

October 11, 2013 Book Reports

Reading Levels:

Light (*Grade school level*)

Medium (*High school level*)

Heavy (*College level with challenging concepts*)

Scholarly (*Challenging concepts with many footnotes*)

Book	<i>Rediscovering the Triune God: The Trinity in Contemporary Thought</i>
Author	Stanley J. Grenz
Publisher	Fortress Press (2004)
Subject	This book is an historical review of the revival of Trinitarian thought that took place during the 20 th Century (during the eight decades following the First World War). Grenz narrates “the story of the renewed interest in the doctrine of the Trinity as it developed within the main trajectory of Christian theology during the eighty years from the publication of Barth’s Epistle to the Romans, which many observers (including Welch) credit with providing the initial impetus for this theological renaissance, to the appearance of T. F. Torrance’s magnum opus, <i>The Christian Doctrine of God</i> , which might be considered to be the last comprehensive Trinitarian theological offering of the century.” ¹ In many ways, Grenz narrates the impact of these developments upon his theological project of writing a broader systematic theology that was Trinitarian in its structure, communitarian in its focus, and eschatological in its orientation. Although Grenz was a prolific author who wrote in service to Evangelical Christianity, he was often critiqued and vilified by the same.
Level	Scholarly

¹ Stanley J. Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God: The Trinity in Contemporary Thought*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 2004, p. 3.

Book	<i>The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz</i>
Author	Jason S. Sexton
Publisher	Bloomsbury (2013)
Subject	As his doctrinal dissertation, the author set out to identify the primary emphasis in Grenz's writings on his own terms and according to his own aims. He also set out to determine whether or not he was consistent with his own target aims. Accordingly, he argues that the primary feature in Stanley Grenz's writings was the doctrine of the Trinity. Grenz receive a number of criticisms for his ethic of "comprehensive love." The author determines that "These criticisms seemed to be quite far-fetched and largely unsubstantiated, the latter particularly coming from a seemingly very weak moment of historical-theological (Trinitarian) amnesia. Arguably, love is at the heart of the biblical story, and Grenz's emphasis of it as a present and future quality, grounded in the divine relationality of the triune God which then grounded the redeemed community in God's love and life is both biblically and historically sustainable." ² Furthermore, the author concludes "It seems that Grenz's work can be properly called Trinitarian throughout, from the earliest point until the end. For Grenz this meant that giving a properly theological account of God as the triune Creator, with humans as God's creatures, made by God <i>in</i> and <i>to be</i> the image of God, with the enormous implications this brings for a robust, complete theology of Christi life with all its impending ethical readiness and comprehension for navigating the important ethical issues faced in life." ³
Level	Scholarly

² Jason S. Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz*, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, London, England, 2013, p. 154.

³ Jason S. Sexton, *The Trinitarian Theology of Stanley J. Grenz*, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, London, England, 2013, p. 173.

Book	<i>The Orthodox Church</i>
Author	Timothy Ware
Publisher	Penguin Books (1963, 1964, 1993, 1997)
Subject	In Part One, he describes the history of the Eastern Church over the last two thousand years with particular reference to its problems in twentieth-century Russia: And in Part Two, he explains the beliefs and worship of the Orthodox Church today. Finally, he considers the possibilities of reunion between east and west. This book has become established throughout the English-speaking world as the standard introduction to the Orthodox Church.
Level	Scholarly

Book	<i>Eastern Orthodox Theology: A Contemporary Reader</i>
Author	Daniel B. Clendenin
Publisher	Baker Academic (1995, 2003)
Subject	This is a collection of readings—selected from some of the most important writers on Eastern Orthodoxy—for those who wish to better understand key aspects of the Orthodox faith, such as liturgy and sacraments, tradition, the mystical encounter between person and God, and relations with other branches of the church.
Level	Scholarly

