Perichoresis and Projection: Problems with Social Doctrines of the Trinity

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First Published in *New Blackfriars* October 2000

Over the last three decades there has been a great outpouring of writings from both Catholic and Protestant theologians on the doctrine of the Trinity, almost all of which, ironically, have lamented the neglect of the doctrine. Again and again one reads that although the Trinity is central and crucially important to Christianity and Christian theology, it has not been given adequate treatment. It is unacceptable, theologians protest, that the Trinity has come to be regarded as an obscure and complex theological technicality, a piece of celestial mathematics impossible to understand and with little relevance to the life of the ordinary Christian. Karl Rahner remarked that modern Christians were 'almost mere "monotheists"', paying lip service to the Trinity but in practice ignoring it. If it were announced that the dogma had been a mistake and was to be erased from official Christianity, nobody, he thought, would be too bothered, neither the ordinary believing Christians nor the authors of theological textbooks.[i] Rahner's diagnosis has been widely accepted and widely regretted. The consensus is that the Trinity is at the heart of Christianity, and both theology and piety have gone astray if it is regarded as belonging to the specialists. A retrieval (it is believed) is needed: the Trinity must be understood once again (one reads) as a positive and central element in the Christian faith rather than an embarrassing obscurity, and as profoundly *relevant* to the life of individual Christians, to the life of the Church, and perhaps beyond.

If there is a consensus about the problem, there is also something increasingly approaching consensus as regards the nature of the solution: the chief strategy used to revivify the doctrine and establish its relevance has come to be the advocacy of a *social* understanding of the Trinity. This line of thought has been gaining momentum especially since the publication of Jürgen Moltmann's *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*,[ii] and by now has achieved, in many quarters, dominance—it has become the new orthodoxy. Increasingly, indeed, one finds references to it in popular Christian literature and hears its influence in Trinity Sunday sermons.

In what follows I want to raise some doubts about the new orthodoxy. My argument will not be directed against social analogies to the Trinity as such: in themselves these analogies are

perhaps no worse than any others. The way in which they are very often used, however, and the claims which are made for them are, I shall argue, deeply problematic.

II

The first step is to offer a brief characterisation of contemporary social theories of the Trinity. Most basically social theorists propose that Christians should not imagine God on the model of some individual person or thing which has three sides, aspects, dimensions or modes of being; God is instead to be thought of as a collective, a group, or a society, bound together by the mutual love, accord and self-giving of its members. Many social theories of the Trinity share considerably more than this minimal basis, however. In particular I want to draw attention to three frequently recurring features: first, a certain understanding of the meaning of the word "*person*" in the classical Trinitarian formula; secondly, a particular picture of the *history* of the doctrine of the Trinity; and thirdly a tendency to wax enthusiastic when it comes to explaining how the three in the Trinity can also be one.

First of all, then, the term "person." All Christian theologians who want to consider themselves orthodox are committed to the proposition that God is three “persons”. And all modern theologians seem to agree that the meaning of person in the context of the Trinity is not simply identical with our current understanding of the word. But as to just *how* different the meaning is, and in what way, there is not such unanimity. Those twentieth century theologians who do not espouse social theories tend to emphasise what a highly technical term “person” is in the Trinitarian formula, how it has almost *nothing* to do with our modern notion. Both Barth and Rahner, for instance, suggest that the term is in fact so misleading to the untrained that in most contexts theology would do better to abandon it altogether, to substitute a different terminology. They suggest such alternatives as “mode of subsistence” or “mode of being”. The problem, they think, is that because of the evolution of the word’s meaning, when we hear “three persons” we inevitably think of three separate “I”’s, three centres of consciousness, three distinct wills and so on, and this, they insist, must be rejected as outright tritheism. So in all but the most technical contexts it is counterproductive to continue to use the word.

