THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

God the Father in the Western Tradition
Bringing Augustine and Bonaventure into Conversation with Modern Theology

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Faculty of the
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One of the widespread contemporary approaches to the Trinity repudiates “mere monotheism” and emphasizes the community of the Persons as three separate centers of action. Within some versions of this “social Trinitarianism,” the unique role of the God the Father as source of the godhead is marginalized or obscured. The views of Jürgen Moltmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg on God the Father bring this problem into focus, as they diminish the “monarchy” of the Father as unfitting because as traditionally understood it lacks reciprocity. Instead, they envision alternative modes of explaining the unity, stressing the original threeness and describing divine unity as an eschatological achievement. After linking the Father’s diminished place in these approaches with the problem of divine unity, this study examines the theology of God the Father in Augustine and Bonaventure to clarify how the concept of the Father as unique source can provide a solution to this pressing problem in contemporary systematic theology.

The Western tradition has often been accused of starting with the divine essence and tending toward modalism, so there is need for a fresh understanding of the persons and God the Father’s role in particular. This study closely interprets primary works from Augustine and Bonaventure to distill how they express the Father’s role and what this means for their concept of
the Trinity. Neither author uses the term “monarchy,” but Augustine employs and Bonaventure develops further the notion that the Father is sole principle of the godhead. Augustine’s mature works make reference to this notion at a several key junctures, even as his Trinitarian logic steadfastly holds to the equality of the persons. He steers a middle course in the face of Homoian subordinationism; he insists that the Father indeed is the sole source, but that the greatness of his fatherhood is enhanced and not diminished by the Son’s equality. Bonaventure articulates a Trinitarian theology with the Father as First Principle \((primum principium)\) in such a way that he shares being principle with the Son and Holy Spirit. The Father’s innascibility constitutes for him a positive characteristic, as it conveys the pure pouring out of being. The eternal emanations of the Son and Holy Spirit from the Father are matched by their eternal return \((reductio)\) to him. This dynamic concept of God binds the Trinity in highest unity, and also serves as a model for the economies of creation and salvation. The conclusion of the study points to how this strong sense of God the Father as source as articulated by Augustine and Bonaventure actually protects the equality of the Persons while also indicating unity and order in the godhead.
This dissertation by James Paul Krueger fulfills the dissertation requirement for the doctoral degree in Systematic Theology approved by Regis Armstrong, O.F.M.Cap., Ph.D., as Director, and by Tarmo Toom, Ph.D., and Joshua Benson, Ph.D., as Readers.

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It has been a tremendously humbling experience to research and write on the Trinity during these last several years. With regard to this mystery, Augustine attests that “nowhere else is a mistake more dangerous, or the search more laborious, or discovery more advantageous.” I owe an incalculable debt, then, to the many people who have helped me to avoid mistakes, who have sustained me in my labors, and who have enabled me to catch whatever glimpses of the splendor of truth that I have.

First, I would like to thank Father Regis Armstrong. Fittingly enough for this project on God the Father, Father Armstrong “adopted” me after I had begun the dissertation. I could not have continued without his support and encouragement. His expert guidance helped me to streamline my diffuse thoughts and maintain focus at several points. Additionally, he did so much to facilitate this project’s completion on the logistic side of things. I will never forget his generosity in directing me. I would also like to thank my readers, Dr. Tarmo Toom and Dr. Joshua Benson, for their helpful suggestions toward understanding Augustine and Bonaventure aright. While the faults of the project remain my own, these scholars aided me in avoid several errors and in clarifying my own interpretation. I express my warm gratitude to Dr. Thomas Schärtl for all of the sessions we spent together discussing Trinitarian theology and conceiving this particular project. I offer thanks as well to Dr. Charles Jones and all of the staff in the School of Theology and Religious Studies office for all of their administrative efforts on my behalf, and to the library staff of Mullen Library at CUA and the Woodstock Theological Library at Georgetown University.
Augustine also writes that he was a young man when he began De Trinitate and an old man as he published it. Comparing great things to small, my own project has spanned considerably more time than initially envisioned. Additionally, it seems that the subject matter itself enables one to mature—so in some ways I feel a similar sentiment as I submit this dissertation. On a more personal level, then, I would like to thank my family and friends, who have provided much needed prayers, encouragement, and assistance throughout this process. Without each of these contributions I could not have finished it. My colleagues at Trinity School, led by Headmaster Andrew Zwerneman, have been nothing but helpful and have covered for many classes and responsibilities so that I could meet with professors and write. My fellow teachers and my students in that splendid community of learners have inspired me on so many occasions, fueling my thirst for greater knowledge and insight into the divine mystery. I thank the many close friends of ours who have provided babysitting and have supported my wife and I as things got exceedingly busy. I thank my parents-in-law for spending several weeks with my wife and children during multiple summers to facilitate my studies. Above all, I am so incredibly grateful to my parents, Vern and Jan Krueger, to my wife Kathryn, and to my children, Elizabeth, Joseph, Claire, and Monica. This dissertation is but straw in comparison to the outpouring of love that I see in you. Words fall short, but the most important words are these: I love you. The unity that we share in some small but real way provides a glimpse of that eternal exchange. While I have written all of the words, this dissertation truly comes from this family as a whole, and so it is dedicated to all of you.
Introduction

“I believe in God the Father Almighty.” Both major creeds begin in this way. Similarly, the words “Our Father” begin the most widely spoken prayer of Christians, and for good reason, because Jesus taught his disciples to pray in this way. In the Catholic Church, the Eucharistic prayer finishes with a doxology culminating with praise of God the Father: “all glory is yours, Almighty Father, forever and ever.” Given these constant reminders of God’s fatherhood, it seems strange to say that God the Father is forgotten. It is truly remarkable, however, how the commonplace can lose its impact and over time become a marginalized or even forgotten relic of the past. For various reasons, the situation is not what one might expect: the theology of God the Father has been somewhat neglected. There are indications that the situation is getting better, but there is much work to be done to revitalize this aspect of Trinitarian thought.\(^1\)

The relative absence of consideration of God the Father is particularly striking because theologians have inquired extensively into the Trinity in the last century. Indeed, many would say that the field has experienced a renaissance led by such authors as Karl Barth and Karl

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\(^1\) Not much has been written on God the Father in English, but there are some notable exceptions; more has been written in French. Jean Galot’s *Découvrir le Père* (1985) has been translated as *Abba, Father—We Long to See Your Face: Theological Insights into the First Person of the Trinity* (trans. M Angeline Bouchard, New York [Alba House, 1992]). This work takes a systematic approach that takes biblical theology and the liturgy into consideration and represents an important if underappreciated resource. Two important dissertations have developed into books: Margaret Turek’s *Toward a Theology of God the Father: Hans Urs von Balthasar’s Theodramatic Approach* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), and Peter Widdicombe’s *The Fatherhood of God from Athanasius to Origen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994). The first work, focused as it is on Hans Urs von Balthasar, makes little reference to the development of the theological tradition, except through Balthasar’s perspective, and does not engage the interlocutors of the current dissertation. The Widdicombe work, as the title makes clear, focuses on the early Eastern tradition and thus the current dissertation serves as a complementary study. Louis Bouyer’s work *The Invisible Father* (Petersham, MA: St. Bede’s Publications, 1999) has been translated into English by Hugh Gilbert, but despite the title it focuses more on the divine attributes than on the First Person *per se*. It serves as the first volume of a Trinitarian trilogy, so this particular approach deserves comment below. A few important book-length studies on God the Father have been published in French, including Francois-Xavier Durrwell, *Le Père, Dieu et son mystère* (Paris: Cerf, 1988) and Emmanuel Durand, *Le Père, Alpha et Oméga de la vie trinitaire* (Paris: Cerf, 2008), which was not available to me until this study was well underway. There are a number of articles on God the Father, mostly in French and Spanish. Not much has been written explicitly on God the Father in German.
Rahner, creating a legacy that has been picked up by Jürgen Moltmann, Robert Jenson, John Zizioulas and many others. When one surveys the scholarly literature on Trinitarian theology today, one finds that there is a wealth of material devoted to exploring the persons of the Son and the Holy Spirit, but God the Father emerges much less as a topic for consideration. As is evident in the very articles of the Nicene Creed, the controversies of the fourth century focused on the divinity of the Son and Holy Spirit and took the Father’s divinity as a given.

Not that the amount of pages devoted to a topic is the only indication of its importance, but textbooks that treat the persons in sequence often contain relatively short chapters on the Father and lengthy ones on the Son and Holy Spirit. Walter Kasper’s *The God of Jesus Christ* is an exception that sheds light on the problem at stake. His chapters are relatively balanced because he treats the divine essence in conjunction with God the Father. The insight behind this approach is easy enough to grasp: if Jesus orients his prayer toward the Father, is the Father not “God” in some special sense? Despite Kasper’s attempts to avoid modalism and tritheism, and give a stronger concept of the Scriptural presentation of God, some might accuse him of falling into an ontological subordinationism. Connecting the treatment of the Father so thoroughly to the treatment of the divine essence leads to this, or so the thought goes. In the midst of the debates about how to conceive of God as Trinity, there is a pressing need for more inquiry into how the Father relates to the divine essence.

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Yves Congar, in his efforts to reinvigorate the theology of the Holy Spirit, quotes a line from Karl Adam: “The structure of the Catholic faith may be summarized in a single sentence: I come to a living faith in the Triune God through Christ in His Church. I experience the action of the living God through Christ realizing himself in His Church. So we see the certitude of the Catholic faith rests on the sacred triad: God, Christ, Church.” Congar respects Adam’s synthesis, but finds this particular formulation deficient, as it does little to combat a de facto Christo-monism, a focus on Christ that overshadows the other persons of the Trinity. But as Jean Galot has said, if we proclaim Jesus as the Son of God, “Christology can never be self-contained, but always needs to be complemented by a theology of the Father.” The relative lack of inquiry into God the Father, however, shows that this theology is mostly implicit. God the Father has been seen as distant and unapproachable, and even called an abusive father for sending his Son to die. Thus theologians and practicing Christians often ignore or misunderstand God the Father and hence truncate the Trinity.

In the 1960s and 1970s, a growing number of scholars and laypeople began to investigate the appropriateness of gendered names and metaphors for the Trinitarian persons. The feminist critique questioned the all-male, paternalistic Father-Son relationship at the core of

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biblical revelation. Many works written in the last several years have retrieved feminine symbols of God in Scripture and in the theological tradition that were neglected, making positive contributions. The vast majority of Christians have continued to name the Trinity as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but one of the movement’s points of emphasis stuck: the Triune God is beyond gender. Despite the awkward situation of pronouns, God is not reducible to male and female categories. Many theologians throughout the centuries have held this view, but the reminder has been salient, and the work of teachers and pastors to communicate God’s transcendence of gender never stops. Even so, it is both difficult and awkward to render the Trinitarian relations in terms of ambiguous gender, *i.e.* God as “parent” and “child.” Many if not most theologians recognize that the traditional language of revelation and worship has its merits, provided the caveat mentioned above.

Aside from works exploring this facet of the theology of God the Father, few works and scarcely any monographs have explored the First Person in systematic depth. It is clearly not the case that contemporary explorations of the Trinity have left out the person of the Father altogether; rather, they either assume that what has been transmitted is uncontroversial, or they subsume their discussion of the “First Person of the Trinity” under other terms.

At the same time, recent treatments of the Trinity have proceeded in such a direction that maintaining the unity of the three persons has become an especially pressing problem. One of the most prominent models, especially at the popular level but still often on the academic level, is *social trinitarianism.* As the name implies, this framework places an emphasis on the threeness of the persons, and upon their relations and interaction within the unity of the Godhead. There is a long legacy of thinking along these lines, but it achieved particular prominence and renewed
expression in the mid-to-late twentieth century. In particular, the trend posited the divine persons as free and independent centers of action, hence “social” in a way analogous to relationships among distinct human beings.

Whereas certain other models, such as the so-called psychological model, involve some difficulty in explicating the full and equal personhood of the “three,” the typical social-trinitarian problem concerns the full unity of the Godhead. Moltmann and others have taken the social trinitarian view to such an extent that traditional reckonings are often criticized as “mere monotheism,” meant in a pejorative way. Scholars proceeding along these lines see the Trinity as a great victory in the concept of God over concepts that demand diversity-shattering unity. Subsequently adhering to mere monotheism would represent regression. Rahner famously opined that most Christians are practical monotheists and few would notice were the doctrine to be altered or removed. Moltmann, Catherine Mowry LaCugna, and many liberation theologians offered a social trinitarianism to respond to this charge, willing to criticize traditional monotheism to seek a more practical and thoroughgoing vision of the triune God. While many theologians, such as Wolfhart Pannenberg, do not go quite as far as Moltmann and those following in his footsteps, there is still a tendency in modern systematic theology to advance an extreme version of social trinitarianism at the expense of the unity of the Godhead.

This dissertation argues that there is a strong link between the absence of full consideration of God the Father and the nagging problem of unity for the social trinitarianism of

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6 For example, see Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 129-148.

7 “Despite their orthodox confession of the Trinity, Christians are, in their practical life, almost mere ‘monotheists.’ We must be willing to admit that, should the doctrine of the Trinity have to be dropped as false, the major part of religious literature could well remain virtually unchanged.” Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, trans. Joseph Donceel (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), 10-11.
Moltmann and others. It appears that—in the midst of the various critiques of the twentieth century—articulating a theology of God the Father in depth proportional to the attention given to the Son and Holy Spirit was simply not fitting or advisable. The term “Father” became an embarrassment, laden with the negative baggage of sexism and colonialism. The term “patriarchy” was coined, and applied to the vilified mode of governance where church, state, and family had one authoritative paterfamilias. So in a democratic, egalitarian, and pluralistic milieu, espousing a religion that celebrated God the Father carried the tinge of patriarchalism. The claim emerged that Trinitarian theology legitimated social structures that were convenient for the elite—political and clerical—to maintain their power. To be sure, there are legitimate concerns here, but there are also compelling reasons to rediscover the meaning of God’s paternity in the tradition. The theologian should be willing to refine unwarranted or outdated modes of thought that have been passed down, but at the same time cannot simply capitulate to the shifting tides of culture. Thus the theology of God the Father stands at an important intersection between theology as an exposition of revelation and theology as expressing the norms of an evolving culture.

Often, the theological community associates a strong concept of God the Father with Eastern Christianity, but extensive study of Augustine and Bonaventure shows that the Western tradition does have resources for a positive theology of God the Father in the Trinity. While these theologians have been misunderstood, they combine a strong sense of the equality of the divine persons along with the divine unity, precisely because they envision God the Father as

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8 Johnson defines patriarchy in this way: “Patriarchy is the name commonly given to sexist social structures. Coined from the Greek pater/patros (father) and arche (origin, ruling power, authority), patriarchy is a form of social organization in which power is always in the hand of the dominant man or men, with others ranked below in a graded series of subordinations reaching down to the least powerful who form a large base” (She Who Is, 23).
source of the other persons in such a way as to allow their equality. They have much to contribute to the ongoing conversation. The insights pertaining to God the Father found in their works indeed can provide a way forward for modern systematic theology.

This dissertation proceeds first by providing an analysis of two modern theologians to ascertain how the theology of God the Father and problem of unity in the Godhead are related. Wolfhart Pannenberg and Jürgen Moltmann will be considered in depth as two representative modern theologians. Study of their work makes clear a few critical questions that contemporary systematic theology faces with regard to the Father. They both diminish relationships of origin as part of their theological systems, and so their theology of God the Father suffers. Their difference of emphasis largely hinges on the complaint that language of origin precludes reciprocity on the part of the persons. At the same time, in their search for true reciprocity, the divine unity becomes a dire problem for each, and they no longer can appeal to the Father as source and these relationships as unifying. Staunchly opposed to the perceived modalism of Rahner and others, and claiming that tritheism is a false danger, they fall into conceiving an egalitarian union of three separate persons that is not fully realized until the end of time.

The need for a reassessment of the Western tradition is clear, and so the dissertation next focuses in turn on two of the most important witnesses within this tradition: Augustine of Hippo (354-430) and Bonaventure of Bagnoregio (ca. 1221-1274). Analysis of several works from

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9 This dissertation certainly does not study these Western authors to serve a polemic against the East. There are two reasons for the focus on the West: first, to provide a basic limitation in scope, and second because more inquiry into the Western tradition on God the Father is especially needed. Understanding the roots of the Western tradition on God the Father can ultimately aid theologians engaged in ecumenical dialogue, even if that is not the primary intention here. On an anecdotal level, when I have told graduate students and even professional scholars that I am studying God the Father, they often assume that I am studying the Eastern Fathers. For a recent ecumenical study, see Lucas Mateo-Seco, “The Paternity of the Father and the Procession of the Spirit: Some Historical Remarks on the Ecumenical Problem,” in Rethinking Trinitarian Theology, ed. Giulio Maspero and Robert Wozniak (London:
each author will give a satisfactory portrait of the place of God the Father in their thought, including insights into how the Father’s role in the Trinity is described, and into the relationship between the Father and the Godhead. After these two authors are considered in detail in Parts II and III respectively, Part IV brings the results of this inquiry into conversation with the problematic outlined in Part I. In this way the dissertation articulates a “response” of Augustine and Bonaventure to the modern theologians on God the Father, and provides an offering toward a systematic expression of the Father’s role in the Trinity.

A few words of explanation and introduction are in order to provide the reasons behind these choices. Jürgen Moltmann (1926—), has influenced the current generation of systematic theologians immensely, whether directly or indirectly. His *Crucified God* and *Trinity and the Kingdom* are widely read and have compelled many to rethink God’s nature as one that participates in human suffering in the Cross. He is also German, but from the Reformed tradition, and scholars of different denominational backgrounds have been affected by his work. Among Catholics, this is true most emphatically of Leonardo Boff and Catherine Mowry LaCugna. These authors have written textbooks widely read at Catholic universities, respectively *Trinity and Society* and *God For Us*. Moltmann does not set about rigorously investigating historical or philosophical topics, but he has crafted bold works that elaborate a wider vision of the implications of the gospel. In this way, he challenges the church to grow and rethink traditional theological answers. Moltmann centers the constitution of the Trinity on the idea of perichoresis,

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the interpenetration of the divine persons. He deliberately seeks to replace relations of origin with this new model. Consequently, for pragmatic and for theological reasons, God the Father has a diminished role in his theology.

The other contemporary interlocutor, Wolfhart Pannenberg (1928–), is one of the foremost contemporary systematic theologians. A German from the Lutheran tradition, his work is widely praised on both sides of the Atlantic. Interestingly, until the publication of his celebrated, three-volume Systematic Theology, his work had not exhibited much of a Trinitarian focus. Nevertheless, many observers agree that his mature thought is thoroughly Trinitarian. He treats the Trinity in the first volume of the aforementioned work according to a method that he reckons innovative: he handles the doctrine of the persons before the divine attributes. Like Moltmann, he too advocates for the divine persons being separate centers of consciousness and strives to provide an account that moves beyond relations of origin. He insists that the relations must be reciprocal, and so the Father’s divinity depends upon the Son’s just as much as the converse.

Moltmann and Pannenberg are both influential upon the landscape of contemporary systematic theology, have fully articulated Trinitarian theologies, and lead us into the heart of the problem regarding the Father’s place in contemporary theology. Their alternative accounts struggle to maintain the unity of the Trinity. By losing relations of origin and the Father’s key

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role in the Trinity, their versions of social trinitarianism in varying degrees veer towards the
danger of tritheism.

To consider the theology of God the Father in the Western context, it is highly
appropriate to start with the figure most responsible for that context. Without a doubt, Augustine
is the most formative author in Western theology, but debates concerning his legacy arise
continuously. Such is indeed evident in the theological literature of this last century. While none
would deny the enormity of his impact, the question remains whether this influence was
salubrious or deleterious. In spite of the reverence for his authority down the centuries, questions
also arise as to whether his thought was transmitted faithfully. The scholarly conversation
regarding his thought on any topic is thus quite complex. Fortunately, the last generation has
witnessed impressive advances in the understanding of his vast literary corpus, and especially his
thought on the Trinity. Specialization in modern research has undoubtedly helped produce this
increased understanding. This same tendency does have certain unfortunate side-effects,
however; most systematic theologians rely upon scholarly narratives, which may or may not be
accurate and up-to-date.

One particular issue affecting Augustine’s contemporary reception in systematic theology
is the East-West schema typically attributed to Théodore de Régnon (1831-1893). According to
this typology the West starts with the unity of God and proceeds to the three persons, while the
East starts with the three hypostases and proceeds to the unity of the Godhead. Nuanced

12 Théodore de Régnon, Études de théologie positive sur la Sainte Trinité (3 vols. bound as four; Paris: Victor
Retaux, 1892-1898).

13 Rahner and LaCugna adopt this paradigm as important parts of their assessment of the state of affairs in
Trinitarian theology. Moltmann also assimilates it to some degree. As early as 1971, Edmund Hill remarked, “I feel
strongly that it is high time this distinction were seen for the crude generalisation it is, and dropped from all
accounts acknowledge that both traditions share fundamental agreement that God is one, and that
the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are each fully divine, but many theologians have seen
tremendous and even disastrous consequences in this procedural and pedagogical difference. It
is described as a tendency, albeit one that has had an impact on succeeding generations of
preachers and teachers of doctrine. In the eyes of many, “the West” is shorthand for Augustine,
and his Trinitarian pedagogy has been seen as a church-dividing issue, so his controversial
legacy is at the heart of Trinitarian disputes. Michel Barnes, though, has forcefully criticized de
Régnon’s paradigm itself, glibly saying that “nothing is more common in contemporary
systematics than the inability to read Augustine outside of de Régnon’s paradigm.” A
simplified dichotomy between Eastern and Western approaches is no longer sustainable.

Rather than invariably starting from the divine essence, Augustine’s Trinitarian theology
typically starts from God the Father. For him, the First Person is the principium, “principle” or
“origin” of the entire godhead. He unfolds the Trinity by explaining the Son and the Holy

14 From the outset, there are two important things to remember about this schema: 1) it is typically a matter of the
order of considerations, i.e. the East does not deny the unity despite starting with the three, just as much as the West
does not deny the distinctness of Father, Son, and Spirit despite starting with the unity; 2) relatedly, the schema itself
is of mostly pedagogical value: there is not a self-conscious rule on the part of Eastern theologians to proceed one
way (or vice versa), nor is it universally true that theologians operated this way.

also has written “De Régnon Reconsidered” Augustinian Studies 26 (1995), 51-79. He was not the first to point out
the falsity of the simplified version of the paradigm, but his articles had a wide influence. Some systematic
theologians have caught on and updated textbooks have appeared (e.g. Declan Marmion and Rik Van Nieuwenhove,
An Introduction to the Trinity [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011]). Lewis Ayres has also written about
the misappropriation of de Régnon’s historical studies. He detects variations of the paradigm that blame Augustine
for a whole host of supposed problems. His book Nicaea and Its Legacy is partly intended to “move beyond” the
false portraits of the fourth century in the wake of de Régnon. See Lewis Ayres, Nicaea and Its Legacy: An
Approach to Fourth Century Trinitian Theology (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 303. See also his
articles “Remember You Are Catholic” (serm. 52, 2): Augustine on the Unity of the Triune God,” Journal of Early
Allan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 121-124.
Spirit’s equality with the Father. The Father eternally gives the fullness of divinity to them while sharing in it himself. This present inquiry seeks to participate in the contemporary reevaluation of his theology, specifically to focus upon the bishop’s treatment of God the Father.

Bonaventure represents an important figure from the thirteenth century, which witnessed a great flowering of theological synthesis and inquiry. The schools of Paris built upon a growing intellectual revival in the late eleventh and twelfth centuries. The influx of Aristotelian texts also spurred scholars in this milieu to draw upon the rigor of philosophy to serve theology. Bonaventure has been recognized as having a thoroughly Trinitarian theology and as placing a particular emphasis on God the Father. He makes most frequent use of an approach to the Trinity grounded in the emanations of the Son and Holy Spirit from the Father. His approach is thus quite distinctive in comparison with the account of relations of mutual opposition that arguably became standard. When Thomas Aquinas considers the unbegottenness of God the Father in his Summa theologiae, he expounds it as merely a negation (i.e. the term does not affirm anything of itself, but only denies that the Father lacks the quality of being-begotten). Bonaventure instead regards it as having a positive corollary; the Father’s unbegottenness (or, “innascibility,” as he prefers) indicates his “fountain-like fullness” (fontalis plenitudo). A phrase does not define a work, however. This examination gathers a more comprehensive theology of God the Father in Bonaventure. This Franciscan theologian follows in the footsteps of Augustine but arguably pushes farther. Study of Bonaventure complements that of Augustine in that his work possesses a different historical context and theological style. Bonaventure’s work is more removed from the fundamental controversies surrounding the reception of Nicene Creed. His theology thus has
less of a polemical cast, and it is of great benefit to evaluate the impact of his particular method and framework upon his thought on God the Father in the Trinity.

To recapitulate briefly, the reason for this study is twofold. First, there is a lacuna in contemporary scholarship regarding a full and systematic understanding of the Father’s role. There are few discussions of the Father in recent literature, and most consider only the legitimacy of gender metaphors for God rather probing the deeper underpinnings of Trinitarian theology. Second, by indicating the Father’s role through the retrieval of insights from Augustine and Bonaventure, this project can assist in the ongoing quest to develop better models for the unity and relations of the Triune God. Social trinitarianism, as it is often framed currently, has a problem with God the Father in particular because in the tradition the Father is the “source” within the Godhead. Often called the “monarchy,” this doctrine of God the Father being source poses a problem for the equality of the persons in the Trinity as a social reality, and so this concept is diminished or redefined.¹⁶ The central claim here is that the two problems, the lack of

¹⁶ This footnote sets out a compact orientation to the relevant terms for the Father as origin. Greek theology usually holds that the Father is the ἀρχή (archē), which simply means “beginning” (as in John 1:1 and the LXX of Genesis 1:1) but the word can also mean “cause” and “rule.” Hence monarchia could signify that the Father is the only source or that he is the only ruler. They reconcile the first meaning with the Trinity, but not the second. It should be noted that theology in Greek also often designates the Father as having ἀγέννησις (agennēsia), which is translated as “unbegottenness.” He is the αἰτία (aitia; “cause”) and πηγή (pege; “font”) of the other persons. In the Latin tradition, monarchia mostly stems from the usage of Tertullian of Carthage (ca. 160-225). See especially Adversus Praxean where he defines the term in ch. 3 (Tertullian’s Treatise against Praxeas, trans. Ernest Evans [London: SPCK, 1948]). “For Tertullian, the deepest mystery of Christianity is expressed in the word monarchia, namely that God has a Son….God the Father remains ruler and he retains sovereignty. But the administration of the rule is handed over to the Son” (Aloys Grillmeier, Christ in the Christian Tradition: Vol. 1, From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451), trans. John Bowden [Louisville: John Knox, 1975], 119). This term was tainted by controversy, however, and in the course of my research I have not seen it used by Augustine or Bonaventure. Instead, it became customary for Latin authors to use principium (“beginning,” or “principle”) to refer to the source of a person in the Trinity. Hilary of Poitiers (ca. 310-367) uses the term innascibilitas (“innascibility”) to signify that the Father is not born from another. Augustine, on the other hand, employs the term ingenitus (“unbegotten”) to mean the same thing. The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity compares the terminology for the Father as source within their document entitled “The Greek and Latin Traditions Regarding the Procession of the Holy Spirit” (L’Osservatore Romano, Weekly English Edition, 20 September 1995, 3 and 6); published also in The Holy Spirit: Classic and Contemporary Readings, ed. Eugene F. Rogers (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 81-90.
the theology of God the Father and the unity of the Trinity, are deeply related. Recovering and clarifying the Father as unique source of divinity through close study of Augustine and Bonaventure provides a helpful reminder and promising way forward. Relations of origin, grounded in the ecstatic Father, provide a better framework for God’s unity and “sociality.” These other approaches defer unity such that it is an achievement rather than an eternal starting point. As Augustine and Bonaventure show convincingly, having a strong sense of God the Father as source respects the eternal unity, order, and equality of the Triune God.
Part I: Two Modern Theologians on God the Father

Jürgen Moltmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg provide an indication of the place of God the Father in current systematic theology. They both express reservations about explaining the Trinity according to relations of origin. They perceive modalism as the major threat to a proper theology of God, and wish instead to provide accounts that accentuate the threeness of the persons. With particular reference to God the Father, it is critical that they each discuss the term monarchy (*monarchia*) at length. Moltmann argues strongly against it in his theological works. He treats the term as a theological toxin, and wishes to expunge it altogether. Pannenberg wishes to hold onto a sense of monarchy because of the weight of tradition, but he radically revises the term. He reckons that the traditional doctrine of monarchy suggests a dependence of the Son and Holy Spirit upon the Father that diminishes their full and equal personhood. Instead, he sees the monarchy as something given by the Father to the Son, to be received again by the Father only at the end of time. Thus there are deep differences between Moltmann and Pannenberg on the one hand and Augustine and Bonaventure on the other. The latter pair of authors may not use monarchy as a theological term, but they do ground the Trinity in the relations of origin and put a premium on God the Father as source.

There are several shared features of the thought of Moltmann and Pannenberg. Their similarities partly stem from their common context. They were born within three years of each other, and both endured the ravages of World War II. After their studies, they each went on to teach for many years in German universities. They make reference to each other and it is apparent that they remained in occasional dialogue. They came to prominence in the 1960s as the new leading lights of German Protestant theology, and in various ways have participated in
Moltmann and Pannenberg inherit a rich theological legacy within their linguistic tradition, but they also define their theologies sharply against some of their immediate forebears. They follow Karl Barth and Karl Rahner in stressing the *revelation* of the Trinity, which in their view differs markedly from speculating about God’s inner-life. A binary emerges here between the “economic” Trinity and the “immanent” Trinity. The former term derives from *oikonomía* (*oikonomia*), standing for God’s stewardship in creating the world and bringing about salvation. When the Greek Fathers incorporated this term into their theological discussion, they sometimes distinguished it conceptually from *theologia* (*theologia*), or God in himself. The circumstances surrounding the origins of the terminology in the modern discussion are obscure, but “immanent” overtook “theology” as the term for describing God’s “inner-life.” It must be stressed, however, that this binary was not operative for Augustine or for Bonaventure. The concept of dividing up the Trinity does not occur in their writings. The term “immanent Trinity” would particularly strike them as bizarre. They do recognize a distinction between the eternal

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2 For a lucid treatment of the history of Trinitarian thought in the German language, see Samuel M. Powell, *The Trinity in German Thought*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. This work focuses on the Protestant tradition and mostly concentrates on the Reformation period through Georg F. W. Hegel and Albrecht Ritschl in the nineteenth century, but it does contain a chapter devoted to the twentieth century.

3 This word is used nine times in the New Testament, and is often translated as “stewardship,” “plan,” “dispensation,” and “commission.” For example, see Eph 1:10.
processions and the temporal missions of the Son and Holy Spirit, but to create a binary is a hopeless anachronism. Moltmann and Pannenberg, however, absorb this terminology and infuse their theology with it.  

A particular principle, often called “Rahner’s Rule,” serves as an important starting point here. Rahner reacted against the scholastic framework of isolating various theological matters into distinct treatises. He was particularly bothered by the separation of treatment of the unity of God (de Deo uno) from the Trinity (de Deo trino). In a passage lamenting this bifurcation, he professes that the Trinity is “a mystery of salvation.” If theologians and the faithful ignore this link, they imperil losing the relevance of the Trinity for their lives. He continues, “The basic thesis which constitutes the link between the mysteries and shows the reality and not just the doctrine of the Trinity as a mystery of salvation for us may be formulated as follows: the Trinity of the economy of salvation is the immanent Trinity and vice versa.” This “rule” or Grundaxiom has engendered many interpretations in its wake. The problem remains as to what “is” means here. Does it mean the collapse of the immanent Trinity into the economic? Or does it mean that the two “Trinities” share a fundamental identity in different respects? It begins to seem as if the same old debate is merely playing out with new terminology.

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4 In fact, the very closing line of Pannenberg’s magnum opus refers to the immanent and economic Trinity. See below, 67-68.


6 Ibid., 87. See also Rahner, The Trinity, 22.
Moltmann and Pannenberg both make explicit reference to Rahner’s Rule and adapt it in a radical way. To wit, Moltmann takes the “economic Trinity” as shorthand for the cross, and so he finds this event to be the central indicator of God’s identity. Pannenberg largely indicates the fusion of God’s own life with the revelation of his being. He absorbs the language of the kingdom of God, and deems that if we still await its consummation that this indicates something that is true about God’s inner life. His application of Rahner’s axiom finds God’s unity to be an achievement rather than something foundational. That is, from the limited perspective we have in this life of suffering and death, God is called into question. Faith is the anticipation of God’s unity, which in the end will be revealed to have been mysteriously present all along. Thus Rahner’s Rule, a concept which would be foreign to Augustine and Bonaventure, has profound implications for the thought of our modern authors.

In a rather grandiose claim regarding Moltmann and Pannenberg, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen has said that “these two German theologians both echo and have shaped nearly all the key themes of the doctrine of the Trinity in contemporary theology.” Whether that is true or not, it is clear that they have exerted a great influence among systematic theologians. It is also clear that they marginalize the traditional doctrine of the Father as sole source because they stress alternative ways of conceiving the unity of the godhead and the constitution of the persons. The examination of their theology of God the Father in turn below produces a few key questions for Augustine and Bonaventure.

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7 In his study of the legacy of Rahner’s Rule, Fred Sanders categorizes responses according to those who radicalize, restrict, or reject the axiom. He places Pannenberg and Moltmann among the radicalizers. See *The Image of the Trinity: Rahner’s Rule and the Theological Interpretation of Scripture* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), 89-107.

Chapter 1. Jürgen Moltmann on the Father

Jürgen Moltmann is regarded as one of the most influential theologians today. A German pastor in the Reformed tradition, his formative years in World War II gave him the impression of the sinfulness of mankind and the piercing need for a theology of hope. The bibliography of his works is staggering, and the mode and style of his works does not permit an easy grasp of a theological “system,” by design. There are certain themes on which he reflects and continues to generate insights, but he writes relatively short, topical books rather than orderly, systematic tomes. This is not to say, however, that his work merely focuses on one or another strand of doctrine at a time: he brings the different facets into contact to treat one issue with a view to the whole of the gospel. In contrast to Pannenberg, one cannot point to a specific place where Moltmann gives his mature thinking on the Trinity in general or God the Father specifically. There are a few important articles that help to indicate his understanding, as well as chapters in other books, but for the most part the following treatment relies upon three works: The Crucified God, The Trinity and the Kingdom of God, and History and the Triune God.

Moltmann’s theology of the Father marks a decisive turn away from the tradition on a number of levels. In advocating his version of social trinitarianism, he militates against placing the Christian doctrine of God within monotheism. He stresses that the Father is only the Father of the Son and has no universal fatherhood. In his Cross-centered theology, Moltmann perceives in the death of Christ a world-shattering estrangement between the Father and the Son, but also incredible suffering on the part of both. Finally, in light of the tremendous problems he perceives in the traditional doctrine of monarchy, Moltmann rejects it as incompatible with perichoresis, his preferred way of explaining Trinitarian unity. By stressing all of these things, Moltmann
strives to correct various imbalances in the theological tradition and to restore reciprocity to the Godhead.

In advocating social trinitarianism, Moltmann is rejecting the “psychological” model of the Trinity most emphatically, and he blames Augustine for this approach.¹ The proposals of Karl Barth and Karl Rahner, which posit variations of “modes of subsistence,” are rejected because of the emphasis on a single divine subject. For Moltmann, such is not unity per se but rather a unicity that is unfitting.² It does not do justice to the Son as subject, and Jesus’ claim that “the Father and I are one (unum)” (Jn 10:30, 17:21). Rather, treating the Trinity as one subject constitutes a lapse to “mere monotheism,” rather than the dynamic interaction of persons that Moltmann perceives in Scripture.

He radically rejects the psychological analogy and even the traditional unity of trinitarian order, so Moltmann needs a counter-proposal to articulate how these Three are One.³ He repeatedly and decisively provides his answer in the concept of perichoresis.⁴ While this Greek term was initially employed to describe Christ’s simultaneous possession of divine and human

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¹ Moltmann, Trinity and the Kingdom, 198-199. “Two different categories of analogy have always been used for the eternal life of the Trinity: the category of the individual person, and the category of community. Ever since Augustine’s development of the psychological doctrine of the Trinity, the first has taken precedence in the West; whereas the Cappadocian Fathers and Orthodox theologians, down to the present day, employ the second category.”

² Moltmann typically avoids using Einheit (“unity” or “oneness”) in favor of other German expressions Einigkeit (“union” or “consensus”) and Vereinigung (“union” or “coalition”). He does not like Dreifaltigkeit (“trinity” or “three-fold-ness”) because of its modalistic implications. See Moltmann, Son of Righteousness, Arise!, trans. Margaret Kohl, Minneapolis (Fortress, 2010), 151; and Ted Peters, God as Trinity: Relationality and Temporality in the Divine Life, Louisville (Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), 215, n. 51.

³ See below, 40ff.

⁴ There have been many studies of this term. For an approach sympathetic to its use in Trinitarian theology, see Verna Harrison’s “Perichoresis in the Greek Fathers,” St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly 35 (1991): 53-65; for an approach skeptical of overreach, see Randall Otto’s “The Use and Abuse of Perichoresis in Recent Theology,” Scottish Journal of Theology 54 (2001): 366-384. Otto specifically criticizes Moltmann’s application of the term.
natures, it eventually was applied to the Trinity. *Perichoresis* indicates the mutual indwelling of the persons of the Trinity—they are eternally bound up with each other, or they eternally live “in” each other. They do not elect to join together, but for eternity their wills are inextricably bound together in perfect concord. Moltmann’s preference for this concept must be stated at the onset as it is central to his theology.

*Rejection of God’s Universal Fatherhood*

An issue in the theology of God the Father concerns the nature of his paternity. To speak biblically, the Old Testament uses “father” several times to refer to God, and—significantly if not frequently—utilizes images of paternity and maternity to convey his love. In the New Testament, the quantitative difference in the frequency of terminology of and reference to paternity is astounding. Much of the time, usage conforms to a stereotypical phrase, such as Paul’s “God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (e.g. Rom 15:6, 2 Cor 1:3, Eph 1:3). Most historians agree that, despite the widespread use of “Father” to denote God in the Judaism of the time, Jesus was still noteworthy in his claim to call God “my Father.”

If not historians, at least theologians are comfortable in assigning a special consciousness of divine sonship to Jesus. That Jesus is the Son of God is a binding theme of the New Testament; further, the various strands of the New Testament also point to the inclusion of Christians into this sonship. A question remains: even if Jesus has a special claim to sonship, does God’s paternity extend to creation and humanity generally?

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Moltmann emphatically answers this question in the negative in several of his writings; it is a firmly held and oft-proclaimed theological position of his. At first this seems strange; given Moltmann’s concern for the marginalized, one would think that God’s universal fatherhood would be a fruitful idea for him. In the end, however, Moltmann thinks that universal fatherhood may apply to the Trinity generally but not to the Father specifically. His opinion hinges on the special relationship between Father and Son, embodied by the term abba, which would be weakened by any universal fatherhood of the First Person.

Interest in Jesus’ use of abba gained prominence in the twentieth century, and Moltmann evidently took this to heart. For him, this Aramaic expression encapsulates the intimacy and nearness of Jesus’ experience of God. Although abba only appears three times in the New Testament, with two instances in Paul’s letters (Rom 8:15, Gal 4:6) and one in the Gospel of Mark (Mk 14:36), he assumes that it is used regularly by Jesus and is distinctive to him. Accordingly, Moltmann extrapolates a great deal of theological significance from this form of address. Even despite the slender pickings regarding actual occurrences of abba, for him the underlying Aramaic expression remains indicative of Jesus’ stance even when the Greek translates his thought into patēr, as most famously in the Lord’s Prayer.

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6 See, for example, Moltmann’s chapter “Some Reflections on the Social Doctrine of the Trinity,” in The Christian Understanding of God Today, ed. James Byrne, Dublin (Columbia, 1993), 106. He says that “‘Abba’, the Father of Jesus Christ, is the Father of this Son. His Fatherhood in respect of this Son constitutes his person. He is neither the ‘Father’ per se as the Orthodox theology appears to think, nor in his person anything other than his ‘Fatherhood’ as Western theology has thought....”

7 In particular, the biblical scholar Joachim Jeremias popularized abba as a solid historical fact and spiritual goldmine, and Moltmann took his insights and radicalized them. Several of Jeremias’ points have been called into question by subsequent scholars, including Joseph Fitzmyer, Mary Rose DeAngelo, and James Barr. Thompson provides a fine treatment of this particular debate in The Promise of the Father (see esp. pages 21-34).

8 He by no means is alone to treat this as distinctive and significant, but the reader could be referred elsewhere regarding this issue generally; here the focus is on Moltmann’s formulation. At any rate, he does not elaborate the underlying historical-linguistic and exegetical claims anyway.
Stemming from Jesus’ relationship with his abba, Moltmann argues that fatherhood must be defined in a Trinitarian way. “The name of Father is therefore a theological term… it is not a cosmological idea or a religious-political notion.” By invoking the specter of “cosmological ideas” and “religious-political notions,” Moltmann cautions against patriarchy and other such forms of stern political and religious authority. This is a continual concern for him. Advocating for the particular freedom of Jesus’ sonship over against the stifling connotations of patriarchy, Moltmann writes, “[the First Person] is only ‘our Father’ for his Son’s sake, [so] we can only call him ‘Abba’ in the spirit of free sonship. It is freedom that distinguishes him from the universal patriarch of father religions.” In his mind, we must allow the specific Father-Son relationship of Jesus Christ with his abba to determine the meaning of fatherhood completely; the intuition of any other ancient religion must be excluded emphatically as dangerous.

Moltmann has reiterated this point of view in other works as well. In his most recent book at this writing, Sun of Righteousness, Arise!, he claims

Jesus called God exclusively ‘Abba’, my dear Father, and in fellowship with him believers become God’s children, who—driven by the Spirit—address God with the same intimate word ‘Abba’. Those who follow him and call God ‘Abba’, dear Father, do nothing other. But that means that ‘the Father of Jesus Christ’ has quite different functions in the life of Christ and those who are from the father in the family religions of the ancient world, with their patriarchal structure. Christ’s ‘Abba’ has nothing to do with the Greek father of all, Zeus, and even less with the Roman father of the gods, Jupiter, or the authoritative ‘father of the family’.

He goes on to assert that Jesus was crucified “in the name of Jupiter…by the Roman occupying power.” While the next subsection will address Moltmann’s unique trinitarian understanding of

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9 Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 163.

10 Ibid.

11 Moltmann, *Sun of Righteousness, Arise!* , 159.
the cross-event, it is still important to point out his implication of the god of Rome, unmentioned in the gospels, in connection with Jesus’ crucifixion. The gospels treat Rome’s involvement as merely a political matter. In this light, it is interesting that Moltmann formulates such overt opposition between the two, and cites the cross as the key difference between Jupiter and Jesus’ God.

As quoted above, Moltmann asserted that Jesus “exclusively” called God *Abba*, which he interprets as “my dear father.” The exclusivity could apply in either or both of two ways: terminological or relational exclusivity. If one accepts the gospels as representing Jesus’ words well, it is clear that Jesus does not only refer to God as “Father,” so that leaves only the option that this relationship is exclusive. A quick search of the gospels, however, reveals some complexity here. Although Jesus does say “my Father” in intimate or even exclusive ways, he feels free to presuppose that his audience understands about whom he is talking when he says “Father” or “heavenly Father” generally. Jesus also is given to using “your Father” to refer to God when speaking to the crowds. For example, this usage persists throughout the gospel of Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount, most notably 5:44-45:

> But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

A few verses later, there is an allusion to a broadened notion of brotherhood in Jesus’ speech (5:47). Such passages testify to a common brotherhood in the family of the heavenly Father. It is

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12 Owing partly to the nature of the gospels, Jesus does not often directly address God. He does refer to God many times in his teachings, under *theos* (“God”), *kyrios* (“Lord”), and *pater* (“father”). These terms appear equivalent in his speech (see Mt 11:25 and Lk 10:21). Thus to argue that “father” is exclusive terminologically is strictly speaking not impossible but rather problematic. Obviously the question of the extent to which Jesus’ words in the gospels testify to the actual words of the historical Jesus is beyond this dissertation; it is merely assumed that the wording of the gospel quotations reliably represents Jesus’ words.
important to note as well that present tense verbs are commonly used in these passages. So there is either a balance or a tension in Scripture between Jesus’ exclusive and unique divine Sonship, and his indication that there is already present a brotherhood under the heavenly Father. Moltmann chooses to respect the statements of the first and reinterpret the second only in light of the first.

As Moltmann explains in “The Social Doctrine of the Trinity,” “God the Father is in the Christian faith always the ‘Abba’ of Jesus Christ, that is the Father of this Son, never the Father of all things, Zeus, nor the Father of the Gods, Jupiter, in whose name Jesus was crucified.”\(^{13}\) With the emphatic wording, “father of this Son,” he stresses particular fatherhood over any kind of generalizing of it. Despite the relative absence of explicit reference to Greco-Roman religion in the New Testament, he is quick to make a contrast between the Father of the Son and the “Father” of gods.\(^{14}\) Given his unique eschatological orientation and his own particular interpretation of Scripture, Moltmann is not interested in relating the doctrine of the Father to extra-biblical theogony.

Along with his insistence on defining God’s paternity on the basis of Jesus’ relationship to God, Moltmann allows for entry into this relationship through the power of the Spirit. In *Trinity and the Kingdom*, he writes that “the nearness of God the Father—Abba—is to be found everywhere where human beings experience the Spirit’s powers of life in the fellowship of

\(^{13}\) Moltmann, “Social Doctrine of the Trinity,” 107.

\(^{14}\) The very name “Jupiter” is a conventional contraction or merger of *Jovis* and *pater*, Latin for “father.” However, the same term was used for other gods as well, e.g. *Dis.*
Once the Trinitarian starting-point is firmly established, he wishes to open up God’s fatherhood, even taking it beyond fatherhood to include motherhood. He puts emphasis on the First Person as source in an intimate and motherly way: “The eternal birthing and creative love is therefore ascribed to the Father.” This is a wholly “productive love,” withholding nothing, such that “[the Father] exists by virtue of this love not in himself but rather totally in the Son.” Following this, with rhetorical flourish, he adds “He gives himself up totally in the Son. He gives himself up totally to the Son.” This mere change of preposition, from “in” to “to,” without contrast or elaboration, draws attention to the full kenosis of the Father. His existence is poured out and utterly spent. As Moltmann states later in the same chapter, “[the persons] do not exist with each other, but rather empty themselves on to each other and live in each other by virtue of love.” These intimations of the self-emptying of the Father link up with Moltmann’s thoughts on perichoresis and provide some of his most promising intuitions regarding the First Person of the Trinity.

A related aspect of Moltmann’s thought on God’s fatherhood depends upon the weight that he gives to eschatologically-oriented passages in a few of Paul’s letters. The cross is not the “end” of the relationship between Father and Son; rather, it is a moment in the history of God that opens it up so that our history can be included in God’s. The consummation of this history

15 *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 167. See also *ibid.*, 75.


comes when the Son will hand over the kingdom to the Father (1 Cor 15:24). What should we make of Paul’s apparent subordination of the Son to the Father in this passage? Moltmann answers, “The goal of the subordination of the Son to the Father and the significance of the transference of the kingdom to the Father is not simply the sole rule of God, but the consummation of the Fatherhood of the Father.”\textsuperscript{18} He explains in light of 1 Cor 15:49 and Rom 8:29 that Jesus is the image (\textit{eikōn}) of believers; when they are conformed to this image, they become brothers (\textit{adelphoi}) to this first-born. The Son’s transfer of the kingdom to the Father is the consummation of their brotherhood, as they join in his obedience and self-emptying. Moltmann suggests that it is easy to misinterpret 1 Cor 15:24 from the “world’s” perspective, concerned as it is with power; rather, “in respect of the inner relationship of the Son to the Father, the consummation of the salvation of the world lies in the consummation of the history of God within the Trinity.”\textsuperscript{19} It seems that Moltmann envisions man sharing in Christ’s brotherhood before sharing in any wider brotherhood and acknowledging God the Father’s fatherhood. Thus he provides a particularly vigorous accent to Paul’s epithet for God as “Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (e.g. Rom 15:6 and 2 Cor 1:3).

Moltmann rejects the universal fatherhood of the First Person, but uses such a tactic to try to cut false notions of fatherhood short, only to open fatherhood up again in the power of the Spirit as believers become adopted sons of God (Rom 8:15, Gal 4:6). The cross-event breaks open the history of God and allows for brotherhood in the image of the Son. So it is fitting to consider Moltmann’s interpretation of the cross next. Since in the history of God the Son became


\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Ibid.}
incarnate while the Father did not, Moltmann reluctantly allows for a metaphorical notion of the Son as embodying the immanence of the Godhead while the Father represents the transcendence, while the Spirit is the power of the future binding the two together and drawing the Christian into this mystery.\textsuperscript{20} As will be seen below, the exclusive nature of the Father’s fatherhood comes into play for Moltmann’s interpretation of the \textit{filioque} dispute as well.

\textit{The Father and the Cross}

It is clear that Moltmann has made discussion of the cross-event essential to any modern treatment of the Trinity. The very title of one of his early important volumes, \textit{The Crucified God} (\textit{Der gekreuzigte Gott}), confronts the reader with the audacity of the Christian claim in a way that would even make many Christians uncomfortable. He calls the death of Jesus “the \textit{center} of all Christian theology,” not only in theme, but in opening up all of its problems and answers.\textsuperscript{21} He casts himself as boldly representing the tradition of Martin Luther in this regard. Just as Paul says that the cross is “stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles” (1 Cor 1:23), Moltmann accuses modern theologians of failing to take the cross seriously as well. It is certainly difficult to think of God dying at all, let alone of a death of such agony upon the cross. Much of the tradition has delicately elided the problem through a cunning interpretation of the hypostatic union: the suffering took place in the human nature of the Son of God. Moltmann urges Christians not to flinch but to take the hypostatic union into the very depths of death.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[20] See \textit{ibid.}, 255-256.
\end{footnotes}
For Moltmann, Jesus’ suffering and death is an inner-trinitarian event. Theologians cannot take a definition of God and then apply it to the cross; rather, the fact of Jesus’ embrace of the cross and its outworking in the resurrection needs to define the concept of God. “To take up the theology of the cross today is to go beyond the limits of the doctrine of salvation and to inquire into the revolution needed in the concept of God.”22 He later states it more succinctly: “the deity of God is revealed in the paradox of the cross.”23 It is not merely a single datum, or a statement about God, but it calls for a revolution in the concept of God.24 While it is clear that Jesus is truly God upon the cross, the other persons must be thought of as involved in the cross as well, along the lines of much medieval artwork. Moltmann needs to explain how this is the case, since the gospel narratives make Jesus the primary focus in their treatment of the passion.

It is perhaps not noteworthy that Moltmann sees the cross as a “dramatic” event, but his inclusion of the divine persons in this drama is.25 Just as with the Gospel of Mark’s placement of Abba upon the lips of Jesus in the Gethsemane scene, Jesus’ last words in this gospel become definitive for Moltmann’s theology of the cross.26 Jesus quotes the beginning of Psalm 22, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mk 15:34). Like abba this is one of a handful of instances in the gospel where the Aramaic is provided, which serves to emphasize the very words to the reader. Moltmann emphasizes that it is “my God,” not “my Father,” in Jesus’ address. He

22 Ibid., 4.
23 Ibid., 27.
24 Ibid., 201.
25 Ibid., 151.
26 While he notes that these words are likely supplied by the Christian community interpreting Jesus’ death, rather than spoken by Jesus himself, he does take this interpretation as correct and authoritative.
also underscores that it is my God; that is, not based on the experience of Israel and its covenant tradition, but his own personal and unmediated experience of God. The intimacy experienced between Jesus and his abba-God is ruptured dramatically and called into question. The passion tears the relationship of Father and Son asunder, resulting in pain for both. Put even more starkly, the dying words and shriek of agony reveal an intra-divine conflict. It is not so much the Jewish or Roman authorities that are responsible for the cross, as God the Father handing his Son over to death.\textsuperscript{27}

Despite the later, perhaps more sympathetic, interpretations of Luke and John, Moltmann cites Matt 27:46 and Heb 5:7 along with Mark as testimonies to the way Jesus met death.\textsuperscript{28} This type of approach to death sets Jesus apart from Socrates, the martyrs of 2 Maccabees 7, and many other examples of ancient figures who had confidence that they were in the right and that they could anticipate a favorable afterlife.\textsuperscript{29} In contrast to much of the Christian theological tradition, which envisions a calm Jesus simultaneously possessing the beatific vision, Moltmann reckons that he faced death as a horror. “Because, as the Christian tradition developed, this terrible cry of the dying Jesus was gradually weakened in the passion narratives… we can probably rely upon it as a kernel of historical truth.”\textsuperscript{30}

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{27} Ibid., 149.
\bibitem{28} He notes that even in Luke, despite the calmer tone of Jesus last words (“Father, into your hands I commit my Spirit”), he still suffers horrific anxiety in the garden and concedes his own will reluctantly to the Father’s.
\bibitem{29} Ibid., 145-146.
\bibitem{30} Ibid., 146. Here he alludes to the “criterion of embarrassment” held out by many historians as a means for determining the actual events behind the gospel stories. In brief: the more embarrassing an included detail is, the less it can be attributed to theological interpretation or embellished hagiography of the figure.
\end{thebibliography}
It is important for him that Jesus’ anguish owes not to his condemnation by the Roman and Jewish authorities—if it were such, he would be able to exude complete confidence and hope in the midst of it all. Rather, “we can understand [Jesus’ final, incoherent cry] only if we see his death… in relation to his God and Father, whose closeness and whose grace he himself had proclaimed.”31 Jesus’ death has a theological dimension that was not present in other martyrdoms. His expression of intimacy of relationship with the Father transcended traditional forms in the Jewish tradition. In several instances, for example in offering the forgiveness of sins, “Jesus was clearly assuming that God identified himself with him and his words.”32 The critical point of the argument follows: “anyone who lived and preached so close to God… could not regard his being handed over to death as one accursed as a mere mishap.” Instead, he “was bound to experience it as rejection by the very God whom he had dared to call ‘My Father’.”33 God’s close union with him makes this abandonment a total devastation.

While several modern scholars agree with Rudolph Bultmann’s assessment that we should “not veil from ourselves the possibility that [Jesus] suffered a collapse,”34 Moltmann insists that we should not view this simply on a biographical or psychological level. Instead, since “he was not a private person,” but one proclaiming God’s kingdom and God’s intimacy, we must interpret Jesus’ collapse theologically. For Jesus, such a death “was bound to mean the death of his cause.” Many other righteous figures have suffered gruesome deaths; what is

31 Ibid., 146.
32 Ibid., 147.
33 Ibid., 148.
distinctive in Jesus’ is “his abandonment by the God and Father.” The physical suffering on the cross alone is not enough. In a stunning turn of phrase, Moltmann offers that “his unique fellowship of God in his life” is matched “in his death” by “a unique abandonment by God.” It is clear at this point that the interpretation of Jesus’ death yields a problem of how to envision a positive role of God the Father in this drama. It seems to depict divine child abuse—a distant God who after declaring his love and support decisively removes it when his Son would need it most. The depiction of the Father in the passion is indeed problematic, but Moltmann has further thoughts to alleviate the problem of a wrathful Father.

Referring to the Father’s role in the passion of Jesus means taking Jesus’ final cry seriously. Moltmann envisions the cross in view of “protest atheism,” i.e. the rejection of any concept of God because of the existence of evil. The God who lets the innocent Christ, his own Son, suffer a hideous and ignominious death, cannot be God. Such a “simple” notion of a just and all-powerful God beyond the fray is proven false by the cross. This “simple” notion is defeated because God is present on both sides—as both forsaking and forsaken. Moltmann thinks that only the Trinitarian God revealed in the cross can provide a response to human suffering. Although his rhetoric on this matter is often appealing if not persuasive, his depiction of God the Father is not satisfying. To be fair, he does not wish to repeat the standard, “pious” treatment anyway. On the one hand, the Father abandons his Son and does so in a way that allows distance, separation and enmity; on the other hand the Father himself endures intense grief to the extent that his suffering is on par with the Son’s suffering. Moltmann relishes in this paradox, that the greatest moment of unity of will of Father and Son takes place in the moment of their greatest

35 Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 149.
separation—the Son’s forsakenness in death. The Holy Spirit, as the fruit of the cross, accomplishes the union and reconciliation of Father and Son so that the separation is overcome in the resurrection. Below, we will focus on Moltmann’s interpretation of God the Father in the story.

First, a few more words are in order regarding the interpretation of Mark 15:34 (and Matt 27:46) on the one hand and Ps 22:1 on the other.36 Regarding the identity of the speaker and the addressee, the “my God” of the psalm is the covenant God of Israel and the “me” is the righteous sufferer. He is one who has done God’s will but is in the midst of a great trial. On the cross, “my God” refers to the Father of Jesus, who is closely linked with him, and likewise the “me” is the Son of God, bound to the Father. Moltmann thus advocates a Trinitarian interpretation of the verse. Moltmann expresses the motivation of Psalm 22 as a call upon the faithfulness of God whose goodness the speaker has defended. In the context of the cross, Jesus calls for the revelation of the righteousness of God. God’s very deity is at stake. Neither cry involves self-pity; instead they constitute legal pleas. In the cross-event, however, it is more of a personal claim. Both the deity of Jesus’ God and the fatherhood of his Father are at stake—so both the Father and the Son suffer agony at this moment. The cry is between God and God. Given Moltmann’s Trinitarian interpretation of the cry, he offers a paraphrase: “My God, why have you forsaken yourself?”37 Jesus is both God and godforsaken, the “Crucified God,” which means that the addressee is the crucifying and forsaking Father, also God. No comeliness or beauty seems to abide in this event that ruptures the very Trinity.

36 The following relies upon Crucified God, 149ff.

37 Ibid., 151.
Moltmann emphasizes repeatedly that the Father abandons the Son on the cross. In a section in which he discusses the alleged discontinuity between Jesus’ own teaching and the kerygma of Christ by the early Church (especially Paul), Moltmann writes, “The true critique of the kerygma of Christ is to be found in the history of Jesus, which had its earthly end when he died, abandoned by God, on the cross.”\(^{38}\) We can only understand the torment of Jesus’ death, Moltmann asserts, if we understand it as stemming from the inner theological conflict.\(^{39}\) He uses phrases of godforsakenness, abandonment, rejection, and separation repeatedly to portray the situation. “And this, in full consciousness that God is close at hand in his grace, to be abandoned and delivered up to death as one rejected, is the torment of hell.”\(^{40}\) Jesus died rejected by God, which overshadows the actions of the Jewish and Roman authorities with their misunderstandings of his role and message, because there are no misunderstandings possible in the theological context of his abandonment by God. “The cross of the Son divides God from God to the utmost degree of enmity and distinction.”\(^{41}\) There is intimate fellowship in the resurrection, but enmity and distinction in the cross. To account this view as obscure paradox or symbolic tension would be too mild.

Obviously, this drama requires at least two divine persons—the Father and the Son—which goes beyond a simple concept of God. God is both dead and not dead, forsaken and forsaking. “The more one understands the whole event of the cross as an event of God, the more

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\(^{39}\) *Ibid.*, 146.

\(^{40}\) *Ibid.*, 148. Ultimately, Jesus died “because of his God and Father. The torment in his torments was this abandonment by God” (*ibid.*, 149).

\(^{41}\) *Ibid.*, 152, emphasis mine.
any simple concept of God falls apart."\(^{42}\) Moltmann wishes to indicate the full equality of Father and Son such that Jesus does not merely die as a man before God, but that death is taken into God’s very self. Indeed, “from the life of these three [persons of the Trinity], which has within it the death of Jesus, there then emerges who God is and what his Godhead means.”\(^{43}\) The resulting image of God shatters various concepts which have an impact on Moltmann’s theology of God the Father. First, God is not the god of Plato and Aristotle. He inveighs at length against the doctrine of divine impassibility and its status in the theological tradition.\(^{44}\) A god that cannot suffer cannot possibly love, and cannot possibly be reflected in the cross. Second, God transcends the “childish” notion of God which holds God as an omnipotent father-figure above the fray, ready to step in and make all things right.\(^{45}\) Monotheism expresses such thoughts and hopes regarding God, but Moltmann holds that these notions do not correspond to the crucified God and serve to enslave humankind rather than free it.\(^{46}\) Here emerges the possibility that Moltmann, in his fervor to see the far-reaching implications of the passion and death of Christ, has overextended to eclipse the doctrine of God held elsewhere in Scripture and in the early Church. His focus upon Jesus’ suffering implicates the Father as forsaking and crucifying. Does not this image leave Moltmann open to the accusation that the Father is evil, or that his version

\(^{42}\) Ibid., 204.

\(^{43}\) Ibid., 207.

\(^{44}\) Moltmann does this in several publications. For further treatment of this topic in Crucified God, see ibid., 222-227 and 267-274.

\(^{45}\) Ibid., 216.

\(^{46}\) See ibid., 195-196, 250, etc. “A God who is conceived of in his omnipotence, perfection and infinity at man’s expense cannot be the God who is love in the cross of Jesus, who makes a human encounter in order to restore their lost humanity to unhappy and proud divinities” (ibid., 250). The issue of Moltmann’s critique of monotheism will be taken up below.
of trinitarianism looks like a mythic duality between a cruel God and an innocent God? In pushing beyond a simple notion of God, he does not hold God the Father as equivalent with the God of the philosophers either, but at this point that appears only in a negative light.

“God is love” must apply to the Father as well. Besides the treatment of the wrath of the Father as emblematic of his role in the Cross, Moltmann stresses the Father’s grief in this event as well. Suffering is not a unique property of the Son. Without expanding on the distinction and its outworking, Moltmann distinguishes between the “deadly aspect” and the “living aspect” of the event. The former involves the opposition of the forsaking Father and the forsaken Son, while the latter captures their mutual love and suffering. He essentially leaves these dangling as two parallel perspectives. The “living aspect” relates the positive understanding of the Father’s role in this crucial event, and plays an important role in Moltmann’s demonstration of the relevance of his positions for today’s world. To offer a theological response to Auschwitz, Moltmann coins a new Trinitarian formulation in light of his theology of the cross, indicating that even this event is “taken up into the grief of the Father, the surrender of the Son and the power of the Spirit.” The following passage perhaps offers the best glimpse into his reckoning of the Father’s suffering with the Son:

The Son suffers dying, the Father suffers the death of the Son. The grief of the Father here is just as important as the death of the Son. The Fatherlessness of the Son is matched by the Sonlessness of the Father, and if God has constituted himself as the Father of Jesus

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48 Moltmann, Crucified God, 245.

49 Ibid., 278. Cf. a similar formulation on the previous page: “There is nothing that can exclude [any man] from the situation of God between the grief of the Father, the love of the Son and the drive of the Spirit.”
Christ, then he also suffers the death of his Fatherhood in the death of the Son. Unless this were so, the doctrine of the Trinity would still have a monotheistic background.\footnote{Ibid., 243.}

Moltmann strikingly depicts the cross as a loss of fatherhood. It is also unique that he establishes that the Father’s grief has soteriological value similar to or even equivalent with the Son’s death.

A few further questions arise at this point. Dennis Jowers disputes Moltmann’s statement of a “loss of fatherhood,” claiming that it dismantles the life of the Trinity.\footnote{Jowers, “Theology of the Cross,” 250.} Since the “very existence of the holy Trinity” becomes mutable in salvation history, Jowers wonders how Moltmann can reconcile this with his modified interpretation of immutability. Another question pertains to Moltmann’s theological method in explicating the grief of the Father, since he does not refer to any New Testament text. Indeed, Thomas Weinandy has criticized Moltmann in this regard. Discussing the position that “the Father suffered in solidarity with his Son,” he retorts that “there is no biblical warrant for this view.”\footnote{Thomas Weinandy, Does God Suffer?, Notre Dame, IN (Notre Dame Press, 2000), 228. See also his reiteration of the point: “Does God Suffer?,” \textit{Ars Disputandi: The Online Journal for Philosophy of Religion} 2 (2002), http://www.ArsDisputandi.org (accessed March 25, 2014), §6.} Moltmann would concede that no text directly states that the Father grieved over the Son’s death, but he would disagree that such a lack renders the insight unbiblical. He draws the motif of the Father’s grief, in his mind convincingly, from the relationship of Father and Son that dominates the New Testament. Jesus \textit{was} correct in his revelation of a special intimacy with his Father. The Cross is a temporary rupture within the history of God for the purpose of embracing suffering and death within God’s self. Further, given the resurrection, he pinpoints the Father’s misery as the implicit middle term. The intimacy of the Father and Son, vindicated in the resurrection, necessitates the Father’s entry into suffering
as well with his loss of the Son. Although Moltmann flinches from the patipassian label, his Trinitarian theology of the Cross requires a suffering Father; indeed, it requires the “infinite grief of love.”

What is amazing in Moltmann’s theology at this point is that he turns the Father’s condemnation of the Son into an opportunity for the inclusion of suffering and death—in a word, all of humanity—into God’s own triune life. He explains, “In the action of the Father in delivering up his Son to suffering and to a godless death, God is acting in himself. He is acting in himself in this manner of suffering and dying in order to open up in himself life and freedom for sinners.” He cites some important verses from Paul in unfolding this perspective: Rom 8:31, 2 Cor 5:21, and Gal 3:13. In each of these passages, Paul uses striking language to express the Father’s plan to hand Jesus over to death for the sake of humanity. As Moltmann says, “Paul sees the delivering up of the Son by the Father for godless and godforsaken man. Because God ‘does not spare’ his Son, all the godless are spared.” The Son’s godforsakenness is the grounds for justifying godforsaken humanity. In losing his Son, the Father’s paternity is opened up; his motivation in abandoning his Son to death is to become “the Father of those who are delivered

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53 Moltmann, Crucified God, 243. Regarding patipassianism: “We cannot therefore say here in patipassian terms that the Father also suffered and died.” The Father suffers, but in a way distinct from the Son. He instead coins a term: “patricompassianism.” In several of his works, he refers to the Spanish author Miguel de Unamuno’s term congoja, which he translates “pain, sorrow, anguish, oppression” (for example, see Moltmann, Trinity and the Kingdom, 37). Although he applies the term principally to Christ, it applies to the entirety of God as well, as it speaks to the Father’s suffering with his Son.

54 Moltmann, Crucified God, 192.

55 Ibid., 242. Moltmann responds to the “death of God” theologians that it is more appropriate to speak of death in God.
up.” According to the aforementioned “living aspect,” therefore, the Cross consummates the Father’s unconditional love and creates new life.

Defining the Trinity in terms of the Cross certainly puts Christ at the center of the doctrine of God. Moltmann still makes a powerful attempt to explicate the Father’s role in Christ’s passion. Certainly, his treatment heightens the paradox of the Father’s forsaking the Son. At some points Moltmann’s language goes too far, for example in equating the Father’s giving up of the Son as actively rejecting him or even killing him. It is difficult to find justification for such language within the New Testament; Moltmann interprets certain Pauline texts and daringly makes connections in the gospel accounts to come to these conclusions. He contends that those who merely say that the Father “allowed” the Cross to happen have not taken Jesus’ final cry of forsakenness seriously enough. The depiction of the Father under “deadly” and “living” aspects depends upon discontinuity in the Father. There is hideous rage and abandonment from the crucifying God before the eschatological resolution in the Easter event. It is certainly much easier to find solidarity with the Son, the crucified God, in Moltmann’s theology of the Cross.

The tension in Moltmann’s paradox of the Father comes to the fore in a specific passage of *Crucified God* in which he asks, “What did God do in the crucifixion of Jesus?” His answer makes sense solely with respect to the Son, such that “God” means Jesus in this passage. The Father betrays him and grieves simultaneously, and it is the Son who operates as God. Later, when Moltmann considers the audacity of his vision of the Trinitarian drama of the Cross, he

56 Ibid., 243. Here he alludes to the usage of παρέδωκεν (paredōken; “deliver up” in his interpretation) in Rom 1:24ff.

ponders how it relates to God’s unity.\textsuperscript{58} He has, as we have said, transcended a “simple” notion of God to focus on the separate, distinctive actions of the three persons in this event so crucial to the saving economy. He asserts that the Christian doctrine of God must relate the “history between the Son and the Father.” The term “God” comes to be defined “[not as] another nature or a heavenly person or a moral authority, but in fact an ‘event.’”\textsuperscript{59} A prayer life centered in God, rather than simply addressing a heavenly Thou, enters into this “event” of the three persons. To experience the freedom of the gospel, the believer must enter into this event characterized by love. While much of the New Testament takes for granted that “God” refers to the Father, Moltmann refers however to a forsaking God and a forsaken God, bound together in the drama of Jesus’ death and resurrection. At this point it becomes clear that Moltmann has radically redefined “God” and so inquiry into the person of the Father in his theology must turn to his thoughts regarding the constitution of the Trinity.

\textit{The Rejection of the Monarchy of the Father}

The most notable element of Moltmann’s theology of God the Father is his rejection of the traditional doctrine of \textit{monarchia}. The term pertains both to the origin and the ordering of the godhead. It is clear that the type of order denoted by the term is contrary to Moltmann’s ideals of governance. It is as much of a political problem as a theological problem for him, if not more so. Whereas most patristic and medieval theologians were content to discuss the trinitarian relations

\textsuperscript{58} Moltmann, \textit{Crucified God}, 247.

\textsuperscript{59} \textit{Ibid.} He claims to have taken over this expression from Herbert Braun.
in terms of origin, Moltmann finds fault with the exclusivity of this approach and offers alternative models. In particular, he advocates *perichoresis* as an antidote to monarchy. A considerable amount of material in *The Trinity and the Kingdom* is devoted to examination of *monarchia* and elaboration of alternative ways of conceiving it. It becomes clear that Moltmann’s analysis of freedom has a lot to do with his preference of *perichoresis* over monarchy. His rejection of the monarchy of the Father is deeply connected with his bold rejection of monotheism as an appropriate term to describe the Trinity.

Moltmann locates the problem historically within the Christian kerygma of the Roman Empire in the second and third centuries. Although early Christians increasingly referred to Jesus as divine, they also retained an emphasis on the oneness of God. Monotheism gave Christianity a certain appeal among many of the philosophically-minded Gentiles. “It was the acceptance of philosophical monotheism and the idea of the universal monarchy of the one God that made Christianity a ‘world religion’….“  

He cites Erik Peterson’s argument that Philo fused the Jewish notion of God with the monarchical concept of Greek philosophy, which evidently led to adoption of *monarchia* as an important term for Justin, Tatian, and Tertullian.  

The universal rule of “the One” is an attractive, even “seductive” idea, because of its ability to provide unity in the midst of problematic diversity. There is an irresistible link between theology proper and political theology according to Peterson’s and thus Moltmann’s narrative of the path to the creedal councils of Nicaea and Constantinople. Arianism and Sabellianism are conceived as

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60 Moltmann, *Trinity and Kingdom*, 130.

merely different means towards the same end: preserving unity in God as sole ruler of the universe. One must either subordinate Christ to or dissolve him into the One God.

Discussing Tertullian’s early attempts to deal with these problems and his analysis of *monarchia* and *economia*, Moltmann indicates that the category of unity prevailed over tri-unity for that early Latin theologian. He argues that “this proves that it is not merely the concept of the *monas* which is the basic problem of the Christian concept of God. It is the concept of *monarchia* too. If these terms are not differentiated and altered, a Christian doctrine of God is not really possible.”

It is noteworthy at this point to relate that the German has fixated upon the political or ruling dimension of *monarchia*, but the term also conveys one source or origin. The rest of *Adversus Praxean* underscores this fact; Tertullian’s images from nature (sun, ray, brightness; source, river, sea; root, shoot, fruit) all indicate the outworking of a phenomenon from its starting point. They are spatial and temporal, and pertain to causation or priority. It is true, Tertullian does in fact use a political analogy, but he does so with the Father as king and the son as heir, who cooperates with his Father in this one kingdom. In the king-prince analogy, there is temporal subordination, but also there is every expectation that the two work in concert and the latter will become equal—the sole and rightful king—upon the death of his father. Returning to the theological reality, obviously the analogy falls apart in that no possibility of death befits God the Father and so no time-bound accession to kingship befits God the Son. Still, the principle of equality is there within the one dynasty and one kingdom.

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63 Tertullian, *Adversus Praxean*, chaps. 8, 18, 29
Moltmann briefly discusses the Nicene Creed on the problem of divine unity under the heading “What divine unity?” He opines that the early creeds “remain ambivalent” on this question, and points to the use of *homoousios* as a key word. Without establishing his point further, he poses another question: is the divine unity found in *subject* or *substance*? He draws his own opinion into sharp relief: “If the biblical testimony is chosen as the point of departure, then we shall have to start from the three Persons of the history of Christ. If philosophical logic is made the starting point, then the enquirer proceeds from the One God.”

This statement provides a glimpse into Moltmann’s own methodological preference for narrative theology over philosophically-driven theology, but there are a few serious problems with his analysis here. The Creed begins with a profession of belief in “God, the Father almighty,” with these two terms set beside one another in apposition. After a brief remark on God as creator, it continues “and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.” Despite the novelty of *homoousios*, which attracts so much attention, at the heart of this creed is a rather conservative recitation of doctrine of God. The starting point is the divinity of the Father, and Jesus is introduced as “Son of God,” although this is subsequently explained as not derogating from his full divinity along with the Father. Yet Moltmann sets “biblical testimony” against “philosophical logic” in an antithesis, presuming that Scripture is perfectly clear regarding threefold personhood, and that philosophy is perfectly clear regarding monotheism. It is clear elsewhere that he repudiates describing the Father as “almighty” as the creeds do. He goes on to stake his theology on the triple enumeration of persons drawn from Scripture, based on narrative

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64 Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 149.

65 Ibid.
and unencumbered by a philosophical or political agenda of unity. He strives to articulate an interpersonal form of unity rather than one based on “substance” (\textit{ousia}).

Moltmann reacts to another historical approach in Augustine’s attempt to see an analogy of the Trinity in the soul. Moltmann associates Augustine’s psychological analogy with the pattern of subordination—or as the German theologian calls it, domination—linked with 1 Corinthians 11:

As subject of intellect and will, each soul corresponds to the God the Father. Each soul dominates the body: \textit{anima forma corporis}. Just as the soul dominates the body and is its head, so must the man dominate the woman, Christ the man, and God Christ [1 Cor 11:3].

Despite his citation of Paul, he goes on to discuss the complementarity of the genders in God’s creative purpose (Gen 1:26), with a contrasting transition—“But according to the biblical tradition”—in the face of the Pauline quotation. At any rate, he wishes to show in this passage that isolated \textit{individuals} do not represent God’s image, in contrast to the widespread Augustinian tradition. Rather, it is humans “in their holistic fellowship.” The psychological analogy is so dangerous in his eyes because it leads to a uni-personal God that looks dramatically different from the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit of Scripture. Only a social doctrine of God would do this testimony justice. In his eyes, Augustine is thus guilty of starting with divine unity philosophically and trying to interpret the “image of God” in Genesis 1:26 according to such a vision. The bishop is also accused of articulating a theology that subordinates the Son to the Father and legitimizes a pattern of domination. Moltmann finds both the uni-personalism and the subordination repugnant.

\textsuperscript{66} Moltmann, “Social Doctrine of the Trinity,” 109-110.
The link between theology and governance ("political theology") in Moltmann’s thought has already been made clear in the paragraphs above. Now it is appropriate to treat monarchia and perichoresis as they pertain to political theology. In brief, Moltmann associates monarchia with domination and patriarchy. It is an idea that undergirds a persuasive and seductive system. It is related to a host of problems encountered in the modern world, including sexism, racism, and colonialism. Patriarchy sets an individual over inferior subordinates. By contrast, perichoresis necessitates equality and mutuality, reciprocity and complementarity. Put in this simple way, it is clear why Moltmann opts for the latter over the former. His bald equation of theological monarchy as advocated by patristic theologians on the one hand and patriarchy as an insidious system on the other invites further analysis.

Moltmann opens the first chapter of *History and the Triune God* with a question probing how individual Christians have understood the opening of the Apostles’ Creed during the last two millennia. “Are they confessing the God of a patriarchal society,” he asks, “or are they joining in the unique Abba mystery of Jesus of Nazareth…?” This is the difference between confessing “absolute dependence” upon the heavenly Father and “joining in the glorious freedom of the children of God.” His antithesis certainly sets the terms patriarchy and Abba mystery, dependence and freedom, in direct contrast, but it also sets the verbs in contrast as well: confessing versus joining. While his latter option indicates a rich and open life replete with a social dimension, the former appears not only bleak and subservient, but even extrinsic. The believer might mutter words that indicate knowledge of or belief in God the Father but he or she does not live in authentic relationship with him according to this patriarchal option. If the God of

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Jesus Christ is a god wholly different from the “age-old deity of patriarchy,” this necessitates a new reality, consisting of freedom and the abolition of patriarchy, “because the rule of one human being over another has come to an end.” Moltmann thus pushes for a theology of God the Father beyond patriarchy, which would seek the liberation of the oppressed and the end of domination.

Moltmann defines patriarchy at various times in his works. In *History and the Triune God*, he states, “‘Patriarchy’ is understood to be a male order covering authority, possessions and right of inheritance which at the beginning of the historical age slowly but surely surpassed and displaced the former matriarchal forms of life.”68 This is sealed, so to speak, by religious belief and institutions of authority in political and familial realms. “Wherever the religion of patriarchy established itself, there was a tendency towards monotheism in religion and the development of monarchical rule in politics.”69 He reviles the two as ideologies of domination.

He attests that the voices of the oppressed and suffering have made a tremendous impression on him. They have given him an understanding of the gravity of the problem of

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69 Although it is perhaps convenient to use the word “tendency” and take the long view of things, Moltmann’s claim is open to criticism on historical grounds. There is little evidence for a monotheism-to-monarchy equation or *vice versa* in the ancient world. To take examples close at hand, there was staunch resistance to monarchy among monotheistic Hebrews and ready embrace of monarchy by countless polytheistic cultures. Several of them, indeed even those of an aggressive imperialistic nature, conceived of the king as having a special relationship to a god of their pantheon. This is not universalistic; the most powerful god, the one in relationship to the king, in many cases was not the creator god. There are certainly texts that one can cite (even within the Hebrew Bible, e.g. Psalm 89) that correlate God’s dominion in heaven with the king’s dominion on earth. Still, it must be emphasized that usually this dominion is not seen as fully unified in reality. In Greek and Roman mythology, besides the main god there are other gods that have other orbits of responsibility, and there is still conflict on the divine level; certainly several monarchs have established far-ranging dominion, but only in idealized moments has this been portrayed as something universal *per se*. Despite instances of deification of monarchs, which Moltmann pounces on with alacrity, there are few cases of theological justification of universal rule. At any rate, in Moltmann’s writings he repeatedly protests the relationship between patriarchy and monotheism as ideologies of domination.
patriarchy, which has led him to consider ways to redefine a theology of God the Father. He alludes to the pain of “some women” who can no longer call God “Father” or pray the “Our Father.” This name for God, this analogy so basic to the Christian faith, unfortunately takes on a negative connotation for those who have experienced abuse on a personal level, or who have seen sexist and domineering behavior on an inter-personal level. From this perspective, the opinion emerges that “human forms of domination have always sought their legitimation in religion, and indeed have found it there.”

It must be conceded that many have had such painful experiences, and it is true and truly horrific that some have legitimized domineering behavior on religious grounds. Moltmann’s sympathies are sincere and praiseworthy. There is need for some careful distinction, however, and theologians should not hastily abdicate positions on the basis of the sinful implementation and poor pastoral practice of others. There may in fact be no orchestrated link between the theology of God the Father and the practice of patriarchy; patriarchal oppression may happen at the level of experience without any legitimate theology to back it up. Moltmann’s position appears rather rash. He surmises that worship of God as “Lord and Father” has had implications for the organization of the family, of the state, and of the church. The images and values are determined by males, so females are marginalized or forced to assume this male culture. Moltmann rails against language that was originally intended as inclusive, e.g. Paul’s address of his audience as “brothers” and describing Christians as “sons of God.” Despite Paul’s intentions, some modern critics perceive these terms as exclusive because of a narrow


71 Ibid.
interpretation of gender. Along with such critics, Moltmann wishes to redefine masculine images to make them more positive, and complement them with feminine ones. The paternal image of God is chief among these as problematic for him.

At the same time, Moltmann realizes that the sands of religion have shifted along with the cultural winds of the last few centuries. The influence of religion has retreated palpably. The *paterfamilias* ideal has fallen by the wayside, especially with the prevalence of dual-income families. More tragically, in many situations the father has not only abdicated “sole rule” of his household but has abandoned it altogether because of divorce and other factors. So instead many social observers remark that ours is a fatherless society, or at least it is on the road to becoming one. Interestingly enough, this situation produces various responses among males who find themselves suddenly powerless, including aggression, depression, and resignation. Moltmann takes notice, and says

It is necessary to develop a non-patriarchal way of talking about God the ‘Father’ in heaven in order to … [promote] a masculinity which does not lay claim to domination and a fatherhood without loss of power and feelings of powerlessness, since there is nothing wrong with becoming and being a father.\(^\text{72}\)

This is a remarkable statement that balances several of Moltmann’s statements that deemphasize fatherhood. It is an interesting question to pursue how this relates to Jesus’ notion of fatherhood in the gospels, which Moltmann had insisted was personal to Jesus. Moltmann perceives not as much ambiguity as a sharp duality in the concept of fatherhood as a metaphor: it can refer to the ruler of the household, who has power over wife, children, slaves and property, or it can refer to the intimate love of father for child. The biological fact of generation is not necessarily intrinsic

\(^{72}\text{Ibid., 3-4.}\)
to either of these. To put it briefly, it is either authority or intimacy—there is no middle ground. Individuals may fashion their god after “God Almighty,” omnipotent and impassible, or they may choose God the Father of Jesus as revealed in the Cross. The grief of the Father for his lost paternity, and his willingness to do this for the sake of embracing new daughters and sons, offers a more productive model for loving fatherhood in the contemporary situation.

Moltmann’s rejection of the monarchy of the Father thus goes hand in hand with his views of rule and order on the human level and even extends to a repudiation of monotheism. He sees monotheism as the true threat to trinitarian doctrine. This follows from his treatment of the suffering within the Trinity discussed above. Since Moltmann rejects the apathetic God of the philosophers, the distant and all-powerful “monad,” he rejects monotheism in order to make room for a suffering God. The prophets of the Old Testament, along with the definitive revelation of Jesus, indicate our experience of God as being an experience of God with us. “God suffers with us – God suffers from us – God suffers for us: it is this experience of God that reveals the triune God. It has to be understood, and can only be understood, in trinitarian terms.” He repeats this statement later and adds, “In monotheism it is impossible [to talk of God’s suffering]. Both Aristotelian philosophy and the religion of Islam make this clear.”

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73 Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 35. Here he follows the work of G. A. Studdert Kennedy, an Anglican priest and poet who contrasted “God Almighty” to the God of Love in the face of World War I. See also *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 197: “If we see the Almighty in trinitarian terms, he is not the archetype of the mighty ones of this world. He was the Father of the Christ who was crucified and raised for us. As the Father of Jesus Christ, he is almighty because he exposes himself suffering, pain, helplessness and death. But what he is is not almighty power; what he is is love. It is his passionate, passible love that is almighty, nothing else.”

74 Ibid., 4.

75 Ibid., 25.
Moltmann collapses the heretical notions of monarchy from Christian history with orthodox expressions and claims,

It was the acceptance of philosophical monotheism and the idea of the universal monarchy of the one God that made Christianity a ‘world religion,’ and that got over Christianity’s appearance of being a Jewish messianic sect, or a private religion. But monotheism and monarchianism are only the names for two sides of the same thing: the One is the principle and point of integration for the Many.\textsuperscript{76}

Moltmann is right to see Arianism and Sabellianism as both taking the unity of God seriously but accounting for it in disastrously flawed ways, and he is also right to perceive the dangers of subordinationism and modalism that have attended certain Trinitarian formulations down the centuries. He goes too far, however, in treating the doctrines of monotheism and the monarchy of the Father as flawed in themselves.

In \textit{Crucified God}, Moltmann boldly attempts to characterize God as beyond theism and atheism, whereas in \textit{Trinity and the Kingdom} and other trinitarian studies, he strives to depict God as a social trinity beyond monotheism and polytheism. He has come under quite a bit of criticism for this position.\textsuperscript{77} In response to his critics, Moltmann does not yield to the traditional language and reconcile his theology with it; rather, he reaffirms his commitment to biblical revelation against the weight of philosophical tradition. He clarifies his thoughts on monotheism extensively in \textit{Sun of Righteousness Arise!}, indicating at first the inadequacy of the term itself:

The term \textit{monotheism} sounds clear enough, but in fact it is open to many interpretations…. Anyone who talks about monotheism is like someone who sees only a wood everywhere without being able to distinguish between the different trees. He has failed to approach the phenomena closely at all, and knows nothing. If we want to

\textsuperscript{76} \textit{Ibid.}, 130. He reiterates similar statements on pp. 191ff.

employ the term usefully, it has to be explained. But if a term needs more explanation than it itself is capable of explaining, it is not very serviceable. We shall try to make this need for explanation clear, so that we can dispense with the term.\textsuperscript{78}

He expounds that the term in itself tells nothing about the nature of the unity or its religious, cultural, or political consequences. Each instantiation of monotheism has distinctive features so that drawing generic conclusions remains difficult. After discussing primal or \textit{ur}-monotheism with its idealization of power and patriarchal forms in history, he is compelled to state whether the Old Testament prescribes monotheism. He summarizes that as liberating God, Yahweh calls the people to enter into free covenant with him. He has committed himself to them and invites them to commit themselves exclusively to him, which means worshiping no other gods. “That is not an absolute, universal monotheism.”\textsuperscript{79} Only in the eschatological hope of the prophets do we encounter the idea that the one God of Israel will be the God of all the nations. Despite Moltmann’s arguments here, the Old Testament picture is significantly more complicated on the matter. He argues that even Judaism transcends monotheism because of its incorporation of God’s immanent presence as \textit{shekinah} as a distinction within God. “If we bear in mind the way in which Israel’s belief in God is constituted—God’s self-determination, his self-limitation, and his indwelling in Israel—it immediately becomes clear that the term ‘monotheism’ is inappropriate and explains nothing.”\textsuperscript{80} According to Moltmann, then, Christians err in appealing to the Old Testament to support the integration of monotheistic philosophy into their theologies, as Augustine and Bonaventure both do.

