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The Triune God (New Studies In Dogmatics)



Synopsis

New Studies in Dogmatics seeks to retrieve the riches of Christian doctrine for the sake of contemporary theological renewal. Following in the tradition of G. C. Berkouwer's Studies in Dogmatics, this series will provide thoughtful, concise, and readable treatments of major theological topics, expressing the biblical, creedal, and confessional shape of Christian doctrine for a contemporary evangelical audience. The editors and contributors share a common conviction that the way forward in constructive systematic theology lies in building upon the foundations laid in the church's historic understanding of the Word of God as professed in its creeds, councils, and confessions, and by its most trusted teachers.

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Customer Reviews

Beginning with doxology, rooted in Scripture, and centered on the missions of the Son and the Spirit, this book is a lucid, rich, lively, and timely reframing of Trinitarian theology, with highly fruitful implications for dogmatics and exegesis. -- Suzanne McDonald, Professor of Systematic and Historical Theology, Western Theological Seminary, Holland, MI
In contemporary theology, the doctrine of the Trinity is the subject of intense discussion and debate. Meanwhile, the theological interpretation of Scripture has reemerged in recent years. In this erudite, articulate, and delightful book, Fred Sanders makes very important contributions to both fields. Here a leading scholar of the doctrine offers helpful insights that will repay careful study. Even better, he leads us to a more profound doxology. I highly recommend this volume. -- Thomas H. McCall,

Professor of Biblical and Systematic Theology, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, IL. Evangelical theologians are at the forefront of a new Trinitarian revival, one rooted in Scripture and common classical Christian tradition---and Fred Sanders is a key voice in that revival. He offers a clearly written and succinct Trinitarian theology that is greatly to be welcomed. -- Lewis Ayres, Head of Department and Professor of Catholic and Historical Theology, Durham University

Fred Sanders (PhD, Graduate Theological Union) is a professor of theology in the Torrey Honors Institute at Biola University in La Mirada, California. He is author of numerous books including *The Deep Things of God: How the Trinity Changes Everything* and *Dr. Doctrines' Christian Comix*. He is coeditor of *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective: An Introductory Christology*. Michael Allen (PhD, Wheaton College) is Associate Professor of Systematic and Historical Theology at Reformed Theological Seminary, Orlando, FL. Michael is a Presbyterian teaching elder and is the author of several books, including *Reformed Catholicity: The Promise of Retrieval for Theology and Biblical Interpretation* (with Scott Swain) and *Justification and the Gospel: Understanding the Contexts and Controversies*, as well as many articles on Christian doctrine and historical theology. His articles have been published in the *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, *Journal of Theological Interpretation*, *Scottish Journal of Theology*, *Horizons in Biblical Theology*, *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology*, *Westminster Theological Journal*, and *Themelios*. He serves as general editor (with Scott Swain) for T&T Clark's *International Theological Commentary* and Zondervan's *New Studies in Dogmatics* series and as book review editor for the *International Journal of Systematic Theology*. Scott Swain is Professor of Systematic Theology at Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando, Florida. He is author of several books, including *The God of the Gospel: The Trinitarian Theology of Robert Jenson*, and *Trinity, Revelation, and Reading: A Theological Introduction to the Bible and its Interpretation*. He serves as general editor (with Michael Allen) for T&T Clark's *International Theological Commentary* and Zondervan's *New Studies in Dogmatics* series. He is a regular blogger at *Reformation21*.

There is much to commend in Sanders's book *The Triune God*. The book is well-written (though not necessarily an easy read), flows well from section to section and chapter to chapter. He is also conversant with authors ancient and modern, east and west, and across denominations/confessions. These comments are not surprising if you are familiar with Sanders - then you know he is one of evangelical Protestantism's leading scholars on the doctrine of the Trinity. This book makes me look forward to a possible Systematic Theology offering from Sanders in the

