From Being to Love: Reconceiving the Trinity in Light of Jean-Luc Marion's Phenomenological Shift

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This article uses the work of Jean-Luc Marion, emphasizing his shift from Being to Love as an analogue for God, to make a parallel shift from Person to Love in Trinitarian theology, thereby addressing some of the issues raised by the social trinitarians. The article then focuses on the work of Catherine Mowry LaCugna as particularly congruent with the shift suggested by Marion, but adds to LaCugna's work a conception of the immanent Trinity that is grounded in Marion's phenomenological shift. Conceiving of God as the unoriginate source of Love that is revealed in Word and enacted in Spirit allows one to understand personhood and community, not in and through the relationships between the Trinitarian Persons, but in and through Love incarnate in the human person of Jesus Christ, and Love enacted in the Spirit present in the community, forming it into the Body of Christ.

Keywords: Jean-Luc Marion, Catherine Mowry LaCugna, Trinity, Person, social analogy, phenomenology

Iℕ recent decades Trinitarian theology has experienced a resurgence of popularity in theological thought. A large part of this resurgence has taken place in discussions devoted to a theology of the "social Trinity." As Karen Kilby states, "The chief strategy used to revivify the doctrine and establish its relevance has come to be the advocacy of a *social* understanding

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of the Trinity."[1] Stanley Grenz concurs, noting that "by the end of the twentieth century, the concept of relationality had indeed moved to center stage. In fact the assumption that the most promising beginning point for a viable trinitarian theology lies in the constellation of relationships between the three persons had become so widely accepted that it attained a kind of quasi-orthodox status."[2] The problem with the promotion of a social Trinitarianism or a social analogy of the Trinity by these schools of thought is the danger of the concept being misconceived in a tritheistic manner.[3] Part of the issue is the manner in which these social trinitarians use the word "person" in combination with the concept of "community." Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen notes: "One frequent question to [Jürgen] Moltmann and other social trinitarians is whether they have ended up affirming tritheism in their fear of 'monotheism'. Scholars from a wide variety of orientations have expressed strong concerns about tritheism; some even leveled the charge of tritheism."[4]

This article will examine this concept of person and suggest that, similarly to the way that feminist theology suggests a need to use female-gendered language for God to counterbalance the overemphasis that has been placed on male-gendered language, there is a need today to find new metaphors to balance the overemphasis that has been placed on the language of person.

One model for making such a shift can be found in the work of Jean-Luc Marion. In this article, I will briefly explore Marion's work and his shift from Being to Love, and then build on this analogical shift by proposing a similar shift from "person" to Love in Trinitarian imagery. I will then put this model in dialogue with the work of Catherine Mowry LaCugna. While still considered a social Trinitarian, LaCugna can serve as a bridge between social trinitarians and Marion because of her emphasis on the Trinity in the *oikonomia* or economy of salvation. At the same time, the development of a Trinitarian theology using Marion's focus on Love can offer a way to speak about the

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[1] Karen Kilby, "Perichoresis and Projection: Problems with Social Doctrines of the Trinity," *New Blackfriars* 81 (2000): 432–45, at 432. Kilby highlights Jürgen Moltmann's work, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*, as the beginning of this movement (432–33). Among those she designates as social trinitarians are Leonardo Boff and John Zizioulas (344 n. 3). Her primary focus, however, is on Moltmann and on Colin Gunton.

[2] Stanley Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God: The Trinity in Contemporary Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 117–18. In the chapter in which he makes this observation, entitled "The Triumph of Relationality," Grenz presents the work of Leonardo Boff and Catherine Mowry LaCugna, among others.

[3] See Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *The Trinity: Global Perspectives* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 115–22, particularly nn. 122 and 123 on Moltmann; and 286–91, particularly n. 99 on Boff.

[4] Kärkkäinen, *The Trinity*, 115 nn. 122, 123.

immanent Trinity that is grounded in the economic Trinity while still protecting the mystery and freedom of God, a point lacking in LaCugna's emphasis on the economy.

Traditional theology from Augustine to Aquinas to Karl Rahner has conceived of God as Being. Jean-Luc Marion contends that our only hope for avoiding idolatry is to praise God as Love as opposed to conceiving God as Being. The shift away from an understanding of God as Being must have implications for our Trinitarian theology as well. How, then, do we speak of Trinity in light of this shift in analogical focus? I would suggest the Trinitarian analogy of the unoriginate Source of Love revealed in the Word and enacted in the Spirit. I would argue that recasting the concept of the Trinity in light of the primary analogue of God as Love enables one to address the critiques of Trinitarian theology presented by proponents of a social analogy of the Trinity, by employing the economic Trinity, God *for us*, in a way that not only reveals who God is in Godself—that is, the immanent Trinity—but also reveals us to ourselves. The *for us* means that the economic Trinity is God in relationship to humanity. Thus we can see what it means to be person in God united to humanity in the Incarnation, and what it means to be community in God united to humanity in the Spirit-filled Christian community described in Scripture.[5] By using Love as the primary analogue, one can conceive of God as personal rather than as Person, as relational rather than as "Being," while simultaneously avoiding the idea that God is a being or a subject—in short, while continuing to avoid a metaphysical and ontotheological conception of God as Being.

I will show how this shift can address the concerns found in the social theory of the Trinity without the leading to possible tritheistic overtones. The model of Trinity proposed here addresses some of the issues raised and purportedly solved by a social analogy of the Trinity without resorting to images of a community or fellowship of persons, where "person" is understood at best as having distinct will and interiority, or at worst as being a subject and having a center of consciousness.[6]

One challenge addressed through this alternative model is the need for a concept of person as relational as opposed to the modern understanding of the person as individual. I would suggest that rather than turning to the

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[5] The early Spirit-filled community is described in Acts and the Letters. For example, Acts 2:42–47 and Acts 4:32–35 emphasize an egalitarian community whose members share resources equally among themselves.

[6] For example, see Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God*, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 1981), 174–76; Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society*, trans. Paul Burns (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 138–39.

three of the Trinity for a model of what it means to be a person, we turn to
Jesus Christ, the incarnation of God as Love in union with humanity, as the
one who reveals what it means to be person. Corollaries to this challenge
are the need for an emphasis on community and equality and a concern
that the Trinity be a doctrine that functions as a catalyst for social change,
combating oppression and fighting for social justice in the world. The
model for community or what it means to be in communion need not be
located in the relationships between the three of the Trinity. Rather, the
model can be found in the Holy Spirit creating the Body of Christ as exempli-
fied in the witness of Scripture.[7]

 LaCugna's Trinitarian theology, building on Rahner's axiom that "the
immanent Trinity is the economic Trinity and vice versa," focuses on the
economic Trinity rather than the immanent Trinity.[8] Therefore one finds in
her work an emphasis on Christ and the Spirit correlative to what is suggested
above. Her work is also congruent with that of Marion, as I will show, and she
attempts to avoid tritheistic overtones precisely by grounding her Trinitarian
theology in the economic Trinity rather than the immanent Trinity. Her
unwillingness to enter into the world of "speculative" theology in order to
say anything about the immanent Trinity has drawn the criticism of many
who feel that her concept of God is too dependent on humanity and creation,
thus jeopardizing God's freedom.[9] The model of the Trinity that I propose
here grounds an understanding of person and community in the economic
Trinity. At the same time, I propose an analogy to be used to speak of the
immanent Trinity that is revealed to us in and through the self-communi-
cation of God in the economic Trinity, albeit revealed as the incomprehensi-
ble mystery of Love. In building on Marion's shift from Being to Love in order
to transpose the concept of Trinity from Person to Love, my hope is both to
avoid the misconception of tritheism and to respond to LaCugna's charge
that any understanding of the Trinity must begin with the economic Trinity,

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[7] For an excellent ecclesiological description of the relationship of the Trinity to the church
as Body of Christ, albeit one that depends on a social analogy of the Trinity via Zizioulas
and Volf, see Marcel Sarot, "Trinity and Church: Trinitarian Perspectives on the Identity of
the Christian Community," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 12 (2010): 33–45.

