

ship at the Catholic Apostolic Church (pp. 264-281). As a researcher of Irving's thought, I found the chronology of his life (pp. 305-308) especially helpful, as well as the list of his writings (pp. 309-313) as a useful tool that future researchers will no doubt find as a valuable starting point for Irving studies.

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The Quest for the Trinity: The Doctrine of God in Scripture, History, and Modernity, by Stephen R. Holmes. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012. xx pp. + 200 pp. + 21 pp. bibliography + 2 pp. index of biblical texts + 1 p. index of technical terms + 7 pp. general index. ISBN 978-0-8308-3986-5. Softcover, US\$26.00.

In his work, Stephen Holmes, senior lecturer in systematic theology at the University of St. Andrews, Scotland, masterfully synthesizes two disciplines—historical and systematic theology. This book focuses on the Trinity doctrine in both the modern and patristic periods. The author notes the explosion of Trinitarian theology since the second half of the twentieth century, and states his thesis that the outcome of this Trinitarian renewal depend largely on concepts and ideas that are not present in either the patristic, medieval, or Reformation periods. The primary approach used by Holmes is the historical. He shows how modern authors differ from the classical formulation of the doctrine of Trinity. Holmes warns readers that he leans toward the classical understanding of this doctrine, since he rejects the idea that mainstream Christianity could be wrong with regard to its understanding about God's being. Moreover, according to Holmes, the twentieth-century Trinitarian revival "misunderstands and distorts the traditional doctrine so badly that it is unrecognizable" (p. xvi).

Holmes divides his work into three main sections. He begins with a study of the development of the doctrine of the Trinity in the twenty-first century. He analyzes the theological understanding of this doctrine in Karl Barth, Karl Rahner, John Zizioulas, Wolfhart Pannenberg, Jürgen Moltmann, Robert Jenson, Leonardo Boff, and Miroslav Volf—together with a quick look at some representatives of analytic philosophy of religion such as Cornelius Plantinga, Brian Leftow, and Michael Rea. Holmes notes a pattern among all these theologians, which includes an emphasis on the personal nature of God, the tendency to interpret univocally the language that is applied to God and the creatures, and the readiness to

include God's life within the history of the world. These ideas, Holmes affirms, are totally alien to the patristic understanding of the Trinity.

The second section of the book includes a very brief study of the doctrine of the Trinity as related to the Bible. Instead of addressing a systematic-biblical analysis of the doctrine, the author focuses instead on the most commented biblical texts used during debates that in turn led to the formulation of the Trinity doctrine during the first centuries of Christianity (Proverbs 8, Wisdom 7, Isaiah 53, etc.).

The last section presents the historical development of the doctrine of the Trinity from the early church up to the ninth-century. Almost half the book (about one hundred pages) is dedicated to the patristic debates (chapters 3-6). Here the discussion is highly technical, which includes Greek philosophical terms such as *ousia*, *hypostases*, and *epinoai*. (This analysis of complex philosophical issues narrows the intended audience primarily to scholars, as well as seminary professors and students.) The analysis of the post-Nicaean discussions—which in my opinion are more significant than the Nicaean creed itself—and Holmes' summary of the patristic formulation of the doctrine are two of the main contributions of this section. Chapter seven briefly examines the medieval contribution to the doctrine, emphasizing the role of Thomas Aquinas and the Filioque debate.

Holmes considers the Protestant Reformation as a harmful period for the doctrine of the Trinity. In his view, although the mainline reformers adhered to the traditional doctrine, the raising of the biblical anti-Trinitarianism (Servetus, Faustus Socinus, and later William Whiston and Samuel Clark), and the rational anti-Trinitarianism (mainly from the Deist movement) sowed the seeds for the modern rejection of the traditional understanding of the Trinity. In his concluding chapter Holmes shows how a change in the presuppositions about God's being and the reality as a whole led to a totally new interpretation of the Trinity for Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Friedrich Hegel, Friedrich Schleiermacher, and Isaak Dorner. Holmes contrasts his summary of patristic Trinitarianism with the modern approach concluding that "we called what we were doing [the modern approach] a 'Trinitarian revival'; future historians might want to ask us why" (p. 200).

Holmes succeeds in showing the difference between the modern understanding of the Trinity doctrine from that of patristic, medieval, and Reformation periods. Furthermore, he correctly identifies the presuppositional level as the root of this divergence: "A basic shift in theology from regarding God as absolute substance to seeing God as absolute personality" (p. 192). According to Holmes, the reason for the new Trinitarian understandings is that modern theologians accuse traditional Trinitarianism of "embracing some Greek metaphysical ideas—simplicity, impas-

sibility, eternity, and the like—which are alien to the Bible and have led to a distorted doctrine” (pp. 197-198). In this respect, Holmes proves his historical thesis, clearly identifying the reasons that are the basis for conflicting interpretations.

