

Trinity Talk, Again

By Fred Sanders

Abstract: The doctrine of the Trinity has, in the past couple of decades, reclaimed its central place in Christian God talk. Theologians are now using it to render every doctrine more explicitly Christian, and to sharpen interreligious dialogue. There is a strong drive toward vindicating the doctrine as relevant, but also a recognition that if it is truly a teaching about God it must remain somewhat theoretical. Finally, the field of historical theology is undertaking a fresh examination of the basic primary texts of trinitarian theology.

Key Terms: Trinity, Immanent Trinity, interreligious dialogue, religious pluralism.

There was a time in the 20th century when Christian theologians could engage in God talk and Trinity talk as two distinct conversations, and the word “Trinity” might not even occur in a discussion of the Christian God. Those days, if not gone forever, are at least a distant memory now: they seem as quaintly mid-century as black-and-white television or cheap coffee. Contemporary theology is in the midst of a massive re-appropriation of the doctrine of the Trinity, with far-ranging implications for every doctrine and every discipline in the theological faculty. Readers of *Dialog* have stayed abreast of this widening conversation as it developed in the last two decades,¹ but the project of Trinity talk is ongoing, and the conversation has taken new turns in recent years.

It would not be possible, in the few pages of this article, even to list all the books, articles, and dissertations devoted to one or another aspect of trinitarian theology, nor would such a booklist be very stimulating reading. A review essay focusing on a select group of the most influential books would also be worthwhile, but would leave out too many important trends to serve as an overall orientation to current Trinity talk. Instead, I will identify some major lines of thought that are recurring, pervasive, and likely to be enduring themes in the discussion during the next several years.

The Christian Answer to the Question, “God Who?”

To begin with a note on usage, the words “Trinity” and “trinitarian” are being employed in unusual new ways in contemporary theological discourse. They sound in a different register than they once did. Your expectations are bound to be frustrated if the occurrence of the word “Trinity” suggests to you that the author intends to take up the task of reconciling threeness with oneness. When “trinitarian” occurs in titles these days, it is almost never a signal that anything about divine triunity is in view, or even anything christological or pneumatological. Instead, “trinitarian” is now being used in theological parlance to put the Christian edges on doctrines. It serves as a one-word cipher for the specificity of the Christian claim. At one time, the word “Christian” itself may have functioned this way, but calling something trinitarian now does the work the simpler term once did. Perhaps this trend is best accounted for as a sign of a diffuse postliberal ethos in contemporary theology. It is not the case that everyone subscribes to a Lindbeckian cultural-linguistic account of theological language, but that in the face of religious diversity there is a widespread desire to situate Christian discourse in the right linguistic context by routinely employing a little bit of explicitly Christian technical language. If the

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doctrine of the Trinity is the underlying grammar of the language of faith, then conspicuously exhibiting some of the unique vocabulary of faith can't hurt.

The term "trinitarian," in other words, is now being used to mark out the Christian theological field of discourse as such. There are a couple of downsides to this usage. One is that many books with "Trinity" in the title are not books about the Trinity, which is confusing. Another is that the large number of ostensibly trinitarian theologies is really just the usual assortment of diverse theological projects, all of which now make their appeal to being trinitarian. That shows how high this doctrine's stock has risen. One striking example is the way many feminist theologians have shifted from being standoffish about this doctrine (which, after all, seems to enshrine in its core terminology theopatriarchy and male filial piety) to being committed to bringing the doctrine into the center of their theological undertakings. The watershed year in this regard was probably as far back as 1992, when Elizabeth A. Johnson published *She Who Is*,² and the late Catherine Mowry LaCugna published *God For Us*.³ Each in its own way, these two major works showcased feminist theology binding to itself the strong name of the Trinity. Of course the actual interpretations of the doctrine of the Trinity offered by Johnson or LaCugna were the subject of considerable debate, and the debate often turned on the fundamental methodological decisions of their broader theological projects.⁴ What has changed is that we are all more self-consciously trinitarian now, but when "trinitarian" means "Christian," its content is as fundamentally contested as the term it replaced.

