

*Divine Simplicity: A Dogmatic Account.* By Steven J. Duby. T & T Clark Studies in Systematic Theology, 30. New York: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2015. Pp. viii + 260. \$120.

The Christian church has consistently confessed that the triune God of the gospel is simple and therefore beyond composition. However, what was once part of the theological tradition from Irenaeus to Edwards is now seriously challenged by many philosophers and theologians. Duby faces these challenges with the aid of careful exegesis and a ministerial use of Thomas Aquinas's and Reformed orthodox metaphysics and scriptural insights. His use of these sources demonstrates his belief that dogmatics is a matter of exegetical reasoning with the proper use of metaphysics. He admits that his use of Aristotelian categories is ad hoc, and some readers who operate with different categories and concepts may struggle with D.'s choice of sources and overall framing of divine simplicity.

D. argues that divine simplicity includes "a network of theological commitments" that require both biblical and dogmatic articulation. On the one hand, Scripture's teachings on God's singularity, aseity, immutability, infinity, and *creatio ex nihilo* imply, or entail, a doctrine of divine simplicity, and D. spends considerable time exegeting key passages to show their biblical connections. On the other hand, D. employs what he calls "a cartography of divine simplicity," a list of ten points that summarize the key tenets of divine simplicity. First, "God is pure act and is therefore not composed of act and potency." Second, "God is entirely spiritual and is therefore not composed of corporeal parts." Third, "God is his own form (*deitas*) and is therefore not composed of matter and form." Fourth, "God is his own divinity subsisting and is therefore not composed of nature and *suppositum* or individual." Fifth, "God is really identical with each of the persons of the Trinity and is not composed by them." Sixth, God "is identical with his own existence." Seventh, God is "not composed of genus and species." Eighth, "God is identical with each of his own attributes." Ninth, "God is wholly himself and not susceptible of any composition at all." Tenth, God is "not joined to other things as though he might become part of a composite" (see 81–86). These ten points are crucial for understanding D.'s overall argument.

They are significant because a select number of these ten points are located within each of the five biblical teachings. For example, the biblical teaching of divine singularity entails, first, "the identity of nature and *suppositum* in God"; second, that God "transcends the categories of genus and species"; third, "that God is really identical with each of his own perfections"; and fourth, "that all that is in God is really identical with God himself" (102, 103, 106, 107). Put differently, God's singularity includes points four, seven, eight, and nine from the cartography of divine simplicity. Another example, aseity, includes points one, four, six, eight, and nine. These connections continue to be made as he analyzes the biblical teachings of immutability, infinity, and *creatio ex nihilo*.

Some may notice D.'s biblical argument for divine simplicity is similar to what Francis Turretin argues in the *Institutes*. Turretin writes that simplicity can be proven from God's independence, unity, perfection, and activity (pure act). It also has similarities to Dolezal's argument in *God without Parts* that God's aseity, unity, infinity,

immutability, and eternity require divine simplicity. Despite any similarities, D.'s account is the clearest and strongest biblical and theological exposition of divine simplicity within the context of Reformed theology. His argument retrieves and extends the insights of Thomistic Reformed theologians, making clear their biblical connections and theological rationale. Furthermore, his response to a number objections is convincing and further clarifies the purpose and content of divine simplicity.

Readers may encounter difficulties with D.'s work if they are not convinced by his exegesis and theological conclusions regarding debatable divine attributes. If one believes that God is unchanging in his purposes but not in his essence, can they reasonably conclude that divine simplicity is a biblical teaching or a real theological possibility? Must divine infinity be described with the language, categories, and concepts of Polanus, Alsted, Zanchi, or Mastricht? If there is disagreement over any of these attributes or their particular articulations, then can a person genuinely affirm D.'s account of divine simplicity? If someone is not Thomistic or Reformed, will they find his exegesis and dogmatic reasoning convincing? Is divine simplicity necessarily constrained to Aristotelian categories and concepts, or can it fruitfully exist outside of them? These questions do not harm D.'s project; rather, they demonstrate that the recovery and rearticulation of divine simplicity is still in the infant stage. D.'s book is an excellent contribution to the small but growing literature on divine simplicity. It represents the best kind of dogmatic theology that is grounded in Scripture, draws on the wisdom from the tradition, and carefully articulates a fresh account of the simple and triune God.

*Jordan P. Barrett*  
*Wheaton College, Wheaton, IL*