

Entangled in the Trinity: Economic and Immanent Trinity in Recent Theology

by Fred Sanders

There is a noteworthy line in John Donne's Holy Sonnet 16, where the poet extols the Son of God for freely sharing the benefits of salvation while at the same time retaining "his jointure in the knotty Trinity." Donne's metaphor pictures the Trinity as a complex knot, and therefore the persons of the Trinity as distinct strands tied together, braided or woven into an indissoluble union with one another. The image is odd and even perhaps startling. "Knotty Trinity," however, serves well as a poetic rendering of the doctrine of perichoresis, the mutual indwelling of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is this perichoretic interpenetration of the persons of the Trinity which has long been considered the central concern of trinitarian theology. The serious business of the doctrine of the Trinity, in fact, is traditionally taken to be a discussion about how it is that "these three are one."

Although the task of reconciling threeness with oneness is still prominent in contemporary theology (especially as it bears on the choice between a psychological versus a social analogy), theologians in recent decades have focused on a different question: the relationship between the triune God and the world. Where trinitarians in the past may have searched for more subtle knots to use in tying together Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now the hunt is on for new and improved devices for securing the Trinity and the world to each other. Nor is it merely a coincidence that trinitarian theology has concur-

rently undergone a renewal, moving from the periphery to the center of theological discussion. The knotty Trinity has braided itself deftly into our history, and some of the most interesting theological work of the past half-century has been devoted to following the involutions and convolutions of those knots.

Rahner's Rule

Chief among those who have undertaken to trace the threads tying the Trinity to the world is Karl Rahner, whose lament over the moribund state of this doctrine in the modern period has become classic: Christians, said Rahner, may claim to be trinitarian, but their idea of God has become scarcely distinguishable from monotheism in general. The doctrine of the Trinity sits enshrined in textbooks and catechisms, but ignored in faith and practice. If trinitarianism were to be retroactively deleted from the history of the church, most of Christian literature would remain unchanged, because the doctrine has left only faint marks on "the catechism of head and heart." In systematic theology proper, the doctrine of the Trinity has been sequestered into its own chapter near the end of the discussion of God's being, and once dealt with is "never brought up again," exerting no formative power on subsequent doctrines such as creation, grace, salvation, or eschatology. Most of

Christian doctrine, in other words, might as well be unitarian, since trinitarian concerns are so rarely brought to bear on the whole theological system. "It is as though this mystery has been revealed for its own sake, and that even after it has been made known to us, it remains, as a reality, locked up within itself. We make statements about it, but as a reality it has nothing to do with us at all."¹

With this complaint Rahner opened his little book *The Trinity*.² He intended to do more than just complain, though. He went on to recommend a solution to the problem, a solution which has become no less classic than his lament. When we think about the Trinity in itself, Rahner argued, we must begin with the trinitarian manifestations in the history of salvation, such as the incarnation of the Son and the sending of the Spirit. These events are to be taken with utmost and ultimate seriousness, because what takes place therein is nothing less than the appearance, in the history of the world, of one of the persons of the Trinity. Such irruptions are trustworthy revelations of the eternal Trinity in itself. In the gospel story we read about the Son being sent by the Father in the power of the Spirit; this is the Trinity at work in the economy of salvation, the "economic Trinity." There is no discrepancy between the Trinity we meet here in the gospel story and the Trinity in itself from all eternity, the "immanent Trinity." We should not imagine any gap or inconsistency between the Trinity in itself and the Trinity in salvation history. Summing this up in one terse axiom, Rahner made his most momentous trinitarian pronouncement: "*The economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity, and the immanent Trinity is the economic Trinity.*"³

These fifteen words have come to be called Rahner's Rule,⁴ and they have provoked hundreds of pages of commentary. In fact, the major trinitarian theologians of recent years have all devoted considerable effort to parsing the precise meaning of Rahner's Rule. What does it mean to take the eternal Trinity on the one hand, and the presence of the triune God in salvation history on the other hand, and equate them via the assertion that the one simply is the other, in a reversible relationship? What are the implications of thus identifying the Trinity in itself with the Trinity in our experience, God *in se* with God for us?

