Slavinski, Sergiej S. *Francis Cheynell: Polemic and Piety in* The Divine Trinunity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit *(1650)*. Brill, 2024.

Over the last few years, Brill's *Studies in the History of Christian Traditions* series has become a home for numerous excellent monographs on important figures, movements, and themes within historical theology, including seventeenth-century Reformed orthodoxy. One such work is that by Sergeij S. Slavinski on the Trinitarian piety of Francis Cheynell (1605–1665). Originating as a doctoral dissertation completed at the University of Edinburgh, the volume focuses specifically on Cheynell's *The Divine Trinunity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit* (1650). The significance of this discourse stems not only from its length, but also *from* the fact that it was written at the request of the Oxford delegation at the Westminster Assembly. As such, the 480-page tome of *Divine Trinunity* constitutes "an official defence of the Classical orthodox doctrine of the Trinity in the politically and religiously charged milieu of mid-seventeenth-century England" (1).

After setting the treatise in the context of Cheynell's career, the political turbulence of 1640s Oxford, and the polemics of early modern trinitarianism, Slavinski goes on to examine its content in six subsequent sections. Chapter 3 highlights the importance of divine simplicity and incomprehensibility in providing the work's metaphysical underpinning. Chapter 4 considers Cheynell's understanding of the role of Scripture and its relationship with tradition. The next two chapters examine Cheynell's metaphysics of "unity in Trinunity" and "Trinunity in unity," respectively. In particular, the author seeks to locate his understanding of concepts like "nature" and "person" within the contexts of medieval, late-scholastic, and Reformed Christian thought. Lastly, chapter 7 examines the ultimate focus of *Divine Trinunity*, namely the inseparable relationship between Trinitarian theology and Christian piety. For Cheynell, "one must first make cognitive room for the Trinity as one true God before communing with God" (254).

Slavinski's monograph is a fine piece of scholarship that will be of interest to a variety of readers. Most obviously, the study will be essential reading for those with an interest in Cheynell himself. Despite his presence at the Westminster Assembly and his position as Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Oxford at the end of the 1640s and the beginning of the 1650s, little secondary scholarship exists on the seventeenth-century divine. He has occasionally received passing reference in works such as *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism* (2008) and Brill's *Companion to Reformed Orthodoxy* (2013). However, surveys of Trinitarian, Reformed, or early modern

theology often fail to mention him entirely. By providing an account of *Divine Trinunity* in its social, historical, and intellectual context, Slavinski has made a convincing case for the significance of Cheynell's thought in these areas. This monograph represents a significant advancement in the scholarship on this underappreciated thinker.

Admittedly, there has been some recognition of Cheynell's role in early modern trinitarianism, and Slavinski's research develops this scholarship in numerous ways. It refines the findings of Chad Van Dixhoorn on the differences that existed amongst those at the Westminster Assembly on Trinitarian doctrines such as the eternal generation of the Son. It corrects Ryan McGraw's misreading of Cheynell in his work on the ways in which Reformed authors approached the topic of communion with God during the period. It also extends the nuanced and complex account given by Paul Lim in his extensive work on the "crisis" of the Trinity in early modern England. Although Lim identified the importance of *Divine Trinunity* in mid-seventeenth-century Trinitarian controversy, he chose to focus on the work of Cheynell's colleague John Owen (1616–1683) in highlighting the close relationships between spirituality and scholastic theology in the polemical defense of orthodox trinitarianism. Slavinski's monograph extends this thesis to Cheynell's work itself.

Doctrinal debates in the early modern period were rarely, if ever, isolated to purely theological issues. Religion and politics were inextricably intertwined, and as a result, theological controversies often had societal implications and *vice versa*. Although this adds complexity to the task of historical theology, it does mean that when it is done well the findings of one study can shed light on a variety of other areas. This is the case with the present monograph. In addition to those who have an interest in early modern Reformed Trinitarian theology, the volume will also be of relevance to those working on other aspects of seventeenth-century life. For example, Giorgio Caravel has drawn attention to Cheynell's anti-Triniatarian polemics in the context of the ideas of Jacob Acontius (ca.1520–c.1566) whose writings on religious toleration were being translated and circulated within England during the 1640s. Similarly, scholars like Sarah Mortimer have located Cheynell and his *Divine Trinunity* within their discussion of the perceived threat of Socinianism during the period. They have shown how ideas regarding nature, religion, and political non-resistance impacted upon more purely theological ones such as the Trinity. Moving in a different direction, Jean-Louis Quantin has cited Cheynell in discussions regarding the use of patristic sources in the religious controversies of the period.

