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The Lord and Giver of Life: the person and work of the Holy Spirit in the trinitarian theology of Colin E Gunton

By

Michael D Stringer

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

Colin Gunton was one of the leading figures in a late twentieth century movement which sought to rejuvenate interest in systematic and trinitarian theology. Gunton's theology was heavily influenced by the trinitarian thought of Karl Barth. As his thought matured, however, he was increasingly drawn to resources found in Irenaeus and the Cappadocian Fathers. Drawing from these patristic sources, Gunton sought to develop a trinitarian theology formulated upon personal and relational categories of thought as a corrective to the over-emphasis upon substantialist conceptuality in the Western tradition. He held that a doctrine of God that desires to remain consistent with the presentation of the divine economy of redemption revealed in the scriptural narratives must be formulated upon a personal and relational conceptuality. To this end, he adopted the Irenaean metaphor of the 'two hands' of God to speak about the complementarity of the Son and the Spirit in the economy of redemption.

Gunton's trinitarian pneumatology is distinguished by an emphasis upon the Spirit as person, as transcendent, and as creation's perfecting agent. His conception of the Spirit as person is developed as an argument for the particularity and relationality of the divine persons within which notions of individualism and depersonalising tendencies are specifically rejected. An emphasis upon the transcendence of the Spirit opened the way for Gunton to speak about the Spirit as mediator between the Father and the humanity of the Son, between the Son and his followers, and between God and the remainder of creation. The personal and transcendent Spirit is the perfecting agent of the whole creation inasmuch as it is drawn, by the Spirit, toward eschatological perfection in Christ.

Understood thus, Gunton's view of the Spirit as person, transcendent and as perfecting agent remains wholly consistent with the creed's declaration of the Spirit as the Lord and Giver of life. Moreover, his theology of the Spirit is in harmony with the principles of the Reformation tradition insofar as the whole of creation is brought to fulfilment in praise of the Father, through Christ, and by the Spirit.

Declaration of Authorship

This thesis is the candidate's own work and contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any degree or diploma in this or any other institution.

To the best of the candidate's knowledge, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text.

_____ _____

Michael D Stringer Date

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writer's block to insomnia.

Preface

An introductory statement about stylistic peculiarities present within this dissertation is in order to explain the particular academic conventions adopted, the use of inclusive language, and apparent inconsistencies in spelling and capitalisation.

Academic conventions employed throughout this dissertation follow those stipulated in *A style manual for the presentation of papers and theses in religion and theology*, compiled by Lawrence McIntosh on behalf of the Australian and New Zealand Theological Library Association and the Australian and New Zealand Association of Theological Schools.[1] On those occasions where McIntosh does not provide sufficient detail, direction was sought from *A manual for writers of term papers, theses and dissertations*[2] and *The Chicago manual of style*.[3]

Gender-inclusive language is used throughout this work except in the case of direct quotations and in reference to the persons of God. For quotations, the language of the original author has been preserved even where gender-exclusive language was employed. It is to be noted that even though quotations were selected with the view to minimise the use of gender-exclusive terms it was not possible to eliminate the practice entirely. That observation applies to quotations taken from Colin Gunton's works, for example, because he employed both gender-inclusive and gender-exclusive terminology – sometimes within the same article![4]

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[1] Lawrence D. McIntosh, *A style manual for the presentation of papers and theses in religion and theology* (Wagga Wagga, NSW: Centre for Information Studies, 1995).

[2] Kate L. Turabian, *A manual for writers of term papers, theses and dissertations*, 6th ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, 1996).

[3] John Grossman, ed., *The Chicago manual of style: for authors, editors and copywriters*, 15th ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, 2003).

[4] For example, Gunton states that the "Enlightenment objected to certain predicates as they were traditionally applied to God. Giving God all the power, knowledge and glory meant taking it away from *mankind*, belittling and humiliating. But to transfer the predicates to *humanity* is even more alienating, encouraging us to act a part that befits us even less than it befits God, if it can be put that way. What is needed is not a transfer of predicates from God to *man* but their revision." Colin E.

