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EMBODIED TRINITARIAN SPIRITUALITY: AN INTEGRATED VIEW OF THE TRINITARIAN SPIRITUALITIES OF A SOCIAL MODEL AND AN INCORPORATIVE MODEL OF THE TRINITY

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by

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This thesis entitled

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that:

1. This thesis has been my own work in its entirety, and that I myself have done the work of which it is a record under the guidance of a supervisor

2. No part of this thesis has been submitted to any other educational institution in any previous application for any degree.

3. All quotations of four lines or less have been denoted by quotation marks, quotations of more than four lines have been indebted, and the sources of information in both cases have been specifically acknowledged.

Place: Bangalore

Date: January 18, 2022. Roselina Vundi

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION …….. 1

1.1 A Survey of the Ante-Nicene Fathers …… 5

1.1.1 Arius ……. 5

1.1.2 Athanasius ……6

1.1.3 The Cappadocians ……7

1.1.4 Augustine ……..7

1.2 The De Regnon Paradigm: A Critique of the Disjunctive Reading of Eastern and Western Trinitarian Theologies …… 9

1.3 Focus and Scope of Research ……17

1.4 Research Problem ……19

1.5 Method ……..21

1.6 Research Questions ……..21

2. A LITERATURE REVIEW OF THE TRINITARIAN THEOLOGIES OF A SOCIAL MODEL AND AN INCORPORATIVE MODEL OF THE TRINITY …….23

2.1 A Brief Review of the Trinitarian Theology of the Social Model ……25

2.1.1 Evidence from patristic theology for the social model ……26

2.1.2 Perichoresis ……...27

2.1.3 An ontology of Personhood ……..28

2.2 A Brief Review of the Trinitarian Theology of the Incorporative Model ……..31

2.2.1 Coakley's critique of the social model of the Trinity ……...32

2.2.2 Evidence from patristic theology for the incorporative model ……34

2.2.3 Sexuality and Spirituality ……..35

2.2.4 An ontology of desire ……38

3. A COMPARISON OF THE TRINITARIAN THEOLOGIES OF THE SOCIAL AND THE INCORPORATIVE MODELS OF THE TRINITY……...44

3.1 Similarities and Differences between the Social and the Incorporative models of the Trinity …… 44

3.2 Relevance of the Doctrine for Christian Spirituality …….. 44

3.2.1 The Social Model: Implications for Christian spirituality ……49

3.2.2 The Incorporative Model: A Foundation for Christian spirituality ……..53

4. A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF THE SOCIAL AND THE INCORPORATIVE MODELS OF THE TRINITY ……..58

4.1 The Social Model: A Critical Evaluation ……58

4.2 The Incorporative Model: A Critical Evaluation ……65

5. REFLECTION ON THE TRINITARIAN THEOLOGIES OF THE SOCIAL AND THE INCORPORATIVE MODELS OF THE TRINITY ……71

5.1 Characteristics of a social spirituality ……..71

5.2 Characteristics of a contemplative spirituality ……75

5.3 An Embodied Trinitarian Spirituality: An integrated View ……..77

6. CONCLUSION ……..81

Bibliography…….. 83

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INTRODUCTION

The doctrine of the Trinity has sparked numerous debates in the history of doctrinal development. While most contemporary scholarship on trinitarian theology has been focused on exploring how theologians in church history have resolved these debates, there has been a period in which theologians grew disillusioned with the doctrine. However, there has been a recent surge of renewed interest in the topic, such that the focus now is not only on resolving the complexities inherent in the doctrine, but also to show the significance of the doctrine for Christian living.

A prominent trend that has emerged in the wake of such a renewed interest, is the social theory of the Trinity, popularly known as social trinitarianism. Those who advocate for a social model of the Trinity are theologians such as Jurgen Motlmann, John Zizioulas, Miroslav Volf, Colin Gunton, Catherine Mowry LaCugna etc. But this trend has been critiqued by contemporary scholars who read the history of doctrinal development in a different way than that of the social theorists. Those who critique the social model, and who advocate for a revisionist interpretation of the trinitarian theology of the patristic fathers, or a classical model of the Trinity are theologians such as Khaled Anatolios, Lewis Ayres, Michel Rene Barnes, Sarah Coakley etc.

If we must put these two major trends in trinitarian theology into context, it is useful to look at two news reports, each of which explain why the respective models best represent the doctrine of the Trinity. First, Roger E. Olson, an evangelical, in an article called *Answering a question about the Trinity: Is "Social Trinitarianism" a Heresy*, argues for why the social model is the only viable model to explain the doctrine of the Trinity. He starts off by clarifying that "social trinitarianism, or belief in the social model of the Trinity, is the idea that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three distinct persons bound together eternally and equally by one divine substance and by perfect love."[1] He remarks that such a view of the Trinity was promoted and defended by the Cappadocian fathers in church history.

Then he goes to ask why social trinitarians start with the three persons of the Trinity, for which he argues that such a starting point is required if one is to stay faithful to

[1] Roger E. Olson, "Answering a question about the Trinity: Is "Social Trinitarianism" a Heresy", *Patheos*, October 20, 2021, https://www.patheos.com/blogs/rogereolson/2021/10/answering-a-question-about-the-trinity-is-social-trinitarianism-a-heresy/.

Scripture's testimony of the Father, Son, and Spirit. He contrasts the social model with the psychological model, defended in the Latin Augustinian tradition, and states that the psychological model, by starting with the oneness of God, "struggles to explain how they can be three distinct persons such as is portrayed in the New Testament and the early Greek church fathers."[2] If the psychological model is to be considered as a good model to explain the Trinity, then the "best analogy for the Trinity is one human person with three dimensions or aspects".[3] Olson argues that such a model is difficult to reconcile with Scripture's testimony about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. So, he advocates for the social model, which, according to him, not only remains close to the New Testament narratives about Father, Son, and Spirit, but also best explains how these three persons are not three gods. In other words, by using the concept of perichoresis, the social model can reconcile the problem of God's simultaneous unity and plurality, without straying into the danger of tritheism.[4]

It is evident that Olson prefers the social model over the psychological model for two reasons. He upholds it for its ability to represent Scripture's testimony about the Father, Son, and Spirit, as well as for its ability to explain the paradox of God's simultaneous unity and plurality, neither by straying into the danger of tritheism, nor by succumbing to modalism. But it is also evident that Olson completely disregards the Western Augustinian tradition of trinitarian theology and elevates the Eastern Cappadocian tradition. In other words, Olson operates with the presupposition that there is a gulf between the theology of the Eastern fathers and the theology of Augustine. Not only so, according to Olson, Augustine's theology cannot be reconciled with the New Testament narratives about the Father, Son, and Spirit, and it leads into the danger of modalism. Moreover, he claims that the Eastern Cappadocian fathers developed a trinitarian theology that is akin to the social model, which is advocated by most contemporary theologians. Although he does not mention how social trinitarian theologians show the significance of a social model of the Trinity for Christian life, it is important to point out that a central purpose of those who advocate for this model, is to show it has radical consequences for Christian living.

But is the social model the only model that best explains the Trinity? Is the claim that there is a disjunction between the Eastern and Western traditions, a claim that is supported by

[2] Olson, Answering a question about the Trinity, October 20, 2021.
[3] Olson, Answering a question about the Trinity, October 20, 2021.
[4] Olson, Answering a question about the Trinity, October 20, 2021.

all contemporary trinitarian theologians? Also, is the social model the only viable model for showing the relevance of the doctrine for Christian life? To answer these questions, it is useful to look at the second news article by Gabrielle Bibeau, a Catholic nun. The article, called *Dancing with the Trinity*, featured in the Global Sisters' Report. To me, the title was strange enough to spark my interest in reading further. What she had to say in the rest of the article was even more intriguing. She starts off with her childhood experience, and how as a child, she hated dancing. But as she grew up, and entered a monastic life, she realised that dancing, in contrast to her fear and hatred for it, was joyful, fun and *holy*.[5] That she would attribute holiness to something like dancing kept me intrigued. She goes on to claim that such a notion is not foreign to Christianity but is rooted in the doctrine of the Trinity.[6]

The idea of perichoresis, which is used to describe the relationship between the three persons of the Trinity, is understood as a dance. She points to Sarah Coakley's definition of perichoresis, in her book God, Sexuality and the Self, which "conveys the union of the Trinity "via their ecstatic dance of interaction and delight"."[7] As she reflects on this, she remarks that such an image of the Trinity, not only allows us to understand the joy and delight in communion, but remains as an open invitation to us, to join and share in God's communion. She concludes with this statement, that "through the Eucharist, God has given us a share of himself, so that we might participate in the divine life...an astoundingly beautiful and incomprehensible mystery."[8]

What stands out in Bibeau's understanding of the Trinity, is that it is 'an incomprehensible mystery,' in that we can only participate in it. Unlike the social theorists who use the concept of perichoresis to rationalise the paradoxical nature of God's being, theologians like Sarah Coakley use the concept to point to the mystery of God's being. In other words, there are contemporary trinitarian theologians who take account of the mystery of the triune God, such that they do not attempt to have the final word in trinitarian theology. Rather, as we see in Coakley's theology, they regard the task of doing trinitarian theology as an ongoing endeavour, a sort of *being overtaken* by the mystery of the triune God, rather than

[5] Gabrielle Bibeau, "Dancing with the Trinity", *Global Sisters Report*, June 4, 2021, https://www.globalsistersreport.org/news/spirituality/column/dancing-trinity
[6] Bibeau, Dancing with the Trinity, June 4, 2021.
[7] Bibeau, Dancing with the Trinity, June 4, 2021.
[8] Bibeau, Dancing with the Trinity, June 4, 2021.

attempting to make cognitive sense of it. Because of such an approach to the doctrine, these theologians speak of the doctrine's function to transform those who engage with it.

Moreover, it will be shown at a later point in this research that theologians like Coakley read the history of doctrinal development in a way that does not promote a disjunction between Eastern and Western tradition of trinitarian theology. Rather, they unify the theology of these patristic fathers (Augustine and the Cappadocians), through a certain reading of the development of the doctrine of the Trinity. In other words, they take account of both traditions in their development of contemporary trinitarian theology, such that they present a unified account of the incomprehensibility and the transformative potential of the doctrine of the Trinity.

To have a grasp on the differences between the trinitarian theologies held up in the social model, and the classical model, it is useful to trace the history of the development of the doctrine of the Trinity. The purpose of tracing the history is to understand these contemporary trends in trinitarian theology that have emerged, and also to explore the unique perspectives they offer for the specific problem that concerns the doctrine of the Trinity, which is the problem of God's simultaneous unity and plurality. An overview of the historical development of the doctrine will also shed light on how contemporary theologians show the significance of the doctrine for Christian life, regardless of the specific model they support.

Before tracing the history, it is important to point out that the historical development of the doctrine "emerged fundamentally from Christological controversy."[9] As Karen Kilby points out, the doctrine was not the result of a speculative endeavour about the inner life of God, "or of any kind of general reflection on threeness-and oneness, on what ontology of the divine must lie behind various threefold patterns of speech to be found in the New Testament."[10] Rather, the doctrine was developed on the conviction that God is one, while simultaneously having a strong account of Christ's divinity. If the doctrine was not a consequence of mere philosophical speculation, then "neither the function of the Trinity, nor its meaning, can be detached from the context of its development."[11] In other words, if the

[9] Karen Kilby, "Is an Apophatic Trinitarianism Possible?", *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, Vol 12. no.1 (2010): 68.
[10] Kilby, Is an Apophatic Trinitarianism Possible?", 68.
[11] Kilby, "Is an Apophatic Trinitarianism Possible?", 68.

context within which the doctrine developed by insisting on God's oneness as well as Christ's divinity, then an adequate account of the doctrine ought to consider these aspects.

The task of tracing the history of the doctrine proves to be useful for understanding the varied complexities that concern contemporary scholars who engage with the doctrine, especially the complexity of accounting for Christ's divinity, while simultaneously adhering to the conviction that there is only one God. The doctrine cannot be removed from the context in which it took shape and must remain faithful to Scripture's testimony about the Father, Son and Spirit, if scholars must explain the difficulties inherent to the doctrine. By taking heed of this condition, a brief overview of the history of the doctrine's development will be discussed, which includes a critique of the social theorists' tendency to read the theology of Augustine and the Cappadocian fathers disjunctively. The purpose of engaging with this critique is to contrast the tendency of social theorists with that of contemporary theologians who read the theologies of Augustine and the Cappadocians in a unified manner. In doing so, the problem that this research seeks to address, and its focus and scope will be underscored, after which a discussion on how this research relates to the wider academic discourse on the topic, and what new insights this research is geared to develop. Now for a brief overview of the history of the development of the doctrine of the Trinity.

1.1 A Survey of the Ante-Nicene Fathers

1.1.1 Arius

The fourth century controversy with regards to the doctrine of the Trinity had to do with the ontological status of the Son. The debate arose between Alexander, who became the bishop of Alexandria in 313 and Arius, a popular priest at that time. Arius criticised Alexander's argument that "the Son, as the Word and Wisdom of the Father, is intrinsic to the being of God and so is the perfect image of God."[12] He rather emphasised the uniqueness of the Father, and therefore, he argued that the Son was "ontologically subordinate to the Father." As a result, he claimed that "there was once when the Son was not."[13]

Dunzl points to the reason Arius has come to this conclusion about the status of the Son as a created being, rather than as someone sharing the same ontological status as the

[12] J. Warren Smith, *The Trinity in the Fourth-Century Fathers*, ed. Gilles Emery and Matthew Levering (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 2.
[13] Smith, *The Trinity in the Fourth-Century Fathers, 3.*

Father. If God's Wisdom is understood as the Logos, as most second century Logos theologians have understood it, then what is written about God's Wisdom in Prov. 8.22-25, suggests that the Logos was created. Arius certainly interpreted it this way.[14] Dunzl argues that by interpreting this OT passage this way, Arius has found a way to reconcile the "old problem of how Christology could be reconciled with monotheism, belief in the one and only God: if the pre-existent Son of God had a beginning, then he did not exist before he was 'begotten, created and set up'."[15] For Arius the real issue had to do with who God really is, and according to him, God does not have a beginning. If the Son of God, the Logos was begotten by God, then the Son must be a created being. So, we see that for Arius, the problem was not with God's unity, rather than with God's nature; that an Eternal God cannot have a beginning, and so the begotten Son of God was created.

1.1.2 Athanasius

To address the theological disagreement between Alexander and Arius, Constantinople called for a council "of eastern and western bishops in June 325 at Nicaea to address the theological disagreement between Alexander and Arius."[16] The council of Nicaea declared that the Father and the Son were of the same substance, as the Son was begotten by the Father, and not made. The council thus affirmed Alexander's view and condemned Arius to exile. Athanasius came around after the death of Alexander in April 328, "who would become Nicaea's chief defender over the next thirty years."[17] He had to refute the Eusebians, who claimed that the "Son was not truly distinct from the Father."[18] From Athanasius's perspective, the Eusebians' claim was like Arius's declaration that the Son is a creature. As a result, he argued for the equality of the Son's divinity with the Father, because "unless the Son is equal in divinity with the Father, the Son is not fully and truly God, and so cannot mediate the divine nature to humanity necessary for salvation."[19] Stephen Holmes drives this point further by asserting Athanasius's view. He states that "the Father did not create the Son,

[14] Franz Dunzl, *A Brief History of the Doctrine of the Trinity in the Early Church,* trans. John Bowden, (NY: T&T Clark, 2007): 45-46.
[15] Franz Dunzl, *A Brief History of the Doctrine of the Trinity in the Early Church,* 43.
[16] Smith, *The Trinity in the Fourth-Century Fathers, 3.*
[17] Smith, *The Trinity in the Fourth-Century Fathers, 3.*
[18] Smith, *The Trinity in the Fourth-Century Fathers, 4.*
[19] Smith, *The Trinity in the Fourth-Century Fathers, 4.*

but the Father together with the Son, "who is the Wisdom and Word and Will of the Father, is one with the Father in divine creative action."[20]

1.1.3 The Cappadocians

After Athanasius died in May 373, the task of resolving the conflict between those who were pro-Nicene and those who were against it, "shifted from Alexandria to Cappadocia."[21] The Cappadocian bishops: Basil of Caesarea, his brother Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory of Nazainzus, had to refute Aetius and Eunomius, a third generation of anti-Nicenes, who "contended that God's essence is 'unbegotten' or 'ingenerate' while the Son is 'begotten'."[22] They defended the essential unity of the Father, Son, and Spirit, while simultaneously explaining that, "they remain distinct even in their unity."[23] How did they do this? By describing that the "Father, Son, and Spirit's common nature and power [is] manifest in the divine economy as a unity of operations."[24] In other words, they stressed on the distinct works of the three persons while simultaneously affirming the unity of the divine economy, by describing God's self-revelation as Father, Son and Spirit, not as three "modes of God's being"[25], but by describing God's self-revelation as the "relationship between the persons."[26] Thus the Cappadocians upheld the full divinity of the Son while simultaneously affirmed the distinctions between the three persons, thereby developing further the Nicene understanding of God's simultaneous unity and plurality.[27] The Council of Constantinople declared the view of the Cappadocians in 381 AD.[28]

1.1.4 Augustine

A generation after the Cappadocians, "Augustine unfolded his understanding of the Trinity, expressing his solidarity with the church's doctrine in his *De Trinitate* and other writings, especially his *Tractates on John.*"[29] But before we discuss Augustine's trinitarian

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[20] Stephen R. Holmes, *The Quest for the Trinity: The Doctrine of God in Scripture, History and Modernity,* (US: InterVarsity Press, 2012), *92.*
[21] Smith, *The Trinity in the Fourth-Century Fathers, 6.*
[22] Smith, *The Trinity in the Fourth-Century Fathers, 7.*
[23] Smith, *The Trinity in the Fourth-Century Fathers, 7.*
[24] Smith, *The Trinity in the Fourth-Century Fathers, 8.*
[25] Smith, *The Trinity in the Fourth-Century Fathers, 7-9.*
[26] Smith, *The Trinity in the Fourth-Century Fathers, 7-9.*
[27] Smith, *The Trinity in the Fourth-Century Fathers, 7-9.*
[28] Robert Letham, "The Trinity between East and West", *Journal of Reformed Theology,* Vol. 3, no. 1 (2009): 43.
[29] Letham, "The Trinity between East and West", 43.

theology, which shaped Western trinitarian thinking, we ought to understand the place given to the Holy Spirit in the fourth century. It was Athanasius who claimed that "since God cannot be known or confessed by sinful humanity unless he reveals himself...the Spirit cannot mediate the knowledge of God unless the Spirit is itself divine."[30] Basil, the Cappadocian bishop, in *On the Holy Spirit,* speaks of the Spirit's illuminating role in our gaining of "the saving and sanctifying knowledge of God by ascending to the Father through his image revealed in the Son whom we behold through the light of the Spirit."[31] Besides this, he argues for "a new form of doxology, 'Glory to the Father with the Son, together with the Holy Spirit', that affirms the Spirit's equality with the Father and Son in power and dignity."[32]

In Augustine's theology, we see that there is a more matured pneumatology by asserting that the Spirit does not merely enable us to have a knowledge of and experience God's love, but "the love that we receive *is* the Spirit."[33] More on how his pneumatology has shaped his trinitarian thinking will be discussed in what follows. Here we turn to the foundational developments in his trinitarian thought. A primary aspect in his doctrine of the Trinity is that our human intellect can reach the truth about divine life through an intellectual ascent. It is through such an ascent that our intellect and desires are transformed, as our life is shaped by the work of grace. "There is always an education and a drawing that happens through our incorporation (by the Spirit) into the body of Christ."[34] In other words, Augustine's view of the Trinity is not shaped by a mere intellectual fiat, but by starting with faith and moving towards understanding, that also transforms us in the process, as the Holy Spirit incorporates us into becoming more like Christ, and into the inner life of the divine.