Social theorists, on the other hand, acknowledge that the meaning of the word person has changed, but not quite so radically as these others think-- not so much that the word itself needs to be abandoned. What is needed is not a new word but only that in using the word “person” Trinitarian theology put up a resistance to *some* features of the modern secular understanding of

this notion. Our contemporary society's basic understanding of the word, of what it means to be a person, in other words, needs to be reformed by a return to the true Trinitarian understanding. The problem with our usual notion of personhood lies in its connotations of individualism, in the assumption that ultimately each person is an isolated being over against all others. A proper understanding of the Trinity and of the Trinitarian perichoresis (to which I shall return shortly) counteracts this, in their view, and enables one to understand persons as by their very nature interactive, interdependent, in communion with one another. [iii]

So the first point that unites the social theorists is that they are, comparatively speaking, quite happy to carry on using the term person in a Trinitarian context. The second, as I mentioned, is a certain reading of the history of doctrine. Social theorists very often distinguish sharply between the way the doctrine of the Trinity was worked out in the East, and how it developed in the West[iv]. In particular, it is often claimed that the Cappadocians in the East took as their starting point the three persons of the Trinity and *then* asked about unity whereas Augustine in the West began with the oneness of God, with an abstract notion of the divine substance, and then puzzled over how to give an account of the threeness of the persons. And it is in this Augustinian precedence of oneness over threeness that the whole Western tradition went wrong, according to the social theorists' typical account. They see as one of the consequences of Augustine's approach, for instance, the fact that from the thirteenth century onwards theological textbooks begin with a treatise on the one God *de Deo Uno*, and only then move on to God's threeness, *de Deo Trino*, and they see this in turn as linked to the contemporary problem of irrelevance: if one has already been introduced to God, learned the basic facts as it were, before ever the question of the Trinity is raised, then it is no surprise that the latter will come to seem simply an intellectual difficulty, a secondary bit of information to be reconciled with a prior, less problematic understanding of God.

The third common characteristic of contemporary social doctrines of the Trinity is the enthusiasm their proponents exhibit when it comes to accounting for how the three persons in God are one. This can be made clear by way of a contrast. One might say that, if one follows Augustine (or at least Augustine as he is understood by the social theorists) and begins from God's oneness, then the problem of the Trinity is to find a way of accommodating God's threeness, whereas if one begins with the social theorists from the three persons then the problem is to find a way of making sense of the claim that God is one. But in fact social

theorists do *not* speak of a problem. Instead they tend to see the question of how the three are one as the point where the doctrine comes into its own.

Often social theorists at this point invoke the patristic concept of perichoresis. It is the divine perichoresis which makes the three one, and it is perichoresis which makes the Trinity a wonderful doctrine. There is among the three divine persons, it is said, a kind of mutual interpenetration which is not to be found among human persons, and it is because of this perfect interprenetration that the three persons are one God. "The doctrine of the perichoresis," writes Jürgen Moltmann, "links together in a brilliant way the threeness and the unity, without reducing the threeness to the unity, or dissolving the unity in the threeness."[vvi] Moltmann characterises this perichoresis as a process whereby each person, by virtue of their eternal love, lives *in* the other two and "communicates eternal life" to the other two; as a circulation of the eternal divine life; as a fellowship; and as a "process of most perfect and intense empathy."

The social theorists' enthusiasm for perichoresis comes out in two ways. First, God is presented as having a wonderful and wonderfully attractive inner life. I already mentioned Moltmann's notion of "the most perfect and intense empathy" existing between the persons. Another proponent of the social doctrine, Cornelius Plantinga, in what is in general a very carefully constructed and restrained presentation, writes of the Trinity as "a zestful, wondrous community of divine light, love, joy, mutuality and verve", where there is "no isolation, no insulation, no secretiveness, no fear of being transparent to another".[vii] So the interrelatedness of the Trinity, the divine perichoresis, makes God intrinsically attractive.