The use of the masculine pronoun when speaking about the persons of God is consistent with an established precedent within the Christian theological tradition. Gunton himself followed that convention and did not equivocate about the use of masculine pronouns for the persons of God; not because he wanted to assert that the divine persons were gendered but to establish that they were divine *persons*.[5] This is especially true where the Holy Spirit is the subject of the discourse because, for Gunton, the grammatical construction supports the theological point: that is, use of the personal pronoun complements and accentuates his contention that the Spirit is *a person*.[6] Unfortunately, the English language does not have a gender-neutral personal pronoun and the use of an impersonal pronoun is rejected on the grounds of inherent depersonalising tendencies.[7]

Thirdly, a brief explanation regarding apparent inconsistency with spelling and capitalisation throughout this work is also required. It goes without saying that a dissertation dedicated to the examination of the thought of one person necessitates engagement with the specific details espoused in his or her published works. That engagement, moreover, will involve repeated reference to and quotation from those

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Gunton, *Enlightenment and alienation: an essay towards a trinitarian theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985), 153f (emphasis added).

[5] In fact, Gunton expressly dismissed any literalistic reading of gender into God on the grounds that "orthodox Christian theology has never held that the word *Father* pictures God or that it implies that God is of the male gender. Quite the reverse: the apophatic tradition has always insisted that all the connotations of the finite usage must be thought away if we are really to be speaking not of some projection but of God." He went on to add that "it is clear that this Fatherhood has nothing to do with masculinity or the mechanics of sexual reproduction." Colin E. Gunton, 'Proteus and Procrustes: a study in the dialectic of language in disagreement with Sallie McFague' in *Speaking the Christian God: the Holy Trinity and the challenge of feminism*, ed. Alvin F. Kimel (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 72f. See also Colin E. Gunton, *Christ and creation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 101.

[6] Gunton's insistence upon speaking about the *person* of the Holy Spirit and his rare use of the impersonal pronoun "it" in reference to the Spirit are examined in Chapter Four below.

[7] Marguerite Shuster's observation accurately summarises the dilemma: "I reluctantly use male pronouns for God, not because I attribute gender to God or consider God to be more like the male than like the female of the human species, but because I worry about the subtle depersonalization that takes place by the repeated use of 'God' and 'Godself'." Marguerite Shuster, 'The triune God: *Credo in deum patrem, in Iesum Christum, et in Spiritum sanctum*' in *Exploring and proclaiming the Apostles' Creed*, ed. Roger E. van Harn (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 1 n. 2.

works. However, a problem arises when quotations taken from a number of different publications are brought into correspondence with each other because it is there that the presence of variation in stylistic standards between publishers becomes apparent, especially regarding spelling, punctuation and capitalisation.

The works of the late Professor Colin Gunton were published by a number of different companies in the United Kingdom and in the United States of America. His publications, therefore, reveal slight, but important, stylistic variations depending upon where and by whom the article was published.

This dissertation follows British spelling and writing conventions for the English language except in those instances where it is necessary to quote from the published works of other authors. On those occasions, the quotations retain the spelling and capitalisation employed in the original article. A consequence of these decisions, however, is that throughout this dissertation there is variation in the spelling and capitalisation of some words. A case in point is the variation in use of capitalisation for certain adjectival terms referring to God – e.g., christological (Christological) and trinitarian (Trinitarian). Finally, this dissertation, in accordance with McIntosh,[8] employs minimised capitalisation in the recording of bibliographical detail. In this scheme, the use of capital letters is reserved for the first letter of the first word in a title and for the first letter of proper nouns.

[8] McIntosh, *A style manual*, 8, 56.

Abbreviations

ANF	*Ante-Nicene Fathers* in 10 vols. reprint ed. Edited by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson and A. Cleveland Coxe. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995.
PG	*Patrologiae Graecae* in 162 vols. Edited by Jacques-Paul Migne. Paris: Lutetiae Parisiorum, 1857-1866.
PL	*Patrologiae Latinae* in 221 vols. Edited by Jacques-Paul Migne. Paris: Lutetiae Parisiorum, 1844-1864.
NPNF-2	*Nicene and post-Nicene Fathers* second series in 14 vols. reprint ed. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995.

