chapter reflects further on the sheer scale of the theologian’s task, and assesses the value of a practical theological methodology for this particular thesis. I refer to Christoph Schwöbel’s methodological criteria for doing systematic theology and then pause to consider the use and abuse of biblical material, since this will form part of my research data in the remaining chapters. There follows a three-way conversation between Miroslav Volf, Kathryn Tanner, and Mark Husbands on the subject of divine-human correspondence. The consideration of biblical material and this three-way conversation are top and tailed by reference to Karen Kilby’s concerns. I conclude with Jordan Wessling’s assessment of Colin Gunton’s argument about the univocity of love, Alan Torrance’s research on theological language, James Danaher on a postmodern correspondence theory of truth and Anderson and Guernsey’s observation about phrasing findings in the subjunctive. There is insufficient space to address adequately some other methodological questions that are, or could be, associated with this research. This includes familial and gendered metaphorical language for God.7

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In the beginning was ... God

Theologians face an interesting challenge from a research methodology point of view. As Sarah Coakley points out:

God, by definition, cannot be an extra item in the universe (a very big one) to be known, and so controlled, by human intellect, will or imagination. God is, rather, that-without-which-there-would-be-nothing-at-all; God is the source and sustainer of all being, and, as such, the dizzying mystery encountered in the act of contemplation as precisely the blanking of the human ambition to knowledge, control and mastery. To know God is unlike any other knowledge: indeed, it is more truly to be known, and so transformed.\(^8\)

Christopher Stead similarly observed that the ‘the task is ludicrously disproportionate’ to the ‘powers’ of ‘any writer in this field’ ... ‘One might seem to think that the being of God, the mystery at the heart of all reality, could all be disclosed in a book of some hundreds of pages’.\(^9\) Barth also refers to the impossibility of overcoming this ‘fundamental difficulty which afflicts theology alone among sciences. ... We always seem to be handling an intractable object with inadequate means’.\(^10\) Instead of God being a subject of researchers it is rather the other way about. The solution that Barth, and Coakley, suggest is that of prayer.\(^11\) This is not quite so easy to evidence, or a widely accepted practice in research, or thesis writing, although I have arguably already made some use of it with Julian of Norwich.

Given these theological observations above, an incisive and pertinent critique of advocates of the ‘social’ Trinity comes from Karen Kilby. She maintains that an essential problem of ‘recent trinitarianism’ is that it:

\(^8\) Coakley, "Is There a Future for Gender and Theology?," 5.
\(^9\) Stead, Divine Substance, vi.
\(^10\) Barth, K CD 1/I, 23.
\(^11\) Barth, Church Dogmatics. 24; Coakley, God, Sexuality and the Self, 2,4,6,12 & passim.
Has become, quite simply, too knowing. Contemporary theologians often seem to have a concept of the Trinity, in a way that sets them at odds with the tradition. ...what is most needed ... is to learn again how to be trinitarian without pretending to know more than we actually do.\textsuperscript{12}

Hannah Bacon similarly has reservations about inappropriate and potentially inaccurate speculation about God, together with a proffered solution:

Rather than following common practice within contemporary Trinitarian-ism of constructing a social model of the Trinity, which relies on speculative knowledge about the immanent life of God, uniting oikonomia with theologia situates the starting point of Trinitarian reflection in the material revelation of God in the economy of salvation...\textsuperscript{13}

Part of my methodological argument, therefore, for using biblical material in the last two chapters, is in an effort to ground this research on accounts as close as possible to the ‘economy of salvation’, and thereby provide some control for what Bacon would otherwise deem as unfitting conjecture.\textsuperscript{14}

The alternative contention, of course, is that the existence of God, trinitarian or otherwise, is unproven and therefore not a reliable basis for academic research, and/or a reductionist argument. Maureen Miner, for instance, considered whether it was possible to ‘bracket out the question of God’s existence’ in her research on Attachment theory and God.\textsuperscript{15} Although she found that there were subjective and projectionist risks she nonetheless perseveres with a theological examination, not least because on the whole this has not been done, and because theology had something important to offer. Clearly, in a thesis where I am investigating the possibility of a theology I am to a certain


\textsuperscript{13} Hannah Bacon, “\textit{Thinking} the Trinity as Resource for Feminist Theology Today?,” \textit{Cross Currents} 62, no. 4 (2012): 442.

\textsuperscript{14} See also Danaher’s argument for the independent importance of Scripture, 302f.

extent already committed along this road. My argument for continuing is partly based on the same premises as Miner.\textsuperscript{16}

The value of the methodological approach of practical theology in this research: and joining forces with systematic theology

The starting point for practical theology can be any given issue, or enquiry, large or small. The research question in this thesis has been: is it possible to have a trinitarian theology of family? The methodology itself was outlined in Ch.1.\textsuperscript{17} It promotes extensive and critical investigation of the presenting question, and wider contributory factors, alongside theological and biblical reflection, and the generation of new theology with the aim of living out a new reality, hence the emphasis on \textit{practical} in practical theology. So far, I have been predominantly engaged in the fact-finding and analytical stages of this methodology, examining the historic and philosophical backgrounds, as well as exploring contemporary issues, of pertinence to human family and the Trinity.

The \textit{critical} and \textit{eclectic} methodological approach of practical theology deliberately draws on a variety of perspectives, and other disciplines. Given the particular and peculiar complexities of both ‘family’ and trinitarian theology, and the significant history I have outlined, I contend that this methodological approach has been necessary and important.\textsuperscript{18} For differing reasons, neither the Trinity, nor family, are easy topics for research. The former is unfamiliar, in

\textsuperscript{16} See also Ch.4, 243-44. Please see David Kelsey’s considered defence of the existence of God and his exploration of God’s relationship with a contingent world, in \textit{Evolution and Creation}, ed. Ernan McMullin (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985), 176-92, 195-96.

\textsuperscript{17} See Introduction, 19-22.

\textsuperscript{18} Prof Ray Anderson, a practical theologian, writes: ‘The task of practical theology is not simply to reiterate dislocated theological truths but to examine theological understandings in the light of contemporary experience in order that their meaning within God’s redemptive movement in the present can be developed and assessed. Theological truth is thus seen to be emergent and dialectical, having to be carved out within the continuing dialogue between the Christian tradition and the historical existence of church and world.’ Anderson, \textit{The Shape of Practical Theology}, 24.
part due to this history, and the latter disarmingly, and sometimes deceptively, familiar. In regard to the latter, paying scant attention to other disciplines, therefore, or ignoring feminist views, for example, would arguably do grave disservice to the subject. Working with other disciplines is not, however, the exclusive preserve of practical theology. Christoph Schwöbel promotes similar engagement for systematic theology, on the theological and methodological grounds that God’s ‘self-disclosure’ and position as ‘source’, ‘standard’ and ‘unity of all truth’, means ‘any propositions arrived at ‘must be externally defensible, for instance in conversation with other sciences’.19

As mentioned, building ‘a new theology’ is an accepted and expected part of practical theological method. In the case of human family there is a noticeable lack of old theology to start from. Theological reflection on the family has generally been conspicuous by its absence, as previously reviewed.20 In attempting to reverse engineer ‘trinitarian mis-steps’ I am partially pioneering new territory. This terrain is contested, and fraught with dangers, as Sections 1.2, 3.3 and 3.4 in Ch.1 make clear. I have outlined some further pitfalls in the accounts in Chs. 2-4. The combination of theological concern about the ‘social’ Trinity, mentioned above, as well as about creating God in human image, the long legacy of patriarchy in theology and the family, and the risk of further idolizing the family, are but some of the perils.

Christoph Schwöbel, in 2014, summarised the current state of development of trinitarian theology, almost twenty years after his first synopsis of the then re-emerging trinitarian theology. Noting current disagreements, he helpfully outlined criteria for where ‘a new understanding is sought by means of theological reflection’. He claimed these ‘criteria for doing systematic theology’ were ‘generated from the

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20 Please see pp.78-84.
structure of the Christian faith’. These yardsticks were (1) congruence with Scripture (because of God’s recorded self-disclosure) (2) ‘critical harmony with the normative traditions of the church’ (3) being true and relevant for contemporary society, (4) propositions being internally consistent and (5) relevancy to all spheres of life. These criteria accord with the method and aim of practical theology and provide methodological bases for evaluating the constructive part of this thesis.

The use and abuse of Scripture

Schwöbel’s first criterion above begs immediate questions, particularly in this sphere of research. Atkinson and Brown referred to the search for biblical material on the family and the relative difficulty of finding, or using, this material. Schleiermacher, you may recall, made a similar observation about the paucity of biblical references. That still does not deter contemporary seekers. As I repeatedly noted in Chs. 2 and 3, the history of theologians approaching biblical texts on the subject of family is littered with examples of selective and dubious interpretations. Michelle Gonzalez notes:

Scripture is a foundational starting point for so many Christian ideas. However, some of those ideas are not found in the text itself but are interpretations imposed on a given passage in scripture. Also, certain texts are often privileged at the expense of others in order to impose a particular ideology or worldview.
This later reinterpretation and selectivity starts, as Gonzalez observes, with the very first book of Genesis, and continues through to Paul's observations about women in Corinthians and beyond in the 'Household Codes'. So pervasive have these interpretations been that they still exercise an effect on how women, for instance, are viewed by the church. The marked contrast with alternative readings, such as Phyllis Trible's and Francis Watson's, of Genesis and Paul respectively, is itself telling in this regard. Stephen Barton's analysis “Biblical Hermeneutics and the Family” is an excellent and thoughtful survey of the strengths and weaknesses inherent in approaches to Scripture in this particular field of enquiry, as is James Dunn’s careful examination of the ‘Household Codes’ in the same volume. Investigating family theologically is clearly a research area that requires a high order of awareness and care in the understanding, interpretation, and use of biblical texts.

Neil Farragh, a practical theologian from New Zealand, has examined methodology, and particularly the use of Scripture, in formulating new theology. His suggestions include surveying the whole of Scripture, paying attention to the context, genre, writers/editors, and intended readership, considering the influence of the researcher’s own thesis or desired outcome, looking for other responses in the text, and translating across time, culture and context. In my own training as an Anglican minister, I was taught by both John Goldingay and Anthony Thistleton, whose books on theology in the Old Testament and on hermeneutics are among helpful counterweights to

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the risks of misreading, misappropriating, and/or misapplying biblical texts.  

The question of correspondence?

A theological and methodological issue at the heart of this research is whether or not it is admissible, or permissible, to think about Christian anthropology, in this case, human family, in the light of trinitarian theology. In a significant paper delivered at a Conference on the Trinity at Kings College, London, in 1998, Miroslav Volf referred to the bold proposal of the Russian Orthodox theologian, Nicholas Fedorov, over a hundred years previously, that: ‘The dogma of the Trinity is our social program’. Volf contrasted this with Ted Peter’s approach to the question of divine-human correspondence. Peters views attempts, like Fedorov’s, to use the model of a ‘Social Trinity’ as a template for human society, as fundamentally flawed because ‘God alone’ is able to be God, and ‘we as creatures cannot copy God in all respects’. Volf concedes that Fedorov was suffering from the ‘strange malady which afflicts theologians seeking to model society on the Trinity’ in forgetting these crucial differences. In a footnote Volf also expressed caution about the ‘discrepancy between the vast amount of reflection’ on ‘the possibility of positive correspondence between the Triune God and human community’ with ‘the virtual absence’ of thought about ‘the inherent limits of all such correspondences’. Nonetheless, Volf argues, there is some basis for exploring this further. First, because it would ‘be odd to claim that there are no analogues to

31 Also transliterated as Nikolai Fyodorov (1828-1903) and a friend of Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky. Volf does not give the precise citation, relying on Paul Evdokimov. Anastosios Bozikos says this Fedorov’ quotation is cited in Kallistos Ware “The Trinity: Heart of our Life”, 142. “Dancing the Trinity: A Patristic Perspective Today” in Wing and Barns, God Down Under, 12.
32 Volf, "The Trinity Is Our Social Program!", 404.
33 Ibid. Dr Reid believes that Fedorov may have been ‘making a strong polemical statement, similar to F. D. Maurice’s objections to both unchristian Socialists and unsocialist Christians’. (Examiner’s comment).
34 Ibid., 419, n11.
God in creation and yet maintain, as Christian theologians must, that human beings are made in the image of God.\textsuperscript{35} Second, Jesus’ command to ‘be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect’ (Matt 5.48) suggests there is an expectation that Christians should aim to imitate God.\textsuperscript{36} Volf therefore deduces that there might be a middle way between these two extremes:

Between ‘copying God in all respects’ (so seemingly Federov) and ‘not copying God at all’ (so seemingly Peters) lies the widely open space of human responsibility which consists of ‘copying God in some respects’. As I see it, the question is not whether the Trinity should serve as a model for human community; the question is rather in which respects and to what extent it should do so.\textsuperscript{37}

In his following remarks, Volf was referring to the church, but he widens this to include ‘human community’. Volf avers that human community can be ‘modeled on the Trinity’ but subject to two significant limitations:

First, since ontically human beings are manifestly not divine and since noetically human notions of the triune God do not correspond exactly to who the triune God is, the trinitarian concepts such as ‘person’, ‘community’, ‘relation’, or ‘perichoresis’ can be applied to human community only in an analogous rather than a univocal sense. ... Human beings can correspond to the uncreated God only in a creaturely way. ... Second, since the lives of human beings are inescapably marred by sin and saddled with transitoriness, ... human beings can respond to the Triune God only in historically appropriate ways.\textsuperscript{38}

On the basis of the foregoing, Volf came to the significant methodological conclusion that constructing correspondences between God and humanity cannot proceed only from ‘above’, as Volf puts it. Indeed, since:

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{36} Volf also cites I Peter 1.16 and Eph. 4.24 ‘and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.’
\textsuperscript{37} Volf, "The Trinity Is Our Social Program!," 405 (author’s emphasis).
\textsuperscript{38}"The Trinity Is Our Social Program": The Doctrine of the Trinity and Social Ethics," in The Trinity (Kings College, London: Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California, 1998).
The mode and extent of the correspondences are not only determined by the character of the Trinity but also inscribed in the very fabric of social realities themselves, then the conceptual construction must go back and forth on a two-way street, both from above and from below. By describing God in whose image human beings are created and redeemed, the doctrine of the Trinity names the reality which human communities ought to image. By describing human beings as distinct from God, the doctrines of creation and of sin inform the way in which human communities can image the triune God, now in history and then in eternity.39

Thus whilst Federov is unrealistic about human limitation, due, says Volf, to ‘eschatological intoxication’, and Volf is not convinced that the Trinity is a blueprint for a ‘program’ per se, Volf nevertheless affirms that ‘the doctrine of the Trinity ought to shape our “social vision”’.40 Volf is immediately careful to explicate the difference between the economic and immanent Trinity before he proceeds any further, drawing on Yves Congar’s amendment to Rahner’s Rule, namely that ‘the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity only if it is not reversible’.41 This qualification enables Volf to have some concrete basis in the revealed Trinity, whilst neither restricting God’s ultimate freedom and being, nor rendering Volf unable to speak authentically about God. Volf also suggests that the intrinsic and then outflowing, ‘self-donation’, as Volf terms it, of the Trinity, is a pre-requisite for any human approximation of triune characteristics. As he explains:

A plethora of proposals about the relation between the Trinity and human communities … are of limited value because they remain at the level of overly diffuse generalities, say about ‘plurality-in-unity’, the dialectic of ‘one and many’, or the balance between ‘relationality and otherness’. In such proposals the doctrine of the Trinity serves more or less as the ore from which the presumed gold of abstract principles should be extracted and then used to construct images of human community or even of the whole reality. But this makes a misjudgment of what is in

39 Ibid., 405f. I have highlighted the ‘very fabric of social realities’. Ought and can are highlighted by the author.
fact gold. Abstract principles are not pure gold; the narrative life of the Trinity, at whose heart lies the history of self-donation, is pure gold. The talk about ... 'plurality in unity' and 'one and many' will be helpful only if they are 'gilded' by being dipped into the narrative of divine self-donation.⁴²

Volf argued, on the basis of John 10.38, 14.10ff, 17.21, 7.16 & 1.32, that divine triune 'self-donation' means that perichoretic personal 'identity' is not self-enclosed and is non-reducible. Furthermore, he pictures a cycle of intra-divine and simultaneous self-donation that constitutes and enables speech of God as love. This is linked in 1 John 4.7-21 to Christ's mission, and to human response in perpetuating that self-donation in Christlike love for others, which may, adds Volf, involve taking up our own cross in order to follow Christ's example. Thus, whilst Volf sees the 'conceptual construction' of God-human correspondence as both top down and bottom up (and analogically refracted), the origin, initiative, example, and expectation all flow from the triune God. The role of humans is fearlessly and lovingly to pass on 'that which we have received' in our welcome, embrace, and self-giving for others who may have no relation to, or call, on us.

In his paper Volf did not consider, or refer to, human family as part 'of the fabric of social realities,' or indeed as a fundamental constituent of 'human communities'. Nor did he consider the macro scale further theologically. He did indicate that the doctrine of the Trinity could be contemplated for how to structure societies but suggested that the 'road from the doctrine of the Trinity to proposals about global or national social arrangements is 'long, torturous, and fraught with danger'.⁴³ Instead, he concentrated on the ecclesial community. Volf did refer to creation and to 'new creation' but did not develop either of these themes much further. Volf also mentions

⁴² Volf, "'The Trinity Is Our Social Program!'," 412 (my emphases).
⁴³ Ibid., 406. Volf illustrates the difficulty by pointing out that Michael Novak and Leonardo Boff are equally willing to found their entirely different political persuasions on the doctrine of the Trinity, 419ff, n14, citing: Boff, Trinity and Society. Novak, The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism (New York: An American Enterprise Institute, 1982).
Federov’s suggestion of ‘participation’ in the divine life but does not address the reciprocal relationship per se between human beings and God (John 21.15-17, for example), other than reflecting God's glory, which Volf sees as ‘the purity of God’s self-giving love’.44

Volf’s suggestion of human responsibility to pass on God’s intratrinitarian and outflowing self-giving love, whilst by no means exclusive to human family, holds some potential for addressing some of the missing theological content in the family sphere.45 His overall concept can claim some biblical support. It leaves open the question of exploring creation further along the same lines, which in turn begs the question whether human relationships in general, and family relationships in particular, are intended to reflect and to be this image of a circular hypostatic self-giving and therefore loving and overflowing God. Although he raises it, Volf does not return to the subject of analogical predication.

Here, I need to consider Mark Husbands’ attempted rebuttal of Volf’s claims and then Kathryn Tanner’s critique of social Trinitarianism, since she briefly cites Volf’s paper and also specifically considers the dissonance between family relations and the Trinity.

“The Trinity is Not Our Social Program” is the first half of the title of Husband’s article, and also sums up his dismissal of Volf’s position, let alone Federov’s.46 Without laying any foundation,

45 Volf does not specify Christian when he is referring to human communities and human response, but the context of a focus on ecclesial communities suggests that it may in fact be Christians that he is referencing here.
46 Husbands, "The Trinity Is Not Our Social Program." Husband’s title is arguably slightly misleading on several counts. For example, Volf used the Federov quotation, deliberately placed in quotations marks in Volf’s title. He also made it clear that he did not agree with Federov about the use of the word ‘program’ and explains carefully why he would prefer ‘social vision’. Husbands repeats: “Our Social Program” but without quotation marks in the main title and as a subtitle with quotation marks but directly associated with Volf, rather than Federov, on p122. He further states: ‘Volf maintains that the Trinity is our social program, or at least a social program for the church’. I think the main title is also misleading because Husbands only refers twice to Volf’s article of similar name. Out of 58 footnotes, 12
Husbands posits ‘the following basic rule by which to measure the relative value of any given proposal regarding the doctrine of the Trinity’:

A theology that purports to be properly ‘trinitarian’ – and by this I mean consistent with both the biblical witness and Nicene Christianity – must preserve an ontological distinction between God and humanity in order to maintain an order consistent with their distinct natures.47

Husbands argues that LaCugna is guilty of breaking this ‘dogmatic rule’ when she states: ‘Trinitarian life is also our life … To conceive trinitarian life as something only belonging to God, or belonging to God apart from the creature, is to miss the point entirely’.48 Husbands cites Paul Molnar’s critique that LaCugna is courting pantheism and dualism. ‘God is no longer the subject acting towards us and for us within history but becomes little more than our experiences of love and communion’.49

Husbands believes that Volf’s vigilance in moving from the Trinity to humanity is only momentary and thus insufficient. He is not convinced that there is a working example to prove Volf’s case. ‘Where is this concrete human community of dynamic self-giving and love of which you speak so positively?’ Husbands asks.50 He also argues that social trinitarians are engaging in ‘idealist’ and prematurely eschatological accounts which do not factor in the reality of sin, let alone creaturely behaviour, though he appears not to have noticed either Volf’s acknowledgment of the same points, or Volf’s deliberate attempt to address some of them. Husbands’ own introduction of ‘a rule’ that there must be an ontological distinction between God and humanity may or may not be correct. He cannot argue, however, that cite Volf but 10 of those citations are to works of Volf other than the one named in the title.

47 Ibid., 121.
49 Ibid. Molnar, Divine Freedom, 128.
Volf is guilty, by unproven association with LaCugna, in imperiling God’s freedom, but then curtail God’s creative action with a rule of Husbands’ own formulation.

Husbands claims that scripture, Gregory of Nyssa’s *Ad Ablabium*, and Karl Barth all support his argument. I shall examine his case about scripture in Ch. 7. This move to Gregory, Barth and scripture by Husbands, however, is not about Volf’s attempt to reflect theologically on the correspondence between the triune God and humanity. It is about the theological legitimacy of even contemplating a ‘social Trinity’. Effectively, Husbands is arguing that any discussion of correspondence is meaningless so long as the Trinity is construed in a way that he does not believe is correct. Moreover, Husbands is convinced that the controlling theological agenda, not just of Volf, but of all ‘social trinitarians’ is earthly social existence. He continues:

Volf offers us a doctrine of the triune God for which the immediate significance of the Trinity lies principally in being a model for us to imitate rather than being the constitutive ground of our reconciliation and promise of life. Not surprisingly, this emphasis on the perichoretic life and koinonia at the level of creatures is the mainstay of social trinitarianism.51

An appropriately modified version of this charge could have reasonably been leveled at F. D. Maurice, as reviewed in Chps. 1 and 3 above, but I am not sure that it fairly applies either to Volf’s intention, or indeed to the actual content of his paper.52 It does, though, point to the sensitivities in this area and by extension the concern about any mention of human family and the Trinity together, particularly since I am deliberately exploring a trinitarian theology at ‘a creaturely level’.

Kathryn Tanner has also taken aim at social trinitarianism and cited (sighted) Volf in the crosshairs, along with Zizioulas, Moltmann, Boff and LaCugna. She too harbours reservations about the elevation of

51 Ibid., 126.
52 Please see Ch.1, 97-99 and Ch.3,197-202.
the social Trinity because of its presumed utility, socially and politically. She is not convinced that it is actually sufficient for the task. Tanner queries the ‘inflated claims for the Trinity’ and whether the ‘perichoretic relations’, which she identifies as the key element, can perform the ‘heavy lifting’ required. Like Volf, she notes that ‘figuring out the socio-political lessons of the Trinity is a fraught task, full of complexities and perils’. For example, she believes that on the social front it leads to ‘a very strong communitarianism’, whilst the ‘fixed roles’ of the Trinity and apparent economic subordination and overall hierarchy give conflicting messages, not to mention the complex gender imagery. Tanner is less than impressed with Hilary of Poitiers’ ‘gender bending’ imagery of a Father’s womb, or of a general tendency towards gender complementarity. In short, she concludes that ‘Trinitarianism can be every bit as socially and politically dangerous as monotheism. Everything depends on how that Trinitarianism (or monotheism) is understood and applied’.

Tanner states:

No matter how close the similarities between human and divine persons, differences always remain – God is not us – and this sets up the major problem for theologies that want to base conclusions about human relationships on the Trinity. The chief complication is how to move from a discussion of God to human relationships, given those differences. How exactly, in short, does a description of the Trinity apply to us?

Tanner argues that there are three further specific problems. First, the use of ‘ordinary language’ to describe the Trinity does not assist meaning, citing the terms ‘person’ and ‘begetting’. Second, the

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54 Ibid., 370f.
55 Ibid., 372.
57 Tanner, "Social Trinitarianism and Its Critics," 373-75.
58 Ibid., 378.
59 Ibid. Tanner refers to Augustine (see Ch. 1, 43) and to Hilary: ‘Begetting is the secret of the Father and the Son. If anyone is convinced of the weakness of his
sheer difference between divine and human. Tanner thinks that human ‘finitude’ prevents mutual indwelling, or Augustinian acting in concert. She believes that the human hypostasis precedes relationship and notes that character is both independent of relationships and varies according to different relationships, all attributes she sees as differing from the divine triune depiction. Nor are there any role changes, the Father remains the Father and the Son the Son. Personal boundaries are not imperiled by the action of another or indeed their breaking relationship. Tanner sees humans incurring loss by giving to others but divine persons maintaining equilibrium through receiving as much as giving. Third, further echoing Volf at this point, she highlights the disjunction between the perfect loving mutuality of God and the conflict, sin and suffering of humanity. She sums up that ‘the Trinity might tell us what human relations should ideally be like’ whilst ‘the understanding of humans as creatures and sinners’ informs how far we might approximate to this. 60 Her conclusion is as follows:

The Trinity fails to do any work. It does not add anything to what we already know about the real possibilities for human community, given the human limits and failings we live under. 61

Tanner then turns to the economic Trinity to see if there is any assistance to be gained there. She argues that Jesus Christ’s exemplary behaviour does provide a pattern for how we as humans may relate to God. With the one exception of the narration of relationships between the members of the Trinity, Tanner claims that ‘Jesus’ relations with the Father and Spirit do not appear in any obvious way to be the model for His relations with other human beings in the story’. 62 Instead, Tanner argues, the work of the Son and the Spirit is to establish one united and diverse body – the Church. She concedes that John 17 does picture a human unity based on the Father and the Son but argues that it can
equally be read that the basis of this Christian unity with God the Father is through God the Son.

This synoptic of Volf, Husbands and Tanner presents a conflicting and conflicted picture about the potential for developing a viable trinitarian theology of human family based on correspondence with the Triune God. Volf is cautiously hopeful in principle, but has not considered human family at all, Husbands is entirely dismissive and Tanner has some convincing reasons at to why she remains unconvinced, and some distinct caveats to consider before proceeding beyond this point.

Karen Kilby, quoted earlier, takes Tanner on even further arguing that there is indeed a pattern of projection built into these arguments. I quote at length, as this is highly relevant:

Because the Trinity is obscure – because we do not know how to understand how the three can be one – the social Trinitarian perfectly reasonably draws on those things that to some degree bind people together in our experience – love, empathy, mutual giving – and proposes that perhaps it is like this in the Trinity, only unimaginably more so. We must add this last proviso, this ‘unimaginably more so,’ since three human persons, however much in accord and empathy they may be, remain three, while the three divine persons are one. But then, in a second movement, what was first put forward to overcome a difficulty – some concept of love, relatedness, empathy, self-gift – is itself offered as the basis for a social and political program: we can learn from the wonders of trinitarian community how best to structure human communities. So we first project our best ideas about human community onto the Trinity, and then claim to have discovered in the Trinity a new map for structuring human communities.

