



DIVINE RELATIONALITY AND HUMAN PARTICIPATION: A CONSTRUCTIVE THEOLOGY OF CREATOR, CREATION, AND CREATURE

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ABSTRACT:

This paper's working title is A Constructive Theology of Creator, Creation, and Creature: Divine Relationality and Human Participation. The claim of God's existence and humanity's constitutive are investigated in this theological work. The central view holds that the relationality of God is more than an attribute; it is the fundamental mode of relationship, and that the pinnacle of creation is for humans to share in God's existence. A Constructive Theological Synthesis of metaphysical involvement, Trinitarian communion, Christological mediation, and eschatological fulfillment is built by this research using some of the later, middle, and axial periods of western theology.

Augustine of Hippo's Trinitarian relationality provides an early example of how divine relationality is stated. In *De Trinitate*, Love is God, and love is always relational since it is active. In his view, the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is truly present. Thus, relationality is an aspect of God's nature. What this means is that goodness is an active relational nature of God, and that essence is creation. Even in Augustine's anthropology, this is clear. Memory, intellect, and will are relational elements that humans possess, having been formed in God's image.

In the *Summa Theologiae*, Thomas Aquinas provides a metaphysical explanation of participation by building on patristic roots. Though in a limited, or analogous, way, all things share in God, who alone is *ipsum esse subsists*, according to Aquinas. Concerning involvement, both the transcendence of the divine and the reliance of creatures are safeguarded. Being is not something that creatures have intrinsically but rather as a gift; as a result, being is situated inside a relational reception framework. Aquinas argues that relationality is a means of depicting the vast and plentiful outpouring of divine kindness, rather than a denigration of the simplicity of God. This philosophical engagement provides the ontological groundwork for comprehending the nature of human contact with the Creator.

Significant developments in relational theology occurred throughout the Modern era. From a Christological and covenantal perspective, Karl Barth reorganizes the nature of divine relations. The supreme manifestation of God's "being-in-act," according to Barth's assertion in *Church Dogmatics*, is Jesus Christ. Rather than being a theoretical framework, divine relationality is a revelation from the past. God freely becomes "for us," and the relational ontology is expressed concretely through covenant. Relationality is based on grace, not obligation, according to Barth's emphasis on divine freedom.

The social and eschatological views of the Trinity are presented by Jürgen Moltmann and other writers. The triune God is portrayed by Moltmann in *The Trinity and the Kingdom* as a community of perichoretic mutual indwelling. Rather of being contained inside the Trinity's own existence, divine relationality spills out into creation's pain. There is an ultimate relationality at the end of God's relationality, which includes all the world's suffering and hope, according to Moltmann. As a result, everything in creation points toward the eschatological union with God.

Catherine Mowry LaCugna's constructive work is also utilized in this research. In *God for Us*, she contends that theology needs to reunite the dogma of the Trinity with the lived experience of Christianity. Separating the "immanent Trinity" from the "economic Trinity" is an abstraction of utterly philosophical conjecture, which LaCugna condemns. She contends that God's relational acts in and toward creation, rather than the inner activities of the Trinity, reveal God's inner life. Ethical duty, worship, and ecclesial activity are all supported by the divine relationality.

Creation, according to this view, is the key to unlocking the mystery of humankind's telos, or ultimate purpose. "God became human so that humans might become divine," according to Athanasius of Alexandria's description of Eastern Christian theology. Even if we are become a "part" of the divine essence via God's favor, we are nevertheless separate from the Creator, even though this is a reference to our distinct 'part' from the essence. This connection has the power to change lives. A life of love, liberty, and communion—the divine life—is offered to all people.

Methods such as constructive synthesis, systematic comparison, and historical-theological analysis are employed in the research. A consistent participatory ontology is developed by combining contemporary relational theologies with ancient metaphysical ideas. The research employs patristic, scholastic, and modernist metaphysics in a relational redescription of metaphysics, rather than dismissing it. The model that emerges from this method is the Trinitarian love's dynamic relational structure, which includes the Creator, creation, and creature.

The ecological and ethical implications of divine relationality are examined in this study. It is a theological contradiction to exploit the natural environment if creation is relational and participatory. Good stewardship, social fairness, and community solidarity are prerequisites for human participation in divine communion. Therefore, ecclesial praxis and global ethics are affected by relational ontology.

