

Robin Parry. *Worshipping Trinity: Coming Back to the Heart of Worship*. Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2005. (xvii + 202 pp.)

There are many books currently in print on the Trinity, most of which deal with the intricacies of theological and historical debates. While many of these books are exceptional they are not targeted at the pastor or the informed laity and for that reason, fail to impress themselves upon a churchly audience. Parry's book is different, and wonderfully so! With chapter titles like, 'Theology and Worship up a Tree, K.I.S.S.I.N.G' and 'Singing the Trinity', Parry appeals to pastors, worship leaders, and other practioners to *get back to the heart of worship – the triune God*. He writes, 'The basic idea of this book is very simple: worship is about God and God is the Trinity, therefore worship is about the Trinity...This book is a journey of exploration into the implications of that simple thought' (p. 3).

After an introduction outlining why the Trinity is essential to Christian worship, Parry provides three chapters which chart some of the important biblical and theological resources from which a doctrine of the Trinity emerges. The remaining chapters focus on applying a doctrine of the Trinity to worship, specifically to our songs, prayers, sacraments, Bible reading, preaching, and the arts. Throughout Parry provides theological theses which summarize the trinitarian shape of worship in differing contexts. These include: 'the mission of the church is nothing less than the gift of sharing by the Spirit in the Son's mission to the world on behalf of the Father' (p. 58); and 'Christian ethics is about participating in the Son's holy obedience to the Father with the help of the Spirit' (p. 59). These statements and others in the book show the influence of certain trinitarian thinkers on Parry, most obviously J.B. Torrance (*Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace*). Parry does an excellent job of applying much of this theology to concrete church practices.

The real strength of the work is the applied sections in the later chapters. In 'Singing the Trinity' Parry provides 'reflections on how songwriters might go about writing more Trinitarian songs and how worship leaders might think about selecting songs so as to facilitate a greater awareness of the richness of the Trinitarian God' (p. 122). Songs ranging from those of Charles Wesley to Graham Kendrick, and the Psalms to Hillsongs, are analysed, critiqued, and recommended. Worship leaders will find in this chapter sane and erudite advice on how to deepen corporate Christian worship by thinking through more clearly what we are singing and who we are

singing to. Without succumbing to the facile advice that we must always sing songs which include the words 'Father', 'Son', and 'Holy Spirit', Parry provides comprehensive and practical ways for worship leaders to ensure a trinitarian 'balance' is achieved, thus escaping a Unitarianism on the one hand and a polytheism on the other hand.

Of special interest is the chapter on 'Praying the Trinity' and the case Parry mounts for why it is at least appropriate to pray to the Holy Spirit. This is a highly contested practice in church history and Parry handles this issue with sensitivity and skill. Parry pleads with the readers to 'consciously teach ourselves Trinitarian prayer habits and break any sub-Trinitarian habits we have picked up along the way' (p. 150). This requires worship leaders to think about their prayers before leading the congregation and for individuals to consider who it is they are praying to and what may be appropriate to ask each person of the Trinity without falling into the trap of 'divide and conquer'. Parry considers the place of written prayers, liturgy, and even speaking in tongues.

Worshipping Trinity concludes with reflections on a range of practices and contexts into which a trinitarian theology needs to work its way out in worship. The arts in particular come in for a sustained reflection and here again Parry offers insights and personal experiences which model the kind of trinitarian worship he is recommending. Those looking for practical insights will find plenty in this section.

Parry writes with humour, insight, passion, and theological accuracy. His style is always fast paced and fresh, with both eyes squarely on how the local church can worship the Triune God and in so doing, participate more fully in God's love for us, our love for him, and our love for each other. Difficult doctrinal themes like *perichoresis* are handled with skill and the richness of one who knows the triune God and his Word as intimately as he loves God's people. This is an academic book wonderfully disguised in language most in our churches would understand. I cannot recommend this work highly enough. Pastors, worship leaders and mature Christians must read this and practice the sort of trinitarian worship Parry recommends.

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