

## NUNTIATA

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## Book Review

REVIEWED BY CHRIS WITMER

"For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Messiah, of Whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Messiah may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Messiah, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God."

The book under review is a partial answer to Paul's prayer. Ralph

Smith's "Trinity and Reality: An Introduction to the Christian Faith" (Amazon's current subtitle, "An Introduction to the Christian World-view," is incorrect but nevertheless accurate as a description) deserves high praise as an introduction to the Christian faith and its fullest expression in Trinitarian covenantal theology. Although *Trinity and Reality* breaks no truly new ground theologically (and that should be reassuring, considering that the Christian faith has been self-consciously founded on Trinitarian belief for the past 2000 years), it performs a valuable service in helping us to see important (albeit heretofore woefully neglected) connections among, and profound implications deriving from, 1) God's eternal Trinitarian existence, 2) the eternal covenantal (love) bond of the Persons of the Godhead, and 3) our covenantal existence as God's image-bearers in both time and eternity.

Despite its relative brevity and popular presentation (most teenagers could read it profitably), I found *Trinity and Reality* to be, in a certain sense, a "revolutionary" work, be-

cause it transformed the way I think about myself, my world, and my God. To my surprise, it turned out to be one of the most awe-inspiring books I have ever read. Smith's overriding aim is for lucidity and I have never thought of him as a particularly "moving" writer. But for any Christian reader, the gaining of new theological insights is always inherently exciting, especially when they pertain directly to our understanding of God Himself.

In the Bible, ever since the fall, whenever people were confronted with the glory of God's immediate presence, their first reaction was instantaneous prostration in fear: even God's covenant people are ut-

terly overwhelmed by the Divine presence. ("Thou canst not see My face: for there shall no man see Me and live.") I have been an eager student of theology and the Bible since becoming a Christian 20 years ago, and the fact that this little "introduction" to the Christian faith could leave me feeling awe-struck testifies to the fact that it succeeds (as far as it goes) in accurately describing the Trinity and in drawing out the implications of covenantal life in our Triune God's universe. I still see through a glass darkly, but a good deal less darkly than before thanks to having read this book. I wish to emphasize, however, that part of what I now see more clearly is the fact that God transcends our comprehension. The things that I have been enabled to comprehend by faith lead me to joyfully accept and confess the truth that remains beyond human comprehension.

*Trinity and Reality* could be a powerful tool for Christian apologetics. On the one hand, although Smith is a Protestant, *Trinity*

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## Book Review

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*and Reality* should appeal equally to Catholics and Eastern Orthodox, since the doctrine of the Trinity is perhaps the most fundamental, core doctrine of all Christendom. On the other hand, it is common today for Christian apologists to put forward arguments that are not distinctively Trinitarian—similar arguments could often be made just as easily by proponents of non-Christian monotheistic perspectives. This is a problem, because as Christians contending for the faith in a neo-pagan culture, we are only interested in converting people to the

Trinitarian faith, not to Judaism, Islam, quasi-Christian cults, or any other non-Trinitarian religious perspective. Smith deftly pulls the rug out from under everything that fails to confess the Trinity. He shows how the universe as it exists could only have come into being through the creative act of the Bible's Triune God, and could

neither have resulted from a monadal deity such as that postulated by Judaism and Islam, nor from a pan-deity, many deities, or no deity. Similarly, divine revelation is shown to be possible only for the Triune God of the Bible, and love in human relationships and the very nature of human society can be accounted for only from a Trinitarian perspective. By the sheer lucidity of its arguments, *Trinity and Reality* serves to remind us that the jihads of the world are no match for the sword that Christ wields with His mouth. If

George Bush is really serious about fighting the war on terror, one of his most powerful weapons might be an Arabic translation of *Trinity and Reality*, to be distributed online and hopefully read wherever sword evangelism is preached.

*Trinity and Reality* is powerful medicine against not only other religious systems, but also against the tenets of post-enlightenment secular humanism. Now that Antony Flew is convinced of the correctness of intelligent design theory, someone should send him a

copy of *Trinity and Reality*. The first time I read Behe's outstanding "Darwin's Black Box," I remember being struck by the ridiculousness of Behe's notion that the intelligent designer could conceivably be anything other than the Triune God of the Bible, and although *Trinity and Reality* doesn't discuss intelligent design theory as such, it makes a good complement to intelligent design

arguments against Darwinian macroevolutionary theory. This is because it shows, over and against the claims of post-enlightenment "autonomous" epistemologies (of which Darwinism is one) that only creation by the Triune God of the Bible can adequately account for reality.

In short, because the relationship of "Trinity" to "reality" is something that has received far too little attention in the past, *Trinity and Reality* fills an important need. I think many will be seeing through new eyes after reading this book.

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## NUNTIATA

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