

JOURNAL ARTICLE CRITIQUE

of

Holmes, Christopher R. J. "God's Attributes as God's Clarities: Wolf Krötke Doctrine of the Divine Attributes." *International Journal of Systematic Theology* (Blackwell Publishing) 10, no. 1 (January 2008): 54-72.

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In the journal article, “God’s Attributes as God’s Clarities”, Christopher Holmes took a critical look at the doctrine of the divine attributes presented by God, as seen by Berlin theologian Wolf Krötke. The author’s arguments examined four different attributes of God, called clarities, from Krötke’s *Gottes Klarheiten*; those of the clarity of God’s truth, love, power, and eternity.ⁱ With a lengthy introduction into the material, Holmes critiques Krötke’s four clarities, each one with its own sub-clarities as contained in Krötke’s book. Holmes concluded with his critical assessment of Krötke’s doctrine, viewed in the light of today’s Germany, that Krötke had written the best full work since Carl Barth, but still had several missing elements. Holmes’ overall analysis came from what he viewed was lacking in *Gottes Klarheiten*, the “robust doctrine of the immanent Trinity.”ⁱⁱ Holmes pulled from years of research of Barth and other well-known European theologians to come to his own conclusions. In the end, Holmes perceived the lack of a Trinitarian discourse so key to the perfections in accordance with God’s love or freedom that his critical view centered on a discussion of the Trinity and not as much on the attributes of God.

Holmes’ purpose in writing this particular critique was to compare and contrast the theological dialogue on the attributes of God, looking at the most recent publication, which Holmes deemed “the most [recent] in-depth theological interpretation of the attributes of God” with the classical study by Carl Barth in his *Church Dogmatics II/1*.ⁱⁱⁱ As Holmes introduced the discussion, he offered an explanation of the theological task of Krötke’s doctrine of the divine attributes and raised the point that in recent history the scholarly interest has waned on the subject, but that Krötke and others like Colin Gunton and John Webster had revived it somewhat.^{iv} Krötke, with his “clarities” on God,

according to Holmes, brought the attributes of God back into scholarly view. Holmes did approach “God’s Attributes as God’s Clarities” with a seemingly obvious bias towards Barth’s *Church Dogmatics*, but also allowed for Krötke’s unique perspective.

The thesis of the article was well established and logically organized, though the title did not suggest this critique was to be involved in the trinity as much as it was. Holmes brought up his objections to Krötke’s lack of correlation given between the attributes of God, the immanent Trinity, and necessity of maintaining a robust doctrine, early, and was presented throughout the article. Although the article was not a complete discussion or argument for the requirement of the Trinity when examining the attributes of God, it did lend itself to a vital application that may have been missed otherwise. Holmes’ handling of the “clarities” of Krötke’s doctrine were extensive and informative, but always turned back to an assessment of the trinity as it pertained to that particular attribute.

In conclusion, Holmes dealt with the very complex subject of Krötke’s doctrine on the divine attributes of God very well. The complexity of the Krötke doctrine came through Holmes’ article in a manner of its own complexity, which was sometimes hard to follow without the full knowledge of Holmes’ research, which he presented throughout his own critique. The study and theological evaluation of the Trinity itself has been the worthy topic of perhaps countless theologians, but within the discussion of the attributes of God, this article may have attributed too much time to the topic here. The author’s objections were duly noted, but a full understanding to Holmes’ critique would be more easily discerned with a full reading and study of Krötke’s *Gottes Klarheiten* and Barth’s *Church Dogmatics*.

Works Cited

Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (hereafter: *CD*), trans. ed. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1957–75), II/1, pp. 322ff.

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Wolf Krötke, *Gottes Klarheiten: Eine Neuinterpretation der Gottes 'Eigenschaften'* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 2001). All translations of Krötke's text are attributed to Christopher R. J. Homes.

Endnotes

- ⁱ Wolf Krötke, *Gottes Klarheiten: Eine Neuinterpretation der Gottes 'Eigenschaften'* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 2001). All translations of Krötke's text are attributed to Christopher R. J. Homes.
- ⁱⁱ Christopher R. J. Holmes, "God's Attributes as God's Clarities: Wolf Krotke's Doctrine of the Divine Attributes," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* (Blackwell Publishing) 10, no. 1 (January 2008): 66.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid, 55.
- ^{iv} Ibid, 54.