ABSTRACT
THE ECONOMIC TRINITY: COMMUNION WITH THE TRIUNE GOD
IN A MARKET ECONOMY

D. Glenn Butner, Jr.

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Many theological approaches to economics claim that the market economy can help develop an economic agent in virtue, while others argue that market economies undermine virtue, impede authentic spirituality, or result in injustice. Similarly, experimental and behavioral economists have identified market constructions that influence economic agents in terms of their motivations, perceptions, actions, and self-understanding in positive or negative ways. This dissertation theologically analyzes these two bodies of literature under the conviction that any redemptively significant development that an economic agent undergoes in the economy must be attributed to God’s grace.

This project develops a Reformed and trinitarian theology of divine action by drawing on a non-contrastive account of transcendence as the basis for developing an account of human actions as concurrent with divine acts. A theology of common grace allows social actions within the marketplace to be identified as grace even when the economic agents who contribute to and participate in these social interactions may not be believers. An account of appropriations allows aspects of common grace to be distinctively attributed to the work of the Father, Son, or Holy Spirit without jeopardizing the divine oneness. The claim that all divine actions supervene upon created realities calls for the identification of immanent terms for the distinctive works of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Drawing on the theology of Kevin Hector as developed in dialogue with Charles Taylor, Cornelius Castoriadis, and Edward Rommen, this project describes the Father working through social imaginaries, the Son through identity, and the Holy Spirit through norms.

The dissertation subsequently explores how various market constructions may impede or enhance redemptively significant transformation by addressing the way these constructions influence social imaginaries, identity, or norms. Models are the key economic focal point because models are the means by which markets are constructed. As mathematical language, they are most prone to shape social imaginaries. Deficiencies in many models and their consequences are explored, with constructive solutions offered. When models undermine redemptively significant transformation, the project explains how the immanent term relates to the work of redemption in revelation, justification, and sanctification to illuminate the problem.