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Economy and Immanence: Karl Rahner's Doctrine of the Trinity[1]

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SUMMARY

In the recent resurgence of Trinitarian theology, many theologians have employed Rahner's famous dictum in varying ways. This paper seeks to place his axiom in the context of his doctrine of the Trinity as a whole. It is concluded that, while Rahner has made a genuine contribution to Trinitarian discussion, his formulation (especially in its reciprocal clause) jeopardizes the freedom of God in loving creation, and should only be accepted with modification.

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ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Im seit kurzem wieder auflebenden Interesse an trinitarischer Theologie haben viele Theologen Rahners berühmtes Diktum auf verschiedene Weise verwendet. Dieser Artikel versucht, sein Axiom in den Zusammenhang seiner gesamten Trinitätslehre zu stellen. Der Artikel kommt zu dem Schluss, dass trotz der Tatsache, dass Rahner einen originären Beitrag zur Diskussion der Trinitätslehre geleistet hat, seine Formulierung (besonders in ihrer wechselseitigen Klausel) die Freiheit Gottes, die Schöpfung zu lieben, aufs Spiel setzt und nur mit Modifikationen akzeptiert werden sollte.

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RÉSUMÉ

Dans le cadre de l'intérêt récent pour la théologie de la Trinité, de nombreux théologiens ont repris la fameuse formule de Rahner de manières diverses. Cet essai tente de replacer son axiome dans le contexte de sa théologie de la Trinité dans son ensemble. L'auteur parvient à la conclusion que, bien que Rahner ait apporté une contribution valable au sujet de la Trinité, sa formulation (surtout dans la clause réciproque) porte atteinte à la liberté divine dans l'amour pour la création. On ne peut donc l'accepter que moyennant modification.

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Introduction

In the recent "renewal of Trinitarian theology," scholars have given broad assent to Catholic theologian Karl Rahner's famous dictum, "The 'economic' Trinity is the 'immanent' Trinity and the 'immanent' Trinity is the 'economic' Trinity."[2] One theologian characterizes the differences among the major Trinitarian thinkers today by the various ways they interpret and implement Rahner's thesis into their theology.[3] In view of such prominence, this brief essay shall attempt to understand the axiom in the light of Rahner's broader Trinitarian theology. After considering Rahner's aim, method, and starting point, we shall then examine the particular emphasis he places on the Trinity as an act of God's self-communication before turning to his immanent and economic identification and his discussion of proper roles within the Trinity. In the end, while Rahner has made a real contribution to the current discussion, we shall argue that his thesis needs to be qualified if it is to receive acceptance in an orthodox theological understanding.

Rahner's Aim, Method, and Starting Point

For Rahner, the doctrine of the Trinity is an abso-

lutely essential key to Christian life. He laments the eclipse of the doctrine in the church: "despite their orthodox confession of the Trinity, Christians are, in their practical life, almost mere 'monotheists.'...should the doctrine of the Trinity have to be dropped as false, the major part of religious literature could well remain virtually unchanged."[4] He traces the roots of this, in part, to the distinction that has been made between the two treatises "On the One God" (*De Deo Uno*) and "On the Triune God" (*De Deo Trino*). While he recognizes the need to treat both topics, their separation, which he attributes to Thomas Aquinas, has led to the neglect of the latter and an undue emphasis on the unity of God.[5] In the end, by the time one gets to the treatise *On the Triune God*, "It looks as if everything which matters for us in God has already been said in the treatise *On the One God*."[6] Thus, Rahner wants to restore to prominence a stress on the Trinity in both doctrinal and practical life.

In order to achieve such a recovery, Rahner focuses on salvation history. To derive our doctrine, we should "confidently look for an access into the doctrine of the Trinity in Jesus and in his Spirit, as we experience them through faith in salvation history."[7] While not neglecting the Magisterium's traditional teaching on the Trinity,[8] the doctrine should follow the order of salvation history. Thus, while there is "an authentic secret prehistory of the revelation of the Trinity in the Old Testament,"[9] the real revelation of the Trinity does not come until Christ and the Spirit are explicitly on the scene. This focus on history means that the "missions" of the members of the Trinity are brought to the foreground:

> But if it is true that we can really grasp the content of the doctrine of the Trinity only by going back to the history of salvation and of grace, to our experience of Jesus and of the Spirit of God, who operates in us, because in them we really already possess the Trinity itself as such, then there never should be a treatise on the Trinity in which the doctrine of the "missions" is at best only appended as a relatively unimportant and additional scholion.[10]

And, as we shall see below, this is one of the fundamental drives behind his identification of the economic and the immanent Trinities.