But how does Augustine resolve the question of God's simultaneous unity and plurality? We understand this through his reflections on the divine. To him, God's divinity can be understood through the concept of simplicity. To describe divine simplicity is to say that "God 'is' what God is said to 'have': when we say that God lives or is good we should understand that as meaning that God is life itself or goodness itself."[35] Given the aspect of

[30] Smith, *The Trinity in the Fourth-Century Fathers, 12.*
[31] Smith, *The Trinity in the Fourth-Century Fathers, 12-13.*
[32] Smith, *The Trinity in the Fourth-Century Fathers, 12-13.*
[33] Lewis Ayres, *Augustine on the Trinity,* ed. Gilles Emery and Matthew Levering (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011): 7.
[34] Ayres, *Augustine on the Trinity, 7-9.*
[35] Ayres, *Augustine on the Trinity, 5.*

divine simplicity, and Augustine's articulation of the mystery of the Father generating the Son, who is the Father's Word and Wisdom as Scripture demands it, then in the Father's generation of the Son, the Son "possesses all that it is to be God."[36] If the Son shares all that the Father is, then "there seems to have been no division of that one source...and we are drawn inevitably back to confessing the inescapable unity of God."[37] In this way, Augustine reconciles the issue of God's simultaneous unity and plurality.

1.2 The De Regnon Paradigm: A critique of the disjunctive reading of Eastern and Western trinitarian theologies

In this brief survey of the historical developments of the doctrine of the Trinity, we have discussed how, from the fourth century onwards, the question of God's unity and plurality has been resolved. The purpose of ending with Augustine's theology is to steer the direction of this survey to a question that concerns contemporary theologians, which is connected to the question of God's simultaneous unity and plurality. It has to do with the gulf between the Eastern trinitarian view that follows the Cappadocians, and the Western trinitarian view which follows Augustine. It is held by most contemporary scholars that while the Cappadocians argued for the simultaneous unity and plurality of God by starting with the three distinct persons of the triune God, thereby emphasising the plurality of God, Augustine started with an emphasis on the unity of the triune God, thereby focusing less on the distinctions between the three persons in the triune God. Robert Letham points this out as a distinction that Theodore De Regnon argues for, which shows a "significant distinction between Eastern and Western trinitarianism, a position widely accepted but which has come under criticism in recent decades, spearheaded by M.R. Barnes."[38]

In what follows, the question of whether we can trace any historical roots of this gulf, will be dealt with. Before we start, it is important to note that the seeming differences between Eastern and Western views of the Trinity, have been marked out due to the differences in the application of the trinitarian doctrine in the life of the church. As Letham notes, "while to Eastern Christians trinitarian worship is axiomatic, to the vast majority of

[36] Ayres, *Augustine on the Trinity, 5.*
[37] Ayres, *Augustine on the Trinity, 5.*
[38] Letham, "The Trinity between East and West", 43.

Westerners the trinity is little more than an abstruse mathematical conundrum."[39] It can be inferred from this that dealing with the question of the gulf between East and West is important for answering a second, connected question, which is: In what way do trinitarian reflections influence the life of the church and its worship of God? This question is considered important for the purposes of this research, which will be discussed in a later section.

For now, we turn to the question of whether the gulf has any historical roots. Robert Letham gives evidence for its historical roots. He asserts that before Regnon claimed that there was a significant difference between the Eastern and Western views, such a claim was "firmly held over a millennium earlier by the Patriarch of Constantinople, Photios."[40] According to Photios, the West was heretical in its view of the Trinity, and "denounced Augustine and his Latin followers as effective heretics by their modalistic blurring of the distinctions between the Father and the Son."[41] It is a given that the Eastern tradition developed a trinitarian theology that differed from the West, in that their theology in its roots was "a negation of rational thought and an exercise in prayer and mystical contemplation, rather than a cognitive positing of qualities in God differing from those in humanity."[42]

Yet Letham argues that such a distinction ought not to be overemphasised. He argues so, because just as the West followed Augustine's emphasis on divine simplicity, which led to his focus on divine unity, the Cappadocians too maintained their focus on divine simplicity. The differences then stem from their tendencies either towards subordinationism or modalism. While the East viewed the "Father as the source of the Son and the Spirit"[43], thereby subordinating the Son and the Spirit to the Father, the West focused on the essence of God without considering the distinctions between the three persons, thereby adopting a modalistic view of the Trinity.[44] According to Letham, the differences also stem from the West's addition of the filioque clause to the Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed. The East objects to the West's tendency to blur the "distinction between the Father and the Son by regarding them as sharing identically in the procession of the Spirit (Augustine wrote of the

[39] Letham, "The Trinity between East and West", 44.
[40] Letham, "The Trinity between East and West", 44.
[41] Letham, "The Trinity between East and West", 44.
[42] Letham, "The Trinity between East and West", 44.
[43] Letham, "The Trinity between East and West", 45.
[44] Letham, "The Trinity between East and West", 45.

Spirit proceeding from both "as from a single source")."[45] As Letham notes, this has led Augustine himself to admit a difficulty in thinking about the three persons in their distinctness.[46]

How much of the Western tendency to emphasise the unity in the triune God, at the expense of the distinctions between the three persons in the Trinity, can be attributed to Augustine? Before we answer this question, we ought to understand the problem that the Western view poses. Colin Gunton, in his article *Augustine, the Trinity and the Theological Crisis of the West*, remarks that much of Western theology has treated the doctrine of the Trinity "as a problem rather than as encapsulating the heart of the Christian gospel."[47] In other words, Western theology treated the doctrine as a mathematical problem to be solved, thereby dealing with the logical difficulties that concerned the language used to talk about the Trinity, rather than understanding that the doctrine is about God, who as a "communion of persons is the basis of a rational universe in which personal life may take shape." Consequently, Western theology has overlooked the primary importance of the doctrine and relegated it to a secondary status in theological discourse.

Colin Gunton presupposes that to understand whether Augustine is to be held responsible for the manner in which the West treated the doctrine of the Trinity, we are to examine, "not simply his statement of doctrine but the underlying presuppositions which give the doctrine the shape that it has."[48] He claims that Christian theologizing in the early centuries was subject to Platonising doctrines, and that this ought to concern the question about Augustine's role in the development of Western trinitarian views. He discusses three central aspects to trinitarian theology, in terms of how Augustine has shaped them in his development of the doctrine: the centrality of Christ to trinitarian theology, the concepts of substance and persons as those which provide the language to trinitarian theology, and the aspect of speaking of the Trinity using analogies. The last aspect is specifically characteristic to Augustine's theology, which Gunton critiques as an imposition "upon the doctrine of the Trinity a conception of the divine three-ness which owes more to neoplatonic philosophy than to the triune economy."[49] The main thrust of Gunton's argument stems from his critique

[45] Letham, "The Trinity between East and West", 46.
[46] Letham, "The Trinity between East and West", 51.
[47] Colin Gunton, "Augustine, the Trinity, and the Theological Crisis of the West", *The Scottish Journal of Theology,* Vol. 43, no.1 (1990): 34.
[48] Gunton, "Augustine, the Trinity, and the Theological Crisis of the West", 35.
[49] Gunton, "Augustine, the Trinity, and the Theological Crisis of the West", 45.

of Augustine's treatment of the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. Gunton asserts that his "doctrine of the Spirit is, if not actually determined by, at least strongly affected by his need to have a third person corresponding to the will in the threefold mind."[50] Since Augustine failed to give adequate hypostatic weight to the Spirit, Gunton argues that the "father of Western theology also lacks the means to give personal distinctiveness to the being of the Spirit in the inner Trinity."[51] So, we see that Gunton attributes the Western tendency to overlook the distinctions between the three persons to Augustinian influence.

While Gunton describes this tendency, which has led to a decline in the seriousness with which the doctrine of the Trinity has been treated in the West, as that which can be attributed to Augustine's theology, contemporary scholars such as Lewis Ayres, Michel Rene Barnes and Neil Ormerod do not read Augustine's theology as that which led to the gulf between Eastern and Western trinitarian views. Ormerod, in his rebuttal on Gunton's article, "demonstrates that many of these criticisms are unfair, or are based on inconsistencies and inadequacies in Gunton's own position."[52] For instance, he counters Gunton's argument that "to Augustine it seemed better to begin with the unity of the divine nature, since it is a truth which is demonstrated by reason."[53] He quotes Augustine's *De Trinitate,* and argues that Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity starts in terms of the Nicene and Contantinoplitan creed, and that Augustine's intent was actually to offer a polemic against Arianism by being pro-Nciene. Even though Augustine uses certain philosophical presuppositions to talk about God's divinity, Ormerod argues that they were certainly not his starting point. Moreover, he asserts that "many of these presuppositions were indeed shared by other Church Fathers and form part of the intellectual heritage of both East and West."[54]

Likewise, Ayres and Barnes offer reasons for why Augustine's theology did not lead to the supposed gulf between Eastern and Western trinitarian thought. Ayres notes that this narrative of the supposed 'fall' of Western or Latin trinitarian theology, which relegated the doctrine of the trinity to a secondary status, has been dealt with by revivalists of Latin trinitarian theologians, who do not necessarily "share the same story of a peculiarly western

[50] Gunton, "Augustine, the Trinity, and the Theological Crisis of the West", 51.
[51] Gunton, "Augustine, the Trinity, and the Theological Crisis of the West, 55.
[52] Neil Ormerod, "Augustine and the Trinity: Whose Crisis?", *Pacifica: Australian Theological Studies*, Vol. 16, no. 1 (2003): 17.
[53] Ormerod, "Augustine and the Trinity: Whose Crisis?", 19.
[54] Ormerod, "Augustine and the Trinity: Whose Crisis?", 20.

failure, even if they do point to a consistent failure of Christians to grasp the heart of the doctrine; but they do share a set of philosophical inspirations."[55] He points to Hegel and his legacy as that which inspired these revivalists to re-articulate trinitarian theology. But, he argues that reviving trinitarian theology along Hegelian thought might not be the most suitable resource for "articulating Trinitarian theology, at least Trinitarian theology that embraces Nicene Orthodoxy."[56] Rather, his argument takes the path of "revisionist historical scholarship on the major figures of the Latin tradition", which does not follow the 'fall' narrative, and which places texts in their appropriate contexts in order to avoid reading their terminology through a modern lens.[57] He argues that we ought to read the patristic fathers, especially Augustine, as those who were inspired by the Spirit of Christ and who speak the word of Scriptures, in that the modern doctrinal conversations that develop are relativized, thereby "allowing 'newness' to arise without assuming that we need consciously to 'construct' it."[58]

If Ayres proposes a re-reading of Augustine's theology, by placing his texts in proximate contexts, and not reading later developments of his theology into them, how does he address the issue of the distinction between the East and the West? We get a hint from Letham's assertion that for Ayres, the distinction was not applicable to Nicene orthodoxy, that Ayres stressed "continuity between Augustine and the Cappadocians, and dismisse[d] its application to later developments."[59] Letham's assertion can be grounded in Ayres' call for a revisionist reading of the Church fathers, especially Catholic trinitarians, who in his view follow Nicene Orthodoxy[60], thereby in continuity with the Cappadocians. Hence, we can see that he gives a more positive account of the continuity between the Church fathers, rather than arguing against the East-West distinction. But we can also see that he does not maintain the distinction himself.

Barnes also states his contention with the tendency of contemporary scholarship to critique Augustine, which he claims is their "inability to read Augustine outside of De

[55] Lewis Ayres, *Into the Cloud of Witnesses: Catholic Trinitarian Theology Beyond and Before its Modern 'Revivals'*, ed. Robert J. Wozniak and Giulio Maspero, (UK: T&T Clark International, 2012), 4.
[56] Ayres, *Into the Cloud of Witnesses,* 4.
[57] Ayres, *Into the Cloud of Witnesses,* 5.
[58] Ayres, *Into the Cloud of Witnesses,* 5.
[59] Letham, "The Trinity between East and West", 43.
[60] Ayres, *Into the Cloud of Witnesses,* 16.

Regnon's paradigm."[61] In other words, contemporary scholarship which critiques Augustine, and constructs trinitarian theologies that claim to be following the relational trinitarian theologies of the Cappadocians, thereby adhering to the assumption that there is indeed an East-West disjunction, is indeed a lack of awareness that Regnon's paradigm has a history, which organises patristic theology[62] by way of creating the disjunction. His aim, therefore, is to "examine many of these recent theological works for what they reveal about the methodological presuppositions operative, more or less, in most systematic treatments of Augustine today, and to critique these presuppositions from the point of view of a historical theologian whose specialty is patristic trinitarian theology."[63] He concludes that the methods used by contemporary scholarship that follow the Regnon paradigm, include an unconscious dependence on the paradigm, a tendency to formulate ideas and conceptualise the doctrine of the Trinity that arises from a reductive reading of the patristic sources, and to move away from the polemical attitudes of the church fathers by focusing more on the philosophical content of the doctrine.[64] What we can infer from the arguments of these contemporary scholars is that Augustine's theology ought to be re-read in a way that does not overlook his continuity with the Nicene-Constantinopolitan orthodoxy and the Cappadocians, but as one whose theology was inspired by Scriptures.

If on the basis of the Regnon paradigm, most contemporary scholars adopt a reductive reading of Augustine's trinitarian theology, and the East-West disjunction is merely a way to organise patristic theology by way of creating a gulf, then to treat Augustine as the one who over-emphasised the unity of God and God's inner life, at the expense of the distinct activities of the three person, such that his understanding of the simultaneous unity and plurality of God is lacking in an emphasis on God's plurality, then a revisionist reading of Augustine's theology is necessary. Such a revisionist reading will not only allow us to address the issue of the East-West gulf but will also allow us to clarify how Augustine spoke of the unity of the three persons of the Trinity, without reading into his theology an over-emphasis of God's unity at the expense of his view on the distinctness of the three persons.

[61] Michel Rene Barnes, "Augustine in Contemporary Trinitarian Theology", *Theological Studies,* Vol. 56, no. 2 (1995): 239.
[62] Barnes, "Augustine in Contemporary Trinitarian Theology", 238.
[63] Barnes, "Augustine in Contemporary Trinitarian Theology", 237.
[64] Barnes, "Augustine in Contemporary Trinitarian Theology", 250.

To make this clarification, we turn again to Ayres, this time to his discussion of Augustine's pneumatology. Insights from this discussion will allow us to reconsider Gunton's criticism of Augustine that failed to give hypostatic weight to the Spirit. This in turn will allow us to gain insight into Augustine' mature trinitarian theology, so that we may turn to another issue in contemporary trinitarian theology, which is the rise of social trinitarianism. As signified earlier, social trinitarianism arose because of relegating Augustine's psychological doctrine of the Trinity as that which tended toward modalism (which reduces the three persons into three modes of being). Given its growing influence in contemporary trinitarianism, and its total disregard for Augustine's contribution to trinitarian theology, it is important to take note of it.

According to Ayres, Augustine understands Scripture's naming of the Spirit as that which invites us to come to a knowledge of the Christian life and the nature of God. In Augustine's pneumatology, we see that he names the Spirit as the Gift that we receive from the Father, the gift of love. So "the love that we receive [from the Father] *is* the Spirit."[65] From this Ayres draws two inferences. First, "that the Spirit is not simply a third *beside* the Father and Son, but one who is the Spirit *of* both."[66] Second, that the Spirit "is the love who joins the Father and Son-in receiving the Spirit we are thus drawn into the divine life itself."[67]

Further, Ayres argues for the Spirit being a distinct divine person in terms of Augustine's understanding of the Spirit proceeding from both the Father and the Son. For Augustine, "it is in the eternal act of generating the Son that the Father gives it to him that the Spirit proceeds from him, part of what it is to be the Son is to be one who has by nature the Father's Spirit."[68] In other words, the Spirit is fully God as the Father and the Son are fully God. Thus Ayres argues that in Augustine's theology, "to assert that the Spirit is God is necessarily also to assert that the Spirit is an irreducible divine 'person'."[69] He clarifies that when Augustine talks about the Spirit as the love between the Father and the Son, it does not mean that the Father and the Son have "as their essence something that is not their own."[70] But it does mean that "their essence is love *and that* the Spirit is the love of the Father and

[65] Ayres, *Augustine on the Trinity*, 7.
[66] Ayres, *Augustine on the Trinity*, 7.
[67] Ayres, *Augustine on the Trinity*, 7.
[68] Ayres, *Augustine on the Trinity*, 8.
[69] Ayres, *Augustine on the Trinity*, 9.
[70] Ayres, *Augustine on the Trinity*, 9.

Son even while being fully another beside and in them."[71] We can infer from this that Augustine does give hypostatic weight to the Spirit, although he does not use the concept of hypostasis to talk about the distinctness of the three persons.

If Augustine views the unity of God in terms of the divine essence, which he attributes to the Spirit, how does he talk about the plurality of God? Ayres turns to Augustine's use of the 'psychological analogies' for the Trinity. He states that Augustine "is not simply analysing the mind to find threefold analogies for the Trinity, but using the language of faith to explore the mind, and using what he finds there to think through how we might imagine the divine three as distinct and yet never divided."[72] Such a view further clarifies Gunton's criticism that in Augustine's trinitarian theology, "the ontological foundations of the doctrine of the Trinity...are to be found in the conception of a threefold mind and not in the economy of salvation."[73] But how does Augustine talk about the relations between the three persons, if indeed he uses the psychological analogies to imagine the divine as simultaneously a unity as well as plurality? Ayres points out that Augustine does make use of the concept of relation. He [Augustine] states that the "Father, Son, and Spirit are not only spoken of in relationship: they are in relationship (*ad aliquid*)- the relationships that the Father establishes from eternity between Father, Son and Spirit are intrinsic to their being (Augustine Tractates on the Gospel of John 4)."[74] In terms of the triune God's economy, Augustine "consistently emphasises that the missions of Son and Spirit- their redemptive work in the world- reveal the eternal ordering of the divine life."[75]

In this way, Ayres presents a discussion of Augustine's mature trinitarian theology, which gives full weight to the Spirit being an irreducible divine person, and which looks beyond reading his trinitarian theology as only that which rests on his psychological analogies. It points us to what Barnes and Ayres adopt as a revisionist reading of Augustine's theology, which enables us to understand that while Augustine is in continuity with his fourth century predecessors, "he is willing to move beyond them in striking ways."[76]

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[71] Ayres, *Augustine on the Trinity*, 9.
[72] Ayres, *Augustine on the Trinity*, 12.
[73] Colin Gunton, *Father, Son & Spirit: Essay Toward a Fully Trinitarian Theology*, (UK: T&T Clark Ltd, 2003), 46.
[74] Ayres, *Augustine on the Trinity*, 10.
[75] Ayres, *Augustine on the Trinity*, 11.
[76] Barnes, "Augustine in Contemporary Trinitarian Theology", 237-250.

As mentioned earlier, Coakley also does a revisionist reading of the patristic fathers. She credits the contributions of Ayres and Barnes for shaping her own study of Augustine and the Cappadocians. She also gives credit to Khaled Anatolio, whose work has not been explored in this research, but whose contribution is worth mentioning. It is beyond the scope of this research to explore her critique[77] of how scholars have interpreted the De Regnon paradigm, which had far-reaching consequences of the shape trinitarian theology has taken in the ensuing years. But it is possible to explore how she reads the theologies of Augustine and the Cappadocian fathers (specifically Gregory of Nyssa) in a revisionist and unified manner. But before a review of Coakley's engagement with patristic trinitarian theology, it is important to indicate what specific themes this research intends to address. In what follows, the focus and scope of this research will be underscored.

1.3 Focus and Scope of research

In the brief overview of the history of the development of the doctrine of the Trinity, it was shown that the central question which concerned the church fathers, and which contemporary theologians seek to grapple with, is the question of the paradoxical nature of God's being. In other words, the problem of God's simultaneous unity and plurality proved to be a complex issue, such that theologians of every age were required to give an explanation for it, if they were to articulate a doctrine of the Trinity. There has been a vast amount of literature that was produced on this doctrine, especially over the last few decades, which is often loaded with controversies. Contemporary scholars have taken on the topic with fresh enthusiasm, despite the disillusionment with the topic in the twentieth century. Yet the complexities in doctrine brought about so many inconsistencies and controversies within the Christian tradition, that an engagement with everything on the topic is beyond the scope of this research. But it would be helpful to point to certain periods in the doctrine's development that will allow for a focused engagement with at least some of them.