Book	<i>The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church</i>
Author	T. F. Torrence
Publisher	T & T Clark (1991, 1997)
Subject	This is a significant work by theologian T. F. Torrence. He was instrumental in the development of the historic agreement between the Reformed and Eastern Orthodox Churches on the doctrine of the Trinity when a joint statement of agreement on that doctrine was issued between the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Orthodox Church on 13 March 1991. By lavishly quoting the patristic theologians, he allows them to speak for themselves and brings to light the inner theological connections which give coherent structure to the classical theology of the ancient Catholic Church as it was formulated during the fourth century. He engages with these fourth century theologians as contributors to the one authentically ecumenical confession of faith of the churches of the East and West, i.e. the Nicene and Nicene-Constantinople Creed.
Level	Scholarly

Book	<i>Eastern Orthodoxy Through Western Eyes</i>
Author	Donald Fairbairn
Publisher	Westminster John Knox Press (2002)
Subject	The author has done a great job in providing a lucid and remarkably balanced appraisal of Eastern Orthodoxy from the perspective of a committed Protestant. He points how Orthodoxy and Western Christianity can learn from each other. This is one of the best books on the subject that I've read from a Western perspective.
Level	Scholarly

Book	<i>The Fathers Speak, St Basil the Great, St Gregory of Nazianzus, St Gregory of Nyssa</i>
Author	Translated and Edited by Georges Barrios
Publisher	St Vladimir's Seminary Press (1986)
Subject	This is an anthology of texts by Greek authors, gathered almost exclusively from the personal correspondence between St Basil the Great, his close friend Gregory "the Theologian" and his younger brother Gregory of Nyssa. These three men appear to us as real human beings, reveal the substance of their Christian vocation, uncover the program of their spiritual life, unveil the intellectual background of their use of Greek philosophy at the service of Christian theology, and explain the meaning of their ministry as monastic leaders and bishops of the Church.
Level	Medium

Book	<i>The Orthodox Way (Revised Edition)</i>
Author	Bishop Kallistos Ware
Publisher	ST Vladimir's Seminary Press (1995)
Subject	This book is a general account of the doctrine, worship and life of Orthodox Christians by the author of the now classic <i>The Orthodox Church</i> . It raises the basic issues of theology: God as hidden yet revealed; the problem of evil; the nature of salvation; the meaning of faith; prayer; death and what lies beyond. Throughout this book, the author shows the meaning of Orthodox doctrine for the life of the individual Christian. Doctrinal issues are not seen as abstract propositions for theological debate, but as affecting the whole of life. This is one of the most mystically profound books that I have ever read, but it is written in a simple and accessible style.
Level	Heavy

Book	<i>Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church</i>
Author	John Zizioulas (<i>Metropolitan of Pergamon, in the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople</i>)
Publisher	St. Vladimir's Seminary Press (1985)
Subject	In the context of the Trinity, Christology, eschatology, ministry and sacrament, but above all, the Eucharist, the author propounds a fresh understanding, based in the early Fathers and the Orthodox tradition, of the concept of person, and so of the Church herself. His consideration of the local church as "catholic" in the literal sense, and the need to understand the universal Church, not as a superstructure but as the communion of all Churches, provides the program for the ecclesiology of the future. This is one of the most profound, penetrating, and coherent reading of the Greek Fathers that I have encountered. It is theologically and pneumatologically deep. I'll need the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit and many readings of this book to apprehend the spiritual principles presented.
Level	Scholarly

Book	<i>On the Incarnation</i>
Author	Saint Athanasius (c. 297 AD – 373 AD)
Publisher	Cliff Lee (2007)
Subject	Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, was one of the most illustrious defenders of the Christian faith. Before the outbreak of the Arian controversy, which began in 319, Athanasius made himself known as the author of two essays addressed to a convert from heathenism, one of them entitled <i>Against the Gentiles</i> , and the other <i>On the Incarnation of the Word</i> . Both are of the nature of apologetic treatises, arguing such important questions as monotheism, and the necessity of divine interposition for the salvation of the world; and already in the second may be traced the tone of thought respecting the essential divinity of Christ as the "God-man" for which he afterwards became conspicuous. Athanasius was a heavy contributor and main influencer in the writing of the Nicene Creed of 325.
Level	Heavy