This methodological stress on salvation history has two important correlates. First, Rahner rejects the propriety of the psychological analogy. While it is traditional and its "basic justification" cannot be doubted,[11] it uses a circular reasoning: "it postulates from the doctrine of the Trinity a model of human knowledge and love, which either remains questionable, or about which it is not clear that it can be more than a *model* of human knowledge precisely as *finite*."[12] Further, the "psychological theory of the Trinity neglects the experience of the Trinity in the economy of salvation in favor of a seemingly almost Gnostic speculation about what goes on in the inner life of God."[13] Thus, Rahner distances himself from some of the classical Augustinian approach to understanding the Trinity.

Second, this highlights Rahner's starting point as one "from below." While this would not necessarily flow from a focus on salvation history, for Rahner the emphasis on human experience is programmatic. As Gary Badcock has written, "Rahner's entire theological enterprise, and his trinitarian position within it, must be conceived as an instance of ...a theological approach 'from below'....theological anthropology lies at the heart of Rahner's theology."[14] To give a full explication of Rahner's neo-Kantian transcendentalism that lies at the heart of his anthropology is beyond the scope of this paper,[15] but his persistent anthropological considerations influence his conception of the Trinity, especially with regard to his Christology.[16] In this light, Rahner's treatise can be seen as an effort to connect the doctrine of the Trinity to humanity: "There *must* be a connection between Trinity and man. The Trinity is a mystery of *salvation*, otherwise it would never have been revealed."[17] [18]

Trinity as Self-Communication

With this rudimentary understanding of Rahner's aim, method, and starting point, we can turn to his doctrine proper. The Trinity is the "mystery of salvation." Rahner means to place emphasis on each of these terms. The Trinity is the mystery of *salvation*: "If there are any absolute mysteries in the Christian faith, that of the Trinity is undoubtedly the most fundamental."[19] And it is the mystery of salvation, which consists fundamentally in God's self-communication. Thus, in the doctrine of the Trinity we come to see that "God himself as the abiding and holy mystery, as the incomprehensible ground of man's transcendent existence is not only the God of infinite distance, but also wants to be the God of absolute closeness in a true self-communication."[20]

Rahner follows the Greek Fathers in affirming the Father as the unoriginated God who is the

source of the Trinity.[21] The Father "self-communicates" himself through the Son and the Spirit. Indeed, the communication of the Spirit is not possible without the incarnation of the Son.[22] He is emphatic that this work of self-communication is not merely information about the Father, but rather that which is communicated is the "essence" or "divinity" of God himself.[23] As he says, "Here is the absolute mystery revealed to us only by Christ: God's *self*-communication is truly a self-communication."[24]

In the divine self-communication, there is a single act of communication with "two basic modalities."[25] Rahner develops this concept by means of four pairs of "aspects": (a) Origin-Future; (b) History-Transcendence; (c) Invitation-Acceptance; and (d) Knowledge-Love.[26] The Son is associated with the first term of each pair (and thus over all with "history" and "truth"), while the Spirit is associated with the latter term (and so with "Spirit" and "love"). Thus, the one self-communication takes place fundamentally "as truth and as love."[27]

This is not simply a public show, however, with no roots in God's being itself. Rather, Rahner insists, "the differentiation of the self-communication of God in history (of truth) and spirit (of love) must belong to God 'in himself,' or otherwise this difference, which undoubtedly exists, would do away with God's *self*-communication."[28] Therefore, there is a necessary connection between God's being in and for himself, and the way he appears in salvation history: "when God freely steps outside of himself in *self*-communication...it is and must be the Son who appears historically in the flesh as man. And it is and must be the Spirit who brings about the acceptance by the world...of this self-communication."[29] Here we can see the beginnings of his identification of the economic with the immanent Trinity.