Secondly, and more significantly for our purposes, God's inner life is presented as having positive implications for that which is not God. It is worth looking at some examples. Patricia Wilson-Kastner, in the final chapter of *Faith, Feminism and the Christ*, commends the doctrine of the Trinity, conceived according to the social analogy, on the grounds that it is supportive of feminist values. The most commonly heard feminist assessment of the Trinity is, of course, rather different, and rather more negative. Usually the attention is on the problematic nature of the language of Father and Son. Whereas abstract philosophical theism may be able to assert that God has no gender, Christian Trinitarianism is tied to speaking of God in these all male terms-- or, at best, in language that is two thirds male and one third neuter. But Wilson-Kastner argues that feminists should in fact prefer a Trinitarian understanding of God to what she terms strict monotheism. Imaging God as three persons, she writes, "encourages one to focus on

interrelationship as the core of divine reality, rather than a single personal reality," and a single personal reality is almost always, she suggests, whatever the theory may be, "imaged as male".[viiiix] When in the history of Christian thought the emphasis has been on the *one* God, this has been God the Father in heaven, ruler of all, the dominant one, the "only and unquestioned deity" who "modelled on a cosmic scale the male dominant behaviour expected of all men, living in splendid and absolute isolation." The Trinity, on the other hand, understood according to the social theory, supports the sort of vision and values favoured by feminists:

> Because feminism identifies interrelatedness and mutuality-- equal, respectful and nurturing relationships-- as the basis of the world as it really is and as it ought to be, we can find no better understanding and image of the divine than that of the perfect and open relationships of love.[x]

Wilson-Kastner's account is influenced by, though not identical to, that of Jürgen Moltmann. He too sets up a contrast between the positive implications of the socially conceived Trinity and the undesirable corollaries of the alternative, which he calls Christian monotheism, and by which he means Christian trinitarianism as it has traditionally been understood in the West. Moltmann argues that Christian monotheism corresponds to, and has been used to legitimate, certain forms of government. In early Christianity it was the Roman empire: corresponding to the *one* God there is the *one* empire which brings peace to the warring nations, and the one emperor, who is "*the visible image* of the invisible God," whose will is law, who makes and changes laws but is not himself bound by them.[xi] Later, 17th century notions of the absolute right of kings owed something to this same monotheism: the king is "above the community of men because he occupie[s] the place of God on earth"; the king's sovereignty must be absolute because it is a "portrait" of the majesty of God.[xii]

In a similar way Moltmann suggests connections between Christian monotheism and a certain kind of ecclesiology. The justification for the role of the pope in the Roman Catholic church-- the role of guaranteeing the unity of the church-- goes along the lines, Moltmann suggests, of "one church-- one pope-- one Peter-- one Christ-- one God."[xiii] Moltmann argues that the "theological justification of papal authority and the unity of the church it guarantees is visibly dominated by the monotheistic way of thinking."[xiv]

The only way Christian theology can *avoid* providing a legitimisation for absolutism of various kinds is if it adopts a *properly* Trinitarian understanding of God, which is to say a social doctrine of the Trinity. It will then be seen, Moltmann tells us, that "it is not the monarchy of a ruler that corresponds to the triune God; it is the community of men and women,

without privileges and without subjugation."[xv] Because the persons of the Trinity have everything in common, Moltmann writes, "except for their personal characteristics,...the Trinity corresponds to a community in which people are defined through their relations with one another and in their significance for one another, not in opposition to one another, in terms of power and possession."[xvi] Something similar holds in ecclesiology: just as a merely monotheistic doctrine of God "justifies the church as hierarchy," so, he writes, "The doctrine of the Trinity constitutes the church as 'a community free of dominion.'... Authority and obedience are replaced by dialogue, consensus and harmony." Therefore a "presbyterial and synodal church order and the leadership based on brotherly advice are the forms of organization that best correspond to the doctrine of the social Trinity."[xvii]