Introduction

The publication of the English translation of *The Trinity* by Karl Rahner in 1970 is synonymous with the beginning of the contemporary resurgence of interest in trinitarian theology. In that volume, Rahner claimed that contemporary Christians were "practical monotheists" because of the lack of an inherently trinitarian foundation to the practice of their faith. Trinitarian theology, it seemed, was not a central concern in the majority of Christian literature, liturgy and hymnody.[1] His emphasis upon the centrality of the doctrine of the Trinity for Christian theology, of course, was a reiteration of the earlier work of Karl Barth, who had laboured to rescue the doctrine of Trinity from a state of neglect. The significance of Rahner's volume, however, is that it marks the point at which the concern for restatement of the doctrine of the Trinity began to impact Roman Catholicism and, therefore, is understood as having contributed to a more general revival of interest in trinitarian studies throughout the Christian church as a whole.

The previous year, 1969, a young English theologian, Colin Ewart Gunton, began an academic career at King's College, London, as a lecturer in philosophy of religion. At the time, Gunton was also conducting doctoral research into Barth's doctrine of God. It comes as no surprise therefore that Colin Gunton's theology, in concert with that of Barth and Rahner before him, is characterised by an attempt to address the fact that most Christians perceived the doctrine of the Trinity as irrelevant to the concerns of life.[2] In fact, Gunton came to the view that, for many Christians, "the Trinity is one of the *difficulties* of Christian belief: a kind of

[1] Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, trans. Joseph Donceel (London: Burns & Oats, 1970), 10.
[2] Colin E. Gunton, 'The Trinity in modern theology' in *A companion encyclopaedia of theology*, ed. Peter Byrne and Leslie Houlden (London: Routledge, 1995), 941.

intellectual hurdle to be leaped before orthodoxy can be acknowledged."[3] The problem, as Gunton saw it, lay in the separation of the doctrine of God from the practice of worship and the concerns of life.[4]

Colin Gunton went on to become one of the leading figures in a movement which sought to retrieve the doctrine of the Trinity from obscurity and reinstall it as the centre piece of Christian systematic theology.[5] The lasting effects of that movement upon the wider Christian theological enterprise are yet to be fully realised. However, Daniel Hardy remarks that the "steady strengthening of systematic theology in Britain today owes much to Colin E. Gunton" because of his analysis and restatement of the crucial elements of Christian belief in what is often perceived to be "an alien climate."[6] Over the course of his academic career Gunton witnessed an amazing reversal of fortunes for the doctrine of the Trinity. So much so that, in the opening sentence of the 'Preface' to the second edition of *The promise of trinitarian theology*, he exclaimed, "Suddenly we are all trinitarians, or so it would seem … the doctrine of the Trinity is now discussed in places where even a short time ago it would be regarded as an irrelevance."[7]

It is a commonplace that the whole project of trinitarian theology is strengthened to the extent that it is accompanied by – and, conversely, weakened by the absence of – a vibrant pneumatology.[8] Accordingly, it is no surprise that at the

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[3] Colin E. Gunton, 'The church on earth: the roots of community' in *On being the church: essays on the Christian community*, ed. Colin E. Gunton and Daniel W. Hardy (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1989), 49.

[4] Colin E. Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed. (London: T & T Clark, 1997), 194.

[5] John B. Webster, 'Systematic theology after Barth: Jüngel, Jenson, and Gunton' in *The modern theologians: an introduction to Christian theology since 1918*, ed. David F. Ford and Rachel Muers (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 259.

[6] Daniel W. Hardy, 'Theology through philosophy' in *The modern theologians: an introduction to Christian theology in the Twentieth Century*, ed. David F. Ford (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 278.

[7] Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed., xv.

