REVIEW

WHEN TWO ARE THREE: JUNG YOUNG LEE'S *THE TRINITY IN ASIAN PERSPECTIVE*

by

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I. Introduction: Lee's Contribution to the Wider Discussion

Jung Young Lee has offered an interpretation of the doctrine of the Trinity, from an East Asian perspective, that he hopes will contribute to our changed context of globalization, in which our understanding of Christianity has come to require what he calls a "world perspective."[148] Interpretations of the Trinity and/or Christology from eastern religious perspectives have become more and more popular over the past few decades. Now *The Trinity in Asian Perspective*, with its appropriation of the doctrine of the Trinity from Taoist and Confucian perspectives, can be added to such works as Raimundo Panikkar's *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man*,[149] Michael von Brück's *The Unity of Reality*,[150]

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[148] Jung Young Lee, *The Trinity in Asian Perspective*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 11

[149] Raimundo Panikkar, *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man: Icon, Person, Mystery*. New York: Orbis; London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1973.

[150] Michael von Brück, *The Unity of Reality: God, God-Experience, and Meditation in the Hindu-Christian Dialogue*. New York/ Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1991.

John Keenan's *The Meaning of Christ*[151] and Masao Abe's influential essay on "Kenotic God and Dynamic Sunyata."[152]

But Lee is interested not only in the East - West theological encounter; along the way he is concerned to show how an Asian interpretation of the doctrine of the Trinity can also answer significant questions raised by feminist and liberation theologies. These are laudable aims, surely, and Lee's work has been praised by significant figures working in the area of East - West interreligious dialogue. And Lee does provide helpful material on what he conveniently terms "yin/yang symbolic thinking" represented in Confucianism and Taoism. Upon close examination, however, I believe that this book, considered as a contribution to contemporary discussions of Trinitarian theology, is flawed seriously by questionable presuppositions, misreadings of the history of Christian thought and instances of sheer incoherence passed off as examples of creative theological thinking. I have no wish to pillory Prof. Lee's work, but it is imperative to scrutinize his book carefully and subject it to stringent criticism, for in it he proposes a far-reaching, programmatic reinterpretation of the doctrine of the Trinity on the basis of East Asian thinking, and to all appearances this book will have a significant impact in the area of interreligious dialogue.

II. Questions of Method

In terms of theological method laid out in his introduction,[153] Lee admits unabashedly to the priority of the apophatic. "I begin with a basic assumption that God is an unknown mystery and is unknowable to us directly....The God who said to Moses 'I am who I

[151] John P. Keenan, *The Meaning of Christ: A Mahayana Christology*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1989.

[152] In *The Emptying God: A Buddhist - Jewish - Christian Conversation*. John Cobb, Jr. and Christopher Ives, eds. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1990.

[153] Lee, *The Trinity*, Chapter One.

am" is the unnameable God...."[154] This statement revealed to Moses is compared, incredibly, to the familiar passage from the *Tao te ching*, "The Name that can be named is not the real Name." One hopes that Lee will encounter one day the name of YHWH in his reading of the Exodus story, and the importance of this name for the doctrine of the Trinity (Robert Jenson no doubt would be happy to help on that point).[155] But perhaps this is an unfair criticism, since Lee claims that his method is not "deductive," i.e., relying on "special revelation," but "inductive," i.e., relying on natural revelation given in cultural or natural symbols.[156] It is not at all clear what difference "special revelation" would make--even though Lee generously assumes that "the divine Trinity is a Christian concept of God implicit in Scripture"[157]--since every theological statement we make, the author assures us, does not speak of the divine reality, but rather only "of its meaning in our lives...[A]ny statement we make about the divine reality is none other than a symbolic statement about its meaning".[158] The symbol of the Trinity, therefore, gives "meaning" as it participates in the life of the community, because this community is none other than that which "produces and sustains it".[159] In the *Unity of Reality*, Michael von Brück was intemperate enough to state that "whether Christ or the Upanishads are 'true' depends on a personal faith experience"[160] --and many of us were (and are) understandably suspicious of those who do not scruple to put *truth* or *true* in quotation marks. Lee, however, appears to be uninterested altogether in asking the truth-question.

Although Lee means to confess that "the symbol of the divine Trinity itself transcends various human contexts," the

[154] Ibid., 12-13.

[155] See Jenson's analysis in *The Triune Identity: God According to the Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982) 1 - 18.

[156] Lee, 229.

[157] Ibid., 15.

[158] Ibid., 13.

[159] Ibid., 14.

[160] Michael von Brück, *The Unity of Reality*, 5.

meaning of this symbol does not.[161] Theological statements are invariably contextual, so much so, Lee says, that if the context of controversy were not present in the early centuries of the church "the divine Trinity would never have become a doctrine or norm for orthodoxy to defend..."[162] The familiar lament about Hellenistic ways of thinking imported into the church's doctrinal thinking is sounded, as well as the familiar warning that traditional terminology is not meaningful or relevant to contemporary contexts--the East Asian, for example. How then, exactly, does culture determine meaning? "How we perceive and think are directly related to our conception of the world. All images and symbols we use in our thinking process area directly taken from the world. Thus our thinking is closely connected with cosmology."[163] Since "the yin - yang symbol can be regarded as the paradigm for East Asian thinking"[164] the interpretive upshot is easy to predict: "the Asian way of thinking" serves as Lee's hermeneutic key to understanding the Christian faith, "especially as to reinterpreting the idea of the divine Trinity".[165]

In chapter two, "Yin - Yang Symbolic Thinking: An Asian Perspective," Lee goes on to explain the basic dynamic of "yin - yang symbolic thinking" by first locating it within a Taoist cosmology characterized by cyclical bipolarity. The *I Ching* or *Book of Change* is, of course, at the heart of Lee's exposition. The necessary and complementary opposite forces (seen, e.g., in such oppositions as light/dark, hot/cold, male/female, action/nonaction, etc.) which characterize everything in the world are known in terms of yin and yang, forces whose complementary opposition constitute "the basic principle of the universe".[166] In this cosmology, change is understood as prior to being; hence yin and yang must be seen not

[161] Lee, 14.
[162] Ibid., 15.
[163] Ibid., 18.
[164] Ibid.
[165] Ibid., 24.
[166] Ibid.

as independent, substantial realities but rather as a symbol of continual movement or relation. Because of this relational character, yin - yang *thinking* is best characterized as a holistic "both/and" thinking, as opposed to (but supposedly also encompassing) the "either/or" thinking characteristic of the West. While "[t]he either / or way of thinking splits the opposites as if they have nothing to do with each other...the both / and way of thinking recognizes not only the coexistence of opposites but also the complementarity of them".[167] We are told that while "either / or" thinking has its uses in certain situations, in the big picture of things it cannot hold up. "In our organic and interconnected world, nothing can clearly and definitely fall into either a this or a that category".[168] It is more than a little interesting to consider how a judgment that claims "nothing can..." is exempt from the kind of charge leveled against either / or kind of thinking. But Lee apparently has little time for such logical niceties; he has theology to do. And for theology especially, which deals with questions of ultimate reality, the "either / or way" is clearly inadequate. Such a way of thinking is appropriate for only "penultimate matters",[169] and not with a symbol like the divine Trinity, which has universal import.

