BOOKS I HAVE READ: THE TRINITY AMONG THE NATIONS

Posted on April 20, 2020 by Eddie

The importance of this book lies in the way that it clearly demonstrates that thoughtful theological reflection from other cultural standpoints can enrich the Western tradition that we take as being normal. The writings of the Fathers, the Reformers or whoever your choice theologians are is not the end of the story. There is much to be learned from people who come to the biblical text asking different questions and gaining new insights. Read this book and have your horizons stretched.
Category: Observations

There is arguably no more important doctrine in the Christian faith than the doctrine of the Trinity. Everything else in terms of God's character and actions in history can be traced, to some degree, to his triune nature. The thing is, many people are rather overwhelmed by the concept of the Trinity. All too often it is presented as an irreconcilable mathematical puzzle or it is wrapped up in complex concepts such as persons and essences. The thing is that, to some extent, we should expect God's nature to be difficult to understand; he wouldn't be much of a God, otherwise. But, crucially, he has revealed himself to us and in that revelation we can come to know him.

However, our understanding of God is always mediated by the cultural and philosophical framework in which we have developed. The orthodox understanding of the Trinity which is expressed in the creeds of the Church uses Greek philosophical language to answer questions about God which emerge from a Greek philosophical mindset. This is not to complain about them, these creeds have served the church well. However, we would be mistaken if we were to assume that they told us all there is to know about the Triune God. People from other backgrounds ask different questions and by searching the Scriptural text develop new understandings. This is not to negate the reflections of the Church Fathers, but to add to them.

The Trinity Among the Nations is an excellent book full of fascinating insights about the Trinity from Latin American, Native North American, African and Asian scholars. They develop questions about the Trinity from their own perspectives and by examining Scripture develop new insights. However, those who are concerned for the primacy of orthodox theology should not be worried, each of the authors continually returns to both Scripture and the classic trinitarian formulations of the Church to ensure that what they are saying is not heterodox.

I won't give you a tour through the book as the various chapters are too dense for an easy summary. However, to me, the importance of this book lies in the way that it clearly demonstrates that thoughtful theological reflection from other cultural standpoints can enrich the Western tradition that we take as being normal. The writings of the Fathers, the Reformers or whoever your choice theologians are is not the end of the story. There is much to be learned from people who come to the biblical text asking different questions and gaining new insights. Read this book and have your horizons stretched.

At the time of writing, this book is available for an amazingly low price on Kindle. If you have one of these devices, I can't imaging why you would not buy it!

As always, some quotes....

> *The church fathers were doing first-rate â€œcross-cultural biblical interpretationâ€ as they employed the languages and related concepts (e.g., â€œunnamable and ineffableâ€ God) of Neoplatonism and Aristotle in reading the Bible. Those cultures that do not have a language system similar to that of the West, before dismissing what the classical traditions in the West have done, need to listen to their voices since monolinguistic interpretations tend to espouse limited views and can lead to idolatrous readings. More importantly today, however, we need a similar â€œcross-cultural interpretationâ€ that is true to our own contexts and vernacular categories*
>
> *p.8*

> *The snag was that while human beings exist in plurality, there is only one God. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not related to each other like Tom, Dick, and Harry â€" three separate beings sharing the same analogous nature. Rather, they are three distinct identities sharing the same being, and for this a new terminology had to be found.*
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> *p.44*

> *Christians in Africa must reinstate and develop a trinitarian theology that is relevant to the rise of an aggressive and violent Islam. Militant Islam falls short of a loving and caring God as provided in a trinitarian theology that depicts God as loving and caring, who loves to save and not to kill his enemies.*
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> *p.69*

> *We can also say that the connection between monotheism and social justice is a direct one. Social justice is not a secondary consequence of monotheism, but the very expression of Godâ€™s direct and exclusive rule over his people. This is precisely what the true prophets of Israel said.*
>
> *p.74*

> *By revealing himself as love, God has revealed personal relations in himself. Love means relationships, and these are eternal relationships. God did not begin to be love in the moment*

> *of time when we experienced loving relationships with him. God is eternal love, and this means that God is love beyond the realm of creation. The loving relations in God are eternal relations. God has revealed himself as love, and this means that God has revealed himself as that which he eternally is. Trinity is not an appearance toward the creatures, but the essence of God as love.*
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> *p.84*

> *The academy is not a place for prophets. Their voices are dampened or dismissed as yet one more interesting idea.*
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> *p.90*

> *The danger in many articulations of the doctrine of the Trinity is that they too quickly skip over the biblical stories, making the narratives only secondary to the real agenda.*
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> *p.95*

> *he doctrine of the Trinity demands that we learn to see Jesus with the eyes of the Spirit so that our own prejudices and politics do not blind us to the obedience to which the Father calls all his people.*
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> *p.117*