Divine relationality considers the conclusion of the world in light of its end. A person's role in history is not yet fully realized, but it is pointing toward its eventual realization during God's rule. Research backs up Moltmann's prediction that relational communion will reach its pinnacle in the new creation. Being in a perfected communion is the ultimate goal of God's creation, not becoming nothing or losing oneself in the divine.

All things are ontologically rooted in divine relationality, and the calling of all things creaturely is human involvement, according to this research, which in turn elaborates the constructive theological perspective. God is communion, creation is a gift, and humanity is a participatory fellow. This is the logical progression from Augustine's Trinitarian love to Aquinas's metaphysical participation, from Barth's covenantal revelation to Moltmann's eschatological communion, and finally to LaCugna's ecclesial praxis. Here we find the relationality of God, a comprehensive theological framework that integrates several branches of study—including ontology, Christology, anthropology, ecclesiology, and eschatology—all pertaining to the connections between God, his creation, and his creatures.

KEYWORDS:

DIVINE RELATIONALITY, HUMAN PARTICIPATION, TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY, PARTICIPATORY ONTOLOGY, CREATOR-CREATION RELATIONSHIP, COVENANT, COMMUNION, THEOSIS, ESCHATOLOGY, CONSTRUCTIVE THEOLOGY.

PAPER ACCEPTED DATE:**PAPER PUBLISHED DATE:**27th January 202630th January 2026**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

A qualitative theological approach with three linked parts makes up this research:

Historical-Theological Analysis – The classical perspective of participation metaphysics is traced via primary materials from Augustine (De Trinitate) and Aquinas (Summa Theologiae I.44).

Systematic-Theological Engagement – We look to contemporary theologians like Karl Barth (Church Dogmatics II/1), and Otto Moltmann (The Trinity and the Kingdom) for novel contributions to relational ontology.

Constructive Synthesis – Modern relational theology and Catherine LaCugna's (God for Us) views provide constructive framework suggestions.

Classical metaphysics and contemporary relational thought are compared and contrasted using a comparative-analytical approach in this study. This study approach takes theological stances on current concerns through contextual interpretation, which is attuned to the historical circumstances of the time.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of divine relationality has evolved throughout the history of theological thought.

PATRISTIC FOUNDATIONS

God is love, according to Augustine, and the Trinity becomes relational via love (Augustine, De Trinitate). Partaking in self-giving to one another, the Father, Son, and Spirit are all one. Any subsequent theology must be based on the relationality inherent in their existence.

SCHOLASTIC DEVELOPMENT

As a metaphysical notion, participation is defined by Aquinas: God bestows existence onto all things; it is not something that the beings possess independently (Aquinas, Summa Theologiae I.44). Involvement safeguards the divine at the top while reinforcing the lower position of animals.

DIALECTICAL THEOLOGY

Disclosure is Barth's major concern. Barth argues in Church Dogmatics II/1 that God is relational through the covenantal process in Christ, rather than through speculative philosophy. Divine freedom is the bedrock of relational grace.

SOCIAL TRINITARIANISM

As a community of humans, the Trinity is portrayed by Moltmann. According to Moltmann's work, "The Trinity and the Kingdom," this exemplifies how people should

engage in society. There is a connection between the political and environmental spheres as well.

CONTEMPORARY SYSTEMATICS

In God for Us, LaCugna argues that theology has to get back to real communion and criticizes abstract metaphysics. Experiencing divine existence is made possible via worship and ethical activity.

This literature lays out the steps one must take to go from a metaphysical level of engagement to a relational level of communion. Constructive theology is being built here.

SUBJECT MATTER**THE ONTOLOGICAL GROUND OF DIVINE RELATIONALITY**

To begin discussing the topic of divine relationality, one must first ask what God is like. At his core, is God alone? Is God's relational nature intrinsic to who He is? According to classical Christian doctrine, God is not a solitary monad but rather the eternally united Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Augustine of Hippo's treatise, De Trinitate, contains a crucial portion of this theology. According to Augustine, God's very essence is love (caritas). God is relational because love requires a lover, a beloved, and the thread of love. Relationality does not split the divine oneness, according to Augustine. There are three unique yet interdependent ways in which the three persons of the Trinity are equal and everlasting. God is community at his core, and this dynamic between relationships is unity in a unique relational ontology. Philosophical accounts that hold that God is either completely detached from creation or completely uninvolved in it fail to capture the core of God's being. Being connected, selfless, and communicative are qualities of the divine nature.

