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BOOK REVIEW

Patrick S. Franklin. *Being Human, Being Church: The Significance of Theological Anthropology for Ecclesiology*. Paternoster Theological Monographs. Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2016. xviii + 325 pp. Pbk. ISBN 978-1-84227-842-0. \$49.99.

In *Being Human, Being Church*, Patrick S. Franklin—Associate Professor of Theology and Ethics at Providence Theological Seminary—explores the relationship between anthropology and ecclesiology. The church, Franklin argues, has appropriated deficient conceptions of human personhood from the culture, which has resulted in widespread confusion regarding the *telos* of the human person. Franklin offers a solution by grounding ecclesiology in a Trinitarian anthropology.

Part I introduces the anthropological confusion in society. The importance of human personhood is universally recognized yet its nature remains uncertain. Franklin writes, “Our culture’s current anthropological agnosticism has led to an erosion of the grounds, the meaning, and the stability of human community” (40). Competing paradigms of community arise from particular perspectives (held consciously or subconsciously) of the human person. Ecclesiology is inhibited insofar as the church embraces reductionist anthropologies.

Parts II and III are constructive and offer an ecclesiological vision informed by a theological anthropology. In Part II, Franklin develops his theological anthropology, defining the human person as a relational, rational, and eschatological creature. As relational creatures, humans are called to participate in the divine triune life, thereby sharing in the eternal love of God. Humans are intrinsically exocentric and created for communion with God and others. As rational creatures, human beings are

called to participate in the divine conversation between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, thereby sharing in the eternal wisdom of God. Franklin writes, “God not only creates human beings by means of the divine *Logos*; God also invites human beings to share in the divine *Logos* in and through the illuminating power and animating *Breath* of the Spirit” (112). The result of such communion is wisdom: living faithfully before God. As eschatological creatures, humans participate in the commission of the triune God, thereby sharing in his eternal reign.

In Part III, Franklin turns to ecclesiology. The church is the new humanity in relational, rational, and eschatological localized communities of love, faith, and hope. The relationality of the human person corresponds to the church as a relational community of love. Franklin argues that the “formative practices” of the church, such as the sacraments, must be conceived in explicitly relational terms. Rationality, crippled by the fall, is restored through union with Christ, whereby the believer is brought into the Christian community. The body of believers is joined together for “wisdom formation” in pursuit of the knowledge of God. The separation of ethics and theology dissolves for the *telos* of God’s self-disclosure and incorporates the transformation of the whole person through communion with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Franklin writes, “genuine rationality is oriented towards God and responsive to God’s purposes and will” (114). Lastly, the church—unified, sanctified, and indwelt by the Holy Spirit—is an eschatological community that extends the present-yet-coming kingdom of God. Eschatological participation includes joining God in his mission to redeem the world and cooperating with God in stewarding and transforming his creation.

Franklin proposes a “modified form of social trinitarianism” (98). His position, to be sure, is more akin to that of T. F. Torrance than the more radical relational views of Paul Fiddes or David Cunningham. This is evident in the direction of theological reflection, which proceeds from the triune God through to anthropology and lastly, to ecclesiology. Social trinitarianism customarily moves from human experience to God’s inner life—the former illumining the latter. In this way,

Franklin establishes a nuanced distinction between human and divine community: “the church images the Trinity metaphorically, not literally” (184). This both preserves God’s transcendence and avoids the deficiencies of some forms of social trinitarianism.

Soteriology emerges in participatory terms, corresponding to both the relationality of the human person and the ecstatic love of the triune God. Franklin writes, “Being in the church is *intrinsically* related to the believer’s salvation . . . because it is the community in which reconciliation is embodied and transformation takes place” (186). Therefore, Christian growth is essentially communal. In this regard, the book confronts the individualistic tendency of evangelicalism, which bifurcates personal spirituality and ecclesiology.

Human participation in God is grounded in the immanent life of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Franklin writes, “The same Spirit who proceeds as the mutual love between the Father and the Son, thus completing or perfecting the ecstatic and perichoretic relational unity of the Trinity, also unites Christian brothers and sisters together by drawing them to share in the divine Love, and thereby to participate in God’s own trinitarian life” (182). The book thus establishes the essential unity between God’s being and God’s transitive acts.

At times, however, the description of the nature of human participation in the divine life remains unclear with respect to the current discussions in trinitarian theology. In recent literature, Paul Molnar, Stephen Holmes, and Karen Kilby have critiqued contemporary theologians for dissolving the ontological distinction between God and creaturely reality. Representing this trend, Catherine LaCugna writes, “There are not two sets of communion—one among divine persons, the other among human persons . . . The one *perichoresis*, the one mystery communion includes God and humanity as beloved partners in the dance” (LaCugna 1993: 274). Other theologians, including Jürgen Moltmann and Ted Peters, argue that the Triune God is consummated eschatologically, that is, God’s fellowship with creation is one of interdependence which retroactively affects the divine life. By positioning himself more clearly in relation to

contemporary theologians, Franklin would resolve the ambiguity regarding the nature and effect of human participation in the triune God.

Aware of the ongoing dialogue concerning the relationship between ecclesiology and missiology, Franklin argues that the church's mission to bring the gospel to the world is "constitutive of the church's very essence" (197). However, while several contemporary missiologists contend that the church exists solely for the sake of others, Franklin maintains that the ecclesial community "exists *both* as an end in itself *and* as a means to a greater end in the eschatological reality of already and not-yet" (280). This approach grounds the church's essence in the triune God's perichoretic and ecstatic love which unites believers into one body and propels them toward the "other."

Reflecting the *telos* of human persons, which consists, in part, in the communal pursuit of the knowledge of God and creation, Franklin cultivates a decidedly interdisciplinary theological method. For instance, in describing the human as an eschatological creature—that is, she is "future-oriented" by virtue of her teleological existence—the author enters into constructive dialogue with sociology and evolutionary biology.

Being Human, Being Church raises important questions for the church today. In chapter two, Franklin offers a close examination of the rival accounts of anthropology and community in contemporary society. However, there is no comparable section which links such accounts to specific ecclesial traditions and practices. Future inquiry will be able to assess the relevance and implications of the volume. For example, which ecclesial traditions are more prone to certain inadequate accounts of what it means to be human or to be in community? Moreover, what are concrete ecclesial expressions of reductionistic notions of human personhood? In many cases, the book offers preliminary answers which provide the resources and direction for further investigation.

The work is recommended as a textbook for graduate courses on theological anthropology. It is also suitable for general readers and church leaders as much of the content is pastorally driven and applicable to local Christian communities. In offering

Review: FRANKLIN *Being Human, Being Church* R5

a compelling case for the importance of anthropology for the doctrine of the church, Franklin charitably interacts and critically retrieves sundry sources from the classical tradition and contemporary theology. *Being Human, Being Church* equips the reader to discern inadequate notions of human personhood that pervade society and begin to overcome the weaknesses of such ideologies for the church today.

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