Starting with Christ

For Karl Rahner, it meant the reinvigoration of trinitarian theology, because as we have already seen, Rahner's Rule took a doctrine which had previously tended to drift away into abstractions and speculations, and rooted it firmly in the solid ground of salvation history. Equipped with his axiomatic identification of economic and immanent Trinity, Rahner set out to put a more trinitarian profile on his entire theological project. This commitment can be seen most clearly in his chosen starting point, which is a meditation on the incarnation. We know that it was God the Son, and no other person of the Trinity, who undertook this mission of assuming human nature for our salvation. Therefore the person who shows himself as the Son of God incarnate is in fact the same Son of God who preexisted as a particular person in the eternal Trinity; in Johannine terms, the Word who became flesh is the Word who was in the beginning. The economic Logos, in other words, is the immanent Logos.⁵ Rahner goes one step further by insisting that it is impossible that any other person of the Trinity could have become incarnate. Neither the Father nor the Spirit could have undertaken this mission, because only the Son bears the personal characteristic of being the word, the revelation, the image and expression of God the Father.

The whole line of argument sounds like a disputed question from a medieval doctrinal tome: Whether Any Person of the Trinity Could Have Become Incarnate. In point of fact, this precise question was posed by the scholastics. From Augustine to Aquinas, one clear answer was given by the traditional consensus: Any person of the Trinity can undertake any economic mission, including the incarnation. The Father or the Spirit could have become incarnate, and can do so now.⁶ Rahner was of course fully informed about the traditional answer, but he believed that taking the Trinity seriously entailed breaking from tradition at this important point. Could any person of the Trinity have become incarnate? Any theologian who answers no to this question is most likely declaring that Rahner's Rule is in effect.⁷ This is the first thing entailed in taking the economic missions with ultimate seriousness: to in-

terpret them as necessarily continuous with the inner-trinitarian processions that constitute the persons of the Trinity. Rahner argued that the principle could be extended to include a proper mission for the Holy Spirit as well, so that the third person accomplished works in the history of salvation which are distinctly characteristic of the proper personhood of the Spirit. Whether this proper role of the Spirit is defined as the descent at Pentecost, the indwelling in the faithful heart, the binding together of the community in fellowship, or in Rahner's terms as the presence of uncreated grace, Rahner's Rule dictates that the presence of the Spirit in the economy should also be viewed as a clear extension of the inner-divine role of the Spirit in the immanent Trinity.

Rahner's Rule, it may be noted, pulls in two directions at once. On one hand, it takes the focus of theology off of the immanent Trinity and redirects it to the economic Trinity. The economic Trinity, especially as it is witnessed in scripture, can bear the full weight of theological attention because it simply is the immanent Trinity. On the other hand, the axiomatic character of the rule raises the question of why these two realities should be distinguished if they are in fact simply identical. Further, Rahner's Rule puts modern theologians in the position of claiming to know more about the inner workings of the immanent Trinity than the older tradition claimed to know: we know, for instance, that the inner-divine processions dictate the character of the economic missions, and therefore we can specify something about the immanent Trinity. This would seem to lead to a more elaborate theology of the immanent Trinity rather than to greater reserve. There is thus (even in Rahner's own work) an indeterminacy or instability built into the formulation and implementation of the rule, drawing our attention now more, now less, to the immanent Trinity.

Tightening the Knot Between God and World

If Rahner himself could interpret his axiom in two different directions, it is not hard to imagine the nature of the discussion that has followed since the publication of his essay in 1967. Right down to the

present day, trinitarian theologians have taken sides over how to interpret and apply Rahner's Rule: the *tight interpreters* and the *loose interpreters*. This ongoing discussion is not merely a series of journal articles exegeting a decades-old remark by Rahner; on the contrary, it forms the background of the major trinitarian projects of recent years. How a theologian interprets Rahner's Rule gives a particular stamp to a whole range of systematic concerns, which means that Rahner's Rule functions as a watershed between two types of trinitarian theology. One of these two groups reads the rule as a good first step in bringing together God and the world, but wishes that Rahner had gone further in this direction. In their own work, therefore, they push Rahner's Rule to its logical conclusions. We will examine the tight interpreters first: Piet Schoonenberg, Hans Küng, Jürgen Moltmann, Wolfhart Pannenberg, and Catherine Mowry LaCugna.