The notion that the "symbol" of the Trinity might have the potential for calling into question "yin - yang symbolic thinking" and its worldview is never considered. For a supposedly ground-breaking book, the central assumption is a tired, old liberal one: that an *a priori* , cultural worldview with its concomitant way of thinking is fundamental and that Christian doctrine must remain secondary and derivative; theological concepts must be trimmed to fit this already-existing picture. It is worth quoting Lee at length on this point, as he introduces us, in chapter three, to his notion of "Trinitarian Thinking":

[167] Lee, 33.
[168] Ibid., 34.
[169] Ibid.

> The Trinity is a meaningful symbol, because it is deeply rooted in the human psyche and is manifested in various human situations. It is then the human situation (both inner and external, or psychic and social situation) that makes the Trinity meaningful...
>
> Today we seek how the Trinity can be meaningful to us rather than the Trinity as reality, because our situation has changed. The reason is that what is meaningful to me is real to me, even though it may not be "objectively" real. Thus divine reality does not precede its meaning; rather, the former is dependent on the latter. What is meaningful to me must correspond to my conception of what reflects my situation as an Asian Christian in America. If yin and yang symbols are deeply rooted in my psyche as an Asian and manifested in my thought-forms to cope with various issues in life, what is meaningful to me must then correspond to this yin-yang symbolic thinking. Similarly, the Trinity is meaningful if I think in Trinitarian terms. Unless the yin - yang symbolic thinking is a Trinitarian way of thinking, the idea of Trinity is not meaningful to me.[170]

Seldom has the self-centeredness at the core of so much contemporary theology been articulated so clearly, and without embarrassment. Lest anyone think this too severe a judgment, consider Lee's estimation of the importance of the theologian's "personal journey" in theological construction.

> It is...one's personal life that becomes the primary context for theological and religious reflection. That is, a theology that does not reflect my own context is not meaningful to me. That is why any meaningful and authentic theology has to presuppose what I am...The theology that I have attempted here is based on my autobiography. In other words, 'what I am' is the context of my theological reflections.[171]

[170] Ibid., 51.

Feurbach wins, Freud wins, as well as innumerable talk show hosts, new age gurus and pop theologians and therapists. In what age other than one which has been characterized by the "triumph of the therapeutic"[172] could one get away with claiming that "what I am" is the context of one's theological reflection?

In order to find out if Trinitarian thinking is "meaningful" to him, Lee attempts to answer the question, "Is yin-yang thinking also Trinitarian thinking?"[173] This may seem like a nonsensical question. After all, to the outsider at least, Taoism and "yin-yang thinking", with polarities of darkness/light, soft/hard, female/male, etc., seem committed to a dualism that is claimed to be resolved (I dare not say "sublated", for fear of being branded too "western") in a higher monism. Threeness does not seem to have much to do with this worldview. Actually, Lee says, this way of looking at Taoism is mistaken, and proceeds from holding on to a substantialist metaphysic. Seen within a relational framework, "when two (or yin and yang) include and are included in each other, they create a Trinitarian relationship".[174] Lee attempts to illustrate this from the familiar Taoist diagram of the Great Ultimate, where one is symbolized by the great or outer circle, and three is symbolized by the yin, yang and the connecting dots in each. To express this linguistically, Lee says we must understand that the preposition "in," when saying (for example) that "yin is in yang" and vice-versa, is a relational, connecting principle. "In the inclusive relationship, two relational symbols such as yin and yang are

[171] Ibid., 23.

[172] The description is taken from Philip Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic: The Uses of Faith After Freud.* New York: Harper and Row, 1966. In a world understood solely therapeutically, Rieff says that there is "nothing at stake beyond a manipulatable sense of well-being" (13).

[173] Lee, 51.

[174] Lee, 58.

Trinitarian because of 'in,' which not only unites them but also completes them".[175] The same sort of relational understanding must be applied to the word "and" in the phrase "yin *and* yang." "...[Y]in - yang symbolic thinking based on relationality is Trinitarian because 'and' is a relational symbol that connects other relational symbols."[176] One can see where this logic proceeds long before Lee draws the conclusion that "[t]wo...are three because of the third or the between-ness, but each is also one because of their mutual inclusiveness".[177] With this logic operating, Lee is able to examine such pronouncements of Jesus as "Believe me that I am *in* the Father and the Father is in me"[178] and "I *and* the Father are one"[179] and conclude that such statements are Trinitarian. "In" and "and" in these statements are ciphers for the Spirit.

There are troubling aspects to this "relational" logic. Could Lee be serious about extending the logic? If "two are three" because of the relational "and" between yin and yang or Father and Son, what about other combinations? To what absurd lengths could this logic lead? Are two "and" two not only four but also five? And what are we to do with the Trinitarian formula—"Father, Son 'and' Holy Spirit"? Remove "and" so as not to wind up with four relations? The most Lee can say to head off these kinds of absurdities is that in Taoism, "[t]hree does not give birth to four. Rather three gives birth to all things...Three is the foundation of existence. It is the symbol of completion and fulfillment".[180] Apparently "in" and "and" are relational categories when dealing only with one, two and three, but somehow not so when dealing with other combinations of relations. As far as I am able to determine, we do not have a thoroughgoing relational way of thinking here, but rather a Taoist convention.

[175] Ibid.
[176] Ibid., 60.
[177] Ibid., 61.
[178] John 14:11.
[179] John 10:30.
[180] Lee, 62-3.