[8] Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco:
Harper, 1991), 221–22, citing Karl Rahner, *The Trinity,* trans. Joseph Donceel
(New York: Herder & Herder, 1970), 22.

[9] Paul Molnar, *Divine Freedom and the Doctrine of the Immanent Trinity: In Dialogue with
Karl Barth and Contemporary Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2002); Grenz, *Rediscovering
the Triune God,* 147–62; Chung-Hyun Baik, *The Holy Trinity—God for God and God for Us:
Seven Positions on the Immanent-Economic Trinity Relation in Contemporary Trinitarian
Theology* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011); Declan Marmion and Rik Van Nieuwenhove, *An
Introduction to the Trinity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), esp. 24–27.

while at the same time upholding Rahner's axiom that the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity and vice versa. Thus I wish to complement LaCugna's focus on the economic Trinity by developing an understanding of immanent Trinity that is grounded in the experience of the economic Trinity. One's understanding of what it means to be person and community thus comes from the revelation of the economic Trinity. The economic Trinity, while revealing the immanent Trinity, also reveals us in our relationship to God, humanity incarnated by the Word of Love, and the community indwelled by the Spirit of Love. In revealing the immanent Trinity as well, we are given the possibility of talking analogously about God in Godself as Love that is Source, Word, and Spirit, a Love that in its infinite depths always remains absolute mystery.

I. The Word "Person" in Trinitarian Theology

As Ángel Cordovilla Pérez explains, the Latin word *persona* and the Greek word *prosopon* have a complicated history:

> The Latin term signified a variety of things: role or character in theatre (Plautus, Terence); the person of the verb in grammar (Varro); or individual in a social sense (Cicero). The Greek term *prosopon* is already witnessed to in Homer with the meaning of 'face', comes to mean 'to gaze', then 'that which is seen', and will finish tied into the world of theatre in the Hellenistic period. Finally, the meaning of *hypostasis* is determined by its etymology. Composed of *hypo-* (under) and the root *sta* (to hold oneself), it originally had a common meaning of foundation, base, cement or point of departure for an expedition.[10]

The word "person" today has taken on a meaning correlative to the word "human," picking up along the way both Boethius' definition of individual and rational and Descartes' contribution of consciousness and cognition. The evolution of this word caused theologians such as Karl Barth and Rahner to suggest alternatives such as "mode of being" or "mode of subsistence" when discussing Trinitarian theology.[11] The concerns of those who favor using the word "person" are that we cannot eliminate a word that is a foundation of our traditional Trinitarian theology and that the alternative phrases suggested do not capture the personal nature of God as revealed in

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[10] Ángel Cordovilla Pérez, "The Trinitarian Concept of Person," in *Rethinking Trinitarian Theology: Disputed Questions and Contemporary Issues in Trinitarian Theology*, ed. Giulio Maspero and Robert J. Woźniak (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 105–45, at 109.

[11] Ibid. 124. See also John Gresham, "The Social Model of the Trinity and Its Critics," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 46 (1993): 328–31.

Scripture. The social trinitarians argue that the word "person" as used for the Trinity can be taken to be a corrective to our individualistic understanding of "person" as it is used to describe a human being. I agree that the word "person" cannot be entirely abandoned in Trinitarian theology, as it does hold a place of preeminence in our dogma and is used in the writings of the ecumenical councils. However, the word, with all the meanings it has accrued over time, has become an idol, to use Marion's term, and thus must be counterbalanced with new images. Recognizing that all of our language about God is ultimately analogy and metaphor, when one image starts to be used exclusively and literally, it is in danger of becoming idolatrous.[12] The point that Elizabeth Johnson makes with regard to the use of male-dominant language for God can also be made regarding the word "person" in Trinitarian language: it is idolatrous "insofar as [it] is honored as the only or the supremely fitting way of speaking about God, it absolutizes a single set of metaphors and obscures the height and depth and length and breadth of divine mystery. Thus it does damage to the very truth of God that theology is supposed to cherish and promote."[13] Thus we should not eliminate the word "Person" altogether from our Trinitarian language, but we do need to counter that imagery with words such as "Love" to balance the dangerous tendency toward literalism that arises when any one image is used exclusively.

Regarding the second and third points in favor of using the word "person," that it is more personal and can be a corrective to the secular usage of the word, I would suggest that Love as an analogy for God does address the personal nature of God because Love is by definition personal and relational. The social trinitarians particularly emphasize the third point, that the word "Person" as used in Trinitarian theology offers a corrective to the individualistic interpretation of the word as applied to the human being. However, more often the tendency is to apply the individualistic interpretation to God rather than the communal interpretation to the human person.[14]

Advocates of a social Trinitarianism or a social analogy of the Trinity[15] have raised certain objections to what is often referred to as "Latin"

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[12] See Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 33–34.

[13] Ibid., 18.

[14] For an excellent argument against using the Trinity to understand human persons, see Kathryn Tanner, "Social Trinitarianism and Its Critics," in Maspero and Woźniak, *Rethinking Trinitarian Theology*, 368–86; see esp. 378–80.

[15] Note that some social trinitarians can be outright tritheists (e.g., Richard Swinburne), whereas those who propose a social analogy of the Trinity are doing so analogously,

Trinitarianism or monotheistic Trinitarianism.[16] Three objections raised are
the ideas that "Latin" Trinitarianism focuses on interiority to the detriment
of intersubjectivity, individuality to the detriment of community, and the
immanent Trinity to the detriment of the economic Trinity. Social trinitarians
claim to address these concerns through the Trinitarian image of three
Persons in mutual and equal communion with one another.

The challenges that social trinitarians offer to "Latin" Trinitarianism are
valid. Their solution is to reconceive the concept of human "person" in
light of what "Person" means in the Trinity. The question then becomes
whether or not there is a way of talking about Trinity that can address
these concerns without being subject to the possible misconception of trithe-
ism and without understanding God as three beings, subjects, or conscious-
nesses in relationship with one another. The word "person" is at the heart of
this issue. The argument of the social trinitarians is that rather than letting the
modern history of the word change our understanding of the Trinity, an effort
should be made to let the Trinity change our meaning of the word "person,"
thereby rendering what has been understood as a rational and conscious indi-
vidual in a different mode, one that offers an understanding of mutuality,
intersubjectivity, and that which comes to be only in relationality—allowing
what LaCugna calls a metaphysics of relation to replace a metaphysics of sub-
stance.[17] While the efforts to reconceptualize the meaning of "person" are
both laudable and necessary, mutuality, intersubjectivity, and relationality
are generally notions that are added on to understanding person as individual
rather than replacing person as individual. In other words, when we think of
intersubjectivity, we think of two individual subjects; when we think of
mutuality, we think of two individuals in a relationship of equality and reci-
procity; when we think of relationality, we think of two individual beings relat-
ing to one another in an experience of coming to know and understand

and thus while there is a danger of tritheism in the analogy, would not claim to be
tritheists.
[16] Note that both terms are problematic. "Latin" refers to the legacy of Augustine, and scho-
lars such as Michel Barnes and Sarah Coakley would point out that the distinction
between Augustine and the Cappadocians is not as clear-cut as some would have you
believe. See Barnes, "Rereading Augustine's Theology of the Trinity," in *The Trinity:
An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity*, ed. Stephen Davis, Daniel Kendall, and
Gerald O'Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 145–77; Coakley, "'Persons'
in the 'Social' Doctrine of the Trinity: A Critique of Current Analytic Discussion," ibid.,
123–44. "Monotheistic" implies that the other theories are not "monotheistic," and
most who propose a social analogy of the Trinity would claim to be monotheistic.
[17] LaCugna, *God for Us*, 243. See LaCugna, "The Relational God: Aquinas and Beyond,"
Theological Studies 46 (1985): 647–63; and LaCugna, "Philosophers and Theologians
on the Trinity," *Modern Theology* 2, no. 3 (1986): 169–81.

oneself in relationship to another. The problem with this approach is that the modern, popular understanding of "person" overrides the new definition in popular images of God as Trinity, leading to a practical misconception of three individual beings relating to one another among a popular audience.