[8] Ralph Del Colle, 'The triune God' in *The Cambridge companion to Christian doctrine*, ed. Colin E. Gunton (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University, 1997), 130. It is argued below, for example, that one of Colin Gunton's criticisms of Karl Barth's theology concerns an inadequate pneumatological

same time as Rahner called for the reinvigoration of trinitarian studies as a way of speaking about the Christian God, John V. Taylor argued for the recovery of a doctrine of the Spirit because that "is where we must now begin our talk about God … If we had not relegated the Holy Spirit to the merest edges of our theology we might never have got ourselves into our present confusions."[9] A decade later, Kilian McDonnell wrote that one of systematic theology's most pressing tasks was the articulation of a mature theology of the Spirit, one in which the person and work of the Spirit was not subordinated to, but complemented by, that of the Son.[10]

Colin Gunton was in accord with these observations, arguing that "the under-determination of the person of the Holy Spirit in almost all areas of dogmatics" is the Achilles' heel of the Western theological tradition, adversely impacting trinitarian as well as ecclesiastical and pastoral theology.[11] In trinitarian theology, for example, he argued that adequate dogmatic weighting afforded to the humanity of Christ and to a

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emphasis in Barth's project as a whole. At the end of his life, Barth himself conceded that a theology of the future must afford more attention to the doctrine of the Spirit as an integral component of a well-rounded trinitarian theology. Karl Barth, 'Nachwort' in *Schleiermacher - Auswahl: mit eine Nachwort von Karl Barth* by Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher, ed. Heinz Bolli (Münich: Siebenstern-Taschenbuch, 1968), 311.

[9] John V. Taylor, *The go-between God* (London: SCM, 1972), 5. To be sure, Taylor's call for more attention to be afforded to the doctrine of the Spirit was not the first in modern times. A decade and a half earlier than Taylor's volume, George Sirks had argued that pneumatology was the 'Cinderella' of academic theology and called for the christological focus which had dominated theological study during the first half of the twentieth century to be augmented with one in which the Holy Spirit played a more central role. George Johan Sirks, 'The Cinderella of theology: the doctrine of the Holy Spirit' in *Harvard theological review* 50, no. 2 (1957), 77-89. Before Sirks, too, there were voices that called attention to an under-emphasis of pneumatology in Christian theology. Kilian McDonnell, for example, observes that at the end of the nineteenth century Leo XIII's encyclical letter, *Divinum Illud Munus* laments Christianity's forgetfulness of the Spirit. Kilian McDonnell, 'A trinitarian theology of the Holy Spirit' in *Theological studies* 46, no. 2 (1985), 192; Leo XIII, 'The Holy Spirit: encyclical letter *Divinum Illud Munus*, May 4, 1897' in *The great encyclical letters of Pope Leo XIII*, ed. John J. Wynne (New York, NY: Benziger Brothers, 1903), 422-440.

[10] The subjection of pneumatology to christology in the Western theological tradition, according to McDonnell, must be seen as "unacceptably subordinationist" because "the Spirit is not inferior to the Son in the inner-trinitarian life, and therefore the external mission of the Spirit cannot be inferior to that of the Son." Kilian McDonnell, 'The determinative doctrine of the Holy Spirit' in *Theology today* 39, no. 2 (1982), 153.

[11] Colin E. Gunton, 'The being and attributes of God: Eberhard Jüngel's dispute with the classical philosophical tradition' in *The possibilities of theology: studies in the theology of Eberhard Jüngel*, ed. John B. Webster (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 21.

doctrine of the immanent Trinity is dependent upon a thoroughgoing trinitarian doctrine of the Spirit.[12] Ecclesiastically and pastorally, he observed that it "would be possible, as an exercise in cynicism, to write a history of the Church as the story of the misappropriation of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit."[13] This 'misappropriation' is apparent within Roman Catholic and Protestant theologies. The "Catholic traditions of the West have tended to limit the work of the Spirit to institutional and clerical channels and have been unable to give due place to his work in the whole Christian community and beyond it in the world outside the church,"[14] while Protestant theologies "have tended to make the equal and opposite error of locating the Spirit in human subjectivity."[15] According to Gunton, both situations arose because of a

