The unfinished business of Trinitarian theorizing

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Abstract: In recent years, many resourceful thinkers have brought a new clarity to the issues surrounding the doctrine of the Trinity. Two incompatible families of Trinitarian doctrine have been clearly distinguished: Social Trinitarianism and Latin Trinitarianism. I argue here that no theory in either camp has yet evaded the triune pitfalls of inconsistency, unintelligibility, and poor fit with the Bible. These two main approaches appear to be hopeless, and I argue that appeals to 'mystery' are no way to avoid the difficulties at hand. Thus, the Trinitarian project is as yet unfinished.

Three pitfalls and an inconsistent triad

Anyone who talks to many Christians about the Trinity will discover that there is no one set of beliefs held by all, despite there being standard formulae which nearly all endorse. One discovers several incompatible ways of understanding those formulae, each with its adherents. In addition, probably most Christians find themselves moving back and forth between these different beliefs, with the most thoughtful changing (and changing back) most often. The good news is that recent discussions have brought unprecedented clarity to the whole issue. Numerous thoughtful people have recently explored many paths through this maze. These paths are now well mapped out, and curious travellers can discover in advance where they lead. The bad news I bear in what follows is that recent efforts have revealed only so many dead ends. Trinitarians must continue their search for the right path.

The doctrine of the Trinity has a long and interesting history. This long discussion is fundamentally an attempt to make sense of what the New Testament says about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, together with what the Old Testament says about the God of Abraham, Moses, David, Isaiah, and the rest. In this paper I will avoid as much of this post-biblical tradition as I can, along with its Latin and Greek terminology. I do this not out of disrespect, lack of interest, or a mistaken belief that folks from the distant past have nothing relevant to say, but *only* because I want to focus on the most difficult philosophical problems facing

various versions of the doctrine, problems which are often obscured by historical concerns, unthinking repetition of traditional formulae, longstanding party spirit, and the political issue of heresy. To the degree it is possible, I will use contemporary language, and I will discuss only recent incarnations of the doctrine.

I want to focus on three basic problems which threaten Trinitarian theories: inconsistency, unintelligibility, and poor fit with the Bible. Let us consider these in turn. Some Trinitarian claims appear to be contradictory. This is a problem, for what is contradictory is also false. Others seem unintelligible. That is, one cannot understand what the speaker or writer is saying; they are using words, but for all one can tell, they are not really saying anything. Finally, some Trinitarian claims seem to either contradict or not fit together well with the clear teachings of the Bible. These are apparent problems for various versions of the doctrine, but are they real problems? Is there a doctrine of the Trinity which is consistent, intelligible, and scripturally kosher?

Consider the following six Trinitarian claims:

(1)   God is divine.
(2)   The Father of Jesus Christ is divine.
(3)   The Son, Jesus Christ, is divine.
(4)   The Holy Spirit is divine.
(5)   The Father is not the Son is not the Holy Spirit is not God. That is, these four – Father, Son, Holy Spirit, God – are numerically distinct individuals.

This last claim can be broken into two parts:

(5a)   These three are numerically distinct: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
(5b)   God is numerically distinct from any of these: Father, Son, Holy Spirit.

(6)   Whatever is divine is identical to at least one of these: the Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit.[1]

The word 'God' here is a proper name, referring to that wonderful individual we meet in the Old Testament: Yahweh ('The LORD' in many English translations, YHWH in Hebrew). The word 'divine' has primary and secondary uses.[2] In the primary sense, the word 'divine' refers to the property of being a divinity or being a god, some sort of supernatural personal being. In secondary senses, 'divine' is used to describe things somehow related to (perhaps very closely related to) things which are 'divine' in the primary sense. Thus various properties (e.g. omniscience) the church, the scriptures, angels, and various people may be called 'divine'. According to the biblical writers, God is divine in the primary sense. Thus, if we accept their testimony, we must accept (1), understanding 'divine' in

this way. One may object that biblical writers don't conceive of God in a full-blown Trinitarian manner, so one can't read them as assuming or implying (1).³ This worry is based on a misreading. (1) doesn't say 'the triune, three-personed God is divine', but only 'Yahweh is divine'. This begs no questions, for Trinitarians, anti-Trinitarians, and everyone in between assumes that the God in the Old Testament is supposed to be numerically the same individual as the God in the New Testament. Abraham, Moses, Paul, and John are all supposed to worship the same being, though their understandings of his nature may differ. Various New Testament writings assert (2)–(4); each of the three Persons seems to have at least one property sufficient for being divine in some sense, such as existing 'before' the world, being an uncreated creator of the world, or being worthy of worship. (5) is a complicated claim that includes two parts. (5a) is a datum of the New Testament. Things are true of the Son which are not true of the Father or the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the Son is not the same individual as the Father or the Holy Spirit. The Son was sent by the Father, but the Father was not sent by the Father. The Son was crucified, but the Father and Spirit were not. The Spirit was given to the church at Pentecost, but the Father and Son were not. For each of the three, there are things true of him which are not true of the other two. What about the last part of (5)? (5b) says that God is not identical to the Father, or the Son, or the Holy Spirit. This is *not* a datum of the New Testament, but is required by the popular social version of Trinitarian doctrine, to be discussed in the next section below. (6) also seems to be a datum of the New Testament. No other individual in those writings has properties sufficient to guarantee divinity. Those three – the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – have a special status and prominence there.

(1)–(6) are an inconsistent set of claims. (More exactly, it is the set of (1), (5), and (6) which are inconsistent, but it will be useful to consider the entire group (1)–(6).) As a matter of logic, they cannot all be true; at least one of them has to be false. It's not hard to see why. (6) says that anything which is divine is identical to the Father, or the Son, or the Holy Spirit (perhaps more than one). But (1) says that God is divine, and (5) says that He is not identical to any of those other three divine persons.

On the face of it, on scriptural grounds a Christian must believe every proposition but (5), which has an extra-scriptural element, (5b). Thus, it seems a Christian ought to deny (5). If (5) is false, then at least two of those four names (God, Father, Son, Holy Spirit) are names of the same individual.⁴ Further, if (5a) is implied by the scriptures, then it is (5b) which should be denied. If we affirm (5a) and deny (5b), God must just be the same thing as exactly one of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Since they are numerically distinct, if God is identical to one, he is not identical to the other two.

