



Baik, Chung-Hyun.

The Holy Trinity—God for God and God for Us: Seven Positions on the Immanent-Economic Trinity Relation in Contemporary Trinitarian Theology

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Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth

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The doctrine of the Trinity has gone from the appendix of theological discussion, which could be referred to or discarded without incident, to a vital organ necessary for the proper function of theology in the past century. It seems that anyone and everyone who writes a book on the Trinity these days finds it necessary to comment on the resurgence, revitalization, resurrection, or (pick your adjective) of Trinitarian theology since Barth and Rahner. What a lot of these authors don't tell you is that for every ten theologians you sit at a table, you're bound to hear at least five understandings of the Trinity. Trinitarian theologians are an idiosyncratic bunch and that's made painfully clear in the volume under review.

Chung-Hyun Baik (lecturer of theology at Presbyterian College and Theological Seminary [PCTS] and Soonsil University in Seoul, Korea) has taken it upon himself to examine seven recent proposals on the relationship between the immanent and economic Trinity by eleven different theologians. In doing so, his focus is on ontology and epistemology, and the tensions created by each theologian's position, tensions that are attempted to be resolved through some sort of appeal to mystery.

In the opening chapter Baik charts the decline and renaissance of Trinitarian theology in biblical, philosophical, systematic, and historical theology.

Chapter 2 presents an overview of ontology and epistemology in the history of Western philosophy before highlighting several important concepts/terms (e.g., *Logos endiathetos/Logos prophorikos*; *procession/mission*; *dispositio, dispensatio; oikonomia; energia*) in the history of discussion. The focus here is mainly on patristic theologians but Aquinas, as the lone medieval theologian, receives the most attention (about 7 pages worth).

The survey of the seven proposals is split into two chapters. Chapter 3 describes Barth's "Mutual Correspondence;" Rahner's "Identity;" and Moltmann, Pannenberg, and Jenson's "Eschatological Unity" positions while chapter 4 focuses on Boff and Pittenger's "Immanent is 'Much More Than' Economic;" Bracken's "Immersing' Economic into Immanent;" Suchoki and LaCugna's "Absorbing' Immanent into Economic;" and finally, Lee's "Mutual Inclusiveness" positions. Each proposal to some extent seeks to maintain the unity and diversity between the immanent and economic Trinity.

Chapter 5 offers a critical analysis of each proposal, all of which create either epistemological or ontological tensions, sometimes both. Almost every theologian appeals to divine mystery into order to resolve the tensions.

Chapter 6 suggests a constructive proposal for future discussions. Baik proposes that "it is necessary to put in the foreground a biblical concept of mystery which refers to Jesus Christ, not merely as a device for resolving epistemological or ontological tensions, but rather that a concept of divine mystery needs to [be] determinative of ontology and epistemology." (179) "In this regard, an important further question to be answered is which concept of mystery to start with, rather than what kind of ontology and epistemology to presuppose." (187)

Baik's volume is a welcomed addition to the ever-growing body of literature on the Trinity. He does an admirable job of summarizing complex positions and making them accessible. He also manages to be evenhanded in his descriptions. I have read some of the theologians covered in this volume ridiculed for their idiosyncratic theologies in other volumes (I'll admit to having at times thrown a jab or two their way), but much like Detective Sergeant Joe Friday, Baik is interested in "just the facts."

Where this volume succeeds in survey and summary it doesn't seem quite as successful in critical analysis. The penultimate chapter barely moves beyond the summary chapters and seems as if it's there to basically set the stage for Baik's constructive proposal of foregrounding divine mystery

(understood as Jesus Christ, a proposal I'm not completely convinced of)¹ in discussions on the relationship between the immanent and economic Trinity. While Baik's constructive proposal is welcome, it says more about Baik's method than his theology. I came away unsure of what Baik's own position would look like. This in turn leaves me with little to base my speculation on why he didn't criticize certain features of each theologian's positions.

I think that plenty could have been said about the panentheistic/pantheistic implications of Moltmann's position. Rahner could be charged on this front as well, and LaCugna wouldn't come away unscathed either (although Baik does cite Gunton's insistence that "LaCugna's theology ultimately leads towards pantheism" [170]). I also think there's something to be said of the "Immersing;" "Absorbing;" and "Mutual Inclusiveness" positions as making God dependent upon his creation for his existence, which in turn does violence to classical beliefs about God's aseity. Likewise, Lee's "epistemology of change" (175, 178) denies God's immutability. Examples could be multiplied but I suppose that I'd expect to see each theologian critiqued according to an existing framework, or an existing framework critiqued according to each theologian. I'm simply not sure where Baik stands.

I'd be remiss to not mention the numerous typographical errors in this volume, which would have benefited from more careful editing. But on a positive note I can say that students and budding theologians will want to engage this volume as one that offers a gateway into the discussions going on in contemporary Trinitarian theology. The summaries alone are worth the price of the book and I look forward to seeing something a bit more constructive from Baik in the future.

¹ I'm unsure of his insistence that most of the occurrences of the word "mystery" in the NT refer to Jesus Christ. We read of the "mystery of God" (Col. 2:2; Rev. 10:17); "mystery of iniquity" (2 Thess. 2:7); "mystery of godliness" (1 Tim. 3:16); "mystery of the kingdom" (Mark 4:11); "mystery of his will" (Eph. 1:9); mystery of the gospel (Eph. 6:19); etc. I think there's a fairly even distribution of "mystery" throughout the NT and seeing Jesus (alone?) as the mystery seems to only present part of the picture.