II. Marion's God without Being

Jean-Luc Marion offers us a radical approach to rethinking the concept of God: to leave ontology behind altogether. He suggests that rather than thinking of God primarily in terms of Being, the primary (though not exclusive) analogy for God must be Love, agape, gift.

In the preface to the English edition of his seminal work, *God without Being*, Marion asks: "Does Being define the first and highest of divine names? ... No doubt, God can and must in the end also be; but does his relation to Being determine him as radically as the relation to his Being defines all other beings?"[18] He is not saying that God is not, but rather asks whether being determines God. Being determines us; it does not determine God.

Marion begins his work by marking various contrasts: idol versus icon, mirror versus face, concept versus gift. In each of these dichotomies the first term limits and constrains the infinite, rebounding our gaze back on ourselves. Marion describes the idol as "the low water mark of the divine" or "what the human gaze has experienced of the divine."[19] The idol is not bad in and of itself. Rather, Marion is addressing our experience of God and the way we tend to articulate that experience: it becomes an idol, an absolute, a limit on the infinity and incomprehensibility of God. The idol or concept is problematic not because of failure or illusion, but rather because of "the conditions of its validity—its radical immanence to the one who experiences it, and experiences it, rightly so, as impassible."[20]

Marion notes that a concept of God is not illusory; it "exposes what *Dasein*, at the moment of a particular epoch, experiences of the divine and approves as the definition of its 'God.' Only such an experience of the divine is not founded so much in God as in man. . . . [T]he concept marks the extreme advance, then the reflected return, of a thought that renounces venturing beyond itself, into the aim of the invisible."[21] In other words, a concept

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[18]   Jean-Luc Marion, *God without Being: Hors-Texte*, trans. Thomas Carlson, 2nd ed. (1991; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), xxii.

[19]   Ibid., 14.

[20]   Ibid., 28.

[21]   Ibid., 30.

catches hold of the imagination of a particular epoch because it expresses the experience of God for that age, but because of the concrete nature of a concept or image, it very quickly becomes an idol, an image that constrains the infinity and incomprehensibility of God. Marion explains that the "gaze makes the idol," so that the idol "fills the intention of the gaze" and is able to "stop the gaze,"[22] fixing it "in an intentional lived experience."[23] The desire for God creates the concept that enables one to apprehend the experience. The concept, for Marion, names God, defines God, and measures God to the limits of its hold.[24]

In contrast to the idol that stops our gaze, Marion suggests the icon as that which "regards us—it *concerns* us, in that it allows the intention of the invisible to occur visibly. . . . He who sees it sees in it a face whose invisible intention envisages him. The icon opens in a face, where man's sight envisages nothing, but goes back infinitely from the visible to the invisible by the grace of the visible itself."[25] Here one sees the contrast between the idol and the icon or the mirror and the face. The idol or mirror closes, whereas the icon or face opens.[26] The icon, as opposed to the idol, allows one to enter into the infinity and incomprehensibility of God, the place where we cannot grasp God, but rather are grasped by God. Marion explains: "Our gaze becomes the optical mirror of that at which it looks only by finding itself more radically looked at: we become a visible mirror of an invisible gaze that subverts us in the measure of its glory. The invisible summons us 'face to face, person to person' (1 Cor 13:12), through the painted visibility of its incarnation and the factual visibility of our flesh: no longer the visible idol as the invisible mirror of our gaze, but our face as the visible mirror of the invisible."[27] To make a distinction between "God" that is idol and God who is icon, Marion uses a cross over the letter "o" in God. He explains:

> Let us cross out God, with a cross, provisionally of St. Andrew, which demonstrates the limit of the temptation, conscious or naïve, to blaspheme the unthinkable in an idol. The cross does not indicate that God would have to disappear as a concept. . . . To cross out God, in fact, indicates and recalls that God crosses out our thought because he saturates it;

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[22] Ibid., 10–11.

[23] Ibid., 238 n. 2, citing Edmund Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie I*, sec. 101, in *Husserliana*, vols. 3–5, ed. Walter Biemel (Den Haag: Nijhoff, 1950), 3:254.

[24] Ibid., 29.

[25] Ibid., 19.

[26] Ibid., 19–20. See also Marion, *The Erotic Phenomenon*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 97–101.

[27] Marion, *God without Being*, 22.

better, he enters into our thought only in obliging it to criticize itself. The crossing out of G⊗d we trace on his written name only because, first, He brings it to bear on our thought, as his unthinkableness.[28]

While Marion would argue that the concept of Being has become an idol, he recognizes that to abandon the category of being in reference to God threatens our ability to say anything at all. Marion queries: "What name, what concept, and what sign nevertheless yet remain feasible? A single one, no doubt, love, . . . 'God is *agape*' (1 John 4:8)."[29] "Why love?" he goes on to ask. For Marion, love is ultimately beyond constraints, limitations, or conditions.[30] Love can be such an icon because our experience of affect is an experience of the ineffable, of that which is beyond cognition. Love is not subject to one who receives it, but is freely poured out. Marion notes that "Love loves without condition, simply because it loves; [God] thus loves without limit or restriction. No refusal rebuffs or limits that which, in order to give itself, does not await the least welcome or require the least consideration. . . . [Humans have] simply to accept it; to accept it or, more modestly, not to steal away from it."[31] For Marion love is truly love only if it risks not being loved in return. He explains that love is not subject to being:

> Loving loses nothing from the fact of not being, because it gains nothing from the fact of being. Or better, to love consists sometimes in not being—in not being loved, or at least in accepting being able not to be loved. Nothing, neither being nor nothingness, can limit, hold back, or offend love, from the moment that loving implies, by principle, the risk of not being loved. To love without being loved—this defines *love without being*. The simple formal definition of loving includes its victory over nothing, and thus over death. Love raises from the dead—we must understand this as an analytical proposition.[32]

Love is also a suitable analogy for God because it is beyond comprehension. One cannot grasp love but rather is grasped by it. Marion puts it this way:

> As opposed to the concept, that by the very definition of apprehension, gathers up what it comprehends, . . . love (even and especially if it ends up causing thought, giving rise—by its excess—to thought) does not pretend to comprehend, since it does not mean at all to take; it postulates its own giving, giving where the giver strictly coincides with the gift,

[28] Ibid., 46.
[29] Ibid., 47.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid. See also *Erotic Phenomenon*, 71–73.
[32] Marion, *Erotic Phenomenon*, 72.

without any restriction, reservation, or mastery. Thus love gives itself only in abandoning itself, ceaselessly transgressing the limits of its own gift, so as to be transplanted outside itself.[33]

As with God, Love cannot be captured by words or a concept. And yet Marion notes that we need the concept, because without one "we literally no longer know what we are saying, and in fact, we say nothing."[34] Thus we cannot abandon words or language or concepts altogether. Love becomes a fitting analogy for God because in both instances we use language in a way that defies comprehension. As Marion notes of his own attempt to speak of love: "And obviously I will do it badly; I will do this phenomenon ill, but that will do me good—if only because it will make me feel my incapacity to say it, just as it will make me take note of my powerlessness to make it."[35] Do not such words describe every undertaking of theology, of God-talk?