Book	<i>The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei</i>
Author	Stanley J. Grenz
Publisher	Westminster John Knox Press
Subject	The author provides an extensive account of the history of Christian teaching about the <i>imago dei</i> , the creation of the human persons in the image of God, and the biblical foundations for that teaching, including the focus on the person of Jesus Christ in the New Testament. In the process, Grenz covers the history of how the soul became the modern self through Western theology from Augustine, through Thomas Aquinas and the Enlightenment to Maslow. Grenz shows how the biblical self is the ecclesial self, i.e. the self which finds its identity in the communion of the Church, which is proleptic and eschatological body of Christ.
Level	Scholarly

Book	<i>Eat This Book: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading</i>
Author	Eugene H. Peterson
Publisher	William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company (2006)
Subject	Eugene Peterson is the translator of the <i>Message Bible</i> . He is convinced that the way we read the Bible is as important that we read it. Rather than reading it for information or as a tool to better our lives, we should be reading it to listen to God and respond in prayer and obedience. Peterson challenges his readers to read the Scriptures on their own terms, as God's revelation and to live them as well and read. Peterson gives insight on the practice of <i>lectio divina</i> . One of the most powerful books that I've ever read on reading the Bible.
Level	Medium

Book	<i>Eat This Book Study Guide</i>
Author	Eugene H. Peterson
Publisher	William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company (2006)
Subject	Same as the book.
Level	Medium

Book	<i>Participating in God: A Pastoral Doctrine of the Trinity</i>
Author	Paul S. Fiddes
Publisher	Westminster John Knox Press
Subject	The author claims that a doctrine of the Trinity cannot be developed in isolation from pastoral experience. In his estimation, it is not enough to view the persons of the Trinity as offering a mere example for human relationships, rather it is actual participation in this triune communion that shapes both our knowledge of God and the pastoral practices that flow from it. The author then develops a radical understanding of the “persons” in God as nothing other than relations, or as movements of divine relationship into which we are drawn.
Level	Heavy

Book	<i>Gregory Palamas: The Triads</i>
Author	Edited with an Introduction by John Meyendorff; Translation by Nicholas Gendle. Preface by Jaroslav Pelikan
Publisher	Paulist Press
Subject	<p>“Gregory Palamas (1296-1359) – monk, archbishop, and eminent theologian – was a major figure in fourteenth-century Orthodox Byzantium. His greatest work, <i>In Defense of the Holy Hesychasts</i> (know commonly as <i>The Triads</i>), was written between 1338 and 1341 as a response to the charges of the Calabrian philosopher Barlaam against the monastic groups known as <i>hesychasts</i>. Barlaam denied the legitimacy of their spiritual methods (inner stillness or quiet), which included the famous ‘Jesus Prayer,’ and discredited their claims to experience the divine presence. Palamas devoted his career as a theologian to the defense of the truth central to hesychasm: God is accessible to personal experience, because he shared His own life with humanity.</p> <p>This book contains extensive excerpts from Palamas’ famous work that, in the words of the book’s distinguished editor John Meyendorff, ‘introduce the reader into the very substance of the religious experience of the Christian East.’”⁴</p> <p>This teaching on the essence and energies of God has become another major obstacle between the East and West. This is some of the most spiritual and intellectually challenging material I have ever read.</p>
Level	Spiritual and Scholarly (<i>Palamas teaches that intellect or the rational discerning of God through His works of creation is one way of coming to know about God, but it could never attain to God’s gift of grace which grants personal participation in the energies of God and a spiritual knowledge that penetrates and transcends human intellect.</i>)

⁴ Edited by John Meyendorff and translated by Nicholas Gendle, *Gregory Palamas: The Triads*, Paulist Press, Mahwah, New Jersey, 1983, back cover.

