BOOKS I HAVE READ: THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

Posted on October 29, 2014 by Eddie

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Category: Observations

A number of years ago, I wrote my MTh. dissertation on a trinitarian approach to Bible translation. Though I gained my degree, I am now thoroughly embarrassed by that document. My intentions were good, I worked hard, but I simply never fully appreciatedÂ the real differences of opinion that exist among theologians on the subject of the Trinity.

I wish thatÂ Two Views on the Doctrine of the Trinity (Counterpoints: Bible and Theology)Â had been available when I was working on my masters. My dissertation would have had a much more solid foundation if it had been.

The book contrasts two views of the Trinity: the ClassicÂ Trinity and the Relational Trinity. The format of the book involves four scholars presenting essays on their particular topic Â (Stephen Holmes and Paul Molnar on the Classic Trinity and Thomas McCall and Paul Fiddes on the Relational Trinity). These are then followed by responses from each of the other authors, with the essay writer getting the last word in each section. Â It should be noted that the different authors who are nominally presenting on the same topic don't necessarily agree with each other. The editor Jason Sexton gives a brief concluding remark.

Though it is a shortish book (216 pages, plus glossary and indices), it is very dense and nor particularly easy reading.Â The references to substance, essence (in Greek and Latin), Thomas Aquinas, the Cappadocian Fathers and Duns Scottus will keep your mind stretched. Each of the essays seemed convincing on first reading, it is only when IÂ read the comments by the other authors that I saw that there were issues that hadn't been fully addressed. I had quite a few, "why didn't I see that?" moments.

The format of the book and the quality of the writing is such that I think it is unlikely to cause anyone to change their view of the Trinity (it didn't in my case), but it will help those who have a firmly entrenched view see things from other viewpoints.

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I thoroughly enjoyed this quote from the conclusion:

> *In this way and with the degree of seriousness displayed in the conversations in this book, even amid strong disagreement on points and yet conducted with a massive degree of respect of engagement - it is with this same degree of hospitality and dialogue that we*

> *should look to insights from the majority world and from our wider globalized (and localized) society who are underrepresented in Western theology, and from alternatively operative epistemologies that may grant new insights for a yet better understanding of God's life in Trinity.*