Marion replaces the primacy of Being with Love, Exodus with 1 John, *Ens* with *Bonum*.[36] For Marion, the use of Being as the primary analogy for God comes from our human cognitive bias;[37] we project what is essential to our experience of existence onto the essence of God. Using passages from Romans 4:17 and 1 Corinthians 1:26, however, Marion demonstrates how God is not restricted by being. Being and nonbeing are subject to God. God "calls the nonbeings as if they were beings. The call does not take into consideration the [ontic] difference between nonbeings and beings."[38] God not only calls being into existence; using 1 Corinthians 1:26-29, Marion points

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[33] Marion, *God without Being*, 48.

[34] Marion, *Erotic Phenomenon*, 4. See also Marion, *Prolegomena to Charity*, trans. Stephen Lewis, Perspectives in Continental Philosophy (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), 71ff.

[35] Marion, *Erotic Phenomenon*, 10.

[36] Marion, *God without Being*, 73–75. Note that Marion no longer includes Aquinas among those who perpetuate an ontotheology (though he does include many interpreters of Aquinas in this critique). He shifted his position on Aquinas in part because of critiques made by John Milbank. For Marion's adjusted position, see his article "Saint Thomas d'Aquin et l'onto-théologie," *Revue Thomiste* 95 (1995): 31–66; see also Marion, "Thomas Aquinas and Onto-theo-logy," in *Mystics: Presence and Aporia*, ed. Michael Kessler and Christian Sheppard (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 38–74. This article is also included in the second edition of the English translation of *God without Being*, 199–236. For articles discussing this shift and the dialogue with John Milbank, see Merold Westphal, "The Importance of Overcoming Metaphysics for the Life of Faith," *Modern Theology* 23 (2007): 253–78; and Wayne Hankey, "*Theoria versus Poesis*: Neoplatonism and Trinitarian Difference in Aquinas, John Milbank, Jean-Luc Marion and John Zizioulas," *Modern Theology* 15 (1999): 387–415.

[37] Marion, *God without Being*, 80.

[38] Ibid., 88.

out that God can also annul being so that "that which is can be, for God, as if it were not."[39] God "gives life to the dead and who calls the nonbeings as beings" (Rom 4:17).[40] God chooses and calls those to whom the world denies humanity and even existence, namely, the weak, the foolish, the lowly.[41] The world divides the world into beings and nonbeings, somethings and nothings, but God reverses that judgment. 1 Corinthians 1:28 states, "God chose the lowly and despised of the world, those who count for nothing, to reduce to nothing those who are something."[42] Existence and personhood are not based on the judgment of the world, but rather the call of God and one's response to that call.[43]

Marion goes on to argue that love is not subject to being. Using human love as an example, he explains that when one loses the person one loves, "the world, which is, does not become more lovable for that reason—on the contrary. And the loved one, who is no longer, does not become less lovable for that reason—on the contrary."[44] According to Marion, "that which is, if it does not receive love, is as if it were not, while that which is not, if love polarizes it, is as if it were."[45] He concludes that "there is nothing more reasonable than the insanity of sacrificing all that is (being in its totality) for that which is not (the absent loved one). . . . To give the world which is, empty of love, for that which is not but belongs to the domain of love—there is nothing more reasonable and even advantageous."[46] Thus love is beyond any constraint, condition, or definition by being. Marion refers to love, therefore, as the proper horizon for the events that escape reason and rationality, the horizon of "love without being."[47] He insists that for human beings, to be loved and to love is more essential than to exist, and that primacy of love is what separates human beings from the world of objects or animals or artificial intelligence.[48] Marion highlights love as that

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[39] Ibid., 89.

[40] Ibid., 86.

[41] Ibid., 92–93.

[42] Marion's translation, "God chose the ignoble things of this world [*agenē, ignobilia* says the Vulgate] and the contemptible things, and also the non-beings, in order to annul the beings (*kai ta mē onta, hina ta onta katargēsē*)," in *God without Being*, 89.

[43] Marion, *God without Being*, 95.

[44] Ibid., 136. See also Marion, *Erotic Phenomenon*, 5–6, 193.

[45] Marion, *God without Being*, 136.

[46] Ibid., 136–37.

[47] Marion, *Erotic Phenomenon*, 6.

[48] Ibid., 21. Marion begins his reflections with the necessity of being loved, asking the question, "Does anybody love me?" (20), but then moves to the question, "Can I love first?" (71ff.), thus defining the essence of humanity as to be loved, but more importantly, to love.

which makes us distinctly human, and so one might say that it is what makes us to be created in the image and likeness of God. Hence our relationality is at the center of our personhood.[49]

For Marion, God has revealed Godself as this Love in the Christ's crucifixion. God for Marion is not Being but Love, and Love is self-gift as is evidenced in the Cross. Marion maintains:

> Doubtless we will name it God, but in crossing God with the cross that reveals him only in the disappearance of his death and resurrection. . . . *God gives.* The giving, in allowing to be divined how "it gives," a giving, offers the only accessible trace of He who gives. . . . God who crosses Being/being only in submitting first to the cross by which the hyperbolic *agape* "which surpasses all knowledge" (Eph. 3:19) makes the sign of the cross.[50]

God is revealed ultimately, not in Being, but in disappearance, in death, in non-Being, which is the epitome of Love and self-gift. In *Prolegomena to Charity*, Marion notes that even the most radical presence of God in the Incarnation ultimately resolves itself in the absence of resurrection and ascension.[51] Once again, Marion argues, Love demonstrates its precedence over Being. Marion maintains that the Incarnation is "translated paradoxically, by non-presence—in short, by the contrary of the completed incarnation."[52] He explains this presence by absence by pointing to "the recognition of the gift of the presence of God in *this* man, because this man can give himself to the point of abandoning himself like bread is distributed, abandoning himself like bread, like *this* bread, can concentrate all his presence in a gift. ... The consecrated bread incarnates the perfectly abandoned gift of a 'body given for [us]'" (Luke 22:19).[53]

III. God as Unoriginate Source of Love Revealed in Word and Enacted in Spirit

To apply Marion's critique to the image of Trinity among the social trinitarians, the term "person" has become an idol, mirror, and concept that limits and constrains the infinite. As a Trinitarian concept, "Person" is a legitimate and important part of the theological tradition, but we cannot escape

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[49] Marion, *Erotic Phenomenon,* 22–23.
[50] Marion, *God Without Being,* 105–6.
[51] Marion, *Prolegomena to Charity,* 125.
[52] Ibid., 125.
[53] Ibid., 133.

our experience of what "person" means as it relates to human persons, and therefore it has become a limit on the incomprehensibility of God. As Marion argues for *Dasein*, "person" captures what was experienced of the divine "at a moment of a particular epoch" in Trinitarian theology.[54] I would argue that "person" similarly "marks the extreme advance, then the reflected return, of a thought that renounces venturing beyond itself, into the aim of the invisible,"[55] to use Marion's words about Being quoted above. The language we use has become too literal in the human imagination. The word no longer moves us beyond concrete thinking into the infinite mystery of the incomprehensible. Love, on the contrary, can function as icon, face, and gift. "Person" would not be abandoned as a concept in our Trinitarian language but rather would be supplemented with the concept of Love as source, expression, and action. Perhaps Love would even need to be overemphasized to counteract the dangers of a literal interpretation of the word "Person." The experience of love, as affective rather than cognitive, opens one to infinite potential depth and an experience of incomprehensibility that enables it to serve as icon.