\textsuperscript{78} Moltmann, \textit{Sun of Righteousness}, 85.
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., 91.
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., 92.
If Jewish theology involves differentiation in God, Christian theology must involve it to an even greater extent. He allows no room for approaching God as a universal monarch, nor as "one." "The unity cannot be monadic or numerical. God is not solitary. God is not an atom, nor is he an individual. The unity of God must itself be formulated in trinitarian terms as a ‘tri-unity’; he is the ‘threelfold God.'" He classifies three possible ways to formulate this: the metaphysics of substance (following Tertullian), the metaphysics of absolute subject (e.g. Barth and Rahner), and the unity of three persons perichoretically, which is his own approach. Overcoming the former two formulations requires dispensing with a metaphysical definition of the unity of the godhead. In his telling, social Trinitarianism and perichoresis alone offer an adequate accounting of the experience of God in Jesus Christ. Following his interpretation of the Old Testament prophets, God’s universal rule is not a present fact but a future expectation. When the Son subjects himself to the Father (1 Cor 15:28), “Then the triune God will become the all-one God and his glory will interpenetrate and illumine all things. It is only then that it will be possible to talk about a divine unlimited omnipotence, omnipresence and omniscience.” From this material, it is clear that in Moltmann’s estimation, at present in the history of God, the Father cannot be acclaimed as possessing authority or rule over creation. Neither does Moltmann look backwards to the Father’s monarchy as belonging to the past, e.g. before the emergence of sin and rebellion against his order. Only in the future will the Father’s monarchy emerge. Only in the future will God’s unity be fully realized and will the term “monotheism” make sense.

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81 Ibid., 94.

82 Ibid., 95.
In *Trinity and the Kingdom*, Moltmann attempts to transcend the traditional description of the trinitarian order: Father→Son→Holy Spirit. The dominant model only accounts for the origin, or the ontological constitution of the persons. At a few points he does cursorily affirm traditional statements about Father as the source of the Godhead, but he insists that other frames of thought need to balance it out.\(^83\) In the economy of salvation, the persons have acted “with changing patterns,” while “the dogmatic tradition has only worked with a single pattern.”\(^84\) He points especially to the insights of Spirit-Christology in developing the pattern Father→Holy Spirit→Son: in the incarnation, Jesus is begotten from the Father by the Holy Spirit, and the anointing of the Holy Spirit at his baptism is intrinsic to his ministry. More relevant here, Moltmann also develops the “doxological” pattern, which is the glorification and consummation of God: Holy Spirit→Son→Father. As we will appreciate more in Parts II and III, the tradition has not had a problem with this so-called eschatological pattern, as it is consistent with how prayers are typically formulated in liturgy. The patterns of emanation and consummation are found side-by-side, for example, in 1 Cor 8:6. Moltmann’s formulation of the eschatological order of the Trinity remains consistent with his turn away from origins and metaphysics towards an emphasis on the finale of God’s history.

It is difficult to discuss trinitarian order without discussing the *filioque* issue, and Moltmann certainly does not shy away from it. At first glance, given that he finds Eastern theologians opposing the *filioque* because it undermines the monarchy of the Father, one might think he would side with the West because of his low opinion of this doctrine. Instead, he rejects

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\(^83\) For example, see *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 165 and 176-178.

\(^84\) *Ibid.*, 95.
the addition to the Nicene Creed for several reasons, but he does wish to clarify the origin of the Spirit. For him, the unique nature of the Father’s fatherhood has implications for this controversy; he wishes instead to replace “Father and the Son” with “Father of the Son.” “The first person of the Trinity is the Father, but only in respect of the Son.” He wishes to safeguard the Father as origin within the Godhead, but in a way that clarifies that he is never alone. In this way, Moltmann disputes the filioque while still rejecting the monarchy. He says elsewhere that the Spirit “arises out of the Father of the Son and has its origin in the Father’s relationship to the Son. It arises out of the Fatherhood of the Father and therefore cannot be thought of without the Sonship of the Son.” Rather than working together as a joint principle of the Spirit, the Son “accompanies” the Spirit’s emanation, just as the Spirit likewise accompanies the Son’s. He maintains that this view is consistent with the Trinity’s inner life, defined as it is by perichoresis.

Moltmann also relates the concept of freedom and practical issues of political and ecclesiastical governance to trinitarian order. His treatment of freedom in The Trinity and the Kingdom, and of governance in Sun of Righteousness, Arise! both involve Trinitarian typologies in which the notion appropriate to the Father is transcended by better forms. As has been stated, Moltmann equates monotheism with monarchy, and he inveighs against “political and clerical monotheism” as legitimating hierarchy and requiring servitude and dependency. He states, “The doctrine of the Trinity which evolves out of the surmounting of monotheism for Christ’s sake, must therefore also overcome this monarchism, which legitimates dependency,

85 Ibid., 183.
87 Moltmann, Trinity and the Kingdom, 191-202.
helplessness and servitude. This doctrine of the Trinity must be developed as the true theological
dctrine of freedom.” In trying to formulate his own trinitarian definition of freedom, to
 supersede the servitude offered by divine monarchy, Moltmann wishes to ground freedom in the
history of God. He appeals to the controversial twelfth-century Cistercian, Joachim of Fiore, who
appropriated the Persons to the form which the kingdom of God has taken in history. 88 To go into
the legitimacy of Joachim’s theology of history and eschatology is beyond the scope of this
chapter, but Moltmann follows along with it to see a qualitative progression in the phases
appropriated to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The kingdom of the Father is characterized by fear,
which is transformed by the kingdom of the Son. The first stage is not only preparatory and
incomplete, but its description is tinged with negativity in Moltmann’s treatment. The “rule” of
the Father is not much of a rule at all, and it certainly does not allow for human freedom. While
he holds out that the kingdom of the Father is ultimately oriented towards the eschatological
kingdom of glory, he only reckons it as a preliminary step to be superseded by the kingdoms of
the Son and Spirit. Discussing how each kingdom contains the “promise of glory,” he equates the
Father’s kingdom with creation: “Creation is the material promise of glory, being full of the
ciphers and signs of the beauty to come.” 89

Building his own typology on the basis of Joachim’s, Moltmann describes the history of
the kingdom of God in terms of three strata of freedom: the freedom of servants correlates to the
Father, the freedom of children to the Son, and the freedom of friends to the Holy Spirit. Again,
Moltmann’s theology delights in dialectic and paradox as he ponders the “freedom” of servants.

88 Ibid., 203-209.

89 Ibid., 212.
Rather than dwelling upon the negative images of servitude considered before, which are so endemic to patriarchy, he focuses positively on the biblical concept of “servant.” Rather than a humiliating title, it describes those who have been taken up into the Lord’s service.\footnote{Ibid., 219.} “To be used and needed by God the Lord, and therefore not to be useless and superfluous, gives their lives meaning.” Being a servant of God means dependence, but it also means freedom: “[the servant] is completely free from other things and other powers. He fears God alone and nothing else in this world.” The freedom of servants does not dissolve, but retains its outward character even when transformed into the freedom of children and ultimately the freedom of friends. The concept of freedom appropriated to the Father, even if it has positive dimensions, is quite limited in Moltmann’s presentation here. It is ironic that he criticizes the tradition for its static ordering of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and that he falls into it so completely in the final section of \textit{Trinity and the Kingdom}.\footnote{Moltmann, \textit{Son of Righteousness, Arise!}, 17.}

In \textit{Sun of Righteousness, Arise!}, Moltmann casts the twentieth century as the death of “Christendom” which served to enable Christianity’s “rebirth.” He hopes that the new millennium, to be marked by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, represents a paradigm shift in the ordering and experience of Christian communities. He goes on to delineate three paradigms for the church: hierarchical, christocentric, and charismatic. It is certainly intentional that the typology corresponds to the three Persons of the Trinity. Once again Moltmann’s preferred paradigm lines up with the Spirit. The first paradigm coincides with Greco-Roman ideals of order and was established as “the hierarchy, the ‘holy rule’ under the monarchy of God the
Father. " It is an authoritarian structure without a tinge of the positive dimension of servitude discussed above. “We find here a unilinear structure of authority from God the Father by way of ‘the Holy Father’, to every priest who acts as ‘father’ to his congregation.” The unity of the church in this model derives from patriarchal hierarchy, whereas in the christocentric model it derives from the brotherhood of believers—typical to Protestantism in Moltmann’s eyes. In terms of political order, the former corresponds to aristocracy while the latter corresponds to democracy. While the difference between the christocentric and charismatic orders does not emerge in particular clarity, his concluding comments on the paradigms encapsulate his hopes for the new millennium:

After the hierarchical church of God the Father, Christianity came to know the brotherly church of God the Son. Today we are experiencing the charismatic church of God the Spirit. We do not experience all at once everything that essentially belongs together. But the church will be united neither solely through the monarchy of the Father, nor solely through the brotherhood of the Son, nor solely through the power of the Spirit, but only through the trinitarian unity of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Just as with his discussion of freedom, Moltmann does not grant the Holy Spirit pride of place in his own right; rather, the Holy Spirit is the Trinity-completing person, so it is as such that his emergence consummates the perichoretic unity of the Trinity. Once again, Moltmann’s rejection of the monarchy goes hand in hand with his practical and experiential concerns. The net effect of these remarks of Moltmann is a diminished theology of God the Father, with a drastically limited place in the Trinitarian order.

92 Ibid., 20.
The monarchy of the Father is an inadequate notion of order within the Trinity for Moltmann. It should be replaced by perichoresis. For him, formulating a theology of God the Father is best not tied with ontological issues, *i.e.* how the divine substance comes to be differentiated. Focusing on the constitution of the Trinity looks backward and provides too much temptation for a distant, impersonal view of God or even a patriarchal, oppressive God. Moltmann prefers to look at the cross and the resurrection to provide historical and eschatological perspectives (respectively) on the constitution of the Godhead. If the Trinity is *not* monotheistic, unity depends upon binding the persons together by the nature of their relationship. Rather than grounding the divine unity in terms of the “origin” of the persons, he points to their *perichoresis*. The Holy Spirit, who could be described as the eschatological reconciliation of Father and Son, binds the Trinity together. Given his motivation to eschew subordination to the Father, Moltmann gives the Holy Spirit the primary cohesive role in the Trinity. To be sure, *perichoresis* applies to each of the persons, but Moltmann specifically links the perichoretic mode of order to the Holy Spirit. The Father is equated with consolidated authority based on power. Even though Moltmann repeatedly criticizes the view, it still turns up in his own discussions of the Father, and his own Trinitarian typologies.

**Conclusion: Trinity without “Patriarchy”**

Jürgen Moltmann intimates that he accepts Karl Rahner’s axiom that the immanent Trinity *is* the economic Trinity and vice versa. He wishes to extend it and take it to radical

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94 Moltmann does attempt to back away from this point in *Sun of Righteousness, Arise!* in the interests of maintaining the Holy Spirit as a person and not an impersonal *vinculum amoris* (154). On the other hand, his theological writings on the whole indicate that the Holy Spirit as representative of the “triadic intersubjectivity” that defines perichoresis for him.
conclusions, giving particular accent to the economic Trinity especially as envisioned in his theology of the cross. He defiantly proclaims, “Anyone who really talks of the Trinity talks of the cross of Jesus, and does not speculate in heavenly riddles.”

Theologians have accused Moltmann of collapsing the immanent Trinity into the economic Trinity, such that the former becomes meaningless. There are tinges of truth in the accusation, but perhaps it is not entirely fair. For Moltmann, the immanent Trinity is the perichoresis of the three persons which is fully revealed only in the eschaton. The immanent Trinity is not represented well solely by a formula pronouncing the Father as source of the Trinity, begetting the Son and breathing the Holy Spirit. A perichoretic interpretation perceives the Father immanently pouring himself out into the Son and the Spirit and receiving them entirely as well. In the Trinitarian constitution, the Father’s emanating love is matched by responding love; as one shifts to salvation history the inner-trinitarian pattern is matched by extra-trinitarian waves of creating and restoring love. In the economy, the Father gave up his only Son, rejected and abandoned him for the sake of salvation. This self-giving action opened up a space for other brothers and sisters. The Father felt tremendous grief in the separation of God from God. The Father still expects the final glorification when he receives the kingdom from the Son and praise from all creation as drawn together by the Spirit. Moltmann’s God the Father emphatically embraces temporality, is subject to change and feeling, and is incomplete at the present time in the story of salvation. The Father himself awaits his final glory.

95 Moltmann, Crucified God, 207.

96 Any attempt to assess Moltmann’s views of Rahner’s axiom is laden with difficulty because of the variety of positions he has formulated in various publications. It is also beyond the scope of this paper. For an attempt to reconcile the data, see Sanders, Image of the Immanent Trinity, 89-97.
In Moltmann’s treatment of monotheism in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic forms, it is apparent that he cannot reconcile time with thoroughgoing and complete monotheism. All of these religions point to a future universal manifestation of the fullness of God’s divinity. The present eludes or somehow escapes God’s direct rule. This can indicate process or conflict, but neither one is consistent with Moltmann’s definition of monotheism. The Trinity—according to his own dramatic and perichoretic interpretation of it—provides the most satisfying solution to this problem. The traditional doctrine of the monarchy of the Father must fall by the wayside.

In the face of his own deferral of the Father’s glory, Moltmann sees certain projections of God in the human mind as dangerous fantasies: God’s inability to suffer, God’s inability to change, God’s being above or outside of time and history, and even God’s sovereignty and unity. The death of God on the cross liberates us from such childish projections. It refutes both theism and atheism, and makes a trinitarian God necessary. The ensuing unity of Father and Son is not a static but rather a dynamic unity. It is a unity in act. Given the separate spheres of consciousness of the persons, and the distinctive actions in the temporal drama, we do not perceive unity in being. It is a volitional and not an ontological trinity of persons. Such assertions emphasize the common will of the Father and Son and their eschatological unity at the expense of the order of their constitution and their protological unity. From Moltmann’s perspective, it is difficult if not impossible to call God “Almighty” in the present tense because of the theodicy problem. He wishes to replace the image of “God the Father Almighty” with the grieving and compassionate Father of the Crucified, who awaits the fullness of his family.
Chapter 2. Wolfhart Pannenberg on the Father

Now we turn to the second contemporary German theologian, Wolfhart Pannenberg. Unlike Moltmann, who developed an elaborate theology of the Trinity in a number of different works, Pannenberg offered mere hints of a Trinitarian theology before his multi-volume Systematic Theology. He did not disappoint those awaiting his full presentation, however, as this series made an exhaustive and innovative Trinitarian theology its center point. In the midst of his treatment of the unity of the divine persons, Pannenberg promises that “the rest of dogmatics… will be part of the exposition of the doctrine of the Trinity.”¹ The remaining volumes relate all aspects of theology back to the Trinity. He calls Trinitarian doctrine the “anticipatory sum of the whole content of Christian dogmatics.” This three-volume work thus contains an important, mature synthesis on the Trinity. In the following discussion, we will mostly determine the role of God the Father in Pannenberg’s thought from his Systematic Theology.

A brief summary of the main lines of Pannenberg’s teaching on the Trinity is in order to provide for some context. It is important to stress right away that Pannenberg’s notions of time, history, and eternity have an enormous impact on his doctrine of God. He professes, “At every point in time it is a fact that what is lasting and reliable, and in this sense true, comes to light only in the future.”² This bold claim is foundational to his theological project. Rather than thinking of eternity as standing outside of time, he thinks of eternity as the summation of every discrete moment of time. While history is progressing, there is still freedom and contingency. We cannot define the “essence” of a human person until all of her or his actions have been taken

² Ibid., 1:54.
into account, which does not come until the end of one’s life. By analogy, while history is ongoing, God is hidden and his rule is called into question. Pannenberg holds to the principle that God’s deity and his rule are the same, so it follows that only in the end will God’s deity be manifested “definitively and unquestionably.”³ As the locus of eternity, “the future” has primary importance in describing God’s very existence, his deity. Christians, however, already have a glimpse of the eschaton in Jesus Christ and most especially in his resurrection.⁴

The theme of the revelation of God’s full deity is linked with Jesus’ proclamation of the kingdom.⁵ This continues a theme of Pannenberg’s theological career, which has committed to an ascending Christology based on the historical Jesus. Roger Olson has remarked that “Pannenberg locates the basis of the doctrine of the Trinity, indeed the Trinity itself, in the historical sonship of Jesus.”⁶ As Pannenberg explains it, the core of Jesus’ preaching is the imminence of the kingdom, as especially demonstrated in the synoptic gospels. The kingdom consists in nothing other than God coming with power to rule. Given the complex issue of the time-frame of the basileia tou Theou in the New Testament, Pannenberg prefers to use a metaphor, speaking of the “dawning” of the kingdom in Jesus’ actions.⁷ Creation is still an open question unto itself, and the kingdom of God is the answer, but it awaits on the horizon. The

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³ Ibid.
⁴ Ibid., 1:56. See also 1:213.
⁵ See ibid., 1:300ff.
⁷ e.g. “The combination of provisional and definitive features characterized Jesus’ own message of the kingdom of God, which dawns with the coming of Jesus but is still future” (Pannenberg, Systematic Theology, 1:211). See also 1:247.
Christian Church eagerly expects it. Only when the kingdom is fully realized will God’s deity be confirmed and his presence to his people all along be validated.

From the foregoing thoughts on time and eternity, it follows that if the immanent Trinity is God beyond time, then ontology merges with eschatology such that God in se is located in the future. Although the doctrine of the Trinity mostly developed throughout history as speculation about a pristine Trinity “preceding” creation, Pannenberg turns the tradition on its head by placing priority on the future. God can bring the power of the future into the ongoing “present” of human history; in no way does he consider the “immanent” Trinity a God outside of time and unconcerned with humanity. Pannenberg interprets Rahner’s axiom by placing a premium on God’s self-revelation in Christ and in the Spirit. At the same time, he criticizes others for collapsing the immanent into the economic Trinity; he attempts to avoid that trap himself with his innovative approach to the future as the full revelation of God’s deity and kingdom. This is a crucial theme that will be investigated below.

Related to his emphasis upon God’s work in history and the future, Pannenberg avowedly wishes to balance the Christian theological tradition’s dependence upon relations of origin to describe the Trinity. If the so-called immanent Trinity exists in the future and not the past, it does not make much sense to speculate about God before creation. Pannenberg thus needs to develop an alternative way of conceiving how the three persons are related. While the tradition defines the persons in terms of the relations of origin, Pannenberg favors describing these relations through the concept of mutual self-distinction, or self-differentiation, which represents one of his important and arguably original contributions to modern Trinitarian theology. The key

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advance made with this terminology consists in the reciprocity of the relations, as contrasted with one-sided relations of origin. As Stanley Grenz explains, “Pannenberg offers a radical reinterpretation of self-differentiation developed in the context of discussion of Hegel’s understanding of personhood, namely, that the essence of person lies in the act of giving oneself to one’s counterpart and thereby gaining one’s identity from the other.”

A few implications of this terminological change for Pannenberg’s theology of God the Father will be explored below.

Pannenberg is quite concerned with how the doctrine of God is ordered in theological works. Grenz calls Pannenberg’s approach “among the most innovative aspects of this section of the dogmatics.”

Pannenberg self-consciously proposes an alternative to medieval treatments, especially Western examples such as Aquinas’ *Summa theologiae*, which in his reckoning begin with the unity of the divine essence and proceed to the Trinity. He wishes to do the opposite. This reversal of topical order partly flows out of Pannenberg’s desire to bring theology into contact with philosophy and other scientific disciplines; he places an emphasis on epistemology, and Jesus’ revelation of God must serve as the starting point.

Pannenberg is far too complex a theologian to pioneer new theological territory without a thorough knowledge of the ground already tread; while elements of his thought are revolutionary, he finds inspiration from specific lines of argument raised in the past. He harks back to a crucial development from Gilbert de La Porrée. This early scholastic theologian argued that while the thesis “only one God exists” may be proven by natural reason, the Christian notion

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of Trinity requires special revelation and cannot depend on proof from reason alone.\textsuperscript{11} Pannenberg concurs and thinks that this implies that we must be able to discern God’s action \textit{in history} as trinitarian. Pannenberg distances himself from certain modern scholars, such as Moltmann, by embracing the Greek philosophical tradition that supports monotheism.\textsuperscript{12} He disagrees, however, with placing the unity of God first because Christians should not simply defer to philosophy and declare the Trinity outside of the bounds, as if theology merely explicates revelation.\textsuperscript{13} The doctrine of God’s essence and attributes must relate to Jesus and his Father—otherwise, the understanding of God communicated remains pre-trinitarian. By treating the economic Trinity before the attributes, “the doctrine of God is grounded in the divine economy, and the understanding of the immanent Trinity flows from the economic Trinity.”\textsuperscript{14} The traditional order notwithstanding, he opines that since the fourth century the unity of God has been the chief problem for Trinitarian theology.\textsuperscript{15} Most attempts have resulted in either subordination or modalism. Above all, however, treating the unity of God last is not simply a matter of convenience or proper pedagogical ordering for Pannenberg. Given the atheist critique

\textsuperscript{11} Pannenberg, \textit{Systematic Theology}, 1:282 and 287.
\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Ibid.}, 1:68-69 and 72.
\textsuperscript{13} He opens his chapter on revelation by stating: “Because the reality of God is the presupposition of human worship of God, the knowledge of God is the starting point of religion. But human knowledge of God can be a true knowledge that corresponds to the divine reality only if it originates in the deity itself” (1:189). Pannenberg is quite willing to admit that basic categories and even philosophical frameworks lie behind Christian acknowledgement of God and the revelation in Jesus Christ. But the \textit{religion per se} starts from the encounter and is determined by that. This links with Pannenberg’s motivation to treat the persons before the attributes, essence or unity of the godhead.
\textsuperscript{15} Pannenberg, \textit{Systematic Theology}, 1:342.
developed in such a pointed way during the last century, the existence—let alone the unity—of God is not a given; God’s deity and his unity await full vindication in the eschaton.

Another notable aspect of Pannenberg’s Trinitarian theology concerns personhood and subjectivity in the Trinity. Here he takes a stance decidedly against that of Barth and Rahner, both of whom in his estimation favor describing the Trinity as one divine subject. He cautions against any attempt to derive the Trinity from the unity of a controlling idea, such as “love” or “spirit” as with Hegel. Such treatments imply a single divine subject with the persons as products. Instead, following his clarification that the Trinitarian relations have “the form of mutual self-distinction,” Pannenberg insists that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit “must be understood not merely as different modes of being of the one divine subject but as living realizations of separate centers of action.” At the same time, unlike Moltmann he is quite wary of tritheism as a legitimate threat. To ground his position, he again points to revelation centered upon the person of Jesus. Inasmuch as Jesus addresses God as “the other,” and Jesus is himself divine, it must follow that there are multiple subjects in the Trinity.

But how to explain the balance of triple subjectivity within a clear realm of unity? In an innovation characteristic of Pannenberg, he appeals to field theory in modern science. He offers this analogy to preserve multiple subjects without endangering true unity that envelops the persons. He thinks that this concept is closer to the biblical sense of “spirit” than the commonly-employed nous (“mind”), pointing especially to the vast and searching power of God’s spirit in Psalm 139. Although he does not provide much elaboration on the scientific underpinnings, he

16 Ibid., 1:296-297.
17 Ibid., 1:319.
cites the inspiration of Michael Faraday. The theory explains field phenomena not “as bodily entities” but “as independent of matter and defined only by their relations to space or space-time.”  

In Pannenberg’s estimation, this opens up great possibilities for theology. “The autonomy of the field demands no ordering to a subject…. The deity as field can find equal manifestation in all three persons.”

Whereas for human persons, a “spirit” is independent of the group that shares that “spirit,” “the trinitarian persons are not independent of the Spirit of love that binds them. They are simply manifestations and forms—eternal forms—of the one divine essence.”

It is already apparent that Pannenberg will need to clarify the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the divine essence, as it might seem that the two are identical. Further on, he ties in how field theory offers a vision of unity in diversity:

The divine persons, then, are concretions of the divine reality as Spirit. They are individual aspects of the dynamic field of the eternal Godhead. This means that they do not exist for themselves but in ec-static relation to the overarching field of deity which manifests itself in each of them and in their interrelations.

The three eternally indicate each other and find their identity in pouring out to each other. Unity does not precede Trinity, but neither does Trinity precede Unity. Pannenberg closely links the unity of persons in the essence of God to the unity of the so-called immanent and economic trinities. The beautiful final remark of his systematic theology harks back to this latter unity:

“The distinction and unity of the immanent and economic Trinity constitute the heartbeat of the

18 Ibid., 1:382.

19 Ibid., 1:383.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid., 1:430.

22 Ibid., 1:333.
divine love, and with a single such heartbeat this love encompasses the whole world of creatures.”

Having sketched some of the main features of Pannenberg’s Trinitarian theology, a few key issues emerge to serve as a context for assessing his theology of God the Father.

The first issue concerns Pannenberg’s depiction of God the Father in what he calls history or the economy. How is the Father named and what is characteristic of him? How can he be distinguished from the Son and Holy Spirit?

The second issue concerns the reorientation of time and ontology that gives preference to the future. How does this affect the personhood of God the Father?

The third issue deals with how Pannenberg reinterprets the traditional doctrine of the monarchy of the Father, and how the Father relates to the divine essence. Pannenberg maintains the monarchy of the Father and calls him “God” in a special sense, but emphatically adds “from the perspective of the Son.” Does this terminological shift remove the threat of subordination? Does it resonate with the traditional formulation while alleviating its attendant problems?

These are the central questions to be explored in the following pages.

God the Father and the Economy

Having noted Pannenberg’s emphasis upon revelation and upon the economy of salvation history, it is imperative to begin investigation of Pannenberg’s theology of the Father by exploring his statements of the Father’s role in the economy. After all, the theologian himself says, “To find a basis for the doctrine of the Trinity we must begin with the way in which Father,

23 Ibid., 3:646.
Son, and Holy Spirit come on the scene and relate to one another in the event of revelation.”

He also calls Trinitarian doctrine “an exposition of the relation of Jesus to the Father and the Spirit.” Since the centrality of the term “Father” mostly stems from the teaching of Jesus, this serves as the best point of entry for the present discussion.

While Pannenberg acknowledges the occasional metaphor of divine paternity in the Old Testament, he reckons that this term takes on unprecedented and central importance in Jesus’ message. “Father” is a proper name in Jesus’ speech, not simply one word among others that may be used for God. For this reason, “God” in the New Testament is coterminous with the “Father of Jesus Christ,” and so Pannenberg agrees with Rahner that “God” is for the most part synonymous with “Father” in the New Testament. He had used “God” simply and “the God of Jesus Christ” to refer to the Father in publications previous to the arrival of Systematic Theology as well. As Herbert Burhenn remarks in an article from 1975, “when Pannenberg refers to God, he seems ordinarily to have in mind God the Father.” In Systematic Theology, after considering various statements in the New Testament that have been adduced as proving the Trinity or the divinity of the Son and Holy Spirit, he tellingly remarks, “Even in these passages it is not clear how the deity of the Son and Spirit relates to that of the Father, whom the NT obviously has in

24 Ibid., 1:299.
25 Ibid., 1:305.
26 He insists that the notion of a patriarchal head of a family of gods is alien to the Old Testament. Nevertheless, paternal language found its way into the Old Testament partly because of the influence of surrounding nations. He identifies a genetic pattern: first other cultures described the king as a “son of God,” then Israel modified this on the basis of its own thought (see, e.g., 2 Sam 7:14), and finally the notion expanded to include the people as a whole (e.g. Hosea 11:1).
27 Ibid., 1:262.
view when it speaks about God in the absolute.”  

Shortly thereafter he stresses that “the deity of the Son and Spirit is to be understood in terms of what is said about the deity of the Father.”  

To deal with the theology of Jesus, there is no question for Pannenberg that one must discuss God the Father.

Unlike Moltmann, who had some sympathies in this vein, Pannenberg does not entertain the possibility of replacing or minimizing “Father” in liturgical use.  

He acknowledges the many changes to the social order since the time of Jesus, but insists that the concept was not a human projection onto God anyway. He specifically disagrees with Ludwig Feuerbach on this score; Pannenberg maintains that the idea of God is not simply about “prevailing social relationships.”  

Human social realities may change but God confronts them as the unchanging and perfect norm, he intimates, referencing Eph 3:15 and Isa 63:16. “For this reason [the metaphor of God as Father] still retains its power even at a time when patriarchal forms decay and the role of the father within the family loses its distinctive contours.”  

The term provides insight into how much God cares for humanity. Grenz remarks that Pannenberg has been criticized by feminist theologians for retaining the traditional names. He cannot abandon “Father” because of its centrality to Jesus’ message.

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30 *Ibid.*, 1:303. He remarks elsewhere, “simply to equate Jesus with God is to deify the creature” (1:263).

31 See above, 47.


34 Stanley Grenz, *Reason for Hope*, 71. Grenz also insinuates that Pannenberg does not belabor the point in his *Systematic Theology* because he sees the feminist challenge on terminology as a short-term issue not befitting treatment in such a long-term project as he intended for his own to be.
Pannenberg offers some interesting comments on the terminology in his small book on the Apostles’ Creed. He notes that for previous generations the idea that there was a “God” who was a “father” in “heaven” was taken for granted. Folding the notion of Jesus into this heavenly father-god was the heart of the theological problem for Christians. The modern situation has reversed dramatically, with many people accepting the relevance of Jesus but skeptical of the existence of a heavenly, paternal deity. Pannenberg suggests that the Old Testament’s emphasis on God’s unlimited power is contrasted by Jesus’ message of God’s fatherhood. This in turn raises the question for him of whether “patriarchal order” based on Jesus’ experience is good and appropriate for today. He responds, “In answering such questions we must first notice that the creed does not simply make the baptismal candidate state that God is his Father; it talks about the Father per se, namely the Father of Jesus of Nazareth.” On the basis of this remark, it seems that Pannenberg would agree with Moltmann to limit the notion of fatherhood to the Father-Son relation in the Trinity. He intends to dull the blow of negative experiences on a theology of God the Father; the metaphor continually evolves, but its expression in Jesus is fixed as the creedal entry point. By “Father,” Jesus “describes in a special way… the saving nearness of the God who before the coming judgment once more offers salvation to all men through Jesus… to everyone who has an ear for the message of the immanence of the divine rule.” This is a rather


37 For example, at various points in the Old Testament, “father” was employed varyingly to speak of God’s relationship to the king (2 Sam 7:14) and to the people as a whole (Hosea 11:1).

38 Pannenberg, Apostles’ Creed, 32. He provides a similarly involved explanation of the relationship on the next page: “On the lips of Jesus the name ‘Father’ indicates the particular way in which the almighty God of Israel, whose mighty coming was expected in the imminent future, has been revealed through his sending of Jesus” (33).
complicated explanation of a simple term. He notes that Jesus employs “father” in a manner vastly different from other ancient Near-Eastern religions with their claims of divine sonship for the king. Throughout his ministry, the name “is bound up with the merciful goodness of God.”

Even though Pannenberg readily accepts “Father” as irreplaceable, and insists that we cannot eliminate the term from the message of Jesus, he hardly focuses on the term per se in his Systematic Theology. By using “father” specifically, Jesus is able to point to an intimate relationship and perhaps even a common generic identity with God. Pannenberg however does not pursue the tack of dwelling upon the closeness and familiarity in the relationship, let alone the begetting. Instead, he focuses on God as “other” in the message of Jesus. The question arises as to what he means by substituting “other” for “Father.” With such a term he underscores the distinction that Jesus draws between himself and the Father; the Father cannot possibly be confused with himself. He stresses that Jesus puts the focus not upon himself but upon the transcendent God whom he addresses. On this point, Pannenberg identifies the Lord’s Prayer as crucial to indicate Jesus’ “other”-oriented spirituality; the prayer longs for a fusion of the reign of the heavenly Father with lived experience here and now, marked as it is by trial. God the Father comes to the foreground in the prayer and teaching of Jesus the Son, but as “other”; he neither reveals himself nor manifests himself in the economy.

39 Ibid., 33.

40 Pannenberg, Systematic Theology, 1:263.

41 Ibid., 1:263.

42 There will be a brief discussion of this point below, since it requires an explanation of what God is revealed to Israel in the Old Testament.
Drawing from a few select Scriptural statements, such as the “Johannine thunderbolt” of Matt 11:27 and its parallel (Lk 10:22), and some quotations from John’s gospel (e.g. 8:19, 14:6), Pannenberg articulates the inaccessibility of the Father.\(^{43}\) “God is infinitely above all that is human and creaturely. He may be known only through the Son.”\(^{44}\) So God’s opaque hiddenness is mitigated by the transparency of Jesus to this mysterious “Other.” Pannenberg says later in this volume, “To know the incomprehensible God, we must hold fast to the Son.”\(^{45}\) He appeals to Martin Luther’s distinction of the “hidden God” (Deus absconditus) and “revealed God” (Deus revelatus). Jesus discloses God “in such a way that the hidden God himself is manifest.”\(^{46}\) While history is still open, there is tension between the hiddenness of God and the disclosure of that God in the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Implied here is a connection of the relation of the Father and Son to the distinction of the hidden God and the revealed God. Yet the point is not that the Father is the hidden God and the incarnate Son the revealed God. In the event of revelation the hidden God is revealed as the Father of Jesus Christ. The unity of the hidden and revealed God is manifest in the unity of the Father and the Son.\(^{47}\)

While the unity of the divine essence is hidden, according to Pannenberg’s argument, the Trinitarian distinctions are not. Pannenberg’s thought here appears ambiguous. The subtle point here could be that even though the Father is invisible and inaccessible, he is not the hidden God per se but is revealed inasmuch as he is identified as the Father of the Son. Unfortunately,

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\(^{43}\) For example, see *ibid.*, 1:215, where he describes a line of thought from Justin Martyr to Athanasius: “The Father himself remains invisible and inexpressible.”

\(^{44}\) *Ibid.*, 1:308.


\(^{47}\) *Ibid.*
Pannenberg does not fully elaborate on his point here, namely that Father cannot be simply equated with the hidden God, but rather that it is the divine essence or unity that is hidden.

Throughout Pannenberg’s theological work, he stresses the importance of the “reign” or “kingdom of God” in Jesus’ teaching. In fact, he has written a work entitled *Theology and the Kingdom of God* because he felt that modern theology had lost the basic idea of Jesus’ preaching.48 In this book, Pannenberg distances himself from mentalities that the kingdom might be on the one hand a community resulting from social developments and on the other merely a pious habitat of the mind. He advocates that the kingdom consists in God exercising his power and fully manifesting his being within the horizon of experience. Here he develops his maxim that “God’s being is his rule” and that God himself is the power of the future that will unify the world.49 In this early work, Pannenberg characteristically embraces an approach to the kingdom that goes beyond traditional descriptions. Even though he does not provide much commentary specifically on the Father, he does write some provocative lines about the relationship between the Trinity and the kingdom. Giving evidence of his willingness to reshape ontological categories, he posits, “God is not an existing entity but is the future of his coming kingdom.”50 He also indicates that futurity draws out the structure of the Trinity: “The Trinitarian distinctions are based on the difference between future and present. As we have seen, future and present—and consequently the ‘persons’ of the Trinity—are comprehended in the unity of God.”51 It can


49 See, for example, *ibid*, 53-61.


easily be inferred from the above that the “present” from the vantage point of the proclamation of the gospel is the Son. He does not specify the relationship of the Father and Spirit in his time-concept, but he implies that the Father is coming (i.e., future) and the Spirit draws the present and future together.

In *Systematic Theology*, Pannenberg somewhat fleshes out the relationship between the kingdom and the Trinity. “In the message of Jesus, of course, the fatherly care of the Creator is always brought into relation to eschatology, to the perspective of an imminent consummation of the lordship of the Creator.” Pannenberg finds the link between God’s providential care as “Father” and the message of the kingdom-soon-to-come a distinctive feature of Jesus’ message. He states that not only should Trinitarian doctrine be based upon Jesus, but even upon “the relation of Jesus to the Father as it came to expression in his message of the divine rule.” Rather than following up on this point by explaining the kingdom specifically, however, Pannenberg explains the significance of the distinction—yet close relation—of Father and Son.

He returns to discussion of the kingdom and the Father-Son distinction in the next subsection. Here he elaborates the aforementioned “reciprocal self-distinction” of the two persons: “What Jesus says about the Father is closely connected to the message of the nearness of the Father’s lordship and the summons to the people to subordinate all other concerns to the dawning future of God, and thereby acknowledge God as God.” Here Pannenberg specifies that Jesus acclaims the *Father* as the coming Lord. He seems largely correct in tracking the

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52 Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1:263.


eschatological mindset of Jesus. “God is coming as king” is an appropriate shorthand for this central motif of his ministry. Pannenberg further connects this mindset with the Lord’s Prayer.

The aim of the whole message of Jesus is that the name of God should be hallowed by honoring his lordship. All else, especially his message of salvation, proceeds from this…. Our point for the moment is simply that the whole sending of Jesus is for the glory of the Father and his lordship.55

The imminent arrival of the Father’s kingdom goes together with the glorification of his name; these insights are central to Jesus’ proclamation and Pannenberg appreciates that fact. This “Christology from below” takes for granted that the Father means God in Jesus’ teaching, and his “rule” or “kingdom” is defined by his “fatherly love.”56

If Jesus came merely to point to the lordship of his Father (God), what does this have to do with his own nature, or the Trinity for that matter? Pannenberg answers that the Son distinguishes himself and subordinates himself as a creature to the Father. He proclaims his message as a witness to the truth of the Father’s coming kingdom or lordship. All patristic attempts to grounds Jesus’ divinity from the New Testament point specifically to his claim to be the Son of God, and corroborate this claim most especially by citing his resurrection. His willingness to distinguish himself from and subject himself to the Father testified to the truth of his claim—he is the true Son in contrast to Adam who grasped at divinity.57

As the one who corresponds to the fatherhood of God, Jesus is the Son, and because the eternal God is revealed herein as Father, and is Father everywhere only as he is so in relation to the Son, the Son also shares his deity as the eternal counterpart of the Father.58

55 Ibid., 1:309.
56 Ibid., 1:335.
57 Ibid., 1:310.
58 Ibid.
Pannenberg must then struggle to explain how Jesus as human (creature) reveals the Father. How can he be in an eternal, essential relationship with God? He deals with this question extensively in his inquiry into Christology in the second volume of *Systematic Theology*. A full engagement with this problem clearly goes beyond the scope of this project, but it is helpful to engage Pannenberg’s insights that do immediately pertain to Fatherhood in God. Similar to the patristic authors, Pannenberg finds the title “Son of God” as the appropriate avenue to considering Jesus’ divinity. Pannenberg reiterates the distinction in their relationship:

> For the man Jesus, God was there only in the person of the heavenly Father, to whom he knew he was related in his whole existence and by whose Spirit he let himself be guided. Only by way of the relation of Jesus to the Father can we decide how and in what sense he himself may be understood to partake of deity, namely, as the Son of this Father.  

The words “to whom he knew he was related in his whole existence” represent an expansion beyond Pannenberg’s remarks elsewhere, where otherness and transcendence eclipse relationship and intimacy. But even these remarks which might indicate a relationship of origin are weakened by his particular explanation of Jesus’ sonship.

Pannenberg’s theological method does not permit proof-texting from the New Testament to determine Jesus’ sonship. He hesitates at that the thought that Jesus actually acclaimed himself with the title “Son of God.” Nor does he allow the New Testament authors to define what sonship means. Rather than speculating about a genetic relationship, Pannenberg thinks sonship is really about subjecting oneself to and participating in God’s rule: “Only in this self-distinction from the Father by subordination to his royal rule, and in service to it, is he the Son.”

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Ironically, Jesus’ humility in distinguishing himself from the Father, by subjecting himself and maintaining his otherness, paves the way for Pannenberg to acclaim his divinity.

Pannenberg demonstrates his willingness to reverse chronology in his discussion of Jesus’ Sonship. From various New Testament texts, he gleans that the resurrection attests to Jesus’ divine sonship—in it the Father confirmed that Jesus’ message was correct, but it went beyond a temporal vindication. The messenger who proclaimed the imminence of the kingdom and embraced his own otherness to the point of death was not simply “other.” Pannenberg first argues that he must have been divine from the point of his human manifestation. Eventually, Pannenberg’s logical explication of Jesus’ revelation leads him to posit the Son’s eternal divinity. The following steps attempt to demonstrate his logic:

1. Jesus’ message defined God in a unique way, as his Father.
2. Jesus’ resurrection shows that his message was true.
3. God must be his Father.
4. If God is Father, the nature of God means that he must be so from all eternity.
5. To be eternal Father, he must have always had offspring.
6. Jesus must be the eternal Son of God.

The order of discovery matters quite a bit for Pannenberg. The eternal relationship of Father and Son cannot be detached “from the incarnation of the Son in the historical existence and work of Jesus. Nevertheless, we are to understand this relation as part of the eternal identity of the Father.” Relation to this specific person is constitutive for the eternal identity of God himself.

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61 Ibid., 2:363. Fuller context: “Jesus did not make himself equal to God, not even in the sense of declaring himself to be the Son of God (Mk 14:61). He differentiated himself from God by subordinating himself to the Father so that he might serve the Father’s lordship by all that he did. In this way he gave the Father the honor that all creatures owe him as the one God. Only in this self-distinction from the Father by subordination to his royal rule, and in service to it, is he the Son.”

62 Ibid., 2:365-366.

63 Ibid., 2:368.
This technique of arguing for the Son’s eternal origin from the Father in light of the “future” event of the resurrection ties in with Pannenberg’s vision of God and time. The Father’s fatherhood is background while the focus is on the eschatological demonstration of God’s power in the resurrection.

The final consideration of this current section relates to the Father’s role in the cross and reconciliation of humanity. Pannenberg appreciates efforts from theologians such as Moltmann to burst the bubble of divine placidity by drawing the reality of the cross into the very life of the triune God. Still, he disagrees with theologians who would speak “point-blank of the death of God on the cross,” calling such a move “reverse monophysitism.”64 Even so, in Pannenberg’s estimation there are theological grounds and consequences involved. The cross is the ultimate consequence of the incarnation. It reveals Jesus as totally distinct from his Father. The incarnation and creation are bound by a close analogy for Pannenberg. The distinction of the eternal Son from the Father is the basis of all creaturely existence. Jesus’ human manifestation in itself entails humility and obedience as that self-distinction, but it comes to a climactic expression in his death.

By distinguishing the Father from himself as the one God, the Son certainly moved out of the unity of the deity and became man. But in so doing he actively expressed his divine essence as the Son. The self-emptying of the Preexistent is not a surrender or negation of his deity as the Son. It is its activation. Hence the end of his earthly path in obedience to the Father is the revelation of his deity.65

Elsewhere Pannenberg writes, “… Jesus took upon himself the ultimate consequence of his self-distinction from the Father and precisely in so doing showed himself to be the Son of the

64 Ibid., 1:314.

65 Ibid., 2:377. See also ibid., 2:433: “As Jesus accepted his death as the bitter consequence of his mission, his death became the seal of his self-distinction and therefore also the proof of his unity with God as the Son of the heavenly Father.”
Such statements as these employ paradoxical language not unlike Moltmann’s, although Pannenberg’s treatment does not go to quite the same rhetorical or poetic extremes. At any rate, it is clear that the cross is a moment of extreme distinction in the Trinity. The Father’s role in the story needs clarification.

While a non-Christian could easily see the cross as calling Jesus’ claims into question, Pannenberg urges his readers to take the cross as a possible contradiction of the Father’s deity. He says point blank, “In the death of Jesus the deity of his God and Father was at issue.” He refers to Eberhard Jüngel and Moltmann as theologians who influenced him on this point. The atheist critique and theodicy are not discussed in this immediate context, however. Pannenberg strives to be consistent in reading the immanent Trinity off of the economic Trinity, with the cross being a focal point of the distinction of Father and Son. Mutuality and reciprocity means that the deity of both is brought into question. He calls this double-implication an advance over Rahner’s own formulation of the inseparability of the incarnation and the immanent Trinity. Jesus’ resurrection provides the ultimate answer as the Father asserts himself against death. The double-implication of Father and Son refers to the Holy Spirit as well, who collaborates with the Father in the resurrection to bring the mission of the Son to its clarity and completion. Here Pannenberg correctly interprets Paul’s expression in Rom 8:11, which is commonly mistaken as

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66 Ibid., 1:314.


identifying the Spirit alone as raising Christ to new life.\textsuperscript{69} The Father’s agency is demanded because he has been called into question.

Regarding the event itself, Pannenberg surmises that the premise “God is love” demands that the Father must be affected as well by the passion of the Son. He does not follow Moltmann in discussing the “grief” of the Father, but he does appreciate his involvement and calls it sympathy, a co-suffering.\textsuperscript{70} He does not expand on this statement, but elsewhere it becomes clear that the suffering of the Father has to do with the equation of God’s deity and his kingdom. In the incarnation, the Father has entrusted his kingdom to the Son and has withdrawn his own rule, which is to say his deity. He is dependent upon the Son to accomplish his will. Christiaan Mostert remarks that Pannenberg makes a “radical point” that “God’s being… the deity of the Father, is constituted by what happens in the history of Jesus and by the work of the Spirit.”\textsuperscript{71}

The Father’s absence from the world reaches its climax in the cross.\textsuperscript{72} He chooses not to deliver Jesus, but at the same time it is an act of judgment against the world that has rejected the Father himself by crucifying Jesus. “The absence of the Father in the dereliction of his Son on the cross—and only here—is itself a factor in his becoming present for the world through the Son.”\textsuperscript{73} Grenz remarks that Pannenberg “views the absence of the Father in Jesus’ cross as a moment of

\textsuperscript{69} Ibid., 1:315.


\textsuperscript{72} Pannenberg, \textit{Systematic Theology}, 2:392.

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., 2:392.
the presence of God’s salvation.” The Father’s willingness to give up his rule, have his deity brought into question, and even abandon his own Son for the sake of humanity, all show his “fatherly love,” and his absence leads to fuller presence and the actualization of his deity in the resurrection. There is no doubt that for Pannenberg, the soteriological significance of the cross comes from the resurrection.

A key verse for Pannenberg’s interpretation of the Father’s—or “God’s”—role in the plan of salvation is 2 Cor 5:18: “All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.” He speaks of levels of agency in the crucifixion, and his emphasis on unity of action among the persons of the Trinity requires him to speak of the involvement of the Son and the Spirit as well, but clearly the Father acted in the cross to reconcile the world to himself. It is definitely not the other way around, as if God reconciled himself to humanity. He states, “Through all the baseness, cowardice, and brutality, God the Father was at work in this event according to his providential directing of the course of history.” Citing John 3:16 among other texts, he shows that the Father’s sending of the Son is clear in its intention. He takes God’s own plan for granted; the situation of Jesus is considerably more complicated for him. The unity of Father and Son demands a concept of joint agency, but their action must be conceived in different ways. The Father gives up the Son and becomes dependent upon him to complete the task and be obedient to him. The Son has the freedom to

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74 Grenz, Reason for Hope, 123.

75 Pannenberg says that 2 Cor 5:18 “causes us in the first instance to think specifically of an action of the Father in the death of Christ” before he goes on to include the Son and Spirit (Systematic Theology, 2:437).

76 Ibid., 2:438.

77 Ibid., 2:439.
do his own will, but his will is conformed to that of the Father. His distinction from the Father and his freedom gives space for created humanity to join with him and be reconciled to the Father. It is clear that the center of gravity in Pannenberg’s soteriology moves away from vicarious substitution towards the concept of reconciliation. The Father’s role is essentially that of providence, giving his Son up to death in order to reconcile the world to himself by raising him to new life.

In his explication of God the Father’s role in the economy, Pannenberg stakes out new territory and innovative theological explanations while trying to maintain fidelity to Scripture and many of the traditional doctrines of Christianity. He clearly prefers preserving the name “Father” for the First Person, and insists that Jesus’ teaching focused upon the imminence of the Father’s kingdom. The Father’s importance in the work of salvation largely consists in his allowing his fatherly love to come to fruition. He allows the distinction between himself and the Son, which already provided the basis for material creation, to lead to the incarnation and ultimately to the death of the Son. The treatment of the Son’s divinity, rather than starting with the immanent Trinity or the incarnation, moves backwards from the resurrection. A difficulty lies behind this aspect of Pannenberg’s theology. He holds to the typical language of the Father and the Son, but his treatment of their relationship dwells upon their distance. The Father is “other” more than a source or a parent. This is not quite the estrangement of Moltmann. It is more of a lack of direct involvement by the Father as true Father in the economy. By preferring to work backwards in Christology, Pannenberg moves away from the Johannine language that has so defined the theological tradition. The origin of the Son is diminished in importance. Much of this
is by design, as a consequence of the priority of the future in his thought. It is to this theme that we shall turn next.

The Future as Determinative

After examining the Father in the economy, it is important to address a few issues that arise from Pannenberg’s concept of the futurity of God. There is no question that the New Testament quite often speaks in the future tense of God’s glorious reign, a new creation, and the life of blessedness that awaits the elect. God’s creative purposes await a final fulfillment. What is innovative and even startling in Pannenberg’s theology is his willingness to dispense with the definitive existence of God in the present. Rather, he speaks of God’s existence and kingdom in anticipation of his future universal glory. Certainly arguments could be marshaled to dispute his reinterpretation of time and eternity, especially in light of various biblical texts. Keeping close to the topic at hand, i.e. God the Father and the future in Pannenberg, there are three issues to be analyzed: the naming of the God of Israel, the diminished usage of relations of origin as illustrating the Trinitarian distinctions, and the Father’s role in creation and eschatology given the reorientation of time.

Although Pannenberg devotes a considerable amount of space in his writings to discussing Christian theological traditions, and necessarily immerses himself in some exegetical issues from the New Testament, he rarely gleans much insight from the theology of the Old Testament. His attention to Exodus 3:14, in which God reveals his name to Moses, is the exception that proves the rule. Pannenberg’s innovative interpretation seizes on an ambiguity in the Hebrew formulation *ehyeh asher ehyeh*. While the Septuagint translated this *egō eimi ho ὄν*,
which is something like “I am the being,” most conventional translations treat it as equivalent to the modern English, “I am who I am.” The ambiguity in the Hebrew admits of several other readings, since there are a few options of how to construe the tense of ehyeh. Pannenberg opts for the translation “I am who I will be.” He has plenty of exegetes in his corner here, but he does not elaborate on the linguistic grounds of his decision. Pannenberg follows the exegetical argument that God answers Moses by pointing forward to his act of salvation. God does not reveal his ontology or make some metaphysical statement to Moses. Rather, it is a statement that he is the God who will act on their behalf. “[God] will show himself in his historical acts and will not come under any human influence.” Shortly thereafter he adds, “The request for the divine name points beyond the communicating of the name to future experiences of divine action in history.” When the events take place, they will confirm Yahweh’s deity, proving his power.

Pannenberg readily perceives the coherence of this interpretation of Ex 3:14 within his framework but takes it even further. The standard treatment of this text has led the tradition to misunderstand God’s being, he argues. God is not the God who “is,” with the name revealing the quintessence of a static nature; rather, God’s being is the future. Where exegetes might envision the future tense as indicating a proximate event, viz. the deliverance from Egypt, Pannenberg applies this futurist ontology macroscopically to the entirety of history. “There is

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78 See ibid., 1:205, 244, 360, 395.

79 This text opens up a fascinating question, but one far beyond the scope of this dissertation. I merely emphasize that Pannenberg is not alone in this interpretation (even a few ancient sources seem to opt for it), but he makes this non-traditional interpretation a cornerstone of his theology. He comments on pp. 395-396 that traditional theology has “wrongly viewed” Ex 3:14 as a statement that characterizes the divine essence.

80 Ibid., 1:205.

81 See also ibid., 1:360: “In the Bible the divine name is not a formula for the essence of the deity but a pointer to the experience of his working.”
knowledge of God only in retrospect of his past action in history, just as Moses sees God’s glory only when it has gone by,” he argues. If God reveals himself only partially in any given event, “knowledge of God is thereby imparted…only at the end of a sequence of revelatory events.” History as a whole can thus be taken as a complete demonstration of God’s deity, “though only at its end.” So the alternative reading of the divine name in Ex 3:14, “I am who I will be,” has incredible consequences for Pannenberg’s vision of eschatological ontology. He strives in his *Systematic Theology* to unfold the thesis that “the future of the world is the mode of time that stands closest to God’s eternity.” Since Pannenberg views the Old Testament revelation of God as specifically pointing to First Person of the Trinity, his interpretation here sets the table for the ambiguity of the Father’s existence or rule in the present vicissitudes of history. He awaits confirmation and vindication in the *eschaton*.

Making the *future* determinative rather than causal events in the past is perhaps the most striking move of Pannenberg’s theology, as he essentially reverses the arrow of time. Inasmuch as we can speak of God existing with respect to time and history, he would insist that we should speak of God dwelling not before time, nor outside of time, but at its end. God’s presence in time is the hand of the future guiding all things to their completion. This point bids us turn to the second issue regarding God’s futurity. What impact does this reversal have on the relations within the Godhead?

Pannenberg provides a vigorous counterbalance to the tradition’s emphasis on relations of origin. The Trinitarian disputes arose from the critical question of how to evaluate Jesus’

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relationship to God and man. If he is “Lord” (*kyrios*) as the New Testament acclaims him, with shades of *Adonai* in the background of this term, then how to compare him with the very divinity that he differentiated from himself? Much of the New Testament frames this issue with its indication of a Father-Son relationship. So the *origin* of the person of the Son became a clear and distinctive way to portray a shared nature. The Son receives the “fullness” of the Father (e.g. Col 1:19, 2:9), which expresses that he was truly sent by God and was something more than a mere man. The divinity of the Spirit forced a similar question, since the Spirit must also somehow be one with the Father and Son and yet distinct. Given the clear analogy of the Father-Son relationship, attempts arose to frame the Spirit’s identity similarly, *viz.* in relations of origin.

Pannenberg, however, takes issue with the one-sided nature of origin as indicating the relations of the persons. The Father begets the Son; the Son cannot beget the Father. He cannot reciprocate. There is also a common tendency in ancient and modern thought to subordinate the effect to the cause. Coupled with Jesus’ pronouncement in John—“the Father is greater than I” (Jn 14:28)—this tendency provoked many to dispute Jesus’ unity with the Father as a union of equals. The Father as source of the Son is an embarrassment for egalitarian theologians, and has been since before Athanasius. In response to the Arians’ mantra “there was a time when the Son was not,” Athanasius replied that if God is eternally Father, then he must eternally have a Son as well.⁸⁴ Pannenberg takes up and extends this argument. Athanasius rejected any gradation in the fullness of divinity on the basis of origin, but his positions provoked sharp questioning on how to uphold divine unity. Pannenberg says that Athanasius stipulated different grounds for the unity of Father and Son, namely “on the logic of the relation that is posited when we call God

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‘Father,’” but he finds the suggestion sketchy. Athanasius successfully applied his idea of
distinction-implying-relation to the unity and equality of Father and Son, but was less convincing
in his attempt to apply it to the Father’s relation to the Spirit.85

The Cappadocians, by linking the relation to the Father to the idea of source or
monarchy, actually represent a relapse into subordinationist challenges for Pannenberg. He seeks
instead to build upon the Athanasian foundation by perceiving reciprocity as fundamental to the
relations. The deity of the Father must depend on the Son no less than the Son’s depends upon
the Father. Recall Pannenberg’s principle that God’s deity is his rule, or “kingdom.” Scripturally,
he argues from several texts in the gospels and letters of Paul that the Father has invested his
authority upon the Son (Mt 28:18, Lk 10:22/Mt 11:27, Phil 2.9ff, 1 Cor 15:24-25).86 Rather than
seeing these texts as suggesting a shared or joint authority, Pannenberg thinks that the Father has
totally vacated his claim. The handing over and handing back of authority indicates mutuality
and reciprocity in a way that begetting does not. The exchange of the kingdom in the saving
economy definitively points to elements of the intratrinitarian life of God. Pannenberg’s criticism
of the Cappadocian theologians for putting emphasis on relations of origin has already been
noted, and will be dealt with again. If many theologians of the tradition might be criticized for
overreliance on John 1 and similar texts that highlight origin and preexistence, Pannenberg
decisively shifts away from such texts to focus on more reciprocal aspects of the trinitarian
relations.

85 Ibid., 1:278-279.
86 Ibid., 1:312.
We now turn to the third issue with regard to God’s futurity. Pannenberg’s doctrine of creation both coheres with many elements of traditional theology and introduces novel concepts. At the onset of the second volume of his *Systematic Theology*, before distinguishing his own trinitarian theology of creation, he states simply: “The world is the product of an act of God.” He also explains that it is a *free* act; creation is contingent, and no necessity compelled God. “Unlike the Son, it is not in eternity the correlate of God’s being as the Father.” Creation is the product of God’s love. The Son is merely the model of God’s turning to creation. Although there are echoes of the longstanding *logos* doctrine here, Grenz perceives some advancement in Pannenberg’s thought when it comes to the consequences of the Son’s self-differentiation: “The Son’s self-differentiation from the Father is the basis of existence of the world as independent of the Father.” He suggests that while the Father may be the ultimate source, the Son is more properly the ground of all creaturely existence. The Spirit comes into view as well as creation strives towards completion. This will be explained below. Pannenberg insists that the Christian doctrine of creation must be thoroughly trinitarian to ward off the various challenges of dualism and process theology. We should first consider the relationship of creation and eschatology in Pannenberg, before addressing the Father’s role in more detail.

Pannenberg’s greatest innovation in his theology of creation concerns his view of creation and the future, or as he sometimes puts it, eternity. Creation is emphatically not a one-

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87 *Ibid.*, 2:1. He emphatically states that “the origin of the world as creation by God’s free action tells us that even if the world had not come into existence, nothing would have been lacking the deity of God” (*ibid.*, 9). For Pannenberg, however, this does not mean that the course of creation (*i.e.* salvation history) has nothing to do with God’s own essence. His involvement in the world in its creation and consummation manifests God’s reality concretely.

time event of the past. God creates from his eternity, which is as much at the end of things as at
the beginning. In *Jesus—God and Man*, he puts it this way:

… in Jesus’ proclamation the true nature of creation is revealed for the first time in light
of its approaching end. This has fundamental significance also for the understanding of
creation itself. Creation is not to be understood as an act that happened one time, ages
ago, the results of which involve us in the present. Rather, the creation of all things, even
including things that belong to the past, takes place out of the ultimate future, from the
eschaton, insofar as only from the perspective of the end are all things what they truly
are.89

Mostert remarks that Pannenberg turns the whole doctrine of creation “back-to-front; the end is
more significant than the beginning.”90 Pannenberg speaks poetically of the future not as a mere
prisoner of the past and present, but being a powerful new thing hidden in the womb of
mystery.91 Looking at the biblical testimony, he draws out the connection between affirmations
of God’s creation and the expectation of new and decisive acts of salvation, especially in
Deutero-Isaiah. Scripture expresses creation as an ongoing process towards its true reality, and
God is the power at work throughout.

Pannenberg’s epistemological and noetic interests demand an explanation of things as
they have come into the horizon of humanity’s understanding. Creation from the future is
counter-intuitive. He realizes that human experience of causal relation suggests the linear
direction of past to present to future.92 In fact, from the beginning of his theological work critics


92 “From the standpoint of creatures the continued event of creation proceeding from the power of the future of God
suffers a temporal inversion whereby it seems to be a process moving from the past to the future.” Pannenberg,
*Systematic Theology*, 2:112.
have questioned how the future can be conceived as a viable ontological category. Pannenberg still claims that some common sense underlies his approach. People readily recognize the provisionality of things, *i.e.* that things are not just defined by their past or origin, but are on their way to a final form. He also elaborates the impact that anticipation has on the present—anticipation is the causality of the future. In *Metaphysics and the Idea of God*, Pannenberg writes, “Not only our knowing but also the identity of things themselves are not yet completely present in the process of time.” One should not speak of a static “essence” determined by the past, but should realize that the “essence” of things changes with the passage of time and events.

Only at the end of their movement through time, or even at the end of more complex series of events, could anyone decide what actually makes up their distinctive character, their essence. At that time, however, one would have to maintain that this had been the essence of the thing in question from the very beginning. The decision concerning the being that stands at the end of the process has retroactive power.

He uses the commonplace metaphor of a zinnia to demonstrate. One needs to observe its essence from its characteristic blossom, but throughout its growth it still has this essence through anticipation. Besides appealing to Scripture, he appeals to the philosophical tradition as well to indicate that his ideas might not be so novel after all. He refers to Aristotle’s concept of entelechy, that an object’s *telos* exerts a certain causality. In Pannenberg’s estimation, Plotinus provided a more satisfactory treatment of the relationship of history, eternity, and eschatology.

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than the Augustinian model that became dominant in Western thought.\(^{97}\) It becomes apparent that creation and eschatology must be handled together, as they are different aspects of the same thing. Creation comes out of and is oriented towards God’s eternity. Present knowledge is only provisional and does not prove God’s deity nor fully manifest God’s kingdom, which awaits its eschatological consummation.

The Trinitarian emphasis of the *Systematic Theology* project demands that each divine person has a role in God’s actions to create, reconcile, and bring the world to its consummation in the kingdom. Even when one person takes a lead role, for example the Son in Jesus’ atoning death on the cross, the other persons are involved in a profound way. Regarding creation, Pannenberg deems the very existence of the world as an expression of God’s goodness. “This statement of Christian belief in creation,” he explains, “relates first to the person of the Father. God is Father as the origin of creatures in their contingency by granting them existence, caring for them, and making possible their continued life and independence.”\(^{98}\) The Father’s love for creation is analogous to his love for the Son. The love of the Father for the Son is different in character, but the Son mediates the turning of the Father’s love to each of his creatures. “They become the object of the Father’s love because the eternal Son is manifested in them.” Although the Father is retained as source of creation, so that Pannenberg deems it legitimate that the creeds should hail him as creator, the involvement of the Son and the Spirit seem to limit and diminish his role even here. In terms of the space required for Pannenberg’s remarks, it is striking that the discussion of the Trinity and creation in volume 2 devotes a considerable amount of space to


discussion of the roles of the Son and Holy Spirit, with hardly more than a paragraph to review the Father’s involvement, the substance of which has been quoted above. It is not that creation is not important for Pannenberg, and neither is it the case that the Father is not involved in it. His eschatological center of gravity, his emphasis on the incomplete nature of creation, leads to an eclipse of the Father’s role.

The Father’s Monarchy Redefined

Pannenberg is dissatisfied with the traditional attempts to articulate the unity of the godhead and the trinity of persons. In his view, two major accounts in the tradition failed to show the Son and Spirit’s relation to the Father adequately. Both in some way collapsed divinity in the strict sense into the person of the Father and were overly speculative. The first account, which he attributes to the Cappadocians, put an emphasis on the Father as source, leading to a subordinationist view of the other persons. The second account, which he attributes to Augustine, put an emphasis on the Father as the single divine subject, leading to a modalistic theology. Pannenberg’s stated desire is to ground the explanation of the Trinity in the revelation of the persons in the economy. Given his interpretation of the data, this leads first to an appreciation of the three persons. So his initial approach inclines in favor of a social Trinitarian model, and the problem becomes how to demonstrate divine unity. Although he favors perichoresis, he does not find it fully adequate so he provides his own terminology in his doctrine of mutual self-distinction. Seeing the problem of Cappadocian theology as the possibility that God the Father could be seen as the only self-sufficient person and thus God in a higher sense, Pannenberg

\[99 \textit{Ibid.}, 1:271-285.\]
demands a fitting way to defeat such a point of view. His solution is to redefine monarchy to allow for mutual dependence. Each of the persons depends upon the others in order to be fully God. The problem, then, was not that the Son and Holy Spirit depended upon the Father, but rather the lack of a similar dependency on the part of the Father. Hence Pannenberg’s interpretation of monarchy deserves some exploration.

Pannenberg articulates multiple times that the traditional doctrine of “monarchy” is not something to be casually jettisoned. He knows that the term is not univocal, that it was employed by those against Nicene profession of Christ’s deity, but also by those in favor of it. He takes the threat of Arian subordinationism quite seriously, but he does not wish to do away with the term on that account; he goes along in some ways with how pro-Nicene theologians reckoned the notion of monarchy. Most times when Pannenberg describes God the Father as “fount,” “source,” or “principle” he is rehearsing what other theologians have said. He generally proceeds to critique their remarks along the lines of the non-reciprocity of relationships of origin as already demonstrated. It is hard to overstate how emphatic Pannenberg is that the Father as source must be qualified.

One might think that this would lead to an endorsement of the filioque because the doctrine often expresses the Father and Son as conjoined principle of the Spirit, which might be understood also to qualify the Father as source in the godhead. On the contrary, he points to John 15:26 and reminds the reader of his stance that the Son himself receives the Spirit, and not

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100 Ibid., 1:273-274.

101 Only taking examples from vol. 1, see 279-280, 301 n. 137, 303, 311, 322-323, 325-326, 336 n. 217, 342, 349, 385. When speaking of this view he almost always mentions the Cappadocians, but as far as I can tell he does not mention Augustine in this vein.
“merely [in] his human nature,” but “as person.”  

He acknowledges that many texts indicate that the Son also sends the Spirit, and that the Holy Spirit may be rightly called the “Spirit of Christ,” but he concludes, “This does not alter the fact that the Spirit originates and proceeds from the Father.” Notwithstanding the fact that both sides of this dispute stake out a claim about the relations of origin in the Trinity, Pannenberg calls the western account “inappropriate because it describes the fellowship in the vocabulary of a relation of origin.” At any rate, the basis of his decision is exegetical in nature. Jesus’ words describing the Holy Spirit as “proceeding from the Father” and the fact of his reception of the Holy Spirit in the saving economy both serve to indicate that the Father is the only source. Here the economic Trinity defines the relation of origin in the immanent Trinity. In this issue it becomes clear that despite Pannenberg’s problems with the “one source” language, he does hold onto it.

In his treatment of the divine attributes, which as we have said follows his treatment of the Persons, Pannenberg must clarify the “divine essence.” He adamantly insists that the divine essence is not a “fourth” in God, but that the interrelation of the three Persons constitutes the divine essence. In this context he makes some important remarks about the Father in the godhead along the lines of the current discussion. He opines that “both Father and Spirit in their different ways represent the Godhead as a whole.” The Son, having become incarnate, is the easiest to perceive as distinct from the divine essence. The attribute “spirit” applies to all three persons (Jn 4:24) and the Holy Spirit, as the dynamic field of God’s love, binds the persons together. Regarding the Father, he writes, “Certainly the Father, [like the Son], is what he is from eternity

102 Ibid., 1:317.

103 Ibid., 1:318.

104 Ibid., 1:429.
only in relation to the Son, but because he represents the divine essence in his function as the fount, his dependence on the Son is less obvious.” Pannenberg does not elaborate on this point, but at least here he does use the term “fount” in a constructive way, describing his own position. It is also important text in that Pannenberg here indicates how one can refer to the Father as “representing” the essence and being a foundation of unity in the Triune God. It is appropriate that he develops this point after just having called the Father’s begetting of the Son “the basic fulfillment of divine love,” and in the context of defining personhood as “ecstatic.” An understanding of the origin of the Trinity in the Father’s ecstatic love is thus hinted at but overshadowed by his extensive treatment of the Spirit as the divine essence.

The term “monarchy” in the tradition has typically referred to the Father as being the unbegotten one, the sole ground or origin of the Godhead in trinitarian order. It is mostly related to the etymology of *arche*, which is “beginning” in Greek. As has been indicated, Pannenberg holds to the Father as the one source in the Godhead, but does so in a rather muted fashion. Monarchy must apply to the Father. He devotes much more theological weight to “monarchy” as signifying divine rule. This goes hand in hand with Pannenberg’s emphasis on the “kingdom” language. It seems that his preference for using monarchy in terms of the kingdom over that of origin epitomizes his treatment of the economic and immanent Trinity. Relationships of origin cannot be reciprocated, but in the economy the eschatological orientation reverses the origin. By treating the monarchy as related to the “kingdom of God,” he articulates a Trinitarian vision of

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105 Ibid., 1:429-430.
106 Understandably, the term also has denotations of governance, as the typical usage of monarchy in English attests.
monarchy rooted in the Father but demanding the Son and the Spirit to be involved in its fulfillment. In a crucial passage, he states:

The mutuality and mutual dependence of the persons of the Trinity, not merely as regards their personal identity but also as regards their deity, do not mean that the monarchy of the Father is destroyed. On the contrary, through the work of the Son the kingdom or monarchy of the Father is established in creation, and through the work of the Spirit, who glorifies the Son as the plenipotentiary of the Father, and in so doing glorifies the Father himself, the kingdom or monarchy of the Father in creation is consummated. By their work the Son and the Spirit serve the monarchy of the Father.\(^\text{107}\)

Pannenberg treats kingdom and monarchy as synonymous in this text; he relates monarchy to the creation and consummation of the world. Just as Athanasius argued that the First Person is not eternal Father without an eternal Son, Pannenberg maintains that the Father is not monarch without the service of the Son and Spirit. His kingdom depends upon them. He rightly rejects any ontological inferiority in this relationship, but says that the Son by subjecting himself to the Father “is himself in eternity the locus of the monarchy of the Father.”\(^\text{108}\) So out of fear of subordinationism, Pannenberg wishes to subordinate the Father’s monarchy to the Son and Holy Spirit. Pannenberg’s formulation of dependent monarchy has some interesting consequences indeed.

As stated earlier, Pannenberg holds consistently that by “God” the New Testament typically has the Father in mind. Jesus’ preaching of the kingdom announced the nearness of God’s coming to rule; it is an eschatological reality made imminent. Jesus is far from a mere herald in Pannenberg’s account in *Systematic Theology*. The Son *activates* the kingdom. He makes the future present. While this much is perhaps uncontroversial, Pannenberg goes farther to


put unique weight on statements that the Father has handed over authority to the Son. He reasons from these statements that the Father depends upon the Son for the realization of his kingdom. To put it in other words, the Father abdicates his monarchy. Of course, this is not a final and definitive state of affairs; the Son will subject all things to God’s rule and return the kingdom to the Father in the end (1 Cor 15:24). The temporary handing over and handing back of the kingdom is essential to Pannenberg’s interpretation of the dependent monarchy of the Father.

The Father delegates his power and rule to the Son and the Spirit in the creation, reconciliation and consummation of the world, in order to receive it again in the eschaton. In this light it is understandable to view the Father as transcendent in contrast to the immanence of the Son and Holy Spirit. There is significant tension here in Pannenberg’s thought. He does formulate the Father’s transcendence, but he also demands that the Father be treated separate from the divine essence. On transcendence, he maintains that using “Father,” as in the Lord’s Prayer, applies to God the Father alone, contrary to most patristic and medieval theologians.109 This is consistent with his exegetical judgment of the equivalence of “Father” and “God” in the New Testament as mentioned earlier. He agrees that the divine Persons work together ad extra, but maintains that theologians can and must discern how each of the Persons acts distinctively in a way that upholds the integrity of revelation. It is proper for the Father to be the object of Jesus’ revelation and remain “other” and transcendent. Rather than reporting a present state of affairs, however, Jesus anticipates and inaugurates the power of the future from this transcendent Father.

\[109\text{ Ibid., 1:325-326. He says emphatically, “The unity of Jesus’ proclamation of God is thereby sundered [by those who take the “Our Father” as related to the Trinity} in a way which is exegetically unfounded and intolerable.”]
It is in this light that we must interpret Pannenberg’s deceivingly simple statement, “In his monarchy the Father is the one God.”

Pannenberg sees the world as the history of God which ultimately bears the stamp of what will be acknowledged as the unity of the divine essence. He picks up a thread from Rahner that focuses on the trinitarian implications of the incarnation and then takes it farther:

Extending the thought of Rahner, one might thus say that creation is brought into the relations of the trinitarian persons and participates in them. Nevertheless, only the persons of the Son and Spirit act directly in creation. The Father acts in the world only through the Son and Spirit. He himself remains transcendent.

This is a model of God’s activity in history reminiscent of Irenaeus’ “two hands of God” image. The difficulty here is that he wishes to maintain the Father’s transcendence but he is also committed to Father’s involvement in the economy so that he is not merely the “hidden God” or the “divine essence” unrelated to creation. Pannenberg is critical of theological works that treat God the Father in conjunction with the divine essence. Walter Kasper is specifically mentioned a few times in this vein, and Barth and Rahner are implicated as well. Pannenberg disputes that Kasper in his book *The God of Jesus Christ* relates statements about God’s essence and attributes “to the doctrine of the Father as the origin and fount of the Trinity.” He rejoins that the Father is not God without the Son and is only known as God by his relation to the Son. Pannenberg tries to strike a tricky balance. The Father creates and sends yet somehow remains directly involved

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110 Ibid., 1:326.

111 Ibid., 1:328.

112 Ibid., 1:300-301, n. 137. Kasper says, for example, “…according to the scriptures and the early Christian tradition the person God whom we seek is the Father. Therefore the doctrine of the Trinity must start with the Father and understand him as origin, source, and inner ground of unity in the Trinity” (*The God of Jesus Christ*, 299). It should be noted that Kasper views his own approach in contrast to “the predominant Latin tradition” (*ibid.*).
through the other two Persons as creation comes to participate in God’s life. Without a strong theology of divine origin, and with merely an *anticipatory* notion of God’s unity, it is difficult to escape the thought that the three are independent agents bound by common beneficence to the world.

God the Father in his monarchy is transcendent, but simultaneously his monarchy depends on the Son and the Holy Spirit. Typically theologians have grounded the economic Trinity in the immanent Trinity, but Pannenberg does the reverse. It is not just that to be eternal Father means to have an eternal Son; the very deity of the Father is something that depends upon the Son. His argument for this is largely an epistemological one: without the Son’s revelation, there is no true or certain knowledge of the Father. The Father transcends the Son and created things besides, but he depends upon the Son for his kingdom. Given the preponderant importance of the economic Trinity here, it is difficult to perceive how God is truly God without creation and God’s relation to it in history. Although Pannenberg makes it clear that he envisions God reconciling the world to himself, and drawing the elect into the relations of the Trinity, it still appears that God is not fully transcendent but rather that his reality is present only in anticipation; its totality hangs in the balance awaiting the consummation, contingent upon the history of the economic relations. In retrospect, God the Father’s transcendence, that is to say his deity, his justice, and his creative love will be said to have been there all along. His monarchy, or as Jesus puts it his kingdom, hinges upon the course of events to be recognized as eternal.
Conclusion

In place of grounding the unity of the Trinity in the relations of origin, Pannenberg offers the alternative conception of separate centers of action in mutual dependence and mutual self-distinction. He reckons that this approach takes the threeness of the Persons seriously, and acknowledges that any definitive statement of unity must be deferred. The astonishing consequence of Pannenberg’s theology here is that the monarchy of the Father is not a given but rather it is the result of the activity of the Son and the Holy Spirit. He focuses rather on the Son’s handing the kingdom over to the Father in the end, when all things have reached their intended end. The petition in the Lord’s Prayer, “thy kingdom come,” takes on a whole new dimension in this light. Through the decisive action of the Holy Spirit, believers enter into solidarity with Jesus and his concern for the imminent coming of the Father’s kingdom, the irruption of eternity into history. Several Scriptural texts point to God’s glory as the destination of all things, but few attempts at theology have made this as decisive as has Wolfhart Pannenberg’s. Perhaps his lack of explicit focus on the Father as source really serves to draw out his thesis that creation is incomplete until the consummation of the world. When the Father’s fontal love becomes evident in the end, then his eternal creative capacity can be truly appreciated.

Although surely this is a powerful formulation, a devastating weakness lies close at hand in Pannenberg’s notion of the obscurity of the present knowledge of God’s creation. Following 1 John 4, Pannenberg defines the divine essence as love.113 “As the one and only essence of God [love] has its existence in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.” The way that Pannenberg’s thought tracks, love and spirit are closely identified. The Holy Spirit is described as the divine field and

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113 Pannenberg, Systematic Theology, 1:427–428.
points to love in a particular way. He says that “on the one side the Spirit and love constitute the common essence of deity, and on the other they come forth as a separate hypostasis in the Holy Spirit.”\textsuperscript{114} Finally, it is easy to perceive that the Spirit’s role in bringing the universe to its consummation simultaneously brings about the unity of God. It turns out that Pannenberg has articulated a much more compelling case for the monarchy of the Spirit than the monarchy of the Father.

Pannenberg strives to make the case for the monarchy of the Father without Monarchianism, that is, taking the doctrine to an extreme length that would be tantamount to ontological subordination of the Son and Holy Spirit. He envisions monarchy as intrinsically connected to the exchange of the kingdom of God: its eternity is in the Father’s hands, but at present it appears as something still anticipated. The glory of the Father depends upon the Son and Holy Spirit. Just as his love flowed ec-statically as their origin, their love flows ec-statically to reconcile and consummate all things in his monarchy. The latter moment finds much more reliable expression in his work. Pannenberg’s theology certainly puts an emphasis on the Father as the content of Jesus’ revelation, but as transcendent other rather than loving source and ground of all being. He raises several significant questions regarding the relationship between history and God, which is analogous to the relationship of time and eternity. Pannenberg perceives a recurring subordinationist tendency in Trinitarian theology, and blames this on the non-reciprocal nature of relations of origin. These concerns lead him to bold but possibly problematic declarations regarding the immanent and economic Trinity, and have a decisive impact on his theology of God the Father.

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., 1:429.
Pressing Questions for the Historical Inquiry

It is time to take stock of the key problems in the theology of God the Father to provide a basis for the historical inquiry into the thought of Augustine and Bonaventure. Moltmann and Pannenberg do not reject everything from the tradition, but they certainly have issued quite a challenge. At the same time, no theology is perfect; turning back to other great authors provides an opportunity for rethinking the problematic areas of any system. Moltmann himself says, “If we consider theology’s task and its problems, then the historical intervals are unimportant, and Athanasius, Augustine, Luther or Schleiermacher enter into the theological discussion of the present day. We have to come to terms with them as we do with contemporaries.”¹ To bring Augustine and Bonaventure into discussion with Moltmann and Pannenberg, I outline three interrelated areas below.

First, how is God the Father said to be “Father”? Is this a literal description or a metaphorical description? Modern theologians are rightly concerned about a concept of God that privileges one gender over another. More importantly, however, is the criticism that “Father” means that he is the ruler over the divine household, or ruler over the universe along the lines of a patriarchal system. Related to this, both the Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed describe the Father with the adjective “almighty.” Moltmann especially draws out the tension between a vision of an “almighty” God and a vision of an intimate, personal God. God’s “fatherhood” can be an ambiguous symbol that points to both.

Second, it is clear that Moltmann and Pannenberg place a premium on equality in the godhead. It is difficult to say, but ought to be said, that in their explorations it is difficult to find

¹ Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, xiv.
God the Father worthy of worship and praise. They also lose or attenuate the sense of monotheism that has been so important for Christian prayer and doctrine. We must discern what Augustine and Bonaventure offer to enable Christians to praise the Father fittingly.

Third, the most pressing question concerns the precise role of God the Father in the Trinity. The Creeds follow a fixed order of Father–Son–Holy Spirit. Eastern traditions certainly place a premium on God the Father as “source” of the godhead, but the Western traditions holds this doctrine as well in ways that have not been as widely understood or appreciated. Of the modern authors considered at length above, both are concerned with the lack of reciprocity in traditional accounts, but Pannenberg puts this most incisively. Can we speak of a “First Person” at all? Can we conceive of a divine person being “first” or “origin” in such a way that he ensures the unity and coequality of the other persons with him? While Moltmann and Pannenberg answer negatively, or at least vigorously reconceive this idea of the Father as source, it turns out to be central to the Trinitarian theology of Augustine and Bonaventure. It is to their theology that we turn now, to discern a more proper theology of God the Father in the Trinity.
Part II: God the Father in Augustine

Augustine wrote indefatigably from the time of his baptism around AD 386 until the time of his death in 431. Alongside the hundreds of letters and scores of treatises that he composed, his ministry as a bishop was catalogued extensively in the form of homilies that were transcribed faithfully for posterity. Similarly, the scholarship on the Trinity in Augustine is staggering, not to mention the thousands of works commenting on and reacting to his teachings down the centuries. As with the currents of scholarship in so many specialties, paradigms have emerged and subsequently fallen out of favor in the course of the last century. At the beginning of this section, therefore, a few words are in order to comment on the state of scholarship as well as to set parameters and explain the works chosen for primary consideration. As indicated in the introduction above, there is plenty of room for further scholarship on the role of God the Father in Augustine’s thought; while the present work seeks to choose texts for analysis judiciously in order to advance the understanding of this topic, an exhaustive study falls outside the scope of the project. Instead, the works studied below aim at providing a representative sampling of Augustine’s paterology, to serve the ultimate goal of bringing his insights to bear on the questions raised above.

After introducing the works to be studied below and some of the scholarly trends, a few paragraphs suffice to give a sketch of Augustine’s early thoughts regarding God the Father. There is continuity in his thought, but also considerable development; these early works offer only brief glimpses of the complexity his theology takes on later. There are many works that would need to be incorporated into a comprehensive study of the theology that he exhibits before
his elevation to the episcopacy in 395.¹ For our purposes here, three works serve to outline his early theology of the Father. *Soliloquium* offers a glimpse of his early expression of prayer. This gives an indication of whether Augustine prays to God the Father in particular or more generally to the entire Trinity at this stage. *De vera religione* shows commitment to the idea that the Father is source, with Son and Holy Spirit emanating from him in equality. *De fide et symbolo* contains an exposition of the creed, as the name implies, and in this work Augustine explores what it means for the Father to be “almighty” and stresses the non-reciprocal nature of the Father-Son relationship. These early works give an indication of the baseline, his first attempts at articulating the mystery of the Trinity and the Father’s place in Trinitarian order.

The remainder of Part II investigates two of Augustine’s most important books (*Confessions* and *De Trinitate*) as well as a cluster of polemical works from late in his career, against the Homoians. Though it has not always been the case, *Confessions* is the most widely read of the works by the bishop of Hippo today. From start to finish, *Confessions* is a prayer to God, and at many points he makes it explicit that he is praying to the Father through the Son and Holy Spirit. While this work does not systematize an understanding of the Trinity in a convenient section, it witnesses throughout to his personal quest, his deep inquiry into the nature of God. If in *Confessions* Augustine narrates his own discovery of God, or better his discovery by God, what does this mean in Trinitarian terms? The Trinity as Trinity is absolutely central to Augustine’s story, and God the Father holds a distinctive place. Fundamentally, he appreciates that the Father has sent his Son and Spirit so that he can make a proper return to the Father.

¹ Aside from the works treated below, see especially *De ordine*, *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae*, *Letter 11*, and *De diversis quaestionibus ad Simplicianum*. Lewis Ayres has a different scope for his study, but he includes subheadings on *De moribus* and *Letter 11* in his *Augustine and the Trinity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 52-71. These works provide early examples of Augustine’s use of *principium* for God the Father.
Biblical imagery permeates the book, and he alludes to and quotes Scripture constantly. One cannot escape it. His confessions thus amount to a Trinitarian hermeneutic of his own life of faith. His reconception of the family in this work aids in responding to Moltmann, and his stress upon givenness aids in responding to Pannenberg.

*De Trinitate (On the Trinity)* is vast in scope, comprising fifteen books. A mere glance at theological literature in the West shows its unmatched influence among patristic works on God. The title of this work immediately suggests its inclusion within this study, but a problem also arises: nearly half of the work focuses not on elaborating Trinitarian doctrine but on articulating a Trinitarian epistemology. That is, how can the finite and fallen human mind come to remember, know, and love God who is infinite? Books 8 to 15 develop mental triads at length. These triads have exerted much influence on the Western tradition, but as has been seen, modern theologians often see them as leading to a unipersonal and modalistic concept of God. While the mental triads have been prone to mischaracterization, modern theologians have not paid enough attention to other matters in this tome. There is rich material here for grasping his theology of God the Father. Two major sequences in this work describe the Father as source, or *principium*, within the deity. Beyond examining these passages closely, however, the current project needs to offer a fresh conception of the Father’s place in Augustine’s Trinitarian method and grammar, topics that have produced tumultuous debate. The inclusion of *De Trinitate* needs no further justification, but the focus must remain tightly on passages and topics that illuminate the Father’s specific role in the Trinity.
Next we turn to certain later works, dating to the period after AD 418, which deal with Homoian threats to Augustine’s staunch pro-Nicene theology: works include Augustine’s *Reply to an Arian Sermon*, from around AD 419, and his recorded debate with and written reply to Maximinus, a Homoian bishop. It is both an advantage and a disadvantage that these works are explicitly polemical. The advantage emerges from Augustine’s need to respond to sharp questioning to frame his own Trinitarian theology and to treat of the Father’s relationship to the godhead. The disadvantage comes from the fact that polemical works rarely allow for systematic and literary freedom. To ward off the taint of heresy, he must make a thoroughly safe play. The Homoians envision God the Father as “God” in a greater sense than the Son, which puts to the test Augustine’s position that the Father is source of the godhead. Augustine does not flinch. He holds that the Father begets the Son from his own substance, in such a way that he is distinct but completely equal. To say that the Father cannot do so would make him impotent, while to say that the Father refuses to do so would make him selfish. His remarks against the Homoians provide a healthy view of the Father-Son relationship in the Trinity. His remarks here indicate sociality in God that is intriguing given the all-too-common complaints against Augustine that Moltmann and Pannenberg have echoed.

The treatment below focuses on the words of Augustine himself, as we invite him to the table to advance the theology of God the Father. This is especially important since few modern scholars have undertaken study of his thought on this specific issue, and it is of great benefit to theology to recapture his authentic voice. Historical scholarship helps this recovery process immensely, so it is also quite helpful to be aware of the current state of scholarship on Augustine’s Trinitarian theology. This last generation has witnessed a deluge of learned studies
on his thought, however, so total mastery of this material exceeds the scope of this dissertation. The following remarks are offered as a mere orientation.

One cannot discuss scholarship on Augustine’s Trinitarian theology, it seems, without mentioning the influential work of Theodore de Régnon. As noted in the introduction above, he published an extensive work detailing the development of doctrine, *Études de théologie positive sur la Sainte Trinité*, which had an enormous impact on the views of historians and theologians in the twentieth century. De Régnon extensively compared the development of Trinitarian theology in the East and in the West, and has been interpreted as offering a basic taxonomy: in the East, theologians generally start with the distinction of the persons and proceed to the unity of the divine essence, while in the West, theologians generally start with the unity of the divine essence and proceed to discuss the distinctions of the persons. The most telling, programmatic example came with Thomas Aquinas’ *Summa Theologicae*, in which he treated of *De Deo Uno* in a hermetic fashion before pressing on to the processions and missions of the Trinity. The original material from de Régnon is rather nuanced, but a certain simplification of his conclusions spread like a virus among theologians of the mid to late twentieth century.² While de Régnon evenhandedly compared East and West without giving a preference for the systematic merits of each, those who leaned upon his work often touted the Greek view. Both authors from the first part of the dissertation, along with Karl Rahner and Catherine Mowry LaCugna, assimilate this typology. The common casual assumption implicated Augustine. As the seminal author of

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Western theology, Augustine surely must have started with the divine essence. Some even went as far as saying that Augustine was a modalist, or suggested that his thought leads to the concept that the divine essence stands behind the persons of the Trinity. Such a vision entails either a de facto quaternity or a subordination of the persons to the divine essence. Sometimes these accusations went hand-in-hand with the supposed explanation that Augustine subordinated biblical language to Platonism, or the economic to the immanent Trinity. Far from being a proponent of authentic pro-Nicene theology, Augustine sealed its de facto defeat. Or so the story goes.