Kevin Hector provides a thumbnail sketch of developments in trinitarian theology after the twentieth century, for the purpose of highlighting Coakley's approach to developing

[77] Sarah Coakley, "Disputed Questions in Patristic Trinitarianism, *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 100, no. 2, (2007).

the doctrine.[78] Jason S. Sexton also provides the same, although with a different purpose, which is to present two views of the doctrine, one of them being akin to the social doctrine of the Trinity. Regardless of their different purposes, both scholars regard that a revival in trinitarian theology began in the twentieth century, with Karl Barth's and Karl Rahner's contributions. The second period was marked by a rise in social trinitarianism, which builds on Barth's and Rahner's theologies. Hector comments that a third period might be on the horizon, which acts as a critique against the social model of the Trinity. He locates Coakley's theology within the third period but suggests that her theology might represent another possible way forward, since her approach differs from that which is advocated by the social model, in at least two respects. First, she refuses to go along with the idea promoted by social trinitarianism that "the economic Trinity provides us with an algorithm, as it were, by means of which theologians can derive knowledge of the immanent Trinity."[79] Second, she differs from social theorists with regards to her point of departure for doing trinitarian theology. Unlike social theorists who take Jesus Christ as the starting point, Coakley starts with the Holy Spirit. It is also useful to note again that social theorists and theologians like Coakley read the history of doctrinal development in diverse ways.

From this, it is evident that trinitarian theologies have taken different shapes from the twentieth century, two of which are the social model of the Trinity, as developed by theologians like Moltmann and Zizioulas, and the incorporative model of the Trinity, as developed by Coakley. The focus of this research will be on these two models, which includes a discussion on the emergence of both models in contemporary trinitarian theology, to show specifically how the problem of the paradoxical nature of God's being is addressed in each model. It is beyond the scope of this research to explore other related questions that concern trinitarian theologians, such as: 'Why three persons only?', or 'What is the relationship between the economic and the immanent Trinity?' etc. It is also beyond the scope of this research to explore the relationship of trinitarian theologies to the arts, inter-religious dialogue, Christian teaching, or Indian theologies etc. Rather, the focus will be on exploring how theologians advocating for each model show the significance of trinitarian doctrine to Christian spirituality.

[78] Kevin Hector, "Trinity, Ascesis, and Culture: Contextualising Coakley's God, Sexuality, and the Self", *Modern Theology,* Vol. 30, no. 4, (2014): 561-562.
[79] Hector, Trinity, Ascesis, and Culture, 562-563.

1.4 Research Problem

To understand the problem identified in this research, it is useful to point to how contemporary theologians who advocate for either of the two models, approach the doctrine. They aim to refute the problem-solving approach, which treats the doctrine as though it is a mathematical problem to be solved and endeavour to show the doctrine's significance for Christian spirituality. Yet, depending on the model of the Trinity which they use to approach the doctrine, their views on spirituality differ.

For instance, Rian Venter points to the three kinds of trinitarian spiritualities identified by John L. Gresham, in an article on exploring the possibilities for a trinitarian approach to spirituality. First, Gresham identifies a contemplative spirituality, which is a typical Augustinian approach to the Trinity that is developed on the basis of a "psychological analogy of the Trinity in the soul- remembering, knowing and loving (willing)."[80] It is the kind of spirituality in which the believer moves toward a knowledge and love of the Son and the Spirit, even as he or she moves inward, and turns deep into the soul in silence, emptiness and contemplation. Such a view of trinitarian spirituality is often critiqued for its individualistic nature, as such a spirituality can foster self-occupation.[81] Second, Gresham identifies a social spirituality, which is characterised by the aspect of believers' participation in trinitarian fellowship. Venter remarks that "the critical difference with the first approach is that the Trinity does not dwell in the human soul, but the human 'participates' in the divine fellowship of the Father, Son and Spirit on the basis of the filiation of believers through the work of Christ."[82] Such a trinitarian perspective is often located in the theology of the Cappadocian Fathers, who speak of the believer's experience of the Trinity, not through an inward turn into the soul, but through an outward movement to various relationships. Third, Gresham identifies a sacramental spirituality, which is typically Eastern Orthodox, which speaks of the significance of the Trinity for missions.[83] Thus, Venter points to the various kinds of trinitarian spiritualities identified by Gresham.

Based on his reading of Gresham's work, Venter remarks that the "value of Gresham's work is the critical reminder that a trinitarian spirituality could be constructed in

[80] Rian Venter, "A Trinitarian approach to spirituality: Exploring the possibilities", *HTS Theological Studies*, Vol. 71, no. 1, (2015): 3.
[81] Venter, A Trinitarian approach to spirituality, 3.
[82] Venter, A Trinitarian approach to spirituality, 3.
[83] Venter, A Trinitarian approach to spirituality, 3.

variegated ways."[84] According to Venter, such varied constructions of trinitarian spirituality "depend on where the focus is placed and what element of the complex traditional Trinitarian configuration is highlighted."[85] In other words, if a trinitarian theology is developed according to a social model of the Trinity, such a trinitarian perspective allows us to conceive only of a social spirituality, and vice versa.

Such a difference in perspectives does not allow for an integrated view of trinitarian spirituality, but only for various kinds of trinitarian spiritualities, none of which, as it is evident, strongly emphasise the importance of practicing a spirituality that takes account of our bodies.

A central presupposition of this research is that the aspect of embodiment, which is an essential aspect in spirituality and spiritual practice, integrates these various trinitarian spiritualities. In other words, it is presupposed that even as a social spirituality emphasises a human participation in God's communion, as we move outward into various relationships, and a contemplative spirituality emphasises an inward turn into our souls to experience the divine, both spiritualities must involve bodily practices. Both a social participation in trinitarian fellowship, and an experience of the divine through contemplation must be bodily experiences, as our worship of the triune God must be a bodily worship.

Yet trinitarian spiritualities based on differing models of the Trinity, differ with regards to their emphasis on what sort of practices are integral to their specific view of spirituality, leading to a variegated view of trinitarian spirituality. Moreover, these various kinds of trinitarian spiritualities overlook the importance of embodied spiritual practices, or embodied worship of God. Therefore, this research aims at developing an integrated view of trinitarian spirituality in which our bodily worship of the triune God takes centre-stage.

1.5 Method

The approach in achieving this research aim is as follows: To build a theoretical framework by way of comparing and evaluating the trinitarian perspectives and the corresponding trinitarian spiritualities offered by the social model and the incorporative

[84] Venter, A Trinitarian approach to spirituality, 3.
[85] Venter, A Trinitarian approach to spirituality, 3.

model of the Trinity. And to explore if these two views of Christian spirituality complement each other, to point to how an integrated view of trinitarian spirituality, which emphasises the importance of an embodied worship, can be developed. For this task, scholarly literature on the trinitarian theologies developed according to the social model and the incorporative model will be reviewed, to compare and critically evaluate the key concepts, approaches, and the significance of each model.

In doing so, this research seeks to offer insights into what an integrated view of trinitarian spirituality or an embodied trinitarian spirituality looks like and how it is significant to understand why we ought to worship the triune God with our bodies, what ought to be the right bodily posture in our worship of the triune God, and what is the goal of worshipping God with our bodies. In other words, this research seeks to offer insights into how an embodied trinitarian spirituality, in which the purpose, the act, and the goal of bodily practices, are held to be central in our understanding and worship of the triune God.

1.6 Research questions

Main question: Considering the trinitarian theologies of the social model and the incorporative model of the Trinity**,** what is an embodied trinitarian spirituality and what insights does it offer for an understanding of our worship of the triune God?

1. What are the trinitarian perspectives offered by the social model and the incorporative model of the Trinity?
2. How do these trinitarian perspectives address the problem of the simultaneous unity and plurality of God, and what is the significance of each perspective in terms of their corresponding trinitarian spiritualities?
3. What does a comparison and critical evaluation of these trinitarian perspectives and spiritualities offer for the task of developing an embodied trinitarian spirituality?
4. What insights does it offer for an understanding of our worship of the triune God?

To achieve the goals of this research, a literature review of the trinitarian theologies developed according to the social model and the incorporative model will be presented in Chapter 1. The aim is to present the key concepts, their approach to the doctrine of the Trinity, and the significance of the doctrine for Christian spirituality. In Chapter 2, a comparison of the trinitarian theologies offered by each model, based on how the problem of

God’s simultaneous unity and plurality or the paradoxical nature of God’s being is addressed by theologians in each model, will be done. In Chapter 3, the characteristics of the trinitarian spiritualities, based on the trinitarian perspectives offered by each model of the Trinity, will be discussed and reflected upon, for the purpose of developing an integrated view of trinitarian spirituality.

CHAPTER 1: A LITERATURE REVIEW OF THE TRINITARIAN THEOLOGIES OF A SOCIAL MODEL AND AN INCORPORATIVE MODEL OF THE TRINITY

Given the immensity of scholarly engagement with the doctrine of the Trinity, it is difficult to navigate our way through some of the complexities in trinitarian thinking. Yet the contributions made by some contemporary theologians have proved to be helpful in answering some of the questions that bring about these complexities. The works of John Zizioulas, an Eastern Orthodox theologian, and Sarah Coakley, an Anglican priest and theologian, are considered ground-breaking in contemporary discussions of the doctrine. Both offer specific models of the Trinity, which account for specific ways of thinking about the triune God. While Zizioulas offers a social model of the Trinity, Coakley offers an incorporative model of the Trinity.

According to the social model, the triune God is understood primarily as 'relationship' or a 'community of persons' or as a 'Being in communion,' such that it becomes an imitable prototype for ordering human relationships. The social model allows us to speak of God's being in terms of an 'ontology of personhood,' such that the personhood of the Father, Son, and Spirit, becomes a paradigm for understanding the human person. So, the claim of those who advocate the social model, is that an ontology of personhood which allows us to speak of the triune God, consequently, informs and guides our understanding of the human person, and human relationships.

Unlike social trinitarian theologians, who advocate a model of the Trinity that acts as "imitable prototype" for human relationships, Coakley does not assume that any direct implications from the social model, for ordering human relationships, can be drawn from the doctrine. Rather, according to her incorporative model, we do not comprehend God as much as we are led to experience God through a transformation of our human desires. Her model speaks of God's being based on an ontology of desire, such that divine desire becomes the prototype for speaking about and understanding human desires, which are a basic aspect of human relationships.

In other words, this model allows us to speak of God's being as the source of all desires, especially human sexual desire, such that our understanding of the triune God is always entangled with the anthropological issues of sexual and spiritual relationships. So, while direct implications for the human person cannot be drawn from an incorporative model

of the Trinity, Coakley claims that this model provides a framework for speaking of anthropological issues like human sexuality and spirituality. Or rather, this model assumes that no compelling answer can be given to the question of who God is, unless we attend to anthropological matters of sexuality and spirituality.

The evidence that Coakley gives for these associations stem from her reading of Gregory of Nyssa and Augustine, by way of comparing these two theological giants, and identifying strands of convergence in their trinitarian thought. Also, she dismantles the assumption in modern trinitarian thinking that there is a gulf between these two patristic fathers, since there has been a tendency to characterise Western trinitarian theology as pioneered by Augustine, and Eastern trinitarian theology as pioneered by the Cappadocian fathers, among whom is Gregory of Nyssa. She even critiques the assumption that the Eastern approach to the Trinity, in contrast to the Western one, provides a basis for social trinitarianism. Rather, she claims that the Eastern apporach is not so different from the Western one, in that both trinitarian theologies shed light on the entanglements of sexual desire and desire for God, such that every question pertaining to the triune God ought to take account of issues of human sexuality and spirituality.

By holding both the Eastern and Western traditions of trinitarian theology together, Coakley speaks of God's simultaneous unity and plurality through a Spirit led approach. The Spirit-leading approach gives priority to the Spirit, in that our knowledge and understanding of God as triune is possible only as the Spirit takes us up into an experience of divine life. Such an experience entails a process of our transformation, even of our sexual desires. In other words, she speaks of God's simultaneous unity and plurality in terms of our experience of *transformation*, such that we know that God is simultaneously the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.

On the other hand, social theorists read the history of doctrinal development in a certain way.[86] Their view is that there is a disjunction in doctrinal developments between the Cappadocians in the East, and Augustine in the West. The tendency of social theorists to prefer the Eastern tradition over Western tradition is due to the differences in their starting points in articulating trinitarian doctrine. The work of John Zizioulas is a telling example of this preference of the Eastern tradition over the West, such that the social model answers the

[86] Kilby, "Perichoresis and Projection", 434.

question of God's being primarily in terms of the communion of the three persons of the Trinity.

More specifically, it is understood that while the Cappadocians started with the three persons of the Trinity, Augustine started with the oneness of God. They consider that starting with the oneness of God gave rise to "an abstract notion of the divine substance."[87] Reconciling such a notion with the divine threeness then became a puzzle to be solved. On the other hand, as it has been discussed, the Eastern Cappadocian tradition, by taking the three divine persons as their starting point, were able to speak of God's oneness, in terms of *relationality* between the three persons. In other words, the Eastern tradition does not speak of the unity of the divine persons in terms of an abstract notion (ousia or substance), but in terms of the mutual relations of love that exist between the three divine persons. Thus, the problem of God's simultaneous unity and plurality is addressed in terms of our capacity to comprehend God in relational terms, or God as a Being-in-Communion.

In the light of these preliminary comparisons between the social model and the incorporative model of the Trinity, the primary focus of this chapter is to explore and identify how both models address the problem of God's simultaneous unity and plurality. This will be done by presenting a brief review of social trinitarianism, and the trinitarian theology developed by Coakley, by way of a basic comparison of the specific concepts that both models use to develop their trinitarian theologies. The task is to discuss the different ways in which both models address the problem of God's simultaneous unity and plurality and identify the grounds for comparing these models.

2.1 A brief review of the trinitarian theology of the social model

A preliminary reading of recent scholarship suggests that an appeal to social trinitarianism has been made, especially in the second half of the twentieth century. Stephen Holmes and Karen Kilby point to the growing disillusionment among theologians with an abstract doctrine of the Trinity, which reduced the doctrine to a mere logical conundrum and had little relevance for the ethical or the practical life of Christians. So, in the light of this turn towards a social model of the Trinity, theologians such as Catherine Mowry LaCugna, Miroslav Volf, John Zizioulas, Colin Gunton etc, understood that the doctrine does have significance for every other area of theology, especially for issues of practical Christian

[87] Kilby, "Perichoresis and Projection", 434.

living. Two key concepts which they use in advocating for a social model of the Trinity, are 'personhood' and 'relationality.' These are connected to the idea of God's simultaneous 'unity and plurality', the arguments for which are often strengthened further by an associated concept of 'perichoresis'. Social theorists assume that their meaning is grounded in our understanding of the triune God as revealed to us in Scripture. So, what led social theorists to use these concepts, such that a social model of the Trinity emerged, which then has implications for Christian living?

2.1.1 Evidence from patristic theology for the social model

The social model presupposes a certain understanding of the concept of 'personhood', when used to describe divine being. Theologians like Karl Barth and Karl Rahner, who are not social theorists, "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.[88] In their view, the concept is problematic since describing Father, Son, and Spirit as three 'persons' can suggest outright tritheism. Barth and Rahner used alternatives such as "mode of subsistence" or "mode of being" to describe divine being.[89]

Social theorists, on the other hand, suggest that the concept itself need not be entirely discarded, but "needs to be reformed by a return to the true Trinitarian understanding." How is personhood, when applied to divine being, understood by social theorists? According to Najeeb G. Awad, it is John Zizioulas who first described the concept of personhood, in his work, *Being in Communion*. Zizoulas inherits his definition of personhood from the Cappadocians' trinitarian ontology, "where 'person' is defined as first and foremost 'relationship' (or communion)."[90] The Cappadocian fathers speak of the divine being and divine personhood under the same rubric: 'being as communion'. In contrast to the Greek philosophical understanding of 'person' as a "free, unique, and unrepeatable entity"[91], the Cappadocians associated 'personhood' with 'relation.'[92] In their view, to 'be a person' is to 'be in relation'. According to Zizioulas, this was a breakthrough in Cappadocian trinitarian theology. He thus adopts such a definition in his work, and unlike the Greek philosophers,

[88] Karen Kilby, "Perichoresis and Projection: Problems with Social Doctrines of the Trinity", *New Blackfriars*, Vol.81, no. 957 (2007): 433.
[89] Kilby, "Perichoresis and Projection", 433.
[90] Najeeb G. Awad, "Personhood as Particularity: John Zizioulas, Colin Gunton, and the Trinitarian Theology of Personhood", *Journal of Reformed Theology*, Vol. 4 (2010): 4.
[91] Awad, "Personhood as Particularity", 4.
[92] Awad, "Personhood as Particularity", 4.

identifies the divine hypostasis with the concept of 'person' rather than with 'substance' (ousia).

Stephen Holmes reiterates this view and remarks that Zizoulas shifts the technical vocabulary of *hypostasis,* which was once synonymous with *ousia* or substance, and makes it synonymous with *prosopon* or person. According to Holmes, such a shift was momentous, since for the first time "personal and relational terminology is used to describe fundamental ontological realities, replacing substantialist terminology." Norman Metzler remarks that Zizioulas's work has been "very influential in promulgating the idea that the divine being is constituted by the communion of the three trinitarian persons."[93] His work led almost every theologian to reconceptualize their understanding of God's being.[94] A re-envisioning of God's being, not in substantialist categories, but by affirming the concept of relationality launched a social model of the Trinity. Hence, social theorists understand the concept of personhood, in terms of the concept of relationality or communion.

2.1.2 Perichoresis

A concept that further strengthens the concepts of 'personhood' and 'relationality, to speak of God's divine being, is the idea of 'perichoresis.' Karen Kilby points to Moltmann who defines 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 and divine life; as a fellowship; and as a "process of most perfect and intense empathy"."[95] Norman Metzler explains Moltmann's definition further by stating that "in contrast to the patristic approach which begins with impersonal philosophical terms, he [Moltmann] argues that the Bible rivals three persons at work, not one."[96] Hence, the Trinity ought to be understood as "a fellowship of a plurality of persons, understood as three centres of conscious activity"[97], and only then can we reconcile God's threeness with God's oneness. Kilby notes in Moltmann's definition, a kind of mutuality and love in the fellowship of the divine persons. Metzler, on the other hand, notes Moltmann's critique of abstract, impersonal arguments for God's simultaneous unity and plurality, which he [Motlamnn] corrects by positing the notion of 'fellowship' to speak of God's plurality without erasing God's unity.

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[93] Norman Metzler, "The Trinity in Contemporary Theology: Questioning the Social Trinity", *Concordia Theological quarterly,* Vol. 67, no. 3 (2003), 280.
[94] Metzler, "The Trinity in Contemporary Theology", 272.
[95] Kilby, "Perichoresis and Projection", 435.
[96] Metzler, "The Trinity in Contemporary Theology", 276.
[97] Metzler, "The Trinity in Contemporary Theology", 277.

Although Metzler reads Moltmann's understanding of God's threeness in terms of three distinct 'centres of consciousness', we find that those who criticise social theorists argue that such an understanding leads to individualising the three persons which can amount to tritheism. A more elaborate discussion on the critique of social trinitarianism will be presented later.

For now, it is important to note that, on the basis of such an understanding of the idea of perichoresis, social theorists are strongly inclined to speak of the implications of divine relations for "that which is not God."[98] In other words, in accounting for how the three divine persons are one, social theorists tend to draw implications from such an account of the Trinity for human relationships. Kilby points again to Moltmann, who 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."[99] Thus, theorising a doctrine of the Trinity in terms of divine relationality not only allows us to find a correspondence between God's inner life, and the social life of human beings. It also challenges certain norms that govern human relationships, and thereby acts as an example upon which human relationships can be modelled.