Love is also a suitable analogy because it implies an infinite horizon. It is "an advance that is definitive and without return, an advance that will never cancel itself out, and never catch up with itself. . . . For even if I reach the other, this does not give me possession, precisely because I only touch her and open an access to her by the impact that I provoke . . . ; the other does not stop me like a wall or an inert and delimited lump, but offers herself to me like a path that opens, always continuing in proportion to my entry forward."[56] Love is infinite and ungraspable. It grounds human transcendence, opening us and luring us ever closer without ever becoming an object or a possession.

Love is interpersonal by definition. In applying Marion's shift from Being to Love to Trinitarian thought, I argue for a similar shift: from thinking of Trinity in terms of "Person" to thinking of Trinity in terms of Love (unoriginate Source, eternally expressed in Word and enacted in Spirit).[57] In the

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[54] Marion, *God without Being,* 30.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Marion, *Erotic Phenomenon,* 83. Marion calls this phenomenon the erotic reduction. For the correlation with mystical theology, see 149–50. For an explanation of what Marion calls the "crossing of gazes" in love, see *Prolegomena to Charity*, 86–91, 164–68.

[57] The inspiration for this model of Trinity comes from the idea of triune consciousness using the concepts of affect, cognition, and volition; see Heidi Russell, *The Heart of Rahner* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2009). A similar phenomenological approach to the concept of Trinity can be found in Anthony Kelly, *The Trinity of Love: A Theology of the Christian God* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1989). See also

reconfiguration of Trinity that I offer based on Marion's approach, our understanding of ourselves as person made in the image and likeness of God and as coming from and having our being totally dependent on God is exemplified in the economic Trinity via the person of Jesus Christ and the community formed by the Spirit. The new understanding of ourselves as person being promoted by the social trinitarians comes to be without resorting to an image of God as three individual subjects or beings existing in an eternal community engendering the danger of the misconception of tritheism.

In addressing the critique of the social trinitarians, one can note that the focus is no longer on interiority and individuality to the exclusion of intersubjectivity and community, but rather one exists in the first place only because of love, and thus one's existence is by definition relational. Our entire being is dependent on its givenness. Marion notes, "Even that which is finds itself disqualified as if it were not, so long as it does not have added to its status as a being the dignity of that which finds itself loved."[58] Like being, our personhood is that of complete dependency, complete coming forth from another, and thus realized only in our realization and actualization of our interdependence. We come to be in love, and therefore we can realize what it means to be made persons in the image and likeness of God only in relationship and community, not because God is a community of three persons, but because God is self-gift and reveals Godself to be an outpouring of love and self in the cross. We come to understand what it means to be person, in the sense of a being that comes from and is totally dependent on love, in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. In my own Trinitarian terms, God is Love, unoriginate Source revealed in Word and enacted in Spirit. The Father is the Source, the "fountain" (to use a term from Bonaventure) of Love that flows outward in self-expression and action.[59] The Word is the eternal self-expression, revelation, and self-gift of Love. The Spirit is the eternal action, dynamism, and power of Love. This immanent Trinity is revealed in God's

Robert Doran, "The Starting Point of Systematic Theology," *Theological Studies* 67 (2006): 750–76; and Doran, "Addressing the Four-Point Hypothesis," *Theological Studies* 68 (2007): 674–82.

[58] Marion, *God without Being*, xxvi.

[59] Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey into God*, VI, 1–3; *The Tree of Life,* 47, in *Bonaventure: The Soul's Journey into God, The Tree of Life, The Life of Saint Francis,* trans. and intro. Ewert Cousins, The Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1978). In the introduction, Cousins notes: "Bonaventure begins his speculative Trinitarian theology with the Father as the fountain-source of divine fecundity. For Bonaventure the Father is fountain-fulness, *fontalis plenitudo,* in whom the divinity is fecund, dynamic, self-expressive" (24–25). Cousins cites *Commentarius in I, II, III, IV librum Sententiarum, I Sent.*, d. 27, p. 1, a. un., q. 2 (I, 468–74); cf. *I Sent.*, d. 11, a. un., q. 2 (I, 214–16).

relationship to us, that is, the economic Trinity. However, the economic Trinity does not simply reveal God; it also reveals humanity because it reveals God in relationship to us. Marion uses the terms "face" and "intention" that correlate with the visible and the invisible.[60] The intention of God, the immanent Trinity, is revealed in the face of the economic Trinity. The invisible and infinite source of all Love is revealed in the face of Jesus the Christ and in the face of the other, those human persons in whom we encounter the indwelling Spirit, thus enabling us to realize and recognize the Spirit indwelling in our own person.

The Word of Love expressed in the incarnate Christ is *the* icon of God who is source of all love. The icon reveals the infinite depth that cannot be grasped or comprehended. As Marion puts it, "The icon, which unbalances human sight in order to engulf it in infinite depth, marks such an advance of God that even in times of the worst distress indifference cannot ruin it. For, to give itself to be seen, the icon needs only itself. This is why it indeed can demand, patiently, that one receive its abandon."[61] Only Love is such that it gives itself in such a way that demands but is not dependent on its reception. Marion explains that "the inevitable impotence of man to correspond to the destiny that love gratuitously imposes upon him is not enough to disqualify its initiative or its accomplishment."[62]

One understands "person" by understanding the incarnate Love found in Jesus Christ. We discover what it means to be person, when we give ourselves in love to the other, when we take up our cross and are willing to sacrifice our individuality and our life for the sake of Love.[63] Thus to be person as Jesus Christ is person is not to be an independent individual caught up in one's own interiority. Rather to be person is to discover oneself in relationship, in the giving of oneself to another in Love. One is person only in community and in the experience of intersubjectivity. One understands community in and through the recognition of mutuality and interrelationship formed by the

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[60] Marion, *God without Being*, 23.

[61] Ibid., 24.

[62] Ibid., 47–48.

[63] "Individuality" is being used here in the sense of a lack of interconnectedness, not in the sense of one's uniqueness. A word of caution is necessary here in line with concerns of feminist theology, that the idea of giving up selfhood for others, particularly in relationships of love, has been a concept that has been used to disempower women. However, understanding God as Love should enable us to have a healthier understanding of love in our own human relationships where it is not used as a power dynamic. As Karl Rahner notes in his axiom on human freedom, surrender to God/Love has a relationship of direct proportion to human freedom. Thus the more one gives oneself to this Love that is God and lets go of a clinging to individual existence, the more one becomes oneself, the truly unique individual in relationship one was created to be.

indwelling Spirit creating us to be the Body of Christ. There is a need to redefine concept of "person" in light of the triune God, but I suggest we do so not from the aspect of "three Persons in fellowship and communion" but rather from an understanding of God as unoriginate Source of Love revealed in the person of Jesus Christ and enacted in the world by the Holy Spirit. Social trinitarians end up either discussing an immanent Trinity that is a community of persons or avoiding language of immanent Trinity altogether with an exclusive focus on the economic Trinity. I would argue that a different image of immanent Trinity that focuses on the icon of love rather than the idol of person grounds an economic Trinity that reveals not only that immanent Trinity, albeit as inexhaustible mystery, but that immanent Trinity in union with humanity, and thus reveals what it means to be person and community in relationship to humanity. Love united to creation reveals what it means to be a human person in the humanity of Jesus as the face of Love incarnate and what it means to be community in the action of Love moving in the Christian community in which the Spirit indwells in the other. The Spirit forms the church into the Body of Christ. One cannot be a member of that body without recognizing the indwelling Spirit in the other that is necessary for one's own union with Christ. Union is no longer a solitary venture. The Spirit demands alterity and interconnectedness. How do we become persons in Christ? Through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, God as Love present and acting in us, forming us in communion into the Body of Christ.