On the positive side, the new usage of "trinitarian" signals a widespread recognition that Christian God talk is identical with biblical monotheism elaborated through a robust Christology and pneumatology, and that the Christian God is not simply God-in-general, but this God in particular: Father, Son, and Spirit. For many Christians, it has seemed that other gods have names, but ours is just called God: The Jewish deity was Yahweh, the Muslim deity was Allah, but the Christian deity seemed to be merely, anonymously, God. The new usage of the word "Trinity" indicates a growing awareness that

the name of our God is the one name of Father, Son, and Spirit.⁵ In that respect, we are still hearing the voice of Karl Barth, echoing down from 1932, when the first volume of his *Church Dogmatics* employed the doctrine of the Trinity to specify the identity of God:

The doctrine of the Trinity is what basically distinguishes the Christian doctrine of God as Christian, and therefore what already distinguishes the Christian concept of revelation as Christian, in contrast to all other possible doctrines of God or concepts of revelation.⁶

Trinitarian theologian Stanley J. Grenz, at the time of his death in 2005, had just completed the second volume of his projected five-volume series, *The Matrix of Christian Theology*, a volume tellingly entitled *The Named God and the Question of Being: A Trinitarian Theo-Ontology*.⁷

The Trinity and World Religions

In a world situation marked by heightened awareness of religious pluralism, the particularism of this trinitarian trend could be seen as a way of drawing sharper boundaries, as if trinitarian theology were a retreat into the fortress of an absolute distinction between us and them. In fact, however, trinitarian theology has proven to be the base of operations for some of the most interesting and productive interreligious dialogue of recent years. Kevin Vanhoozer summarizes the reason for this:

the doctrine of the Trinity, with its dual emphasis on oneness and threeness as equally ultimate, contains unexpected and hitherto unexplored resources for dealing with the problems, and possibilities, of contemporary pluralism.⁸

Earlier works had already begun exploring these resources,⁹ but the past decade has seen a flourishing of trinitarian explorations into interreligious dialogue.¹⁰

Though the many voices in this conversation are saying different things, one idea emerges repeatedly: that Christology and pneumatology provide distinct

ways of understanding God's saving action toward the world. Christology requires recognition of a unique salvation history centered on a chosen people and an unrepeatable historical event. Pneumatology, on the other hand, indicates the universality of spiritual presence to all peoples and throughout the cosmos.

Since both find their homes in a fully elaborated trinitarian theology, the task of a Christian theological account of world religions is tied to trinitarianism. The challenge is to clarify how these two poles are in fact part of one consistent belief. Two wrongs do not make a right, and a narrow, particularist Christocentrism could not be helpfully supplemented by its opposite, a universal affirmation of the Spirit with no specified relation to Christ. To put it another way, it does no good to affirm that Christ is the only way to the Father, if the Spirit turns out to be a way around Christ after all. In some cases, the appeal to trinitarianism as resolution to pluralism may be an attempt to have our cake and eat it too. Thoroughgoing trinitarianism here would argue, with Irenaeus, that the Father reaches into creation with both hands simultaneously, that the Spirit is the Spirit of Christ, and that Christ is the one anointed by that same Spirit.

What is the upshot of this trend toward a trinitarian theology of world religions? It is not just that a well-articulated doctrine of the Trinity equips Christians to come to the table of interreligious dialogue with an identifiably Christian doctrine of God (though that is true). What many of these interlocutors are saying is that their trinitarianism equips them uniquely to account for a wider range of religious claims from all parties. The position staked out by S. Mark Heim is probably the most fully pluralist: that the one triune God actually wills different religious ends for different peoples. But even the proponents of a more exclusivist theology of the religions argue from the presupposition that the divine diversity of trinitarian persons is somehow related to the global diversity of religious claims and experiences. If plurality is an acquired taste, Christians are supposed to have acquired it long ago from the very being of our God. Much more could be said, and no doubt will be, as this area of Trinity talk develops further.