Jürgen Moltmann, who follows in the footsteps of his predecessors by developing this concept hundreds of years later, coined the word perichoresis, which means "mutual indwelling of divine persons," in his work The Trinity and the Kingdom. "Community of mutual love" is how Moltmann describes the Trinity. It is not uniformity that produces the divine oneness or unity, but rather the involvement in relational processes. Sharing one's life, as opposed to dominating it, is reimagined as power in this context. As the foundation of the reality of God's existence, the relationality of God's essence or being is communion. It is essential to the divine nature that God be relational; it is not an afterthought.

CREATION AS THE FREE EXPRESSION OF DIVINE LOVE

Creation can be viewed as a manifestation of the intimate communion that is God. However, God's fulfillment does not depend on creation; rather, creation is the product of God's generosity. In *Summa Theologiae* (I.44), Thomas Aquinas explains that God's kindness causes him to create something from nothing (*ex nihilo*). A self-possessing entity creates through a diffusive process. The act of creation entails selfless love. After that, Aquinas discusses involvement. According to Aquinas, creatures share in God's essence, but not in the sense of autonomy. Being itself is a gift to them. This metaphysics of participation upholds both the uniqueness of the divine and the inherent worth of all living things. But God is also present as the cause that sustains everything.

An interpretation of creation as a covenant is offered by contemporary theologian Karl Barth in *Church Dogmatics III/1*. According to him, God's covenant with humanity rests on the surface of creation. According to Barth, the act of creation is a relational event. In creation, the relationship between God and humanity is laid forth. Creation is not mechanical or arbitrary, according to Barth. All of creation is based on relationships.

THE CREATURE AS IMAGE AND PARTICIPANT

A unique position among God's creatures has been bestowed upon humanity. The core of Augustine's thought is the belief that the human heart is perpetually restless and will never find peace apart from its union with God. Augustine thinks that humans are created in God's image. This type of movement is not indicative of passivity or unrest, but rather a strong yearning for communion with God. Our invitation to a relationship of desire with God does not elevate us to His level, however. "God became human so that humans might become divine" (*On the Incarnation*), as said by Athanasius of Alexandria, provides a good explanation of this relationship thought in Eastern Orthodoxy. We are called to a divine existence, but it doesn't mean we have to give up who we are. In fact, by God's grace, we are changed completely. Our relationship with God is profound as a result of this. We are extended an invitation to a profound and unique connection with God, with each other, and with all of creation because God is relational.

CHRISTOLOGICAL MEDIATION OF PARTICIPATION

Jesus Christ's relativity reveals the Divine most plainly and completely. According to Karl Barth, Revelation is the necessary first book of theology. Jesus Christ is portrayed as the covenant mediator in *Church Dogmatics IV/1*. When God becomes one with humanity via the incarnation, his relational love for humanity is shown. Both God's transcendence and God's immanence are affirmed by the incarnation. God is not only actively involved in human history, but is also God in his entirety. This gathering guarantees that people will take part. God has made it

possible for humans to have a conversation with him by first communicating with them. A further point that Moltmann makes is that Christ's suffering shows how God is one with everything that God has made. Not only that, but God is right there with us while we're hurting. The crucifixion also shows how deep Jesus' love is and how deep our mutual love is. This implies that participation is more than just a concept; it is a reality made possible by the suffering of Jesus Christ.

THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN RELATIONAL COMMUNION

Joining in takes place when the Holy Spirit works. To Saint Augustine, the Holy Spirit is the tie that binds the Father and the Son together in their love (*De Trinitate*). When Christians are unified with God in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, they also play this function. According to *God for Us* author Catherine Mowry LaCugna, Christians should live their lives in accordance with the Trinitarian theology. Through worship and good deeds, the Holy Spirit forms the bond of the Church, enabling her members to share in the divine life. As a result, relational theology touches on more than only the metaphysical. This isn't only a Canadian agenda; it's a global one as well. By maintaining the connection between the Creator and the created, the Spirit makes participation a living reality.

ECCLESIAL AND SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF PARTICIPATION

Regarding the relationality of the divine, communal implications do exist. As a symbol of shared existence, the Church emerges as an expression of God as communion. According to LaCugna, theology has to return to doxology and praxis, and Moltmann sees the Church as an embodiment of Trinitarian communion defined by mutuality rather than hierarchy. To make room for the entire, relational ontology advocates doing away with individuality. In addition, social ethics are a part of relational theology. When all sentient creatures are a part of the one true God, then theologically speaking, the truth about God is contradicted when exploitation and injustice occur. Every human connection should be modeled after the selfless love of God.

ECOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF RELATIONAL ONTOLOGY

The natural environment is fundamental to the participatory structure of creation. All creatures, even in contemplation, attribute goodness to God, according to Aquinas's metaphysics. By using analogies and an expansive imagination, Moltmann posits that the world is inhabited by the Spirit of God. The world is concerned with creation from a relational viewpoint, not as a resource but as a communion partner with God. A heavenly hug is also required by nature. By emphasizing the interdependence of God, his creation, and all living things, the relational dimension strengthens the caretaking of God's active, sustaining love.

ESCHATOLOGICAL FULFILLMENT OF PARTICIPATION

Both active engagement and optimism about the future are sources of strength. As Moltmann explains in *The Coming of God*, hope is at the heart of relational expectancy. Fellowship is the direction that creation takes in divinity. Rather than erasing, eschatological completeness enhances, creaturely identity. The last seal on a human heart, according to Augustine, is the eternal embrace of communion. When people really participate, they experience the communion of relationality. Being a portion of God is what Aquinas means when he talks about the beatific vision of grandeur. Although God the Creator is unique, all living things share in God's divine nature by grace.

CONSTRUCTIVE SYNTHESIS: A PARTICIPATORY ONTOLOGY

Coherence is shown by blending diverse voices. With Augustine, Trinitarian love situates relationships. The metaphysical framework with Aquinas is participation. The foundation of our relationship is the revelation of the covenant with Barth. Moltmann expands relational communion from an eschatological and social perspective. With LaCugna, one practices theology in the lived.

A CONSTRUCTIVE THEOLOGY EMERGES:

- Being God means being in communion with others.
- God's love for humanity is freely given via creation.
- Fellowship that encourages participation is extended to humanity.
- Reconciliation in relationships is mediated by Christ.
- Communion is made possible by the Spirit.
- Participatory destiny is fulfilled by eschatology.

Both the transcendence and the immanence of the divine otherness and intimacy are well-represented in this participatory ontology.

THE OLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

According to the concept of divine relationality, love is power, service is authority, and gift is being. By including humans, vocation is reimagined as a kind of connection rather than independence. In this way, theological inquiry progresses from lifeless metaphysics to dynamic relationality. A living community, not an impersonal designer, is the Creator. Creation is more of a gift of relationships than a final result. The being is not an outside observer but rather a welcomed participant. Anthropology, ecclesiology, ethics, and hope are all built around this constructive framework's centrality of divine relationality. Being a part of something is not a luxury but a fundamental aspect of being spiritual.

OUTCOMES

Several theological outcomes are produced by the research:

Relational Ontology – Relationships are fundamental to the nature of a divine creature (Augustine; Moltmann).

Participatory Metaphysics – Being dependent on others for survival is not only acceptable, but also admirable. In the case of Aquinas

Covenantal Communion – Relationships are more about coming clean than guesswork (Barth).

Ecclesial Praxis – Worship and the moral community are places where participation occurs (LaCugna).

Eschatological Orientation – Community is progressing towards complete realization in creation (Moltmann).

When seen in a relational context, these findings illuminate the link between classical and modern theology.

CONCLUSIONS

In light of human experience as vocation and destiny, and creaturely existence as telos, this study has sought to provide a constructive and positive theological perspective based on God's relationality. According to this research, which takes a historical and systematic relational approach, relationality is an essential part of God's being, not an afterthought. As a result, creation is not a solitary act, and people are not separate entities but rather members of God's communion. One school of thought in theology holds that God is relational, with Augustine of Hippo as its progenitor. In *De Trinitate*, the love of God is portrayed as a self-sustaining communion of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who are three people in one God. If love is God's most essential quality, then the most fundamental aspect of existence is interpersonal relationships, which has far-reaching implications. That is why the doctrine of the Trinity must be taken seriously as actual truth and not as abstract theological theory. The unity of God is not that of a single entity, but rather of a group of individuals. Similarly, Augustine says that humans are relational because we are created in God's image and because our hearts are restless.