IV. The Trinitarian Theology of Catherine Mowry LaCugna

Much of Catherine LaCugna's Trinitarian theology resonates with the theory put forth here, which builds on Jean-Luc Marion.[64] Her emphasis on God as Love, her focus on the economic Trinity, and especially her concept of God as ineffable mystery evoking praise are congruent with the idea of God as unoriginate Source of Love revealed in Word and enacted in Spirit. However, LaCugna is often categorized with the social trinitarians because she falls back on images and terms of three Persons in a communion of love, using them (and pronouns such as "them") as a model for what being relational means among human persons. In his review of *God for Us*, Roger Haight notes that while LaCugna wants to move away from talking about God *in se*, "the grammar of LaCugna's sentences seems to contradict her basic thesis."[65] Haight goes on to give as his example LaCugna's chapter

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[64] For an accessible and abbreviated summary of LaCugna's position, see LaCugna, "The Practical Trinity," *Christian Century* 109, no. 22 (July 15–22, 1992): 678–82.

[65] Roger Haight, Review Symposium of *God for Us*, *Horizons* 20 (1993): 131.

"Persons in Communion," which "seems to be an urging that God deals with us, and we should deal with each other, as genuine persons because God is differentiated into three persons."[66] LaCugna wants to emphasize that "the essence of God is relational, other-ward," but in doing so, she further clarifies that "God exists as diverse persons united in a communion of freedom, love, and knowledge."[67]

LaCugna wants to move theology from a substance ontology to an "ontology of relation," which she defines as "a description of what it means to be a person and to exist as persons in communion."[68] Drawing on the Cappadocians and John Zizioulas, LaCugna primarily argues for the use of the category of person rather than substance.[69] LaCugna explains that "the *esse* of God is to-be-related, and the activity proper to such a being is relating. Thus to be God is to-be-relationally. . . . God is personal *because* God is relational, and not vice versa."[70] While LaCugna does follow the social trinitarians in the imagery of three Persons in community, she is more concerned with the understanding of God as *personal* rather than as person. LaCugna maintains: "It does not so much matter whether we say God is one person in three modalities, or one nature in three persons, since these two assertions can be understood in approximately the same way. What matters is that we hold on to the assertion that God is *personal*, and that therefore the proper subject matter of the doctrine of the Trinity is the encounter between divine and human persons in the economy of redemption."[71]

LaCugna follows Zizioulas in grounding personhood in the monarchy of the Father, hence her ability to be fluid in her approach to whether God is spoken of as one person or three persons. For LaCugna, person must be redefined in relational terms rather than understanding person as "an individual who is self-possessed in self-knowledge and self-love."[72] LaCugna explains that "a person is defined by relation of origin ('from-another')," and so "the divine persons are never thought of as separate from each other, as discrete individuals."[73]

Given her emphasis on the economic Trinity, LaCugna maintains that "the divine essence is indeed revealed, given, bestowed in Christ, but what is given is not an impersonal nature, an 'in-itself', but the highest, most perfect realization of personhood and communion: being-for-another and from-another,

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[66] Ibid.
[67] LaCugna, *God for Us*, 243.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid., 244–45.
[70] LaCugna, "The Relational God," 654.
[71] LaCugna, *God for Us*, 305.
[72] Ibid., 14.
[73] Ibid., 246.

or love itself."[74] Her interpretation of Rahner's axiom that the immanent Trinity is the economic Trinity and vice versa wants to move beyond Rahner's understanding that "distinctions in the economy originate in and are grounded in distinctions 'in' God."[75] LaCugna "suggests not only that we abandon the misleading terms, economic and immanent Trinity, but that we also clarify the meaning of *oikonomia* and *theologia*" as more simply the "plan of God" and the "mystery of God."[76] LaCugna notes that it is the person of Jesus Christ that "discloses what it means to be fully personal, divine as well as human," and the Holy Spirit that "gathers us together into the body of Christ, transforming us so that 'we become by grace what God is by nature', namely, persons in full communion with God and with every creature."[77] LaCugna wants to redefine what we mean by person, using the economic Trinity as our model.[78]

LaCugna broadens the concept of communion and wants to focus primarily on the communion between God and the human person/community rather than communion within Godself. LaCugna's main argument is that we should focus on the economic Trinity, God *pro nobis* rather than God *in se*, but she notes that "the temptation will be to reify the idea of community by positing an intradivine 'community' or society of persons that exists alongside, or above, the human community."[79] LaCugna herself defines the Spirit as "the animating power of the economy, making God's will and work known and realized in Jesus Christ and in each one of us. The Spirit humanizes God, and also divinizes human beings, making persons theonomous and catholic."[80] She points out that the experience of *Koinōnia* in the Spirit is one that upholds the uniqueness of the individual: "*Koinōnia* does not swallow up the individual, nor obscure his or her uniqueness and unique contribution, nor take away individual freedom by assimilating it into a collective will. The goal of Christian community, constituted by the Spirit in union with Jesus Christ, is to provide a place in which *everyone* is accepted as an ineffable, unique, and unrepeatable image of God."[81]

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[74] Ibid.

[75] Ibid., 221.

[76] Ibid., 223.

[77] Ibid., 1. On Jesus as the revelation of what it means to be person, see 292–96; on the Holy Spirit as the principle of communion, see 296–300.

[78] For a description of the key factors of what it means to be "person" for LaCugna based on the understanding of "person" given by the Trinity, see *God for Us*, 288–92.

[79] *God for Us*, 15.

[80] Ibid., 296.

[81] Ibid., 299. Miroslav Volf takes a similar approach to the concerns of postmodernism; see Volf, "The Trinity Is Our Social Program: The Doctrine of the Trinity and the Shape of

V. *Oikonomia* Informing *Theologia*: Love as Source, Word, and Spirit

Following Marion's lead in moving from a conception of God as Being to God as Love, one can escape the linguistic trap of "Persons in communion" noted by Roger Haight above by using a Trinitarian image of God as Love. Love offers a better analogue than person because it is not subject to being, and it is not a substance, and yet love is the essence of relationality. Pure relationality is what enables existence. Because all existence finds its ground and being and sustenance in God as Love, being is always already relational. The source of being is relationality, that is, love.

While LaCugna's attempt to use the Trinity to redefine the common concept of person is laudable, the problem is that it is very difficult for the contemporary mind to think "person" and not "individual." LaCugna herself notes this danger:

> We in the west today think of a person as a "self" who may be further defined as a center of consciousness, a free, intentional subject, one who knows and is known, loves and is loved, an individual identity, a unique personality endowed with certain rights, a moral agent, someone who experiences, weighs, decides, and acts. This fits well with the idea that God is personal, but not at all with the idea that God is three persons. Three persons defined in this way would amount to three gods, three beings who act independently, three conscious individuals.[82]

While LaCugna wants to conform the common notion of person to the Trinity, in fact it is the opposite that occurs, so that when people hear the Trinity described as "three persons in communion," they conform the Trinity to their notion of person as an individual in relationship with another individual, thus leading to the very misconception of Trinity that LaCugna warns about in the passage above.

LaCugna is critical of a Trinitarian theology that follows Augustine in conceiving of God as "individual consciousness and its internal differentiations," because it leads to a focus on the individual and her/his journey inward in introspection and self-reflection.[83] But if one understands consciousness in

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Social Engagement," *Modern Theology* 14 (1998): 403–23. The social analogy of the Trinity becomes a means of protecting the identity of the other in the face of the totalizing effect of the metanarrative (408). Volf does argue, however, that we should not model our relationships on God's Trinitarian love, which is a reciprocal love, but rather on God's love for the world, which is "deeply flawed" and "suffused with enmity" (413).