Besides the criticism that Augustine starts with the divine essence or privileges the unity over the persons, the remarks up to this point have suggested another major criticism leveled against the bishop during the twentieth century. Given Augustine’s extensive inquiry into the mind in the latter half of De Trinitate, many have read this as symptomatic of a philosophical ideology hijacking Christianity. In this view Augustine, afforded slight justification by John 1:1, assimilated the Trinity to a Neoplatonic triad starting from the mind. This criticism has not been leveled solely at Augustine; it has become commonplace to find the accusation that Hellenistic philosophical ideologies supplanted the Semitic cultural roots of Scripture. At any rate, the work of Olivier du Roy and Michael Schmaus provoked intense criticism of Augustine’s

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3 The very titles of the major sections of LaCugna’s work testify to her view that Augustine’s theology led to the defeat of the Trinity. Colin Gunton has also seen Augustine as having had a devastating effect on Trinitarian doctrine, as in The Promise of Trinitarian Theology, 3rd ed. (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 30-55. Bradley Green has written an excellent response to Gunton’s criticisms in Gunton and the Failure of Augustine: The Theology of Colin Gunton in Light of Augustine (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011).
“psychological analogy” and its ramifications for theology. His vision of God has been cast as solipsistic, entailing a deity knowing and loving himself—a fully realized individual.

Late in the twentieth century, dissidents from these paradigms became increasingly vocal. In particular, two key figures representing a new paradigm are Michel Barnes and Lewis Ayres. A growing body of scholarship seeks to free Augustine from some of the accusations and labels mentioned in the preceding paragraphs, or at least move past those labels. Mary Clark offers the vigorous counterclaim that there is “no evidence in De Trinitate that Augustine asserted divine unity to be prior to the Trinity.” Basil Studer has published a few works operating on the premise that Augustine typically uses “God” with reference to the Father. In the face of the


5 See above, 11 n. 15. Rowan Williams should also be mentioned as a leading figure in the current revival of Augustinian scholarship. While the work of Ayres has found many supporters, it has provoked intense discussion and some sharp criticism. There is a concern that he implicitly replaces de Régnon’s typology with a view of a unifying pro-Nicene culture that does not sufficiently respect the distinctive elements of individual theologians. Along with this, Khaled Anatolios and John Behr suggest that he too readily applies a terminology and framework from the later West to support this unifying tendency. See Harvard Theological Review 100:2 for their criticisms and Ayres’ response. It is especially worth taking into account the charge of John Behr concerning the usage of “God” in Nicene and Its Legacy. He notes the consistent usage of θεός (ho theos) for God the Father in Scripture and the ancient creeds. Yet “for whatever reason, we have become so accustomed to speaking of ‘the triune God’ or ‘the trinitarian God’—the one God who is three—that we find it difficult not to think of the Trinity whenever we read the word ‘God’” (“Response to Ayres: The Legacies of Nicaea, East and West,” Harvard Theological Review 100 [2007]:147). He laments that Ayres uses expressions like “the triune God” in treating Greek theologians. Because of the lack of articles in the Latin language, Behr maintains that the Latin theological tradition could not capture the key nuance. “To speak of ‘the triune’ or ‘trinitarian God,’ the one God who is three, Father, Son, and Spirit, sounds not only odd, but distinctly modalist” (ibid., 148). Behr wonders whether “God as Trinity” emerges with Augustine, but he criticizes that this usage forms an assumption in Western theological discourse (ibid., 148). Ayres’ Augustine and the Trinity seems to respond to Behr’s concerns inasmuch as he strives to depict the Trinitarian dimensionality of God.


assumption that Platonism or Neoplatonism was the primary driver of Augustine’s language of God, Gouven Madec has rehabilitated Augustine as drawing his terminology and imagery more from Scripture. Ayres’ work *Augustine and the Trinity*, for example, situates the bishop more within the context of early Latin Trinitarian theology than within a thoroughgoing Neoplatonism. Recent historical scholarship encourages us to appreciate Augustine more as a theologian utilizing philosophical motifs at the service of his various roles in context.

The current dissertation, sympathetic to many of the insights provided in this recent tide of Augustinian scholarship, recognizes that there is still room for further refinement in understanding and articulating Augustine’s theology of God the Father. Theologians must resist the tendency to automatically accept textbook accounts and ought instead to investigate the sources anew. A better grasp of Augustine also affords a better understanding of Bonaventure. There is much less Trinitarian scholarship on Bonaventure, but a few of the major accounts envision him breaking away from Augustine, following the now-diminished critiques that Augustine starts from the divine essence and overemphasizes the psychological model.

Rather than treat Augustine’s theological style in general here, each of the sections below will include some remarks about the context and style that Augustine uses. Similarly, the

8 Gouven Madec, *Le Dieu d’Augustin* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1998). To qualify the remark slightly, Madec allows that the Platonic language need not be seen in total opposition to biblical language, as Augustine saw the two as consistent though not identical (ibid., 33).

9 Certainly Neoplatonic influences and Christian influences were intermixed and so a clean division is impossible. Ayres criticizes the tendency toward making the Neoplatonic framework dominant in his thought, or in his early thought before he “came to his Christian senses” (Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity*, 41). He actually prefers the term “Platonist” because he has a hard time seeing specific concerns of late Platonists but more of a general influence (ibid., 16-17).
dissertation will refrain from extensive discussion of Augustine’s reliance upon the work of previous theologians. Just a few comments will suffice in general here, although footnotes below provide additional information. While Augustine quotes liberally from Scripture, and in certain works makes use of liturgical texts and creeds, his explicit citation of theologians is notably rare. He acknowledges Hilary of Poitiers’ work on the Trinity from the 360’s (which is also called *De Trinitate*) and discusses a particular point of his at length in his own *De Trinitate*.\(^\text{10}\) Along with the fact that Augustine specifically names Eunomius in this work, most scholars infer that his discussion of certain arguments assumes at least a passing knowledge of the Greek debates.\(^\text{11}\) Ayres detects terms and phrases that can be traced to earlier Latin theologians, especially Victorinus and Ambrose. In a summary comment, Ayres remarks that Augustine certainly read his predecessors and contemporaries carefully, but he could be counted upon to have an original take on the issues he discussed.\(^\text{12}\) The working assumption for this project, then, is that Augustine owns each of the positions that he takes. He certainly has been influenced by others and his works include borrowed phrases and exegetical strategies, but his theology is distinctive and does not lean extensively upon the arguments of others. Thus after a few prefatory matters, including remarks on the context and genre of the work under consideration, each section below investigates the theology of God the Father offered with a view to the questions at hand.

\(^{10}\) Augustine, *De Trinitate*, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina (henceforth CCSL) vol. 50 and 50a (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1968), 6.10.11.


\(^{12}\) Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity*, 70, 169.
God the Father in Three Early Works

As indicated above, before moving on to Confessions it is appropriate to set forth a distillation of his theology of God the Father from three early works in order to appreciate the development of his thought on this topic: Soliloquia, De vera religione, and De fide et symbolo. Augustine’s earliest works do not grapple with the doctrine of the Trinity in detail, but they naturally enough contain treatment of God. They also provide a glimpse into his (rather limited) absorption of the pro-Nicene theology of his early teachers.

Among Augustine’s earliest works as a baptized Christian are the Soliloquies (Soliloquia or Soliloquiorum libri duo). He wrote them in the late autumn and winter of 386-387. He crafted these two books as a dialogue between himself and his faculty of reason. The key passages take place in his prayers at the inception of the dialogue. Indeed, as Augustine’s persona in the dialogue suggests, the fruitfulness of the inquiry hinges on beginning in prayer. Because of his poor health, Reason bids him to pray for assistance. He does just that, recording the words of his prayer for the reader. Augustine’s prayer is direct and extensive, repeating key phrases in anaphora and tricolon, taking up several pages and the rest of the first chapter of the dialogue. Scholars consider the prayer a careful product of style, and most modern scholars

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13 On Augustine’s early theology of God, see Studer, Grace of Christ, 88-103; the article “God” coauthored by Ayres and Barnes (Augustine through the Ages, ed. Fitzgerald), 384-390; Ayres’ Augustine and the Trinity, 42-92. Carol Harrison’s Rethinking Augustine’s Early Theology (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) does not treat his early Trinitarian thought in detail.

14 The critical edition referred to below is contained in Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum (henceforth CSEL) vol. 89, Vienna: Verlag Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1986.

detect a cautiously Trinitarian structure. Augustine begins the lengthy prayer by invoking God as the creator of the universe \((Deus universitatis conditor)\). The focus on origins provokes some to conclude, perhaps a bit hastily, that Augustine writes more as a neo-Platonist than as a Christian. Later components of his prayer, however, attenuate such an opinion. He begins eleven sentences in a row with a simple invocation, \(Deus\), followed by a particular description or attribute of his creative power. The final invocation in this initial part of the prayer runs this way:

\[
\text{God, father of truth, father of wisdom, father of true and perfect life, father of blessedness, father of goodness and beauty, father of intelligible light, father of our awakening and illumination, father of the pledge by which we are reminded to return to you: it is you whom I invoke.}
\]

The eighth \((Pater pignoris quo admonemur redire ad te)\) uses the word \emph{pignus}, meaning “pledge.” This phrase points to a call to return to the Father. Interestingly, the Vulgate employs this word to describe the Spirit in three \emph{loci}: 2 Cor 1:22 and 5:5 and Eph 1:14. Augustine certainly does not spell out the Trinity here aside from the Father, but he does use phrases that imply the roles of the other two in the saving economy. So he explicitly addresses God as father repeatedly at the end of the first part of this prayer. This dense sequence of phrases serves as a transitional outline for the following six sentences of the prayer, in which he directly follows the

\footnotesize{
\begin{enumerate}
\item In the above mentioned article, Jean Doignon suggests that the language of his prayer is inspired by philosophical works. Watson resonates with this (“The form is Neoplatonic; so, too, is much of the content”) but he nevertheless reckons a Trinitarian structure \((Soliloquies, 166)\).
\item Augustine, \textit{Soliloquies}, 1.2. \emph{Deus, pater veritatis, pater sapientiae, pater verae summæque vitae, pater beatitudinis, pater boni et pulchri, pater intelligibilis lucis, pater evigilationis atque inluminationis nostræ, pater pignoris, quo admonemur redire ad te.}
\end{enumerate}
}
invocation *Deus* with truth, wisdom, true and supreme life, etc., as apparent attributes of God in apposition. God as creator calls to mind his fatherhood, and God’s qualities manifestly flow from this same fatherhood.

His first usage of *unus*, in the phrase *unus deus tu*, comes only toward the end of this prayer, after sections that are usually accorded to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We perceive a strong reference to the Trinity shortly thereafter: “…where who begets and whom he begets is one” (*ubi qui gignit et quem gignit unum est*).19 This is an allusion to Scripture, and indeed Augustine retracts it as a misquotation of Jn 10:30; he should have written *unum sunt*.20 Either way, the text confirms that this “one God” includes the Father and Son in a mystery of unity. Even so, it is not clear that “God” means “Trinity” as much as “God” includes the Son certainly and the Holy Spirit less certainly.21 The Father is simply assumed to be God, but this language insists on the unity of Father and Son. The rest of the prayer includes six more references to *pater*, including “Father wisest and best” (*pater sapientissime et optime*). In seeming allusion to the parable of the prodigal son, he prays, “Receive back, I beg you, your runaway slave, my master, most merciful Father” (*Recipe, oro, fugitivum tuum, Domine, clementissimum pater*).22 His usage of “Father” in this extensive prayer does not admit of much precision in Trinitarian terms.23 He calls upon God as Father many times, and professes that in God the begetter and

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21 He does not seem to use the word *spiritus* at all in *Soliloquia*.

22 Augustine, *Soliloquies*, 1.5.
begotten is (sic) one, but he merely suggests the Son and Holy Spirit without using their personal names.

The rest of the dialogue is almost devoid of explicit reference to Scripture. With his Reason, he ponders the relationship between veritas (“Truth”) and verum (“the true”) in a way that identifies God as Truth. It is only with difficulty and speculation that one could identify Truth with a person of the Trinity on the basis of his writing here. He does not use the terms “Word” or “Spirit” in this work. Augustine the interlocutor addresses his prayers to God the Father, but his theology in the Soliloquies is quite undeveloped. It is worth noting Augustine’s fundamental inclination towards the unity of God, and that “God” aligns closely with “Father” in a way that is rather unclear.

A few years later, Augustine wrote De vera religione (True Religion). It is typically regarded as a work for Romanianus, an African benefactor who had been a Manichean with Augustine before the latter’s conversion. In this lengthy tract, Augustine upholds worship of

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23 His concomitant identification of God as both “Father of Truth” and “Truth” itself—among other divine attributes—merely suggests a trajectory for later development in his theology.

24 The major exception occurs later at a point when Augustine’s persona finds himself in patent error and Reason bids him to pray to God for help. He calls on God as Father again (ibid., 2.6): Deus, Pater noster, qui ut oremus hortaris, qui et hoc quod rogaris praestas; siquidem cum te rogamus, melius vivimus, melioresque sumus: exaudi me palpitantem in his tenebris, et mihi dexteram porridge. Praetende mihi lumen tuum, revoca me ab erroribus; te duce, in me redeam et in te. Amen.

25 See Augustine, De Vera Religione, 7.12. Critical text in CCSL 32. While Augustine does not begin the work with a dedication or indication of a specific reason for writing, here he adverts to his inspiration: “Accordingly, my dearest friend Romanianus, since I promised you a few years ago that I would commit to writing what my thoughts are on the true religion, I have decided that now is the time, because I have reached the stage where, bound to you as I am by the bonds of charity, I cannot allow the flood of your acute and persistent questions to continue unanswered.” Augustine, True Religion, in On Christian Belief, The Works of Saint Augustine I.8, ed. Boniface Ramsey, trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2005). Augustine does not refer to Romanianus again, but we may presume that the rest of his work provides a response to various issues that his friend and former patron raised.
the one God of the Trinity alone, over against the polytheistic state religion on the one hand, and Manichaeism on the other. Since this work is more for outsiders, Augustine does not elaborate as much on the theology of the Trinity, but he does need to demonstrate for his readers that the Christian God is more reasonable and fitting than the current alternatives and as such he does list and discuss the three persons at various points. The interest in God as the source and destiny of all created things also calls for investigation into the role of the Father as origin within the Trinity. *De vera religione* contains several references to the Father as “source” or “beginning” (*principium*) and the “One” (*unum*).

While *Soliloquies* hardly used any explicitly Trinitarian language, Augustine uses *trinitas* four times in *De vera religione* and emphasizes the equality of the persons throughout. He explains that Truth is not less than the Father precisely because the Father does not render judgment on his own, but judges *through* Truth. Augustine does not immerse himself in technical explanation of how the Trinity “works,” or the relations among the persons—such would go beyond his purposes here. He does specify that each person of the Trinity cooperates in creation. He speaks of the “creator Trinity” (*trinitate creatrice*) that is the source of all things; each thing “derives from that source its own specific nature and is governed by it in the most beautiful order conceivable.” Note the elements contained here: existence, specific nature, governed in order. He warns the reader not to think that each person made part of creation, but that it is the simultaneous act of the three persons. There is still differentiation, though, in their “aspect.” Prepositions indicate their precise involvement: “by” for the Father, “through” for the

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Son, and “in” for the “Gift of the Holy Spirit.” He argues that every particular thing has three “aspects,” correlated to those elements discerned above. It exists as “one something,” it is distinguished from other things, and finally it maintains its place in the order of things.28

At several points, Augustine fascinates over the number one and the quest for a grand unifying idea. He straight off rejects polytheism as a false path, but he does not turn to handle “the One” in detail until later in this work. When he does, he apparently has the Father in mind; he uses “Beginning” (principium) and “One” (unum) for the Father unambiguously at a number of points. The Word, also known as Truth, is the perfect Likeness (similitudo) of the One.29 Similarly, he offers, “the Father of Truth is supremely the One, the Father of his own wisdom…. And so the Son is rightly said to be from him, everything else to be through him.”30 Augustine hedges slightly though, in a seeming bow to a pro-Nicene understanding, by indicating that the Son “supremely achieves the One” while other things attain their form through him and become

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29 Augustine, De vera religione, 36.66. The whole passage underscores my point, but I supply two particular lines in this note. “…[W]e are given to understand that there is something which is so like that one and only One (the Beginning from which anything that is one that is a unit in any way at all) that it altogether perfectly realizes this likeness and is exactly the same. And this is Truth, and the Word in the Beginning, and the Word, God with God” (datur intelligi esse aliquid, quod illius unius solius, a quo principio unum est, quidquid aliquot modo unum est, ita simile sit, ut hoc omnino impleat ac sit id ipsum). Shortly thereafter: “Accordingly, since things are true insofar as they are, while they are insofar as they are like the original One, she is the form of all things that are, who is the supreme Likeness of the Beginning and is Truth, because she is without any unlikeness at all” (quapropter quoniam uera in tantum uera sunt, in quantum sunt, in tantum autem sunt, in quantum principalis unius similia sunt, ea forma est omnium quae sunt, quae summa similitudo principii et veritas est, quia sine ulla dissimilitudine est).

30 Ibid., 43.81. Non enim habet aliud hic aliud alibi aut aliud nunc aliud postea, quia summe unus est pater ueritatis, pater suae sapientiae, quae nulla ex parte dissimilis similitudo eius dicta est et imago, quia de ipso est. Itaque etiam filius recte dicitur ex ipso, cetera per ipsum. Praecessit enim forma omnium summe implens unum, de quo est, ut cetera quae sunt, in quantum sunt uni similia, per eam formam fierent.
to varying degrees “like the One.” He elegantly explains that some creatures are made *through* the Word in order to be made *to* it (*ut ad ipsam etiam sint*).

So Augustine uses various terms flexibly to express the persons of the Trinity, especially the relationship of the Father and Son. “One,” “beginning,” and “Father” pertain to the First Person, and “truth,” “wisdom,” “likeness,” and “son” pertain to the Second. He combines these in various ways, so we get expressions like “Father of Truth” seen above. His usage of “God” is difficult to discern. On the one hand, the Trinity is the “one God,” but on the other hand he follows traditional usage of Scripture and so “God” often refers simply to the Father, albeit not in an exclusive sense. He says that God, that is, the Father, “found no better way of conferring benefits on the human race… than when this very Wisdom of God, that is his *only-begotten Son*, consubstantial with the Father and coeternal with him, was good enough to take to himself the whole man….“\(^31\) This passage shows the equality of God’s Wisdom (the agent of salvation) to God the Father as sender. A few other passages also illustrate this tension.\(^32\) Augustine does not have the facility that he later shows balancing the persons, but his language for the Father as “first and supreme beginning” is instructive.

\(^{31\text{ Ibid.}, 16.30.}\)

\(^{32\text{ In 18.35, Augustine rhetorically asks who has being in the highest degree, and replies, “God, the unchanging Trinity, since he both made [everything that is mutable] through his supreme Wisdom and preserves them through his supreme Kindness” (Quis hic est? Deus incommunicabilis trinitas, quoniam et per summam sapientiam ea fecit et summa benignitate consuerat). In this answer Augustine is both thoroughly Trinitarian and quite traditional. God as Trinity is the supreme being; “God’s Wisdom” and “God’s Kindness” naturally invite the reader to consider these two qualities as reified. Indeed, they are personified as the Son and Holy Spirit, and one with God the Father.}}\)

In 31.58, he finds the Father-Son analogy most suitable given the relationship of Truth to God. Truth “alone has fully realized the likeness of him from whom she has received being—if, at least, to say ‘has received’ is not inappropriate for signifying why she is called Son, which is because he is not from himself but from the *first and supreme Beginning (primo summoque principio)*, who is called the Father, from whom all fatherhood in heaven and on earth takes its name” (citing Eph 3:15, emphasis added).
He closes De vera religione with an impassioned plea to for the reader to abandon false religion and cling to true religion. It is appropriate then that he lays out his most extensive vision of the Trinity in the conclusion. He explains, “I worship one God, the one Source of all things (unum omnium principium), and the Wisdom by which is made wise any soul that is wise, and the very Gift by which is blessed any soul that is blessed.”\(^{33}\) The Son and the Holy Spirit are not intermediate beings, but he strongly maintains the Father as unique source. We venerate “in him and with him this same Truth, which is unlike him in no way whatever, which is the form and shape of all things that have been made by the One and that direct themselves towards the One.”\(^{34}\) It is clear that as One, and as Source, Augustine envisions unity with the Father as the destiny of human existence.

In a few passages, Augustine also draws out the positive implications of God’s fatherhood. Unlike Moltmann, he sees it as applying to all created things. He calls the Father “author” (auctor) a number of times, a term which he will come to refine when he responds to Maximinus later. On the balance, this work shows an interesting stage of his early theology. He is growing in confidence such that he uses Trinitarian terminology more readily and explores a number of triads to express their relationship to each other and how they work together with respect to creation and salvation. He calls the Father the “One” and the “Source” or “Beginning” (principium), but also gives expression to the equality and consubstantiality of the persons.

\(^{33}\) Ibid., 55.112.

\(^{34}\) Ibid.
After his ordination as priest but before he became a bishop, Augustine was invited to address an episcopal synod at Hippo in 393. We have this text as *De Fide et Symbolo* (*On Faith and the Creed*). In this address, Augustine engages in a careful interpretation of the baptismal creed, so it is fitting that this brief work provides germane discussion of Trinitarian matters. From the structure of his remarks, however, it is apparent that his comments on God the Father are rather limited. Following from the Creed’s attribution of creation to the Father, he mostly concentrates on the Father as almighty creator. He indicates the Father’s transcendence, that there is an overwhelming gulf of difference between the Father and creation. In a few remarks scattered throughout, he find discussion of the Father in a way that has practical, spiritual implications for believers.

In extrapolating the significance of this first article of the creed, Augustine indirectly seeks to repudiate Manichaeism by exalting the Father’s power. He bemoans that some teach that there is a nature that exists which God did not create, but that he created from preexistent matter. For Augustine, however, only *creatio ex nihilo* does justice to the almighty Father. He insists that even the potentiality of form comes from God. His treatment of this first article does

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35 Finbarr G. Clancy says that *De fide et symbolo* is a revision of his “address to a plenary assembly of the episcopate of North Africa.” Clancy, “De fide et symbolo,” in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 360. See Augustine, *Retractions*, 1.17. The Latin text referred to below is from *De fide et symbolo*, CSEL 41 (1900).

36 Ayres says that *De fide et symbolo* “reveals significant shifts in [Augustine’s] Trinitarian theology” (*Augustine and the Trinity*, 72). He argues that the remarks on the Trinity in this work owes much to anti-Monarchian and anti-Sabellian traditions from Latin theologians before him. He notes that these are rarely considered in standard treatments of the Western tradition. We would add in this context that these early traditions are rarely if at all quoted by Bonaventure.

37 Augustine, *De fide et symbolo*, 2.2. “Some people have indeed tried to demonstrate the God the Father is not all-powerful: not that they dared to say as much, but it has been shown beyond doubt from their teachings that this is what they think and believe.”
not engage the meaning of “Father” or his place in the Trinity, but only defends the principle of *creatio ex nihilo*. It is not much, but this point does serve positively to indicate the Father’s power and transcendence, which permeates the rest of his teaching in *De fide et symbolo*.

In his discussion of the Son, he points to this transcendence by suggesting the “hiddenness” of the Father. “It is through this Wisdom that the Father, *totally hidden (secretissimus Pater)*, makes himself known to souls worthy of him.” He discloses himself only through his Son. Although Augustine does not say so explicitly, he links the Father’s transcendence closely with his role as origin and source. Aside from the motif of the Father as almighty creator, discussed above, he emphasizes him as sole origin elsewhere in this creedal exposition. He provides a basic Trinitarian grammar: the Father is begetter, the Son begotten; The Father is not from the Son, but the Son from the Father. Drawing from these basic statements, he acknowledges that the Father is the origin of the Son. He offers that it is in this light that Paul considers the Father to be the “head of Christ” (1 Cor 11:3). Anticipating further development of interpretive principles in *De Trinitate*, Augustine holds that passages in which the Son appears less than the Father do so “partly because of this saving economy and partly because of the fact that what the Son himself is he owes to the Father.” The second reason is...

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39 Ibid., 3.4. Despite their difference, this text also testifies to their equality: the Son must be what the Father himself is.

40 Ibid. … *partim ergo propter hanc administrationem illa ita scripta sunt… partim præterea, qui fílius patri debet, quod est, hoc etiam debens utique patri.…*
quite telling for his inner-Trinitarian theology and the theology of the Father as source. He adds, “moreover, to the same Father he also owes his equality, whereas the Father is indebted to no one for what he is.” In practically the same breath, Augustine holds to the perfect equality of the Father and Son and the unique position the Father has as source without source. It is curious that he uses language of debt or obligation (debet), but it is arguably appropriate by analogy given the utter dependence of children upon their parents.

The Father’s begetting of the Word, and the Word’s equality with him, assures the believer that the will and ability to reveal himself is embedded within God’s very nature. Two comments of Augustine’s in this work speak to the implications of the fatherhood of God for believers. Both of them indicate brotherhood in Christ as adopted sons of the Father.

Insofar as he is the only-begotten Son he has no brothers, but according to his status as the firstborn he graciously called everyone his brothers, those who were to follow and, because of his firstborn status, are reborn into the grace of God through their adoption as sons, as the teaching of the apostles informs us. As a natural Son, he was born the only-begotten Son from the substance of the Father, sharing the same life as the Father, God from God, light from light. We cannot claim to be that light by nature, but we are illumined from that light so that we can shine in wisdom.

41 Ibid. ...quod eidem patri aequalis aut par est; pater autem nulli debet quidquid est.

42 Augustine executes a very similar strategy regarding the person of the Holy Spirit. He echoes previous expositors of Trinitarian theology that “the Holy Spirit is not begotten [from either Father or Son], nor that he is indebted to no one for his existence,” and “the Holy Spirit owes his existence to the Father from whom everything comes (ex quo omnia)” (ibid., 9.19). In this passage, he excludes the possibility of two origins without origin (sed patri, ex quo omnia, ne duo constituamus principia sine principio).

43 Ibid., 4.6. Quapropter secundum id, quod unigenitus est, non habet fratres, secundum id autem, quod primogenitus est, fratres vocare dignatus et omnes, qui post eius et per eius primatum in dei gratiam renascentur per adoptionem filiorum, sicut apostolica disciplina commendat. Naturalis ergo filius de ipsa patris substantia unicus natus est, id existens, quod Pater est, Deus de Deo, lumen de lumine; nos autem non lumen naturaliter sumus, sed ab illo lumine inluminamus, ut sapientia lucere possimus.
We believe that on the third day he rose from the dead, to be followed by many brothers, whom he called to become adopted sons of God, making them worthy to be sharers with him and his co-heirs.\textsuperscript{44}

Both of these passages accord a unique type of sonship to Christ and speak of the adoption that enables Christians to be sons (and daughters) of God. Both also suggest that God the Father, not the Trinity generally, is the adoptive father. Unlike what we just found in \textit{De vera religione}, the fellowship is not universal, but a special blessing for the elect. Augustine exhibits a greater level of comfort as an exegete in bringing these texts to bear on an elaboration of the Creed.

Naturally, Augustine’s method of exposition in \textit{De fide et symbolo} follows the Creed closely. He does not start with the divine unity. Rather, he reaffirms and clarifies the doctrine of the Trinity after handling the persons in turn. Given that he is speaking for bishops, his presentation is especially careful, but it does show glimpses of erudition and sound doctrinal judgment. Augustine treats the doctrine of creation under God the Father, and in doing so he draws a sharp contrast. Other worldviews start with primeval chaos or preexistent matter. Drawing back from Augustine, the challenge nowadays for Christianity comes not as much from rival religions as from modern science. The strategy of grounding creation in God, and the Trinity in God the Father, prevents disorder. Scientific advance certainly helps us to grasp a physical explanation of origins, but the basic question of why is there something rather than nothing cannot be rooted in anything but God. Augustine stresses both order and equality in the godhead, and there are subtle connections between Trinitarian order and the joint activity of the persons in creation and redemption. Ultimately, the faithful look forward to being true sons and daughters of the Father through Christ.

\textsuperscript{44} \textit{Ibid.}, 5.12. \textit{Credimus etiam illum tertio die resurrexisse a mortuis, primogenitum consecuturis fratribus, quos in adoptionem filiorum dei vocavit, quos conparticipes et conheredes suos esse dignatus est.}
These three works offer a glimpse of Augustine’s growth as an interpreter of Scripture in the years after his conversion. We witness Augustine using terms that he continues to develop in later works. We also find here an important point of contrast with Moltmann and Pannenberg: his treatments of the Trinity follow a fixed order and entail non-reciprocal relationships. Augustine holds that there can only be one source (principium). Additionally, some elements of their critique of Augustine do not hold in these particular texts. The Son is often called Word or Wisdom, but we find no consistent application of a mental image to the Trinity as a whole. Augustine assumes an ordered unity springing from the One. He takes the coequality of Son and Spirit as a given, just he presumes that the Father is the starting point.
Chapter 3. *The Confessions*

The *Confessions* (*Confessionum libri tredecim*) is widely recognized as a literary and theological masterpiece. Augustine wrote the work between 397 and 401, in the first few years after becoming Bishop of Hippo Regius.¹ This work has had a decisive impact, but a neglected aspect of this work is the highly personal concept of God that he cultivates in it. God is surely the transcendent Lord, but also the incredibly intimate Father as well. Augustine’s concept of God admits of philosophical influences in this work and it is also thoroughly biblical. He blends the motif of the return to the “One” with the return to the “Father.” He prays to God as Trinity at a few points, but more commonly implicates God the Father when he uses *Deus* simply. He prays toward the Father in a way that includes the Son and Holy Spirit. Given the common critique in systematic theology that Augustine starts from the essence and diminishes the persons, it is worthwhile to engage the Trinitarian dynamic in this work and its orientation toward the Father. Mercy, not dominion, serves as the dominant attribute in his portrait of the Father. Augustine compellingly attests to his adoption as a son of the Father.

It is perhaps a commonplace to say that *Confessions* is addressed to God. There are prayers throughout, but even when Augustine is not praying he is questioning and turning to God to help illuminate the state of his soul. It can be said that much of the work consists of one side of a putative dialogue between the author and God.² *Confessions* is highly personal, with

¹ Frederick van Fleteren reckons that it was written between 397 and 401, probably toward the early side of this range (“Confessiones,” *Augustine through the Ages*, ed. Fitzgerald, 227).

Augustine employing the first person fairly continuously but punctuating his remarks by confessing to God in the second person. In the majority of instances he simply uses “Lord” (dominus), “my God” (deus meus), or some combination thereof. With reference to the Trinity, these terms may appear ambiguous: is he referring to the Father or to the Trinity as a whole? Augustine makes explicit in several passages that “God” is assumed to mean “God the Father,” and furthermore, he regularly refers to the Son and the Holy Spirit in the third person. First, a number of texts will be offered as evidence for this claim. Then, a selection of the more overtly Trinitarian passages in the Confessions will be examined in some detail. Finally, referring to other poignant passages puts us in a position to glean several insights regarding his theology of God the Father in this work.

God the Father as Addressee

Throughout Confessions, Augustine weaves in quotations from Scripture and especially the Psalms to frame and accompany remarks about his interior journey. The opening note of the work offers praise to God by citing Psalm 47: “You are great, Lord, and highly to be praised.” The theme of praise and the dynamics of prayer are at the heart of this work from beginning to

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3 Basil Studer remarks that “although [Augustine] speaks of God more often as ‘Lord God’ than as ‘Father,’ he means by ‘Lord our God’ the God of the ancestors, the God of Israel, the God of Jesus, that is, the one whom Christians confess in the first article of their baptismal creed” (Grace of Christ, 82).

end. Praise is the “desire of man,” and in it he attains his end: “Our hearts are restless until we rest in you.” He concludes his work of prayer by looking forward to the “sabbath rest” of the Church in God. Given the judgment of Augustine’s modern critics, as seen to some degree in Part I above, it might be imagined that Augustine has some modalistic concept of the divine essence in mind when he calls upon God.\(^5\) In *Confessions*, one quickly finds out that such is not the case. As Augustine turns to consider the faith that nurtures his prayer, itself the gift of God, he says, “You breathed it [sc. faith] into me by the humanity of your Son, by the ministry of your preacher.”\(^6\) Elsewhere in Augustine’s theology, he is known for making a sharp distinction between Christ in the form of a servant (his humanity) and Christ in the form of God (his co-equal divinity). It is helpful in that light not to take this comment as subordinationist in intent, but all the same it is clear that Christ is the Son of the Father and not the Son of the Trinity. While he does not tell us as much, Augustine likely draws the basic inspiration for his address from the Lord’s Prayer, the basic prayer of Christians and an important part of the catechumenate.\(^7\) God the Father is the addressee while the Son—or more precisely in this passage, the *humanity* of the Son—is in the third person. Later texts will draw this into sharper clarity.

\(^5\) See above, 93.

\(^6\) Augustine, *Confessions*, 1.1.1, emphasis added. ... *fides mea, quam dedisti mihi, quam inspirasti mihi per humanitatem filii tui, per ministerium praedicatoris tui*. With Chadwick, the preacher mentioned should not be interpreted as Christ but as someone who preached the gospel to Augustine directly, most likely Ambrose.

\(^7\) Madec opines that it is far too often forgotten that Augustine draws the basic elements of his faith from the Creed and the Our Father: “Dès lors, le Symbole de la foi et la Prière du Seigneur qu'Augustin a reçus d'Ambroise, avec tout les autres candidats au baptême, devenaient -- on l'oublie trop souvent -- les textes fondateurs de la foi, de la piété et de la pensée d'Augustin sur Dieu. C'est un point d'importance pour interpréter correctement ses premières œuvres et voir comment elles reflètent sa première théologie” (*Dieu d'Augustin*, 65).
Later in the first book the bishop explores an illness that incapacitated him as a youth and nearly led to an emergency baptism. In this instance, he notes God’s watchful care and providence: “You saw, my God, because you were already my guardian, with what fervor of mind and with what faith I then begged for the baptism of your Christ, my God and Lord, urging it on the devotion of my mother and the mother of us all, your Church.” His usage of “guardian” (custos) for God implies God’s fatherhood, alongside both the literal maternity of Monica and the figurative maternity of the Church, a familiar Augustinian motif. By specifically calling Jesus “your Christ,” he puts an accent on the mission of the Son. He adds “my God and Lord” (dei et domini mei) by way of apposition—it is in the genitive to clarify into whose name he would have been baptized and not in the vocative as if to denote Christ as addressee. Once again, this text suggests a balanced approach. The Father is the primary addressee of his confessions, but not in such a way that Augustine would be seen as excluding Christ’s divinity. Both are truly God and truly Lord. He includes reference to Christ alongside God the Father but in a way syntactically distinct.

If even this second text has proven insufficient or too subtle to count as evidence that Augustine has in mind God the Father when pouring himself out in Confessions, the bishop makes it perfectly clear in a series of references in Book 3. The passage in question stands at a crucial juncture of the Confessions; in rapid succession he reports his reading of Cicero’s Hortensius, subsequent disillusionment with Scripture and first associations with the Manichees. Even though Cicero’s work gave him a new zeal for the search for truth, the lack of Christ’s name in Hortensius initially held him back from full enthusiasm. He says, “This name, by your

Augustine, Confessions, 1.11.17.
mercy Lord, this name of my Savior your Son, my infant heart had piously drunk in with my mother’s milk…. Any book which lacked this name, however well written or polished or true, could not entirely grip me.”

Having turned to catalogue his disgust with the lowliness of Scripture, he remarks that his pride led him to pursue truth elsewhere, and he fell in with some slick-talking Manichees. “In their mouths were the devil’s traps and a birdlime compounded of a mixture of syllables of your name, and that of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that of the Paraclete, the Comforter, the Holy Spirit.”

Here he presents the Trinity in sequence, with the Father addressed in the second person. The usage arises naturally in the passage, so it is clear that this is simply his way of addressing God: directly speaking to the First Person, with the other two Persons implied as accompanying and included, but in the grammatical third person.

It is important to take into consideration Augustine’s notion here that the name “Father” is not enough—the Manichees used it but used it falsely. A striking element of this passage is his repetition of veritas; these deluders claimed to speak the truth, but ultimately God is the truth and their words were far from him. Within this beautifully drawn contrast is one of Augustine’s most sublime descriptions of God the Father in this work:

They uttered false statements not only about you who really are the Truth, but also about the elements of the world, your creation. On that subject the philosophers have said things which are true, but even them I would think to be no final authority for love of you, my supremely good Father, beauty of all things beautiful. Truth, truth: how in my inmost being the very marrow of my mind sighed for you!

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9 Ibid., 3.4.8.

10 Ibid., 3.6.10, emphasis added. ... in quorum ore laquei diaboli et viscum confectum commixtione syllabarum nominis tui et domini Iesu Christi et paracliti consolatoris nostri spiritus sancti.

11 Ibid. In Latin, the most important phrase for our purposes here is mi pater summe bone, pulchritudo pulchrorum omnium.
Here he praises the Father in the vocative, and equates him with the Truth and the God of creation. Beyond that, he affirms to the highest degree the Father’s goodness and beauty to complete the classic triad of *verum, bonum, pulchrum*. So in a short space of text in a pivotal passage describing quite an important sequence in his journey, we find third-person references to the Son and Holy Spirit, a Trinitarian expression to highlight the falsehood of the Manichees, and intimate expressions of his confession to God the Father.

Altogether, Augustine uses “Father” explicitly instead of “God” or “Lord” to name his divine addressee at least sixteen times in *Confessions*, along with a handful of additional instances that are slightly less clear. While a few of these might be attributed to a wider notion of fatherhood that applies to the entire Trinity, most of them certainly implicate the First Person. In one such passage, after his stirring description of Monica’s death in Book 9, Augustine makes this appeal:

> And now, Lord, I make my confession to you in writing…. If he finds fault that I wept for my mother for a fraction of an hour… let him not mock me but rather, if a person of much charity, let him weep himself before you for my sins; for you are the Father of all the brothers of your Christ.”

He addresses God in such a way that it is clear that he makes his plea to the First Person as a consequence of his brotherhood in Christ. It is no accident, of course, that this confession of God’s steadfast paternity and solidarity with Christian brothers takes place in the context of Monica’s death. He has become an orphan. He is grateful to his mother not only for the gift of physical life, but also for her solicitude for his second birth in faith. He reports that from a young age

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age she counseled him to think of God, rather than Patricius, as his true father.\textsuperscript{13} So in a deep emotional sense, the God whom Augustine calls upon has become his father and has provided him with a new family full of brothers and sisters in Christ.

Two instances in Book 11 also make this clear. First, Augustine calls upon the Father (\textit{vide, Pater}) and then adds, “I make my prayer through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son” and refers to him as mediator “between yourself and us.”\textsuperscript{14} But perhaps the most powerful statement in this regard in \textit{Confessions} is found later, as Augustine inquires relentlessly into the nature of time. Frustrated, he relates,

My mind is on fire to solve this very intricate dilemma. Do not shut the door, Lord my God. Good Father (\textit{bone pater}), through Christ I beg you, do not shut the door on my longing to understand these things which are both familiar and obscure… You are not irritated by the burning zeal with which I study your scriptures. Grant what I love. For I love, and this love was your gift. Grant it, Father (\textit{da, pater}). You truly know how to give good gifts to your children…. Through Christ I beg you, in the name of him who is the holy of holy ones, let no one obstruct my inquiry.\textsuperscript{15}

The structure of Christian prayer is reflected again and again in \textit{Confessions} as it is here. He makes his prayer through Christ to the Father. Much of the time, he uses “God” and “Lord,” but he uses “Father” enough and with enough context to infer that he intends God the Father as First Person of the Trinity.\textsuperscript{16} He almost invariably refers to the Son and Holy Spirit in the grammatical third person, and often with a second person possessive pronoun to indicate their close

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Ibid.}, 1.11.17. “She anxiously labored to convince me that you, my God, were my father rather than [Patricius], and in this endeavor you helped her to gain victory over her husband.”

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Ibid.}, 11.2.4.

\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Ibid.}, 11.22.38.

\textsuperscript{16} Aside from the loci mentioned above (3.6.10, 9.12.33, 11.2.4, 11.22.28 twice) he uses a form of \textit{pater} for his addressee in 8.3.6 (\textit{misericors pater}), 9.4.9 (\textit{in tua misericordia, pater}), 9.13.37 (\textit{sub te, patre}), 10.4.6 (\textit{pater meus}), 10.31.46 (\textit{pater bone}), 10.43.69 (\textit{pater bone}), 11.17.22 (\textit{pater}), 11.29.39 (\textit{domine, pater meus aeternus es}), 13.5.6 (\textit{tu, pater}), 13.15.17 (\textit{pater bone}), and 13.24.36 (\textit{pater pietatis}).
relationship with the Father. He uses a variation on “your Son” at least twenty-two times, a variation on “your Word” at least fourteen times, and a variation on “your Christ” seven more times. Not even counting references to “your Spirit” as pertaining to the Father because of the complicated filioque issue, this amounts to over fifty loci throughout Confessions in which it can be reasonably concluded that he envisions the Father as the ultimate recipient of his offering.¹⁷

A note of complexity does emerge from the fact that Augustine addresses Christ directly a few times. He also invokes God as Trinity. These important exceptions clarify that Augustine holds true to the equality of the persons. In Confessions, he principally speaks in the language of Scripture and liturgy, hence the orientation towards the Father.¹⁸ Prayer to the Son and Holy Spirit is also perfectly compatible with his faith, even if not as common. They are important exceptions to his standard usage.

In the passage where Augustine reviews his childhood illness and near-baptism, discussed above, he does mention that he would be “confessing you, Lord Jesus, for the

¹⁷ On this I am in agreement with Madec and du Roy. “En tout cela, le Dieu d'Augustin, ce Dieu auquel Augustin s'adresse constamment est généralement le Père, de l'avis d'O du Roy. Mais il s'adresse aussi occasionnellement au Christ et a la Trinité” (Madec, Dieu d’Augustin, 93). Cf. du Roy, L'intelligence de la foi, 462.

¹⁸ Studer rightly sees Augustine’s prayer language as reflective of the liturgy. He cites the fact that besides the Our Father, the Eucharistic prayer is also addressed to God the Father, and examines Augustine’s comments on the liturgy. “Even though Augustine in his prayers often addresses Christ or even the whole Trinity or attests to the fact of such prayer, he nonetheless makes it clear that for him, as for the entire early Christian tradition, the addressee of liturgical prayer is God the Father” (Studer, Grace of Christ, 143).

Many of Augustine’s sermons ended with a prayer. Often it is abbreviated as “turning to the Lord,” but a few times a full text is given. Here is the full text of the prayer from Sermon 272: “Turning to the Lord, God the Father almighty, with pure hearts let us give him sincere and abundant thanks, as much as we can in our littleness; beseeching God in his singular kindness with our whole soul, graciously to hearken to our prayers in his good pleasure; also by his power to drive out the enemy from our actions and thoughts, to increase our faith, to guide our minds, to grant us spiritual thoughts, and to lead us finally to his bliss; through Jesus Christ his Son. Amen.” In Augustine, “Sermon 272,” Sermons 230-272B, Works of Saint Augustine vol. III.7, trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1993).
remission of sins.” So Augustine transitions from addressing God the Father to Jesus directly, in the context of baptism, and back to God the Father as he discusses Monica’s understanding of God’s overarching paternity later in the same section. Another case appears near the end of Book 1. Chadwick’s translation reads, “So you, our king, have taken the small physical size of a child as a symbol of humility; that was what you approved when you said ‘Of such is the kingdom of heaven’ (Mt 19:14).” Usually, Augustine uses “the master” or “our king” in the third person as he quotes Jesus’ words from the gospels, but here he invokes God the Son directly. He does this again at the beginning of Book 9 in an extended passage right after the famous garden scene: “Thereby I submitted my neck to your easy yoke and my shoulders to your light burden, O Christ Jesus ‘my helper and redeemer.’ … And now I was talking with you, Lord my God, my radiance, my wealth, and my salvation.” Here he employs the vocative Christe Jesu. So we have perhaps four clear instances in which the Son is addressed in Confessions.

More problematic, given Augustine’s current reputation, would be the assumption that by “God” Augustine means the divine essence, and that “Father” merely stands for the Trinity. In a few loci—much fewer than for “Father”—Augustine does make it clear that he confesses to God as Trinity. Discussing God’s act of creation, he says, “There was nothing apart from you out of which you could make them, God one in three and three in one.” Interestingly, this follows

[19] Augustine, Confessions, 1.11.17. ... Te, domine Jesu, confitens in remissionem peccatorum.

[20] Ibid., 1.19.30. Humilitatis ergo signum in statura pueritiae, rex noster, probasti, cum aisti, ‘talium est regnum caelorum.’ Augustine similarly implies Christ as the addressee by referring to Jesus’ sayings in 10.36.58: “By fear of you, you repressed my pride and by your yoke you made my neck submissive; now I carry that yoke, and it is gentle, exactly as you promised and as you made it.”

[21] Ibid., 9.1.1.

[22] Ibid., 12.7.7. Et aliu praeter te non erat unde faceres ea, deus, una trinitas et trina unitas.
almost immediately a formulation of the only-begotten Son’s equality with “you,” *i.e.* the Father. Shortly thereafter he discusses the intelligible realm of the mind as eternal in this way: “Without being coeternal with you, O Trinity, it nevertheless participates in your eternity.” There are also two such passages in Book 13, but again both of them are closely connected with material that parses the Trinity in a way that the Father is invoked directly. Discussing the outflow and return of all things to God, he claims, “Here in an enigmatic image I discern the Trinity, which you are, my God. For in the beginning of our wisdom which is your wisdom, Father, begotten of your self, equal to you and coeternal, that is in your Son, you ‘made heaven and earth.’” In the final case to be considered he addresses God in conjunction with the *trisagion* and baptismal formula: “in your name we are baptized, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.” As would be expected, the possessive adjective is singular (*in nomine tuo*). After repeating for emphasis, he adds, “Among us also in his Christ God has made a heaven and an earth, meaning the spiritual and carnal members of his Church.” Despite his emphatic acclamation of the Trinity of God, he uses a more primitive formulation of God, God’s Son, and God’s Spirit in the surrounding context. It may be significant that all of these passages are in the last two books of *Confessions*, concomitant with the shift of his subject matter and tone to a more speculative—or contemplative—key.

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Some Noteworthy Trinitarian Passages

Now we treat three sequences that particularly exemplify or clarify Augustine’s Trinitarian theology in the *Confessions*, with a view to the Father’s place in the *taxis*. Notwithstanding that he addresses the Father, it is clear from the beginning of the work that he does have God as Trinity ultimately in view; his discussion of the Trinity gathers momentum throughout and indeed his inquiry into God’s inner life becomes critical in the latter books.

The first sequence, which deals particularly with an increasing appreciation of the incarnation and the Trinitarian economy of salvation, comes from Book 7. This is one of the most commented-upon sections in all of Augustine’s writings, but we will keep our focus on his theology of God the Father. In this book, Augustine depicts a period of striving to find the origin of evil. Astrology does not offer a helpful solution. He thanks God for delivering him from these chains, and that he never lost faith in God’s existence and God’s concern for humanity—both to care and to judge.\(^{26}\) He adds that in the midst of his searching he held secure the fact that “in Christ your Son our Lord…you have provided a way of salvation whereby humanity can come to the future life after death.”\(^{27}\) The author crafts here a rich portrait of the merciful guidance that God has given him. Augustine relates that he was reading “some books of the Platonists” (*quosdam platonicorum libros*).\(^{28}\) These aided him on his quest, and in retrospect he treats them

\(^{26}\) *Ibid.*, 7.7.11.

\(^{27}\) *Ibid.*

\(^{28}\) *Ibid.*, 7.9.13. Quite possibly Augustine is referring to Plotinus and Porphyry (so James J. O’Donnell, *Confessions*, vol. 2, 421ff). To provide an answer to this important question is clearly beyond the limits of this dissertation. The philosophical subtext of Augustine’s conversion has been a matter of intense discussion for over a century. For a general overview, see Van Fleteren, “Confessions,” 230-231. For a recent in-depth study, see Brian Dobell,
as revealing to him “with what mercy [God] has shown humanity the way of humility in that [his] ‘Word was made flesh and dwelt among’ men.”

He goes on to acclaim the various teachings that cohere well with Christianity, as well as the teachings that point to the incarnation and hence he did not find there. He saw in the Neoplatonic works that the Word was in the beginning with God, along the lines of the prologue of John’s Gospel. Augustine calls him “God the Word,” then remarks that he did not read in these works about his coming to this world and giving to power to become sons of God, alluding to John 1:12.

He also claims to have read in these books that the Son was God’s equal, but not that he took the form of the servant and emptied himself, both from Phil 2:6-11. He goes on, “The books say that before all times and above all times your only-begotten Son immutably abides eternal with you…,” but they do not profess that “you ‘did not spare your only Son but gave him up for us all’” (Rom 5:6). There follows a strong sequence of biblical allusions detailing how God the Father has acted in the Son to teach humanity and to reconcile it with himself. His reading of the Neoplatonists admonished him to return into himself, with God as his guide. In doing so, he discovered humility and inadequacy in comparison with an “immutable light” high above his own mind. Augustine locates the transcendence of this “light” precisely in that he knew that it made him. He yokes together eternity, truth, and love in an apparent triad:

It transcended my mind, not in the way that oil floats on water, nor as heaven is above earth. It was superior because it made me, and I was inferior because I was made by it.


29 Augustine, Confessions, 7.9.13, citing Jn 1:14.

30 Ibid., 7.10.16.
The person who knows the truth knows it, and he who knows it knows eternity. Love
knows it. Eternal truth and true love and beloved eternity: you are my God.

Inspired by these non-Christian texts, his contemplation perceives a triad of qualities that this
surpassing “Being” has: eternity, truth, and love. He does not here point to Father, Son, and Holy
Spirit, but the implication is almost certain. At any rate, it is God qua God, the divine substance
that he has in view, addressed in the second person and with threefold attributes. Following from
these insights he reports a breakthrough in his thoughts on the origin of evil, realizing that
existence itself is good so evil must be a privation of good. “I inquired what wickedness is; and I
did not find a substance (substantiam) but a perversity of will twisted away from the highest
substance (summa substantia), you O God, towards inferior things, rejecting its own inner life
and swelling with external matter.”

He uses images of eating several times during this sequence, lamenting his impotence in
the face of sin and his inability to obtain “solid food.” He finally finds it by embracing Christ as
the mediator between God and man.

I sought a way to obtain strength enough to enjoy you; but I did not find it until I
embraced ‘the mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus’ (1 Tim 2:5), ‘who
is above all things, God blessed forever’ (Rom 9:5). He called and said ‘I am the way and
the truth and the life’ (Jn 14:6). The food which I was too weak to accept he mingled with
flesh, in the ‘The Word was made flesh’ (Jn 1:14), so that our infant condition might
come to suck milk from your wisdom by which you created all things. To possess my
God, the humble Jesus, I was not yet humble enough. I did not know what his weakness
was meant to teach. Your Word, eternal truth, higher than the superior parts of your
creation, raises those submissive to him to himself.

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31 Ibid. This last part: Qui novit veritatem, novit eam, et qui novit eam, novit veritatem; caritas novit eam. O aeterna
veritas et vera caritas et cara aeternitas, tu es deus meus.

32 Ibid., 7.16.22.

33 Ibid., 7.18.24, emphasis added.
Augustine’s awareness of God as creator owes something to the Platonists, and he conceives of the Word and Wisdom as emanating from God (the Father), who creates through his Word. He breaks through from merely admiring Jesus as a man of great wisdom to believing in him as the Word made flesh, as Wisdom itself. At one and the same time in this passage he calls Jesus God and refers to him in the third person as “your Word.” This is personal language, a personal address. The mission of the Word as mediator has become deeply impressed upon Augustine. It is worth noting that at this point it would appear that God (the Father) is overwhelmingly transcendent; the Word is the perfect mediator, transcendent but also immanent as the instrument of God’s creation and as the instrument of reconciliation with God. He enables Augustine to confess and draw closer to the almighty God.

Significantly, even though Augustine recalls the “Platonists” as having an influence upon him, he cites scripture in his narrative here and not these other sources. Despite his triad of eternity, truth, and love, he handles God and the Word, but not the Holy Spirit in this sequence. Even still, he overwhelmingly has a sense of God as creator, creation as good but marked by disorder, and the role of Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, as the embodiment of truth and the way of return to God. As with De fide et symbolo, Augustine’s theology of God the Father is linked closely with the goodness of creation, and the progress of his thought here reflects a sense of order in his mind, that God is some kind of substance and that there is no primordial evil substance. He must know the goodness of the Father first, before he can attain a greater knowledge of the Trinity.
Next, we will turn to a sequence at the end of Book 10 and the beginning of Book 11. This is an interesting point in the structure of *Confessions*. Augustine has finished his narrative recollections and has begun reflecting on memory. Although many readers stop at Book 9, for Augustine his *Confessions* was never a memoir, but rather an opportunity to reflect on how God his creator has drawn him to himself and his own Sabbath rest. He pushes deeper, past memory and into eternity insofar as he can. To do this, in Book 11 he embarks on an extensive interpretation of Genesis 1, mostly concentrating on the first few verses, lasting until the end of the work as a whole. At the end of Book 10 and the beginning of Book 11, Augustine turns again to an extensive inquiry into the Trinity in the economy of salvation, prompted by his experience of sin continually dragging him down. He praises God, saying

> You are the truth presiding over all things. But in my greed I was unwilling to lose you, and wanted to have you at the same time as holding onto a lie….That is why I lost you: you do not condescend to be possessed together with falsehood. Who could be found to reconcile me to you?  

He wonders about the different ways that people have tried purifying themselves or returning to God. The true mediator, he insists, must have “something in common with God and something in common with humanity.” He cannot be distant from either.

Addressing the Father, Augustine says, “The true mediator you showed to humanity in your secret mercy. You sent him so that from his example they should learn humility.” He professes the Father’s initiative in sending Christ with this curious phrase “your secret mercy” (*secreta tua misericordia*), anticipating a theme to be discussed further below. Augustine makes

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35 *Ibid.*, 10.43.68.
an important clarification, however: “It is as man that he is mediator. He is not midway as Word; for the Word is equal to God and ‘God with God,’ and at the same time there is but one God.” It is much clearer in this passage than it was in Book 7 that the Word is not an intermediary between the divine and human realm. Unity and equality of God and Word are clear here, but again Augustine makes his own theological style apparent.

Immediately following upon this comment indicating the Word’s full divinity as God from God, he adverts specifically to the Father’s providential love: “How you loved us, good Father: you did not ‘spare your only Son but delivered him up for us sinners’ (Rom 8:32).” He praises Christ for giving up his equality with God to die upon the cross, and his victory in taking up his life again. His actions took on significance “before you,” as he says. “Before you he makes us sons instead of servants by being born of you and being servant to us. With good reason my firm hope is in him. For you will cure all my diseases through him who sits at your right hand and intercedes with you for us.” Augustine neatly inverts Jesus’ divine sonship with humanity’s servitude. He essentially depicts the Father’s willingness to give up his Son out of his intense love, so that he may adopt as many as will believe in him.

Shortly into Book 11 he returns to the same line of reflection as he ponders eternity and how his confessions can serve his brothers in Christ. He prays,

See Father: look and see and give your approval. May it please you that in the sight of your mercy I may find grace before you….I make my prayer through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son… whom you have strengthened to be mediator between yourself and us.

36 Ibid., 10.43.69.

37 Augustine’s sentiments here compare with Moltmann’s expression that God the Father gave up the Son to the Cross in order to have other children through him. See above, 36-39.
By him you sought us when we were not seeking you. But you sought us that we should seek you, your Word by whom you made all things including myself, your only Son by whom you have called to adoption the people who believe, myself among them.

Here Augustine emphasizes again the Father’s mercy and his enfolding love, working through his Word and Son to create and to save. He sees his prayer as ultimately coming before God the Father through the intercession of Christ. In the Father’s books, meaning Scripture, Christ is contained although clear in some places and obscure in others. Precisely this intuition leads Augustine into his investigations of Genesis 1:1, as he seeks to understand the treasures of wisdom contained there and how God created through his Word. It can be said, then, that as the truth of Christ the Mediator’s act of redemption and salvation convinces Augustine of his coequal divinity, he must seek the unity of Father and Son in eternity, indeed before the beginning of all things. Since he has taken on a new identity through sonship in Christ, his impulse to know “himself” drives him to contemplate the fullness of God’s fatherhood in eternity.

The third sequence to consider in detail comes from Book 13. As Augustine considers the Spirit of God hovering over the waters in Gen 1:2, he explores the Trinitarian implications of this verse extensively. Indeed, this sequence contains one of the few instances of him directly addressing the Trinity, as mentioned above. While the two passages just examined focused on the Father and Son, in this sequence the Holy Spirit naturally becomes an important part of the discussion. Given his rejection of material concepts of deity, it strikes Augustine as strange to say that the Holy Spirit “was borne above the waters,” as if placing weight upon them. Elsewhere in Scripture, too, the Holy Spirit is said to rest upon people (e.g. Isa 11:2). He cleverly inverts the
image, suggesting that it is better understood to mean that the Spirit “makes them rest on himself.” Creation in darkness needs the Holy Spirit, needs to live by the fount of life (magis magisque vivere apud fontem vitae) to be happy. Augustine professes to see an image of the Trinity here, “which you are, my God.”

God the Father begot wisdom of himself, equal to and coeternal with himself, and made creation through him. We should note here that the phrase “in the beginning” signifies the role of the Son in Augustine’s exegesis; he was the beginning (principium) in which God created. He explains,

Where the name of God occurs, I have come to see the Father who made these things; where the ‘Beginning’ is mentioned, I see the Son by whom he made these things. Believing that my God is Trinity, in accordance with my belief I searched in God’s holy oracles and found your Spirit to be borne over the waters. There is the Trinity, my God—Father and Son and Holy Spirit, Creator of the entire creation.

Following the language of Scripture, he thus attributes the name “God” to the Father in most contexts; he also continues the patristic exegetical tradition of finding each of the three persons involved in creation. God is Father, and God is Trinity. We have seen that Augustine typically links the Father with creation, but the Son and Holy Spirit can be rightly called “creator” along with him. If the Father is present (appropriated as “God”) in this crucial Scriptural text, the Son and Spirit are as well.

Finding all three divine persons present in Gen 1:1-2 does not mean that their roles in creation are entirely clear, and indeed Augustine continues probing how to understand the curious suggestion of the Holy Spirit’s physical presence. He says flatly, “Surely no one supposes that either the Father or the Son was borne above the waters. Indeed if one understands

38 Augustine, Confessions, 13.4.5.
39 Ibid., 13.5.6.
this of a body in space, neither was the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{40} So how can this crucial text be interpreted? Augustine proposes that an answer may be found in his favorite name for the Holy Spirit—the gift. Linking the reader back to the beginning of \textit{Confessions}, he says, “In your gift we find our rest. There are you our joy. Our rest is our peace.”\textsuperscript{41} Something that is restless is apart from its ordered, natural place. The Holy Spirit as gift, as love, hovering above the waters, makes it clear that the gravity of the soul ought to point upwards toward God. As beautiful as these thoughts are, Augustine realizes that he is in difficult straits exegetically. These remarks on the Holy Spirit thus set the stage for a section in which he turns inward to find the Trinity.

He finds a triad within the self. “These three aspects of the self are very different from the Trinity,” he assures his readers, but they should contemplate it to become aware of “how distant they are from it.”\textsuperscript{42} This triad consists of being, knowing, and willing. He speaks of them as inseparable yet distinct. Augustine plays with various options of how to interpret the correspondence of this triad to the Trinity, in a non-committal way. Anticipating his Trinitarian logic in \textit{De Trinitate}, he suggests that the persons may be “defined by relation to each other, yet infinite in themselves.” His next statement calls attention to this distinction-by-relation in terms of emanation: “So the divine being is and knows itself and is immutably sufficient to itself because of the overflowing greatness of the unity.”\textsuperscript{43} God the Father has life in such a way that

\textsuperscript{40} \textit{Ibid.}, 13.9.10.

\textsuperscript{41} \textit{Ibid.} \textit{In dono tuo requiescimus: ibi te fruimur. Requies nostra locus noster.}

\textsuperscript{42} \textit{Ibid.}, 13.11.12.

\textsuperscript{43} \textit{Ibid.} \textit{…quo est et sibi notum est et sibi sufficit incommutabiliter idipsum copiosa unitatis magnitudine.}
he is not bounded by unicity. The persons are one in essence but distinct, grounded in the overflow of the Father’s greatness.

Specific Dimensions of Paterology in Confessions

Augustine’s treatment of God the Father in Confessions is quite striking. Language of the family forms a pervasive motif within the work. During his sojourn of mind, body, and spirit, Augustine comes to see his fellow Christians (now, readers) as his brothers, Christ as brother in a special sense, the Church as his mother, and God as his Father. Besides the language of the family, he occasionally uses other images to convey God as the ultimate source of being. He certainly depicts creation as an act of the Trinity in Confessions, and the Son and Holy Spirit on the creator side of the gulf between creator and creature. Even so, creation is appropriated in certain ways to God the Father. Finally, the preeminent quality of God the Father—perhaps his defining characteristic from the vantage point of Confessions—is his mercy. This is exemplified by but not limited to the parable of the prodigal son, to which he alludes several times. Each of these matters will be explored further in turn.

Recall the recent controversy surrounding divine “gender” in prayer noted above. At the pastoral level, calling God “Father” has been seen as patriarchal or sexist. At the theological level, many influential authors in the West have taken the prayer as referring to all the persons of the Trinity. Thus, it should not be taken as a given how Augustine interprets “Father”—i.e. as referring only to the First Person of the Trinity or to the entire Trinity as “father” to creation in

44 See above, 3-4, 46.
an analogical sense. It should be clear from the remarks above that in *Confessions*, at least, Augustine does have God the Father in mind when he uses language of the family. At the same time, it is not that he repeatedly puts a particular emphasis on limiting this fatherhood to the Father; it is simply that he uses language of the family casually and naturally throughout the work, and in his reckoning God the Father is the head of this mystical family. His focus on his own natural parents in the narrative, combined with his insights into his wider ecclesial family, has induced some modern readers to psychoanalyze the bishop. Monica’s suggestion to the young Augustine to see God rather than Patricius as his “father” is prone to unsympathetic interpretation, particularly in a Freudian vein. At any rate, Monica’s suggestion clearly made quite an impression on him. Given these modern readings, it is important to reiterate that Augustine views his father’s conversion as sincere even if belated, and he does transcend Monica’s motherhood. In God’s family he views the Church as his mystical mother. His natural mother certainly plays a role within the Church’s bringing him to a birth of faith, but he details myriad factors in his conversion, such that it is impossible to reduce the motherly function to his own biological mother. Besides “mother,” he also calls the Church “Jerusalem,” and more rarely the “body” or “bride” of Christ. Moving to sonship, he often refers to Christ as “your only Son,” but without belaboring the point he also refers to children of God in a wider sense, along the lines of Jesus’ speech in the Sermon on the Mount (and elsewhere). Elsewhere, he does refer to the theology of adoption along the lines of John 1, Romans 8 and Galatians 5, viz. that Christians become children of God. Besides clear references, he implies it in others besides. He typically

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45 For example, see the collection of essays in *The Hunger of the Heart: Reflections on the Confessions of Augustine*, ed. Donald Capps and James E. Dittes, Society for the Scientific Study of Religion 8 (West Lafayette, IN: Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, 1990). Although the title might not indicate it, for the most part these essays adopt a stern hermeneutic of suspicion and do not treat Augustine as a sympathetic figure.
addresses his readers as “brothers,” implying a pious Christian audience. Because God is the supreme parent, he is always near to his children who need him.\(^4^6\)

For Augustine, the realization of God’s goodness as creator is paramount in his transition from Manicheism to his full embrace of the Catholic Church. There are a few important dimensions of his belief regarding God’s act of creation that emerge in *Confessions*. He closely connects creation with *order*. Put briefly, God orders all things. This core element of faith stands in stark contrast to chaos and evil which is a perversion of God’s sovereign rule. Such a point of focus reminds us of Pannenberg’s insistence that in the end God’s sovereignty will be proven to have been there all along. For Augustine, though, this sovereignty is evident from the beginning even though it is covered over by sin.

It is important not to take for granted Augustine’s belabored turn away from material concepts of God toward a concept of God as *spirit*. God is not merely the highest and most remote being, but also the nearest or innermost being to anyone who calls upon him. His realization that evil has no existence apart from God gives him a sense of moral responsibility and inspires him to seek regeneration and order in the God ultimately responsible for existence. In various Latin expressions, Augustine calls him the “governor” of the universe.\(^4^7\) While he does not stress the analogy to earthly hierarchy in this work, in some instances he does suggest it. The creator brings about good order. Is this patriarchy in a sense that Moltmann would criticize? If it is, it is a soft form of patriarchy. Augustine continually stresses the benevolence and love of


\(^4^7\) Ibid., 1.20.31 (*optimo conditori et rectori universatis*), 3.8.15 (*deo regnatori universae creaturae suae*), 11.19.25 (*regnator creaturae tuae*).
the Father. He is powerful beyond any created thing, but it is his generosity that is impressed more upon Augustine’s mind. No earthly ruler compares. At any rate, Augustine primarily addresses the Father as the creator of all things, who works through his Word and his Spirit.

This emphasis on the good order of God’s plan naturally suggests providence. After Augustine and his friends find their faith in the gospel and enter into the Church, he finds in retrospect that their journey started with the steps of providence. Simply put, this is God the Father acting eternally through his Son and Spirit, and in time through created means to bring about his plan. This explains his announcement in Book 10 that he wishes to “rise above that natural capacity in a step by step ascent to him who made me.”

There is a vast gulf between the creature and the creator; he strains under the difficulty, even impossibility, of this undertaking.

Occasionally in Confessions, Augustine refers to God along Plotinian lines as the “One.” He refers to a “graded hierarchy of being” inasmuch as things are close to him or far away. The Word is the perfect expression of the Father, while the entirety of material creation, having been crafted ex nihilo, comes from formless dissimilarity. It is not God’s likeness, but its constituents do seek return to the “One” according to God’s dispensation for each one. So is the “One” the Father? In at least one key passage, Augustine suggests as much. In the midst of a reflection on time, he writes,

‘Because your mercy is more than lives’, see how my life is a distension in several directions. ‘Your right hand upheld me’ in my Lord, the Son of man who is mediator

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48 Ibid., 10.8.12.

49 Ibid., 10.28.38. The key phrase is gradatim remotiore distantia. The sense of the context is that some things abide close to God while others are separated from him by degrees or steps, in “beautiful modifications” (pulchras mutationes).
between you the One and us the many, who live in a multiplicity of distractions by many things.\textsuperscript{50}

Here Jesus is referred to as Lord, but the “One” is remote. Against the possibility of this passage referring to the Father, he does call Jesus the “Son of man” rather than “Son of God,” which leaves open the possibility that he is referring principally to the humanity of Christ as mediator. Thus, the “One” would be God’s substance or essence, including the Son. Even so, he does directly address the “One,” and shortly thereafter, he uses the term again and follows it with an address of the Father: “Gathered to follow the One…. You are my eternal Father, but I am scattered in times whose order I do not understand.”\textsuperscript{51} The exitus–reditus schema comes into play here, as this gathering is also described as a reverse flow, merging into the One, also called God and Father.\textsuperscript{52} All things come from this fount of life in a sort of scattering, but all are destined to return to it for their reintegration. Augustine’s praise of God as presider over the creation and order of all things does thus take on a neo-Platonic—more specifically, Plotinian—mode occasionally, but he generally does link these concepts with God as Trinity.

The image of the One as a fountain, serving as a source of the rivers of time and material creation, is certainly found in Plotinus.\textsuperscript{53} It is not found there exclusively, however. Augustine’s use of the fountain image coincides with a favorite of his includes the verse, “For with you is the

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 11.29.39. \textit{Sed quoniam melior est misericordia tua super vitas, ecce distention est vita mea, et me suscepit dextera tua in domino meo, mediatore filio hominis inter te unum et nos multos, in multis per multa}....

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid. ... \textit{et tu solacium meum, domine, pater meus aeternus es. At ego in tempora dissilui quorum ordinem nescio}....

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid. ... \textit{donec in te confluam purgatus et liquidus igne amoris tui}.

\textsuperscript{53} Plotinus, \textit{Enneads} 3.8.10: “This Principle on the thither side of Life is the cause of Life...it itself is poured forth, so to speak, like water from a spring. Imagine a spring that has no source outside itself; it gives itself to all the rivers...”. Also, he says in \textit{ibid.} 6.7.12, “All flows, so to speak, from one fount not to be thought of as some one breath or warmth but rather as one quality englobing and safeguarding all qualities...” Plotinus, \textit{Enneads}, trans. Stephen McKenna (Burdett, NY: Larson Publications, 1992).
fountain of life, and in your light we see light” (Ps 36:10). He alludes to this verse several times. Further, he does not simply write, “fount of being”; rather, “fount of life” as in the psalm and “fount of mercies” are more prevalent. It is true that alongside his references to the Father as fountain that the Son is called fountain as well. He never makes a claim that the Father is fountain exclusively. Even so, just as with his direct address of the Trinity and Christ mentioned above, it is exceptional and not typical. All things emanate from God’s act of creation, and in the Trinitarian taxis the Son and Spirit flow from the Father. The image of the fountain connotes not just the dynamism of God as the source, but also the hiddenness of God. The effects are evident but humankind cannot directly perceive the Father in himself, just as a spring conceals the true source of the water. Augustine characterizes sin, the death of the soul, as the departure from the “fount of life… absorbed by the transitory world and conformed to it.”

Augustine’s consideration of God the Father as creator, along with the goodness of creation per se, leads to two interrelated and defining characteristics of his portrait of God the Father in Confessions: his generosity and mercy. As intimated above, Augustine composes this work to praise the mysterious and hidden ways in which God has called him to salvation despite his own sins. Book 1 of Confessions leaves the reader with the distinct impression that everything is enfolded in the gift of God’s grace, that God the Father gives good gifts to his...
children. Faith is the decisive gift that enables Augustine to pour forth these words of praise. He professes that he did not will his own existence; his own life is an overflow of God’s goodness. Being enfolded by God, how could faith be anything but a gift? At the end of Book 1, he exclaims his gratitude to God, “the most excellent and supremely good Creator and Governor of the universe.” Recalling his basic qualities, he calls these God’s gifts: “I did not give them to myself…. Therefore he who made me is good, and he is my good, and I exult to him.” He thanks for Lord for his gifts, and acknowledges his existence as the overarching gift. He will periodically return to this motif as God in his providence dispensed gifts at particular waypoints of his journey.

Closely bound up with God the Father’s generosity as a giver of gifts is his incredible mercy. Augustine praises God’s mercy in myriad ways and indeed this may be seen as a catchword of the book as a whole. As noted above, several of the instances in which Augustine addresses God, he does so using this attribute, i.e. “merciful Father,” and he describes the abundant and overflowing nature of God’s mercy by calling him the “fount of mercies.” Augustine even describes his confessions not as the product of his own mind but as the product of God’s mercies: “May your mercies, my God, make grateful confession of that to you from the innermost parts of my soul!”

55 Ibid., 1.1.1.
56 Ibid., 1.20.31. … excellentissimo atque optimo conditori et rectori universitatis.
57 Ibid., 7.6.8. Confiteantur etiam hinc tibi de intimis visceribus animae meae miserations tuae, deus meus!
Augustine makes use of the parable of the prodigal son often in *Confessions* to describe his own predicament and to praise the merciful Father.\(^{58}\) He says that he became to himself “a region of destitution” (*regio egestatis*), redolent of the famine in the foreign country of the prodigal’s self-imposed exile.\(^{59}\) He wandered (*erravi*) away from the Father’s “unmoved stability” (*ab stabilitate tua*). In other passages he identifies himself or Alypius as embodying the younger son’s behavior in the parable. He characterizes his reaction to *Hortensius* as the beginning of his return to God (*surgere coeperam ut ad te redirem*), mirroring the prodigal’s *surgens venit ad patrem suum* (Lk 15:20).\(^{60}\) In the parable, the father rejoices that the son who once was dead is alive again (Lk 15:32), which resonates with Augustine’s outlook towards life apart from God as death, while clinging to the Source is finding true life, peace, and joy. He calls this verse to mind twice while on the precipice of narrating his own conversion in the garden.\(^{61}\)

Augustine equates his divine addressee with the father in the parable. In various ways in the space of a few paragraphs, he emphasizes the stability of the God in contrast with the instability of his metaphorical children. He laments his base position in contrast with God’s loftiness. He confesses, “You never go away from us, but we have difficulty in returning to you.”

Augustine does not directly connect the prodigal’s humble renunciation of sonship (Lk 15:19,

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\(^{58}\) I detect allusions or citations in Books 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 11, 12, and 13. Scholars have debated over whether the bishop intends the phrase *regio dissimilitudinis* to echo a neo-Platonic text or to allude to the biblical parable. Of course, another possibility is that it is a casual fusion of the two. See Colin Starnes, *Augustine’s Conversion: A Guide to the Argument of Confessions I-IX*, Waterloo, Canada (Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1991), p. 51, n. 89: “It seems best to say that, at the time of writing, Augustine knew he was using words which would strike a chord in those who knew the Scriptures and in those who knew Neo-Platonic texts. There is no reason to prefer one over the other.” On the other hand, Leo C. Ferrari assumes that Augustine only has the biblical parable in view. See his “Symbols of Sinfulness in Book II of Augustine’s *Confessions*,” *Augustinian Studies* 2 (1971): 93-104.

\(^{59}\) Augustine, *Confessions*, 2.10.18.

\(^{60}\) *Ibid.*, 3.4.7.

\(^{61}\) See *ibid.*, 8.3.6-8.
21) with the father’s superabundant generosity in restoring him to sonship, but he does in this passage turn to the beginning of John’s gospel to acclaim how God gives recipients of faith the power to become his sons (Jn 1:9, 12). Augustine glowingly tells of God the Father’s joy at welcoming back his creation as his children, in the greatness of his merciful love.

The Father’s love and mercy animates the entirety of Confessions. Poured out through his Son and Holy Spirit, this mercy alone enables Augustine to respond to God in praise and thanksgiving and thereby provide some benefit for his “brothers” in faith who read this book. Although Augustine holds firmly to God’s immutability and depicts the stability of the Father, his mercy is superabundant and dynamic. He treats the Father’s mercy as synonymous with God’s providence—it “hovered from afar” while Augustine persisted in sin. Augustine acclaims the Father’s mercy as illuminating him and as putting a salubrious pressure upon him. Most of all, the Father’s mercy inspires the greatest hope in Augustine as he journeys and as he recounts his journey “back” to his existential home. As the author discovers God as most intimate and inward, pervading everything, completely inescapable and irresistible, he discovers that his “return” to the Father is fulfilled by pouring forth his praise of the profusion of God’s mercies.

The upshot of this inquiry into Confessions is tremendous. We discover a sense of the qualities that define God the Father in Augustine’s mind. Too often narrative treatments compartmentalize texts, which eventually leads to incomplete and even distorted images of an author’s theology. Modern critics such as Moltmann and Pannenberg need to take more seriously

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62 Ibid., 8.4.9. Quod si qui recipient, accipiunt a te potestatem ut filii tui fiant.
63 Ibid., 3.3.5. Et circumvolabat super me fidelis a longe misericordia tua.
the insights that Augustine conveys in his works that are categorized as “spiritual.” The fact that *Confessions* is oriented towards God the Father in the language of Scripture and prayer amounts to a significant statement regarding the “starting point” of his Trinitarian theology.
Chapter 4. De Trinitate

It took many years for Augustine to bring De Trinitate (On the Trinity) to completion. He worked on it intermittently between roughly 404 and 420, and there seem to be two causes for delay: he was frustrated by unauthorized copies of early books distributed without his permission, and he had to split his attention to defuse other disputes.\(^1\) Comprising fifteen books, this work is by far his longest sustained analysis of the mystery of the Triune God. Reckoned among his greatest works, De Trinitate has garnered a reputation as a classic text. And yet there are several problems surrounding basic features of this work. Although these controversies lie outside of the scope of this project, they should be noted briefly at the onset.

One question has to do with the genre of De Trinitate and its intended audience. In his own words, Augustine describes the work in various ways. The prefatory letter opens by describing De Trinitate as “these books on the Trinity which the one true God is” and as “an inquiry (inquisitione) [that] proceeds in a closely-knit development from the first of [the books] to the last.”\(^2\) He set the project aside because of “other preoccupations” which interrupted him, but he strove to finish it at the insistence of others, including Bishop Aurelius of Carthage. Indeed, he characterizes their calls as “urgent” (vehementissima). This suggests more than idle curiosity; in fact we find a pressing need to have an articulation of the Trinity. Another item of

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1 Scholars differ on how to date De Trinitate, and the fact that Augustine worked on it for many years complicates things immensely. Edmund Hill, in the introduction to his translation, claims that Augustine worked on it from 400 to 420 (“Introduction,” The Trinity, 20). He relies upon the work of Ephraem Hendrikx and Anne-Marie Bonnardière. Ayres’ Augustine and the Trinity includes a short excursus on the dating of De Trinitate. He assumes that Augustine wrote a few books between 399-405, most of the remaining books between 411-418, and the final books perhaps not until 419-427 (Ayres, Augustine and the Trinity, 118-120).

2 Augustine, De Trinitate, prologue. I follow the translation of Edmund Hill except where noted otherwise. The Latin text from CCSL 50 and 50A appears in the footnotes. De Trinitate quae Deus summus et verus est libros juvenis inchoavi, senex edidi. … Non enim singillatim sed omnes simul edere ea ratione decreveram quoniam praecedentibus consequentes inquisitione proficiente nectuntur.
interest emerges here. The manner of this preface suggests that Augustine writes for those who agree with him, at least as an immediate audience. Presumably, Aurelius and these other unnamed allies faced grave challenges from their flocks and needed better answers.

Within the work proper, he uses the verb *disserimus*, indicating a lengthy discussion, and immediately gives a polemical thrust to the work by warning that his pen is “on the watch against the sophistries of those who scorn the starting-point of the faith.”3 He offers a statement of purpose in this way:

That is why, with the help of the Lord our God, we shall undertake to the best of our ability to give them the reasons they clamor for, and to account for the one and only and true God being a trinity, and for the rightness of saying, believing, understanding that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are of one and the same substance or essence.4

Here he frames Book 1 as a polemic, but scholarship used to hold that he did so as a literary convention.5 He seems to vacillate between second person and third person address for the adversaries, but at any rate he appears as if he is trying to convince some Christians who doubt the Nicene account of the Trinity. Barnes in particular has shown that Augustine writes against


4 *Ibid.*, 1.2.4. Quapropter adiuvante domino Deo nostro suscipiemus et eam ipsam quam flagitant, quantum possumus, reddere rationem, quod Trinitas sit unus et solus et verus Deus, et quam recte Pater et Filius et Spiritus Sanctus unius eiusdemque substantiae vel essentiae dicatur, credatur, intellegatur.

5 Rowan Williams says, “Recent research has noted that the presence in Milan at the time of Augustine’s baptism of some eloquent representatives of Latin Homoianism casts a good deal of light on his later polemic against ‘Arians’: the controversies over trinitarian language, in other words, were not remote or academic in his lifetime, as an earlier generation of scholars tended to assume” (“De Trinitate,” *Augustine through the Ages*, ed. Fitzgerald, 845).
the Homoians in *De Trinitate*. The polemic thrust of the work is not a factor of rhetoric but of exigency.

A related question concerns the basic structure and intention of the work, given that so much material is devoted to the image of God in man. Thus, some would consider it to not merely be a work on the Trinity, but a work on Trinitarian epistemology. Scholars have struggled to perceive the unity that Augustine clearly intended for the books and thought that they possessed; recall that in the prefatory letter he says the work as a whole forms a tight interconnected argument. There have been many proposals about the structure of the work. I will draw attention to Matthew Levering’s recent suggestion which has a lot of merit. He perceives the first four books as relating the revelation of the Trinity to man, conceived as a downward motion. The next seven describe reason’s limited ability on its own to access the mystery. The final four consist of a treatment of the dynamics of Trinitarian contemplation enabled by the missions of the Son and Holy Spirit. The distorted nature of humanity as image of God and the finite nature of the human mind both demand accommodations. While centered on the Trinity, then, the work also demands an epistemological focus. Returning to the polemical intent of *De Trinitate*, we should bear in mind that alongside deniers of the divinity of the Son,

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6 He has written extensively on the background of *De Trinitate*. For two examples, see the aforementioned article “The Arians of Book V,” and “Exegesis and Polemic in Augustine’s *De Trinitate* I,” *Augustinian Studies* 30 (1999): 43-59.

7 Note that in the prologue he says “sufficient works on [the Trinity] have not been published in Latin, or at least they are not at all easy to find” (Augustine, *De Trinitate*, prologue). *Quod si ea quae legamus de his rebus sufficienter edita in Latino sermone aut non sunt aut non inventiuntur aut certe difficile a nobis inveniri queunt.*


i.e. the typical Homoian threat, Augustine faults “reason-mongers” at the inception of the work. To expound the mystery of the Trinity properly, he needs to expound the nature of mystery itself. So *De Trinitate* provides a fascinating exercise of faith seeking understanding.

The approach taken below delves into a few topics that touch on God the Father throughout *De Trinitate*, and then focuses on two particularly important sections of text. The mental analogies from Books 9 to 14 certainly can be studied in respect of the subject at hand—especially the way in which Augustine sees “memory” as a source within the mind—but this topic has been treated elsewhere in greater detail. Much indeed has been written about *De Trinitate*. Given the wider intent of this dissertation, it is impossible to interact with recent scholarship in detail. Our focus will be on unpacking the text of *De Trinitate* itself with respect to God the Father’s place in Trinitarian order. To engage this topic, it is helpful first to ascertain his terminology, especially as it compares with his usage in *Confessions*. Subsequently, an examination of Augustine’s method of procedure and exposition can shed light on the Father’s place in Trinitarian order. There are two especially significant sections of *De Trinitate* which

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10 Aside from the anti-Homoian polemic, John Cavadini remarks about the other polemic in this way: “And thus the *De trinitate* is not in the first instance a purely ‘speculative’ work inquiring into the mystery of the Trinity for the sake of systematizing Christian dogma, but finds its context rather in a polemical dialogue, visible in other, more familiar parts of the Augustinian corpus, against Neoplatonic views of salvation and also against (as Augustine sees it) overly Platonizing Christian views” (“The Structure and Intention of Augustine’s *De trinitate,*” *Augustinian Studies* 23 [1992]: 110).


12 We will confine ourselves for the most part to the aforementioned studies of Ayres, Barnes, Gioia, and Studer. While these authors certainly do not offer the final word on Augustine, they represent valuable recent contributors towards assessing Augustine’s Trinitarian theology in its literary, philosophical and theological context.
elaborate the role of the Father as *principium* of the Trinity, towards the end of Books 4 and 15, so these will be treated in detail.

“*God*” in *De Trinitate*

Among the works discussed thus far, the genre and style of *De Trinitate* most resembles *De vera religione*. Unlike *De fide et symbolo*, Augustine is not speaking to fellow bishops in an exposition of the faith. Unlike *Soliloquies* and *Confessions*, he rarely addresses God. He makes an extensive argument to persuade his audience or at least reinforce their faith in the Trinity. He also inquires deeply into various theological mysteries and offers exegetical and philosophical reflections upon them. A basic, important question must be handled first: by *deus* (“God”), does Augustine consistently mean the Trinity, does he conventionally mean the Father (with the wider Trinity in view and implicitly included), or does he vary in his usage?

Augustine’s prayers at the beginning and end of the work offer a good place to start, since these provide us with a few of the instances in which he directly addresses God. Right from the inception of *De Trinitate*, striking differences from the basic posture in *Confessions* as outlined above become apparent. A conventional “greetings in the Lord” (*in Domino salutem*) appears in the opening salutation to Bishop Aurelius, followed immediately by the first instance of *Deus* in the work: “I was a young man when I began these books on the Trinity which the one true God is…”\(^{13}\) The Latin sentence starts with the expression *De trinitate quae deus summus et verus est*. The term *trinitas* thus precedes God and dominates the meaning of *deus* right from the

\(^{13}\) Augustine, *De Trinitate*, prologue.
beginning of the work. This is especially striking since Augustine seems to be the first Latin author to use this phrase.\textsuperscript{14} Similarly, his opening of Book 1 announces his theme as the study of the Trinity (\textit{quae de Trinitate...disserrimus}) with God appearing in subsequent sentences. The word \textit{Deus} appears, however, not in a declarative mood announcing the divine economy, but in subordinate clauses as he seeks to correct mistaken concepts of God. He militates against bodily thinking about God and other problems. He establishes a firm binary between the “created spirit” (\textit{spiritalem creaturam}) and the “Creator himself” (\textit{ipso creatore}).\textsuperscript{15} Before we can adequately name God, Augustine seems to say, we need a proper concept of deity which demands an apophatic process of denying unfitting ways of envisioning God. Positively, he establishes that Scripture operates through bodily and spiritual language to accommodate humanity. Besides the common ways in which Scripture refers to God and his activity, there are a few exceptional passages in which Augustine detects God’s immutability. Among these, he cites the ever-important revelation of the divine name in Ex 3:14, 1 Tm 6:16—a problematic text to which we will turn below—and finally the “Father of lights” passage from the Epistle of James (1:17). This is his first usage of \textit{pater}, and he includes it to support the immutability of the divine substance and does not comment on the Trinitarian economy. He concludes, “So then it is difficult to contemplate and have full knowledge of God’s substance (\textit{substantiam dei}), without which any

\textsuperscript{14} Ayres, \textit{Augustine and the Trinity}, 100. He says that this precise phrase is “not found in his predecessors.” He further indicates that Augustine himself seldom uses this phrase outside \textit{De Trinitate}. He suggests that Augustine viewed the phrase as “at the least, needing careful explanation because of its direct identification of \textit{Trinitas} with \textit{Deus}. While Augustine’s standard practice seems to have been to refer to the Father when \textit{Deus} is used without further qualification, he also uses a number of innovative phrases when speaking directly of the Trinity as God and which identify the Son and Spirit by (scriptural) titles and phrases that his predecessors were reticent to apply to any other than the Father without qualification.”

\textsuperscript{15} Augustine, \textit{De Trinitate}, 1.1.1.
change in itself makes things that change, and without any passage of time in itself creates things that exist in time.”16

His remarks on revelation need to make clear, then, that this revelation is genuine. To be so, the Son must be equal to the Father even if he does not (and must not) appear in equal glory. He proceeds to this point without specifying his premises or foundations. Accommodation and mediation on the one hand must be grounded in genuine unity and equality on the other. All of the above serves to provide context for his statement of purpose, including within it an implicit prayer:

That is why, with the help of the Lord our God, we shall undertake to the best of our ability to give them the reasons they clamor for, and to account for the one and only and true God being a trinity, and for the rightness of saying, believing, understanding that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are of one and the same substance and essence.17

It is evident that he invokes the Trinity simply here without implicating the Father in a particular way by his usage of “God.” It might appear from these select quotations from the start of De Trinitate that the critics are right and that Augustine starts with the unity of the divine substance and proceeds to the persons. This topic demands more treatment below.