Taking its Proper Place in Systematic Theology

The more pervasive Trinity talk becomes, the more it spreads out from its home base in the doctrine of God proper and infiltrates other doctrinal loci. One indicator of this is the role the Trinity plays in those recent systematic theologies which are intentionally kept as short as possible.¹¹ Two that stand out are Kathryn Tanner's *Jesus, Humanity, and the Trinity*,¹² and the late Colin Gunton's *The Christian Faith*.¹³ Tanner's volume, a preliminary sketch of a promised systematics, delivers a powerful meditation on how God saves the world through the one individual Jesus Christ. It presupposes throughout (as the title indicates) the doctrine of the Trinity as the necessary condition for this redemption to be thinkable. Gunton's volume also attempts to stick to the central plot of salvation and leave the periphery undeveloped. His handling of the Trinity involves a deliberate mimicry of the outline of Friedrich Schleiermacher's masterwork, also entitled (at least in its English translation) *The Christian Faith*. Schleiermacher famously put the doctrine of the Trinity at the very end of his system, as something of an appendix. Gunton likewise postpones the Trinity until the final chapter, but is quite clear that he is doing so to highlight the way all Christian truth finds its final summation in this doctrine. The case studies of Tanner and Gunton showcase how the doctrine of the Trinity carries a great deal of structural weight in the crafting of a systematic theology. The shorter the system, the more the Trinity emerges as crucial for informing all doctrines.¹⁴

The most important works related to the Trinity in the past several years have not been monographs on the doctrine of the Trinity itself, but books devoted primarily to other doctrines. Again, this is significant evidence that trinitarianism is influencing Christian theology as a whole in an unprecedented way: every doctrine is being articulated as if the Trinity mattered. There are examples from loci as far apart as creation, anthropology, soteriology, and ecclesiology. On the doctrine of creation: Colin

Gunton's *The Triune Creator* is one long insistence that the theology of creation must in principle be formed by a recognition of the "immediate mediation" of Son and Spirit, and a warning that in fact "the effective quiescence of christology and pneumatology in the structuring of Western theologies of creation leaves a vacuum which non-biblical ontologies rush to fill."¹⁵ On anthropology: Stanley Grenz's *The Social God and the Relational Self*¹⁶ is sub-titled *A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei*, and showcases Grenz's constructive attempt to mobilize social-trinitarian resources to engage the postmodern de-centered self, taking its fragments up into divine and creaturely saving community. On soteriology, Robert Sherman's *King, Priest and Prophet: A Trinitarian Theology of Atonement*¹⁷ situates the three main types of atonement theories within the three offices of Christ, and appropriates these in turn to the three persons of the Trinity. Sherman argues that it is impossible to understand how the sheer multifaceted wealth of biblical atonement motifs can belong to a single saving act of God, without taking recourse to an elaborate doctrine of the Trinity. On ecclesiology, Miroslav Volf's *After Our Likeness: The Church in the Image of the Trinity*¹⁸ not only sets forth a vigorously trinitarian doctrine of the church from the Free Church perspective, but also provides critical interaction with the ecclesiologies of Joseph Ratzinger and John Zizioulas, each equally concerned to connect church and Trinity. In these and many other fields, theologians are showing a desire to extend trinitarianism into the territory of nearby doctrines, and recognizing that no doctrine is far from the Trinity.

How Practical Can a Doctrine Be?

High modernism had a strong antipathy toward the Trinity, and one of its main reasons for rejecting or (more often) ignoring the doctrine was its sheer irrelevance to any practical concerns. Immanuel Kant put it pointedly: "The doctrine of the Trinity, taken literally, has no practical relevance at all, even if we think we understand it; and it is even more clearly irrelevant if we realize that it transcends

all our concepts."¹⁹ Those theologians who have participated in the retrieval of trinitarian thought from its modern neglect have long seen a major part of their task to be defeating this objection.

The Trinity must be presented as a doctrine with immediate relevance. Catherine Mowry LaCugna is among those who have seized the bull by the horns and declared that "the doctrine of the Trinity is ultimately a practical doctrine with radical consequences for the Christian life."²⁰ Advanced specialists in any field can always be counted on to argue passionately that their sub-divided area of scholarship is incredibly relevant to everybody who will listen. But the academic theologians who argue this way are also being backed up by a whole phalanx of popular-level and pastoral books making a case for why the Trinity matters to ordinary Christians.