Finally, let me mention the work of Colin Gunton.[xviii] Some of his concerns are similar to Moltmann's-- they share the belief, for instance, that the social trinity has a role in helping us to find a way beyond the unappealing modern political alternatives of individualism and collectivism. But primarily Gunton takes up the question of the doctrine of the Trinity and its broader significance on the level not of politics but of *metaphysics*. If God created the world, one would expect to find some marks of the creator on the creation, one would expect that something about the nature of *being* in our world should reflect the nature of God. And so if God is the Trinity, one might hope to find some trace of this in the world. Gunton rejects, however, the traditional search for the *vestigia Trinitatis* traces of threeness, or three-in-oneness, here and there in the creation-- this would be, he suggests, too *mathematical* an understanding of the whole matter. It is not on the precise *number* of the persons that we should focus, but instead, he proposes, on their *perichoresis*. Perichoresis can be understood, according to Gunton, as a transcendental, as a concept which captures something universal about all being and which is also suggestive and fruitful for further reflection. The notion of perichoresis, of the "interrelation and interanimation" of the persons in God, of the "unity deriving from the dynamic plurality of [the] persons," can provide a useful and suggestive way of thinking about created being on all levels.[xix] Gunton explores this in connection with three strata of being-- personal being, non-personal being (i.e. the material world) and the world of culture and art-- and then in turn he applies the notion of perichoresis to the relations *between* these layers of being. To give just one example, in the realm of the personal the concept of perichoresis helps us think about close relationships-- indeed relationships which are

constitutive of persons-- without abandoning notions of particularity and difference, without a loss of the self. So Gunton writes that "our particularity in community is the fruit of our mutual constitutiveness: of a perichoretic being bound up with each other in the bundle of life."[xx]

In the hands of these thinkers, then, the claim that God though three is yet one becomes a source of metaphysical insight and a resource for combating individualism, patriarchy and oppressive forms of political and ecclesiastical organization. No wonder the enthusiasm: the very thing which in the past has been viewed as the embarrassment has become the chief point upon which to commend the Christian doctrine of God: not an intellectual difficulty but a source of insight, not a philosophical stumbling block but something with which to transform the world.

III

It is possible to put questions to social theorists on a number of levels. One could ask whether the history of theology really presents as simple a picture as they suggest.[xxi] Or again, one could ask whether the implications of a doctrine of God for political arrangements are quite so clear as they assume. Could not very different conclusions be drawn from one and the same understanding of God? An emphasis on the unity of God, on the oneness of a God who stands apart from, over-against the world, could arguably be used to *undermine* as well as to legitimate hierarchical and absolutist forms of government. Before the one God who transcends the world, it might be said, for instance, all human beings are levelled: all alike are creatures, absolutely different from their creator, and any attempt by some to lord it over the others can be seen as a sinful attempt to usurp the place of God.[xxii]

In what follows I want however to develop a different kind of objection, one centring on the issue of projection. I will argue, first, that there is a high level of projection in the theories that I have been discussing, and secondly, that this is not accidental, but built into the nature of the social theorists' approach. It might be said that this is true of all theology: I will therefore aim to show, thirdly, that even if projection always has a role to play in theology, it is here playing a distinctive, and a distinctly problematic, one.

Some of the language already quoted raises the first suspicions of projection: social theorists speak of intense empathy, of verve and zest. Where exactly, one might wonder, did they acquire such a vivid feeling for the inner life of the deity?