At least one of (1), (5), and (6) must go. I have all too briefly argued that a Christian should reject (5), because of (5b). There are, of course, other strategies

to consider: rejecting (1), rejecting (6), or rejecting *both* (1) and (6). Any one of these moves allows one to consistently believe (2)–(5). The two main approaches to the Trinity in the literature of the last thirty years always, as far as I can tell, either (a) jettison at least one of (1) and (6), or (b) deny (5), replacing it with a false or unintelligible claim, or (c) fail to clearly take a stand on each of (1), (5), and (6). We'll begin by looking at that family of theories which takes the first route. In later sections, we'll examine the two remaining approaches.

Social Trinitarianism

The two most popular approaches to understanding the doctrine of the Trinity are standardly called Latin Trinitarianism (LT) and Social Trinitarianism (ST).[5] Only ST implies (5), so we will examine it first. Like many, I was introduced to ST by the fine work of the American theologian, Cornelius Plantinga.[6] I found it to be a breath of fresh air, for it clearly affirmed (5a). This seemed a good fit with my reading of the New Testament. According to ST, God – that is, the three-personed 'Godhead' – is identical to a *community* of divine persons. This community is composed of three different personal parts – the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In this way ST completely clears up the most obscure relations in traditional Trinitarian theorizing: the relations between the individual persons (No, says ST, they aren't identical), and the relations between God and the persons collectively (God just is the sum of those three).[7] (6) is also affirmed by many forms of ST. We'll consider a version below that denies (6).

How does ST imply (5b)? This principle is self-evident: nothing is identical to one of its proper parts. If any thing X is composed of three different proper parts, A, B, and C, then X is not identical to either A, B, or C.[8] Therefore, if God is identical to this community, then He can't also be identical to one member of it, for instance the Holy Spirit. In sum, if ST is true, then so is (5).

ST does *not* commit one to an inconsistent set of propositions ((1)–(6) or (1), (5), (6)); its proponents have anticipated and avoided this problem. Subtleties aside, according to most versions of ST, (1) is false. Whatever is divine in the primary sense is a person, a personal being. But according to ST, God is *not* a person, but is only a group of persons.[9] What is not a person is not divine, not a divinity. Thus, God is not divine. Sadly, for all its lovely virtues, this seems to be the death of ST. An acceptable doctrine of the Trinity must be compatible with the scriptures, and the scriptures imply (1). Proponents of ST have described several ways one can talk and think about of God on their theory *as if* it were personal. They are right about this: we often do think of and speak of communities of persons (e.g. teams, countries, families, churches, schools) as if they were persons. But in the end, communities are just not persons.

Some ST theorists will respond as follows: 'Not so fast! We think there are three divine persons, and that God is composed of these. We also think that *God* is

a person! How could we deny such a thing?' Of course, it is rarely *said* that God is a person in addition to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But it is frequently claimed in Trinitarian theorizing that God is a thing which has features only personal beings can have, such as knowledge, self-consciousness, power to intentionally act, moral goodness, and such. In making such claims, one implicitly claims that God is a person. Whether she explicitly or implicitly claims that God is a person numerically distinct from the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, she denies claim (6) above. She believes in a divine Quaternity, not in a divine Trinity. She might reply that God is a 'person' in a different sense than the three components are 'persons'. Until one spells out what this other sense of 'person' is, one has a distinction without a difference, a merely verbal solution to the problem. Attempts to spell it out inevitably fall into one of two traps. First, this new talk of a 'person' which is not a personal being in the normal sense may fail to be intelligible; it may be so much wind. Second, the new definition of 'person' may imply the old one, so that whatever is a person in the new sense must *also* be a person in the normal sense: a conscious being with intelligence and the ability to perform intentional actions. If that is so, the new conception of personhood may be intelligible but it will not be helpful; on this sort of account, one is still committed to (1)–(4).

What is wrong with positing four beings which are divine persons in the same sense, so long as one is composed of the other three? The problem is this: in the New Testament, we encounter three divine and wonderful personal beings. In those pages there is no *additional* person called 'God' or 'the Godhead'. Many careful readers have noticed that in the New Testament 'God' and 'the Father' are almost always two names for one thing.[10] They are used more or less interchangeably. The most interesting exceptions to this are passages where the term 'God' is applied descriptively to the Son of God. In such passages, the word 'God' isn't a name for the individual Yahweh, but is rather a descriptive term like 'divine', which says something about what sort of being the Son is. Whatever basis there is for a *fourth* divine person, it isn't the scriptures. To defend this claim I would have to do exegetical work that I can't undertake here. In this short paper I will just say, let the reader check for herself.

Another way someone could try to escape the Quaternity problem goes something like this: 'Though the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are persons, God is not a person, but he is not less than a person. Rather, God is more than a person'.[11] In reply, the claim that God is more than a person is unintelligible, because we can't conceive of a greater kind of being than a personal being.[12] It seems that if there were a greatest possible being, it would have to be a personal being. Admittedly, many are attracted by this sort of 'God-is-a-something-we-know-not-what' doctrine, but this sort of view isn't theism at all, for many of the attributes theists think of God as having (e.g. omniscience, omnipotence, compassion, faithfulness, justice) imply personhood.

Versions of ST are often derided as tritheism, and not monotheism at all. I think this objection is less serious that the ones just given. As proponents of ST have remarked, on the face of it, it isn't obvious that Trinitarianism shouldn't be understood as some special kind of tritheism. Also, defenders of ST respond that on their theory there are three divine beings, and yet there is also a being which is divine in a unique sense – either the Father or the community. If it is the Father who is uniquely divine, then many will object that the three persons are not equal at all, and that we instead have one 'real' God and two 'second-class' gods.[13] This objection seems wrongheaded to me, if we assume that any Trinitarian wants to say that 'generation', 'procession', or 'begetting' relations obtain between the persons. Whatever these amount to, they would seem to be asymmetric onto-logical dependence relations, implying *some* sort of ontological inequality. Thus, I see no problem in ST theorists saying that the Father is uniquely divine. Of course, if it is the community which is uniquely 'divine', then one is using 'divine' in a secondary sense. To say that the community is 'divine' thus means that it is related to at least one divinity in some way, such as being composed of three of them. Such a community would be an interesting thing indeed, but it would not be the Yahweh we meet in the Old Testament, who is a unique, loving, all-powerful, faithful, and generous divine person. To suggest that what is revealed as a personal being in the Old Testament is *really* (we later find out in the New Testament) an impersonal society of personal beings is to charge God (or rather, some or all of the three persons which compose it) with deception, and the prophets with being badly mistaken about Yahweh.