There is also something novel in the current version of the push for the practical. That new element is the grounding of beliefs in practices. David S. Cunningham's 1998 book *These Three Are One: The Practice of Trinitarian Theology* is an especially clear representative of the trend.²¹ Cunningham takes his programmatic cue from the Wittgensteinian dictum that "practice gives the words their sense," and approaches the entire doctrine of the Trinity by inquiring into the trinitarian practices that give sense to the words of the doctrine. Water baptism in the name of the Trinity is understandably among the most important of the church's trinitarian practices, and in various ways it looms large in Cunningham's account. But it is not enough for him to interpret current practices in a more explicitly trinitarian way; Cunningham also wants to recommend new trinitarian practices to ground the doctrine. His particular list features themes of hospitality and diversity prominently, and he admits that his list reflects his own social location, while welcoming recommendations from other locations. This, he believes, is the way to answer in advance the question of relevance: to interpret properly the trinitarian dimension of current practices, and to develop new trinitarian practices to give sense to the doctrine.

In arguing this way, Cunningham has apparently read the temper of the times accurately. Most of the contributors to the stimulating 2001 volume *Knowing the Triune God: The Work of the Spirit in*

*the Practices of the Church*²² are comfortable making their arguments under a similar banner. The book is united by the thesis that knowing the triune God (and here, by the way, is one of those titles that uses “triune” primarily as a cipher for specificity rather than as an indicator of the contents of the book) cannot be separated from participating in the practices of a specific community, the church. This thesis, properly handled as it is by most of the essays in the volume, holds great promise for articulating a trinitarianism that draws its vigor directly from the deep roots of the church’s existence in God’s economy. However, at its worst it also runs the risk of flattening knowledge claims down into ethical claims, and seems to require some epistemological accounting that delivers it from being merely pragmatism plus liturgy. Consider, for example, the confusion that could be occasioned by a chapter title from another set of essays: “God is One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic.”²³ The author, D. Brent Laytham, is obviously substituting the marks of the church for the divine attributes in order to make the point, rather puckishly, that the true God is identified by those in the community of faith rather than by another community that might want to appropriate God talk for their ends.

Knowing God

Notwithstanding all the benefits that the turn to practices might convey on the doctrine of the Trinity, there are reasons for caution with this trend. A familiar disputed question in systematic theology is whether theology is primarily a practical science or a speculative science. Any satisfactory answer must be a nuanced one, but the classic *responsio* of Thomas Aquinas voices the dominant Christian answer: “Sacred doctrine is chiefly concerned with God, whose handiwork is especially man. Therefore it is not a practical but a speculative science.”²⁴ It must not be overlooked that the doctrine of the Trinity is first and last a teaching about God. If it also a mystery of salvation (not just a revealed datum), a map of our participation in the

life of God (not just a diagram of God’s interior architecture), or the structuring grammar of a personal encounter (not just a depiction of a distant being), that must be delineated in a way that does not obscure the fact that it articulates knowledge of God. The note of contemplation must not be drowned out in the symphony of practice. In the current climate, one could almost wish for a slightly impractical doctrine of the Trinity.

Most of the devotees of church practices have kept from running over the boundary lines here. In fact, *Knowing The Triune God* carries within itself a vigorous corrective against any pragmatic reductionism, in A. N. Williams’ essay on “Contemplation: Knowledge of God in Augustine’s *De Trinitate*.” Williams draws out this conclusion from Augustine’s treatise on the Trinity:

Theology understood as contemplation would also correct the anthropocentrism of much contemporary theology...The object of Christian contemplation is not the self, but an Other, a trinity of persons who together are self-communicating Truth. Contemplation fosters the apprehension of God as Other, the realization that Christian truth is to be found by engagement with the Trinity, not by looking within or even by looking to creation.²⁵

Matthew Levering goes even further than Williams in this regard. In *Scripture and Metaphysics: Aquinas and the Renewal of Trinitarian Theology*, he undertakes to rehabilitate the somewhat unfashionable idea of trinitarian metaphysical thought, which he views as a complementary discipline to biblical theology. Levering faults a number of modern theologies for failing to recognize “contemplation as the rightful ‘end’ of Trinitarian theology.”²⁶ He warns that “when practical relevance replaces contemplation as the primary goal of Trinitarian theology, the technical precisions of metaphysics come to be seen as meaningless, rather than as ways of deepening our contemplative union with the living God revealed in Scripture.”²⁷ This high road to a metaphysically self-aware trinitarianism may seem to many too austere or unachievable. If so, there are more ground-level books which, while being ostensibly devoted to “why the Trinity matters in practice,” in fact start out from a basis in our knowledge of God,

and then move to pastoral or practical application. Two of the most accomplished offerings are James B. Torrance's *Worship, Community, and the Triune God of Grace*,²⁸ and Paul Fiddes, *Participating in God: A Pastoral Doctrine of the Trinity*.²⁹