Furthermore, Rahner's understanding of the Trinity as self-communication leads him to assert the insufficiency of the traditional language of "persons" within the Trinity. While such terminology is ancient and established,[30] modern usage of "person" leads one to think of solitary individuals with their own centers of consciousness.[31] Thus, "if we wish to understand the use of 'three persons' correctly (this supposes that we forget the usual meaning of the words), we must always return to the original experience of salvation history."[32] Instead of thinking of "several spiritual centers of activity, of several subjectivities and liberties,"[33] Rahner suggests the term "distinct manner of subsisting" instead of "person."[34] He distinguishes this from Barth's "manner of being," insisting also that it should not be supposed that this " 'manner' were something subsequent, a 'modality' without which the substantially real might also exist."[35] In the end, then, the traditional "person" language should be understood as expressing, economically, "three concrete ways of being given, of givenness," and immanently "three relative concrete ways of existing" of one God.[36] Thus, once Rahner has reconciled his stress on self-communication with the notion of persons, he can write that "each one of the three divine persons communicates himself to man in gratuitous grace in his own personal particularity and diversity...these three self-communications are the self-communication of the one God in the three relative ways in which God subsists."[37]

The Economic Trinity is the Immanent Trinity

This now leads us to consider Rahner's fundamental axiom: the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity and vice versa. This statement may be taken in varying ways, and Rahner himself is not entirely clear in his writing.[38] The fundamental thrust of it, however, is clear. Rahner vehemently protests against any sort of "God behind the God-who-is-revealed." That is, he wants to assert that salvation history reveals God as he is in himself, as opposed to tendencies that posit some sort of gap between the economic and the immanent (e.g., Sabellianism or Arianism).[39] Rahner does not want to deny that the immanent Trinity actually exists or to say that the Trinity is constituted by salvation history. Rather, "the revelation of the immanent Trinity can only be thought of as coming in the action of divine grace qua action, that is, by the immanent Trinity becoming the economic Trinity."[40]

The question, then, may be posed: what is the "meaning of the copula" in Rahner's dictum?[41] If it is to be understood as expressing a literal identification between the two (an ontological construal), "then it clearly requires qualification, since, as it stands, it fails to shed light on an adequate way to maintain both the ontological difference between God and creation, *and* the ontological relatedness of God to creation."[42] If, however, it is being used somewhat metaphorically to posit an identity of relation, then the statement may be paraphrased something like this: "The relationality of God to us in salvation history is God as internally and antecedently related in God's self, and *vice versa*."[43] In

this sense, then, the axiom may be seen as a "methodological rather than ontological insight."[44]

Rahner himself is not entirely clear which of these two options should be preferred. At times his language supports the "methodological" understanding of the copula by stressing the freedom inherent in God's decision to communicate himself:

> The identity does not of course mean that one denies that the 'economic' Trinity, one with the immanent Trinity, only exists by virtue of the free decree of God to communicate himself (supernaturally). But by virtue of this free decree, the gift in which God imparts himself to the world is precisely God as the triune God, and not something produced by him through efficient causality, something that represents him.[45]

In these sentences one may see an entirely orthodox concern to stress a coincidence of God's revelation of himself with God's being in himself. At other times, however, Rahner appears to blur the lines more than this:

> It is not a question here of setting the immanent and economic Trinity in a narrower and clearer relationship, which nevertheless always assumes the prior existence of two separate realities. The goal of our efforts is rather to bring out a prior and original identity and unity of the two realities, in relation to which the immanent and economic Trinity offer developments, clarifications and aspects of this underlying unity.[46]

Rahner's stress on the "prior and original identity and unity" of the immanent and the economic seem rather to point to an ontological understanding of the copula.

I want to suggest that Rahner's lack of clarity is due to his conception of the Trinity as divine self-communication. Because God himself is really communicated, there can be, *a priori*, no distinction between the two conceptions of the Trinity. This is most clearly seen in Rahner's identification of the processions with the missions. The missions are not enacted in salvation history so much as they are rather extensions of the processions: "the two immanent processions in God correspond (in identity) with the two missions."[47] We will have more to say on this in our next section.