> failure to give to the Holy Spirit the kind of personal identity or particularity that is required if we are to speak of him and identify his action in the world. If we do not find adequate means of identification, the danger remains that we shall identify his work apart from the work of the Father and the Son, and in terms of what we happen to find attractive or appealing at the present time.[16]

Highly appreciative as he was of the perichoretic nature of pneumatology, christology, and trinitarian theology, and of the fact that the doctrine of the Spirit is governed by the trinitarian nature of revelation and the Christian church's response to that revelation, it was a matter of concern to Gunton that in its answer to the question of the Spirit's location and activity, the Western tradition offers a number of "highly varying accounts of the person and work of the Spirit"[17] many of which "are

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[12] ibid., 21f.
[13] Colin E. Gunton, 'The church: John Owen and John Zizioulas on the church' in *Theology through the theologians: selected essays, 1972-1995* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 187.
[14] Colin E. Gunton, 'Pneumatology' in *Dictionary of ethics, theology and society*, ed. Paul Barry Clarke and Andrew Linzey (London: Routledge, 1996), 646.
[15] ibid.
[16] Gunton, 'The church: John Owen and John Zizioulas on the church,' 189.
[17] Colin E. Gunton, 'God the Holy Spirit: Augustine and his successors' in *Theology through the theologians: selected essays, 1972-1995* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 105.

not necessarily those of scripture."[18] For Gunton, many contemporary Western pneumatologies demonstrate a tendency to focus upon the internalising function of the Spirit, whether that is understood in terms of the individual believer, the church, or in culture and the cosmos generally.[19]

The rise of interest in studies of the person and work of the Holy Spirit that paralleled increased interest in trinitarian theology was, according to Gunton, due to two primary factors: the increasing influence of the charismatic/Pentecostal movement and of Hegelian thought.[20]

He conceded that the charismatic/Pentecostal influence is significant not merely because of the phenomenal numerical growth of the movement, but also because of its increasingly sophisticated presence and contribution to academic theology, especially in the area of pneumatology.[21] Even so, Gunton suggested that in the Christian West, the mainstream tradition's inadequate and unsatisfactory relating of the Son and Spirit is somewhat paralleled by the charismatic movement's tendency to separate the one from the other and "to identify the Spirit as the *cause* of particular religious phenomena: speaking with tongues, conversion experiences and the rest."[22] Notwithstanding the significance of these criticisms, Gunton held that charismatic theology, and its pneumatology in particular, is "a strand in the Christian

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[18] Colin E. Gunton, *Act and being: towards a theology of the divine attributes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 21.

[19] Gunton, 'God the Holy Spirit,' 108.

[20] ibid., 105-108. See also Colin E. Gunton, 'The God of Jesus Christ' in *Theology today* 54, no. 3 (1997), 325; Colin E. Gunton, 'We believe in the Holy Spirit, who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified' in *Fire and wind: the Holy Spirit in the church today*, ed. Joseph D. Small (Louisville, KY: Geneva, 2002), 25; and, Gunton, 'The Trinity in modern theology,' 944.

[21] Gunton's recognition of the increasingly important role of charismatic/Pentecostal theology is supported by Joseph Small's claim that the "worldwide Pentecostal movement, barely a century old, is considered by many to be the fourth great Christian ecclesial family, after the Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant." Joseph D. Small, 'The Spirit and the Creed' in *Fire and wind: the Holy Spirit in the church today*, ed. Joseph D. Small (Louisville, KY: Geneva, 2002), 14.