The Return of the Immanent Trinity

An important element of recent Trinity talk is that the doctrine of the immanent Trinity has returned to prominence after a period in which it was pushed to the periphery. As with the turn to church practices, this movement also involves the three-step dialectic of (1) a bad situation followed by (2) a sharp corrective which (3) itself requires a counter-corrective. In this case, the bad situation was a centuries-long tradition in which theologians could construct doctrines of the immanent Trinity (the inner life of God, immanent to himself, without reference to creation or redemption) that had no connection with the economic Trinity (God as manifest triunely in the history of salvation). The sharp corrective was set forth in the terminology known as Rahner's Rule: the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity and vice versa. This proposed identification of economic and immanent Trinity ignited some of the most combustible trinitarian theology of the late 20th century, mobilizing major projects like those of Moltmann, Pannenberg, Jenson, and LaCugna.³⁰ This substantial and ecclesially diverse body of work succeeded in re-centering the whole burden of trinitarianism from "God in himself" to "God for us," and is probably the single greatest factor responsible for keeping the Trinity high on the agenda of creative theologians in recent decades.

However, trinitarian thought carried out under the banner of Rahner's Rule did in time evoke a counter-corrective. As the implications of identifying the economic and immanent Trinity become more apparent, some of the leading spokespersons for the trend began to back down from their strongest claims. Colin Gunton pushed hard in the direction of reconnecting with the economy in the essays gathered in his 1991 book *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*,³¹ but sometime after LaCugna's *God For Us* was published,

Gunton began to perceive that the economic thrust was carrying along with it "a polemic against the doctrine of the immanent Trinity."³² In Gunton's view, a consistent application of Rahner's Rule would simply lead to an emptying out of God's being into world history. This emptying out would only be plausible on some kind of revisionist metaphysical presuppositions: process thought, or Hegelianism or some other form of dialectical historicism. Once this became fully clear, a number of theologians found they were unwilling to pursue the otherwise promising line of thought to that conclusion. Reviewing works by LaCugna and Ted Peters,³³ Gunton urged that

The question that must be asked, therefore, is whether Peters' and LaCugna's approaches finally escape the pantheism that results from any attempt to bring God and the world too close... Far from ensuring the relevance of trinitarian categories, the outcome of such a process is to destroy it.³⁴

The counter-corrective which followed from this concern is in no way a denial of the centrality of the economic Trinity for all our knowledge of the immanent. It is instead the assertion that theology needs to recognize and confess the immanent Trinity as ontologically prior to the gracious opening up of God's life to us in the economic Trinity.

The chief exhibit in this counter-corrective is Paul D. Molnar's 2002 monograph, *Divine Freedom and the Doctrine of the Immanent Trinity*.³⁵ In this work, Molnar marshals the evidence for the necessity of affirming and confessing God's freedom, and shows how the doctrine of the immanent Trinity is the appropriate locus for this affirmation and confession.

All Christian theologians realize that the purpose of a doctrine of the immanent Trinity is to recognize, uphold and respect God's freedom. Without theoretical and practical awareness of this freedom all theological statements about the significance of created existence become ambiguous and constitute merely human attempts to give meaning to creation, using theological categories.³⁶

After stating his case in this way, he ranges broadly over the entire field of recent theological work and

exposes numerous failures. Molnar's book doggedly pursues the implications of these failures, especially in connection with theological method and christology. Although Molnar's book is the most comprehensive treatment of the immanent Trinity's importance in the structure of Christian thought, he is not alone in his argument. Something of a backlash is becoming evident against Rahner's Rule altogether, a state of affairs unthinkable a decade ago. It is not the case that Rahner's Rule, even in its strictest form which seems to entail denial of the immanent Trinity, has no defenders on the contemporary scene. But a great number of theologians now see a distinction between the economic and immanent Trinity where they did not before, and are heavily invested in remaining committed to the economic Trinity without lapsing into bare economic reductionism by surrendering the immanent Trinity altogether. They want to preserve divine aseity without backing off of what Ted Peters has called in this context *emmanuelism*, God's character as God with us. This trend stands in considerable tension with another trend: the development of a family of projects gathered under the heading of "open and relational theologies." This is an umbrella term (used as the title of an American Academy of Religion study unit) which intentionally includes philosophical pantheism, a variety of process theologies, open theism, and other movements which bear that "open and relational" family resemblance. As of this writing, I think it is fair to say that the immanent Trinity is not apparently consistent with most of the theologies included under this banner, and for the time being the two seem mutually exclusive.

