

**The Trinity by Roger E.Olson & Christopher A.Hall, William B.Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich.2002. Pb. 156 pp.**

Many people today talk about God in a vague, very general way. They believe in God in some fashion. But is their God the God of the Bible?

Does it really matter what you believe about God? It certainly does. Since September 11, 2001, Christians are told that they worship the same God as the Muslims. But Islam's Allah is not the God of the Christian faith. Only Christians believe the Trinity of one God in three Persons. To reject the Trinity is to deny the Christian faith. Why? At the heart of the doctrine of the Trinity is the truth that there is only one true God. The Gospel is Trinitarian. This Biblical truth is the landmark of the Christian faith. When you remove the Father, you have no Gospel. When you remove the Son, the Gospel ceases to exist. When you remove the Holy Spirit, the Gospel has no existence. Martin Luther asserted that salvation depends on belief in the Trinity. For John Calvin the Trinitarian confession is necessary in order to express and protect belief in salvation and in Jesus Christ.

In the first part of this book on the Trinity, the authors provide an up-to-date, concise, readable, non-technical narrative of the development of this doctrine from the early church, the medieval period and the Reformation to the present era. Major thinkers of each period are highlighted. The main contributions of a few important 20th-century Trinitarian thinkers are discussed in depth and detail. I am grateful for the authors' willingness to take the church's theological heritage seriously. All too often the doctrine of the Trinity is discussed as if our generation is the first one confronted with it. The history of doctrines does not merely help us to understand the past. It is a resource for theology in the present. I also commend the authors for including the contribution of Eastern Orthodox thinkers.

In Western Europe and throughout the English-speaking world, church history focussed too long on the development of Christianity in the Western part of the Roman Empire at the expense of the Eastern churches. But in these churches there are signs of a major resurgence in scholarly and theological activity.

The authors rightly point to the major contribution by the Greek Orthodox Metropolitan John Zizioulas and his rediscovery of Trinitarian thought in the theology of the patristic traditions.

The second half of the book contains a detailed, annotated bibliography of all the major books written on the Trinity. For Reformed pastors and students of theology I suggest a supplemental reading list: *A Reader's Guide to Reformed Literature: An Annotated Bibliography of Reformed Theology* by Joel R.Beeke, Reformation Heritage Books, Grand Rapids, Mich.pp. 16-18. Pastors will find this book most useful for preaching and teaching on the Trinity.

Although I appreciate this slender volume's straightforward exposition of the development of the doctrine of the Trinity, I find the use of C.E. (common era) instead of A.D.(in the year of our Lord) for dates annoying. This politically correct language dishonours our Christian tradition.

Johan D.Tangelder  
October14, 2002