

Christian Book Summaries



Volume 3 Issue 40
October 2007

COUNCIL OF REFERENCE

- Dr. Richard Averbeck
- Rev. D. Stuart Briscoe
- Dr. Paul Cedar
- Mr. Dave Coleman
- Dr. & Mrs. Larry Crabb
- Mr. Roger Cross
- Rev. Samuel Farina
- Dr. Kenneth O. Gangel
- Rev. & Mrs. Lud Golz
- Dr. Howard G. Hendricks
- Mr. Olan Hendrix
- Dr. David Jeremiah
- Rev. Knute Larson
- Dr. John C. Maxwell
- Dr. Bruce McNicol
- Mr. Dean Merrill
- Mrs. Elisa Morgan
- Dr. Luis Palau
- Dr. Gilbert A. Peterson
- Rev. Wes Roberts
- Rev. & Mrs. Jamie Rassmussen
- Mr. Jim Warren
- Dr. Rick Warren

Publishers

Catherine & David Martin

Editors

Cheryl & Michael Chiapperino

THE GREAT DANCE: The Church Vision Revisited

A Quick Focus

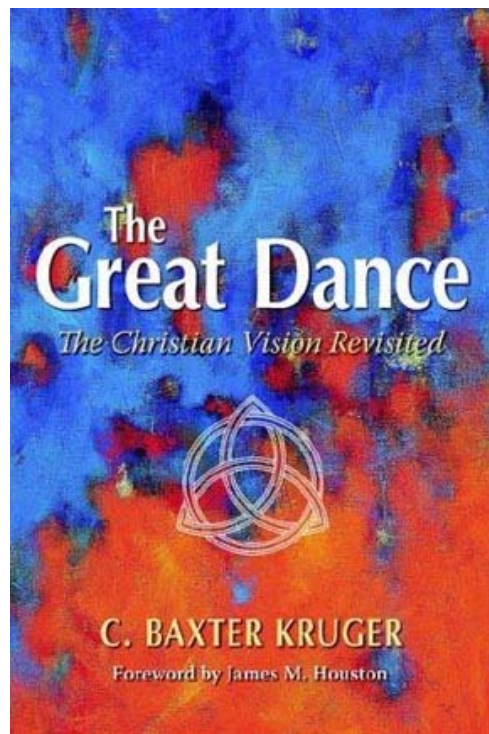
The Book's Purpose

- Explore who God really is and rediscover His love, passion, joy, fellowship, and creativity
- Understand your inclusion in the fellowship of the Father, Son, and Spirit
- Recognize and reject the darkness of the lie
- View yourself in His amazing light and see the truth
- Accept your true identity and enjoy the fellowship of the great dance

The Book's Message

There is something grand and wonderful running through the scenes of our lives. We are part of something magnificent like an invisible flowing river. We are part of a great dance. ***"The central passion of the human heart is to be filled with the great dance, and the chief and maddening riddle of human life is to understand what the dance is and how to live in it."***

Do we find it in religion? We frequently observe that many devoted "religious types" know a lot about the Bible. They talk a lot about God, but they are as joyful and interesting as fence posts. Their life witness seems to imply that we must make a choice between God and life, between God and joy, between God and the great dance. Tragically they have missed the point.



By C. Baxter Kruger
Regent College Publishing
ISBN: 1573833452

The truth is: God is not abstract. The Trinity is not three "religious types" sitting around in some room in heaven. The Trinity is life shared~life that is full, rich, and beautiful. The invisible flowing river begins in the fellowship of the Trinity. The great dance is the life shared by the Father, Son, and Spirit~a great dance in which we can choose to participate.

Five Main Points

- The Trinity and the Logic of the Universe2
- Why Jesus Came and What He Accomplished2
- The Darkness and How the Dance is Distorted3
- Faith and the Release of the Dance4
- How We See Ourselves and Who We Really Are4

THE TRINITY

and the Logic of the Universe

“God is not a legalist, a divine bookkeeper, who watches us like a hawk to see if we keep his little rules...God is a circle of passion and life and fellowship. The Trinity is the most beautiful doctrine in the Christian faith.”