Spade Work for the Task Ahead

A final element of Trinity talk today belongs properly in the field of historical theology. Revisionist readings of all manner of church fathers and major theologians are proliferating, and many of these have direct bearing on how contemporary theology will continue developing its understanding of the Trinity. Trinitarian theology, though carried out in the present tense by systematic theologians, is always

conducted by way of living dialogue, however critical or accepting, with the formative thinkers in the history of the doctrine. Many of our accounts of the foundational figures and decisions have become clichés and oversimplifications operating at considerable distance from any exposure to primary texts.

The most irritating oversimplification is probably the rule of thumb, which somehow has become ubiquitous even at the popular level, that Eastern trinitarian thought begins with the three persons while Western trinitarian thought begins with the one essence. Anybody who has tried to engage a few of the church fathers closely has probably experienced the disjunction between that organizing schema and the kind of arguments and idioms actually found in the texts. The East-West schema is about as (un)helpful for trinitarian theology as the old God-Man vs. Word-Flesh schema was for explaining that reification of Alexandrine and Antiochene christologies. Michel René Barnes has undertaken some very helpful archaeology underlying this schema, and has concluded that it was formulated by French Augustinians in polemical contrast to the categories of the historian Theodore De Regnon.³⁷ Wouldn't it be wonderful if this obtuse advance organizer could be left behind on the way to some new oversimplifications?

Another important re-reading is the account Lewis Ayres offers of the pivotal fourth century in his 2004 book *Nicaea and its Legacy*. Ayres rightly argues that "recent Trinitarian theology has engaged the legacy of Nicaea at a fairly shallow level, frequently relying on assumptions about Nicene theology that are historically indefensible and overlooking the wider theological matrices within which particular theological terminologies were situated."³⁸ He hopes that his book (and the recent scholarship it draws on) will "challenge modern Trinitarian theologians to rethink some of their most cherished assumptions."³⁹

Though they pale in comparison with Nicaea itself, important figures such as Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine of Hippo, and Cyril of Alexandria have also found champions in recent years to argue for their rehabilitation and put their voices back into the conversation on the Trinity. Thomas Aquinas has taken on a new profile recently, emerging as more of

a Bible commentator and spiritual writer than we have been prone to think of him.⁴⁰ Such an Aquinas will not be so easy a target for blame about the neglect of the doctrine of the Trinity or its supposed subordination to a general doctrine of God. Richard Muller's massive work on the Trinity in post-reformation reformed dogmatics,⁴¹ along with Philip Dixon's *Nice and Hot Disputes: The Doctrine of the Trinity in the Seventeenth Century*⁴² provide a wealth of information and analysis of the crucial centuries after the Reformation, on the cusp of modernity. Until now there have not been detailed guides to these periods.

Surely with their colleagues in historical theology doing this amount of careful work, and writing about it accessibly, systematic theologians will take the time to engage the history of doctrine with a renewed sense of the tradition in which they stand and the constructive task in front of them. The doctrine of the Trinity is a showpiece of classical Christian understanding, and its articulation and re-articulation through the centuries provide a great example of contemporary theology engaging God's self-revelation by way of the centuries-long conversation with scripture. "These, being dead, yet speak," and the present is a very promising time for a more inclusive round of Trinity talk than we have yet heard in the modern world.

Endnotes

1. Ted Peters, "Trinity Talk," Parts I and II, for "Theology Update" column, *Dialog*, 26:1 (Winter 1987) 44–48 and 26:2 (Spring 1987) 133–38; and more recently Fred Sanders, "Entangled in the Trinity: Economic and Immanent Trinity in Recent Theology," *Dialog*, 40:3 (Fall 2001), 175–182.

2. Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (Crossroad, 1992).

3. Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God For Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (HarperCollins, 1992).