Turning to the closing prayer of the work, the presentation does not change much. He addresses God as Trinity before making specific second-person appeals to the Father and the Son. The prayer runs thus:

16 Ibid., 1.1.3.
17 Ibid., 1.1.4. Quapropter adiuvante domino deo nostro suscipiemus et eam ipsam quam flagitant, quantum possimus, reddere rationem quod trinitas sit unus et solus et verus deus, et quam recte pater et filius et spiritus sanctus unius eiusdemque substantiae vel essentiae dicatur, credatur, intelligatur.
O Lord our God, we believe in you, Father and Son and Holy Spirit.... And if you, God and Father, were yourself also the Son of your Word Jesus Christ, were yourself also your gift the Holy Spirit, we would not read in the documents of truth ‘God sent his Son’ (Gal 4:4), nor would you, only-begotten one, have said of the Holy Spirit, ‘whom the Father will send in my name’ (Jn 14:26), and, ‘whom I will send you from the Father’ (Jn 15:26).\footnote{Ibid., 15.28.51. Domine deus noster, credimus in te patrem et filium et spiritum sanctum.... Et sit u deus pater ipse esses et filius verbum tuam iesus Christus ipse esses et donum vestrum spiritus sanctus, non legeremus in litteris veritatis: Misit deus filium suum, nec tu, unigenite, dicens de spiritu sancto: Quem mittet pater in nomine meo, et: Quem ego mittam vobis a patre.}

It is curious, given Augustine’s attention to patterns and triads throughout \textit{De Trinitate}, that he does not turn similarly to the Holy Spirit in his prayer. At any rate, that he uses second person singular language for the entire Trinity and for the persons of Father and Son indeed follows from his Trinitarian logic. Even still, it is a marked departure from his style of prayer elsewhere. His final appeal, too, adverts to the Trinity without distinction: \textit{Dominus deus one, deus trinitas} addressed as \textit{tu}. Perhaps it is simply to be granted that in a work entitled \textit{De Trinitate}, postured by its author as a vigorous exposition and defense of the doctrine, that he would be cautious in his opening and closing to keep the focus on the three-and-one rather than on a particular person in any way as might suggest ontological subordination.

If the above paragraphs indicate the normal meaning of “God” for this particular work, even within \textit{De Trinitate} there are noteworthy exceptions. The prologue of Book 4 must be mentioned, and this is particularly interesting because he most likely inserted this prologue late in the process of editing \textit{De Trinitate}.\footnote{See Luigi Gioia, \textit{Theological Epistemology}, 32.} Here he breaks from his outline to reflect and seemingly to pray. Two lines of this prologue immediately stand out: “As one of this sort of men, O Lord my God, I sigh among your poor ones in the family of your Christ” and “But I am struggling to
return from this far country by the road he has made me in the humanity of the divinity of his only Son.”

This second statement is slightly confusing and needs to be unpacked. Both of these lines suggest the Father as the terminus of prayer, and the second is especially certain in this vein. Both instances draw attention to the metaphor of family and fatherhood.

Inspecting the prologue of Book 4 more broadly, Augustine had named God’s work in dynamic or economic terms earlier on. After exalting knowledge as a human good, Augustine praises self-knowledge. Knowledge of one’s own weakness is worth more than knowing the course of the stars. Many are ignorant, however, of their own desperate situation; they need to be “woken up.” They are in a dream, at the mercy of others. He urges the reader to consider “a man who has been roused by the warmth of the Holy Spirit and has already woken up to God….”

Having realized his own weakness, he knows he cannot make progress on his own. He needs to pray, to “implore [God] over and over again to take pity.” His own situation changes dramatically, and his prayers take on a new confident tone once he has “received the free gratuitous pledge of health through the one and only savior and enlightener granted to us by God.” This person is now in a position to long for his true country and its founder, God. So in this passage, we discern a triad. Augustine’s ideal readers can say that the Holy Spirit has woken them up, and that the Son has enlightened them. Even still, they long for the God who set this in motion and will bring them to their lasting peace.

Similarly, Augustine acknowledges that “God” is a proper name for the Father in Scripture. This is clear from his exegesis of one of the most important passages for his theology.

20 Augustine, De Trinitate, 4.proem.1. In hoc genere hominum, in familia Christi tu, domine deus meus, si inter pauperes tuos gemo and de longinguo redire conanti per viam quam stravit humanitate divinitatis unigeniti sui....
of God and Christology, the Johannine prologue. He makes a similar statement as he expounds upon the Christ-hymn in Philippians. Paul talks of Christ as being “in the form of God” and in fact as having “equality” with God. Augustine takes this not as referring to an impersonal divine substance but rather to God the Father properly (*proprie*).\(^{21}\) He summons the quotation “the head of Christ is God” (1 Cor 11:3) as another example of the same. There is no doubt that he could have cited several other texts. Although he does not linger on this “proper name” comment, it is important to keep this remark in mind to comprehend the range of his biblical exegesis. He does not simply shoehorn an interpretation of “God” in every instance to mean the undivided Trinity, but is content for Scriptural language to appropriate the Father as God.

The qualifier “in every instance” is necessary because Augustine does interpret some New Testament texts rather clumsily when the Father seems the more natural referent. See, for example, his treatment of John 14:1 (“Believe in God, believe in me too”) which he reinterprets as “Just as you believe in God, so too in me, because I and the Father are one God.”\(^{22}\) Even here, though, he does not diminish the Father’s divinity but extends it by adding the Son. So there is in fact an implicit acknowledgement of the evangelist’s signification of the Father by “God.” Of course, Augustine also affirms that the Father is the divine referent of “Christ the power of God and the wisdom God” in his extensive discussions of the meaning of this phrase.\(^{23}\)

\(^{21}\) *Ibid.*, 1.6.12. *Quamquam nec ab ipso verbo tacuerit apostolus et appertissime omnino dixerit:* Qui cum in forma Dei esset, non rapinam arbitratus est esse aequalis Deo, *hic Deum proprie patrem appellans, sicut alibi:* Caput autem Christi Deus (1 Cor 11:3).

\(^{22}\) *Ibid.*, 1.27.

\(^{23}\) See *ibid.*, 7.1ff.
He also discusses Jn 17:3 ("Now this is eternal life, that they should know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ the one whom you sent"), one of the passages cited by anti-Nicene theologians. Augustine makes room for the Son and Holy Spirit along with the Father: "And when he hears the Father called the only God, he must not exclude the Son or the Holy Spirit from that title, for he is of course the only God together with whomever he is the one God with."²⁴ Perhaps Augustine is grasping with this interpretation, but he realizes that neither the words of Scripture appropriating the Father as God nor the Nicene Creed can budge. The Father is God in an unqualified sense, but in light of other Scriptures he must add that his divinity is shared with the Son and Holy Spirit.

In closing this section on Deus in De Trinitate, we must admit that his usage has changed from that in the works analyzed to this point. Most of the time, Deus means the Trinity. He also vigorously demonstrates that it stands for each of the persons of the Trinity separately as well. He loyally adheres to monotheism and to the equality of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He effectively has created a "common concept of God."²⁵ Even so, in his exegesis he admits that Deus often means Father, and he still naturally refers to the Father as God in another sense—as primary origin and ultimate end—at various junctures in De Trinitate. The missions of the Son and Spirit come from the Father and unify all things in him. He maintains these various

²⁴ Ibid. 7.6.12. In the next line he says the same would apply "when" the Son is called the only God. Such a formulation does not occur in Scripture, however, so Augustine seemingly brings this up as a rhetorical gambit. Neque cum audierit patrem solum Deum separat inde filium aut spiritum sanctum, cum eo quippe solus Deus cum quo et unus Deus est quia et filium cum audimus solum Deum sine ulla separatione patris aut spiritus sancti oportet accipere.

²⁵ Studer, The Grace of Christ, 105. He distinguishes this "common concept" of God from the Father who is "properly God," and says, "the main question in The Trinity is how the concept of 'God in common' or 'God universally' is used of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, that is, of the entire Trinity. Only in the second place does the question arise of how the Father is called 'God in the proper sense.' But in both cases, the meaning of God is, at bottom, simply presupposed."
approaches in a careful balance. He does in this particular influential work aver and demonstrate that we can also address the Trinity in prayer, but in the midst of it he still orients prayer toward the Father. Augustine retains Scriptural and liturgical language but also strives to broaden the range of meaning of “God” as well.

_Augustine’s Order and Procedure_

As has been maintained above, Augustine is perfectly clear that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit share perfect equality. Equality and sameness must not be confused, and one must grant that Augustine’s vision of equality does not preclude a fixed pattern or order of relationships. He upholds God the Father as foundational within Trinitarian order in _De Trinitate_. As is often the case with concrete foundations, they attract less attention than the edifices constructed on them, but the buildings would crumble without them. The subtle centrality of God the Father in Augustine’s schema should be brought to light and be appreciated more by the bishop’s modern critics.

When he sets out to explain and defend the Trinitarian faith, he does not start with the divine substance as is still commonly held among systematic theologians. Instead, he assumes the divinity of the Father and works to prove the divinity of the Son, and then of the Holy Spirit. He repeatedly holds to this procedure of exposition. He makes it clear, as it were, that divinity encompasses not only the Father, but the Son and Holy Spirit as well. He never “proves” that the Father is God in _De Trinitate_; by steps he proves that the Father does not hoard divinity but rather in eternity he issues it forth in the Son and Holy Spirit. Recent studies have reiterated
Augustine’s dependence upon Scripture, and it behooves us in the current dissertation as well to stress that his unfolding of the doctrine of the Trinity, from the very first book of *De Trinitate*, proceeds along Scriptural lines. Augustine himself explains, “First we must establish by the authority of the holy scriptures whether the faith is in fact like that [*i.e.*, Trinitarian]. Only then shall we go on, if God so wills and gives his help....” The revelation of the godhead in Scripture is the core of Trinitarian faith. He respects that the Trinity is not merely the *content* of divine revelation but also it is the dynamic mode of divine revelation. Only a few Scriptural texts neatly capture the distinctness and equality of the Three, but from critical Old Testament texts, echoed in the New Testament, it is clear that God is one. More powerful for Augustine, however, is the tide of passages that insist upon the unity of God and his Son, or God and his Spirit, or the Son and the Spirit. Taken together, and respecting the story of salvation as a whole, they add up to one impressive argument for the Trinity.

Despite the position above that Augustine begins procedurally with the Father’s divinity, which is borne out in the text of *De Trinitate*, there is a curious challenge to the theology of God the Father that Augustine finds within some authors leading up to his time. He devotes significant parts of Books 6 and 7 to Trinitarian appropriation, ostensibly to protect the Father’s possession of attributes that are predicated of the Son and Holy Spirit. As usual, the focus is on

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26 See, for example, Gouven Madec, *Le Dieu d’Augustin*, 31ff.

27 Augustine, *De Trinitate*, 1.2.4. *Sed primum secundum auctoritatem scripturarum sanctarum utrum ita se fides habeat demonstrandum est. Deinde si voluerit et adiuverit deus... sic fortasse seruiemus.*

28 My judgment here aligns with a major theme of Gioia’s work. He says, for example, “The Father is known precisely as the one who cannot be seen or the one who, although he cannot be seen (*i.e.* he is unknowable), makes himself knowable in the Incarnation of the Son and the sending of the Holy Spirit. Again, knowledge of God is not simply knowledge of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, but knowledge of the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit” (*Trinitarian Epistemology*, 113, emphasis original).
sorting out the issue with respect to the Father and Son, with the consequences applying in the case of the Holy Spirit as well. Paul’s description of Christ as the “power of God” and the “wisdom of God” (1 Cor 1:24), which has captivated Augustine before, provides the particular stumbling block here. This verse was interpreted by Augustine’s theological forebears as ascribing divine qualities to Christ. In fact, pro-Nicene theologians employed this phrase to refute the Arians, as they insisted that God was never without his power or wisdom. Some, however, apparently pursued or rejoined with a false interpretation of Christ being the “wisdom of God” to mean that the Father himself does not have wisdom, or that there are two wisdoms. According to another way of putting this, the Father does not have wisdom of himself or in himself, but only has it through the Son who is his power and wisdom. From Augustine’s perspective, such a position is entirely unfitting. Certainly Augustine does not deny the eternity of the Trinity, but even so, to simply say that the Father has wisdom because of the Son or only in conjunction with the Son denigrates the Father’s divinity.

We can bring Augustine into dialogue with Pannenberg on this point. Pannenberg had formulated the interdependence of the persons of the Trinity, justifying his claim largely in Athanasius’ reasoning that the Father must have eternally had the Son in order to be Father. Pannenberg would be more at ease with the expression that the Father is wise by the wisdom of the Son.

Augustine does not provide his real response until Book 7. He develops a fascinating answer. While the relations of the Trinity are a given, and Father and Son are intended relationally and not as differences of essence, he stresses that ontological content must remain in

29 See above, 87.
the godhead. He says, “If the Father is not also something with reference to himself, there is absolutely nothing there to be talked of with reference to something else.”\textsuperscript{30} The divine essence must be located in the Father, and so too the properties of wisdom, power, greatness, etc. Without such grounding there are no relations, because there cannot be relations at all without the foundation of being or existence.

The African also insists upon the Father having wisdom in himself besides begetting “wisdom” in order to maintain divine simplicity.\textsuperscript{31} If the situation obtained that the Father begot a quality distinctive from himself, that quality would be separate and God would no longer be simple. He echoes the familiar refrain, “For God, to be is the same as to be wise.”

If then in this case to be is the same as to be wise, it follows that the Father is not wise with the wisdom he has begotten; otherwise he did not beget it, but it begot him. When we say that for him to be is the same as to be wise, what else are we saying but that he is by that which he is wise by? So it follows that the cause of his being wise is the cause of his being at all. Therefore, if the cause of his being wise is the wisdom he has begotten, this will also be the cause of his being at all. And it can only be this by begetting him or making him. But no one has ever dreamt of saying that wisdom is the begetter or maker of the Father. Could you have a crazier notion?\textsuperscript{32}

Augustine in this section runs into the notion that God the Father could be considered to be begotten by the divine substance. He utterly rejects it. The essence of the Trinity is only found in the persons themselves. These persons themselves are grounded ontologically in the Father. It

\textsuperscript{30} Augustine, De Trinitate 7.1.2. Quapropter si et pater non est aliquid a se ipsum, non est omnino qui relative dicatur ad aliquid.

\textsuperscript{31} See Ayres, Augustine and the Trinity, 221-226.

\textsuperscript{32} Augustine, De Trinitate, 7.1.2. Quod si hoc est ibi esse quod sapere, non per illum sapientiam quam genuit sapiens et pater; alioquin non ipsa illum, sed illa eum genuit. Quid enim alius dicimus cum dicimus hoc illi est esse quod sapere nisi eo est quo sapiens est? Quapropter quae causa illi est ut sapiens sit, ipsa illi causa est ut sit. Proinde si sapientia quam genuit causa est illi ut sapiens sit, etiam ut sit ipsa illi causa est. Quod fieri non potest nisi gignendo eum aut faciendo. Sed neque genitricem neque conditionem patris ullo modo quisquam dixerit sapientiam. Quid enim est insanius?
does not follow that the Father is temporally prior; he eternally abides as wisdom, power, etc., but he also eternally begets the co-equal Son and abides with the Son in the communion of the co-equal Holy Spirit. He thus protects the Father against having his divinity dependent on the Son, contra Pannenberg. Ayres connects this point well with Augustine’s wider theology. He says, “God is the source of all wisdom and is the wisdom itself in whom we seek to participate.”\textsuperscript{33} The Father’s generation of the Son does not entail the multiplication of wisdom but a shared wisdom. Through the Son we come to share in that one wisdom. Because of “God from God” we are drawn into the life of God.

In a fascinating sequence in Book 5, Augustine traces how God as Trinity is the origin of all things, but that the relationships of origin within the Trinity serve as the foundation of the Trinity as \textit{principium}. God the Father as “father” is origin of the Son, and as “God” he is origin of all things.\textsuperscript{34} The Son is emphatically not the origin of the Father, but he is called \textit{principium} of all things. Augustine cites his Latin text of Jn 8:25, which differs from most other versions, in which Jesus calls himself \textit{principium}. He feels that he must explain that Jesus “wanted to indicate that he is the creator when he said he was the origin, just as the Father is the origin of creation because all things are from him.”\textsuperscript{35} The Father and Son, he insists, are one origin. He then proceeds to include the Holy Spirit: “we cannot deny the Holy Spirit the right to be called origin either, because we do not exclude him from the title of creator.”\textsuperscript{36} So the Father is the

\textsuperscript{33} Ayres, \textit{Augustine and the Trinity}, 226.

\textsuperscript{34} Augustine, \textit{De Trinitate.}, 5.13.14. \textit{...pater ad filium dicitur, principium vero ad omnia quae ab ipso sunt.}

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid. \textit{Et principium dicitur filius... Sed numquid patris principium? Creatorem se quippe ostendere voluit cum se dixit esse principium, sicut et pater principium est creaturarum quod ab ipso sunt omnia.}
origin of the Son, the Father and Son are origin of the Holy Spirit, and together all three are the origin of all things. “With reference to creation Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one origin (unum principium), just as they are one creator and one lord.”\textsuperscript{37} This treatment of principium serves as an inspiration for Bonaventure’s ideas, as treated below.

A related passage appears in Book 15, which shows how the Trinitarian order is grounded in relationships of origin. It again displays Augustine’s order of operations, \textit{i.e.} starting with the Father. This passage shortly follows Augustine’s own outline-in-review of the entirety of Books 1 to 14, which itself shows the repetition of this Father$\rightarrow$Son$\rightarrow$Holy Spirit procedure.

So here we are then with these three, that is memory, understanding, love or will in that supreme and unchangeable being which God is, and they are not the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit but the Father alone. And because the Son too is wisdom, begotten of wisdom, it means the Father does not do his remembering for him or the Holy Spirit his loving any more than the Father or the Holy Spirit do his understanding, but he does it all for himself; he is his own memory, his own understanding, his own love, but his being all this \textit{comes to him from the Father of whom he is born}. The Holy Spirit too does not have the Father for memory and the Son for understanding and himself for love [and so forth]…. No, he himself has these three, and he has them in such a way that he is them. But its being so with him \textit{comes to him from where he proceeds from}.\textsuperscript{38}

Besides showing Augustine’s proper understanding of appropriation and analogy, too often overlooked by some readers, this passage encapsulates his procedure beautifully. All attributes

\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Ibid.} …\textit{non possimus negare etiam spiritum sanctum recte dici principium quia non eum separamus ab appellatione creatoris.}

\textsuperscript{37} \textit{Ibid.}, 5.14.15. \textit{…ad creaturam vero pater et filius et spiritus sanctus unum principium sicut unus creator et unus dominus.}

\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Ibid.}, 15.7.12. \textit{Ecce ergo tria illa, id est memoria, intelligens, dilectio seu voluntas in illa summa et immutabili essentia quod est deus, non pater et filius et spiritus sanctus sunt, sed pater solus. Et quia filius quoque sapientia est genita de sapientia, sicut nec pater ei nec spiritus sanctus intellegit sed ipse sibi, ita nec pater ei memnit nec spiritus sanctus ei diliget sed ipse sibi; sua enim est et ipse memoria, sua intelligens, sua dilectio, sed ita se habere de patre illi est de quo natus est. Spiritus etiam sanctus quia sapientia est procedens de sapientia non patrem habet memoriam et filium intelligendum et se dilectionem…. Sed ipse habet haec tria et ea sic habet ut haec ipse ipse sit. Verumtamen ut ita sit inde illi est unde procedit.}
and perfections that apply to God are perfectly realized in the Father. They too are perfectly realized in the Son and Holy Spirit, since they receive fully from the Father in due order.

Although—as we have shown above—Augustine is much more careful about how he uses the term *Deus* in this work, he does unfold the doctrine of the Trinity in accordance with the traditional order of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The divinity of the Father is assumed, and he labors to interpret Scripture as extending co-equal divinity to the Son and Holy Spirit. This procedure is evident throughout *De Trinitate*, from beginning to end.

*God the Father as Sender: De Trinitate 4*

In two passages towards the end of Book 4, Augustine calls the Father the *principium* of the Godhead.\(^{39}\) He does not arrive at this statement haphazardly; rather, he carefully builds towards this statement—absolutely key to this project—throughout the first four books.\(^{40}\) Although the structure of *De Trinitate* as a whole has been debated, there is at least a clear sequence of exposition that starts in the middle of Book 2 and continues to the end of Book 4. The author’s final remark in Book 4 and his prologue to Book 5 also make a change clear: “In those [volumes] that follow we shall see with the Lord’s help what sort of subtle crafty arguments the heretics bring forward and how they can be demolished.” Then, “From now on I will be attempting to say things that are altogether be said as they are thought by a man—or at


\(^{40}\) Lewis Ayres stresses the importance of the Father as origin several times in *Augustine and the Trinity*. For example, he states, “Exploration of this topic [i.e. the Father as origin] both reveals the centrality of the Father’s status in Augustine’s mature Trinitarian theology, and suggests some initial questions about how Augustine envisages the Trinitarian communion…” (177).
least as they are thought by me.” In this light, Luigi Gioia’s insistence on the unity of the first seven books presses too hard.\textsuperscript{41} They are indeed interrelated, but Books 2 to 4 have an inner coherence as do Books 5 to 7. This structural question has implications for evaluating the ending of Book 4. It is a climactic moment of Augustine’s handling of the divine missions of the Son and Holy Spirit, and it anticipates Book 15. It is no coincidence that both sections contain important material for his theology of the Father. These deserve to be studied closely in turn.

First, some context is in order. In Book 2, Augustine begins to discuss in earnest the significance of the missions of the Son and Holy Spirit. To the Homoians and other opponents of pro-Nicene theology, the fact of the Son and Holy Spirit being “sent” by the Father entailed their subordination to him.\textsuperscript{42} Even among pro-Nicenes there was temptation to regard the Father as the “invisible” person of the Trinity. To put it briefly, Augustine holds firmly to the invisibility of the entire Trinity—notwithstanding God making use of visible manifestations to attest to the presence of the Son and Holy Spirit—and insists that the missions do not necessitate subordination. He explains the manifestations of the Holy Spirit—the dove and tongues of fire—as symbolic, visible representations of the divine action. Later, of course, he will establish firmly that God cannot possibly show his substance.\textsuperscript{43} At any rate, the Incarnation is a more complicated case, as Augustine wishes to ensure that Christ did not merely appear human, but had an invisible nature alongside a visible nature. The theological implications of the Old

\textsuperscript{41} Gioia, \textit{Theological Epistemology}, 37-40.


\textsuperscript{43} Augustine, \textit{De Trinitate}, 2.16.27.
Testament theophanies had been interpreted variously by the Fathers before Augustine, and he feels the need to deliberate the issue. So in the midst of Book 2 he outlines the questions that will comprise the remainder of the book along with Books 3 and 4.

First, he takes up “whether it was the Father or the Son or the Holy Spirit who appeared under these created forms to the fathers” in a recurring fashion, or whether the persons appeared singly in various theophanies, or whether “it was simply the one and only God,” without distinction.\textsuperscript{44} Second, he takes up the creaturely \textit{mode} of God’s manifestation. Third, he promises to ascertain “whether the Son and the Holy Spirit were also being sent from of old, and if they were, how such sending differed from the one we read of in the gospel.” That is to say, when do those two missions “begin”? As he proceeds and attempts to interpret some challenging verses, he carefully distinguishes the \textit{activity} of the Trinity, in which the three work inseparably, and the proper \textit{manifestation} of each person. For example, regarding the voice of the Father at Jesus’ baptism, he says:

Not that the voice could be produced without the activity of Son and Holy Spirit (the triad works inseparably); but it was produced to manifest the person of the Father alone, just as the three produced that human being of the virgin Mary and yet it is the person of the Son alone—the invisible three producing what is the visible person of the Son alone.\textsuperscript{45}

Unfortunately, as Augustine realizes, it is easier to discern the joint action in the Incarnation than it is in the voice. The common thread, as he proceeds to make clear, is that God the creator makes use of created realities in his manifestation. For some theophany passages, he

\textsuperscript{44} \textit{Ibid.}, 2.7.13. \textit{In huitis perplexitate quaeestionis primum domino adiuvante quaeerendum est utrum pater an filius an spiritus sanctus; an aliquando pater, aliquando filius, aliquando spiritus sanctus; an sine ulla distinction personarum sicut dicter Deus unus et solus, id est ipsa trinitatis, per illas creaturae formas patribus apparuert.}

\textsuperscript{45} \textit{Ibid.}, 2.10.18.
does not find a compelling inclination towards one person of the Trinity, while in others, there may be a reasonable inference drawn about the manifestation of an appropriate person of the Trinity. His inquiry leads to skepticism as to the ability for exegetes to track down the persons of the Trinity in the Old Testament. Aside from the premises already mentioned, there is another fact that he does turn into a guiding hermeneutical principle: he states twice that “nowhere in the scriptures do we find the Father being sent.” Against the suggestion that the Father is the invisible person of the Trinity and the Son the visible, however, he holds out the possibility that the Father could have been the appropriate person appearing in disguise, or in a “symbolic manner,” to the patriarchs. Indeed, he thinks that the “Ancient of Days” in Daniel is the Father. Shrewd readers might point out that Daniel’s vision took place in a dream, but Augustine uses the very objection to reduce the contrary opinion to absurdity and prove his point. How on earth could one see the divine substance of the Son and Holy Spirit with their waking eyes but not of the Father? After all, they jointly comprise the divine substance.

He finishes his response to the first question by refusing to commit to an answer; he essentially says that it does not matter which person if any might be suggested by a particular passage. “In any case, that nature, or substance, or essence, or whatever else you may call that which God is, whatever it may be, cannot be physically seen.” He is ambivalent towards or even disinterested about the terminology, as long as the theologian does not confuse the appearance of the godhead with God himself. Of the three possible answers initially held out for the question of who was manifested in the Old Testament theophanies—one person invariably, individual

46 *Ibid.*, 2.12.22, 3. proem. 3. This aids him, for example, in his interpretation of the story of mysterious visitors to Abraham in Genesis 18.

persons variably, or the triune Godhead invariably—Augustine vigorously excludes the first and hedges between the second and the third options.

Once he has concluded that the Old Testament theophanies necessarily make use of visible, created realities, and do not present the divine essence, the question of which person recedes in importance, replaced by the question of modality. Only a little of this discussion is directly relevant to the current inquiry. He concludes that God acted through angels to represent himself. He steadfastly holds to the angels as representing any of the three or all three together. The angelic work—in a seeming nod to those who held that the Old Testament theophanies involved Christ invariably—anticipated the manifestation Christ, preparing the way for the one true mediator between God and man.48

So in Book 4, Augustine aims to present his explanation of the missions of the Son and the Spirit, and how these missions do not compromise their coequal divinity with the Father. Although much of the soteriological material here focuses on the Son as mediator, the Father maintains a fundamental role in the drama. In fact, as it turns out, the Father as source provides for the possibility of the very drama. God created all things through his Word and because these created things plunged into such despair he reached out through his Word to bring them into unity and harmony with himself.49 In a passage with Plotinian resonances, he contrasts the divided and discordant many—“we,” for Augustine—with the one supreme true God. “And so it was fitting that at the beck and bidding of a compassionate God the many should themselves


49 See Bochet, “The Hymn to the One,” 43-47.
acclaim together the one who was to come.”\textsuperscript{50} The use of \textit{unum} in the following passage connotes Christ, along with the Father (and Holy Spirit) as one God. Being the One from the One, and One in the One, he is able to bring the many into the One. He puts it, “thus fully reconciled to God by him the mediator, we may be able to cling to the one, enjoy the one, and remain forever one.”\textsuperscript{51} The oneness and equality of the Son with the Father is paramount, and he cites John 17 at length to emphasize his point. Christ is not God alone. He is God precisely because of his unity with the Father. His function as mediator does not derogate from his equality with the Father, but without his being from the Father he could not be mediator. His exegesis of this passage has profound implications for Augustine’s Trinitarian theology and God the Father’s place in the saving economy.

The idea of Christ’s double solidarity with the Father and with humanity returns with his discussion of sacrifice later in the book. In contrast with Moltmann, Augustine’s soteriology does not exclusively focus on the cross, nor does it solely relate to the notion of sacrifice, but these hold importance among other images and formulations. Augustine treats the phenomenon of sacrifice as having four dimensions: “whom it is offered to, whom it is offered by, what it is that is offered, and whom it is offered for.”\textsuperscript{52} Augustine naturally treats the sacrifice as offered to the “one true God,” but on the strength of John 17 and other passages it can be spoken as offered to the Father by way of appropriation. The Son was one with the Father to whom he offered it,

\textsuperscript{50} Augustine, \textit{De Trinitate}, 4.7.11. \ldots \ oportebat nutu et imperio dei miserantis ut ipsa multa venturum clamarent unum, et a multis clamatus veniret unus.\ldots

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid. \ldots et per mediatorem deo reconciliati haereamus uni, fruamur uno, permaneamus unum.

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 4.14.19.
and one with humanity for whom he offered it. The sacrifice is a Trinitarian action to be sure, but it is fitting to see it offered by the Son to the Father for humanity, binding them all tightly together as an appropriate mediator. The Father lovingly sends the Son, and lovingly receives the Son’s sacrifice. So Augustine perceives the Father’s role in the cross-event in an entirely different light, as compared with our modern interlocutors.

If the Son, sent by the Father, were not equal with the Father, the whole saving economy would break down. He would not be a true mediator. But what of the Father? Is he aloof from creation, coordinating all things, but without getting directly involved himself? How does that not elevate him? Well, in a sense it does and in a sense it does not. The Son being from the Father, in a fixed and non-reciprocal order, enables him to be a bridge to the eternal. It is this theme to which Augustine turns in the final section of Book 4 as he culminates the theology of the missions by grounding them in a sender that maintains primacy while completely pouring himself out in his divinity. The missions in time point to the eternal processions from the Father. In an analogous way, the Son and Holy Spirit share givenness with creation. As we have seen before with Augustine, the dynamism of outflow lies at the heart of his theology, but here it is presented in a more thoroughgoing fashion.

There are three principal metaphors describing the Father as origin in this section: (1) Obviously, that of a human parent and offspring (Father begets his Son); (2) creative mind and

\[53\text{Ibid.} \quad “And this one true mediator, in reconciling us to God by his sacrifice of peace, would remain one with him to whom he offered it, and make one in himself those for whom he offered it, and be himself who offered it and the same as what he offered.” Idem ipse unus verusque mediator per sacrificium pacis reconcilians nos deo unum cum illo maneret cui offerabat, unum in se faceret pro quibus offerabat, unus ipse esset qui offerabat et quod offerabat.\]

\[54\text{Ibid.} \quad 4.18.24. \quad “Nor, on the other hand, could we pass from being among the things that originated to eternal things, unless the eternal allied himself to us in our originated condition, and so provided us with a bridge to his eternity.”\]
word; and (3) light and brightness (Light from Light). The last of these he sees as the superior natural image to spring and water because our senses suggest that the spring is of a different substance. These images work vividly by signifying non-reciprocal relationship. By definition, a son is born of a father, not a father of a son. By definition, a word is spoken by a speaker, not a speaker by a word. By definition, brightness emanates from a light, not a beacon of light from brightness. At this point, though, the second of these images is not well-defined by Augustine. He speaks not generically of a mind or a speaker, but more biblically as “God” with his “wisdom” or his “word.”

As it turns out, the difference between the processions and missions is the difference between time and eternity. The missions accommodate to our senses, and so they take place in time. Because of God’s nature, however, even these accommodations need to indicate something true about God. If the Son and Spirit are said to be sent by Scripture, but the Father is never said to be sent, then God the Father must have some eternal quality of sending. If the Son and Holy Spirit are temporally marked by “from-ness,” to coin a term, they must eternally be so. The Father must conversely be designated by “not-from-ness.” Gioia uses the term “direction” to speak of this difference. He relates,

What appears to be subordination, therefore, only means ‘direction,’ so to speak, in the relation between the divine persons: only the Father is ‘God’ without qualification. The Son is “from God,” de deo. The Holy Spirit is a deo or ex deo. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, however, are equally “God.”

In contrast to Homoian theology, Augustine insists that in the case of the divinity, or deity, being from another does not mean temporal subordination. This equality is related so deeply to the

55 Gioia, Trinitarian Epistemology, 27. See a similar comment in ibid., 121.
common eternity of the persons. A father is “superior” to his son not simply in respect of the origination but because this relationship suggests precedence in time. This difference means that the father should be stronger than his son and have power over him for much of his life, and always have precedence in wisdom. But if you take away precedence in time, and translate them into an eternity, they are equals in respect of their shared nature.

At the start of paragraph 25 of Book 4, Augustine summarizes the previous discussion of the saving economy thusly: “There you have what the Son of God has been sent for; indeed there you have what it is for the Son of God to have been sent.” He strikes on the theme of exitus–reditus, bringing back (relatis) the originated to contemplation of the eternal. He reiterates that the Son, insofar as he is “made of woman” (Gal 4:4) is less, such that the greater sends the less, but he also reminds the reader of the Son’s equality with the Father “before he was sent and so made.” The statement that the greater sends the less needs to be qualified. His conviction rests on the assertion that the Son, as sent, cannot be seen “as he is in his equality with the Father.” It should be noted at this point, as with the subsection on procedure above, that Augustine prefers to discuss the Son’s divinity as “equality with the Father” rather than baldly state that the Son is “God.” Again, this is not a fixed rule, but a preference.

Just as with two human beings—say, a king and his emissary—if one strips away function the basic nature is the same and it is equal. Despite Augustine’s recent reputation, he

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56 Augustine, De Trinitate, 4.19.25. Ecce ad quod missus est filius Dei; immo vero ecce quod est missum esse filium Dei.

57 Ibid., 4.19.26. Quomodo ergo ante istam plenitudinem temporis qua eum ergo mitti oportebat priusquam missus esset videri a patribus potuit cum eis angelica quaedam visa demonstrarentur, quando nec iam missus sicut aequalis est patri videbatur?
has a strong sense of equality when it comes to human nature. The difference is the relationship. 
The situation regarding equality is not the same among the Trinitarian persons, and we must also consider that they act jointly. Augustine does use the king-emissary relationship as an analogy, though. With Father and Son, or the one sending and the one sent, he takes away the hierarchical element when it comes to the underlying nature. The Son being sent does not deprive him of being consubstantial and co-eternal. “Not because one is greater and the other less, but because one is the Father and the other the Son; one is the begetter, the other begotten.” 58 This is a fixed order, but not a subordinating one. “For the Son is from the Father and not the Father from the Son.” Seen in view of eternity, the procession of the Son testifies to his equality, not to his disparity. He is sent “in virtue of his being from the Father.” Augustine assumes that it is not fitting for a son to send his father—this does not square with his worldview—but it is eminently fitting for a father to send his co-equal son. Origin indicates something about relationship and also obviously something about function for Augustine.

To say that God eternally speaks his Word is analogous to saying that the Father eternally begets his Son. Augustine is comfortable setting these images side by side and even mixing them (e.g. “the Word is sent by him he is born of”). 59 Augustine interprets the scriptures that the Son of God was “born” in an eternal mode, but that he was “sent” only in time. 60 If God the Father is not sent in time, as Augustine insists, it ought to have ramifications for the Father’s eternal

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58 Ibid., 4.20.27.
59 Ibid., 4.20.28.
60 Ibid.
constitution. Surely, this is not necessary, but it is fitting and appropriate. In the next section, Bonaventure will echo Augustine in this judgment.

Any apprehension of the Father, then, excludes the possibility of his being sent. In paragraph 29, Augustine indicates that there is an order of being and an order of knowing behind this mystery. The Father begetting the Son corresponds to the order of being, while the Son being sent from the Father corresponds to the order of knowing. After Augustine has invested considerable energy in exploring this Father-Son relationship exclusively, he finally adverts to the Holy Spirit. As he continues, he assures his readers that the very same principle applies to the Holy Spirit’s procession from the Father: “Just as for the Holy Spirit his being the gift of God means his proceeding from the Father, so his being sent means his being known to proceed from him.” The Holy Spirit is from eternity the gift of God, but it is the temporal mission that makes him known as such. It is not coincidental that this inquiry into the Holy Spirit leads directly into the key texts on the Father as source at the end of Book 4.

Perhaps ironically, Augustine’s insistence on the Son’s participation in the sending—thus ensuring his involvement in the eternal procession of the Spirit—requires him to clarify how the Father is the ultimate source of both God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. He cites two of the crucial texts from the Last Supper discourses of Jesus in John’s Gospel, 15:26 and 14:26, to point to the Son’s inextricable involvement in the temporal mission of the Holy Spirit. There are elements of each verse that underscore the Father’s role: in 15:26, Jesus promises to send the Spirit “from the Father”; in 14:26, Jesus says that the Father will send him “in my name.” This prompts Augustine’s exegetical conclusion that the Son “thereby indicated that the source

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61 Ibid., 4.20.29.
(principium) of all godhead, or if you prefer it, of all deity, is the Father. So the Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son is traced back (refertur), on both counts, to him of whom the Spirit is born.62 Here, as elsewhere, Augustine uses multiple terms and refuses to be hemmed in to one way of referring to God.63 The Father is the principium. God may also encompass being “from another,” as with the Son and Holy Spirit sharing in the Father’s divinity, but there is no divinity without source. There is thus no confusion regarding the source within the Trinity. It is emphatically not the divine substance, since the substance is nothing other than the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The unique source is the Father.

We recall that Moltmann and Pannenberg referred to this doctrine as the monarchy, stemming mostly from the Eastern usage. Augustine uses principium instead, but the intent is equivalent. They rejected or relativized the language of the Father as reference point, the sole source, preferring other models of divine unity. Also not to be overlooked is Augustine’s usage of totius with divinitatis and deitatis. The Father is principium, indeed he is God, in such a way that he is fully God but is not exclusively God. Father, Son, and Spirit altogether are the whole deity (tota deitas).

Augustine insists not only that the Trinity abides in perfect equality, but that the persons act inseparably. While the identities of the Son and Holy Spirit are signified by their missions, which at least in a certain respect are “visible,” the Father must act along with them but in a way

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62 Ibid., 4.20.29. ... videlicet ostendens quod totius divinitatis vel si melius dicitur deitatis principium pater est. Qui ergo ex patre procedit et filio ad eum refertur a quo natus et filius.

63 He offers the alternatives of divinitas and deitas to express that whichever term one uses, the result is no different.
that is even less evident. The Son and Holy Spirit make him known, and enable humanity to come to vision of him. Gioia puts this well.

The property of the Father is to be the *origin* of divine life and the *goal* of the revelatory and reconciliatory work of the Son and Holy Spirit. His property is the invisibility or unknowability: he is the source of God’s decision to make himself known and to overcome the impossibility of knowing him from our side through the sending of the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The contemplation of the Father in eschatology mirrors the Trinitarian order. The fact of the Father’s not being from another person does *not* entail ontological subordination for Augustine. Rather, it provides the positive content for the Father, his identity and role within the Trinity. For Augustine, it is evident that the eternal order of the three persons, in terms of origin, guarantees their unity and equality.

*The Eternal Giver – De Trinitate 15*

There are two matters of special interest in Book 15. First, Augustine offers further statements of the relationship between the Father and the divine essence, among the most clear in his literary corpus. Second, he returns to the perplexing theme of the origin of the Holy Spirit. As demonstrated in his Trinitarian grammar of Book 5, he holds as a premise that within the Trinity the Father alone can be called unbegotten (*ingenitus*), and seeks to work out the details. So he clarifies one final time that the divine substance or essence is not something apart from the persons, but that God’s being consists in the Father eternally begetting the Son and together with

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64 Gioia, *Theological Epistemology*, 146.

65 Augustine, *De Trinitate*, 5.6.7.
the Son bringing forth the Holy Spirit. The Father perfectly communicates his essence. In Augustine’s expression here, the double procession of the Spirit is not intended to derogate from the Father as the source of the deity; rather, he intends by it to show the perfection of the Father’s begetting of the Son. The Spirit is thus the perfect gift of the eternal giver.

Augustine at the start of Book 15 recapitulates the previous books, and his material in the remainder of the book takes up many of the same topics but in a new perspective. Exploring the image of God in man is not an idle project for him, but still he recognizes that the exploration ultimately falls short because of God’s transcendence. Taking up the analogy of the mind in particular, i.e. that the divine persons resemble the unity-in-diversity of memory, understanding, and will, he quickly exposes its shortcomings. The mind exists and has these functions, while God does not have the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Additionally, incorrect thinking along the lines of this analogy might posit that the Father is memory but does not have understanding or will, and so forth for the Son and Holy Spirit. Each of the persons would rely upon the others to be God together. Again, Pannenberg’s insinuation of dependent deity contrasts Augustine on this point. The latter does insist that none of the three faculties should be denied to any of the divine persons. Consequently, his leanings towards a social Trinitarian view here are intriguing. He does not actually insist on a single divine mind in a modalistic fashion.

Augustine also realizes that fundamental problems limit the analogy of the word. The word of the human mind is incomparable to the Word of God. On a fundamental level, God speaks his Word in eternity, while the created nature thinks a word and speaks it in time. God

66 Ibid., 15.7.11-12.
speaks one word which encompasses all thought and action, while the created nature is fragmented and irreducibly multiple. The Word is a perfect extension of God, a complete replication, singular, and belonging to the same nature just as Father and Son. Although the English expression “brainchild” attests that a weakened form of this analogy is commonplace, the dissimilarity of the two overwhelms, such that everyone easily distinguishes between the nature of the thinker and the thought. The image of birth and begetting for thought applies to God much more truly than it does for humanity. Additionally, Augustine considers that the human mind acquires knowledge not only through itself, but also through the senses and from other humans; of these three sources, he definitively excludes the latter two in the case of God. God the Father only knows through himself. The “Word” cannot come from any other source. This maintains the perfect integrity of the Trinity.

Book 15 also returns to the subject of the procession of the Holy Spirit, which evidently perplexed Augustine. Certainly, his adherence to the Spirit’s procession from the Father and the Son became a theologically fixed position for the West, and a source of protracted controversy with the East. In this passage he stresses the Father as the ultimate origin of the Holy Spirit, and offers a nuanced position to take into account several Scriptural texts on the Spirit. So it appears that exegetical concerns spur him on to such a position. His writing reveals a commitment to protect certain Scriptural priorities and the traditional names of the persons. While an earthly parent may have multiple children, the designation of Jesus as the only-begotten Son precludes a vision of God the Father having multiple offspring. This could only be the case in a metaphorical or adopted sense. Augustine reinforces his argument with the theology of the unique Word,
discussed above. He presses to ensure that the Holy Spirit is kept logically distinct from being another Son. He must ensure simultaneously that there are not two Fathers within the Trinity.

The bishop admits that his discourse up to a certain point (par. 27) in Book 15 has been focused on the Father and the Son. He wishes, of course, to include the Holy Spirit within their co-equal divinity, and immediately reminds the reader of his assertion that the Third Person is spirit of both the Father and the Son. Augustine remarks that Scriptural obscurities have great value in that by challenging interpreters they are called to greater investment. He deliberates the connection between the Holy Spirit and charity, pondering the assertion “God is love” and whether love is a substance. He continues to put the previous books in perspective by insisting that the reader should not simply read the Trinity off of the mental analogy. Just as the whole Trinity is memory, understanding, and will, so too the whole Trinity is love.

Appropriation of particular attributes to one of the persons, however, is fair practice in his theological grammar. Indeed, the interrelations of the persons demand distinctive roles so that there is no confusion within the Godhead. “It is not without point that in this triad only the Son is called the Word of God, and only the Holy Spirit is called the gift of God, and only the Father is called the one from whom the Word is born and from whom the Holy Spirit principally proceeds.”67 Since he has scarcely just professed the procession of the Spirit from both Father and Son, this principaliter demands special explanation. The identity of the Father as source defines him within the godhead: both as sole source of the Son and primary or preeminent source

67 Augustine, De Trinitate, 15.17.29. Et tamen non frustra in hac Trinitate non dicitur verbum dei nisi filius, nec donum dei nisi spiritus sanctus, nec de quo genitum est verbum et de quo procedit principaliter spiritus sanctus nisi deus pater.
of the Spirit. Augustine’s explanation hinges on the theology of the gift. The Father, as bountiful source, does not hold back. Just as in speaking the Word he spoke himself, in his generating the Son he gives him the capacity—if that be the right word—to bring forth the Holy Spirit. Of course, down the centuries this has been a point of controversy between the East and West. As will be seen in the next section, it also differs from other theologies of the Spirit among Augustine’s contemporaries, notably the Homoians, who saw the Son as producing the Spirit in a different way, as sort of a mediator. Augustine, however, maintains the Father’s role not simply as the remote, primary origin of the Spirit, mediated by the Son, but as principaliter the origin of the Spirit, albeit sharing the Spirit with the Son. The difference is subtle, but Augustine’s insistence upon it demands his interpreters to take it seriously.

In explaining the Father’s identity as principle cause, Augustine does not hark back to the language of monarchia or ingenitus but instead concentrates on the phenomenon of gift-giving and the language of gift. This provides a point of comparison with Bonaventure below, as Bonaventure does link the Father’s unbegottenness with his fontality. Augustine’s concept of eternity does not allow for a step-wise process, such that the Father begot the Son and then gave him the gift of the Spirit. Such a description fails to account for God’s eternity. In begetting the Son, the Father gave him everything. “This distinction [of the persons] then within the inseparable Trinity must be diligently looked into and not casually taken for granted. It is this that allows the Word of God also to be called distinctively (proprie) the wisdom of God, even

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68 Gioia, Trinitarian Epistemology, 146.
though the Father and Holy Spirit are also wisdom.” The answer then of how to conceive of the relations of the three has to do with distinctiveness or appropriation. The ecstatic nature of the First Person is reflected in his preferred names of the other persons, Son and Word on the one hand, Gift on the other. Whereas the person of the Word may be called Wisdom “distinctively,” and the person of the Gift may be called Charity “distinctively,” Augustine implies that the Father is origin distinctively. He does this by insisting on the adverb principaliter in describing the procession of the Spirit.

He explicates this point shortly thereafter as he explores the terminology used for description, general and distinctive. He turns to 1 John 4, a passage which states in a short span that love is “from God,” and yet that “God is love.” Augustine says,

Besides the Son being born of God the Father, the Holy Spirit proceeds from God the Father, and so the natural question is about which of them we should here take it as said, that love is God. The Father alone is God in such a way that he is not from God (Pater enim solus ita Deus est ut non sit ex Deo), and thus the love which is God in such a way that it is from God must either be the Son or the Holy Spirit.

Here again, we see the Holy Spirit and the Son as God from God and the Father as God not from God, i.e. the primal source. He continues from this point to meditate eloquently on the Spirit’s indwelling in the hearts of the faithful. The “love from God” that “is God” makes the entire Trinity present. God the Father’s ecstatic outpouring of the Spirit, as one with himself and with

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69 Augustine, De Trinitate, 15.17.29. Non est igitur accipienda transeunter sed diligenter intuenda inseparabilis trinitatis ista distinction. Hinc enim factum est ut proprie Dei verbum etiam Dei sapientia diceretur, cum sit sapientia et pater et spiritus sanctus.

70 I infer this from the way he begins the passage: “only the Son is called the Word… only the Spirit is called the gift… only the Father is called the one from whom the Word is born and from whom the Holy Spirit principally proceeds.” See ibid., 15.20.38-39, for the paragraphs in which Augustine appropriates charity to the Holy Spirit.

71 Ibid., 15.17.31, emphasis added.
his Son, permeates the created order and enables a return to unity with the Father. Augustine does not say it so baldly here, but it is unfitting for the Father (God not from God) to become present in the human soul on his own, so to speak, without the activity of his Son and Spirit (God from God). As he says simply, “nothing is more excellent than this gift of God.”

For creation, the Holy Spirit is both the gift and the giver, but in another sense just as the Father sent his Son, so too the Father sends this gift. The persons of the Trinity work inseparably, but their work is not identical. The Son and Holy Spirit fully participate in and are fully communicated in the eternal outpouring of the Father.

There remain a few important clarifications in Book 15, wherein Augustine wishes to make the distinctiveness and cohesion of the persons as clear as possible from careful reading of biblical texts. In the midst of these remarks, he protects the unique fatherhood of the First Person. For one matter, he demonstrates that the Son is not begotten by the Holy Spirit. For another, he sorts out the difficult question of why the Holy Spirit is not another son, which requires discussion of the distinctiveness of generation and procession. Alongside these matters, he reminds the reader of his rejection of the Holy Spirit as possible parent or mother of the Son. Through all these, Augustine maintains the specific primacy of the Father as source.

Once again, Augustine reminds his readers that appropriation must not be taken too far. He must rule out certain unfitting notions of the Trinity on the basis of false impressions that the appropriations might convey. If the Holy Spirit alone is charity, the Son would be the Son of the

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72 Ibid., 15.18.32.

73 See ibid., 15.19.36. “He is given as God’s gift in such a way that as God he also gives himself.” Ita enim datur sicut Dei donum ut etiam se ipsum dicit sicut Deus.
Holy Spirit. This idea seems strange, but he summons Col 1:13 as a potential proof-text for the Son as the product of the Father and Holy Spirit. Such a view is unfitting exegetically and theologically. On a theological basis, Augustine endeavors to demonstrate that the Son is not the Son of the divine substance generally, but of the Father’s substance specifically. The Father’s substance is charity. “For the charity of the Father in his inexpressibly simple nature is nothing but this very nature and substance.”74 The Father begets the Son as substance from substance, wisdom from wisdom. The Father alone is parent of the Son in Augustine’s Trinitarian order.

As Augustine transitions into his peroratio to bring his discussion of the Trinity to its close, he returns to ponder the nature of knowledge. Only when we transcend this fallen state, he maintains, will we know the truth “in clarity and certitude.”75 One puzzle continues to vex him: how is the Holy Spirit not a son if he too proceeds from the Father? He reminds us here that his remarks are essentially provisional, a remark as humble as his arguments are vigorous. As he strives to give an answer, he repeatedly circles around the nature of eternity. He holds as a core tenet that there is no passage of time, no “before” and “after” with these dual processions from God. He also holds, on the basis of close scriptural exegesis, that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of both the Father and the Son. He contemplates here how Jesus can both receive and give the Holy Spirit. It is true that he is able to account for that, to some degree, by appealing to the distinction of Jesus’ divinity and humanity. But again, the fact of God’s eternity inexorably pulls Augustine in the direction of perceiving a simultaneous, or better, eternal dynamic of gift-giving. The Son eternally receives and eternally gives. He expounds on this in light of one of his favorite

74 Ibid., 15.19.37. Caritas quippe patris quae in natura eius ineffabiliter simplici nihil est aliud quam eius ipsa natura atque substantia….

75 Ibid., 15.25.45.
Trinitarian passages, Jn 5:26: “As the Father has life in himself, so he has given it to the Son to have life in himself.” Anyone who can understand that this passage indicates that the Son’s life is coeternal,

should also understand that just as the Father has it in himself that the Holy Spirit should proceed from him, so he gave to the Son that the Holy Spirit should proceed from him too, and in both cases timelessly; and thus that to say that the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Son is something which the Son has from the Father. If the Son has everything that he has from the Father, he clearly has from the Father that the Holy Spirit should proceed from him.\(^7^6\)

This sets up the final and clearest statement that Augustine makes on the Father as origin in *De Trinitate*. Establishing the Spirit as proceeding from the Son in a certain sense, he must clarify that the Holy Spirit is not the son of both (*filius amborum*). Just as he eliminated the Son as the product of the Holy Spirit and Father as from two parents, so too he rules out that the Father and Son together beget the Spirit.

He takes the fallacy of that notion as a given, calling it extremely absurd (*absurdissime*), but turns aside from pressing for clarity on this line of inquiry for a moment to ponder another matter of terminology and Trinitarian order. If the Spirit is not another son, then he is not begotten by the Father; some might seize upon this and call the Spirit unbegotten. Anticipating this, he relates

The reason why we do not dare to call the Holy Spirit unbegotten, even though we do not say that he was begotten, is to avoid the suggestion this term might convey of there being two fathers in that Trinity, or two who are not from another. The Father alone is not from another, and therefore he alone is called unbegotten, not indeed in the scriptures but in the conventional usage of those who discuss the matter and employ such language as they are able to in so deep a mystery. But the Son is born of the Father and the Holy Spirit

proceeds from the Father principally, and by the Father’s wholly timeless gift from them both jointly. So by this point Augustine has firmly and unequivocally rejected “nuptial” models of the Trinity. The Father is the unique and primal source of the divine substance and even the Son’s participation in the procession of the Spirit does not imperil that status. The Father and the Son do not beget the Holy Spirit as two parents do, just as the Father and the Holy Spirit do not beget the Son. The fact that the Father is not-from-God distinguishes him clearly from the other persons and it cannot be compromised. Without the Father who has life in himself, there is no life at all. There is no Trinity without the Father’s ecstatic pouring out of his own substance in begetting the Son and the Holy Spirit. While Augustine does not refer to the Father as principium with much frequency, there is no question that within Trinitarian order all flows from the Father and returns to him.

Conclusion

Recalling our intention of bringing Augustine into conversation with the authors dealt with in Part I, we distill a few insights from De Trinitate with reference to God the Father. It must be emphasized that this work does not actually correspond to two major criticisms of Augustine. He does not begin from the divine essence; rather, the persons are irreducible. Procedurally, he assumes the divinity of God the Father and proceeds through rigorous exegesis to demonstrate that the Son and Holy Spirit fully share in his divinity. Also, Augustine’s doctrine

\[\text{Ibid. Ideo enim cum spiritum sanctum genitum non dicamus, dicere tamen non audemus ingenitum ne in hoc vocabulo vel duos patres in illa Trinitate vel duos qui non sunt de alio quispiam suspicetur. Pater enim solus non est de alio, ideo solus appelatur ingenitus, non quidem in scripturis sed in consuetudine disputantium et de re tanta sermonem qualem valuerint proferentium. Filius autem de patre natus est, et spiritus sanctus de patre principaliter, et ipso sineullo intervallo temporis dante, communiter de utroque procedit.}\]
of the joint activity of the persons does not seal off the doctrine of the Trinity from the doctrine of salvation and the life of the believer. Indeed, as recent research has also underscored, *De Trinitate* offers a vision of how the faithful come to share in the Trinitarian life. The persons act together, but they do not act in the same way. The Father sends but is not said to be sent, but that does not mean that he is “invisible” while the other persons are visible. It is a fixed usage in Scripture that the Father is different from the other persons in doing the sending, so Augustine draws a theological position from this judgment. While Augustine’s *filioque* has received much attention, he does carefully and clearly rule out the idea that there might be two principles in the godhead. The Son receives the procession of the Holy Spirit as the eternal gift of the eternal giver. The Father alone is the *principium totius deitatis*, which preserves Trinitarian order.

“God” does not just mean the Father in the *De Trinitate*, but the Father remains God in the “simple sense” (so Studer) or God “without direction” (so Gioia). As the principle of the whole deity, he provides an important reference point. Indeed, Augustine suggests that the idea of relation makes no sense without origin. “If the Father is not also something with reference to himself, there is absolutely nothing there to be talked of with reference to something else.”

The Father begets the Son from the divine essence, such that the divine simplicity is maintained. Taken singly, each is God. Taken together, they are God. Even so, the godhead is not multiplied. Augustine’s insistence on the divine unity takes a slightly different approach in the anti-Homoian works to be considered next, in which he explores the idea of the “common nature” of the persons. Further on, we shall see in Part III how the *De Trinitate* heavily influenced Bonaventure’s framework and terminology.

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78 Augustine, *De Trinitate* 7.1.2. See above, 169-170.
Chapter 5. Late Anti-Homoian Works

Ambrose of Milan, a formative figure in Augustine’s spiritual journey, engaged in vigorous disputation with strains of Arianism prevalent in northern Italy. Augustine listened assiduously to Ambrose’s preaching and came into the Church under his care. It is safe to say that early on, he was not involved in the Arian-Catholic polemics. Even so, he absorbed the basic lines of Ambrose’s theological response to Arianism. Although Augustine’s “library” has not been clearly defined, he professes to have read pro-Nicene works from the fourth century. In recent years, scholarship has come to grasp more thoroughly the anti-Homoian character of De Trinitate. A few works from late in his life took on the Homoian challenge directly: his Reply to An Arian Sermon and the debate with and response to Maximinus, a Homoian bishop.

Analysis of these works is essential to understanding Augustine’s thought on the Trinity and God the Father in his most mature work. Enhancing their significance for the current project is the fact that Homoians had an elevated view of God the Father and also a staunch reliance upon Scripture. How Augustine responds to this threat deserves careful consideration. Augustine continues to reveal his expertise as a rhetorician and an exegete. He refers to Christ as Word

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2 Throughout Augustine and the Trinity, Ayres discusses Ambrose’s likely influence on Augustine with regard to several theological formulations and exegetical judgments (see esp. 79). William Sumruld says that “Augustine’s first contact with the theological arguments of Arianism was, thus, probably filtered through the sermons of Ambrose.” Sumruld, Augustine and the Arians (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 1994), 65.

3 Augustine intimates this in De Trinitate (e.g. 1.2.7 and 6.2.11). Hill infers that Augustine has read Tertullian, Novatian, Hilary, Victorinus, Irenaeus, Gregory Nazianzen, Didymus the Blind and possibly Basil of Caesarea and Epiphanius of Salamis (“Introduction,” The Trinity, 38).

4 Ayres says that De Trinitate reveals the basic lines of Augustine’s mature vision of the Trinitarian life, lines that do not significantly change in the last decade of his life (even as various themes and exegeses do change) (Augustine and the Trinity, 118). Even so, he remarks that Augustine’s argument about species generating offspring is “not found fully developed in Augustine until his latest anti-’Arian’ works” (ibid., 86). We will comment on this argument below.

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much less, relatively speaking, than in the works considered above, and he rarely mentions the mental triads. He focuses squarely on the Father-Son relationship and articulates a thoroughgoing vision of this core “social” image at the heart of the revelation of the Trinity. His central point is that if God is truly “father,” then he does not merely beget a son that is “like” himself; God’s Son must possess an equal substance. We find much in this material that helps to alleviate the modern criticism that his Trinitarian theology tends toward modalism.

A few words are in order about Homoian Arianism. The term “Homoian” provides a useful framework given the diversity of Arianism’s forms in the late fourth and early fifth centuries AD. Homoian Arianism is typically distinguished from Neo-Arianism. The Cappadocians principally battled the Neo-Arianism of Eunomius of Cyzicus. The neo-Arians have also been called anomoeans and heteroousians because of their rejection of any similarity of the Son’s substance to the Father’s, contra homoioustians or semi-Arians. In their view, God the unbegotten is an absolutely simple being admitting no generation of like substance. The Homoians, on the other hand, maintain similarity (homoios) between the Father and the Son. Lewis Ayres quips that “ecclesiastical parties are often complex and fluid entities—and the


6 The various terms here testify to the difficulty that scholars have had with providing a taxonomy of the Arian movements after Arius. They of course, regarded themselves as the true Christians. For example, see the Arian Sermon to which Augustine responds: Arian Sermon, §34, in Arianism and Other Heresies, Works of Saint Augustine vol. I.18, trans. Roland Teske (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1995). Michael Slusser has remarked, “Terms have been used inconsistently and with such imprecision that it is hard to imagine how a new normative critical portrayal can arise” (“Traditional Views of Late Arianism,” in Arianism after Arius, ed. Michel R. Barnes and Daniel H. Williams [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993], 3). Note that Sumruld’s book calls Augustine’s opponents “Ulfilan Arians.” This dissertation will adopt the currently prevailing usage of Homoian to designate the figures opposite Augustine in these controversies.
Homoians were particularly so.” According to Richard Hanson, a defining feature of Homoians is their deliberate and careful avoidance of *ousia* and related terms. They prefer to refer to the Son as “like” the Father without qualification, resisting the impulse to add precision to the likeness. They subordinate the Son to the Father, but they nevertheless acclaim the Son as God, which opens them up to the charge of ditheism as will be seen below. Despite the difficulties in defining the various strains of Arianism into groups and giving them names, the facets just given provide a rough identity to the Homoian Arianism that Augustine combatted in his later years. Fortunately, Augustine reproduced the text of the Arian Sermon and had the debate with Maximinus recorded, thereby providing posterity with a fair representation of his opponents’ views. Thus, further remarks on specific beliefs of theirs emerge from the analysis of these texts.

*Answer to the Arian Sermon (Contra sermonem Arianorum)*

Augustine apparently received a copy of a Homoian tract in AD 419, and having been begged by his friend Dionysius, responded quickly with a treatise debunking it. He calls the

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9 The intertwining of strains of Arianism with political and ethnic groups presents another complicating factor.

10 See Roland Teske’s “Introduction” in *Arianism and Other Heresies*, 119. For the remark about the request and speed of Augustine’s response, see Augustine, *Retractions*, 2.52.78. Augustine himself does not mention Dionysius by name in this work or in *Retractions*, but Brian Daley argues convincingly that Letter 23A refers to this matter. See his chapter “The Giant’s Twin Substances: Ambrose and the Christology of Augustine’s Contra sermonem Arianorum,” in *Presbyter Factus Sum*, ed. Joseph Lienhard, et al. (New York: Peter Lang, 1993) 478-479. This Dionysus is otherwise unknown, but he lived in Vicus Juliani, near Hippo (*ibid.*, 490 n. 16).
work “anonymous” because he received it from a third party with no name attached.\textsuperscript{11} While Augustine refers to the text as a \textit{sermo} and a \textit{disputatio}, it is more accurate to call it a list of theses or a catechism, as the text simply narrates what should be believed.\textsuperscript{12} It employs laconic formulations without much rhetorical ornamentation. In the very last section, however, the unnamed author comments extensively on what “we Christians believe” in contrast to “the Homoousians” and engages in an explicit and extensive polemic.\textsuperscript{13}

Augustine attaches the text of the sermon before his reply.\textsuperscript{14} He responds to the sermon point by point, and includes a numbering system in each text so as to facilitate comparison. This

\textsuperscript{11} Michel Meslin supposes that the Arian bishop Palladius of Ratiaria wrote it. See his \textit{Les Ariens d’Occident 335-440} (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1967), 120-121. At any rate, Augustine does not profess to know and its provenance is not critically important for this project.

\textsuperscript{12} Daley calls it “a set of propositions or theses” that follow the general order of the baptismal creeds in order to draw out sharply the author’s anti-homoousian understanding (“Giant’s Twin Substances,” 479). Barnes speculates, though, that the blending of literary forms in the text represents a sympathetic editor who has either gathered together the ‘best’ of early fifth-century Homoian sound bites or edited together selections of different works from the same Homoian author (e.g. Palladius of Ratiaria)” (“Contra Sermonem Arianorum,” \textit{Augustine through the Ages}, ed. Fitzgerald, 772).

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Arian Sermon}, §34.

\textsuperscript{14} This footnote contains a summary of the “sermon.” It opens by calling Jesus “the only-begotten God,” who was “established before all ages by the will of his God and Father” (\textit{ibid.}, §§1 and 2). Christ assumed the flesh but not a human soul, and ultimately abandoned the flesh when he died. The author traces the origin of Christ’s flesh to Mary but the divinity to God the Father. A hierarchical analogy follows this initial Christological section, in which the Father is compared to an emperor, the Son to a judge, and the Spirit to an advocate or lawyer. Each of these three has its proper sphere of action. While it is obvious that the Father is source of the Son, the sermon further professes that the Holy Spirit is made through the Son. Orders flow according to a rigid chain of command from Father to Son, and from Son to Spirit. In nature, power, and activity, each is \textit{alius} with respect to the others, which in context Roland Teske translates as “different” and notes that it could mean “another, distinct” (\textit{ibid.}, §31, and Roland Teske, “Introduction” to \textit{Arian Sermon}, 139 n. 22).

The “sermon” calls the Father “Unbegotten” and “God without beginning,” but calls the Son “the only-begotten God.” The Spirit is mentioned after the Unbegotten and Only-begotten perhaps as a residual influence of the creedal statements; the pneumatology is sparse and undeveloped. (The Holy Spirit is never directly called God, but neither does the text deny the Spirit’s divinity. As the advocate, the Spirit is involved in the divine governance of creation. Given the emphasis on the Son’s subordinate divinity, without the Spirit receiving similar treatment, it is reasonable to infer that the Spirit is not divine in the narrow sense.) The final statement of the tract, shifting into a doxological conclusion, gives a sense for Augustine’s studious avoidance of the term \textit{monarchia}: “Thus God will be all things in
strategy has the unfortunate consequence of preventing Augustine from organizing his response on his own terms, which shortcoming as we will see applies to the debate with Maximinus as well. His thought on God the Father takes on new precision at the edges, so to speak, but undergoes no major change. Perhaps that is most illustrative: that in the face of Homoian exaltation of the “Unbegotten” at the expense of the Son and Holy Spirit, Augustine continues to affirm the Father as God-not-from-God. He maintains this position even in the heat of debate. To distill Augustine’s theology of God the Father in his response to this anonymous tract, I will concentrate on four points: 1) the Father is origin without origin; 2) God the Father is eternally origin; 3) the Father “gives” the Son and Holy Spirit equality with himself; and 4) the Father does not relate to the Son like an emperor to a judge.

First, Augustine reiterates that the Father is origin without origin, a rare area for agreement between himself and the Arian. He does this in four distinct passages of Contra Sermonem Arianorum. The first instance is in response to an assertion based on Jn 5:22 (“the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son”) that the Son receives judgment and hence gives first place to the Father. Augustine answers that a son’s obedience does not show him to be of a different nature from his father. He proceeds to offer a different interpretation of Jn 5:22, that Christ received the authority of judgment as Son of Man. Reiterating that the works of the Trinity are inseparable, he continues,
…while he gave the power to the Son, because he is the Son of Man, he gave that power to him through the same Son, because he is the Son of God….But the Son attributed to the Father as an appropriate honor that which he himself does as God, because he is God from the Father. After all, he is himself God from God, while the Father is God, but not from God.  

While the Son’s authority is given to him by the Father, it is not given in such a way as to diminish his equality with the Father. Augustine refers to the “immutable and simple nature” of the Son as God later on, noting that he has “received it from the Father.” Rather, as the bishop interprets Jn 5:30 (“As I hear, so I judge”), even as God the Son “has hearing and seeing from the same source from which he has being.”

Later, as Augustine again summons Jn 5:22 and 5:30 for close interpretation, he leaves it open to be interpreted as applying to Christ as Son of Man or Christ as Son of God who “does not have his origin from himself (non de se ipso est), but is the Word of the Father.” He emphasizes that Christ is the Word from the Father and that he is simultaneously life in himself and life from another (Jn 5:26). He continues,

So too, the Father is not something other than the life that is in him, but the Son did not give it to the Father, because he did not beget the Father. But the Father did give life to the Son by begetting him as life, just as he himself is life. He did not, however, beget the Word, as if he himself were a word. We can speak of a life which does not have its origin from any other. Such is the Father’s life. Or, to speak more precisely, the Father is life which does not have its being from another.

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16 Ibid., 14 (9). Dixit ergo filius ‘Sicut audio, iudico’: sive ex humana subjectione, quia et filius hominis est; sive secundam illam incommutabilem simplicemque naturam, quae sic est filii, ut tamen ei de patre sit: in qua natura non est aliud audire, aliud videre, aliud esse; sed quod est esse, hoc audire, hoc videre. Unde ab illo ei est audire et videre, a quo illi est ipsum esse.
Augustine in this passage wishes to balance the Trinitarian images of Father-Son and Speaker-Word. Both indicate a procession forth from an origin, and Augustine does not blink at that. The derivative nature of the Son’s life does not mean that he lacks it; he rightly honors the Father as the origin without origin.

As a final text on this first point, Augustine briefly returns to emphasize the Father as not-from-another towards the end of his treatise. He emphatically denies the accusation that pro-

Nicenes attribute the subordinationist statements on the lips of Christ to “humility.” Jesus speaks the truth; he does not make these remarks without full sincerity. Here Augustine holds that Christ says such things both on account of his being in the form of a servant, i.e. the human nature assumed by the Son of Man, and on account of the ultimate origin of his being from the Father. “On account of that human condition and because he is God from the Father, while the Father is not God from him, he said all these things which they take as grounds for believing and preaching that the Father and the Son have different natures.” This reminds us of that further hermeneutical category that Augustine added in De Trinitate to supplement his more prominent “form of God”–“form of servant” exegetical distinction. It is hard to overstate the importance of

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17 Ibid., 17 (9), emphasis added. Sicut nec pater aliud est quam vita quae in ipso est: sed eam filius patri non dedit, quia patrem non genuit: dedit autem pater filio vitam, gignendo eum vitam, sicut est etiam ipse vita. Non autem sic genuit verbum tanquam et ipse sit verbum. Vitam quippe cum dicimus, potest esse de nullo alio, sicut est patris vita, vel, quod expressius dicitur, pater vita, cui de alio non est ut sit. In his translation of this passage, Teske uses the term “origin” in order to render Augustine’s sparse text. This is completely justified as representing Augustine’s meaning, even if a more strictly literal translation would read “we can speak of a life that is from no other.”

18 Ibid., 36 (34). Absit autem ut dicamus, humilitatis, non veritatis gratia filium aliquando sic loqui, ut se patri subjiciat eum que majorem esse testetur.

19 Ibid., emphasis added. ... propter quem scilicet humanum habitum, et propter quod ipse de pater, non pater de illo Deus est, dicit illa omnia, de quibus isti occasionem accipiunt, diversas patris et filii credere ac praedicare naturas.
Augustine’s statements on the Father as origin here: in response to a subordinationist, Arian triadology, Augustine does not respond with a Trinitarian theology that emphasizes the divine essence apart from the three persons and the order and relations of those persons. Even though he does not use *principium* here, the Father is without a doubt the life-not-from another, God-not-from-God, who gives the fullness of divine life to the Son.

Now we turn to the second point about his paterology in the *Contra sermonem Arianorum*. Augustine reminds his readers that God’s mode of existence is eternal. The consequence ensues that if God the Father is origin, he is *eternally* origin. This is not a matter of mere protological concern, as if the Father were origin before time and that is it. The Father is the eternal origin of Son and Holy Spirit. He continues to beget the Son eternally, and so forth with the Holy Spirit. Two passages advance this point. The first reiterates the perhaps obvious point that the Son eternally remains in the condition of having been born from the Father. Again situated within his careful exegesis of Jn 5:19ff, he says that the Son does nothing by himself because he is not from himself (*non faciat aliquid fiilius a se, quia non est a se*). The Son sees that he has his power from the same one from whom he has his nature. Rather, “his saying that he cannot do anything on his own does not indicate a lack of power, but that he remains in the condition of having been born from the Father.”20 Rather than being a deficiency as the Homoians would have it, Augustine insists paradoxically that the Son’s inability to do anything on his own, his permanent sonship, points to his immutability and his omnipotence. He effectively flips the argument.

20 *Ibid.*, 14 (9). *Et quod ait, se non posse, non deficientis est, sed in eo quod de patre natus est permanentis.*
The Father begot the Son with an immutably good nature, and the Son’s insistence on not doing anything he has not seen the Father doing means he can do exactly what the Father does. He is fully equal, but his Sonship has eternal implications. Augustine emphasizes the eternal consequences of the Father as origin again in a passage dealing with the Holy Spirit. Treating Jn 16:15, in which Jesus says of the Holy Spirit “he will receive what is mine,” Augustine wishes to allay fears about the tense of the verb. It might appear from this verse that the Holy Spirit does not have the divine fullness for all eternity. Anticipating the objection, Augustine posits,

The tenses of verbs are used without regard for their differences, although we know that eternity lasts without time. Thus, he received, because he proceeded from the Father, and he receives, because he proceeds from the Father, and he will receive, because he will never cease to proceed from the Father. So too, God is and was and will be, and yet he does not have, nor has he had, nor will he have a temporal beginning and end.\(^\text{21}\)

The discussion of origin does not merely concern protology but abides in God’s eternal present. The Father always has been and always will be the origin of the Son and Holy Spirit. This relationship is not reciprocal. We recall that Pannenberg and Moltmann both sought to escape the dominance of constituting the persons by relations of origin. On the other hand, beginnings do define things. Augustine insists that in God, origin does not merely look “backward,” but means the eternal orientation of one’s being toward the source.\(^\text{22}\)


\(^{22}\) In the debate with Maximinus explored below, he will further consider the “embrace” of the persons. The origin is the dominant way of characterizing their orientation towards one another, but it is not the only way.
Third, another corollary of the Father as origin ensues. Since the Son and Holy Spirit derive their divinity from the Father, we may say that the Father gives Son and Holy Spirit to be equal. To put it another way, their equality stems from the Father’s total gift of his divinity. He quotes the sermon as stipulating that “the Father gave being to all things that are, and that he received his being from no one.” In a certain sense, Augustine accepts this statement—he even calls it true. He contends that it needs a qualifier, however, and he offers it: “But he gave equality with himself to no one except to the Son who was born from him and the Holy Spirit who proceeds from him.”

With regard to equality, a key difference between divine and human persons lies here: human persons legally acknowledge equality nowadays upon a child’s reaching the age of majority, but it is not “given.” The Father, however, actually gives this equality eternally to the Son and Holy Spirit. Augustine can tolerate no theological statement that accords unequal nature or power to the Son and Holy Spirit. The source within the Trinity is unique, but the nature and power are common. The Father has given of himself completely to the Son and Holy Spirit in a way that does not apply to creation. They possess being in common with him, the source of being.

Fourth, Augustine must respond in some way to the sermon’s use of imperial imagery. Given the modern impressions of hierarchical thought as discussed in the first part of this dissertation, this takes on particular importance. The sermon likens the hierarchy of Father,

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23 Ibid., 29 (27). Verum est autem quod pater omnibus quae sunt, dedit ut essent; et ipse quod est, a nemine acceptit: sed aequalitatem suam nulli dedit, nisi filio qui natus est de illo, et spiritui sancto qui procedit de illo.

24 There are at least four times that he touches on human hierarchies: ibid. 3.4, 6.6, 18.10 and 20.10. The first compares the human sender to human messenger, and the second deals with the obedience of a human father to a human son. Augustine quips that despite the obedience the father and son are equal in terms of human nature. The last two deal with imperial and legal hierarchies.
Son, and Holy Spirit to emperor, judge, and advocate. Augustine objects to using these human practices and structures as analogous to God, but he places more emphasis on his strenuous complaint against subordinating Christ by this analogy. He calls ranking the three “carnal… as if they were three human beings.”  

25 He deals with the imperial image a few times, with slight differences each time. Even when functions differ, and hence power or authority, the emperor and his emissary are equal at the level of being because they are both human. On the one hand, the imperial imagery is unfitting because it proposes comparisons based on “human practices” and “human affairs” when the realm of the Spirit transcends the flesh. He borrows a phrase from 1 Cor 2:14, that the natural or unspiritual person “is unable to perceive what pertains to the Spirit of God” (animalis enim homo non percipit quae sunt spiritus dei).  

26 On the other hand, even this example is open to attack because human subordination does not override equal human dignity.  

27 He quips further that the situation of the persons of the Trinity would be worse than that of humans, because with regard to offices and powers, at least a human can make advancement. He does once hint in the direction of the critique, saying “in the case of the Trinity, these people refuse to grant even this [i.e. equality of nature], even to the only Son of the emperor.” This might make it look like a concession to the imperial imagery, with the Father as emperor, but he treats the Son as heir apparent, rather than subordinate judge. He goes on to demonstrate the exegetical difficulties of this subordination of the Holy Spirit as advocate as well. Although in

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25 Ibid., 18.10.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid. “Thus, even if the judge is inferior in power to the emperor, he is no less a human being. Nor is the advocate less a human being than the judge, even if he seems subordinate to the judge in his function. Hence, even if they think that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are unequal in power, they should at least admit that their nature is equal.”
the parry and thrust of the rhetoric he is willing to engage the Arian Sermon’s own logic and
disprove it, it is apparent that he deems the emperor–judge–advocate triad unspiritual and
unfitting for God. It fails to respect the equal power and dignity of nature in the Trinity.

The core of Augustine’s rebuttal of the Arian Sermon relies upon the oneness of God and
the unity of the Father and the Son. 28 From the first line, Augustine insists that belief in “two
gods …different and unequal in nature” is incompatible with the Shema, Deut 6:4. The Son is
one with the Father, and so he must be true God in such a way that God’s overarching unity is
not violated. This may be the closest that Augustine has come to treating the divine essence
before treating the persons. Even so, Augustine’s comments defend a properly conceived notion
of the Father as the unbegotten source of the Trinity. At a few critical moments he uses the term
“Word” to suggest the Son as an intellectual emission, one in substance and power with the
Father. Yet again, the Father is first in such a way as to give equality to Son and Spirit. Unity is
not sameness, and the conjoint action of the Trinity means that it always has the same dynamic.

The Father and the Son have the same works, not because the Son is the same as the
Father, but because the Son has no work that the Father does not do through him. Nor
does the Father have any work that he does not do through the Son who does it as well. 29
All of this adds up to a very powerful statement that the Father is the “personal source of the
divine essence,” as Ayres puts it. 30 That is to say, as a person in utter simplicity of relation, he is

28 We should note that in this work, Augustine reiterates that the Father is the unique principle in the deity and sole

29 Ibid., xv. Note that in the following passage he elaborates to include the Holy Spirit and eventually builds to a
creedal summary statement, reminiscent of the method detected above in De Trinitate.

30 Ayres, Nicaea and Its Legacy, 381.
principle of the Son and Holy Spirit as persons. Augustine decisively rules out an imperial model, and steadfastly holds origin with unity of substance and equality of nature.

Debate with Maximinus the Arian

In the final years of Augustine’s life, the Roman Empire was in tumult and northern Africa was no exception. The Goths invaded and with them came political intrigues and new impulse to the Arian threat. In AD 427 or 428, after Augustine had retired from the administration of his diocese, a Homoian bishop named Maximinus arrived at Hippo, apparently at the behest of Count Sigisvult (or Sigiswulf). Maximinus engaged in a public debate with Heraclius, Augustine’s designated successor. Apparently Heraclius did not enhance the pro-Nicene cause with his performance, and he strenuously appealed to Augustine to vindicate this cause. Augustine accepted and agreed to question Maximinus publicly. The Homoian, for his part, claims at the onset of this meeting not to have been interested in debate but rather in pursuing peace on behalf of the commander Sigisvult. What follows, however, is clearly a debate between two experienced orators, each with a thorough knowledge of Scripture. They certainly serve as no model for modern ecumenical dialogue, as each frankly manifests little regard for understanding the other party and seems more interested in scoring points with the bystanders than achieving concord with each other. The two proceed from short exchanges to


32 Augustine, Debate with Maximinus, §1.
lengthier replies until Maximinus’ final reply—or rather oration—which comprises more than half of the entire text. Teske surmises that Augustine’s gruff response at the end and his promise of a written reply constitutes an admission of defeat in the debate. On the contrary, Augustine’s accusation that his counterpart was trying to run out the clock and prevent a response rings true, and Augustine reiterates three times that the Homoian position fails to provide an account for the monotheism essential for Christianity on the basis of Deut. 6:4.

Early in the debate, Maximinus cites a creed developed at Sirmium and ratified at Ariminum as authoritative since it was signed by three hundred western bishops. This creed stipulates that the Father is greater than the Son and that language of *ousia* must not be admitted since it is unbiblical. Augustine refuses to consider this creed, and in exchange he is willing to drop any reliance upon the Nicene Creed as an authority. An unfortunate but undeniable tendency of fourth century theology was its intimate interconnection with imperial politics.

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34 Of course, the question of who “wins” a live debate is ultimately subjective and there is no way to track the attitudes of those present except by inference. Teske relates the opinion that an ancient Roman audience would have calculated the success of a debate of orators by who could hold forth longer. On the other hand, of course, one could judge the success of the debate by who preserves the record of it and which side emerges as victorious over time. Score both to Augustine.

35 Augustine does not note, as he might have, that Constantius essentially detained the bishops at Ariminum until he got his desired result—a compromise position that placated Nicenes while respecting an ostensibly biblical subordinationism. As Timothy Barnes notes, “The craven acquiescence [Constantius] extorted was short-lived” (*Athanasius and Constantius: Theology and Politics in the Constantinian Empire* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993], 149.) See also this author’s dismissal of Sirmium as the location of an actual council in the 357-359 timeframe in which the creed was supposedly developed. He thinks instead that it was a small group of bishops close to the emperor who had their gathering called a council in order to give it the guise of authority to western bishops. Cf. also Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, 137. Constantius died within a couple years and various synods of western bishops, led principally by Hilary, condemned the creed from Ariminium. Ayres maintains, however, that the creeds of the Homoian “victory” of 360 remained “the imperially sanctioned statement of orthodoxy” for twenty years, especially in the east (*Nicaea and Its Legacy*, 165). Referring to the council, Augustine says that “heretics under the heretical Emperor Constantius tried to weaken the force [of the Nicene expression *homoousios*], when many were deceived by the fraudulence of a few. But not long after that, the freedom of the Catholic faith prevailed…” (*Contra Maximinum*, 2.14.3).
the generation after the Sirmium creed, the Homoians receded in power and eventually became less relevant in Northern Italy by the 390’s. Several elites of the Goths had converted to Homoian Christianity, however, so in the wake of the Sack of Rome in 410, it did not take long for widespread encounter to take place. The debate of Maximinus and Augustine is among the most fascinating episodes from this encounter. Without being able to refer to creeds, each side needed to interpret scripture closely to provide evidence.\textsuperscript{36}

As may be expected, in the written answer treated below Augustine provides a more measured and substantial response to Maximinus, and articulates the Father’s place in the Trinity more clearly. It is instructive first to have a sketch of the main lines of the debate. The points on which Augustine will not compromise emerge from this. Maximinus claims that the Father is the “one author” and is the “unbegotten.”\textsuperscript{37} Augustine affirms that the Father is unbegotten, but does not directly respond to Maximinus’ insistence on the title “author.” Augustine provides a brief articulation of his model of the giving or ecstatic Trinity. Closely working with texts from the Gospel of John, he insists that all that the Father has he has given to the Son, and likewise the Son echoes this giving by pouring forth the Holy Spirit with the Father.\textsuperscript{38} Regarding Maximinus’ notion that the Father is God the unbegotten while the Son is the only-begotten God, Augustine rejoins that such a distinction requires a separation of the Father and Son and hence two deities.

\textsuperscript{36} In the written response to Maximinus, Augustine captures this spirit: “By the authority of the scriptures that are not the property of anyone, but the common witnesses for both of us, let position do battle with position, case with case, reason with reason” (\textit{Contra Maximinum}, 2.14.4).

\textsuperscript{37} Augustine, \textit{Debate with Maximinus}, 5.

\textsuperscript{38} Augustine, \textit{Debate with Maximinus}, 11.
Maximinus, for his part, thinks that Augustine’s position adds up to three unbegottens rather than one. He reveals the firmly entrenched stance that “God” most naturally means “unbegotten” even among Homoians who believe in the Son as the “only-begotten God.” Augustine still refuses to take up the term “author;” but feeling pressed about the threeness of the Trinity, he refers to the fire of charity that binds the three. If the souls of the early Christians were drawn to unity by the Holy Spirit (Acts 4:32), and they are creatures, then surely the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit can “cling to one another inseparably” and be called one God. After all, “the power of divinity goes beyond even the meaning of number.” In this instance, then, Augustine delivers a unique social approach to the Trinity, rather than directly formulating an opinion about three unbegottens. This is merely an analogy, but quite a notable one in light of the tendency to see Augustine only through the prism of the mental analogies.

He does not delay using this term “unbegotten” much longer, however. Augustine retorts later,

We know that the Son of God is the Son of God; we know that he does not come from himself, but is begotten by the Father, though the Father is unbegotten, comes from no one, and has received life from no one. … The Father gave [the Son] life by begetting life; by begetting him as life, he gave him life.

The social Trinitarian view that Augustine espoused earlier does not sit well with Maximinus, who cannot see how a “union or mixture... makes one God.” He continues to equate God with unbegotten despite Augustine’s answers on that score, and he presumes that equality means sameness when it comes to God.

39 Ibid., 12. The Latin text referred to below is from Collatio cum Maximino in PL 42. ... quanto magis nos unum deum dicimus, semper sibi inuicem et inseparabiliter et ineffabili charitate cohaerentes patrem et filium et spiritum sanctum?

40 Ibid., 13.
Later again Augustine confesses the “unborn” (*innatum*) quality of the Father, but holds that this difference in their relationship does not mean a difference of substance.\(^{41}\) Here he really presses towards taking the “Father” and “Son” language of Scripture seriously. He exposes the Homoians as treating this core relationship as a mere image or a metaphor. As difficult as it might be for the weak human mind, Augustine insists that projecting the Father–Son relationship onto eternity means a relationship of equals. The Father and Son are equal, just as a human father and son are equal human beings. With rhetorical flourish, Augustine thinks it unfitting to suggest that animals could produce an offspring of the same substance but that God cannot. He flinches from the thought that God would be weaker. Instead, God generates a true Son who is completely equal. Obviously, this social image threatens the divine unity—*having* the same substance does not mean *partaking in* the same substance—but Augustine deems it imperative to overcome the notion that God the Father’s unbegottenness means holding back his divinity in isolation. He thinks that Jesus is not the true Son of the Father according to Maximinus’ theology. The Son “clings to the Father” (*adhaereat Patri*) in unity of divinity, and this applies to the Holy Spirit as well.\(^{42}\) He often employs this affective language in the debate, alluding to the unity of the Trinity in charity. While Maximinus is not impressed, here we continue to see elements of a social analogy in Augustine.

Aside from true fatherhood and true sonship, Augustine also wishes to protect the invisibility of the divine nature of all three persons. He maintains his maxim that the Son only became visible in the form of the servant. Any visible signs from God are created manifestations.

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\(^{42}\) *Ibid.* *Si ergo ista adhaesio diuersarum naturarum spiritus - quia aliud est hominis, aliud dei - fecit unum spiritum; non vis ut tantum adhaereat patri filius, ut sit unus deus? Hoc accipe etiam de spiritu sancto, qui deus est.*
In the lengthy speech that consumes the rest of the time for debate, much of Maximinus’ response defends the invisibility of the Father. He recoils at several of Augustine’s arguments for the true nature of the Son as unworthy and bestial. Repeatedly hitting on his own interpretation of 1 Tim 6:16, he says “the Father alone truly has immortality, since he has not obtained it from someone else, since he has no father, since he has no origin.”

He piles up a staggering number of proof-texts for the Homoian position. When he finally lets up, Augustine circles back to the Shema a number of times in his brief response, and chides Maximinus for his stubbornness, before promising to write a more proper rebuttal. As we will see, Augustine’s written reply does not back away from the unique formulation of shared substance found in the debate.

*Answer to Maximinus the Arian*

Maximinus vowed at the end of the debate that he would respond to Augustine’s tract. There is no extant response, and indeed there are no clear records of Maximinus at all after the debate. Augustine divides *Contra Maximinum* into two books of unequal length, the first being a short reminder of twenty points he made that Maximinus was unable to refute, and the second being a lengthy point-by-point rebuttal of Maximinus’ own prolix address. Augustine does not retract statements that he made in the debate. In fact, he returns prominently to the biological

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It might be assumed that Maximinus was overwhelmed and could not offer a rejoinder, but there is also the distinct possibility that Maximinus never received Augustine’s tract for one reason or another. Alternatively, he may have received it but never had the chance to respond because of duress, or he did respond but no manuscript has survived. Sumruld simply says, “What happened to Maximinus after the debate is something of a mystery….No trace of him has been found among the Vandal Arian clergy” (*Augustine and the Arians*, 100).
analogy of generation to argue that the Son is equal and of the same substance as the Father. He turns around the Homoian claim that Catholic high Christology denigrates the Father, responding that he praises God the Father precisely for begetting a son equal to himself. He puts full emphasis on his identity as Father, not simply as source. In fact, he counters that the opposite view dishonors the Father because he would be reckoned an inferior father to a human or animal. He would be either weak or envious. The equality of the Son thus proves the perfect extent of the Father’s power and generosity. The Contra Maximinum provides interesting insight into Augustine’s willingness to employ social imagery for the Trinity, without diminishing the unity of the Trinity and the Father’s unique role as source.