The first response to Rahner's Rule was also the most instructive. It came from the Dutch Jesuit theologian Piet Schoonenberg. Schoonenberg's contribution was to apply the rule, with full force, to each of the particular concepts that make up the vocabulary of trinitarianism (person, mission, procession, relation, etc.). This move yielded such corollaries as the following:

- The salvation-economy fatherhood of God is the inner-divine fatherhood, and vice versa.
- The salvation-economy filiation is the inner-divine filiation, and vice versa.
- The missions are the processions and vice versa.
- The salvation-economy relations are the inner-divine ones, and vice versa.⁸

When the axiom is extended to these particulars, some problems become evident which might otherwise have escaped notice. On this account, the Trinity seems to be constituted for the first time by the relations which take place in the course of world history. The filiation of the Son of God, that is, seems to take place only in Jesus of Nazareth's obedient living out of sonship to the Father, and not in the pre-existence or eternal generation asserted in classical christology. Traditional christology has always argued for a fit between eternal procession and economic

mission, but when the procession simply is the mission and vice versa, the Trinity itself seems to be the result of a process of becoming. When the Trinity is so thoroughly “economized,” God’s triunity is dependent on the world. Schoonenberg, it should be noted, thinks that God would still be God if the salvation-economic events had not occurred, but would not in that case be triune.⁹ Ironically, Schoonenberg’s apparent radicalization of Rahner’s Rule ends up producing an account of God which is so weakly trinitarian that it may well be only modalism after all: God is triune for us, but merely monadic without us. The root of the problem is Schoonenberg’s surprisingly naïve assumption that it could be business as usual for the being of God even if the immanent Trinity is poured out into the history of the world. In other words, when drawing his corollaries, he neglected to subject the concept of “divine being” to Rahner’s Rule. But what is God’s essence, the divine *ousia*, if not a trinitarian concept?

A similar twist was given to Rahner’s Rule by Hans Küng, who took it as a kind of declaration of independence from all trinitarian speculation. If immanent simply is economic without remainder, reasoned Küng, then we are free to ignore the Trinity in itself. Theology can end its long fascination with God’s “innermost nature” and the “static, self-sustaining essence of a triune God.” Instead, we are free to speak more like the New Testament, which “is not concerned with God in himself, but with God for us, as he has acted on us through Jesus himself in the Spirit, on which the reality of our salvation depends.”¹⁰ With Küng, Rahner’s Rule is no longer a gateway into more profoundly trinitarian theology, but a barrier which forbids us to reflect on anything beyond the economy of salvation, a barrier on which is written, “Do not ponder the immanent Trinity.” Whatever warrant Küng may adduce for his refusal to speculate (and he can in fact appeal to a kind of Hegelian overcoming of metaphysics), by turning Rahner’s Rule into a barrier he runs the risk of simply failing to rise to the challenge of thinking through the metaphysics implicit in trinitarian claims. Refusal to shoulder the responsibility of using the language of being is a very old temptation for trinitarian theology; it was the point at issue at the first ecumenical council. As with the specter of modalism in Schoonenberg’s work, it seems

odd to undertake a radicalizing interpretation of Rahner’s Rule only to come around at last to a sub-Nicene theology which could have been had more directly.

