

**DE TRINITATE LIBER;
NOVATIAN'S TREATISE
ON THE TRINITY**

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De trinitate liber; Novatian's Treatise on the Trinity by W. Yorke Fausset

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NOVATIAN'S
TREATISE ON THE TRINITY

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HOC GRATAE PIETATIS TESTIMONIUM

D.D.D.

VXVS E PRESBYTERIS SVIS

PREFACE

IT is nearly two centuries since a separate edition of Novatian's *Treatise on the Trinity* was produced by an English clergyman, John Jackson, and published in London. To this editor and his immediate predecessor, Edward Welchman, we are indebted for valuable help towards the emendation of a corrupt vulgate text, in the absence of all manuscript evidence. But they left much still to be done, and the text of the present edition can only claim to mark a further advance towards textual purity. My first duty was to provide an intelligible text, and this, I trust, has been accomplished. The aim of the *Commentary* has been to make the treatise speak for itself. Criticism and theological dissertation were reserved, in the main, for the *Introduction*.

The interest of the *Treatise*, and its importance at the present day, will hardly be questioned. It is at once the earliest systematic treatise on its subject, and the earliest monument of Roman theology. It transports us to a critical period in the history of Christian thought. Then, as now, the battle-ground of contending schools of opinion was the doctrine of the Person of Christ. It may be said of doctrines and formularies with no less truth than it is said of institutions, that the study of

their origins and ordered growth is the surest key to their meaning. There is no better introduction to the study of Christology than the Treatise of Novatian. Much that nowadays to the popular mind is new and modern, is there to be found in germ or tendency. The Divinely-endowed Man of the Adoptianists has re-appeared in the Christ of humanitarian theories, and there are modern critics who dissolve the historical Christ into an idea as unsubstantial as the Christ of the Docetic Gnostics. Again, far removed as is the writer's standpoint from that of those who disavow "the dividing line between man's being and God's," he can say that the Word of Christ bestows on man divinity. It may be said in truth, that Novatian is as instructive by his limitations of insight and definition, as he is by his positive contribution to the problems of the Creed. For he is not merely the pale reflexion of Tertullian, as might possibly be inferred from dogmatic writers. The student may think that the Treatise scarcely earns the title which it has come to bear, and it is true that more is said about the unity of the Godhead than about Its tri-personality. But the writer will not allow his sublime conception of the Divine 'monarchia' to exclude that other conviction, which Scripture and experience have rooted in his mind, that Christ is, in a real sense, God as well as Man.

It has not been an easy matter to prepare, at a distance from libraries, an edition requiring constant reference to authorities, and in particular to the earlier printed texts. I am indebted to Mr Falconer Madan, of the Bodleian Library, to Professor Dr Binz of the University Library at Basel, for practical assistance; to Prebendary Goudge for the use of the Wells Theological College Library; and to the Rev. E. G. Meyrick Wood,

Vicar of St Stephen's, Shepherd's Bush, and to the Rev. H. R. Joynt, Rector of Marksbury, for the use of some valuable books; and lastly, to my brother, Mr F. Porter Fausset, of the Inner Temple, who did some useful work for me in the British Museum. But my chief thanks are due to Dr Mason, the General Editor of the Cambridge Patristic Texts. It is not easy to express in a few words what this little book owes to his continuous criticism and encouragement, and, in many passages, to his actual collaboration. I have drawn freely upon his great stores of theological and patristic learning. Many of the interpretations to be found in the Commentary represent the result of prolonged consultation between us; and I have had the privilege of discussing with him the larger aspects of Novatian's theology. This general acknowledgment of Dr Mason's unwearied kindness has to stand in place of any acknowledgment in detail. He has bestowed more pains upon the work of another than some men bestow upon their own.

W. YORKE FAUSSET.

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