

*The Providence of God:
A Trinitarian Perspective*

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**This thesis is presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work that has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

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ABSTRACT

The primary focus of this dissertation is the doctrine of the Providence of God and it is approached from a distinctive perspective – that of the doctrine of the Trinity. Its fundamental thesis is that the adoption of a trinitarian perspective on Providence provides us with a conceptual paradigm in which varying theological emphases, which often divide understandings of Providence, are best understood in a form of paradoxical tension or creative balance with each being correctly understood only in the context that the other provides.

To demonstrate this, it addresses four issues of Providence that have on occasion divided understandings of Providence in the past and which have become significant issues of contention in the contemporary debate on Providence occasioned by a proposal known as Open Theism. These issues concern the nature of divine transcendence, sovereignty, immutability and impassibility and how each should be understood in the context of divine Providence. Through a detailed examination of three recent trinitarian theologies, which have emanated from the three main communities of the Christian church, it argues that a trinitarian perspective is able to provide significant illumination and explication of these identified issues of Providence and of the tensions that are often intrinsic to this doctrine.

In relation to these identified issues of Providence, it affirms tensional truths in our understanding of the issues of Providence and an articulation that necessarily incorporates a binary form of language – that is, utilising language of *both-and* rather than *either-or*. In other words, it posits that divine

transcendence ought to be held in paradoxical tension with divine immanence; divine sovereignty ought to be held in paradoxical tension with human responsibility; and divine immutability and impassibility ought not to be understood as immobility or impassivity but as affirming the paradoxical tension of active constancy. The articulation of these tensional truths is followed and completed by an examination of how they might be applied pastorally in the specific area of prayer and its relationship to Providence.

Consequently, this dissertation not only constructively impacts our understanding of divine Providence but also significantly advances the contemporary debate on Providence concerning Open Theism.

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