

Foreword

ONE OF THE GREAT signs of hope in theological conversation across denominations is renewed interest in the fathers of the Church. Turning the life-giving earth of early Christian thought has been the preliminary to faithful reform in the Roman Catholic context for centuries. It is no accident that the meaning of the fathers was one of the fundamental subjects at issue in the reformations of the sixteenth century, and it is no accident that a renewed exploration of early Christian thought should now be the source of new and important conversation between Christian traditions, Catholic and reformed, Latin and Greek.

One of the most important areas of conversation in recent years has concerned the Trinity, the core mystery of Christian faith. For many decades, whether positively or negatively charged, the story of an essential separation between Eastern and Western Trinitarian theologies held sway. Against the background of such a narrative it became all too common for theologians to make an easy Eastward turn, rejecting the complex tradition of Latin discussion and argument, and yet never really engaging the complexities and differences within Eastern theology. The past two decades have seen an extensive reconsideration of the idea that an East/West division is fundamental in Trinitarian theology. The result has been the opening up of new scholarly conversations that mark new more complex divisions, new unities and which bring together figures one might previously have thought opposed. At the same time this new scholarship has begun to suggest the importance of new narratives by means of which we can think about the emergence of modern Western post-Hegelian, personalist and dramatic re-castings of the life of the Trinitarian God.

Brad Green's book takes its place within this new scholarship. He offers us an important examination of one of the central figures to hold out for what I have portrayed as the "old" narrative of division between

East and West, the late Colin Gunton. Gunton's large corpus of writing on the Trinity attempted to sustain the view of Augustine as the source of a distinctly Western and failed theology, one that tended toward monism, and one that had disastrous consequences for Western metaphysics and theology. Brad Green's treatment is always attentive, always respectful, even as it constitutes a significant critique of Gunton's work and suggests very different construals of Augustine's theology and significance. It is greatly to be hoped that the new trends in Trinitarian theology of which I have spoken develop in a variety of forms, that they not only converge on new unities but also open up new areas of discussion. Brad Green's book is thus to be greatly welcomed to the emerging body of new Trinitarian literature, taking on an important figure, and bringing from his critique perspectives and vistas that can help to revitalize our thinking. Through such acts of rethinking and recovery the Christian faith grows in intellectual power and force, it shows its vitality and witnesses to Logos through whom and in whom all exists.

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