[22] Gunton, 'God the Holy Spirit,' 106f.

tradition that has a place in any theology aiming at comprehensiveness."[23]

The influence of Hegelian conceptuality, on the other hand, is all too readily observable in contemporary pneumatologies, according to Gunton, insofar as God's presence is conceived as, and identified in, historical and cultural developments. He suggested that Hegel's influence was apparent wherever "the Spirit is identified as the being or force which operates either … within the created order to lead it in a certain direction or to bring about certain developments within it; or … within the human person or human culture to direct it in a certain way."[24]

Gunton argued that contemporary Western pneumatology is marked by a preoccupation with the internal work of the Spirit,[25] a conceptuality of pneumatological internalisation, which has its theological and historical origins in Augustine's trinitarian theology. When Augustine employed psychological categories – albeit, as anthropomorphised analogy – as a way of speaking about the Spirit's relating the Father to the Son and vice versa, he presided over a paradigm change in theological reflection. Gunton held that this change of theological orientation is characterised by a movement of 'turning-inwards'[26] that is to be corrected by emphasising that God is "not a closed circle, but a self-sufficient community of love freely opened outwards to embrace the other."[27] Indeed, God's 'openness' or orientation toward the world is one of the defining characteristics of Colin Gunton's trinitarian theology.

However, it is precisely here that the question of the place and importance of a doctrine of the Spirit in Gunton's trinitarian theology comes into sharp relief. The

[23] ibid., 107.
[24] ibid.
[25] ibid., 108.
[26] Colin E. Gunton, 'The Spirit in the Trinity' in *The forgotten Trinity* vol. 3, ed. Alasdair I. C. Heron (London: BCC/CCBI, 1991), 131; Gunton, 'Pneumatology,' 647.
[27] Gunton, 'God the Holy Spirit,' 128.

question may be stated simply: what specifically did Colin Gunton teach about the third person of the Trinity? Or, expressed differently: what emphasis is afforded the person and work of the Holy Spirit in the trinitarian theology of Colin Gunton?

Answering these and other related questions will be the concern of this present study, which aims to provide a comprehensive exposition and evaluation of Colin Gunton's trinitarian pneumatology. Here, a number of factors demand attention from the outset including, but not limited to, the fact that Gunton's theological project was not completed, that he was an unsystematic theologian, and the paucity of secondary literature dealing with his theology.

Colin Gunton's academic career began with his appointment as lecturer in philosophy of religion at King's College, London, in 1969, and was cut short by his sudden death on the sixth of May 2003. At the time of his death, Gunton was Professor of Christian Doctrine and a director of the Research Institute in Systematic Theology and had commenced work upon a proposed multi-volume systematics in which his mature theology would be presented. In one sense, therefore, Gunton's theological project remains incomplete. On the other hand, a close reading of Gunton's published works yields a number of instances in which his own words, read in the light of the fact that his career ended prematurely and the body of his published theological thought remains incomplete, may be understood as having greater depth of meaning than originally intended. A case in point is when, in a sermon titled *Time and providence*, Gunton stated

> What God does in his own time is decisive for the whole of time. It is the occasion when he takes our time in his hands, and directs it inexorably to his promised redemption. God has time for us, and goes at his own time, but also at ours. He will give us time to complete what he wants us to achieve, which may not be what we hope or plan to do. That is why we can live freely as his people in the time he has given us to do what he wants us to complete in our particular life-spans, however long or

short.[28]

Clearly, this statement takes on additional import when read in the context of Gunton's own life and death. While commentators may be tempted to conclude that his contribution to Christian theology was less than what had been proposed by Gunton himself, it is equally possible that, according to his own testimony, he had sufficient time for that which the Lord had planned.

Secondly, to describe Gunton's theology as unsystematic is not to deny that he was a systematic theologian of international repute; rather it is a statement about Gunton's own estimation of the value of system in the theological enterprise. Irenaeus of Lyons, for example, was one of Gunton's foremost theological influences and one whom he often described as an 'unsystematic systematician,'[29] a terminological designation he had adopted from Emil Brunner.[30] The point of Brunner's observation was that Irenaeus' theology is distinguished by his ability "to perceive connections between truths, and to know which belongs to which,"[31] or, in Gunton's terms, to see "things whole, and yet in their parts as well."[32] In other words, Irenaean thought was attractive to Gunton precisely because of the way in which Irenaeus understood Christian doctrines as interrelated but refused to succumb to the desire to construct an all-encompassing system of thought. Systematic theology, understood thus, "is not so much a matter of the organising of doctrines into systems, as of weighting and balance in the ways doctrinal matters are placed

[28] This particular sermon, *Time and providence*, was based upon an exposition of Psalm 31:14-15a and was preached on 20th May 1984. Colin E. Gunton, *Theology through preaching: sermons for Brentwood* (London: T & T Clark, 2001), 47f.