Summary of the foregoing debate about correspondence

Kilby, like Husbands and Tanner, is right to harbour doubts about any inappropriate theological, and methodologically
questionable, misuse of trinitarian theology. I have already partially attempted in Ch.5 to counter Kilby's concern about anthropomorphic projection. In Chs.7 and 8 I will be putting a case for a trinitarian approach to family, human being, and ecclesiology, that I believe will address a number of Tanner and Kilby's reservations, along the lines that Volf was proposing. Before I do so, however, it is appropriate to conclude this Methods chapter with Jordan Wessling’s paper considering divine-human correspondence through the specific lens of 'love', that Volf also touched on. I will then cite Alan Torrance’s related take on language use in theo-logy, and James Danaher’s discussion of a postmodern correspondence theory of truth.

**Wessling on the univocity of love**

In Gunton's last book, he observed that 'Divine love is a pattern for human love, because it is precisely the same kind of attitude and action'.\(^{65}\) Jordan Wessling was intrigued by this statement and by Trevor Hart’s contrary argument that not only is love abstruse but, in making Gunton’s claim, God’s transcendence is denied, or human beings are deified, by the use of a common descriptive category.\(^{66}\) Gunton had pointed to 1 John 4.11 and a working univocal definition of love, as: ‘doing and being for the other what the other needs’. If so, said Gunton, ‘God’s love and ours are precisely the same kind of action, always given that God does not fail in love while we do’.\(^{67}\) The stress on attitude and action is important but I will save that for the next two chapters and here stay with Wessling’s contribution.

Wessling noted that if Gunton was correct then ‘contra Hart ... we have excellent theological grounds for relying on univocity in the


\(^{67}\) Gunton, *Act and Being: Towards a Theology of the Divine Attributes*, 70.
formulation of a theology of divine love’. Wessling’s primary interest is in the ‘propositional content’ of this claim. ‘Univocal predication is the doctrine that the concepts embedded in a predicate share the same meaning or sense when applied to God and creature’. This entails significant repercussions for the methodological approach of this thesis, since it suggests, with Volf, that there is biblical warrant for thinking about aspects of anthropology in the light of theology, under certain conditions.

Wessling turned his attention to John 15.9-12 in order to examine three major forms of theological predication: univocity, equivocity and analogy. By contrast with univocity, equivocity holds that there are no common predicates or attributes, whilst analogical predication allows for a position somewhere between the other two. In Jesus’s command that the disciples love one another, ‘as the Father has loved me’, Wessling argues that ‘a tight link’ is made ‘between intra-Trinitarian and human exemplifications of love’. If this link was only equivocal predication it would make no sense; the disciples would not be able to know what exactly was being required of them. Whilst if the link was analogical, that would introduce a difference in the kind of love being referred to that Wessling believes is not reflected in the exegetical sense of this passage. Wessling suggests that John 17.26 supports this argument for ‘a univocalist reading of Jesus’ use of ‘love’ in John 15.9-12’. I have not had sufficient space to detail his additional argument about partial and pure univocity. Overall, Wessling found

69 Ibid., 94.
70 It is interesting to note, of course, that analogy is an historical by-product of substance ontology: see “Analogy in Theology” in Geddes MacGregor, Dictionary of Religion and Philosophy (New York: Paragon House, 1989), 94-96. The author of the article, Frederick Ferré, makes it clear that the controlling rationale for analogy is the ‘Hellenistic assumption’ that ‘the Highest Being’ is taken to be entirely simple, immutable, and thus essentially beyond our fragmentary concepts, but at the same time, to be the supreme source of all intelligibility and, consequently, the one supremely knowable reality’. (p94). Cf. Jenson, The Triune Identity, 60.
72 Ibid., 104.
resoundingly in favour of Gunton's contention that the love predicated of both the Triune God and of human beings was 'precisely the same kind of attitude and action'.

The analogical language qualification of Alan Torrance

At the end of his book *Persons in Communion: Trinitarian Description and Human Participation*, and after a long analysis of Karl Barth's methodological approach, Alan Torrance comes to a dense and highly qualified conclusion about the use of language in divine and human descriptions, and about the theological debate over divine-human correspondence, from a trinitarian perspective. It was this theme of language conceptuality that Gunton, Wessling and Hart were grappling with above, and of correspondence that Volf, Husbands and Tanner were deliberating. I am quoting a relevant section of Torrance's argument in full because of its careful complexity.

The semantic dimension ... *may* be described in terms of an 'analogy of being', if this is carefully understood, in so far as we have in this 'hinge' of communion between the divine and the human a real and given event of *communion* between the divine and human orders. To the extent that created reality requires to be interpreted in the light of this communion – and not the other way around – we may speak of an 'analogy of being', of real participation of created and contingent humanity in the triune life of God. This constitutes a *'koinonial'* and thus *'ontological'* *ekstasis* involving an analogical extension of our conceptualities in the reconciling 'integration' of the human with the divine mediated by the *enhypostasis* of the Logos. In and through affirming that this is *sola gratia*, it is also appropriate to affirm here, with Zizioulas, that there is an identification of being and communion that is to be found in that triune event of epistemic communion (revelation) and semantic participation between humanity and God which takes place in Christ and in which humanity is given to share by the Spirit as the body of Christ.

This analogical function of human semantics demands a dynamic, participatory and theological interpretation of being (*ens*). *Analogein* is contingent on the free dynamic of divine creativity and remains, therefore, a 'possibility' affirmed *a posteriori*. We do not have here an *analogia entis* affirmed *a priori* with recourse to a metaphysic of being. It speaks of a
commandeering integration of our semantic rules of use and the sets of family resemblances that constitute the meaning of our terminology en Christo. As such, the analogia entis requires to be conceived in eschatological terms in that it is only in the eschaton that human participation (as this includes semantic participation) is complete – where God will be all in all.

In the light of this it is clear that we cannot endorse any suggestion that the language-games and semantic rules associated with our logoi may 'naturally' circumscribe the cognitive reference or Inhalt of our ‘attempts to speak of God’. Our language only becomes ‘God-talk’ (Theos-talk) given the creation and redefinition of our language games instituted in and through the Word and which take place within the ecclesial community as the reconciled Body of the Word.73

What Torrance is doing is drawing attention to the verity that language use in theology (God-talk) needs to be watched very carefully indeed, from both methodological and theological points of view, in order to prevent the danger of curtailing God with human semantic conceptualities. The direction of the analogy is from God to human beings and not vice versa. Torrance’s mention of ‘family resemblance’ is an allusion to Wittgenstein’s description and not to the subject of this thesis. The very fact that Wittgenstein used this depiction, however, out of all the possible descriptors, only serves to emphasize that in this area of theology and family, perhaps more than any other, extreme caution needs to be exercised.

The other emphases Torrance is making are the central role of the second person of the Trinity in mediating between the divine and human, our human participation with God in and through Christ, and the Christian belief that genuine likeness to and communion with God will be fully achieved in the eschaton.74 Overall, Torrance argues for a ‘dynamic, participatory and theological interpretation of being’. It is precisely this that I will be outlining in the following two chapters.

73 Torrance, Persons in Communion, 356-57 (author’s emphases and italicisation).
74 Torrance carefully qualifies ‘participation’ as koinonia and not as Platonic methexis (‘the participation of the particulars in the eternal Forms), although he suggests that methexein is used for koinonia in Heb. 11.3. Ibid., 356, n104.
James Danaher and a postmodern correspondence theory of truth

As Sarah Coakley points out, postmodernism is ‘closely related’ to non-foundationalism, which ‘denies the possibility of identifying universal epistemological criteria that could form the basis (“foundation”) for all other claims to truth’.75 The American philosopher, James Danaher, investigated the postmodern claims that conceptualisations and accompanying language are ‘perspectival’, likening them to Einstein’s theory of the relativity of simultaneity.76 This is in stark contrast to the ‘Aristotelian medievals’ who ‘believed that we had a god-given ability to abstract essences and thus form concepts from what is given in the brute facts of experience’.77 This would help account for some of the views of Aquinas, Luther and Calvin, for example.

Danaher argues that there is still ‘a place for correspondence as a criterion for truth’, but, he says, it will have to be to ‘another person or persons, and not to objective reality’.78 He observes that Christians are the ones who most appear upset about the loss of ‘an objective and independent reality’.79 Yet, Danaher believes, they should in fact notice that any such reality would be idolatrous, and be ‘among the most receptive’ to understanding that correspondence must be based on God. Thus John 14.6 “I am the … truth’ can ‘be taken quite literally’.80 Consequently, ‘for the Christian, truth should be found in correspondence between our concepts and God’s concepts, and not a correspondence between our concepts and objective reality’.81

75 Coakley, God, Sexuality and the Self, 31.
77 Ibid., 57. He quotes ‘veritas est adaequatio rei et intellectus’ – ‘truth exists as a correspondence between things and our ideas of them’. (Ibid., 55)
78 Ibid., 59.
79 Ibid.
80 Ibid.
81 Ibid.
The corollary of Danaher's argument is not that there 'is no ultimate reality', or that whatever is chosen 'as a basis for ... correspondence is as good as any other'. Instead, human beings actually have freedom to choose. Whilst that freedom is heavily influenced by cultural conceptions and peer influence, for 'the Christian, ultimate truth is found in a correspondence, not to an ever larger group of people, but to one other person, namely God'.82 I might wish to qualify this with reference to the Triune God, but Danaher’s following comment is equally applicable:

Of course, much of God's conceptual understanding is not immediately accessible to human beings, and we are naturally estranged from the very person to whom we desire to have our concepts correspond in order to be true. But to say that we do not know God's intentional meaning is not to say that there is no meaning, or that we are not able to overcome our natural estrangement from such meaning. Fortunately, two things allow us to establish correspondence to God's conceptual understanding. The first is the postmodern insight that has made us aware of the fact that we are not naturally equipped with adequate, god-given concepts. The second is the belief that the Scripture is God inspired and therefore a means by which God can set forth instances which serve as extensions of His concepts in order to communicate them to us.83

Conclusion

It is this combination of Torrance and Danaher's theo-centric and ontological quest, evidenced by careful reference to Scripture and Schwöbel’s systematic theological criteria, that undergird the methodology for the constructive second half of this thesis. This quest needs to be mindful of Volf’s, Tanner’s and Kilby’s qualifications and reservations, but is also informed by the known difficulties and disadvantages of substance ontology and Western individualism.

82 Danaher, "Toward a Postmodern Correspondence Theory of Truth," 61.
83 Ibid.
Last but by no means least: phrasing findings in the ‘subjunctive’

Anderson and Guernsey, in their groundbreaking book on the family, noted:

The supposed ‘answers’ we bring should be couched in the subjunctive rather than the indicative. Until then we should admit to our audiences that there are as many questions as there are answers in our teaching.84

Anderson and Guernsey were actually referring to the danger of ‘cultural encapsulation’ creeping into much of the Christian literature on the family that they had surveyed.85 Nevertheless, their observation that theologians need to be careful about the degree of prescription, when there could be flaws in the veracity and reliability of their methodology, data and conclusions, is a salutary one. This is good advice generally. It is particularly applicable when addressing the identical ideologically and emotively powerful research foci they were examining, namely theology and human family, and when advancing a different and untested theological approach, as I am about to do.

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85 They honestly included their own previous work in that category, as mentioned in Ch.1, 88.
Chapter 7

Constructing a Trinitarian Theology of ‘Family’

Setting the scene and beginning to define some crucial terms

I am drawing on Najib Awad’s latest book *Persons in Relation: An Essay on the Trinity and Ontology*. Awad was Colin Gunton’s last doctoral student before Gunton’s unexpected death and is now Associate Professor of Theology at Hertford University, Connecticut. I have selected this work because Awad’s book is one of the latest contributions on the Trinity, published in May 2014, as well as an explicit ‘case study ... on the relationships between Trinitarian theology and the main hermeneutical trends regarding “self,” “personhood,” “relationships,” and “otherness”.’ Moreover, he is seeking to examine:

The contemporarily developed Christian understanding of the triune God and its ambition of making an impact on, and becoming a referential criterion for, understanding human existence and nature in today’s context.¹

Najib Awad concludes that:

In the triune being of God, we have personal subjective being and relational, reciprocal existence side by side without contradiction, confusion, or conflict. God is three self-distinct persons who exist together and are united to each other by means of a mutual openness and interrelationality. They are relational persons who act and interact reciprocally with each other and with the human. In the triune God, both “person” and “relation” are original and foundational. Neither is exhaustive of the other, nor is subordinate to or produced as the sum total of the other.²

² Ibid., 288.
The Godhead, in Awad’s synopsis, therefore appears to be not just binary or dialectical, but triune and communal, both concurrently and, as I will seek to show, with outgoing and consequential effects. In Awad’s conclusion the construction and operation of the Trinity differs markedly from that of Platonic substance ontology. Instead, the Trinity exemplifies the coincidental and simultaneous ontological significance of (i) identifiable individual ‘persons’, and (ii) the relationships between them, and (iii) the divine community as a whole. Please note that each of these facets (i) to (iii) is important, whilst the interwoven and mutually contributory nature of all these facets together is equally significant. Awad’s description above further reminds that, in respect of the Triune God, these facets operate outside of time or place, but can also Chalcedonically bridge to the creaturely human and temporal sphere.

As previously noted, Basil, or probably rather Gregory of Nyssa, described the Triune God as ‘united separation and separated unity’. Classical and contemporary trinitarian theology has also employed the Greek terms ‘hypostasis’, ‘ekstasis’, and ‘perichoresis’, as a way of articulating the trinitarian dynamic, which reflect each of the three facets (i) – (iii) referred to above. While hypostasis, perichoresis and ekstasis are terms we have met already in the history of trinitarian theology, it is at this point that I will pick them up as key elements for a Trinitarian theology for the family. In defining them now, I am retrieving what has already been said about them, in order to be clear how they will be constructive in this regard. These terms are not familiar to non-theologians. It is therefore necessary to explain them. I begin to outline them all in this section and them unpack each in successive sections.

‘Hypostasis’ can be thought of as ‘personhood’, ‘person’, or ‘character’: the essential, irreducible, inalienable and unique

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3 See Ch.1, 31.
individuality of a person. In a human frame of reference it is somewhere between personality and personhood. The dictionary defines the former as: ‘the distinctive character or qualities of a person, often as distinct from others’, and the latter as: ‘the quality or condition of being an individual person’. It is essential to distinguish and distance ‘hypostasis’ from the justifiable concerns that contemporary Western conceptions of ‘person’ have imported excessive notions of individualism and independence into the term. As I reviewed earlier, this importation is contrary to theological understanding, and due again, in part, to the unintended consequence of trinitarian mis-steps.

It would be fair to say that of these three terms ‘ekstasis’ has been the least used, although I have cited references to this in Richard St. Victor, Rahner, Alan Torrance and Zizioulas. Whilst its roots date back to before the fourth century its theological use appears to have been relatively limited. ‘Ekstasis’ is an attitude, a being, and actions, of self-donation and genuine other-awareness and other-orientation that is mindful of, appreciates, goes out and responds to the other. It literally means ‘from being’. In this sense it is ‘extra-self’, unselfish, self-sacrificing. As other-person-oriented, in anthropological terms, it comprises observation, communication, nurture, attention, affirmation, praise, love, listening, care, obedience, desire for the best for the other, and indeed desire for the good of the community, or koinonia (communion), as a whole. I have struggled to come up with a more familiar and accurate term that quite encapsulates ekstasis. Indeed, it is a notable failing, quite possibly connected to the absence of trinitarian theology, that such a word does not exist in the English language. Unselfish is close but not as positive as ekstasis. ‘Unselving’ is another recent term but like ‘unselfish’ it equally does not quite convey the

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more positive sense of the deliberate desire to do good to, and for, the Other.5

‘Perichoresis’ is sometimes translated literally as ‘to dance around’ but Julian of Norwich’s concept of ‘oneing’ or ‘knitting’ is probably the closest approximation. Emmanuel Durand explicates trinitarian perichoresis as the ‘mutual immanence’ and ‘reciprocity’ between ‘the Father and Christ ... extended to refer to the three divine Persons’.6 It conveys koinonia (actual community, communion, or the slightly out-dated word ‘fellowship’) and comprises company, teamwork and perfect communication. At heart it is the dynamic, whilst settled and truly peaceful, purposeful joy of harmonious and co-operative relationship, and of mutual personal affirmation, as part of that koinonia.

These terms, ‘hypostasis’, ‘ekstasis’, and ‘perichoresis’, and the ideas and processes that they represent, I contend, provide significant keys to thinking about the evidence we have of the revealed Triune God. In turn, they suggest a rather different way of conceiving theological anthropology and ‘family’. These terms are not new to theology. In the case of hypostasis and perichoresis their theological use dates back at least to the third and fourth centuries.

Furthermore, I am arguing that these three ways of understanding what has been revealed about the Triune God are non-reducible and non-separable. In other words, to major on one or other to the diminishment or disappearance of another leads to theological and anthropological difficulties. This would run the danger of

5 See p.85. ‘Self-sacrifice’ is used in Christian circles. Feminist theologians have critiqued the use of this expression arguing that it might be appropriate for men but it is not so appropriate for women because it plays on their guilt and culturally gendered sense of responsibility for the welfare of others rather than themselves. Sarah Coakley, “Why Gift? Gift, Gender and Trinitarian Relations in Milbank and Tanner,” Scottish Journal of Theology 61, no. 2 (2008): 231.
perpetuating, or rather creating, a new set of trinitarian theological mis-steps.

I am immediately conscious of Karen Kilby’s concerns.\(^7\) Building on Kathryn Tanner’s critique, Kilby (as mentioned in the last chapter) is deeply and properly suspicious that ‘social Trinitarians’, in her view, know, or think they know, more than they actually do, or have any right to know.\(^8\) She argues that if there are such divergent views about the Trinity, how is it possible to have a single ‘map’, or ‘description of God’ that can be ‘put to use in other areas’? Pertinently, at this precise juncture, she believes that modern theological ‘volubility’ on this subject is rooted more in ‘the speculative possibilities; of the traditional language – (she specifically refers to ‘perichoresis’ and ‘person’) – than in re-immersion in Scripture’.\(^9\) She adds, perceptively:

There is something odd in settling on a very specific language precisely because of the authority invested in it by its usage in the tradition, and then deploying the language in a way unimagined by and at odds with this same tradition. It can seem not so much a development of the tradition as a misunderstanding of it.\(^10\)

It is clearly necessary to address Kilby’s concerns. Her critique is not a new one. Moltmann, for example, cites Gregory of Nyssa as follows: ‘Concepts create idols, only wonder grasps anything.’ Moltmann similarly wishes to establish that it is God who defines theological concepts, rather than what Moltmann calls ‘subsuming generic terms being used in the doctrine of the Trinity’.\(^11\) This, you will

\(^7\) Kilby, "Trinity, Tradition, and Politics," 73-86.

\(^8\) See Ch.6, 302-03. ‘What is fundamentally troubling about much contemporary trinitarian theology, then, is that many seem to have a concept of God in a way that it seems to me we have no business having a concept of God. A form of idolatry, out of step with the mystery and transcendence of God, out of tune with a God whose ways are beyond our ways and thoughts above our thoughts. Whose I am who I am is to be revered not pronounced and the ungraspable quality of Jesus in the gospels and elusiveness of the Holy Spirit’. Ibid., 81.

\(^9\) Ibid., 77.

\(^10\) Ibid.

\(^11\) Moltmann, History and the Triune God, 89.
recall, was also the proper theological approach taken by Athanasius.\textsuperscript{12} Moltmann continues:

In the life of the immanent Trinity everything is unique. Only because everything is unique in the triune God himself can it be recognised as original and prototypical for others in the ways and works of God. In the doctrine of the immanent Trinity we may basically only narrate, and not subsume. We have to remain concrete, since, as history shows, heresies lurk in abstractions. By contrast, the foundation of orthodoxy lies in narrative differentiation. Understanding and narrating are reciprocally related and so lead to understanding. Here a distinction has to be made between historical contingency in trinitarian history, which makes the narration necessary, the contingency of origin in the Trinity itself, which compels praise.\textsuperscript{13}

In other words, the use of the expressions 'hypostasis', 'ekstasis' and 'perichoresis', is not, or should not be, intended to delimit the Triune God by concepts of our human construction. Instead, it should be the other way around, as Athanasius argued. It is the Triune God who defines these concepts. In the case of hypostasis and perichoresis these terms were the best available at the time, or indeed now, to describe God according to the revelation of scripture. They were not intended to replace the evidence of scripture, contrary to Kilby’s view, rather to attempt to explain it, and remain as poor as any human language and conceptualisation about God.\textsuperscript{14} In regard to 'ekstasis' it is not clear that this term has been ‘invested with authority by the tradition’ but it is a potentially helpful way of describing the evidence. What I am doing is simply taking these existing terms and concepts and arguing for their heuristic value and the importance of keeping them together: mutually appraising, balancing, and complementing each other. The proof for this particular theological and ontological approach can be discerned by its fruitfulness as it applies both to trinitarian theology and to a theology of family, as well as to theological anthropology and ecclesiology.

\textsuperscript{12} Kilby, "Trinity, Tradition, and Politics," 73-86. See Ch.1, 228.
\textsuperscript{13} Moltmann, History and the Triune God, 89.
\textsuperscript{14} I am indebted to my Supervisor, Dr Heather Thomson, for this observation, and for most of the remainder of this paragraph, except the debate about descriptive language use at the end.
I had intended translating these terms back into more familiar language during the last chapter but I have eventually decided to stick with them. The difficulty of their communicative unfamiliarity is less problematic than either the risk of their distinctiveness and dynamic functions being elided by using more familiar terms (such as ‘person), or the inability to find a wholly appropriate single word alternative for ‘ekstasis’, let alone ‘perichoresis’.  

**Unpacking the implications for theological anthropology**

**Hypostasis**

A tenet of relational trinitarian theology is that the economic Godhead comprises at least two and quite possibly three ‘persons’ in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Whilst the theological arguments continue as to whether these persons can be conceived of in terms of individual will and consciousness, and whether the Holy Spirit constitutes a third person as such, close attention to the New Testament accounts tend towards regarding the Godhead as comprised of three *hypostases*, yet so closely aligned that God may properly be thought of as one: wholly and completely united. Each person, or *hypostasis*, is distinctive from the other two. The Father is not the Son, or the Holy Spirit, and so on for each person. These *hypostases* appear to communicate with one another, collaborate between them and undertake differing tasks, yet together constitute such a special and unbreakable and unwavering bond that it effectively defines not only

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16 Vladimir Lossky points out that *hypostasis* has two meanings. It can simply mean ‘existence’ (*hyparxis*) and share this in common with *ousia*. It can also designate ‘what exists by itself’ and is so constituted. Lossky uses the examples of Peter and Paul, and ‘a particular horse’. Vladimir Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, trans. A. M. Allchin (London: Mowbrays, 1975), 114.
God, but what constancy, trust and love are. I shall examine the disputed question of the Holy Spirit shortly.

The existence of distinctive and different *hypostases* in the Godhead is important. As McFarland puts it:

The trinitarian controversy of the fourth century led Christians to the conclusion that the concept of person was primary. Father, Son and Spirit were not names for variations or modes of some primordial divine essence, but were in fact constitutive of that essence. It is therefore not owing to the properties of an impersonal (or prepersonal) divine nature that God is God: rather, God's divinity is a function of the relationships between the three persons.¹⁷

Theological anthropology, on this *trinitarian* basis would find that each human person is unique, different and important, regardless of age, sex, social status and ethnicity. This accords with biblical passages such as Ps. 139, Matt. 10.30, Luke 15.1-7, and the many references to calling people by distinguishing names.

Among the quotations from Awad above, he stated that ‘in the triune God, both “person” and “relation” are original and foundational’. In an important article, “Should we say that Personhood is Relational?” Harriet Harris took Alisdair McFadyen, Elaine Graham, and Vincent Brümmer to task for overstating the importance of relationship to the point where the *hypostasis*, or person, no longer appeared to exist.¹⁸ For example, McFadyen notably describes personhood as ‘the sedimentation of personal relations’.¹⁹ Similarly, Brümmer claims that personhood is a relational concept. Thus to be a person only occurs in relation to other persons.²⁰ Harris concedes that McFadyen and the other authors were affirming something of importance in our

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¹⁸ Harris, “Should We Say That Personhood Is Relational?."
¹⁹ McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood*, passim. McFadyen explicitly refers to the Trinity along similar lines. Ibid. 40.
understanding of ‘person’, particularly about relations with others influencing personhood, a sense of oneself as a person and self-esteem. Nevertheless, she felt these authors had gone too far in this direction. She wondered: ‘between what are the relationships formed’ out of which persons come into being. Harris argued that weighing up ‘person’ and ‘relation’ meant being careful about the clarity of concepts. She recognised that this crucially affects our understanding of human ontology.

Moltmann addresses this concern in respect of the persons and relationship between the Father and the Son, as follows:

Person and relation are to be understood as being complementary, because personality and relationality come into being at the same time. Person and relation are equally original. That means that Abba, the Father of Jesus Christ, is the Father of this Son. His Fatherhood in respect of the Son constitutes his person. His person as Father is determined by this unique relationship to the Son (the only-begotten Son). One cannot either say that God in himself is Father and that he only ‘manifests’ himself as such in respect of the Son, as some Orthodox theologians are inclined to assume, or that his person is none other than this relationship, as is occasionally said in scholastic theology. What distinguishes the Father from a Fatherhood is the same as what distinguishes a concrete being from a mode of being. One can address a father (pater) but not a fatherhood (paternitas). So the person does not precede the relationship, nor does the relationship precede the person. Both come into being at the same time, and therefore neither reduction nor subsuming are allowed.

Najib Awad points out that if the person were mere relations, it in fact denies the reciprocal relationship between them, as well the concept of interpersonal relation. Following Moltmann, Awad argues ‘the balanced way of looking at “person” and “relation” ... is maintained by maintaining the genetic connection between them, rather than total identification’. Awad similarly quotes Moltmann as concluding that

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21 Harris, "Should We Say That Personhood Is Relational?," 224ff (my emphasis).
22 Ibid.
23 Moltmann, History and the Triune God, 85.
24 Awad, Persons in Relation, 272.
we need to rethink “person” and “relation” together as two distinct concepts in order to show God’s dynamic and active nature.’ Kasper also argues that the ‘relational reality of God … presupposes distinct relational realities’.