2.1.3 An Ontology of Personhood

We see the aspect of an ontology of personhood more fully developed by Zizioulas in his work, *Communion and Otherness: Further studies in Personhood and church*. To show that personhood is central to God's being, a central problem that Zizioulas seeks to address is the problem of the simultaneous oneness and threeness of God. How can we speak of God's simultaneous unity and plurality? As mentioned earlier, both the Western and Eastern traditions offer solutions to this basic question in trinitarian theology. But Zizioulas takes issue with the solutions offered by the Western tradition, stating that their approach brings about certain complications and presents the Eastern tradition's approach, influenced by the Cappadocians, as that which resolves some of those difficulties. So, he addresses this problem by presenting a solution developed by the Cappadocian fathers, for whom the person

[98] Kilby, "Perichoresis and Projection", 436.
[99] Kilby, "Perichoresis and Projection", 437.

of the Father is the ontological cause of the Trinity, thereby making the idea of an ontology of personhood a key solution to speak of God's trinitarian being.[100]

In this work, his aim is to show that the Cappadocian development of trinitarian theology is faithful to Scripture's testimony of Father, Son, and Spirit. Specifically, he aims to present Cappadocian trinitarian theology as that which does not elevate divine substance or 'ousia' over and above the person of the Father. Not only so, but he also aims to show that the Cappadocian approach does not make a distinction between God and Father, such that divine substance is understood to be distinct from the three persons of the triune God. Rather, he intends to present Cappadocian ontology in which the word 'God' is identified with the Father, such that the Father "remains the one God of the Bible by being the ground of unity of the three persons." In other words, the Cappadocian approach views the person of the Father in terms of *personal ontological origination,* such that the one ontological ruler in the Trinity is the Father, who, in this sense, is the One God.[101]

The West makes a distinction by dissociating the word 'one' from 'God the Father' (in the Nicene creed), such that the notion of oneness is used in reference to God only, and not the Father. Such a distinction has been developed in the West for the sake of upholding the unity of God. In other words, speaking of divine substance as distinct from the three persons, would allow one to posit the notion of unity in God's being, without having to face the problem of the distinctions between the three persons. The Western tradition developed such an ontological understanding of the triune God, to combat the Arian heresy.[102]

The Eastern tradition, on the other hand, by adding the word 'one' before 'God the Father, highlighted the problem of divine unity. If the word 'God' is equated with 'Father', then we can speak of divine unity only in terms of divine Fatherhood. Zizioulas states that the "Arians would then appear to be right in excluding the Son and the Spirit from the idea of the one God."[103] If this is so, then the Eastern approach has to face the challenge of Arianism, in a way that their trinitarian theology is faithful to the "biblical equation of God with the Father." Zizoulas aims to precisely present this; the manner in which the Cappadocians deal

[100] John D. Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church*, (London: T&T Clark): 2006, 113-118.
[101] Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 119-124.
[102] Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 119-124.
[103] Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 117.

with the Arian heresy, while addressing the problem of God's simultaneous unity and plurality, and without speaking of divine substance as distinct from divine hypostases.

As mentioned earlier, Zizioulas highlights the Cappadocian understanding that the person of the Father is the ground of unity and the ontological originator of the Son and the Spirit, such that the Father is the divine monarch who is the 'cause' of the Son's and the Spirit's existence. If the Father is the divine monarch, then the Father "caused the other two persons to be distinct hypostases"[104]; the causation characteristically taking place outside of time such that the Son nor the Spirit is subordinate to the Father, and taking place on the "hypostatic and personal level"[105] and not at the level of substance, thereby implying *freedom* and *love* in such causation.

In this way the Cappadocians avoided necessity in ontological causation, and "introduced *freedom into ontology*, since the Father as a person, and not as substance, can only exist freely and in relation with the other persons."[106] In other words, the Cappadocian insistence on making personhood and not substance, the basis of the ontology of the Trinity, identified the connected attributes of freedom and love as central to the nature of God's being. He concludes that it was such insistence from the Cappadocians which produced the Nicene-Constantinople creed, which struck the word 'substance' and "read that the Son was born simply 'from the Father'."[107] Thus the Eastern Fathers remained faithful to biblical faith expressed in the older eastern creeds: 'I believe in one God the Father'.[108]

But how did the Cappadocians address the Arian challenge, that if, according to the Nicene creed, the Son and the Spirit are of the same substance as the Father, then their generation was a necessity, and not that which ensued freely from the Father? Zizioulas states that the Cappadocian solution to this problem was to make a distinction between the Father's 'will', and the Father as the 'willing one'. The divine will is common to all three persons, which is equivalent to the divine substance, while the willing one "is a person, and as such is primarily none else but the Father."[109] If the Father and not divine substance, is the

[104] Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 119.
[105] Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 119.
[106] Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 120.
[107] Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 120.
[108] Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 120.
[109] Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 121.

ontological originator of the Son and the Spirit, then the Father is the 'willing one', from whom the Son is begotten and the Spirit proceeds. And if the Father is the willing one, then the Father is the initiator of divine freedom. And in originating personal being and freedom, the Father originates an ontological otherness as well, in the Trinity, such that freedom is understood as the freedom to be oneself or uniquely particular.[110]

In other words, freedom in God's being is this: as the Father freely generates the Son and the Spirit, each person presupposes an ontological otherness or a unique particularity, such that there are three distinct hypostases or persons in the Trinity. Moreover, since ontological freedom in the Trinity is associated with relationality, and not individuality, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are relational entities, each of whose existence is inconceivable without the other. This aspect of relationality in the Trinity, and not divine substance, makes the Son and the Spirit equal to the Father, such that the generation of the Son and the Spirit, as persons other than the Father, is not a necessity, but the consequence of the Father's ontological freedom and love. Thus Zizioulas, through his reading of the Cappadocians, presents, not divine substance but the Father as the ontological cause of the distinct hypostases, thereby resolving the challenges posed by the Arian heresy to the 'substance' theology of the Nicene creed, and offering a solution to the problem of the simultaneous oneness and threeness of God's being.

If social theorists approach the doctrine of the Trinity by conceptualising an ontology of personhood, such the problem of the paradoxical nature of God's being is explained in terms of 'relationality' and 'communion', then what sort of consequences does the social model have for our understanding of trinitarian spirituality? First, the concept of an ontology of personhood, challenges and redefines our understanding of God and human beings. In other words, since we can conceive of God's being in terms of persons-in-relationship, our notion of what it means to be a person is subject to redefinition. The implications of the social model for Christian spirituality will be discussed at length in the next chapter. For now, is it sufficient to point out that the social model shows the significance of trinitarian doctrine for Christian life in a way that allows us to conceive of a social or participative spirituality. In other words, if the triune God is an imitable prototype for ordering human relationships, then

[110] Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 121-122.

our knowledge and worship of God as triune expresses itself in a social spirituality, or a spirituality in which communion of believers is central.

2.2 A brief review of the trinitarian theology of the incorporative model

A central conviction in Coakley's trinitarian theology is that we cannot speak of God as Trinity unless we can chart the "necessary and intrinsic entanglement of human sexuality and spirituality in such a quest: the questions of right contemplation of God, right speech about God, and right ordering of desire all hang together."[111] She claims that unless one attends to questions of sexuality, gender and desire, one cannot adequately articulate a doctrine of the Trinity. According to her, most modern textbooks on the doctrine of the Trinity have tended to obscure its entanglements with questions of sexuality and spirituality, "in favour of its more cerebral account of the intellectual issues, along with the imperial political backdrop."[112] So, she proposes a re-reading of the patristic fathers, in order to set the story of the doctrine's development within a constellation of spiritual, ascetical, sexual and social consideration/s, and "expose a narrative of an explicitly prayer-based access to the workings of the divine."[113] Her thesis is that these connecting associations to trinitarian thinking caused political difficulty in the history of the church, such that a prayer based approach to the Trinity was marginalised in favour of a more conciliar discussion of the doctrine. Not only was this the case in the patristic period, but the church further marginalised dealing with these associations even in modern histories of the doctrine's development.[114]

2.2.1 Coakley's critique of the social model of the Trinity

Although Coakley deals with several concepts in her systematic undertaking of the doctrine of the Trinity, in this research the focus will be on a few specific concepts that allow us to understand how she engages with and develops her trinitarian theology that, according to her, proves to be a transformative experience in a Christian's life. Unlike social trinitarian theologians, who advocate a model of the Trinity that acts as "imitable prototype" for human relationships, Coakley does not assume that such direct implications can be drawn from the

[111] Sarah Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self: An essay on the Trinity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 2013, 2.
[112] Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self", 6.*
[113] Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self", 6.*
[114] Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self", 6.*

doctrine. Rather, she implicitly probes into the social theorist's assumption that the doctrine can be formulated in a way that makes it 'relevant' for Christian spirituality or life, and points to the immense theological and spiritual danger that such neatly formulated theories of the Trinity can bring. Her claim is that trinitarian doctrine as it was achieved in the conciliar negotiation of orthodoxy, subordinated the Spirit, even though the rhetoric was that the Spirit was fully equal to the Father and the Son. Such a subordination of the Spirit was tied to covert issues of spiritual power and gender.[115] If the Spirit is subordinated, then the doctrine cannot be, as social theorists claim, a model on which human relationships can be ordered. The idea of perichoresis becomes invalid, since the relationship of the Spirit to the Father and the Son is not mutual and equal. And if the Spirit is relegated to a subordinated position, it leads to a dismantling of the whole endeavour of social theorists to describe the divine hypostases as 'persons' who are in relationships of equality, mutuality, and communion. But even though the Spirit can be considered as a person, equal to the Father and the Son, the Spirit's subordination will only result in the kind of implications for human relationships, in which those who bid for knowledge, hegemony and phallocentrism will effectively subordinate those who do not claim such power.[116] In other words, gender relations can only be organised according to a false hierarchy.

While Coakley does not critique social trinitarianism extensively in *God, Sexuality and the Self: An Essay on the Trinity* (although she addresses this in another one of her works), her central hypothesis is that the Eastern approach (which is claimed by social theorists as the right approach), did not produce a doctrine of the Trinity that is exclusively different from the West. She argues that we find strands of trinitarian thought that is based on a Spirit-led approach to the Trinity in both Eastern and Western accounts of the doctrine. So, her main argument, one that could be offered as critique to the social theorist's reading of the patristic fathers, is this: giving priority to the Spirit even as we attempt to articulate a doctrine of the Trinity, allows us to experience the Trinity, simultaneously as Father, Son and Spirit "in a reflexive divine 'incorporative' act which makes Christians participative of divine 'Sonship'; and a more hierarchical perception of 'incorporation', in which the Spirit is the point of entry in a movement of progressive 'ascent'."[117]

[115] Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self",* 101.
[116] Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self",* 42.
[117] Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self", 142.*

On this note, we understand the simultaneous unity and plurality of God, not by attempting to solve it through our cognitive abilities, but through an experience of an incorporative act of the Spirit. As Hector puts it, Coakley's argument for the problem of God's threeness is that "if one proceeds from the Spirit to the "Son" and the "Father," then one never faces the embarrassing question of how the Spirit can be joined to, and made to seem equal with, the Son and Father." In other words, it is in the Spirit, and through the Spirit's act of incorporating the believer into God's life, that we understand God as triune.

2.2.2 Evidence from patristic theology for the incorporative model

What evidence does Coakley give to support her argument that the task of doing trinitarian theology proves to be a transformative experience? Before pointing out Coakley's answer to this question, it is important to consider Coakley's direct remarks on social trinitarianism. She points out that the Western approach has been blamed for being proto-Catersian in its implications, which means that a modern understanding of selfhood was read onto God's self, "making God in the image of the modern, individual mind."[118] While this was so, the Eastern approach, on which the social model rests, presented a vision of the persons in the Trinity as being in mutual communion, such that it allowed social theorists to claim that the trinity can be an ideal prototype for ordering human relationships, be it in the political or ecclesial realms. She remarks that it is wrong to argue that if God is conceptualised as a relationship, all would be well, and our human relationships can then be ordered according to perichoretic harmony. Rather, her approach, in contrast to the idea that the West was individualistic and the East was rich with relational insight, is that trinitarian thinking in both traditions "was undeniably rife with a 'gender subtext' that we have yet to detect and unravel; and both [Augustine in the West and Gregory of Nyssa in the East] were engaging profoundly , albeit in different contexts and with different points of difficulty, with what [she] calls the 'messy entanglement' of sexual desire and desire for God."[119]

Her construction of the doctrine of the Trinity, therefore, involves an engagement with Augustine and Gregory of Nyssa, by paying close attention, especially to the ways in which they converge in their ontological vision of the Godhead, and "in their perceptions of

[118] Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self", 270.*
[119] Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self", 272-273.*

its radically transformative potential for human life."[120] In doing so, she retrieves the rich resources offered by the patristic fathers for a more comprehensive understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity, which modern textbooks on the subject often overlook. She concludes her work by arguing that such a retrieval has great theological importance. Her claim is that the patrictic fathers provide rich resources for "a presentation of a contemporary trinitarian *ontology of desire*- a vision of God's trinitarian nature as both the source and goal of human desires, as God intends them."[121] Thus, she shows how the task of doing trinitarian theology allows us to encounter the triune God as One who is the source of, as well as One who transforms, our human desires.

To show how the task of trinitarian theology is transformative, Coakley discusses the theologies of Augustine and Gregory of Nyssa, who respond to the problem of the paradoxical nature of God's being always in association with issues of sexuality and spirituality. In doing so, she speaks of how these fathers approach the task of doing trinitarian theology, which is often entangled with anthropological issues, such that their approach to trinitarian theology illuminates how undertaking the task itself proves to be a transformative experience.

She starts off by showing how these patristic fathers diverge in their trinitarian thinking, so that she may identify how these divergences are connected, especially with regards to the differences in their understanding of the human sexes. In what follows, an overview of some of her main arguments, the key concepts that undergird her arguments, and her approach in reading the trinitarian theologies of Gregory of Nyssa and Augustine will be presented.

Coakley presents a comparison of Gregory and Augustine in broad strokes. While Gregory emphasises the equality of men and women, Augustine struggles to square his view of the bodily differences between men and women with his commitment to the spiritual equality of both genders. Coakley also attributes their views to their differences in life experiences. Gregory, who was married, but later became celibate, has a high view of human

[120] Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self", 273.*
[121] Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self", 6.*

sexuality, yet upholds celibacy over married life. But Augustine's view of sexuality is often guilt-ridden, even though he has a high view of reproduction in Christian marriage.[122]

2.2.3 Sexuality and Spirituality

As mentioned earlier, Coakley focuses on two specific aspects in each of the fathers' theologies: human nature and sexuality; and prayer and spirituality in relation to their trinitarianism. She explores a few of Gregory's treatises, which enables us to have a glimpse of his view of human nature and gender. From his treatise, *On the making of humanity*, she points to Gregory's view, that gender or sexual differentiation is a result of the Fall, such that his eschatological vision of the human person is "what one might call 'humanoid' (or perhaps 'angeloid)- neither male nor female in any commonly accepted sense."[123] To emphasise this point further, Coakley notes Gregory's view that, at the resurrection, our bodies will lose any sexual differentiation and all of us will become quasi-female in relation to God. She takes note of his understanding that gender binaries do not play a role in our true spirituality, nor even our bodily identity.[124]

Coakley then goes on to ask what his views on sexuality are, specifically his views on the importance of virginity. She engages with his treatise, *On Virginity*, to point out that in his view, celibacy echoes the nature of the triune God analogically. Coakley does not elaborate on this point. But she does take note of this: While Gregory regards celibacy as that which reflects God's triune nature, he does not hesitate to apply sexual metaphors to the Trinity. These metaphors are indispensable to his trinitarian thinking and are highly suggestive of that "never achieved union with the divine nature towards which [he] constantly and restlessly strives."[125] In other words, sexual metaphors, when applied to trinitarian thought are not worrisome to Gregor; they are intrinsically associated with it. But it is also important to note while Gregory does not favour celibacy over married asceticism, he values "'right aiming' of desire (at God) and of its appropriate 'moderation' in all matters of good physical pleasure."[126] In other words, he does presuppose the value in married asceticism, in that sexual desires are channelled rightly.

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[122] Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self",* 274-281.
[123] Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self", 281.*
[124] Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self", 281-285.*
[125] Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self", 278.*
[126] Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self", 285.*

Coakley probes further into his view on spirituality. She highlights two characteristics: a particular kind of loss of control to the divine and being impregnated with God's life. Both aspects draw our attention to the sexual subtext present in Gregory's view on spirituality. To do this, she engages with his later work, *Life of Moses,* to highlight the aspect of 'losing control' or surrendering to the divine, as opposed to arriving at clarity of mind, as the goal of Christian life. And as the human soul is being drawn into an intimate relationship with the divine, and surrenders control, "the soul has to wait for the spouse (Christ) in darkness, relying only on the 'spiritual senses' of smell, taste, touch, and feeling."[127] She also points to Verna Harrison, who emphasises the concept of 'spiritual procreation', as the goal of Christian life, for both men and women, such that the human person becomes a receptacle to be filled with the life of God; the life which then pours out in response to both God and neighbour.[128] In this way, Coakley brings out the associations between sexuality and spirituality in Gregory's theology.

What about Augustine's view on the nature of human sexes and gender, and spirituality and prayer, and how does Coakley read Augustine with regards to these aspects? Since she embarks on a comparative reading of Augustine and Gregory of Nyssa, Coakley first points out that for Gregory, the emphasis is on a certain 'loss of sexual control' in one's spiritual experience of the divine. On the other hand, the dominant emphasis in Augustine's views on these aspects is "the quest for corporate and controlled *order*- at the level of life in the Trinity, of the city (polis), and of relations between the sexes."[129] She attributes his theological thinking on these matters to his experience of his struggles with sexual self-control.

She goes on to remark that for Augustine, sexuality is meant only for procreation, and it is good for that purpose alone. The difference in the bodily differences between men and women, then is purposeful in Augustine's view. With regards to this Coakley points out that unlike Gregory, Augustine does not hold the view that bodily differences would dissolve at the end times, but that men and women will still remain sexually differentiated. It is only with the post-fall condition of sexuality that Augustine is concerned about, such that he views the

[127] Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self", 286.*
[128] Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self", 286-287.*
[129] Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self", 289.*

body and its lack of sexual control as a revolt against "the cooperative mental work of memory, understanding, and will- especially against the will."[130] Coakley explains this view of Augustine further by pointing to his work in the *City of God,* where he suggests that the revolt of the body, especially male bodily revolt would be absent if there had been no Fall, and procreation would have been done dispassionately. Based on this view, Coakley remarks that Augustine is more concerned about the ordered physical control of male desire, than for women's safety from male bodily revolt.[131]

If Augustine's primary concern has to do with the controlled order of male sexual behavior, what are his views on women's sexuality? According to Coakley's reading of him, she points out that while there is a strong conviction in Augustine's thinking that women are *mentally* equal to men, he also adheres to Scripture's teaching that 'the woman is the glory of the man' (1 Cor 11.7), which leads him to the view that a "woman, considered in her own right, is *different*- subordinate qua bodily, and not fully in the image of God unless joined to a man, her husband."[132] His view on the equality of men and women also stems from his adherence to Scripture's teaching that in Christ, there is neither male nor female (Gal 3. 28).[133] Accordingly, Coakley points to the paradox that is prevalent in Augustine's thinking.

With regards to his views on spirituality, Coakley draws a comparison again, between Gregory and Augustine, by pointing out that while Gregory's spiritual theology leads to "darkness and incomprehensibility and loss of control",[134]Augustine's theology emphasises "*light* and clarification and insight".[135] In other words, spiritual ascent does not lead to darkness and loss of sexual control, but "into the light of grace which one might appropriately describe as right divine control."

2.2.4 Ontology of desire

She goes on to connect these views on human nature, sexuality, and spirituality, with their trinitarianism. First, she asks how Gregory's views on these anthropological issues fit

[130] Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self", 290.*
[131] Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self", 291.*
[132] Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self", 291.*
[133] Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self", 291.*
[134] Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self", 292.*
[135] Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self", 292.*

with this trinitarian theology. On this, her comments are that while his later exegetical writings have many aspects of an incorporative approach to the Trinity, his more polemical writings, such as his famous treatise *Ad Ablabium,* and *Not three gods,* speak of the Trinity in terms of a "safe 'linear' and hierarchical ordering of the persons. In other words, even though his later works, such as the *Life of Moses,* seem to understand the Trinity, as in which all structured order and hierarchy are dissolved in our encounter with God, his doctrinal treatises do not reflect such thinking. Based on such a reading of Gregory's works, Coakley concludes that this apparent lack of fit between his earlier and later writings can be resolved only when we pay attention to his "wilder" trinitarian analogies in his exegetical works, which are not reflected in his more philosophical discourses. Her view is that these trinitarian analogies take account of the associations between human erotic lovers and inner trinitarian relations.[136] With regards to Augustine's trinitarianism, she points out that in his thinking, the mind images the trinitarian Godhead, such that our memory, understanding and will, being three faculties of one mind, image the triune God, who is not three substances but one substance. "Thus, as with the level of the human, so at the level of the divine, what matters is harmony and order, unity and cooperation."[137]

She notes how Augustine's thinking differs from Gregory's with regards to their understanding of the triune God. While Gregory emphasises a dissolution of structured hierarchy and order in our experience of the divine, Augustine emphasises the formation of order, unity, and cooperation, in our encounter with the divine.

While Coakley points out to these strong divergences between the trinitarian thought of Augustine and Gregory of Nyssa, she does not hesitate to draw points of convergence between them. Since she aims to show that both patristic fathers, while emphasising distinct aspects of our experience of the divine, have a vision of the triune God that has a "radically transformative potential for human life"[138]Coakley ends her comparative reading of them by indicating points of convergence in their trinitarian thought.

