Foreword

It is commonly said that the last seventy years or so have seen a Trinitarian revival and the credit for initiating this usually goes to Karl Barth and Karl Rahner. It is certainly true that the doctrine of the Trinity suffered an eclipse during the high point of Enlightenment modernity. "Religion" was reduced to the cardinal points that would be accepted universally by all "reasonable" people irrespective of culture, tradition, and background: that there was one God, the designer of the universe, that he was the source and guarantee of the physical and moral order, and that he would reward the good and punish the wicked in the hereafter. All the great religions of the world, including Christianity, could be boiled down to this one central affirmation now being set forth as the world was finally and joyfully "enlightened" by this oh-so-reasonable creed of Deism. That God was a Trinity, that one of the persons of the Trinity became incarnate in Jesus Christ, and that Christ died to make atonement for the sins of the world—these assertions peculiar to the Christian tradition could be set aside. At best they were marginalized in the deistic faith of many who still thought of themselves as part of the church. The atonement was a piece of primitive superstition, the incarnation was some kind of myth, and the doctrine of the Trinity was a self-contradictory conundrum.

In the nineteenth century, as deism collapsed into atheism, Hegel seemed to offer a revived Trinitarianism. But, of course, the doctrines of the Incarnation and the Trinity were merely illustrative of the way in which the Absolute Spirit had realized itself in creating its opposite, creation, and then in realizing itself in entering into a new synthesis with creation through the process of world history. Such a confusion of the generation of the Son with the creation of the world had not been seriously mooted in Christian thought since before Nicaea. Meanwhile traditional Catholics and Protestants continued to affirm their belief in the Trinity, but the doctrine seemed to be rather esoteric, abstract, confusing, and irrelevant to the life and mission of the church.

Given then that Hegel was reinterpreting the doctrine of the Trinity as an illustration of his own philosophy, and that orthodox Christians

clung to it merely as a badge of orthodoxy, it appears to be true that the real revival of the *church* doctrine of the Trinity did not come till the mid-twentieth century. Barth re-formulated it in terms of the concept so central to the church's response to the epistemological challenges of the Enlightenment—revelation. "God reveals himself as Lord." And so this one God is the Revealed, the Revealer, and the resulting Revelation. Rahner tackled the problem that the doctrine of the Trinity seemed to be irrelevant by questioning the divorce in Christian theology between the "Immanent Trinity" and the "Economic Trinity." Rahner's "rule" (as it was called) insisted that the Immanent Trinity *is* the Economic Trinity and the Economic Trinity *is* the Immanent Trinity. But that was rather ambiguous. Did this mean that God did not exist as Immanent Trinity apart from the world? Another Catholic theologian, Catherine Mowry LaCugna, did not hesitate to affirm that that was what we had to say to end the irrelevancy of the doctrine of the Trinity. But the ghost of Hegel seemed to be hanging around.

There was another line of development. Rahner criticized the tendency to make the unity of God more fundamental than God's being as the Trinity. But this line was taken further by a reaction against what was seen to be the "single subject" God of Barth or Rahner. Was this not still influenced by Augustine in its overemphasis on the *one* God? They were not then Trinitarian enough! The development of the "social analogy" for the Trinity has therefore been presented as a correction to the whole Augustinian tradition of the West in which (it has been said) Augustine's "psychological analogy" has been too dominant. The resulting strong emphasis on the unity was said to be characteristic of the Latin West (according to the de Régnon thesis), while the Greek East began instead from the three.

The "social analogy," which has been seen as the counter to this Augustinian "psychological analogy" and the strong Western bias to unity, was actually introduced at the same time as Barth's revival of the Trinity, by some rather forgotten Anglicans, Leonard Hodgson and Charles Lowry. Hodgson speaks of God as a "divine society" and Lowry goes so far as to refer to the three persons as "three centres of consciousness." But the so-called "social analogy" only came to the centre of discussion as similar perspectives on the doctrine of the Trinity were put forward by Jürgen Moltmann and John Zizioulas. Moltmann's Trinitarian theology began in truly Lutheran fashion as a *theologia crucis*. If Moltmann's Trinitarian theology makes the Trinity relevant by portraying the God who suffers with

us, Zizioulas makes the doctrine relevant by his account of how the Cappadocian theologians were the source of a new ontology of personhood. Our understanding of personal relationships can be seen to be grounded in Trinitarian theology. The unity of the Three Persons is not to be understood by some Greek metaphysical idea of impersonal substance (*ousia*), but their unity as the one God consists in their inter-personal communion (*koinonia*). But Zizioulas's doctrine contrasts strongly with Moltmann in that, while they both accentuate the distinctions among the persons, Moltmann moved increasingly under the influence of his political and social egalitarianism to emphasize the equality of the Three and to reject any kind of precedence or order.

But more recently, the various differing understandings of the "social analogy" have come under fire. While philosophical theologians such as Cornelius Plantinga and Richard Swinburne are sympathetic, others such as Michael Rae and Brian Leftow have been critical. Among other leading theologians, Colin Gunton (sympathetic to Zizioulas but not to Moltmann) wrestled with the relation of Trinitarian doctrine to the doctrine of creation, and Robert Jenson has wrestled with the relation of the Triune God to time. But Stephen Holmes has argued that the contemporary "revival" of Trinitarian theology has not been a "revival" at all, but is in fact quite at variance with the Trinitarian theology of the Fathers.

In this context, the Trinitarian Theology of Thomas F. Torrance deserves the attention of the church. Far from devising a doctrine of the Trinity crafted to speak to contemporary debates (reason and revelation, relevance to the life of the church, God and suffering, human personhood), Torrance's theology begins with a deep understanding of the Fathers. It is not that he simply recovers their thought in the supposedly detached and neutral way of the historian, but neither does he begin from contemporary issues. He begins with the Trinitarian thought of the Fathers, not read superficially in order to find support for contemporary causes, but read *theologically* in order to discern their deep structure and inner logic. This Trinitarian theology is then seen to speak powerfully to the church in every age, and particularly the contemporary church.

A number of major accounts of Torrance's theology have now been published by Alister McGrath, Elmer Colyer, Paul Molnar, and others, and an increasing stream of doctoral theses is examining different aspects of his thought. This book is based on a first-class thesis in which Dick Osita Eugenio shows the profound coherence and integration between Torrance's doctrine of the Trinity and his doctrine of salvation. These two

areas of Christian theology are often held apart, but Torrance has a deeply soteriological doctrine of the Trinity and a deeply Trinitarian soteriology. While Trinitarian theology no doubt has much to say to concerns about reason and revelation, the mission of the church, human personhood and personal relations, God's relation to the creation, and the suffering of the world, Torrance's exposition of the doctrine relates it primarily and profoundly to the gospel. This book makes a significant contribution not only to our understanding of Torrance's thought but to the contemporary need of the church to grasp at a deeper level how the salvation of the world is being accomplished by the Triune God, and to live in alignment with the mission of the One who is eternally Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

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