Harris, Moltmann and Awad’s observations raise interesting questions about the hypostatisation of the Holy Spirit. Augustine famously argued that the Holy Spirit is the relationship of love between the Father and the Son, a point that Richard St. Victor challenged, as I outlined in Ch.5. Awad, along with a number of other theologians, takes Richard St. Victor’s position. Norman Metzler’s paper correctly argues that in the hypostatization of the Holy Spirit lies the key to understanding whether the Trinity is indeed social. Contrary to Metzler, who is not convinced of the Spirit’s separate existence and therefore about the social Trinity, the Biblical evidence arguably does point to agency and subjectivity on the part of the Holy Spirit that distinguishes the third ‘person’ of the Godhead as more than Augustine’s vinculum amoris. The reason that this is of interest, in respect of theological anthropology, is precisely because it infers there might be a third hypostasis or person in the Godhead, what Coakley refers to as God’s ‘irreducible threeness’. Why this is important may be seen in the seminal work of Martin Buber. Buber realised the significance of the mutually constitutive dyadic interaction between an

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27 Metzler, “The Trinity in Contemporary Theology.”
29 Lossky, for example, refers to Genesis’ ‘let us create man in our image and likeness’ as the Council of the Three Hypostases’. Lossky, In the Image and Likeness of God, 123. Coakley, "Is There a Future for Gender and Theology? ," 10.
‘I’ and a ‘Thou’ for what it means to be human beings, along the lines of Moltmann’s discussion of the Father and the Son above.\(^{30}\) Trinitarian theological anthropology, however, introduces a further transforming extension to this concept. It suggests that the relationship between A and B is also of significance and potentially constitutive to C, and so on, as is the entire relationship of A, B and C together.\(^{31}\) (The number in the Triune Godhead is indicative and permissive rather than prescriptive in respect of theological anthropology. In other words, having a Trinity of persons in the Godhead does not constrict human relationships and community to three persons. It simply indicates the possibility, beyond two, of three, or indeed more). A trinitarian theological anthropology thus comprises more than binary relationships, a point that Coakley also goes on to make in her paper on gender and theology.\(^{32}\)

There is a considerable body of evidence, from an anthropological perspective, that the significance of relationships extends beyond the immediate participants in a particular dyad.\(^{33}\) For example, from my social work experience with children, I have frequently been struck by how often and how much children are affected by disagreements, arguments, and worse, between their parents.\(^{34}\) They frequently internalize these conflicts and believe that they are responsible for them.\(^{35}\) Nor is this knock-on effect found solely

\(^{30}\) Buber, I and Thou., 55 and Ch. 4.  
\(^{31}\) See also Pannenberg, Systematic Theology, 1, 429f.; Coakley, God, Sexuality and the Self, 56f; "Is There a Future for Gender and Theology?," 10, and Emmanuel Durand “Perichoresis: A Key Concept for Balancing Trinitarian Theology” in Robert J. Woźniak and Giulio Maspero, eds., Rethinking Trinitarian Theology (London: T & T Clark, 2012), 181ff. Please see Ch.1, 59-60.  
\(^{32}\) “Is There a Future for Gender and Theology?.”  
\(^{33}\) See Ch.1, 59-60, n.164 & 165.  
\(^{35}\) Dora Black notes research from Pynoos and Eth that post-traumatic stress disorder was recorded in 80% of ‘the uninjured child witnesses’ to domestic violence. Black noted that ‘post traumatic stress disorder is usually more severe and longer lasting if the stress is related to the actions of one person or a group of people against another and is more likely in uninjured witnesses than in injured abused children’. Dora Black, "Parents Who Have Killed Their Partner," in
in relation to parents. A parent or partner, or indeed another child in a family, can be distressed about the poor relationship between two other parties in a relationship, such as a parent and a child, or between other siblings. The opposite also holds true. Children growing up in homes where parents are genuinely supportive and loving towards one another find this is also of considerable value to the child’s own sense of self, security and wellbeing.

Andrew Root has similarly reflected, from a theological anthropological perspective, on the effect of the divorce of parents on their children. Coincidentally, both his and his fiancée’s parents divorced shortly before the author’s own marriage. In his book *The Children of Divorce: The Loss of Family as the Loss of Being*, Root notes that this is an ontological issue since ‘divorce is not just the end of a marriage, but the end of a child’s community of being, which forces her to live between two worlds’. 36 In effect, it is the child who ends up having to do the work of the parents in bringing these two worlds together, says Root. He goes on to contrast this loss of self, and even a loss of reality, with the Godhead where:

> Relationship constitutes reality; it is relationship that leads to being (not the other way around). We find our being in being with others. Just as God is God in being three-in-one, so we are when we are in relational community.37

I might critique this extract from Root on the grounds that he is in danger of falling into the trap Harriet Harris has pointed out of seemingly evacuating the individual *hypostasis* of significance.


36 Root, *The Children of Divorce: The Loss of Family as the Loss of Being*, 83 (my emphasis).

Nevertheless, his observation about the impact of divorce on the child’s identity, or hypostasis, and their ekstatic concern for the parent’s relationship, and for the family’s perichoresis, does appear to bear out his appeal to trinitarian theology, and to this thesis.

**Ekstasis**

Of the three: hypostasis, perichoresis and ekstasis, ekstasis is the one that has received least attention in Western theology to the extent that discrete reference to it is almost totally lacking in Encyclopaedias and Dictionaries of Theology. There is no mention in the John Bowden edited *Encyclopaedia of Christianity, The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, or The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Modern Christian Thought*. The aforementioned *Encyclopaedia of Christianity* specifically lists ‘hypostasis’, ‘ousia’, ‘person’, ‘physis’, ‘prosopon’, and ‘substantia’, and a number of other Trinitarian terms, but not ekstasis.  

The Eerdmans/Brill *Encyclopaedia of Christianity* briefly refers to ekstasis as ‘outside of ourselves’ but the article is primarily about ecstasy as in ‘leaving the normal bodily state, or trance-like’. Liddell and Scott’s Greek-English Lexicon has a number of meanings for ekstasis, including ‘displacement’, ‘movement outwards’, ‘differentiation’, ‘standing aside’, distraction of mind’, ‘entrancement’ and ‘drunken excitement’. It is more the sense of ‘movement outwards’ than ‘trance-like’ that I believe is the theological referent. Thus, in Ch.1, I noted Zizioulas’ understanding of ekstasis as ‘an openness of being’ or ‘a movement towards communion’. He did not develop this any more other than to...
point out that the combination with *hypostasis* is ontologically 'constitutive' of 'personhood'.\(^{42}\) Hannah Bacon believes Zizioulas was making 'an important contribution to the contemporary debate', particularly if *ekstasis* refers to the 'koinonia' in the Godhead, 'which characterizes the triune life', and not just from God the Father.\(^{43}\) Miroslav Volf refines this idea further to suggest that this movement or orientation is not compelled from outside the *hypostases*, or persons, but the voluntary outgoingness of each *hypostasis*. Volf therefore calls this 'self-donation'.\(^{44}\) As noted in Ch.4, Volf depicts what he terms the 'narrative life of the Trinity' as a 'history of self-donation' as follows:

The self gives something of itself, of its own space, so to speak, in a movement in which it contracts itself in order to be expanded by the other and in which at the same time enters the contracted other in order to increase the other's plenitude. This giving of the self which coalesces with receiving the other is nothing but the circular movement of eternal divine love – a form of exchange of gifts in which the other does not emerge as a debtor because she has already given by having joyfully received and because even before the gift has reached her she was already engaged in a movement of advanced reciprocation. If we adjusted the famous statement of John, “We love because God first loved us” (I John 4.19) to fit the cycle of exchange between perfect lovers, we would have to say that *each* always both loves first and loves because he is loved.\(^{45}\)

Essentially *ekstasis* is other-oriented. Janet Martin Soskice describes beautifully the quality of attention that a mother or a parent may give a child.\(^{46}\) It is this that demonstrates both *ekstasis* in the parent *and* affirms and develops the *hypostasis* of the child. It is in the nature of *ekstasis* that this attention will change as the child matures. In

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\(^{42}\) Heidegger and a publication in Greek by C. Yanneras *The Ontological Content of the Theological notion of the Trinity* (1970).

\(^{43}\) *ʻHuman Capacity and Incapacityʼ*, 409.

\(^{44}\) Bacon, *What’s Right with the Trinity?*, 72.

\(^{45}\) Volf, "ʻThe Trinity Is Our Social Programʼ," 412.

\(^{46}\) Ibid., 412-13.

\(^{46}\) John Milbank also refers to what he terms ‘the requisite *attention* to the other’ that enables the giving of appropriate gifts. He includes, for example, the gift of time. John Milbank, "Can a Gift Be Given? Prolegomena to a Future Trinitarian Metaphysic," *ibid.*11, no. 1 (1995): 131, 32 (author’s emphasis).
other words it is observant and respectful of the particular age- and person-appropriate hypostasis.

The biological reciprocity between mother and child in early infancy is continued in innumerable small acts of watchfulness, many almost as involuntary as lactation: for instance, the scanning, native to parents of toddlers, of any new surroundings for steep steps, sharp, breakable, or swallowable objects. Parents do not always think much about this, they simply do it as a few years further along in a child’s life they will not. Other acts of ‘attentiveness’ require the disciplined and conscious exercise of humility. To attend to the child properly is also to employ the proper passivity of ‘letting the other be’. The love of the parents, at the best of times, holds the child up without holding them back, for they must grow, and the parents must in gradual steps ‘let go’ without ceasing to love unstintingly.\footnote{Soskice, \textit{The Kindness of God}, 31. Soskice notes that the term ‘humility’ came from Sarah Ruddick in Maternal Thinking, 122 and it was her analysis that she was drawing on.}

Soskice notes that in order for this to occur the parents must, if not all the time, at least some of the time, be ‘unselved’.\footnote{I strongly suspect, and it would be worthy of further research, that this might accord with David Winnicott’s well known ‘good-enough parenting’. Winnicott, \textit{The Child and the Outside World}.} The neologism ‘unselved’ appears an apt synonym for \textit{ekstasis}, subject to the earlier caveat about its positive intent on the part of the other that is evident in Soskice’s example. The importance of this for child development cannot be overstated, as recent research in infant brain development and Attachment theory has been demonstrating.\footnote{Cairns, \textit{Attachment, Trauma and Resilience}; Gerhardt, \textit{Why Love Matters}, \url{http://www.childhood.org.au/our-work/trauma-recovery}.} It is noticeable that for this to occur, and the extent to which it occurs, is also dependent on the parent recognising the special, distinct, particular and unique otherness in the hypostasis of their child. I worked for some years in a multi-disciplinary team investigating serious infant and child abuse. We tried to rehabilitate parents with their children if it was safe to do so. A critical part of the work was seeing if we could get parents to reach the point where they achieved this recognition of the special otherness (including age-appropriate) hypostasis of their child. If they did so, the
prognosis for safe rehabilitation and the future secure growth and development of those children dramatically improved.\footnote{It was, of course, not the only factor. Attention to other matters such as drug and alcohol misuse, mental health, the relationship with partners, the particular company parents were keeping and basic skills, including appropriate play with children, were all required, but an understanding of the child’s own separateness and uniqueness was key. See Peter Reder and Clare Lucey, “Significant Issues in Parenting Assessment,” in \textit{Assessment of Parenting: Psychiatric and Psychological Contributions}, ed. Peter Reder and Clare Lucey (London \& New York: Routledge, 1995), esp. 10-12.}

Such loving attention is crucial not only for the growing child but it has consequences into adulthood and parenthood. \textit{Ekstatic} loving attention is needed by the child in order to become an \textit{ekstatic} parent. Even as an adult and a parent it is still needed. Sue Gerhardt’s \textit{Why Love Matters: How Affection Shapes a Baby’s Brain}, comments about some of the parents she saw in her parent/infant practice.

In my parent/infant practice, depressed mothers are the norm. Usually they are desperately in need of loving attention themselves. The majority describe difficult relationships with their own mothers. For example, Benitas had a mother who was disabled so she felt unable to make demands on her. Sally had an unpredictable alcoholic mother. Jill’s mother was a career woman, busy and unavailable. Those mothers who present a more positive account of their relationship with their mothers often aren’t able to substantiate it. Many of these mothers did not get the attention they needed as babies and small children and now find it hard to provide it for their own babies. They feel helpless with their own babies, not knowing what to do, how to get the baby to stop crying, to sleep through the night. \textit{They want the baby to grow up fast and not need so much attention.}\footnote{Gerhardt, \textit{Why Love Matters}, 125 (my emphases).}

Sue Gerhardt’s practice was not only similar to some of the work of the hospital specialist multi-disciplinary team I was a member of, but she also practised in the same city. In my professional experience, both in this unit, and elsewhere, I too frequently encountered the impact of the loss of \textit{ekstatic} love from not only mothers, but also fathers, upon the next generation of parents, sometimes for several generations.\footnote{I referred only generally to my social work experience in the Introduction. This has included a number of specialist roles. For example, I was a Guardian ad Litem in the UK – an expert independent witness giving evidence in the courts,}
These findings are replicated in the relevant literature. Moreover, the impact on parents might not only originate inter-generationally. For example, one of the devastating effects of domestic violence is the reduction of the parenting capacity of the victim. Again, the loss of consistent love and attention usually to the mother by her partner, or ex-partner, could affect not only her own *hypostasis* but also her *ekstatic* ability towards her children.

Soskice notes that, anthropologically and ethically, ‘to be fully human and to be fully moral is to respond to that which demands our response – the other, attended to with love.’ This is an exceedingly important observation that I will return to when I consider the ethical implications of this trinitarian theological approach in Ch.8 and the theologically neglected subject of love. A defining aspect of *ekstasis* is that it reaches out to, acknowledges, affirms, rescues and builds up or edifies the *hypostasis* of the other, as I have been outlining. *Ekstasis* occurs in a wealth of possible scenarios that can be seen in scriptural references to the Trine God and concerning human beings. For

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56 *Ekstasis* is not to be confused with extrovert. The two are not coterminous. Thus an introvert may equally be able to pay attention to and build up the *hypostasis* of the other. The definition of an introvert is ‘a shy inwardly thoughtful person’ (*Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 1990) cf. Susan Cain, *Quiet* (London: Penguin Books, 2012). Cain makes a defence of the sensitivity, among other traits, of introverts.
example, giving glory to the other hypostases (John 17.1-5). Ekstasis is observed in voluntary obedience, in self-sacrifice, in going the extra mile, in empathy, in patience, gentleness, courtesy, forbearance and self-control (Matt. 5.40-42, Rom. 15.1-4, Gal. 5.22, Philippians 2.5-8). The significance of these behaviours and attitude, whether as a micro- or macro-culture cannot be overestimated. Not only are these ekstatic exploits specifically enjoined in the New Testament, they are also exemplified in Jesus Christ’s parables, and inter-personal encounters, and, argues Paul, supremely in Christ’s death on behalf of all humankind (Romans 5.6-21). Ian McFarland makes the astute observation that when we look at the scriptural references to Jesus Christ ‘in the fullness of his glory, we find ourselves asked by him to look to the other whom he might otherwise conceal but to whom his ministry is in fact oriented’. This ekstatic attitude and behaviour applies as much to the Father and the Holy Spirit as it does to the people he encountered.

This ‘attention to the other with love’ can be identified, for example, in the power of praise, compared with criticism. The former is hypostatically specific and edifying, whilst the latter can be ‘personal’ but destructive of the other’s hypostasis. It has long been known that children who grow up in homes or situations where they are not praised, or sufficiently encouraged, loved, or believed, frequently lack self-esteem and self-confidence. It could be said that their hypostasis is diminished. This trinitarian theological anthropology explains why self-confidence derives in part from the attentive love, support and praise of significant others. Professor Robbie Gilligan’s work has shown that even if that does not occur at home it is still possible for children to be

57 Martin Luther noticed, in the words of Christine Helmer, that ‘the Trinity is structured in such a way that in speaking, one person points to another and reveals that person’. Helmer, “Luther’s Trinitarian Understanding,” 144.
58 McFarland, "Persons and the Problem of Difference," 27. McFarland refers to the ‘scriptural underdetermination of persons’. He is making an important anthropological point that supports the trinitarian thesis of hypostasis, ekstasis and perichoresis I am advancing although he does not use these terms or link this with trinitarian theology.
‘resilient’ if they received this kind of ekstatic encouragement, understanding and support from a grandparent, a friend, a teacher or a youth worker, indeed anyone particular who pays positive attention to them.\(^{59}\) This has also been shown to be the case with children who have been successfully fostered, or adopted.\(^{60}\) As with Gerhardt’s mothers referred to above, some children lacking self-esteem in turn find it harder to extend ekstatically to others, both attitudinally and behaviourally. This dichotomy between praise and criticism can also be seen to operate in marriage. John Gottman’s analysis of the likelihood of divorce showed that ‘the biggest determinant for divorce is the ratio of positive to negative comments the partners make to one another’.\(^{61}\) Gottman found that the optimum ratio of praise to criticism was 5 positive comments for every negative comment. For those who eventually became ‘divorced the ratio was 0.77 to 1, or three positive comments for every four negative ones’.\(^{62}\)

Ekstasis is mutual and involving, not solely one-way traffic, even when one of the hypostases is an infant, or child, or dependent due to a disability. Parents and carers will attest to the effect of smiles, chuckles, laughter, hugs, kisses, sometimes the smallest of responses, on the relationship between them. In other words, nonverbal gestures can be as significant, if not more so, than words. In fact human beings rely on ekstasis a great deal. It is why Bowlby’s work indicated that Attachment behaviours were so important and why people will even endure physical punishment to have some sense of response from a parent or other significant person, albeit a negative and detrimental response,


\(^{60}\) Results of Sydney Study and the Anna Freud Centre in London.


\(^{62}\) Cited in ibid.
rather than be ignored. It is also why autism and some forms of disability, dementia and mental illness can prove so difficult to deal with, particularly for those closest to the sufferer. It is not simply an absence of any, or of a ‘normal’ response, it is also where a specific absence of recognition of the carer as a unique hypostasis occurs, alongside the diminished ability of the sufferer to respond ekstatically, as well as the loss of perichoresis.

The lack of ekstasis, along with mutuality and reciprocity, also accounts for why it is so hard when people are trapped in a controlling relationship. The occasionally heard phrase: ‘It’s my way, or the highway’ not only suggests no negotiation or genuine discussion but also, and crucially, no recognition or affirmation of the other’s hypostasis. Part of the tactics employed in domestic violence is to deliberately humiliate, belittle, intimidate and manipulate the victim, as well as divide them from their natural perichoretic social supports, all of which exercises a cumulative and overwhelming impact on their hypostasis. As mentioned above, this, for example, can have the consequent effect of seriously eroding the mother’s parenting capacity or ekstatic giving to her children. Accordingly, even in some of the most awful cases of domestic violence where their mothers have been killed, the previous experience of relative emotional neglect and lack of ekstasis by their mother will still colour some children’s ambivalence about their mothers, and have affected their own hypostases.

64 Humphreys, Domestic Violence and Child Protection.
65 Drawn from my social work experience. Please see Fn. 52 above. Cf. Mullender et al., Children’s Perspectives on Domestic Violence, 156-77.
An argument could be made that the discipline of children is an *ekstatic* act of love. By ‘discipline’ I mean age appropriate teaching and instruction rather than physical punishment. It is taking the time and trouble to help children grow in character and their ability to *perichoretically* relate to others and thereby elicit positive rather than negative responses from wider family, peers and others. In sum, parental discipline is *ekstatic* to the extent that it is for their child’s *hypostatic* sake and *perichoretic* ability.\(^\text{66}\)

*Perichoresis, ‘Knitting’ or ‘Oneing’*

*Perichoresis* is the word used to describe the continuous and cumulative interactive and reciprocal movement of *ekstases* between and by the *hypostases*. It is the inter-penetration or inter-permeation of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. As Moltmann points out, and I have already alluded to, since it involves three persons and not just two, ‘it takes on a richer significance than in the I-Thou philosophy of Martin Buber’.\(^\text{67}\) Moltmann continues:

> So following the Gospel of John I have understood the unity of Jesus the Son with the Father as a perichoretic unity, i.e. as a social unity of ‘I’ and ‘You’ in ‘We’ and ‘Us’, in mutual giving and taking, and in communicating and participatory living. The term *perichoresis*, Latin *circuminsessio*, used by John of Damascus in the doctrine of the Trinity, best grasps the unity of the three persons. Through their reciprocal love they exist in one another in complete empathy, so that they are wholly one. In the intensive exchange of their energies they mutually permeate one another in a perfect way and share themselves fully with one another.\(^\text{68}\)

Cornelius Plantinga and Moltmann both note the New Testament use of the words *en* and *hen*, ‘in’ and ‘one’, with Plantinga claiming that

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\(^{67}\) Moltmann, *History and the Triune God*, xv.

\(^{68}\) Ibid., 131.
these expressions demonstrate that the persons of the Trinity are ‘primordially united’. He adds:

This is the base claim for the Greek Father’s doctrine of *perichoresis*, a sort of intratrinitarian hospitality concept. ... Each trinitarian person graciously makes room for the others in his own inner life and envelops or enfolds that person there.69

Moltmann phrases it thus:

The divine persons exist not only in relationships to one another but also, as the Johannine formulations show, *in one another*: the Son in the Father, the Father in the Son, the Holy Spirit in the Father and the Son, and the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit. This intimate indwelling and complete interpenetration of the persons in one another is expressed by the doctrine of the trinitarian *perichoresis*. It denotes that trinitarian unity which goes out beyond the doctrine of persons and their relations: by virtue of their eternal love, the divine persons exist so intimately with one another, for one another and in one another that they constitute themselves in their unique, incomparable and complete unity. The trinitarian unity is not a secondary ‘communion’ of the divine persons, nor are these persons ‘modes of being’ or ‘repetitions’ of the one God. Their relations within the Trinity and the trinitarian *perichoresis* are complementary: the perichoretic unity does not do away with the distinct relations any more than these damage it. The perichoretic concept of trinitarian unity gets over the dangers of tritheism and modalism equally. For the doctrine of *perichoresis* combines the threeness and the oneness without reducing the threeness to the oneness or the oneness to the threeness. The perichoretic unity is to be thought of as being equally original for the divine persons and the divine relations. If the life within the Trinity is understood perichoretically, then the divine life is as little lived

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69 Plantinga, “Social Trinity and Tritheism,” 25. Elizabeth Frykberg has argued against Barth that a distinction should be drawn as to whether *perichoresis* is applicable, depending on whether relationships are between equal parties or not. Thus *perichoresis* is applicable between partners, but between God and human beings, or between parents and children the notion of *perichoresis* should be replaced by a ‘covenant relationship’. I understand and applaud her aim to make male-female relations reciprocal. I am not so convinced that she is right to draw this particular distinction and application between the two alternatives. This is because (i) marriage itself is a covenantal relationship (Please see pp.360-61 below further in respect of covenant). (ii) It overlooks Julian of Norwich’s idea of *perichoresis* between God and human beings (pp.290-291). (iii) I am not convinced that children are ruled out of either the capacity, or need for *perichoresis*, simply because they are children. These are early days, however, for my thesis, and this is a counter argument that may need to be assessed further and more carefully. Frykberg, “The Child as Solution.”
by one subject alone as is the trinitarian history of the Father, the Son and the Spirit. It is the perichoretic concept of unity which is the trinitarian concept of triunity.\textsuperscript{70}

Karen Kilby has further objected to perichoresis on the grounds that human beings neither understand nor are able to replicate this Godlike aspect. I quoted her at length in the previous chapter.\textsuperscript{71} Kilby is again right to be sceptical and to put theologians on notice about their methods and claims. At face value it does appear that she may have found the Achilles’ heel of the arguments of Moltmann and others, at least insofar as they extrapolate this to human relationships and society. Yet I am not so sure that Kilby is entirely correct. It appears she may be overlooking the very source that she avers should be examined, namely the Biblical texts. Not only are there particular references to the very activities she describes (John 13.34-35, Philippians 2.1-4, Col. 3.12-15, for example), but there are even some that specifically point to a degree of closeness and inter-relationship in which separate people are counted as one. In short, it is not only, or even primarily, from our present observations of human behaviour that we can learn ‘how best to structure human community’ but from the very biblical sources that Kilby wishes to refer to. John Thurmer notes that this is precisely what St. Paul claims about the marriage relationship: ‘He who loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it’ (Ephesians 5:28,29).\textsuperscript{72} Ian Ramsay drew attention to the significance of this extended biblical passage in his report for the 1966

\textsuperscript{70} Moltmann, \textit{History and the Triune God}, 85. Lossky notes that ‘the irreducibility’ of God ‘cannot be understood or expressed except in the relation of the Three Hypostases who, strictly speaking, are not “three” but “Tri-Unity”. Lossky, \textit{In the Image and Likeness of God}, 113. Moltmann and Volf refer to the ‘conciliatory’ fifteenth century Council of Florence declaration: ‘\textit{Propter hanc unitatem Pater totus est in Filio, totus in Spiritu Sancto; Filius totus est in Patre, totus in Spiritu Sancto; Spiritus Sanctus totus est in Patre, totus in Filio}’ (Because of this unity the Father is fully in the Son, fully in the Holy Spirit; the Son is fully in the Father, fully in the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit is fully in the Father, fully in the Son’) Moltmann, \textit{History and the Triune God}, xv. John of Damascus expounds that in cleaving to one another ‘they have their being in each other without any coalescence or commingling’. John of Damascus \textit{De Fide} I, vii., quoted in Volf, "The Trinity Is Our Social Program'', 409.

\textsuperscript{71} Please see Ch.5, 317.

\textsuperscript{72} Thurmer, \textit{A Detection of the Trinity}, 43.
Church of England discussion on the family. Working largely before the re-emergence of trinitarian theology, and thus not necessarily influenced in the way that Kilby describes, Ramsey nevertheless claimed that developments in theological thought had led to ‘full weight’ being given to:

New Testament teaching about the union of man and woman in ‘one flesh’ and the analogy it bears to Christ and his Church. It is now fairly generally recognized that the union of man and woman ought not to be regarded mainly as a means of bringing children into existence, but as a ‘two-in-oneship’ which has value in itself and glorifies God.73

Furthermore, it is the biblical sources that make a direct dependent link between the qualitative degree of unifying human relationships and intra-Trinitarian ones (John 17,11, 21-23). Thus whilst Kilby may be right that there are human limitations in imaging God, her argument that social Trinitarianism is mere projection becomes harder to sustain. The very sources that she believes should be consulted are the ones that place a question mark over her critique. Consequently, paying attention to the dynamics of hypostases, ekstases and perichoresis in the Triune God, ‘persons in relation’, may in fact be a rather important, as well as a theologically legitimate, exercise. Therefore, for human beings to copy this Trinitarian God, to the extent of their creaturely ability, forms part of the basis for enjoyable and beneficial human development and society. The opposite leads to damaged people and disrupted relationships and affected communities and society.

Unlike Kilby, Moltmann is convinced that perichoresis is highly significant for our understanding not only of God but also for theological anthropology and for ecclesiology. I examine the evidence for this last observation in Ch.8 where I peruse ecclesiology in more detail. This is because, as I will seek to show, trinitarian theology is also

relevant in this field. Indeed the overlaps with ‘family’ issues are so
great that I will also use these to demonstrate that Kilby may not be
etirely correct in her critique. Moltmann again:

The unity of the triune God is no longer seen in the
homogeneous divine subject nor in the identical divine subject,
but in the eternal perichoresis of Father, Son and Spirit. This
insight has far-reaching consequences for the hermeneutics of
the history of salvation and human experiences of God; for the
doctrine of the image of God in human beings and the conception
of a creation which corresponds to God; for the doctrine of the
unity and the form of the church as the ‘icon of the Trinity’; and
not least for the eschatological expectation of a new, eternal
community of creation.74

From Moltmann’s perspective, the repeated emphasis on ‘one’ in
relation to God in the Old and New Testament is no accident. Jesus’
recorded prayer ‘so that they may be one as we are one’ is reiterated
three times, not just for the immediate disciples, but for all those who
come after them, concluding: ‘May they be brought to complete unity to
let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you
have loved me’ (John 17.11b, 22-24). Julian of Norwich’s idea that the
Trinity is about ‘oneing’ is a very important observation and supported
by numerous biblical references to the theological significance of being
‘at one’. As cited above, the writer to the Ephesians comments that
Christ’s at-one-ing death breaks down ‘the dividing wall of hostility’
between God and human beings and between, in this passage, Gentile
and Jewish Christians (Eph. 2.11-22). According to the writer, it is this
undivided grouping that becomes the church (2.21-22). Paul develops
the same point in Galatians and Romans, extending it to other societal
divisions of men and women, slaves and free (Gal. 3.28). Thus, as
Gunton and other theologians have noted, the exemplary society of the
Trinity stands out not because it is uniform but because it is united. Ipso
facto that is the theological benchmark for human family and for the
church.75 A great deal of the ‘social Trinitarian’ literature, with varying

74 Moltmann, History and the Triune God, xi.
75 For a slightly alternate view: David Nicholls, "Trinity and Conflict," Theology
XLVI, no. 769 (1993).
degrees of cogency, makes much of the rich theme of ‘unity in diversity’. The Biblical evidence for perichoresis lays correspondingly extraordinary stress on the Godlike activity of being at one with those who differ from us, not least as represented in the different ages, sexes and personalities found within human families.