Tying Human Relations to Divine Relations: Moltmann

From these early commentaries on Rahner’s Rule we turn now to three major projects motivated by similar interpretations of the axiom. Jürgen Moltmann has been fascinated by Rahner’s Rule for most of his career, and has grappled with it repeatedly. Already in 1974’s *The Crucified God*, he was looking for a way to establish the cross of Christ, the central event in the history of salvation, as something which also stands in the immanent Trinity itself. “The theology of the cross must be the doctrine of the Trinity and the doctrine of the Trinity must be the theology of the cross.”¹¹ By the time he wrote his influential *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, however, he had come to see Rahner’s Rule as itself part of the problem, since it presupposes the very distinction which in Moltmann’s view should simply be eliminated.¹² At this point, Moltmann achieved a moment of interpretive clarity, seeing that Rahner’s Rule has a conservative thrust (maintaining an affirmation of the immanent Trinity) as well as a more radical thrust (shifting attention to the economic Trinity), and that his own work would have to go beyond the axiom. As long as the doctrine of the immanent Trinity is maintained at all, in Moltmann’s view, it will continue to draw theological attention away from the economic Trinity.

This is because of the essentially idealist or Platonic cast of traditional theology as a whole, which has never escaped from the assumption of a contrast between a higher realm of being and a lower realm of becoming.¹³ When the doctrine of God is pressed into these categories, “God *in se*” occupies the realm of being while only “God for us” shows up in the world of becoming. The economic Trinity is drastically subordinated to the immanent. Plato described time as the moving image of eternity; traditional theology has accordingly portrayed the economic Trinity as the moving image of the immanent Trinity, a ghostly reflection under the conditions of finitude and mu-

tability. In contrast to this, Moltmann asserts that “the economic Trinity not only reveals the immanent Trinity; it also has a retroactive effect on it.”¹⁴

Moltmann’s claim is provocative, and its motivation is evident, but is a retroactive effect of the economic Trinity on the immanent Trinity a defensible claim? What would the immanent Trinity be if it were partially constituted by the economy of salvation? It might be coherent to argue that the immanent Trinity exists first, then enacts itself economically, making possible a second movement that further (“retroactively”) conditions the original immanent Trinity. If, however, the immanent Trinity itself is only a future culmination of historical events which are yet to be gathered together in a temporal whole, then there is no immanent Trinity to start the process. Moltmann has certainly succeeded in his task of tempering the overbearing dominance of the immanent Trinity’s initiative in the relationship. But if the determinate being of the immanent Trinity is waiting on the results of salvation history, then all the initiative has been shifted to the economic Trinity. The traffic is still moving in only one direction, with no reciprocity, but Moltmann (thanks to a thoroughly historicized ontology) has reversed the flow of traffic.¹⁵

Binding the Future to the Present: Pannenberg

Wolfhart Pannenberg has taken up this same question and developed it in the three volumes of his *Systematic Theology*. It is no exaggeration to say that Rahner’s Rule is one of the central ideas in Pannenberg’s massive project; in fact, Pannenberg may be the first theologian to spell out the implications of the axiom across the entire range of theological topics. Even more clearly than Moltmann, Pannenberg takes into account the significance of history and eschatology for God’s relation to the world. He emphasizes the fact that the economy of salvation is currently in the process of reaching its ultimate goal, and will not manifest its complete character until that eschatological future dawns. If the economic Trinity is truly to be the immanent Trinity, therefore, it must be the eschatologically completed economic

Trinity, the temporal wholeness which will be manifested at the end. In other words, Pannenberg will affirm Rahner’s Rule with an important eschatological proviso: the economic Trinity will finally be identical with the immanent. However, what Pannenberg is famous for is not simply remembering the end of the world, but for finding that final wholeness proleptically present in Jesus Christ. When the messiah rose from the dead, the paradigm event of the last day occurred in advance, within the course of history.