Another suspicion of projection arises if one probes a bit further into Patricia Wilson-Kastner's feminist commendation of the social Trinity. One might have thought her emphasis on the mutuality of the Trinity would run into trouble with the strand in feminist thought which holds that what women need is not to be urged towards mutuality and interrelatedness, but to learn to reclaim their own autonomy, to become aware of their own distinct desires and needs, to become aware of themselves as something *other* than wife, mother, sister-- one might have thought, in other words, that it would be problematic to hold up for women an image of God as persons who are so *utterly* bound up in and defined by relationships that they lose even their numerical distinctness. But Wilson-Kastner is in fact well aware of this difficulty, well aware that it is not *just* mutuality and inter-relatedness that need to be promoted. "The human person," she writes, has "*two* essential dimensions": in addition to "the self-transcending, other-directed, outward oriented" dimension there is "the self-focused, the centred, the self-conscious" dimension.[xxiii] When things work properly these two sides of a person nourish each other, so that relationship is not at the expense of autonomy: "the more one reaches out to other and is accepting of connections [she writes], the more one comes to consciousness of and possession of the self."[xxiv] And in the Trinity, she suggests, *both* sides, both these dimensions, are superlatively represented: the Trinity, she writes, "is a unity of three centers of awareness and centeredenss [this is the one side-- the persons of the Trinity are each centered in themselves] who are also perfectly open and interdependent on each other [this is the other side]. The "persons" of the Trinity are three centers of divine identity, self-aware [the one side] and self-giving in love [the other side], self-possessed [the one-side] yet freely transcending the self in eternal trinitarian interconnectedness [the other side]."[xxv] So although Wilson-Kastner's emphasis is on the support the doctrine of the Trinity lends to an ethic of mutuality, she is careful to make it clear that this is a mutuality of persons who have, one might say, a very health sense of self.[xxvi]

There are two things to note about Wilson-Kastner's account. First of all, she seems to be willing to say some very precise things about the Trinity. Not only are there three centres of consciousness, but these centres are themselves centred, self-aware and self-possessed. Secondly, the account diverges in an interesting way from that of Moltmann. Moltmann insists that the Trinitarian persons do not first exist and then enter into relationship, but are constituted and defined by their relationships; Wilson-Kastner, on the other hand, writes of the persons as

self-possessed yet freely transcending the self-- in other words, in some sense they do not have to, but choose to go out of themselves in relationships. Why, one might ask, do they take opposite positions here, and how would one go about adjudicating between them? The most likely account of the difference, it seems to me, is that while Wilson-Kastner has her eyes on the danger to women of lacking a sense of self and so emphasises that each of the persons is "self-possessed," Moltmann is focused on the excessive individualism of the modern West and so maintains that the persons are constituted by their relationships. To adjudicate the difference, then, one would need to decide whether, all things considered, it is better for us to think of ourselves as self-possessed and going out into relationships, or as entirely constituted by our relationships. Once that question has been settled, the Christian theologian can then say, that is how God is too.

From an examination of particular examples of social theories of the Trinity, then, one can form the impression that much of the detail is derived from either the individual author's or the larger society's latest ideals of how human beings should live in community. I want to go one step further, however, and suggest that this is no accident: it is not just that as it happens social theories of the Trinity often project our ideals onto God. Rather it is built into the kind of project that most social theorists are involved in that they *have to be* projectionist.

Why is this? Let me start again from the beginning. For the social theorists, to put the matter crudely, God is more appropriately modelled on three human beings than on one. But social theorists do not want to be tritheists, so they must say that although three human persons make three human beings, three divine persons, even if they are separate centres of will and self-consciousness and so on, make only one God. What is it, then, that makes the three into one? I do not think one can pretend to find, outside of a few proof texts in the Gospel of John, any very clear help in the New Testament in understanding this. And whatever it is, it must be something beyond our experience, since in our experience three persons are, quite simply, three people. This whatever it is, this thing which is beyond our experience which binds the three into a one, however, is given a label-- it is called the divine perichoresis. And in order to describe the perichoresis, the social theorist points to those things which do to some degree bind human persons together, into couples or families or communities-- interrelatedness, love, empathy, mutual accord, mutual giving and so on. What binds God into one is then said to be like all the

best that we know, only of course, unimaginably more so. It has to be more so, since it has to make the three persons into one God and not just into one family of Gods.