A further important theological element of perichoresis is that it is not a ‘selves-enclosed’ and exclusive ‘laager’-like relationship. Orthodox theologians have a notion that out of the superfluity of the Triune ekstatic and perichoretic internal loving relationship came Creation itself. This is hinted at in Gen. 1.26 and John 1.3. It can also be discerned in the action of the Trinitarian God in Incarnation and Redemption (John 3.16-17, Rom. 5.8). Moltmann has described this as the ‘open Trinity’, which he contrasted with:

The traditional figures of the circular or triangular Trinity. The Trinity is ‘open’ by virtue of its overflowing, gracious love. It is ‘open’ to its beloved creatures who are found and accepted.

Rublev’s iconic early fifteenth century depiction of the Trinity similarly invites the viewer into the Trinitarian group. Walter Kasper also argues that ‘the distinctions based on the relations ... bring out the ecstatic character of God’s love’.

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78 ‘Trinitarische Geschichete’.
79 Moltmann, History and the Triune God, 87. ‘A perichoretic understanding of the relation of God to creation sees God’s creating, forming, sustaining, enduring, receiving, accompanying, moving and suffering as an expression of the liveliness of his love’. Ibid., 133.
80 ‘We are invited to complete the circle, to join the dance, to complete the movements of God in the world by our own response.’ “Explanation of Andre Rublev’s Icon of the Trinity” www.sacredheartpullman.org/Icon%20explanation.htm accessed 14.12.14.
81 Kasper, The God of Jesus Christ. 280.
Considering hypostasis, ekstasis and perichoresis together

So far I have considered hypostasis, ekstasis and perichoresis separately. This has been for the purpose of explaining these terms, illustrating how they have been used in respect of the Trinity, and might have application to theological anthropology. It will not have escaped notice, however, that each of these facets is in fact closely interrelated to the others and that properly therefore they should be considered as a whole. The significance of this observation for an understanding of the Trinity, for theological anthropology and for a theology of family cannot be overstated. I shall consider each briefly in turn.  

The Trinity

The perpetual conundrum of the Trinity is how can one God be three persons and vice versa? This puzzle is encapsulated in Basil’s (or Gregory’s) aforementioned and perceptive ‘united separation and separated unity’. Najib Awad unpacked this fourth century formulation further referring to God as ‘three self-distinct persons who exist together and are united to each other by means of a mutual openness and interrelationality’. Awad’s approach, attested as it is by the New Testament, suggests with Moltmann that this triple operation of...

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82 It may be considered strange that a thesis ostensibly on ‘family’ should devote space not only to the doctrine of God, but also to theological anthropology and to ecclesiology. I endeavour in this chapter and the next to show why these are linked by trinitarian theology and their particular relevance to this thesis. The Orthodox theologian John Meyendorff, writing in the Foreword of Zizioulas’ Being and Communion, similarly noted ‘that the Orthodox doctrines of man and of the Church cannot be compartmentalized into neatly separate sections of theological science – “theology,” “anthropology,” “ecclesiology” – but are simply meaningless if approached separately’. He added: ‘Only together do they reflect the true “mind of Christ” of which St. Paul wrote, the true “gnosis” defended by St. Irenaeus, and the authentic experience of God, called for by the Fathers of later centuries’. Zizioulas, Being as Communion, 11.

83 Awad, Persons in Relation.
hypostases, ekstasis and perichoresis successfully surmounts the twin dangers of tritheism and modalism I outlined in Ch.1.84

Indeed, hypostases, ekstasis and perichoresis suggest a rather different and potentially more theologically and biblically coherent account of the vexed theological issues involved in Incarnation, Christology, Atonement and Pneumatology, as well as the Immanent and Economic Trinity. To take the Atonement as just one example: previous theories such as Irenaeus’ ‘recapitulation’, the patristics’ ‘ransom’, Anselm’s ‘satisfaction’, or even Aulen’s ‘Christus Victor’ do not offer quite as full, or as satisfactory, an explanation as the one provided by relational trinitarian theology. No longer is the Son appeasing the wrath of the Father, for instance. Instead the Son is ekstatically voluntarily obedient to the Father and the joint longing and intention of the Triune Godhead to reunite human beings with God and with each other (John 1.1-5, 9-14, 3.16-17, Romans 5.10, 2 Corinthians 5.14-21, Ephesians 2, Colossians 1.13-22).85 This dramatically changes the dynamics from disparate ‘persons’ in the Godhead, and a Father laying punishment on an entirely separate Son, to the Triune Godhead acting in concert together. John Milbank is among those who see a direct connection between the Incarnation and Atonement and the Trinity – ‘it is disclosed to us that the divine created gift ... is itself grounded in an intra-divine love which is relation and exchange as much as it is gift’.86 This direct connection also supports Rahner and LaCugna’s contention that the Economic Trinity does demonstrate the Immanent Trinity and LaCugna’s further argument that God’s apophatic incomprehensibility is witnessed specifically in these historic and particular events.87

84 Moltmann, History and the Triune God, 132.
85 See Ch.8, 402-403 on the Son’s obedience.
87 LaCugna wished to remove the use of these particular terms preferring ‘the inseparability of theologia (i.e. the mystery of God) and oikonomia (i.e. the mystery of salvation)’. LaCugna, God for Us, 223,24 n. 7. and 27. ‘The inner nature of God is of course revealed in this interaction on the supposition that it is no other God that so acts’. God for Us Review Symposium, 139, quoted in Groppe, “Catherine Mowry Lacugna’s Contribution to Trinitarian Theology,” 735. Hannah Bacon also specifically supports these moves in her article: Bacon, "Thinking the Trinity," 442.
It follows from the discussion above that the Western definition and understanding of ‘human being’, influenced, as it has been, by previous Christian thought and theology, may need to be substantially revised. First, the prevailing connotation that ‘human being’ is primarily an autonomous individual does not convey the necessary and complex interplay of hypostasis, ekstasis and perichoresis that in fact enable and enhance human being or being human.

Second, the distinguishing characteristic of being human is now not as concerned with intelligence, reasoning, speech, or any general attributes that might, for example, distinguish human beings from other primates or animals. This is the argument well made by John Zizioulas. Instead, and almost contradictorily, when a human being is referred to there is, or should be, a recognition of the unique distinguishing characteristics of that particular hypostasis, or person, regardless of intellectual ability, or any other general criteria. Furthermore, the unique hypostasis of each person is, or is designed to be, safeguarded, enhanced and developed by the ekstatic actions, responses and attitudes of other hypostases. Consequently, the verb in human being is not passive but active. Human being is thus the individual and cumulative responsibility to act in ways that ekstatically

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Anthony Kelly suggests that ‘once “being in love” is accepted as the focal analogy in Trinitarian theology’, the distinction between the immanent and economic Trinity is not entirely relevant. Anthony Kelly, The Trinity of Love: A Theology of the Christian God, ed. Peter C Phan, New Theology Series (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1989), 179f, 249f.

88 Zizioulas, "Human Capacity and Incapacity."
89 In a discussion on the emotional neglect of children Brian Minty refers to ‘the Human Givens Approach’. The authors, Griffin and Tyrell, claim that ‘all human beings, including children’, have ‘psychological needs … only slightly less essential than the needs for food, protection, safety, supervision and medical help’. They suggest these needs are: attention, connection with others, a sense of belonging and status, being psychologically stretched, a balance between autonomy and control, a sense of purpose and meaning – for many people to be found in relationships’. Whilst these authors describe these as ‘biologically based psychological needs’ it is also conceivable to consider them as trinitarianally based. Brian Minty, "The Nature of Emotional Child Neglect and Abuse," in Child Neglect: Practice Issues for Health and Social Care, ed. Julie Taylor and Brigid Daniel (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2005), 64f, citing; J Griffin and I Tyrell, Psychotherapy and the Human Givens (Chalvington: HG Publishing, 2002).
and perichoretically support other human beings or hypostases, whilst similarly and sometimes simultaneously receiving from them and/or from others. There is thus a balance to be struck. Too much outgoing ekstasis whilst receiving insufficient incoming ekstasis and/or any loss of perichoresis is thus potentially detrimental to the hypostasis.\footnote{Matt. 10.27 suggests that one should ‘have the same esteem and care for a neighbour that one would have for oneself’. But under certain circumstances of unreasonable self-abnegation it could be read the other way around. The esteem and care you have for a neighbour you also need for your self.}

Moreover, individual hypostases will vary in how much they can give and receive ekstatically, and in their perichoretic ability, according to factors such as their maturity, personal circumstance, and how much they are encouraged or allowed to by other human beings.

Third, being human in this way entirely alters how differences of gender, age, race, or any criteria that contribute to poststructuralist ‘other’, are addressed. No longer is being male, white, middle classed, educated, or any other classification normative and exclusive. The ‘heir to Adam’, as McFarland phrases it, is not one type of person. Instead, I am arguing that the trinitarian theo-logic of the \textit{Imago Dei} is that human beings are the collective co-heirs of Adam: a plural noun, or Adam and Eve. Thus the anthropological emphasis is on \textit{how people are with one another}, regardless of any preferential factors. It is this interaction that defines being human in the image of God, not any single criterion that privileges one type, or person, over another. The uniqueness of each hypostasis, and collectively being human, in ekstatic attitudes and behaviour, and through perichoresis, all trump difference and otherness.\footnote{I am indebted to Ian McFarland’s discussion of (i) Ferdinand de Saussure’s observations about the occlusion of the personhood of women in the opposite semantic and generic use of ‘man’ for person, and (ii) Mary McClintock Fulkerson’s work. Her desire is to rectify this situation without simply producing a reversed version. Her solution is personal narrative that is neither too narrow to define one’s personal role, nor too broad that it ‘casts doubt on an individual’s status as a person.’ McFarland’s observations on Saussure and Fulkerson’s proposals marry well with this thesis, although he has not quite recognised the potential of a trinitarian \textit{Imago Dei} for addressing the issues he is properly raising. Ferdinand de Saussure, \textit{Course in General Linguistics} (Chicago: open Court, 1988), Mary} Indeed otherness now becomes an added invitation, challenge and benefit for hypostases, ekstasis and perichoresis.
Fourth, as I argue later in this chapter, *being human* also needs to factor in a further dimension, namely a dynamic relationship with the Triune God.

Since relationships and *hypostases* are both *ekstatically* and *perichoretically* dynamic then it follows that allowance needs to be made for development and for change. Soskice refers to this above in respect of parents enabling their children to develop and mature and responding differently to them as they do so.\(^92\) It also holds true for adult partners and signifies *ekstatic* love one for the other, when and where this occurs.

**A Trinitarian Theology of ‘Family’**

It is now possible to begin to discern the trinitarian contours that depict, define and constitute ‘family’. Theologically: ‘family’ defines and encapsulates the continuous activity and experience of *hypostatic* identity and character, the giving and receiving of *ekstatic* love, and the sense and reality of *perichoretic* community and belonging. It is therefore effectively independent of biological or legal relationship, though these are highly pertinent factors. ‘Family’ thus theologically constituted may only exist to a certain degree. All, or some parts, (*hypostases, ekstasis* and *perichoresis*) may be fractured and/or impaired. In this Trinitarian ontology, or ‘metaontology’, as Lossky refers to it, each *hypostasis* carries, in so far as they are able, an *ekstatic* responsibility for the other *hypostases* and towards the *perichoretic* whole.\(^93\) I explore the significance of this trinitarian theological basis for ‘family’ in the remainder of this chapter and in the next.

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Consequential effects and their source

It is inherent in the continuous action of hypostases, ekstasis and perichoresis that there are immediate consequential effects for the participants. But it is not mutually confined to the immediate participants, or the particular synchronous moment. As explained above, the overspill of divine ekstases and from the divine perichoresis is thought to have led to the creation of the world, as well as to its redemption. This knock-on effect is exemplified in II Cor. 4.15: ‘... so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God’. Indeed, ‘grace’ is a particularly apt word to encapsulate the Triune God’s ekstatic and costly outpouring towards human beings and indeed all creation. The passage in Ephesians 2.1-9 is one of many in the New Testament that conveys something of this extraordinary operation of God’s grace in Christ Jesus, which, says this writer, results in good works conducted as a direct consequence by the human recipients of this ekstatic grace.

In Eph. 4.32 the active Greek verb ‘to be gracious to’ (charizomai) is translated as ‘forgiving one another, just as in Christ God forgave you.’ Similarly, Col. 3.13: ‘Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you’. This intended knock-on effect of ekstatic forgiveness and grace from the Triune God to hypostases takes an interesting turn in Luke’s account of the ‘sinful woman’ who anointed Jesus’ feet. Jesus declares ‘her many sins are forgiven – for she loved much’.94 Fitzmeyer points out that the use of ‘for’ – hoti is neither indicative of cause, nor does this sense accord with the remainder of the passage. ‘Thus the clause states not the reason for forgiveness but rather why the forgiveness is known to exist’.95

94 Luke 7.47.
John Milbank's fascinating essay: "Can A Gift be Given? Prelogomena to a Future Trinitarian Metaphysic" ponders and traces the complex anthropological, etymological, philosophical and ultimately theological underpinning to 'gift' and gift giving. There is insufficient room to do justice to his dense and complex argument. In essence, he exposes the limitations of many previous anthropological and philosophical theories about gift giving, whilst accepting that some observations are valid. For instance, that there is a curious circularity and exchange in gift giving. Furthermore, this circularity is marked by a critical liminal space between the giver and the receiver, a necessary delay between receiving and reciprocating, and non-identical reciprocation. Whilst historically and anthropologically there are many reasons for gift giving, Milbank argues that a key basis of human generosity is a prior relationship, or the making of a relationship (he refers to these as ‘attachments’). Consequently, Milbank critiques the ‘over-rigorous’ notion of agape as being ‘pure gift’ insofar as it must have no expectation of return. He uses the example of gift giving in families, noticing that it ‘would seem ... folly if it were too unilateral’, since that would entail, for example, spoiling the children. Similarly, in romantic attachments, unilateral giving is not the preferred, or even desirable, norm. ‘Giving here is most free where it is yet most bound, most mutual and most reciprocally demanded’.

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96 Milbank, "Can a Gift Be Given?" Sarah Coakley points out that the origin of this debate came from Marcel Mauss’s ‘influential anthropological monograph’ The Gift (1924). In her 2003 paper, she questioned (i) the use of ‘gift’ over more established theological terms such as ‘grace’, (ii) quite how Milbank viewed human participation in the divine, and (iii) why Milbank in this paper, although not elsewhere, had dropped Mauss’s engendered references. Coakley is right to challenge Milbank but I still consider that he has made an important theological contribution to understanding the relational aspect of gift exchange. Coakley, "Why Gift? Gift, Gender and Trinitarian Relations in Milbank and Tanner."
97 Milbank, "Can a Gift Be Given?," 124.
98 Ibid., 132.
99 Ibid., 124f.
100 Ibid., 124.
Milbank pursues the rationale to circular gift giving even further, consciously re-appraising human ontology, and ultimately theological ontology, as he does so.\textsuperscript{101} Thus he notes that you can enjoy giving as ‘a kind of \textit{ecstasis}, ‘the continuation of oneself outside of oneself.’\textsuperscript{102} Milbank goes on:

Likewise, the wanting and even the demanding to receive back (in some fashion) may be a recognition of ineradicable connection with others, and a desire for its furtherance. Here resides a self-affirmation that is also a self-displacement, since it seeks to situate self through the address of others towards me'.\textsuperscript{103} 

Milbank sees this mysterious relational reciprocity as enabling a third option between eros or desire, on the one hand, and narcissistic self-expression on the other. It also helps to explain the curious overlap of covenant and contract, and the paradox whereby the voluntary, spontaneous, \textit{ecstatic} expression of love coexists with the dominical \textit{commandment} to love. Ultimately, human ontology and the human capacity for \textit{ekstatic} love and response, argues Milbank, are both predicated on a Triune God who first loved us, since God’s very trinitarian \textit{perichoretic} ontology is interpersonal \textit{ekstatic} love.

\textbf{The priority of the Triune God’s relationship with human beings}

In keeping with the theme of the previous section, there is a further factor of some immediate relevance and importance to a trinitarian theology worthy of its name. As noted in Ch.1, Peters,

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\textsuperscript{101} ‘I venture to suggest that this possibility or actuality – purified gift-exchange – and not ‘pure gift’ is what Christian \textit{agape} claims to be. And that purified gift-exchange, unlike the pure gift, remains within the bounds of the ontological, which is to say the meta-physical. Just as Christianity transforms but does not suppress our ‘given’ social nature which is exchangist, so also Christian theology transforms, utterly appropriates to itself the ontological task, but does not abandon it in suspension, by elevating itself above it … in the name of a purely unilateral (and univocal) gift prior to that circular reciprocity which is, indeed, consequent upon \textit{esse}.’ \textit{ibid.}, 131-32.
\textsuperscript{102} \textit{Ibid.}, 132.
\textsuperscript{103} \textit{Ibid.}
\end{flushleft}
McFadyen, and others expressed concern that the aim of social trinitarians is the construction of a model of God that human beings might adopt, almost independently from God. They are right to harbour these concerns. Brueggemann observed that such an attempt to ‘be like God’ is analogous to the mistaken intent in the account of Adam and Eve (Gen. 3.4). Instead, any authentic theological anthropology should incorporate as a first or second principle the relatedness between God and human beings. This, after all, was the salient point and tragedy of the Genesis 3 account.\textsuperscript{104} The entire Bible can be seen as two Testaments to the priority of this relationship. It is precisely what Gunton was referring to, as quoted in Ch.1, when he spoke of ‘a double relatedness for humanity’: humans are first persons, he added, ‘insofar as we are in a right relationship with God’.\textsuperscript{105} McFadyen himself acknowledges that prioritising this relationship with God is one of the surest methods of preventing anthropomorphising and also of nullifying his own objection to social trinitarians.\textsuperscript{106}

It is a feature of Western thinking that this relationship with God is often thought of as an individual, even private affair. Whilst there is clearly biblical evidence in support of response by individuals to God, there is equally evidence that it may be conducted on a much more collective basis, whether as groups of disciples, as families, or as churches, or indeed as whole tribes and nations.\textsuperscript{107}

Living in a secular society and with notions of a non-existent or remote Deity, a relationship with God may appear far fetched to the point of delusional. McFadyen noted the extent and effect of the gap between the Biblical accounts and western secularised society.

\textsuperscript{104} W. Brueggemann, \textit{Genesis; Interpretation} (John Knox Press, 1982). 
\textsuperscript{105} Gunton, \textit{The Promise of Trinitarian Theology}, 116. Gunton points out that this is ‘a very real background’ and dependent on ‘the image’ being ‘reshaped’ and ‘realised in Christ.’ 
\textsuperscript{106} McFadyen, ”The Trinity and Human Individuality: The Conditions for Relevance.” 
\textsuperscript{107} E.g.: 1 Sam. 3.10-14, Matt. 6.6, Acts 16.31-34, Rev. 2 and 3.
This separation and partialisation is what worries me most as a Christian theologian. Talk of human being in our society has been so completely secularized that we find it increasingly difficult to talk of humanity with reference to God in a way that is meaningful in our contemporary situation. It is my belief that this missing dimension makes a real and important difference to our theoretical understanding and to our practice.\textsuperscript{108}

By contrast, stating for a Christian audience that God wishes to have a relationship with human beings may appear a rather obvious maxim for a Christian theological anthropology. Yet, as I have reviewed in Chs. 2 and 3, theologians struggled to articulate quite how marriage and family life connected with God. When it came to Reformation, the Augustinian association between sin and sex, and marriage as a concession to concupiscence, remained. Moreover, it was overlaid by a further concern about the inherent depravity of human beings. Therefore, although the marriage liturgy referred to bringing children up ‘in the fear and nurture of the Lord’, and to marriage as a sign of the union between Christ and the church, none of the three stated purposes for marriage actually referred to the relationship between the couple and God, or the family as a whole and God.\textsuperscript{109}

Daphne Hampson’s observation about the absence of an intimate relationship between Martin Luther and God may be symptomatic of this crucial gap in the Reformers’ thinking.\textsuperscript{110} As reviewed in Ch.3, some of the Puritans did notice the danger of marriage and the family leading people to forget their maker. John Cotton’s solution, however, rather than advocating greater love for God, was instead to ‘moderate’ their ‘affections’ for their spouses.\textsuperscript{111} Schleiermacher believed that an encounter with God occurred through interpersonal relationships but the actual relationship with God is unspecified and the God Schleiermacher refers to appears rather nebulous. A relationship with God, even defined as primarily Father and Son, in F. D. Maurice’s work,

\textsuperscript{108} McFadyen, \textit{The Call to Personhood}, 10.

\textsuperscript{109} Please see Ch.3, n. 27.


\textsuperscript{111} Please see Ch.3, 130.
is similarly elusive. A few of the more ‘popular’ Christian books on the family address this lacuna, but the majority do not.112

This all appears to be a long way removed from the Genesis’ intimate account of God walking and communicating in the garden with Adam and Eve, even if, simultaneously, their hiding from God is symptomatic of a disobedience and loss of communion that remains a constant hurdle.113 As just mentioned above, the Old and New Testaments continuously emphasize efforts on God’s part to renew the relationship with individuals, families, tribes, whole nations and all the people on earth. Carver T. Yu points out that whilst God ‘is revealed as utterly distinct’ from Creation and created things in the Bible, nevertheless ‘assurances of God’s presence go hand in hand with the affirmation of the covenant’.114 Like Milbank, Yu is certain that this love of God is unconditional and springs wholly from God – ‘God’s love is grounded on nothing but itself’.115 He includes a quote from Charles Wesley: ‘He hath loved, he hath loved us, because he would love’. Yu notes that ‘the strong personal language of the simple formula of the covenant – “I will be your God, and you shall be my people” – points up the intimate relation implied’.116 Even God’s holiness, which includes his glory and majesty, and which marks God out as distinct and unapproachable and incomprehensible, is nevertheless indicative of God’s presence, and wish for relationship. Yu cites Isaiah 6 and a

113 Genesis 3.8-19. Phyllis Trible points out that ‘so simple a story has been made to bear the sins of the world’. She points out that in this text ‘God-the-subject’ becomes ‘God-the-object’. The ‘power’ of the man and woman ‘to disobey leads … not to a change of character in God … but rather to changes in their own portrayals: from creatures of delight … to creatures of death’. Trible, Rhetoric of Sexuality, 72, 74. Walter Brueggemann refers to this text and others as dealing with ‘the problem of human autonomy and the ways in which such autonomy leads to alienation and death, for self and others’. He adds: ‘this story … is the anguish discernment that there is something about life which remains hidden and inscrutable … There are secrets about the human heart and the human community which must be honoured, bowed before and not exposed’. Brueggemann, Genesis, 52 (author’s emphasis).
114 Yu, Being and Relation, 184, 96.
115 Ibid., 196.
116 Ibid.
number of references in Exodus, Deuteronomy, Isaiah and Jeremiah (Ex. 19.6, 10-11, Deut. 7.6, 14.2, 21, 26.19, 28.9, Is. 62.12, Jer. 2.3) in support of this contention. In 2 Corinthians Paul also notes the extraordinary effect relationship with God has. ‘Whenever anyone turns to the Lord’, says Paul, what he refers to as ‘the veil’ is ‘taken away’. He continues:

And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

Yu notes that there are two primary words in the Old Testament that reinforce the sense of God’s willingness to engage in intimate relationship with human beings. The first is Berit, ‘covenant’, and the second Hesed, ‘loving-kindness’. Yu discusses the various understandings of covenant, which is paradoxically both unilateral and bilateral, and even appears contractual. Yet Yu’s conclusion is that covenant presupposes ‘an intimate relation between God and Israel’, even at its most seeming contractual with the Sinaitic commandments. Yu cites Leviticus 26.9-12 and Ezekiel 37.26-27 which both refer to the intensely personal and relational words of the covenant that ‘I will be your God and you shall be my people’. The intensity and steadfast nature of God’s covenantal love appears in the frequent use of Hesed, occurring some 260 times in the Old Testament. Yu refers to examples in Hosea 2.19, 11.4 and Jeremiah 31.3. Indeed Hosea stands out for what Wolff described as ‘Hosea’s best-known and

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117 Ibid., 186-87.
119 Yu, Being and Relation, 194-96.
120 Ibid., 196-97. Yu’s actual reference is Hosea 2.21 but the biblical quotation is from 2.19.
fully allegorized metaphor of Yahweh as the loving yet rejected husband’.121

The priority of God’s relationship with human beings does not necessarily detract from their relationships with one another. Instead, there is a quite significant correlation between the human relationship with God and with other human hypostases. One interesting example of this occurs in the sequel Ephesians’ passage to the one quoted earlier. The writer examines how Christ Jesus has united the Gentile and Jewish Christians, once hostile to one another, not only to one another but also to the Triune God.

His purpose was to create in himself one new person out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God by the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through Him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.122

This theme is repeated in John’s Gospel, Acts, Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Hebrews, and other epistles.123 Matthew’s recorded words of Jesus suggests the degree of correlation is such that God can forgive, or not, in proportion to our forgiving of other people, and even gifts to God cannot be offered if our attitudes or actions have adversely affected the relationship with another person for whom we carry some ecstatic and perichoretic responsibility.124 The first epistle of John puts it even more starkly:

We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, “I love God,” yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has

122 Eph. 2.15b-18.
not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.  

The Matthean and Johannine reference to ‘brother’ may or may not indicate immediate kin but Malachi is explicit about God’s intervention in biological kinship relations: ‘He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers’ (Malachi 4.6).

The relativisation of family ties found in the gospels points to the priority of the relationship between human beings and God but does not necessarily undermine the dominical support for human relationships, also found in the same gospels. Thus Jesus’ recorded words about honouring parents and about divorce (Matt. 19.5, 19), his attending the wedding in Cana (John 2.1-11) his stories about parents (Matt. 7.9-12) and his affirmation of children all provide an important context for Jesus’ so-called ‘hard sayings’.

When the Sadducees posed a casuistic and vexatious question about levirate marriage in the afterlife that they did not believe in, they are unlikely to have envisaged Jesus’ recorded reply. Jesus was emphatic that there was life after death, citing Exodus 3.6, and that in this life marriage would be absent. The marriage that is described in Revelation is between a ‘new Jerusalem’ and God. In this marriage:

(God) will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.

125 1 John 4.19-21.
126 Greenspahn’s study in the Old Testament is interesting precisely because he demonstrates that the priority of God’s relationship does not necessarily follow the received ‘normal’ or cultural ‘family’ pattern. Frederick E. Greenspahn, When Brothers Dwell Together. The Preeminence of Younger Siblings in the Hebrew Bible (OUP, Oxford, 1984).
128 Rev. 21.3-4.
Cornelius Plantinga observed ‘this is the family for whom our Lord prays in John 17, that it will one day enter the mysterious union of the Trinity itself’. Orthodox theologians refer to theosis as a process by which this begins in this present life. Whether in the present, or in the resurrection, Werner Jeanrond calls this ‘life in loving relationship with God’. He argues that it is the culmination, or continuation, of God’s intent to generate and promote ‘participation in the divine (relational) project of creation and new creation’. Hannah Bacon similarly connects the Economic and Immanent Trinity with the Triune God’s ultimate and eschatological purpose: ‘It is because all three hypostases mutually dwell with one another that God cannot help but draw humankind into the eternal dance of the Trinity’.

