

In Search of the Triune God: The Christian Paths of East and West. By Eugene Webb. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri, 2014. Pp. xii + 435. \$65.

Never one to eschew challenges, Eugene Webb has written about religion and psychology, modern literature, and philosophical theories of human consciousness. In this latest book, he does not so much search for the triune God as provide a travelogue of attempts to understand it.

Beginning with notions of sonship and spirit in the Old Testament, W. traces the development of trinitarian symbolism in the Scriptures through the NT's references to the Spirit of God and Jesus as the Son of God. Not until the third chapter does he get into early attempts to relate Father, Son, and Spirit that were later rejected as heretical, and into the creedal statements of Nicaea, Constantinople, and Chalcedon. He clarifies the nonbiblical terms that the creeds introduced into Christian theological discourse—words such as nature and essence, person and consubstantial—in the original Greek, of course. He also draws upon Kierkegaard and Lonergan when trying to explain the consciousness of Christ as a subject who is both human and divine.

Attempts to understand the Trinity took decidedly different paths in the Greek-speaking East and the Latin-speaking West. “Eastern Christians were working with the assumption that the symbolism of the Triune God expressed the experience of knowing God by way of their life in Christ,” whereas in the West, “Augustine’s effort was a speculation about something he assumed no one could have real experiential knowledge in this life” (118). As a consequence, the Eastern understanding of the Trinity tended to evolve slowly through the contributions of many mystical authors, while trinitarian theology in the West was a product of concentrated efforts by intellectuals such as Augustine and Aquinas.

East and West came into conflict over whether the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father or from the Father and the Son—*filioque*. Apparently, “and from the Son” was mistakenly inserted into a creed that was being used to convert Arian Christians to orthodoxy, but once it was accepted by the Council of Toledo in 589, it became a matter of doctrine in the West. Without knowing the origin of the insertion, Latin churchmen insisted that theirs was the original version of the creed, whereas Greek churchmen would have none of it.

This mutual misunderstanding was compounded by the difference between the spiritual and speculative approaches to the Trinity, and also by language differences, with two subtly different Greek verbs being translated into Latin as *procedere*, which was not a good translation of either of them. W. details the convoluted controversy through the Carolingian period to the condemnation of Western errors by the patriarch Photius in 867. Adding to East–West tensions were diverging conceptions of church and authority, with popes insisting on their right to command obedience and the patriarchs working out of a more conciliar vision of leadership. The schism between Orthodoxy and Catholicism was formalized in 1054 with excommunications by both sides, and it was finalized in 1204 with the looting of Constantinople by soldiers returning from the Fourth Crusade.

Subsequently, both the theology of salvation and the explanation of the Trinity developed differently in the occidental and oriental forms of Christianity. In the West,

Augustine's theory of original sin caused the Incarnation to be conceived as a plan of atonement by which the Son made satisfaction to the Father for the sinfulness of humankind. In the East, absent that theory, the Incarnation of the Son was a model of *theosis* or deification, a process of becoming more like God through emptying of the self and greater openness to transformation by the Spirit.

A compendious work such as this can lead one to wonder whether the time spent with it can have any practical benefits. Such a skeptical attitude, however, most likely arises out of my Western bias in favor of philosophizing about the Trinity. Karl Rahner once observed that, "despite their orthodox confession in the Trinity, Christians are, in their practical life, almost mere 'monotheists'" (5). For if the inner life of the transcendent God is totally inaccessible to human experience, then even what is known by analogy is pure speculation. On the other hand, however, if we take the Eastern tradition as our guide, conceiving God as Father, Son, and Spirit can lead us to seek God by inviting the Spirit to make us more like God's Son.

Joseph Martos
Aquinas Institute of Theology, St. Louis, MO

This is Our Faith: An Introduction to Catholicism. By Thomas P. Rausch, S.J. New York: Paulist, 2014. Pp. xii + 204, \$17.95.

In this volume Rausch offers a most helpful introduction to the core trinitarian belief of the Catholic faith and to recent trends in the Catholic Church. Written for nonspecialists, its concise chapters, numerous headings, and plain style contribute to pedagogical clarity. The footnotes, though relatively scarce, witness to a broad scope of contemporary theological scholarship and suggest directions for further readings. Prepared initially as a course for a Chinese audience, R.'s book is nonetheless shaped by the Western cultural context—as seen for example by the appeal to philosophical framework sketched by Charles Taylor—and peppered with references to the major voices in American theology.

R.'s book has a dual purpose. The first half, comprising five chapters, deals with faith through the lens of the doctrine of God: God (the Father), Christ, and the Spirit—whose treatment is nonetheless minimal in a chapter devoted de facto to the Trinity. R.'s approach is methodical, starting with the experience of the divine, moving to the progressive revelation of the God of Israel, then to the Jesus of the Gospels—as seen through his preaching of the Kingdom of God, and the experience of his death and resurrection—before addressing trinitarian theology as a whole. The reader is presented with the general flow of the development of the trinitarian faith up to the creedal statements.

The second half of the book is more circumstantial and relates to the recent history of the Catholic Church. One chapter deals with the Church per se, centered on two of its sacraments: the Eucharist and baptism. A subsequent chapter offers a vivid presentation of the main achievements of the Second Vatican Council. R. then jumps over John Paul II's pontificate to devote a chapter to the pontificates of Benedict XVI and Francis.