By providing a closely contextualized study of *Divine Trinunity*, Slavinski has been able to add to our understanding of areas such as these and their convergence in the thought of a figure like Cheynell. In particular, he has provided a detailed case study of how a prominent orthodox theologian utilized patristic and other sources to respond to the challenge of heterodoxy within the politically charged atmosphere of mid-seventeenth-century England's revolutionary years.

What may be of the greatest interest to readers of this journal is the contribution that this study makes to our understanding of Puritan piety. Whilst conscious of the difficulties inherent to terms like "Puritan" and "Puritanism", the author draws on the work of numerous scholars including Geoffrey Nuttall, Peter Lake, and John Coffey to highlight how Puritans "balanced polemic and piety in pulpit, print, and academia in their campaign for England's reformation" (15). By locating Cheynell's *Divine Trinunity* within this movement, Slavinski expands our understanding of the complex relationship between dogma and praxis in Puritan spirituality during the 1640s and 1650s. By way of example, he notes how Cheynell engaged in a "charitable Trinitarian hatred" as he sought to indict unorthodox doctrine for the benefit of England's spiritual welfare (hence the illustration on the cover of the volume of Giovanni Ambrogio Figino's 1591 painting of St. Ambrose on horseback driving away Arian heretics). This reforming interest is astutely connected with the dramatic societal and ecclesiastical changes which were going on at the time, such as the collapse of state censorship, the abolition of episcopacy, and the introduction of the Westminster Assembly's *Directory for Public Worship* (1645). Seen in this context, Slavinski makes a convincing argument for the central role of both polemic and piety in *Divine Trinunity*. This corrects the reading of scholars who have overlooked the defensive nature of the discourse but also finesses the interpretation of those who have seen it in purely polemical terms. Whilst the work was undoubtedly and self-consciously controversial, this controversy arose out of a concern for the spirituality of the nation.

In light of the recent anniversary of the Council of Nicaea, engagement with Cheynell's *Divine Trinunity* may be especially apt for the church today. The last few decades have seen a number of helpful volumes on the importance of a classical doctrine of God for Christian theology. What has not been so common is a detailed treatment of how an orthodox Trinitarian theology relates to a vibrant Christian piety. Yet, this is what can be found in Cheynell's treatise. Whilst the seventeenth-century divine saw Trinitarian knowledge as an essential precondition of Trinitarian communion, he also

considered it to be a necessary consequence of it. In other words, an understanding of the infinite simplicity and incomprehensibility in Trinitarian multiplicity could not but produce a response in the life of the believer individually and within the church corporately, and across 146 pages Cheynell showed his audience what he believed would be the result. This consisted in a faith in, worship of, and obedience to God through Christ. By marrying a Reformed Christology with a Trinitarian divinity, Cheynell sought to "promote Reformed trinitarianism as the apex of faith and true communion with God" (227).

Slavinski's monograph offers a model of one way to successfully engage in the study of historical theology. By taking a discourse such as Cheynell's *Divine Trinunity* and closely reading it within the theological, historical, and social dynamics of its time, one is able to add depth to our understanding of important texts from the history of the church. Not only can this shed light on an important question regarding the religion of seventeenth-century England, but it also allows such works to speak to us with great power today. Altogether, this volume is a significant contribution to the scholarship on the religious controversies of the early modern period, and an essential one for those seeking to understand this often-overlooked pastor and theologian.

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David Van Brugge. *That Which They Can't See: A Retrieval of Jonathan Edwards' Homiletical Use of Imagination*. Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2025.

That Which They Can't See is an insightful book, yet it is complex and deserves careful attention to assess its contribution to Edwardsean studies. Van Brugge divides this study into three main parts. Part 1 recalls the modern skepticism toward the imagination in homiletic textbooks. Part 2 focuses on the topic, particularly the rationale for studying Edwards's use of the imagination. In Part 3, the book conveys "The Benefit of Strengthening a Homiletical Use of Imagination with Edwards," along with an appendix listing all of Edwards's relevant sermons from Stockbridge, Massachusetts.

In the introductory chapters, Van Brugge laments the disparaging treatment of imagination in modern preaching. He writes, "The primary