[82] LaCugna, *God for Us*, 250.
[83] Ibid., 247.

terms of phenomenology, then consciousness becomes a journey of intentionality and intersubjectivity rather than a solipsistic turning inward on oneself.[84] There is no self-reflection without relationship to and with another. This understanding of personhood and consciousness is manifested in the Gospel witness to Jesus Christ. LaCugna's dismissal of the Augustinian tradition of God as one consciousness throws one back to a misconception of Trinity as three consciousnesses, which then leads to a conception of God as three individuals. The issue is not the oneness of consciousness, a point LaCugna does not dispute. Rather the issue is the understanding of consciousness as able to exist individually and independently rather than as interrelated and intersubjective. Following Marion's shift from Being to Love, we can sidestep the entire question by moving away from "person" to "love" as the primary analogy of understanding the Trinity.

LaCugna's own focus on the experience and revelation of God in the economy of salvation supports the claim here that one comes to know the meaning of person and community not in God's inner life, but rather in the relationship between God and humanity that is revealed in the incarnate Word and the Spirit-filled community. As noted above, her focus on *oikonomia* results in a redefinition of "person" that is revealed in the Incarnation of Christ. The understanding of what it means to be person as for-another and from-another comes from the incarnation of Love, the self-revelation and self-manifestation of God in the world as human. Thus we understand our human personhood in Christ as having its ground and existence in love and its essence in relationality. To exist is to be in relation because we have been loved into existence. However, LaCugna does not acknowledge that even this new definition of interrelated and inclusive personhood exemplified in Jesus is the self-communication of God *in a human person*, in the modern, psychological sense.[85] Jesus, not the triune Persons, is the exemplar of

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[84] Note that LaCugna does acknowledge this phenomenological understanding of person in her critique of Barth and Rahner (*God for Us,* 251) and in her section on John MacMurray (251ff.). The problem with LaCugna's use of MacMurray is that he is talking about God as personal in that God acts, not God as three personal others or three agents of action. In this sense, MacMurray's conception of God fits better with the image put forth in this article, where the Son and Spirit disclose God as Love revealed and enacted in the economy. See also Russell, *The Heart of Rahner*.

[85] There are theological debates about whether the "persona" or "hypostasis" of Jesus is divine or human, and the Council of Constantinople would seem to affirm that the "person," the bearer of the divine and human nature, is divine, but one must again recognize that the word *persona* that is being used in these debates does not carry the meaning of a psychological center of consciousness and freedom that the word conveys today. The early councils strongly argue that Jesus had to have a fully human will and center of action; thus the connotations of the word "person" today are what

personhood for human beings, a point that LaCugna herself highlights.[86] To understand what it means to be a human person in communion with God and one another, we do not look to the inner relations of the Trinity, but to God incarnate in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus reveals divinized humanity, Love incarnate, to us. The Word of God is person in the modern, psychological sense of the word as an individual being or subject with a center of consciousness and freedom, only in and through union with humanity in Jesus Christ.

Likewise, the appropriate understanding of communion or community is not found in the intradivine relations among the three in the Trinity, but rather in the community formed by the presence of the Holy Spirit as witnessed in Scripture. The Spirit is Love enacted in the world. As was noted above, in shifting focus to the economic Trinity, LaCugna wants to move away from any talk of intradivine community and focus on the Spirit working in and through human beings in a way that brings them into *koinonia* while preserving the uniqueness that makes them individuals. The individuality and individual freedom that LaCugna seeks to preserve in the human notion of community is precisely the reason this image does not work as a metaphor for the Trinitarian Persons, where the notions of individuality and individual freedom must be excluded. LaCugna is seeking a metaphor that allows these notions to exist within a human community while at the same time negating the overemphasis on individuality in the current culture that has led to a breakdown of community. Focusing on the Trinity as Love enables one to make that corrective. The Spirit-filled community witnessed in Scripture is one in which a radical equality and mutuality occurs so that there is no longer Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, male nor female (Gal 3:28).

In addressing the concern that the Trinity protect the distinctness and otherness of persons in community, Marion's insight can be used to note the necessity of distance between giver and gift.[87] Rather than totalizing the Other (to use the concept of Emmanuel Levinas),[88] Marion's sense of

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the councils affirm of Jesus' humanity. When I use "person" in reference to Jesus, I am referring to Jesus as a human being in the Rahnerian sense that in the person of Jesus we see one whose human nature as the *capax Dei* is perfectly fulfilled, thus enabling us to see the essence of what it means to be human, and in that sense to be a human person, one whose potential is fulfilled in that it is grounded in God as Love and becomes the manifestation of that love in the world.

[86] LaCugna, *God for Us*, 292.

[87] Marion, *God without Being*, 104.

[88] Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis, Philosophical Series Book 24 (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969).

exchange always requires maintaining a distance that can never be crossed.[89] "With love," Marion explains, "it is a matter of the other as such, irreducibly distinct and autonomous. If I were somehow to appropriate this other for myself, I would first have to reduce it to the rank of a slave, of an animal object, and thus lose it as other."[90] In order to understand being persons in communion, we follow LaCugna's lead and look to the way in which the Spirit is the action of God in each of us, making us persons in the way that Jesus is person. To be a person as Jesus is person is to be for another and from another, God revealed as Love in the world. God as Love continues to act in the world as Spirit in and through human persons and the bonds of love that create true communion among humankind, creation, and God. This Spirit of Love is the catalyst for authentic social change, combating oppression and fighting injustice in the world. Spirit-filled persons continue to bear witness, following in the footsteps of the first Christian martyrs, giving up even their own existence for the sake of Love, for the sake of the other whom the world does not recognize as human or person.

At best, LaCugna's critics fault her for ambiguity in maintaining some concept of immanent Trinity to protect the freedom of God and refrain from making God dependent on creation.[91] At worst, they fault her for an annihilation of God's freedom and a total conflation of the immanent Trinity into the economy of salvation.[92] By using Marion's shift from Being to Love to develop a Trinitarian shift from Person to Source, Word, and Spirit of Love, one can speak of the immanent Trinity that is revealed in the economy of salvation, without abandoning language of God *in se* altogether. The revelation of the economic Trinity does in fact reveal to us God's very self, the immanent Trinity. What is revealed is God as Love manifested and enacted in human history. The economic Trinity does not simply reveal God; it reveals God in relation to humanity. Following LaCugna's principle of focusing on *oikonomia* and letting *oikonomia* inform *theologia*, the economic Trinity reveals the immanent Trinity. Who God is in relation to us is not other than who God is in Godself. God is revealed as Love, the unoriginate Source of Love, the revealed Word of Love, and the enacted Spirit of Love.

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[89]   Marion, *God without Being*, 104.

[90]   Marion, *Prolegomena to Charity*, 75.

[91]   Kärkkäinen, *The Trinity*, 187–93. While Kärkkäinen notes the ambiguity in LaCugna's position, the many times that she states that there is a role for *theologia* in protecting the mystery of God, and that God cannot be reduced to our experience of God, he nonetheless concludes, "In sum, it seems to me that the end result of LaCugna's program is the collapse of the immanent Trinity into the economic" (191). For other critiques of this point in LaCugna's work, see note 9 above.

[92]   See note 9 above, in particular, Molnar, *Divine Freedom*.