Now of course any language that is used about God is drawn from human experience in some way or other, and so it is arguable that in talk about God it is always a matter of saying that God is just like such-and-such that we know, only unimaginably more so. What is particularly distinctive about the social theorists' strategy, however, is that what is at its heart a suggestion to overcome a difficulty is presented as a key source of inspiration and insight. So the social theorist does not just say, perhaps the divine perichoresis, which we can understand as being akin to our best relationships, only better, makes the three Persons into one God; she goes on to say, should we not model our relationships on this wonderful thing, the divine perichoresis?

In short, then, I am suggesting we have here something like a three stage process. First, a concept, perichoresis, is used to name what is not understood, to name whatever it is that makes the three Persons one. Secondly, the concept is filled out rather suggestively with notions borrowed from our own experience of relationships and relatedness. And then, finally, it is presented as an exciting resource Christian theology has to offer the wider world in its reflections upon relationships and relatedness.

To bring out what is distinctive and problematic about the role of projection in these theories, it will be helpful to consider an analogy. Anselm, in formulating his doctrine of atonement, famously drew on feudal concepts of honour and justice. So one can say, to some degree at least he projected contemporary concepts and ideals onto God. And, one might want to argue, in so doing his theology may have served to legitimate and reinforce those very ideas and the corresponding social structures. But suppose Anselm had gone on to say that the main relevance of the doctrine of the atonement, the new and important thing that it teaches us, is that at the very heart of God is the notion of *honour*: it teaches us that God is all about honour and what is due to one's honour, and that we too must in various ways make these concepts central to out lives. If Anselm had, in other words, trumpeted as the most important thing about the doctrine those very concepts which he himself had imported to solve the intellectual difficulty posed by it, if he had said, these concepts are the heart of the doctrine, they are what we must learn about God and ourselves from the doctrine of the atonement, then I think, he would have been doing a very different, and a much more worrying, kind of theology.

Projection, then, is particularly problematic in at least some social theories of the Trinity because what is projected onto God is immediately reflected back onto the world, and this reverse projection is said to be what is in fact *important* about the doctrine.

I began by noting a concern in recent theology to re-establish the vitality and relevance of the doctrine of the Trinity, and in fact I think it is here that the whole thing actually starts to go wrong. Does the Trinity need to be relevant? What *kind* of relevance does it need to have? The doctrine of the Trinity arose in order to affirm certain things about the divinity of Christ, and, secondarily, of the Spirit, and it arose against a background assumption that God is one. So one could say that as long as Christians continue to believe in the divinity of Christ and the Spirit, and as long as they continue to believe that God is one, then the doctrine is alive and well; it continues to inform the way they read the Scriptures and the overall shape of their faith. But clearly many theologians are wanting something in addition to this, something beyond this, some one particular insight into God that this particular doctrine is the bearer of. It is when one gets to thinking about three being one, and how this might be possible, that most Christians grow puzzled, silent, perhaps even uninterested, and this is what so many theologians are troubled by. It is therefore (though few would quite admit it directly) the abstraction, the conceptual formula, the three-in-oneness, that many theologians want to revivify, and if one is going to make an abstraction, a conceptual formula relevant, vibrant, exciting, it is natural that one is going to have to project onto it, to fill it out again so that it becomes something the imagination can latch onto.

IV

If not the social doctrine, what then? The beginnings of an alternative are present already in what was said above. I suggested that problems arise when one looks for a particular insight into God of which the doctrine of the Trinity is the bearer. My own proposal, then, is not that one should move from the social back to, say, a psychological approach to the Trinity—this would simply be to look for a *different* insight—but rather that one should renounce the very idea that the point of the doctrine is to give insight into God.