The effect of upbringing on the apperception of God

One of the concerns that fuelled my interest in this research was how might formative family upbringing influence the apperception of God, and any relationship with God, particularly for some of the children I had met who had experienced abuse, neglect and domestic violence? I am not alone in wondering about this. As Maureen Miner puts it: can a person ‘with an insecure attachment to a caregiver ... ever find security of attachment to God?’ Some feminist writers and

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130 Jeanrond, A Theology of Love, 247.
131 Ibid.
132 Bacon, What's Right with the Trinity?, 72.
134 Miner, “Back the Basics in Attachment to God,” 120. Miner notes that Kirkpatrick has been foremost in explicitly relating Attachment theory and experiences to relationship with God. See, for instance, L. A. Kirkpatrick, "The Role of Attachment in Religious Belief and Behaviour," in Attachment Processes in Adulthood. Advances in Personal Relationships, ed. K. Bartholomew and D. Perlman (London: Jessica Kingsley, 1994); "God as a Substitute Attachment Figure: A Longitudinal Study of Adult Attachment Style and Religious Change in College Students,"
others have questioned whether the experience of human fathering might be such that it adversely affected how they thought of and related to God the Father. Of course, it does not necessarily follow that being brought up in what might appear to be ideal family circumstances will automatically provide an advantage in being able to relate to God. There are many other factors at play. Nor do adverse circumstances preclude such a relationship. Indeed the watchfulness and care God exercises is compared and contrasted in the Bible with human parenting. The Psalmist refers to God’s personal knowledge of the writer even before birth (Ps. 139.13-16). Isaiah uses a powerful metaphor of a mother and a baby: ‘can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child that she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!’ (Is. 49.15) The Psalmist echoes this: ‘Though my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will receive me’. (Ps. 27.10) The Sermon on the Mount refers to God’s generosity exceeding that of human fathers (Matt. 7.7-12).

One study has examined accounts of Christian conversion experiences compared with standardised tests of attachment behaviour. In theory, these tests provide a measure of the quality of reliable, secure and effective parenting that a child had received. The study did not find that there was necessarily a barrier to becoming a Christian depending on the attachment history but there was a difference in how that happened. The research demonstrated that where there was a healthy and strong attachment to parents the

Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin 24, no. 9 (1998). Miner has critiqued Kirkpatrick’s work, however, for being reductionist, for lacking a ‘clear and coherent theological basis’ and thus not fully ‘considering the attributes of God to whom the individual attaches’. Miner, “Back the Basics in Attachment to God,” 112.

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transition to faith was a gradual one whilst where that relationship is fractured in some way sudden conversion is more often reported. 136

I noted Steele’s assessment in Ch.1 that a review of studies had found Attachment theory was ‘the most powerful contemporary account of social and emotional development available to science’,137 Miner’s paper reverses the thinking about Attachment theory that starts only from human experience, important as that may be. Instead, she argues, it is the Triune God who underpins the entire theory and this vital human experience. Relying upon Gunton, and referencing Hall, she presses her case that ‘trinitarian accounts’ supply a theological basis for human ‘inter-subjectivity’ and for Attachment theory.138

Gunton’s trinitarian theology asserts that God is knowable in the personal sense of knowing rather than merely as a symbol or other human construction. From such a theology the origins of an attachment relationship with God can be found, not as a projection or generalization from parental attachments, but based in the spiritual ontology of humans ... Our capacity for human relationships is an outworking of this unity. Thus the order of priority is changed. The capacity for, and actuality of, relationship with God is primary. Relationality is built into the fabric of all being because of the nature of God. We relate to others because we are capable of relating to God by being made

136 Martin Luther’s autobiography might fit the results of this study. The study did not examine the attachment profiles of a control group of people who had not become Christians. Pehr Granqvist and Berit Hakekull, "Religiousness and Perceived Childhood Attachment: Profiling Socialized Correspondence and Emotional Compensation," Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion 38, no. 2.


in the image of God; we do not just develop an ability to relate to
God because we relate to humanity, or to carers.\textsuperscript{139}

**Human family and human being without God?**

The previous two sections beg the question about human family
and being human in the absence of any belief or knowledge of God,
trinitarian or otherwise. McFarland addressed this question
tangentially when he suggested there is a flaw in McFadyen's
arguments that 'personhood was constituted by our relationships with
God and each other'. Does this not exclude 'those who for whatever
reason are not able to respond to God's address in any recognizable
manner(?)' McFarland was questioning McFadyen's solely relational
basis for person that Harriet Harris and I have both critiqued earlier in
this chapter. McFarland's alternative solution is instructive and
congruent with the notion of hypostasis advanced above (and examined
further in the next chapter). He asks: might it be 'preferable to view
personhood as the basis for our relationships with each other rather
than their product. ... It is because we are persons that we have the
capacity for relationships, not the other way around'.\textsuperscript{140} In other words,
being a human relational being is not necessarily precluded by an
absence of relationship with God. There is instead a categorical
potential for relationships with others, and indeed with God. This was
also the conclusion St. John's Theological College's *Symposium on the
Family* came to:

> God the Holy Trinity offers a 'role model' for our understanding
> of the family, not least because it provides a dynamic and
> relational rather than structural approach to the question. We
> would not like to suggest that only 'Christian family' is real
> family, as we regard the various social constructs of family as a
> creation ordinance.\textsuperscript{141}

\textsuperscript{139} Miner, "Back the Basics in Attachment to God," 119.
\textsuperscript{140} McFarland, "Persons and the Problem of Difference," 15.
\textsuperscript{141} Adrian Chatfield, St. John's Theological College's *Symposium on the Family*
(1995). There is insufficient space to develop this point further but it may be evident
that it touches on part of the longstanding grace and nature debate in theological
Adrian Chatfield argued, instead, that the implications from Trinitarian theology for Christian anthropology is an understanding of ‘personhood in less individual terms’, and seeing that ‘our experiences of family can ultimately be located in our understanding of God’. At this precise juncture, McFadyen might well resurrect his concern about Chatfield’s apparent noetic use of the ‘Social Trinity’. I do not believe Chatfield is making that mistake and indeed would subscribe to McFadyen’s proper concern that the Trinity is not simply a role model to emulate. Instead, through Incarnation, Redemption and Sanctification, the Triune Creator God offers the means by which human beings can be more human and relational with God and with other human beings.

I now turn to exploring this further and reviewing the thesis in the final chapter.

anthropology. This debate owes its origins to Hellenistic metaphysics and Substance ontology and to a disagreement between Roman Catholic and Protestant scholars over the effects of Genesis 3 on the imago dei in human beings. This debate may need to be revisited in the light of a trinitarian ‘relational ontology’.

142 Adrian Chatfield, Ibid.
143 Please see pp.97-99.
Chapter 8

Reflecting on a trinitarian theology of family

Introduction

In the previous chapter I began to outline a trinitarian framework for a *theo*-logical understanding of ‘family’. A particular focus was on the trinitarian features of *hypostasis, ekstasis* and *perichoresis*, and their combined dynamic operation. I argued that these features provide a critically different ontological conception for what it means to be human beings created in the image of the Triune God.⁠¹ I hypothesised that these trinitarian dynamic features are key to comprehending, defining, and considering ‘family’ from a theological perspective. Furthermore, in keeping with the avowedly theological nature of this approach, I explored the relevance of human relationships with God, as well as with one another.

This final chapter is in three parts. The first section is an extension of the previous chapter in exploring this trinitarian thesis about ‘family’ further. The second section compares and tests the thesis against a number of the concerns outlined in the literature review. The final section contains a summary, and conclusions.

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¹ Hanmer refers to this as the ‘*Imago Trinitatus*’ Ronald Edward Hanmer, “The Therapeutic Impact of a Multiple-Identity View of Personhood as Imago Dei in Light of Social Trinitarianism, Psychological Theories of Multiple Selves, and Existential Thought” (Fuller Theological Seminary, 1999), 67.
Section 1. Further explication of, ramifications from, and evidence for a trinitarian relational ontology of ‘family’.

The experiential power and prevalent nature of Western individualism is such that this alternative trinitarian hypothesis may still not be fully clear. I will therefore examine why human relationships are so vital for this trinitarian ontology, including in ecclesiology, and support this argument by reference to biblical material. I will be careful to explain that there is no loss of the significance of the individual person in contemplating the importance of relationships. On the contrary, human relationships are only possible between persons and rely on the uniqueness and, to varying degrees, the participation, responsibility, character, and integrity of each person.

The biblical stress on relationships, persons, and overflowing love, I will argue, underscore this trinitarian thesis. Wherever these trinitarian theological emphases coincide, I further claim, they rapidly tick all the boxes in Paul’s list of ‘whatever’ is ‘true’, ‘noble’, ‘pure’, ‘lovely’, ‘admirable’, ‘excellent’ and ‘praiseworthy’. The opposite also holds. Trinitarian theology casts human, ecclesial and divine-human relationships into sharp relief. It asks searching questions about the quality of all these relationships, the degree of personal responsibility and character, and the extent of love for God and neighbour (whether near or far, in Barth’s classification). Consequently, this thesis reinforces the significance of God’s redemptive and reconciling economy of salvation, and the need for the transformative work of the Holy Spirit.

The remainder of the section more briefly considers some further ramifications arising from this thesis. They include personal boundaries, friendship, loneliness, obedience, and re-thinking love, hierarchy, ethics, and sin. These would need to be the subjects of further research.

2 Taken from Philippians 4.8.
1.1: The central significance of relationships in a ‘relational ontology’.

An inescapable and fundamental feature of trinitarian theo-logic, contained in the dynamic combination of hypostases, ekstasis and perichoresis is that relationships, and the quality of those relationships, are immensely important. Each of these processes of hypostases, ekstasis and perichoresis relies on how much and how well relationships work. Thus hypostases benefit from the ekstatic relational, caring, responsive and affirmational efforts of other hypostases, whilst perichoresis is similarly dependent on the combined beneficial relational participation of hypostases. This sub-section therefore explores the significance of relationship in more detail and reflects on how much the biblical texts appear to address this theo-logical ontology and its interconnected processes.³

Please note that reference here to the importance of relationships does not detract from, or affect in any way, the unique roles and value of hypostases (please see Ch.7 and Sub-section 1.3 below). Rather, it is the case that the significance and relevance of relationships to ontology is considerably underplayed in Western Individualism (as well as, of course, in substance ontology). Even trying to convey, or explicate, this relational approach to ontology, and the degree of difference this approach represents from Western individualism, is not entirely easy. In no small part this is because Western individualism is so pervasive that it acts as a controlling paradigm rendering the key ontological importance of relationships difficult to conceptualise and therefore fully appreciate.⁴ I will draw an

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³ In considering hypostasis and ekstasis, John Zizioulas too referred to what he termed 'the ontological primacy' of relationships. He suggested that, contrary to Western perception, it is relationships that guarantee the uniqueness of each person and underwrite and constitute being itself, as the following passage indicates: 'Personal identity is totally lost if isolated, for its ontological condition is relationship. ...This hypostatic fullness as otherness can emerge only through a relationship so constitutive ontologically that relating is not consequent upon being but is being itself. The hypo-static and the ek-static have to coincide.' Zizioulas, "On Being a Person," 46.

⁴ Majerus and Sandage make the same observation about the 'conceptual and cultural bias towards individuality' Brian D. Majerus and Steven J. Sandage,
analogy of an unusual but visual and replicable experience to try and demonstrate this more invisible relational and ontological perspective.

Taken from a compendium of youth group games, it is possible to get a group of people to sit on one another’s knees simultaneously without any chairs. All that is required is for everyone to stand in an unbroken circle facing the back of the next person sufficiently closely, and for all to ‘sit down’ at the same time. Although the resultant temporary seated state of being is uncommon, surprisingly it works, and it does so because each person is supporting another, and being supported in turn, around the circle. Of course, for it to be successful it requires a willing group to be involved. If there was only one person, or people were not willing to participate, this different state of being could not be achieved.

Translating this figurative physical analogy into ontological terms: in a relational ontology the ekstasic efforts of each hypostasis is upholding the hypostasis of another and also contributing to the perichoresis of the whole group. In a relational ontology, of course, the support is not principally, or solely, physical, as it is in this youth game. Instead, it is primarily emotional, and psychological care, and indeed affirmation that is upholding the other hypostases and contributing to perichoresis. The implications of this entirely different ontological arrangement are enormous for an understanding, and theology, of ‘family’.

By definition, an analogy is only a partial representation. This analogy begins to fall down because this is a youth group game and a rather transient state, whilst the ‘ontological primacy’ of relationships is something potentially occurring across all age groups all the time and in continuous real time. The fact that it can be a mixture of ages means, for example, that younger can be supporting older and much older can

be supporting much younger. Nor is it necessarily a series of persons who are ekstatically supporting only the next person. Ekstatic support can be mutually reciprocal, as I indicated in Ch.7, and can entail multiple significant relationships for each hypostasis. In the youth group example, the moment one part fails the whole is in some danger of collapse but these multiple relational connections in real life means it is not quite as direct a likelihood, or connection, from one relational failure to the entire group (though it undoubtedly still has an effect). This particular game also requires simultaneous action in order to work in practice. As I explained in the previous chapter, however, neither synchronicity, nor exclusive mutuality, are essential in a trinitarian anthropology, since ekstasis has consequential effects over time and beyond the immediate circle. This, for instance, ties in with Paul’s analogy of sowing and reaping I refer to in the next sub-section.

The essential difference from Individualism that I am attempting to demonstrate is just how important relationships are for ontology. This involves, but is not limited to, affirmation of identity and of particular hypostases (or Selves), personal wellbeing, and the significance of being a member of a particular group or groups. Please notice that I am carefully not ascribing a value to the foregoing since theoretically and practically the ontological effects on the persons and groups can be positive or negative, or even a mixture of both. At this stage I am simply establishing how important these processes may be. (It follows syllogistically, and in reality, that where relationships are not ideal then this can be damaging to identity, self, wellbeing, and to the sense of being an integral member of a specific wider group).

As outlined in Chs.1 and 4, further support for such a relational ontology can be adduced from a number of sources. These include Attachment and child development studies, the work of philosophers, like Buber and MacMurray, the extensive Christian and secular literature on family, not forgetting the enormous amount and interest in fictional and non-fictional accounts of people’s lives where
relationships feature heavily. The existence of these multiple sources provides additional evidence, if any was needed, that this relational approach to ontology holds some merit. This evidence manifestly contradicts the prevailing paradigm and tenacious tenets of Western individualism. Yet few of these sources would necessarily acknowledge any explicit trinitarian theological association whatsoever, including the Christian literature. In Ch.4 I followed Gunton and LaCugna’s theories about trinitarian theological mis-steps that provide cogent reasons why no such connection may have been made.

What is striking, in the context of this discussion about the ontological significance of relationship, is the degree to which the Biblical material, both in the Old and New Testaments, lays explicit stress on the importance and quality of relationships both between human beings and God, and between human beings. One of the most well-known examples incorporates both: ‘Love the Lord your God with all you heart and with all your soul and with all out mind ... love your neighbour as yourself’. Indeed, in the Matthean version Jesus is recorded as averring that this summary encapsulates ‘all the Law and the Prophets’. Moreover, it has not been hard to find biblical passages to cite in order to demonstrate the trinitarian processes of hypostasis, ekstasis and perichoresis, either in the previous chapter, or in the next section on ecclesiology. Indeed, the quality of hypostatic, ekstatic and perichoretic approach, attitude and behaviour that is enjoined in the Bible is extraordinarily high, so much so that it arguably marks out ‘Christian’ and ‘Christlike’ in the most positive, beneficial and distinctive sense of these words. 1 Corinthians 13.4-7 offers one of many examples of these soaring standards. It is within these conditions, I argue, that the

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5 Gunton, The Promise of Trinitarian Theology, 93; Buber, I and Thou; MacMurray, The Self as Agent, 1; Persons in Relation, 2; Smith, The Argument to the Other: Reason Beyond Reason in the Thought of Karl Barth & Emmanuel Levinas. Cf. Speidell, "A Trinitarian Ontology." See also the quotation from Andrew Root in Ch.7, 336.
6 Cf. Yu, Being and Relation.
7 Matt. 22.36-40, Mark 12.28-31.
8 Matt. 22.40.
trinitarian processes of hypostasis, ekstasis and perichoresis flourish and can be seen functioning optimally. The Biblical passages indicate (i) the finest attitudes and behaviour effectively defining hypostasis, ekstasis and perichoresis, (ii) the rationale that lies behind those attitudes and behaviour, and (iii) precisely how these may be attained.  

This biblical precision in spelling out exactly how to initiate, maintain and even repair relationships is akin to having the specific written instructions from the compendium that I rehearsed for the youth game above. In the case of that game those instructions perform a vital function since without them it is highly unlikely that the desired new ontological state of ‘group seating’ could be achieved. Similarly, the existence of this repeated and sustained relational theme from the Genesis accounts, through the history of the Israelites, the Commandments, Psalms, Wisdom and Prophetic literature to the Gospels and Epistles, suggest that the optimal ontological conditions are both difficult to achieve and exceptionally important. Negative examples are also used. For instance, sibling jealousy, rivalry, rape, incest and fratricide go back as far as Genesis 4. Yet the evidence that this is not the best, or desirable state of affairs, is also not hard to find. Contrast, Psalm 133.1, or Joseph’s approach to his brothers who plotted to kill him and sold him into slavery (Gen. 36 & 50), or Jesus’ reply to Peter’s conditional and grudging regard for his brother in Matt. 18.21-35. A number of passages use the analogy of the breakdown in human relationships for the loss of relationship with God – the rebellious child in Isaiah 1 and Hosea 11, and the unfaithful wife in Hosea 1-10. Malachi,

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10 This is just a selection of passages drawn from these respective strands. There are many more. Isaiah 1, Matt. 18.21-35, John 13.12-17, 1 John 3.11-24.
11 Brueggemann describes this as the move from ‘a vertical crisis’ and ‘the travesty’ in Ch.3 to a ‘horizontal problem’ and ‘the scandal’ in Ch.4. He adds that this demonstrates ‘a crucial human agenda is the brother-problem’. Brueggemann, Genesis, 55. Nor is this confined to brothers: sisters, in-laws and grandchildren feature from Genesis onwards, see Genesis 29-31.
12 E.g. Genesis 4, Genesis 6, 2 Samuel 13.
like Genesis 6, also indicates God’s direct interest in human behaviour that is destructive of relationships.\textsuperscript{13}

The biblical stress on the establishment, maintenance and restoration of good relationships provides additional evidence of how much good quality relationships are seen as the ideal default position for individuals and communities to be. There are thus a number of recommended sequential and non-sequential components that appear specifically designed to further this aim. I have used the terms \textit{hypostasis}, \textit{ekstasis} and \textit{perichoresis} below because I believe these trinitarian terms fairly summarise the intent of the cited texts.

1) Attempt to maintain \textit{ekstatic} love towards one another at all times, for the sake of \textit{hypostases} and \textit{perichoresis}.\textsuperscript{14}

2) Recognition of the impact on \textit{hypostases} of behaviour or attitudes that have represented the opposite of \textit{ekstasis}, and have adversely affected \textit{perichoresis}.\textsuperscript{15}

3) A personal responsibility on the person affected to convey their perception of the offence, and on the offender to try and make amends.\textsuperscript{16}

4) Acknowledgement of the harm that has been caused and the possible need for reparation.\textsuperscript{17}

5) A further responsibility on the offended to forgive, and on the offender not to offend again.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{13} Has not the Lord God made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth. “I hate divorce” says the Lord God of Israel, “and I hate a man covering himself with violence as well as with his garment,” says the Lord Almighty. Malachi 2.15-15, cf. Matt. 19.4-6.

\textsuperscript{14} Ps. 133, 1 Cor. 10.31-11.1, 1 Peter 4.8, 1 John 4.7-12, 19-21.

\textsuperscript{15} Romans 14.13-19, 16.17-19.

\textsuperscript{16} Matt. 5.23-24, 18.15-16.

\textsuperscript{17} Exodus 22.1, Lev. 6.1-7, Numbers 5.5-8, Ezekiel 33.14-16, Luke 19.1-10.

\textsuperscript{18} Prov. 16.9, Eph. 4.32, Matt. 18.21-35. According to the following article and research in a peer-reviewed journal, psychologists had not paid much attention to forgiveness, despite its ‘rich history' including in ‘Judaeo-Christian theology'. The authors found that ‘forgiving is a motivational transformation that incline people to inhibit relationship-destructive responses and to behave constructively towards someone who has behaved destructively towards them'. They noted that this transformation was triggered or enhanced by the degree of empathy that the aggrieved had towards the offender. Michael E. McCullough, Everett L. Jr.
6) It may entail loving your enemies, or taking measured community action about those who are wilfully divisive.\(^{19}\)

Arguably, the entire program of this complex interplay is to promote ekstasis at each and every stage and restore genuine relationship for the sake of the hypostases and in order for perichoresis to flourish.\(^{20}\)

In his book, *Compassionate Justice*, Christopher Marshall examines the New Zealand and Western Justice system through the lens of the parables of the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son, from Luke’s gospel. He points out that offending is ‘relational rupture’. The prodigal son:

Does not merely break biblical law at some technical level. He does something far worse: he wrecks bedrock relationships. His offending manifests a profound disrespect for the rights and needs of others something that, according to restorative justice thinking, constitutes the harmful essence of all crime.\(^{21}\)

For Marshall, the Old Testament Torah combines elements of modern Western Law and ‘positive moral exhortations that lie beyond the reach of any coercive sanction (the realm of modern ethics rather than the law)’.\(^{22}\) This leads him to suggest that ‘true justice’ is a ‘condition of individual and communal “rightness” in its most comprehensive sense’. This, he avers, is achieved by ‘the cultivation of positive virtues, the sustaining of healthy relationships, and the manifestation of overflowing compassion for those who suffer and those who fail’.\(^{23}\) Marshall does not mention the Trinity at all, or use the trinitarian terms I am referring to, but what he accurately perceives in the Torah and these parables is the ontological importance of

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\(^{19}\) Matt. 5.43-48, 18.17, Titus 3.9-11.

\(^{20}\) Romans 12.9-21, 2 Cor. 13.11, Philippians 4.2.


\(^{22}\) Ibid., 139.

\(^{23}\) Ibid.
relationship and the trinitarian processes of *hypostasis, ekstasis* and *perichoresis*. What marks the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son’s Father out is their *ekstatic* attitude and behaviour, in sharp contrast to the Good Samaritan’s victim’s assailants, the Prodigal son himself, and his older brother. *Perichoresis* is the goal. Each *hypostasis* in these stories carries an *ekstatic* responsibility towards the others and their own *hypostases* are variously impacted positively and negatively by the others’ attitudes and actions.

**1.2: Ecclesiology, New Testament texts, and a theology of ‘family’?**

The previous section leads on to a specific consideration of ecclesiology (or ‘ecclesial theology’, as Najib Awad terms it) from the perspective of the New Testament texts. Whilst initially ecclesiology might appear an odd place to continue thinking about the ramifications of this thesis for a trinitarian theology of family, nevertheless I contend that these texts provide a number of cogent reasons for doing so. To begin with, writers such as Aasgard, Banks, Crosby and Lassen have observed the explicit use of ‘family’ language in the New Testament to describe relationships within the church, and indeed the concept of ‘church’ itself. Eva Marie Lassen noted that family metaphors such as ‘God the Father’, ‘Jesus the Son’, ‘children of God’, ‘brothers and sisters in Christ’ were an essential vehicle ‘to develop and communicate a Christian theology as well as constructing a church community with a certain kind of leadership and certain patterns of interactions between its members’. Roman listeners, she says, would have related to Christianity partly through the Christian use of family metaphors. Her rationale was that it would have struck several chords, coming at the same time as the family was being seen at the heart of Roman society, where fictive kinship and sibling affection were commonplace and the

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24 Awad, *Persons in Relation.*
26 Ibid.
Fatherhood of God could be construed in *paterfamilias* and Father/Son terms.

Robert Banks, however, believed that the power of the family metaphor lay not just in its appeal to Hellenistic and Roman audiences but in its faithfulness to its ecclesiological subject.27 There were, of course, some notable differences with Roman *familia*. The language of brother- and sister-hood cut across the *cursus honorum* of Roman society. In theory there was no bond or free, male or female, Gentile or Jew.28 To this extent *Ekklesia* was egalitarian and ‘hierarchy was intentionally de-emphasised’.29 ‘Even the inadequacy of the organic unity of the ‘body’ metaphor leads Paul to utilise the language of human, and especially, family relationships’.30 Crosby suggests that the sheer number of allusions to ‘household’ or ‘family’ means that this is the ‘assumed primary metaphor’ for the church in the new Testament.31 Like Jesus Christ, Paul makes use of the widely understood practice of *fictive, or surrogate, kinship* to describe the relationships between Christian believers and God, and, derivatively, between one another.32 Referring to believers as ‘brothers’ and ‘sisters’ is one of the commonest descriptions of Christians in the New Testament as well as a

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27 Banks, *Paul’s Idea of Community*.
28 Fiorenza, *Discipleship of Equals*.
29 Hellerman, *The Ancient Church as Family*, 12. Matt 23.8-12, James 2.1-9. There is some debate in feminist literature as to how liberating Gal. 3.28 actually is, see Gonzalez, *Created in God’s Image*, 13-16.
30 Banks, *Paul’s Idea of Community*.
31 Banks concludes with Crosby that the application has often been overlooked, because of the rare occurrence of *oikeioi*. Nevertheless, Crosby’s study of Matthew underscored the importance of the *oikos/oikia* in the shaping of the common life of the first Christians. Crosby found the New Testament makes use of the term *oikos* 112 times and *oikia* 94 times, and that these terms are used interchangeably. In Matthew’s gospel they occur 9 and 27 times respectively. However since the household constituted both persons in relationship and their resources he produces an Appendix with approximately a further 1400 references solely from Matthew, which Crosby claims would have had a household connotation and resonance. Crosby, *House of Disciples*, 38-9, 325-8.
distinguishing form of salutation.\textsuperscript{33} So much so that with some passages it is not immediately apparent whether the kin referred to are biological or ecclesiological.\textsuperscript{34}

This choice of terminology and metaphor was not simply a highly successful mission strategy of the nascent church. Jesus Christ’s recorded words also made use of this ‘family’ language and these familial metaphors, to the extent of radically redefining ‘family’.\textsuperscript{35} Furthermore, Jesus laid considerable stress on the quality of relationship that this language implied, both between his disciples and between the disciples and God.\textsuperscript{36} Nor was this quality of \textit{ekstatic} love to be restricted only to those who might reciprocate, or to whom they felt well-disposed.\textsuperscript{37}

The very nature of the relationship between the ‘Father’ and the ‘Son’ is itself depicted in explicit ‘familial’ language and terms. It is also strikingly described as one of love.\textsuperscript{38} It is this love that is portrayed as the impetus for Christ’s mission, incarnation and death, and for the work of the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{39}

Examining the texts from an ecclesiological perspective reinforces the earlier observations about the quality and paramount necessity of relationship both with God and, integrally linked, between the Christian believers. This linkage pivots on love. To give just a few examples:

\begin{enumerate}
\item Jesus’ injunction to his disciples in John 15.9-17.
\end{enumerate}

\textsuperscript{34} Matt. 7.3-5, Luke 17.3.
\textsuperscript{39} John 3.16, 15.13, Romans 5.5,8, Gal. 2.20, 5.22, Eph. 2.4, 2 Thess. 3.5, 1 John 3.1, 4.7-18.


iv) The lengths the writers of Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Peter and 1 John go to underscore the need to resolve differences and to love one another: see Philippians 2.1-4 or 1 Peter 4.8-11. Paul writes the most astonishing theology to convince the fractious and factious Jewish and Gentile Christians in Rome that they can be a perichoretic whole. He takes similar trouble to address numerous divisive issues, employing an extended analogy of the body, and carefully composing a metric poem on love, all to press his case for the Corinthian Christians to overcome their multiple schisms.