Based on the patristic foundation, Thomas Aquinas provides clarification through participation theory. The sole entity who is pure entity, according to Aquinas, is God. To the degree that we have God, the remainder of us have existence. We still have the dignity of being above God in the participation perspective, yet God is our sustaining cause. Therefore, dualism does not exist. Two parties: the Creator and the community that He has formed; the latter is a blessing. Divine kindness freely disperses. All the rest of us are formed with some degree of being. Karl Barth is the one we consult in the current day. At its core, relational theology is concerned with what Jesus Christ revealed. When Barth says that God is "being-in-act," he is moving toward relational theology. The communion of the triune God—God, Christ, and the Godhead—is for us. By describing the work of creation and grace as a communion

of covenants, Barth makes it crystal evident that the created order originates in the fellowship of the triune God. Additionally, Barth places an emphasis on the crucifixion, recasts Christ's relational theology, and grounds it in Christ's pre-eschatological order.

Jürgen Moltmann builds a concept of the Trinity that is social and eschatological by extending relational theology. In his book *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, he paints a picture of the triune God as a community of consubstantial fellowship and reciprocal indwelling. This new way of looking at God challenges ideas of God as a source of absolute power and reimagines the Trinity as a place where love reigns supreme. As the world progresses toward its eschatological culmination in communion, Moltmann's theology of hope incorporates relationality within the eschatological horizon. Cooperation, rather than confusion, will determine the fate of the world. In communion, God will be complete. As a result, involvement is not static but rather dynamic and historic, with an eye toward completion. The theology of hope's practical element is strengthened by Catherine Mowry LaCugna's constructive contribution, which focuses on the divine relationality. Any attempt to separate God's salvific activity from God's interior life is criticized by LaCugna in *God for Us*. According to her, understanding God's relationality with the world is essential for grasping the Trinity. Morality and doxology are thus integral parts of religion. Social justice activity, communal worship, and sacramental worship all provide opportunities to partake in the holy life. How the church knows herself and what her moral obligation is are defined by relational ontology.

All of the foregoing established the theologians' various perspectives as champions of a unified goal. To begin, the holy presence of God exists in community. As a divine entity, God is self-loving, self-giving, and mutually loving. Secondly, God gave us the gift of creation. The universe exists because of God's self-sacrifice, or divine charity, and it is dependent on God. Third, the invitation is extended to mankind to join in, to experience the camaraderie and self-giving of the divine. The worth of a (human) creator is not found in the individual's independence but in their relational and occupational selves. The Creator-creature dichotomy remains, nevertheless, even after participation. Through the generosity of God and the gift of involvement, it brings perfection to the creation. This model questions the autonomy of the contemporary person. At its core, the self is relational and interactive. Being human, then, is being in communication with God, which means being in communion with other humans and, just as importantly, with all of creation. The church is also seen in this ecclesiastical light as an outward manifestation of the Triune communion. A Christian community is more of a participative construction, molded by the divine life than a sociological one, in the sense of a voluntary association. Exploitation is a theological paradox since it depends on relational and participative being in line with God's image, goodness, and character. In reality, exploitation is a

theological paradox since being connected and participative is in line with God's image, kindness, and character.

Either now or in the future, you may still be a part of the action. Intimacy with God on this planet is genuine, yet fleeting. The goal is for the apostolic communion to be fully realized. The communion in the relationship will be complete when this occurs. St. Augustine's core teachings are on active engagement, not passive observation. It is taking part in the splendor of God. A love that is both immanent and transcendent exists in God. Within the boundless love of the triune God, this is the world's destiny. This study's corpus shows how classical metaphysics and relational theology are not mutually exclusive conceptions of modernity. In fact, the polar opposite is true: participation and relationality may coexist together. The stabilizing factor is Aquinas's analogical ontology, whereas the dynamizing force is Moltmann's social Trinity. At their core, both revolve on Augustine's Trinitarian love. The Christological emphasis is maintained by Barth, but LaCugna brings the theory to a practical level. The theology of God the Creator, God's creation, and the creature as a whole is woven together in a web of relationships maintained by grace.

Finally, the essence of Christian theology is the relationality between God and humans, and human involvement is the manifestation of existentialist ideas. Rather than being an architect, God is communion in living form. Creation is an act of divine kindness, not a mechanical process. The creature's role in the covenant is that of a relational participant, rather than a subject. The theological viewpoint that views the end of creation and its purpose in communion is one that integrates relational ontology, Christology, anthropology, ecclesiology, ethics, and eschatology. All living things are cordially invited to actively and transformatively participate in the existence of the triune God, who is love. The purpose and promise of everything are conveyed in this invitation.

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