ST theorists also reply to the tritheism charge by saying that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not three *independent* persons. As it stands, this is an am-biguous claim. Is relational or ontological interdependence being asserted? ST theorists usually emphasize their relational interaction – their mutual love, co-operation, intimate access to one another's thoughts, unity of will, and so on. All this, however true, is quite irrelevant. Three personal beings, no matter how close their personal relationships, do not for that reason compose a single person. More to the point are dark assertions about the *periochoresis* or 'coinherence' or 'mutual permeation' (etc.) of the three divine persons.[14] The point of these claims, I take it, is that the three persons are somehow ontologically, or meta-physically, and not just relationally 'mixed together'. This kind of *periochoresis*-talk seems firmly stuck at the metaphorical level. We imagine spatial coincidence or perhaps chemical combination, but these are surely not what they are trying to assert. Surely they don't mean to suggest that the three persons share a common stuff or matter, or that their three portions of matter overlap. It appears that there is no way to 'cash out' this metaphor into literal assertion, and that no-one can say why the metaphor is appropriate. Contrast with other divine metaphors, such as calling God a 'Father' who 'begat' a 'Son', or calling Jesus 'the Word', 'the light', or 'the Vine'. Here we can translate the metaphorical talk into literal talk,

and if the resulting claims are reasonable and appropriate, so is our use of the metaphor. I take it that these metaphors *are* kosher, and for just this reason. But one suspects that all proponents mean by *periochoresis* in this context is '*whatever it is* which makes divine persons combine to make a further person'. If they have more in mind than this, they must answer the following question: Even if it is true that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit 'metaphysically interpenetrate' (whatever this means) why do they *for that reason* constitute a fourth person? That is, exactly what is it about *periochoresis* that makes this so? Without an answer to this, such metaphors simply hide an unintelligible claim.

In sum, there are two ways that ST theories respond to the problem of this paper. Some versions commit to (2)–(6) and deny (1). But we have roughly the same grounds for believing (1) as we do for believing (2)–(4): the biblical writers, inspired by God, tell us these things. To deny (1) is to claim that the biblical writers are badly mistaken about the nature of Yahweh. Alternately, ST may embrace (1)–(5) and deny (6), at the price of unintelligibility and/or running against the grain of the New Testament by proposing a Quaternity. Either way, ST is an unappealing metaphysics of God.

Latin Trinitarianism

What about the other kind of Trinitarian theory, LT, which is certainly closer to the historical tradition, at least in the Latin West? Any form of LT denies the ST claim that God is at bottom a community of divine persons. How does LT respond to the problem of this paper? One must distinguish, I think, between what I'll call 'popular LT' and 'refined LT'. Popular LT denies (5). It doesn't then rest content with merely (1)–(4) and (6), an obviously consistent set of claims, but substitutes something else for (5), which is represented in the famous Trinitarian diagram below.

Why exactly is (5) false, according to popular LT? It is false because (contrary to (5b)) the Son is identical to God, the Father is identical to God, the Spirit is identical to God, and yet none of those three persons are identical to one another. The threefold distinction 'in' God is real, not conceptual – there is in God himself, and not merely in our thinking about him, a three-fold division of persons, according to any form of LT. Accordingly, (5) should be replaced with:

(5^I) The Father is identical to God, the Son is identical to God, and the Holy Spirit is identical to God, but the Father is not identical to the Son, the Son is not identical to the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is not identical to the Father.[15]

In other words, these three – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – are each numerically identical to God, but are numerically distinct from one another. We can read this in the picture following if we interpret the 'is' there as an 'is' of identification.
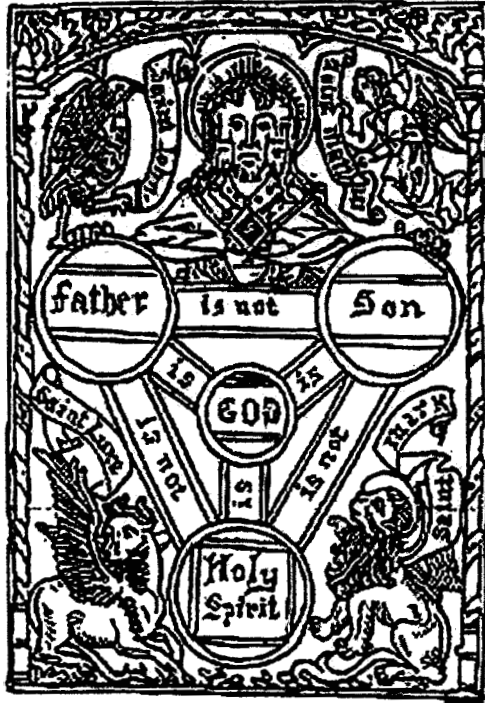
Having done this, we still don't have a consistent set of Trinitarian claims; this time the contradiction is within a single premise! All of (1)–(6) can't be true because (5^I) is a contradiction, a necessary falsehood. By its very structure, it is false, because the identity relation ($=$) is transitive. For any *a*, *b*, and *c* whatever, if *a*=*b*, and *b*=*c*, then *a*=*c*. By this rule of inference, it follows from (5^I) that the Father is the Son, the Son is the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is the Father, all of which are expressly denied in (5^I). In other words, (5^I) is equivalent to this statement: 'The Father, Son, Holy Spirit, and God are just one thing, *and* they are not'.

The common expedient to get around this problem is a strong dose of modalism, the claim that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one individual, God.[16] This temptation stares back at us in the above diagram; we see one personal being with three faces, three ways of presenting itself, and relating to world. (In contrast, ST is more in line with the traditions in Christian art of drawing the Godhead as three men, three angels, or two men and a dove.) Many versions of LT, both scholarly and non-scholarly, appear to be indistinguishable from modalism, though their authors verbally deny modalism.[17] A modalist accepts (1), but must deny (2)–(6). Modalism has no problems at all with consistency and intelligibility, but it utterly fails as a way to read the New Testament. If modalism were true, it

would be a mistake to think that the Father and the Son have a wonderful, loving, co-operative personal relationship. Rather, what we see in the Gospels would really amount to a single individual (God) communicating to, relating to, and cooperating *with Himself* in various roles, much as a human suffering from multiple personality disorder or a versatile actor does. This is a terrible reading of the New Testament, which is why nearly all Christians in all ages have (at least, officially and in their clear-headed moments) rejected modalism. The Trinitarian interactions therein are not to be thought of as divine delusion, pretending, or deceit.