Transposing this proleptic mindset to the discussion of Rahner’s Rule, Pannenberg argues that the complex relationship between the economic and immanent Trinity is an instance of historical self-actualization. In order for self-actualization to take place, “from the beginning of its action the acting I would be identical in the full sense with the determination which is to be the result of the action.”¹⁶ Because we are always in a state of becoming, humans can never experience self-actualization. God, however, can and does experience historical self-actualization by entering the world in the trinitarian missions.¹⁷ During the course of world history, God’s rule is debatable, and “the progress of events decides concerning ... the deity of the Son” and even of the Father.¹⁸ Apparently the Trinity can nevertheless be itself before and after taking part in the economy of salvation, experiencing true becoming by participating in the history of salvation. How this can be, Pannenberg admits, is a paradox; although “paradox” is a word that otherwise occurs quite infrequently in his work.¹⁹

Much remains unclear in Pannenberg’s use of the idea of God’s self-actualization, and in his characteristic appeal to the proleptic presence of the future. What is clear, though, is that for all his desire to integrate the divine life with the historical reality of the world, Pannenberg recognizes the danger of tying the knots too tightly. He insists on God’s aseity, and believes that his system is a refutation of “the idea of a divine becoming in history, as though the trinitarian God were the result of history and achieved reality only with its eschatological consummation.”²⁰ He strives to recognize a unity between the economic and immanent Trinity, but also insists on the distinction. In fact, he chooses this theme as the final note in his systematic theology: “The distinction and unity

of the immanent and economic Trinity constitute the heartbeat of the divine love, and with a single such heartbeat this love encompasses the whole world of creatures.”²¹

Knocking God *in se* to God *pro me*: LaCugna

If anyone deserves credit for bringing the discussion of Rahner’s Rule before a wider audience, it is Catherine Mowry LaCugna in her 1991 book, *God For Us*. LaCugna wanted to reconnect trinitarianism with Christian life, and to this end her book offers a wealth of reflections on historical theology, liturgy, and spirituality, all flowing from her distinctive methodological transposition of Rahner’s Rule: “Theology is inseparable from soteriology, and vice versa.”²² Reading the axiom this way, LaCugna is able to transcend the categories of the normal discussion, arguing that “there is neither an economic nor an immanent Trinity; there is only the *oikonomia* that is the concrete realization of the mystery of theologia in time, space, history, and personality.”²³ The doctrine of the Trinity, therefore, is not a description of God *in se*; it is a description of God’s life with us and for us. Instead of teaching us something about the constitution of God, this doctrine “summarizes what it means to participate in the life of God through Jesus Christ in the Spirit.”²⁴

It is not misleading to call LaCugna’s position a kind of economic or soteriological reductionism. Her argument reaches its culmination in the following sequence of thought: If the specifically Christian idea of God is the doctrine of the Trinity, and the doctrine of the Trinity is not about God *in se* but God for us, then it follows that the specifically Christian message about God is that God is not *in se* but only for us. At this point LaCugna indulges in open polemic against the very idea of the immanent Trinity. Her entire project is best viewed, however, not so much as a direct attack on the doctrine of the immanent Trinity, but as an attempt to define the theological task in such a way that the question of the immanent Trinity cannot be made thematic.²⁵

Divine Freedom: A Little Slack in the Line

With the tight interpreters of Rahner’s Rule, the eternal God and the history of the world’s salvation have been tied together very closely indeed. In fact, the knot is so tight and complex that the two realities seem to have become merged into a single mass. Another group of interpreters—Yves Congar, Walter Kasper, and Thomas Torrance—have taken note of this tendency in recent theology, and have attempted to loosen those knots at a few strategic points.

Yves Congar was among the earliest theologians to respond to Rahner’s Rule. He was quite enthusiastic about the reorientation of trinitarian theology that the axiom made possible, especially the way it bound our knowledge of the triune God to the missions of the Son and the Spirit among us. In the cases of the incarnation and of the Spirit’s pentecostal indwelling of the Christian community, the economic Trinity is undeniably coextensive with the immanent. Congar, however, thought that a world of theological confusion lurked in the second half of the axiom, the vice versa. That the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity is an epistemological claim about the finality of revelation, but that the immanent Trinity is the economic Trinity reaches toward an ontological claim about the being of God. “Can the free mystery of the economy and the necessary mystery of the Trinity of God be identified?”²⁶ Congar thought not, and pointed out that collapsing these two mysteries into each other jeopardized our ability to recognize that God does not need the world in order to be God. Simply put: “Even if God had not decided to create, he would nonetheless have had his Son.”²⁷ To affirm the second half of Rahner’s Rule is to say too much, because it ignores a host of important distinctions. Because the incarnation is an event that takes place under the sign of createdness, because God the Son has appeared for us behind a veil of self-emptying and humiliation, because the historical self-revelation of God is not complete until the eschaton, “there is a distance between the economic, revealed Trinity and the eternal Trinity.”²⁸ The second half of Rahner’s Rule attempts to leap over that distance.