LaCugna points out that the classic distinction between the immanent and the economic Trinity is made in order "(a) to uphold divine freedom, (b) to avoid equating God with the world, and (c) to avoid the agnostic or nominalist perspectives which despair of any real knowledge of God on our part."[48] This is why she is zealous to defend Rahner against any ontological construal of the copula in his axiom. There is in Rahner's axiom, however, an element that suggests that it is to be intended to be more than methodological – that is, its "*vice versa*" clause. Colin Gunton contrasts Barth and Rahner on this point in a way that sheds light on Rahner's axiom:

> Barth's view is that in the order of knowing we may move from what God (economically) shows himself to be to a corresponding conception of what God is in himself. If God is what we are given in the economy, then we may conclude that the economy is a reliable guide to what God is, eternally and in himself. There is, however, an asymmetrical relationship between knowing and being, and we are not obliged to accept the apparent view of Rahner that the thesis 'the Economic Trinity is the Immanent Trinity' is also true 'reciprocally' (*umgekehrt*).[49]

In other words, Rahner is not simply saying that the economic Trinity gives us an accurate picture of who God is in himself, but also that the immanent Trinity is somehow fully disclosed in the economic Trinity. This lends support to a more ontological construal of the copula, as does Rahner's discussion of "proper missions" within the Trinity, to which we now turn.

Proper Missions in the Trinity

In attempting to provide support for his axiom, Rahner has to face a possible objection raised by the tradition. Since the time of Augustine, it has been supposed that any one of the divine persons could have become man in the incarnation.[50] If this were the case, the economic Trinity would not reveal the true structure of the immanent, but would be more of an *ad hoc* encounter of the immanent Trinity with history. Rahner, however, counters this with the idea that "there is at least *one* 'mission,' *one* presence in the world, *one* reality of salvation history which is not merely appropriated to some divine person, but which is proper to him...There has occurred in salvation history something which can be predicated only of one divine person."[51] He is speaking, of course, of the incarnation of the Logos.

Here Rahner has also introduced the idea of "proper" attributes that go beyond "mere appropriation." In doing so, he wants to say that each member of the Trinity has its proper relationship to the creation, and the incarnation is only the most obvi-

ous example. While the Father's essence is communicated through the Son, it is the Spirit, as we have seen above, that effects the reception of this (recall the second set of terms: future, transcendence, acceptance, love). Thus, the Spirit, as "Uncreated Grace," has proper relations just like the Logos. In this sense, Rahner can write, "Christology and the doctrine of grace are, strictly speaking, doctrine of the Trinity."[52] Here we see the strict correspondence between God's self-communication in himself and that toward the world: "the real distinction between the two processions is constituted by a twofold immanent self-communication, inasmuch as the unoriginated God (the Father) is he who is expressed in the truth for himself (the Son) and he who is received and accepted in love for himself (the Spirit), and hence is he who can freely communicate himself *ad extra* in this twofold way."[53]

There is therefore an identity between the processions and the missions: "the two immanent processions in God correspond (in identity) with the two missions."[54] This leads Rahner to make an interesting connection between the persons of the Son and Spirit and the created reality they each assume in the economy: "the relationships to created realities constituted in formal (not efficient) causality by the missions as processions are not appropriations...The relationships are proper to the person in each case."[55] This move has important consequences for both his Christology and his pneumatology. To begin with the latter, Rahner employs the notion of "quasi-formal causality" to speak of the Spirit's role as Uncreated Grace. As LaCugna writes, this notion "means something more than efficient, less than formal causality. The indwelling of the divine persons in grace makes the graced person as close to God as possible without erasing the ontological difference between God and creature."[56] In other words, the Spirit does not merely work through created reality (efficient cause), but somehow inheres within the person to effect the reception of Christ. In Badcock's words, "Rahner consistently defines grace, which *is* the self-communication of God to you and me, in pneumatological rather than in Christological terms."[57] It might be too strong to speak of repeated "hypostatic unions" with the Spirit and individuals, but the parallel is apt.[58]

The consequences of this move for Christology are more pronounced in Rahner's work. It must be emphasized that the incarnation is far more important for Rahner's Christology (and hence, for his doctrine of the Trinity) than is a doctrine of the atonement. The point that Rahner labors to establish is that the incarnation must be proper to the Logos or else there is no true revelation of the Logos.[59] This means that Christology and anthropology are closely linked in his thought: "Christology is the end and beginning of anthropology. And this anthropology, when most thoroughly realized in Christology, is eternally theology."[60] Indeed, this link is not merely through historical accident, but is due to a proper correspondence between Logos and humanity. Rahner writes, "If God wills to become non-God, man comes to be, that and nothing else, we might say...And if God himself is man and remains so for ever, if all theology is therefore eternally an anthropology....man is for ever the articulate mystery of God."[61]