In sum, I contend, on the basis of the texts cited above, that a quality of ekklesial relationship is a significant and repeated theme in the New Testament, specifically bearing in mind the Sitz im Leben of the gospels and epistles within the early Church. Furthermore, I believe it is possible to discern the same trinitarian features of hypostasis, ekstasis and perichoresis that I have described in Ch.7 and section 1.2 above. Ekstasis and perichoresis particularly are quintessential features in the gospel accounts and letters to the churches, just as I have argued they are in respect of trinitarian theology, theological anthropology, and human family. Nor is hypostasis overlooked. The constant stress on the importance of individual people in the New Testament, regardless of gender, socio-economic background, ethnicity, age, disease, and mental or physical disability, together with the use of names and personal address, suggest that hypostasis was also significant. Not only are specific persons recognized as important individuals in their own right.


41 Zizioulas observes that the references to what he terms ‘particular human beings’ in the Old as well as the New Testament ‘are numerous’. He believes these added an entirely new dimension to Greek philosophy and to philosophy as a whole. Zizioulas, "On Being a Person," 38f. See also pp.35-37.
but the significance of both their personal character and their personal responsibility for ekstasis and perichoresis is also explicitly referred to.\textsuperscript{42}

This expectation of ecclesial hypostasis, ekstasis and perichoresis between people unrelated, from differing social strata, ethnic and cultural backgrounds contrasted with Graeco-Roman society, as I have mentioned, as well as the filial responsibilities to the patrilineal kinship group in Jewish culture.\textsuperscript{43} The dissimilarity with Graeco-Roman society is particularly evident in Paul’s letter to Philemon about Onesimus (Philemon 14-17). Paul is eliciting an ekstatic response from Philemon to recognise Onesimus’ hypostasis, regardless of his non-status as a criminal runaway slave, which would enable perichoresis between both of these men and indeed with Paul.

As I am suggesting with human biological family, these processes of hypostasis, ekstasis and perichoresis are not optional extras. They are, according to the New Testament, the very stuff from which the church is actually made and functions best. The fact that the authors of the New Testament found it necessary to write about these matters underscores their significance then, as well as arguably now.\textsuperscript{44} I am not, of course, suggesting that these authors had these particular trinitarian categories in mind when they wrote their texts, rather that these categories are consistent with the New Testament vision for ecclesial relations.

Indeed, if Selwyn’s hypothesis is correct in respect of passages in 1 Peter, and similar sections found in other epistles, then these particular New Testament texts may themselves have been derived

\textsuperscript{42} E.g. Rom. 12, 13.8-10, Eph. 4.17-5.21, 6.10-18, Phil. 2.14-16, 4.4-9, Col. 3.12-17, Titus 2, 3.1-8, I Peter 1.13-16, 2.1-3, 5.1-11.
\textsuperscript{44} Peter Marty talks of ‘community in the rich biblical understanding of ekklesia … a powerful place for transcending the individualistic tendencies that creep into so much of life. After all, the church’s business has everything to do with relationships, and most especially with putting people in touch with God and with the needs of others’. Peter W. Marty, "Shaping Communities: Pastoral Leadership and Congregational Formation," in For Life Abundant: Practical Theology, Theological Education, and Christian Ministry, ed. Dorothy C. Bass and Craig Dykstra (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 310.
from an early common baptismal catechism or ‘Christian holiness code’. By comparison of the separate texts Selwyn demonstrated a possible pattern of specific teaching that fell into a number of distinguishable parts. What is remarkable about the teaching content is the significant focus on the quality of relationships with God, with their ecclesial siblings, and extending beyond the church. Analysing these texts, I aver, underscores a trinitarian relational ontology consistent with the features of *hypostasis, ekstasis* and *perichoresis* that I have been outlining in this thesis.

Perceiving these trinitarian features of *hypostasis, ekstasis* and *perichoresis*, I contend, can also be demonstrated in other teaching addressed to the early Church. Take, for instance, Galatians 5.13-6.10. Paul lists as inimical to the Galatian fellowship: ‘sexual immorality, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissension, factions, envy, drunkenness and orgies’. All of these can be seen as self-serving rather than *self-donating*. All have the effect of disrupting *perichoresis* and of damaging *hypostases*, including of the person themselves. Paul goes on to note precisely that in the continuation of the same passage: ‘a person reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction’. In total contrast, Paul catalogues the ‘fruit of the Spirit’ in the well-known, but not necessarily well-practised, ‘love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control’. These *hypostatic*

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45 “Essay II” in Edward Gordon Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1946), 363-466. Selwyn acknowledges the earlier work of Dr. Carrington *The Primitive Christian Catechism*, Cambridge, 1940 and A. M. Hunter, *Paul and his Predecessors*. Selwyn was using *Formgeschichte* (narrative form investigation) ‘horizontally’, at a level beneath the surface across the texts, rather than simply mining downwards in each one. He commented at the time that it was ‘surprising so little of this work had been done’. Ibid., 367.

46 Selwyn follows Carrington in referring to three of those parts as the ‘*Abstinentes*’, ‘*Deponentes*’ and ‘*Induentes*’. The *Abstinentes* were specific activities converts were to avoid, cf. Romans 12.2, Col. 3.5-7, Eph. 4.17-19, Thess. 4.3,12,22, James 4.8, I Peter 1.14, 2.11-12. At baptism, according to this theory, they also took off (*Deponentes*) their old clothes that symbolically represented their old life, and put on (*Induentes*) new robes indicative of their new Christian lives. Selwyn argues for supporting evidence in Rom. 13.12-14, Gal. 3.27, Eph. 4.25-31, Col. 3.8-15, Heb. 12.1, James 1.21, 2 Peter 1-2, I John 2.15.

47 Gal. 6.8.
and ekstatic attributes and attitudes together promote ekstatic mind-sets and acts that build relationships, and thereby benefit other hypostases, the perichoresis of the community, and the person themselves. Paul indicates that there is a twin and apparently paradoxical responsibility on the part of each person to carry the burdens of others and also to be responsible for their own load. Paul encourages them to continue this ‘self-donating’ (in Miroslav Volf’s term):

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

Cornelius Plantinga reflected that baptism in ‘the threefold name’ of the Trinity ‘marks the adoption of human beings into the joy and warmth of the family of God’. He calls this one of the ‘striking implications of social Trinity theory’. Plantinga continues:

First, the confession that we are created in the image of God begins to resonate with new overtones. In our fellowship and koinonia, in such heavenly endeavours as telling one another the truth or in doing such honest work as will help those in need – above all in that love which “binds everything together in perfect harmony” – we show not only that we have become members of one another, but also that we as restored community, we-in-the-plural, have become a remarkable image of God. Race, class, sex, and other alienations get transformed into delightful complementarities, so that we know, and respect the other as other, but as co-other, loved other fellow, family member. For those who reflect on the image of God, in short, the Holy Trinity becomes a model not of narcissism, but of overflowing, other-adoring, agapic love.

Galatians is the artist’s sketch to the finished master canvas of Romans. In the latter, Milbank also describes agape as ‘intra-ecclesial

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48 Gal. 6.2,5.
49 Gal.6.9-10.
50 Plantinga, “The Perfect Family,” 27. Although Plantinga is not using the expressions ‘hypostasis, ekstasis and perichoresis’ I would contend that this passage conveys a very similar, if not exact, sense.
51 Ibid.
exchange’. He suggests that Paul’s ‘unfolding of the divine plan of salvation’ and the responsibilities of the Jewish and Gentile Christians towards one another and in Roman society implies ‘an infinite exchange of agape’.52 As with the prevailing Western definition and conception of ‘human being’ not matching the trinitarian theological anthropology I have outlined, so the current definition and understanding of ‘church’ does not necessarily reflect these New Testament emphases of ekstasis, perichoresis and hypostasis. I referred in Ch.4 to Hellerman concluding his book Ancient Church as Family that the early Church was ‘about the church as a loving, supportive family’. To which he had appended:

For many readers the contrast between community as it was experienced in the early house churches and what passes for Christianity in the West today will be regrettably obvious.53

Hellerman went on to note, however, that his own personal experience of church was far more like the model espoused in the New Testament. In particular, he recounts that some one hundred people in his congregation had voluntarily helped to fund his part-time doctoral research over a five-year period – many of whom eventually gathered to celebrate his graduation. Over and above the generosity and practical help that this afforded it is clear that the author was moved by the interest, affirmation, and indeed love of him as a person that this support represented. In a not dissimilar fashion, the Melbourne based Christian disability charity called ‘Luke 14.1’ has a video excerpt of a mother with her multiply disabled young daughter. The mother describes how she was ‘blown away’ by members of her church deciding to give them more support as a family. They did this as a team effort, providing regular cooked meals, cleaning their house from top to bottom, praying for them, and arranging respite. They called themselves ‘Team Sunny’, named after her daughter. Visibly moved on the video recording at the recall of these ekstatic acts, the mother says that this intervention, which took place over a sustained period, was the

52 Milbank, "Can a Gift Be Given?," 149.
first time she had begun to feel hope in their personal situation.
Furthermore, so struck was she by the beneficial impact this had on her
she was now seeking for ways in which she could reproduce that kind
of 'blessing' (her word) for someone else, (an instance of the
consequential effect of *ekstasis*, referred to in Ch.7). As one final
eample, I visited a church that had provided a vacant parish house to a
Sri Lankan refugee family. The family had come to Australia by boat and
the father was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder as a result
of seeing relatives killed and being tortured himself. This hospitality
had proved to be a formative experience for the church as well as
significant for the family. The day I visited, and despite their relative
poverty, the family had cooked a Sri Lankan feast for the entire church
to thank them for all their practical and emotional support.

In all of these scenarios above the operations of *ekstasis*,
*hypostasis* and *perichoresis* are apparent. To the extent that these
Triune processes occur, they create very significant differences for
individuals, and families, as well as for the *perichoretic* church
community itself. In keeping with the overflowing *ekstatic* love of the
Trinity this authentically should extend beyond the church
congregation into the wider community. That was occurring with the
Sri Lankan family. Sunny's mother noted that ‘church’ tended not to be
regarded positively by the parents she knew who also had disabled
children. Given the similar concerns and burdens that those families
faced, she said the strain frequently caused marriages and relationships
to fail. Like her with Sunny, they often had to attend many medical
appointments. Their difficulties were often further compounded by a
severe loss of income and social isolation due to the departure of a
partner, and/or the impact of being carers on their ability to work or
socialise. Sunny's mother therefore pondered what a difference it might
make to those parents if churches were to offer the same kind of
support that she had received.
I would argue, on the basis of the biblical material and this thesis, that the changes required to upgrade churches to the standard God is looking for, are the very changes inherent in the trinitarian theology and anthropology I have outlined. Moreover, churches, like families, are intended to mirror God’s trinitarian *perichoretic* and *ekstatic* overflowing love to the communities around them. This is exactly the point that Steve Summers makes about a missionary approach for churches in a postmodern world of fostering intentional but unconditional friendships.\(^5^4\) In short, this trinitarian ecclesiology is both inherently attractive and automatically missiological.\(^5^5\) If this is the case, then deliberately fostering and developing relationships with the Triune God and with local sister and brother Christians is part of an essential and effective mission strategy in Australia, described by Stanley Hauerwas as one of the most secular societies in the world. Moreover, it is a singularly important way of bringing God’s blessing to communities.

There are two further brief reasons for including ecclesiology in the context of this thesis. The first I mentioned in Ch.1, namely that re-emergent trinitarian theology has itself gravitated towards ecclesiology. There appears to be a ‘fit’ between a growing sense of ‘persons in community’ in the Godhead and how the church ought to be, or could be. Theologians from a wide range of denominational backgrounds, such as Moltmann, Boff, Gunton, Patricia Fox, Cornelius Plantinga, James Torrance and John Zizioulas have all written in this area and concluded that trinitarian theology is significant for ecclesiology.\(^5^6\)

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\(^5^5\) Acts 2.42-47.

The second reason references the curious historical ambivalence towards family and church explored in Chs.2 and 3. Instead of a concentration on celibacy pre-Luther and on the family post-Luther, this thesis redirects the focus to the quality of divine-human and interpersonal relationships, irrespective of whether ecclesial or familial. This accords with the paradox of the dominical call to renounce kith and kin for the sake of the kingdom of God, alongside Jesus Christ’s support for marriage and family referred to in Ch.7. It means that, from a Christian standpoint, celibacy and family can co-exist and both be endorsed.

This historical ambivalence between church and family is similarly reflected in a contemporary bifurcation of the Christian literature. Authors such as David Cunningham, Stanley Hauerwas and Rodney Clapp have questioned whether there is much purpose in studying the family theologically, preferring to concentrate on the church instead. Conversely, the large Christian literature on the family has appeared to dwarf similar attention being paid to the church, certainly prior to the re-emergence of trinitarian theology. I have also earlier demonstrated that there has been a long history and sometimes quite confused overlap between the church and families. This thesis proffers a rather different way of thinking about both biological family and the church that closely reflects the biblical portrayal and its deliberate use of family language. No longer is it necessarily a question of either one or the other, or of mixing them almost arbitrarily, for example in the Roman Catholic notion of ‘domestic church’, without

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57 In this respect the Orthodox Church position, which affirms marriage and celibacy equally, is more in keeping with the New Testament material and with this trinitarian theological approach, than the variable and ambivalent approach the Western church has pursued. Evdokimov, The Sacrament of Love.

58 Clapp, Families at the Crossroads; Cunningham, These Three Are One.

59 John-Paul II, Familiaris Consortio; Ouellet, Divine Likeness; Clement, Stromateis, 85. Cahill, Family.

60 Banks, Paul’s Idea of Community; ibid.; Hellerman, The Ancient Church as Family. Gunton and Hardy, On Being the Church.
sufficient thought about what that means, or entails.\footnote{Cahill, \textit{Family}, 83-110; Ouellet, \textit{Divine Likeness}, 38-43, 118-19, 68-69, passim; John-PaulII, \textit{Familiaris Consortio}, 91-116. In Ch.3 I also noted the adverse effects of Luther and then Calvin seeing the family as a ‘little church’.
} Instead, the dynamic processes of \textit{hypostasis, ekstasis} and \textit{perichoresis} enable both church and family to be critically examined from the same trinitarian perspective.

If I have still failed to make a convincing case for why the theology of trinitarian theology means that ‘family’ relationships and ecclesiology can and should be examined together, and that this, together with trinitarian theology itself, can be supported on a scriptural basis, then I turn to my final piece of evidence in the form of a remarkable thesis by Earl.\footnote{Muller, \textit{Trinity and Marriage in Paul}, 60.} Muller is an American Roman Catholic scholar who became interested in the theme of marriage in Paul whilst trying to provide marriage guidance for couples from Scripture. He thought Augustine’s psychological and love analogies were both inadequate because they attempted to understand ‘communitarian realities’ in terms of the individual. These, Muller said, ‘do not provide the basis for an analogy which is fully proportionate to the reality that is human community’.\footnote{Ibid., xiv.} He believed that psychological and ‘interactional’ analogues had been variously developed but not a ‘genuinely communitarian’ one, as he put it. He saw his thesis as attempting to address this lacuna.

Muller’s methodologically sophisticated and detailed analysis found that Paul used the same ‘fundamental categories’ in ‘his discussions of God, of Christ, and of the Spirit’ as he did when looking at the marital \textit{and} ecclesial community. Muller summarises:

\begin{quote}
It was ... shown that the similarity in fundamental categories was not accidental. Thus, the marital order expressed in such passages as I Cor. 11.2-16 is explicitly linked to that order established in Christ; the knowing how to take a wife in holiness and honor of I Th. 4.4-5 is seen in 1 Cor. 2.7-3.1 as the activity of
\end{quote}
the Holy Spirit who mediates the knowledge of all spiritual realities; the construction of the one body from diverse elements seen sexually in 1 Cor. 6.16-17 is seen ecclesiastically in 1 Cor. 12.7ff as accomplished by the one God, from whom are all things.64

As alluded to in Ch.6, Francis Watson’s reading of Paul in 1 Cor. 11.2-16 is rather different from Muller’s, and from many other commentators. Watson sees this passage not to do with marriage but to do with church, and not with subjection but the empowerment of women.65 I am inclined towards Watson’s careful interpretation. This does not detract from the overall force of Muller’s claim, since Watson nonetheless concludes that after peeling away ‘misleading statements’ and ‘the hermeneutics of historicism’ the ‘real subject matter of this passage’ is ‘the togetherness of man and woman in the Lord, within the koinonia of agape’.66

Using a form of argument borrowed from Anglo-American jurisprudence, Muller begins with the assertion that humans are made in the image of God (Gen. 1.27). This ‘data’ depends on the ‘warrant’, as just mentioned, that Paul discusses communities using the same categories as he uses for God, Christ and the Spirit, evidenced in Muller’s detailed exegetical and theological analysis. This ‘warrant’ in turn is dependent on ‘exceptions’ and ‘rebuttals’ that might challenge its veracity and applicability. Muller deliberately compared his approach with Augustine’s criteria for a good analogy and since these were satisfied, he concluded that this meant ‘an analogy can be established between human community and the Trinity’.67 If Muller is correct, then Paul is deliberately referencing the Triune God in respect of both marriage and the church, in a similar manner, and potentially for a similar reason, to the claims I am making in this thesis.

64 Ibid., 209.
66 Ibid., 89.
67 Muller, Trinity and Marriage in Paul, 60, 4-5. I have just summarised over 525 pages of dense text and endnotes in about three paragraphs so I have not done anything like justice to the detail of Muller’s argument.
1.3: Affirming the pivotal importance of individual persons

Harriet Harris’ modalist critique was that theologians like McFadyen and Elaine Graham overstated the importance of relationship to the point where the hypostasis, or person, no longer appeared to exist. In signalling the significance of relationships for ontology I am not overlooking the existence, significance and agency of the person, or hypostasis. As the previous chapter and the sections above will have demonstrated, hypostases carry vital and unique responsibility for ekstasis and towards perichoresis, as well as being ontological beneficiaries of the same processes. Thus the non-existent answer to Cain’s rhetorical question from Genesis 4: ‘Am I my brother’s keeper?’ – was an emphatic yes! The tragedy began when Cain did not think or act ekstatically towards Abel or count their perichoresis as of value. Jesus makes the same point about the extent of personal hypostatic responsibility in Matt. 5. 21-22, 27-30.68

Whilst the New Testament is often addressed to groups but sometimes mistakenly read as principally applying to individuals, there are equally many passages that unmistakeably point to individual ekstatic responsibility and hypostatic character. The examples of the prodigal son and the Good Samaritan could be joined by many others from Jesus’ parables, such as the rich man in Luke 16, or the young ruler in Luke 18. Some sections outlining desired attitudes and behaviour are clearly addressed to individuals, as with Paul’s charge to Timothy (1 Timothy 6.11-21). Other passages, like I Corinthians 3.10-15, 9.24, Philippians 3.17, Hebrews 10.24, and James 1.19 all appear to emphasize specific individual response or action, or the requirement on each and every person to step up.

The unique character of an hypostasis is a combination of their particular genetic inheritance and make up, their appearance, gender,
abilities, personality traits and disposition together with the type and quality of relationships that they find themselves in, or engage in.\textsuperscript{69} In this latter sense John Donne was right to assert that no man, or woman, is an island. Nor can their hypostasis be overlooked, ignored, or subsumed within a greater whole, without any effect. It therefore matters that others recognise, affirm, praise, encourage, communicate with, listen to, and deal equitably with each particular person.

Equally, an hypostasis is not an isolated individual with no responsibility for others. Christopher Lasch’s influential book The Culture of Narcissism noted that Erich Fromm used the term narcissism ‘as a synonym for the “asocial” individualism which … undermines cooperation, brotherly love and the search for wider loyalties’.\textsuperscript{70} Lasch argued that whilst western society promoted narcissism and narcissism offered a way ‘of coping with the tensions and anxieties of modern life’, nevertheless, to the extent that it interrupted and weakened the quality of relationship narcissism ‘falls with particularly devastating effect on the family’.\textsuperscript{71} I would translate this as narcissism represents a lack of ekstasis on the part of the hypostasis, which has negative consequences for other hypostases, for perichoresis and for the person’s own hypostasis.\textsuperscript{72}

Consequently, part of the complicated task of parents is to love and affirm the unique specialness of their child or children, whilst at the same time curb their egos only to the extent that they recognize the existence and appreciate the needs of other hypostases.\textsuperscript{73} Wise parents

\textsuperscript{69} Studies of identical twins growing up in the same family have found they separately elicit slightly different patterns of responses and these ‘micro-climates’ affect and distinguish their separate uniqueness and particularity.


\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., 50.

\textsuperscript{72} Lasch also referred to Sennett’s idea that narcissism ‘had more in common with self-hatred than self-love’. Ibid., 31.

\textsuperscript{73} I was told a story of a wife who talked sagely to her husband about their son. Her words illustrate the importance of affirming and developing unique hypostases. She
effectively encourage ekstatic attitudes and behaviour. Families offer a unique environment for both the affirmation of hypostases and for the encouragement of ekstasis and perichoresis. Part of the semantic understanding of ‘family’ is contained in these important processes.

In Chs.1 and 4, I referred to the rather different and more relational conceptualisation of family and society by Asian and African writers, including Carver T. Yu, Auris Hung, Chol Won Sun, Jung Young Lee and Mpyana Fulgence Nyengele.74 Their concern was that over-emphasis on the individual neglected the ontological importance of the wider familial group. Whilst they provide an important corrective to the deleterious effects of Western individualism, there remains a danger that the unique hypostases of each family member may be overlooked. This is a corollary of the wider point that Colin Gunton was trying to make by qualifying Carver Yu’s ‘monism’ with a trinitarian perspective.75

**Summary of subsections 1.1 -1.3**

This first section of this final chapter began with an exemplification of the importance of relationships. I then examined ecclesiology and hypostasis in turn. I have attempted to show that all three spheres collectively represent a significantly different relational ontology that supports this trinitarian thesis and is firmly grounded in Scripture.

The remaining subsections in this first section are ramifications that flow directly from, and hopefully serve to amplify, this research.

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75 Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 108; Yu, *Being and Relation*, (esp. the final chapter).
Each is relatively brief. They are not in any particular order. They could be separate foci for future research. Their inclusion was designed to demonstrate the considerable scope and fruitful possibilities of a trinitarian theology of ‘family’ and make suggestions for future topics for research.

1.4: Personal boundaries

Personal boundaries are a longstanding area of interest in family therapy, psychiatry, psychology, counselling, and child and adolescent development. Personal boundaries define the contours of a hypostasis and their differentiation from other hypostases. Influenced by Freud and Melanie Klein, David Winnicott’s research on ‘maladjusted children’ observed that some children did not seem to develop a clear sense of ‘self’ or ‘ego’. He believed this was the result of neglectful or abusive relationships. Furthermore, without this defined sense of self, he also noted that it was very hard for these particular children to make and keep friendships, and relationships in general.76

Psychiatry and family therapy also refer to ‘enmeshed relationships’, where it is not easy to distinguish between, say, a mother and her son or daughter. These relationships are seen as problematic for the respective parties and for effective therapeutic work with them both. In an enmeshed relationship it is hard for a child to know where the boundary of their hypostasis ends and that of the parent begins. Conversely, over-rigid boundaries between parents and children, or partners, which do not allow mutual communication and reciprocity,

76 Winnicott, The Child and the Outside World. Winnicott also observed that the same children would form a close alliance often with an adult who would see a very different and more acceptable side to their character, completely at odds with the perceptions of most other people. In Bowens’ terms these children had limited capacity for autonomous functioning – see next page.
can prove equally difficult for rather different reasons. These are referred to as ‘disengaged relationships’.

Definition 13 in Book 1 of Euclid’s Elements states that ‘a boundary is that which is an extremity of any thing’. He was of course referring to objects and not to people. Trinitarian theology makes a unique contribution to anthropology in suggesting that the boundary between people is not the extremity, ontologically speaking, subject to certain conditions. Instead permeable personal boundaries may be applicable between human beings, but patterned on revealed triune relationships. The renowned UK Christian family therapist, Sue Walrond-Skinner, makes this precise point. She relies on the ‘trinitarian discourses’ of John 16 and 17:

Here we are given a model of relationships which postulates *intimacy without fusion and differentiation without separation*. The relationship between the three Persons is one of equality and mutual love. The functions of the Person are clear and boundaries are firm but permeable. The intimate union between the Persons is given as a model for the unity and oneness of Christ’s followers with God and with each other.

Trinitarian theology, in this thesis, affirms the significance and boundary of each hypostasis whilst at the same time encouraging ekstatic activity to and from each hypostasis. In the children David Winnicott observed, the lack of ekstasis had affected their hypostasis and their ekstatic ability. I noted the same in the discussion of Sue Gerhardt’s work. In the example of an over-rigid boundary, both hypostases are curtailed from giving and indeed receiving ekstatic affirmation and support to the other. This is mutually detrimental to

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80 See p.394 above.

81 See p.340.
their respective hypostases and their perichoresis. Enmeshed relationships similarly damage all three of these processes.

More recently, Brian Majerus and Steven Sandage have discussed ‘Differentiation of Self’ (DoS). They define DoS as ‘both “separate-togetherness” and “together-separateness” that is a self-in-relationship’. Like Walrond-Skinner, they perceive that ‘differentiated relationality has its theological grounding in the Trinity’. They have used this concept to describe very similar scenarios to those outlined above but with the added dimension that relates to maturity, including spiritual maturity. The ‘emotional cut-off’ and ‘mutual dependency or fusion’ both create anxiety that interfere with relationship processes and reduce individual responsibility. By contrast a ‘differentiated person’ can define their ‘own beliefs and actions without requiring the same of others’.

In their book, entitled Boundaries, the authors, Henry Cloud and John Townsend, suggest: ‘boundaries define us. They define what is me and what is not me’. Transgressing the boundaries without permission can thus be harmful both for the hypostasis being transgressed and potentially for the transgressor. Proximal family relationships present a higher opportunity and risk for this to occur, although it can happen between complete strangers. Power imbalances in relationships can also increase the likelihood of transgression. This is not an example of ekstatic behaviour or attitude: quite the reverse. It may involve being invasive of the other hypostasis by abusing them physically, sexually, or verbally, or taking them for granted, and the

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82 Majerus and Sandage, "Differentiation of Self," 42.
83 Ibid., 41. They ascribe the originator of the term 'Differentiation of Self' to the family systems theorist, Murray Bowen. There is now apparently a burgeoning literature on Christian maturity based around this concept. Note to self – this is also reminiscent of couples’ work where the emphasis is on being able to own one’s own feelings and ideas and be respectful of the other person’s concerns, which may be rather different, in order to aid communication and appreciation of one another.
84 Henry Cloud and John Townsend, Boundaries: When to Say Yes, How to Say No to Take Control of Your Life (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1992), 31.
deliberate, or accidental, lack of attention to their verbal and non-verbal clues. In short, this is the opposite of Soskice’s point referred to in the previous chapter of the ‘other’ being attended to with love. It is not observant or respectful of the other person and therefore becomes, in Soskice’s terms, inhuman and immoral.85

Cloud and Townsend also refer to the balance of responsibility to carry one another’s loads, and bear one’s own burdens, similar to St. Paul’s words to the Galatians cited above. In short, there is a responsibility placed on each person to take responsibility for themselves as well as responsibility for others. Being unbalanced in this regard means a greater weight falling on one or more individuals. This may not be good for them, or indeed for the hypostasis less burdened as a result.

