

The Triune God

Mystery of a Personal God

The Triune God

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Problem of Nature of God

57-58

- # If we believe in God, does that mean there is no real human freedom?
- # Given the evil in the world, how can God be sovereign and good?
- # If God is primarily represented as male, doesn't that reinforce patriarchy?
 - Isn't the Trinitarian terminology of "Father, Son, & Holy Spirit" fundamentally sexist?

Problem of Nature of God

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Biblical Roots of Trinity

60-62

- # Dual affirmation in Scripture that God is One and that God is revealed as "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit"
 - 'God over us, God for us, and God in us' (61)
- # Thus, we start with "Economic Trinity" – different ways that God acts through Father, Son, and Spirit in "economy" of salvation
 - We see God as creator of world, revealed in Jesus Christ, with us through Holy Spirit, bringing salvation to world
- # "Immanent Trinity" – God within God's own being – is based upon the economic Trinity revealed in Scripture

Biblical Roots of Trinity

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Immanent Trinity

- # If God has expressed Godself through activity of Father, Son, and Spirit, then we can assume "there is a basis of this structure of divine love in God's own immanent, eternal being" (61)
- # Therefore, we don't start with a doctrine of an eternal Trinity and then look for it revealed in revelation and Christian experience; rather we start with the concrete expression of God through revelation and experience and then draw conclusions about God's eternal nature

Immanent Trinity

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Historical Development of Doctrine of Trinity

62-64

- # Council of Nicea (325) and Council of Constantinople (381)
 - ▶ God is “one in essence, distinguished in three persons” (one God, three persons)
 - ▶ First, Trinity was trying to avoid dangerous view of subordinationism (one Great God over two inferior divinities or exalted creatures)
 - ▶ Second, Trinity was trying view of modalism, that God merely appears sometimes as Jesus, sometimes as Spirit
 - ▶ Third, Trinity was a rejection of tritheism – three deities who worked together

Historical Development of Doctrine of Trinity 5

Positive Meaning of Trinity

- # See last paragraph p. 63
- # ‘God is shared life and love rather than domineering power’ (64)

Positive Meaning of Trinity 6

Distortions in Doctrine of God

64-65

- # “Unitarianism of the Creator” – impersonal theism often justifying civil religion
- # “Unitarianism of Redeemer” – Jesusolatry coupled with self-centered piety
- # “Unitarianism of Spirit” – emotive pursuit of ecstatic experiences as ends in themselves

Distortions in Doctrine of God 7

Migliore’s Constructive Formulation of Doctrine of Trinity

“Depth Grammar” of Trinity (66-72)

1. “To confess that God is triune is to affirm that the eternal life of God is personal life in relationship” (67)
 - ▶ “*koinonia*” of persons in love
 - ▶ Identity of God emerges through relationship, not in spite of it (‘relational realities defined by intersubjectivity...and mutual giving and receiving of love’)

Migliore’s Constructive Formulation of Doctrine 8

Migliore's Trinity (cont.)

2. "To confess that God is triune is to affirm that *God exists in community*" (69)

- ▶ Because God's life is social, it empowers the possibility of inclusive community among creatures
- ▶ Basis of Christian social ethics "in which relationships of domination [subordinationism] are replaced by relationships of honor and respect among equals" to reflect God's nature

Migliore's Trinity (cont.)

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Migliore's Trinity (cont.)

3. "To confess that God is triune is to affirm that *the life of God is essentially self-giving love*" (70)

- ▶ Based upon biblical witness of God who suffers with and for creatures out of love for them (71)
- ▶ Leads to re-definition of traditional attributes
- ▶ immutable = not unchanging, but steadfast or "dynamic constancy"
- ▶ omnipotent = not coercive control, but compassionate, sovereign love
- ▶ omniscient = not "trivial 'know-it-allness'" but wisdom of God revealed in foolishness of cross

Migliore's Trinity (cont.)

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Predestination

Doctrine of Election

- # Double Predestination usually interpreted as God, from all eternity, having chosen who will be saved and who will be damned (75)
 - ▶ Traditional view negates human freedom
- # Biblical witness suggests that election is gracious and surprising, not dreadful

Predestination

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Election (cont.)

In terms of Trinity, election

- ▶ Points to God's initiative to be for world (76)
- ▶ Is illustrated through gracious love to free us to love in community (76)
- ▶ Has goal of creating a people of God, not individual salvation
- ▶ God's judgment is God's grace, and judgment follows upon rejection of God's grace offered to all, not God's rejection of some in advance (77-78)

Election (cont.)

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