4. See for instance Kathryn Greene-McCreight, *Feminist Reconstructions of Christian Doctrine: Narrative Analysis and Appraisal* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2000).

5. This thesis was argued pointedly by Robert W. Jenson in *The Triune Identity: God According to the Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1982). For its continuing influence at a more popular level, see Roderick Leupp's *Knowing the Name of God: A Trinitarian Tapestry of Grace, Faith, and Community* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996).

6. Karl Barth: *Church Dogmatics*, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, 4 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936–69); I/1, 301.

7. This work will be published this year by Westminster/John Knox Press. Grenz had already recently published an overview of twentieth-century trinitarian theology, *Rediscovering the Triune God: The Trinity in Contemporary Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004).

8. "Introduction" to *The Trinity in a Pluralistic Age: Theological Essays on Culture and Religion*, edited by Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), x.

9. Raimundo Pannikar, *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man: Icon – Person – Mystery* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1973).

10. Gavin D'Costa, *The Meeting of Religions and the Trinity* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000); S. Mark Heim, *The Depth of the Riches: A Trinitarian Theology of Religious Ends* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001); Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Trinity and Religious Pluralism: The Doctrine of the Trinity in Christian Theology of Religions* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2004).

11. Mention should probably be made here of Robert W. Jenson's two volume systematic theology, but in spite of its amazing compression, it remains a little too long to be called short.

12. Kathryn Tanner, *Jesus, Humanity and the Trinity: A Brief Systematic Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001).

13. Colin E. Gunton, *The Christian Faith: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishers, 2002).

14. A counter-example is Paul F. M. Zahl, *A Short Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000). Zahl has pursued a different strategy in stating the heart of the gospel, leaving the structure of his book unmarked by the Trinity.

15. Colin E. Gunton, *The Triune Creator: A Historical and Systematic Study* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 102.

16. Stanley J. Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001).

17. Robert Sherman, *King, Priest and Prophet: A Trinitarian Theology of Atonement* (London: T & T Clark, 2004).

18. Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

19. Immanuel Kant, *The Conflict of the Faculties*, trans. Mary J. Gregor (NY: Abaris Books, 1979), 65.

20. Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God For Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991), 1.

21. David S. Cunningham, *These Three are One: The Practice of Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998).

22. James J. Buckley and David S. Yeago, editors, *Knowing the Triune God: The Work of the Spirit in the Practices of the Church* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2001).

23. D. Brent Laytham, editor, *God is Not: Religious, Nice, "One of Us," an American, a Capitalist* (Brazos Press, 2004).

24. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* Prima Pars, question 1, article 4, *responsio*.

25. Williams, in *Knowing the Triune God*, 121–146, at 145.

26. Matthew Levering, *Scripture and Metaphysics: Aquinas and the Renewal of Trinitarian Theology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), 2.

27. Levering, *Scripture and Metaphysics*, 3.

28. James B. Torrance, *Worship, Community, and the Triune God of Grace* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1997).

29. Paul Fiddes, *Participating in God: A Pastoral Doctrine of the Trinity* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001).
30. I have taken up this issue in detail in Fred Sanders, *The Image of the Immanent Trinity: Rabner's Rule and the Theological Interpretation of Scripture* (NY: Peter Lang, 2005).
31. Colin E. Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1991).
32. From Gunton's review of LaCugna in *Scottish Journal of Theology* 47/1 (1994), 136–7.
33. Ted Peters, *GOD as Trinity: Relationality and Temporality in Divine Life* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993).
34. Colin Gunton, "The God of Jesus Christ," *Theology Today* 54 (October 1997), 328–9.
35. Paul D. Molnar, *Divine Freedom and the Doctrine of the Immanent Trinity: In Dialogue with Karl Barth and Contemporary Theology* (London, T & T Clark, 2002).
36. Molnar, *Divine Freedom*, ix.
37. Michel Rene Barnes, "De Regnon Reconsidered," *Augustinian Studies* 26.2 (1995), 51–79.
38. Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1.
39. Ayres, *Nicaea*, 2.
40. See for example Nicholas Healy, *Thomas Aquinas: Theologian of the Christian Life* (Ashgate, 2003).
41. Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), Volume Four: The Trinity of God.
42. Philip Dixon, *Nice and Hot Disputes: The Doctrine of the Trinity in the Seventeenth Century* (London: T & T Clark, 2003).