Two significant terms in respect of the Father that Augustine employs in his response are “author” (auctor) and “beginning” (principium). In a significant passage, he concedes that the title “author” used by Maximinus is legitimate, but not how he used it.\(^\text{45}\) It is an appropriate term because the Son is from him, and he is not from the Son, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from them both. “Call the Father the author, because the Son is from him, though he is not from the Son and because the Holy Spirit proceeds from him and from the Son.” He implores Maximinus to continue calling Christ the creator and the Holy Spirit the teacher, as long as he does so in a way as to include the entire Trinity. “Then these words of yours will be ours as well.” He perceives splitting up the Trinity into different roles—author, creator, teacher—to be wrong. Augustine is also willing to grant that no one gave the Father power, while the Son receives his power completely from the Father.\(^\text{46}\) He links the proper understanding of the Father as author with the

\(^{45}\) Augustine, Contra Maximinum, 2.5.

\(^{46}\) Ibid., 2.12.1.
familiar image of flame and brightness. The Father is the also the author of the procession of the Holy Spirit, but he gives it to the Son for the Spirit to proceed from him as well.\textsuperscript{47} The statement that the Trinity is one and the same substance means that the substance of the Son and Holy Spirit comes entirely from the substance of the Father. He again grants that “author” is a proper term if one has the right understanding of it. Calling the Father the source of the Son is perfectly legitimate, but dividing the substance or designating inequality is inappropriate usage of “author” for the Father.\textsuperscript{48}

Augustine clarifies \textit{principium} (“origin” or “beginning”) in response to the following claim from Maximinus: “‘The Son was in the beginning before anything existed, but the Father was before the beginning.’”\textsuperscript{49} Augustine wonders what this might mean, since the Father cannot be before himself, and he himself “is the beginning.” The convergence of Genesis 1:1 and John 1:1 indicate for him that the Son was eternally with the Father. Each of the persons can be taken as “beginning,” although the Father embodies this term in a special sense because he is the beginning not from another beginning. Augustine explains,

The Father then is the beginning without beginning (\textit{principium non de principio}) and the Son the beginning from the beginning. Both together are not two, but one beginning, just as God the Father and God the Son are both not two gods, but one God. Nor will I deny that the Holy Spirit who proceeds from each of them is the beginning. Rather I say that these three together are one beginning just as they are one God.\textsuperscript{50}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{47} \textit{Ibid.}, 2.14.1.
\item \textsuperscript{48} \textit{Ibid.}, 2.14.6.
\item \textsuperscript{49} \textit{Ibid.}, 2.17.4. The Latin text of \textit{Contra Maximinum} is cited from PL 42. \textit{Magnum sane aliquid tibi dicere videris, quia dixit: filius erat in principio antequam aliquid esset; pater vero, ante principium.}
\item \textsuperscript{50} \textit{Ibid.} Pater ergo principium non de principio; filius principium de principio; sed utrumque simul, non duo, sed unum principium; sicut pater deus et filius deus, ambo autem simul non duo dii, sed unus deus. Nec spiritum
They together make one beginning even though the Son and Spirit receive that status from the Father, who alone is without any kind of principle. Augustine can maintain the unity of the three as one beginning because he differentiates categories of origin and equality. Begetter and begotten do not signify greater and lesser. “Who comes from whom is a question of origin; of what kind or how great he is is a question of equality.” They differ in respect of origin, but the greatness indicates the three persons as one principle (unum principium) of creation. As we will see, Bonaventure later picks up on this insight and extends it.

Augustine holds forth repeatedly on the fatherhood of God in Contra Maximinum, mostly to pile up arguments for the Son as fully equal in dignity with the Father. He circles back to similar points many times, but he does elaborate on some distinctive themes. Among them, he explores human motherhood as a better expression of God the Father’s begetting of the Son. The particular advantage conveyed by motherhood is that the offspring actually emerges from the mother. Augustine favors this because he wishes to emphasize that the Father begets the Son out of his own substance. There are two passages in which the bishop develops this image, one in each book. He does this because Maximinus had interpreted Ps 109 (110:3) as subordinating the Son. Augustine fails to see this as subordinating. “After all,” he says,

\[ sanctum ab utroque procedentem negabo esse principium: sed haec tria simul sicut unum deum, ita unum dico esse principium. \]

51 Ibid., 2.18.3.

52 Especially in light of the critique of Moltmann above, I find it significant that Augustine adopts this interpretation of Psalm 110. In this, however, he certainly followed a tradition of doing so. Regarding works in Latin, see Hilary of Poitiers, The Trinity (= De Trinitate), trans. Stephen McKenna (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1954), 6.16.

53 “From the womb, before the dawn, I begot you” translates the Vulgate ex utero, ante luciferum, genui te. Modern translations of the Hebrew vary widely but point to an infusion of energy like the morning dew.
It is not the person of the Son who says, ‘From your womb,’ or, ‘From your belly,’ you are my God. Even if we understand here the ineffable generation (ineffabilis generatio) from the womb of the Father (ex utero patris), what it says is that from out of himself, that is, from his substance God begot God, just as, when he was born from the womb of his mother, a human being begot a human being.\textsuperscript{54}

He does not linger on any discomfort with the femininity of the image. It is more important for him that of these two births of the Son, they both convey continuity of substance. There is dissimilarity between the eternal birth and the birth in time, but not between God the Father and God the Son, or the humanity of Mary and the humanity of Jesus. He connects the two “forms” of Christ with his concluding statement: “Do not try to obscure with many irrelevant words matters that are perfectly clear. He who fathered the Son out of his own womb is also his God from the womb of his mother, not from his own.”\textsuperscript{55} The English translation draws further attention to this gender-switch with the curious statement “his own womb.” Even though Augustine firmly holds to the language of father, he does not stress the masculinity of the Father and it is at least clear that he is willing to explore a female image where it is more apt to convey the totality of the Son’s birth from the “Father.”

He makes this sense of God’s “maternity” even clearer in Book II as he expounds the Son as homoousios in line with Nicaea. Again, he speaks of the two generations of Christ, one “from God the Father apart from time” and the other “from his human mother in the fullness of time.”\textsuperscript{56}

Regarding Ps 110:3, the psalmist speaks in the person of the Father, which he holds along with

\textsuperscript{54} Augustine, \textit{Contra Maximinum} 1.7. \textit{Non enim filii persona est dicentis, ex utero tuo, aut, de ventre tuo, deus meas es tu. Ila ineffabilis generatio etiam Si ex utero patris accipitur, hoc significatum est, quia de se ipso, hoc est, de substantia sua deus deum genuit, sicut ex utero matris quando natus est, homo hominem genuit: ut intelligeremus in utraque generatione non diversas eius qui est natus, et eorum de quibus est natus, esse substantias.}

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid. \textit{Noli multis verbis ad rem non necessariis conari operire res claras. Qui est pater filio ex utero suo, de ventre matris deus eius est, non de suo.}

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 2.18.1.
Maximinus. God does not have a physical womb, Augustine says, but the phrase suggests something important about the relationship of the two divine persons. “God, after all, does not have a womb in term of the arrangement of the members of the human body; rather, the word has been transferred from a bodily to an incorporeal substance so that we might understand that the only-begotten Son was born out of the substance of God.” The problem is not femininity but materiality. The image of the womb helps construct an analogy for the eternal issuing-forth of Son from the Father, and that the offspring is of the same substance as the parent. He continues with rhetorical flourish,

You do grave injury to God, as if he could beget from his womb something different from himself. Do you not see that you believe God’s generation to be defective, that you preach it as monstrous, when you dare to say that a different nature has come forth from the womb of God? But if you shrink from this, as you ought, and reject it with us, then at last praise and hold with us the Council of Nicaea and homoousios.  

The womb language, of course, is not creedal, but here Augustine uses this symbolic interpretation of Ps 110:3 to advance the Nicene position.

The fullness of the Father’s gift of life connects well with this maternal image. The Father gives of himself completely, but does not lose what he has by giving it away. “As he had, so he gave; what he had, he gave; he gave the same kind that he had; he gave as much as he had…. The Father gave to the Son nothing less than the Father has.”  

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all the fullness of life, but not life in the same exact way. “Each of them has what he is, 

57 Ibid. Considera ergo quantum mali sit, quod eiusdem substantiae filium negatis, quem genitum confitemini ex utero patris, inuiariam gravissimam facientes deo, tanquam illud quod ipse non esset, ex utero gignere potuisset. Nonne sentitis vos generationem dei credere vitiosam, praedicare monstruosam, qui dicere audetis ex utero dei processisse diversam naturam? Si autem hoc, sicut debitis, horretis, resputitis que nobis cum iam tandem concilium nicaenum et homousion laudate ac tenete nobis cum  

58 Ibid., 2.14.7. Sicut habet dedit, quod habet dedit, qualem habet, talem dedit; quantum habet, tantam dedit….Non ergo aliquid minus quam pater habet filio dedit.
but the one is life from no one, while the other is life from life.” The Trinity is one and the same life or one and the same substance, echoing the Nicene term *homoousios*. Augustine strongly connects the Son and Holy Spirit’s reception of the substance of the Father with their unity.\(^{59}\)

Another noteworthy characteristic of the Father in *Contra Maximinum* lies in Augustine’s description of the correspondence of the divine processions and missions. In the midst of his rich but meandering answer to a point regarding the substance of Son and Holy Spirit, Augustine adverts to the double origin and “two forms” of Christ. It is a given that the Son was sent by the Father: “What Christian does not know that the Father sent and that the Son was sent? It was not fitting that the Begetter be sent by his Son, but that the Son be sent by his begetter.”\(^{60}\) The eternal identity of the Son does not require him to be sent as if he were a subordinate being, but it does correlate better to temporal mission than that of the Father. As with *De Trinitate*, this has to do with his concept of order; here, he contrasts “order of nature” with “equality of substance.” The one that brings forth the other more appropriately sends forth the other. “…It does not mean that one existed before the other, but that the one has his origin from the other (*esset ex altero*).”\(^{61}\) As we saw in Part I, modern theologians use the terms “immanent” and “economic” to describe a distinction (or even a fissure) between the two formulations of the Trinity. Augustine may hold to the joint action of the persons *ad extra*, but that does mean their roles in the action are identical. The missions certainly correspond to the eternal processions.

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\(^{59}\) See also *ibid.*, 2.14.2-3.

\(^{60}\) *Ibid.*, 2.14.8. *Quis autem christianus ignorat quod pater miserit, missus que sit filius? Non enim genitorem ab eo quem genuit, sed genitum a genitore mitti oportebat....*

\(^{61}\) *Ibid.* *Verum haec non est inaequalitas substantiae, sed ordo naturae; non quod alter prior esset altero, sed quod alter esset ex altero.*
While the above instance largely reiterates a position staked out in *De Trinitate*—he in fact deploys the same hermeneutical categories shortly thereafter—Augustine offers an interpretation of the encounter between Abraham and his mysterious visitation in Genesis 18 that also pursues the relationship of processions and missions. The justification for Augustine’s exegesis of this favorite passage comes from Maximinus’ claim that the Father is invisible and that the Son appeared to Abraham. The bishop pounces, perceiving the opportunity to show the equality and order of the Trinity suggested in this passage. Although three men are seen, the narrator describes the visitor as “the Lord” and Abraham addresses the visitor likewise, in the singular. Augustine construes the two angels that move on to Sodom to be sent, just as the Son and Holy Spirit are sent in the order of salvation. “Lot saw two and still recognized one Lord,” he writes. “There I think that the Son and the Holy Spirit are signified by the angels, because those angels said that they were sent, and of the Trinity which is God, the Father alone is not said to have been sent…. By claiming that “God the Trinity is of one substance, just as those three men were of one substance,” Augustine unmistakably points in the direction of a social analogy here. The three are countable and distinguishable, or at least the two sent from the one sender, yet they are one in a powerful bond of unity, named with one name, “Lord.” The Son and Spirit are sent, yet this does not detract from their commonality of substance with the Father sending them.

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62 *Ibid.*, 2.26.4-9. This is not the only time that Augustine interprets this important story. Among other places Augustine treats it in his writings, see *De Trinitate*, 2.19-22.

63 Augustine, *Contra Maximinum*, 2.26.7. *Ubi mihi videntur per angelos significari filius et spiritus sanctus: quoniam se illi angeli missos esse dixerant; et de trinitate quae deus est, solus pater non legitur missus.*

64 *Ibid.* ...*ne tu ipse nos admoneres unius esse substantiae trinitatem deum, sicut unius erant substantiae tres viri quos vidit Abraham.*
As mentioned above, the bishop repeatedly deploys the *Shema*, Deut 6:4, as a repudiation of Homoian theology. Maximinus for his part relied upon 1 Cor 8:6, which seems to identify “God” with the Father and “Lord” with Christ. Augustine thus attempts to reconcile these texts. The former passage points with perfect accuracy to the unity of the Trinity as “one God.” Regarding the latter, he puts the emphasis on the name “Father” set in apposition to God there. While Maximinus used that to show that God is simply the Father, and vice versa, Augustine deploys his hermeneutical principle to account for this usage. For him the passage is rather about the distinction of persons, eliminating confusion that there might be two gods or two lords. He compares the passage to Rom 11:33-36, which includes the phrase “for from him and through him and in him are all things.” Although we could interpret these phrases singly with reference to the Father (from him), the Son (through him), and the Holy Spirit (in him), this must be resolved in the equality of “God,” that is, the Trinity, whose unifying power the Pauline text acclaims.

Augustine returns again and again to his point that reserving certain titles for the Father actually insults the Father. He takes the case of Mk 10:17-18 (“No one is good save the one God”). Apparently the Homoian interpretation on this verse focused on God the Father. The Son is good from good, and to call him otherwise insults both. He strives to teach Maximinus here, and moderns who diminish the Father can learn from him on this point too. Augustine reserves such lavish praise for God the Father, and insists that we must say great things about him. His goodness is amplified by his full gift of his goodness to the Son: “Thus the one did not
intrinsically increase because he received, and the other did not intrinsically decrease because he gave. Immutability cannot decrease, and fullness cannot increase.”

Maximinus had claimed that the Father’s embrace of the Son is analogous to a mother’s embrace of a baby. He “comprehends” the Son, but the Son cannot do likewise. The Son may be the begotten God, but his divinity is of a different order of magnitude. Augustine picks up on this language of “embrace,” but instead uses it to show their equality. It is more like a Father and Son of equal stature embracing each other. They both comprehend each other. The Father begot the Son in perfection, so he is the perfection of “stature,” so to speak, and the perfection of knowledge.

Conclusion

In Augustine’s encounters with Homoian Arianism, he brings up the Father-Son relationship continually to demonstrate that God the Father and God the Son are of the same substance. It is crucial to him in this context to establish sameness of substance, because of the Homoian position that the Son is merely “like” the Father. Augustine downplays concern about sameness not meaning oneness. He has already confirmed this at length in De Trinitate, that the relationships of origin entail simplicity and unity of essence. The task at hand in this polemic is to fight against subordinating the Son to the Father. Given the series of proof-texts from his

65 Ibid., 2.23.7.
66 Augustine, Debate with Maximinus, 15.9.
opponents, Augustine must continue honing exegetical strategies. Primarily, Augustine relies upon the eternal nature of the Father-Son relationship. Human sons are of the same substance as their fathers, but depend upon them at least for a time, and always need to show them respect. After all, the son comes from the father and owes his very life to him. In the eternity of God, however, the motherly Father mysteriously brings forth from his very substance a Son of equal stature to himself, whom he embraces completely. Furthermore, he allows the Son to completely embrace him in return. The Son is beginning from beginning, or principle from principle, and his life is referred to another; nevertheless they share in this perfect embrace of equals. For obvious tactical reasons, Augustine rarely discusses the Son as “Word” here, and avoids the mental analogies. He puts his focus on how God begets a Son of the same substance as himself. He is truly Father. Augustine still does not use the word “person” as a fixture of his Trinitarian theology, but he does put emphasis on the personal and shared character of the divine unity in the anti-Homoian works. Theologians, especially in recent times, have often fixated on parts of De Trinitate as if they were Augustine’s only formulations. These late anti-Homoian works provide a helpful complement. They confirm and deepen the impression Augustine does not merely conceive of the persons as modes of the divine essence, but as a unity in order and equality.
Conclusion to Part II

At the end of this section on Augustine a brief note is in order to gather a few observations concerning the trajectory of development in his thought. Given the sketchy nature of Augustine’s writings at the beginning of his career, and his continual return to consideration of the Trinity, it is evident that his theology of God the Father grows over the course of his career. He was careful and conservative enough in his early works that he did not need to retract anything from them pertaining to the Father specifically. He does, however, leave some theological formulations behind without formally retracting them. His articulations tend to be rather clumsy in the two works before *De Fide et Symbolo*, especially in that they appear to subordinate the Wisdom and Spirit to God. He prays to the Father in *Soliloquies* but not with the richness or balance that he strikes in *Confessions*. In his earlier work, including *Confessions*, he strikes on the theme of the “One” in reference to the Father, but he only uses this language a few times in *De Trinitate* and none at all in his disputes with the Homoians.

His thought demonstrates continuity along with growth. He holds in his early works that the Father is “beginning” in a special sense, and that the Son and Holy Spirit receive from him. The Father alone is Father in the Trinity, and he has one Son and no “grandsons.” He expounds precisely the same position in the later works examined. Throughout his career he sharpened his insight into how Scripture signifies the Father as source of the deity and sender of the missions, yet that he gives himself to the extent that the Son and Holy Spirit are equal.

Modern theologians relish in critiquing the mental analogies from *De Trinitate*, such that it has dominated reception of his Trinitarian thought. The lengthy stretch of *De Trinitate* treating these analogies appears disconnected from the Father-Son relationship and much of the
Scriptural account. That work taken as a whole, however, coheres well with his thought elsewhere. We have seen this to be the case with *Confessions* before it and the anti-Homoian works after it. Book 15 casts this bold thought experiment in helpful perspective. These works from his time as a bishop all show strong awareness of the unity and equality of the Trinity, and the need to distinguish the persons of the Trinity according to relations of origin. He employs various images to help him explain this, even as he finds them all deficient. He gravitates continually to the Holy Spirit as the “gift,” but no analogy can replace the names Father and Son. The sociality of the Trinity for Augustine is especially demonstrated in the anti-Homoian works, in which unity can be ascertained both from the unique source of the divinity (the Father) and the bond of love (the Holy Spirit). In speaking of the perfect embrace of the Father and Son, he refers well to reintegration theme sounded in his earlier works. The Father as unbegotten (*ingenitus*) is the principle of the godhead (*principium totius deitatis*) and the origin from no origin.

The variations in Augustine’s theology in the works from his time as a bishop may well be rooted in the respective genres and intended audiences. In *Confessions*, Augustine largely seeks to tell the story of his own journey to the Father, from the desolate mire of sin to his heart’s rest in God. He may have had an attendant motive to convince others of the genuineness of his conversion and his fittingness as a spiritual leader. In this work, he casts himself within the story, so to speak, and readily addresses God as his father and refers to the audience as his brothers within mother church. Although in other instances he may speak of a metaphorical fatherhood of
the whole Trinity, in *Confessions* he speaks much more directly to the First Person. It is a hymn to the Father’s mercy.¹

The genre of *De Trinitate* is difficult to pinpoint, but the work is oriented towards those who doubt the doctrine of the Trinity, or at least towards other pastors concerned for such people. He carefully avoids praying or addressing God in such a way that the persons would appear unequal. Even so, he does not flinch at tracing the unity and equality of the Son and Spirit from the person of God the Father. While “God” in *Confessions* and the earlier works often casually implicated the Father, in *De Trinitate* he generally means the Trinity, and his prayers at the beginning and ending accord with that. Because of divine simplicity, these approaches are not in competition with each other. Given the polemic thrust of the work, Augustine wants to ensure that his audience has a strong awareness of the unity and equality of the persons. “Father” is used more in the Gospel of John than in any other gospel, and Augustine’s intense study of John’s Gospel in particular enriches the thought of *De Trinitate*.

The anti-Homoian works perhaps do not present Augustine at the heights of his rhetorical acumen, but they too testify to the contextual nature of his theological endeavors. In particular, he places two concerns at the center of this debate: the unity of God and the relationship of the Father and Son. For our purposes, the way in which he frames the latter is most instructive. How could God be a father at all if he is not willing to beget an equal son? He challenges any concept

¹ Studer says that “‘Father,’ both in the sense of Creator and in the sense of Father of believers, is used by Augustine mostly as a title of the first person of the Trinity. In principle, one could also give the name ‘Father’ to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, and even to the entire Trinity, inasmuch as the divine action in relation to what is outside of God, including creation and adoption, is common to all three persons. But in his use of the name ‘Father,’ Augustine sticks very close to the New Testament” (*Grace of Christ*, 157). Augustine has the reputation, based on a remark in *De Trinitate* 5, of founding an approach to the “Our Father” addressing the Trinity. My initial research outside of the works handled in this dissertation—into Augustine’s homilies on the Lord’s Prayer—concurs with Studer’s judgment, but this is a direction for further research.
of God’s fatherhood that would see him as dominating or ruling over the Trinity. In fact, Augustine utilizes a rare maternal analogy to reiterate the complete perfection of the Son coming forth from the Father. Rather than diminishing the Father in his eyes, the equality of the Son redounds to the praise of God the Father. The Son partakes of the same divine substance. In the face of a theology that ontologically subordinates the Son and Holy Spirit, Augustine holds firm to the unique role of the Father as principle of the Godhead. He balances it, however, with a basic intuition that most good parents understand: shared life requires the total gift of oneself, the willingness to see the other as equal even while the relationship is not reciprocal. Augustine was sharpened by rereading Scripture and facing stern challenges such as this one. He did not stumble upon these remarks haphazardly, but developed them over the course of his tenure as bishop.

As we have seen, then, Augustine provides an excellent framework for responding to the concerns of Moltmann and Pannenberg related to the Father’s role in the Trinity. Augustine does not exalt the Father at the expense of the Son and Holy Spirit. Rather, his greatness lies in the gift of equality. The Father, not the divine essence, brings them forth eternally. Next, we turn to unfold how Bonaventure takes up Augustine’s approach to God the Father, and the various ways in which he presses it further.
Part III: God the Father in Bonaventure

Bonaventure of Bagnoregio lived from 1221 to 1274.¹ Several centuries passed since the death of Augustine, the fall of the Roman Empire, and the decisive, early ecumenical councils. The doctrinal disputes changed considerably over the course of these centuries. Similarly, so changed the way theologians went about teaching doctrine and clarifying controversial matters. The expanding influence of Aristotle represents another key change—Augustine had read some Aristotle, but was unimpressed and largely uninfluenced by contact with his philosophy.² Consequently, with Bonaventure we arrive at a considerably different historical and theological context.

One major development consists in the turn to “scholasticism,” the general term which indicates a theological methodology, arguably initiated by Anselm of Canterbury, which came to fruition in the twelfth century and dominated the landscape for several centuries thereafter. To put it briefly, a dialectical method dominated the scholasticism that flourished in the thirteenth century. According to this method, a scholar took up particular discrete questions, summoned conflicting authorities to provide a glimpse of the problem at stake, and used logic and

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² Augustine, Confessions, 4.16.28ff. He read the Categories as a young man, but indicates in his retrospective remarks that he was not aided in his quest for truth by them. A noteworthy exception regarding Aristotle’s influence on Augustine is the latter’s application of substance and accident terminology and the category of relation in De Trinitate 5. See Russell L. Friedman, Intellectual Traditions at the Medieval University: The Use of Philosophical Psychology in Trinitarian Theologies among the Franciscans and Dominicans, 1250-1350, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 1:13.
“necessary reasons” to adjudicate the proper response to the question. Theology of the fourth century was chiefly the enterprise of bishops, which is to say pastors, who sought to interpret Scripture and ward off challenges to the faith that imperiled the very existence of their flocks. Theology of the thirteenth century was chiefly the enterprise of priest-theologians, who drew from the wealth of Scripture and the “Fathers,” also called “Masters” or “Doctors,” while also making more explicit use of a philosophical toolbox to advance theological understanding. It would be unfair to say that theology no longer had pastoral implications, but in the void of an existential threat to the flocks, the focus turned to theology that fosters the life of the mind, the life of the soul, and the life of particular communities, whether monastic, mendicant, or “secular.”³ The fairly docile reception of most theological positions did not diminish the duty of each theologian to clarify anew the common deposit of faith. So the practitioners, the questions, the methods, and even the goals of theology have all changed in the transition from Augustine to Bonaventure.

Bonaventure was born in Bagnoresgio, a small town then within the Papal States, in central Italy near Orvieto. It would have been a few days’ journey to Florence and to Rome, but as it turns out, more important was his proximity to the influence of a new and burgeoning religious community, the Franciscans. Bonaventure’s parents baptized him as Giovanni, but the lad was subsequently nicknamed Bonaventura, “good fortune,” because of his recovery from a childhood illness.⁴ His mother attributed the dramatic nature of his healing to the intercession of

³ There were, of course, still challenges and threats—the Cathars and Albigensians, to name two—but by comparison the Church was far more stable and secure as an institution than it was in the fourth century.

⁴ See Cullen, Bonaventure, 10, and Bonaventure, Legenda minor sancti Francisci, in vol. 8 of Doctoris seraphici S. Bonaventurae opera Omnia: opuscula varia theological, ed. the Fathers of the Collegium S. Bonaventurae (Ad
Francis of Assisi. After several years of study and a year of novitiate, Bonaventure officially joined this new mendicant order in 1244.  

Bonaventure does not provide us with a comparable book to *Confessions*; he has not left an extensive intellectual and spiritual account of his life. While Augustine’s formation was not limited to one place, but rather took place on both sides of the Mediterranean in various cities, Bonaventure’s intellectual and spiritual formation can be closely pinpointed to one time and place—the Paris of the 1230s to 1250s. The University of Paris attracted many of the greatest thinkers of the time. Learning in Paris, Bonaventure found himself in the midst of a period of considerable intellectual ferment.

Here, he devoted himself to study at the feet of various teachers, mostly fellow Friars Minor. He mentions Alexander of Hales as a particular influence. Between 1250 and 1252, Bonaventure began his *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard*, a necessary step toward becoming a master, or teacher, of sacred theology. Owing to the disputes between the mendicant and secular masters, the wider university community did not receive him for a few years after the completion of this work; he incepted in 1254 at the Franciscan house of studies. His tenure as

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magister regens was limited to only a few years, because in February of 1257 he was chosen to become the eighth minister general of the Franciscan Order. This important role would consume most of the remainder of his life, so his writings took a different turn. In 1273, Pope Gregory X created him cardinal and invested him as bishop of Albano, a suburbicarian see near Rome. He made important contributions to the Council of Lyons, which for a brief time seemed to reunite East and West but in fact was doomed to failure for several reasons. He most likely did not foresee the tragic aftermath; he took ill and died unexpectedly in Lyons on 15 July 1274.

Like Augustine, Bonaventure left a number of diverse writings, but unlike Augustine, his theological endeavors were more concentrated. His first and largest work, taking up four of the nine volumes of his collected works, is the Commentary on the Sentences mentioned above. He also wrote a few volumes of quaestiones disputatae (“disputed questions”), a distinct genre with roots in the academic activity in Paris. He took up questions on the knowledge of Christ, on the mystery of the Trinity, and on “evangelical perfection,” i.e. how consecrated religious should live in community, written in defense of the mendicant orders. While his contemporary Thomas Aquinas published the extensive but incomplete Summa theologiae, ostensibly aimed at providing a new program of theology for beginners, Bonaventure offered his own unique sort of introduction, the Breviloquium. This work dates from his first year as minister general and so is removed in some ways from the academic context, although he remained in Paris. Besides

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7 Jay Hammond argues convincingly that he incepted in April 1254 to assume the chair formerly held by William of Middleton (“Dating Bonaventure’s Inception,” 179, 217 et passim). Hammond has also reconsidered the typical dating of his reception by the university at large (see ibid. 179 n. 3). This recognition is widely thought to have been delayed until 1257 (so Cullen, Bonaventure, 11).

8 On this genre, see Bernardo C. Bazan, “Les questions disputées, principalement dans les facultés de théologie,” in Les questions disputées et les questions quodlibétiques dans les facultés de théologie, de droit, et de médecine, Typologie des Sources de Moyen Âge Occidental 44-45, ed. Leopold Genicot (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1985), 15-149.
leaving homilies and biblical commentaries, he crafted two biographies of Francis and several works on the spiritual life. Of these, his *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum* (“The Mind’s Journey into God”) has proven the most widely read and influential down the centuries. Besides these, however, he gave various *collationes* or lectures on particular themes for his friars. These works vigorously attempt to clarify the illumination of the soul and how it becomes enfolded within the Trinity in a process of return.

Considering these various writings, limits must be set for the current study. Christopher Cullen surmises that Bonaventure showed “little, if any, substantial development in his thinking. Bonaventure seems to have thought through the main elements of his theological system from very early in his career; hence, his *Commentary on the Sentences* should have a priority of place in any accurate reading.” Others have advanced similar views, that this *Commentary* affords the reader a full articulation of his theological positions. Although later works permit him full freedom to determine and frame the content, they presuppose what he has written in the *Commentary*. Whether these opinions are true when it comes to the doctrine of God the Father remains to be seen, but at any rate it will be important to investigate the basic lines of his thought from this particular work even if an exhaustive study is not possible. Even though it has been hailed as one of the finest commentaries on the *Sentences*, its impact on scholarship has been limited because as yet there has been no vernacular translation. If Bonaventure did refine his

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9 Cullen, *Bonaventure*, xii. He says that he is in agreement with Etienne Gilson. For an opinion that sees certain areas of growth or discontinuity along with the substantial continuity of his thought, see Hayes, “Bonaventure: Mystery of the Triune God,” in *The History of Franciscan Theology*, ed. Kenan Osborne (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 1994), 52-53.

10 For a high appraisal, consider the eminent historian Martin Grabmann’s comment that it is one of the most significant commentaries (“bedeutendste Sentenzenkommentar der Scholastik”, as quoted in Robert Josef Wozniak, *Primitas et Plenitudo* [Navarra, Spain: Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 2007], 33). Portions of the *Commentary*
theological positions after commenting on the *Sentences*, the most likely place for that would be the *Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity*.11

Given our goal of ascertaining Bonaventure’s thought on God the Father, the following presentation examines four of Bonaventure’s most important works. We will delve into his two of his scholastic theological works that treat the doctrine of the Trinity extensively—his *Commentary on the Sentences* and his *Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity*. Under a third heading, we will study two works from his time as minister general of the Franciscans, namely *Breviloquium* and *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*. These works point to the place of the Father in his theological vision as a whole. The limits of the current project preclude taking into account Bonaventure’s sermons and his commentaries on Scripture. Further studies could illuminate how his thoughts on the Father there relate to these other prominent works.

Cullen laments that some authors have given priority to Bonaventure as a “mystic”; instead, by placing an emphasis on the *Sentences Commentary* in his own treatment, he wishes to establish him firmly as “the scholastic he was.”12 Fortunately, Cullen acknowledges that he is both an insightful mystical theologian with a proclivity for rich imagery and an organized thinker with a vigorous philosophical bent. This seems to be a sound methodological principle: we must

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12 Cullen, *Bonaventure*, xiii.
maintain these elements throughout our study of Bonaventure and not pit them against one another. Bonaventure’s pursuit of clarity and truth, within the scholastic paradigm, nourished and was nourished in return by his deep personal investment in living the evangelical calling of the Franciscans, and indeed, in seeking happiness in contemplation of the Triune God.

Before attempting to let the Franciscan speak for himself, it is fitting to provide a few important comments about his context as it specifically relates to the Trinity, and to give some indications of contemporary scholarship on Bonaventure. Indeed, much could be said about the development of Trinitarian theology between the time of Augustine and Bonaventure, and indeed much inquiry has sought to determine the sources of Bonaventure’s thought. Some thoughts on the latter issue will arise in the section on the Sentences, but at least a few of the key developments merit mentioning now. Within medieval Trinitarian theology, the emphasis upon the proper theoretical underpinnings of theology produced a whole set of terminology and also completing explanations. While the various teachers and schools at Paris would all yield to the Nicene Creed (with the filioque), they increasingly took particular explanations as preferable and marginalized or even rejected others. The exceedingly difficult issue of sorting out the simultaneous unity of essence and trinity of persons became an area of controversy of this sort. While Augustine circled around the distinction of the persons with various images and models in De Trinitate and his other works, without firmly committing to one or demanding the same of his readers, the milieu of thirteenth century Paris set the table with sharply-framed questions that

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required a public response from theologians. Hence competing basic stances and models arose and vied for preeminence.

What complicates matters is that these stances all arose from language in Scripture, the Creed, and Augustine, often even from passages in close succession, so reinterpretation of various elements was necessary and total rejection undesirable. As Russell Friedman documents, Augustine’s psychological model wielded considerable influence over Boethius, Anselm, and other figures from the intervening Western tradition.\(^{14}\) This traditional model was of course largely rooted in two Scriptural concepts: first, in the human mind as the preeminent created image of God, and second in the *logos* terminology of the opening of the Gospel of John. Whether *mind–self-knowledge–self-love* or *memory–intelligence–will*, commentators passed on Augustine’s analogies approvingly. New life was breathed into this model with the more widespread reception of Aristotle’s work. As scholastics put more emphasis on the mental analogies, a question emerged: do these triads *explain* or account for the distinctions within the Trinity, or are they merely helpful images? God the Father’s eternal thinking of his Word and breathing of his Spirit could even be viewed as more helpful for Trinitarian theology than the more common terms Father, Son, and Holy Spirit because they are more conceptual.

At the same time, two accounts for how to distinguish the persons of the Trinity came into sharp relief. According to one, the plurality of the persons is grounded in personal relations. This account sees no difference in substance among the persons, but rather sees difference in their constitution vis-à-vis one another. The Father begets the Son, so he has the relation of

\(^{14}\) My narrative here has been greatly influenced by two of Russell Friedman’s recent works. See *Intellectual Traditions*, 1:1-43, and *Medieval Trinitarian Thought from Aquinas to Ockham* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 5-93.
paternity. The Son is begotten by the Father, so he likewise has filiation. The Holy Spirit, ever
the difficult case, is distinguished by the relation of procession or “spiration.” The shared relation
of active procession or spiration does not sufficiently distinguish Father and Son from each
other, so in the four relations we may acknowledge three persons. The most oft-discussed
elaboration of this account in contemporary theology takes place in the *prima pars* of Thomas
Aquinas’ *Summa theologiae*, q.q. 27-43.\(^{15}\) He drew mostly from Augustine and Anselm. Russell
Friedman calls this approach the “relation account.”

Eastern thought on constitution of the Trinity differed, of course, but in fact it is another
Western figure who instigated the other model to be considered here. Thoroughly Augustinian in
his own right, Richard of St. Victor focused on the origin of the persons of the Trinity to express
their distinctness.\(^ {16}\) Given that the relation account, reproduced above in brief, was rooted
specifically in relations of origin, this difference at first appears too subtle. In fact, they can be
rendered compatible, but the basic premises are distinctive. Richard’s account proceeds in the
following way. The Father alone has no origin from another. The Son has his origin from the
Father alone. The Holy Spirit alone has his origin from two others, the Father and the Son. While
the relation account puts the focus on the relationship of each person to the others, this approach
concentrates on the different modes of personal constitution. This emphasis on origin and the
communication of being also has roots in Augustinian *loci*, but is more decidedly neo-Platonic in
character and hence it can be called the “emanation account.”

\(^{15}\) Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 5 vols. (Westminster,

As mentioned above, these models and accounts often existed side-by-side in the sources, so in Peter Lombard’s *Sentences* and in Bonaventure’s works, elements of all of them are woven together. The early Franciscans, though, largely inherited the legacy of the Abbey of St. Victor, and Bonaventure is noted particularly for his articulation of the emanation account. The spiritual outlook of St. Francis was trained on the goodness of God, and God’s benevolence in pouring out his gifts. Paired with the pseudo-Dionysian maxim that goodness is diffusive of itself, Bonaventure elaborated on the source and end of all goodness. He and the Franciscans that followed him are often foiled with the Dominicans, who largely preferred the relation account. These accounts have enormous implications for the basic conception of God the Father, as the following sections will develop.

Bonaventure’s theology has been studied less than that of his contemporary, Thomas Aquinas, but considerably more than many other figures of his day. The three studies that have had the greatest influence on discussion of Bonaventure in systematic theology are those of Theodore De Regnon, Albert Stohr, and Olegario Gonzalez. As a consequence of these works,

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17 See Pseudo-Dionysius, *On the Divine Names*, ch. 4, esp. §1, and *The Celestial Hierarchy*, ch. 4, in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. Colm Lubheid and Paul Rorem (New York: Paulist, 1987). A few things about Bonaventure’s use of this maxim should be noted. He uses it twice in ch. 6 of *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, which pertains to the Trinity, but uses it only twice in the questions on the Trinity in the *Sentences Commentary (In I Sent. d. 19, p. 1, a.u., q. 2 [I, 344b, 345b]*)], in an objection and corresponding reply. Overall, in the *Commentary*, he employs the maxim eleven times with a few additional paraphrases. He does not there link the phrase to Dionysius, which points to an indirect influence. The probable source is Alexander of Hales.

18 As Friedman documents, it was not until the end of the thirteenth century that these viewpoints coalesced into veritable parties. Even then, there were Franciscans and (less often) Dominicans whose thought did not exactly fit this scheme. The other problem with the Franciscan-Dominican typology is the obvious point in fact that not all theologians of the day belonged to these orders, although many developed affinities (a notable example is Henry of Ghent).

Bonaventure’s teaching on God the Father has emerged as a particular point of interest. The scholar to have written the most on Bonaventure’s Trinitarian thought in English is Zachary Hayes.²⁰ Many have seized upon Bonaventure as an alternative to Thomas Aquinas. Narrative histories of theology have highlighted a few of Bonaventure’s key words: primacy or primitivity (primitas), fecundity (fecunditas), and fontal or fountain-like fullness (fontalis plenitudo). Because of his emphasis on the Father as origin, Bonaventure has often been connected with Eastern views of the Trinity, with this claim taking varying degrees of nuance. Whereas with Augustine, there has been much study of his Trinitarian theology with relatively little on the specific issue of the Father’s role, the situation is somewhat reversed in Bonaventure scholarship. Some studies on fontal fullness and innascibility have appeared, but few of these studies have put these notable aspects of his paterology into broader context.²¹ Additionally, a few works have been written with a view to contrasting Bonaventure and Aquinas.²² So while specific questions on the Trinity in the Sentences Commentary have received extensive treatment, the Disputed Questions has been seldom examined, and his writings elsewhere seemingly only mined for particular points. In an attempt to elaborate God the Father’s role within the Trinity for

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²² With a particular view to the Trinity in Creation, see Gilles Emery, La Trinité créatrice: Trinité et création dans les commentaires aux Sentences de Thomas d’Aquin et de ses précurseurs Albert le Grand et Bonaventure (Paris: Vrin, 1995), and more recently Durand, Le Père, Alpha et Oméga de la vie trinitaire. In order to preserve the limits of the project, I do not offer a comparison between the views of Bonaventure and Aquinas on God the Father, but have striven to articulate Bonaventure’s views in their own integrity.
Bonaventure, it seems appropriate then to reappraise these points of emphasis with a view to the broader arc of his theology.

Already these remarks show Augustine’s decisive impact on Bonaventure, whether directly or indirectly, and so the discoveries in Part II regarding the Father’s place often emerge in Part III. Some points demand comparison as we go, before we take stock of the picture of God the Father in Part IV. It should be kept in mind that the modern authors discussed in Part I do not seem to have significantly engaged Bonaventure’s Trinitarian theology. Karl Rahner’s essay on Trinitarian method was originally published in honor of Albert Stohr, the aforementioned author of a study of Bonaventure’s doctrine of the Trinity. Rahner appreciates Bonaventure as cultivating a mysticism of the Trinity and as allowing the Trinity to permeate his doctrine of creation. The tenor of his treatment implies that Bonaventure could be used as a counterbalance to Aquinas. Whether that is a prudent suggestion or not, Moltmann and Pannenberg do not seem to have picked up on it. Moltmann mentions Bonaventure once in *Crucified God* in reference to Bonaventure’s thought on the cross in *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, but he does not bring up the medieval author at all in *Trinity and the Kingdom*. Similarly, Pannenberg makes regular reference to Augustine and Aquinas in the chapters on God in his *Systematic Theology*, but not Bonaventure. We offered a fresh look at Augustine’s theology of the Father above in the hopes of revising misunderstandings; with Bonaventure, there is more of a blank slate. Bonaventure’s

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24 *Ibid.*, 79, 81. In the latter text, he invokes Bonaventure as one of the “great theologians of former times.”


26 Pannenberg does mention Bonaventure a handful of times in Vol. 3, with reference to sacramental theology.
balanced perspective on the senses of First Principle—pertaining to the Father and to the Trinity—may in particular offer a way forward.
Chapter 6. Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard

As intimated above, Bonaventure’s Commentary on the Sentences dwarfs his other works in terms of length. He lectured on the Sentences as a bachelor between 1251 and 1253, although possibly out of sequence.¹ It is likely that he continued to revise his commentary during his tenure as regent master in Paris (1254-1257). In taking up the work of the Lombard, Bonaventure followed in the footsteps of his teacher Alexander of Hales, who had recently established this requirement for an aspiring teacher of theology in Paris.² Given the tremendous length of the Commentary on the Sentences, it goes beyond the scope of this project to distill Bonaventure’s comprehensive theology of God the Father in this work. Instead, in this section we will treat three topics. First, we will highlight how he adheres closely to Augustine’s theology of God the Father as expounded above, even as he is willing to expand or adjust it. Second, we will discern the place of God the Father in his own scheme from the prologues to the four volumes. Third, we will relate Bonaventure’s thought on the Father as it emerges from a few particular questions inspired by the Lombard’s Sentences, which touch on the unity of the godhead, innascibility, the paternity of the Father, and his special status as principle of the Holy Spirit.


Bonaventure’s Adherence to Augustine on the Father

Scholars battle ferociously over labels. Many times labels are helpful, while at other times they obfuscate. Labelling Bonaventure an “Augustinian” might appear obvious, given the fact that he cites the Bishop of Hippo more than 3050 times in his writings. Indeed, in attempts to provide narratives of medieval theology, what with the impulse toward grouping figures into various convenient camps, not to say protagonists and antagonists, some have held up Bonaventure as the Augustinian of the thirteenth century. This perspective envisions Bonaventure maintaining the tradition against the radical Aristotelians, perhaps even including Aquinas himself as an opponent. The issue is not so simple for several reasons.

First, even a staggering number of citations is no guarantee of fidelity to an author. His citations, even in works other than the commentaries on the Sentences, draw mostly from the excerpts contained in the Lombard’s compilation. He thus has been accused of being true to the Augustinian deposit, so to speak, but false to the spirit of Augustine. Relatedly, despite his apparent deference to Augustine, he may not have read his works in their own integrity.

1 Bougerol states that Bonaventure cites Augustine “more than 3050 times.” (“Auctoritates in Scholastic Theology to Bonaventure,” 307). A search of the Latin Library B Database from Brepols reveals that he refers to Augustine by name 2385 times in the four volumes of the Sentences Commentary. A complicating factor, of course, is that this particular format encourages the piling up of citations and Augustine is by far the author most represented in the Lombard’s work itself.

4 According to Joshua Benson, remarks by John Pecham (d. 1292) show that “as early as 1285, Bonaventure could be associated with Augustine as a mark of philosophical and theological orthodoxy” (“Augustine and Bonaventure,” in T&T Clark Companion to Augustine and Modern Theology, ed. C. C. Pecknold and Tarmo Toom [London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013], 131). Regarding the modern interpretation of Bonaventure’s “Augustinianism,” Benson refers to the analysis of John Francis Quinn, who traced the various interpretations of historians of the early to mid-twentieth century (ibid., 132-134). Among these, Pierre Mandonnet held that Bonaventure “was the chief representative of the Augustinians, who were opposed to the Aristotelian learning emerging in the thirteenth century.”
Second, Bonaventure participated in a school that used a variety of sources, many but not all of whom were also dependent on Augustine. Bonaventure may cite Augustine thousands of times, but he could simply be following the interpretation of Anselm, another “Augustinian” of whom he thinks highly. Besides, he also appears to owe much to Richard of St. Victor and Dionysius (the pseudo-Areopagite). He cites John Damascene many times and reveals knowledge of the eastern fathers, albeit mostly through him and Dionysius. On this basis, despite his clear indebtedness to the Augustinian heritage, there are enough other influences on his thought as to set him apart.

Third, Bonaventure utilized methods particular to the schools of his day which increasingly included Aristotelian reasoning. True, his attitude towards Aristotle’s own thought, or perhaps it is better to say his enthusiasm for reason’s capabilities on its own, cools over time, and he is wary of reason apart from faith, but Bonaventure certainly embraces the use of rigorous logic in service of theology. The divide between Bonaventure and others on this topic is often overestimated.

Fourth, theology embraces a great variety of doctrines, while many attach the label “Augustinian” to a thinker’s work as a whole. Recent works by Zachary Hayes and Kenan Osborne remark that Bonaventure adheres closely to Augustine on most theological matters but departs from him on the Trinity. As bold as these statements are, these authors do not explain

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5 Cullen, *Bonaventure*, 76.

6 Kenan Osborne, “Alexander of Hales” in *The History of Franciscan Theology*, 28 n. 42, and “Trinity in Bonaventure,” 112-113. Interestingly, he says that the converse applies to Aquinas, i.e. he typically differs from Augustine but follows him closely on the Trinity. “In discussing Bonaventure’s theology of the Trinity, it must be kept in mind that Bonaventure deliberately departs from Augustine’s *De Trinitate*” (ibid.). See also Hayes, “Bonaventure: Mystery of the Triune God,” 43. He repeats the comment in a forthcoming work. In the works quoted
them fully. Indeed, they appear to contradict a word from Bonaventure himself about his sources, namely, on Augustine’s preeminence as a teacher of theology proper in *De Trinitate*. While offering advice to a fellow teacher who wonders whether academic inquiry verges too closely on the sin of curiosity, Bonaventure commends the example of Augustine.

After all, no one describes the nature of time and of matter better than Augustine as he probes and discusses them in his *Confessions*; no one has explained the origins of forms and the development of things better than he in his *Literal Commentary on Genesis*; no one has better treated questions on the soul and on God than he in his book *On the Trinity*; and no one has better explained the nature of the angels and of the creation of the world than he in *The City of God*. To put it briefly, our masters of theology have set down little or nothing in their writings that you will not find in the books of Augustine himself.7

Unless we take his words here and elsewhere as exaggerated or insincere, which would seem unwarranted skepticism, we arrive at the conclusion that Bonaventure did indeed regard Augustine as the primary patristic source of his Trinitarian thought. So on the one hand, the twin witness that Bonaventure clearly has the highest regard for Augustine’s authority and that his citations of Augustine far outnumber those made to other theologians combined make it obvious that he would consider himself an Augustinian. On the other hand, as the above remarks show, there are problems with interpreting such a label simply.

above, neither Osborne nor Hayes expand on the comment, especially Osborne’s intimation that this is a conscious rejection. The underpinnings of the view may be found throughout Hayes’ Introduction to *Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity*. In particular, he suggests there that Bonaventure does not make the psychological analogy central to his scheme, that his starting point owes much to Richard of St. Victor and Pseudo-Dionysius, and that he has more in common with Eastern fathers. While Augustine’s terminology was quite apophatic, Bonaventure accepts “person” as refined by Boethius and especially Richard. It seems, however, that Hayes follows a faulty paradigm of interpreting Augustine and Bonaventure that goes back to Stohr and De Regnon, casting Augustine as starting with the unity and solely devoted to the psychological image.

7 Bonaventure, “Letter to an Unknown Master,” in *St. Bonaventure’s Writings Concerning the Franciscan Order*, trans. Dominic Monti (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 1994), 53, emphasis mine. I was alerted to this passage in the essays by Benson and Bougerol cited above.
It is not for this dissertation to decide ultimately whether Bonaventure is an “Augustinian”; rather, the question is the extent to which he adheres to the major points of Augustine’s doctrine of God the Father explored above. The position taken here is that he does stay close to the points rendered above, even as he takes them further. He agrees with Augustine on several basic matters: 1) The divine essence is not something apart from the three divine persons. 8 2) The Father is the unique source within the Trinity, such that the Son and Holy Spirit emanate from him but remain in perfect equality and oneness with him. 9 While it is tempting to attribute this to Eastern influence, we must recall Augustine’s important remarks in Books 4 and 15 of De Trinitate, which Bonaventure frequently quoted at important junctures. 3) Relatedly, while the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, the procession stems principally from the Father. 10 4) To the Father is appropriated the quality of unity. 11 5) Although Bonaventure reinterprets the mental image, he does follow Augustine’s treatment of the Son as the Word or knowledge and the Spirit as the love or will binding both together. 12 Indeed, it is far easier to find matters in which Bonaventure adheres closely to Augustine than matters in which the former departs significantly from the latter. The term “person” is one area of conceptual development since the time of Augustine, so this does constitute one area. Regarding whether Bonaventure manifests the “spirit of Augustine,” that is a matter best deferred until the end of this study.

8 See especially Distinctions 4 and 5.
9 See especially Distinctions 15, 27, 28, 29, and 31.
10 See especially Distinctions 11 and 12.
11 See especially Distinctions 2 and 31.
12 See especially Distinction 3.
If we focus on the first volume of the Sentences, and on distinctions 2 to 34, there are over four hundred direct citations of Augustine. This does not even take into account the scores of instances in which Bonaventure alludes to Augustinian points or refers to the text of the Lombard without overtly quoting Augustine’s work. Upon surveying these citations, a few trends emerge. First, they are spread over the first 34 distinctions fairly evenly. A substantial majority of questions include some reference to Augustine, which is remarkable. In scholastic fashion, the text of Bonaventure’s questions follows a typical pattern, although the first two elements vary in order from question to question. The author writes *fundamenta*, or arguments for the proper opinion, *ad oppositum*, arguments against, the *respondeo* section in which he provides the basic conclusion and at times an elaborate response, and the *solutio oppositorum*, in which he responds to the arguments against. His references to Augustine appear in each of these four sections. Direct citations in the *fundamenta* are most common, followed by citations in the *ad oppositum*. These latter instances do not involve many direct contradictions of Augustine; rather, he often provides an argument against alongside an Augustinian argument for his conclusion, resolves an apparent but not real difference of opinion in the *solutio oppositorum*, and cites a clearer answer from Augustine in the conclusion.

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13 To provide perspective, in the entirety of *In I Sent*. Bonaventure cites Aristotle roughly 120 times, Hilary 113, John Damascene 64, Boethius 63, Anselm 60, and Pseudo-Dionysius 48. Richard and Hugh of St. Victor combine for 42 citations.

14 Some questions involve several citations of Augustine, and indeed there are many questions that do not involve a citation at all. The latter category amounts to less than one third of the total questions.

15 Bonaventure cites or mentions Augustine by name many times in the *divisio textus* section, in which he lays out the questions and his procedure, as well as in the *dubia*, which were not included in the 400 number. Some questions follow a slightly different format than the typical arguments for-arguments against model, e.g. if there are three points of view on a question and further distinctions to make. Excluding these, in the range of Distinctions 2 to 34 I have counted 89 citations of Augustine in the *fundamenta*, 61 in the *argumenta ad oppositum*, 13 situated in the *respondeo*, 52 in the lengthier *conclusio*, and 50 in *solutiones ad oppositum*. 
Turning to the Augustinian “library” that Bonaventure culls from in distinctions 2 to 34 of the *Commentary on the Sentences*, unsurprisingly *De Trinitate* emerges as by far the most cited work. In this work he draws from Book 15 the most, but only narrowly so: he cites passages in Books 5, 6, and 7 only slightly less.\(^{16}\) If one tentative conclusion could be drawn from this basic count, Bonaventure most often cites Augustine’s basic Trinitarian grammar. He appears less interested in the account of missions in Books 1–3, laden as they are with minute exegesis, and the “story” of the mental image of God in Books 10–14. Books 4 and 9 deserve further comment, however. Book 4 brings the treatment of the missions to its conclusion, while Book 9 begins the lengthy attempt at discovering a trinity in the mind. The references to Book 4 in particular relate to the Father as *principium* within the godhead. Beside *De Trinitate*, Bonaventure refers in these distinctions to at least nineteen other authentic works of Augustine. Of these, several are only cited a couple of times, but *de Doctrina Christiana, de Civitate Dei,* and curiously *Answers to 83 Questions* turn up for consideration at least a dozen times.\(^{17}\)

For an example of Bonaventure’s use of Augustine, we will consider *In I Sent.* d. 7, a.u. q. 2. This distinction, within the set of initial distinctions treating God the Son, investigates the relationship of the power of begetting to the persons of the Trinity. Bonaventure’s second question considers whether the Son possesses the power of begetting. Apparently, some theologians held that the Father, in his act of eternally begetting the Son, gave to the Son the

\(^{16}\) I count 30 direct citations of Book 15. The other books are as follows with number of citations in parenthesis: 1 (4), 2 (4), 3 (2), 4 (16), 5 (28), 6 (20), 7 (24), 8 (3), 9 (16), 10 (8), 11 (2), 12 (2), 13 (2), 14 (4). We should note two factors affecting the precision of this count: some passages are referred to multiple times in succession and so it proves a judgment call whether they constitute two instances or one, and as mentioned above, Bonaventure often simply cites the text of the Lombard, which in turn draws on Augustinian passages. Those exceptions were not directly considered in compiling this list.

\(^{17}\) He refers to all of the works discussed in the Augustine section above except *De fide et symbolo*. I count 7 references to *Confessions*, 9 to *De vera religione*, and 6 to *Contra Maximinum*. 
power to beget, but that the Son does not use this power. The text of Augustine in the body of the distinction was open to various interpretations. Bonaventure maintains that the Father did not in fact communicate the power of begetting to the Son. He cites Augustine several times in this question—once in an argument against his opinion that the Father does not communicate this power (ad op. 2), twice in arguments for his position (fund. 1 & 5), and once in the solution to the very objection from Augustine (sol. op. 2).

His first argument in favor stems from a passage in the Lombard’s text. Augustine had written in his treatise against Maximinus that it was not proper for the Son to beget. Quoting this, Bonaventure adds that if it was not fitting, it is not suitable (sed si non fuit opportunum, nec conveniens). If it is entirely unsuitable for the Son to beget, it is unfitting for the Son to have the capacity of begetting. He follows this argument with one drawn from Anselm and then two drawn from logic before returning to Augustine with the fifth. While he had relied upon and extended Augustine’s claim that it was not fitting, he now rebuts the first part of that same line, which had insinuated that the Son could beget. This citation to Augustine is not simply a confirmation from an authority: he deftly points out that the ambiguity in Augustine’s language should be interpreted in a certain way or else an impossible conclusion results. As Augustine himself suggests later in the same passage, the idea of a Son with the capacity of begetting leads to an infinite chain of divine generations. To preclude this possibility, the power to beget must

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18 To provide context for Augustine’s remark: Maximinus had goaded the elderly bishop into making such a statement because of his claim that the Father’s preeminence in power over the Son precisely lay in his begetting of a son who created the world. Augustine responds ambiguously, hinting that the Son could beget another son but that he did not, as it would not be fitting (“After all, it was not that he could not, but that it was not fitting,” Augustine, Contra Maximinum, 2.12.3).

remain in the first person. While Augustine wishes to keep the door of possibility open, Bonaventure turns fittingness into necessity and slams it shut. So he follows Augustine but not without his own critical affirmation and extension.

Naturally, the argument in opposition from Augustine draws on the same exact line in the treatise against Maximinus, which had “shaken” Peter Lombard. It might seem at first to hinge on a technicality, since Augustine’s exact wording was *Neque enim non potuit Filius generare*. If two negations make an affirmation, then the Son was able to generate. In responding to this argument, Bonaventure lauds the Lombard’s treatment and then distinguishes two manners of denying that the Son has the generative power, negative and privative. Essentially, the privative denial would mean that the Son is impotent. So Augustine’s careful language needs to be interpreted carefully, otherwise he would appear to affirm that the Son begets, while he denies it elsewhere. The negative denial should be upheld. The Son was not able to beget, but this is simply an aspect of his divine personality, not a defect. In this way, Bonaventure respects Augustine’s rhetorical thrust against Maximinus, who had claimed that the Father’s begetting a Son shows his preeminence over the Son. The lack of *potentia generandi* in the Son in actuality manifests the perfection of divine relations rather than a weakness on the part of the Son.

As we have seen, in *In I Sent.* d. 2 a.u. q. 2, Bonaventure emphatically retains the capacity to beget for the Father alone. He says that the Father does not communicate the power

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20 *Ibid.* (I, 139a). *Si Filius habet potentiam sive posse generandi, ponatur quod generet; quaero de secundo similiter; et si non est stare in primo, oporet ponere infinitos filios, quia qua ratione non statur in primo, ergo nec in aliquo: ergo si est stare—quia hoc repugnat divinae completioni—sed qua ratione statur in aliquot, statur in primo: ergo primus non habet potentiam generandi.*

21 Augustine, *Contra Maximinum*, 2.12.3.
to beget to the Son on two counts—he cannot and he ought not—then he explains these reasons. He cannot because the particular fecundity of begetting resides in the Father alone, because he is the principle and the first person (...quia fecunditas ad generandum est in Patre, quia principium, et ideo principium, quia primum). "Primity" cannot be transferred from one person to another. The fecundity of begetting is exclusively linked to the Father’s primitity, his being first. The Son ought not have capability to beget for two reasons. First, there must be a distinction of origin (originalis distinctio) between Father and Son since they cannot be distinguished by any material distinction. The simplicity of the godhead precludes this. They can only be distinguished by their origin, the one begetting and the other being begotten (generare et generari). The Father alone must beget, otherwise the Trinity becomes disordered; the Son must be eternally son and not eternally father besides. Second, it is most fitting for the Father and Son to be distinguished by the fullest communication (propter plenissimam communicazione). The Son is the fullest communication of the Father, but this act is unrepeatable and the Son’s givenness is irrevocable. So he follows Augustine’s authority and terminology (generare and generari, principium), and supplements it with “fecundity,” a term used by his teachers but employed more often by Bonaventure, and “primitity,” a term uniquely used if not developed by himself.

22 Bonaventure, In I Sent. d. 7 a.u. q. 2 resp. (I, 139b).
23 Ibid. Impossibile autem est, quod primum communicet alii primitatem.
24 I have not been able to find primitas in the works of Alexander of Hales, who passed along many other key terms to Bonaventure. So also Zachary Hayes, who says, “It is, indeed, a very personal development of the Seraphic Doctor and is found in this form in none of his predecessors” (“Introduction,” 100). Wozniak calls it a Bonaventurean neologism (Primitas et Plenitudo, 90). Primitas is simply an abstract noun from the word primus. Hayes translates the term as “primacy,” Wozniak into Spanish as “primacia,” and French authors generally render it
Along with Augustine’s enormous influence, then, Bonaventure drew upon the terminology of another early Latin theologian, Hilary of Poitiers. From him he garnered two terms that prove important in the study below: auctoritas (“authority”) and innascibilitas (“innascibility”). The former term conveys the influence of a source more than a situation of juridical power; the latter serves as parallel term to Augustine’s ingenitus, conveying the Father’s lack of personal origin. Bonaventure also appreciates Hilary’s appropriations of eternity to the Father, likeness to the Son, and use to the Gift as a complement to Augustine’s “unity”–“equality”–“concord of unity and equality.” Although there are many streams of influence incorporated in Bonaventure’s theology of God the Father, the authority of Augustine is a significant factor in his Trinitarian theology and hence provides some basic limits but also some avenues for further development, which Bonaventure takes up. Incorporating these various streams enriches the basic Augustinian framework that Bonaventure followed.

Overview of Paterology Offered: The Prologues to the Volumes

The difficulty in assessing what makes Bonaventure’s theology in the Commentary on the Sentences particularly his own has already been noted. The commentary itself is a scholastic exercise closely intertwined with work of others, mostly to Peter Lombard who compiled the sentences, but also to Bonaventure’s immediate teachers and the Parisian milieu of late 1240’s as “primauté.” Because “primacy” has other associations, I prefer to translate it as “primit” (or sometimes “firstness”).

25 Auctoritas features more prominently in Hilary than in Augustine; we have seen Augustine’s understanding of this term. See above, 121 and 214ff. Richard of St. Victor also made use of innascibilitas as a theological term for God the Father (De Trinitate, 6.16). On the various early-to-mid thirteenth century options for interpreting innascibility, see Durand, Le Père, 159-182.

26 See especially Distinction 31.
and early 1250’s. Bonaventure certainly imbues his own spirit in the course of his own choice of questions and in his judicious interpretations of the selected texts, but he had the most freedom in his prefatory material. Before examining a few key distinctions in detail, then, we should look for traces of his paterology in the prologues to the volumes. Not surprisingly, the prologue to Book I has the greatest relevance, but there are a few worthwhile comments in the others. This glance at the prologues gives us a general sense, a basic snapshot, of the impact of God the Father’s role in his theology at this early juncture.

The prooemium before In I Sent has the purpose of introducing the scope and order of the Lombard’s Sentences as a whole. This is not as much to defend the textbook as to provide an elegant and original summary of its contents. The natural imagery of a river dominates Bonaventure’s prooemium. He begins the text with a quotation of Job 28:11: “He has searched the depths of the rivers, and has brought forth hidden things into the light.” Conflating this text with Genesis 2:10-14 enables him to compare the volumes to the four rivers of Eden. The prooemium is also dominated by a philosophical concept, namely, Aristotle’s fourfold causality. He correlates each tome of the Sentences to one of the causes of creation, thus masterfully intertwining the symbolic reading of Scripture with scholastic rigor. Volume 1 casts God himself

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27 The prologues are most likely adapted from principia, formal opening addresses delivered to the university community. There is a growing body of research on this genre. The freedom was mitigated somewhat by convention. In the following treatment, I consider several images and themes that Bonaventure employs, but these likely were not unique per se. Bonaventure produced fine prologues for many of his works. Timothy Johnson calls attention to Bonaventure’s “predilection for prologues” a “neglected aspect of Bonaventure’s writings.” He says, “Prologues, with their defined literary space, are for him privileged locations for the scripted introduction to the interior journey and…mirror the affective movement of the soul on the linguistic level.” (“Prologue as Pilgrimage: Bonaventure as Spiritual Cartographer,” Miscellanea Franciscana 106-107 [2006-2007]: 457). Jay Hammond has also pinpointed Bonaventure’s prologues for understanding his works that contain them. Criticizing another scholar for neglecting the prologue of Itinerarium Mentis in Deum, he writes, “Not to consider a preface in the analysis of one of Bonaventure’s texts both neglects his predilection for prologues specifically and does violence to the genre more generally” (“Bonaventure’s Itinerarium: A Respondeo,” Franciscan Studies 67 [2009]: 311 n. 44).

28 Bonaventure, In I Sent. prooem. (I, 1). Profunda fluviorum scrutatus est, et abscondita produxit in lucem.
as the efficient cause of creation, he explains. He also contemplates four key attributes of the “waters”—eternity, spaciousness, circularity, cleansing—that line up conveniently with the volumes of the Sentences. The books thus analyze creation and the entire saving economy in volumes two to four and the God who causes all of this in volume one.

As Bonaventure begins the *Commentary*, then, he offers this image of a river coming from God and leading back to God. The concept of origin is inescapable, and the Franciscan essentially announces that the theme of emanation and return will dominate his commentary. He gives the river image a Trinitarian cast almost immediately. He says, “First, on account of its eternity the river is said to be an emanation of persons, since that kind of emanation alone is without beginning and without end.”

The emanation of persons constitutes an eternal flow within God. He turns to Scripture to expound this further, drawing on the vision in Daniel 7. He paraphrases Daniel 7:9-10, “The Ancient of Days sat down, and a fiery river proceeded from his countenance.” As was common and customary, his interpretation here identifies this Ancient of Days with God the Father, calling him *Pater aeternus*. He takes “ancient” (*antiquus*) as suggesting the Father’s eternity, and further reads into the detail of the Father’s taking his seat (*sedit*) as suggesting immutability. Regarding the flame coming forth from the Ancient of Days, Bonaventure cleverly interprets the two adjectives in terms of the two processes. He continues, “from the sublimity of his divinity the fullness of love and the fullness of power (*virtus*) was proceeding.” So the Father in this remark is the “sublimity of divinity.”

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29 *Ibid. Primo, propter perennitatem dicitur fluvius personarum emanatio, quoniam illa emanatio sola est sine principio, sine fine.*

30 *Ibid. Antiquus dierum sedit, et fluvius igneus rapidusque egrediebatur a facie eius.*
easily to the warmth of love, while its speed indicates its strength. The procession of the Son conveys the fullness of strength; the procession of the Spirit conveys the fullness of love. So in this inaugural address the Father is ensconced upon a throne and his own eternity is perceived as ecstatic, overflowing with the two eternal processions. The first Trinitarian image he offers is one that privileges the Father as source of the Trinity, by appropriation the beginning of beginnings. Although Bonaventure does not press this further, the particular image clearly has more in common with the mental analogy than the social analogy. Here, the Father as Ancient of Days is the appropriate locus of unity and eternity in the Trinity, who perennially issues forth the Son and Spirit.

Bonaventure returns to the connection of the image of the river with the emanation of the persons later on in the prooemium. He links each volume with a specific river from Eden. The first volume, on God the Trinity, he links with the Pishon (Phison in the Vulgate). He says, “For the Pishon is interpreted as the ‘changing of the mouth,’ and in this is signified the emanation of persons.”32 Though this strikes modern readers as strange, he connects the Pishon with the “change” or “alteration of the mouth” according to the prevailing etymology of his day. At any rate, given this connection, the appropriation of the Father’s speaking of the Word and breathing of the Spirit follows. He calls to mind a material image (ex ore materiali), a human being speaking and breathing. This analogy applies to the Father’s production of the Son and Holy Spirit (ita ex ore Patris Filius et Spiritus sanctus). To illustrate this he cites Sirach 24:3, in which Wisdom explains her emanation from the mouth of the Most High. The Son is the Word and

31 Ibid. ...de sublimitate divinitatis eius procedebat plenitudo amoris et plenitudo virtutis.

Wisdom from the Father’s mouth. Although this image of the Word does not fit well with social analogies, Bonaventure highlights it from the beginning as fitting the order of emanation within the Trinity.

In this preface, he also unfolds his concept of the dynamism of the Trinity under the heading of *circulatio* or “circularity,” which is correlated with the third volume. The incarnation of the Son of God joins the first and the last, just as a circle. The purpose of the highest joining with the lowest is to elevate it, as Christ does for human nature. He finds this circularity described in John 16: “I came from the Father and have come into the world: again I am leaving the world and going back to the Father” (*Exivi a Patre et veni in mundum: iterum relinquo mundum et vado ad Patrem*; Jn 16:28 Vulgate). He directly adds to emphasize, *et ita fecit circulum*. This departure and return of the Son traces a circle. So in his sketch here, the Christology and soteriology of the third book of sentences points to the dynamism of the Trinity “for us and for our salvation”: the mission of the Son from the Father and his subsequent return to the Father. The river flows down to the lowest parts only to lead the lowest back to the highest, *i.e.* to union with the Triune God, appropriated as Father. Bonaventure often turns to the symbol of the circle at key junctures of his teaching to indicate the coherence of the whole economy of creation and salvation.

Regarding the sacraments of Book IV, the cleansing effect of the river, Bonaventure again makes use of another classic locus of this image, *viz.* Revelation 22. He interprets the activity of the Holy Spirit in the sacraments, envisioned as spiritual river which flows from God and from the Lamb. Again his remarks anticipate the Trinitarian dynamics of his entire system.

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33 *Ibid.* (1, 2a). *… sicut in circulo ultimum coniungitur principio*...
The distinction of God and Lamb invites him to make further consideration: “for sacramental grace proceeds from God as from the author and efficient cause, and from Christ as from the mediator and meritorious cause.”\textsuperscript{34} In this way Bonaventure intimates that the sacraments are caught up in the life of the entire Trinity. The very nature of the sacraments is intrinsically connected to the grace of the Holy Spirit. The Son is the mediator who merits or obtains them for the faithful. But they are also grounded in the Father, appropriated as “God” here, who is the efficient cause and “author” of the sacraments.

After citing Ephesians 3:17-18, a symbolic exegesis of which he will develop at length in the \textit{Breviloquium} prologue, Bonaventure sums up \textit{In I Sent}. in this way:

So the Master searches out this deep mystery in the first book. For the sublimity of the divine being consists in two things, namely in the noblest of emanations, which are generation and procession, and in the noblest of qualities, which are the highest wisdom, omnipotence, and perfect will. The first book treats these matters. For in the first part he discusses the most holy Unity and Trinity, while in the second part, in a special treatise, he discusses the threefold quality or property just mentioned.\textsuperscript{35}

Again he uses this adjective “sublime,” and frames the discussion of the Trinity around the two emanations rather than the relations. We also detect here his three favorite attributes, which have a Trinitarian appropriation even if out of order here.

The other prologues contain far fewer references to the Trinity. He merely alludes to the triune image of God in the \textit{prooemium} of \textit{In II Sent}. Discussing humanity’s restoration in the \textit{In

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid. (I, 2b). \textit{Nam sacramentalis gratia procedit a Deo tamquam ab auctore et efficiente, a Christo tamquam a mediatore et a promerente.}

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid. (I, 3b). \textit{Et hoc profundum perscrutatur Magister in primo libro. Sublimitas enim divini esse consistit in duobus, scilicet in nobilissimis emanationibus, quae sunt generatio et processio, et in nobilissimis conditionibus, quae sunt summa sapientia, omnipotentia et perfecta voluntas, de quibus est primus liber. Nam in prima parte agit de sacratissima Unitate et Trinitate, in secundo vero speciali tractatu agit de supradicta eius triplici conditione sive proprietate.}
III Sent. prologue, Bonaventure cites God as its author but his biblical quotations highlight God’s fatherhood. In particular, he meditates on a text that Augustine had labored so hard to interpret, John 5:26: “…God has brought us to life in Christ, because he has shared our mortality of life in his person, according to that passage in John: ‘As the Father has life in himself, even so he has given to the Son to have life in himself.’ Therefore, [the Son] has joined us to the true and immortal life, and through this he has brought us to life in himself.” He returns to this very quotation in the In IV Sent. prologue, as he roots the power of the sacraments in the life that Christ shared with the Father. “Because he had life in himself, he had power to revive those who were dead.” Exploring the symbolic correlation of the sacraments to scented ointments, he speaks of Christ’s redolence of the Father (in se Patri redolebat). “Filled as he was with that scent, to pass it on to others he offered himself for us all to God the Father.”

In the midst of the discussion of Bonaventure’s sources, sometimes his deep reading of Scripture is overlooked. The upshot of this glance at the Sentences prologues is that he comfortably shifts between the Father and the Triune God as the principle of creation and goal of restoration, following his biblical citations. The Trinitarian character of his thought only appears in limited fashion in the prologues of II to IV. As we will see, his later syntheses integrate the Trinity to a greater extent. The Breviloquium and Itinerarium Mentis in Deum maintain


37 Bonaventure, “Prologue to the Fourth Book of Sentences,” trans. Gregory Shanahan, in Johnson, Bonaventure, 71 (translated from IV, 2b). Et quia in se vitam habebat, mortuos vivificare poterat….

38 Ibid., 70 (IV, 2a). Et ut odor iste, quo plenus erat, ad alios derivaretur, obtulit semetipsum Deo et Patri pro omnibus…. Notice that a strict literal translation would render the indirect object as “to God and the Father.”
Trinitarian reference throughout; in those works, every topic of theology relates to the Trinity, and hence in specific appropriate ways to God the Father.

_A Few Key Questions Regarding the Father_

As mentioned above, the _Sentences Commentary_ is massive and so a full account is impossible given the limits of this project. Instead, we offered an overview that affirmed the basic Augustinian framework of his theology of the Father, and engaged the prefaces for a glimpse of his construal of the whole. Similarly, it exceeds the scope of this project to engage how Bonaventure followed or did not follow his immediate teachers. The treatment below focuses on the theology of the Father in his works without recourse to the _Summa Fratris Alexandri_ and the _Glossa in quattor libros sententiarum_.

In this next section, we restrict ourselves to close study of a few particular questions in Bonaventure’s _Sentences Commentary_, all from the first volume. First, the commentary on Distinction 2 contains a summary treatment of the doctrine of the Trinity. Next, there are a few particular questions that are not taken up directly in the _Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity_, but which are so essential that they require some treatment here. The sequence from Distinctions 27 through 29 treats the qualities of paternity, innascibility, and principality in the Father, and so these distinctions offer the greatest concentration of material on the First Person of the Trinity in Bonaventure’s literary corpus.

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39 It is quite true that Bonaventure achieves a synthesis that marks him out from his immediate predecessors. Even so, not nearly enough research has been done into the influence they had upon him and how his own thought differs from theirs.
1. Distinction 2, Questions 2 & 4

Following a treatment of the Augustinian interpretive scheme of things and signs, Distinction 2 is the first properly on God. In this distinction, our author investigates four fundamental questions: whether God is one, whether one can conceive of a plurality of persons in God, whether the number of divine persons is infinite, and whether there are three divine persons. The second and fourth of these contain particularly relevant material.

Bonaventure’s argument for the multiplicity of persons in God centers around productivity within the divine essence, and his understanding of primity plays a key role. He presupposes four perfections in God—that he possesses the highest blessedness, the highest perfection, the highest simplicity, and the highest primity. He structures his arguments for and arguments against the plurality of persons around these four attributes. The first argument connects beatitudo with goodness and alludes to the Pseudo-Dionysian insight that the good is diffusive of itself, but we will focus on the fourth argument for and against. He explains,

As much as anything is more prior, it is more fecund and the principle of other things: therefore just as the divine essence, because it is first, is the principle of other essences, so too the person of the Father, since he is first, because he is from no one, is the principle and possesses fecundity with respect to the persons; but there can be no fecundity in God with respect to God unless it is conjoined to activity: therefore, it is necessary that there be multiple persons.\(^{40}\)

This is the only of the arguments for that features a common creedal name for a divine person, the Father. He is the first and therefore the principle, with fecundity yoked to this title. It is

\(^{40}\) Bonaventure, I Sent. d. 2, a.u., q. 2, fund. 4. (I, 53b). ... sed quanto aliquid prius, tanto fecundius est et aliorum principium: ergo sicut essentia divina, quia prima, est principium aliarum essentiarum, sic persona Patris, cum sit prima, quia a nullo, est principium et habet fecunditatem respectu personarum; sed fecunditas in Deo respectu Dei non potest esse nisi actui coniuncta: ergo necesse est, plures esse personas.
fascinating to see this as an argument for, rather than the defense against an opposing point. Recall that the question as a whole aims at the plurality of persons in God. Bonaventure contends here that the primity of God requires principle and fecundity within the divine essence. God being the highest good requires persons and first-ness, so the Father fittingly communicates himself. *Summa primitas* could also be construed as opposing multiple persons in God, as Bonaventure knows fully well. First-ness can be said to betoken unity in the first principle rather than plurality. We will treat his response below.

Bonaventure provides a concise response to the main question as well as to the fourth objection. Indeed, this response plays an important role in his theology as a whole. In his argument, the four attributes mentioned above all converge on plurality in the divine essence; the term innascibility safeguards an ordered plurality of persons consistent with the highest blessedness, simplicity, perfection, and charity. Although he does not yet restrict the persons to three, in which the Son and Spirit are fixed, at this point the First Person, the Father, is of decisive importance to his Trinitarian logic. He draws together the four *fundamenta* into intertwined accounts or reasons (*rationes*) for plurality. The *ratio* of primity entails that a person born of himself will produce another person. “I call this primity ‘innascibility,’… as the ancient opinion relates, there is a fountain-like fullness in the Father for all emanation.”  

He vows to explain this further below, and he does this in Distinction 27. The Father’s special status as unbegotten one establishes him as the eternally productive ground of being.

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Bonaventure’s defense of the plurality of persons in the responses to the objections refers indirectly to the Father in the first and third and directly in the second and fourth.\(^43\) Regarding divine perfection, he says that the same perfection which the Father has completely possesses also redounds into the other persons.\(^44\) Regarding primity, he says, “just as among essences one essence is first, from which \((a\ qua)\) and toward which \((ad\ quam)\) are the others, so too among the persons there is one person, from which \((a\ qua)\) and toward which \((ad\ quam)\) are the others.” So Bonaventure affirms a basic analogy between God and all creation on the one hand and the First Person and the other persons within the divine essence on the other. The position of the First Person as origin, being from no one else \((a\ nullo)\), inheres appropriately in the Father. He claims that this explains the suitability of Augustine’s appropriation of unity to the Father.\(^45\) Although the stress here is precisely the origination of the other persons in the Father, Bonaventure does not conceive of origin as a one-off. Picking up on his use of \(ad\ quam\), we can aver that for him the other persons are fundamentally oriented in relationship toward the Father. The analogy of God’s production of creation and the Father’s production of the divine persons means that the turning back of creatures to God in worship and in eschatological destiny matches in some sense the turning back of the divine persons to the Father in eternal relationship. The Father does not abide in solitude but is fundamentally oriented towards other persons, and they back to him.

Now we turn to the fourth question of the same distinction, which limits the plurality of divine persons to precisely three. The first pair of objections question why there should be

\(^{43}\) In ad 1 he insists on the communication of goodness, while in ad 3 he stresses that plurality from the same origin does not compromise simplicity but rather is repugnant to solitude.

\(^{44}\) Bonaventure, \textit{In I Sent.}, d. 2, a.u., q. 2, ad 2 (I, 54b). \textit{Et praeterea, eo ipso plene est in Patre, redundant in alias personas redundantia perfectionis}.

\(^{45}\) \textit{Ibid.}, ad 4, referring to Augustine, \textit{De Doctrina Christiana}, 1.5.
more than two persons, since the requirement of perfect communication is filled by two persons, while the second pair of objections question why there are not four persons, based on another level or mode of production. In Bonaventure’s arguments for a trinity of persons, he returns to the fourfold attributes handled in Question 2, namely, how does primity ensure specifically three persons? The account of primity given above means that one person manifests the highest fecundity, and no subsequent person can produce in the same way as the first, which would be redundant, and there is no other mode of production than the two identified above, by nature and by will. The account of superlative nature of the Father’s fruitfulness as source, combined with the exclusion of other modes of production, means that three divine persons suffice.

In Bonaventure’s main response, he articulates according to necessary arguments (ratio necessitatis) that highest blessedness and perfection require no fewer than three persons, while highest simplicity and fecundity (principalis fecunditas) allow no more than three persons. He elaborates upon the latter by echoing the reasoning given above, then adds the following note:

Whence the first person, because he is not able to be begotten or breathed forth (innascibilis et inspirabilis), begets and breathes forth; the second person, because he is not able to be breathed forth (inspirabilis), but is begotten, does not beget but breathes forth; and truly the third person, who is breathed forth and proceeds from the one who begets (generante), neither begets nor breathes forth.

46 Bonaventure, In I Sent. d. 2, a.u., q. 4, fund. 4 (I, 57a). Si ratione primitatis est ibi summa fecunditas, nulla persona potest producere aliquo genere producendi, quo producitur, quia respectu illius non est prior: ergo cum duae personae emanent secundum duos modos emanandi, impossibile est, quod his modis producant, et non sunt alii modi: ergo non possunt producere aliam personam: ergo sunt tantum tres. Regarding the two modes of production per modum naturae and per modum voluntatis, Mathieu shows that Bonaventure has drawn largely from his predecessors in the Franciscan school (La trinité créatrice, 29-33).

47 Bonaventure, In I Sent., d. 2 a.u., q. 2, resp. (I, 57b). Unde prima persona, quia est innascibilis et inspirabilis, generat et spirat; secunda, quia inspirabilis, sed genita, non generat, sed spirat; tertia vero persona, quia spiratur et procedit a generante, nec generat nec spirat.
Note, in anticipation of his treatment of the origin of the Holy Spirit, that he describes the third person as proceeding from the one who begets.

He also brings up the fittingness of this particular configuration of three persons on the basis of origin among his arguments from congruency (congruitas). He does this first by describing a combination of given and received love, explicitly drawn from Richard of St. Victor. In this schematic vision, the Father only gives, possessing amor gratuitus. Bonaventure’s second demonstration of fittingness, concerning origin, does not follow the particular terminology of modes of origination but rather of “principling.” That is, does the person in question arise from another or not and serve as the beginning or origin of another, or not? Logic provides four combinations: 1) being the principle of another without being “principlied,” 2) being the principle of another while being “principlied” oneself, 3) not being the principle of another and being “principlied” oneself, and 4) neither being principle of another nor being principled oneself. The last of these he dismisses as unintelligible, so it remains that three persons are fitting, 1) the Father, 2) the Son, and 3) the Holy Spirit. Thus the Father alone is “the beginning of a person and not ‘begun’ himself” (principium personae et non principiatum). His juxtaposition of these two descriptions of the fittingness of the Trinity from the point of view of the combinatorial advantages of three allows us to perceive the unity of the structure of love and origination in the Trinity. It is not simply that the Father begets his Son, and so forth, but this procession is concomitant with the perfection of love.

48 See Richard of St. Victor, De Trinitate, 5.23.

49 He provides another similar line of appropriation later in the same response when he describes the fittingness of the Trinity according to the triad of beginning, middle, and end (principium, medium et ultimum). The middle serves as a fitting mean between the beginning and end by exhibiting both priority and posteriority. See Bonaventure, In I Sent., d. 2 a.u. q. 2 resp. (1, 58a).
It seems that the first argument, from goodness and love, draws primarily from the Pseudo-Dionysian and Victorine streams, as handed down to him by the Franciscan school in Paris, while the fourth, from primitiveness, extends these insights in an original fashion. Distinction 2 attests to the importance of the Father in the order of the Trinity.

2. Distinction 27, Part 1, Sole Article, Question 2

This could be the most controversial question in Bonaventure’s *Commentary*, and a few studies in the last century have touched on it.\(^{50}\) In this subtle question, he asks whether the fatherhood of God the Father is *conceptually* prior or subsequent to his act of begetting. In other words, granted the axiom that God is Father eternally, is he Father “because” he begets, or does he beget “because” he is Father. Against Aquinas and many others, Bonaventure posits the logical priority of the begetting vis-à-vis paternity. His answer invites correlation with the dichotomy of accounts of the Trinity, the emanation account and relational account. Besides Question 2 itself, the stalwart researchers who compiled Bonaventure’s *Opera Omnia* found two texts in which Bonaventure follows up on his treatment here—an “additamentum” is included in the scholion of the Question, and a possible letter or postscript treating the issues raised here, entitled *Praelocutio* by the editors, is included at the beginning of the second volume of the *Commentary*. Before exploring his arguments in defense of his position there, let us briefly provide some context and then discuss the conception of God the Father in Question 2 itself.

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\(^{50}\) In particular, see Friedman (*Intellectual Traditions*, 77-87; *Medieval Trinitarian Thought*, 18-30) and Durand (*Le Père*, 204-210). For an older treatment, see de Régnon, *Études de théologie positive*, 2:480-492.
Distinction 27 falls within a section of the *Sentences* that treats of the personal relations and appropriation in greater detail.\(^{51}\) Distinction 26 began this section by identifying the breakdown of key terms. In Question 4, Bonaventure holds to the conventional numbering of the relations in the Trinity and characteristics (*notiones*) of the persons. Distinction 27 comprises two parts, one inquiring into how the common terms (*magis usitata*) of Father and Son relate to the characteristics, and one inquiring into the less common term (*minus usitata*) of God/Father and Word. The two ensuing distinctions will also be discussed in this dissertation below. Distinction 28 treats the innascibility of the Father, and Distinction 29 treats the term *principium* in the Trinity. Given these standard labels, it is ironic that innascibility becomes the major controversy of Distinction 27, while he primarily provides a positive definition of divine fatherhood in Distinction 28.

The first question of Distinction 27 Part 1 draws from the Trinitarian terminology of Hilary and Augustine as gleaned in the *Sentences*. The Lombard presents Hilary as favoring “to be Father” (*esse Pater*) and “to be Son” (*esse Filium*), while Augustine favors “to beget” (*generare*) and “to be begotten” (*generari*). Bonaventure asks whether “to be Father” and “to beget” are one and the same characteristic. He concedes that they indicate the same reality (*sunt eadem proprietas secundum rem*), but they differ in terms of signification (*differenti tamen modo significatur*), or in other terms, understanding (*differunt tamen ratione intelligendi*).\(^{52}\) He is conscious of the semantic range of terms, and *generatio* is a more abstract term than *pater*,

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\(^{51}\) While Distinctions 2 and 3 provide a basic account of the Trinity, and Distinctions 4 to 25 elaborate upon it, 26 to 34 delve into further problems concerning the identity and characteristics of the persons.

\(^{52}\) Bonaventure, *In I Sent.* d. 27 p. 1 a.u. q. 1 resp. (I, 468a-b).
applicable to matters besides the production of children. He further mentions that generation, or begetting, conveys the process of emanation, while “to be father” conveys *habitudo*, or disposition towards another. The two are closely related, and in the Trinity they indicate the same reality—hence his affirmative answer to the question posed. The difference in signification, however, leads directly to the question of which is logically prior.

When it comes to the procreation of finite, created beings, the answer is quite simple. A being must exist before it becomes a parent. The capacity to procreate both logically and temporally precedes the actualization of that faculty. In view of the eternity of the triune God, the situation is different. In response to the question, *utrum generatio sit ratio paternitatis, an e converso*, Bonaventure takes the position that generation is the cause of paternity. God the Father’s “capacity to beget,” although actualized eternally, provides the proper and logically prior account of his “being Father.” He offers relatively few arguments for and against this conclusion, and he keeps the main body of his response concise; the bulk of his treatment centers on the lengthy response to the third argument against. As we will see, it is in this third response that he provides a *tour de force* of his characteristic terms for God the Father discussed above, focusing on the Father’s innascibility, his fountain-like fullness, and his fecundity.

Of the three arguments Bonaventure adduces in favor of his conclusion, two come from reason and one from authority. Peter Lombard had stated that “He is always Son, because he is always begotten.” Bonaventure takes this as granting that the ground of the Son’s existence

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(ratio essendi) lay in his being begotten (generatio passiva). Bonaventure reckons that the reverse must be true of the Father, i.e. his begetting (generatio activa) provides the account of his essence. Similarly, the second fundamentum argues the constitution of the First Person from that of the Second. In this case, he asks the reader to grant that for the Son, the account of his being “Son” follows his being “begotten.” So if sonship follows begottenness, fatherhood follows begetting. The third contains an interesting bit of logic. It is assumed that the hypostasis of the Father is “father.” If he is not simply “God” to the exclusion of other persons, he must be God in a certain way. According to the intellect, the account of the Father as Deus generans in the divine essence precedes the account of his fatherhood in the order of persons. This hinges on a particular definition of hypostasis as logically subsequent to the divine essence, but it seems strange for there to be a way to describe the Father in terms of the essence.