We've seen that popular LT and modalism are unacceptable. But what about refined LT? In one version, the logical prowess of contemporary English language analytic philosophy rides to the rescue of LT. A number of philosophers have shown that Trinitarian statements can be interpreted so as to form a consistent set of claims. One merely has to deny that there is any such relation as identity (=).[18] They replace (5) with this:

> (5^{II})   Each divine person (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) is *the same god as* the others, but is not *the same person as* the others.

Questions of numerical identity are ruled out as meaningless or wrong-headed. The only kind of identity there is, on the theory of relative identity, is identity relative to a kind of thing. Unfortunately, the theory of relative identity is false, for it is self-evident that there is such a relation as identity. We can think and talk about individual things such as ourselves, each other, and objects in the world, and concerning each of those things, it is evident that it is identical to itself.[19] What is identity? It is 'the only relation that everything has to itself and nothing has to anything else'.[20] Everyone both grasps what the identity relation is and knows that it obtains in reality.

But suppose that the relative-identity Trinitarian grants that there is a coherent notion of (non-relative) identity, but nonetheless claims that there are irreducible relations of relative identity[21] such as *same person as*, and that two non-identical things can be the same (some kind of thing) and yet different (some other kind of thing), as in (5^{II}). There are at least two problems with these sorts of claims. First, they are unintelligible. What does it mean to say, for example, that the Son is 'the same god as' the Father, but not the same person as the Father? Isn't a god, a divine being, just a very special kind of personal being? The more one reflects on (5^{II}), the harder it is to see what it means. No philosopher has given a convincing example of two things which are the same (some kind of thing) but not the same (some other kind of thing). One would be incredulous if told, for example, that John and Peter were the same apostle but different men, or that Rover and Spot were the same mammal but different dogs. Why should one be less incredulous at claims like (5^{II}), or the claim that the Son is the same being as, but a different

person than the Father? It seems that this sort of refined LT is to attempt to illuminate the obscure by the obscure.[22] Developments of relative-identity logics do nothing to remedy this; such logics, like many others, seem to have no application to reality.[23] For instance, suppose that one could state Trinitarian claims consistently in a four-valued logic. This would be little comfort, because no one can make sense of the theory that claims can be true, false, ___, or ___ (where something akin to truth and falsehood fills these two blanks). At best, this sort of refined LT can give us a version of internally consistent Trinitarian claims, but it does so at the price of unintelligibility.

Brian Leftow has recently explored a different kind of refined LT, which stands squarely in the mainstream of historical Trinitarian theorizing.[24] His theory employs the notion of a 'trope', which is an individual rather than a universal attribute. For instance, Vladimir Putin and George Bush would each would have his own trope of humanity, though if there are universal properties, they would both possess the one universal *humanity* which all humans possess. According to Leftow's refined LT,

> … there is just one divine being (or substance), God. God constitutes three Persons, but all three are at bottom just God. … while Father and Son instance the divine nature (deity), they have but one trope of deity between them, which is God's. … But bearers individuate tropes. If the Father's deity is God's, this is because the Father *just is* God … LT's persons have God in common, though not exactly as a common part.[25]

It is difficult to make sense of this passage (because of the language that suggests identity, e.g. 'the Father *just is* God', and the suggestion that the Father and God are one individual) but as I interpret it, the three persons are not identical ((5a) is true), and they somehow share God. It would seem that whatever the relation between God and the each of the three persons is supposed to be, it is supposed to be something less than identity, so the theory affirms (5b) as well. It is not clear whether it also affirms (1) or (6). Leftow's refined LT isn't refined enough, for it faces at least three problems. First, if the above reading is right, though we are told that all four (Father, Son, Holy Spirit, God) share a trope of divinity, we are still left in the dark about the relation between the three persons and God. Is God composed of them, or are they composed of Him? In what sense could they constitute or compose each other? Second, is God a personal being or not? If He is, how could three other persons 'have Him in common', and how can we accept a doctrine of Quaternity? If it isn't a personal being, (1) is denied, and the account fails for the same reason that ST fails. Third, it seems impossible that two numerically distinct things should both wholly possess one individual attribute (trope). Consider our incredulity at the claim, for instance, that two men have a single height trope. Why shouldn't we be equally incredulous of the claim that non-identical things share a divinity trope? If so I conclude that Leftow's refined LT is not a viable Trinitarian theory.

'Mysteries'

Where does this leave us? The Trinitarian dilemma is that we can't ignore the problems facing the doctrine, and yet it would appear that our best minds have not solved these problems. Thanks to hard, careful, and honest work by a number of Christian philosophers and theologians in recent years, both ST and LT now look unpromising. Some Christians believe that unintelligibility, inconsistency, and poor fit with the Bible are *good* features of their own form of Trinitarianism. To such people I would suggest a look at the LT and ST literature, or perhaps anti-Trinitarian literature from Jewish, Muslim, Unitarian, Mormon, or Arian sources. Such persons are immune from that peculiar blend of inconsistency, nonsense, proof-texting, mere defensiveness, and special pleading which plagues the Trinitarian camp. Of course, these other camps suffer from their own peculiar vices, but the point is that they are not in love with *our* confusions, and so they can help us to see them. It's too easy to view one's own contradictions and nonsense as evidence that one has been in touch with Transcendent Reality, rather than as mere evidence that one is confused.

Even after one appreciates these problems and tries to address them, there is an almost irresistible temptation to spin a vice as a virtue. Many protest that the doctrine is 'supposed to be a mystery'. Such protests constitute one of two things. The speaker may have simply reached the end of her rope, or she may be expressing a positive claim about the Trinity. If the former, then faced with some contradiction or obscurity in her own thinking, she is simply expressing her desire that the conversation end, and making a suggestion that since further clarity is unattainable, further inquiry would be pointless. One can then ask how she knows that further clarity is unattainable. It seems to me that no-one has ever come forward with a good reason for this kind of pessimism. In any case, most Christian philosophers would not accept this sort of cop-out from members of other religions defending their distinctive theses about God, Brahman, the Absolute, Nirvana, the Real, etc. They wouldn't applaud such moves, but would consider them an apologetic opportunity, a chance to point out insoluble problems with the world-view in question and the superior coherence of Christian theism. What is an intellectual vice for non-Christians can't be an intellectual virtue for Christians. But, such a protester may not be copping out, but may be expressing a consistent line on the doctrine of the Trinity.