Another, perhaps more troubling, aspect of this logic involves Lee's criticism of western theology and its substantialist logic. According to Lee, from this perspective "in" and "and" are meaningless, because they cannot be a part of substance or being, while from a "relational" perspective, " 'and' is a relational symbol that connects other relational symbols".[181] According to Lee, however, " 'and' is not only a linking principle in both/and thinking but also the principle that is *between* two".[182] This is just silly. The early church fathers understood conjunctions and prepositions like "and" and "in" not as "meaningless" words but precisely as relational terms, because that is how they function in grammar. One cannot read, for example, Basil of Caesarea's treatise *On the Holy Spirit* without gaining an appreciation for his insights as to how the doctrine of the Trinity generates a theological grammar that enables us to speak responsibly and coherently about the triune relations and our place in the economy of salvation. The Fathers used words like *ousia* and *hypostases*, and they have been roundly criticized for that (often by people who do not understand the discussions), but it seems to me that, after criticizing the fathers for not paying attention to "and" and "is" because these terms were not substantial, Lee is the one guilty of reifying these words. For example, Lee says that while "substantial thinking overlooks 'and' as if it does not exist...[i]n reality, 'and' is a part of everything in the world, just as the spirit exists in all things."[183] It seems incredible that one could damn the fathers for merely being intelligent grammarians, then pride oneself on committing the error they had sense enough to avoid.

On the basis of his "relational" understanding of the Trinity, Lee proffers a few criticisms and revisions of "Trinitarian thinking." Among such criticisms, the one aimed at Karl Rahner's "simplistic understanding of the divine Trinity" (!) is the most memorable in this chapter. The depth of Lee's misunderstanding of

[181] Lee, 60.
[182] Ibid.
[183] Ibid.

Rahner's position can be seen in the former's judgment that "[i]f God's presence in the world is completely unaffected by the world, it is possible to conceive that the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity and the immanent Trinity is the also the economic Trinity".[184] It is, of course, precisely "Rahner's Rule" (to use Ted Peter's apt description[185]) that gets Rahner himself in trouble with his grip on the classic immutability thesis. Perhaps we should forgive Lee for his lapse in rigorous attention to this important argument, since early in the book he admitted to spending "more time in meditation than in library research and more time in rereading the Bible than reinterpreting existing theological works on the Trinity."[186] But it is no light matter to shrug off one's commitment to scholarly integrity and fidelity to one's subject matter--especially when interpreting works the likes of Fr. Rahner's, whose "simplistic understanding" of the doctrine of the Trinity has been one of the most important contributions in this century to the ongoing discussion.

III. The Trinitarian Relations

A. The Son

Chapters four, five and six are devoted to understanding the divine persons, but, surprisingly, Lee's order begins with a discussion of the Son (chapter four), then moves to the Holy Spirit (chapter five) and finally to the Father (chapter six). Chapter four is by far the most interesting, with chapters five and six working out Lee's logic expressed in four. In this chapter, his attempt to begin the discussion with the Son has a biblical flavor to it, but here Lee's methodological confusion is plain. He has already claimed that his

[184] Lee, 67. That the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity, and vice versa, is Rahner's central thesis in *The Trinity.* New York: Herder and Herder, 1970.

[185] Ted Peters, *God as Trinity: Relationality and Temporality in Divine Life* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 22.

[186] Lee, 12.

method is "inductive" or based on natural theology rather than a deductive approach based on special revelation. Yet here he claims that we begin with the Son because "God the Father was revealed through God the Son" and therefore "the concrete and historical manifestation of Christ becomes the foundation for our understanding of God," --immediately adding, incoherently, that "the traditional approach to the Trinity is deductive; our approach to it is inductive."[187] However the reader is supposed to make sense of this, it is clear in what follows that Lee is concerned not so much with the story of Jesus found in the Gospels as he is with an abstract discussion of the Son "who has two natures, divinity and humanity, just as we have begun our Trinitarian thinking with yin-yang symbolic thinking."[188] This is a natural place for us to begin, Lee explains, since the Christological issue preceded the Trinitarian formula -- apparently forgetting that Nicea preceded Chalcedon.

Leaving that aside, how exactly are the two natures of the Son supposed to function as a key to understanding the Trinity? To begin, Lee explains that "[i]f Christ is the symbol of divine reality, Jesus is the symbol of humanity...He is both Jesus and Christ or Jesus-Christ, who is different from Jesus as Christ. Jesus as Christ means Jesus is equal or identical with Christ, but Jesus-Christ means that Jesus and Christ are neither equal nor identical. Just like yin and yang, they are different but united together."[189] One would be hard pressed to find in contemporary theology a more palpable lack of understanding the meaning of "Christ." But, bolstered by his understanding of familial symbols taken from the *Shou Kua* or *Discussion of the Trigrams*, in his appropriation of the biblical material for his Trinitarian musings, Lee continues to venture where sane exegetes would fear to tread, by claiming that in the nativity narratives in Luke *two* distinct divine powers are actually involved in the conception of Jesus — "the Holy Spirit" and the "power of the

[187] Lee, 70.

[188] Ibid.

[189] Ibid., 74.

Most High."[190] Thus Lee concludes that "[t]he familial symbols of the Trinity are definitely established in this story: the Most High as the father, the Holy Spirit as the mother, and Jesus to be born as the son. In this Trinitarian relationship, the Son possesses the natures of both Father and Mother. The Father is represented by the yang symbol and the mother by the yin symbol."[191] It seems the doctrine of the Trinity is not all that difficult to understand--just one big happy divine family. So much for Mary as *Theotokos*.

There are in this reinterpretation a number of implications for liberation and gender concerns. Jesus becomes the perfect symbol of "marginality," being in touch with the world of heaven and the world of earth, belonging to both worlds yet neither in this world nor in heaven, transcending both. So "Jesus-Christ [*sic*] as the Son, possessing the two natures of humanity and divinity, becomes the margin of marginality, the creative core, which unites conflicting worlds."[192] But because the Son includes the Father and the Spirit while simultaneously excluding both of them, he is at the margin of the Father and the Spirit, and therefore he acts as "the connecting principle between the Father and the Spirit."[193] The implication for the gender issue is that, although according to the biblical witness Jesus was male, yin - yang "both /and" thinking enables us to affirm that "Jesus was a man but also a woman," (and "not only men but also women"[194]) since human beings are microcosms of the universe. Like all other creatures, Jesus was subject to the yin-yang polarity, and in terms of gender, the upshot of this polarity means that the existence of male (yang) presupposes the existence of female (yin). "In this respect, Jesus as a male person presupposes that he is also a female person."[195] Of course there is a Trinitarian pattern discerned here by Lee, since Jesus not

[190] Cp. Luke 1:35.
[191] Lee, 74.
[192] Ibid., 77.
[193] Ibid.
[194] Ibid., 79.
[195] Ibid.

only brings male and female together but also transcends them. Further, if Jesus was not only male but also female, then he was more than a single person--he was "one but also two at the same time"--and by now it should be clear as to where this kind of rhetoric leads. If one symbolizes singularity and two symbolizes plurality, then Christ is a single person representing individuality but also a people representing a community.