She suggests from her reading of both Augustine and Gregory, that there are differences between their earlier works and their later works. Just as Gregory's exegetical

[136] Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self", 288.*
[137] Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self", 293.*
[138] Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self", 273.*

works do not fit with his later polemical doctrinal treatises, Augustine's later anti-Pelagian works do not reflect his trinitarian thinking, according to which humans experience a c*ontrolled cognitive order* in their encounter with God. In other words, Augustine speaks of the formation of order and unity in our experience of the divine; thus, differing from Gregory, who speaks of a dissolution of all order and hierarchy in the human encounter with the divine. Nevertheless, as Coakley points out, Augustine's thinking converges with Gregory's, in that both speak of an experience of incorporation into divine life, in and through the Spirit. She quotes Augustine, in whose understanding there is "an overflowing, enkindling, inflaming, and 'incorporative' flow of the Holy Spirit, a 'pouring forth' into our hearts, through which… 'the whole Trinity dwells in us'." She connects this thought to Gregory's theology of the Trinity, who states that "one must first be enlightened by the Spirit, in order to ascend to the Son and thence to the Father."

In other words, Coakley shows points of convergence between Augustine and Gregory, by emphasising their Spirit-led approach to the Trinity. Even though both fathers differ in terms of the implications they draw from their trinitarian theologies to issues of sexuality and spirituality, yet their insistence that only the Spirit leads us to a vision of the triune God, which allows us to be incorporated into a life of potential transformation, shows a convergence in their trinitarian thinking.

Although Coakley does not clearly explicate these points of convergence between the fathers, apart from quoting their views on a Spirit-led approach, yet she indicates areas in which both Augustine and Gregory meet in their trinitarian thought. She does go on to explore the heritage of Augustinian theology, in the works of John Donne, to fully explicate the associations between divine desire and human loves, it is beyond the scope of this review to discuss these ideas. Yet it could be argued that Coakley should have discussed at length the points of convergence between Augustine and Gregory more adequately.

For now, we note her claim, that in both Gregory and Augustine, we see an alignment of human desire with divine desire, such that our incorporation into divine life by the Spirit demands a response that involves all our desires, even our sexual desires. In other words, the fathers' understanding of God as Trinity is always associated with an experience of a transformation. So, according to Coakley, while their gender views in relation to their trinitarian thought differ, their trinitarian theologies meet in terms of the associations they

make between our experience as creatures with embodied desires, and our knowledge of God as triune. From this, it is evident that Coakley's engagement with Augustine and Gregory of Nyssa, is not so much to show how they explain the paradoxical nature of God's being, as much as to show that their prayer-based approach to trinitarian theology, involves a Spirit-led transformation of our desires, such that it is in such a transformative experience that we truly comprehend God as Father, Son and Spirit.

Based on this review, it is reasonable to presuppose that the incorporative model speaks of God's being by conceptualising an ontology of desire, such that we understand God, only in our interaction with Him as creatures laden with embodied desires. In other words, since we can conceive of God as the source of all human desires, even sexual desires, our knowledge of God lies in an experience of our union with God, in whom all of our desires are satisfied. With regards to the significance of the doctrine for Christian life, the incorporative model opens a way for the believer to engage in a contemplative spirituality. In other words, if the Spirit initiates our understanding of the triune God, through our response to the Spirit in prayer, then our knowledge of God as triune expresses itself in a spirituality of deep and silent contemplation. The way in which the incorporative model shapes this kind of a trinitarian spirituality will be fully discussed in the next chapter. For now, it is helpful to point out that the incorporative model provides a foundation for a contemplative spirituality.

Conclusion: As mentioned earlier, the purpose of this brief review of the social model and the incorporative model of the Trinity, is to discuss the ways in which each model addresses the problem of God's simultaneous unity and plurality by taking a unique approach and by offering distinct trinitarian perspectives. The aim was to identify the possible grounds for comparison of these two models, to start building a theoretical framework which sheds light on what significance trinitarian theology has for our understanding of Christian spirituality. In other words, the aim is to offer an integrated perspective on spirituality that is informed by the doctrine of the Trinity, by way of identifying how each model gives a certain perspective on the relevance of trinitarian theology for Christian spirituality or Christian living, with each perspective complementing the other.

For now, it is useful to summarise the key findings from this review, to discuss their significance and to build a theoretical framework. First, in the social model, the concept of relationality is crucial for explaining the paradoxical nature of God's being. The evidence that

social theorists show for a relational view of God, is taken from their reading of patristic theology in a certain way. Specifically, they read the history of doctrinal development disjunctively, in that they disregard the Western Augustinian tradition for its inadequacy in addressing the complexities in trinitarian theology, and laud the Eastern Cappadocian tradition, both for remaining faithful to Scripture's testimony about the Father, Son, and Spirit, and for its ability to explain God's simultaneous unity and plurality. Their relational view of God is further strengthened by their use of the concept of perichoresis. This concept allows the social theorist to reconcile the unity and plurality of God, without straying into the danger of tritheism. Also, it helps the social theorist to uphold a relational view of God, as a model for understanding human relationality.

Moreover, such a relational view of God is explained fully by conceptualising an ontology of personhood, for which the theological contributions of John Zizioulas are highlighted. An ontology of personhood allows for speaking of the unity of the Father, Son, and Spirit as three distinct persons in the Trinity, without positing the notion of 'substance' or 'ousia.' Rather, this concept allows for an understanding of God the Father as the *primary ontological originator* of God's being, such that the personhood of the Son and the Spirit is explained in terms of their eternally free, and eternally loving relationship with the Father. It has been pointed out that our understanding of personhood, at the anthropological level, can be challenged and redefined on this basis. In other words, if personhood can be explained in terms of relationality at the level of God's being, such an ontology redefines our understanding of personhood at the anthropological level. Thus, the social model of the Trinity guides and informs our understanding of the human person and human relationality, and consequently sheds light on how trinitarian theology has implications for a social or communal kind of trinitarian spirituality.

Second, the incorporative model approaches the problem of the paradoxical nature of God's being, not by way of using our *intellectual capacities* to provide a rational solution to it, but by identifying it as mystery that requires a prayerful disposition of following the *Spirit's capacity* to lead us into divine life, via a process of transformation that allows us to know God as Father, Son and Spirit. In other words, the incorporative approach to the Trinity does not consider that our knowledge of the Trinity is possible through cognitive rationalisation. Instead, it points to the mystery of the triune God, who can be known only through the Spirit's leading, or the Spirit's act of incorporating us into divine life.

The evidence that Coakley gives for this approach from patristic theology, is taken from a unified reading of the theologies of Augustine and Gregory of Nyssa, such that she identifies points of convergence in their trinitarian visions. Not only so, but she also identifies how their trinitarian theologies are laden with a 'gender' or 'sexual' subtext, in that their approach to the doctrine is always associated with their views on issues of sexuality and spirituality. In other words, she connects the specific aspects of human nature and sexuality, and prayer and spirituality to their trinitarian theologies. Her aim is to lay bare the often neglected associations between the doctrine of the Trinity, and issues of sexuality and spirituality, so as to argue for the intrinsic entanglements of our sexual desires and our desire for God, such that our understanding of the paradoxical nature of God's being is possible only through our interaction with God in the Spirit, that essentially involves a transformation of our embodied desires.

Such an approach makes even the task of doing trinitarian theology an experience of transformation. If divine desire is the progenitor of human desire, and its subsequent transformation, and our understanding of the nature of God's being involves such a transformative encounter, then this approach to trinitarian doctrine acts a foundation for developing a certain kind of trinitarian spirituality. It has been pointed out that the incorporative model operates on the presupposition that such a transformative encounter is Spirit-led and demands a disposition of prayer and contemplation. Thus, it provides a basis for developing a contemplative trinitarian spirituality.

Based on this summary, it is possible to identify the grounds for comparing the social model and the incorporative model. While there are differences in their approaches to trinitarian theology, both models complement each other in terms of the significance of their trinitarian perspectives for Christian life and spirituality. In the next chapter, these aspects will be compared, for the purpose of developing an integrated perspective on trinitarian spirituality.

CHAPTER 2: A COMPARISON OF THE TRINITARIAN PERSPECTIVES OF THE SOCIAL AND THE INCORPORATIVE MODELS OF THE TRINITY

The social and the incorporative models of the Trinity can be compared on these grounds: First, the approach to trinitarian theology taken by theologians who advocate for their respective models, their reading of patristic trinitarian theologies, especially that of Augustine and the Cappadocian fathers, and the significance of the trinitarian perspective of each model for Christian spirituality.

It will be argued that while theologians who support these respective models differ in terms of their approaches and in terms of their reading of patristic sources; their perspectives on trinitarian spirituality, which is informed by their corresponding trinitarian theologies, are complementary in nature, such that an integrated view of trinitarian spirituality can be developed based on this comparison.

3.1 Similarities and Differences between the Social and the Incorporative models of the Trinity

A specific way in which the social model and the incorporative model are similar is in terms of what motivates theologians who advocate for their respective model, to answer the question of God's simultaneous oneness and threeness. This question has long been addressed as though it is a logical problem to be solved. But theologians advocating both the social model and the incorporative model reiterate against such an approach. They start their trinitarian developments by refuting the idea that the doctrine, especially the issue of God's simultaneous unity and plurality, is a logical conundrum that can be solved by mere human intellect. Yet they differ with regards to their understanding of where the capacity to articulate the doctrine is located, or with the approach they take to begin their trinitarian reflections.

First, social theorists arrive at their main arguments for addressing this problem, by pointing to the inability of the Western Augustinian tradition to properly account for the distinctions between the three persons of the triune God, thereby critiquing the Western tradition of its inadequacy in addressing the problem of God's simultaneous unity and plurality. Their approach lauds the Eastern Cappadocian tradition as that which properly considers and takes account of the plurality within the Godhead. Their main critique of the Augustinian tradition is that the West approaches the doctrine by starting with the unity of

God, thereby being led to speak of God's oneness using an abstract notion like 'ousia' or substance, and thus remain unable to account for the three distinct hypostases, without the notion of 'substance.' Their claim is that the Eastern Cappadocian tradition accounts for this inability of the Western tradition, by starting with God's plurality, and the distinctions between the three persons, thereby being able to speak of God's unity in relational terms, and not in terms of abstract notions.

Travis E. Ables refers to Karl Rahner's critique of the Western approach, to show why the Augustinian tradition received such incredible criticism. Ables states that according to Rahner, the problem with conceiving the three persons of the Trinity, by privileging the one divine mind as the supreme category, "encourages to think of the Trinity without reference to the history of salvation, and focuses primarily on the unity of the divine nature as a single mind, rather than on the plurality of the persons."[139] Instead, Rahner's assertion is that the Eastern tradition, by emphasising the distinctions of the three persons "preserved a more authentic and salutary way for thinking about the Trinity."[140]

In other words, the Western Augustinian approach, according to Rahner, lacks the ability to speak of the triune God in relational terms, accounting neither for intra-trinitarian relations, nor human-divine relations. If Western approach is inadequate to account for God's plurality, then the social theorists' argument that the Eastern Cappadocian approach is more authentic, is not surprising. So, those who advocate for the social model address the problem of God's simultaneous unity and plurality, in the words of Declan Marnion and Rik van Nieuwenhove, by first underscoring "the relationality of the triune God, a relationality not self-contained but overflowing into the economy of creation and redemption."[141] As seen earlier, there is evidence for such a critique of the Western approach, as well as for why social theorists claim that the Eastern approach adequately deals with the question of God's simultaneous unity and plurality.

In what follows, this evidence will be reviewed for the purpose of showing how social theorists argue for the adequacy of their approach. As presented earlier, social theorists start

[139] Travis E. Ables, "The Decline and Fall of the West? Debates about the Trinity in Contemporary Christian Theology", *Religion Compass*, Vol.6, no.3 (2012): 164.
[140] Ables, The Decline and Fall of the West?, 164.
[141] Declan Marmion and Rik van Nieuwenhove, *An Introduction to the Trinity*, (UK: Cambridge University Press), 2010, 202.

with the plurality of God, by taking note of the concept of 'personhood', and its usefulness for speaking of the distinct hypostases. They point to Zizioulas' work as groundbreaking in terms of his reading of the Eastern Cappadocian fathers, who shaped his description of the concept of personhood to speak of the three persons of the Trinity. Holmes especially credits Zizioulas for his contribution in shifting the terminology used in articulating the doctrine of the Trinity. He asserts that a shift from using the term 'ousia', to using the term 'person', to speak of the distinct hypostases was momentous, such that it led to a reinterpretation of the concept of God's plurality.

How was it reinterpreted? Social theorists use the concept of personhood to speak of the distinct hypostases of the triune God, by defining the concept in terms of relationality, such that the three persons of the Trinity are ontologically defined in terms of their relationship to each other. As mentioned earlier, Zizioulas holds this view that he has inherited from the Cappadocian fathers, who speak of God's being under the rubric of 'being as communion'. If the plurality of God's being is primarily understood in relational or communal terms, then the unity of God's being is understood in terms of relationship or communion. Social theorists neither deny the unity of God, not do they overlook the existence of three distinct persons in the Trinity. Rather they affirm that God is a unity as a well as plurality, primarily because God exists as a communion of three persons. Thus, they address the problem of the simultaneous unity and plurality of God, by speaking of God's being in terms of relationship or communion.

Next, the specific ways in which Coakley's approach differs from the social theorists will be presented. Unlike those who advocate a social model of the Trinity, Coakley does not approach the problem by using analogical language to speak of the unity of the three divine hypostases. In other words, Coakley does not attempt to provide analogies to articulate the trinitarian doctrine. Rather, she emphasises the Spirit's role of incorporating the praying believer into divine life, through which we experience and understand the inner life of the triune God. Unlike the social theorists who focus on the *human capacity* to articulate what it means that God is both three and one, Coakley upholds the *Spirit's capacity* to enable the praying Christian to experience the divine, such that it is in such experience that one understands God's simultaneous oneness and threeness. So, Coakley's trinitarian thinking is primarily distinct from that of the social theorist, in terms of their understanding of what or who gives us the capacity to articulate the doctrine of the Trinity.

Clare Carlisle contrasts Coakely's thinking with the thinking of most modern theologians. She remarks that while modern theologians often undertake the task of doing theology as though it is a game of chess, critiquing their opponents' moves and failures, Coakley does not approach the task in that manner.[142] Rather, she proposes that the task of doing theology is always a 'recommendation for life', such that it becomes an ascetical exercise- "one that demands bodily practice and transformation, both individual and social."[143] Such transformation, according to Coakley, happens only as one is led by the Spirit. In other words, while most modern theologians do trinitarian theology by depending on human capacity to articulate about the nature of the triune God, Coakley proposes for a dependence on the Spirit's leading, in order to do the same. If our speech about God does not rise out of our own capacities, but through our embodied involvement in the leading of the Spirit, then the understanding of God's simultaneous unity and plurality comes only as we are incorporated by the Spirit into the divine life of the triune God. Coakley does not explain how such incorporation happens, except that it occurs as the believer engages in prayer and contemplation, such that he or she experiences, through faith, the Spirit 'catching them up into divine life'. While such experiences may remain a puzzle to those who do not engage with trinitarian theology in this manner, Coakley argues that the triune God can be known in this manner. Thus, Coakley remains distinct from most modern theologians, among whom are the social theorists, with regards to her approach in doing trinitarian theology.

Moreover, Coakley's trinitarian theology is distinct from that of the social theorist, in that she does not assume that there is a disjunction between the Western Augustinian tradition and the Eastern Cappadocian tradition in trinitarian theology. This is another chief distinction between the social model and the incorporative model. In supposing a disjunction between the Eastern and Western traditions in trinitarian thinking, the social theorist credits the Eastern fathers for developing a trinitrian doctrine by conceptualising an *ontology of personhood,* while simultaneously critiquing the Western Augustinian tradition for lacking the capacity to articulate what it means that God's being is constituted by three distinct hypostases. On the other hand, Coakley does not presuppose such a disjunction. Rather, she exposes a common 'gender subtext' running through the trinitarian thinking in both

[142] Clare Carlisle, review of *God, Sexuality and the Self: An Essay 'On the Trinity'* by Sarah Coakley, *Religious Studies*, Vol. 50, no. 3 (2014): 392.
[143] Carlisle, review of *God, Sexuality and the Self: An Essay 'On the Trinity*' by Sarah Coakley, 392.

traditions, such that she credits both for developing a trinitarian theology by conceptualising an *ontology of desire*. Through her reading of Augustine and the Gregory of Nyssa, she presents a vision of the triune God, who is the source of all human desires, and in whom those desires will be transformed and fulfilled.

With regards to this, Fiona Ellis remarks that, in terms of Coakley's thinking, "we can say that desire for God is to be put above all other desires, that sexuality properly so called can be approached only via God, and that sexual desire and desire for God are irrevocably 'entangled'."[144] If the issue of sexuality is entangled with the question about God, then the task of doing trinitarian theology must take account of these entanglements, such that questions about the human experience of sexual desire, and the desire for God are intrinsically connected. The task of doing trinitarian theology, then involves, according to Ellis, "an ongoing journey of purgative transformation and change, as we swim in the tide of the Spirit itself and order our desires in relation to God."[145] And if trinitarian theology is done as one is led by the Spirit, then our understanding of God as Trinity, does not take place in our attempts to give a rational explanation, by treating our quest for God as an intellectual problem, but happens only in an encounter with the divine even as we engage in contemplation or 'deep prayer' in the Spirit. Based on such an understanding, the question of God's simultaneous unity and plurality is addressed only as the believer experiences an encounter with the Father and the Son, in and through the Spirit.

In short, the social model and the incorporative model are different in these specific ways: The social theorist depends on the human capacity to receive the revelation given to us in Scriptures, about the Father, Son and Spirit, to make sense of God's simultaneous unity and plurality. On the other hand, Coakley proposes for a dependence on the Spirit's capacity to incorporate the believer into the life of the triune God, such that it is through an encounter with the divine, in the Spirit, that the believer comprehends God as trinity.

[144] Fiona Ellis, review of *God, Sexuality, and the Self: An Essay 'On the Trinity'* by Sarah Coakely, *Philosophy*, Vol. 1, no. 6 (2014): 2.
[145] Ellis, review of *God, Sexuality, and the Self: An Essay 'On the Trinity'* by Sarah Coakely, 3.

3.2 Relevance of the doctrine for Christian spirituality

While there are remarkable differences between the models advocated by social theorists and Coakley, both start their trinitarian reflections by affirming the resurgence of a renewed interest in the doctrine of the Trinity, and by arguing that the long-held disinterest among scholars with the topic was due to a failure on their part to show the significance of the doctrine for human life. While social theorists argue that the doctrine has social and spiritual implications for human life, the incorporative model, as proposed by Coakley, provides a framework within which anthropological issues could be discussed. But both models, in their distinctive ways, offer us specific insights into the significance of the doctrine for human relationships.

Declan Marnion and Rik van Nieuwenhove, in speaking of the social model, write that social theorists "explore how the doctrine of the Trinity has practical as well as spiritual consequences by developing a trinitarian vision of humanity and society, and showing knowing the triune God has a participative and doxological character."[146] In other words, the social theorist draws practical and spiritual implications from the doctrine, for human life thereby suggesting that the social model of the Trinity provides a basis on which human relationships could be ordered. On the other hand, Coakley, in speaking of her incorporative model, asserts that any question about the Trinity can only be answered by attending anthropological issues of sexuality and spirituality, thereby suggesting that the incorporative model of the Trinity only acts as a foundation for the human experience of God. She does not draw any direct implications from the model for providing practical solutions to anthropological issues. Yet, both the social and the incorporative models affirm the relevance of the doctrine for human life, only with different emphases on the manner in which the doctrine proves to be significant for this purpose.

3.2.1 The social model of the Trinity: Implications for a Christian spirituality

With regards to the approach taken by social theorists, theorising a doctrine of the Trinity in terms of divine relationality not only allows us to find a correspondence between God's inner life, and the social life of human beings. It also challenges certain norms that govern human relationships, and thereby acts as an example upon which human relationships

[146] Declan Marmion and Rik van Nieuwenhove, *An Introduction to the Trinity*, 202.

can be modelled. If a social model of the Trinity is useful for understanding how to organise human relationships, what are some of the ways in which social theorists use the Trinity as a model for human communities? In what follows, an example of the kind of implications that social theorists draw from a social model of the Trinity, will be presented.