If the doctrine of the Trinity is supposed to be a 'mystery', we should ask what is meant by 'mystery'. I find at least five meanings of 'mystery' in play. First, there is the main New Testament sense of 'mystery': a truth formerly unknown, and perhaps undiscoverable by unaided human reason, but which has now been revealed by God and is known by some. Probably every believer in some Trinitarian doctrine believes it to be a mystery in this sense. Second, a 'mystery' may be something we don't completely understand, something whose entire essence

we can't grasp.[26] But the universe is full of mysteries like this from top to bottom, quite apart from the supernatural: time, space, matter, black holes, biological life, human beings, human consciousness, the brain, etc. Surely anyone who believes in God (Trinitarian or not) agrees that God is also a mystery in this sense. But admitting this still leaves us with the problems rehearsed above. Third, a 'mystery' may be some fact that we can't explain, or can't fully or adequately explain. Most Trinitarians agree that they can't adequately explain the fact of the Trinity.[27] In the present discussion, it seems, the issue of explanation is a red herring. Fourth, by 'mystery' some mean an unintelligible doctrine, the meaning of which can't be grasped. But as Richard Cartwright remarks, Christians 'are asked to believe the propositions expressed by the words, not simply that the words express some true propositions or other, we know not which'.[28] What can't be grasped or understood can't be believed. One can assent to sentences, to English (or Latin or Greek, etc.) formulae, and believe or hope that they express some truth, but one can't really *believe* what is unintelligible. Nor can such a 'belief' guide one's conduct apart from the endorsement of words; there can be no proper application of or living out of such a Trinitarian faith, for if one doesn't understand a claim, one can't draw out any implications of it. In this sense, a 'revealed mystery' is a contradiction in terms. If God has given us words which remain mumbo-jumbo to us, then any truths expressed by those words have yet to be revealed to us. Fifth, by 'mystery' some mean a truth which one should believe even though it seems, even after careful reflection, to be impossible and/or contradictory and thus false.[29] Are there any mysteries in this sense? Can one *reasonably* believe an apparent contradiction?

It seems to me that one can, if two somewhat hard-to-specify conditions are met. First, one must have very strong grounds for believing the claim or claims in question. Second, one must have some reason to suspect that the contradiction is only apparent.[30] Unless these two conditions are met, one ought not believe any apparent contradiction, for what is apparently contradictory is for that reason apparently false. With our claims (1)–(6) above, or the inconsistent triad (1), (5), (6), the second of these conditions is not met, for the contradiction is crystal clear.[31] Even if one denies that, it is doubtful that we have strong enough grounds for (1)–(6) to swallow the apparent contradiction. The only way we could have strong grounds for (1)–(6) or any version of the doctrine would be if we very reasonably believed it had been revealed by God. Presumably, the doctrine would appear in the Christian scriptures. But in a sense that everyone really familiar with the issue understands, full-blown doctrines of the Trinity are not at all data of the New Testament, but are rather the product of serious, careful efforts to understand what is there, efforts which are ongoing. Other Christians believe that some version of the doctrine has been revealed by way of various church councils. Trinitarians of either camp mount complex arguments to the effect that their form of the doctrine is implicitly in the scriptures or is the best all-things-considered

way to interpret what is there, or that God Himself acted through council pro-
ceedings to reveal certain truths to the world. Fair enough – such cases deserve
examination, which can't be done here. My only point is that a non-negligible
amount of doubt always attaches to these cumulative case arguments. When it
comes to the texts of the Bible, the support for various forms of Trinitarianism
is not as strong as it might be; much of the Trinitarianism alleged to be there
evaporates on a careful and fair reading. When it comes to viewing the councils as
instruments of revelation, many agree that the record of councils, even the major
ones, is extremely spotty. One finds contradictory, morally objectionable, and
unintelligible claims in their documents, as well as some which seem a poor fit
with scripture. As to the way these proceedings occurred, one finds a lot more
than the hand of God there! Still, one could try to make a case that, in these pro-
ceedings, God revealed the truth of the Trinity to His people. But whether one
grounds the doctrine in the Bible or in council documents, one will be hard
pressed to show that we are *so* justified in believing that God revealed doctrine X
that we should believe X, *even though* it seems as contradictory as the claim that
there is a square circle. This is why so much energy has recently been spent by
those in the ST and LT camps on coming up with a clearly consistent (or at least,
a not clearly inconsistent) version of Trinitarian doctrine.

Although he explores a consistent variety of LT, Peter van Inwagen also sug-
gests that Christians should be willing to live with apparent contradictions. He
says that traditional formulations of the doctrine are 'good, practical descriptions
of real things. … I am confident that they are at least as good as descriptions of
curved space or the wave-particle duality in the works of popular science'.[32]
Concerning this last mystery, the apparently contradictory claim that an electron
is both a wave (a disturbance in a medium which doesn't literally move through
space) and particle (a discrete entity which moves entire), Van Inwagen says there
are two equally justified answers to the query, 'How can this be?'

   (i)   No-one knows;
   (ii) Quantum field theory explains how something can be both a wave
         and a particle.[33]

How is this relevant to Trinitarian mysteries? Van Inwagen argues as follows.
Suppose (ii) is correct. If that were so, there was nonetheless a stretch of time
before quantum field theory advanced that far, during which the evidence said
that an electron is both a wave and a particle. Perhaps Trinitarians are presently
in a similar position. 'If the Holy Spirit really existed and had led the mind of
the Church to the doctrine of the Trinity, then might not the Trinitarian be in a
position analogous to that of the physicist to whom nature had revealed the
doctrine of [wave-particle] Duality?'[34] This is a kind of innocence by association
strategy. Van Inwagen seems to think it is an undeniable fact that electrons are
both waves and particles. On his view we must accept this established fact despite

its mysterious nature, and not let our epistemic scruples rob us of true belief. This can be doubted. For one thing, scientists are equivocal as to what claim the evidence supports; one hears of particles with wave-like behaviour, and waves with particle-like behaviour. Others suggest that electrons are neither waves nor particles, but some other sort of thing we have no adequate grasp of. With any of these interpretations, electrons would be 'mysteries' in my second or third, but not my fifth sense above. Second, why not opt for anti-realism at this point? Why not rest content with the usefulness of our present theories without insisting that they correctly mirror the world, that we ought to believe they are literally true? Exactly what we are to make of the famous dual-slit experiment is, I take it, a matter of controversy. It isn't clear that Nature has revealed to us the true nature of electrons. We seem to be in a rather tough epistemic situation about that.

