The Cambridge Companion to the Trinity * and
The Oxford Handbook of the Trinity **

*edited by Peter C. Phan

Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011. 432pp. Rrp US$34 pb

**edited by Gilles Emery, O. P. and Matthew Levering

Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012. 704pp. Rrp US$150 hb

The Cambridge Companion has 23 chapters spread across 432 pages. *The Oxford Handbook* has 43 spread across 704 pages. Singly and together they are more like a reference collection than a book. And there's too much to comment on in a review. So I'll first say something about the way the two collections are divided into topics and issues. And then I'll comment on a few of the contributions that I found most challenging and interesting.

The Cambridge Companion has six parts. The first is an introduction that includes a list of systematic issues in Trinitarian theology. The second is a survey of the sources for the doctrine of the Trinity in the New Testament, in the Greek Fathers and in Latin Trinitarian theology. The third is an evaluation of how the Patristic tradition was renewed by Aquinas, by Bonaventure and by Protestant theologians during and after the Reformation. Part four covers contemporary theologians and theological movements. The theologians are Barth, Rahner, von Balthasar, Moltmann and Pannenberg. The movements are contemporary Orthodox theology, feminist theologies and the insights that come from Black, Latin American and Spanish-American perspectives. Part five is a dialogue with other religions in the light of the doctrine of the Trinity: Confucianism, Taoism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism and Islam. The final part makes a number of systematic connections between the doctrine of the Trinity and Christology, Pneumatology, the Liturgy, sacraments, mysticism and sociopolitical ethics.

The Oxford Handbook has seven parts. They are sandwiched between an introduction and a fascinating conclusion by the editors on the prospects of Trinitarian theology. Part one is about the Trinity in Scripture, including an examination of its canonization in the context of Trinitarian doctrine and its exegesis in the early Trinitarian discussions and debates. The other five contributions cover the Old Testament, Paul's letters, Hebrews, the Johannine literature, the Synoptic Gospels and Acts. Part two is about Patristic witnesses to the Trinitarian faith. Augustine gets a chapter to himself amongst the Ante-Nicene Fathers, the Fourth Century Fathers and late developments in the East.

Part three is about medieval appropriations of the Trinitarian faith: before the 12th century; from the 12th century to the early 13th century; and from the late 13th to the 15th century. These appropriations were made by people like Anselm, the Victorines, Aquinas and Bonaventure. Byzantium developments in the doctrine of the Trinity from the 9th to the 15th centuries are also discussed. Part four is about the doctrine of the Trinity from the Reformation to the 20th century. The ideas of the Reformers flow into ideas in the early modern era. In the modern era there are the ideas of Kant, Hegel and Schelling, as well as various 19th century Protestant and Catholic expositions of the doctrine of the Trinity. In the 20th century there are the ideas of Barth, Rahner and von Balthasar, as well as the ideas of various lesser known Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant theologians. Part four closes with a look at Trinitarian theology in the light of analytic theology. Part five is about Trinitarian dogmatics, including essays on Trinitarian Fatherhood, Trinitarian Christology and Trinitarian Pneumatology. Other essays bring Trinitarian perspectives to beliefs about creation, anthropology, the church and salvation. Part six is about the Trinity and some dimensions of the Christian life: liturgy, preaching, the visual arts, the moral life, prayer, feminism and politics. Part seven is about dialogues: in the context of ecumenism; in discussions with Jews and members of other religions; and with theorists of globalization and postmodern culture.

Reading the two collections is one thing; absorbing what one has encountered is another. And deciding which of the pieces one wants to pay special attention to is the most difficult of all. For what it's worth, here are five that I have selected; two from the *Companion* and three from the *Handbook*. Part two of the *Companion* is about retrieving the sources of the doctrine of the Trinity. John Anthony McGuckin describes and evaluates the Greek legacy. And Michel René Barnes comments clearly and insightfully on what the doctrine of the Trinity has inherited from Latin Trinitarian theology. Reflecting on the similarities and differences that come to us from these two traditions is one way of appropriating what they have given us. From the *Handbook* I've chosen the chapter by Lewis Ayres on Augustine on the Trinity, because it's helping me to understand his book with the same title. I've also decided to do more work on Fergus Kerr's comments on Trinitarian theology in the light of analytic philosophy, because of his insight that modern logic is a neglected tool for clarifying Trinitarian concepts. And my third choice, but perhaps the one that intrigues me most, is Francois Bespflug's discussion of attempts to depict the Trinity in the visual arts. These depictions are like the traditional analogies. It's their failure to capture the idea of three realities that are and are not distinct that illuminates what they are failing to illuminate.

Three distinguished scholars edited the two collections. Peter C. Phan edited the *Companion*. He is the Ignacio Ellacuría Chair of Catholic Social Thought in the Department of Theology at Georgetown University in the USA. The *Handbook* was edited by Gilles Emery, O.P, Professor of Dogmatic Theology at the University of Fribourg in Switzerland, and Matthew Levering, Professor of Theology at the University of Dayton in the USA.

Reviewer: James Moulder is a retired business school academic who lives in Melbourne, Australia. He enjoys reading and reviewing theology books.

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