In an article called, *"The Trinity is our Social Program": The Doctrine of the Trinity and the Shape of Social Engagement,* Miroslav Volf suggests that the basic question to ask with regards to the doctrine of the Trinity is not if it should serve as a model for human community, but rather "in which respects and to what extent it should do so."[147] He advocates for framing a social vision based on the doctrine of the Trinity, which has implications for every human individual to relate to others in the larger network of relations. For the purposes of his task, he builds on the economic Trinity, that is, the "narrative of the Triune God's engagement with the world."[148]

His social vision rests on two issues: identity and self donation. First, with regard to the issue of identity, he asks how the doctrine of the Trinity would allow us to understand our identity as human beings. More specifically, he asks how might the doctrine suggest ways to "go about negotiating identities under conditions of enmity and conflict."[149] He argues that the doctrine of the Trinity allows us to return to a true understanding of the concept of personhood, in contrast to modernistic notions of the concept. Since this topic has already been discussed in the previous section, our focus can turn to Volf's understanding of how the concept of perichoresis allows us to explore the implications of a social model of the Trinity for human identity.

Volf understands the concept in terms of the personal interiority of the divine persons. He says that the divine persons do not merely influence and depend on each other from outside of themselves, but are personally interior to each other. He refers to Scripture, more specifically from John's gospel, to give evidence for this notion of the persons' personal interiority. Jesus' words about his relationship to the Father acts as evidence for this notion: "The Father is in me and I am in the Father."[150] Volf remarks that while every divine person interpenetrates the other, they do not cease to be distinct from one another. He argues their

[147] Miroslav Volf, ""The Trinity is our Social Program": The Doctrine of the Trinity and the Shape of Social Engagement", *Modern Theology*, Vol. 14, no.3 (1998): 405.
[148] Volf, "The Trinity is our Social Program", 407.
[149] Volf, "The Trinity is our Social Program", 408.
[150] Volf, "The Trinity is our Social Program", 409.

"interpenetration presupposes their distinctions"[151] because if the persons dissolve into some third entity, then they cannot be interior to each other.[152] Each person is, and acts, with the other two persons being present and acting in them.[153] Thus Volf speaks of the identity of the Son (which in the context of the economic Trinity is the identity of Jesus Christ) as depending on his twofold relationship to the Father and the Spirit.

He elaborates this idea further by referring to Augustine's commentary on the Gospel of John. Augustine elaborates on the paradox found in Jesus' words: "My teaching is not mine but his who sent me " (John 7:16).[154] According to Augustine, Jesus' teaching is both 'His Word', as well as 'not His own', because He is the Word of the Father. To this, Volf remarks that "mutual personal interiority makes "my" (Jesus') to be simultaneously "not-mine" (the Father's) without ceasing to be "mine", just as "not mine" is simultaneously "mine" without ceasing to be "not-mine"."[155] At the same time, "all that Christ achieves is through the Spirit", and so "the same dialectic of "mine" and "not-mine" pertains in relation to the Spirit just as in relation to the Father."

Volf then asks, what does such a paradox of "mine" as well as "not-mine" in the identity of the triune God imply for human identity? He draws two implications, namely: that "identity is non-reducible", and that "identity is not self-enclosed".[156] With regards to the first, he explains that a non-reducible identity allows us not only a "a certain kind of assertion of the self in the presence of the other [but also] a certain kind of deference of the other before the self."[157] He suggests that in order to maintain this, "we must attend to the boundaries of identities by enforcing rules that protect identities and by providing environments that nurture them."[158] With regards to the second, he argues that "the self is itself only by being in a state of flux stemming from "incursions" of the other into the self and of the self into the other."[159] In other words, the self is truly itself when it is open to the other, not merely to be influenced, but also to be examined by the other. He locates such a

[151] Volf, "The Trinity is our Social Program", 409
[152] Volf, "The Trinity is our Social Program", 409.
[153] Volf, "The Trinity is our Social Program", 409.
[154] Volf, "The Trinity is our Social Program", 409.
[155] Volf, "The Trinity is our Social Program", 410.
[156] Volf, "The Trinity is our Social Program", 410.
[157] Volf, ""The Trinity is our Social Program", 410.
[158] Volf, ""The Trinity is our Social Program", 410.
[159] Volf, ""The Trinity is our Social Program", 410.

nature of the self to be non-reducible and open to the other within the Trinitarian perichoresis.[160]

Also, in asserting the non-reducible character of the self, Volf argues for the self's stability by being given certain boundaries, and in denying the self-enclosed nature of the self, he affirms that the self is enriched only by being open to the other.[161] According to him, the only way we can determine when boundaries for the self ought to be open and when they ought to be closed is by seeking for wisdom from the cross, which integrates the "dual and interrelated messages about "indiscriminate welcome" and the truth about the importance of "truth and justice."[162] In other words, Christ's giving of Himself or self-donation[163] on the cross allows us to understand our human identity.

From the brief review of Volf's article, we see how he draws the specific implication of human identity from his understanding of Trinitarian identity. In other words, as a social theorist, he shows the significance of a social model of the Trinity for human relationships. More specifically, he situated human identity within the identity found within the relations of mutual love among the three persons of the Trinity or within trinitarian perichoresis. The approach that Volf takes in constructing a trinitarian model for structuring human relationships is appealing for varied reasons. It is certainly characteristic of almost every social theorist. But Volf's arguments that the social model of the Trinity is useful only to a certain extent to model our human relationships suggests that, as a social theorist, he does not attempt to show that trinitarian relations univocally correspond to human relations, but only analogously. It shows a restraint on his part to argue that the relations within the triune God are social in the strict sense of the term, while also suggesting that God is triune merely for the sake of acting as an exact model for ordering human relations. Yet, he does argue that the doctrine of the Trinity remains a mystery. Nevertheless, this aspect of the mystery does not keep him from envisioning a certain way of modelling human communities. Volf's arguments for advocating a social model of the Trinity are quite persuasive, given that his work, like other social theorists, moves the doctrine away from being irrelevant and impersonal, to having quite a strong significance for the Christian life.

[160] Volf, "The Trinity is our Social Program", 410.
[161] Volf, "The Trinity is our Social Program", 410.
[162] Volf, "The Trinity is our Social Program", 412.
[163] Volf, "The Trinity is our Social Program", 412-417.

Based on these arguments that Volf presents, it is understood that a social model is useful for the purposes of ordering human relationships and human communities. In this way it appears to have several strengths which can contribute to an understanding of Christian spirituality. Aspects such as mutual indwelling, fellowship, communion, and love in the Trinity, are understood to be reflected in our social relations. In other words, our social interactions are to reflect the perichoretic relations that are to be found in divine relations. Based on such an understanding, Christian spirituality is seen as an expression and practice of such perichoretic relations in our ecclesial, social and even political interactions. Stephen Holmes asserts this view by stating that "social trinitarianism has been found to be extraordinarily generative for ecclesial, social, and political practice."[164] He remarks that the trinitarian doctrine is no longer understood as devoid of implications for Christian piety; rather "it seems that almost every area of ethics and piety is determined directly by a commitment to the social Trinity."[165] Hence, the implications that a social model of the Trinity has for Christian spirituality must not be overlooked.

3.2.2 The incorporative model of the Trinity: A foundation for Christian spirituality

With regards to the incoporative model, theorizing a doctrine of the trinity is a task that involves bodily practices of contemplation and prayer, such that human sexual desires align with divine desire, in a process of purgation and transformation, in an often painful encounter with the divine, through the Spirit. If the incorporative model, thus advocates for an experience of the divine, in which anthropological issues of sexuality and spirituality are involved, in order to know God as triune, then how does it provide a framework within which these issues can be discussed in relation to the question of God? In what follows, an example of how Coakley's trinitarian theology provides a framework for these issues will be presented.

Kevin W. Hector, in an article called, *Trinity, Ascesis, and Culture: Contextualising Coakley's God, Sexuality, and the Self*, reviews Coakley's work and relates it to broader trends in theology. The focus of this brief review of his article is to show how he discusses a few anthropological issues in relation to the framework that Coakley's trinitarian theology

[164] Stephen Holmes, "Three Versus One? Some Problems of Social Trinitarianism", *Journal of Reformed Theology*, Vol. 3, no.1 (2009): 81.
[165] Holmes, "Three Versus One?", 81.

provides. The purpose of the review is to show how Coakley differs from social theorists in showing the significance of the doctrine of the Trinity for human life.

In order to relate Coakley's theology to the issue of spirituality, Hector contrasts Coakley's theology with trinitarian theologies that have been done in specific periods, before other possibilities for developing the doctrine have been suggested. He discusses the trinitarian theologies of Karl Barth and Karl Rahner, and comments that each of them "insisted (a) that God "in Godself" is neither disconnected not materially different from God "with us", and therefore (b) that would-be knowledge of the former must be derived strictly from the latter."[166] In other words, their approach to the doctrine of the Trinity upholds the belief that our knowledge of the inner life of God depends on our knowledge of God's life with us. On the other hand, he remarks that Coakley's theology differs from these theologies in at least two respects:

First, Coakley refutes the idea that the economic trinity or the theology of 'God with us' provides us with an algorithm, "by means of which theologians can derive knowledge of the immanent Trinity."[167] She disagrees with those who "treat such knowledge as if it could be drawn more or less straightforwardly as the conclusion of an inference."[168] She rather insists that we can know the inner life of God only as we engage in a life of ascetical practice of contemplative prayer. Second, Coakely takes the Holy Spirit as the point of departure for doing trinitarian theology, and focuses on the Spirit's working on our desires as the means through which we understand God as triune.[169]

In doing so, Coakley offers a satisfying explanation for the problem of God's threeness. As mentioned earlier, the priority she gives to the Spirit, and the Spirit's act of incorporation of the believer into divine life, is the means by which we know that the Spirit is equal with the Father and the Son, thereby knowing that the One God is the Father, Son, and Spirit. Not only does her theology offer an explanation for God's threeness, it also connects trinitarian theology with spirituality. Hector comments that in terms of Coakley's arguments, to know the triune God, one must engage in ascetical practises, but it is also true that such

[166] Hector, Trinity, Ascesis, and Culture, 562.
[167] Hector, Trinity, Ascesis, and Culture, 563.
[168] Hector, Trinity, Ascesis, and Culture, 563.
[169] Hector, Trinity, Ascesis, and Culture, 563.

practises incorporate us into divine life, such that we know God as triune by engaging in them.[170] Thus, he points to how Coakley's trinitarian theology connects with the issue of spirituality.

With regards to the connection between trinitarian doctrine and the issue of sexuality, Hector credits Coakley's Spirit-led approach, as it takes account of the centrality of asceticism to experience the Spirit's role of incorporating us into divine life. He comments that, according to Coakley, asceticism is a necessary condition for our knowledge of the triune God. He reiterated Coakley's understanding that for humans to know God, they must overcome the difficulties posed by deceptive desires. To overcome these deceptions, and truly understand who God is, asceticism becomes necessary. If the ascetic practices are central to knowing God, such that our desires are reordered, then those desires which incoporate the sexual are transfromed.[171] He draws two insights from Coakley's approach, which shed light on how he discusses the issue of sexuality within the framework provided by Coakley:

First, he remarks that if our desires, even our sexual desires which are embodied desires, are to be reordered, "it follows that the relevant ascesis must attend to the body too."[172] Second, Although his remarks do not explicitly indicate that embodied deisres are sexual ones, it is reaosnable to assume that these insights could apply to the issue of sexual desires. If the Spirit's act of incorporating us into divine life involves our participation through ascetic practises, such that these practises involve our bodies, then we can know the triune God only on the basis of "learned bodily enactment, sweated out painfully over months and years, in duress, in discomfort, in bewilderment, as well as in joy and dawning recognition."[173] Such an insight does not directly address issues of sexual abuse, or sexual immorality, so that they can be prevented from occuring. Rather, Coakely's insights draw our attention to where these issues can be laid bare, and exposed for what they truly are, such that our the desires that cause us to abuse sexuality, are reordered and transformed. In other words, Coakley's approach opens a new way in which sexual issues could be discussed, in

[170] Hector, Trinity, Ascesis, and Culture, 563.
[171] Hector, Trinity, Ascesis, and Culture, 563.
[172] Hector, Trinity, Ascesis, and Culture, 564.
[173] Hector, Trinity, Ascesis, and Culture, 564.

that "she rightly acknowledges the need for discernment in determining what it means to live fully as sexual persons whose deepest desires can be fulfilled only in union with God."[174]

To further understand how Coakley's trinitarian theology provides a foundation for discussing anthropological issues, Hilkert's comment is helpful. She states that while Coakley does speak of the association between trinitarian doctrine with issues of sexuality and spirituality, yet she does not engage with any specific aspects related to these issues, "since her intent is to demonstrate that a discerning response to any or all of them requires a contemplative openness born of sustained ascetical prayer which will in turn frame those discussions in new ways."[175] This suggests that while Coakley trinitarian theology exposes the entanglements between the quest for God and human desire, her approach is not geared towards drawing implications from her theology to address these issues. Rather her approach only provides a foundation or basis for looking at anthropological issues of sexuality and spirituality within a trinitarian framework. Hence, her trinitarian theology offers a certain perspective for developing a trinitarian spirituality, even as issues of sexuality and spirituality can be discussed in association with the doctrine of the Trinity.

Conclusion: While social theorists are similar to Coakley in terms of what motivates them to undertake the task of trinitarian theology, which is that the doctrine of the Trinity has radical consequences for Christian life; they differ in terms of their approach to the task, their reading of Augsutine and the Cappadocian fathers, and how they address the problem of the paradoxical nature of God's being. Regardless of these differences in their approach to trinitarian theology, their perspectives on trinitarian spirituality complement each other, such that an integrated view of trinitarian spirituality can be developed on the basis of a comparative reading and evaluation of the social model and the incorporative model of the Trinity. An evaluation of these models, which is the next step in building a theoretical framework for interpreting the different trinitarian perspectives that these models offer, will be done in the following chapter.

For now, it is useful to point to the integrated perspective of a trinitarian spirituality this research seeks to develop. It has been shown that if, according to the social model, the

[174] Mary Catherine Hilkert, "Desire, Gender, and God-Talk: Sarah Coakley's Feminist Contemplative Theology", *Modern Theology*, Vol. 30, no.4 (2014): 576.
[175] Hilkert, Desire, Gender, and God-Talk, 576.

nature of the triune God conceived in social or relational terms, informs social and spiritual relationships in the human realm, then trinitarian spirituality, based on this model, is understood to be participative, communal or social. In other words, the social model of the Trinity indicates a participative or a social kind of trinitarian spirituality. On the other hand, it has also been shown that if, according to the incorporative model, the nature of God's being can be understood only as we are led by the Spirit, in and through a disposition of contemplation and prayer, such that there is an experience of transformation of all our embodied desires; then this model of the Trinity indicates a contemplative kind of trinitarian spirituality. If the trinitarian perspectives of each model offers an understanding of specific kinds of trinitarian spirituality, can an integrated view be developed? In what follows, an evaluation of the trinitarian perspectives of both models, and their corresponding trinitarian spiritualities will be done, to show how an integrated view can be developed on such a basis.

CHAPTER 3: A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF THE TRINITARIAN PERSPECTIVES OF THE SOCIAL AND THE INCORPORATIVE MODELS OF THE TRINITY

A comparison of the ways in which the social model and the incorporative model of the Trinity address the problem of God's simultaneous unity and plurality, suggests that theologians advocating these respective models offer unique perspectives on the Trinity, as they respond to the problem of God's being. While Coakley, who advocates for the incorporative model, critiques the social model, the social model must not be disregarded. Rather, it will be argued in this chapter, that each model, based on a critical evaluation, approaches the problem of God's simultaneous unity and plurality from a unique perspective, such that we will be able to see that each offers a distinct way of speaking about God's being. However, each model, in showing the significance of the doctrine for Christian life, emphasises different expressions of spirituality, which are rendered complementary. The purpose of such an argument is twofold: to show that both models offer unique ways of dealing with the problem of God's simultaneous unity and plurality, such that they differ in both their approach, as well as the distinct perspectives they bring forth in addressing the issue of the paradoxical nature of God's being; and to show that while these models differ in these terms, they complement each other in terms of their corresponding trinitarian spiritualities. In what follows, a critical evaluation of each model will be presented.

4.1 The social model of the Trinity: A critical evaluation

Some contemporary theologians are critical with regards to whether the social model of the Trinity can adequately address the problem of how God is simultaneously one and three. While some object to the meaning of 'person' when applied to the divine hypostases, some object to the theological consequences it gives rise to, such as a tritheistic understanding of the divine. Moreover, there are some others who are critical of what the social model has to offer, namely, its claims that a social understanding of God has consequences for human relationships. The criticism is specifically against the concept of perichoresis, which social theorists assume as a concept which captures the essence of divine relations, in a way that they serve as a model for all human relationships.

First, with regards to the objection that pertains to the nature of the persons in the trinity, William Hasker states that the trinitarian persons are "individual centres of consciousness and will, capable of entering into personal relationships both with one another and with created persons."[176] But he also states that not everything about the nature of created persons can be applied to the divine persons. However, what entails in divine personhood is "the capacity of the divine Persons to love and commune with one another; this, one might say, is what Social Trinitarianism is most fundamentally about."[177] In other words, Hasker opts, not for a univocal, but an analogical understanding of the divine persons. If the nature of divine persons is treated as that which is exactly like the nature of human persons, there is a danger of regarding them as three gods. This idea is best captured by John Gresham, who states that "the comparison of divine *personae* and human persons taken analogically provides insight into the trinitarian life as social and interpersonal love, but when taken univocally and without qualification, particularly in regard to the divine consciousness, this comparison can lead toward a tritheistic misunderstanding of the Trinity."[178]

With regards to such an understanding of personhood, social theorists differ in how they conceive of its meaning. As mentioned earlier, social theorists such as Zizoulas do not assume a modernist understanding of the concept, as though we can speak of the divine persons as three distinct individual centres of consciousness. Rather, for them, to be a person is to be in relation. But other social theorists like Motlmann do regard divine persons as three distinct individuals. And it is this idea that Hasker and Gresham reiterate. In their view, although the three persons are three individuals, with distinct centres of consciousness, such an understanding is only analogical. To regard the divine persons as univocally similar to human persons is to stray into tritheism.

But critics of the social model of the Trinity differ in their understanding of this concept of personhood when applied to the divine persons. As mentioned by Hasker, Daniel Howard Snyder insists that "the concept of a person must be applied to God taken as a unity rather than to the Persons."[179] In other words, the concept of personhood when applied to God ought to be applied, not individually to the three persons, but to their unity. Yet Hasker

[176] William Hasker, "Objections to Social Trinitarianism", *Religious Studies*, Vol. 46, no. 4 (2010): 422.
[177] Hasker, "Objections to Social Trinitarianism", 422.
[178] John Gresham, "The Social Model of the Trinity and Its Critics", *Scottish Journal of Theology,* Vol. 46, no. 3 (1993): 331.
[179] Hasker, "Objections to Social Trinitarianism", 423.

counters this view by arguing that such a univocal understanding of the concept "flies in the face of virtually the entire theological tradition, which has insisted that analogical language is very much to be expected in our assertions concerning the divine; indeed that it is indispensable."[180] Moreover, according to Hasker, the application of univocal language to the Trinity is to disregard the limits of human language to describe the divine persons. In other words, analogical language is used, especially in articulating the doctrine of the Trinity, only because our verbal and conceptual resources are limited in their capacity to speak of the triune God.[181] Hence, analogical language is most effective in explaining the nature of the Trinitarian persons, without succumbing to the fallacy of regarding them as three gods, and falling into the danger of tritheism.