Using the analogy of Love protects the mystery of God *in se*, in that Love is unfathomable, inexhaustible, and incomprehensible; something we experience but in a way that eludes our cognitive grasp. To recall Marion's terms, Love is an icon that opens the incomprehensible in such a way that allows us to talk about *theologia*, God *in se*, the immanent Trinity, but in a way that is grounded in our experience of how God has revealed Godself as Love in the economy of salvation. As an icon, face, gift, the analogy of Love protects the otherness of God, and therefore the freedom and hiddenness of God *in se*. Contrary to the arguments that LaCugna cites from Piet Schoonenberg that God's offer to humanity requires a free acceptance, and thereby brings about "a new way of being both for God and for the creature,"[93] Marion explains that love gains nothing from its reception or lack thereof.[94] God's offer does not bring about a new way of being for God. Rather, that offer reveals who God is eternally in Godself, that is, Love. This image of the immanent Trinity as Love protects God's independence and freedom from creation, while remaining true to who God has revealed Godself to be in relation to creation in the economy of salvation.

LaCugna argues that "personhood precedes and is the cause of existence."[95] For Marion, love precedes and is the cause of existence. LaCugna focuses on the Father as the Unoriginate Origin, thus the personhood of the Father is "the principle, origin, and cause of all existence."[96] Drawing on Zizioulas, LaCugna would agree with Marion on the primacy of love. She explains, "love is constitutive of God's being, but as a predicate of person, not substance. Since love produces communion among persons, love causes God to be who God is."[97] LaCugna quotes Zizioulas: "Thus love ceases to be a qualifying—i.e. secondary—property of being and becomes *the supreme ontological predicate*. Love as God's mode of existence 'hypostasizes' God, *constitutes* [God's] being. Therefore, as a result of love, the ontology of God is not subject to the necessity of the substance. Love is identified with ontological freedom."[98]

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[93] LaCugna, *God for Us*, 219; LaCugna cites Piet Schoonenberg, "Trinity—The Consummated Covenant: Theses on the Doctrine of the Trinitarian God," *Studies in Religion* 5 (1975–76): 114.

[94] Marion, *God without Being*, 47; Marion, *Erotic Phenomenon*, 71–73.

[95] LaCugna, *God for Us*, 247.

[96] Ibid.

[97] Ibid., 261.

[98] John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), 46 (emphasis in original); quoted in LaCugna, *God for Us*, 261.

After expanding on the relationship between love, freedom, and existence in Zizioulas, LaCugna concludes, in uncanny synchronicity with Marion: "The fullest import (albeit implicit) of Zizioulas' ontology of communion is that love creates new being; love brings into existence anything and everything that is. Without love nothing would be at all. Apart from love there is only nonbeing which is the same as nonpersonhood."[99] In a footnote to this passage, LaCugna uses the example of suicide, and ultimately any death, to note that ceasing to exist bodily is not the same as ceasing to exist entirely, because existence continues when one is remembered and loved in a network of relationships.[100] She goes on to connect this sense of existence to eternal existence in light of God as "the one who 'remembers' everyone and everything."[101]

LaCugna's theology ultimately ends up in the same place as Marion—namely, mystery and praise. Part of LaCugna's emphasis on God as Person is an understanding of person as "ineffable: an inexhaustible mystery that is not fully 'communicable' to another."[102] One must raise the question of using this definition to then speak of three Persons in the Trinity, if one is going to hold to the Nicene understanding of *homoousios*. For LaCugna, "the ultimate predicate of incomprehensibility is 'person'. . . . Person is at root a term of apophasis or negation; by predicating personhood of someone we acknowledge their indefinability and ineffable mystery."[103] Marion would say the same of Love. Both LaCugna and Marion would agree that this sense of God as ineffable, inexhaustible mystery leads to silence and praise. Ultimately all talk of God as Trinity leads back to God as holy mystery before whom we fall silent in praise and adoration.[104]

LaCugna, like Marion, connects the concepts of mystery and love: "We do not say that God is mystery because we know nothing about God. As a partner in love, God permanently remains Mystery to us, no matter how advanced is our intimacy. Like all love relationships, the involvement between God and humanity cannot be easily described and can only be inadequately explained."[105] God is mystery because God is personal, as she explains: "The more intimate our knowledge of another, the more we are drawn to

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[99] LaCugna, *God for Us*, 265; see also 301, 303.

[100] LaCugna, *God for Us*, 309–10 n. 75. Note that death and suicide are also important topics for Marion in both *The Erotic Phenomenon* and *Prolegomena to Charity*.

[101] LaCugna, *God for Us*, 310 n. 75.

[102] Ibid., 289.

[103] Ibid., 302.

[104] See Karen Kilby, "Is an Apophatic Trinitarianism Possible?," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 12 (2010): 65–77.

[105] LaCugna, *God for Us*, 323.

that person's unique mystery, and the deeper that mystery becomes."[106] Marion's own understanding of human persons and our relationships with one another similarly emphasizes the unknowability of another. He uses the concept of the crossing of gazes to explain the way in which love operates among persons. Both LaCugna and Marion confirm that a primary analogue for our relationship with God is our relationship with one another in love. We experience a congruence between the "contingent infinity" of the human other and the absolute Infinity of the divine Other, and in that experience we recognize and name God as Love, unoriginate Source revealed in Word and enacted in Spirit.

VI. Conclusion

All language falls short of capturing the infinity and the incomprehensibility of God. The ontotheological conception of God can give us many insights into the divine, but its complete dominance in theological circles has also tended toward idolatry in Marion's sense of the word—a concept that limits and constrains, rather than an icon that opens one to the infinity and incomprehensibility of God. The analogue of God as unoriginate Source of Love revealed in the Word and enacted in the Spirit is an image that both opens one to the mystery and ineffability of God and addresses the legitimate concerns of the social trinitarians, such as the need for a greater emphasis on intersubjectivity and community. Social trinitarians make an effort to redefine what is meant by "person" by hearkening to the relation of the Persons of the Trinity. The danger in addressing these concerns through the image of Trinity as a fellowship or community of persons is the danger of misconceiving such language as tritheism. Such concerns, however, can be addressed when one comes to understand what it means to be person in and through the person of Jesus Christ, the incarnate revelation of God as Love in the world. In the person of Jesus one sees a person whose origin is Love itself. He exists as a human person in mutual and equal relationships and expresses his own identity in relationship with others and in giving himself in love for others. Thus we come to know that being person means being relational and intersubjective in and through the revelation of Love incarnate in the human person of Jesus the Christ. Likewise, the concept of community as interrelationships based on mutuality and equality giving rise to a society that operates in a manner that is just and loving does not need the tritheistic image of a society or fellowship of three

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[106] Ibid., 324.

Persons in the Trinity to be grounded in Trinitarian theology. Rather when one understands the Trinity as God as Love in Source, Word, and Spirit, the Spirit is the principle of Love enacted in the world, a principle that is illustrated in the theological concept of the Body of Christ. The Spirit creates and unites the community in a Love that does not create uniformity, but rather creates the space and openness that empowers the authentic diversity that is necessary for community. The recognition of the indwelling Spirit in each person creates the bonds of mutuality and equality necessary for a healthy society. Such community that is created in and through the Spirit finds its origin in Love and recognizes that persons come to be only in loving relationship to another. Our understanding of personhood and society should be grounded in our understanding of God as Trinity, but that understanding need not lead to tritheistic images of God. God as Love is revealed in the incarnate Christ who reveals to us what it means to be a human person. God as Love is enacted in the Holy Spirit as the dynamism and power that creates community and forms it to be the Body of Christ, the ongoing revelation of God as Love in the world as a catalyst for social change, working to overcome oppression and injustice. We are created and have our existence in that unoriginate Source of Love and are called to live out our personhood in the image of the incarnate Love that is Jesus Christ, in and through the power of the Spirit of Love that dwells and acts within each of us, bringing us into communion with God and one another.