Walter Kasper's response to the axiom is similar to Congar's: he welcomes it for its promise to reinvigorate trinitarianism, but is alert to certain misinterpretations which would render it more troublesome than helpful. Kasper warns that the "is" in Rahner's Rule should never be understood as if it were establishing a simple identity between economic and immanent, as in a reversible tautology. The economic and immanent Trinity are so closely related that it is proper to say that one is the other, but only if certain restrictions and limitations condition the identity. The presence of the immanent Trinity in the economic must be a "non-deducible, free, gracious historical presence" enacted in the sovereign freedom of a God who could have done otherwise.²⁹ Kasper thus offers this reformulation of the axiom: "In the economic self-communication the intra-trinitarian self-communication is present in the world in a new way, namely, under the veil of historical words, signs and actions, and ultimately in the figure of the man Jesus of Nazareth."³⁰ Kasper's formulation lacks the tidiness of Rahner's, so it is unlikely that anybody will ever call this "Kasper's Rule," but it has the merit of putting in place some necessary distinctions to govern the interpretation and application of Rahner's. To Congar's list of conditioning factors, Kasper adds a major one: the economic Trinity is the sacramental presence of the immanent.

One recent theological project driven by a qualified assent to Rahner's Rule is that of Thomas Torrance.³¹ Torrance's distinctive Barthianism has always been concerned to recognize the unity and distinction of God's being and act. The immanent and economic Trinity are related to each other in precisely the same way, though Torrance prefers to call them the ontological Trinity and the evangelical Trinity. Throughout his theology, Torrance is insistent on the priority of the ontological Trinity, and the fact that the saving character of the evangelical Trinity depends on the unthreatened integrity of God's triune being.³² God saves us by being God for us, but "being God for us" means graciously opening up access to the inner taxis of the divine life. The eternal Trinity works salvation out by being the Trinity for us, not by being something else.

The Economic Trinity as Image of the Immanent

What this second group of theologians--the loose interpreters--are all urging is that the relationship of the economic Trinity to the immanent Trinity is less direct than some interpretations of Rahner's Rule might indicate. They are looking for "an accommodation principle that allows a certain amount of slippage between how God appears to us and how God actually is in the supreme freedom and transcendence of the divine life,"³³ and are willing to affirm "correspondence, congruence, agreement, harmony,"³⁴ between economic and immanent Trinity, but stop short of simple sameness. To tie economic and immanent Trinity together too closely is to collapse the divine being into the world process, to make God's freedom indiscernible, and to saddle the created world with the burden of being God's self-actualization.³⁵

There is only one Trinity, and that Trinity is truly present in salvation history, in the missions of the Son and Spirit. But that single economic and immanent Trinity is God, and God's freedom must be duly recognized by theological formulations. Everyone involved in the current trinitarian discussion is glad to affirm that we are tied to the Trinity by strong cords and subtle knots, but it is becoming apparent that there is a need for some slack in the line, lest God and world come to be constrictively co-entangled. That slack can be recognized in various ways under differing theological programs: it may be described as kenotic, sacramental, veiled in the very act of revelation, historical rather than eschatological, or as occurring under the conditions imposed by createdness. An especially fruitful way of describing this real but indirect relation is through the venerable christological category of icon: the economic Trinity is the image of the immanent Trinity. Just as Christ (and only Christ) reveals the Father who cannot be seen directly, the Trinity's presence in salvation history is the only means of access to an eternal fellowship of love which is the inexhaustible life of God. An overweening application of Rahner's Rule may involve God and the world in snags, snarls, and kinks, but when the rule is interpreted in a more moderate way, it is a powerful reminder of a truth too easily

ignored in Christian life and thought: that our knowledge of God, our renewal in the divine likeness, and our salvation depend on the gracious God making it possible for us to become entangled in “the knotty Trinity.”