However, Norman Metzler takes a better route in his criticism of the social model of the Trinity. He first states that we ought to remember why the doctrine of the Trinity was needed at all. It was developed by the fathers "to maintain the full divinity of the Son, for unless the Son were true God, fully participating in the divinity of God, He could not be our Saviour."[182] If this was the basis for formulating the trinitarian doctrine, Metzler asks if the fathers intended to articulate a doctrine of the trinity, in which God is tri-personal or social. He questions those aspects which are expressed by the social model, "in which three distinct and separate personalities are in some fashion not only economically but eternally three subjectivities mutually interrelating, as being-in-communion."[183]

His arguments against a social understanding of God begins with an analysis of the nature of the Spirit. He states that while the Spirit is not of the same personal character as that of the Father or the Son, the Spirit participates in divine reality as much as the Father and the Son. If the Spirit is distinct in nature from that of the Father and the Son, then the *persona* of the Spirit is parallel or analogous to the other two divine *personae*, but does not "stand in the same kind of parallel or analogous "personal" relationship to the Father or the Son, as do that Father and the Son to one another." So, he concludes that the term *persona* [or the concept of personhood], and its meaning cannot be carried onto describing the Trinity. In other words, our understanding of personhood cannot be applied to the trinitarian persons, since this

[180] Hasker, "Objections to Social Trinitarianism", 424.
[181] Hasker, "Objections to Social Trinitarianism", 424.
[182] Metzler, "The Trinity in Contemporary Theology", 283.
[183] Metzler, "The Trinity in Contemporary Theology", 283.

concept can only properly be applied to the Father and the Son, but not in the same way to the Spirit.

Metzler explains this further by asking if the concept of God's relationality as revealed to us in the economic Trinity, only has to do with God's relationship with creation and the incarnation but does not say anything about the immanent Trinity. He points out the tendency of social trinitarians to see the incarnate Son's relationship to the Father, as that which correlates with the Father-Son relations in the immanent Trinity. He does agree with the understanding that we know God as personal and loving and thus has the capacity for relationship, only through the incarnate Son. He also agrees that we understand the Father/Son relationship dynamic, as the divine Logos becomes incarnate, and reveals the divine as loving Father. Yet he cautions against succumbing to the "ancient heresy of "dividing the substance"[184] of the immanent Trinity by dividing the activities of the persons as revealed in the economic Trinity and applying them to the immanent Trinity.[185]

He further corrects the way the trinitarian theology of the Cappadocian fathers is read by those who advocate the social model. He argues that the fathers "are very concerned to maintain the oneness of the ousia of the divine Nature or divine operations over against the distinction of the three hypostases."[186] While they did emphasise the distinctions of the three hypostases, they did explain the Trinity as one indivisible Godhead, existing in three modes of being. So, he concludes that applying the modern concept of personhood to the Trinity, in which the trinitarian persons are understood as three distinct, self-conscious agents, does not correlate, neither with the idea of God as relational, nor with the idea that God is one.[187]

In Metzler's critique, there is a focus on the meaning of personhood when applied to divine threeness, but the emphasis is on questioning if we can apply this concept equally to the Spirit, as we apply it to the Father and the Son. He focuses less on attempting to describe the meaning of personhood (he implicitly assumes the meaning of person as an individual centre of consciousness), and more on whether we can apply such an understanding of personhood to the Spirit. He argues that we cannot, because in his view, only the Father and the Son can be properly spoken of as persons, but not the Spirit. Moreover, he takes issue

[184] Metzler, "The Trinity in Contemporary Theology", 284-285.
[185] Metzler, "The Trinity in Contemporary Theology", 284-285.
[186] Metzler, "The Trinity in Contemporary Theology", 285.
[187] Metzler, "The Trinity in Contemporary Theology", 285.

with reading what we understand from the economic Trinity onto the inner life of God. His view is that we do understand the proper relations between the Father, Son and the Spirit, and their distinct activities, as revealed to us in God's economy, or in God's relationship to the world. But he argues that we cannot read such relations and distinct activities onto the immanent Trinity, because then it would lead to the danger of compromising on God's unity. He thus corrects social theorists' reading of the Cappadocian fathers, by stating that the fathers never emphasised distinctions between the persons at the expense of God's indivisible unity.

Another kind of criticism against the social Trinity comes from Karen Kilby. Kilby questions social theorists on a number of levels. Overall, her critique is against the sustained emphasis in their claims that the social Trinity allows us to draw implications for human relationships. She specifically targets their idea of perichoresis. With regards to this idea, she asks, where it came from. "Where exactly, one might wonder, did they [social theorists] acquire such a vivid feeling for the inner life of the deity?"[188] Her simple answer to this, is that social theorists 'project' human ideals onto the doctrine of the Trinity.[189] It is with this issue of projection that she deals with in the rest of her argument.

First, she gives an example of a feminist theologian, Wilson-Kastner, who commends the social Trinity as suitable for feminist ideals. Kilby asks how this could be, given the feminist emphasis on autonomy, and social Trinity's opposite emphasis on mutuality and interrelatedness. She explains that according to Wilson-Kastner, the concept of personhood is not to be understood merely as mutuality and interrelatedness, but as that which also has the dimension of autonomy to it. Kastner speaks of divine persons representing a relational aspect, as well as the aspect of autonomy. Kilby takes issue with Kastner's account of the Trinity, and remarks that not only does Kastner say very precise things about the Trinity, but she also diverges from Moltmann's account of the Trinity in an interesting way. Moltmann insists on divine persons being defined by their relationships, at the expense of their autonomous self-existence. So, Kilby asks why Kastner and Moltmann, both of whom advocate the social Trinity, take such opposite views of personhood. Her simple answer is that both 'project' human ideals onto the doctrine of the Trinity. While Kastner wants to uphold women's rights and sense of autonomy and so, reads it onto the divine persons,

[188] Kilby, "Perichoresis and Projection", 439.
[189] Kilby, "Perichoresis and Projection", 439.

Moltmann is critical about Western individualism, and thereby maintains that the divine persons are constituted by their relationships.[190]

Kilby questions this issue of projection further, and asks, why social theorists have to be projectionists in the first place? She remarks that social theorists strive to explain how God is one and three at the same time, and hence they produce the concept of perichoresis, because it best describes how God is simultaneously one and three. The problem with such an idea is that it is defined by their human or societal ideals, which then is projected onto God. Also, social theorists endeavour to make the doctrine of the Trinity relevant, so that what they project onto the doctrine is reversed and projected back onto the world, so that now they can draw specific implications from it, for human relationships and relatedness. Kilby denounces this whole project thus, by arguing that rather than claiming insight into the nature of God through an idea like perichoresis, and using such to promote social, political and ecclesiastical regimes, the doctrine of the Trinity ought to inform our reading of Scripture, our prayer life, and our Christian experience in general. Rather than being a first-order discourse about God, it ought to be a "kind of structuring principle of Christianity rather than as its central focus: if the doctrine if 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."[191]

Kilby critiques the social model of the Trinity on several aspects. Not only does she question the social theorists' attempt to approach the problem of God's simultaneous oneness and threeness intellectually, but she also takes issue with how they do it. Moreover, she questions their well-intentioned motives to make the doctrine relevant for Christian spirituality, or human relationships in general, by critiquing their overall approach to the doctrine.

There are some key elements in Metzler's and Kilby's critique of the social model of the Trinity. While Metzler does not take issue with their approach to the Trinity, one of the strengths in his critique is that he points to the social theorists' one-sided reading of the Cappadocian fathers. This is an important element in Coakley's trinitarian theology, which is

[190] Kilby, "Perichoresis and Projection", 439-441.
[191] Kilby, "Perichoresis and Projection", 441-444.

a re-reading of the patristic fathers that allows us to see beyond the distinctions between the Western Augustinian tradition, and the Eastern Cappadocian tradition. The significance of Kilby's critique lies in her proposal to approach the doctrine of the Trinity differently. While Kilby dismantles all approaches that treat the doctrine of the Trinity as first-order discourses, her emphasis on treating the doctrine as that which informs our reading of Scripture, our prayer life, and our experience of God, ought to be considered. We see these elements in Coakley's theology as well, although she does not disregard first order reflection of the Trinity.

What is innovative in Coakley's theology is that she carefully holds questions about God's simultaneous unity and plurality, the economic and the immanent Trinity and God's ad intra and ad extra relations together. Yet, she does not approach these questions in the doctrine as logical problems to be solved. Rather, she calls it an incorporative, a Spirit-led, or a prayer-based approach to the Trinity. As mentioned earlier, such an approach to the doctrine allows one to engage with it, in a way that the doing the task of trinitarian theology itself becomes a transformative experience. Overall, her approach to doing trinitarian theology implicitly offers, what she calls, a *recommendation for life*.

However, the work of those who advocate the social model must not be entirely overlooked for two reasons. First, the social model, while it could lead into the danger of a tritheistic understanding of God, and gives a lesser priority to speaking of the personhood of the Spirit, it also allows us to address the problem of God's simultaneous unity and plurality, given that we speak of the three divine persons analogically. In other words, since the social model does appear to emphasise the plurality of God more than God's unity, it is important, as Gresham puts it, to "present the analogy in such a way that the unity of divine consciousness and will is not denied."[192] Yet the social model does focus on the relationship of the Father and the Son to each other, in that the personhood of the Father and the Son is articulated in a specific way that cannot be applied to the Spirit, such that the Spirit is given lesser priority in the social doctrine of the Trinity.

[192] John L. Gresham, "The Social Model of the Trinity and its Critics", *Scottish Journal of Theology,* Vol. 46, no. 3 (1993): 342.

If the Spirit ought to be given equal priority, then, as Gresham suggests, "the social model must be complemented by another model or analogy which more clearly expresses the ontological unity of God."[193] The incorporative model, proposed by Coakley, does precisely this, by offering us a Spirit-led approach to the Trinity, that takes account of the Spirit's equality with the Father and the Son. In what follows, Coakley's incorporative approach will be evaluated in terms of how her model addresses the problem of God's simultaneous unity and plurality. But for now, it is sufficient to conclude that the social model does offer a certain way of answering the question of God's simultaneous unity and plurality, such that it does not take the problem-solving approach to the Trinity, as well as counters the tendency to succumb to modalistic or tri-theistic tendencies in trinitarian thinking. Rather, it explains the paradoxical nature of God's being on the basis of an ontology of personhood, which allows us to understand that God, as Father, Son, and Spirit, is one God.

4.2 The incorporative model of the Trinity: A critical evaluation

While Coakley's incorporative model critiques social trinitarianism in some ways, it has been discussed that this model only complements the social model, in that it does not override the emphasis placed on the importance of analogical language by social theorists, to speak of the simultaneous unity and plurality of God. In other words, the social model emphasises the capacity of human words, or the importance of analogical language, in developing a doctrine of the Trinity. The incorporative model, on the other hand, emphasises the Spirit's capacity to overtake human rational capacities, by way of engaging the believer in the Spirit's intercession, such that he or she gives up all control over one's intellectual or linguistic capacities, to develop a doctrine of the Trinity. There is a distinct emphasis on the loss of control on our rational capacities, in comprehending God as triune, such that a transformation of our embodied desires, rather than a refinement of our intellectual capacities are at the forefront in this trinitarian theology. Yet Coakley's incorporative model of the Trinity only complements the social model, such that trinitarian discourse based on the social model, remains as important as the prayer-based trinitarian theology, advocated by the incorporative model.

[193] Gresham, The Social Model of the Trinity and its Critics, 343.

In what follows, the reasons for why Coakley's incorporative model does not stand-alone as the only viable model for trinitarian theology will be discussed, such that a critical evaluation of the incorporative model is necessary to show that this model only complements the social model.

The criterion for evaluating the incorporative model is as follows: Coakley's response to the problem of God's simultaneous unity and plurality is shaped by an approach that takes account of the inter-relationship between God and humans, such that within this model of the Trinity, human transformation occurs even as one engages with the doctrinal problem of God's being. In other words, within this approach to the Trinity, there is an element of human interaction with divine life, such that our comprehension of God as triune is not an act of intellectual knowhow, but an experience of transformation by which we not only know God as triune, but more importantly are intimately known by Him, even as embodied creatures who incorporate sexuality. Yet such an interaction in which we know God and are known by Him is subject to critique, as we shall shortly explore in what follows.

Before we explore the critique of Coakley's incorporative model, it is useful to summarise Coakley's response to the problem of speaking of God's being. How does Coakley's conceptualization of an ontology of desire, within the framework of an incorporative model of the Trinity, address the problem of God's simultaneous oneness and threeness? As discussed earlier, her conceptualization of an ontology of desire presents God as the source of all desires, even human sexual desires, such that our desire for sex is primarily a desire for God. If God is the source of all human desires, such that even our sexual desires point to our longing for God, and to be in union with God, then our knowledge of God as triune is intrinsically associated with our desire for God. In other words, if all our human desires are a desire to know God, then our vision of the triune God is possible only as this desire for God is met. And if desire is essential to God's being, then our knowledge of God, or being known by God, is the ultimate satisfaction of our desires. Thus, Coakley conceptualises an ontology of desire, such that desire is understood to be essential to God's being.

If desire is primarily an ontological aspect, such that divine desire is a prototype for speaking of human desires, then Coakley's response to how can make sense of God as a unity of three distinct hypostases, is shaped by an approach that points to an inter-relationship

between God and human beings as central to our articulation of the doctrine of the Trinity, or our understanding of God as triune. This inter-relationship is experienced by the believer which is of a twofold nature: (1) a Spirit-led, (2) transformative encounter with the divine. The two elements of such an experience are examined by contemporary scholars who engage with Coakley's trinitarian theology. The following discussion will be focused on exploring the insights of these contemporary scholars and highlighting their critique of Coakley's theology.

First, Radu Bordeianu comments that Coakley's trinitarian theology, which advocates a Spirit-led approach to the Trinity, is not only theoretically relevant for the purpose of doing systematic theology, but also for practical purposes in the life of the church. To show how her Spirit-led approach serves practical life, Bordeianu contrasts Coakley's theology with social trinitarianism, which usually has the tendency to view inner trinitarian relations as imitable prototypes for human relationships. He remarks that Coakley's theology rather "establishes a continuum between immanent Trinity, economic trinity, theology and relationships in the created order"[194] such that "human and intra-trinitarian relations do not merely mirror each other, but divine interactions determine our relationships."[195] Thus, Bordeianu identifies a significant element in Coakely's theology, which is that her trinitarian reflections serve the purpose of shedding light on the practical life of the church.

A critical question that be raised here has to do with whether Coakley's trinitarian theology really proves to be relevant for the practical life of the church when direct implications for anthropological issues cannot be drawn from her theology. So far, it has been pointed out that her theology only frames discussions on anthropological issues in a new light, without necessarily attending to these issues with practical solutions. As Hilkert points out, Coakley's theology does not provide any practical solutions to problems of sexuality or gender within the church. Yet she remarks that "Coakley is frank about her assessment of the depth of the problem and its pastoral ramifications, noting that the audience for the book includes those who have dismissed Christianity as an intellectually defensible worldview, partially because of its "massive historic collusion in gender blindness and abuse of power,

[194] Radu Bordeianu, "Triadologie Totale: An Orthodox Reflection on Sarah Coakley's Spirit-Centred, Iconographical Perspective", *Modern Theology*, Vol. 30, no. 4 (2014): 569.
[195] Bordeianu, Triadologie Totale, 568.

its tragic (and continuing) mismanagement of the economy of desire.""[196] In other words, Hilkert is pointing to Coakley's deep examination of the problems of abuse of sexuality and gender roles in the church, such that her trinitarian reflections do not merely provide practical solutions that serve to resolve problems of abuse, but engage the believer in a profound transformation, such that it reorients their desires, even sexual desires toward God. The consequences of this are a life lived with a profound discernment that one's deepest desires can be satisfied only in one's union with God. The resolution to issues of sexual abuse and gender roles has to do with a change of one's heart, and less to do with changing situations of abuse.

Second, Eugene F. Rogers comments on the aspect of prayer in Coakley's trinitarian theology. He remarks that the transformation of the believer in the Spirit, to have a vision of the triune God, in Coakley's theology, involves a practice of contemplative prayer that "reaches into the roots of desire and therefore both brings up and transforms human desires as well."[197] The insight that Rogers focuses on in Coakley's theology is the aspect of prayer of a deep sort that initiates the believer's transformation, such that he identifies Coakley's conviction "that God made human beings for Godself even before God made them for one another."[198] In other words, he identifies what leads Coakley to emphasise the aspect of prayer of a deep and wordless sort, in her approach to trinitarian theology. He reiterates her words that it is only through prayer in the Spirit that the believer recognises that "divine desire can be seen as the ultimate progenitor of human desire, and the very means of its transformation."[199] Thus, Rogers identifies an important element in Coakley's trinitarian theology, which is her conviction that trinitarian theology can be done only as the believer approaches the task by engaging in prayer of a deep and contemplative sort.

Another major critique against this approach to the Trinity, is that while Coakley repeatedly clarifies that such an experience of the divine, through prayer and contemplation, is not merely a matter of subjective experience, yet it remains an individualistic endeavour, which only those who have the time and resources to engage in contemplation, can achieve.

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[196] Mary Catherine Hilkert, "Desire, Gender, and God-talk: Sarah Coakley's Feminist Contemplative Theology", *Modern Theology,* Vol.30, no. 4 (2014): 576.
[197] Eugene F. Rogers, Jr., "Prayer, Christoformity, and the Author: New Sites of Discussion for Theology", *Modern Theology,* Vol. 30, no. 4 (2014): 553.
[198] Rogers, Prayer, Christoformity, and the Author, 553.
[199] Rogers, Prayer, Christoformity, and the Author, 553.

What can be questioned about this approach of Coakley's is that she does not clarify to whom this invitation to contemplative prayer is for. In other words, is the call to engage or practice contemplative prayer, a call to the church as a community, or it is merely to those who are attentive to the Spirit? If it is not a communal call, then the practice of contemplative prayer becomes the endeavour of a few spiritualists, who can abuse the power that comes from believing that they have exclusive access to the Spirit. Based on this, it can be argued that engaging in prayer itself does not indicate transformation but displaying such transformation in the lived realities of the church points to the believer's understanding of God. As Rogers puts it, "the question of how to discern or achieve rightly ordered desire is not answered, therefore, by appealing to "the crucible of prayer as such, but by its *fruits*."[200] And such fruits are evident only as the Spirit leads one to participate in the lived realities of a community of believers.

Conclusion: A critique of the social model of the Trinity reveals that its approach to the doctrine of the Trinity is based on using analogical language. The approach builds on the human capacity to use analogies for the Trinity, such as the analogy of 'relationship,' to describe God's being. It has been pointed out that such analogies, while they fully explain the personhood of the Father and the Son, fail to take account of the personhood of the Spirit. If the personhood of the Spirit is not fully accounted for, such that there the Spirit has subordinate status, then the implications that the social model of the Trinity has for human relationships will involve an effective subordination, such that our communities are ordered according to false hierarchies.

While the social model can be subject to such a critique, of its tendency to subordinate the Spirit, the social or relational analogy used to describe God's being, allows for an understanding of fellowship or communion among the Father, the Son and the Spirit, such that we know and comprehend God through our participation in divine fellowship. Such a trinitarian perspective allows us to conceive of Christian spirituality as our participation in the communion that exists between the Father, Son, and Spirit. In other words, it allows us to conceive of a social or a participative kind of trinitarian spirituality.

[200] Rogers, Prayer, Christoformity, and the Author, 554.

On the other hand, a critique of the incorporative model of the Trinity reveals that while its approach to the Trinity emphasises a Spirit-led, contemplative disposition to experience God as triune, the act of contemplation ought to be reinterpreted, or more fully explained. This aspect needs clarification as it could be misunderstood that our encounter with God, through practises of contemplation, which transform our embodied desires, are an individualistic endeavour. Rather, it has been argued that the transformation that occurs in our following of the Spirit's leading, in an act of contemplation and prayer, is evident only when it is displayed in the lived realities of our communities. In other words, our understanding of God, through a contemplative spirituality, displays itself in the fruits that we produce even as we engage in relationships of communion and fellowship. Hence, the incorporative model, while it allows us to conceive of a contemplative kind of trinitarian spirituality, is complemented by a social or a participative kind of trinitarian spirituality. Based on their complementarity, an integrated view of trinitarian spirituality will be developed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4: REFLECTION ON THE TRINITARIAN PERSPECTIVES OF THE SOCIAL AND THE INCORPORATIVE MODELS OF THE TRINITY

For an integrated view of trinitarian spirituality, a theoretical framework that consists of a comparison and critical evaluation of a social model and an incorporative model of the Trinity, has been developed in this research. What has been revealed from developing this framework is that these models offer two distinct trinitarian perspectives, especially to address the problem of the paradoxical nature of God's being. However, these models complement each other in terms of their corresponding trinitarian spiritualities. In other words, an integrated view of a Christian or a trinitarian spirituality can be developed from these trinitarian perspectives.