This identity is bound up for Rahner in the theology of the symbol. As Hill describes Rahner's symbolic theology, he writes, "Everything, to the extent that it is, seeks to come to full realization of itself by bringing its own being to expression in 'another' that it posits over and against itself...It is not a mere sign or cognitive pointer, but an ontological reality."[62] This logic is clearly seen in Rahner's description of how the utterance of the Logos in some sense entails human existence:

> Human nature in general is a possible object of the creative knowledge and power of God, because and insofar as the Logos is by nature the one who is 'utterable' (even into that which is not God)...[human nature] is the constitutive, real symbol of the Logos himself...man is possible because the exteriorization of the Logos is possible.[63]

For Rahner, then, such created reality is seen as "a consequence of the self-communication" of God.[64] It is clear that Rahner extends the concept of self-communication not simply to Jesus' divine nature, but to his human nature as well: "This man [i.e., Jesus] is, as such, the self-utterance of God in its self-emptying, because God expresses *himself* when he empties himself."[65]

We may question, however, for two reasons whether Rahner's strict identification of the exteriorization of the Logos with humanity has come at too great a price. First, the language he uses is so emanationist that it seems to compromise the freedom of God in creation. Hill perceptively states that

> the way in which emphasis falls upon the Son as the auto-expression of God the Father, coupled with the insistence that only the Son could

be God's self-expression (real symbol) into the Void, does strongly suggest that, prior to the Incarnation, the eternal Word is not so much the nonincarnate Word as the Word that is to become incarnate...Rahner's thinking appears to compromise a view of that utterly free act as *logically* subsequent to the unoriginate 'structure' of God's very being as triune, that is, to God's very being as deity apart from all relation to the nondivine.[66]

In other words, Rahner seems to make the very identity of the second person of the Trinity dependent in some way upon created human beings. Second, such a close identification of humanity as the symbol of the Logos leads Rahner to universalism. Self-acceptance, then, becomes the same as acceptance of Christ, and love of neighbor is the same as love of God: "Anyone who accepts his own humanity in full – and how immeasurably hard that is, how doubtful whether we really do it! – has accepted the Son of Man, because God has accepted man in him."[67]

Concluding Evaluations

In conclusion, we may sum up our discussion of Rahner's understanding of the Trinity, and especially of his "axiom," by way of critique and appreciation. First, the largest single critique we must offer is that Rahner's axiom eclipses the immanent Trinity, especially in light of the "reciprocal" move to affirm that the immanent Trinity is the economic Trinity. As Paul Molnar argues, the purpose of any doctrine of the immanent trinity, broadly speaking, is "to recognize, uphold and respect God's freedom."[68] In other words, to affirm that God was complete in himself before creation is to affirm that he created out of freedom, and hence that his being is not somehow constituted by his act of creation nor that creation is an extension of himself.

It is clear that Rahner himself did not want to draw these conclusions explicitly. In Ted Peters' words, "Rahner persists in the classical insistence that God's eternity is independent of historical self-constitution."[69] However, by virtue of the reciprocal identification of the economic and the immanent Trinity, Rahner paves the way to "consider how the history of the incarnation as history becomes internal to the divine perichoresis itself. And along with the incarnate Son comes the world that he was destined to save, so that the whole of temporal creation enters into the eternity of God's self-relatedness."[70] Indeed, LaCugna has developed Rahner's insight by claiming that the immanent Trinity should be left behind as a theological fiction: "to postulate God's nonrelationship with the world as the primordial truth about God's nature, is a fantasy about a God who does not exist."[71]

But by so closely identifying the very being of God with history, both God's freedom and the world's created freedom are jeopardized.[72] If creation is in some sense an "emanation" or "extension" of the being of God – as Rahner comes close to saying especially in his Christological discussion – it is not clear how this can be attributed to God's love. In Hill's words, "Rahner finds an explanation for creation and redemption in God's very *being* as Trinity; earlier theology preferred to find only its possibility there and to leave its actual occurrence to the mysteriousness of God's altruistic *love*."[73] What is more, we may surmise that under Hegel's influence, "the emphasis on the economic Trinity may be the way to compose the Trinity with the *man* Jesus, the man as such (*qua homo*) in the center."[74] We have noted above the universalism to which this move leads Rahner.

