

in the second century. He shows great appreciation of Hill's *The Johannine Corpus in the Early Church* – an appreciation shared by this reviewer – but disagrees with some of Hill's specific conclusions regarding the knowledge of Revelation in the second century.

Ilaria Ramelli (Italy) is the first author to stay close to the volume's theme as she analyses Origen's handling of the violence in Revelation. She shows how his allegorisation enables Origen to see the violence as positive, viz. as the purification of humanity. Andreas Merkt (Germany) analyses the different ways in which the constituent parts of the *Passio Perpetuae* receive Revelation. He introduces the *Passio* well and shows how it claims an authority for itself equal to that of the writings of the emerging New Testament. Konrad Huber (Austria) introduces Victorinus of Pettau, the famous first commentator on Revelation, and his work, with special attention to Rev 1:9-20 – not a violent text! Martin Hasitschka (Austria) follows on with Victorinus' interpretation of Rev 19-21 – another passage without much violence – and Jerome's reception of it. Jan Dochhorn (Denmark) studies Lactantius' eschatology, a fascinating construct which only vaguely builds on Revelation – amazing for such an early author who died in AD 325.

Then follow three essays in which violence is actually a topic: (1) Christopher Rowland and Ian Boxall (UK) tell us what Tyconius and the English theologian Bede made of Rev 4:1 and 8:2 – 11:18; both linked Revelation directly to their own situations. (2) Pieter de Villiers (South Africa) introduces the enigmatic author Oecumenius and his commentary on Revelation, which has the violent Roman Empire as its main character and God as merely responding to its violence. (3) Eugenia Scarvelis Constantinou (USA) discusses the commentary of Andrew of Caesarea; her introduction and presentation are good.

Yet in the last three essays the theme of violence is lost from view once again. (1) Harald Buchinger (Austria) contributes the longest essay (51 pages), describing the use of Revelation in the liturgy and iconography of the Church. Going far beyond the patristic era, he finds that the violent texts were largely ignored. (2) Julia Eva Wannenmacher (Germany) describes Joachim of Fiore, hardly a church father. She assumes rather much, such as a distinction between the real Joachim and Pseudo-Joachim, and the essay's English is so poor that it is at times hard to understand. (3) Stefan Alkier (Germany) presents his own, all too brief exegesis of Revelation in intertextual perspective. Turning to violence he argues that 'The violence of the Book of Revelation is not an invention of this book, but a real experience of all mankind; the power of God is the foundation of the hope that violence will come to an end. There is no passage in the Book of Revelation that instructs the human witnesses of Jesus and God to kill anybody or to fight against people who do not believe...' (293)

This is a highly specialised collection; although the present reviewer teaches on Revelation he lacks the

expertise in patristics to evaluate some of the contributions. Regrettably the volume lacks an index of biblical texts, which will limit its usefulness.

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The Holy Trinity. Understanding God's Life

Stephen R. Holmes

Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2012, xv + 231 pp,
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ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Holmes argumentiert auf rein historischer Basis, dass momentane Ansprüche auf eine trinitarische Renaissance fehlgeleitet und falsch sind. Stattdessen würden gegenwärtige Lehren zur Dreieinigkeit in Wirklichkeit von traditionellen Überlieferungen abweichen, indem sie die Schrift in ihrer Gesamtheit außer acht lassen, die Dreieinigkeit im Netz der Geschichte einfangen, eine volle Persönlichkeit jeder der drei göttlichen Personen zuschreiben und eine eindeutige Sprache verwenden. Die klassische Lehre der Dreieinigkeit entwickelte sich aus exegetischen Anliegen heraus und im Zusammenhang mit einem göttlichen Minimalismus, einer Doktrin, die nun in der Theologie der Gegenwart fehlt. Abgesehen vom filioque sprachen Ost und West unisono bis zum 19. Jahrhundert, als Änderungen der Lehre eintraten.

SUMMARY

Holmes argues on purely historical grounds that recent claims to trinitarian revival are misguided and mistaken. Instead, contemporary doctrines of the Trinity actually deviate from traditional accounts by failing to account for all of Scripture, entangling the Trinity in history, ascribing a full personality to each divine person, and the use of univocal language. The classical doctrine of the Trinity developed out of exegetical concerns and within the context of divine simplicity, a doctrine now missing in contemporary theology. Besides the filioque, East and West spoke with one voice up until the nineteenth century when changes to the doctrine began.