1.5 Friendship

Couples, and sometimes a parent and a child, will refer to the other as being their 'best friend’.86 Whilst this is a thesis about ‘family’ it is worth noting that some of the distinctive elements of friendship in fact share an affinity with the very trinitarian concepts of hypostasis, ekstasis, and perichoresis and ‘family’ that I have been exploring.

Friendship is a consistent theme in the Bible. Proverbs talks of a friend loving ‘at all times’ and ‘being closer than a brother’ (Prov. 17.17, 18.24b). Jonathan is described as ‘becoming one’ with David and loving him as himself (I Sam. 18.1). Exodus mentions Yahweh talking face to face with Moses ‘as a man speaks with his friend’ (Ex. 33.11). James refers to Abraham being called ‘God’s friend’ (James 2.23). The most

86 For example a renowned pre-War Methodist minister, Dr. Leslie Weatherhead, dedicated his book on friendship to his wife, Lyn, as follows: ‘True Wife and Truest Friend, who has taught me so much concerning human friendship as to deepen my faith in that which is divine’. D. Weatherhead Leslie, The Transforming Friendship (London: The Epworth Press, 1928).
significant passage is John 15.12-17 where Jesus calls the disciples his friends, if they do what he commands, and because he has shared with them everything he has heard from his Father. The supreme example of friendship, found in the same section, is the reference to Jesus laying down his life for them.87

Steve Summers’ published thesis *Friendship: Exploring Its Implications for the Church in Postmodernity* is a detailed study of the subject. He found that postmodernity was a complex environment in which to consider relationships generally. Moreover, ‘the Cartesian, solipsistic notion of the self’ was a persistent, and flawed, model.88 On the whole, Christian theology had not considered the subject of friendship as extensively as it might have done. Summers concentrated on the ‘particularity’ of friendship, interested in whether this was a valid activity, since it ran the risk of precluding others, the concern that Augustine had harboured. Summers found overwhelmingly that it was valid since there was something about the particularity of the relationship that was also constitutive for the *hypostasis* of both friends.89 In searching for a theological explanation of this he is clear that trinitarian theology holds the key, just as I have been arguing, and

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87 Cf. Rom. 5.6-11
89 Summers does not use the term ‘*hypostasis*’ but it aptly describes his meaning. Moltmann writes an illustrative passage about friendship shared with his wife, as follows: ‘That brings me to the last argument against the well-meaning suggestion that I should present my “individual approach”. Since I came to know my wife during our study together in Gottingen, I have ceased to feel that I am an “individual”. Our shared life began with a theological dialogue, and our marriage since then has been accompanied by theological dialogue. This has brought a great depth of friendship to our marriage and has made it an exciting affair, in which we have made constantly new discoveries in each other, in our own selves and together. Of course that does not mean that I want to share the responsibility for ‘my’ theological publications and foist them off on a partner. But I do want to draw attention to the constant and fundamental conversation from which my theological work derives and without which it cannot be understood. Precisely in such sharing one becomes “one’s own person”, to quote the German title of my wife’s book about the women around Jesus, and develops one’s own ideas. One respects the other’s ways and goes along with the changes that take place in them. That, I imagine, is individuality in sociality and sociality by virtue of individuality’. Moltmann, *History and the Triune God*, 167. Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendell has also written on friendship herself: Elizabeth Moltmann-Wendell, *Rediscovering Friendship*, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM, 2000).
he deliberately links his conclusions about friendship to the strategic mission of the church, as mentioned in Section 1.3 above.

Under this sub-section on ‘friendship’, the distinctively Australian concept of ‘mateship’ deserves mention and might warrant further investigation from a trinitarian theological perspective, as might the widely recognised phenomenon of teamwork.

1.6: Loneliness

‘It is not good for the man to be alone’.

The idea that the Holy Trinity is a community and that human beings made in that image are also intended to be in relationship suggest that the western condition of loneliness may be a deleterious one. In North America, for possibly the first time in human history, the number of dwellings with one person living on their own is beginning to exceed the number of households with two or more persons. It was recently reported that one third of Tokyo’s 38 million inhabitants live alone and some are now paying for friends in order to go shopping together, for instance. Of course, living on one’s own is not synonymous with, or necessarily indicative of, loneliness. Indeed, it is entirely possible to be lonely within a relationship, due to the absence of ekstatic exchange and perichoresis. Part of the exponential growth of emails, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Skype has been due to the need and the facility of making connections with others. Sometimes loneliness is self-imposed. In Bonhoeffer’s memorable words ‘we have pushed the other person from us’. Nevertheless, if this hypothesis is correct, then the absence of experiencing ekstasis and perichoresis may be a very serious matter for

90 Genesis 2.18.
the hypostases affected, and raises questions about the need to find ways that enable people to feel included, valued and part of a community.\textsuperscript{94}

\section*{1.7: Obedience}

This is not necessarily a popular topic in postmodern western culture, and it is one that is open to abuse where power differentials obtain, including between partners and between parents and children. Yet the very fact that there are dominical commandments implies a relational option for obedience, including the summary of the commandments to love God and neighbour (Matt. 22.37-40) and the injunction to love one another.\textsuperscript{95} The Johannine passage referred to above linked friendship for the disciples with their response to Christ's command. There are further references in John's gospel commanding love and associating relational love with obedience.\textsuperscript{96} Wessling notices this linkage in John 14.23-24, 31 and John 15.10-12,17. He comments: 'it seems that Jesus is describing a particular quality of love, a love that obeys commands'.\textsuperscript{97}

The intriguing passage at the end of John's gospel links a response of particular love on Peter's part to the command to 'feed my sheep' (John 21.15-17). The letter to the Philippians similarly links love and humility with Christ's own obedience to death (Philippians 2.1-8). Moltmann suggests that a better way of thinking about Christ's obedience is not as a master-servant in the Father-Son relationship, but as 'the mutual love in which Jesus and the Father are so 'one' that the Son is "in" the Father and the Father "in" him'.\textsuperscript{98} Marc Vial similarly notes of Gunton that he discerned the cross as the expression of the 'real fellowship' between the Father and the Son, since 'the suffering of

\textsuperscript{94} In this context the cry of desolation is significant: Ps. 22.1, Matt. 27.46.
\textsuperscript{95} cf. Romans 13.8-10.
\textsuperscript{96} John 13.34, 14.15, 15.12,14 & 17.
\textsuperscript{97} Wessling, "Divine Love, and Univocal Predication," 105.
\textsuperscript{98} Moltmann, \textit{History and the Triune God}, 167.
the Son, *incarnandus* from all eternity, is nothing but the form of his assent to the redemptive project...”

According to Francis Watson, both Paul and Augustine saw that ‘human fulfilment of the divine will can only occur through the Spirit’ (Rom. 7.6, 8.4). Gunton also suggested that the Holy Spirit enabled ‘the Son’s humanity to be the perfect expression of the Father’s will’. All of this indicates that obedience in this context is not a forced requirement but an act of *ekstatic* love integrally linked to relationships and *perichoresis*. Moreover, it is a particularly good example of the significance of the relationship between God and human beings. Disobedience, *under these strict criteria of genuine hypostatic voluntariness*, thus suggests an absence of love for, and relationship with, either or both the divine and human ‘other’ (Genesis 3).

1.8: Love

Another word for the process of *ekstasis* that has been under consideration, both in the last chapter and this, is *love*. It is the attitudes and actions towards another that show regard and seek the good of that other, which are demonstrated and outlined on countless occasions in the New Testament. Equating love with *ekstasis*, within a context of *hypostasis* and *perichoresis*, has revolutionary implications.

To begin with, as Jeanrond and others have indicated, it contradicts Platonic notions of love seen as a lack or a need. Milbank referred to the ‘over-rigorous’ notion of *agape* as strictly unilateral. He questioned whether this was congruent with our actual experience of human relationships. Nygren famously distinguished between *agape*

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100 Watson, *Towards a Pauline Sexual Ethic*, 149.
101 Vial, Marc. *op. cit.* 129.
102 See Sections 1.1 – 1.3 above.
and eros but both have been summarised by Brümmer as: ‘attitudinal rather than relational. Love has generally been taken to be an attitude of one person to another, rather than as a relation between persons’. Ekstasis conforms to neither of these suggested kinds of love and is, as I have sought to argue, intensely relational. Milbank’s previous argument about gift exchange similarly demonstrated that agape could be interpersonal and reciprocal.

Secondly, and curiously, Jeanrond noted that prior to his 2010 publication there had been a dearth of new theological investigation into love for the last forty years. This seems a strange omission when, as he points out:

Love is at the centre of Christian faith. God loves this universe in which human love as a gift of God is able to transform lives. God’s love and human love are of primary importance for theological reflection.

The resounding statements from John’s epistle and gospel make extraordinary claims about God as a God of love (1 John 4.7-19, John 3.16). This is not necessarily the view that many in Western society have of God. Yet these Johannine statements are by no means unique in the Bible. The biblical accounts and pictures that depict a God who cares constantly and passionately about human beings can be found throughout. As noted in Ch.5 the Johannine affirmations of God as a God of love resonated with the trinitarian understandings of Richard St. Victor and Julian of Norwich. Cornelius Plantinga summed up Richard’s argument that love is essentially other-directed. Thus Richard’s

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104 Milbank, "Can a Gift Be Given?", 149ff. Kevin Vanhoozer queries Brümmer’s views that love must be reciprocal since, argues Vanhoozer, an infant or an enemy may not be able or wish to reciprocate. I have noted earlier, however, that ekstasis both admits reciprocity but is not confined by it. Vanhoozer, Nothing Greater, 18-19.
105 Jeanrond, A Theology of Love, xi.
106 These are a sample: Ex. 15.13, 20.6, Deut. 7.8, 1 Kings 8.23, 1 Chron. 16.34, Neh. 9.17, Ps. 36.5, Isaiah 54.10, Jer. 31.3, Hosea 3.1, Joel 2.13, Zep. 3.17, Rom. 5.8, Eph. 1.4. For a concise essay on this subject see Geoffrey Grogan, "A Biblical Theology of Love", in Vanhoozer, Nothing Greater, 47-66.
‘remarkable conclusion’: ‘in order for love to be true, it demands a plurality of persons; in order for love to be perfected, it requires a trinity of persons’. \(^{107}\) Although Jeanrond thought there had been no theological investigation into love in the previous forty years, there had been one theological study that went to the core of the subject and did so in a similar trinitarian manner to Richard of St. Victor: Anthony Kelly’s \textit{The Trinity of Love: A Theology of the Christian God}.\(^{108}\) Kelly noted that the uniqueness of the divine reality was ‘to be Love’ in ‘utter self-transcendence’.\(^{109}\) I will confine his exploration to an edited version of just one passage:

For God, ‘to be’ is to ‘be-in-Love’; and to ‘be-in-Love’ is to be Trinity, as the one self-communicating mystery. Neither Love nor Trinity are superadded to the divine constitution, as it were. Love is not a quality that God has or an attitude that the divine three cultivate: it is what God \textit{is}. This, of course, means that God does not depend on anything beyond the Godself to be Love. … it may be said that the Divine Mystery is constituted as Being-in-Love by being Father, Son, and Spirit.\(^{110}\)

Kelly’s explication of being Love in ‘utter self-transcendence’ aptly depicts \textit{ekstasis}, and the \textit{ekstatic} communion that is God. ‘Self-transcendence’ indeed may be another synonym for \textit{ekstasis}.\(^{111}\)

The third revolutionary feature, in equating \textit{ekstasis} with love, is connected to my suggestion that the \textit{ekstasis} evident in the Trinity is also a key component process in the three spheres of ecclesiology, human family and Christian anthropology. Whilst there may be hesitation about talking of divine and human love as if they were the same, I have already noted in Ch.6 the unusual univocity with which both are linked by Jesus’ words in the gospel. Roy Clements goes so far as to say that ‘the congruence between God and his divine image in human beings is never more closely defined than in the semantic

\(^{107}\) Ibid.; Woodhead, "Love and Justice."; Jeanrond, \textit{A Theology of Love}.

\(^{108}\) Kelly, \textit{The Trinity of Love}. This book is not listed in Jeanrond’s Bibliography.

\(^{109}\) Ibid., 177.

\(^{110}\) Ibid., 178. Author’s italics.

\(^{111}\) See Ch.7, 327f & 337-345.
associations of that word love’. John Chryssavgis’ brief article: “Love and Sexuality: An Eastern Orthodox Perspective” starts by affirming that the ‘Trinitarian God is a God of personal relationships and that love is an ‘established ontological category’ that characterizes ‘both God and humanity’. Anthony Kelly fights shy of an entirely univocal application, contra Gunton and Wessling, as reviewed in Ch.6. Alan Torrance asks: ‘when we say that God loves and Mother Teresa loves, are we affirming the same thing or quality in both contexts?’ Kärkkäinen notes that Luther could conceive of divine and human love being coterminous but that human love can also be subject to selfishness, mixed motives and become perverted. Torrance returned to Athanasius’ distinction between mythologising, by projecting our opinions (epinoiai), say of love, onto God, and theologising (theologiein or analogein). Torrance continues:

In theologien (God-talk proper), our terms are extended to project (ana-logein) beyond their ordinary context of use in such a way that they refer to the reality of God. No longer mere epinoiai (arbitrary human opinions or ideas projected mythologically onto the transcendent), these terms become dianoiai – concepts that project through (dia) to the reality and being of God. The condition of this is meta-noia, as Paul interpreted it – that is the transformation of our thinking and concepts (noiai) and thus our terminology.

Torrance concluded on the basis of Romans 12.2 that it is possible for human beings to think and act in conformity with God but this “Athanasian” account safeguards ... the transcendence, priority, and initiative of God and the ontological relationship between the divine being and contingent human order’. The high bar for God’s

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113 Chryssavgis, “Love and Sexuality.”
114 Kelly, The Trinity of Love. See Ch.6, 318-320.
118 Ibid., 124
definition of love is found in the content and witness of Scripture, as reviewed in sub-sections 1.2 and 1.3 above.

1.9: Rethinking hierarchy

As Visser’t Hooft observed, it is extraordinary quite how long patriarchy has lasted.\textsuperscript{119} Its influence has been so extensive and so great that it is difficult to untangle the threads. Patriarchy has had an arguably powerful effect on this particular field of enquiry, namely theology and the family. I have examined some of these threads and some of the reservations expressed by feminists and by feminist theologians during the course of this thesis. A few examples will highlight the complex knot between patriarchy, family and theology. Thus, Miroslav Volf discerned that, despite Barth’s rhetoric and professed methodology to the opposite, he ‘projected a patriarchal construction of masculinity onto God and tacitly declared it was there already from the beginning!’\textsuperscript{120} From this Barth deduces that ‘human males ... initiate, beget, lead, and are superordinate’.\textsuperscript{121} As outlined earlier Tom and Alan Torrance, Moltmann, Weinandy and Hannah Bacon have all taken Zizioulas to task for his ‘patro-centric hypostatization of the Godhead’ and the stress he has laid on the \textit{monarche} of God the Father.\textsuperscript{122} I also previously quoted LaCugna noting that: ‘the hierarchical arrangement between men and women is professed to belong to the so-called natural order of creation and to be confirmed by the doctrine of the Trinity’.\textsuperscript{123}

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\textsuperscript{120} Miroslav Volf, \textit{Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness and Reconciliation} (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 171.
\textsuperscript{121} Barth, 1960b, 287 cited in ibid.
\textsuperscript{123} Chp1, n.85. LaCugna, Catherine M. “God in Communion with Us: The Trinity” in LaCugna, \textit{Freeing Theology: The Essentials of Theology in Feminist Perspective}, 94.
\end{flushright}
The connection between patriarchy, substance ontology, emanationism and hierarchy is such a strong one that it behoves to ask, in the light of the previous discussion about the Trinity and love, whether hierarchy is ultimately necessary in the Godhead and by extension in church, human and family relations. After all, it was Jesus who washed the feet of his disciples and suggested that the least in the kingdom of heaven would be the greatest.\(^\text{124}\) Awad reminds us with his phrase ‘reciprocally koinonial’ that Gregory of Nazianzus differed from his Cappadocian colleagues on the question of Trinitarian hierarchy.\(^\text{125}\) Some of the more recent explorations of love and the theo-logic of ekstasis and perichoresis may at last be changing patriarchy and hierarchy, not necessarily by replacing them with equality and egalitarianism but with a totally different way of thinking about divine and human organisation. Henriette T'Hooft’s earlier quoted response to Karl Barth gave pause for thought: ‘isn’t there something different from superiority, namely love. Love knows no superiority or inferiority’.\(^\text{126}\) This is an area where more research is needed.

1.10: Re-thinking ethics

As noted in Ch.4, a combination of Cartesian individualism and Kantian rationalism has bedevilled ethical debate and the resolution of intractable situations, particularly in respect of moral dilemmas, such as marriage breakdown and divorce. In Ch.7 I promised that I would return to Soskice’s remarkably perceptive comment that ‘to be fully human and to be fully moral is to respond to that which demands our

\(^\text{124}\) John 13.3-5, 12-17, Matt. 18.4.
\(^\text{125}\) See Ch.1, 40. *De Decr.* 20 Awad, "Between Subordination and Koinonia," 181. citing Gregory of Nazianzus *Theological Orations* 29. This is still a contentious area. For example, Emmanuel Durand has argued that ‘perichoresis is not a primary or foundational concept that can replace consubstantiality or Trinitarian order’. Emanuel Durand “Perichoresis: A Key concept for Balancing Trinitarian Theology” in Robert J. Woźniak and Giulio Maspero, eds., *Rethinking Trinitarian Theology* (London: T & T Clark, 2012), 181.
\(^\text{126}\) Quoted in Moltmann, *History and the Triune God*, 137.
response – the other, attended to with love.\textsuperscript{127} Trinitarian theology and the processes I have outlined of hypostasis, ekstasis and perichoresis offer a rather different and I believe more dynamic and comprehensive way of considering ethics, and of defining what constitutes ethical behaviour.

Thus, I have earlier argued that the processes of ekstasis and perichoresis consist of attitudes as well as behaviour. Consequently it is what we think about the ‘other’, as well as how we act towards them, that also counts. This means moral ‘behaviour’ is evaluated in the realm of the mind as much as it is in actions. This was precisely Jesus’ recorded point.\textsuperscript{128} Furthermore, each hypostasis carries a responsibility, to the extent of their ability, for ekstatic thought and action towards other hypostases and for promoting perichoresis. Thus a failure ‘to attend to the other with love’ is effectively immoral, as is not promoting perichoresis. Attending to the particular hypostasis with love requires attention, listening, observation, care, a desire for their good. Breidenthal describes this as ‘our radical availability to one another’.\textsuperscript{129} Promoting perichoresis is about healing relationships, preventing rifts, and not excluding people. These ekstatic attitudes and actions, as I have contended in Section 1.8 above, are attitudes and actions of love. Milbank notes that this is the argument of Paul in Romans 13.8:

> Let no debt remain outstanding, except for the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellow (human being) has fulfilled the law. The commandments, “Do not commit adultery,” “Do not murder,” “Do not steal,” “Do not covet,” and whatever other commandment there may be, these are all summed up in this one rule: love your neighbour as yourself. Love does no harm to its neighbour, therefore love is the fulfilment of the law.

This concentration on the relational is precisely the point that Christopher Marshall was making about the ethical component of the

\textsuperscript{127} Soskice, \textit{The Kindness of God}, 26.
\textsuperscript{128} Matt. 5.22, 28.
Torah.\textsuperscript{130} Paul refers to negative commands that prevent relational damage and to positive deliberate attitude and action. Don Kimball has observed that traditionally ethical teaching has not sufficiently emphasized this dynamic of love or provided instruction on how best to relate to others.\textsuperscript{131} This is not true, however, of the Biblical material that I have been reviewing in this chapter. Galatians 5.22-23 is but one example that reels off relational gems: ‘against which there is no law’.

Trinitarian theological anthropology thus reframes ethics from an entirely different perspective. Now responsibility is shared, as well as individual. Each hypostasis has a responsibility towards the others, including for the quality, consistency and reliability of their ekstatic attitudes and behaviours to others, and for encouraging perichoresis as a whole.\textsuperscript{132} The determining factor is not necessarily who is to blame. Instead the question is how may we, as individuals and corporately, further the quality, consistency and constancy of ekstatic love and perichoresis by my/our attitudes and behaviour?\textsuperscript{133} This theological underpinning to ethics might meet the hopes of, say, Michael Banner and Sherwin Bailey who, as I reviewed in the literature, thought ‘the vexed issues in sexual ethics’ would be ‘greatly eased if there was a wider theological framework in existence’.\textsuperscript{134} It might also fulfil Ruether’s plea for ‘a new way of reading marriage, family, sex, and

\textsuperscript{130} See pp15-16 above. Marshall, Compassionate Justice, 196f.
\textsuperscript{132} This accords with Bonhoeffer’s observation: ‘the other person is the limit placed upon me by God. I love this limit and I shall not transgress it because of my love. They are part of me.’ Bonhoeffer, Creation and Fall, 61. The Blackwell Companion to Religious Ethics refers to the African cognatus sum, ergo sumus ‘I am related, therefore we are’ as ‘decisive in African ethics.’ ‘Everything that contributes to maintaining, strengthening, and perfecting individual as well as communal life is good and right’. William Schweiker, ed. The Blackwell Companion to Religious Ethics (Oxford: Blackwell Pubs., 2008), 428.
\textsuperscript{133} For a brilliant dissection of the anatomy of blame and the failure of personal and corporate responsibility please see Trible’s analysis of Genesis 3, Trible, Rhetoric of Sexuality, esp. 116-22. Breidenthal suggests Christians have found ways to avoid the force of loving one’s neighbor ...Throughout most of Christian history patriarchy has fulfilled this function, not only by making women and children extensions of the husband and father (and thus effacing them as neighbors), but also by reducing all relationships, including those between men and men, to the question of the power to assert one’s will. Breidenthal, Christian Households, 26.
\textsuperscript{134} Banner, "Directions and Misdirections in Sexual Ethics," 103.
procreation *theologically* that can support a more just and more sustainable harmony of women and men, home and work?"135

1.11: Re-framing sin

As has been argued, it is worth observing that much Western thought about sin is infected with individualism. The trinitarian theological approach to human family, ecclesiology and anthropology that I have been outlining in the previous chapter, and above, sets the bar high for the way in which human beings relate to one another, placing individual responsibility on each *hypostasis*, for their thoughts as well as their deeds and, in addition, a joint responsibility for achieving the kind of society that enables *hypostases, ekstases, and perichoresis* to flourish for the good of all and to the glory of God. It also lays stress on the quality of individual and joint relationship with God. Seen from this perspective the gap between human *being*, as God is and as God intends, and human *being* as it actually occurs, appears to be a chasm.136 It reinforces why the incarnation and redemption were necessary. It also demonstrates why the Holy Spirit needs to convict and convince human beings to change, as well as enable that transformation to take place – including the renewal of our minds (*meta-noia*) that Alan Torrance refers to above. This was the point that Roger Hazleton made earlier about salvation as deliverance ‘from sinful selfhood ... into newness and fullness of life’.137 This ‘fullness of life’ finds ‘concrete expression in an uncompromising commitment to God and compassionate dedication to one’s fellow humans’.138

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136 Emmanuel Asante notes that in Africa ‘sin is hardly a private matter’. He quotes Pobee ‘sin is any act, motivation, or conduct which is directed against the *sensus communis*, and later ‘any act which does not contribute to the welfare and continuance of the family’. J. S. Pobee Toward an African Theology (Nashville: Abingdon) 1979, 111 in Asante, 361.
138 Ibid.
Paul’s letter to Titus directly links injunctions around domestic relationships, personal responsibility and moral restraint to the action of God in Christ Jesus ‘who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good’. (Titus 2.14) Paul asks Titus to remind the people ‘to be obedient to the authorities, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no-one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility towards all people’, all of which are ekstatic and perichoretic. He goes on:

At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. And I want you to stress these things so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.139

Notice the careful references to what might be termed the Economic Trinity that Paul employs in this passage. McFadyen’s criticism was that social trinitarianism might detract from the God who ‘creates and redeems, communicates and has relations with human beings’.140 He was concerned that having a ‘social model’ would not necessarily allow God to transform the situation. Instead, I believe that viewing the family from a trinitarian theological and relational ontological perspective reveals and intensifies the disparity between how human beings were created to be and how human being we are, and explains precisely why God’s prevenient grace in salvation and sanctification is required to rectify this situation.141

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139 Titus 3.1-11.
140 McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood*.
141 Husbands, "The Trinity Is Not Our Social Program."
Summary of Section 1

These foregoing reflections on relationships, ecclesiology, hypostases, personal boundaries, friendship, loneliness, obedience, love, hierarchy, ethics, and sin, conclude the constructive second half of this thesis. The relational trinitarian theology that I am portraying in this thesis presents opportunities and challenges that, in the opinion of this researcher, are relatively new, relevant, exciting, and merit further investigation. Comparing with the systematic theological criteria that Schwöbel outlined: of biblical congruity, critical harmony with the normative traditions of the church, pertinence to present day society, internally consistent, and related to all spheres of life, I believe this trinitarian theological approach is scoring consistently highly. It remains to evaluate this thesis against the other concerns that arose in the literature review, and to summarise and conclude this research as a whole.

2. Assessing this thesis against the concerns outlined in the Literature Review

The literature review in Ch.1 uncovered a plethora of varied, discrete and overlapping concerns in respect of (i) ‘family’, (ii) the Trinity, and (iii) any attempt to examine them together. The previous section has already begun to address some of these concerns, such as McFadyen’s critique that mimetic emphasis on the social Trinity came at the expense of salvation and actual relationship with the Triune God. Section 2 now considers the findings of this thesis against a number of the other so far unaddressed concerns.

2.1: Redefining ‘family’

Defining ‘family’ is widely seen as difficult to do. This is partly because of the ubiquity and diverse range of usage, and partly due to a
considerable number of factors such as its etymology, historical, social and cultural construction, ideological connotations, and subjective meaning. Some writers, like Breidenthal, have ceased to use the term completely as a result of these associations. Nevertheless, the widespread usage of ‘family’, despite these difficulties, and its Wittgensteinian ‘fuzzy boundaries’, would suggest that it carries some considerable import and meaning.

This thesis has argued that it is possible to define, or perhaps redefine, ‘family’ from a trinitarian theological perspective. In essence, ‘family’ represents a different and relational ontology that is ultimately defined by the Triune God. This was precisely what Cornelius Plantinga Jnr. claimed in an article in 1988. I have argued that the Trinity is a mutual and reciprocal society of hypostases whose ekstatic love and perichoretic community is not confined to the Triune God alone. The Trinity thus denotes a unique divine particularity and quality of perichoresis, ekstases and hypostases. Human beings are created in this divine image and designed to function best when they replicate these processes. A first opportunity to do so occurs in biological and legal kinship groups. However, these same processes can also take place in friendships, in particular communities and teams, and it is intended that they are practised and demonstrated by human beings generally and especially by those who claim to follow God. In each scenario the intention is that others outside the group may also benefit from the collective ekstasis and perichoresis of the group’s hypostases.