In the body of his response, Bonaventure lays out the two opinions on the matter succinctly. Per the alternative opinion, although relative properties arise in creatures, they persist in God. Hence the act of generation provides the account of the relation in creatures, while the opposite is true for God. He casts doubt on this opinion by pointing out that it might hold for the Father but not the Son. Reiterating the arguments for his opinion, he firmly asserts that the Son’s sonship conceptually (secundum rationem intelligendi) follows his begottenness. Our author then concedes that the corollary for the Father must be true. It is remarkable that this key attribute of Bonaventure’s theology of the Father, at least as presented in his main response to this question, seems to result from his understanding of the Son. In lapidary fashion, he offers that generation indicates emanation or origin, while paternity indicates reference (habitudinem), and origin must
provide the account of the latter. If origin logically precedes reference, “to beget” must precede “to be Father” in the order of understanding. This key declaration speaks to his preference for the emanation account of the Trinity, but to stop here would be a mistake.

Even though we have seen that his embrace of this opinion appears to follow from a process of elimination, he makes his positive case in the response to the third objection. According to the line of reasoning there, given the predication of begetting to the Father alone, the question arises as to the account of that predication. The two main options emerge: it is either because the First Person is innascible or because he is father. The contrary opinion supposes that innascibility is a negation, not an affirmation, and so it must owe to him being father. Since Bonaventure embraces innascibility to the degree that he does, it now becomes clear why the response to this objection dominates his treatment of this particular question. His main response had handled the issue at some remove, with the terminology of action, relation, and reference, finally reaching his position that origin provides the explanation for relations rather than vice versa. He chooses to explore the underpinnings of this opinion in the response to the third so as to provide a positive understanding of innascibility.

The crux of his answer, then, lies in his understanding of the Father as the sourceless source within the Trinity. The fact that God the Father is the one person from no other functions not as a negation, but rather as perfect affirmation. He is the principle, the wellspring of the divinity. He cites the maxim of Augustine that the Father is the principium totius divinitatis twice

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55 Bonaventure, *In I Sent.*, d. 27 p. 1 a.u. q. 2 resp. (I, 469b). *Nam secundum proprium rationem generatio dicit emanationem sive originem, paternitas dicit habitudinem. Constat autem, quod origo est ratio habitudinis, non habitudo ratio originis est.*
in his response, once towards the beginning and once right near the end. As he begins his response proper, he reiterates his treatment from Distinctions 2 and 13 and avers that innascibility is a perfect affirmation in God, despite being a privation.

For the Father is called innascible because he is not from another; and “not to be from another” is to be first (primum), and firstness (primitas) is a noble affirmation. For on account of being first, the first thing specifies a noble affirmation and condition, as will be seen, because the second position follows the first. So because it is first, on that account it is the beginning (principium); because it is the beginning, on that account it has begun (principiatum) either by act or by reference. Therefore, since the account of primity in any order is the account of beginning (principiandi) in it, so it follows that because the Father is the first in respect of emanation, generation, and procession, that he generates and spirates. Since he is first in the order of generation, because he is innascible, he is first in the order of spiration, because he is God improcessible (improcessibilis); so he generates because he is God innascible.

He then piles up a series of arguments for his position, both from authority and from philosophical reasoning. It is within the first that he folds the term fontalis plenitudo into his argument. He speaks obliquely of the “longstanding affirmation of the great teachers” (antiqua

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56 Despite how some have interpreted Bonaventure’s emphasis on the Father, he does not formulate innascibility on the basis of “Greek” or Eastern sources. For a recent example of this misinterpretation, see Wozniak, Primitas et Plenitudo, who underestimates the Augustinian influence and overestimates the “Greek” influence throughout, but we see this emerge especially in an excursus (82-87). In his conclusion, he states, “En cierto sentido la primitas forma parte de una historia inédita del desarrollo de la teología griega de Dios Padre (piénsese especialmente en las pruebas de San Basilio el Grande). Es muy curioso que fuera un teólogo latino en plena Edad Media quien diera forma completa a una visión griega esbozada tímidamente hacia cientos de años en unas circunstancias totalmente diferentes” (213). The above study has shown, however, that Augustine does in fact provide basic insights for Bonaventure’s elaboration of primitas and his positive definition of innascibility. Pseudo-Dionysian elements are present, folded in perhaps, but by no means dominant. Bonaventure directly cites Augustine twice and Hilary once in this response, not any Eastern author.

57 Bonaventure, d. 27 p. 1 a. un. q. 2 ad 3 (I, 470a). Aliter tamen est dicendum, sicut praedictam fuit, quod innascibilitas est privatio, quae secundum rem est perfecta positio. The Quaracchi editors point to d. 2 q. 2 resp., d. 11 q. 2 resp., and d. 13 dub. 4.

58 Ibid., (I, 470a-b). Innascibilitas enim dicitur Pater, quia non est ab alio; et non esse ab alio est esse primum, et primitas est nobilis positio. Primum enim ratione primi adeo dicit nobilem positionem et conditionem, ut videbitur, quod ad positionem primi sequatur positio secundi. Unde quia primum, ideo principium; quia principium, ideo vel actu vel habitu est principiatum. Quoniam igitur ratio primitatis in aliquo genere est ratio principiandi in illo, ideo, quia Pater est primum respectu emanationis, generationis et processionis, generat et spirat. Et quoniam primum in genere generationis, quia innascibilis, primum in genere spirationis, quia Deus improcessibilis; ideo generat, quia Deus innascibilis.
positio magnorum doctorum) which holds that innascibility in the Father indicates fountain-like fullness. I translate *antiqua* as “longstanding” rather than “ancient” because Bonaventure is not citing a patristic authority here. Rather, he more likely refers to his teachers at Paris. Both the *Summa Aurea* of William of Auxerre and the *Summa fratris Alexandri* contain the unique phrase *fontalis plenitudo*, which has not been found in prior literature. On the point at hand, Bonaventure attests first of all that he has not developed this opinion on his own. See more on this below. At any rate, this fountain-like fullness bespeaks production, he continues. Ascribing this fullness to the Father arises not from the creation of creatures, nor from the production of the Holy Spirit; it is precisely in bringing forth the Son that *fontalis plenitudo* pertains in a special way to the Father. Innascibility has the appearance of a negation, but it is the obverse of the positive reality of fountain-like fullness that Bonaventure insists upon. He says simply, innascibility is fontal fullness.

After pointing out the various authorities that have persuaded him to adopt this view—the Parisian masters, Hilary, and the pseudo-Aristotelian work *Liber de causis*—Bonaventure crafts four rational arguments. Among these, he argues that just as the other persons in the Trinity are

59 While research continues into the literary provenance and redaction of the latter text, it is fairly safe to say that Bonaventure’s Franciscan teachers compiled it. In the quotation from Bonaventure, notice also the manuscript variant *magistrorum doctorum* in place of *magnorum doctorum*, which although not determinative, shows that he may be referring to more recent teachers. The following passage from the *Summa fratris Alexandri* contains several instances of *fontalis plenitudo*: liber 1, pars 2, inquis. 2, tract. 3, sect. 2, q. 1, tit. 1, cap. 2, num. 481 (*Summa Theologica*, ed. Fathers of the Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 4 vols. [Quaracchi: Collegii S. Bonaventurae, 1924-1948], vol. 1, 683b). See also William of Auxerre, *Summa Aurea*, vol. 1, tract. 8, cap. 5 (ed. Jean Ribaillier, 4 vols., Paris: Editions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1980).

60 Ibid. *Sed constat, quod non ideo, quia creaturam producit, dicitur in eo fontalis plenitudo, quia hoc convenit tribus; nec ideo, quia producit Spiritum sanctum, quia hoc convenit Filio: ergo fontalis plenitudo in Patre ponit generationem in eodem. Si ergo innascibilitas est fontalis plenitudo, patet etc.*

61 Bonaventure, along with most of his contemporaries, thought *Liber de causis* was by Aristotle. The authorship of this text is still unknown, but it is typically thought to have been an Arabic adaptation of Proclus’ *Elements of
“reduced,” or traced back to the Father, so the Father’s attributes are traced back to his innascibility, which stands for his being principle without principle.\textsuperscript{62} He goes on to posit that while in creatures the faculty of begetting is communicable, in God it is not. He draws from the incommunicability of paternity that there must be another account of the person of the Father, and he finds this in “innascibility, or primity, because ‘first’ is not able to give its primity to another, and innascible is not able to beget another innascible.”\textsuperscript{63} The fourth argument is not surprising, given his others, but it has manifold repercussions on the rest of his theology. It is also characteristically Bonaventurian in the sense that it creatively links positions of Aristotle and Augustine. He says,

Finally, since it is the same thing to be “first” and “principle,” just as the Philosopher [Aristotle] makes clear and says; so either it is first because it is principle, or the converse. It holds that the reckoning of principle falls to it because it is first; thus it has this by itself. It holds also that position (\textit{status}) is in the first principle not because it is principle, but because it is first. It holds also that this is the condition of nobility: therefore since the Father is “principle of the whole deity,” as Augustine says, that is, because he is the first person, and this because he is innascible.\textsuperscript{64}

\textit{Theology}. See \textit{The Book of Causes}: Liber de Causis, trans. Dennis J. Brand (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1984). Bonaventure seems to have been influenced by the principles of this text, as he cites it fairly often. The tract starts with this axiom: “Every primary cause exercises more influence upon its effect than [does] the universal second cause” (ibid., I, 1).

\textsuperscript{62} \textit{Ibid.}, (I, 471b). \textit{Rursus, sicut videmus plures personas in una natura, sic plures proprietates in una persona: ergo, sicut ad perfectionem completissimam necesse est, omnes personas reduci ad unam, quae sit principium aliarum, sic omnes proprietates unius personae ad unam, quae sit ratio aliarum. Sed in Patre est paternitas et innascibilitas et spiratio; sed innascibiltas non est reducibilis ad alias: ergo necesse est, quod aliae reducantur ad innascibilitatem, quae est, sicut dixerunt, fontalis plenitudo.}

\textsuperscript{63} \textit{Ibid.}, (I, 472a). \textit{In divinis autem paterntitas est incommunicabilis: ergo cum hoc non sit de ratione paternitatis in quantum paternitas, erit ratione alcius, quod est incommunicabile; hoc autem est innascibilitas sive primitas, quia primum non potest dare ali primitatem, et innascibiltis non potest generare innascibilem....}

\textsuperscript{64} \textit{Ibid.} (I, 472a-b). \textit{Postremo, cum idem sit primum et principium, sicut patet et Philosophus dicit; aut ideo est primum, quia principium, aut e converso. Constat, quod ideo convenit ei ratio principii, quia est primum; ideo per se hoc habet. Et constat, quod status est in primo principio, non quia principium, sed quia primum. Et constat, quod illa est conditio nobilitatis: ergo cum Pater sit "totius deitatis principium", ut dicit Augustinus, hoc est, quia est
A potential danger is that the title “First” could overwhelm “Father” as the name of the person, because he even reckons “first” to be the account of “principle.” He does something quite brilliant here, though. No one would say that “first” is a negation. It indicates a special position with respect to others. So too, he claims, innascibility and unbegottenness only point to the Father as first. These terms speak affirmatively of the special position he has vis-à-vis the Son and Holy Spirit. Just as the number one is irreducible, but gives rise to all other numbers, the Father is the source of the persons. All other relationships follow this priority. 

prima persona, ac per hoc guia innascibilis. The quotation is from Aristotle’s Posterior Analytics 1.2, as found in The Basic Works of Aristotle, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941).

65 Pertaining to this, I must mention a recent interpretation of Bonaventure’s doctrine of innascibility. Russell Friedman treats the priority of innascibility to paternity in Bonaventure as a flashpoint in the Trinitarian theology of the day. Thomas Aquinas takes a position opposite that of Bonaventure, so naturally this question is seen as having particular importance for the formation of Franciscan and Dominican schools of thought regarding the Trinity. Friedman sums up the order of concepts for the First Person in each of these authors. For Bonaventure: generation—Father—paternity; emanation—person—relation (Intellectual Traditions, 75). For Thomas: paternity—Father—generation; relation—person—emanation (ibid., 73). So there is a conceptual priority to emanation for Bonaventure and relation for Thomas. Friedman says, “For Bonaventure, human beings must understand reference (or relation) as following the existence of the persons who relate to one another. Further, since we conceive existence as following origin, we must conceptually distinguish origin from reference and give the priority to origin” (ibid., 77). Friedman mentions Aquinas’ criticism: in order for there to be action, there must first be distinct individuals. Bonaventure needs a conceptual “tool” to make his order work (ibid., 79).

Friedman identifies the positive sense of innascibility, intertwined with the term “primity,” as Bonaventure’s tool. Friedman says, “there must be a type of ‘proto-Father’ from which generation comes. Bonaventure’s notion of primity or ‘firstness’ fills this need. The Father’s primity is the conceptual ground upon which we conceive the Father generating, thereby establishing both himself and the Son in being” (79). Friedman fairly lets the reader know that the term is his own, but “proto-Father” is quite jarring. He calls it the “potential in the Father” to bring about the emanations (ibid., 79-80). Note that he also uses this terminology in Medieval Trinitarian Thought (27-28).

There are at least two reasons why “proto-Father” seems a distortion of Bonaventure’s thought here. Although Friedman does not overtly advocate Aquinas’ position, and he does not seem to offer “proto-Father” as a repudiation of Bonaventure, it assimilates Aquinas’ criticism of Bonaventure. As Friedman is apt to point out elsewhere, this is a conceptual distinction. Both Bonaventure and Aquinas agree that the First Person is eternally Father. Why should we then use a term that insinuates splitting up the Father’s fatherhood into before and after? Bonaventure maintains that the Father must bring forth the Son in some way, so he stresses the emanation. The relation between the Son and the Father is eternal, but marked by a specific, non-reciprocal direction. Each side on this issue is prone to misunderstanding, but Friedman does not appear to grasp the full force of Bonaventure’s thought on this. “Proto-Father” appears to revert to the criticism of Bonaventure that the Father must have been something “before” he was Father.
From the strange question of whether “to be Father” or “to beget” provides the account of the other, Bonaventure makes a vigorous claim for the Father’s productive capacity as a corollary of his innascibility and thus his primity. He is principle, or fountain fullness, of the godhead. He does not trace back to a divine essence but rather the other persons trace back to him as pure active production, pure ecstatic goodness. Recall, however, that he explained that this was with special reference to the Son, as he is joint principle with the Son of the Spirit and with both to creation. We must attend to how he resolves this language of primity, innascibility and fountain fullness with the traditional theological term, Father.

3. Responses to the Reception of Bonaventure’s Position

There are numerous signs in the Quaracchi edition that the related positions detailed above, on the conceptual priority of emanation and positive sense of innascibility, were met with controversy. There are signs in the very text of d. 27 a.u. p. 1, as well as two extensive comments on question 2 published elsewhere. The word “comments” is deliberately ambiguous because the precise nature of these texts has not yet been settled definitively. Although he lectured on the Sentences around 1250-1252, he likely continued to edit the text for a few years thereafter. It is impossible to determine the redaction history of this section of the Commentary; even so, the

Second, Friedman says that innascibility (i.e. the rationale for Proto-Father) “gives a certain amount of being to the hypostasis that will be the person of the Father: enough being to be the fontal source from which the Son can be generated and the persons can become fully distinct” (Intellectual Traditions, 81, emphasis added). This is not accurate because Bonaventure would recoil from talk of an “amount of being” and “enough being” for any person of the Trinity. God’s being is not partitioned into source and sourced. Friedman relates that in the emanation account “the Father is constituted more on the basis of his not being from another than by his relation of paternity to the Son” (Medieval Trinitarian Thought, 20). This does not seem to grasp Bonaventure’s view, as will be related below in d. 28. Bonaventure would reply to Friedman by pointing out that the Father cannot take a name without the Son. “Before” the differentiation of Father and Son, we have pure emanation, pure divinity, pure essence. “In” this distinction, then we can call the first person Father and the second person Son. Primity is God the Father as that eternal origin, the divine essence in such a way that the other persons arise from him. There is no “proto-Father,” but only the Father who also eternally possesses primity.
epilogue to question 2, and questions 3 and 4 together attest to Bonaventure’s intellectual humility and his attempt to defuse the boldness of his position.\textsuperscript{66}

Of the two supplemental texts, one is contained within the \textit{scholion} of q. 2 as an \textit{additamentum}, and the other precedes \textit{In II Sent.}, given the title \textit{praelocutio} by the Quaracchi editors.\textsuperscript{67} Both are quite lengthy, spanning several columns. The Quaracchi editors likely made the decision to call the latter \textit{praelocutio} on the supposition that it was a set speech attesting to his orthodoxy at the beginning of a term.\textsuperscript{68} Other hypotheses have been offered. Edward Synan detects traces of epistolary form and hence reckons it a private letter to the Franciscan house at Angers.\textsuperscript{69} Bonaventure speaks personally in this address as he rarely does, defending himself because his fidelity to Alexander of Hales and Peter Lombard has been questioned. He offers a vigorous \textit{apologia}, stressing that he does “not intend to turn to new opinions, but to relate common and approved ones.”\textsuperscript{70} On some points he thoroughly defends himself from holding a contrary opinion. Even so, he does delicately concede in this text that he has departed from the Lombard in a few specific opinions. He insists that others have done so as well, such that his departure does not constitute reckless novelty but rather a carefully considered advancement.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[66] See d. 27 p. 1 a.u. q. 2 ad 3, q. 3 and q. 4 (I, 472b, 475a-479b). He acknowledges that there are other positions, attests that the abstraction of properties is conceptual (\textit{non est... a parte rei, sed a parte intellectus nostri}), and holds out that as long as one does not assert things presumptuously, matters not determined by the Church admit of contrary opinions.
\item[67] \textit{Scholion} to d. 27 p. 1 a.u. q. 2 (I, 473a-474b); \textit{Praelocutio Prooemio in II Sent.} (II, 1a-3b). For the fuller text of the so-called \textit{additamentum}, consult Bonaventure, “Responsio ad obiecta contra quamdam distinctionem in divinis,” in \textit{Collationes in Hexaëmeron et Bonaventuriana quaedam selecta}, ed. Ferdinand Marie Delorme, Bibliotheca Franciscana Scholastica Medii Aevii 7 (Ad Claras Aquas [Quaracchi], Italy: Ex typographia Collegii S. Bonaventurae, 1934), 284-294.
\item[70] Bonaventure, \textit{Praelocutio in II Sent.} (II, 1a).
\end{footnotes}
The importance of this *praelocutio* at present has to do with the vantage point it provides for seeing the distinctiveness of Bonaventure’s views on God the Father and the significance of this paterology in his whole project. In a short space of text he calls up many of his favorite terms for describing the Father’s role in the Trinity. Bonaventure is accused of departing from the teaching of Peter Lombard and Alexander when it comes to the power of begetting in the Trinity, as discussed in Distinction 7, and in the logical reckoning of the Father’s nature, in Distinction 27. At issue in the first is whether the power of begetting is common to the Trinitarian persons. At issue in the second is whether the Father begets because he is “father,” or whether he begets because he is “innascible.” These issues are connected, bound up in the mystery of divine paternity, so Bonaventure turns naturally from one to the other.

Above we discussed the issue of the Son’s possession of the faculty of begetting in the context of Distinction 7. Here, the issue is a bit broader. Some have maintained that the faculty of begetting belongs to a relation, while others have held that it belongs to the divine essence or substance. Bonaventure explains how it could be taken as referring to the divine essence, as the power of begetting and being begotten are caught up with the essence. In other words, the essence is in the persons. He does prefer the other formulation, though, that the faculty of begetting belongs properly to a person, namely, the Father.

If however we speak about that which through those two designations is signified, such that they join into the sense of one word, then, since nothing else is the power of begetting than the fecundity of power, and fecundity in producing another person is altogether said according to relation, and is not common, but proper, thus without a doubt the power of begetting or to be able to beget is said according to relation.\(^71\)

\(^71\) *Ibid.* (II, 2a). *Si autem loquimur de eo quod per illa duo vocabula significatur, ita quod concurrant in unius vocabuli intellectum, tunc, cum nihil aliud sit potentia generandi quam fecunditas potentiae, et fecunditas in
These two opinions actually agree, he insists, despite his preference for the one just given. The emphasis on fecundity, the divine fruitfulness, residing in a personal relation appeals to him as providing a better explanation of the truth of the matter. He does concede that these two formulations complement one another and can be taught side by side.

The controversy of the Father’s paternity and innascibility is not one of his eight differences with the Lombard; rather, it emerges after he mentions Alexander by name the second time. Bonaventure sheds interesting light on the reception of Peter Lombard throughout the section, but in particular in this sequence he provides a glimpse into the weight of the tradition. In the midst of hundreds of particular questions taken up by the venerable theologian and Bishop of Paris, his answers to relatively few were controversial. Bonaventure has treated innascibility quite differently, however, than his beloved teacher, Alexander of Hales. Accused of deviating from a secure position, Bonaventure replies that if one scrutinizes carefully his positions are in accord with those of Alexander. He does not find a real opposition; only those who have a superficial grasp of the matter say otherwise. He says, “Indeed, it is true that the Father begets because he has nothing from another, but has the capacity whence he gives to another. It is also true that the Father begets because he has fecundity in producing one similar to himself through all things by a mode of nature.”  

He does say that he had omitted one thing before which he now supplies, that “fatherhood does not only signify reference (habituidinem),

Ibid. (II, 2b). Verum est enim, quod Pater generat, quia ipse nihil habet ab alio, sed habet unde det alii. Verum est etiam, quod Pater generat, quia fecunditatem habet in producendo sibi per omnia similem per modum naturae.
but also fecundity.” 73 In this letter or address, he certainly does not back down from the close correlation of fecundity and paternity, even as he protests for his orthodoxy. He demands his audience to look more closely at the subject, that it requires a status beyond which there is no regression. 74 Innascibility provides this status, and points positively to the Father’s pure actuality as divine source. In this way, he says, he safeguards the position rooted in Augustine and expounded by Peter Lombard, that the Father is the principle of the entire deity, because he is from no one. 75

4. Distinction 28, Sole Article, Questions 1-3 and Dubium 1

As important as the idea of the Father as fontal fullness is for Bonaventure, it would be a terrible misunderstanding of his theology to stop there. As he makes clear in his commentary on Distinction 28, it is not innascibility but paternity that provides the “personal relation,” which is to say, the overarching and primary way that we name the First Person of the Trinity. This seems a contradiction at first. We have just witnessed the tenacity with which he holds to the conceptual priority of the “begetting” to the relation. Along with this came an elegant and impassioned explanation of the emanations as the positive consequence of the doctrine of

73 Ibid. (II, 3a). …sed hoc ibi dicere omisi et nunc suppleo, quod paternitas non tantummodo dicit habitudinem, sed etiam fecunditatem.

74 Ibid. Magis autem adhaesi huic positioni, quod Pater generat, quia Deus innascibilis, non quia innascibilitas magis sit ratio generandi quam paternitas, vel quod sit adeo propria ratio sicut paternitas, sed quia magis est ibi status, ultra quem non contingit quaeerere.

75 Constraints preclude writing thoroughly on the additamentum in this dissertation, but the following should be said: The form of that text is quite different, but the defense is ultimately similar. He points to primitivity and the need for a limiting position (status) in God to uphold the Father as principle. He also uses the word preambulus to suggest the meaningfulness of innascibility and fecundity. It is a logical prerequisite, even if it is not sufficient for defining “father.” We must have some pre-concept of bringing forth another being for there to be any notion of fatherhood. This issue strikes at the core of the distinction between the emanation account and the relation account.
innascibility. As mentioned above, the emphasis on the emanation account has not hardened into an exclusive stance for Bonaventure. Recent studies have noted ambiguity when it comes to the status of relations.\textsuperscript{76} While he does not make them the focus of the distinction of the persons as Aquinas does, the relations do serve an important purpose for him.

This becomes clear in Distinction 28. As we shall see, innascibility may be a particular characteristic of the Father, but it does not indicate a specific relation (\textit{specialem relationem}). The properties of innascibility and paternity are related but distinct, and Bonaventure follows the traditional answer by locating the personal identity of the person in the latter. He vacillates between two types of understanding, the \textit{primum intellectum}, and the \textit{consequentem intellectum}, and these need to be made clear below. As he says eloquently in Dubium 1, the Father’s distinct personhood is begun (\textit{inchoatur}) in innascibility, but it is consummated (\textit{consummatur}) in paternity.\textsuperscript{77} Bonaventure reverses the distinctions slated to focus on fatherhood and innascibility, but he we must perceive that he strives to adhere to the traditional positions in an innovative way. In this way he has “rewoven” the deposit of the faith, to echo his fascinating usage of the word \textit{retexere} in the \textit{Praelocutio}.\textsuperscript{78}

In the first dubium, Bonaventure handles a particular text from Augustine: “If [the Father] had not generated the Son, nothing would prevent our calling him unbegotten.”\textsuperscript{79} This

\textsuperscript{76} Friedman, \textit{Intellectual Traditions}, 76; Hayes, “Introduction,” 38.

\textsuperscript{77} \textit{Ibid.}, d. 28 dub. 1 (1, 504). \textit{Unde distinctio personae Patris quasi inchoatur in innascibilitate et consummatur in paternitate.}

\textsuperscript{78} Bonaventure, \textit{In II Sent.}, praelocutio (II, 1a). \textit{Non enim intendo novas opiniones adversare, sed communes et approbatas retexere.}

\textsuperscript{79} Peter Lombard, \textit{Sententiae}, 1.28.1, citing Augustine, \textit{De Trinitate}, 5.6.7.
statement, by raising the possibility that the Father “becomes” Father, seems to point to
innascibility as the ground of the Father’s personhood, and fatherhood would not be a personal
property. Augustine’s statement also disassociates fatherhood and unbegottenness, which runs
counter to Bonaventure’s thinking. To answer, Bonaventure deploys an epistemological principle
to establish a full understanding of the connection between the Father’s unbegottenness and
fatherhood. He explains that one may understand an object through grasping what it is in itself
(intellectum apprehendens), through connecting it with other things (intellectum resolvens
semiplene), or through setting it in its full connection to being itself (intellectum resolvens
plene). In disassociating “unbegotten” and father,” Augustine follows an apprehending
understanding, according to which one is not necessarily signified by the other. In itself,
“unbegotten” does not have much positive meaning, and could be said of a great many things
that are not God. The partially resolving understanding, on the other hand, perceives ingenitus as
a negative attribute but one that signifies God as being without origin. Bonaventure says that
non-Christians (gentiles) have such a privative understanding, which carries some positive
signification with it. “Unbegotten” is not a divine attribute per se for Christians, however; as
Bonaventure endeavors to show, at the level of the persons it applies expressly to the Father.

The proper way to understand ingenitus resolves it fully into God’s being, which is love
and goodness. Bonaventure lays it out in this way:

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80 These epistemological terms stand out enough to warrant treatment both in Christopher Cullen’s Bonaventure (61)
and Andreas Speer’s brief overview of Bonaventure’s philosophy. See Speer, “Bonaventure,” in A Companion to
spells out this scheme precisely in this dubium and refers to it only occasionally elsewhere (In I Sent. d. 8, p. 1, dub.
3 [I, 162b], d. 19, p.1, dub. 8 [I, 352b], and especially In II Sent., d. 1, p. 2, dub. 2 [II, 52a]).
If we speak of the type of understanding that completely resolves a thing, then “unbegotten,” since it is a property of the Father, does not only say something privative but indeed it sets forth a positive meaning—it necessarily sets forth paternity. So it is true that, speaking about anything that is “unbegotten” [in the proper sense], it is necessarily established as father, since through this very reality its fontal fullness is set forth.⁸¹

To call the Father “unbegotten” is true, and attains a certain grasp of his personal constitution. It is open to misunderstanding, however, especially if one stresses it without its corollary in fatherhood. Bonaventure’s warning about how non-Christians think about God speaks to the situation of his day regarding Muslims and Jews, but he intends his nuanced solution here to safeguard against an Arian view of unbegottenness as well. The very point of the fontal fullness idea is that it does not stand on its own, but we must make it more specific by taking fatherhood as an intrinsically bound up consequence. The distinction of the persons within the Trinity depends on completing innascibility with paternity. He shows this pointedly shortly thereafter:

...according to a full resolution [unbegottenness] sets forth [fatherhood] necessarily. From this the distinction of the person of the Father is as it were begun in innascibility and completed in fatherhood. And so, if fatherhood is not granted as understood, the Father is not able to be understood as a completely distinct person. Therefore fatherhood is the personal characteristic (*personalis notio*), even though innascibility precedes it in the order of understanding.⁸²

Perhaps it is unsurprising that the definition of the Father’s personhood would involve terminology that conveys the whole Trinity, but this is a penetrating insight. The choice of verbs, *inchoatur* and *consummatur*, encapsulates the eternal ecstatic unity of the Trinity. He seldom

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⁸¹ Bonaventure, *In I Sent.*, d. 28 dub. 1 (I, 504b). *Si loquamur de intellectu plene resolvente, cum ingenitus, secundum quod est proprietas Patris, non dicatur solum privative, immo ponat respectum positivum; de necessitate ponit paternitatem. Et sic verum est, quod dicendo aliquid esse ingenitus, necessario ponitur esse pater, cum ponatur plenitudo fontalis per ipsum tantum.*

⁸² Ibid. *...tamen secundum plenam resolutionem una ponit aliam necessario. Unde distinctio personae Patris quasi inchoat in innascibilitate et consummatur in paternitate; et ideo, non intellecta paternitate, non potest intelligi ille complete distincta. Et ideo paternitatis est notio personalis, quamvis in ratione intelligendi prius cadat innascibilitas.*
uses forms of *inchoare* in Book I, but often does in the rest of the *Commentary*.\(^\text{83}\) It does not merely convey a bare beginning of something, but the laying of a foundation. The verb *consummāre* points to the completion of the fONTAL fullness in the Son and especially the Holy Spirit, oriented towards the Father in the perfection of love.

To grasp Bonaventure’s treatment of the Father in this distinction and the next, we must be aware of another set of terms correlated with *intellectus*, in this case the first or original sense (*primus intellectus, principalis intellectus*) and the consequent sense (*consequens intellectus*) of the term under discussion. When he considers whether “unbegotten” signifies something in a divine relation or in the divine essence, he deploys this distinction to provide a positive sense of unbegottenness. His dual concern is to distinguish the persons while establishing the nobility of the Father’s primity; in his view the other options invariably fail in one of these. Even the partly negative, partly positive view of innascibility falls short. The proper understanding of the Father’s unbegottenness consists in the two-fold negation of relation (*i.e.* the Father is from no one else) and affirmation of relation (*i.e.* the Son and Holy Spirit are from the Father). He is not begotten, which excludes the Son from sharing in this characteristic, he himself is not received from generation, which excludes the divine essence, and he himself is not the consequence of generation, which excludes the Holy Spirit. The Father communicates his entire essence, but it is improper to say that he begets the divine essence. In a certain sense, that is, the *principalis intellectus*, the privative meaning of unbegotten applies to the essence which neither begets nor

\(^{83}\) It is worth noting that he uses the same pair of verbs to describe the relationship of the sacraments of baptism and the eucharist in regard to incorporation into the Body of Christ (e.g. *In IV Sent.* d. 8, p. 1, a. 1, q. 1, resp. [IV, 181b]).
is begotten. But the privative sense does not convey a property of the Father correctly. Instead, as unbegotten denotes primity, the consequent sense carries the positive meaning fontal plenitude.\textsuperscript{84}

As we have seen, although innascibility and paternity are closely intertwined, they are distinct characteristics of the Father. Their distinction is found in the orientation these terms have towards the other persons of the Trinity. Naturally enough, fatherhood specifically relates to the Son, while innascibility is open-ended. While innascibility carries over into paternity, the term distinguishes the Father from \textit{both} the Son and Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{85} Not just any relation serves to define a person, but specifically a personal relation.\textsuperscript{86} This anticipates his response in question 3 regarding which of these characteristics conveys the “personal property” of the Father.

Bonaventure handles the question efficiently. He answers that neither innascibility nor active spiration conveys his personal property, but fatherhood alone. He immediately invokes the authority of the saints, Hilary and Augustine by name, that this is so. Innascibility does not signify a special relation but only fontal plenitude, so it is insufficient to distinguish the Father as a divine person. Among his supporting arguments, the ability to use Father as a name proves important: personal property is that “through which a person is most properly named and expressed, and the person of the Father is most properly named and expressed through

\textsuperscript{84} Bonaventure, \textit{In I Sent.}, d. 28, a. u., q. 1, conc. (I, 496b) and resp. (I, 498a-b): \textit{Nomen ingenitus in principiali intellectu dicit relationem privative, sed ex consequenti intellectu positive, scilicet fontalem plenitudinem..., Hoc igitur modo ingenitus importat nullo modo esse ab alio, et ita primitatem ac per hoc fontalem plenitudinem. ... et ita in principali intellectu dicit relationem privative, ex consequenti positive; et ita non dicit negationem, quae nihil ponit.} He points to the last and next distinction, and cites Augustine that the Father is \textit{principium totius divinitatis}.

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., q. 2, resp. (I, 500a-b). \textit{Nam pater dicit relationem principii solum respectu Filii et per modum generationis, sed innascibilis universalem dicit principalitatem sive fontalem plenitudinem in producendo, non tantum quantum ad generationem, sed etiam quantum ad spirationem, non tamen respectu Filii, sed etiam respectu Spiritus sancti.}

\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., ad 2 (I, 500b). \textit{Ad illud quod obiicitur, quod relatio dat personae existere; dicendum, quod non quaecumque, sed quaee est relatio personalis.}
fatherhood.”

To the objection that “Father” does not express everything connected with the person, since he is also from no one and actively spirates, Bonaventure responds that the personal property need not say everything about the person, but rather one specifically determined thing (unam determinatam). Foundational as innascibility is for Bonaventure’s emanation approach, when it comes to naming the persons he finds it imperative to supplement with their proper names. To be “father” means to have a specific relation, to a son or daughter. While conceptually subsequent, this orientation towards the Son truly consummates the personal identity of the First Person and provides his proper name, Father.

5. Distinction 29, Article 1 Questions 1 & 2, and Dubium 1

The primary term under discussion here is principium, which as we have seen is a central term in his Trinitarian theology, and it will remain so in the works handled below. He handles principium here with a view to the common spiration of the Holy Spirit by the Father and Son. In this sequence on the notions or characteristics of the persons, he has treated paternity and innascibility and now turns to active spiration. God is principium in multiple respects, however. Dubium 1 and Question 1 both explore how the Father is the beginning or principle within the deity, and Question 2 handles the logical and semantic issue of ascribing principium in various ways. The term principium chiefly applies to the Father, and among his names this one designates his being the origin of both emanations. Bonaventure describes the relationship between the essential and personal (notional) meanings of principium as analogical. He is careful

87 Ibid., d. 28 a.u. q. 3 fund. 4 (l, 501a). Item, illa est proprietas personae, quae dicit per modum positionis et propriae habitudinis; sed inter omnes relationes, quae dicuntur de Patre, sola paternitas est talis : ergo etc.

88 So Article 1 deals with God as source generally and with specific reference to the Father, while Article 2 approaches the Son as joined with the Father in breathing forth the Holy Spirit.
throughout this section to ward off misunderstandings of *principium* that would subordinate the Son and Holy Spirit; he strives to express how they share “beginning” with the Father in distinct but equal ways.

Bonaventure has deployed the Augustinian phrase that the Father is the “principle of the whole deity” (*principium totius deitatis*) at several important junctures. Here he investigates how that is meant. In his framing of the question, he summarily rules out understanding it only as according to essence, paternity, and spiration. He even excludes taking *principium totius deitatis* as signifying innascibility, “because innascibility does not indicate relation (*respectus*) toward a person, but privation of relation.”

Rather, he is principle of all the persons (*omnium personarum*). He establishes his position in this way: “If it is asked what this term principle stands for, it should be said that it stands for simultaneous paternity and spiration, because through paternity he is principle of the Son, and through spiration he is principle of the Holy Spirit, and through the one he is principle of the other.”

In the elaboration following this statement, he does bring up innascibility and fecundity, but the situation is reversed from the distinction above. In this case, the fact that the Father is from no one is logically connected to him being the producer of all modes of production, which among the divine persons means two. *Principium* is first understood (*intellectu principali*) according to the source of deity and only consequently (*ad intellectum consequentem*) to convey the name innascibility.

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89 Bonaventure, *In I Sent.*, d. 29, dub. 1 (I, 517a). … *quia innascibilitatis non dicit respectum ad personam, sed privationem respectus.*

90 Ibid. Si autem quaeritur, pro quo stat pro paternitate simul et spiratione, quia per paternitatem est principium Filii, per spirationem principium Spiritus sancti, et per utrimque principium utriusque.

91 Ibid. Unde idem importatur nomine principii, cum dicitur principium deitatis, intellectu principali, quod importatur nomine innascibilitatis quantum ad intellectum consequentem. Et ex hoc verbo et ex hac ratione verbi
innascibility ultimately conveyed divine fatherhood, here the two-fold principle ultimately conveys innascibility and fontal fullness. This shows that Bonaventure connects these concepts consistently, but he does not subordinate one to the other in a fixed way.

Bonaventure accepts from Augustine that the Father is the principle of the Son. Bonaventure’s concept of the Trinity includes true origin, which can be characterized as principle. Indeed, emanation in God must be “most complete” (completissima). For the perfection of emanation, equality is necessary. So in the question of whether the term principium can be taken personally or notionally, he affirms that it can, and applies it “chiefly to the person of the Father” (praecipue quoad personam Patris). He explains the fact that principium does not imply any relationship of before and after, that is, the pure concept of origination abstracted from time, means that the term applies “most properly in God, mostly in regard to the person of the Father (maxime quantum ad personam Patris).” So these parallel phrases, praecipue quoad and maxime quantum ad, point to special but not exclusive reference of the term to the Father within Trinitarian order.

In his basic response he feels compelled to attach a series of negations to prevent misunderstanding. Several of the similar terms do imply inequality which is unfitting. There is one pair of terms he allows alongside principium and principiatum: “producing one” and

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confirmationem recepta ista positio, quae dicit, quod innascibilitas dicit in Patre plenitudinem fontalitatis sive fontalem plenitudinem, licet ex consequenti intellectu.

92 Ibid., d. 29 a. 1 q. 1 fund. 1 (1, 508a). See Augustine, De Trinitate, 5.14.15.

93 Bonaventure, In I Sent. d. 29 a. 1 q. 1 resp. (1, 509a).

94 Ibid., ad 1 (1, 509b). …intentio autem principii, prout privat anterius, propriissime receptur in Deo, maxime quantum ad personam Patris.
“produced one” (*intentio producentis et producti*). A key objection critiques *principium* because it implies first (*primum*), and first usually means before and after. His rejoinder subsumes order under origin rather than assuming that “first” means anteriority and posteriority. Among the divine persons, order can only be posited in respect of origin.\(^95\) *Prius*, “before,” he reluctantly admits can be said but only under the strictest conditions (*cum determinatione*). *Principium* is much safer because it avoids the confusion from temporality. In the midst of this response he refers to the expression of Hilary that “the Father is greater than the Son, however the Son is not less” (*Pater maior est Filio, nec tamen Filius minor*).\(^96\) Bonaventure connects this statement to the issue of *primum* and anteriority, as “less” implies imperfection just like “after.” The Father as principle designates him in a special way, but it must be construed in a way that does not diminish the Son and Holy Spirit. It is for the same reason that he excludes “cause” within the Trinity, since “cause” excludes the oneness and equality of the one producing with the one produced.\(^97\)

He realizes that holding both essential and personal significance for *principium* leaves an ambiguity. So in Question 2 he turns to how the term applies to both. He considers equivocal and univocal possibilities, but settles on an analogical understanding of the relationship. From Aristotelian logic of reference, he reckons that “principle is said essentially with respect to that

\(^95\) *Ibid.* Attamen nec ratio prioris omnino recipitur proprie; quia cum in divinis sit ordo et origo, proprie est origo, et minus proprie ordo, nec est nisi solum ratione originis. Quoniam ergo principium principaliter importat originem, et prius ordinem; ideo simpliciter recipitur intentio principii, intentio vero prioris minus proprie et *cum determinatione*.

\(^96\) *Ibid.* He most likely cited the quotation from Peter Lombard, *Sententiae*, 1.16.2.4. See Hilary of Poitiers, *De Trinitate*, 9.54.56.

\(^97\) See Bonaventure, *In I Sent.* d. 29 a. 1 q. 1 ad 3 (I, 509a). God is the cause of creatures, but the divine persons cannot be a cause of one another because they do not differ in substance.
which is created, and notionally with respect to that which is uncreated.” Although Bonaventure’s response is terminologically dense, it is instructive on the basic issue at hand; he points to a balance of the two senses of principle, the Father and the Trinity. He structures the question to respond to objections from the univocal meaning of *principium*.

To say there are different meanings, however, does not say enough; he aims for precision. He cites three ways in which the meanings might differ: pertaining to the supposit, pertaining to the thing signified, and pertaining to the thing connoted. For the first, using the term “God,” he gives the example of “God as Trinity” as distinguished from “God begets”; the latter is taken according to the supposit, in this case the person of the Father. He calls this a difference, but one with no multiplicity. For the second, using the term “Father,” he distinguishes the Son calling upon the Father from the faithful praying the “Our Father.” Equivocation attends the distinction of this term, as the first is applied from person to person and the second to the essence. For the third he uses the term in question, *principium*, which can variously describe a created effect (hence, *essentially*) and can describe something that is not created but obtains as part of a relationship (hence, *personally*). This is an analogy without equivocation, because even though there is diversity of meaning there is still a unity of proportion (*unitatem proportionis*). The upshot of this is that there is a real carryover of the significance of the Father as principle of the Son and Holy Spirit and the Trinity as principle of creation.  

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98 Ibid. q. 2 fund. 3 (I, 510b). ... *sed principium essentialiter dicitur respectu creati, et notionaliter respectu increati.*

99 Ibid. (I, 511a).

100 Ibid., (511b). “Just as ‘to produce,’ concerning the production of the Son [on the one hand] and the creature [on the other] is not said equivocally, but analogically, so too the term principle is taken differently along these three
Bonaventure thus holds both that the Father is rightly called “principle” of the whole deity, which is to say that he begets the Son and through the Son produces the Holy Spirit, and that the Trinity is called “principle” with respect to creation. These are not disparate in meaning, but rather analogical. The connection between these two meanings of principle becomes clearer in *Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity*.

**Conclusion**

In the *Sentences Commentary*, Bonaventure advances a distinctive Trinitarian theology, and his formulations regarding the person of the Father are a key part of its distinctiveness. He relies in particular upon the account of the Son and Holy Spirit as distinct emanations from God the Father. Following Augustine, the Father is *principium sine principio* and *principium totius deitatis*. He puts particular emphasis on the Father’s innascibility, and its positive corollary, fecundity. There is no regression or reduction behind the Father—he is first in a special way that cannot be abrogated. He communicates the divine essence entirely to the Son and Holy Spirit. He only singularly retains the special sense of primity, his innascibility and his personal character as Father. As we have seen, Bonaventure’s particular emphasis on innascibility and fontality generated controversy and is still prone to mischaracterization. It is a salient reminder, however, that despite the positive meaning of innascibility he still prefers the name “Father” as proper to the First Person. While innascibility affirms his special place in Trinitarian order, his personhood is actualized in the begetting of the Son.
Chapter 7. Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity

Historians seem divided about whether Bonaventure delivered his Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity while he was still putting the finishing touches on his Sentences Commentary or in the short period time thereafter.¹ The last stretch of the work is only contained in one manuscript, which some have taken as evidence of a dating to right before his departure from the university in 1257.² The final questions thoroughly refer to the previous questions, so the treatment below will take them as from Bonaventure’s hand. The Disputed Questions provides a dense synthesis of his thought on the Trinity, but it is too often neglected as a resource. He weaves a powerful elaboration of the emanation account throughout the work, and thus God the Father bears particular emphasis in his vision of Trinitarian order.

Like the process of commenting on Peter Lombard’s Sentence, engaging a set of disputed questions was a quintessentially scholastic enterprise: it was tied to public lectures given to the community, and contained a formal structure of division of arguments for, arguments against, the scholar’s conclusion, and then his response to the arguments against his position.³ Unlike the Commentary, our author has sole responsibility for the structure of the whole, and he is not

¹ Bougerol dates this set of questions to 1253-1254, shortly after the Disputed Questions on the Mystery of Christ (Introduction, 201 and 206). The recent chronology of Hammond, utilized above, is silent with regard to the dating of this work.

² Hayes, “Introduction,” 26. Specifically, the other extant manuscripts break off in the middle of the response to Question 6, Article 2. Hayes notes that despite the irregularity, the Quaracchi editors take it as “certain” that the text is from Bonaventure himself (ibid., n. 51). Non-committal, Hayes himself holds out the possibility that it was completed from notes by someone else. The approach taken below concurs with the Quaracchi editors primarily for two reasons. Both the writing style (the structure and language of Bonaventure’s answers) and the dense series of references to previous questions point to Bonaventure’s own hand.

³ There are two types of disputed questions: quodlibetal and ordinary. While the master addressed a broad array of questions in the former, the latter consisted of a series on a pre-defined topic. On the genre of the disputed questions, including those in the field of theology, see Bazan, “Les questions disputées,” 15-149, especially 40-48 for its basic setting in the life of the university.
responding to the particular theological statements compiled by the Lombard. He thus has considerably more freedom to pursue his chosen topic in depth, with his own order, terms, and structure. This genre involves the scholar taking up a series of questions on a topic of theological controversy and thus is more limited in scope than the four massive volumes of commentary. Additionally, it is important to note that the disputed questions genre was the province of established masters, addressed to the whole scholarly community rather than to students alone.

Of the three extant sets of disputed questions from Bonaventure, we are fortunate to have one explicitly on the Trinity. In this work he delves deeply into the inherence of unity and trinity in God simultaneously, and the Father’s role in the godhead. He begins with a fundamental question concerning God’s existence and the existence as Trinity, then he devotes a question each to God’s unity, simplicity, infinity, eternity, immutability, necessity (and liberaliy), and primity. Each question contains rich material pertaining to the Father, as he thoroughly infuses Trinitarian doctrine into his discussion of each attribute. So the following treatment handles each question in turn. It is especially of interest for this dissertation that in Bonaventure’s ordering of the attributes he concludes with primity. This quality applies in a special way to God the Father, even though the Trinity together is the First Principle. Furthermore, this final question only contains one article, which points to the resolution of unity and trinity in the triune primity headed by the Father.

Bonaventure establishes the pattern of treating the presence of an attribute in God, generally or philosophically speaking, in the first article of each question, and then how the same

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4 Bazan indicates that the master had a high degree of liberty in choosing the subject matter and conducting the disputation (ibid., 144).
attribute is consistent with God as Trinity in the second. Naturally, this leads to more of a
dependence on philosophical argumentation in the first, yet this is by no means a clean division
of faith and reason; he frequently unfolds the fittingness or congruency of reasons in the second
article. He is more concerned, rather, that Trinitarian doctrine not contradict or seem
contradictory to the reasoning of the first part. It would be unfitting to separate these treatments
completely; procedurally, I will handle the first articles only with brief reference to origination
within the godhead, before proceeding to the second articles, which spell out the Father’s place
in more detail.

Bonaventure cites theologians considerably less in this work than in the *Sentences
Commentary*. Indeed, most of his arguments for and against come either from the province of
reason or from basic logic applied to theological propositions. He does not argue from the
authority of Scripture or any particular theologian. He does infrequently cite theologians in the
course of arguments for or arguments against, but he does this essentially to replicate their
theological reasoning. When he does this, he most often refers to Augustine.\(^5\) He quotes from
and alludes to Scripture, but not nearly as often as he does in the *Sentences Commentary* or in his
later works. His focus is on the reasonability of the faith in the Triune God, not in a
demonstration from authority. That being said, he does not abandon piety here. As rationally-
driven as this work is, Bonaventure aims not merely to show the truth of the faith, but to show its
goodness and beauty as well. Most of his own answers, and typically the responses to the final
objection of the question, end with statements intended to turn the mind of the audience towards

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\(^5\) Less often he draws from a handful of other patristic (or pseudo-patristic) theologians, and even less to recent
figures like Anselm, Richard, and Hugh. He regularly refers to Aristotle and the pseudo-Aristotelian *Liber de causis.*
To my knowledge, he does not cite Peter Lombard at all, which is a significant point of contrast to the *Sentences
Commentary.*
the praise of God. This is eminently the case with the finale of his Disputed Questions, which fittingly comes to its conclusion in the Trinitarian dynamic of return to the Father, the fontal source, as the end of prayer.

**Question 1: Whether God and the Trinity are Believable**

The first question deals with the existence of God and the basis of believing that God is a Trinity. No further inquiry is warranted with a negative answer to these questions. Indeed, they are foundational to everything that follows. Bonaventure does not set out to prove the existence of God, or the existence of a Trinity of divine persons, or at least not so exactly. Rather, he respectively asks whether it is an indubitable truth that God exists, and whether it is believable (*credibile*) that God is trine (*trinum*). That is, in a way that could be compared to Augustine’s approach in *De Trinitate*, he is concerned not just with the doctrine of the Trinity per se, but also with Trinitarian epistemology. His answers in both articles reveal the framework, the basic stance, of his Trinitarian doctrine and how the idea of emanation—and hence God the Father—is central to it.

Among his arguments for the certainty of God’s existence, a basic premise is that non-being cannot bring itself to being. Every category of being is educated, or drawn out, from some other being. So God’s existence is presupposed as the “first principle of education,” or that which is “not educated from another.” He produces many similar arguments from the nature of being.

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6 Bonaventure, *Quaestiones Disputatae de Mysterio Trinitatis*, q. 1, a. 1 and 2 (V, 45, 51).
The fact that we exist calls for a being that exists of itself, not merely by participation but by essence, in pure act, and completely simple. All things that are possible, potential, composite, and relative owe their origin to God who is from no one else. While the first article speaks about the relationship of God and creation, this basic principle of the need for grounding in a source anticipates the next article as well as the final question on primity.

In the second article, Bonaventure defends the Trinity as a truth of the faith. In doing so, he allows for a robust theology of God the Father in stressing not just that God is principle, but the particular way in which God must be principle. He proposes that if God is great by being principle of creation in time, it is fitting for him to be even greater by begetting from himself for all eternity. He does this in the seventh argument in agreement:

Again, it is impossible for anyone to find salvation who does not believe that God is the creative principle. Indeed, unless one believes this about God, it is impossible for man to worship and venerate God in a proper manner. But it is more noble to be the principle of generation than to be the principle of creation, since the offspring that is begotten is more noble than the creature that is made. Therefore, no one can be saved who does not believe that God is the principle of generation, and for the same reason, that he is the principle of spiration, and therefore no one can be saved unless he believes that God is a trinity.

This argument is strikingly different from those preceding it. He does not borrow from Scripture or creed, and he does not cite a theologian. He stakes his claim in God’s identity as the creative

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7 Ibid. q. 1 a. 1 fund. 12 (V, 46b). Unless otherwise noted, translations follow that of Hayes (Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity, St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Press, 1979) (ed. cit. 110).

8 It should be noted that he divides his arguments in favor of the Trinity into a section on why it is necessary for salvation to believe in the Trinity (arguments 1 to 8) and a section on why it is entirely fitting to believe in God as Trinity (arguments 9 to 14).

9 Ibid., q. 1, a. 2, fund. 7 (V, 52a-b; Hayes, 123). Item, impossibile est, aliquem salvari, qui non credit, Deum esse principium creativum; nisi enim hoc de Deo credatur, nullo modo Deus ab homine recte colitur et veneratur; sed nobilior est esse principium generativum quam creativum, quia nobilior est proles genita quam creatura facta: ergo nullus potest salvari, qui non credit, Deum esse principium generativum, pari ratione et spirativum, ac per hoc, nisi credit, Deum esse trinum. Although he does not cite them, in this argument he follows in the footsteps of Anselm and Richard of St. Victor. The Triune God perfectly corresponds to that than which nothing greater can be thought.
principle (*principium creativum*), but also in the basic human need to worship God aright. Creation, good as it is, is limited in character and is little in comparison with God’s glory. If we worship God as principle, then, it is better for him to be conceived as having begotten rather than merely having created. This is radical. God must not just be the principle of creation in time, but since what is nobler is necessary in God, he must be *eternally* Father. We can infer that begetting is better than creating because God makes a co-equal from himself, showing an immensity of power that no creature can match, but all creatures imitate just as surely as they cannot create from nothing. In this brief argument on the necessity of believing, “God” taken simply means the Father. God as noblest *principium* begets and spirates. Unfortunately, here Bonaventure does not elaborate on why the noblest principle must also give rise to the Holy Spirit.

As he touches on this same idea later, in the body of his response, he adds that “human reason dictates to each individual man that we are to think of the first principle in the highest and most reverent way; in the highest way because he proceeds from no other; in the most reverent way, because other things proceed from Him.”\(^\text{10}\) This much reflects God the Father, so it is not yet Trinitarian. He continues, “But to think that God can and does wish to produce one equal to and consubstantial with Himself so that He might have an eternal beloved and co-beloved is indeed to think of God in the highest and most reverent way.”\(^\text{11}\) This language, which owes much to Richard of St. Victor, incorporates what reason demands but goes beyond it, as the light of

\(^{10}\) *Ibid.*, resp. (V, 55b-56a; Hayes, 131). *Per lumen enim naturaliter homini a Deo inditum et signatum tanquam lumen divini vultus unicuique dictat ratio propria, quod de primo principio sentiendum est altissime et piissime: altissime, quia a nullo; piissime, quia cetera ab ipso.*

reason is infused with the light of faith. A higher way has been pointed out—that God begets and
spirates, that God ecstatically brings forth a beloved and co-beloved—and so that higher way
demands assent. The importance of the Trinity is clear: it allows the believer to worship God in
the greatest way (maxime honorificare, venerari et colere). This coheres with Bonaventure’s
language elsewhere that to believe in God is demonstrable from reason alone, even if it is open to
doubt because of the failure of the mind, while the Trinity requires revelation. In his idiom of
illumination, the infused light is necessary to supplement the natural light. It is significant to note
here that careful study of his phrasing reveals that it is God as first principle known to reason:
God the Father, but not yet known as such. Further consideration must reveal that God can and
consequently ought to be principle in an even more eminent, eternal way, by bringing forth his
Son and the Holy Spirit together with him.

His demonstration of the Trinity in this fundamental question also places unmistakable
emphasis on the distinction of the supposites by reason of their origin. This emerges most clearly
in his response to the second objection, which had stated that whatever is multiplied in supposite
must be multiplied in form as well. Since he reckons that there must be some analogy between
created nature and God, it would seem that Trinity cannot be believed. Bonaventure replies that
created nature can be referred to in itself or through its cause, and nothing in creation is its own
cause. Creatures differ in matter and form, and no “trinity” is possible. “Yet in the case of the
Creator—in whom there is indeed no matter but true fecundity—while there is oneness of form
and substance, there is distinction among the supposites by reason of origin.”12 Although it is
subtle and our author does make much of it, he does incline to include the emanation account

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12 Bonaventure, Quaest. de Trin., q. 1, a. 2, ad 2 (V, 57a; Hayes, 133). … in Creatore, in quo nulla prorsus est
materia et vera fecunditas, manente una forma et substantia, est distinctio in suppositis ratione originis.
here to reckon the distinctions among the persons of the Trinity, which account favors the Father as origin without origin.

He takes up the idea of emanations and the Father as source as well with his use of the mental image in the body of his response. He orchestrates his response, fittingly enough, according to a threefold pattern based on the source of the argument, along the typically Bonaventurian image of the “book.” The “book of creation” offers testimony that “leads” to the Trinity, the “book of Scripture” offers testimony that “obliges” belief in the Trinity, and the “book of life” offers testimony that “elevates” the individual to firm belief that has the conviction of rational proof besides. The material dealt with above, coinciding with the “infused light,” pertained to the “book of life,” while the mental or psychological analogy arises within the “book of creation.” The image of God, he reckons, gives witness to God’s threefold nature from its proximate likeness to him.

The intellectual creature has memory, intelligence, and will; or mind, knowledge, and love; mind, like a parent, knowledge like an offspring, and love like a bond proceeding from both and joining them together. For the mind cannot fail to love the word which it generates. Therefore, these not only indicate origin and emanation which leads to distinction among them; but they indicate also quality, consubstantiality, and inseparability, from which an express testimony is given to the fact that God is a trinity. For since He is spirit and intellect, He can lack neither a word that is begotten nor a love that proceeds. Among these there is distinction by reason of origin, and emanation of one from another….  

This statement strongly harks back to Augustine, but infuses it with the language of emanation.

13 Ibid., resp. (V, 55a; Hayes, 129). Habet enim creatura intellectualis memoriam, intelligentiam, et voluntatem, seu mentem, notitiam, et amorem: mentem ad modum parentis, notitiam ad modum prolis, amorem ad modum nexus ab utroque procedentis et utrumque connectentis; non enim potest mens non amare verbum, quod generat. In iis autem non tantum attendit ur origo et emanation, per quam est in eis distinctio, verum etiam aequalitas et consubstantialitas et inseparabilitas, ex quibus expresso testimonio clamatur, Deum esse trinum. Cum enim sit spiritus et intellectus, non potest carere verbo genito et amore processivo, in quibus sit distinctio ratione originis et emanationis unius ab altero....
Further and finally, it is not enough for the Trinity of persons to be distinguished rationally. Bonaventure’s demonstration aims at a fittingly beautiful depiction of God as Trinity, since God is the greatest being and worthy of worship. As a result, he presses beyond arguments from authority and reason to illustrate the beauty of the Father’s love, and that he fittingly begets a Son equal to himself and gives him up for our salvation. The highest way of thinking of God points not only to the ability to create but to the eternal act of bringing forth equals. Not only does God exist, but it is most fitting to think of God as Trinity.

Question 2: Whether the Trinity Exists with a Unity of Nature

At first glance, the two articles that make up this question refer surprisingly little to God the Father. One might expect a prominent place for the Father here because of the Augustinian appropriation that entails “unity in the Father,” drawn from De Doctrina Christiana and approved by Bonaventure elsewhere.14 While Bonaventure does not employ the traditional names of the persons or even the traditional analogies very much, the notion of God the Father as the principle of the other persons within the Trinity does emerge as an important topic and remains an indispensable subtext. He does not utilize the concept of circumincession; rather, he points to the perfect communication of divinity and the retracing of persons to the Father.

In the first article Bonaventure considers whether God is supremely one (summe unum). His basic conclusion maintains that creation itself witnesses to the proposition that there is only one divine being. Naturally, he first makes recourse to the argument that the divine attributes can

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14 Augustine, De Doctrina Christiana 1.5. See above, 119 n. 28, and 261.
only exist in one being, as they are impossible otherwise. There is always some unity underlying a plurality. In contrast to the diversity of beings, which might seem to disprove the idea of unity, the underlying universe embraces all things. Even the oneness of this universe, dynamic as it is, depends upon one being which set it in motion and will bring it to rest. All things can be reduced to one principle and all things tend to one end. He rules out an eternal succession of gods because an infinite series is not properly grounded in being. In this way, “the very universe of beings testifies that God is one.” He then illustrates the underlying unity with the simile of a circle: if one thinks of a circumference, one must think of a center which guarantees the equal lines tending from it to make the circumference. The circle of the universe which embraces such diversity is dependent upon God who is the source of all encompassed by the circle. So we find the idea of *reductio* and the simile of the unifying circle at the center of Bonaventure’s account of the unity of God, as all things find their origin and end in the *primum principium*.

Similarly, several of Bonaventure’s arguments for God’s unity at the beginning of the question hinge on God being the unique source or principle of all things. There cannot be multiple gods because the gods would have to be reduced to each other. Both the argument from omnipotence and the argument from highest causality are worth mentioning. The argument from omnipotence states that an omnipotent being not only can do all things, but all power comes from it (*Omnipotens vere est non solum qui omnia potest, sed etiam a quo est omne*

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15 Bonaventure, *Quaest. De Trin.*, q. 2 a. 1, resp. (V, 61a). *Omnis enim rerum diversitas intra unam universitatem est comprehensa, quae in se quidem est finita et limitata et perfecta. Hoc autem non esset, nisi illa pluralitas reduceretur ad aliquid, in quo esset status; ac per hoc necessarium est, omnia reduci ad unum finem ultimum et unum principium primum, aliquin esset abire in infinitum. Testificatur igitur ipsa rerum universitas, Deus esse unum.*

16 The argument from highest wisdom (*fundamentum 3*) is also interesting because at first it might appear to subordinate the Son and Holy Spirit, but in the reply to the objection Bonaventure explains that God the Father eternally knows what is other than himself through himself, with his wisdom that proceeds from him.
posse). Regarding the argument from highest causality, he posits that God must be the “first, ultimate, and most perfect cause” (*causa prima, ultima, et perfectissima*). All causes find their *status*, which Hayes translates as “rest,” within God. On the supposition that multiple gods existed, the gods would be reduced (*reduceretur*) to each other, and none would be first. Within this *fundamentum*, Bonaventure anticipates the threefold causality that he appropriates to the persons of the Trinity.

Of the many objections Bonaventure treats, the seventh handles the familiar notion of self-diffusive goodness. One might suppose on the basis of the Dionysian concept of the good that there should be many gods, as the greatest good would thereby be magnified. In his response, Bonaventure insists that the superlative quality of the good does include multiplicity inside itself. It communicates the highest good within and remains one. While finite goods put together entail even more goodness, the same does not apply to the infinite good in which the highest goodness diffuses, communicates, or pours itself out while remaining one.

As we have seen, the idea of God as source or cause, the beginning and the end of all things, was critical to his argument that God is one. The above arguments are connected to the Father insofar as the Father is source (*principium*) in the Trinity and in a sense the ultimate destination of praise. The second article pushes beyond the first, as it pertains to the oneness of the Trinity. The opening formulation of Bonaventure’s argument for the unity of the Trinity is that the three persons share in, or communicate, the divine essence (*communicant in essentia*)

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17 *Ibid.*, q. 2 art. 1 fund. 6 (V, 60a). *Deus est causa prima, ultima, et perfectissima, ac per hoc causa, in qua status est per omnium modum, et secundum rationem efficiendi, exemplandi et finiendi....

18 *Ibid.*, q. 2 art. 1 ad 8 (V, 62b). *Ad illud quod obiicitur, quod summo bono competit summa diffusio in aliquid extra non competit, secundum quod summum dicitur simpliciter; sed intra competit summa communicatio.*
while remaining personally distinct. He proceeds to explore the terminology of persona-natura and also the production of the persons in the Trinity. The latter topic predictably bids us recall the emanation account of the Trinity discussed above. Quoting from Aristotle, Bonaventure contends that among the divine persons form is communicated without any multiplication. So the possibility of multiple divine persons is logically permissible.

The problem remains of how many there are and how they are to be distinguished. The fact that they are persons, not abstract objects in isolation, means that they must find their specific identity, their personhood, in relation to one other. This seems to nod in the direction of Moltmann and Pannenberg’s insistence on their irreducible personhood. Bonaventure says,

Because no one can produce himself, it is necessary that there be a plurality at the level of person. Since in the emanation of persons, the nature is communicable while the person is that which produces, emanation requires that there be a plurality at the level of persons and unity at the level of nature in such a way that there is no contradiction here but the highest harmony.

In this way, he elegantly recapitulates his introduction of the terminology and language of emanation, in which he said that the level of the persons “removes any contradiction” while the

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19 Bonaventure writes a puzzlingly incomplete or at least vague remark early on in his response. After a fairly commonplace statement—“The Christian faith, therefore, says that the divine nature is one and supremely one, and nevertheless there are three divine persons”—he then adds, “one of whom proceeds from the other and through the other” (V, 65a; Hayes, 151; et tamen sunt ibi tres personae, quarum una est de alia et ab alia....). It seems unlikely that he is describing both the Son and Holy Spirit because there would be the plurals elsewhere, so it is more likely that he is describing the Holy Spirit as from (de) the Father and as by (ab) the Son. So perhaps it would be better to translate it this way: “there are three persons, one of whom proceeds from one and by the other.” To use “through” for ab would assimilate it with a more common phrase to describe the procession of the Holy Spirit, but it is difficult to justify here.

20 Ibid., q. 2 art. 2 fund. 7. He refers to Aristotle, Metaphysics, vii.8, De Anima ii.4.

21 Bonaventure, Quaest. de Trin., resp. (V, 65b; Hayes, 152). Quoniam autem nullus potest se ipsum producer, necesse est, esse pluralitatem a parte personae. Quoniam in emanatione personarum natura se habet in ratione communicabilis, persona se habet in ratione communicabilis, persona se habet in ratione producentis; propter eandem emanatione necesse est, pluralitatem esse in personis et unitatem in natura, ita quod non est ibi repugnantia, se summa concordia.
level of essence “shows the harmony.” He goes on to argue that the nature of God means that he cannot be limited to one supposite. The superabundant goodness of God requires a plurality of persons while these persons maintain perfect harmony according to their emanation. God the Father “is one in such a way which does not impede [him] from being the eternal principle with respect to that which is coequal with [himself], and coeternal and most perfect.” It is necessary to adjust Hayes’ translation of the last line to draw out Bonaventure’s line of reasoning more clearly. In discussing God as primum and discussing coequals and coeternals, he does not have in mind the impersonal divine essence but rather the Father. The divine essence comprises three coequal, coeternal persons, and nothing outside it shares in its eternity. Bonaventure quotes John Damascene to reinforce that the divine substance is incapable of division, but that “it is necessary that the one who generates gives his entire substance to the one that is generated.” Even though Bonaventure does not use the common names of the persons here, Bonaventure is nevertheless clear that the order of emanation allows for the harmonious unity of the Trinity.

As an indication of how difficult and important this issue is, Bonaventure accumulates twenty objections to God’s unity. Three of these are of particular importance to the current topic. According to the first of these, ad opp. 11, the production of persons generally means the multiplication of nature as well (ergo si productio plurificat personam, plurificabit pariter et naturam). Bonaventure agrees that production means the multiplication of persons but disagrees

22 He advances this argument as well in q. 2 a. 2 ad 18. It is “more noble” and “more excellent” for God to possess a unity of nature in a trinity of persons rather than the bare unicity of a monad. See also q. 3 a. 2 fund. 6, in which he says that “the highest perfection does not exclude but includes plurality” (V, 75a; Hayes, 175).

23 Ibid., q. 2 a. 2 resp. (V, 65b-66a; Hayes, 153) … sic est unum, quod non aefertur ei aeterna ratio principiandi respectu sibi coaequalis et coaeterni et perfectissimi.

24 Ibid., fund. 8. …. divina substantia est impartibilis: ergo necesse est, quod generans det genito totam substantiam.
regarding nature. The production communicates nature; it does not produce another nature. He insists that when it comes to the Trinity, “the whole nature is communicated and nothing is lost in the communication” (et quia in illa productione totum datur, quod habetur, nec amittitur, cum datur). The two other objections are related, and are even clearer. In ad opp. 17 he raises the concern that plurality can always be reduced to unity, hence raising the specter of reductio within the Trinity, and in ad opp. 19 he raises the concern that God’s existence “of himself” has the consequence that “only one person can be of itself.” He replies to the first that the highest unity has no further need for reduction. “Nonetheless, in as far as in God the emanation of divine persons is affirmed from the first person as from a principle, in this sense it is not repugnant that there be a reduction to the first person as to the principle from which the others are produced.”

To the second, he concedes that “the divine essence cannot be derived from any other principle,” but denies that this means a person must possess everything of itself (a se). This allows the situation where one person is of himself while the other two persons are from him, in diverse ways.

To sum up: since the persons find their identity in one another, there must be some beginning so that there is order. Thus again he employs the concept of status within God. The plurality of persons oriented towards one another is a given, but Bonaventure insists that this is so because the Father communicates his essence entirely. Finally, the concept of reduction, coupled with the distinction of the divine essence and persons, enables there to be a plurality of

25 Ibid., sol. opp. 17 (V, 67b ; Hayes, 157). Pluralitas autem, quae non dicit defectum a summe unitate, non indiget reduci, quia ipsa est summa unitas; nihilominus tamen, secundum quod ibi ponitur emanatio divinarum personarum a prima sicut a principio, sic et hoc modo non repugnat reductio ad illam sicut ad principium, a quo producuntur.
harmony that is consonant with perfect unity. In Bonaventure’s treatment of the consistency of unity with Trinity, the Father’s role is apparent even though he does not use the personal names.

**Question 3: Whether the Trinity Exists with Highest Simplicity**

To be simple means to be without composition. The Trinity can only be simple if the relationships among the persons are utterly simple. God the Father’s fatherhood must therefore be conceived in a way that is consistent with highest simplicity, which means that he must give of himself completely.

In the first article, Bonaventure treats the simplicity of God in light of the principle of emanation and return. He says that we must attend to two matters: the perfection of the divine nature (perfectionem conditionum divinarum) and the means of human consideration or knowledge (modos considerationum nostrarum). With respect to the first, since God is first, he is most simple; similarly, since he is first all things flow back to him. Here he employs again the language of reduction, or the return of all things to God. As he proceeds, he reiterates that because God is first, there is no composition in God; rather, God is like a perfect circle (quendam intelligibilem circulum). While the first article mostly stays focused on the divine essence (divinum), as has been his pattern, there is a seeming stray argument, where he holds that origin provides the only permissible distinction. This takes place in the sol. opp. 2, which had supposed that a “being which is entirely abstracted from a suppose is more simple than a concrete

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26 *Ibid.*, q. 3 a. 1 resp. (V, 70b). *Nam eo ipso quo est primum, omnia ab ipso fluunt, et eo ipso quo fluunt ab ipso, ad ipsum recurrunt et reducuntur tanquam ad finem ultimum.*
being.” To explain, he needs to clarify the meanings of supposite. If a supposite is understood to add something to nature, the objection would stand. On the contrary, he insists that in God “there is no distinction coming from any addition beyond nature, but only distinction by reason of origin of one person from another.” Even in the discussion of divine simplicity, the motif of the emanation and return of all things to God recurs in Bonaventure’s thought. This non-reciprocal distinction of origin binds the two articles on divine simplicity.

In this way, Bonaventure has anticipated the crux of his account in the second article: the Trinity involves the highest simplicity despite the plurality of persons because the persons are distinct only by reason of origin. This much is fairly clear. Bonaventure goes farther here by stressing that the origin within the Trinity emerges not from the divine essence or from anything other than a person (ipsius personae non per aliquid alius)—God the Father knows through himself, or to put it another way, generates through himself and is identical with his generation. In offering side-by-side the emanation of the Son as offspring from the Father and the emanation of the Son as thought, Bonaventure stresses the Father as participating in the divine essence in a special sense as he brings forth the others. The Father’s simplicity as the truest origin (verissima origo) means that the Son and Spirit communicate in the divinity without derogating from that simplicity. As he goes on to explain, the three divine persons have the same being in different

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27 Ibid. ad 2 (V, 71b; Hayes, 166).
28 Ibid. Sed hoc modo non ponimus suppositum esse in divinis, quia non est ibi distinctio per additionem aliquid factam circa naturam, sed per originem unius personae ab alia.
29 Ibid., q. 3 a. 2 resp. (V, 76a; Hayes, 176) Personae autem divinae, quia omnino unum sunt in substantia et forma et nulla habent accidentia, non distinguantur qualitate, sed sola origine; illa autem origo est ipsius personae non per aliquid alius, se per se ipsam, ita quod, sicut Deus se ipso intelligit et est suus intellectus, ita Pater se ipso generat et est ipsa generatio, similiter Filius sua filiatio; si ergo est ibi verissima origo, verissima est personalis distinctio.
ways—only the Father has it “from himself” (a se)—and these relations of origin suffice to differentiate the persons without compromising the essential unity, because they are pure relationships *ad intra* rather than attributes *ad extra*. Thus he maintains modes of existence while striving to avoid the pitfall of modalism. He does so solely on origin without any recourse to the mutual opposition of the relations, and we do well to point out that he started his response with reference to God as first principle (*primum principium*). This anticipates his *modus operandi* in the *Breviloquium* of reasoning from the first principle.

Unfortunately, in the basic response of article 2, Bonaventure does not press to consider the distinction among the originate persons. He does, however, reference the acts of generation and spiration in the third supporting argument. There, he calls both of those “intrinsic acts” (*actus intrinsecus*). This response advocates for the Trinity as a logical consequence of creation and simplicity. If God can create while remaining simple, and the creative act can be organized under these two categories—as he assumes here—then God must be Trinity: “The Trinity exists *because* he generates and spirates.” It is easy to see why Bonaventure employs this as an ancillary argument for his conclusion rather than in the conclusion itself, but this argument shows derivation of the Trinity from the “intrinsic acts” of the Father. Among the arguments for simplicity, he uses highly Augustinian language with the mental analogy and the image of light.

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30 Ibid. *Cum ergo in divinis non reperiatur differentia, nec quantum ad absolutos modos essendi; reperitur tamen tribus modis praedictis. Differentia namque quantum ad modos essendi est in personis ad invicem: quia, licet idem esse habeant, tamen alio modo, quia una a se, alio vero ab alio; et haec est tanta diversitas, ut non permitat, unam personam dici de alia, licet non inducant compositionem, faciunt tamen verum distinctionem. Emphasis added.*

31 Ibid., fund. 3 (V, 75a; Hayes, 174). *Sed quia generat et spirat, est trinitas.* The subject of the verb from the previous sentence is *Deus*, but of course the sentence implicates the Father because the divine essence does not beget.
His main point here is that the Father’s acts of generation and spiration are consistent with simplicity.

Finally, his treatment of divine simplicity adverts to the “communication” that takes place in the Trinity. Objection 12 raises the possibility that a person could give of itself incompletely. The resulting relationship would betoken a composed and selfish nature. Such cannot be the case with the Trinity. In his response, Bonaventure maintains that the person communicates whatever is communicable (*communicat ei quidquid habet communicabile*). The Father gives of his essence completely, but does not lose what it is to be Father, or origin, or first—this is his *personalitas*. That which distinguishes the person is theoretically retained while the essence is perfectly given. So in maintaining the generosity of the Father he maintains the simplicity of the Trinity.

**Question 4: Whether the Trinity Exists with Highest Infinity**

Bonaventure takes infinity in God to mean that any limitation to God’s power must be denied. He uses Intellect-Word relation as well as the Father-Son relation to shed light on the infinity consistent with the Trinity: there is no redundancy because the knower’s act of knowing and the begetter’s act of begetting are so powerful and complete that they preclude repetition.
Regarding the divine essence, he argues that infinity means that God’s being and his power must be the same. God’s being first means that he is the origin, the fount of all power. So unity does not contradict the infinity of God’s power, but rather safeguards it. The most perfect unity transcends the limit that materiality imposes on form; this depends upon the unity of origination in God and that God must not have a source from elsewhere. His use of the image of the fountain and his insistence on the plenitude of power in the origin links us to his treatment of infinity in the Trinity below.

In the face of a barrage of objections in the second article, questioning whether there can be any limitation on the number of the divine persons, Bonaventure firmly maintains that the Trinity coheres with infinity perfectly. Although he uses a few complementary lines of reasoning, the main thrust of his argument adheres to the perfect emanation of the Son and Holy Spirit from the Father. Here, Bonaventure’s preference for the emanation model comes to the fore. He reiterates the idea that there are two modes of emanation: by nature, which corresponds to generation, and by will or liberality, which corresponds to spiration. Since the Son and Holy Spirit share in the Father’s essence in highest infinity, and there are no other modes of

32 Ibid., q. 4 a. 1, resp. (V, 81a). *Quia rursus unitissimum est respectu posse, ideo enim est in eo omnino esse et posse, et ideo, ubicumque est suum esse, et suum posse; et ubi est esse, est centrum et origo et fons ipsius posse; et ubi fons et origo et centrum ipsius posse, semper ultra potest.*

33 See ibid., ad 9. Here he counters the objection that if God could only produce one being he would be finite by distinguishing between God’s power *ad intra* and *ad extra*. “Though [the divine being, God] be only one, yet that one is immense, both because that being has no limitations within itself, and because it is the fount of all being, and because nothing can exist without the divine being.” *Et licet sit unum solum, illud tamen unum immensum est, tum quia illud esse nullam habet intra se limitationem, tum quia est fons omnis esse, tum quia nihil potest esse sine divino esse* (V, 82b-83a; Hayes, 192).

34 Ibid., q. 4 a. 2 resp (V, 85b-86a). *Infinitas ponitur in Deo non per defectum, sed per excessum, excessum, inquam, non superfluitatis, sed perfectionis et nobilitatis. Quia igitur infinitas in Deo non ponit superfluitatem vel diminutionem, sed summam perfectionem; ideo in emanatione divinarum personarum est ponere immensitatem quantum ad producentem et productum et producendi modum, non autem infinitatem quantum ad numerum.*
emanation, any further divine persons would result in confusion. The infinity and immensity of the Father’s fatherhood means that there is an order among the three persons, first, middle, and last, and only the father is first. If there were multiple fathers, the divine paternity would be diminished and nothing would ward off the logical problem of an infinity of persons.

The second article on infinity also contains interesting commentary on the mental analogy, preserving the infinity of God’s (or the Father’s) infinite knowledge because of the perfection of the Word which contains infinite knowledge. God the Father is the “first intellect” and the “highest principle.” The Father’s knowledge of himself is the most actual and most complete act. So again, Bonaventure does not neglect the mental image, but incorporates it in parallel with other discussions of the Trinity focused upon the persons.

Finally, this section also presents the Trinity of divine persons, rather than an infinite quantity of persons, as advantageous for the saving economy. This passage deserves to be quoted at length.

Again, the immensity of the divine being does not exclude the indwelling of God in the mind through the gift of the Holy Spirit. But if there were an infinite number of persons producing and produced, since each of the productive persons sends and gives the persons produced, then in the sanctification of each soul it would necessarily happen that an infinity of persons would stand between the sanctified soul and the person who first sends or sanctifies. Therefore, if it impossible to traverse the infinite, it would be impossible for the soul to return to the first principle through sanctification if there were an infinite number of persons. But since the immensity of God exists together with the indwelling by grace, in which the Son, who is the image of the Father, leads us back to the Father through the gift and bond of the Holy Spirit, the immensity of the divine being is compatible with the trinity of persons.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, ad 8 (V, 87a). \textit{...verbum autem dicit respectum ad dicentem et ad primum intellectum et summum principium, cujus est hypostatica similitudo}. See also \textit{ibid.}, ad 9.}
While we have seen the dominance of the protological conception of the Trinity, here is a glimpse of the eschatological Trinity, or the Trinity of worship. This compares well to the modern theologians’ emphasis on linking the saving economy to the account of the Trinity. In Bonaventure, though, this is simply the returning arc of the circle. An infinite number of persons is unfitting for the indwelling of the Trinity in the soul and the soul’s return to the Father through the Son and Holy Spirit. In this section Bonaventure’s language tilts towards the mental analogy, but he still incorporates social imagery, principally through the perfect persons emanating from the perfect Father. In his treatment he casually shows the compatibility of the language of emanation with the perspective of the believer and the end of faith.

Question 5: Whether the Trinity Exists with Highest Eternity

A few trenchant objections to the eternity of the Trinity force Bonaventure to offer his own synthesis of fairly conventional arguments concerning the Father’s eternal fatherhood. Namely, he argues that God’s fatherhood consists in supreme actuality, and that eternity is consistent with order of origin. The Father’s eternal fatherhood admits of no before and after. Emanation protects order but does not diminish the simultaneous eternity of the persons.

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36 Ibid., fund. 10 (V, 85a; Hayes, 197-198), emphasis added. Item, immensitas divini esse non excludit habitacionem Dei in mente per Spiritus sancti donacionem; sed si infinitae essent personae producentes et productae; cum quaelibet persona producens mittat et donet productam, tunc ergo in unius animae gratificatione necesse esset, quod inciderent infinitae personae inter animam gratificatam et personam primo mittentem seu gratificantem. Si ergo non contingit infinita pertransire, impossibile esset, quod anima per gratificationem in primum principium rediret, si esset infinitas personarum: cum ergo immensitas Deus stet cum inhabitatione gratiae, in qua Filius, qui est imago Patris, per Spiritus sancti donum et nexum nos reductit ad Patrem; stat igitur ipsa immensitas circa esse divinum cum trinitate personarum.
In the article on the divine essence, Bonaventure presses the connection between simplicity and eternity, since eternity precludes the designations “before” and “after.” He utilizes an “argument from necessity” by Richard of St. Victor, advocating the point that whatever exists of itself is eternal. Since God is first (primum), he exists of himself and so is eternal. The third objection, that eternity lacks a beginning and an end, seems to disprove God’s eternity because God is supposedly the beginning and the end of all things. Here it is somewhat problematic that Bonaventure voices in his reply that beginning and end are to be understood as internal to God. With respect to beings that come to be and cease to exist, i.e. things “outside” of God, God is the beginning and the end. He is also beginning and end in the order of causality. But none of these pertain to the godhead, since God does not cause God, so God lacks beginning and end within himself.

Straight off, the second article brings a wave of serious objections to the premise that the Trinity exists with eternity. Interestingly, Bonaventure correlates emanation and order in the first objection: the simultaneity inherent in eternity would preclude order (ordo), which in turn denies emanation. He next reminds the reader that production typically signifies a “before” and “after” sequence. Similarly, in the third he submits that the persons are either equally first or not. These objections against the eternity of the Trinity are formidable, as the history of doctrine shows. Bonaventure’s response shows that the eternity of the Father is a bedrock assumption throughout; we do well to recall that Hilary appropriated “eternity” to the Father. Bonaventure

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37 Ibid., q. 5 a. 1 fund. 3 (V, 87b-88a). The footnote in the Quaracchi indicates the passages come from Richard of St. Victor, De Trinitate, I.6, 8, and 11. Item, hoc ipsum concludit rationis necessitas. Arguit enim Richardus sic: Omne, quod est a se ipso, est aeternum; sed divinum esse, cum sit primum, est a se ipso: ergo etc.

38 See above, 251.
focuses upon proving the eternal nature of the emanations of the Son and Holy Spirit, especially the Son. So much of his answer hinges upon the supreme actuality (actualitas) of the Father’s fatherhood. Since the Father is never potency but is eternally, supremely active, it follows that his communication of the persons, his diffusión of the good, or in other words, of the divine essence, is eternal and admits no before and after.

To the objections, he tries to clarify that order of origin can exist in the simultaneity of eternity, even though it is exceedingly difficult for creatures to conceive of this. He follows Augustine in making this distinction. The Son and Holy Spirit must simultaneously proceed from the Father in eternity, else he is not truly God or truly Father. They are equally first in the sense that there is no before and after, but they are not equally first in terms of the order of origin. Similarly, the Son and Holy Spirit are not from another essentially, while they are from another personally. Only the Father is “of himself” absolutely, but the eternity of his generation rules out the distinction of past, present, and future.

**Question 6: Whether the Trinity Exists with Highest Immutability**

As with the infinity above, Bonaventure argues for the consistency of immutability with the Trinity by using a mental analogy. Here, the modern accusation of solipsism raises its head. As is so often the case, however, Bonaventure includes personal language nearby. He elegantly

39 Bonaventure, *Quaest. de Trin.*, q. 5 a. 2 resp., ad 7 & ad 11.

40 Ibid., ad 1 (V, 95a; Hayes, 220). “But when it is said that the Trinity includes order, this is understood not of the order of priority and posteriority, but of the order of origin and natural emanation, according to what Augustine says, that ‘there is an order not by which one is prior to another, or one is posterior to another, but by which one proceeds from the other.’” See Augustine, *Contra Maximinum*, 2.14.8.
displays in this question that the Father immutably delights in begetting the Son, and sets down that the Father as origin of every production anticipates the goodness of creation.

God’s immutability follows logically from Bonaventure’s prior accounts, that God is simple, immense or infinite, and eternal. Given that dynamism in God might imply change, the Franciscan emphasizes God as creator less in this section. His arguments in favor mostly correspond to the previous questions of this disputation, extending them to embrace immutability, but he does offer an argument from reduction, namely, that all mutable things must ultimately be traced back to that which is immutable. Unqualified priority means that God is “universally and principally first” and therefore “universally immutable.” Bonaventure poses an objection that the Father might be seen as acquiring his identity as father in time. He rules out this possibility, however, as the relational terms never begin or cease in God. “The fact that those predicates are said to begin (incipere) or to cease is not to be referred to God, but is to be referred to the created effect.” He declines to comment on God the Father “acquiring” paternity, because he does not do so in Bonaventure’s view. Strictly speaking, there is no “proto-Father.” In response to an objection that the divine missions imply change in God—and it is peculiar that he addresses it here rather than in the next article—he responds that from the divine perspective missions are metaphorical (translative). Instead, they are eternal emanations and

41 Bonaventure, Quaest. de Trin., q. 6 a. 1 fund. 2 (V, 97a). Divinum esse est simpliciter et universaliter primum; sed immutabile prius est mutabili, quia mutabile ad immutabile habet reduci: si ergo est universaliter primum et principium, ergo universaliter est immutabile.

42 Ibid., ad 3-4 (V, 100b; Hayes, 232). Quod ergo dicuntur ista incipere vel desinere, hoc non est ex parte eius quod ponitur in Deo, sed ex parte eius quod ponitur in effectu creato.

43 See above, in reference to Friedman, 269 n. 25.
the change takes place in the creatures as they receive the effects of God’s manifestation. The Franciscan provides some rather contemplative comments at the end of the article, responding to a series of objections that there are changes in the divine will. In ad 17, he emphasizes God’s essential unity, grounded as it is in the Father. He does so by using variations on the verbal conception of the Son to stress that the divine being (here implicitly Father) at one and the same time directs his glance on all things he eternally produces, reiterating that God is the primary and supreme cause of all things.45

The objections that Bonaventure summons related to the immutability of the Trinity pertain naturally enough to the concept of generation or production in God. His response immediately reaffirms that the Trinity exists by the emanation of divine persons. Trinitarian immutability follows as a consequence of the highest eternity and simplicity that the Trinity has already been shown to possess. Nothing is lost from the productive principle in the generation of persons, and nothing is added.46 Bonaventure extends his inquiry into Trinitarian immutability by pointing out how the Trinity realizes the highest actuality.

Furthermore, since actual immutability united with highest simplicity and eternity demands the highest actuality, and the highest actuality is realized in the full conversion of being upon itself in knowledge and love; and since understanding includes a word, and

44 Bonaventure, Quaest. de Trin., ad 7-8 (V, 101a). Ad illud quod obicitur de missione, quod omnis missio et descensus est mutatio ; dicendum, quod missio in divinis non accipitur ibi proprie, sed translativa....

45 Here he effects the familiar term Ars (“Art”) for the Second Person: “…So the divine will always remains unchanged even though those beings which proceed from it are changed, since at one and the same time, in an eternal and immutable act, it directs its glance as art, reason, and exemplar, word, and wisdom, and several other things, to all those things which are eternally produced. No change is caused in these by the change in the external being, for God is in no way dependent on external beings, even though all things depend on His wisdom and will and power as on the cause that is most noble, stable, and sufficient; a cause that is primary and supreme” (ibid., ad 17 [V, 102b; Hayes, 237]).