What is disturbing about all of this, soteriologically speaking, is that on this score we are re-presented in the incarnation of the Son not because the divine nature comprehends and sanctifies human nature; rather, such re-presentation takes place by virtue of an East Asian communal "cosmo-anthropological" principle that can be extended to all persons. When this principle is extended theologically to the triune fellowship, the results are ridiculous. It means that "Jesus as the Son is not only a member of the Trinitarian God but is also the Trinitarian God's own self."[196] When this principle is applied hermeneutically to the story of Jesus, the results are horrific. It means that that death of Jesus on the cross was the death of the Father, and the death of the Spirit as well.[197] "It was then the perfect death...."[198] Lee is motivated to make such extravagant claims partly by his desire to redress the traditional notion of divine *apatheia*, but this is assuredly not how to do it. The resurrection of the Son, then, is also the resurrection of the Trinitarian God. Now how can this happen, if--to put not too fine a point on it--everyone is dead? Quite simply, we have in Lee's reading a resurrection *by principle*, by virtue of the fact that "just as yin cannot exist independently without yang...we cannot speak of death without resurrection."[199]Although Scripture speaks of death as the result of sin and the enemy of life, an enemy that is overcome through the resurrection of Christ, the cosmo-anthropological perspective animating Lee's reinterpretation reveals that death and

[196] Lee, 82.
[197] Ibid.
[198] Ibid.
[199] Ibid., 83.

life cannot exist apart from each other--and hence are not truly enemies to each other after all. Moreover, our perception is so skewed that we fail to understand that there is no genuine gap between death and resurrection in eternity; death and resurrection take place simultaneously. Thus, "[t]he death of God occurs in the resurrection of God, just as the resurrection of God occurs in the death of God."[200] In answer to the question, "Oh Death, where is thy sting?," Lee's response seems rather anemic. Death never really *had* much of a sting.

In attempting to draw out some implications for creation and redemption from the relation of the Son to the Father, Lee makes some startling claims, the most disturbing of which bears upon the equality of Father and Son in the Godhead. As a Father has priority over his son, so, Lee reasons, creation must take precedence over redemption; indeed "salvation means restoring the original order of creation, which is distorted because of sin."[201] Hence the work of the Savior is dependent upon the work of the Father, which creates what Lee terms a "functional subordination of the Son to the Father."[202] Fair enough. But then Lee draws the wholly unjustified judgment that it was "[t]hus a mistake of the early church to make Christ coequal with the Father, by placing the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit side by side...[the Father and the Son] are one but not the same. This is precisely why it is not possible to make the Son coequal with the Father."[203] They are one but not the same, therefore they cannot be equal? Perhaps I have missed Lee's point here, but he appears to be committing the elementary blunder of reading into the inward Trinitarian relations an order he believes he has discerned in the outward works. For someone so enamored of "both/and" thinking, with these intemperate (some would say heretical) comments it seems to have never occurred to Lee to affirm "both" functional subordinationism "and"

[200] Ibid.
[201] Ibid., 88.
[202] Ibid.
[203] Ibid.

equality of being or essence. Subordinationism is hardly a new idea in the history of Trinitarian theology, and many people have held various forms of it while still adhering to the central insight expressed at Nicea as to the consubstantiality of Father and Son.

B. The Spirit.

In his treatment of the Spirit, Lee is out to help remedy the short-shrift this member of the Trinity has gotten in the history of Christian thought. "The Spirit is often regarded," Lee says, "as an attribute of the Father and Son without having a distinctive place in the Trinity."[204] A bit overstated, perhaps, but intending to "clarify" the place of the Spirit is a genuinely praiseworthy aim. The real question for Christians in this chapter, however, is whether we can afford (or stomach) Lee's "clarification". According to Lee's Asian Trinitarian thinking, the Spirit is known "as 'she', the Mother who complements the Father." Then, Lee adds this for the feminists: "The Spirit as the image of Mother, as a feminine member of the Trinity, is important for today's women who are conscious of their place in the world."[205] In Lee's reading, "[i]t is the two primary principles of reality, the Father ["the essence of the heavenly principle"] and the Mother or Spirit ["the essence of the material principle"], who have logical priority over the Son," so in this respect, "it is not the Spirit which proceeds from the Father and the Son, but the Son who proceeds from the Spirit and the Father."[206]

Lee attempts to identify the Spirit with the Asian idea of *ch'i*, or the vital energy which animates and transforms all things in the universe. The Spirit is "the essence of all things, and without her everything is a mirage," and Lee does not hesitate to compare this notion to the Hindu *prana* when speaking of the function of *ch'i* to unite matter and spirit. The author realizes that he is on

[204] Lee, 95.
[205] Ibid.
[206] Ibid., 103.

dangerous ground (even for him) in talking like this, and does his best to explain that "[t]he unity of the Spirit as *ch'i* and the Spirit as Godself does not mean that the former is identical with the latter even though they are inseparable."[207] So, while the Spirit as *ch'i* , the essence of life, must manifest herself in "trees, rocks, insects, animals and human beings," Christianity is "more than animistic or pantheistic because the Spirit is not only *ch'i* but also more than *ch'i*. She is more than *ch'i*, because she is also God."[208] There you have it; theism rescued by the conceptual clarity offered by yet another variation on "both/and" thinking. Harnack's familiar comment about Augustine avoiding the charge of modalism by the mere assertion that he did not wish to be a modalist might well be tailored to fit Lee on the question of pantheism.[209]

Because Lee cannot successfully navigate the problem of pantheism entailed by his position, he cannot, not surprisingly, successfully navigate the problem of evil or (in his terms) the problem of the relationship between ch'i and evil spirits ("I do not know how this disharmonious element occurs in the universal flow of the Spirit").[210] This does not prevent him, however, from presenting a kinder, gentler Spirit, oriented to the *K'un* hexagram in the *Book of Change*. "Because fragility is the nature of the Spirit, the Spirit is always gentle."[211] Gentle metaphors for the Spirit (drawn from the *Discussion of the Trigrams*) such as cloth, a kettle, water, a large wagon, form, and multitude are all investigated, but, interesting as some of these are, by far the most interesting metaphor for the Spirit is a cow with a calf or a pregnant cow, insofar as such metaphors "signifies the fertility of the earth mother."[212] These metaphors signify "the self generating power inherent in the

[207] Ibid., 99.
[208] Ibid., 100.
[209] Adolf von Harnack, *History of Dogma*, vol. IV (London, Edinburgh and Oxford: Williams and Norgate, 1898) 131.
[210] Lee, 102.
[211] Ibid., 105.
[212] Lee, 106.