Importantly, none of the above moves in response to the dual-slit experiment are available to the Trinitarian. She can't say that God is really one personal being which sometimes (or always) manifests as three, for that is modalism. She can't say that He's really a collection of three persons which appears to be one, for that would implicate at least one divinity in egregious deception. She can't opt for theological anti-realism, saying that Trinitarian theories are practical but that the issue of truth shouldn't arise, if she wants to maintain Christian belief. Nor does it look like a principled stand to say that God is neither one person, nor three, but is an inconceivable something which at times appears these ways – at least on the assumption that a Christian must also be a theist! Further, one can refuse to commit to a view or remain in permanent confusion about the true nature of electrons with no practical consequences whatever. But the same is not true of these questions: how many, and what sort of divinities are there? How we answer these more or less determines the nature of an unavoidable aspect of human life, the spiritual.

When we turn our minds to a 'mystery' (in any but the first sense) we feel our minds 'boggling', or giving out. This can be an extraordinary intellectual pleasure. We feel it when thinking about great and complicated realities, and we also feel it when seriously considering nonsense and contradictory claims as true. I suggest that an important intellectual virtue involves habitually refraining from this latter pleasure, for it prevents a greater good, understanding, by cementing our love of vacuous words and false beliefs. Telling the difference between the two sorts of pleasure can be a difficult matter, but I suggest that it involves sorting out incomplete understanding from lack of understanding. I assume that what there is is not essentially unintelligible or contradictory. There are no such facts or things, but there are such claims, claims which result from our all-too-human theorizing.

If this is right, then when we discover a contradictory, impossible, or unintelligible claim in Trinitarian theorizing, we should consider it the product of misguided or confused human theorizing, and not something which dropped into

our laps from above. We Christian theologians and philosophers came up with the doctrine of the Trinity; perhaps with God's help we will come up with a better version of it. The most one can say, I think, is that Trinitarian thinking is *presently* stuck with the sorts of problems we've been discussing. It is often suggested, but rarely argued, that these problems are unavoidable and permanent, at least in this life. I can't see why anyone ought to believe this. Perhaps there are other explanations for our failure to avoid all three problems at once. Perhaps someone will, or perhaps someone in the more distant past already has found a way to avoid all three. In any case, appeal to mystery is no escape from the Trinitarian dilemma presented here.

Some might suggest that the way out is intellectual restraint born of humility. In the preceding discussion I have assumed that we can understand the meaning of each of (1)–(6), and that to have a truly thoughtful and reflective position on the Trinity, one should be able to either affirm or deny each of (1)–(6). But affirmation and denial aren't the only stances one can take with regard to a claim. Sometimes the wisest course is to withhold judgment. To withhold judgment about a claim is neither to believe that claim nor the denial of it; it is to withhold commitment on the matter. Sometimes we rightly withhold judgment because we simply lack adequate evidence. For this reason, I neither affirm nor deny that the number of stones on the surface of Pluto is even. Sometimes we rightly withhold because the evidence we have is contradictory, supporting both the claim and its denial. Situations like this sometimes lie behind hung juries in criminal trials. Sometimes we rightly withhold judgment because we simply don't understand the claim in question – though we assume that someone does, or at least in principle someone could. Thus, I refrain from judging about certain matters in advanced mathematics.

Now suppose that one ought to withhold on at least one of (1)–(6), for one the reasons just sketched, or perhaps for some other reason. For instance, one may withhold or (2)–(4) and (6), because we read 'divine' there in the primary sense which implies personhood. But while we know that there are three *somethings* 'in' God (so this line of thinking goes), we have no idea what they really are. They are somehow analogous to personal beings, but we shouldn't affirm that they are personal beings. We can affirm (1), but we must withhold on (2)–(4) and (6). This would solve the Trinitarian dilemma, but is probably disingenuous. Under the pressure of the New Testament, such a person will surely think of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as genuinely personal, for each knows, wills, communicates, makes plans, loves, teaches, and so on. This doesn't appear to be a consistent Trinitarian position. Whichever propositions one withholds on, the problem remains that (1), (5), and (6) are an inconsistent triad. To affirm (1), (5), and (6) is to contradict oneself, whatever one says about (2)–(4). Further, there is a kind of inconsistency in affirming two of those propositions and withholding on the remaining one. To affirm (1) and (5) is to be committed to the falsity of (6). To affirm

(1) and (6) is to be committed to falsity of (5). To affirm (5) and (6) is to be committed to the falsity of (1). Therefore, to escape the Trinitarian dilemma by withholding and not denying, one would have to withhold on at least two of the (1), (5), and (6). Suppose one accepts (1) but withholds on (5) and (6). Such a theory is consistent with modalism, tritheism, Quaternity, or polytheism with a million divinities. Suppose one accepts (5) but withholds on (1) and (6). Modalism would be ruled out, but none of those other anti-Trinitarian theories would be. Finally, suppose one accepts (6) but withholds on (1) and (5). Such a theory doesn't rule out modalism, and withholds on something that the Bible implies throughout: (1). These sorts of moves would leave one with a theory that just isn't a Trinitarian theory at all. Withholding is not the answer.

Perhaps the most muddled area of Trinitarian thinking concerns (5). Many Trinitarians, it seems to me, don't take a clear stance on both (5a) and (5b). A common move, I think, is to avoid the issue of what to do about (5a) and (5b) by replacing (5) with this sort of claim:

> (5^{III}) The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are in some way one and in some other way many.

This gives us a relative of (5) which is not clearly inconsistent with (1) and (6). But the price one pays for (5^{III}) is obvious: one is making a shadowy and vaporous claim. It isn't clear that a 'Trinitarianism' consisting of (1), (5^{III}), and (6) (or (1)–(4), (5^{III}), and (6)) rules out modalism or million-god polytheism. But by definition the intent of all Trinitarian theorizing is to say something inconsistent with both of those options.

Conclusion

Let us conclude by revisiting our six Trinitarian claims. (1), (5) and (6) are an inconsistent triad; one can consistently affirm any two but not all three claims. Extant forms of Trinitarianism either deny (1) or (6) (ST), deny (5) and replace it with an unbelievable claim (LT), or sweep the issue under the rug by not taking a clear stand on all three (some fans of 'mysteries'). But on the plausible assumption that every claim but (5) is required by the Christian scriptures, (5) must go because of (5b). There are materials left ((1)–(4), (6)) for a different kind of Trinitarian theory, whatever we replace (5) with. It will have much in common with traditional theories, except that it will exclude (5), (5^I), and (5^{II}), and will avoid the amorphous (5^{III}). Whatever we come up with won't be a version of either LT or ST. I believe that there is a doctrine of the Trinity which is consistent, intelligible, and scripturally kosher. But that is a story for another day.