RÉSUMÉ

En se fondant simplement sur l'histoire de la théologie, Holmes soutient que les tendances récentes que l'on présente comme participant à un renouveau trinitaire sont en fait mal orientées et erronées. Au contraire, les approches nouvelles de la doctrine de la Trinité s'écartent en fait de la tradition en ce qu'elles ne prennent pas en compte l'ensemble des Écritures. Elles errent par un accent indu sur une conception plus « personnaliste » de Dieu en opposition avec la tradition métaphysique, par la manière dont elles lient la Trinité à son engagement dans l'histoire, ou par une confiance trop optimiste dans la capacité du langage humain à se référer à Dieu, parfois de manière univoque. La doctrine classique de la Trinité a été élaborée sur

la base de l'exégèse et en tenant compte de la simplicité de l'être de Dieu, doctrine désormais laissée de côté par la théologie contemporaine. En dépit des divergences quant au filioque, les théologiens orientaux et occidentaux ont parlé d'une seule voix jusqu'au xix^e siècle, au cours duquel de nouvelles approches de la doctrine ont commencé à apparaître.

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Many books have been written in the last fifty years that have charted and lauded the retrieval and resurgence of the doctrine of the Trinity in contemporary theology. However, Stephen Holmes' new book argues that most modern expositions of the Trinity do not constitute a retrieval of the traditional doctrine, but a completely new development. He states that 'the explosion of theological work claiming to recapture the doctrine of the Trinity that we have witnessed in recent decades in fact misunderstands and distorts the traditional doctrine so badly that it is unrecognizable' (xv). Despite recent claims, modern trinitarian theology does not actually depend on patristic, medieval or Reformation accounts. This does not, however, mean that the modern developments are wrong. They may be correct, but this would imply that the majority of the Christian tradition was wrong. Holmes finds this conclusion dissatisfying and therefore aims to survey Scripture and the tradition in order to see what has been left behind in modern accounts of the Trinity.

Holmes begins by surveying views of the Trinity in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. While Barth and Rahner form the origins of modern trinitarian theology, Holmes locates new developments such as a focus on a more 'personal' view of God in contrast to the metaphysical tradition, the entanglement of the Trinity and history, the relation of the Trinity and the Church, and an increased confidence in the ability of human language to refer to God (sometimes univocally). Holmes sees the developments in modern trinitarianism as 'absent from, or even formally condemned by, all earlier accounts of the Trinity' (32). This first chapter forms a significant beginning, setting the stage and placing the modern period against the backdrop of Scripture (chapter two) and the theological tradition (chapters three to nine).

The development of the doctrine of the Trinity was not, as is sometimes claimed, a speculative exercise in Christian logic as a result of cultural pressures of Greek philosophy. Rather, it was chiefly a result of biblical exegesis. Patristic interpreters read scripture christologically and Holmes gives examples by surveying Proverbs 8, Wisdom 7, Isaiah 53 and the Psalms. Chapters three to nine survey the theological tradition (both East and West), providing excellent summaries of primary texts. Holmes finds continuity amidst the diversity of contexts and time. Contrary to much recent scholarship and the 'de Rénnon thesis', East and West 'spoke with one voice' (144) except on the issue of the *filioque*; they commonly emphasized divine simplicity, unity, ineffa-

bility and the unity of divine operations. Holmes also argues that 'Augustine is the most capable interpreter of Cappadocian Trinitarianism' (146) and sees Aquinas as a fully biblical and Trinitarian theologian rather than one who subordinates the Trinity to a philosophical and general view of the one God.

One theme in this volume stands out among the others: divine simplicity. Aside from analytic philosophy, recent scholarship either ignores or denounces simplicity as a distortion of a biblical view of God. Holmes argues, however, that the doctrine can be found in early Patristic thought and is not merely the product of Augustinian thought finding its culmination in Aquinas. It was essential to trinitarian theology in the East and the West. Contemporary scholars who claim that it has obvious problems must assume that the tradition either ignored such problems or was blind to them. Therefore, more significant arguments against divine simplicity must be developed before it can be denied as a crucial doctrine for trinitarian theology.

For as much historical ground as Holmes covers, it is surprising that Colin Gunton and Jonathan Edwards are both largely absent from this work. Gunton, Holmes' *doktorvater*, was an important figure in the rise of contemporary trinitarian theology and a critic of Augustine and much Western trinitarianism. Edwards' theology, the focus of Holmes' doctoral study, seems to have offered new developments on the doctrine of the Trinity. Does Edwards stand in continuity with the tradition? Or would he be relegated to more modern theologians who have deviated onto a new theological pathway? The reader cannot be sure. Lastly, Holmes might have made his critique of social trinitarianism more explicit from the beginning; readers must wait until the end (195) to read that it is a departure from 'the unified witness of the entire theological tradition'.

Because the series within which this book is found is primarily aimed at upper-level undergraduates, some readers may disagree with Holmes' starting-point in recent theology. Can students understand the complexity and diversity of trinitarian theology from the beginning? Although I was hesitant about this approach at first, I came to agree with Holmes' decision as it allows to students to learn about the so-called 'trinitarian retrieval' first, and then to move on to hear the tradition and to assess if recovery is truly taking place. I found Holmes' historical argument convincing, and this text will serve students well and spark debate among scholars on some of Holmes' more controversial stances. This book should be taken seriously and I hope it changes the direction of conversation in trinitarian studies.

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