Spirit," so that the Spirit is the authentic mother of Jesus, while Mary was the "surrogate mother." Again, commenting on Luke 1. 34ff: "If the Holy Spirit represents female divinity, the Most High may represent male divinity. In other words, the relationship between God the Mother and God the Father caused the conception of Jesus in Mary."[213] One might say that St. Thomas had it wrong: the real relations should be Paternity, *Maternity*, Filiation, etc.[214] We are assured that Mary fully participated in the process of conception and birth, yet Lee laments that "[w]hen the church failed to recognize the feminine element in God or to recognize the Spirit as God the Mother, the church had to elevate Mary as God the Mother. Divinizing Mary was a tragic mistake."[215] Elevating Mary to God the Mother? Is that what Lee thinks those sneaky Roman Catholics have been up to? Or what church is this man talking about? Try as one might, it is difficult to see why this fictitious error would be worse than the paganism Lee proposes; at least Mary as "God the Mother" might not land one so squarely in Docetism, as Lee's position does, despite his protests to the contrary.

Two of the dominant motifs which characterize the work of the Spirit are integration and transformation. At first glance, these motifs strike one as reasonable enough, pneumatologically speaking, but they are expounded without the slightest hint of subjecting to theological criticism *what* is being integrated and transformed. "Integration," we are told, encapsulates that "inclusivity without discrimination" and "complementarity of opposites" characteristic of what Lee calls love.[216] And why the Spirit's transforming work enabling movement "from one stage to another in human growth and spiritual formation" is such a big deal remains a mystery. After all, as Lee tells us, "[a]ny sharp distinction between the secular and the sacred....is not only contrary to the

[213] Lee, 107.
[214] See Thomas' discussion of the real relations in *Summa Theologica* 1. 28. 4.
[215] Lee, 106.
[216] Ibid., 108.

Trinitarian principle but also unacceptable from the cosmo-anthropological perspective of East Asian thinking."[217] Although the New Testament distinguishes between flesh and spirit, we need not operate with a division between them, what with the blessing of yin-yang thinking. In fact, " 'what is born of the flesh' has the potential for becoming 'what is born of the Spirit.' "[218] Lee explains that "[t]he Spirit in all things makes up the continuum between saints and sinners, between the flesh and the spirit, between the bad and the good. Thus, *the continuum itself* is the power that moves us from one pole to the other."[219] It is not without good reason, of course, that the creed refrains from referring to "the Continuum Itself, the Lord and Giver of Life." With his unstudied, unbiblical and undifferentiated amalgam of flesh and spirit, no wonder Lee can conclude that "because the Spirit is immanent in the world, the world is the church."[220]

If all of this sounds like so much pneumatological gurgling from the contemporary liberal pluralist agenda, it is. "In this pluralistically and ecologically oriented age," Lee says, "we have to rethink our theological task. An exclusive and absolutist approach, which has been fostered by a Christocentric perspective, must be revised. Our theological focus must change from Jesus-Christ to the Father, and from the Father to the Spirit."[221] And despite Lee's assurances that "the Spirit-centered approach" does not exclude a Christ-centered approach, we have heard all this before. "Because the Spirit is truly immanent and inclusive of all things in the cosmos, a theology based on the Spirit must include all...From the perspective of the Spirit, all religions are manifestations of the same Spirit."[222] Such groundbreaking pneumatology.

[217] Ibid., 115.
[218] Ibid., 116
[219] Ibid., italics added.
[220] Ibid., 117.
[221] Ibid., 123.
[222] Ibid., 123.

C. The Father

In chapter six we see the political quandary in which Lee is landed as a result of his hermeneutical commitments. Nearly one quarter of the chapter is devoted to explaining why the Father has preeminence in the Trinitarian relations. This has very little to do with the Son's relation to the Father in a biblical perspective. In the West, because of liberation and feminist concerns, Lee suggests we do not have to take seriously the patriarchy expressed in the Scripture. But because he is committed to reinterpreting the doctrine of the Trinity from "the contextual reality of Asian people," and in that context the dominant familial structure is patriarchal, he has no choice but to argue for the preeminence of the Father. So, while Lee is aware of, and sympathetic to, Western calls to dismantle patriarchy, and while he attempts to soften an unyielding patriarchal structure in the doctrine of the Trinity by reimagining the Spirit as a feminine member of the Trinity, he must admit nevertheless that "[s]ince the purpose of this book is to present the Trinity from an Eastern perspective, not from a Western perspective, I have to accept reluctantly, with some reservation because of my Western influence, the biblical witness that the Father (the male) is more prominent than the Spirit, who represents the image of the mother (female)."[223] Make no mistake, that "biblical witness" is "accepted" only because of the East Asian perspective on the family. "The Eastern perspective is relative to the context of Eastern people at the present time, and any theological treatise from an Eastern perspective must reflect the context of Eastern people."[224] It is touching indeed to see a liberal theologian torn between his sympathy for a western feminist political agenda and his commitment to a radically contextual hermeneutic that will permit him to reinterpret the Trinity from only an East Asian (i.e., patriarchal) perspective.

[223] Ibid., 129.
[224] Ibid.

The remainder of this chapter is devoted largely to interpreting the Father from the perspective of *Ch'ien* or the symbol of heaven found in the *Book of Change.* This hexagram bears four cardinal virtues which Lee explicates in relation to heaven's attributes: origin, success, advantage and correctness--reinterpreted as the Father's love, harmony, justice and wisdom. Following this, Lee examines a number of metaphors from the *Discussion of the Trigrams* for unfolding the character of the Father: the 'round,' the prince, the father, jade, metal, cold, ice, deep red, a good horse, an old horse, a lean horse ("I would like to think that the Father in the Trinity is like my own father, working like a horse for his Trinitarian family..."), a wild horse, and tree fruit. Yet among the various characteristics discussed, the creativity of the Father and the universal moral principle or order originating in him constitute his "centrality," which unifies the relations and the cosmos. But speaking this way about "centrality" in reference to the Father's place smacks way too much of patriarchy and subordinationism, and once again Lee has to scramble to salvage a more egalitarian way of distributing power. Fortunately, "in yin-yang thinking, everything changes and transforms itself. The center changes as an entity or as a relation change. Thus, the center is redefined again and again in the process of creativity and change."[225] Hence, Lee can claim that the Spirit is also central because she represents the centrality of the earth, and the Son is also central because the centrality of the Father is marginalized through the Spirit and recentred in him (the Son), who is between both Father and Spirit and heaven and earth.