God has always been the Father, Son, and Spirit. Never in all eternity has God been alone. There has never been a time when God was not in fellowship. In John 1:1-3, John makes it absolutely clear that all things were created ***“not merely by God, but in and through and by the Son. Nothing, John says emphatically, not one thing, was created apart from the Son.”*** The Son was part of the entire creation event. This act of creating was a shared task. It is critical that we understand that the shared life of Father, Son, and Spirit is one of fellowship and happiness~***“a great dance of shared life that is full and rich and passionate, creative and good and beautiful.”***

The goal of the Trinity is to include us~to draw us into the circle of their shared life so that we can experience it with them. If we are supposed to truly understand who we are and why we are here, we must begin by understanding the relationship of the Father, Son, and Spirit. ***“It is this relationship that holds the secret to the ‘why’ of creation, the ‘why’ of your life and mine.”***

“There are two things that I have known for as long as I can remember. The first is that there is an invisible river flowing through this phenomenon we call ‘life.’ It is a river of glory and abounding fullness, of passion and goodness, beauty and joy. As I have thought about it through the years, I have come to think of the river more as a dance, a great dance, which somehow is shared with us and fills our lives and all things, and at the same time, is constantly distorted. The second thing I have always known is that this great dance is related to God.”

What does God do with the joy shared between the Father, Son, and Spirit? He offers it to us so that we can share in it. That is the logic of creation. First, the Father, Son, and Spirit shared the great dance of fellowship and joy. Then, God spoke all things into existence for the amazing purpose of sharing the great dance with us. For this sharing to occur, there had to be a connection between the Trinity and humanity. That connection was Jesus. **CBS**

WHY JESUS CAME

and What He Accomplished

“The logic of the incarnation and death of Jesus lies in the determined passion of the Trinity to share their life, their glory, their great dance with us~and not just with us, but with the whole creation.”

When Jesus cried from the cross, “It is finished,” we were given a staggering gift~we were united with the Trinity. ***“And that means that our inclusion in the great dance of life shared by the Father, Son and Spirit is not now a goal to be achieved, a dream for us to attain some day later when we finally get our religion right. It means that there is far more going on in our lives right now than we ever dreamed.”*** We must learn to think about who we *are*, not who we *will be* one day. We have been given participation in the great dance. It is not something we make true. It *is* true.

There is nothing ordinary about you. Jesus unlocked the mystery about babies and baseball, fishing and barbecues, romance and love. He illuminates our humanity, ***“from cooking supper and managing a hardware store and painting houses to friendship and laughter and music.”***

It is all part of the great dance of the Trinity happening within you. You and your life are the expression of the great dance~the beauty, love, and joy shared by the Father, Son, and Spirit. It is who you are~who we as Christians are.

CBS

THE DARKNESS

and How the Dance is Distorted

Why do so many of us miss the great dance?

- We have downsized Jesus in our thinking. We have reduced Jesus to a spectator on the sidelines. As a result, that we see ourselves as “just human,” very “ordinary.” How did this happen? ***“I can tell you that the Calvinist doctrine of double predestination has had an awful lot to do with it. And so has the rise of deism and the mechanistic worldview of Sir Isaac Newton, and Descartes’ dualisms between the body and the soul, and the mind and reality, and the rise in rationalism, and the pride of Enlightenment. Each in its own way has contributed to the eclipse of the incarnation, the downsizing of Jesus, the reduction of Jesus Christ to being a mere spectator in the universe.”***
- We lost the truth of a loving God who wants to include us in fellowship. The Early Church painted a picture of God in which His deepest fundamental characteristic was the Trinity. This picture was beautiful! It included a relationship filled with joy, fullness, love, delight, passion, harmony, wholeness, and wonder. During the development of Western theology, we lost this picture. The holiness of God was substituted for the Trinity and, while the Early Church depicted the holiness of God as multi-faceted and incredibly beautiful, Western theology redefined it as *legalism*. We detached God from the Trinity and redefined Him using descriptions of law, order, and punishment. In our collective mind, God became holy only in the legal sense.
- We lost the focus upon the Son and focused instead upon the Cross. Yes, He died on the Cross, but it was Jesus himself, the meeting place of the Trinity and humanity, Who is the true center of all. The Western model of Jesus implies that Jesus suffered and died, and that then His work was done. His practical value ceased and was replaced by a legal arrangement between God and humanity. ***“This shift from the centrality of Jesus Christ to the centrality of the Cross is the great sin of the Western Church and the greatest of all disasters.”***
- We have placed so much emphasis upon justification that it has replaced adoption as central to the Christian message. Forgiveness is, of course, a major part of the gospel message but it is not the whole truth. To be forgiven serves an even higher purpose~to be forgiven allows us to be included in the relationship of the Trinity. Unfortunately, forgiveness has become the entire goal for which Jesus died. It overshadows the incredible fact of our inclusion into the fellowship of the great dance.
- We have allowed a new concept of Jesus to prevail~Jesus “fixed” the sin problem and then returned to Heaven to watch us from a distance. He is no longer an active participant in our lives. His job is done and He sits in a room in Heaven and occasionally glances our way.