Therefore, in light of these serious shortcomings, we may only accept Rahner's maxim with some revision. If we intend it as a methodological principle about the order of knowing, then we may certainly agree with the first half of his statement that the economic Trinity truly reveals the immanent Trinity. In this sense, salvation history is not a modalistic play, but really reveals God as he is. The reciprocal aspect of Rahner's maxim, however, implicates one in an ontological construal of the copula and so endangers the distinction between God and world. This move has serious and detrimental theological consequences, and so must be rejected. Rahner has done a real service to Trinitarian theology by returning to a stress on salvation history, but he must not be followed in all of his conclusions.

Notes

1 I am grateful to Professor Henri Blocher for his comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

2 Karl Rahner, *The Trinity* (trans. J. Donceel; New York: Crossroad, 1997; orig. 1970), 22 and *passim*; emphasis removed.

3 Carl E. Braaten, "The Triune God: The Source and Model of Christian Unity and Mission," *Missiology* 18 (1990): 415-427; esp. 416.

4 Rahner, *Trinity*, 10-11. Happily, this is less the case now than in Rahner's day, thanks in part to his own

contribution, to that of Karl Barth, and several other prominent theologians over the past thirty years.

5 Ibid., 15-21.
6 Ibid., 17.
7 Ibid., 38.
8 Rahner wants "to make sure that this theology is the theology of the Church" (Ibid., 49), and spends a third of his book delineating the Magisterium's doctrine to show how his, while not identical, is certainly compatible with it.
9 Ibid., 42.
10 Ibid., 40.
11 Ibid., 115-116.
12 Ibid., 117-118.
13 Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity* (trans. William V. Dych; New York: Seabury, 1978), 135. Cf. idem., *Trinity*, 119.
14 Gary Badcock, "Karl Rahner, the Trinity, and Religious Pluralism," pages 143-154 in Kevin J. Vanhoozer, ed., *The Trinity in a Pluralistic Age: Theological Essays on Culture and Religion* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997). See 144.
15 On which see William J. Hill, *The Three-Personed God: The Trinity as a Mystery of Salvation* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1982), 130-145.
16 A quick glance at the table of contents of Rahner's *Foundations of Christian Faith* will serve to indicate the anthropological focus of his theology.
17 Rahner, *Trinity*, 21, emphasis original.
18
19 Karl Rahner, "Trinity, Divine," Pages 295-303 in *Sacramentum Mundi: An Encyclopedia of Theology* (vol. 6; New York: Herder & Herder, 1970). Here, 297.
20 Rahner, *Foundations*, 137.
21 Rahner, *Trinity*, 16, 84. Cf. Gregory Havrilak, "Karl Rahner and the Greek Trinity," *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 34 (1990): 61-77.
22 Ibid., 84-85.
23 Ibid., 102.
24 Ibid., 36, emphasis original.
25 Ibid., 98.
26 Ibid., 88-94.
27 Ibid., 98. He also says, "the divine self-communication has two basic modes, those of truth and of love. As truth, the self-communication takes place in history and is the offer of the free faithfulness of God. As love, it brings about acceptance and opens man's transcendence to the absolute future of God." (Rahner, "Trinity, Divine," 300).
28 Ibid., 100, emphasis original.
29 Ibid., 86, emphasis original.
30 Ibid., 44.
31 Ibid., 104-105.
32 Ibid., 106.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid., 109-110.
35 Ibid., 110, 112.
36 Ibid., 74. Jürgen Moltmann, (*The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God* [trans. M. Kohl; London: SCM, 1981]), says that Rahner is in danger of "Idealistic modalism" (144). But as Timothy F. Lull, ("The Trinity in Recent Theological Literature," *Word & World 2* [1982]: 61-68) has pointed out, it is not clear that Moltmann himself has successfully arrived at an articulation of the *unity* of God in his plurality.
37 Ibid, 35. He elsewhere writes that instead of "persons" one could "speak of three distinct ways of being there (in the economy of salvation) and three different ways of susbsistence (immanently) for the one God" (Rahner, "Trinity, Divine," 302).
38 See Randal Rauser's discussion of possible construals of the statement in his "Rahner's Rule: An Emperor without Clothes?" *IJST* 7 (2005): 81-94.
39 Cf. Catherine Mowry LaCugna, "Re-Conceiving the Trinity as the Mystery of Salvation," *SJT* 38 (1985): 1-23; here, 3.
40 Rahner, "Trinity, Divine," 299.
41 LaCugna asks this question in op. cit., 10.
42 Catherine Mowry LaCugna, "Introduction," in Karl Rahner, *Trinity*, xv. Cf. LaCugna, "Re-Conceiving," 10.
43 LaCugna, "Re-Conceiving," 11.
44 LaCugna, "Introduction," xv.
45 Rahner, "Trinity, Divine," 298.
46 Karl Rahner, "The Mystery of the Trinity," pages 255-259 in vol. 16 of *Theological Investigations* (trans. D. Morland; New York: Crossroad, 1983), 259.
47 Rahner, "Trinity, Divine," 298.
48 LaCugna, "Re-Conceiving," 13.
49 Colin E. Gunton, *Theology Through the Theologians. Selected Essays, 1972-1995* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 1996), 127.
50 Rahner, *Trinity*, 11.
51 Ibid., 23. Cf. p. 27. Eberhard Jüngel, ("The relationship between 'economic' and 'immanent' Trinity" *Theology Digest* 24 [1976]: 179-184), speaks of "the hypostatic union as the chief event of the unity of 'immanent' and 'economic' Trinity," 183.
52 Rahner, *Trinity*, 120, emphasis original.
53 Rahner, "Trinity, Divine," 301.
54 Ibid., 298.
55 Ibid.
56 LaCugna, "Introduction," xiii.
57 Badcock, "Karl Rahner, the Trinity, and Religious Pluralism," 147, emphasis original. Badcock goes on to critique Rahner for de-centering Christ in his theology, calling his a "theology of the Holy Spirit," but not Christocentric in any real sense. See 148-149.
58 Apt, but inexact. In fact, Rahner asserts that the two unions are different enough that we cannot rightly