It becomes clear by the end of this chapter that Lee is unable to reconcile his commitment to traditional Eastern "family values" (my term) with his sensitivity to contemporary gender concerns. He believes that "the Trinitarian structure is fundamental to human community" and can serve as "the archetype of the human family." In the face of crumbling family life, Lee maintains that no sound family can exist without either a mother or a father, and that without children the family is incomplete. Yet "[w]hat is needed in family

[225] Ibid., 149.

life today is not to change the images of father, mother and children, but to reinterpret their images to meet the ethos of our time."[226] Not changing the images, but merely reinterpreting them for our time? That is a bit like offering clarification without clarity. But the underlying ideology has at least become clear. In his concluding remarks on this chapter on the Father, Lee admits that "[t]he real issue regarding the Trinity is neither the familial images nor the gender of the Father. To me the real issue is the lack of the feminine member of the Trinity."[227] By this point in the book, it come as no surprise to learn *that* is the real issue, even in a chapter on the Father.

IV. "The Orders of the Divine Trinity."

In chapter seven, Lee says he "hopes to examine how using one's imagination and drawing from one's existential context shows us new ways in which the Trinitarian members can be interrelated in the mystery of divine life,"[228] and he is out to do this unencumbered by both Greek and Latin ways of conceiving the relations within the Godhead. Lee's interest in Trinitarian "orders" is somewhat baffling, and although he says that in general theologians tend to be fascinated by the inner workings of the divine life, it appears that Lee's real fascination in this chapter is with less divine questions of hierarchy and power. The political and hermeneutical dilemma, for example. is evident again in full force. "Although I lean strongly toward feminist and liberationist interpretation of Trinitarian doctrine in terms of equality, mutuality and community, my approach to the orders of the divine Trinity is distinct because of my Asian background, which presupposes not only a cosmo-anthropological and organic worldview but also a hierarchical dimension in the order of the divine Trinity."[229] In the traditional order, "the Father,

[226] Lee, 150.
[227] Ibid.
[228] Ibid., 151.
[229] Ibid., 150.

the Son, the Spirit, " Lee judges that commitment to the coequality of persons should be questioned, since the idea of coequality of the three persons "is based not on the biblical witness but on the aspirations of equal rights advocates and a democratic society."[230] One learns such invaluable lessons about the history of theology from Prof. Lee's book. Instead of countenancing such egalitarian idealism in our doctrine, Lee reminds us that "[i]n praxis, there is no equality of all people. Ethnic minorities and many women are oppressed, class structure cannot be eliminated, and utopia is only a dream of those who suffer injustice today. If we truly want to reflect the contemporary situation in which we live, we must not be too idealistic."[231] This is truly a pathetic picture. Here is a theologian who accuses the Fathers of something that they could not possibly be guilty of (viz., being democratic idealists), who then reminds us to be hard headed pragmatists on account of the political realities in our world, but who all along has admitted to reimagining the Spirit as feminine in order to balance out the patriarchy of the traditional interpretation. One almost would counsel Lee to develop a more active political imagination, so at least he could appreciate the error he mistakenly attributes to the Fathers.

The other orders imagined are "the Father, the Spirit, the Son" (the "distinctively Asian" order[232]), "the Spirit, the Father, the Son" (admittedly difficult to support from the biblical witness, but not if taken "from human imagination based on human experience"[233]),"the Spirit, the Son, the Father" (a matriarchal family structure supported by "shamanism, often regarded as the religion of women in Asia,"[234]), "the Son, the Father, the Spirit" (an order against the norm of the East Asian idea of family structure but one which can be salvaged by virtue of the yin-yang principle[235]) and

[230] Ibid., 157.
[231] Ibid., 158.
[232] Ibid., 153.
[233] Lee, 161.
[234] Ibid., 166.
[235] Ibid., 169.

finally, "the Son, the Spirit, the Father" (Lee's favorite paradigm because it represents "the existential situation of human experience,"[236]). Each of these orders is explicated with the aid of a hexagram.

What is the significance of these Trinitarian "orders"? Lee admits that these different orders "are based purely on the imagination of human experience and may have no relevance to the inner life of the divine Trinity."[237] Yet, he insists that such an exercise is not merely a pointless exercise. "Rather, I have attempted to discover the meaning of the divine life from my own experience...My imagination of the divine Trinity is rooted in the meaning of my familial life. The orders of the divine Trinity are then meaningful images of my experience of life."[238] So although what he has done in this chapter cannot be identified with what the life of God is like, it is "not sheer nonsense but has a meaning that relates my life to the divine."[239] If one is baffled initially by Lee's fascination with Trinitarian orders, the bafflement increases by the time the chapter is at an end and the realization sinks in that these orders do not have anything to do with God but only with Lee's search for "meaning" for his life--yet still, somehow, the church is supposed to profit by reading a chapter of his personal imaginings.

V. "Trinitarian Living."

As another episode in Lee's theological autobiography, chapter seven could be excused perhaps as one theologian's imaginative ramblings. But theology must be more than a privatistic, imaginative vision quest. Once one's search for personal meaning is divorced from the search for truth, disaster cannot be far behind when one attempts to think about *other* people, and nowhere is that

[236] Ibid., 172.
[237] Ibid., 175.
[238] Ibid., 176.
[239] Ibid.

more apparent in this book than in chapter eight, where Lee holds forth on what he calls "Trinitarian living" with respect to church life, family life and community life.