Is there any such doctrine which is also orthodox? My lawyerly but necessary response is, it depends on what is meant by 'orthodoxy'. The concept of orthodoxy is essentially political. Doctrines are not timelessly orthodox or unorthodox.

To say that a doctrine is unorthodox is to say that at same past point, we, the genuine Christian church, have collectively forbidden that it be taught among us, and that we haven't yet changed our minds and allowed it or affirmed it. Christians differ greatly in their judgements of who is in the genuine Church now, and which, if any, are the authoritative councils, creeds, and other extra-biblical documents. Matters of orthodoxy are relative, then, to a group and a time in history. On my view, in light of the metaphysical and exegetical difficulties noted here, a reflective Christian will have to make some hard choices about what she accepts as standards of orthodoxy. The hard truth is, not all of these historical formulations can be reasonably accepted. Some of them clearly can, for instance the claim in the creed of the Council of Nicea (325), that the Son is *homoousios* with the Father.[35] This claim is consistent with the argument of this paper, if understood as originally intended, as asserting that the Son is divine like his Father (reading *homoousios* as meaning qualitative, not numerical sameness).[36] Unhappily, many later formulations are harder to reconcile with my conclusions here; there is in general a strong tilt towards the hopeless projects of modalism and LT.[37]

Notes

1. In contemporary logical symbolism:

    (1) Dg
    (2) Df
    (3) Ds
    (4) Dh
    (5) $f \neq s \neq h \neq g$ (That is, $f \neq s \,\&\, s \neq h \,\&\, f \neq h \,\&\, f \neq g \,\&\, s \neq g \,\&\, h \neq g$.)

        (5a) $f \neq s \,\&\, s \neq h \,\&\, f \neq h$
        (5b) $f \neq g \,\&\, s \neq g \,\&\, h \neq g$

    (6) (x) $(Dx \supset (x=f \lor x=s \lor x=h))$

    (5) is compatible with $g = (f, s, h)$, the claim that God is identical to the mereological sum of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
2. Also, 'divine' is used to refer to the property of being identical to Yahweh. To avoid confusion, I'll avoid this usage in this paper.
3. I thank an anonymous reader for this journal for raising this objection.
4. More precisely, if one denies (5), one is thereby committed to this claim: $f=s \lor s=h \lor f=h \lor f=g \lor s=g \lor h=g$.
5. LT is so-called because of its affinity to the Trinitarian theories of Western thinkers such as Boethius, Augustine, Anselm, and Aquinas, as well the pronouncements of Western councils such as the Eleventh Council of Toledo (675), and the Fourth Lateran Council (1215). For historical references and discussion see also Cornelius Plantinga 'The threeness/oneness problem of the Trinity', *Calvin Theological Journal*, **23** (1988), 37–53, esp. 43–48; Brian Leftow 'Anti Social Trinitarianism', in Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins (eds) *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity* (New York NY: Oxford University Press, 1999), 203–249, esp. 203–204; G. E. M. Anscombe and Peter T. Geach *Three Philosophers* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1961), 118–120. ST is (or is supposed to be) a development of some of the ideas of the Cappadocian fathers (Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa). See Edward R. Hardy (ed.) *Christology of the Later Fathers* (Philadelphia PA: Westminster Press, 1954); William G. Rusch 'Introduction', in *idem* (ed.) *The Trinitarian Controversy*

(Philadelphia PA: Fortress Press, 1980), 23–25; Cornelius Plantinga 'Gregory of Nyssa and the social analogy of the Trinity', *The Thomist*, **50** (1986), 325–352; David Brown *The Divine Trinity* (La Salle IL: Open Court, 1985), 276–279. A crude but helpful way of characterizing the two is to say that LT starts with the unity of God and then tries to show how He is three, while ST starts with the threeness of the Godhead and tries to show how it is one God. While LT clearly has historical precedent both in the Latin West and the Greek East, it is not so clear that ST, as here discussed, was espoused by the Cappadocians or anyone else in the distant tradition. (See Hardy *Christology*, 242–243; Sarah Coakley '''Persons'' in the ''social'' doctrine of the Trinity: Gregory of Nyssa and the current analytic discussion', 1999, web page, Boston Theological Society: http://www.bostontheological.org/colloquium/bts/btscoak.htm (accessed 3 August 2001).)

