

Family of God

Arthur Perkins

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The Trinity—the idea that God somehow is triune while at the same time being one—remains one of the most perplexing doctrines of Christianity. Numerous theologians have spent their lives lost in the labyrinthine intricacies of the doctrine while untold numbers of pastors and youth leaders have spent sermon after sermon attempting to explain the paradox. In spite of the challenge of the theological nuances the Trinity is central to the Christian faith.

In a rather stilted and repetitious effort Perkins bravely attempts to explain the many facets of the Christian Trinity. Drawing deeply on biblical texts he demonstrates first that the idea of the Trinity pervades the entire Bible from Genesis to Revelation. He contends that Genesis 1:26-27—where God says “Let us make man in our image”—is an early testimony to Trinitarian thinking. According to Perkins the one God is joined in this passage by the family of God—Jesus and the Holy Spirit—in the creation of humankind. Such an idea can be found also in New Testament in John where both the Spirit and Jesus are pre-existent.

Perkins employs the metaphor of the family of God as his primary means of explaining the functional nature of the Trinity. God he observes is a “triune entity comprising Father Holy Spirit and Son and the union of the first two produces the third.” He goes on to point out that the Father is Divine Will and directs his love his creation. The Holy Spirit functions as Divine Means and “furnishes the capacity and the function to accept the Divine Will.” The Son in the role of Divine Implementation fosters the “actualization of the Divine Will which is synonymous with the Word of God in the manifestations of Creation Scripture and the persona of Jesus Christ.” Although he relies primarily on biblical texts to illustrate his points Perkins also uses categories that derive from Greek philosophy and he fails to explain clearly both their origin and their function in explaining the Trinity. Moreover in his attempts to read the Trinity on every page of the Bible Perkins misreads the Hebrew Bible which contains no references to Jesus or to the Holy Spirit. Only later interpreters read Jesus and the Spirit into the texts of the Hebrew prophets and the Psalms.

Perkins devotes roughly the first half of his book to the Trinity and discusses a number of unrelated topics ranging from the problem of evil to the scientific evidence to “the reality behind biblical myths” in the latter half of the book. Thus he points out that “there is ample evidence compatible with a logical interpretation of modern scientific knowledge that the Great Flood of Noah did indeed occur as presented in Scripture.” Yet Perkins fails to present objectively archaeological evidence to the contrary.

While Perkins makes some fundamental errors in his readings of Scripture and fails to evaluate other evidence fairly his sometimes helpful explanations of the Trinity may be useful to readers.

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