With respect to his understanding of church life, we have in Lee's proposals nothing short of a pagan reinterpretation of the life of the Christian church. Baptism represents the ebb and flow of yin and yang. "Just as yang changes to yin, which again changes to yang, life dies in the water and rises up to new life. In this process, the old yang (old yang) becomes new yang (new life) because of yin (death)."[240] This symbolic representation of cosmic forces is seen throughout the church year, most notably during the Christmas and Easter seasons, when we experience the "cycle of life-death-new life."[241] The paganism is furthered in Lee's treatment of the service of holy communion, which he relates to the Asian practice of ancestor worship or ancestral rite. In Lee's Trinitarian model of preaching, we do not see paganizing so much as we do his implicit assent to outright clichés about genders. A good sermon, he says, has an ethical or rational axiom (related to the mind), an emotive axiom (related to the heart) and a volitional axiom (related to the "lower abdomen" or seat of strength). The rational or ethical component belongs to the Father (the masculine principle), the emotive element to the Spirit (the feminine principle) and the volitional component to the Son, who mediates the Father and Spirit (mother). In Lee's final reflections on church life, he suggests that meditation is "the soul of the church's life," and that "the real crisis of today's church life comes from a lack of meditation."[242] In response to this crisis, the church needs to either revive its mystic tradition or learn meditation techniques from Asia. In meditation, Lee explains, we are connected or "yoked" to the divine. All separation from the divine life - whether that separation is caused by

[240] Ibid., 182.
[241] Ibid., 183.
[242] Lee, 188.

thinking, self consciousness, sound or sensory images – is eliminated, so that "we are 'in' the life of divine Trinity."[243]

In Lee's treatment of what he calls "Trinitarian family life," the gender issue once again comes to the fore. We are told that "remaking the image of God with feminine members"—for example, changing the name "Father" to that of "Mother"—"can create the same problem that patriarchy has created." So, to avoid that problem, Lee says his strategy has been to reimagine the Spirit as the feminine member of the Trinity, as "the mother who complements the Father," thus completing the "Trinitarian family of God."[244] The glaring, unexamined assumption in all of this is that while one cannot change "Father" to "Mother" for fear of repeating the same kind of problem that patriarchy has created, somehow one can with impunity feminize the Holy Spirit. Apparently, while names in the Holy Scripture such as "Father" and "Son" provide gender boundaries Lee is unwilling to cross, he has no reservations about ignoring in Scripture the existence of mere pronouns (he, his) in reference to the Spirit. This inconsistent and uncritical hermeneutical posture carries over into Lee's estimation of the trinity as the "archetype" of our family life. Although the heavenly model was "influenced" by our human context, Lee will not admit that he has sold out to a "contextual approach, where the present family context might be used as a norm for interpreting the familial life of the divine Trinity...We cannot attribute our family experience to the divine."[245] Has this man read his own book? For the better part of two hundred pages he has done just that; why get sentimental about revelation now?

The Trinity as the archetype of the human family does more than provide a theological blueprint for families which are able to exhibit the traditional father-mother-child structure; in Lee's reading this archetype should also provide hope for families that do not manifest this structure. Single-parent families, childless

[243] Ibid., 189.
[244] Ibid., 191.
[245] Ibid.

couples, even single persons are regarded as families "in transition," and even in this transitional phase all of these groups manifest, nonetheless, the divine archetype. What is highly revealing in this portion of chapter eight is a complete lack of interest in "alternative" family structures, such as *de facto* arrangements and homosexual partnerships. In particular, one wonders if homosexuals in the church have an ally in Lee or not, especially given his commitment to complementarity of opposites, male and female forces, etc. This seems to be one more of example of how, from the traditional East Asian understanding of family, Lee is restrained from capitulating wholesale to predominantly western concerns, no matter how sympathetic he might be. Granted, because of this restraint, Lee can at times sound very conservative. "No matter how firm the commitment made by the husband and wife, how much they love each other, their marriage and family do not succeed unless they have the right structure, based on a firm foundation."[246] One of my Sunday School teachers might have said the same, and I believe it. But then almost immediately the theological craziness resumes. "What is needed is to build the family on the archetype of the Trinitarian Family...Thus, it is not only mutual commitment but also meditation that reaches the depth of God the Family, which then becomes the foundation of the human family."[247] No organization is more sacred than the family, for this basic unit reflects the structure of the Trinity. Hence the church itself must be regarded as "the extension of the family unit," and Lee even makes the accusation that, since the church tends to look at the home as a secular realm and the church as the only sacred realm, "the church is indirectly responsible for the deterioration of family structure."[248] Chalk up one more disaster for which the church is responsible.

Lee discerns familiar Trinitarian "principles" in his treatment of "community life" or society, which is envisioned as a large

[246] Ibid., 197.
[247] Ibid.
[248] Lee, 197.

family system or as a "mosaic" of many family units. In this section the author executes an amazing backflip away from his early position on the notion of "coequality." Whereas earlier in the book he was sharply critical of the church's judgment that the divine persons are coequal, here without explanation he claims that "[j]ust as the coequality of the three is an essential ingredient of the Trinity, the coequality of different ethnic and racial groups in society is imperative for Trinitarian living in the world...Society is an extension of the family, and our family is a reflection of the familial image of the divine Trinity."[249] Yet, even as a functional hierarchy is also at work in the Trinitarian "family," so a hierarchy of power must exist in any society. The power in the structure of that hierarchy, however, should be based on an individuals' capacities and not on racial origins or ethnic orientations. A more masterful exposition of the obvious would be hard to find, but the socio-economic platitudes continue. In surveying actual society, Lee soberly admits that "classes are inevitable in this life."[250] But in response to liberationists' concerns, Lee says that the liberation theology he affirms "does not liberate us from the reality of the poor itself but from the unjust structure that is oppressive for the poor and weak.."[251] The poor, I am sure, will be grateful for that clarification.

However, Lee tells us we must consider "the possibility that the structure of the social classes reflects the functional hierarchy in the Trinity."[252] In a poignant display of naiveté, he attempts to explain from yin-yang thinking why this position does not merely endorse the social and economic order. Governments should not attempt to fix the order of society so that only certain groups are benefited, "for everything must change according to yin-yang cosmology. Just as yin changes to yang when yin reaches its maximum and vice versa, people change from the lower class to the

[249] Ibid., 201.
[250] Ibid., 204.
[251] Ibid., 205.
[252] Ibid.

upper and from the upper class to the lower."[253] How long do we have to pray, and wait, for this kingdom (of sorts) to come? We really don't *just* wait for it, Lee says, for "we are fully participating in the process of change," since God is immanent in the whole process of our collective efforts to fulfill the needs of a just society. However, the middle class is particularly important in Lee's vision of society, since "[i]f society truly reflects the Trinitarian image of God the Family, the people of the lower strata and those of the upper strata are complemented through the middle strata, which acts as a mediator...It is this middle [class] that provides the stability of society and prevents conflict between the upper and lower classes."[254] So when, for the benefit of society, the *Tao* is allowed to work through us its ceaseless ebb and flow of yin and yang, in our enlightenment we will come to recognize...the middle class in all its glory? Hegel has found a Taoist soulmate.