Mistakenly “just human” is our condition today. We are in an identity crisis. We are looking for spiritual substance that the Church is not able to provide~its Jesus is too small. We are like the child at the fair who has lost his parents. All around him is everything a child could dream of~cotton candy, foot-long hot dogs, games, prizes, and rides. Yet, inside he is so scared and desperate that he has no freedom to enjoy it.

The truth is that we are clueless about the incredible reality of what Jesus Christ has done for us. He did not die only for the forgiveness of sin. He did not come only to “settle the score.” He came first and foremost to unite us with the amazing fellowship of the Trinity.

“The truth is, this world belongs to the Holy Trinity and is permeated by the great dance of life shared by the Father, Son and Spirit. You and your life have been overtaken by the abounding philanthropy of the Triune God. You have been included in the great dance.”

“Gone is the vision that he is the connection between the Trinity and human existence and that he mediates the Triune life of God to us...we are left to assume that our human existence is just human, secular. There is no Trinity in it, no divine life, no divine dance.”

FAITH

and the Release of the Dance

“The reason for creation, the aim and purpose of creation, of your existence and mine, lies in the great dance of life shared by the Father, Son and Spirit....The logic of the coming of Jesus begins...with their astonishing decision and determination to share that dance with us.”

When we start with Western theology’s legal-holiness premise, we see the Cross as just the solution to the sin issue. It fixed the problem~nothing more, nothing less. By believing only this, the true meaning of the incarnation is left in the dust. We miss the stunning larger significance of the incarnation. We also miss the astonishing meaning of the ascension. The Son became human; He did not put on a costume that He could later remove. He became human for all time. He unified divinity and humanity forever.

“He is now and forever one of us, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, man, a human being....When the Son of God became human, he *became* human and he *will* be human through all eternity. The dance of the Triune life is no longer just a divine dance. It is now and forever a divine-human dance.”

Our inclusion in the great dance is a given, not a goal. It is not something yet for us to accomplish. It is not something we must earn. It is ours. It has been given to us. Yet, as separate and distinct human beings, we can become confused. ***“If we do not know who we really are as participants in the life of the Trinity, we get very proud of ourselves and what we think we have done, and that sanctimonious pride repels people and short-circuits the fellowship of the Trinity at work within us.”***

Jesus, the eternal beloved Son of the Father, will forever live within Adam’s skin. In Jesus, the two worlds are forever united. In Jesus is Adamic man living in light, totally unhindered by darkness. In Jesus is victory~forever. ***“The history of Jesus Christ is therefore not just another event in a series of important events in human history. The history of Jesus Christ is the event of all events. It is the moment of all moments.”***

We must learn to see ourselves and others as we really are~not “ordinary” human beings, but people of the fellowship; co-participants in the joy, love, life, and glory of the Father, Son, and Spirit. The Father, Son, and Spirit do not need us. However, they love to share what they are doing with us. They love to include us. They employ our hands and feet as the dirt movers in their projects. God does not *need* a farmer to collect and distribute milk; He does not *need* a surgeon to fix an unhealthy heart; but the Trinity is all about fellowship and God delights in including us in His work. Our hands are His hands and our feet are His feet as we accomplish what we consider just our normal, daily tasks. There is far more of His work going on every day on this planet than we could ever imagine.

This world was created by the Trinity, and it belongs to the Trinity. The great dance of life shared by the Father, Son, and Spirit permeates all of creation. Through the unity brought by the incarnation and ascension of the Son, you and your life have been included in the great dance. This is who you are and what your life is all about. Your identity is as solid as stone.



HOW WE SEE

Ourselves and Who We Really Are

If our identities are established in the great dance of the Trinity, why do many of us see ourselves in darkness? The answer is “deception.” We have fallen for the lies of the evil one. Evil tells us that we are “not”~not special, not acceptable, not significant, not participants of real life, not part of the glory. In response, many of us invent an ideal. We tell ourselves that if we can just be like *this*, if we can just own *that*, if we can just reach *this* level of something, *then* we will have arrived! We will have solved our life riddles! We will finally enjoy “real” life!