6. Plantinga 'Gregory of Nyssa', *idem* 'The threeness/oneness problem'; *idem* 'Social Trinity and tritheism', in Ronald J. Feenstra and Cornelius Plantinga (eds) *Trinity, Incarnation and Atonement: Philosophical and Theological Essays* (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 21–47.
7. That is, $g = (f, s, h)$.
8. It is irrelevant whether X is identical to the sum of (A, B, C). (5) neither asserts nor denies that $g = (f, s, h)$.
9. Richard Swinburne *The Christian God* (New York NY: Oxford University Press, 1994), 180–182; Plantinga 'Social Trinity and tritheism', 31–37; *idem* 'The threeness/oneness problem', 50–53; C. Stephen Layman 'Tritheism and the Trinity', *Faith and Philosophy*, **5** (1988), 291–298, esp. 295; Timothy W. Bartel 'Could there be more than one Lord?', *Faith and Philosophy*, **11** (1994), 357–378; *idem* 'The plight of the relative Trinitarian', *Religious Studies*, **24** (1988), 129–155; Thomas D. Senor 'The Incarnation and the Trinity', in Michael J. Murray (ed.) *Reason for the Hope Within* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 238–260.
10. This one being (Yahweh) is also picked out by the phrase 'the God', 'the only God', and various other phrases. See Samuel Clark *The Scripture-Doctrine of the Trinity, Wherein Every Text in the New Testament Relating to That Doctrine Is Distinctly Considered; and the Divinity of Our Blessed Saviour, According to the Scriptures, Proved and Explained*, in John Clarke (ed.) *The Works of Samuel Clarke, D. D., Late Rector of St. James's Westminster*, 4 vols, 3rd edn (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1738), ch. 1, sections 1–3.
11. I thank David Matheson for suggesting this objection.
12. See Cornelius J. Hagerty *The Holy Trinity* (North Quincy MA: The Christopher Publishing House, 1976), 61.
13. Leftow 'Anti social Trinitarianism', 208, 220–221, 244–247.
14. Stephen T. Davis 'Periochoretic monotheism: a defense of a social theory of the Trinity', in Melville Y. Stewart (ed.) *The Trinity: A Beginning of East–West Dialogue* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003); William Alston 'Substance and the Trinity', in Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins (eds) *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity* (New York NY: Oxford University Press, 1999), 179–201, see 192.
15. $f = g$ & $s = g$ & $h = g$ & $f \neq s$ & $s \neq h$ & $h \neq f$.
16. That is, $f = s = h = g$. As I use the term, a 'modalist' need not claim that God exists as or plays the role of Father, Son, and Spirit serially, one after the other.
17. A few recent examples: Gregory A. Boyd *Oneness, Pentecostals and the Trinity* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Book House, 1992); Linda Zagzebski 'Christian monotheism', *Faith and Philosophy*, **6** (1989), 3–18; John Macnamara, Marie Reyes, and Gonzalo Reyes 'Logic and the Trinity', *Faith and Philosophy*, **11** (1994), 3–18. See also Edward C. Feser 'Has Trinitarianism been shown to be coherent?', *Faith and Philosophy*, **14** (1997), 87–97.
18. This doctrine is explored in Peter T. Geach 'Identity', in *idem* (ed.) *Logic Matters* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1972), 238–247; *idem* 'Identity – a reply', in *ibid.*, 247–249; *idem* 'Ontological relativity and relative identity', in Milton K. Munitz (ed.) *Logic and Ontology* (New York NY: New York University Press, 1973), 287–302; *idem Reference and Generality: An Examination of Some Medieval and Modern Theories*, 3rd edn (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1980); A. P. Martinich 'God, emperor and relative identity', *Franciscan Studies*, **39** (1979), 180–191; Peter van Inwagen 'And yet they are not three Gods but one God', in *idem* (ed.) *God, Knowledge, and Mystery* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), 222–259; *idem* 'Not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person', in *ibid.*, 260–279; *idem* 'Trinity', in Edward Craig (ed.) *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* Version 1.0 (New York NY: Routledge, 1998); *idem* 'Three persons in one being: on attempts to show that the doctrine of

the Trinity is self-contradictory', in Stewart *The Trinity*; James Cain 'The doctrine of the Trinity and the logic of relative identity', *Religious Studies*, **25** (1989), 141–152; John Zeis 'A trinity on a trinity on a Trinity', *Sophia*, **32** (1993), 45–55. For an account of the motivations and claims of relative identity theory, see Harold Noonan 'Relative identity', in Bob Hale and Crispin Wright (eds) *A Companion to the Philosophy of Language* (Malden MA: Blackwell, 1997), 634–652. The best objections I am aware of to the doctrine of relative identity in general and applied to the trinity are in: Richard Cartwright 'On the logical problem of the Trinity', in *idem* (ed.) *Philosophical Essays* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1987), 187–200; Bartel 'The plight', 129–155; E. J. Lowe *Kinds of Being: A Study of Individuation, Identity and the Logic of Sortal Terms* (New York NY: Basil Blackwell, 1989); William P. Alston and Jonathan Bennett 'Identity and cardinality: Geach and Frege', *The Philosophical Review*, **93** (1984), 553–567.

19. For the connection between singular reference and identity, see Alston and Bennett 'Identity and cardinality', and Van Inwagen 'And yet they are not three', 244.
20. Alston and Bennett 'Identity and cardinality', 559–560.
21. That is, a sentence of the form '*s* is the same *k* as *p*' is *not* to be understood as asserting: '*s* is a *k*, and *p* is a *k*, and *s* = *p*'.
22. For his part, Peter van Inwagen is not trying to illuminate the doctrine at all, but is only trying to state it in a non-contradictory way. His view is that it must be a 'mystery' in this life, i.e. something which seems impossible. (*God, Knowledge, and Mystery*, 219, 259.) We will consider the subject of 'mysteries' below.
23. I have in mind the painstaking work of Peter van Inwagen.
24. Compare, for example, Leftow's claims with the traditional Catholic view expressed in Hagerty *The Holy Trinity*, 160–164.
25. Leftow 'Anti Social Trinitarianism', 203–204.
26. Senor 'The incarnation and the Trinity', 257, 260.
27. The only exceptions I am aware of are attempts to explain why there is more than one divine person (Stephen T. Davis 'A somewhat playful proof of the Trinity in five easy steps', *Philosophia Christi*, **1** (1999), 103–105) or why there are three, and only three, divine persons (Swinburne *The Christian God*, 177–180, 190–191), both in the context of ST theories.
28. Cartwright 'On the logical problem', 193.
29. Van Inwagen *God, Knowledge, and Mystery*, 219; Stephen T. Davis *Logic and the Nature of God* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 141.
30. Cf. *ibid.*, 141–143.
31. The same is true of the inconsistent sets of Trinitarian claims discussed in Cartwright 'On the logical problem', Bartel 'The plight', and A. P. Martinich 'Identity and Trinity', *The Journal of Religion*, **58** (1978), 169–181.
32. Van Inwagen *God, Knowledge, and Mystery*, 220.
33. Van Inwagen 'And yet they are not three', 225.
34. *Ibid.*, 226.
35. John H. Leith (ed.) *Creeds of the Churches*, 3rd edn (Atlanta GA: John Knox Press, 1982), 30–31. This should not be confused with what later came to be called the Nicene Creed, which derives from the Council of Constantinople (381).
36. J. N. D. Kelly *Early Christian Doctrines*, rev. edn (San Francisco CA: Harper and Row, 1978), 234–237; Rusch *The Trinitarian Controversy*, 19–20; R. P. C. Hanson *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318–381* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 202.
37. My thanks to Timothy Chambers, Stephen T. Davis, Edward Feser, William Hasker, Brian Leftow, David Matheson, Richard Swinburne, Ed Wierenga, Nicholas Wolterstorff, two anonymous readers for this journal, an audience at the Eastern Regional Meeting of the Society of Christian Philosophers at St John Fischer College, Rochester NY, March 2001, and an audience at The Holy Trinity Conference, Moscow, Russia, June 2001, for their helpful comments on many drafts of this paper. The version of this paper read in Moscow will appear as 'The Trinitarian dilemma' in Stewart *The Trinity*. This version also appears in Russian translation in Alexander I. Kirlezher (ed.) *The Holy Trinity* (Moscow: Theological Commission of the Moscow Patriarchate, 2003).