call the Spirit's a "hypostatic union" with humanity. See "Trinity, Divine," 298 and *Trinity*, 28-30.

59 Rahner, *Trinity*, 28.

60 Karl Rahner, "On the Theology of the Incarnation," pages 105-120 in vol. 4 of *Theological Investigations* (trans. Kevin Smyth; New York: Seabury, 1974). Here, 117. Throughout this essay, Rahner's stress on the "transcendence" of humanity is evident.

61 Ibid., 116.

62 Hill, *Three-Personed God*, 137.

63 Rahner, *Trinity*, 33.

64 Ibid., 101.

65 Rahner, "Incarnation," 116.

66 Hill, *Three-Personed God*, 141.

67 Rahner, "Incarnation," 119. As Jüngel (op. cit., 184) points out, one consequence of Rahner's doctrine is that "The impossibility of natural knowledge of God will be counter-balanced by the revealed truth of faith that the whole of human existence is ontologically determined by the self-bestowal of the Father in the Son through the Spirit, so that the truth, 'outside Christ, no salvation,' includes a title benefiting all men and a corresponding universal promise." Badcock (op. cit., 144) also says, "In short, Rahner's claim is that all human being as such is graced by the presence of God and that it is precisely the closeness, the immediacy of God to us that is the source of all that is distinctively human in human life."

68 Paul D. Molnar, "Toward a Contemporary Doctrine of the Immanent Trinity: Karl Barth and the Present Discussion" *SJT* 49 (1996): 311-357. Here, 311.

69 Ted Peters, *God as Trinity: Relationality and Temporality in Divine Life* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993), 97.

70 Ibid., 103. For Peters, this is a welcome change.

71 Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God For Us: The Trinity & Christian Life* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), 230. As David S. Cunningham (*These Three Are One: The Practice of Trinitarian Theology* [Oxford: Blackwell, 1998], 38) points out, however, LaCugna introduces a sharp distinction between the immanent and the economic that Rahner himself would have resisted.

72 See Colin E. Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (2nd ed.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), xix, 127, 134-135. Cf. Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 148.

73 Hill, *Three-Personed God*, 141, emphasis original. Likewise, Molnar, "Toward a Contemporary Doctrine of the Immanent Trinity," 352, writes, "Had [Rahner] kept to a clear doctrine of the immanent Trinity (which he believed was important) then he could have said consistently that God loves in freedom as the Father, Son and Spirit and thus could and did create in freedom. Instead he argues that creation is the continuation of God's immanent self-utterance and presumes that there is a void which God wishes to fill by means of creation and incarnation."

74 Henri Blocher, "The Trinity, An An-Archic Community?" Paper presented to Trinity Seminar at Wheaton College Graduate School, Spring 2005. Although at one point Rahner disavows Hegelian influence ("Incarnation," 114 n.3), Hill points to further links to Hegel's understanding of the God-world relationship (see Hill, 142).