Holmes fails, however, to show that the development of the patristic understanding of this doctrine “was almost entirely exegetical” (p. 198). He cannot prove, for example, how the simple narrative of Exodus 3:13-14 can support such complex, philosophical ideas as God’s simplicity, impassibility, immutability, and timelessness (p. 75). Such a gap is evident in his analysis of the key Trinitarian discussions of the patristic period. These discussions reached a highly philosophical level with just cursory allusions to biblical passages used as proof texts. Jaroslav Pelikan, in his work *Christianity and Classical Culture: The Metamorphosis of Natural Theology in the Christian Encounter with Hellenism* (Yale University Press, 1993), demonstrates that the Cappadocian theology was built on natural theology, a methodological procedure followed by all the main representatives of classical theology since that time. What this means is that Greek philosophical ideas were the source of the presuppositions used by the Cappadocian fathers to elaborate their understanding of the Trinity (including Augustine’s neo-platonism, and the Aristotelianism of Thomas Aquinas are also linked).

Holmes indicates a discontinuity between the classical understanding (patristic, medieval and Reformation periods) of the doctrine of Trinity and that of modern theology. He does not provide, however, any convincing argument as to why one must prefer the classical doctrine of the Trinity to the modern one. Both traditions built their position based mainly on natural theology—that is to say, philosophy. Greek philosophy contributed to patristic theology with presuppositions such as God’s timelessness, impassibility, immutability, and simplicity (according to Holmes, simplicity is the key presupposition to understand the doctrine of Trinity). Once philosophy defied these presuppositions and adopted a temporal understanding of God and reality (Hegel, and even more fundamentally, Heidegger), modern theology adopts this new set of presuppositions in order to explain the Trinity. Both sets of presuppositions as proposed by philosophy present the ultimate understanding of God and reality. Now the question must be asked: which best explains the doctrine of the Trinity?

This crossroads demonstrates the necessity to build the doctrine of the Trinity on the principle of *sola Scriptura*. Such a methodology allows God’s self-revelation in the Bible to provide the tal presuppositions to understand God’s Trinitarian life. Holmes, notwithstanding, does not perceive this need, given his scanty treatment of the biblical understanding of the doctrine of the Trini-

ty. This book also omits some recent discussions on the Trinity. While Holmes addresses many of the Trinitarian issues of modern theology, he neglects other important contemporary challenges to the traditional understanding of Trinity. For example, in the book *The Eternal Generation of the Son: Maintaining Orthodoxy in Trinitarian Theology* (IVP, 2012), Kevin Giles lists thirteen individuals who have published in support of removing the phrase "eternally begotten of the Father" from the historic creeds (p. 30). This revival of the discussion about ism deserves treatment in the review of contemporary issues.

I recommend the reading of this book to those who want to understand not only the differences between the classical and modern renditions of the doctrine of the Trinity, but also to better understand the presuppositional differences behind such interpretations.

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El problema de la identidad bíblica del cristianismo. Las presuposiciones filosóficas de la teología cristiana: desde los presocráticos al protestantismo, by Raúl Kerbs. Libertador San Martín, Argentina: Editorial Universidad Adventista del Plata / Adventus, Editorial Universitaria Iberoamericana, 2014. 671 pp. + 7 pp. bibliography. ISBN 978-987-1378-32-6. Softcover, US\$24.00.

El problema de la identidad bíblica del cristianismo [The Problem of Christianity's Biblical Identity. The Philosophical Presuppositions of Christian Theology: From the Presocratics to Protestantism] is a massive document, the product of an extensive research by professor Raúl Kerbs to clarify the impact of the Greek philosophical presuppositions on Christian thought and identity. Dr. Kerbs is particularly qualified for such a task. He holds a doctoral degree in Philosophy from the National University of Córdoba, Argentina, with a dissertation focused on the religious speech of Paul Ricoeur. He continued with post-doctoral studies at Tübingen and has served as professor of Philosophy at River Plate Adventist University for over twenty years. His book deserves serious attention.

The question of the influence of Greek philosophy upon ty necessitates a new approach to the issue of the relationship between Greek philosophy and Christianity. The book has two basic objectives (p. 27). First, to offer a panoramic presentation of the thought of leading philosophers and theologians, from the pre-Socratics to the Protestant orthodoxy of the seventeenth century. Second, to show differences between