In the last few pages of this chapter, Lee includes his take on the concept of time from a "Trinitarian perspective." This is a strange little addition to the chapter; it was added, I suppose, because all of our Trinitarian living takes place, well, in time. But, no surprise, Lee's "Trinitarian perspective" on time is little more than a cover for a Taoist/Confucian perspective. "Linear" time is an illusion or "a limited perception within human experience," while "[i]n an ultimate sense, our time is cyclic, because our time is cosmic time."[255] Lee's contribution to this discussion is neither unique nor interesting. Eschatology is associated with "dualistic concept of time," which is infected with the strange division of time and eternity, while in "Trinitarian thinking" now *is* eternity, since the Son serves as the "present" connecting principle to the "past" of the Father and the "future" of the Spirit. Why is it so difficult for people to understand that one can dress up an unchristian worldview with a Christian formula, and that worldview will still remain

[253] Ibid.
[254] Ibid., 206.
[255] Ibid., 208.

unchristian? With Lee's revision of eschatology, his paganizing program is complete.

VI. Lee's Conclusion

Lee's conclusion (chapter nine) briefly reviews the main themes of his book, and in important respects a few of these themes summarize the unexamined assumptions, confusion and errors running through his project. All he has done in this book, Lee admits, is to have drawn "a picture of the divine Trinity based on imaginations coming from my own experience, which is deeply rooted in Asian tradition. Realizing that I, as a human being, am incapable of the knowing the reality of the divine mystery, I have searched for the meaning of the divine Trinity in my own life." Lee warns us that "[w]hat is meaningful to me my not always be meaningful to others," but he hopes nonetheless that his book will function as "a catalyst for those who are seeking out the meaning of the Trinity in their own lives."[256] This sounds so very humble, but it is the outcome of a theology almost wholly concerned with contextual "meaning" and not with truth. Lee uses Scripture in his construction, and one would think that some recognition of special revelation would factor into his claims. But, as we have seen repeatedly, he eschews the claims one might make on account of special revelation, preferring to use snippets from the Gospel merely as stimuli for his own imaginative and so-called "inductive" theological method. As we all know, there is using *Scripture* and then there is *using* Scripture. Bereft of the ability to make robust universal truth claims, Lee can only finally wonder, "Does my imagination of the Trinity, which is translated into my Trinitarian thinking, have anything to do with the divine Trinity itself? I do not know. However, if my Trinitarian thinking is intrinsic to my creatureliness, the Trinitarian God who created the world has something to do with my Trinitarian thinking. This gives me hope

[256] Lee, 212-13.

that my Trinitarian thinking is not completely out of focus."[257] Lee's thinking is not completely out of focus. That is cold comfort. This is hardly a full-blooded Trinitarian theology for the community of faith; to the degree that Lee's faith remains primarily in the "Trinitarian thinking intrinsic to [his own] creatureliness," his theological project remains a private affair. As Lee has reminded the reader again and again, "[t]he Trinity is meaningful to me because I think in Trinitarian terms."[258] For over two hundred pages, the author has extolled the corporate virtues of family, community, etc. It is a pity he never made the connection between the theological enterprise itself and the life of the people of God--which is public, confessional and mission-minded. To the degree that this work stumbles at this point, despite the concerns for holism, pluralism, racism, feminism and a host of other postmodern "-isms," Lee's project remains an eminently *modern* way of doing theology.

Lee's indebtedness to modernity is made clearer in some of his final comments on the relationship between the religions. As opposed to dialogue, in which "one religion relates to another religion because they are strangers to each other," Lee suggests what he calls *trilogue*, an inclusive conversation which moves beyond the constraints of oppositional, "either/or" thinking. In trilogue, the religions "relate to each other because they are part of each other"[259] since, if we are all part of the Trinitarian family of God, we cannot help but be part of the religious traditions of our brothers and sisters. "In trilogue, many religions are in one religion and one religion is in many religions, because every religion bears the image of the Trinity."[260] Such trilogue is common enough in the East Asian religious context, Lee assures us. What, then, becomes of the vast differences between many religions? How do we think about such differences? Apparently, rational discrimination *is* the problem.

[257] Ibid., 219.
[258] Ibid., 213.
[259] Ibid., 217.
[260] Ibid., 218.

Trilogue "transcends talking, discussing, arguing, comparing, criticizing, analyzing, judging, classifying, or agreeing with each other. In trilogue one simply accepts other religions as part of one's own...Trilogue is a spontaneous act of communication, which is a direct recognition of the presence of 'one in many.'"[261]

A "spontaneous act of communication," transcending discussion, argument, criticism, analysis, etc.? We have in the idea of "trilogue" a most extreme manifestation of what George Lindbeck in his *Nature of Doctrine* calls religious "experiential - expressivism,"[262] the notion that at the core of all religions is a common, pre-linguistic experience of the sacred, the Absolute, etc. (pick your religious abstraction). The most well known exponent of this holdover from nineteenth-century religious romanticism is, of course, John Hick, and Lee's understanding of religious "trilogue" fails at the same basic point that Hick's model of the religions and religious experience does: seeing the very obvious differences among the religions, it throws its hands up in despair and claims no single religious perspective has the absolute truth, but assumes for itself a Babel-like, absolute perspective in order to make this claim, and then falls back on some vague, pre-linguistic religious experience. With respect to the relations between the religions, in the final assize Lee looks like a garden-variety pietist of a higher (or, depending on your point of view, lower) order.

At the close of this review, I find very little by way of which to commend Lee's work. There are interesting expositions of Taoist and Confucian ideas, but Lee betrays such little understanding of why the Christian doctrine of the Trinity is important, and misunderstands so many critical discussions in the history of Christian theology, that this work has only marginal importance in contributing to the genuine issues in the current discussion. A good, basic question for Lee to ask would be why the Gospel story

[261] Lee, 218.
[262] George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1984.

(rather than an abstract discussion of "two natures") is important to the doctrine of the Trinity.[263] But, committed as Lee is to his so-called "inductive" method, Holy Scripture cannot help but receive the short end of the stick. What Lee fails to realize is that, given his unexamined hermeneutical and theological assumptions, *The Trinity in Asian Perspective* is a predictable deduction, republishing a number of liberal clichés about religion, politics, gender and Christian theology.

[263] See, for example, Eberhard Jüngel's discussion of "The Humanity of God as a Story to be Told," in *God as the Mystery of the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1983) 299 - 314.