Book	<i>On The Holy Spirit: St Basil the Great</i>
Author	Translation and Introduction by Stephen Hildebrand
Publisher	ST Vladimir's Seminary Press (2011)
Subject	St Basil the Great, known as one of the Cappadocian Fathers, along with his brother, Gregory of Nyssa and his friend, Gregory of Nazianzus, was a defender of the faith whose work was an important contribution to the Nicean-Constantinople Council of 381, which he did not live to see. The Cappadocian fathers gave language to and defended the doctrine of the three hypostases of God. Although they were often charged with tritheism, they defended the one essence (<i>ousia</i>) of God. This translator has chosen from St Basil's writings excerpts that will show the Church's faith in the Spirit as co-equal with God.
Level	Heavy

Book	<i>Energies of the Spirit: Trinitarian Models in Eastern Orthodox and Western Theology</i>
Author	Duncan Reid
Publisher	Scholars Press (1997)
Subject	"This book examines twentieth century theological commentators (Barth, Rahner, Florovsky, Lossky) on the problem of the doctrine of energies in God. Counter to existing trends in western theology, the author gives a positive evaluation of this doctrine and seeks common ground between the eastern idea of essence and energies and the western identification of the inner and economic trinity. Though written from a clearly western perspective, the book argues the coherence of the eastern position, and that underlying both eastern and western positions is a common intention to say that the encounter with God is real, and that the primary ontological distinction is between God and creation." ⁵ I have read about 17 books on the subject of Eastern Orthodoxy and, from my western perspective, this is one of the best books that I've read of this kind. The author is fair, insightful, scholarly, and more.
Level	Scholarly

⁵ Duncan Reid, *Energies of the Spirit: Trinitarian Models in Eastern Orthodox and Western Theology*, Scholars Press, Atlanta, Georgia, 1997, Back Cover.

Book	<i>The Trinitarian Controversy</i>
Author	Translated & Edited by William G. Rusch
Publisher	Fortress Press (1980)
Subject	<p>“The historical experience of the first several centuries of Christianity shaped subsequent Christianity in an extremely crucial manner. It was in this initial phase that the critical features of the Christian faith were set: a vocabulary created, options of belief and practice were accepted or rejected. Christianity’s understanding of its God and of the person of Christ, its worship life, its communal structure, its understanding of the human condition, all were largely resolved in this early period, known as the time of the church fathers or the patristic church (A.D. 100-700).”⁶ The purpose of this book is to allow an English-reading public to gain firsthand insights into these significant times for Christianity by making available, in a modern, readable English, the fundamental sources which chronicle how Christianity and its theology attained their normative character.⁷ Included are letters from the persons involved in the development of the doctrine of the Trinity in the patristic church, as a result of the Arian controversy: Arius, Eusebius of Caesarea, Athanasius, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine of Hippo, Alexander of Alexandria, The Synodal Letter of the Council of Antioch, A.D. 325, The Creed of the Synod of Nicea (June 19, 325), and The canons of Nicaea, A.D. 325.</p>
Level	Scholarly

⁶ William G. Rusch, *The Trinitarian Controversy*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1980, pp. vii-viii.

⁷ William G. Rusch, *The Trinitarian Controversy*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1980, p. viii.

Book	<i>Benefit of the Doubt: Breaking the Idol of Certainty</i>
Author	Gregory A. Boyd
Publisher	BakerBooks (2013)
Subject	Beginning with the story of his personal struggle with his faith and using an autobiographical approach, the author talks about how faith, for him, has been anything but certain. He invites the reader to a faith that does not strive for certainty, but rather commits to Christ in the midst of uncertainty. He contrasts intellectual beliefs with covenantal trust. When the New Testament Uses the word <i>pistis</i> (belief or faith) it is a word of relationships, not rational prowess. It is possible, when you have a life-transforming, mutually trusting relationship with Jesus, to live with unresolved questions about the Bible, theology, and ethics. The young people of this generation will be able to see beyond the intellectual challenges of the Bible. This is one of the most impacting and challenging books that I've read recently. Greg Boyd is a profound theologian and philosopher.
Level	Heavy

Book	
Author	
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