

TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY

- Topic: The Immanent-Economic Distinction
Convener: Nancy A. Dallavalle, Fairfield University
Moderator: Anthony Keaty, St. John's Seminary, Brighton
Presenters: David M. Coffey, Marquette University
Ralph G. Del Colle, Marquette University
Elizabeth Groppe, University of Notre Dame

This session took up the question of Catherine LaCugna's treatment of the "immanent-economic" distinction, particularly as found in her book *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1991). David Coffey supported LaCugna's soteriological focus, but was critical of its realization. In particular, he rejected her "agnosticism" about an inner divine life, her insistence on a God essentially related to the world, her rejection of substance metaphysics in favor of an ontology of the monarchy of the Father, and her endorsement of Eastern over Western theology. Coffey suggested that she did not, finally, escape the reductionist path of Maurice Wiles, which collapses the life of God into the economy of salvation. Coffey proposed, as an alternative, an approach based on Lonergan's epistemology and on aspects of Rahner's ontology and theology. Coffey cautioned that LaCugna's claim (following Haight and Schoonenberg with regard to their use of Rahner) that "the Church in both East and West took a wrong turn ... as early as the fourth century," was highly problematic for ecumenical dialogue. More specifically, with regard to LaCugna's opposition of person and substance, Coffey argued that "both *homoousion* and monarchy are necessary" and that such a solution will bring East and West together "in the one household of God."

Ralph Del Colle noted that he shares LaCugna's concern for the doxological dimension of trinitarian theology. But in her focus on the soteriological, Del Colle charged, she shortchanged the analogical dimension of the divine-human encounter, a dimension highlighted by the immanent-economic distinction. Del Colle noted three areas of concern. First, LaCugna limited the notion of relationality to that between God and the creature, ignoring the intradivine relationality among the three divine persons which is the basis of creaturely participation in the divine life. Second, in refusing to go beyond the soteriological in her presentation of the divine persons, LaCugna missed the point that the creaturely recognition of these relations betrays a complexity within the divine life that analogically exceeds the instantiation of personhood at the human level. Third, by rejecting the immanent-economic distinction itself, LaCugna did away with the notion of intradivine relationality as essential for divine soteriological agency. For Del Colle, "LaCugna's concentration on the divine-human relation diminishes the richness of human life caught up in the divine especially

when that divine life exists in various relations within which the creature is incorporated."

Elizabeth Groppe began her response to the published critiques of LaCugna's work by noting that LaCugna did not abandon the immanent for the economic trinity, rather, she abandoned the "immanent-economic" *terminology* as imprecise and misleading, inadequate to the mystery of God (*theologia*) with us (*oikonomia*). Groppe identified four specific critiques about LaCugna's theology: (1) that it is phenomenological rather than ontological; (2) that it lacks an objective referent; (3) that it founders on an inadequate distinction of God and creature; and (4) that it is inconsistent with the Christian tradition (issues raised by Joseph Bracken, Thomas Weinandy, Barbara Finan, Paul Molnar, and Colin Gunton). These criticisms, Groppe argued, all result from reading LaCugna with the presupposition that trinitarian theology is necessarily structured through the paradigm of the "economic Trinity" and the "immanent Trinity" and the categories of a substance metaphysics. LaCugna, however, intended to prescind from this approach, laying the groundwork for an alternative structuring principle for contemporary trinitarian theology: the principle of the unity and inseparability of *theologia* (the mystery of God) and *oikonomia* (the mystery of salvation) construed through the categories of a relational ontology. Read in these terms, LaCugna's work proves to be ontological rather than phenomenological, grounded in the mystery of God, clear in the differentiation of God and creature, and consistent with the heart of the Christian tradition.

In discussion, Peter Phan asked if Rahner's theology of the symbol has been explored as a resource for thinking about the relationship between the economic and the immanent trinity, while William Lowe asked for a more detailed treatment of LaCugna's rejection of Augustine's speculation on the immanent trinity. At the business meeting, Anthony Keaty (St. John's Seminary, Brighton) and M. John Farrelly (St. Anselm's Abbey) offered to serve with Dallavalle as a steering committee for the seminar.

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COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY

Topic: Theological Anthropology: Hindu/Buddhist Practice
Convener: Bradley J. Malkovsky, University of Notre Dame
Presenter: Francis X. Clooney, Boston College
Respondent: Susan M. Windley, University of St. Thomas, St. Paul

Continuing a collaboration between the Comparative Theology and Theological Anthropology groups, this year's session treated the topic of Hindu Goddess