Specifically, a comparative reading of these models has revealed that the trinitarian perspectives offered by each model has certain characteristics. A reflection on these characteristics will allow for an understanding of the two kinds of trinitarian spiritualities that can be expressed on the basis of each trinitarian perspective. Also, if a critical evaluation of these models has revealed that the two kinds of trinitarian spiritualities, which are based on the trinitarian perspectives offered by each of these models, and which can be viewed as complementary, an integrated view of both spiritualities is possible. The purpose of reflecting on the characteristics of each of these trinitarian spiritualities is to unfold the ways in which they complement each other, and to present an integrated view of trinitarian spirituality. Such an integrated view will be broadly termed as 'embodied trinitarian spirituality.'

5.1 Characteristics of social spirituality

First, a social spirituality is expressed through our participation in divine fellowship, primarily by way of imitating divine perichoresis. In other words, a social spirituality is expressed as our participation, in God's communion, which is characterised by relations of mutual love and self-giving between the Father, Son and Spirit. If the Trinity is understood to be analogous to a community of persons-in-fellowship, who are bound by love and self-gift, such a trinitarian perspective acts as the basis for the fellowship that binds human communities.

Not only is the Trinity a model for human fellowship, this trinitarian perspective opens a way for humans to participate in divine fellowship, such that we share in the communion that exists between the Father, Son, and Spirit. Such participation in the divine, when expressed in our human relationships, characterise our human communities as communities that reflect divine perichoretic relations. Thus, social spirituality expresses itself outwardly in building relations of love and self-giving in and among human communities.

But such a perspective can be critiqued with regards to the clear-cut way human communities can mirror or initiate divine perichoretic relations. Can we mirror God and the communion that exists between the Father, Son, and Spirit, as though God's inner relations are directly imitable? With regards to this question, we have seen Volf's argument that while we cannot imitate God for our social relationships in *all* ways, there are *some* ways in which we can imitate divine relations. In other words, there is an extent to which we can imitate God's inner relations.

For instance, he points to the ways in which trinitarian relations can function as a model for our understanding of human identity. The idea of divine perichoresis suggests that the three persons of the Trinity, do not merely influence each other in relations of mutual love and self-gift from the outside, but that they are personally interior to each other, such that each person inter-penetrates the other, in their relations of mutual love. But such inter-penetration does not dissolve their distinctions, such that the identity of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, is not reducible to their relations with each other, nor are they self-enclosed, such that there is no place for being personally interior to the other. Rather, the identity of the three persons is understood through their distinctions as well as in their relations of mutual love and self-gift. Thus, trinitarian identity acts as a model for understanding that our identity as human beings, also depends on our being distinct as well as being in relationship with others.

Volf cautions us that divine perichoretic relations could be considered as an imitable prototype for human relations, in that we apply the concept of perichoresis to human communities in an analogous sense. He writes that "human beings can correspond to the uncreated God only in a *creaturely* way."[201] The rest of the ways in which God exists in

[201] Volf, The Trinity is Our Social Program, 405.

communion as Father, Son, and Spirit, remains a mystery, to which we only respond in awe, delight and worship.

So, the concept of divine perichoresis must not be treated as a blanket concept that exhausts the mystery of the Trinity, such that we can univocally apply the concept to human communities. In other words, there is a sense of mystery to the triune God, in that we can speak of divine perichoretic relations only in analogous ways that correspond to creaturely relations. If social spirituality takes account of this sense of mystery that there is, to the triune God, expressions of social spirituality would complement expressions of a contemplative spirituality. This last aspect will be explained fully in a later section.

Second, the social model not only emphasises the aspect of divine perichoresis, upon which we can model our human communities, but also our participation in divine fellowship by way of imitating divine perichoretic relations. Such participation in God's communion allows for a posture of active dialogue with the triune God, by way of sharing in the divine fellowship that is extended to us. If "the social model of the Trinity envisions the eternal life of the Trinity as analogous to a loving dialogue"[202], then our fellowship with the triune God is to participate in an ongoing conversation among the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Thus, social spirituality is expressed as our participation in God's communion with us, by way of communicating with the triune God.

This perspective can also be subject to critique with regards to our experience of communicating with the divine even as we partake in the ongoing conversation in trinitarian fellowship. How can we know that such experiences authentically reflect our participation in trinitarian fellowship? In other words, isn't there scope for mistaking such experiences as reflections of our fellowship with the triune God, when in fact they may be experiences of our own internal states of mind, devoid of the Spirit's leading?

It has been pointed out that the social model of the Trinity does not give priority to the Spirit, either with regards to the personhood of the Spirit, nor with regards to the Spirit's leading of the believer into an encounter with the divine. It is reasonable to infer from our

[202] John L Gresham, *Three Trinitarian spiritualities*, ed. Kenneth J. Collins (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2001), 288.

study that in the social model, there is a tendency to subordinate the Spirit, such that our experience of divine fellowship is attributed, not to the Spirit's capacity to lead us into such fellowship, but to our intellectual capacities to make sense of what this fellowship is, and assume that such an understanding automatically accommodates us into such divine fellowship.

If the role of the Spirit is overlooked in this manner, we must surely question our understanding of divine perichoretic relations. Like Kilby asks, where do we acquire such an understanding about the inner life of God? But if the Spirit leads us into an encounter with the divine, by an act of incorporating us to God's life, then we can be assured of the authenticity of our experience, of partaking in the ongoing conversation in divine fellowship. This aspect is well captured by Gresham, who remarks that:

> The Father eternally says to the Son, "You are my beloved", and the Son responds with an eternal, "Yes", to the Father's love. The Spirit eternally glorifies Father and Son with that divine glory and love which unites the three as one. In Christ, the church hears the Father call us his beloved children and through Christ we receive the Spirit. The Spirit unites our "yes" to the eternal "yes" of the Son, that we might share in the Spirit's glorification of Father and Son. Thus, we share in the eternal conversation of the divine trinitarian fellowship.[203]

Such an experience of the Spirit is possible only as one engages in prayer and contemplation. Thus, the aspect of participation in divine fellowship can be complemented by the aspect of the Spirit leading, in our experience of divine fellowship. In other words, when the Spirit enables us to learn what divine perichoretic relations look like, and experience God's inner life through a posture of prayer and contemplation, our imitation of these divine relations within our human communities truly and meaningfully reflects trinitarian fellowship. Thus, expression of social spirituality can be complemented by practising a contemplative spirituality.

[203] Gresham, *Three Trinitarian Spiritualities*, 288.

5.2 Characteristics of contemplative spirituality

First, contemplative trinitarian spirituality speaks of the indwelling of the Spirit in a believer, such that the believer achieves union with God. In other words, a contemplative spirituality is characterised by the believer's encounter with the divine, and an experience of becoming united to God's inner life, through silent and wordless contemplation, in which the Spirit of God communicates with the believer's soul "in a manner beyond words or thoughts."[204]

While theologians usually perceive this form of spirituality as having its roots in Augustine's psychological analogy of the Trinity, Coakley's comparative reading of Augustine and Gregory of Nyssa, suggests that the aspect of contemplation for an experience of the triune God, has been emphasised by the Eastern fathers as well. What is different in their understanding of the aspect of contemplation is this: Augustine views contemplation of the divine as that which leads to light and clarification, while Gregory of Nyssa views that contemplation of the mystery of the triune God leads to darkness and incomprehensibility and loss of control. Nevertheless, both Augustine and Gregory of Nyssa speak of the Spirit's work in uniting us with the divine, in and through our practises of contemplation. Thus, contemplative spirituality is an inward experience of the Spirit's work in uniting us with God.

But are there pantheistic overtones to a contemplative spirituality? Gresham points to Mister Eckhart's and John Ruusbroec's mystical trinitarian theology. A glimpse into their views clarifies whether contemplative spirituality has pantheistic tendencies. Eckhart's mysticism corresponds to Gregory's views that silent contemplation leads to darkness and incomprehensibility of the mystery of the triune God, such that he interprets "this divine silence and darkness as the bare unity of the godhead beyond God in which no distinctions remain, not the distinction between creator and creature, nor even the distinction among Father, Son and Spirit."[205] On the other hand, in Ruusbroec's mysticism, which corresponds to Augustine's view that contemplation leads to light and clarity, such pantheistic tendencies are overcome by a trinitarian understanding of divine unity, in which "all does not remain darkness and silence, for the Father eternally utters his Word who brings light."[206]

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[204] Gresham, *Three Trinitarian Spiritualities*, 285.
[205] Gresham, *Three Trinitarian Spiritualities*, 285.
[206] Gresham, *Three Trinitarian Spiritualities*, 285.

If contemplative spirituality is an experience of the unity of Father, Son and Spirit, through the indwelling of the Spirit in our soul, such that through the practice of contemplation, we are led into light and clarity in our understanding of the mystery of the triune God, then our union with God does not dissolve any distinctions, not only between the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, but also between God and human beings. If the Spirit takes us into an experience of God's life and a transformation into Christlikeness, in our engagement with the mystery of the triune God, such that humans achieve union with the divine, in the capacity of the Spirit; such union does not dissolve any distinctions. Rather, just as we understand the nature of God's unity only as we maintain that there is differentiation within the Godhead, we recognize by way of analogy, the significance of God-human distinctions, and distinctions between humans themselves, for an understanding of our union with God, and with each other. Our relationship with the divine or our union with God does not diminish our humanity, not even our gender differences. Thus, a contemplative trinitarian spirituality, in which we are led by the Spirit, who indwells our soul and unites us with God, does not lead us to a pantheistic understanding of the divine.

Second, contemplative spirituality emphasises the aspect of a silent and wordless prayer towards God, in a posture of deep attentiveness to the Spirit. Such a posture of being attentive to the Spirit, through prayer of a deep and wordless sort, brings about a transformation in which we conform to the likeness of the Son, and are drawn back to the Father, who is the source of all human longing for God. Thus, a contemplative spirituality demands a keen attention to the Spirit's work of initiating our incorporation into divine life.

But is this a kind of spirituality that can be practised only by those who can afford the time and the resources to be attentive to the Spirit, and engage in contemplation? Doesn't it seem like an elitist spirituality, which can be practised only by those who are far removed from the difficult realities of daily living? Is such attention to the Spirit's leading possible for those who find themselves amid oppressive realities? Coakley responds to this by stating that authentic contemplation, which is characterised by a gentle effacement of ourselves from the world, and a radical attentiveness to the Spirit[207], allows for paying a certain kind of deep attention to those whom we are praying for, such that it is not only us who are empowered,

[207] Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 86.

and experience transformation, but we also engage ourselves in a prophetic act of empowering those are oppressed, thereby making way for the Spirit to initiate and work towards a transformation of their lives.

If the practice of contemplation empowers the lives of the oppressed, by making way for the Spirit to work in the lives of the people we are praying for, then such spiritual practises are not devoid of our participation in social realities. The practice of contemplative spirituality then, can be done in conjunction with practises of social spirituality. The manner in which contemplative practises can complement practising social acts of mutual love and self-giving, is that these social acts can be practised by being deeply attentive to the Spirit's capacities, instead of practising them by relying on own strength and wisdom.

So far, some ways in which social and contemplative spiritualities complement each other, have been highlighted. But the aspect which integrates these spiritualities, such that we have an integrated or a holistic view of trinitarian spirituality is the aspect of embodiment. An embodied trinitarian spirituality is not devoid of the characteristics of social and contemplative spiritualities that have already been discussed. Yet a fundamental characteristic of this trinitarian spirituality is shaped by the conviction that an understanding or experience of the triune God calls for a response of awe and worship, not merely with our minds or souls, but with our bodies. Thus, an embodied trinitarian spirituality is an integrated expression of social and contemplative spiritualities, even as it is shaped by the conviction that our worship of the triune God ought to be an embodied worship. In what follows, three questions that are central for our understanding of an embodied trinitarian spirituality will be dealt with; the responses for which are shaped by the trinitarian perspectives offered in the social model as well as in the incorporative model of the Trinity.

5.3 Embodied spirituality: An integrated view of trinitarian spirituality

First, why do bodies matter in our worship of the triune God? In other words, why do our expressions of a trinitarian spirituality ought to involve bodily practices?

The trinitarian perspective offered by the social model is helpful to respond to this question. One of the central aspects that shapes this trinitarian perspective is the conceptualization of an ontology of personhood. This concept not only shapes social

theorists' response to the problem of God's being, but it also shapes a certain understanding of personhood, which can be applied to our understanding of the human person.

If personhood is constituted by relationship or communion, then our personal identity is constituted by our being in relationship with others. And if we can relate to other people only as embodied selves (our interactions with other people are always bodily interactions), then our personal identity is primarily an embodied identity. Moreover, the implications that Volf draws from his understanding of trinitarian identity, for human identity, sheds light on this aspect. If human identity, which is derived from our understanding of trinitarian identity, is neither reducible to our relationship with others, nor is enclosed by our personal distinctness, such that what makes us distinct, as well as what gives us the ability to respond and relate to others is our bodies, then our identity as human beings is essentially an embodied identity. Since what makes us distinct cannot be dissociated from our bodily realities, as much as our relations to other people are embodied relations, the essence of our identity as human beings is bound to our bodily existence.

Such an understanding that the human person is essentially a bodily creature not only signifies to what constitutes our primary identity, but it also points to why bodies are significant in our worship of the triune God. If our humanness is necessarily a bodily reality, then our response to God in worship ought to be a bodily response. Even as we imitate divine perichoretic relations in our human relationships, we do so with our bodies. Not only so, but the Spirit also who brings about our transformation that leads us to achieve a union with God, does so by indwelling our bodies. Therefore, our bodies matter in our worship of the triune God.

Second, what ought to be the right bodily posture for our worship of the triune God? If our bodies matter in our worship of the triune God, what bodily practices do we adopt in such worship? Coakley's view of ascetic practices as a recommendation for life sheds light on the right bodily posture in our union and communion with God.

According to her, "the willingness to endure a form of naked dispossession before God; the willingness to surrender control (not to any human power, but solely to God's power); the willingness to accept the arid vacancy of a simple waiting on God in prayer, the willingness at the same time to accept disconcerting bombardments from the realm of the

'unconscious': all these are the ascetical tests of contemplation without which no epistemic or spiritual deepening can start to occur."[208]

In other words, adopting certain bodily practises which give us courage to surrender to God's power, patience to wait for God's intervention, and the strength to accept a certain kind of spiritual discomfort, even as we engage in prayer and contemplation, are a necessary precondition for us to even start grappling with the mystery of the triune God, as well as those which lead us towards a transformed life.

Moreover, adopting such bodily practices lead us to display attributes such as courage, patience, and strength, they also lead us to display acts of love and charity towards our neighbour. Ascetic practices lead us to emulate attributes of mutual love and self-gift, which are attributes of divine perichoretic relations. In other words, practising asceticism leads us to participate in God's fellowship, in that such practises are displayed as bodily enactments of love and charity. Therefore, practises of asceticism lead to a right bodily posture in our worship of the triune God.

Third, what is the goal of practising asceticism in our worship of the triune God? In other words, what is the goal of worshipping God with our bodies? It has been pointed out, in the trinitarian perspective offered by the social model, that the practice of imitating divine relational attributes of mutual love and self-gift, are displayed as bodily enactments of love and charity. As we emulate divine attributes of love and self-gift, such that we prioritise the needs of others before ours, act for the sake of upholding the value and dignity of others, and give ourselves unto others in and through acts of sacrificial love, we are not only able to display divine love, but are also able to exemplify divine love for others to follow. So, the goal of such an embodied participation in, and emulation of, divine fellowship, is to extend God's communion of love, to those who do not yet share in it, and to bring them into a life of partaking in divine fellowship.

Likewise, according to the trinitarian perspective offered by the incorporative model, our experience of God's nature allows us to achieve a Spirit-led union with God. It has been pointed out that this union occurs even as we adopt bodily practises of asceticism, by

[208] Coakley, *God, Sexuality, and the Self*, 19.

following the Spirit's leading in prayer and contemplation, by which the Spirit progressively purges us of our sinful desires and aligns them into a desire for God. An indication of such transformation is our nature being conformed into the likeness of Christ. Moreover, such a transformation of our desires that leads us to achieve union with God does not dissolve our personal distinctness, such that our embodied identity is preserved. The act of worshipping the triune God then becomes a bodily act of engaging in deep prayer and contemplation, such that we are conformed into the likeness of Christ and achieve a union with God, with the hope of preserving our identity as embodied creatures. This hope that we have of being able to live as embodied creatures is not relinquished in death. Rather, it is built around the reality of Christ's resurrection, which enables us to anticipate an eternal future in which we live as embodied creatures. So, the goal of worshipping God with our bodies is to live with the hope of becoming like Christ, even as our bodily identity is preserved in such union.

CONCLUSION

Thus, an embodied trinitarian spirituality, is an integration of a social and a contemplative trinitarian spirituality, which can be developed based on their complementarity, and which offers insights into the purpose, the act, and the goal of worshipping the triune God with our bodies. The purpose of worshipping God with our bodies is to imitate divine perichoretic relations as embodied creatures, and let the Spirit transform us in our bodies. The act of worshipping God with our bodies is to engage in practises of asceticism, which is the right bodily posture in our worship of the triune God. And the goal of worshipping God with our bodies is to extend God's communion to those who do not have it, and to live with the hope of embodying Christ.

To arrive at this conclusion, contemporary literature on the social model of the Trinity, and the incorporative model of the Trinity, has been reviewed, with a focus on the key concepts, their main approach to the doctrine, and their significance for their corresponding trinitarian spiritualities. A central question that is of concern in the trinitarian theologies of both models, is the question of God's simultaneous unity and plurality, or the problem of the paradoxical nature of God's being.

To address this problem, some of the key concepts employed in the social model are relationality, perichoresis, and an ontology of personhood. In other words, to describe how God is simultaneously a unity and a plurality, the social model uses these concepts: relationality to explain the paradoxical nature of God's being, perichoresis to explain the nature of divine relations that shed light on their unity, and the ontology of personhood to explain the personhood of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Their main approach in developing a trinitarian theology is found in their reading of the Cappadocian Fathers, who are understood to have provided a social analogy to speak of the triune God. Thus, they use analogical language that applies to social relationships to explain the paradoxical nature of God's being. In other words, God's being is explained in terms of a community of social relations.

Such a trinitarian perspective offered by a social model of the Trinity is compared with an incorporative model of the Trinity, with regards to how the problem of the paradoxical nature of God's being is addressed in this model. Some of the key concepts employed in this model are sexuality, spirituality, their relationship to trinitarian theology and

an ontology of desire. The incorporative model assumes the centrality of addressing anthropological issues of sexuality and spirituality, to answer any question related to the doctrine of the Trinity. In other words, the nature of God's being is explained using the concept of an ontology of desire, such that our knowledge of the unity of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, is possible only as we experience the divine, through the Spirit, who transforms us in our desires, even sexual desires. The main approach to the doctrine of the Trinity in the incorporative model is called a Spirit-led approach, which emphasises the Spirit's capacity, rather than human linguistic capacities, to make known to us the nature of God's being. Thus, the Spirit-led approach speaks of the Spirit's capacity to incorporate us into divine life, such that we know and experience the One God who is Father, Son and Spirit.

The purpose of reviewing these two approaches to the doctrine of the Trinity in contemporary trinitarian theology is to compare and critically evaluate the different perspectives these models offer in addressing the problem of the paradoxical nature of God's being. Such a comparison and evaluation were done to construct a theoretical framework which revealed that while the trinitarian perspectives offered by the social model, and the incorporative model differ in terms of their approach and their explanation to the problem of God's simultaneous unity and plurality, they complement each other in terms of their significance for Christian spirituality. Based on such a theoretical framework, a few characteristics of a social spirituality and a contemplative spirituality have been highlighted for the purpose of indicating how an integrated view of trinitarian spirituality could be developed. Thus, three aspects (the purpose, the act, and the goal) of an embodied trinitarian spirituality have been pointed out, which could be developed in further research on trinitarian spirituality.

To better understand how such an integrated view of trinitarian spirituality or an embodied trinitarian spirituality could be developed, further studies on trinitarian spirituality could address the relationship of trinitarian theology to theological anthropology in a more comprehensive manner. On the basis of a broader understanding of the human being, and our relationship to the triune God, aspects of human identity being essentially an embodied identity, how we ought to live as embodied creatures, and the eschatological hope for our bodies, can be fully explored, for the purpose of drawing connections between theology and spirituality, and developing a trinitarian spirituality that takes account of our embodied nature

in our worship of the triune God. Further research can also focus on how such an understanding of trinitarian spirituality can be useful for addressing practical aspects of Christian living within specific cultural contexts.

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