The doctrine of the Trinity, I want to suggest, does not need to be seen as a descriptive, first order teaching—there is no need to assume that its main function must be to provide a picture of the divine, a deep understanding of the way God really is. It can instead be taken as grammatical, as a second order proposition, a rule, or perhaps a set of rules, for how to read the

Biblical stories, how to speak about some of the characters we come across in these stories, how to think and talk about the experience of prayer, how to deploy the "vocabulary" of Christianity in an appropriate way.[xxvii] The doctrine on this account can still be seen as vitally important, but important as a kind of structuring principle of Christianity rather than as its central focus: if the doctrine is fundamental to Christianity, this is not because it gives a picture of what God is like *in se* from which all else emanates, but rather because it specifies how various aspects of the Christian faith hang together.

But surely, one might respond, if I am told that God must be spoken of as three persons and one substance, I will inevitably try to make sense of this. If God must be spoken of in this way, what does that mean about how God really is? The question, perhaps, is inevitable, and the history of theology is littered with (conflicting) attempts to answer it. What I am suggesting, however, is that it is nevertheless a secondary question—affirming a doctrine of the Trinity does not depend on being able to answer it, nor does establishing the relevance of the doctrine depend on finding the "right" answer to it.

Theologians are of course free to speculate about social or any other kind of analogies to the Trinity. But they should not, on the view I am proposing, claim for their speculations the authority that the doctrine carries within the Christian tradition, nor should they use the doctrine as a pretext for claiming such an insight into the inner nature of God that they can use it to promote social, political or ecclesiastical regimes.

[i] Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, Trans. Joseph Donceel (NY: Crossroad, 1997) pp10-11.

[ii] Published in 1980, and in English translation in 1981.

[iii] One can find examples of this fundamentally positive approach to "persons" in writings of Moltmann, Gunton and Boff, to name but a few. Cf. Chapter 1 of John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985) for a similar line of thinking in a somewhat different context.

[iv] Gunton and Moltmann once again provide examples of this.

[v] *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* (London: SCM, 1981), p. 175.

[vi] Ibid.

[vii] Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., "Social Trinity and Tritheism" in Ronald J. Feenstra and Cornelius Plantinga, Jr. ed. *Trinity, Incarnation and Atonement* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989).

[viii] Patricia Wilson-Kastner, *Faith, Feminism and the Christ* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), p. 122.

[ix] Ibid., p. 123.

[x] Ibid., p. 127.

[xi] *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, p. 195.

[xii] Ibid., p. 196.

[xiii] Ibid., p. 201.

[xiv] Ibid.

[xv] Ibid., p. 198.

[xvi] Ibid.

[xvii] Ibid.

[xviii] In what follows I shall be drawing primarily on *The One, The Three and the Many* (Cambridge: CUP, 1993), but see also his "Trinity, ontology and anthropology" in Schwöbel and Gunton, eds., *Persons: Divine and Human* (Edinburgh: T+T Clark, 1991).

[xix] *The One, the Three and theMany*, p. 152.

[xx] Ibid., p. 170.

[xxi] This has indeed been questioned by historical theologians. C.f. for instance the arguemnts of Michel René Barnes in "The Use of Augustine in Contemporary Trinitarian Theology" *Theological Studies* 56 (1995) and "Rereading Augustine on the Trinity" in Stephen T. Davis et. al., *The Trinity* (Oxford: OUP, 1999).

[xxii] C.f. Kathryn Tanner, *The Politics of God* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1992) for an extended discussion of the different ways in which a belief in God's transcendence can function politically.

[xxiii] *Faith, Feminism and the Christ*, p. 126

[xxiv] Ibid.

[xxv] Ibid.

[xxvi] Denis Edwards, in a similar vein, suggests that the Christian ideal of love, as represented by the Trinity, "concerns self-possession as well as self-giving, love of self as well as love of other". *The God of Evolution: A Trinitarian Theology*. (New York: Paulist Press, 1999) p. 16.

[xxvii] Readers of George Lindbeck's *The Nature of Doctrine* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984) will immediately recognize his influence here. It is worth noting, however, that one need not commit oneself to a grammatical interpretation of doctrine in general in order to consider whether the Trinity in particular is best thought of in this light.