[29] Colin E. Gunton, 'An English systematic theology?' in *Scottish journal of theology* 46, no. 4 (1993), 485; Colin E. Gunton, *Intellect and action: elucidations on Christian theology and the life of faith* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 25f.

[30] Emil Brunner, *The mediator: a study of the central doctrine of the Christian faith*, trans. Olive Wyon (London: Lutterworth, 1934), 262.

[31] ibid.

[32] Gunton, 'An English systematic theology,' 493.

into relation with each other."[33]

Gunton's own published corpus reflects a similar approach to the task of systematic theology. While the content of his writing may be described as eclectic inasmuch as he treated many and varied topics,[34] it is also thoroughly systematic in the sense that it offers an unapologetic defence and exposition of the major Christian doctrines, conceived as coherent and interconnected parts of the whole body of Christian thought. The governing paradigms of Colin Gunton's theological thought, as the discussion to follow will show, are reflected in his decision to afford centrality to the doctrines of creation and the Trinity.[35] While it is true that Gunton never produced a conventional systematic treatise of the doctrine of the Spirit, nonetheless the person and work of the Holy Spirit was an integral part of his trinitarian theology. In fact, it will be argued that, as his theology matured, Gunton afforded increased attention to the person and work of the Spirit precisely because he intended to articulate a thorough-going *trinitarian* theology.

A third obstacle facing an intensive examination of Gunton's trinitarian pneumatology is the lack of secondary literature treating the topic. In spite of Gunton's own prolific publishing record, there is, as yet, few scholarly works that engage with his theology. One could speculate that the eclectic nature of Gunton's

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[33] Colin E. Gunton, 'A systematic triangle: Hegel, Kierkegaard, Barth and the question of ethics,' a paper presented to a theology seminar held at the Research Institute in Systematic Theology, King's College, London, (19 March 1999), 7.

[34] Stephen Holmes has observed, for example, that "after his doctorate, not one of Colin's many books takes the form of a sustained engagement with a particular theologian. ... Individual papers or chapters do sometimes take a single writer as their focus, but even this is fairly rare." Stephen R. Holmes, 'Introduction' in *The Barth lectures* by Colin E. Gunton, ed. Paul H. Brazier (London: T & T Clark, 2007), 2.

[35] When Colin Gunton presented the 1992 Bampton Lectures, for example, he argued that the Christian tradition contained resources which may be employed for the healing of the fragmentation and disintegration associated with the intellectual malaise of modernity. Gunton chose the Christian teaching about the essential goodness of the material, created order (the doctrine of creation) and the triune nature of God (doctrine of the Trinity) as a way of addressing tensions between competing individualistic and collectivist demands present in the history of Western thought. Colin E. Gunton, *The One, the three and the many: God, creation and the culture of modernity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University, 1993).

writing, combined with his intention to publish a multi-volume systematics, constitute some of the reasons that gave rise to this situation. It is possible that other theologians may have preferred to wait for a more comprehensive statement of Gunton's position before offering their critique. Speculation notwithstanding, this study will have to contend with a lack of secondary material. Fortunately, there is no poverty of primary material upon which to draw: Gunton's published corpus is replete with references to the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Although it is conceded that the task of analysing and evaluating Colin Gunton's trinitarian pneumatology will be hindered to some extent by his non-architectonic style and a lack of secondary literature, this study nevertheless aims to present one of the first readings of Gunton's doctrine of the Spirit *in toto*.