future. I won't give the table of contents, you can find that by clicking on the book's image. Sanders sums up the gist of structure and method on page 211. Our preliminary exercises were a call to worship (chapter 1) and a strategic revision of the doctrine of revelation (chapters 2 and 3). We began our treatise on the Trinity proper with a thick dogmatic description of the events of incarnation and Pentecost, that is, the actual revelatory interventions of the Son and Holy Spirit into the economy of salvation (chapter 4), and then traced its implications for the being of God (chapter 5). We then proceeded, after some hermeneutical considerations (chapter 6), to the New Testament's attestation of the Trinitarian revelation (chapter 7) and finally to the Old Testament's adumbration (chapter 8). Chapter 9 contains 11 Theses on the Revelation of the Trinity. I found chapters 4-6, 8 personally to be the most rewarding and interesting. In these chapters we find: Sanders's explications on the processions of God (His works ad intra) which are quite rewarding to read. He keeps them always near to the Son and Spirit's missions (God's works ad extra). Missions reveal processions. Sanders repeatedly comes back to this point which is a necessity in current Trinitarian theology. Sanders, in chapter 6, also gives due attention to Scripture, necessary and unnecessary Trinitarian interpretive practices, and shows a great awareness of the vast number of presuppositions standing behind past and present biblical hermeneutical methods. I was let down by chapter 7. Sanders' chapter on new covenant attestation to the Trinity. It was one of the shortest chapters and did not provide much of interest. He covered the Trinity in the life of Jesus, Baptism of Jesus, Great Commission, and some of Paul's Trinitarian language as he discusses salvation. In contrast, Sanders' chapter 8 on Trinitarian adumbration in the Old Testament was very informative and insight-full. If I was to nit-pick, I also found several sections to be quite wordy/long-winded. Example: 3 pages on how Einstein tried to make his work in mathematical physics understandable to a wide audience without dumbing it down or giving people the notion that they understand all of it. A bit too long. One caution: "if you're new to or even relatively unread in Trinitarian Theology, I don't think this is the best place to start. As I mentioned, it's not an easy read content-wise. Start off with Sanders' *The Deep Things of God*. How the Trinity changes everything as that book was meant for a wide-audience (non-technical). Otherwise this new offering from Sanders is a great resource to most anyone looking for a contemporary exposition of the doctrine of the Trinity which is scripturally based and elucidates a classical understanding of the doctrine.

Let's face it: the Trinity is without a doubt the most important, complex, and debated doctrine in all of Christian thought. For thousands of years, Christians have been attempting to define the Trinity, and nothing is new under the sun. Even today, despite all of the exegesis and the

systematic and historical theology textbooks we have access to, questions still remain, persuasions still divide. We cannot exhaust our study of the Trinity, nor should we want to. Yes, it can be taxing, but it is the stuff on which worship is founded. Says Fred Sanders, "All theology ought to be doxology, but Trinitarian theology, in particular, is essentially a matter of praising God" (25). For this reason, alone, I knew Sanders' newest work on the Trinity would be an important contribution. Sanders is one of the foremost scholars on Trinitarian studies, and with a host of other works already addressing the matter, some may wonder what this newest volume has to offer additionally. What I am finding as I read through the various works of Sanders is that in each volume I am always learning something new about my confession of God eternally existing in one essence as three distinct persons. And the same goes for *The Triune God*. Here we have accessible, rich, relevant scholarship from one of the most balanced and learned voices in his field. Chapter 9 is worth the price of the book if one is willing to gather a systematic and creedal understanding of the Trinity. It is also the shortest chapter, as it summarizes 11 key statements, most of them unpacked at large within the book. Of course, it's important to read *The Triune God* in its entirety, as it skillfully walks the reader through the minefield in hopes of helping him arrive at the other end unscathed and grateful. Here are some key quotes from the book: "The root idea of revelation is not verbal announcement but the unveiling or disclosing of something that has been present, though concealed. In order to inform us that the Father has a Son and a Holy Spirit, the Father sent the Son and the Holy Spirit in person. The triunity of God was revealed when the persons of the Trinity became present among us in a new way, showing up in person and becoming the object of our human observation." (40) "The missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit are irreducibly verbal, though not exclusively verbal. Keeping divine words linked to divine acts is what enables us to understand the acts correctly and to use the words correctly." (70, 129) "What is required for doctrinal interpretation of the Old Testament is a hermeneutical framework that acknowledges the complex structure of the revelation, and approach to reading the documents that precede and follow the revelation. The key hermeneutical category for this kind of interpretation is rereading." (215) There are many, many more underlines I made in between these pages. I'll leave it up to you to mine the rest of those important nuggets for yourself. Thanks again to Fred Sanders for writing a very important, clear, and robust work on the Trinity that drove me to worship.

Dr. Sanders provides an excellent introductory text on Trinitarian Theology. The prose is at times arduous, but the content is a rare find. I highly recommend this work.

I bought this for a Master Degree Theology course. This book is full of the author's own speculations and ideas about the nature of the Trinity that, in my opinion, go far beyond what is revealed in Scripture. The language is obtuse and the book reads like a lecture on Ancient Hebrew grammar. Although there are many Scriptures that support the truth that God exists as a triune Person, there is little biblical support for much of what the author purports here. God is indeed Father, Son and Holy Spirit- HOW that is so is neither revealed in Scripture, nor understandable by the finite mind of man that whose understanding is as far removed from that of God as the heavens are removed from the earth.(Isaiah 55:9). Much of what this book presents is God remade in man's understanding.

Good reading, excellent approaching to the topic of the Holy trinity.

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