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142 Anderson, Sociology of the Family; Anderson and Guernsey, On Being Family; Barton, “Towards a Theology of the Family.”; Berger and Berger, The War over the Family; Breidenthal, Christian Households; Stacey, In the Name of the Family.  
143 Breidenthal, Christian Households.  
144 Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations.  
145 ‘The precincts of heaven are occupied by more than one divine person. Christian monothelism must include more than one divine thinker, doer, actor, lover. For if God the Father and the Son of God are “one,” they are not one person. Their unity is more like a marriage in which two person become one flesh, or like persons bound together in a single community.’ Plantinga, "The Perfect Family."
Since this definition of ‘family’ implies a rather different definition of human being from that proffered by Boethius or prevailing in Western society then I have also suggested that trinitarian theological anthropology requires a different conception and definition.\textsuperscript{146}

It follows from the theological definition of ‘family’ that it is not constrained by culture, historical circumstance, or even biological, or legal, necessity. Instead, it denotes a particular and peculiar combination of hypostases, ekstases and perichoresis. As such this relational ontology crosses into friendship and ecclesiology. That is not to say it has ceased to be of relevance and of theological, ontological, epistemological, and methodological use to biological and legal families. Quite the reverse; it provides a way of thinking about their operation, frailty, repair and significance that is unparalleled.

It also follows that Anderson’s and Guernsey’s notion that it would be better to conceive of family as a verb (familying) does indeed represent a far more accurate depiction than the static description of ‘family’ as a noun. Milbank’s thesis about gift is helpful here in thinking of a continuous exchange of ekstatic love and dynamic perichoresis. The UK child psychologist, Masud Hoghugi, similarly defines the word ‘parent’ as more accurately: ‘a relationship, a process and a group of activities. “To parent”,’ he claims, therefore, ‘is an active verb’.\textsuperscript{147}

\textbf{2.2: Theologically reflecting about children}

O.M. Bakke, Anne Borrowdale and Marcia Bunge all discovered that children and childhood were strikingly neglected theological themes. Arguably the trinitarian theological anthropology I have outlined holds children in much greater theological significance, in

\textsuperscript{146} Please see Ch.6, 299.

keeping with Jesus’ words about children. Each child is a unique and special hypostasis. Whilst all hypostases need to receive ekstatic love, children’s dependency renders that need imperative not only for their physical safety and development but also for their behavioural, cognitive, emotional and spiritual development as well, as Attachment theory research has demonstrated. Indeed, their overall development will be greatly influenced by the quality of ekstatic love and care they experience. This not only affects their childhood but their adulthood and their own future parenting capacity and ability.

Children are not solely passive recipients because they also generate ekstasis to their caregivers and to others. Part of the responsibility of parents, and adults generally, is to manage the balance of affirming children’s hypostases whilst promoting their ekstatic and perichoretic behaviour towards others, including God. It does appear that perichoresis is a further aspect that is important to children, as Andrew Root explored in his book on the effects of divorce. Indeed this present trinitarian thesis goes some way to explaining why the quality of ekstasis between parents, or indeed the breakdown of a parental relationship, are both so significant to the children in these families.

Nearly fifty years ago, Ian Ramsey’s report to the Church of England on the family, made the following insightful comments:

The importance of the family as basis of a wider society continues to be underlined. The family-community is a model situation in which the meaning of human relationship is learnt. In particular it is one of the few groupings in the modern world in which human persons have status and are respected simply because they are human persons, and not because they are useful. This is what makes family the principal school of charity.

149 Cairns, Attachment, Trauma and Resilience; Hughes, Building the Bonds of Attachment; Gerhardt, Why Love Matters.
150 Root, The Children of Divorce: The Loss of Family as the Loss of Being.
151 Ramsey, Christian Ethics and Contemporary Philosophy, 342.
Masud Hoghugi’s article entitled “Good enough parenting for all children – a strategy for a healthier society” made two significant points that link with Ramsey’s report. First, that of all the initiatives governments might take as ‘a rational and cost effective strategy for a healthier society’, then promoting what made for successful child rearing needed to be high on the list.\textsuperscript{152} By a healthier society Hoghudi was referring to reduction in crime, drug addiction, mental health concerns, divorce and child abuse. Second, he underscored the importance of ‘good enough parenting’ in reliably meeting children’s developmental needs. Hoghudi noted ‘how spectacularly natural families can fail to provide normal happy childhoods’. Despite the difficulties of defining parenting, he is clear it is the quality of relationship and particular loving ‘attention’, as Soskice termed it, that are the primary keys. Indeed, since these can be provided by people other than birth parents, it reinforces that it is these processes that are so ontologically important and the quality of earlier and contemporary relationships that make such a difference to children’s lives and to society as whole.

I contend, therefore, that trinitarian theology has much to offer in rectifying the previous deficit of theological thinking about children.

\textbf{2.3: Cross-cultural and cross-historical differences}

Moltmann is seen as one of the theologians who reintroduced the 'Social Trinity’ but he claimed he could ‘not make any concrete ethical suggestions because the circumstances of Americans and Koreans are so different’.\textsuperscript{153} Auris Hung would agree with Moltmann that the cultural circumstances are very different yet he has also


\textsuperscript{153} Quoted in xiii.
perceived in trinitarian theology a way of conceiving human relatedness that does not place or replicate cultural constraints. The difficulty that Hung, other Asian, and African authors, have found with Western individualism is that insufficient attention is given to the importance of the extended family and the obligations that a family member has to this wider society. The sense of shared responsibility, and of identity and support through the extended family, are all tangible differences.

Auris Hung’s understanding of the ‘differentiated oneness’ of the Trinity allowed him to see that a combination of perichoresis and person in relation provided a theological model for Asian families that was a much better fit than the prevailing models and ideas he had come across in Western Christianity with its inbuilt individualism. I have referred above to Gunton’s critique of Carver Yu that corrects the opposite danger, of losing the person or hypostasis. Harriet Harris’ criticism of the loss of the person in relation is highly relevant here. Thus, I would contend that a trinitarian theological understanding of ‘family’ is able to critique, in equal measure, Western, Eastern, African and other cultural constructions of ‘family’.

Historical differences in family or kinship structures pose similar questions to cross-cultural ones. Hellermann’s study of the patrilineal kinship group demonstrated just how different family

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154 McDougall, Pilgrimage of Love.
156 Harris, "Should We Say That Personhood Is Relational?.
157 I was intrigued to discover that an anthropologist had used the theological concept of perichoresis, found by the earlier English anthropologist Pitt-Rivers, in order to describe the operation of Aboriginal family organisation in the Australian Western Desert. Laurent Dousset, "Structure and Substance: Combining 'Classic' and 'Modern' Kinship Studies in the Australian Western Desert," The Australian Journal of Anthropology 16, no. 1 (2005).
structure and conception can be.\textsuperscript{158} As he points out this is still a prevailing model in many parts of the world and historically has lasted very much longer than the western nuclear family. This thesis has cast question on ideologically privileging the western notion of nuclear family over other forms.\textsuperscript{159} Moreover the processes of hypostasis, ekstasis and perichoresis apply not only to families, but also to human anthropology and ecclesiology, and operate irrespective of both historical and cross-cultural differences. It is worth remembering that the Old and New Testament material was written at the time of the very patrilineal kinship group structure that Hellerman was describing.

\subsection*{2.4: Feminist Concerns}

As I attempted to outline in Ch.1, feminists and feminist theologians have had particular reasons to be concerned about a thesis that set out to look at theology \textit{and} the family. Moreover, the fears of some of these theologians are heightened rather than lessened once trinitarian theology is mentioned. Most of these concerns and fears have proved to be founded, at least in prospect.

Yet, this research has suggested that trinitarian theology may in fact offer a significant critique of patriarchalism and idolising men, masculinity, rationality and individualism. Ekstatic and perichoretic processes are gender neutral. Similarly all hypostases merit love, care and attention and have responsibilities to deliver the same to others, irrespective of the sex of those hypostases. This is therefore not androcentric. Women’s ‘otherness’ is not defined in male terms. On the contrary, trinitarian theology affirms relationality, respect, love,

\textsuperscript{158} Hellerman, \textit{The Ancient Church as Family}.
\textsuperscript{159} This is supported by Arland Thornton’s meta-analysis of sociological and historical demographic research by ‘reading history sideways’. He found that ‘the developmental paradigm’ as he defines it is ‘fundamentally flawed and should be totally rejected’. Thornton also found that ‘we have inherited ‘structural explanations for family change over ideational explanations’. Christianity has been heavily implicated in these ideational reasons. Arland Thornton, "The Developmental Paradigm, Reading History Sideways, and Family Change," \textit{Demography} 38, no. 4 (2001): 460.
mutuality and reciprocity. It is not docetic, nor does it underpin super-
and sub-ordination and thus foster domestic violence. Theologians such
as LaCugna, Hannah Bacon and Sarah Coakley have in varying degrees
and ways seen some of the potential of trinitarian theology to address
the pervasive influence of patriarchy.

2.5: ‘Family’ as symbolic and ideological discourse

The symbolic, and particularly ideological, connotations of the
term ‘family’ were seen as problematic in the Literature Review in so
far as this portrayed a particular type or structure (for example the so
called ‘nuclear’ family), against which those who did not apparently, or
quite, conform were then compared unfavourably. This stigmatised, for
example, ‘one parent’ families, or could be used to hide racial, sexist and
homophobic prejudices. It could also be unjust in failing to recognise
the effects of financial, cultural and social disadvantage and the
pressure these and other factors place on families and individuals. It is
also potentially culturally imperialist in presuming that one form of
human family is superior to all others.

The risk of considering ‘family’ from a theological perspective,
was of increasing the ideological power of ‘family’. I hope, however, that
I have demonstrated a trinitarian theology of ‘family’ provides an
effective critique of the ideologising and indeed idolatrous tendencies
inherent in the Christian concept of ‘family’. Far from supporting a
particular type, the focus is on the significance and quality of human,
and divine-human, interaction. This undercuts any complacency, or
sense of moral superiority, and draws attention to these injustices.

Furthermore, a theological as opposed to mythological or
ideological view of family sets Christianity free from an unquestioning
acceptance of the status quo. As with Rowan William’s critique of F. D.
Maurice, it means that it is possible to evaluate the Christian espousal of
‘family’ and not confuse a contingent social construct with the divinely-
ordained. It means Christians can critique the ‘toxicity’ of particular institutions, and examine more closely and carefully the actual content of relationships. In William’s analysis, it also allows us to consider celibacy and different forms of community as viable or potential options.

2.6: Encouraging hospitality in families

This followed from the observations of Breidenthal, Nicholas Harvey and Stanley Hauerwas about the radical degree of selfishness and individualism that families can exhibit. A trinitarian theology of family suggests the very opposite. The ekstatic internal relationship of the Triune God reaches ekstatically outside of God in creation, redemption and re-creation, and in perichoretic embrace. Consequently, as Miroslav Volf puts it:

The role of humans is fearlessly and lovingly to pass on ‘that which we have received’ in our welcome, embrace, and self-giving for others who may have no relation to, or call, on us.

This mindfulness for the needs and welcome of others is a responsibility of parents to practice themselves and set a good example for their children. It entails ekstatically extending perichoresis to others in hospitality, fostering and adoption. I referred to Pope John Paul’s observation that this another antidote to the family becoming idolatrous. This might include offering fictive kinship for older people as well as for children, and creative options for providing mutual support. As Nicholas Harvey suggests, having permeable boundaries for families is realising the full implications of the gospel. It can

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160 See sub-section 2.8 below.
161 See Ch.1, 90-91.
162 Volf, Exclusion and Embrace.
164 See, for instance: Heim, "Family Values." Karen Main, Open Heart, Open Home. Greer, G. Sex and Destiny p241, Sine, Mustard Seed Versus Mcworld., Schluter and Clements, Reactivating the Extended Family., Hauerwas, After Christendom?
165 Harvey, "Christianity against and for the Family."
represent astonishingly good news in a very tangible way. There are a number of Christian and secular writers who have indicated the value of not figuratively regarding home as a castle and simply pulling up the drawbridge.\textsuperscript{166}

\subsection*{2.7: Social Justice?}

The mindfulness just referred also needs to extend to the conditions that promote, or rather, do not inhibit, family relationships. Researchers such as Bob Holman and Kristin Luker, bodies like the Anglican Consultative Council, and numerous charities such as Joseph Rowntree in the UK and Anglicare in Australia have all reported on the deleterious effects of housing, employment practices, capitalism and poverty on human and family relationships.\textsuperscript{167} Judith Stacey has pointed to the bad faith of expressing concern about or judging the family relationships or arrangements for others whilst doing nothing to recognise or alleviate these significant factors.\textsuperscript{168} If there is merit in the argument of this thesis, and if importance is attached to the quality of relationships and human interaction, then Judith Stacey is surely right to suggest that this demands action where these factors imperil human relationships.

\subsection*{2.8: Content, rather than form: Being ‘Christian’ in families}

A significant criticism of the historical Christian approach to marriage and the family was that attention to the \textit{form} of the relationship appeared to be more important than the \textit{content} and quality of the relationship itself. I hope that it will be evident by now that trinitarian theology warrants more than a passing interest and

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{166}] Drane, \textit{Happy Families}; Covey, \textit{The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Families}; Mains, \textit{Open Heart, Open Home}.
\item[\textsuperscript{167}] Holman, "Inequality in Child Care."; Nichols, Clarke, and Hogan, \textit{Transforming Families and Communities}; Luker, \textit{Dubious Conceptions}.
\end{itemize}
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concern about the conduct and actual content of relationships. In fact, it suggests that close attention to the content and conduct of relationships *hypostatically, ekstasically* and *perichoretically* has a divine origin, rationale and purposes, anthropologically, ecclesiologically and even missiologically.

This content comprises what we think as well as what we do in relation to other people, especially those nearest to us, on a day by day and almost minute by minute basis. How we hold them in mind, anticipate, observe, act, respond, etc. makes a considerable difference to them and to how they feel about themselves and how they then react to others and indeed to our selves. Our thoughts, attitudes and actions build relationships and community or deconstruct and damage them. It suggests why harmonious and united relationships might be so important (Ps. 133.1). As indicated in sub-sections 1.2 and 1.3 above, the biblical material provides ample supporting evidence for this emphasis on content, including the significance of forgiveness and the restoration of genuine relationships. The effects are felt not only by the immediate participants, but are also consequential for significant others and even to those unrelated, and to communities and society as a whole.

2.9: The use and abuse of social trinitarianism

In this research, a critical issue methodologically, as well as theologically, has been the referential basis to a ‘social’ or preferably a ‘relational’ Trinity. As reviewed in Ch.1, there are many theologians who are sceptical about the re-emergent trinitarian theology. Part of this scepticism relates to epistemology, as well as theology: how can we know about the Triune God? Is God even a Trinity? Some scepticism attaches to the ever-present risk of anthropomorphic projection, or of Platonic idealism, or the loss of the economic Trinity and the Christian history of salvation. Further concerns have been voiced about divine-
human correspondence, and from feminist theologians about whether this is yet another version of patriarchy in divine disguise. The fact that human family has been focus for this research has only served to heighten a number of these fears and sharpen these critiques.

It is appropriate to acknowledge that there are genuine grounds for these concerns and critiques. The issues at stake are important ones. The evidence one way, or the other, is neither easily accessible, nor cut and dried. This is not a simple area of research and it has a complex back story. Trinitarian investigations are still in their comparative infancy and there has been very little overt theologising about human family to go on. There are, moreover, examples of social trinitarian approaches more generally that demonstrate and substantiate the concerns of the critics. Their concerns also serve to keep theologians honest. I have attempted to include and examine a number of them precisely because they red flag uncertain and contested territory. It will ultimately be for others to judge whether I have been sufficiently circumspect in my approach and if there is merit in this thesis. For my part, I believe it has been possible to demonstrate that relational trinitarian theology has evidential scriptural support, is coherent, practical, relevant, accords with the major themes of Christian theology and offers a theological analysis of family that has been sorely lacking.

In short, I think it ticks all the boxes in Schwöbel’s systematic theological criteria.\(^1\)

\(^1\) See Ch.6, 305-306.
3. Summary and Conclusions

3.1: Summary

This research began with three questions. 1) How did the family come to occupy such a position of importance in Christianity? 2) Why has there apparently been so little theological consideration of family? and 3) might the re-emerged trinitarian theology offer a theology where little or none existed? The overall approach I adopted was one drawn from practical theology, namely beginning with a given problem, or a set of questions in this case, and then attempting to investigate the relevant issues from a range of perspectives and inter-disciplinary sources, alongside biblical and theological reflection. In considering ‘family’ I have necessarily traversed social and language constructionist, historical, anthropological, cross-cultural, developmental, feminist, ethical, emotional, ideological and philosophical viewpoints and considerations. Theological reflection itself was a focus for investigation in this research precisely because there are a number of contentious matters around the re-emerged trinitarian theology, not least some that are of direct and overlapping relevance to issues with ‘family’, including patriarchy and anthropomorphism.

The principle hypothesis I have pursued in this thesis is that trinitarian theology offers a theological way of considering ‘family’. Unpacking and addressing the concerns mentioned in Section 2 above were therefore integral to this research. A secondary hypothesis arose from a theory of Zizioulas, Gunton, Schwöbel and LaCugna about the particular and peculiar historical course of earlier trinitarian theology. They had argued that the unintended consequences had been a loss of trinitarian consciousness in favour of a more monadic, impassive, and remote deity, a rupture between the economic and immanent Trinity, and a Christian anthropology that focused on the individual and on rationality as the primary characteristics of the Imago Dei. I argued that these developments have had powerful ramifications for this research
because of 1) the effect on western society and individualism and their combined influence on the ‘family’, alongside other factors accelerated by individualism and rationalism that have also impacted families, 2) the effect on theology in reducing the ability to think theologically about relationships, and in marginalising the relevance of theological reflection, 3) the effect on women and children because it perpetuated patriarchy, prized rationality over relationality, downgraded emotion, was docetic and disembodied, and God came to be viewed not only as primarily monadic and impasive but also predominantly as male. I advanced the idea that if trinitarian theological mis-steps were implicated in these important background issues surrounding ‘family’ and in a loss of theological reflection then it was also possible that the re-emerged trinitarian theology might be relevant and significant in re-thinking ‘family’ from a theological perspective.

3.2: Conclusions

The literature search confirmed the considerable Christian interest in ‘the family’, as well as a surprising lack of sustained theological reflection. It also uncovered a raft of critiques and concerns about the phenomenon of the family, and about its cultural, social and ideological construction, in which Christianity was heavily implicated. Whilst there have been some attempts in the literature to consider the issues surrounding human family from (i) critical or (ii) theological standpoints, given the enormous size of the literature there are extraordinarily few studies, if any, that have successfully managed to encompass both perspectives.

Even if I had not intended examining the family from cross-disciplinary and critical viewpoints it would have been necessary to do so. This is due to the significant involvement of Christianity and social constructionist and ideological influences upon the concept of ‘family’, including patriarchy. Consequently, one conclusion is that attention to
critical issues is essential when discussing ‘family’, particularly from a Christian perspective.

A similar ‘hermeneutic of suspicion’ is also required when examining trinitarian theology. That is partly because this is still relatively new and untested territory. I found that some of the criticisms from ‘anti-social Trinity’ theologians were apposite and justified. Using the social Trinity as a utopian ideal for human society, or anthropomorphically projecting preferred relations onto God, both fail crucial tests of biblical congruence and theological method. At the same time critiques, like Miroslav Volf’s of Karl Barth, support the claim of feminist theologians that notions of patriarchy have been idolatrously imported into conceptions of God and the Trinity. This suggests that whilst theologians have not been rushing to consider family from a theological perspective, it might be necessary to consider the degree of bias that socialization, personal experience, and Christian views on family, may have exercised on theology.

The methodology of practical theology has proven to be a useful and helpfully critical architectonic in this research. I have not been able to complete all the elements, of which the most important is living out the new theology. I am mindful of Pete Ward’s comment, a practical theologian at King’s College, London, that an oft quoted criticism about practical theology is that it is neither practical, nor does it contain any theology. His own assessment of much practical theology supports this latter concern, as did Anderson’s earlier quoted critique of Browning’s work. Part of the reason for this, I contend, relates back to the loss of trinitarian consciousness, the remoteness of God and the Kantian belief that there was no practical value or application in this doctrine, contra LaCugna who posited the exact opposite view. This thesis has thus been

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a deliberate reconnection between practical and trinitarian theology, which I believe has lent support to LaCugna’s position.

The dead hand of ‘substance ontology’, and particularly Graeco-Roman philosophical views about hierarchical emanationism, may themselves have been influenced by patriarchal societal norms. A striking finding of this research is the remarkable influence these Graeco-Roman philosophical ideas have exerted on the course of trinitarian theology and Christian anthropology and on the peculiar and ambivalent attitude that the Christian church took towards celibacy, marriage and the family. Since all these topics virtually define the areas under investigation in this research this is an important discovery, or re-discovery. It is hard, therefore, to overestimate just how much this powerful, pervasive and astonishingly persistent thread has affected the course and understanding of western family, of individualism and of theology. Thus, although the premises on which it was based are redundant, it still continues to exercise a largely unknown and unseen hold on the contemporary social and theological debate.

It was not the original intention of this research to examine the historical attitudes of Christianity towards the family. That was partially prompted by Ruether’s research and her noticing just how ambivalent Christianity has been on the subject of marriage and family and how much Christianity has affected the perception and phenomenon of family. It has been an eye-opener to uncover the remarkable reach and endurance of Graeco-Roman views. What Ruether did not do was examine this philosophical thread that appears to have been such a factor in influencing heretical groups and creating unusual Christian attitudes towards marriage, sex and the family both before Luther, and from Luther onwards. Indeed, Margo Todd’s thesis demonstrated how these Graeco-Roman views were a contributory factor to the dramatic change in emphasis heralded by Luther.

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171 Ruether, *Christianity and the Making of the Modern Family.*
The investigation in Ch.4 of Gunton, LaCugna’s and Schwöbel’s theory about the trajectory of trinitarian theology and Christian anthropology, led me to find in favour of my secondary hypothesis that these processes also exercised enormous influence over the development and vulnerability of the Western family and simultaneously reduced the ability for theologians to bring adequate theological resources to bear on the subject of human relationships. Accordingly, I argued that the historic course of trinitarian theology had in fact contributed to some of the difficulties, and lack of theological tools, lamented by Christian writers, in respect of the family. As noted in Ch.7, I have not found reference in any of the Christian or secular academic literature that has recognized this link. I had intended investigating a further connection between Western individualism, Puritanism and Weber’s theory about the development of capitalism, alongside the degree of impact capitalism exercises on family relations, but there was simply insufficient space to devote to this. Instead I did underscore how individualism and rationality and the loss of the sense of God have impacted on ethics and secularism, and how these in turn have also affected Western family and society.

Whilst some theologians have understandably been wary about wading theologically into the debate about family because of its cultural, historical and eschatological contingency, or have genuinely felt that it was more important to pursue ecclesiology than the family, I have argued that ‘family’ is a highly significant part of people’s lives and experience and therefore it is one where people might reasonably expect greater theological consideration. Cardinal Ouellet has described a theology of the family as ‘still a huge quarry waiting to be mined’. ¹⁷² Similarly I have noted that some theologians, such as Alisdair McFadyen, have looked carefully at human relationships, including

¹⁷² Ouellet, Divine Likeness, ix.
from a trinitarian perspective, but they have done so without mentioning family at all.

This thesis has developed and explicated a relational ontology, making use of existing trinitarian categories of *hypostasis*, *ekstasis* and *perichoresis*. These are dynamic processes that together provide a more coherent account of the Trinity, of family, of Christian anthropology, and of ecclesiology, than either substance ontology or Western individualism. Their *theo-*logical concentration on the necessity and quality of relationship appears to be supported by extensive biblical references and accord with both subjective experience and objective evidence, such as Attachment theory. This relational ontology meets objections, such as Harriet Harris’s, in that it does not lose the significance of the person, or *hypostasis*, but holds this in tension with, and as an essential part, of relationships. It also addresses the concerns of McFadyen and others that the use of the Social Trinity would actually bypass relationship with God, fail to address the limitations of human nature and sin, and ignore the significance of salvation history. Instead, if anything, this relational ontology emphasizes the sometimes yawning gaps between human *being* as God intends and human *being* as is, and the requirement and possibility for the Grace of God and the work of the Holy Spirit to change this state of affairs. By grounding this trinitarian relational ontology in biblical sources I have attempted, in Athanasian style, to be faithful to God’s self-revelation rather than idolatrously creating God in human image. This has accorded with an admittedly fine and subliminal relational theological thread that can be traced back to John’s gospel.

This trinitarian relational ontology appears to solve a number of puzzles and problems. It helps explicate and locate ‘love’ - a surprisingly neglected theme in Christian theology, asserting its reciprocity, and finally breaking free of the outmoded Nygrenian dichotomy between *eros* and *agape*. It enables a theological definition of ‘family,’ which eludes easy definition. This theological definition
chimes with the semantic association that ‘family’ reflects not just kith and kin but also those who affirm and look out for us, or who we may minister to. It confirms Anderson’s and Guernsey’s notion of family as a verb and the significance of both actions and attitudes in ekstasis. It accommodates cross-cultural and cross-historical differences and facilitates an entirely new and needed take on ethics, and on sin. It overcomes the limitations of Barthian binitarianism and explains why the relationship between proximal others also affects us. This theology is child-friendly and might merit qualified approval from some feminist theologians and indeed from some feminists. It can promote social justice and offers a common lens for analysing human and ecclesial family. It demonstrates a connection with friendship.

The aim of this research was to see whether trinitarian theology offered a missing theology for considering ‘family’ that was sensitive to: 1) the priority of relationship with God 2) theological concerns surrounding trinitarian theology 3) the contingency of ‘family’, historically, culturally, and eschatologically 4) and critical concerns about ‘family’ as an ideology and even idolatry, including feminist and social justice perspectives. I believe that the trinitarian theology I have outlined fulfils these criteria as well as the systematic theological criteria proposed by Christoph Schwöbel for resolving theological disagreements.

Earlier in this thesis, I noted the following:

At issue is whether trinitarian theology does indeed furnish a Christian anthropology, which is critically different and more relevant to the role and possibly significance of ‘family’, not solely as a biological and social phenomenon, but also as a shorthand term that points to the unique combination of person and relation and the quality of interaction that is the revealed Trinity.
On the basis of the foregoing chapters, I think the evidence I have presented confirms and supports this contention. It therefore upholds the principle hypothesis that trinitarian theology does offer a theological way of considering 'family'. If this thesis is correct, and although much more needs to be done, I believe this research has made a significant contribution to Christian anthropology and to the contentious debate about 'family'.

Although this was not the intention, I believe this research also contributes to ecclesiology and missiology. It suggests, in keeping with the New Testament, that the theo-logical stress on the nature of God as love and on church as a loving community are both vitally important. It begs questions about Confirmation training and whether this contains the same inter-personal relational emphases that Selwyn claimed to have found in baptismal teaching within the epistles. This accent on church as a loving, ecstatic and perichoretic community, far from being insular and introspective, instead would promote Spirit-inspired acts and attitudes of love, service and kindness that would touch and transform neighbouring communities, bringing God’s kingdom here on earth.

Kathryn Tanner queried the ‘inflated claims for the Trinity’ and whether the ‘perichoretic relations’, which she identified as the key element, can perform the ‘heavy lifting’ required. A number of theologians are equally sceptical. I have argued that the strength of perichoretic relations depends on a uniquely trinitarian dynamic combination of hypostasis, ekstasis, and perichoresis. Furthermore, I believe the Triune God is not only theologically weight bearing but can in fact carry any burden, large or small. Tanner’s emphases on the Incarnation and Redemption are valid but they, along with Creation itself, have been generated from the Triune God.

173 Tanner, "Social Trinitarianism and Its Critics," 370, 71, 75.


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