46 The Father produces from the entirety of his substance, so there is no movement. See ibid., q. 6, a. 2 ad 12.
love includes a union; just as it is not repugnant to but actually consonant with the immutability of the first principle that it know and love itself, so also it is not repugnant to but consonant with His immutability that he generate a Word and breathe forth Love. 47 God immutably, in eternal actuality, begets his Word and brings forth his Love, so the correct understanding of immutability coheres with the Trinity. His explanation appears susceptible to the modern critique, that he maintains immutability and divine unity at the expense of a tri-personal understanding of God. There is tension between knowledge and love as internal acts of the first principle and the external implications of the Word and Love. The very reason the perfect knowing and loving are internal, however, is because of the conversio, etymologically a “turning with.” They eternal turning back of the Son and Holy Spirit is analogous to the unity of the knowing and loving mind. The mental analogy is a tool to help explain these puzzling matters, but note how he continues to speak of the ecstatic emanations of begetting and spirating.

Another instance of affective language in Bonaventure’s presentation links well with the preceding thoughts. Bonaventure suggests the joy of the Father in bringing forth the Son in connection with his unchanging love, and in producing the Spirit with the Son. Anticipating the next question on divine necessity, he denies that God produces out of compulsion. The Father produces “...not by reason of a will that chooses, but by reason of a will of eternal acceptance through which the producer finds pleasure and delight in the most perfect production.” 48 Admittedly, his lack of personal language makes attribution of this comment to the Father an

47 Ibid. (V, 104b; Hayes, 241-242). Amplius, quoniam actualis immutabilitas cum summa simplicitate et aeternitate ponit summam actualitatem, et actualitas summa est per plenam conversionem eiusdem supra se intelligendo et amando, et intellectus includit verbum, et amor includit nексum; sicut immutabilitati primi principii non solum non repugnat se ipsum intellegere et amare, quin potius est consonans, sic non repugnat, immo consonat generare Verbum et spirare Amorem.

48 Ibid., ad 6 (V, 105b; Hayes, 243-244). ...non per voluntatem eligentem, sed per voluntatem sempiternaliter acceptantem, secundum quam producens in productione nobilissima sibi complacet et etiam delectatur.
interpretation. It is likely that he leaves it open for all types of divine production, including the work of the entire Trinity in bringing forth creation as an act of immutable delight. Even though Bonaventure uses technical language, here we infer the joy of the Father’s paternity and his joy with the Son in breathing forth the Holy Spirit.

Bonaventure’s treatment of Trinitarian immutability also includes one of the rare references to fecundity outside of Question 8. He connects it with the phrase “Author of beauty,” drawn from Wisdom 13:3. The corresponding objection draws an inference from creation back to the creator of the repugnance of begetting. Yet humankind still would have begotten in his innocent condition before the Fall, Bonaventure reckons. He adds, “that generation arises more from the supreme perfection, fecundity, and actuality of the first principle than from the need to fill up any lack arising from corruption.”

As the author of beauty, the Father’s begetting of the Son is most complete (completissima), “the origin of every production.” This is a powerful affirmative statement of the goodness of creation, which derives from the goodness of the creator. The production of children is not a concession granted to humanity, but it is rooted fundamentally in God’s own fecundity. In a statement that both anticipates the crowning of the Father as First Principle in a special sense in Question 8 and evokes a similar sense as the “bending the knees before the Father” passage (Eph 3:14-19) that Bonaventure

49 I have found only two uses of the term outside Question 8. Aside from here, see q. 1 a. 2 ad 2 (V, 57a).

50 Ibid., q. 6 a. 2 ad 8 (V, 105b; Hayes, 244). With more context: *Ad illud quod obiicitur, quod causa generationis et corruptionis est longe distare a primo; dicendum, quod illa non est tota ratio. Nam homo, si stetisset in statu innocentiae, nunquam corrumpetur, et tamen generaret. Unde generatio potius est ex perfectione summa et fecunditate et actualitate ipsius primi principii, quam sit ad supplementum defectus corruptionis ipsius principii productivi. Loquitur ergo Philosophus de causa generationis secundum statum deficientis naturae, non generaliter et secundum modum generationis illius completissimae, quae est origo omnis productionis. Nam speciet generator omnia haec constituit, et ipse, qui generationem alis tribuit, non potest sterilis esse, quod dicitur ultimo Isaiae.*
gravitates toward, he affirms the immutable disposition of the Father towards bringing forth life in eternally begetting the Son.

**Question 7: Whether the Trinity Exists with Highest Necessity**

At first, the modern reader might hesitate to see necessity as a divine attribute. Bonaventure himself shows that necessity needs particular interpretation; in his conclusion to the second article (i.e. with respect to the Trinity), he links highest necessity with highest generosity. Just as the first principle possesses an intrinsic necessity, the Father is absolutely necessary. It is as *Father*, however, so this necessity means that he diffuses the good as well, in such a way that the other persons share in his necessity without “dependence.” We can see that this divine attribute is crucial for bringing Bonaventure into conversation with Moltmann and Pannenberg.

As Bonaventure says in the fourth argument for God’s necessity, “whatever possesses being of itself and through itself and according to itself, is entirely necessary. But such is the divine being, since it is first.” Just as with the other attributes, God’s primity is foundational for all things, and so God is necessary in the highest sense. In the body of his response, he treats what necessity is to clear up the concept and appropriately rebut objections. God, he concludes, is necessary according to an entirely intrinsic necessity. All beings depend upon the “creative essence.” The divine essence alone depends upon nothing else. His argument proceeds along the lines of the *Liber de causis*. All contingent things emanate from God and are brought back to him (*reductio*). In this way, everything “cries out that the first principle is necessary.”

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51 *Ibid.*, q. 7 a. 1 fund. 4 (V, 106b; Hayes, 246). *Item, omne, quod habet esse a se et per se et secundum se, est omnino necessarium; sed tale est esse divinum, cum sit primum: ergo, etc.*
necessary for God to exist and necessary for him to do good; the latter necessity, however, follows from his perfection as the highest good rather than from any kind of limitation on God.

This last statement fittingly provides a transition to Bonaventure’s treatment of necessity in the Trinity. Breaking from his pattern, he does not merely treat the attribute of the heading, but opts to include liberality (liberalissimum) along with necessity. By doing so he calls ample attention to the objections that necessity precludes love, making the issue central to a proper treatment of Trinitarian necessity. The reader perceives once again that Bonaventure engages in this disputation not merely to demonstrate logic but to elaborate how the Trinity is worthy of worship and reverence. The necessity of the Son and Holy Spirit logically follows from the necessity of God the Father, who, owing to the fact that he possesses being “of himself,” is “absolutely necessary” (omnino est necessaria). Not only is he necessary in himself, but the Father necessarily knows and wills because of his supreme goodness as producer. Even so, Bonaventure is quick to clarify that while the Son and Holy Spirit conceptually follow from the Father’s ecstatic production, there is “no dependence of one person on another” in the Trinity and “all exist equally and unchangeably.” The divine persons’ identity of essence means identical necessity.

52 Ibid., resp. (V, 108a; Hayes, 249).

53 Ibid., q. 7 a. 2 resp. (V, 111a; Hayes, 255). “Since in the three persons, the essence is entirely identical, there is one quiddity or entity, and one truth; and hence one necessity. Since the first person possesses its being of itself, it is absolutely necessary, hence, so are the second and third persons….If one is necessary, all are necessary.” Quia enim in tribus personis est essentia omnino indifferens, ideo una quidditas sive entitas, una veritas, ac per hoc una necessitas. Cum enim prima persona sit a se ipsa, omnino est necessaria, ac per hoc secunda et tertia.

54 Ibid. See also ad 5 (V, 111b-112a).
He raises a jarring objection that an agent who “dominates” over his actions is more perfect.\textsuperscript{55} Bonaventure replies that in the Trinity, action is fully identical with the agent. So God the Father’s act of begetting is fully identical with the Father. Consequently the Father cannot be said to “dominate” over his actions, yet both he and his production of the other persons remain perfectly necessary.\textsuperscript{56} As indicated above, the final objection, which points out that in the Trinity the production of the one of the persons (the Holy Spirit) is a voluntary emanation, prompts Bonaventure to treat not only necessity but also liberality in his primary response to the main question. It seems that what is necessary is not praiseworthy. He replies by making a distinction within the rendering of praise: it can confer some change by enhancing the receiver, or it corresponds to goodness in itself. He implies another distinction between created objects, which possess goodness by participation, and God, who possesses goodness essentially. God’s essential goodness is the source and the fitting end of all praise. His necessity is an insufficient reason to fail to render him praise, and indeed it is more fitting to praise him than anything else. He focuses the praise of God on the diffusion of goodness within the godhead, and so God the Father has the first place in the Trinitarian order of praise. We recall that this First Person was absolutely necessary because he alone is from himself, but that he perfectly communicates his essence in perfect unity such that the other persons are said to be “from him” but not to “depend” on him. “With this sort of praise God the Father is praised in the production of the Son; and the

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., q. 7 a. 2 obj. 2 (V, 110a).

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., ad 2 (V, 111b).
Father and the Son in the production of the Holy Spirit, in their mutual love and in the diffusion of all good with respect to every creature.”

Bonaventure insists upon the perfect equality of the Trinity, and this article underscores the authentic personhood of each. There is an order and basic orientation towards the Father as the source, but not in a way that takes anything away from the other persons. It is helpful that he balances necessity with generosity to show that there is no “dependence” of the Son and Holy Spirit upon the Father. This allows for fruitful conversation with our modern interlocutors, who see non-reciprocality as diminishing equality. To coin an expression, perfect love creates the possibility of a “co-necessity,” which is fully actualized in God the Father.

**Question 8: Whether the Trinity Exists with Highest Primitas**

As suggested above, the first seven questions prepare for one final question. This question deviates from the pattern of the others in a few ways. The other questions were typical enough in the context of the day, and Bonaventure’s contemporaries dedicated substantial arguments to them; they did not do the same with primitas. So Bonaventure is entering unique territory with his inquiry. The eighth question is also different because it comprises only one article. This makes sense, however. While in the other questions Bonaventure dedicated an article to demonstrating a quality in the one divine essence, then he turned in the second article to its applicability within the Trinity, the question on primitas makes sense as a controversial

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question only on a Trinitarian basis. The one God obviously is first with respect to creation, and so has primacy over it. It is not as obvious whether primity is consistent with the triune God. The procedural order (opposing arguments–supporting arguments–conclusion) follows that of the second articles from the questions above, which provides further subtle support to its being a properly Trinitarian topic. Up until this point in *Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity*, Bonaventure has refrained from using this favorite neologism, only to devote an entire question to it at the end. Similarly, variations on *fecunditas* registered a meager two instances in Questions 1 to 7, as mentioned above. Bonaventure is paradoxically treating first things last, and we must attend to the dramatic conclusion of his *Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity* and its implications for his paterology. We will first look at his arguments in favor of primity, then his own response, and finally his responses to a few key objections.

Bonaventure adduces eight arguments in favor of primity. We will not spell out each of them, but it is noteworthy that his arguments all involve logical argumentation and the application of rational principles; none cite an authority from Scripture or the Fathers. Zachary Hayes’ footnotes follow those of the Quaracchi editors, which correlate specific formulations to Aristotle and the putatively Aristotelian *Liber de causis*, with one exception to be noted below. He uses the term *trinitas* but not the traditional names Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In the first fundamentum, Bonaventure cites the maxim *idem est primum et principium* from the *Posterior Analytics*. If God is the first principle, and God is eternal, then it is most appropriate for him to be “principling” (*incipiens*) eternally. Perfect production must inhere within God’s very nature. God’s being first, his *primitas*, thus requires “intrinsic production” (*productionis*

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58 Namely, at q. 1 a. 2 ad 2 and q. 6 a. 2 ad 8. See above, 295 and 315.
The second fundamentum is similar to the first, as he applies the same reasoning starting from the maxim quanto aliquid prius, tanto potentius et actualius from Liber de Causis. The first principle must be most powerful and actual in eternity. “Therefore, if it is necessary to affirm the highest actuality and power in the first principle because it is first, then it is necessary to affirm the truth of an eternal production, and hence the completion of a perfect trinity.” In the fourth fundamentum, Bonaventure argues on the basis of eternal production. That which is eternal is not only prior in existence (re) but also prior in conception (intellectu) to that which does not admit eternality. The production of one being from another can be reckoned eternal, as he demonstrated in Question 5 above and in the Sentences Commentary. The creation of something from nothing cannot be reckoned eternal but initiates time. “Therefore,” he argues, “before the production of every creature, the production of one being from another is necessarily understood as prior, according to the reckoning of perfect primity.” This logical conclusion implies the Trinity, in his view. Far from being antithetical to orthodox Trinitarian doctrine, Bonaventure sees primity as a logical prerequisite.

It was noted above that the arguments for primity depended upon non-Christian philosophical texts, with one exception. The sixth fundamentum depends upon the mental

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59 Liber de causis, 1.1.

60 Bonaventure, Quaest. de Trin., q. 8 a.u. fund. 2 (V, 113a). ...ergo si in primo principio, hoc ipso quod primum, necessario ponitur ratio summae actualitatis et potentiae, necessario ponetur veritas productionis aeternae, ac per hoc et completio trinitatis perfectae.

61 For q. 5, see above, 306. See also In II Sent, d. 1, p. 1, a. 1, q. 2.

62 Bonaventure, Quaest. de Trin., q. 8 a.u. fund. 4 (V, 113b), my translation. ... ergo ante productionem omnis creaturae necessario est productio alicuius de aliquo praointelligenda secundum rationem primitatis perfectae.
analogy; the editors rightly refer to Book 9 of Augustine’s De Trinitate. Drawing also from Aristotle, Bonaventure asserts that the first principle must be a mind or intellect (intellectus).

But every intellect that acts as principle does so through a word and a gift of love that is intrinsic to it. Whatever is a principle by way of word and love first conceives the word and breathes love before it produces an exterior effect. Therefore, it is necessary that if the first principle produces the being of something extrinsic to itself, it must first be productive within itself.\textsuperscript{63}

So he draws from the fundamental notion, relatively uncontroversial for his day, that the first principle is a rational spirit that it must eternally produce a word of understanding and the ardor of love eternally. We should note here that he does not include terminology of “self” here, such as to render this “self-knowledge” and “self-love”, but at the same time he stresses that this is an intrinsic act that must proceed any extrinsic act. In this appropriation of the mental analogy, as has been seen before, the Father is the intellect that produces the diverse processions, so primacy naturally inheres in the Father, and it is nonsensical otherwise. In placing such an emphasis on rational demonstration here, drawing upon the Augustinian tradition but without quoting the Gospel of John, he suggests a strong version of the mental analogy, \textit{i.e.} that God truly functions like a mind knowing and loving and so primacy necessarily follows.

The eighth \textit{fundamentum} suggests that Bonaventure deliberately structures his treatise to end with primity and reinforce his treatments of the other attributes in the triune God, as divine essence and as Trinity. As with the preceding arguments the notion that priority in reality and conception are linked, in a sort of Anselmian Aristotelianism, here he applies the same notion in

\textsuperscript{63} \textit{Ibid.}, fund. 6 (V, 113b). \textit{… sed omnis intellectus principians principiat per verbum et donum amoris intrinsecum; omne autem principians per verbum et amorem prius concipit verbum et spirat amorem, quam producat effectum exteriorem: ergo necessario est, quodsi primum principium est productivum esse extrinsecorum, quod prius producat.}
a piling up of attributes that recite the matters already treated in the Disputed Questions as a whole. The production of any imperfect creature must be preceded by the production of something supremely perfect, complete, undivided, simple, infinite, active, immutable, eternal, and necessary.\(^6^4\) This can only take place if there exists “the production of a person who is one in essence with the person producing, and equal in power, wisdom, and goodness.”\(^6^5\)

The main line of Bonaventure’s conclusion is that primitas “does not only not exclude the trinity, but includes it” (Primitas non solum non excludit trinitatem, sed verum etiam eam includit). By the very fact that the first principle is first (primus), it is also trine or threefold (trinus). The core ideas behind Bonaventure’s explanation for primacy in the Trinity, namely fontality and fecundity, are quite familiar, but the dearth of these terms in Questions 1 to 7 makes them all the more striking in the concluding question of De Mysterio Trinitatis. Given the Trinitarian subject at hand, he fittingly desires to write in triads. Consequently, he supplements fontality and fecundity with a related concept—variously actuality and production—as he sets them down in this section. As with his treatment elsewhere, but to an even more acute degree here, Bonaventure’s writing is replete with superlatives and repetition of the adjective summus, meaning greatest, highest, or best. With the first principle comes the highest possible actuality, fontality and fecundity, and it is most perfect in producing, most fontal in emanating, and most

\(^6^4\) Ibid., fund. 8. The related questions will be indicated in brackets. Prius est perfectum quam imperfectum et re et intellectu, completum quam diminutum, unam quam multum [2], simplex quam compositum [3], infinitum quam finitum [4], actus quam potentia, immutabile quam mutabile [6], aeternum quam temporale [5], necessarium quam possibile [7]; si ergo omnis creatura producta est imperfecta, est deficiens ab unitate summa, est composita, est finita, est ens in potentia, est quodam modo temporalis, est variabilis, est possibilis, deficiens ab actualitae et necessitate summa: necesse est igitur, quod ante productionem creaturae sit productio rei perfectissime [1], summae [1], indivisae [2], simplicissimae [3], infinitissimae [4], aeternae [5], immutabilis [6], et necessariae [7].

\(^6^5\) Ibid. Hoc autem non potest esse per productionem essentiae diversae: ergo necesse est, quod illud sit per productionem personae habentis unitatem essentiae cum persona producente et aequalis in potentia, in sapientia, in bonitate.
The perfection of the first principle’s emanation means that both true, intrinsic modes issue from it eternally. He calls these variously the way of nature (per modum naturae) or word, and the way of will (per modum voluntatis) or love. These are hypostases produced by the first person, the first producing principle (primo principio producente). It is precisely this fact that requires three persons in God, he emphasizes.

He elaborates upon the triad of productivity, fontality, and fecundity by linking the first with the equality of the persons (perfect production consists of producing an equal), the second with the co-eternity of the persons (the image of the fountain means that it eternally issues forth), and the third with their sharing of substance (the perfect germination consists in a sort of intrinsic fertility). It is the third that is most difficult to grant Bonaventure at first. “Intrinsic fertility” may be quite helpful in seeing the ramifications of his imagery for modern theology, though, because it guarantees the not only the equality of the persons but the fact that they mysteriously share in the substance as persons. This may point in the direction of circumincession which Bonaventure takes up later.

At any rate, he draws from this argument that “primity (primitas) in respect to the first principle, therefore, establishes (ponit) the most perfect trinity according to order, origin, and distinction,” and again he produces a list of the divine attributes that he had treated in the first

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66 Ibid., resp. Nam primitas summa in summo et altissimo principio ponit summam actualitatem, summam fontalitatem et summam fecunditatem. Primum enim principium, hoc ipso quod primum, est perfectissimum in producendo, fontalissimum in emanando, fecundissimum in pullulando. Quoniam ergo perfecta productio, emanation et pullulatio attenditur tantum secundum duos modos intrinsecos, scilicet per modum naturae et per modum voluntatis, verbi scilicet et amoris; hinc est, quod necesse est, ibi poni ratione summae perfectionis, fontalitatis, et fecunditatis duplicem modum emanandi respectu duplicis hypostasis productae, emanantis a prima persona tanquam a primo principio producente; ac per hoc necesse est, ponere personas trias.

67 See below, 374ff.
seven questions. He provides here a tour de force on the strict and absolute identity of the attributes of God with the attributes of God as Trinity. The perfect emanation of the Son and Holy Spirit from the Father, the principle within the Trinity, gathers up all that needs to be predicated of God. He ends the conclusion with a turn to piety, as he has done with several other articles. This will be discussed below.

The objections that Bonaventure adduces to the notion of primity in God typically assume that primity resides in the Father but that it is inconsistent with the Trinity as a whole. It excludes plurality. If one person is first, the others are not and therefore reckoned ontologically subordinate. If all are first together, none of the persons can come from the other. We will lay out how Bonaventure handles the fourth, fifth, and seventh objections, which demonstrate best his balance of the Father’s primity with Trinitarian equality. The fourth and seventh contain the only instances of innascibilitas in this entire set of disputed questions.

The fourth objection advances a difficult challenge to the consistency of primity. Bonaventure clings to the sharp distinction between being first according to temporal anteriority and being first according to eternal origin. These are two vastly different ways of describing the “first” (primum). In the sense of temporal anteriority, there is no “before” with regard to any of the persons, so they share in primity according to that meaning. However, in the sense of origin, they do not.

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68 Bonaventure, Qvaest. de Trin., q. 8, a.u., resp., my translation. Bonaventure begins successive clauses with ponit to tell what must be held regarding the first principle. Again I put the related question in brackets. Ponit igitur primitas circa primum principium trinitatem perfectissimam secundum rationem ordinis, originis, et distinctionis, coaequalitatis et coaeternitatis et consubstantialitatis; ponit etiam summum unitatem [2], simplicitatem [3], immensitatem [linked with infinity, 4], aeternitatem [5], immutabilitatem [6], et actualitatem. He does so again almost immediately thereafter. Quoniam igitur primum principium, hoc ipso quod primum, est summe unum [2], et hoc ipso summe simplex est [3] et immensum [4], et hoc ipso est aeternum [5], incommutabile [a new variation on immutable, 6] et necessarium [7], sicut ex praeceedentibus colligitur.
If, however, “first” is said as a lack of origin, that is to say, it does not come forth from another: in this way, primitiveness principally resides in the person of the Father, because in him there is fount of fullness for the production of all the persons. Since innascibility includes this property, therefore it is said to be a property, a characteristic of the Father. But this certainly would not be the case, unless it simultaneously indicated nobility and the order of knowing; also, it would be predicated in a relative sense.  

Perhaps Bonaventure has held off on mentioning innascibility because of the misunderstandings discussed above. At the end of these questions, he has already established the emanation of the persons from the Father and adds to this foundation. “First” can be said with respect to the lack of origin that the Father possesses. This complements the way that the Trinity is “first.” The Father has fount of fullness as the positive counterpart of his innascibility. It designates him as having a certain “nobility” or “excellence” (nobilitatem), Bonaventure returns to this key term he sometimes uses with the excellence of fatherhood in view. He must protect against misunderstanding, though, so he adds the comment that this should be taken only relatively. The innascible and the Father are one and the same.

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69 Ibid., ad. 4 (V, 115a), my translation. Si autem dicatur primum per privationem originis, quia scilicet a nullo oritur; sic ratio primitatis principatius resinet circa personam Patris, ratione cuius est in ipso fountalis plenitudo ad productionem omnium personarum. Unde et quia innascibilitatis hanc proprietatem includit, ideo dicitur esse proprietias, quae est notio Patris; quod quidem non esset, nisi simul et nobilitatem diceret et innoscenti rationem, diceretur etiam relative.

70 See above, 268 and 278.

71 Bonaventure might be taken as following Greek sources here, but it seems more of a synthesis of various elements. The idea of emanation is in Augustine, even if the language there differs. The main emphasis is not just on emanation itself but on modes of emanation. The mental analogy plays the key role here. The fact that knowing and willing are intrinsic modes of emanation guarantees that there is unity. The emphasis on the modes of emanation largely set the later Franciscan school apart (see Friedman, Intellectual Traditions, 86 n. 80). The mind exhibits primitiveness, because without mind there is no knowing and willing. The genius of Bonaventure here lies in using this mental analogy without falling into its caricature of solipsism.
To the fifth objection, which puts the matter bluntly that the persons of the Trinity are either equally “principling” or not, Bonaventure distinguishes two kinds of “principling.” It can take place according to essence or person. They do not “principle” equally according to the order of person; rather, the Father is the principle of two persons, the Son of one person, and the Holy Spirit of none. So the reckoning of primity according to essence “is found equally in all three persons,” exists together with supreme primitity (simul stat trinitas cum primitate summa). The two kinds of primity follow the two kinds of “principling,” essential and personal. This sentence needs to be parsed carefully. The persons are equal principiantes essentially, but there is a clear distinction of their “principling” at the level of person. The Father and Son are both active principles, but even the account of their being principle is not equal, since the Father brings forth both the Son and Spirit. God as first principle is fully drawn together in essential primity. Though the terminology is different, this idea compares well to Pannenberg’s notion of shared monarchy. Bonaventure maintains the additional level of primity, however, connecting the equality of God’s primity to the negation of begetting to the Son. This was discussed above in Distinction 7 of the Commentarium. The perfection of the Son attests to the perfection of the Father’s fatherhood—the denial of the property of begetting to him does not take away from his

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72 I translate principiantes as a verbal, “principling” in English, to avoid using the word “principle” and show that he is using a word other than principium. Hayes renders the phrases as “eternally active as principle,” which does suggest the activity well, but it seems helpful to point even more attention to Bonaventure’s use of principle as a verb.

73 Bonaventure, Quaest. de Trin., q. 8, a.u., ad 5 (V, 115a). ... dicendum, quod aeque principiantes essentialiter, sed non aeque personaliter, quia Pater est principium duorum, Filius unius, et Spiritus sanctus nullius. Quoniam ergo ratio primitatis, quae convenit essentialiter primo principio, est aequaliter in omnibus illis personis tribus; ideo simul stat trinitas cum primitate summa: quia, sicut non posse generare in Filio non ponit impotentiam, sic non esse a se, sed a Patre non ponit aliam posterioritatem, ac per hoc non diminuit de ratione primitatis perfectae.

74 See above, 244ff.
power but points to the Father. This also connects Bonaventure well to Augustine’s position in
Contra Maximinum.\textsuperscript{75}

The coherence of these positions lies in the Son and Spirit yielding \textit{primity} to the Father at the level of the persons. So why ascribe \textit{primity} to the essence when begetting cannot be so ascribed? He connects it with God’s eternity. He denies any posteriority, any “before” and “after,” within the Trinity as First Principle. So \textit{primitas} at the level of person concerns origin, and the Father exhibits “firstness” in a sense that cannot be shared by the other two persons. At the level of essence, on the other hand, \textit{primitas} concerns time, and the Trinity stands firm with the highest primity in this sense.

The response to the final objection concerning God’s two-fold \textit{primitas}—that of the Trinity and that of the Father—provides a fitting climax to his \textit{Disputed Questions}. The objection states that

\ldots the more a being is prior, the more it is the fontal cause of production. Therefore, whatever is produced emanates necessarily from that being which is absolutely first. Therefore, if it is impossible for a person to emanate from itself, it is impossible for a person that is produced to exist together with perfect primacy (\textit{primitas}).\textsuperscript{76}

In other words, the Father has primity in such a way that the Son and Holy Spirit cannot partake of it. Since the Trinitarian processions are not reversible, and the Son and Holy Spirit necessarily arise from the Father, his primity is undeniable and these other persons are secondary. Here the ancient Arian threat is ever strong. Following up on his response to the fifth objection, just

\textsuperscript{75} See above, e.g. 211.

\textsuperscript{76} \textit{Ibid.}, ad opp. 7 (V, 113a). \textit{Item, quanto aliquid prius est, tanto magis tenet rationem fontalitatis in producendo: ergo ex eo quod est simpliciter primum necessario manat quidquid producitur: si ergo nulla persona potest manare a se ipsa, impossibile est, quod aliqua persona manet sive producatur et simul stet cum primitate perfecta.}
handled above, a twofold (dupliciter) distinction applies. For something to be first means to deny that anything came before it. There is room for ambiguity, though, if we grant the situation of eternal origin. In that case, something can be first because it lacks anything “before.” It is deprived of the “essential anteriority” (privationem anterioritatis essentialis) that pertains to all created things. The other way to be “first,” as we have seen, is to lack any origin (privationem originis personalis). This primitas pertains to God the Father alone.

To be first, however, is not a negative but a positive ascription; it gives rise to all that is subsequent. The primitas of the Father, eternally shared as it is with the Son and the Holy Spirit, establishes him as the very first origin and the ultimate destination of absolutely everything. Here Bonaventure invests in the image of the fountain. From the perspective of creation, the three persons are one beginning, one fountain. “But in as far as it involves the lack of personal origin, it befits only that person who is innascible; namely, the Father in whom resides the fullness of fontality for the production of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

Bonaventure only uses the term “innascible” here at the end of the Disputed Questions, and he correlates it boldly with its positive significance. The Father’s lack of any personal origin means that he is entirely ecstatic, communicating himself without receiving from any other. His next statement makes an attempt at drawing these two accounts together.

And, in a certain way (quodam modo), this sort of fontality is the source of the other fontality. For, since the Father brings forth the Son, and through the Son, and together with the Son brings forth the Holy Spirit, God the Father through the Son and with the Holy Spirit is the principle of everything created.

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77 Ibid., ad 7 (V, 115b). Secundum autem quod dicit privationem originis personalis, sic competet soli personae innascibili, scilicet Patri, in qua est plenitudo fontalitatis ad productionem Fili et Spiritus sancti.
There are two fontalities in view here: the Father’s fontality in producing the Son and the Holy Spirit, and the Trinity’s fontality in creation. Bonaventure says, somewhat cryptically, that in a certain way the one fontality is the source of the other. When Bonaventure says, “in a certain way,” he most likely has in mind the analogical understanding as delineated in *In I Sent.*, d. 29. The emanations are disparate in that one is eternal and the other temporal. They are comparable though, and the one serves as the basis for the other, because in Bonaventure’s view creation presupposes eternal emanation. To produce in time while retaining immutable essence, God must be immutably productive in eternity. From our perspective, these fontalities seem collapsed into unity—we can just say “God,” meaning the source of all being, which says something true at one level. The differences of the persons are invisible when the creature focuses on the divine essence, they “vanish.” There is real difference, though, at the level of relation or emanation. In the overwhelming brilliance of God’s act of creation, it is difficult for humanity to perceive a Trinity from reason alone; the temporal missions aid in the apprehension of this mystery of the two fontalities.

In other words, for Bonaventure we can assert the Father as the ultimate source of creation, provided that we recognize the eternal roles of the Son (per) and the Holy Spirit (cum

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78 Ibid. *Haec autem fontalitas quodam modo origo est alterius fontalitatis. Quia enim Pater producit Filium et per Filium et cum Filiolo producit Spiritum sanctum; ideo Deus Pater per Filiolum cum Spiritu sancto est principium omnium creatorum.*

79 See above, 280ff.

80 Friedman characterizes Bonaventure’s thought accurately on this point: “Insofar as relation is like the other categories of accident it is not found in God, because any accident existing in God would compromise his simplicity: relation cannot indicate a respect toward its subject, i.e. inherence in the divine essence. Thus, like all the other accidents, relation qua accident ‘vanishes’ (*transit*) into the divine substance and is indistinct from it. Insofar as relation differs from the other categories of accident, however, in some way it remains in God” (*Intellectual Traditions*, 65).
or in). They are the conditions for the possibility of our recognition of the Father as source. He states, “If [the Father] did not produce them from eternity (ab aeterno), he could not have produced through them in time (ex tempore).”\textsuperscript{81} So for our part, we must describe this fontality as two-fold. God is first, indiscriminately, and the Father is first in a special way. The Father is first in such a generous way, not holding back anything of himself save what identifies him as Father. This means that the Son and Holy Spirit share in being first. “God” is the “fountain of light,” but we are perfectly consistent if we appropriate that fontality to “God the Father,” as Bonaventure does here: “He \textit{i.e.} the Father] is rightly called the ‘Fount of Life’ by reason of his production within the trinity.” He cites John 5:26, also one of Augustine’s favorite quotations, to describe the Father’s gift of “life in himself” to the Son. Thus Bonaventure draws the unity of God and the Trinity, begun in the two articles of Question 1, to a dramatic conclusion in the sole article of Question 8 by exploring the double sense of primity.

Bonaventure seeks to augment understanding of the Trinity in order to serve the goal of deeper contemplation of the Trinity. Recall that towards the end of this response he says that the firstness of the first principle means that it draws “all beings and all knowledge” to come to rest in it. He turns to Rachel as a symbol of the contemplative life under the etymology of her name “the principle is seen”—following the best Latin exegetes, Augustine and Jerome, on this point.\textsuperscript{82} The one who contemplates this first beginning “finds the rest and final end of his desires, which

\textsuperscript{81} Bonaventure, \textit{Quaest. de Trin.}, q. 8, a.u., ad 7 (V, 115b), my translation. ... \textit{nisi enim eos produceret ab aeterno, non per illos producere posset ex tempore; et ideo ratione illius productionis in trinitate recte dicitur esse fons vitae.}

are not brought to their end unless the first principle is clearly contemplated as both three and supremely one.”

Drawing the principium of the Godhead to a fitting focal point in God the Father allows for the perfect coincidence of Trinity and Unity. Similarly, he makes a stirring appeal to the reader to proceed from the Father’s primity to the splendor of the Trinity at the end of the final objection. Rather than subsuming this contemplation under the framework of vision, however, there he depicts the soul’s return in terms of motion. While the Father gives to the Son the gift of life “in himself,” the rational spirit created in the divine image needs to complete its return and be “deformed,” that is, conformed to God’s own life. After he describes the Father’s production, his fontality in the Trinity, his gift of life in itself, Bonaventure’s final words in the Disputed Questions hold out that “eternal life consists in this alone, that the rational spirit, which emanates from the most blessed trinity and is a likeness of the trinity, should return after the manner of a certain intelligible circle—through memory, intelligence, and will—to the most blessed trinity by God-conforming glory.”

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83 Bonaventure, Quaest. de Trin., q. 8, a.u., resp (V, 114b). Ac per hoc Rachel, quae vitam designat contemplativam, interpretatur visum principium, quia qui illud videt in quantum primum principium, habet suae conditionis statum et desiderium terminatum; quod non terminabitur, nisi cum clare videbitur primum principium, ubi et trinum et summe unum.

84 Ibid., ad 7 (V, 115b). Hinc est, quod vita aeterna haec sola est, ut spiritus rationalis, qui manat a beatissima Trinitate et est imago Trinitatis, per modum cuiusdam circuli intelligibilis redeat per memoriam, intelligentiam et voluntatem, per deiformitatem gloriae in beatissimam Trinitatem. This climactic ending to the Disputed Questions serves as a prime witness to the enormity of Augustine’s impact on Bonaventure’s theology of the Trinity, however mediated by layers of tradition.
Conclusion

In one respect, the interpretation above hazards losing some of the finesse of Bonaventure’s teaching in the *Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity*. Discussing one of the persons in such a thoroughly Trinitarian work is like trying to take one strand of the double helix. Our focus, however, is on appreciating the Father’s place in the Trinitarian order so as to better respond to modern concerns. To gather up a few of the many insights pertaining to God the Father in this work, it is clear that the twin concepts of emanation and reduction factor largely into Bonaventure’s concept of God. The combination of these two conveys the image of a circle, which Bonaventure turns to several times, including at the very end. Rather than having perfectly reciprocal relations according to a concept of separate consciousness or independence, Bonaventure conceives of the reciprocation or conversion of the Son and Holy Spirit upon the Father. He carefully balances the plurality and unity by seeing this process of pouring forth and turning back in eternity, whether in the image of the mind with its word and love, or whether in the emphatically co-equal and consubstantial persons.

The processions spring from the Father as from a source, which protects the unity and order of the godhead. Multiple sources would lead to an infinite number of divine persons, Bonaventure says, and so there is an advantage to monotheism that Bonaventure does not want to lose. The modern insistence of the irreducibility of the Trinity veers in the direction of tritheism, which Bonaventure does take as an authentic threat. A proper sense of “reduction” protects the unity without diminishing the equality. For Bonaventure, God the Father’s production is ecstatic in the sense of springing forth; he communicates the divine essence entirely to the Son and Holy
Spirit. Far from an overlord, he selflessly imparts whatever is communicable. This echoes Augustine well; the Father gives them to be equal. Bonaventure adds that this relationship precludes dependence as upon a cause. The Father is absolutely necessary, but he shares his necessity with the Son and Holy Spirit because his necessity is one of generosity. The divine production is intrinsic in a certain sense as well, in that the shared essence does not point to a multiplication of the godhead but to the highest unity. Following a long tradition, he maintains that only relations of origin are consistent with divine simplicity. Among creatures, however, such relationships suggest plurality, and so the mind provides an apt analogy for the intrinsic nature of the production. He does not use this analogy, however, to deny full and equal personhood to the Son and Holy Spirit. This common charge against the Western tradition is unfounded, at least in Bonaventure’s case. He uses the analogy principally in two ways: to suggest a way to discover intrinsic production in the Trinity, and to suggest how the individual soul of the believer can be conformed to God (“deformed”).

The persons find their identity in one another, Bonaventure says, but there must be order. He finds this order in the double ascription of primity. Only the Father is from himself absolutely, but the eternity of his generation rules out past, present, and future. Put briefly, God is Trinity because the Father is “first” in the fullest sense. He devotes a single article to primity because in it the unity and the Trinity are resolved in the perfect circle of emanation and reduction. A great benefit of Bonaventure’s presentation of God the Father in this work lies in the analogy between God’s eternal production and temporal production. His position certainly provides fodder for philosophical debate, but there is no question that his doctrine of the Trinity has ramifications for how one views everything.
Chapter 8. Two Works from Bonaventure’s Tenure as Minister General

Now we turn to two works composed during Bonaventure’s tenure as Minister General of the Franciscans. Bonaventure did not leave his acumen as an academic behind when he began serving the order in this capacity, just as he had not left his ardent religious fervor behind when he reached the heights of the academic world in Paris. A high level of intellectual precision mark both *Breviloquium* and *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*. So even if we grant that Bonaventure composed these works with a different end in mind, they attest to his desire to put reason in the service of his faith in the Triune God. He continued to live in Paris, but his concerns as minister general impelled him to write for a broader audience. He stood astride two worlds, which impacts his writing accordingly.

The two works selected are both extraordinarily ambitious works, though strikingly different in their ambitions. While each pertains to the enlightening of the mind and kindling the love of the soul, the *Breviloquium* pertains more to the first—aiming at knowledge—and the *Itinerarium* more to the second—aiming at contemplation. The *Breviloquium* takes on the expanse of salvation history, from the first things to the last things. The *Itinerarium* takes all of creation in from the point of view of the individual mind, leads it into itself and ultimately from the self into God. One could say, then, that these works are beautifully complementary, the one proceeding according to the *priora quoad se* and the other according to the *priora quoad nos*.

While these works do not offer startlingly new doctrines pertaining to God the Father, they do witness to maturity in Bonaventure’s thought and expression as he synthesizes the wealth of theological insight that he has amassed. His doctrine of the Trinity impacts nearly every aspect
of theology, and so the Father’s role has consequences throughout. The alert reader perceives how he has taken the views of Augustine and has fused them with new terms and formulations to articulate the perfect self-communication within the Trinity. The double sense of “First Principle,” pertaining to the Trinity and to the Father as “first,” has a central place in these works. Bonaventure’s balance of images accenting unity and plurality, and the unique role of the Father in this balance, provides for a fruitful response to Moltmann and Pannenberg.

_Breviloquium_

There is a common refrain in Bonaventure scholarship, and for good reason, that the doctrine of the Trinity permeates the entirety of his literary corpus. In terms of length, the _Breviloquium_ exceeds the _Disputed Questions_ tracts and is surpassed by the unfinished _Collationes in Hexaemeron_, but it contains within it a summary of the content of theology. Henri de Lubac has said that this work, “in its harmonious density, manifests a power of total synthesis, perhaps never equaled.”¹ Bonaventure’s theology of God the Father does in fact permeate his synthesis in the _Breviloquium_, and the paternal dimension enriches the triadic appropriations throughout.

He most likely composed this work in 1257, in the very year that he was received as _magister regens_ by the secular masters at Paris, and elected as minister general by his order in

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February. A passage towards the end of the prologue helps establish his impulse to write Breviloquium. He laments that “this teaching [i.e. sacred doctrine] has been transmitted, both in the writings of the saints and in those of the doctors, in such a diffuse manner that those who come to learn about Sacred Scripture are not able to read or hear about it for a long time.”

It is probable that he has in mind the great number of new recruits to the Friars Minor, even if he never mentions the order by name in the work. He goes on to relate that those who begin theological studies even dread it, comparing it to a dark wood (silvam opacam).

That is why my colleagues have asked me...to draw up some concise summary of the truth of theology. Yielding to their requests, I have agreed to compose what might be called a brief discourse [breviloquium]. In it I will summarize not all the truths of the faith, but some things that are more opportune [for such students] to hold. At the same time, I have added, under each topic treated, some explanation so that they might understand it.

A few things stand out from this statement. This work provides Bonaventure’s own synthesis of the Christian faith. Although his outline corresponds to the exitus–reditus pattern so common in medieval theology, he does not follow Peter Lombard’s Sentences by dividing theology into four areas but rather seven.

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2 Along with most Bonaventure scholars, Bougerol dates the Breviloquium to 1257 on the strength of internal evidence and a manuscript bearing that specific year (Introduction, 197).

3 Bonaventure, Breviloquium, trans. Monti, Prologue. (Ed. cit., 22) Quaracchi (V, 208b). Unless otherwise noted, translations come from Monti, but I include the Latin in the footnotes and will occasionally differ in my interpretation of the text.

4 We should note that the basic term for the discipline of theology was not yet fixed, and that sacra Scriptura can stand both for Scripture itself and the expounding of Scripture even if not a close exegesis. The Breviloquium does present a compelling invitation to read Scripture proper in the prologue, but the rest of the work relates to the biblical scope of salvation history alluding to scripture often (especially the psalms, gospels, and Pauline epistles) but without presenting a recitation of scriptural texts.

5 Part 1 does match up with the first volume of the Sentences, but after that his division expands and slightly reorganizes the content of the last three volumes, splitting each of those three into two.
Even if the content itself is uncontroversial, he makes his own decisions concerning the important lessons for rank beginners, hence his phrase, *magis oppportuna*. Even more drastic is his chosen method of exposition. The procedure in *Breviloquium* departs profoundly from the dialectical method of the schools. Instead of crafting a series of questions and opposing viewpoints to arrive at the most probable position, he presents certain tenets of the faith as true and then deductively works to show the coherence of these truths. Thus his method in *Breviloquium* has more in common with the manuals of natural science than those of law. Most of the time, he starts his explanations from the First Principle (*primum principium*) and uses triads to organize his presentation. Naturally then, the deductive method of the work leads to interesting questions concerning God the Father in his doctrinal synthesis. To study the place of God the Father, we will first ascertain the signification of “first principle” (*primum principium*) as employed throughout. Next, we will draw out some insights from his synthesis on the Trinity in Part 1. Lastly, we will point out some of the intimations and reflections of the Father in Parts 2 through 7.

1. The Father as First Principle

Bonaventure’s deductive method traces the intelligibility of the faith from principles, most typically from the premise that God is “first principle” (*primum principium*). We have treated this term already in the *Sentences Commentary* and *Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity*. The question naturally arises whether “first principle” in *Breviloquium* takes on any new significance. As will be seen below, the term primarily refers to the entire Trinity in this
later work, but he does continue to privilege the Father as first and so at certain points the Father’s primity allows Bonaventure to appropriate the term to him.

With only a few exceptions, Bonaventure provides the understanding (intelligentia) or reason (ratio) for what is held by faith by working out the consequences of a principium. In his orderly account, each chapter contains one of these passages after explaining what must be held and before elaborating the coherence of that belief. In parts 1, 2, 3, and 7 he invariably deduces from the “First Principle” (primum principium), in parts 4 and 5 he variously uses First Principle and “restorative principle” (reparativum principium), and in part 6, on the sacraments, he deduces exclusively from the restorative principle. So why does Bonaventure deduce from the first principle? He gives a rather functional answer at the end of the Prologue. Theology, since it is “discourse about God and the First Principle…should resolve everything in God as its first and supreme principle.” A more elaborate answer appears in Part 5. He opines that all things radically depend on God because they do not have existence on their own.

The First Principle, by means of its omnipotent power and most loving munificence, brought all creation into being out of nothing. And so, of itself, the creature is non-being, for its entire being comes from another. It follows, then, that the creature was made in such a way that, because of its own deficiency, it would always stand in need of its Principle, and that this Principle, because of its benevolence, would never cease to sustain the creature.6

Simply speaking, God is the First Principle. God is Trinity, and so several times it is clear that he usually has the entire Trinity in view with the phrase, yet there is still room for appropriation.

The term “restorative principle,” on the other hand, denotes Christ as the Incarnate Word.

6 Bonaventure, Breviloquium, 5.2 (V, 253b). ... quia, cum primum principium sua omnipotenti virtute et benignissima largitate creaturam omnem de nihilo produxerit ad esse; ac per hoc creatura de se habeat non-esse, totum autem esse habeat aliunde: sic fata fuit, ut ipsa pro sua defectibilitate semper suo principio indigeret et primum principium pro suo benignitate influere non cessaret.
At the beginning of the fourth part, Bonaventure alerts the careful reader to the transition from reasoning from the First Principle alone to making frequent use of the restorative principle besides. He describes why the restorative principle had to be divine, and then why it had to be human as well. Regarding the first, he explains that the First Principle, solely responsible for creation, could not be anything less than God; it follows that in order to bring full restoration, the restorative principle should be divine as well. “Thus, just as God [the Father] had created all things through the Uncreated Word, so he could restore all things through the Incarnate Word.”

This passage epitomizes the distinction between these principles. While the first pertains to the Trinity, it reflects the order and dynamism of the Trinity—the Father creates through his Word, in the Holy Spirit. Christ as Second Person of the Trinity abides in the First Principle, and serves as the restorative principle by the hypostatic union. The latter springs from the former: “our restorative Principle, the Incarnate Word, was conceived from eternity in the bosom of the Father, and appeared corporeally in time to humankind.”

The restorative principle works in time and space to lead humankind, originally formed in the image of the Trinity, back to union with the eternal First Principle. Christ is likened to a fountain, but his work as restorative principle is grounded in the fountal fullness of the First Principle, rooted in the Father’s abundance. This analogy calls to mind Paul’s expression, “the

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8 *Ibid.*, 6.8 (V, 272b). *…quia reparativum principium nostrum, Verbum scilicet incarnatum, sicut aeternaliter conceptum est in corde Patris et temporali ter in carne sensibiliter apparuit homini*.... On the derivation of the restorative principle from the First Principle, see also 4.2 (V, 242b), in which he describes the threefold derivation of the restorative principle in the work of healing, atoning, and satisfying, using the phrase, “it is from the First Principle” (*est a primo principio*) in each paragraph.

head of every man is Christ, and the head of Christ is God” (1 Cor 11:3). The Son is the source of salvation for the elect, and the Father is the wellspring of the Son’s life. He is the origin of the persons, without beginning and altogether first (omnino primum).10

We are now in a better position to grasp the significance of the very opening passage of Breviloquium. He cites a passage from Ephesians which begins, “For this reason I bow my knees before the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom every fatherhood in heaven and on earth takes its name” (Eph 3:14-19). The prayer invokes each divine person, asking for the inner being of the believer to be strengthened by the Spirit and for Christ to dwell in the heart. The key word plenitudo factors into the passage as well. This quotation thus aptly conveys the abundant “inflowing of the Most Blessed Trinity” that binds together the entire work.11 Shortly after opening with the Ephesians passage, he conflates it with James 1:17, another passage highlighting the Father’s generosity. Scripture, he insists, does not start with humans but “flows from divine revelation, ‘coming down from the Father of lights,’ ‘from whom every fatherhood in heaven and on earth receives its name.’” Bonaventure continues, “It is from him, through his Son, Jesus Christ, that the Holy Spirit flows also into us.”12 He employs the “Father of lights” phrase again a few paragraphs later in a dense Trinitarian passage articulating the “fruit” or goal of Scripture. He enjoins his reader, “... [W]e must begin at the source (exordium). That is, we must reach out in true faith to the ‘Father of lights,’ bending the knee of our hearts, so that

10 Ibid., 1.6 (V, 215a).
11 Ibid., Prologue (V, 201a). ... influentiam beatissimae Trinitatis.
12 Ibid. Ortus namque non est per humanam investigationem, sed per divinam revelationem, quae fluit a Patre luminum, ex quo omnis paternitatis in caelo et in terra nominatur, a quo per Filium eius, Iesum Christum, manat in nos Spiritum sanctum....
through his Son and in the Holy Spirit, he might give us a true knowledge of Jesus Christ, and
together with this knowledge, love for him.”

He returns to the passage at the beginning of Part 5, on the grace of the Holy Spirit, because grace epitomizes the Father’s gift as experienced by the faithful. The Holy Spirit is the “uncreated gift,” coming down from the “Father of lights through the Incarnate Word.” So the gift of the Father does not make merely a nice but vague expression for Bonaventure; rather, these passages sum up the missions of the Son and Holy Spirit, radiating eternally from the Father and realized both in history and in the individual experience of the believer.

In this way, Bonaventure deftly balances the competing notions that the First Principle is the whole Trinity and that the Father is the First Principle. In doing so, he respects the Father as source of the emanation of the other persons, but also grounds the missions in the eternity of the Father. He does not place undue emphasis on this, which would throw the Trinity out of balance and fall into subordinationism. The Son and the Holy Spirit are the First Principle as well because it has been given them by the Father, as he is able to communicate the divine essence perfectly. That is why Bonaventure never uses such a term as Second Principle or Third Principle. The Son is First Principle in the First Principle as Uncreated Word, and so too is the Holy Spirit as Uncreated Gift. Bonaventure’s periodic indications of the primity of the Father, as principle without principle, suggest the dynamics of the Trinity that flow principally from the

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13 Ibid. (V, 202a-b). *Et ut ad istum fructum et terminum recto perveniamus progressu per viam recti itineris Scripturarum, inchoandum est ab exordio, hoc est, ut cum mera fide ad Patrem luminum accedamus, flectendo genua cordis nostri, ut ipse per Filium suum in Spiritu sancto det nobis notitiam Iesu Christi, et cum notitiam amorem eius....*

14 Ibid., 5.1 (V, 252a).
Father and ultimately tend toward the Father. In this way he seeks to do justice both to the testimony of revelation and to the rigor of philosophical reasoning.

2. Part 1: How to Speak of the Father

As anticipated, the theology of the Father in Part 1 does not show significant further development of ideas advanced in the Sentences Commentary and Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity. As part of his synthesis of Trinitarian teaching, he gives the briefest summation of the characteristics unique to the Father, including innascibility positively understood as fontality. He stresses nonetheless that Father is the proper name of the First Person. The style of his presentation permits a wider scope than the other formats, and after sharpening his mind in the Trinitarian disputes he is able to organize and present his theology in a mature, polished way. He supplies the reader with a primer on how to speak of Trinitarian persons in relation to each other and to the divine essence. His depiction of the Trinity here is certainly not an undifferentiated triad, that is to say, one that lacks much reality in itself in comparison with the substance. Dynamism pervades his entire doctrine of God, the dynamism of emanation and return to the Father in a Trinity of perfect love.

Recapitulating material we have seen above, for example in In I Sent. d. 27-28, Bonaventure distills the essential tenets treating God the Father in this way:

For it is proper to the Father to be the one without an originator [esse innascibilem], the Unbegotten One [ingenitus]; the Principle who proceeds from no other; the Father as such. ‘Unbegottenness’ [innascibilitas] designates him by means of a negation, but this term also implies an affirmation, since unbegottenness posits in the Father a fountain-
fullness [fontalem plenitudinem]. The ‘Principle that proceeds from no other’ designates him by an affirmation followed by a negation. ‘Father’ designates him in a proper, complete, and determinate way, by affirmation and the positing of a relation.\textsuperscript{15}

Since Bonaventure has again the Father’s proper name as “Father”—and he similarly professes preference for “Son” to “Word” and “Image”—the question ensues to what extent he draws out the analogy to this basic human relationship. Bonaventure’s use of the fountain image and principle appear rather impersonal.

As useful as he finds the various impersonal triads, their reference point is always the basic language of the three persons, rooted as it is in relationships. The start of his account makes it clear that God the Father is the point of departure in the reality of the Trinity itself, and that his eternally begetting the Son is a relationship at the core of the faith and is irreplaceable. He organizes the treatment of the Triune God in Part 1 around three topics that all hinge on unity-in-diversity: how the unity of God abides with a plurality of persons (chapters 2-4), how God abides with a plurality of manifestations (apparitionum; chapter 5), and how God abides with a plurality of appropriations (chapters 6-9). The unity of God is assumed throughout, but so are three-fold personhood, the divine missions, and manifold characteristics.

As shown above, his reasons for fittingness draw from qualities or attributes of God as first principle. He does consistently strive, however, to set forth the unity of these rational conclusions with the Scriptural language and the traditional teaching of the faith. He establishes

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 1.3 (I, 212a). \textit{Cum enim proprium sit Patris esse innascibilem sive ingenitum, esse principium non de principio et esse Patrem; innascibilitas notificat ipsum per modum negationis, licet ex consequenti per modum positionis, quia innascibilitas in Patre ponit fontalem plenitudinem; principium non de principio, per modum positionis cum negatione; esse Patrem, per modum positionis et habitudinis, proprie, complete et determinate. An interesting manuscript variant places \textit{non de patre} after one of the instances of \textit{esse Patrem}, which denies that the Father himself is begotten and thus positively it follows that he is the principal source of all fatherhood.
the core of Trinitarian faith in this way: “the true faith prescribes that we maintain that within the one [divine] essence there are three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Of these, the first proceeds from no other; the second, from the first alone through generation; the third, from the first and second through spiration or procession.”

This succinct statement coheres with both emanation and relation accounts, but gives priority to the former. He lists the seven attributes treated in the *Disputed Questions* along with “highest fecundity, love, generosity, equality, relationship, likeness, and inseparability,” as things that “true faith understands to exist in the most blessed Trinity.” This latter set of terms, in moving beyond those of the *Disputed Questions*, hints at an increased awareness of the need to complement the philosophical terminology of attributes with terms that emphasize the inherently relational nature of God.

In laying out the rationale of this belief, his debt to Anselm and Richard of St. Victor becomes immediately apparent. Since by “god,” we mean that than which nothing greater can be thought, we must conceive of God in the highest possible way. This best way of conceiving God entails that he must be able to communicate himself fully and be willing to do so. In fact, the fullness of love requires a third person loved by both (*condilectus*). Believers hold that “God totally communicates himself by eternally having a beloved and another who is loved by both.”

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16 Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, 1.2 (V, 210b). *De pluralitate igitur personarum in unitate naturae hoc dictat recta fides esse tenendum, scilicet quod in unitate naturae sunt tres personae, Pater et Filius et Spiritus sanctus, quorum prima a nulla est, secunda a sola prima per generationem, tertia a prima et secunda per spirationem sive processionem.*

17 *Ibid.*, 1.2 (V, 211a). *Ita quod trinitas personarum non excludit ab essentia divina summam unitatem, simplicitatem, immensitatem, aeternitatem, incommutabilitatem, necessitatem et etiam primitatem; quin potius includit summam fecunditatem, caritatem, liberalitatem, aequalitatem, germanitatem, conformitatem et inseparabilitatem; quae omnia sana fides intelligit esse in beatissima Trinitate.

18 *Ibid.* ...et ideo, ut altissime et piissime sentiat, dicit, Deum se summe communicare, aeternaliter habendo dilectum et condilectum, ac per hoc Deum unum et trinum.
To put it in perspective, this is the only time that he uses this terminology in *Breviloquium*, a work awash with triads. Despite the paucity of such reference, its place within the first demonstration of the fittingness of the faith cements its importance and shows a subtle influence on the remainder of his synthesis.

He suggests as much in the next line, in fact, as he launches into a grand summary of Scripture—a microcosm of the *Breviloquium*.

In fact, the whole of Sacred Scripture, which is called a doctrine according to piety, testifies to this belief, dictating that we conceive of God in the most loving way (*piissime*). For it declares that God [the Father] has an offspring whom he supremely loves: a Word coequal with himself, whom “he has begotten from all eternity and in whom he has disposed all things,” by whom he produces and governs all things. Furthermore, it declares that through this precious blood of this Word made flesh, God in his all-surpassing goodness redeemed humankind and nourishes it once redeemed. It also declares that at the end of the world, through that same Word, God will liberally pour out his supreme mercy, delivering humankind from every misery, so that through Christ, all the elect might become children of the eternal Father (*fili Summi Patris*). In him all love (*pietatis*) will be consummated: God’s for us, and ours for God.19

The Monti translation inserts the bracket reference, because Bonaventure simply wrote that

“God has an offspring” (*Deum habere prolem*). The brackets remain above to draw attention to Monti’s desire to clarify that Bonaventure speaks of the Father. “God” in this passage, as we saw with so many passages in Augustine above, is appropriated to the Father. As this passage attests, the Father is the principal origin but also the ultimate destiny of all. God’s Fatherhood is two-

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19 *Ibid.*, 1.2 (V, 211a). *Huic autem fidei, in quantum dictat, de Deo piissime sentiendum esse, attestatur tota sacra Scriptura, quae dicitur doctrina secundum pietatem: quia Deum fatetur habere prolem, quam summe diligit, Verbum sibi coaequale, quod ab aeterno genuit, in quo cuncta disposuit; per quod cuncta produxit et gubernat; per quod etiam carnem factum pro summa benignitate hominem redemit pretiosissimo eius sanguine redemptum que cibavit; per quod etiam in fine mundi, summam misericordiam impertiendo, ab omni miserialiberabit, ut per Christum omnes electi sint filii summi Patris, in quo erit omnis pietatis consummatio et Dei ad nos, et e converso. The quotation from Peter Lombard, who in turn follows an Augustinian interpretation of Psalm 61.
fold in this passage: he begets a Word, and eschatologically embraces the elect as his children, through that same Word.

Bonaventure challenges translators, to be sure, and it is difficult to get the right rendering of *pietas* in modern English, as this word had manifold connotations in Latin literature. Given the concentration of expressions related to *pietas* at this particular point, we should note the familial resonances of this word, as it conveyed duties of parents to children and children to parents. Although Bonaventure favors the term “Word,” largely because it draws us back from the physical and time-bound characteristics of bearing children, he follows the tradition of conflating the two by calling the Word “offspring” (*prolem*). Echoing the Victorine language he had used above, God loves this Word in the most complete way (*summe diliget*). From that point, the passage thoroughly conveys God (*i.e.* the Father) working through his offspring-Word to create and reconcile all things to himself. The destiny of the elect as sons and daughters of the Father, through Christ, is the climax of this presentation of the saving economy. In this passage, at least, it appears appropriate to consider the elect as children of the Father *per se*, not children of the Trinity, even if this adoption (hence, *become*) happens through the mediation of the Son. It is clear that this Johannine and Pauline theme resonates deeply with Bonaventure.

These opening passages of Bonaventure’s presentation of the doctrine of God help to clarify both why the term “Father” remains the proper term for the First Person and the particular role of the First Person in the Trinity. His treatment in Part 1 points not only to proper belief but

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20 Another concentration of this term appears in Part 5 below, since the gifts of the Holy Spirit include *pietas*. Aside from there and here, forms of *pius* and *pietas* only appear six times in the *Breviloquium*. Another argument for a particular familial resonance of piety here comes from an instance in Part 5. While discussing the commandments, he connects the honoring of one’s parents with the command of piety (*unum, quod pietatem mandat, scilicet de patre honorando*, *ibid.*, 5.9 [V, 263a]). Interestingly enough, he words it in the singular (*patre*).
also the proper expression of that belief, and so we are striving here to encapsulate how he
wishes to speak of the Father. Recalling the three basic questions of unity-in-diversity pertaining
to the Trinity, namely substance to persons, substance to missions, and substance to
appropriations, the above summary of the doctrine of the Father suffices for the first. In what
ways, then, should we speak of the Father in conjunction with the missions and appropriations?

Bonaventure treats the missions in the chapter on the *apparitiones* (which term can mean
“appearance” or “manifestation”). Here he describes how God becomes present to humanity.
Given the inseparability of the Trinity which he has already expounded, it is not fitting to
conceive of an individual person manifested without the other two. The order of the missions
strongly corresponds to his reckoning of the emanations. Consequently, only the Father sends,
the Holy Spirit is only said to be sent—except where the human nature of Christ is concerned—
and the Son both sends and is sent.21 This scheme perfectly matches the scheme of active and
passive “principling” within the godhead, and similarly he includes a caveat to protect the
equality of the persons. Bonaventure follows Augustine in seeing the Holy Spirit’s involvement
with the Incarnation as pertaining to Jesus’ humanity, which protects the order of the persons.
This stands in contrast to our modern interlocutors who interpret the Scriptural passages as
showing the fluidity of the processions and missions. Moltmann thinks that there is nothing
amiss in holding that the Holy Spirit brings forth the Son with the Father.

Bonaventure’s explanation of the missions, however, unequivocally points to the concept
of emanation: “In a general way [the First Principle] manifests itself and makes itself known

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21 Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, 1.5 (V, 214a). *Licet etiam sit ibi summa aequalitas, solius tamen Patris est mittere non mitti; Spiritus sancti est tantummodo mitti respectu divinarum personarum, nisi forte dicatur mittere hominem assumptum; Filii autem est mittere et mitti, sicut ex Scripturis potest colligi.*
through all of the effects that emanate from it.”

Since all things come from God, all things point to God. Even so, he uses *specialiter* (“in a special way”) multiple times to point to particular effects that indicate God’s presence. While the Trinity indwells together, simultaneously, they are nevertheless distinct and can manifest themselves distinctly in symbols. The believer also perceives this indwelling as a beginning, and so it is fitting for the two persons-from-another, to point to the person-not-from-another. He says, “The Father ‘sends’ the Son when, by making him present to us through knowledge or grace, the Father makes it known that the Son proceeds from him. Now because the Father himself proceeds from no one, he is therefore never said ‘to be sent.”

So the Trinitarian indwelling always respects the distinctions of the persons. The order of the Trinity precludes for the Father to be sent.

As his final word in the section, Bonaventure reinforces the unique role of the Father “within,” and in a certain sense “behind” the missions. The missions after all, correspond to relationship, and so they must point to the relationships eternally present in the Trinity. Employing the same terms as *In I Sent.* d. 15, he speaks of *auctoritas,* or “authority,” and *subauctoritas,* translated here as “subordination to authority”:

It is also clear that ‘to send’ and ‘to be sent’ do not pertain to all of the persons; for although both imply an effect on creatures, they are also the signs of an intrinsic relationship (*relationem intrinsecam*). For ‘to send’ implies authority, and ‘to be sent’ implies subordination to authority (*subauctoritatem*) in the order of eternal production within the Godhead.

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22 *Ibid.* Reddit autem se manifestum et notum generaliter per universitatem suorum effectuum ab ipso emanantium....

As seen above, *auctoritas* is often attributed to the Father insofar as he is the fount of the Trinity. The term does not convey power of jurisdiction to the extent it does in modern English, and certainly does not imply domination. The term *subauctoritatem* is markedly less common. As is clear from Bonaventure’s *Sentences Commentary*, in which we find over thirty instances, the term signifies reference (*habitudo*) to another and not subordination. Rather, the Son and Holy Spirit possess *auctoritas* in such a way that they are oriented towards the Father as principle.

Bonaventure reminds his readers that God abides in unity despite the multiplicity of qualities found in God. Following the tradition going back to Augustine, then, he perceives ways in which these qualities can be attributed to the persons in appropriate triads. Concerning the reason for these appropriations, Bonaventure writes, “Now these are said to be appropriated, not because they are proper (*non propria*) [to these persons], since they are always common (*communia*) [to them all], but because they lead to a better understanding and knowledge of what is proper, that is the three persons themselves.”

25 Apart from Bonaventure, I have found instances of *subauctoritas* in the *Summa fratis Alexandri* and the works of Thomas Aquinas and John Duns Scotus. Even though the term has not endured in Trinitarian discourse, like “authority,” it deserves further study.

26 See especially *In I Sent.*, d. 25, dub. 4, which compares texts from Augustine and Jerome on whether we may speak of degrees (*gradus*) of the godhead. Bonaventure splits the term *subauctoritas* into its component parts and answers this way: *Ad illud quod obiciitur de sub, dicendum, quod sub in divinis non dicit inferioritatem, sed solum habitudinem secundum rationem intelligendi. Ad illud quod obiciitur de auctoritate, dicendum, quod verum est, secundum quod auctoritas sonat in rationem dominii, quod ponit gradum; sed sic non est in divinis, sed solum, prout sonat in rationem principii; et hoc ponit ordinem in cognoscendo.* It should be noted that all of the instances of the term in Bonaventure, as far as I know, pertain to the Trinity. There are only three instances outside Volume 1; all fall within the opening questions of Volume 3 dealing with the mission of the Son.

27 Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, 1.6 (V, 215a). *Haec autem dicuntur appropriari, non quia fiant propria, cum semper sint communia; sed quia ducent ad intelligentiam et noititiam propriorum, videlicet trium personarum.*
Bonaventure’s intention to bind the persons and attributes is quite similar. Bonaventure not only posits a number of triads, but he argues for the logical derivation of each set from the other. He wishes to guard against these triads appearing artificial and wants to relate them to proper teaching on the Trinity. He presents in order these triads: unity, truth, goodness; eternity, splendor, use (or enjoyment, *usus*); efficient, exemplary, and final causality; and finally omnipotence, omniscience, benevolence.

In each triad, the first element correlates to the Father, so unity, eternity, efficient causality, and omnipotence pertain to the Trinity but illustrate something about the Father’s own distinct personhood. Just as what is good and true presupposes that it is one, unity pertains especially to the Father because he is the “origin of the persons.”\(^{28}\) Supremely one indicates supremely first, and so “eternal,” as he combines Hilary’s appropriations with the neo-Platonic understanding of *Liber de causis*.\(^{29}\) The Father’s designation as origin without origin points to him as altogether first (*omnino primum*), which in turn reveals him to be principle (*unum et primum tenet rationem principiandi et originandi*). Thus efficient causality pertains in a special way to the Father. This reminds us of the basic summary of Bonaventure’s metaphysics in the triad of emanation, exemplarity, consummation. Finally, he reckons that all power flows from the first cause (*a primo et summo principio fluit omne posse*). To epitomize the appropriations, Bonaventure elaborates the final set with the image of emanation and return for each. So the

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\(^{28}\) *Ibid.*, my translation, as Monti’s translation curiously lacks this phrase. ... *et appropriantur tribus personis, quia ordinata; et ideo summe unum Patri, qui est origo personarum; summe verum Filio quia est a Patre ut verbum; summe bonum Spiritui sancto, qui est ab utroque ut amor et donum.*

\(^{29}\) *Ibid.* *Et quia summe unum est summe primum quia caret omni inception....*
“first and greatest unity, returning upon itself in a complete and perfect return, is omnipotence,” and so forth for omniscience and the greatest benevolence.\(^{30}\)

Also expressed as power, wisdom, and love, this last grouping emerges as Bonaventure’s key triad throughout *Breviloquium*, and the remaining chapters of the section on God treat these three in turn. He subsumes the language of the persons within the appropriations there, without a single instance of the names Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Whenever he speaks of God, though, he speaks of him as three and one, and so the dynamics outlined above remain, albeit without the personal names. For example, when speaking on God’s will, he says that it “cannot deviate from the truth,” hence the Son, and “it cannot lack power in any way—for not only is it effective, it is the very fountainhead and origin all efficacy.”\(^{31}\) The implication of the Father in “power” is strengthened by *fons et origo*.

As we can see, Bonaventure’s appropriation does not point to real differentiation in God, but conceptual distinction. Even so, God remains Trinitarian and not mono-personal, and the implications of the doctrine of the persons carry throughout. So we need to be aware of all three levels of speaking about the Trinity—the persons, the missions, and the appropriations; Bonaventure’s doctrine of emanation from the Father abounds with connections to the missions and appropriations. When Bonaventure uses terminology that is appropriated to the Father, as found in the triads listed above, he is careful to balance concern for the unity and plurality of the


\(^{31}\) *Ibid.* 1.9 (V, 218a). *Et quia non potest divina voluntas carere veritate, ideo non tantum est recta, verum etiam regula rectitudinis.* *Quia vero nullo modo potest carere virtute, ideo non tantum est efficax, verum etiam fons et origo totius efficaciae.*
persons. His doctrine of God in *Breviloquium* thus exhibits dynamism and texture, from and towards the Father in respect of the order of origin. It remains to test how God’s Fatherhood applies to the rest of his presentation of the economy of creation and salvation in *Breviloquium*.

3. Intimations and Reflections of the Father in Parts 2–7

In the prologue to *Breviloquium*, Bonaventure proclaims, “Just as no one can appreciate the loveliness of a song unless one’s perspective embraces it as a whole, so none of us can see the beauty of the order and governance of the world without an integral view of its course.”

The remarks above have laid a promising foundation for a theology of God the Father. As we shall see, the topic is pervasive and important in the remainder of *Breviloquium*; however, there are surprising omissions in Bonaventure’s account. In setting these out, I must be clear that from the first page to last, the idea of emanation remains as central as exemplarity and consummation. The idea of principle, and so in a certain way, the Father, remains all-embracing. I will point to two areas where he does not push the Trinitarian reading far enough: the dynamic of prayer, as epitomized in his interpretation of the Lord’s Prayer, and the Father’s involvement in the passion and resurrection of Christ. After briefly discussing these weaknesses in his presentation, we will turn to some of the strong connections with the preceding section.

Bonaventure discusses prayer in the last chapter of Part 5, on the grace of the Holy Spirit. Although he states and explicates several of the phrases of the prayer, he is focused upon the

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petitions themselves. He never actually uses the word “Father” in this section. Interestingly, at the beginning of the section Monti adds “Father” in brackets after an instance of God, to make clear that he is the giver.\textsuperscript{33} Indeed, this seems appropriate in a way because as we have seen above, the Father is the giver of “gifts,” and Bonaventure does mildly allude to the Sermon on the Mount. Further on, he refers more strongly to the passage that began the Breviloquium, James 1:17, when he says that “God bestows this \textit{perfect gift [\textit{i.e. grace] only on those who desire it.}”\textsuperscript{34} Bonaventure quotes the petition “hallowed be thy name,” but he does not attempt to explain the Trinitarian dynamic of the prayer as he does in the \textit{Sentences Commentary}.\textsuperscript{35}

We now turn to the second concern. Bonaventure does mention that the Father gave the Son out of love for us, paraphrasing Rom 8:32: “For how could God, who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, … fail to give us everything else with him?”\textsuperscript{36} Additionally, we may concede that Bonaventure sets out the entire mission of the Son as an act of the triune First Principle. He does not comment on the Father’s role in the passion and resurrection, except insofar as he refers to the “will of the Father” in the Gethsemane scene and uses “Son of God” to

\textsuperscript{33} “Although God [the Father] is lavishly generous and far more ready to give than we are to receive, yet he wishes to receive prayers from us so that he might have occasion for increasing the Holy Spirit’s gifts of grace” (ed. cit. 206-207). He translates this portion of the Latin text: \textit{licet Deus sit liberalissimus et promptior ad dandum quam nos ad accipiendum; vult tamen orari a nobis, ut occasionem habeat largiendi dona gratiae Spiritus sancti (V, 263b).}

\textsuperscript{34} Bonaventure, Breviloquium, 5.10 (V, 263b). … \textit{ideo donum perfectum non dat nisi desideranti}.

\textsuperscript{35} See especially \textit{In III Sent.}, d. 10, a. 2, q. 3 (III, 237-238). Bonaventure here asserts that the adoptive filiation of the elect corresponds to the entire Trinity speaking essentially (\textit{essentialiter}), but to God the Father through appropriation. Therefore, the Lord’s Prayer is said with Christ as brother to Christ as God, along with the Father and Holy Spirit. This is reminiscent of the Augustinian maxim “through Christ as man to Christ as God.” Bonaventure’s twofold concern is first to safeguard the unity of the Trinity in the act of redemption just as in salvation, and second to ensure that adoptive sonship, being created, does not partake in the eternal procession of the Son except by analogy.

\textsuperscript{36} Bonaventure, Breviloquium, 4.9 (V, 250). \textit{Deus enim proprio Filio suo non pepercit, sed pro nobis omnibus tradidit illum; quomodo non etiam cum illo omnia nobis donavit?}
refer to Christ several times. Even though he provides the framework for such a theology, he
does not integrate Trinitarian theology with the cross and resurrection. This stands, of course, in
contrast to Moltmann, who in a sense collapses the Trinity into the paschal mystery. The
*Itinerarium* treated next contains more fruitful intimations in this direction.

With these omissions registered, let us appreciate how Bonaventure does thoroughly
involve the Father in the remainder of *Breviloquium*, in addition to his role as *primum principium*
dealt with above. A few scholars have already commented extensively on Bonaventure’s
theology of the Trinity in creation, so we will leave Part 2 aside for the most part. Among the
many ways in which the Fatherhood of God in the Trinity comes to bear in the rest of
*Breviloquium*, we will focus on the following four themes. First, Bonaventure alludes to a nuptial
analogy of the Trinity. Second, related to the concepts of *principium* and *auctoritas* mentioned
above, the motif of hierarchy reemerges a few times in *Breviloquium* and carries with it a
Trinitarian resonance. Third, Bonaventure does offer fascinating reflections on adoption,
appropriated to the Father, despite his lack of reference to it in the dynamics of prayer. Finally,
we will consider the eschatological destiny of the elect in reference to God the Father.

Bonaventure’s prominent usage of the triad of lover, beloved, and co-beloved certainly
lends itself to a nuptial image of the Trinity. He does not discuss this within the section on the
Trinity, but rather in the section on marriage. In this way, he seems to respect Augustine’s
emphatic denial of nuptial imagery for the Trinity in *De Trinitate*. It is fitting to say that for

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37 For example, Gonzalez, *Misterio Trinitario*; Mathieu, *La Trinité créatrice d’après saint Bonaventure*; and Emery,
*La Trinité créatrice*. Bonaventure discusses the six days of creation as the work of the Trinity. Rather than
appropriate a pair of days to the Trinity, as three sets of two, he subtly appropriates the entire six days to the Father,
the days of distinction to the Son (1-3), and the days of embellishment to the Holy Spirit (4-6).
Bonaventure, the Trinity sheds more light on marriage than the other way around. Christopher Cullen ends his chapter on the sacraments in Bonaventure with the following remark:

Bonaventure understands the sacrament [of marriage] to refer to the indissoluble bond; fidelity as the fulfillment of sexual intercourse; and offspring as the principal effect proceeding from both. One of the most important implications from this is that the marriage and the family are part of man’s created nature. The family is a natural society. It is appropriate to end this brief examination of Bonaventure’s sacramental theology with marriage, for he sees in it the symbol of the divine.38

Human sexuality can actually serve as a symbol of God for Bonaventure. He sees a triad in the goods of marriage: the sacrament, fidelity, and offspring. Even though he treats this sacrament last, he calls it “first” according to human nature, and for good reason: without the union of man and woman there would be no human race. While he also envisions in marriage an analogy for the hypostatic union, he advances a Trinitarian concept in more detail. He is partly enabled to develop the nuptial triad by a different concept of the biology of procreation than Aristotle or Aquinas. He sees the female as a co-equal producer of offspring along with the male.39 The woman as comprincipians points to God the Father producing the Holy Spirit with the Son as co-principle.

Bonaventure develops the analogy in his discussion of marriage. The sexual bond (nexus), resulting in children, correlates to the Holy Spirit as bond of Father and Son. This relates as well to his use of “consummation” to describe the action of the Holy Spirit elsewhere. The

38 Christopher Cullen, *Bonaventure*, 176.

39 “Moreover, in that [primordial] state, the [male] body was such that it would produce seed for the procreation of offspring, with the help of the female sex as an equal co-producer.” *Et propterea in statu illo corpus erat tale, ut ab eo fieret decisio seminalis ad propagationem prolis per adminiculum sexus muliebris pariter comprincipiantis.* Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, 2.10 (V, 228b). See the footnote in the Monti translation referring to Bonaventure favoring the biological explanation of Avicenna (ed. cit. 92 n. 95). He also refers to Emma Therese Healy, *Woman According to Bonaventure* (New York: Georgian Press, 1956), 9-13.
connection to God the Father is drawn out by his depiction of the parties of marriage, “one of which is active and influencing, the other passive and receiving, and which is brought about by virtue of a bond of love that proceeds purely from free will. This is why matrimony has to be the joining together of two persons who differ as active and passive, that is, as male and female.”

The offspring as the effect “proceeding from them both,” that is, from the sacrament and fidelity, further underscores the analogy. The triad of man, woman, offspring, and that of sacrament, fidelity, and offspring both point to the dynamics of giving and receiving in the Trinity. The distinction of the aspects from each other essential, and the active role of the Father as source is irreplaceable. Bonaventure does not deploy the Victorine language of lover, beloved, and co-beloved to discuss the connection of these mysteries, and neither does he overtly use the traditional names Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Even so, we can see here that the implications of his Trinitarian doctrine reach into every sphere of life.

The term “hierarchy” typically suggests functional, if not ontological subordination, and so many Christians have stayed away from this term in discussing the Trinity. For his part, Bonaventure often gathers related realities into triads, and provides them with a certain order. He does not use the term “hierarchy” at all in the first volume of the Sentences Commentary, but he uses it cautiously in regard to the Trinity in later works. Here we must determine whether Moltmann would accuse him of supporting a patriarchal structure. In the identification and

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40 Bonaventure, Breviloquium, 6.13 (V, 279b-280a). With more context: Rursus, quia quaelibet praedictarum spiritualium unionum in Sacramento matrimonii significatarum est unio unius sicut agentis et influentis, alterius sicut patientis et suscipientis; et hoc, faciente amoris vinculo, qui ex mera voluntate procedit: hinc est, quod matrimonium debet esse coniunctio duplicis personae, differentis secundum rationem agentis et patientis, scilicet virilis sexus et muliebris, et hoc ex mero consensu voluntatis.

41 Ibid. (V, 280a). Et ideo ipsius matrimonii sunt tria bona, scilicet Sacramentum propter vinculum insolubile, fides propter debiti solutionem, proles vero sicut effectus consequens ad utramque.
description of hierarchies, Bonaventure owes much to Pseudo-Dionysius. To evaluate Bonaventure’s reckoning of the Trinity as a hierarchy, one must diligently attend to his concept of order rather than subordination commonly understood. He speaks of a three-fold hierarchy: the super-celestial, celestial, and sub-celestial.42 By the first he means the Trinity, by the second the angelic host, and by the third the church. Jesus is the “Hierarch” who erects a ladder on earth to touch heaven. Bonaventure describes him as the hierarch in the sub-celestial and celestial hierarchies, and the “middle person of that super-celestial hierarchy of the Blessed Trinity.”43 From this comment it is clear that the Father is the hierarch of the super-celestial hierarchy. This hierarchy, however, abides in perfect equality, so his remarks on the other hierarchies require a caveat.

Recall that Bonaventure appropriates power to God the Father. He describes auctoritas in correlation with power as he prepares to describe the sub-celestial hierarchy of the Church, within the section on the sacrament of Holy Order. “A power that is exercised over another is truly an excellent power…. Now this excelling authority gradually diminishes the more widely it is distributed, and is more concentrated as it ascends on high.”44 This language naturally compares to the notion of the diffusion of the good. Thus Bonaventure finds the concentration of

42 As an illustration of the correspondence of the hierarchies and the Trinity, consider Bonaventure’s description of the annunciation to Mary as fittingly representing all three hierarchies: “The angel Gabriel was the herald of the eternal Father, the immaculate Virgin was the temple of the Holy Spirit, and the conceived offspring was the very person of the Word. Thus the representatives of all three hierarchies—divine, angelic, and human—concurred in this way in the universal restoration, suggesting not only the Trinity of God, but also the universality of the benefit bestowed and the generosity of the supreme Redeemer.” Ibid., 4.3 (V, 243b).

43 Ibid., Prologue §3 (V, 205a). … et hoc totum per illum unum hierarcham, Iesum Christum, qui non tantum ratione naturae assumptae est hierarcha in ecclesiastica hierarchia, verum etiam in angelica et media persona in illa supercaelesti hierarchia beatissimae Trinitatis.

44 Ibid., 6.12 (V, 278b). …et potestas super potestatem est potestas excellens…et quia excellentia, quanto magis descendit, tanto magis dilatatur et quanto magis ascendit, tanto magis unitur.
power and authority in the pope (papa), the “father of fathers.” He had before called Christ the head of the sub-celestial hierarchy, and so the pope must be considered as head inasmuch as he is “Vicar of Christ.” The analogy of the pope to God the Father in the super-celestial hierarchy is strengthened by ascription of the terms “fountain” and “origin” to the pope. “From him, as from the summit, all ordered power descends down to the most humble members of the Church.” Bonaventure thus opens himself up to certain criticism, but the unity of the super-celestial hierarchy in perfect love could serve to mitigate the insinuation of a structure of sheer power.

In the angelic host, the Franciscan finds a triple hierarchy of three choirs each. As he describes the actions of each triad, the first element can easily be appropriated to the Father. Among the first triad, the one closest to God, the thrones worship, the cherubim possess wisdom, and the seraphim love. Among the second triad, devoted to carrying out God’s commands, the dominions command, the virtues execute, and the powers implement. Among the third triad, which serves human beings, the principalities rule, the archangels reveal, and the angels assist. So again this hierarchy suggests unity but not equality. With the descending triads, the first of each has a responsibility that exceeds the other two. It is clear now that for Bonaventure, while auctoritas is appropriated to the Father, he “exercises” this authority by sharing it equally with the Son and Holy Spirit in the eternal, undiminished unity of the godhead. The celestial and sub-

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45 Ibid. ... unus pater patrum, qui Papa merito appellatur, tantum unus, primus, et summus pater spiritualis omnium patrum...

46 Ibid. ...Christus vicarius, fons, origo, et regula cunctorum principatum ecclesiasticorum ; a quo tanquam a summo derivatur ordinata potestas usque ad infima Ecclesiae membraz....

47 A drawback of Bonaventure’s presentation of the sub-celestial hierarchy centered on the pope is that he never completes the analogy by likening other aspects of the Church to the Son and Holy Spirit.

48 For the following, see Bonaventure, Breviloquium, 2.8 (V, 225b-226b).
celestial hierarchies bear traces of the Trinitarian cast of reality, but the created order—even among the angels—manifests inequality and so differs drastically. Bonaventure effectively concedes that certain hierarchies do manifest inequality of power. Despite this, he finds order with equality in the Trinity. The supercelestial hierarchy is constituted as a hierarchy of order—first, middle, last—rather than a hierarchy of greater and lesser members.

Having discussed the nuptial image of the Trinity and the hierarchical order, we now consider the third topic: the soul as adopted “daughter” of God the Father. If the human soul is made in the image of God, and God is triune, the soul must bear an image of the Trinity. Subscribing to this reasoning, Bonaventure continues to explore this longstanding motif. He sees the soul in union with God, having an intimate relationship with the Trinity. Following Alexander of Hales, he depicts the relationship of the soul to God in three ways, appropriating one to each divine person.49 He depicts the soul as feminine, so the blessed soul becomes the daughter of the eternal Father, the bride of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Spirit through grace.50 After he first unveils this triad of relationships at the start of Part 5, he comes back to it twice.51

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51 See *ibid.*, 5.1 (V, 253a) and 5.3 (V, 255a). The latter instance features a counter-triad of enemy of God, whore of the devil, and slave of sin.

Note also that in Part 4 Bonaventure twice speaks of the adoption of the elect. First, he does so while depicting the fittingness of the Second Person to assume human state as mediator in threefold fashion, as Word, Image, and Son. The Word is the one “by whom the Father expresses himself,” and the “image of the Father.” Further, “No one can more fittingly restore human beings to their status as God’s adopted children than the one who is God’s son by
Why is Bonaventure comfortable with calling the soul the “daughter of the eternal Father” while he is less emphatic elsewhere about addressing the “Our Father” to the First Person? Two considerations stand out. First, he is speaking strictly about the soul, the aspect of the human person elevated by grace, and so there is more room for affinity with God. Second, and more to the point, alongside “daughter” there are concomitant appropriations to the other two divine persons. The union of God with the soul reflects distinctive relationships with the divine persons. With the Father, he suggests that the believer enters his family and falls under his loving protection. The sweetness of intimacy is not there as it is with the Son, but rather the calming assurance of receiving one’s being and identity from the Father of lights.

We now turn to the culmination of the economy of creation and redemption. Above, we mentioned that Bonaventure returns to deducing from the First Principle in Part 7, on the last things. In fact, he intensifies the argument from the primity of the First Principle with such sayings as “by the very fact that it is first.”

Although he does not repeat the intelligible circle image in Part 7, his attentiveness to drawing the fittingness of the last things from the First Principle certainly suggests it. Once again, Part 7 does not contain many instances of the proper names of the Trinitarian persons. Instead, the mental analogies recur; the Trinitarian aspect certainly remains present, but more subdued as our author appears to emphasize the unity of the

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52 He does this in chapters 1, 2, 5, 6, and 7.

53 He does refer to the intelligible circle in 2.4 (V, 221b) and 5.1 (V, 253a).

54 A rare exception, he says that we must believe that there will be a judgment “in which God the Father, through our Lord Jesus Christ, will judge the living and the dead” (ibid., 7.1 [V, 281a]). On the basis of several New Testament passages, judgment is more typically assigned to the Son, as Bonaventure does further on (see V, 282a).
godhead as the saving economy reaches its rest. The Trinitarian image of the soul will be perfected, in a state which he describes in a typically Bonaventurean expression as “deiformity” (*deformitas*).\(^{55}\) “Becoming like God, [the soul] sees God clearly through the intellect; it loves God through the will; and it retains God forever through the memory.” Notice that this triad inverts the order slightly, as he does in a few other instances in Part 7, to end with the element that corresponds to God the Father. The inverted order is noteworthy in light of the critique of Moltmann and Pannenberg that the tradition too heavily relies upon constituting the Trinity according to the fixed pattern Father → Son → Holy Spirit. Bonaventure certainly holds to this pattern elsewhere, but we have also seen that he recognizes a “doxological” pattern for the Trinity. This is fitting for Bonaventure because in the end, time resolves into eternity as the elect pass out of this world to the Father, to dwell in union with God in the heavenly *patria*. Bonaventure yields the ending of *Breviloquium* to a favorite passage of his from Anselm’s *Proslogion*. This lengthy excerpt ends with a rather typical prayer form, addressed to “God,” here clearly appropriated to the Father, through the Son.

While *Breviloquium* is replete with triadic formulations, many of which involve appropriation to the Trinitarian persons, it is worth noting that neither the content nor the order is fixed. In the sphere of morality, for example, he describes the will as having the place of the Father even though the description of the mind reckoned this as the faculty of the Holy Spirit.\(^{56}\) As long as a Trinitarian implication is manifest, however, we can never say that the three qualities in view are disordered or redundant. Among them, one stands as origin of the others.

\(^{55}\) *Ibid.*, 7.7 (V, 289b). On the Trinitarian image of the soul as created, see *ibid.*, 2.9 (V, 226b-227b).

Bonaventure has thus provided a deductive theology, rooting his deductions in the Trinity as First Principle. Within the Trinity, the Father of Lights is the first principle and fontal source. The Son and Holy Spirit emanate from him and return to him in love, and all creation follows a similar pattern. The theme of deduction from First Principle and the abundant triads witness to the Father’s role in the Trinity. Although there are a few gaps, his theological system impressively integrates God the Father and the Trinity throughout. As with the *Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity*, Bonaventure’s method of presentation in *Breviloquium* has more in common with Pannenberg’s *Systematic Theology* than with the manuals of neo-Scholastic theology. He treats the attributes of God always in contact with the doctrine of the Trinity. Drawing from his rich academic study of the Trinity as *magister regens*, Bonaventure as minister general infuses his doctrine of the Trinity into all areas of theology. It must be stressed that he does not stop coming up with new formulations and expressions of his belief in the Trinity. Both features just mentioned—the rich synthesis of the Trinity with all aspects of theology and the willingness to adopt new terms and techniques of expression—continue to be the case in the *Itinerarium* to be explored next.

*Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*

When Bonaventure’s tenure as minister general began, he needed to travel more often as part of his responsibilities. Besides taking a toll on his body, these frequent journeys doubtless led him to think even more about the journey towards God as a spiritual motif. According to Timothy Johnson, Bonaventure preached at Arras in northern France on 27 July 1259, then he
“departed on perhaps the longest singular trip of his life for Mount Alverna.” In October 1259, he left the road for a time and composed a dense little book entitled *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum.* The place of composition factors significantly into the work. Upon Mount Alverna (La Verna in Italian), Francis of Assisi was reputed to have experienced a vision of Christ crucified. Bonaventure vividly sets down his inspiration in the prologue:

> It happened that, thirty-three years after the death of the Saint, about the time of his passing (*transitum*), moved by a divine impulse, I withdrew to Mount Alverna, as to a place of quiet, there to satisfy the yearning of my soul for peace. While I dwelt there, pondering on certain spiritual ascents to God, I was struck, among other things, by that miracle which in this very place had happened to the blessed Francis, that is, the vision he received of the winged seraph in the form of the Crucified.

Bonaventure takes the six wings of the seraph as a symbol of the stages that lead toward Christian wisdom, or as the title indicates, *into* (union with) God. As it turns out, he perceives a scheme such that the six illuminations are divided into three pairs. The first of each pair contemplates the matter in its reflection; the second contemplates the matter in itself. The mind proceeds from vestiges of God (material creation) through the likeness of God (the mind) and finally to God himself.

The fact that this work documents a spiritual quest toward contemplation does not mean that we should neglect it as a theological contribution. It is instructive that the Quaracchi editors and Jacques Bougerol categorize *Itinerarium* with other theological works rather than with the

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57 Johnson, “Prologue as Pilgrimage,” 455.


60 Bonaventure provides a roadmap for the stages in *Itinerarium,* 1.2-6 (V, 297a-b).
ascetical-mystical works. It is a journey of the mind, and in fact some perceive its style as akin to the university sermon.\textsuperscript{61} The little book is both “transitional and foundational,” Johnson says, “for it signals Bonaventure’s initial steps toward a decidedly pastoral perspective that will dominate his subsequent writings.”\textsuperscript{62}

The following treatment looks at Bonaventure’s theology of God the Father in \emph{Itinerarium} under two headings. First, we examine the Father’s place in the arc of the work, since Bonaventure certainly begins with a reflection on God the Father and arguably ends with the Father as well. In a manner reminiscent of the \emph{Disputed Questions} handled above, he traces an intelligible circle. Second, we must unpack his reflections on the Trinity in Part 6. The distinctiveness of his theology of God the Father shines through again here, but also some new elements. In a move that invites comparison with our contemporary interlocutors, he envisions the interpenetration of the persons of the Trinity. Nevertheless, he maintains that the Father is unique source and in a certain way the guarantor of order in the Trinity. He thus strives to combine perfect love with perfect order.

\textit{1. The Father as the Alpha and Omega}

Bonaventure begins and ends the \emph{Itinerarium Mentis in Deum} with the Father, or at least with the Trinity as appropriated in the Father as source. He is the first person of the Trinity to be mentioned by name at the beginning, and the last to be named at the ending. The \emph{primum}

\textsuperscript{61} Brown, Introduction to \emph{The Journey of the Mind to God} by Bonaventure, x.

\textsuperscript{62} Johnson, “Prologue as Pilgrimage,” 451.
principium is coterminous with the “Father of Lights” in the opening prayer of his prologue. It is union with the Father of Lights that he seeks throughout the journey, and at the end, the author bids the reader to join with him in passing over from this world to the Father through Christ. The sweep of the Itinerarium points to the Father as the Alpha and Omega of the Trinitarian life. This claim requires some unpacking through careful consideration of the prologue and chapter 7, with occasional attention to waypoints in between.

The alliterative opening words of the prologue, In principio primum principium, play on the meanings of the word principium and allude to two of the most commented upon passages of Scripture. In principio designates the beginning of the present work and the beginning of the letter and subject of Scripture as in Genesis 1:1 (In principio creavit Deus caelum et terram). It also points before the creation of the world to John 1:1, the “beginning” in which the Word was with God and was God (In principio erat Verbum). According to the other significance, which is also suggested by the patristic exegesis of the Johannine prologue, principium does not merely convey priority but also causality—especially when joined with primum, as we have seen. So Bonaventure begins the Itinerarium with this same phrase that has proven important throughout his theological works. The mystery of origins captivates him, and he continues to ruminate on it.

This work contains more evidence of the balanced signification of primum principium, pertaining to the entire Trinity but appropriated to the Father. For the clearest example, consider

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63 Bonaventure, Itinerarium, Prologue §1 (V, 295a). In principio primum principium, a quo cunctae illuminationes descendunt tanquam a Patre luminum, a quo est omne datum optimum et omne donum perfectum, Patrem scilicet aeternum, invoco per Filium eius, dominum nostrum Iesum Christum....

64 Ibid., 7.6 (V, 313b). ...transeamus cum Christo crucifixo ex hoc mundo ad Patrem, ut, ostenso nobis Patre, dicamus cum Philippo: Sufficit nobis....
his outline of the three branches of philosophy in chapter 3. Not only can natural, rational, and moral philosophy be appropriated to persons of the Trinity as a triad, but they also each possess three branches. Bonaventure thus discerns nested layers of reference. Under natural philosophy, metaphysics “deals with the essences of things… so it leads to the First Principle, the Father.” Under moral philosophy, individual ethics “suggests the unbegotten nature of the First Principle.” While other instances of primum principium have the entire Trinity in view, he allows a certain tension to remain by pointing out the special position of the Father.

It is entirely proper, then, to interpret the primum principium of the first line as appositional to Patrem aeternum, as the direct object of Bonaventure’s invocation. The specific word order trains the reader’s focus on the Father as the first beginning, the beginning from no beginning. Our author subsequently calls the emanation from the Father to mind. It is from the First Principle that “all illuminations flow, as from the Father of Lights, from whom is every best thing given and every perfect gift.” Much to the consternation of translators, his paraphrase alters the quotation from the Letter of James by insinuating distinct objects for what the Father gives: datum and donum. Bonaventure’s adjustments manifest the distinctive emphasis in his Trinitarian theology. We are prompted to recall his interpretation of the river from the mouth of the Ancient of Days, in his symbolic interpretation of Daniel 7. There, he had treated the adjectives “strong” and “fiery” distinctly to convey the distinct emanations of the Son and Holy Spirit. We saw in Breviloquium his interpretation of the Holy Spirit as gift in relation to James

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65 Ibid., 3.6.

66 Ibid., Prologue §1 (V, 295a), my translation. ... a quo cunctae illuminationes descendunt tanquam a Patre luminum, a quo est omne datum optimum et omne donum perfectum.

67 See above, 253.
These opening lines of the *Itinerarium*, however, suggest the two-fold procession by this reworking of the text.\(^69\)

The verb *invoco* signals the opening not as a narration or a philosophical statement, but as a prayer. Bonaventure calls upon God the Father, the source of all illumination, for his own illumination.\(^70\) If every good and perfect gift comes from him, he is the perfect giver. After starting with the destination of his prayer he mentions the three intermediaries. He puts them on different planes, using that common Trinitarian preposition *per* for the mediation of the Son, and a simple ablative with genitive for the intercession of Mary and Francis. He names the mediator by his sonship first (*per Filium eius*), then as Lord Jesus Christ (*Dominum nostrum Iesum Christum*). Therefore, it is through the Son of the Father that we can call upon the Father. This is distinct from intercession because it is the *only* way, so it is the means in such a way that it anticipates the realization of the end.

Bonaventure’s ultimate goal is not for just any kind of enlightenment, but the vision that bespeaks union with God, that of *ecstatic* wisdom. The dynamics of these first lines of the *Itinerarium* are borne out by the rest of this dense work. Shortly thereafter, he spells out that it is only through the Crucified that we can attain union with God.\(^71\) One does not come into union

\(^{68}\) See above, 341-342.

\(^{69}\) Neither the Boehner nor Hayes translation makes this distinction clear. The Boehner translation renders this phrase as “from whom every best and perfect gift,” while Hayes as “from whom comes every good and perfect gift.” See *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, trans. Zachary Hayes (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 2002). The Hayes translation similarly obscures the Trinitarian significance of the text by translating *a Patre luminum* as “from the God of lights.”

\(^{70}\) Bonaventure shifts from the singular first person to the plural first person shortly thereafter. Following Michel de Certeau, Johnson has noted this tendency in Bonaventure’s prologues (“Prologue as Pilgrimage,” 457-459).
with the Father alone, but it is nevertheless appropriate in Trinitarian language that this union, in
the Holy Spirit and through the Son, is oriented towards the Father. The treatment of
Bonaventure in the sections above has shown that the missions are of crucial importance to his
theology. Since the Father alone is not sent, this privation fittingly attests to something positive
about him. It is in fact that he epitomizes transcendence even as he shares it completely with the
Son and Holy Spirit. The Father thus appears in the prologue as the first beginning but also as the
goal of the journey.

In symbolic language, the opening prayer asks for light for the eyes and direction for the
feet, two basic things the wayfarer needs to make a journey. If the light permits keeping to a
straight path, the wayfarer finds the destination and may rest content. Illumination and peace, it
turns out, summarize the means and the end. The sequence of his thoughts alternate between
describing that peace and the vision. Bonaventure only mentions Francis by name in the
prologue and chapter 7, only at the beginning and the end of the Itinerarium. For Bonaventure,
Francis provides a model of peace and of contemplative vision, and his special vision provides
Bonaventure with the symbolic framework of the work, in the six wings of the seraph but also in
the cross. The ambivalent nature of that vision characterizes the Itinerarium, in that it provides a
glimpse of transcendent glory but proceeds through death, namely the death of Christ. The word
transitus encapsulates this ambivalence. As much as imagery pertaining to vision and light
dominate the course of the Itinerarium, the journey actually ends in a kind of darkness. Union
with the Father only comes by passing over through the death of Christ.

71 Bonaventure, Itinerarium, Prologue §3 (V, 295b). *Via autem non est nisi per ardentissimum amorem Crucifixi....*
It is easier to discern the Father as the origin than the Father as the end. The dense language of the final chapters poses a significant challenge to the reader. Bonaventure had warned of this density early on with his injunction to turn over his words carefully. It is humbling to make a decisive claim about their meaning. Jay Hammond has advanced a different reading of the Trinitarian trajectory than the one offered below. He claims that the Holy Spirit is the end of the *Itinerarium* based on his interpretation of the prologue and chapter 7. In accord with the interpretation above, he identifies the purpose of the text as attaining “a peace that surpasses all understanding.”

Among accomplishing other things, chapter 7 “quiets the groans of prayer with the ‘mystical wisdom’ revealed by the Spirit ‘in the superluminous darkness of a silence that teaches secretly’ (7.4-5). In effect, the entire text moves from the Father of lights who gives ‘every best and perfect gift’ (prol. 1) to ‘the gift of God, namely, the Holy Spirit (7.5).” Indeed, Bonaventure adverts to the involvement of the Holy Spirit in this final chapter. I interpret these references to the Spirit differently, however.

Achieving the vision of the Father of lights in the superluminous darkness is the proper “end” of the *Itinerarium*. It is necessary to understand this vision properly, which means in conjunction with the Trinity. “Seeing the Father” encapsulates the union of the soul with God which is impossible in this life. Properly speaking, of course, the entire Trinity is perfect spirit and hence invisible. Bonaventure’s emphasis on emanations correlates with an emphasis on exemplarity and consummation. In eternity, the consummation of the Holy Spirit is the bond of the Father and Son. In the temporal missions, the consummation of the Holy Spirit draws the

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elect into the Trinity. It is proper for the Holy Spirit to be involved in the *transitus* and to be the end, but this is still an incomplete framing of the end without the Father.

The interpretation that envisions the Father as the appropriated end depends upon an understanding of *transitus* and forms of its related verb (*transeo*). From the inception of the work, this term is linked with death. He uses it twice in the opening paragraphs to refer to Francis’ death. Later, after describing the Son as the ladder and the door, he speaks about passing over from this world with Christ to the Father.74 Forms of the word recur several times in chapter 7. As necessary and fruitful as the six steps are, Bonaventure holds that the mind “must still, in beholding [the sacred mysteries], transcend and pass over, not only this visible world, but even itself.”75 Through the cross, the mind passes over the Red Sea and may rest with Christ in the tomb. He likens this experience to Paul’s claim to have died with Christ. The stigmata invite comparison to a mystical death, and in receiving them Francis “passed over into God in a transport of contemplation.”76 Bonaventure invites his readers to imitate Francis in a way by yielding to the transformation of the Spirit and transcending the mind.

In the lengthy, penultimate Latin sentence of the *Itinerarium*, Bonaventure returns to treat this mystical death in conjunction with passing over to the Father. He employs wording from John 13:1: “Before the feast of Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this

74 Bonaventure, *Itinerarium*, 1.9 (V, 298b). ...*simus etiam Christiani cum Christo transeuntes ex hoc mundo ad Patrem*....

75 *Ibid.*, 7.1 (V, 312b). ...*restat, ut haec speculando transcendet et transeat non solum mundum istum sensibilem, verum etiam semetipsam*....

76 *Ibid.*, 7.3 (V, 312b). ...*ubi in Deum transit per contemplationis excessum*....
world to the Father…” He further references Philip’s request in 14:8, that he would be satisfied if Jesus would show him the Father. Bonaventure concludes the journey in this way:

Let us, then, die and enter into this darkness. Let us silence all our cares, our desires, and our imaginings. With Christ crucified, let us pass out of this world to the Father, so that, when the Father is shown to us, we may say with Philip: ‘It is enough for us.’ Let us hear with Paul: ‘My grace is sufficient for you,’ and rejoice with David, saying: ‘My flesh and my heart have fainted away: You are the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion forever. Blessed be the Lord forever, and let all the people say: so be it, so be it. Amen.’

Bonaventure had commented at length on John’s Gospel during his time as Bachelor of Scripture from 1248-1250, and these references trenchantly evoke Jesus’ own conscious exitus–reditus in that gospel. The glory of Jesus’ Passover comes in and through the Cross, but he must return to the Father. Bonaventure bids his readers to join with Christ in this transitus and leave behind all attachments to their own self in an ecstasy.

What about the alternative proposal to appropriate the Holy Spirit in the end? Certain phrases do especially signal the role of the Holy Spirit in Chapter 7. While the Christocentric focus of this work is quite obvious, the Spirit has been in the background of the whole Itinerarium. In the Prologue, Bonaventure specifies two ways that desire for contemplation is enkindled: “through the ‘outcry of prayer,’ which makes one sigh from ‘anguish of heart,’ and through the refulgence of speculation by which the mind most directly and intensely turns itself toward the rays of light.” While this precise phrase gemitus cordis comes from Ps 37:9, it can also be an allusion to Romans 8:22-26. The Spirit teaches the elect to pray and leads them as

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77 Ibid., 7.6 (V, 313b).
78 Ibid., Prologue §3 (V, 296a). Desideria autem in nobis inflammantur dupliciter, scilicet per clamorem orationis, quae rugire facit a gemitu cordis, et per fulgorem speculationis, qua mens ad radios lucis directissime et intentissime se convertit.
they await adoption as children of God. Returning to chapter 7, Bonaventure uses some parallel language regarding the importance of desire. He says,

In this passing over, if it is to be perfect, all intellectual activities ought to be relinquished and the loftiest affection transported to God, and transformed into Him. This, however, is mystical and most secret...no one receives it except him who desires it, and no one desires it except he who is penetrated to the marrow by the fire of the Holy Spirit, Whom Christ sent into the world.\(^{79}\)

Notice the use of fire (\textit{ignis}) here. Although the name \textit{Spiritus sanctus} was absent from the Prologue, the fire was not. The \textit{transitus} to peace was doubly characterized by two phrases in parallel, each with the preposition \textit{per}: “through the ecstatic transports of Christian wisdom” \textit{(transeat at pacem per ecstaticos excessus sapientiae christianae)} and “through nothing else than a most ardent love of the Crucified” \textit{(nisi per ardentissimum amorem Crucifixi)}.\(^{80}\) The fire of the Spirit enables this Paschal transcendence of self \textit{(excessus)}. It is the Spirit’s work, which is why all is owed to the Gift and none to the effort. Just as the way is through \textit{(per)} Christ, it is also through \textit{(per)} the Holy Spirit. Although Bonaventure does not say this, it would not be an intrusion for him to link the groaning of prayer in the Holy Spirit, which precedes the \textit{transitus}, with the dying words of Christ in Luke’s gospel, “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit” \textit{(Lk 23:46)}. At any rate, Bonaventure envisions the missions of the Son and Spirit reaching their perfect fulfillment in the burning love of the Crucified that is the door to the Father.

\(^{79}\) \textit{Ibid.}, 7.4 (V, 312b). \textit{In hoc autem transit, si sit perfectus, oportet quod relinquantur omnes intellectuales operationes, et apex affectus totus transferatur et transformentur in Deum. Hoc autem est mysticum et secretissimum, quod nemo novit, nisi qui accipit, nec accipit nisi qui desiderat, nec desiderat nisi quem ignis Spiritus sancti medullitus inflammat, quem Christus misit in terram.}

\(^{80}\) \textit{Ibid.}, Prologue §3 (V, 295b). Note that directly after this line Bonaventure refers to Paul’s mystical death.
2. The Goodness of the Father: Balancing Authority and Circumincession

When Bonaventure describes the stages of his ascent in chapter 1, he sets the consideration of the First Principle as a penultimate goal. To perceive that which is above the mind (superior), the reader must proceed from God’s vestiges in the world (exterior) and through the mind (interior). He then reveals that each level can be subdivided “according to whether we consider God as the Alpha or the Omega, or whether we consider Him in any one of the aforesaid ways as through or as in a mirror.” 81 Another way to put the distinction, he offers, is to “consider each…in itself or in conjunction with another that is related to it.” So the stages number six, and while he provides plenty of glimpses of the Trinity throughout, the last two turn the gaze toward the First Principle proper. These stages differ significantly from one another. In the fifth, he considers the divine unity in God’s “primary name” as Being (Esse), while in the sixth he considers the Trinity in his name as Good (Bonum). Recalling the scheme as laid out in chapter 1, it would seem that the Trinity comes second because of the personal relations bound up with it. The fifth step, following the revelation of God’s name to Moses as “I Am who I Am” (Ex 3:14), considers God’s attributes as discussed in Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity, though in much less detail. He still imbues the step with triads, but the proper names of the persons do not appear. 82 While a few connections may arise, our focus will be on chapter six on the Trinity.

81 Ibid., 1.5 (V, 297b). ...secundum quod contingit considerare Deum ut alpha et omega, seu in quantum contingit videre Deum in unoquoque praedictorum modorum ut per speculum et ut in speculo....

82 There is one exception, in the second paragraph, which only names the persons as it introduces the distinction between the two steps covered in chapters 5 and 6 respectively. Bonaventure, Itinerarium, 5.2 (V, 308b).
Bonaventure’s discourse concerning the Trinity in this chapter is simultaneously familiar and quite distinctive. The distinctiveness seems mostly to arise from the unique genre and intent of the Itinerarium. Since the reader has reached the highest step of the six, imagery related to the Ark of the Covenant dominates the chapter. Rather than suggesting how the divine mystery is present in other things, now Bonaventure bids the reader to consider that mystery in itself. The works considered above have all evidenced Bonaventure’s proclivity for symbolism, but in a more diffuse way compared to the density of this text. The biblical images form the entire texture of this work. The lines of reasoning that he lays out for the reader, though, are quite familiar. Although he is not providing formal proofs of the Trinity, neither is this solely devotional literature. He presents dense and fairly rigorous considerations so that the mind might marvel at the mystery of the Trinity.

The title provides the key to the chapter: the Trinity attests to God’s name as the Good. In the opening lines, he declares, “the Good itself is the principal foundation of the contemplation of the personal emanations.” Scripturally, he draws this from Jesus’ words, “No one is good but God alone” (Lk 18:19). In the theological tradition, he appeals to Pseudo-Dionysius. Throughout his career, Bonaventure treasured the insight from Pseudo-Dionysius, mediated through his teachers, that the good is self-diffusive. He combines it with Anselm’s premise that God is the highest good, to reckon that the highest good must be self-diffusive to the highest degree. Since diffusion is at the core of what makes God who he is, the Father’s centrality follows naturally.

83 Ibid., 6.1 (V, 310b). ... sic contemplationis emanationum ipsum bonum est principalissimum fundamentum.
84 Ibid., 5.2 (V, 308b). Nemo, inquit, bonus nisi solus Deus. The quoted words also appear in Mk 10:18 and with a slight variant in Mt 19:17.
Relative to the length of the work, *Itinerarium* focuses more on language conveying love and intimacy than the works from Bonaventure considered above. He does not discard the focus on emanations in the Trinity; indeed, he sees the emanations as the perfection of divine love, but manifesting non-reciprocal ordering based on the relations of origin. This is key for responding to Moltmann and Pannenberg. Bonaventure’s description of the Trinity indicates the Father’s ineffable generosity in pouring himself out and serving as principle of the mutual indwelling (*circumincessio*). The non-reciprocity of origin abides simultaneously with the reciprocity of the gift. While Bonaventure does not describe the Trinity as a hierarchy here, he does use language that conveys a certain primacy on the basis of origin, for example *auctoritas*. The next few paragraphs, then, will explore how he balances love and order in chapter 6.

Bonaventure’s considerations in this chapter take the following order, which will be numbered for convenient reference below. After setting out the thesis for the chapter (#1), that the Good itself is the foundation of the emanations, Bonaventure bids the reader to observe the highest good and reasons from this concept to the Trinity (#2). The reader is, as it were, passive in this step, beholding the thoughts that the author unfolds. If the reader does follow this consideration, Bonaventure says (#3) that the reader can see that “through the utmost communicability of the Good, there must exist (*necesse esse*) a Trinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”

85 He draws a series of necessary conclusions, using the expressions *necessesse est* and *necessario*. This section contains a chain of reasoning with no antitheses. At this stage, the reader’s mind is settled on certain conclusions. In an abrupt change (*sed*), he then issues a

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85 *Ibid.*, 6.2 (V, 311a), emphasis added. ...*potes videre, per summam boni communicabilitatem necesse esse Trinitatem, Patris et Filii et Spiritus sancti.* Bonaventure delicately balances the reasonability and the necessity of the Trinity. These conclusions are necessary, he says, for someone whose mind is cleansed and can see the love and goodness of the First Principle. The type of necessity here is not bare logical necessity.
caveat that we are dealing with the incomprehensible, and sets forth wonders (#4) for the reader to admire. This section juxtaposes seemingly contradictory divine qualities (e.g. identity of nature and distinct personality). Having listed the six pairs of incredible characteristics, he bids the reader to gaze (#5) at the Good again with him, and he attempts to encapsulate Trinitarian teaching once more (#6). This time, the reader understands these truths about the Trinity most certainly (haec omnia certissime intelligimus esse in beatissima Trinitate). In the following sentences, he resolves the contradictions in the unity of essence and distinction of persons. Addressing his reader once more (#7), Bonaventure concedes that thinking of these matters singly results in the truth, but suggests a comparative approach that will lift the mind to the apex of admiration. This recalls the distinction between the apprehending and resolving intellect.

Looking back at this section, we perceive a complex structure. In #2 and #5, Bonaventure invites the reader to behold the highest goodness, although in the first he elaborates on the good and anticipates the findings of the further considerations. #3 and #6 are also parallel in advocating logical correlations. While #3 ends in necessity, a mystery remains. Upon another lifting of the eyes toward the good, the mind attains certitude, even if the mystery ever precludes full comprehension.

The foregoing remarks tell us three things about God the Father in this chapter. First, Bonaventure’s starting point is not “divine unity” but the goodness of the Father. Despite the Itinerarium starting with the primum principium, and the repeated derivation of truths from the primum principium in Breviloquium, he does not lead off with explicating the Trinity as First

86 Ibid., 6.3.
87 See above, 279.
Principle here. He merges this idea with the good, and names it as First Principle further down. In #1, he says that the “Good itself is the principal foundation of the contemplation of the personal emanations,” thus pointing to the Father not as an impersonal source but as the loving source of loving persons. The eternal diffusion of the Good must be, among other qualities (#2), “natural and voluntary, free and necessary.” These pairs point to the distinct emanations of the Son and Holy Spirit, as they recall per modum naturae and per modum voluntatis. Having alluded to these distinct emanations, Bonaventure sketches the order of eternal principle (aeternale principium), meaning the Father, and eternal co-principle (aeternale comprincipians), meaning the Son. He deftly turns from these two persons communicating the good to the two persons receiving the good, this time under the Victorine language of beloved (dilectus) and co-beloved (condilectus). In the Highest Good, producing means producing love, and receiving means receiving love.

This important quality of love is clear in #3 as well, as Bonaventure rephrases the foregoing remarks by hailing “the Principle that loves with a love both free and due and a mixture of both, a love which is the fullest diffusion by way of nature and will.” He employs forms of the term communicatio, which can suggest sharing, to complement diffusio. The highest communicability of the persons ultimately entails their infinite intimacy, their mutual indwelling or interpenetration (circumincessio), and their joint activity. Even though it might appear that Bonaventure starts with a concept of the essence, the seemingly abstract notion of Good, we perceive that goodness is fundamentally personal, oriented towards another. While the precise analogy of fatherhood or parenting does not appear on the surface, his emphasis on self-
emptying love, a love that holds nothing back, shines through here. God the Father eternally “begins” a personal union of the highest and most perfect love.

Second, it confirms what was found in the *Sentences Commentary*, that the analysis according to emanation has logical priority but needs to be complemented by a stronger concept of distinct personhood. Even if the above paragraph accentuates the personal character of goodness and love, Bonaventure’s first approach (#2 and #3) resembles Bonaventure’s intimations of the positive meaning of innascibility. The reader sees the Trinity as necessary, but the mind does not yet understand it as fully as it can. The complications of #4 prompt Bonaventure to gaze upward again, and in this approach to the mystery he uses more conventional scholastic terminology. Thus in #6 he speaks of order (*ordo*) and distinction (*distinctio* and *distinguo*). The communication and diffusion lead to the distinctions based on origin. Since this communication is complete, the gift is completely given, and the essence is thus one but intrinsically constituted with distinct properties. It is these properties that result in the “Trinity by the numbers” mnemonic distillation found in *In I Sent.* d. 26 and *Breviloquium* Part 1. He merely presupposes that his readers are familiar with that account here. The distinguishing properties link with “an emanation of origin, and an order, not of time but of origin.” Just as we saw in the *Sentences Commentary*, the innascibility of the Father possesses an important positive significance, yet does not suffice to constitute him as person. He complements the account of divine communicability with the order of specific personal properties that define the persons according to relations of origin.

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88 See above, 268ff.
Third, chapter 6 indicates that if authority is rooted firmly in love and goodness, it abides in order and equality. In his first depiction of the Good (#2), Bonaventure starts from diffusion and stipulates the presence of an equally noble hypostasis (hypostasis aeque nobilis), but does not yet develop the nature of this relationship. If the mind perceives the Good rightly (#3), the communicability, consubstantiality, and co-resemblance (configurabilitas) inherent in the Good necessarily entail highest co-equality (summam coaequalitatem). This does not result in merely a juridical equality, but superlative oneness in dignity that inheres in perfect intimacy. Bonaventure calls this the “highest co-intimacy” (summam cointimitatem). The prefix co-, as with co-equality, might seem redundant, but Bonaventure insists on the supreme mutuality of the Trinity here. This accumulation of co- words is quite noteworthy—the Trinity is certainly no monad for Bonaventure. Co-intimacy is that quality “by which one is necessarily in the other through the highest circumincession, and one works with the other through a complete lack of division of the substance and power and activity of the most Blessed Trinity itself.” 89 The persons dwell within one another and act in perfect unison.

This depiction, as beautiful as it is, might suggest a lack of order that is unfitting in Bonaventure’s eyes. The conjunction of order and equality comes into focus in the binaries of #4 of the scheme above. As he runs down the chain of reasoning from #3, the mind is potentially confused by “the highest co-equality along with order (ordine), the highest co-eternity along with emanation, and the highest co-intimacy along with sending forth (emissio).” 90 In the second

89 Bonaventure, Itinerarium, 6.2 (V, 311a), my translation. …atque ex omnibus praedictis summam cointimatem, qua unus est in altero necessario per summam circumincessionem et unus operatur cum aëo per omnimodam indivationem substantiae et virtutis et operationis ipsius beatissimae Trinitatis.

90 Ibid., 6.3 (V, 311a), my translation.
upward gaze of the mind, along with the distinctions discussed above, he finds order. Just because the gift is given completely, or in other words the emanation is perfect, the “directionality” of the gift does not fade away into disorder; rather, it eternally defines the persons. Along with origin, and indeed correlated with that pattern of origin, there is also a sending forth (emissionem). “There is also a sending forth, not involving a change of location, but of freely given breathing (gratuite inspirationis), on account of the authority which the producer, as sender, has with respect to the one sent.”\footnote{Ibid., my translation. \textit{Et emissionem non localis mutationis, sed gratitute inspirationis, per rationem auctoritatis producentis, quam habet mittens respectu missi.}} Oddly, the language of this passage relates to that of the spiration of the Holy Spirit but not the begetting of the Son. It should be inferred that, just as he spoke of the Father and Son as \textit{principium} and \textit{comprincipiantes} before, here he leaves the possessor of the \textit{auctoritas} open. The Son has it with respect to the Holy Spirit, but Father has it with respect to both. He does clarify this two-fold sending later, when he invites the reader to take the perspective of the “other Cherub.” Marveling at the concomitance of co-intimacy with sending forth (emissione), he adds, “for the Son is sent by the Father, and the Holy Spirit by both the Father and Son, and yet the Holy Spirit sent from both ever remains with them and never departs from them.”\footnote{Ibid., 6.6 (V, 311b).} Though Bonaventure does not use the modern immanent-economic distinction with regard to the Trinity, this note shows their coordination (if not identity) in his thought. The “sending forth” of the Son and Holy Spirit in the temporal missions does not remove them from their mutual indwelling, but that mutual indwelling has an eternal form of order. Returning to the “authority” comment, Bonaventure wishes to make clear that this “authority”—or service as source—protects the non-reciprocal ordering of the persons but does
not denigrate their equal dignity. Thus, in sharp contrast to Moltmann, he maintains circumincession with emanation. The persons interpenetrate one another, but never without what makes them proper persons, \textit{i.e.} the way in which they communicate the divine essence.

The mind’s understanding of Trinitarian doctrine is not the only consideration at the summit of the journey; Bonaventure also bids the reader to consider the perfect union of divine and human natures in Christ. At the end of the Trinitarian consideration proper (#7), and in the remainder of the chapter, Bonaventure’s concern is with contemplation, but in doing so he suggests a particular image for augmenting one’s understanding of the two mysteries. In other words, he suggests not merely a way of praying, but of “learning” the Trinity and Incarnation. The human mind cannot consider all things at once, but first singly; then, with some certainty gained, the mind can appreciate other connections. While a perfect account is the goal, with its comprehensive abstraction, the perspectival and incremental nature of human understanding is insurmountable.\footnote{In \textit{Breviloquium}, Prologue, §2 (V, 204b). Bonaventure says that we need Scripture to tell us of protology and eschatology because at present we cannot glimpse it ourselves, because our perspective is narrow in comparison with the length of time.} As Brown interprets it, “the Cherubim who faced each other symbolize a comparative approach.”\footnote{Bonaventure, \textit{Itinerarium}, 6.4 (V, 311b). \textit{Nam et Cherubim hoc designant, quae se mutuo aspeciebant.}} One should attempt to grasp the divine attributes and characteristics on their own, one by one, but the higher way brings them into comparison with each other as much as possible. The first way pertains to what is true, while the second grasps these truths at a higher level, uplifting the mind.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, 6.3 (V, 311a-b): “While you consider these things, one by one, you have the subject matter that will enable you to contemplate Truth. When you compare them with one another, you have the subject matter that lifts you to the utmost heights of admiration. Therefore, that you mind may rise, through admiration, to admiring contemplation, you must consider all these attributes together.”} The first Cherub wonders at the essential qualities of God (e.g. he is
eternal but most present) while the second wonders at the properties of the persons (*propria
personarum*). He directs the reader, having adopted these perspectives, to turn toward the Mercy
Seat to marvel even more deeply. For the mind attempting to grasp theological truth, this
suggests that the means to ascent is shifting perspectives while holding onto the insights
previously gained.

Although Bonaventure does not draw this out in this close-knit text, this method has
implications for how to grasp his doctrine of the Father. In themselves, circumincession and
completely self-giving authority are mysteries that seem contradictory. Looking to the gospel
presentation of Christ, especially in the Gospel of John, helps to draw these marvelous and
seemingly-competing perspectives into a higher unity. The Word “was with God” according to
one cherub, and “was God” according to the other. The Son is “sent into the world” according to
one, and is “one with the Father” according to the other. Such is the Father, exercising
“authority” by yielding to others and letting go of his Son, only to glorify him and draw others
into unity through sending the Spirit with him. This picture of the Father suggests Jesus’ answer
to Philip (Jn 14:9-11). God the Father remains beyond but still comes down fully in his Son. So
Bonaventure bids the reader marvel at the conjunction of the Father’s transcendence and
immanence, his lofty authority and his humble circumincession, and in this conjunction rise to
perceive the glory of the Trinity.
Conclusion

In these works, Bonaventure provides an excellent synthesis of Trinitarian doctrine. He also deftly upholds the order of origin with the unity of the godhead and equality of the persons. Not that these elements were absent in his prior treatments, but it is clear that the twin concepts of love and the good are key to his Trinitarian theology here. The Father’s full communication of his substance and nature, which is fundamentally good, is the eternal act of the first lover. Bonaventure speaks of the mutual indwelling of the persons, but this is never without a sense of order. Origin provides the only proper personal distinction in the Trinity. In comparison with the prologues of the Sentences Commentary, these works show the thorough infusion of Trinitarian doctrine into all elements of theology. The Brevilloquium and Itinerarium Mentis in Deum are products of deep, sustained reflection on the Trinity.

In Brevilloquium, Bonaventure discusses each of the key attributes (omnipotence, omniscience, and benevolence) in the language of emanation and return. In this way he strikes balance and maintains order. Given the critique of Moltmann and Pannenberge, it is fascinating that he uses reverse triads, especially when treating eschatology. Along with the prevalence of emanation and return, however, he also puts strong emphasis on relational language and the names of the Trinitarian persons. The Father’s proper name is “Father,” and this basic Scriptural relationship is determinative for his Trinitarian doctrine. The Father, not the essence, is the starting point. God the Father begets God the Son in the highest love. The persons dwell in each other, but in a way that the “sent” persons still refer to or point to their sender. From the very opening quotation of the Brevilloquium, it is apparent that God’s fatherhood has an important
place in the work. His brief summation of the saving economy reaches its climax in the consummation of God’s love in the faithful becoming children of God through the Word. This adoption is appropriated to God the Father.

The *Itinerarium* provides a different synthesis of the same doctrinal content, in accord with its unique purpose. Like the Breviloquium, the work is saturated with triads appropriated to the persons of the Trinity, and the work traces a trajectory toward the Trinity and the Father in a particular respect. The Father is the starting point—we first must call upon him to lavish us with his gifts—and union with him is also the goal, since through the Son and Holy Spirit, we “pass over” to God the Father. So Bonaventure’s opening prayer calls upon the Father through the Son, and this order is reflected at the end of the journey as well; in the ecstasy of contemplation the mind passes out of this world to the Father. Whereas the *Breviloquium* explains Trinitarian doctrine first, the *Itinerarium* contemplates the Trinity last. The specifically Trinitarian content of this work focuses similarly on the supreme communication within God, described as the good and as love. This diffusion of goodness is not conceived impersonally, but is the Good Father bringing forth the Son and Holy Spirit in love, and establishing Trinitarian order in which there is mutuality and intimacy. The persons are fully in and toward each other, but they must possess identity and distinct personhood. If this were not the case, there would not be a Trinity but some distortion of it. Bonaventure’s image of the Trinity aims not at juridical equality, or “sameness,” but at the superlative oneness of co-equality. Thus his vision of circumincession is quite different from Moltmann’s. Also, unlike Pannenberg, he envisions a Trinitarian reciprocation rather than individually reciprocal relations. If the Father is sole origin, that points to him as originating mutuality and intimacy. The Father’s identity is oriented toward another. This harks back to the
Father’s personhood being appropriately located in his fatherhood despite the prominence of innascibility. His vision of love entails not holding anything back. The Father eternally “principles” a personal union of perfect love.

Because the Father is not sent, the missions must in some way point to integration with him. The privation of being sent attests to something positive: he epitomizes transcendence even as he shares transcendence with the Son and Holy Spirit. The balanced senses of *primum principium* in both of these works—referring to the Trinity generally and in an appropriate way to God the Father—aptly demonstrate the Father’s central role in bringing forth the other divine persons in superlative goodness, from his very self. Bonaventure thus has elaborated a proper interpretation of the Father’s “monarchy” in *Breviloquium* and *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, using the various senses of *principium* that he has honed throughout his Trinitarian works.
Conclusion to Part III

While the works from Augustine studied above spanned roughly forty years, the works from Bonaventure spanned less than ten. He shows remarkable consistency of thought in these works. Even so, there are signs of refinement over the course of them. The prologues for the Sentences Commentaries showed less integration of the Trinity into the whole scope of theology than the Breviloquium. The Disputed Questions serves as a key text linking these two phases, as he was able to formulate a dense scholastic tract that argued for the consistency of “primity” with the Trinity. He rarely calls the Father the “first principle” in as few words, but he grew in confidence in his balance of the primity of the Father within the Trinity as first principle. While Bonaventure increasingly employs the term “first principle” over the course of these works, his use of “innascibility” diminishes. He never held one without the other, but his powerful understanding of Father as primum principium in a special sense, developed in the Sentences Commentary but refined in the Disputed Questions, enabled him to invest in other terminology. As a consequence, Breviloquium and Itinerarium Mentis in Deum maintain a sense of coming from and going to the Father, but alongside new terms to express the mutuality of the persons of the Trinity.

In a sense, it might be argued that the two articles of the Disputed Questions, with alternating focus on the unity of God and trinity of God, resemble the cherubim of Itinerarium Mentis in Deum. Bonaventure’s Trinitarian theology is flexible enough that each of the persons can signify the divine unity. The Father can signify unity as the principle without principle, the source of the Son and Holy Spirit and in some sense their end as they are retraced to him in love. The Son can signify unity as the middle person of the Trinity, receiving from the Father and
giving to the Spirit. The Holy Spirit can signify unity as the bond or gift joining the Father and the Son as one principle. Bonaventure’s theology of the Father helps him to achieve this balance.

For Bonaventure, the Father is true Father of the Son, but he is also analogously the father of creation as well. He conceives of the Father as the first person of an egalitarian hierarchy. There is no cause or effect, no before or after, but in the Trinity there is only the relationship of “principling” person to “principled” person. Since the Father is principle of both the Son and Holy Spirit, he holds a special position within the Trinity as “first principle.” Bonaventure envisions him as ruling along with the Son and Holy Spirit—his “authority” with regard to the other persons does not designate domination over them or their “dependence” upon him. Bonaventure does take the adjective “almighty” seriously, but again his concept of power differs radically from that of Moltmann. Power is appropriated to the Father, which is to say that the Son and Holy Spirit possess the same power along with him. As First Person, his power is demonstrated most emphatically by the eternal production of the Son and Holy Spirit. These emanations are also appropriated as wisdom and love. A concept of sheer power without relation to the fullness of wisdom and love has no place in the Trinity.

Bonaventure praises the one God, and each of the persons are fully worthy of praise. Bonaventure does not let on to any tension between monotheistic and Trinitarian worship. It is apparent in many instances that he praises the one God in a Trinitarian way. The Father’s place within the Trinity as principium also points to the means of “return” to him in worship—that is, through the Son and Holy Spirit. Of the texts investigated here, the Itinerarium makes this especially clear. He also makes this clear in the Disputed Questions, however, in the analogous
relationship of the created order to the divine order. The Trinity means perfect mediation back to God. This is both a mystery worthy of contemplation and the mystery that makes contemplation possible. The Father’s primity ensures return to the origin; there is a distinct and discernable origin in the Trinity rather than an infinite number of steps to the unoriginate origin.

With regard to the cluster of questions from the modern theologians on reciprocity and whether there can be a “first person,” it should be clear that Bonaventure sees non-reciprocity of origin as perfectly compatible with the reciprocity of intimacy. The Father as sole unoriginate person guarantees that we have one God rather than three, but he is the greatest good precisely because he does not hold it back, but brings it forth eternally. The relations of origin need to be abstracted from temporal and material considerations. There is a type of giving and receiving in God where the relations are non-reciprocal but the love is reciprocating. The Son and Holy Spirit come forth but also turn back eternally. This insight points in his later writings to an orderly form of circumincession. The persons truly abide with and in one another, but they do so as distinct persons with distinct identities in the godhead. In this way, Bonaventure maintains the Father’s distinctive role as principle with a fitting concept of equality and unity.
Part IV: Comparison and Conclusion

It is fitting now to bring these investigations from Augustine and Bonaventure into conversation with modern theology more explicitly. A brief restatement of the problem is in order, before comparing these authors to each other and finally retrieving insights from them that seem especially pertinent to the various facets of the problem identified. Thus we can envision their response to the modern situation.

Several contemporary theologians have challenged the major Trinitarian paradigm that has been received by theologians from Eastern and Western traditions since at least the Council of Nicaea. Among other complaints that have been raised, a particular challenge has emerged regarding the fittingness of relations of origin as a way of articulating the unity of the Trinity. This traditional account, rooted in the revelation of Jesus Christ as Son of the Father, distinguished the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit according to their distinctive identity within the oneness of God. The New Testament confirms the Old Testament’s firm monotheism; it usually equates the “one God” with the Father of Jesus, but speaks also of the Son and Holy Spirit in ways that indicate their divinity with the Father. It is true that there has been much controversy and division over the doctrine of the Trinity for several centuries. Even so, approaches in the East and West formulated that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit constitute the one God: one substance (ousia or essentia) and three persons (persones) or hypostases (hypostaseis). The notion that the Son and Holy Spirit received their being from another, namely the Father, constituted one of the major obstacles to the emerging Trinitarian orthodoxy.

The accounts of the origin of the Son and Holy Spirit, then, are not peripheral but central to the development of Trinitarian doctrine. From the start, the accounts have been challenged
from within Christianity and without. Any lack of balance disrupts the entire explanation. Putting too much emphasis on the notion of origination in God could lead to ontological subordination. Not having the persons bound eternally by relationship of origin, however, can lead either to modalism or tritheism, as God is comprised either of three parts or of three free agents, respectively. The modern critique of the non-reciprocity of relations of origin thus strikes at the heart of pro-Nicene theology. The person implicated most in this recent reassessment is God the Father.

God the Father has long been held as the unique source within the Trinity. This is most clear in typical accounts of the Trinity from Eastern traditions. In the face of variations of Arianism, among others the Cappadocian theologians came to define the Father’s *monarchia*. Despite some misinterpretations that achieved great prominence in the last century, the same has been true of the West as well. The terminology in the West is different, but Augustine taught that the Father is the principle of the whole divinity, the origin from no origin. Presentations of Trinitarian doctrine have differed down the centuries, but the Father’s unique place within the ordering of the persons in terms of origin has remained relatively unscathed. It may have been a neglected and misunderstood aspect of doctrine, but it was not seriously challenged until recently.

Moltmann and Pannenberg are two theologians who have seriously challenged the traditional emphasis on modes of origin as an account of the Trinity. They inveigh against a monolithic view of the Trinity, particularly criticizing the “modes of subsistence” terminology of Barth and Rahner as too modalistic. They both entertain, far more than most theologians have
dared to, the idea that the persons manifest distinct centers of consciousness. While perceiving different solutions to the problem, both of these theologians perceive the traditional doctrine of the monarchy of the Father to be untenable. Along with this, they wish to radically reorient the relations of the Trinity, from identifying them on the basis of origin to identifying them on the basis of the eschatological consummation of the Trinity. The unity of the Trinity becomes an achievement to be awaited in a certain sense, rather than the beginning (principium) that embraces all time.

Moltmann in particular has problems with the traditional doctrine of God the Father because in his perspective it encourages patriarchy, a worldview that privileges a “father”-king or paterfamilias to dominate others. He scoffs at the danger of tritheism, but consistently rails against any kind of subordinating tendency in theology. Relationships of origin are fixed and incompatible with genuine equality, he claims. The Nicene Creed may start with “I believe in one God, the Father Almighty,” but Moltmann has no regard for the adjective “almighty,” less regard for “father” in conjunction with “almighty,” and a radical wish to redefine “God” and God’s unity. He has no room in his theology for monarchia, seemingly for pragmatic reasons. He strives to ward off any application of the Father’s identity as “father” outside of a Trinitarian context, which means for him the embrace of new daughters and sons through the Cross-event. His system moves away from the unity in origin and towards a unity in perichoresis. Many of his formulations could even be characterized as subordinating the Father in favor of the Holy Spirit.

Pannenberg’s primary misgivings with the traditional accounts center on the possibility of subordination and the non-reciprocity of relations of origin. In his telling, the widespread
ancient view that a cause is greater than its effect still exerts its grip on modern theology. He pays lip service to the monarchy, but the way in which he revises the concept voids it of its meaningfulness. Applied within the Trinity, the doctrine of monarchy always conveyed that one person is source; Pannenberg holds out for a “shared monarchy” to alleviate the perspective from the vantage point of creation. He identifies monarchy with governance rather than origin. God’s kingdom, or God’s power, is exchanged by the divine persons at different moments in the economy of creation and salvation. He tentatively holds onto some notion of source within the Trinity, and in denying the filioque he casts his exegetical judgment in favor of the Father as sole source. In spite of this, he flips the ontological priority to the future, such that the Trinity awaits unity in a certain sense. His concepts of time and eternity are complex; he holds that when the consummation of time merges it with eternity, the Trinity will be seen to have been one all along. Pannenberg puts a premium on what and how creatures can know about God; as long as his kingdom is in some doubt, the monarchy is not yet realized. The Spirit draws creation towards this future, and so Pannenberg too orients his system towards a monarchy of the Spirit.

The systematic problem is intertwined with a historical problem. “Western” theology has often been misunderstood, and a persistent position in the last century held that the West “starts with” the divine unity and proceeds to the three persons. Even though the position mostly stemmed from a particular interpretation of Thomas Aquinas’ *Summa theologiae*, which started a pattern of handling *De deo uno* before *De deo trino*, fault often was laid at the feet of Augustine. In militating against faulty pedagogical paradigms, theologians also commonly but mistakenly assumed that the tradition neatly divided doctrine into the “immanent Trinity” and “economic Trinity.” In other words, the eternal processions of the Trinity were sealed off from the missions...
of the Son and Holy Spirit in the economy of salvation. In the view of critics like Pannenberg and Moltmann, this led to the separation of Trinitarian doctrine from the rest of Christian doctrine.

There has been a pressing need, then, for a reassessment of the Western tradition’s teaching regarding God the Father. Systematic theology has always greatly benefitted from retrieving insights from the past and applying them to new challenges. As it turns out, there are tremendous strengths in the accounts of Augustine and Bonaventure that respect many of the concerns of Moltmann and Pannenberg or otherwise defuse them, while still expressing a vibrant theology of God the Father.

The limits of the study required a few theologians to be examined in depth rather than an exhaustive treatment of the entire tradition. A number of other figures could have been chosen and studied fruitfully; relatively little has been done with a view to this particular problem, so there is room for further study of figures such as Hilary of Poitiers, Anselm of Canterbury, and Richard of St. Victor, to name only a few. These authors have made substantial contributions to the development of Trinitarian doctrine in the West, and in the research for this dissertation their influence on Bonaventure was clear on a number of points. Augustine, however, was an obvious choice from the start because of his decisive influence on the entire West. In a telling comment by Henri de Lubac, in the medieval West it was not a question of whether a theologian was an “Augustinian,” but rather which “school” of Augustinianism one followed. Augustine also made sense because of the historical problem identified above. The last century has seen widespread criticism of Augustine on a whole host of issues. In Trinitarian theology, he was most often seen
as promoting two particular problems, which are interrelated. First, his emphasis on the unity of the activity of the divine persons *ad extra* purportedly led to the bifurcation of doctrine of the Trinity from the rest of dogma and the life of the believer. Second, his attempts at finding a trinity in the mind in *De Trinitate* led to unicity or even modalism rather than reveal the glory of the Trinity. Since studies have appeared that challenged the prevailing paradigm regarding these criticisms, the window was wide open for a reassessment of his thought as it relates to God the Father.

The thirteenth century does not have a monopoly on impressive theological accounts, but it did make particular sense for this study to choose an author from this context to track God the Father’s place in the Trinitarian doctrine in the Western tradition. The previous two centuries had built a foundation of terminology and rational inquiry, and the school of Paris in particular witnessed an impressive consolidation of intellectual talent. There are a number of theologians that contributed to the flourishing of theology in this century and beyond, but the works of Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure have received the most attention and response.¹ Now Thomas Aquinas has also borne a large share of the criticism of the last century, particularly for his methodology in expounding the doctrine of God. After preliminary studies I chose instead to study Bonaventure, in large part because of the impressive synthesis of Trinity and unity in the *Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity*, and also because of his emphasis on accounting for the Trinity in terms of origin. His noteworthy positions on innascibility and fontal-fullness invited a deeper investigation.

¹ In particular, it is clear that Alexander of Hales exerted a formative influence on Bonaventure, but at the same time that there is a dearth of scholarship on this key figure. This has emerged as an area for further inquiry.
The choice of works proved difficult, and a brief note of retrospective explanation is in order. Regarding Augustine, the decision was made to pick a few works from early in career to give an indication of his early theology, and a few from later in his career when he was compelled to offer a new presentation of Trinitarian doctrine in the face of a Homoian threat to the church in northern Africa. Two important works between these contexts also stood out for inclusion. *De Trinitate* needs no justification because of its wide readership down the ages, its tremendous influence on various aspects of Christian doctrine, and its controverted reputation in the last century. While *Confessions* does not treat the doctrine of the Trinity at length, in this work Augustine approaches the mystery of God throughout, and more careful investigation indicates a thoroughly Trinitarian orientation. He bares his soul before God as his Father and addresses him with passionate language. I consulted a great number of works of Augustine beyond these, but the works selected provide a fitting entrée to his thought on God the Father.²

The case of Bonaventure proved much easier in a certain sense, but different difficulties emerged. His *Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity* and the succinct synthesis *Breviloquium* stood out immediately as mature and relatively compact works with a Trinitarian cast. The *Commentary on the Sentences* represents his most complete theological work, but its staggering size necessitated limiting the number of questions for inclusion. We treated the prologues to the volumes to give a general sense of his approach, and then his fundamental question on the Trinity and a few key questions pertaining to God the Father. Bonaventure wrote a number of excellent theological investigations during his time as minister general, but

² Further work must be done to incorporate the wealth of insight from Augustine’s homiletic material into accounts of his theology. He shows both keen exegetical and pastoral insight in this format. Part of the problem, and what inhibited the homilies being a part of the present project, is that he left so many that it is difficult to sift through them to distill these precious insights.
*Itinerarium Mentis in Deum* represents them well, as it sounds the major themes that he would continue to articulate in these later works.

**Augustine and Bonaventure Compared**

Augustine and Bonaventure offer similar visions for the role of God the Father in the Trinity. Most strikingly, both place a strong emphasis on relations of origin as the means of distinguishing the divine persons. Within that method, the Father is the unique source within the Trinity. He begets the Son from his own essence and communicates all that he has to the Son except what designates him as “Father.” While the Son forms one principle with the Father in bringing forth the Holy Spirit, the Spirit nevertheless proceeds principally from the Father because the Son receives this from the Father. So both the Son and Holy Spirit receive the fullness of divinity from him.

It is important for both of their Trinitarian theologies that there is no prior concept or relation to the Father. Not only is he principle in the fullest sense, but that he is principle without principle stands indispensably with this notion. His fatherhood differs fundamentally from human parenthood in the sense that he has no parent of his own. Hence he is that beyond which no fatherhood can be named, the perfect source of all fatherhood. The two privative terms used for this, unbegotten (*ingenitus*) and innascible (*innascibilis*), serve to point to this special capacity as the origin without origin. Most emphatically, the denial of any birth of the Father, or of any relation prior to him, demonstrates that there is no God apart from the three persons of the Trinity, and the divine essence is not something separate from them. The triune God *is* the Father bringing forth the Son and Holy Spirit. It is not that the essence “contains” the persons. There is
nothing logically prior to God the Father. Both theologians, then, develop their Trinitarian theologies from precisely this starting point, even as they express it in various ways.

Recent systematic theology has used the terms “immanent” and “economic” to indicate the Trinity “in itself” and the Trinity as active in creation and salvation. Neither Augustine nor Bonaventure conceive of a disconnect between the Trinity under these two aspects. They both hold that the activity of the Trinity with respect to creation is done jointly by the persons. It is hard to overemphasize, however, that the joint nature of their activity does not mean the persons are signified in an undifferentiated way. The concept of joint activity merely points to their eternal and inextricable unity. Regarding the Father, Augustine and Bonaventure strongly hold to the position that the Father sends the Son and Holy Spirit. They stress in particular the account in John’s Gospel that the Son sends the Spirit from the Father. Their exegesis of passages here and elsewhere compels them to envision the Son receiving from the Father and pouring out the Spirit. Even though these passages deal with God’s temporal activity, for both theologians these passages undoubtedly have implications for the eternal mystery.

In a similar vein, they keenly perceive an analogy between the *exitus–reditus* of creation from God and that of the Son and Holy Spirit from the Father. Trinitarian doctrine thus does have an analogical relationship to the entire sweep of created existence. Hence each is comfortable with interpreting New Testament passages that refer to “God” in a way that particularly applies to the Father. While prayer may be addressed to the Trinity collectively or directed to the Son and Holy Spirit, each is comfortable with directing prayers according to the typical longstanding pattern, i.e. to God the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit. They
hold the special orientation of the economy in careful balance with the equality of the persons. It is true that the Son and Holy Spirit are visibly manifested in created forms, not in their full divinity, but it is also true that neither Augustine nor Bonaventure thinks it is fitting for the Father to be sent. This has entirely to do with the Father’s status as source of the godhead. Just as it is not fitting for the Father to be begotten, it is not fitting for the Son or Holy Spirit to send the Father. This indicates not a subordination of nature but rather an order of roles or functions within the unity and equality the persons share. The idea of the Father as principle within the Trinity coheres with the Father as sender with respect to creation.

There are also aspects of their thought pertaining to God the Father that manifest moderate continuity. One concerns the mental analogy of the Trinity. The account detailed in this dissertation seeks to appreciate the balance of Augustine’s Trinitarian theology; even so, the prominence of the mental image in De Trinitate is undeniable and it wielded considerable influence on the subsequent tradition. Augustine reckons that the rational soul is made in the image and likeness of God, and thus it bears a stamp of the Trinity. He offered two major mental triads: mind–knowledge–love, and memory–understanding–will. At the end of the De Trinitate, however, his focus is not on the mind “in itself,” but in the mind remembering, knowing, and loving God. Besides, he adverts to the ways in which this and any analogy falls short, and pronounces his search a glorious failure. Some recent accounts have downplayed the prominence of the mental image in Bonaventure, but he does weave it throughout his works on the Trinity. In fact, his account of the emanations (per modum naturae and per modum voluntatis) corresponds loosely to the mental image. These mental images do locate the Trinity within a single subject, and it is fairly obvious that, especially in the case of the first triad, this
single subject matches up with the Father. Bonaventure largely tracks Anselm’s interpretation of
the mental analogy. The prominence of this analogy for Bonaventure is telling from a glance at
the ending of the Disputed Questions, which envisions the individual soul returning to the Triune
God through memory, intelligence, and will.

Augustine and Bonaventure both most commonly use the traditional names of the persons
and allude frequently to Scripture. Even so, they supplement with various images. As just
discussed, they draw from the mind. They also favor the image of light. Though this is
sometimes overlooked, it is also clear that they employ social images for the Trinity.
Bonaventure does this more than Augustine. In the anti-Homoian works, Augustine makes an
analogy between the unity of the early Christian community (Acts 4:32) and the unity of Father,
Son, and Holy Spirit. If humans can share in “one heart and soul,” surely the divine persons
share in unity to an even higher degree. In Book 8 of De Trinitate Augustine scarcely mentions a
triad around the concept of love, but Richard of St. Victor makes the Trinitarian component more
prominent and emphasizes this concept of God in his presentation. Following Richard and his
own Franciscan teachers, Bonaventure uses the triad of lover-beloved-cobeloved. He employs it
sparingly, but turns to it at critical junctures that attest to its importance for his thought.

When discussing social analogies it is too often forgotten that Father and Son itself
suggests a basic social analogy. Both authors take this relationship at the heart of the mystery
quite seriously. In his anti-Homoian works, Augustine dispenses for the most part with the
mental analogy and puts overriding emphasis on the fittingness of Father as true father and Son
as true son, and that they embrace one another as equals. Bonaventure opted for “Father” as the
defining name of the First Person, despite the fact that he contemplated impersonal alternatives, because it suggests orientation towards another. Innascibility and primity have places of importance in his Trinitarian account, but these provide conceptual framework. The personhood of the Father is consummated in his paternity.

The above account has also shown that Augustine frequently addresses prayer towards God the Father. In fact, he does so quite naturally in Confessions, echoing the language of Scripture. He does not adhere to this as a fixed rule, however, and in De Trinitate he fittingly prays to the Trinity. Bonaventure prays to the Father as well, although it is more natural to see his prayers as oriented towards the Trinity. The Itinerarium Mentis in Deum suggests, however, that he may appropriate the Father as the addressee of prayer elsewhere. The gravity of the centuries has resulted in “God” more and more settling into a word that designates the Trinity generally. Even so, Bonaventure’s prayer envisions a Trinitarian dynamic: to the Father, through the Son and Holy Spirit.

Besides the areas of strong and weak continuity, there are also areas of particular contrast between the theologians. Among these perhaps the most notable concerns the terminology they are willing to use in service of the mystery. This relates more generally to confidence each has in reason. Not only does Augustine express dissatisfaction with the Greek categories of ousia and hypostasis, he only grudgingly uses even the term “person.” For him, the term does not capture exactly what each of the three is, and in fact he would almost prefer to leave it that way except for the linguistic need for a placeholder. He employs images and analogies but takes a strong apophatic turn. For his part, Bonaventure uses both Greek and Latin terms in service of
Trinitarian theology. He particularly favors the definition of person taught by Richard of St. Victor, that the divine person is an incommunicable substance of an intellectual nature. Not only is Bonaventure more willing to use terminology that was unsatisfactory for Augustine, but he continued to explore new terms to say something about the mystery. This study especially has witnessed the importance of *primitas*, a term not even used in the *Summa fratris Alexandri*. The sequence of co-terms in *Itinerarium in Mentis* ch. 6 also testifies that he continued to invent words as a mature writer. His theology includes apophatic turns as well, but his work shows much more openness to the capacity of reason to make distinctions and formulate terminology in service of doctrine.

Finally, Augustine has a relatively weak concept of unbegottenness in comparison with Bonaventure. In Augustine’s treatment of the Trinitarian relations in Book 5 of *De Trinitate*, he does not ascribe positive content to the Father’s lack of personal origin outside himself. The positive significance of innascibility, on the other hand, emerges as one of the distinctive traits of Bonaventure’s theology of God the Father. Again the contrast with Augustine can be ascribed to other influences or sources on Bonaventure’s thought, and in this case the chief alternative influences are Aristotle and the tract *Liber de causis*. These sources inspired Bonaventure to persist in articulating the origins of things and the special priority of the “first.” Augustine certainly held to the fixed order of Father—Son—Spirit, but Bonaventure provides underpinnings for this order.
A Response to Moltmann and Pannenberg in Light of Augustine and Bonaventure

Moltmann and Pannenberg each have compelling points in their theological works that pertain to God the Father. They also work out innovative theologies that call traditional doctrine of the Trinity into question. The several aspects of their critique have been reproduced above, but fundamentally, it comes down to whether a Trinity emanating from one person is a true trinity. For them, non-reciprocal relations do not seem compatible with equality and love.

As tempting as it is to reduce their theologies to one particular model, Augustine and Bonaventure each present complementary models to express how God is a Trinity. Behind these various formulations, they invariably hold to the specific language of the New Testament to name the Trinity as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Pannenberg aptly expresses that we come to know the Trinity through Jesus calling upon his Father. The root of any social analogy starts in this basic relationship of the Son to the Father. Even Pannenberg’s revised concept of the meaning of Jesus’ address of the Father acknowledges a lack of reciprocity that he hesitates to hold onto in his doctrine of God. The Father-Son relationship is not a reciprocal relationship. On the one hand, it is certainly a unifying relationship, one bound up in love, but on the other hand there is nothing any son can do to bring himself into existence. There is no way he can become a father to his father. Their roles in that relationship are distinctive. What a son can do, however, is turn back to his father in love. Just as the father delights in the son, the son can delight in his father. Non-reciprocation of origin does not mean non-reciprocation of end.

There is a basic difference of terminology between these two sets of authors. Moltmann and Pannenberg both write about “monarchy.” The former wishes to expunge the term
altogether, while the latter radically revises it. Neither Augustine nor Bonaventure use this term in a Trinitarian context. Both prefer the term *principium*, and they hold that this term applies to the Father in a special sense with regard to the deity as a whole, but that it also applies in other senses to the Son and Holy Spirit. Beyond Augustine, Bonaventure envisions God the Father possessing *primitas*, translated above as primity, but which others translate as primacy. He also explores the ideas of authority and hierarchy more freely and—provided that careful qualifications are made—sees them inherent in the Trinity.

This terminological difference is rather superficial; a deeper difference accounts for the gulf between the conceptions of God the Father of the two sets of authors considered here. The primary disagreement between our historical and contemporary interlocutors concerns whether the persons of the Trinity are constituted and primarily differentiated by relations of origin or not. Wishing to emphasize reciprocity, the contemporaries in varying degrees reject relations of origin as the primary means of distinguishing the persons. While Augustine and Bonaventure use various images for the Trinity, they generally return to these relationships of origin as guaranteeing both equality and distinction.

From this study of the works of Augustine and Bonaventure, it is apparent that both authors would vigorously dispute Moltmann and Pannenberg’s characterization of the Father’s place in the Trinity. For them, the personal relations are non-reciprocal and the fact that the Father is from no other person very much defines him and protects against the persons disintegrating into or being overwhelmed by the divine substance. At the same time, their treatments of God the Father do not push him away or remove him from the drama of salvation.
The divine economy and the saving economy are both grounded in the Father’s self-giving love, the type of love that makes room for equals. Moltmann and Pannenberg think that non-reciprocity prevents equality, while Augustine and Bonaventure see the Father’s greatness as one that engenders persons of equal dignity. He does not lose what it is to be Father, but he pours forth the persons without holding back any “substance” to retain a level of greatness beyond the Son and Holy Spirit.

If Augustine were to respond, he would most likely engage in an exegetical disputation with Moltmann and Pannenberg. Regarding Scripture, it is apparent that a considerable difference between the historical and contemporary authors lies in the weight attached to the various gospel traditions. Augustine and Bonaventure both produced significant commentaries on the Gospel of John; though they do not utilize the Fourth Gospel to the exclusion of other texts, many of the key insights tracked above were inspired by it. Moltmann and Pannenberg put considerably more priority on the synoptic gospels. Recall Moltmann’s position on the dying words of Jesus in Mark’s Gospel. His theological interpretation of the passion draws almost exclusively from these words. In fact, he leaves little room for balancing this account with those of Luke and John. It is as if his historical judgment that the Gospel of John attests to a later tradition means that it less accurately describes the relationship of the Son to the Father. In placing so much emphasis on the kingdom of God, Pannenberg also organizes his theology primarily with reference to the synoptic gospels; this theme is much sparser in John.

If we were to accuse both sides of maintaining a “canon within the canon,” is there a way past this impasse? Augustine would pounce on the moderns for disregarding the clear statements
of origin in John’s Gospel. They in turn would surely criticize Augustine’s approach as unhistorical, out of touch with current practices in biblical studies. There is a way out, though: the approach of Augustine and Bonaventure accords better with the New Testament as a whole. While the synoptic gospels do not dwell on language of origin nearly to the extent that the Gospel of John does, the fact is that Jesus still calls upon God as his Father in a special sense. Also, the evangelists variously imply and make explicit that Jesus is “sent” or on a mission from God the Father, and this relationship is never depicted in a way that suggests reciprocation of origin or mission (see esp. Mk 9:37 par, Lk 10:16, 20:13 par). Paul’s letters, while again not making this topic a constant theme, also attest to the exitus–reditus dynamic of Christ’s mission and the non-reciprocation of Father and Son (e.g. Gal 4:4, Rom 8:3, Phil 2:5-11). Moltmann plucks out the comment about the cries during Christ’s passion from the Letter to the Hebrews (5:7), but this letter as a whole hardly attests to his idiosyncratic vision of the relationship between the Father and Son. On the other hand, Moltmann does not afford the Christological title “Word” a place in his Trinitarian theology. He does not offer a convincing reinterpretation of passages that do not suit his theological interests. Pannenberg allows for some room for motifs of the Fourth Gospel, but not much. Both modern authors value the perichoretic intimations of John’s Gospel (e.g. 14:20 “I am in my Father”) but downplay the Father-Son relationship that undergirds this unity.

In a curious balance that has perplexed interpreters, the Gospel of John simultaneously holds Christ to be “Word” and “only begotten Son.” Both unequivocally designate origination in another. Pannenberg prefers the concept of “Father” to be translated as “other,” in a sense that moves away from this language of unity and intimacy. Jesus’ appeal to the unity that he shared
with the Father before the world was made, in John 17:5, seems to contradict Pannenberg’s key claim that the unity is an eschatological achievement. By subjecting the Gospel of John to such a devastating critique, Moltmann and Pannenberg make it hard to follow their position in terms of a biblical theology that respects the entire canon.

Bonaventure would surely concur with Augustine on the exegetical insights, but he would likely provide a response along broader theological and philosophical lines. Abundant and unmistakable differences separate his theology from the two contemporary authors, and there is scant room for underlying agreement. As has been crystal clear, Bonaventure’s whole system grants a central place to causality and origination. We have seen how Bonaventure takes up Augustine’s terminology of *principium* and uses it thoroughly. Along with Scripture and the theological tradition, Bonaventure draws extensively from philosophy to develop his views. God is the First Principle, the efficient cause of all that is; all things emanate from God. His philosophy does also give considerable weight to exemplarity (formal causality) and consummation (final causality) alongside emanation, though. Creation is formed according to God and is destined to resolve in God as well. Bonaventure’s emphasis on God the Father is rooted in the basic intuition that creation is not possible without an eternally productive Triune God; one specific source eternally initiates this process within the divine life, and there is no way to trace back beyond the Father, no further “reduction.”

The hermeneutics of modern theologians differ from those of Augustine and Bonaventure, but it is safe to say that the philosophical approaches differ even more. A comprehensive response to Moltmann and especially Pannenberg on the issues of time, eternity,
divine impassibility, and creation is not possible here. Instead, the paragraphs below will glean insights from Augustine and Bonaventure on God the Father centered on the following issues: articulating origin without subordination, fatherhood without patriarchy, unity without unicity, and origin with worship and eschatology. In this way we will encapsulate Augustine and Bonaventure’s contributions concerning the theology of God the Father in response to Moltmann and Pannenberg.

Augustine and Bonaventure vigorously combat the idea that origination within the godhead means subordination. This has been a common objection to Trinitarian theology from the beginning, so they both undertake to debunk this notion. Their arguments center on this insight: the divine persons share in being God completely because the processions are eternal. Nothing stands “behind” the relations of origin, but God the Father begets out of his own substance, the Son receives that substance completely, and receives also from the Father to pour forth the Holy Spirit. The idea of “beginning” or “principle” (principium) advanced by Augustine and taken even further by Bonaventure allows for an analogy between the Father as beginning of the godhead and the Trinity as beginning of creation. This is an analogy and not part of the same fabric because of the eternal nature of the former. Augustine develops the idea of a broadening sense of principium in Book 5 of De Trinitate. There, he neatly distinguishes the different senses in which each person of the Trinity can be held as principium. These broader attributions, however, do not imperil the status of the Father as the origin without origin.

Pannenberg reconceives Jesus’ divine sonship in a way that may actually be seen as widening the gap between the Son and the Father. Augustine in his anti-Homoian works insists
that sonship means equality. He does not rely as much upon his exegesis of Jn 5:18 as upon a basic common-sense argument from the shared and equal nature of human beings. Rather than subordinating, this Father-Son relationship shows origin and equality simultaneously. He might point out that this image accords with the Word being “with God” and being “God,” and also to the “equality” in the form of God indicated by Phil 2:5. Pannenberg flinches from the Father-Son relationship in a way not dissimilar to Maximinus, but Augustine embraces it as long as we abstract from time and matter.

For Bonaventure, thinking of God in the highest way means that God must be always productive, and that the highest way of producing is to bring forth an equal and coeternal person. He extends this, of course, by saying that these persons would share another mode of production, so that there is a third eternal person. Since this takes place in the highest way, these persons share in perfect unity. These three would share being “first” in one sense and not share being “first” in another sense. Rather than subordinating, this perfect production in God allows the conceptual room for equality. A certain dignity remains for the first person, but Bonaventure firmly and repeatedly protects against any inequality of the divine persons. His mature doctrine of primity and the senses in which the Trinity is the first principle provide a sensible balance. The non-reciprocity of these relations is not a problem because equality does not depend upon “who does what” in the Trinity, but rather in the complete willingness to give and receive in love. It does not diminish the Father to give the divine perfections to the Son and Holy Spirit, and neither does it diminish them to receive these same perfections.
Pannenberg inveighs against the idea that a cause is greater than its effect, which he sees as having a firm grip on the philosophical tradition. He perceives negative consequences when this idea is applied to the Trinity. Bonaventure’s treatment of *principium* in *In I Sent.* d. 29 pervades his use of this term throughout the rest of his texts studied for this dissertation. In this locus, Bonaventure distinguishes between proper and improper understandings of the Father as principle within the godhead, and he deliberately excludes the idea of “causality” among the persons. The Son and Holy Spirit, he asserts, are not the “effects” of the Father. The analogy between intra-Trinitarian emanation and extra-Trinitarian emanation breaks down when it comes to causality. Perhaps it might be said that this does not completely respond to Pannenberg’s criticism because Bonaventure still advocates for the superiority of cause to effect, but Bonaventure does at least protect the Trinity from this inequality. While Moltmann and Pannenberg fear the subordinating tendencies of the “monarchy” idea, Augustine unfolds and Bonaventure further advances a proper balance of the Father as “principle of the godhead” (*principium totius deitatis*).

The vision of God’s fatherhood found in Augustine and Bonaventure does not at all line up with Moltmann’s critique of patriarchy. To frame this positively, they see an order of love and equality in the godhead. The power of the Father is the power of wisdom and love, not the power of domination and subjugation. Again, it should be granted that human history contains the record of too many abuses of power. This should not be taken lightly. Also, too often “fatherhood” has been invoked as legitimizing this kind of self-centered rule. While we should stop short of denying any link whatsoever between the theological tradition and these abuses, the guilt cannot be rightly laid at the feet of Augustine and Bonaventure. Neither of their theologies
accent God as male, and both conceive of God’s fatherhood being a fatherhood of love and service rather than a fatherhood of privilege and abuse.

The non-reciprocal relationship means that the Son derives his being from the Father and honors him, but this does not mean that he is abased or diminished in comparison to the Father. Instead, his love and honor for the Father is a sign of the Son’s exaltation and the glory of the Trinity. As early as *De Fide et Symbolo*, Augustine provides a nuanced perspective on this relationship. He speaks of the debt or obligation that the Son owes the Father, on the basis of many New Testament texts. Just as all children did not will themselves into existence, but their being derives from their parents, so too the Son honors the Father. Some modern authors attenuate this basic givenness that applies to all existence, which is anticipated in the Second Person of the Trinity. No matter the circumstances—whether the child is young and frail or whether the parent is old and frail—this debt is fundamental. It is not about “power” but the recognition of the source of life. Jesus’ reverence towards his Father is not deference to a tyrant, but gratitude to the all-giving source.

The male aspect of God’s fatherhood is not especially important for Augustine. The *Confessions* recollects his earlier limitations in thinking about God materially and his decisive turn from it. He solemnly repudiates the idea that God has a “body,” as his early works *De vera religion* and *De fide et symbolo* also attest. He does use female imagery, without complaint, to offer a suitable image for the Father bringing forth the Son from his very self. In *Confessions*, he uses fatherhood frequently for God, often in conjunction with the Church as mother as well, but the weight of this parental imagery falls upon the tenderness of the Father’s mercy rather than the
almighty and fearsome rule of the Father. Bonaventure does not offer obvious female images of God, but neither does he indicate God’s maleness despite his usage of the core personal language of Father and Son. Indeed, his willingness to use impersonal images and more pliable personal terms such as lover, beloved, and co-beloved, show that he is not invested in the male-centered rule of the Father.

In the West, the term “monarchy” used to describe the Trinity traces to Tertullian. In the works studied here, however, Augustine rarely discusses the Trinity in relation to temporal rule. Since the Homoians liken the rule of the Father to the emperor, Augustine explicitly rejects applying a hierarchical model to the Trinity. He reluctantly accepts “authority” as a term that applies to the Father, but he strictly limits it to the relationship of source to that which issues forth. He permits no sense of superior and inferior. This same strict limitation applies in the case of Bonaventure. Inspired largely by pseudo-Dionysius, Bonaventure does discuss various hierarchies often, and he even calls the Trinity a “supercelestial hierarchy.” He uses the term “authority” for the Father and “sub-authority” for the Son. This verbiage might suggest the “patriarchy” label applying to Bonaventure, but routinely Bonaventure clarifies these terms with an egalitarian interpretation. The image of the supercelestial hierarchy conceives of the Trinity as expanding from the Father as focal point. There is no gradation of the fullness of life, wisdom, power, or love. In the Trinity, the Good is fully diffusive of itself.

Bonaventure attributes power to the Father and love to the Holy Spirit. Modern sensibilities predictably gravitate towards the Holy Spirit then, and retreat from language of power. What kind of power does Bonaventure mean, however? He certainly does not mean the
sheer power of domination, but the power of bringing forth. The greatness of the Father’s power is specifically located in bringing forth the Son and Holy Spirit, and making space for these persons in co-equal divinity with himself. Although Bonaventure himself acknowledges the disjunction between the supercelestial hierarchy and the created hierarchies, his Trinitarian theology could be used as a resource to combat patriarchy in the created sphere.

Moltmann and Pannenberg both outline their misgivings with the traditional focus on unity, to the point that God is effectively mono-personal. Pannenberg does not go as far as Moltmann in critiquing monotheism, but still presses for separate centers of consciousness for the persons of the Trinity. They largely react to the mental analogy developed by Augustine, which has had such influence in the theological tradition. If God is one mind that has knowledge and love, then God would seem to be triadic but not triune. This is a serious charge, but the language of “separate centers of consciousness,” along with Moltmann’s rejection of the label of monotheism, seriously gravitates towards the danger of tritheism. It is indisputable that Augustine and Bonaventure both employ variations on the mental analogy. Along with it, they offer other analogies that place more emphasis on the plurality. We will not claim here that their Trinitarian theologies are perfectly balanced, but this study has elaborated the particular place of God the Father in the unity of God in their thought.

To put it positively, both of these authors from the Western tradition emphasize that God the Father is the single source of the godhead. He brings forth equal persons enfolded in the unity of the divine essence with himself. The Father safeguards unity, but not in a way that means unicity. There are complementary ways of envisioning divine unity with regard to the other
persons, but the Father alone is “God not from God.” This unbegottenness or innascibility has the positive corollary that all personhood stems from him. As Augustine says in *De Trinitate* 7, “If the Father is not also something with reference to himself, there is absolutely nothing there to be talked of with reference to something else.” Bonaventure develops this unity based on origin to a strong extent, along with his advocacy for a positive sense of the Father’s innascibility. It is absolutely critical to take away, however, the balance that Bonaventure provides in *In I Sent* d. 28, that conceptually speaking, the Father’s personhood is begun in innascibility and consummated in fatherhood. The Father is sole source, but not in such a way that he is sole subject. He possesses the status appropriate to the First Person—the Father and not in such a way that he is sole subject. He possesses the status appropriate to the First Person—there can be no further tracing back of relations—but in his eternal goodness, his identity is characterized by his reference to another within the godhead.

Both authors recognize, then, that Scripture typically appropriates “God” to the Father, and the language of prayer often does the same. “God” can refer to each of the persons singly or to the deity collectively, but these passages point to “God not from God,” the principle without principle. These passages of Scripture, starting with the “Word of God” that simultaneously “was God” (Jn 1:1), are typically seen as providing the exegetical basis of the mental analogy.

Augustine and Bonaventure each provide complementary analogies that move in the direction of the threeness of the persons. There is a twofold problem with Augustine’s images that move more in the direction of accenting the plurality. First, he rarely develops them in any length comparable to the several books taken up with the mental analogy to *De Trinitate*. They remain compact hints, intimations and sketches. Such is the case with his trinity of love in *De
Trinitate 8 and the “fire of love” binding the persons in Contra Maximinum. Second, the grandest social image in his thought, as discussed at length above, is that of the Father-Son relationship. The “problem” here, besides the lack of an appropriate familial term for the Holy Spirit, is that it is too close to the traditional language. It is thus deceptively social. The Father and Son are bound in oneness of mind that far transcends even the unity suggested about the early Christian community in Acts 4:32. In Augustine’s vision of the unity of the Father and Son, to call them distinct centers of action might be appropriate, but to call them separate centers of action certainly would not follow. They eternally converge in complete unity; their unity does not await eschatological certification.

Bonaventure complements the mental analogy with the lover-beloved-cobeloved triad as drawn from Richard of St. Victor. The rareness of instances of this triad in his works is offset by the prominence of their placement. In Itinerarium Mentis in Deum, Bonaventure simultaneously holds the circumincession of the divine persons along with the notion of “authority” discussed above. In his mind, at least, the special role of the Father as sourceless source in the Trinity does not rule out the perichoretic model for which Moltmann pleads. He sees the three persons as distinct and ordered according to origin but perfectly “co-intimate.” When both authors indicate the appropriation of unity in the Father, then, they most certainly do not relate a self-centered God closed in upon himself. God the Father provides the very possibility for otherness in eternally begetting the Son.

With regard to the Father and eschatology, the contemporary authors do have some helpful suggestions. Accounts of the Trinity that focus on the origination of the Trinity should
also provide some account of the turning back of the divine persons. After all, relating to the human analogy, the plurality of persons even based on origin (i.e. a family) can be painfully fragmented and not exhibit unity at all. As we have seen, though, both of the authors from the tradition do this, and Bonaventure especially develops a strong sense of the “return” of the Son and Holy Spirit to the Father.

When it comes to the Trinity, if the relations of origin are granted to be eternal in nature, then so also must the relations of return be eternal. Augustine’s very maxim—unity in the Father, equality in the Son, and the concord of unity and equality in the Spirit—and his strong notion of the Spirit as the bond of love between the Father and the Son does provide a vision for the “turning back” of the Son to the Father. His vision of the Trinity amounts neither to a monad nor to three free agents simply organized by a framework of origin.

Bonaventure’s esteem of the concept of reduction shows his interest in not only tracing Trinitarian unity out from the Father but also in leading it back to him. His treatment of the analogy of emanation has been discussed at length, but we have also seen him provide the analogy of consummation. The Son and Holy Spirit eternally trace back to the Father in an eternal circle of love. The very existence of creatures attests to the emanation of all things from God, but the grace of the Holy Spirit enables the faithful to join in this return to the Father through the Son. Again and again in Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity, Bonaventure adverts to the doxological Trinity that Moltmann yearns for to balance the Trinity based on origin.
We are much less accustomed to speaking of “eschatology” in relation to the Trinity, and so Pannenberg and Moltmann provide a helpful spur towards conversation. As the previous paragraph suggested, prayer joins the believer into this dynamic of return, this “eschatological” constitution of the Trinity. This is evident in the New Testament itself, of course, as the contemporary authors rightly point out. This dissertation offers a more satisfactory glimpse of Augustine’s theology of prayer in *Confessions*, in pointing out the *a Patre ad Patrem* dynamic permeating that most personal of his works. He identifies himself strongly with the prodigal son, but in a characteristic shift he sees the merciful Father as having sent his Son and Spirit to enable his return to the joy of the Father’s house. The study of *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum* advanced here also shows that the mystical journey from the “beginning,” from the Father of Lights, reaches its resolution by passing out of this world to the Father through the burning love of the Crucified.

Just as the gospels have it, “The last shall be first and the first shall be last” (Mk 10:31 par), and in a certain way this saying applies to the Trinity as well. Jesus points to the self-surrender of the persons of the Trinity, the love that they have for each other. Both Augustine and Bonaventure in praying to “God,” often appropriate this to the person of the Father, anticipating union with him. Prayer to the other persons is completely in line with their thought as well, because just as Augustine points out so well in *Contra Maximinum*, this praise also redounds to the Father. So these authors would be able to respond well to Moltmann and Pannenberg’s desire for complementary models of the Trinity pertinent to prayer and eschatology. They show that relations of origin need not diminish other frameworks but indeed
the account is complemented perfectly by relations of return; the doxological Trinity is completely consonant with their thought.

In the works studied here, Augustine and Bonaventure do not reflect extensively on the connection between the mystery of the Trinity and the paschal mystery.³ Their works could, however, serve as a basis for positive conversation with contemporary theologians while respecting the role of God the Father in the economy. Augustine and Bonaventure both accentuate the full communication of goodness from the Father. The actions of the Trinity ad extra are joint but not identical. There is need, therefore, for a greater sense of the Father’s sacrifice, one with more positive content than the harsh rejection imagined by Moltmann. Augustine and Bonaventure firmly hold that the Father is the sender and the Son and Holy Spirit are sent. They also see a Trinity rooted in love, the embrace of Father, Son, and Spirit, in which the Father brings them forth and gives them to be one with himself, holding nothing back. The following thoughts are offered in the spirit of their thought.

It is perhaps easy nowadays to exalt the sacrifice of the one sent over the sender. When a president commits troops to battle, the onus is on the troops. When they perish, the country rightfully cherishes their sacrifice. If the cause is controversial, blame falls to the government, but even when the cause is right, the senders rarely receive any credit. At the core of the Christian faith, however, is not a president-soldier relationship but a father-son relationship. The sacrifice is not merely that of the sent, but of the sender as well. The Father pays the price with his beloved Son. In the last supper of John’s gospel, Jesus says “No greater love has man than

³ An exception explored above is the Passover through Christ to the Father explored in reference to Bonaventure’s Itinerarium Mentis in Deum.
this, to give one’s life for one’s friends.” This must be interpreted in light of the Father’s sending of the Son in love for the world (John 3:16) and the Son doing what he sees the Father doing (John 5:19). The core love of Father for Son, and the love they both have for the world, invites us to further consider the dynamics of parenting.

A creative act is an act of surrender. This is even more palpably so when the creative act involves giving freedom to another. With an infant child, the child can be awake for hours wailing in pain because of a toothache, and there is tremendous empathy on the parent’s part, but also a feeling of helplessness. The more the child grows, the more the parent must yield the child to the world. A father does not, indeed cannot, keep the child to himself. The best a human parent can hope for is to help the child to make good decisions when close by so that they can make good decisions when apart. Since the parent sends the child into the world, the parent makes of the child a gift. The parent invariably longs for the child’s happiness, but most parents also want the child to make a difference, to have a positive impact on the lives of others. The parent surely wants the child to return in love, but not without fully realizing what he or she can do on his or her own.

Augustine and Bonaventure show that this yielding aspect of parenthood is present within the very nature of God. They take the missions seriously as the Father sending forth in love. This is not incidental to the Father’s nature, but reflects its very constitution. The Father takes no pleasure in the death of the Son, but has poured out himself and enables the Son to pour himself out and affirms this in the resurrection. Moltmann aptly encourages us to see the Trinity in the cross, but we must perceive the Father’s sacrifice alongside that of the Son in an unambiguous
positive sense. The president-soldier image does not capture this; the parent-child image does. Augustine and Bonaventure hold the equality of the Father and the Son clearly and firmly. True, there are abundant complications related to the conjunction of divine and human wills and time and eternity, but the cross means something for God the Father as well. The Son’s will is merged with that of the Father, in the love of humankind that reaches to the brink of nothingness and the depths of hell.

The order is consistent: the parent is not brought forth by the child into the world, but vice versa. The child is forever marked as being from that particular parent. Having drunk deeply from John’s Gospel, Augustine and Bonaventure both have a tremendously clear sense of the mutual love of Father and Son. This is a love that embraces the cross as a sign of the pouring forth of love without holding anything back. The cross is not the last word: this love reaches beyond the cross and shows itself forth as an eternal union of life in itself. The same savior who receives “life in itself” from the Father professes to have come that the faithful “might have life, and have it to the full” (Jn 5:26, 10:10). A fundamental insight that they both underscore repeatedly in their work, each in his own way, is that what makes God the Father’s fatherhood so unique is that he gives himself away in the fullness of generosity. He brings forth divinity, but possesses it in a shared way. God the Father’s entire character is marked by this outward movement. The Father does not keep divinity to himself, but diffuses it eternally. In the Last Supper in John’s Gospel, when Philip asks to see the Father, Jesus responds that one who has seen him has seen the Father (Jn 14:8ff). He says, “The Father who dwells in me does his works” (v. 10). This brings to mind the verses from John 5 that Augustine and Bonaventure both turned over so many times, that the Son does only what he sees the Father doing (Jn 5:19). Philip has
seen Jesus wash his feet, and this is only a small gesture compared to Jesus’ imminent death for his friends. Augustine and Bonaventure share the sense that origination means something more than a physical or biological phenomenon. Rather, it is the willingness to give. While it is true that gifts can be reciprocated, there is a gift that sets the entire dynamic in motion.

Thinking along the lines of the Trinitarian gift of life is much more fruitful for considering the place of God the Father in Trinitarian theology, and makes much more sense of the basic prayers of Christianity. Augustine and Bonaventure show the way to a sense of the Father as “First Person” in a consistent order, while showing that the Father’s greatness actually conduces to the full equality of the Son and Holy Spirit, and to their full unity with him as one God. The love of the Father bringing forth the Son and Holy Spirit, and their perfect return to the Father in love, makes further room for otherness in the creation of all things, and seeks to bring believers into this same perfect and inexpressible union. Recognizing that this special relationship of the Son to the Father cannot be supplanted but only extended, Paul fittingly calls this new relationship adoption, as “God [the Father] has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying ‘Abba! Father’” (Gal 4:6).
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