Endnotes

¹ Karl Rahner, *The Trinity* (NY: Herder and Herder, 1970), 10-14.

² *The Trinity* (currently in print from Crossroad Herder) was originally published as a chapter in the second volume of the ambitious multi-author project *Mysterium Salutis: Grundriss Heilsgeschichtlicher Dogmatik* (Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1967)

³ Rahner, *The Trinity*, 21.

⁴ The first person to call this axiom “Rahner’s Rule” was either Ted Peters (according to Roger Olson, “Wolfhart Panenberg’s Doctrine of the Trinity,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 43 (1990), 178) or Roger Olson (according to Ted Peters, *GOD as Trinity: Relationality and Temporality in the Divine Life* (Louisville: Westminster / John Knox Press, 1993), 213).

⁵ Rahner, *The Trinity*, 21.

⁶ Augustine begins the line of thought, but does not state it as clearly as the later tradition. Anselm entertains the idea in *Cur Deus Homo* II:9; Peter Lombard states it clearly in *Sentences* 3:1; Aquinas at some length in *Summa Theologia* III:3, article 8.

⁷ Barth’s support of the traditional answer to this question (*Church Dogmatics* I/2, 34) is an indication that he affirms Rahner’s Rule (to speak anachronistically) in only a qualified sense.

⁸ “Trinity—The Consummated Covenant: Theses on the Doctrine of the Triune God,” *Sciences Religieuses* 5/2 (Fall 1975), 111-116.

⁹ Schoonenberg, “Consummated Covenant,” 114.

¹⁰ Hans Küng, *On Being a Christian* (NY: Doubleday, 1976), 475-6.

¹¹ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1974), 243.

¹² Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1981), 160.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 160.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ A similar judgment is given by Roger Olson, “Trinity and Eschatology: The Historical Being of God in Jürgen Moltmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg,”

Scottish Journal of Theology 36 (1983), 213-227.

¹⁶ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, three volumes, translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988-1998). I:390.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 392.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 330.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, II:393.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, I:331.

²¹ *Ibid.*, III:646. It is also worth noting that Pannenberg now censures other thinkers about the dangers of collapsing the immanent Trinity into the economic. See his review of Robert Jenson’s *Systematic Theology* in *First Things* 103 (May 2000), 49-53.

²² Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991), 211.

²³ *Ibid.*, 223.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.

²⁵ Paul Molnar is an acute critic of the radicalizing movement of thought we have just traced. He argues that these strict interpreters of Rahner’s Rule seek to eliminate the concept of the immanent Trinity altogether. See his “Toward a Contemporary Doctrine of the Immanent Trinity: Karl Barth and the Present Discussion,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 49 (1996).

²⁶ Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* (London: Chapman, 1983), III:13.

²⁷ Congar, *I Believe* III:18, quoting Athanasius *Contra Arianos* II:31.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

²⁹ Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ* (NY: Crossroad, 1984), 276.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Other full-scale projects shaped by similarly restrictive interpretations of the axiom include those of Hans Urs von Balthasar and Colin Gunton. Karl Barth is also claimed on this side of the debate, but elements of his thought (especially after *Church Dogmatics* II/1) lean toward full affirmation of Rahner’s vice versa.

³² Thomas Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1996), 198.

³³ Cornelius Plantinga, “The Fourth Gospel as Trinitarian Source Then and Now,” in Mark S. Burrows and Paul Rorem, *Biblical Hermeneutics in Historical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 316.

³⁴ Thomas Thompson, “*Imitatio Trinitatis*: The Trinity as Social Model in the Theologies of Jürgen Moltmann and Leonardo Boff,” Dissertation, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1996, 263.

³⁵ Colin Gunton, “The God of Jesus Christ,” *Theology Today*, 54 (October 1997), 328-9.