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Review of *The College Student's Introduction to the Trinity*, by Lynne Faber Lorenzen

Robert B. Slocum
Marquette University

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The College Student's Introduction to the Trinity. By Lynne Faber Lorenzen. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999. 114 pp. \$11.95 (paper).

This study provides an interesting and significant synthesis of trinitarian theology drawn from Eastern Christianity, process thought, and feminism. Lorenzen notes Augustine's influence on Western Christianity in terms of an

emphasis on predestination and election of souls, so that a monotheistic God wields unilateral power for the salvation of some individuals and the rest of creation is not included in salvation. Lorenzen contradicts a view of salvation derived from Augustine that "all human beings are guilty of original sin, which is passed on by fathers to their children, so that all people deserve punishment," with salvation available only in terms of God's mercy (p. 94). She points out that the roles of the Trinity in this kind of salvation are not delineated (p. 27), and that "God as Trinity is not necessary to Augustine's understanding of salvation as election" (p. 28). In this way, God as Trinity is separated from the God of salvation, and the Trinity comes to function in Western theology as "primarily an organizing structure for Christian education" (p. 30).

In contrast to the traditional Western view of the Trinity, Lorenzen points out that all three persons of the Trinity are necessary to salvation in the trinitarian theology of Jürgen Moltmann (p. 58). A completely different understanding of God and the human role in salvation is derived by Lorenzen from the Eastern tradition and Moltmann. The relationships of the Trinity are "non-hierarchical," providing a pattern for our relationships in the kingdom of God (p. 59). Lorenzen's doctrine of God is also shaped by process thought. Instead of God being understood in terms of an irresistible power over us for salvation, God relates to us in terms of persuasion and provides space for our exercise of freedom and responsibility (p. 59). The goal of sanctification is to restore the image of God in which we were all created. Lorenzen draws on Moltmann to present an understanding of holiness in terms of "whatever God loves," so that growth in holiness "comes from the goodness of the person in response to the love of God who has already made the person holy in the relationship" (p. 64). In light of Moltmann and Orthodoxy, salvation is understood to begin with creation—not the fall of humanity. Salvation is not focused on sin. Transfiguration provides the paradigm for salvation, which includes all creation and not just human beings (p. 65).

Lorenzen draws on feminist thought to urge that "the male/female dualism that is so ingrained in our culture" must be overcome for salvation: "interdependence means that we are going to be healed or broken together" (p. 71). She draws on Gregory of Nyssa to urge that the image of God is "reflected in all humanity, not in one individual" (p. 90). The image of God is neither exclusively male nor female. Lorenzen continues to develop her relational theology in light of Bishop Kallistos' statement that "a Christian cannot be a Christian alone" because being a person "is by definition to be internally related to other persons as the persons of the Trinity are eternally, internally related to each other" (p. 90). Lorenzen's concluding chapter concerns a "reauthenticated doctrine of the Trinity," and she notes that the doctrine of the Trinity in the Eastern tradition serves to integrate the concepts of salvation, Christ and God (p. 93). All people and all creation can share in Jesus' experience of Transfiguration. We can be transfigured because we are created in

the image of God, and “what defines us as human is our internal relationship with God” (p. 93).

Of particular interest is Lorenzen’s synthesis of process thought and Eastern Orthodoxy, including their common “worldview of interconnectedness, the immanence of God in the world, the understanding of persons and community as being necessary to each other, and the insistence that God not be a metaphysical exception” (p. 92). In Eastern Orthodoxy, as in process thought, God is “persuasively related to the world while for Augustine God in relation to the world is all-powerful in such a way that God’s grace is irresistible” (p. 94). In contrast, Lorenzen draws on feminist insights to urge that God’s saving relationship with us is one of “friendship and cooperation,” not one of “power-over or judgment” (p. 96). Her approach is characterized by a strong resolve to integrate christology and salvation into a trinitarian doctrine of God, who is known in a loving, cooperative, and saving relationship with human beings. It is for us to serve as “the agents of God who bring about the transfiguration of the world” (p. 101).

Lorenzen’s book offers original insights for a relational doctrine of the Trinity. She draws convincingly from the theological positions of Eastern Orthodoxy, process thought, and feminism. This book will provide helpful and interesting reading for advanced students in theology—for example, it would be helpful for senior seminarians reviewing for ordination examinations, and for theology graduate students preparing for doctoral qualifying examinations. However, I believe that college students seeking an introduction to the doctrine of the Trinity will have some difficulty in using this text. Students without a significant theological background may find some of Lorenzen’s presentations and summaries difficult to follow. Her relational theology of salvation deserves further development outside the limitations of a relatively brief introduction intended for college students.

ROBERT B. SLOCUM

*Marquette University
Milwaukee, Wisconsin*