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Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth
New Jersey

Trinitarian Theology for the Church brings together a number of essays that were originally delivered at the 2008 Wheaton College Theology Conference. The 11 chapters were authored by the following 10 scholars: Kevin J. Vanhoozer, Edith M. Humphrey, John R. Franke, Mark Husbands, Keith E. Johnson, Robert K. Lang'at, Gordon T. Smith, Philip W. Butin, Leanne Van Dyk, John D. Witvliet. Unfortunately, due to contractual and spatial limitations this volume wasn't able to include all of the papers read at this conference. Participants of the conference whose essays did not make the volume are: Craig Carter, John Flett, Fred Sanders, Steven Studebaker, and Jonathan Wilson. As the book's subtitle implies, the essays are delineated according to the following three categories:

1. Scripture: The Bible and the Triune Economy
2. Community: The Trinity and Society?
3. Worship: Church Practices and the Triune Mission

While all of the essays are interesting in their own right (n.b. that 'interesting' does not necessarily mean 'good, helpful, or exciting') some are more noteworthy than others. Taking the Evangelical Theological Society's doctrinal basis as his point of departure Kevin Vanhoozer spends the first two chapters trying to mesh the doctrine of the Trinity with a doctrine of Scripture which he says were torn asunder when "theologians lost interest in theology." (28) Vanhoozer takes a critical look at the incarnational analogy of Scripture and finds it wanting. He

rightly concludes that "Chalcedon was designed to clarify the being of Jesus Christ, not Scripture." (41) He spends the latter half of the first chapter looking at Karl Barth's "trinitarian theology of the Word" and Nicholas Wolterstorff's "analytic philosophy of divine discourse." In both of these authors he finds attempts to reconcile the Trinity and Scripture but he finds that Barth doesn't account for the language/speech of the Word of God, i.e., for Barth "the Bible itself is not revelation but becomes so when God in his freedom uses it to present Christ." (44). Wolterstorff's discussion on the other hand accounts for the language/speech of Scripture but is insufficiently trinitarian. Vanhoozer asserts that his "analysis could work in Judaism or Islam as well as in Christianity." (49) In the second chapter Vanhoozer's presents his fix to the problem, which is to view the Trinity as our "Scripture principle." "Scripture is triune discourse: something (covenantal) someone (Father, Son and Spirit) says to someone (the church) about something (life with God)." (64)

Edith Humprey's essay starts off a bit slow but quickly picks up steam when she proposes that we start with the Son in our account of the Trinity. She asks what if we were to view the actions of Lord in the OT as the actions of Son. This question arises from Jesus' statement that "no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." (Mat. 11:27 // Lk. 10:22 cf. Jo. 1:18) It's in the Son's creating, acting, speaking, and guiding that the Father is revealed. This type of thinking has a decent pedigree in Church history with such giants as Hilary of Poirtier and Ireneaus thinking along similar lines. She makes a good case for seeing Jesus as YHWH from 1Corinthians 8 and Philippians 2, but the best part of the essay comes at the end when she criticizes those who appear to be "allergic to hierarchy." She rightly points out the order (*taxis*) in the Trinity that arises from order of procession (the Father is neither begotten nor proceeds; the Son is begotten of the Father, the Spirit proceeds from the Father). She's certainly correct to call out the error of Kevin Giles and those of his ilk who assert that such an idea of order is "weird heresy" (see Gilbert Bilezikian in the front matter to Giles' *Jesus and the Father*). And I nearly shouted out loud and did a dance when I read the following:

> Consider the proliferation of newer, casual hymns that call us into the eternal and ineffable "dance" of the companionable Trinity. But *perichōrēsis* does not mean "a round dance" no matter how many would-be Greek specialists say so on the internet! (95)

Amen and amen!

John Franke and Mark Husbands offer dueling essays on the social Trinity. Franke goes the route of contrasting Eastern and Western ways of looking at the Trinity. Augustine has the psychological analogy and starts with the divine *ousia* while the Cappadocians have the social analogy and start with the three persons in communion. Richard of St. Victor is the closest thing

to a Cappadocian that there was in the West. Franke sees the "relational and social character of the triune God as an eternal community characterized by the giving, receiving and sharing of love [being] further developed by the concept of mission." (117) "God [who is love] is missional by nature." (119) Husbands on the other hand thinks that social trinitarians have misread the Cappadocians and that Karl Barth is the more faithful interpreter of their trinitarian theology despite the charges of modalism to the contrary. He criticizes the kind of overly simplistic view of Eastern and Western trinitarianism presented in Franke's essay (without criticizing Franke directly) and sees the overplayed "distinctions" between the East and the West as "misguided." (132) Husbands' problem is not with the Church's communion corresponding to God's communion per se, but rather in the way that social trinitarianism at times fails to preserve the ontological distinction between God and humanity.

Space prohibits me from commenting on all of the essays (and I admit to skipping chapters 7 & 10) but there are some solid essays in this volume. In passing I'd like to note that Keith E. Johnson's essay "Does the Doctrine of the Trinity Hold the Key to a Christian Theology of Religions?" which is a distillation of his doctoral dissertation was one of the more enjoyable chapters. Thankfully footnotes were employed throughout and there is a name/subject index as well as a Scripture index. I highly recommend this volume to all students of Trinitarian theology.