This mentality is based on a lie.

What we have actually done is invent a god that we believe will give us what we do not have. We think it will fill all of those empty places within us. We think it will satisfy the hunger of desperation that lies at the core of our being. What we have done is create an idol and, by our own doing, we find ourselves mired in the sin of idolatry!

Many of us are not even aware of the lie. It is whispered in our ear so subtly that we aren’t even aware that we have begun our downward spiral. The logic of darkness promotes the lie that says, “I am not.” And we accept this as our own thought. But the Truth~the logic of the Light~says, “Yes, I am!”

“The hope of the world, the hope of your life and mine, is that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of adoption, the Spirit of truth, the Spirit of the eternal purpose of the Father and Son, and that he has an everlasting passion that we experience the great dance.”

continued on page 5

**HOW WE SEE OURSELVES
AND WHO WE REALLY ARE**
continued from page 4

The Trinity chose in amazing grace and astounding compassion, to share their glory, fullness, joy, and fellowship. The Trinity chose to include *you*. The Trinity chose to include *me*. Through the power of adoption, we can say to the one who lies, “*Yes, I am...because God is the great I Am.*”

Believing the truth of who we are aligns our minds, hearts, and wills with reality. Believing that we belong to the Trinity produces assurance, hope, and peace. Is our faith magic? No. We experience assurance, hope, and peace because we believe the truth.

“Given what Jesus Christ has accomplished, given what he has done for and with and to the human race, given that he has connected us with the Triune life, everything now hinges on what *we* believe. To persist in believing in the lie that we are separated from God, and thus that we are ‘not,’ is to live...in the *tear* between knowing we have a home, but never finding it.... But to come to believe in Jesus Christ, to see him as he is and see ourselves included in him, is to come into our right minds. It is to have the tear healed, and with that healing, to experience resolution and peace, hope and assurance.”

Our identity is as solid as stone. The great dance is about abundant *life*—love, passion, joy, fellowship, and creativity. It is the fellowship of the relationship of the Father, Son, and Spirit. The incarnation is the philanthropic act of God to reach out, embrace us through forgiveness, and include us in the dance.

Through humanity, through the use of our hands and feet—through our entire beings—the great dance is played out. Who we are and our entire life story is part of the invisible river of the dance. The great dance of the Trinity is happening within each of us.

We are not alone. God is with us. He bore our pain and darkness so that we could share in the circle of life and fellowship. Jesus asks in John 1:38, “What do you seek?” Each of us must answer this question. Choose to seek and believe the truth! Enjoy the dance!

CBS



**Christian
Book
Summaries**

Volume 3, Number 40

Publisher

Catherine & David Martin

Editors

Cheryl & Michael Chiapperino

Published on the World Wide Web at
ChristianBookSummaries.com.

The mission of Christian Book Summaries is to enhance the ministry of thinking Christians by providing thorough and readable summaries of noteworthy books from Christian publishers.

The opinions expressed are those of the original writers and are not necessarily those of Christian Book Summaries or its Council of Reference.

The Great Dance: The Church Vision Revisited by *C. Baxter Kruger*, copyright 2005 by *C. Baxter Kruger*. Used by permission of the publisher, *Regent College Publishing*, 5800 University Blvd, Vancouver, British Columbia V6T2E2 Canada. 121 Pages. \$12.95. ISBN 1-57383-345-2. Available at your favorite bookstore, online bookseller, or at www.regentpublishing.com

The author: Baxter Kruger is a theologian, author, and founder of Perichoresis Ministries, a ministry dedicated to spreading the news of the gospel in the light of the Trinity. A native of Prentiss, Mississippi, Kruger earned a BA from the University of Mississippi, an M.Div. from Reformed Theological Seminary, and a PhD from Kings College, University of Aberdeen. He has worked as a minister to college students, as a lecturer in theology at the University of Aberdeen, and as an associate pastor. Today he teaches and preaches around the USA and abroad.

Summarized by: Bonnie Church is a website content manager, editor, freelance writer, avid gardener, mother of three, and grandmother of five. She is a graduate of University of Minnesota. Bonnie, her husband, and their family live in Colorado Springs, Colorado.