The question of the content and value of Colin Gunton's trinitarian pneumatology, however, is dependent upon a prior understanding of the way in which Gunton perceived the purpose and resources employed by systematic theology. The task of Christian systematic theology must be conceived as dialogical, according to Gunton, in the sense that theologians 'converse' with the "living voices" of those who have gone before because "that is what it means to take them seriously."[36] Understood in this way, Christian theology is not monological, but dialogical inasmuch as "we would not be theologians unless others had been such before us."[37] For Gunton, the accomplishments of previous thinkers is that which

[36] Colin E. Gunton, 'Historical and systematic theology' in *The Cambridge companion to Christian doctrine*, ed. Colin E. Gunton (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University, 1997), 5f. Affording respect to the theologians from previous generations by treating them as if they were "living voices" is an idea adopted from Karl Barth and repeated at various places throughout Gunton's published works – see, for example, Colin E. Gunton, 'No other foundation: one Englishman's reading of *Church Dogmatics* chapter v' in *Reckoning with Barth: essays on commemoration of the centenary of Karl Barth's birth*, ed. Nigel Biggar (London: Mowbray, 1988), 205; quoting from Karl Barth, *Protestant theology in the Nineteenth Century: its background and history*, trans. Brian Cozens and John Bowden (London: SCM, 1972), 17.

[37] Colin E. Gunton, 'Using and being used: scripture and systematic theology' in *Theology today* 47, no. 3 (1990), 255.

provides the foundation upon which others build. That is to say, no human being "creates anything truly worthwhile entirely out of a vacuum,"[38] an idea that is paradigmatically illustrated by Isaac Newton's (1642-1727) admission to Robert Hooke that "If I have seen further it is by standing on ye sholders of Giants."[39] Gunton clearly understood that those human beings who are privileged to 'see' further than most are those who appreciate and learn from the accumulated knowledge and wisdom of others.

The 'giants' upon whose shoulders Colin Gunton stood are many and varied, and the question of Gunton's historical, philosophical and theological context will be discussed more completely in Chapter Two below. However at this point it will suffice to acknowledge that Gunton is a theologian steeped in the knowledge of the whole Christian tradition – Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Protestant. Indeed it is axiomatic that his theology is marked by a profound respect for and consistency with the received Christian tradition. T. F. Torrance, for example, in a review of *Yesterday and today: a study of continuities in christology*,[40] observed that the principal governing criterion of Gunton's argument in that volume is that

> the renewal of Christology is to be sought not in rejecting the teaching tradition but in taking it further. The problem has been that Christology has not been orthodox enough, or that its lessons have not been learned.[41]

The recognition that some modern theologians have misunderstood the

[38] Malcolm E. Lines, *On the shoulders of giants* (Philadelphia, PA: Institute of Physics, 1994), 1.

[39] Isaac Newton, '154 Letter to Robert Hooke 5 February 1675/6' in *The correspondence of Isaac Newton* vol. 1: 1661-1675, ed. H. W. Turnbull (Cambridge, UK: The Royal Society by Cambridge University, 1959), 416. Determining the date of Newton's letter to Hooke is made difficult because it was written in the period of transition from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar. Newton's dating of the letter reads "5 February 1675/6", but that was according to the Julian calendar. When read in the light of the change to the Gregorian calendar, the letter was actually penned on 15th February 1676. Cf. H. W. Turnbull, 'Preface' in *The correspondence of Isaac Newton* vol. 1: 1661-1675, ed. H. W. Turnbull (Cambridge, UK: The Royal Society by Cambridge University, 1959), xxvi.

[40] Colin E. Gunton, *Yesterday and today: a study of continuities in christology*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983).

[41] Thomas F. Torrance, a review of *Yesterday and today: a study of continuities in christology*, by Colin E. Gunton, in *King's theological review* 7 (1984), 30.

significance of the tradition[42] led Gunton to assert that Christian theological orthodoxy "is, and always has been, encapsulated in and guaranteed by the summary of the biblical faith in the trinitarian creeds of the Christian church."[43] It is clear, therefore, that Gunton was concerned to ensure that his trinitarian theology remained consistent with the received traditions of not only Reformed theological thought but also that of the wider Christian community. The title of this work, *The Lord and Giver of Life*, intentionally emphasises that Gunton's thought is located firmly within the tradition of orthodox Christian theology insofar as it is not merely a description of the person and work of the Holy Spirit but is an explicit reference to the third article of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed. That is not to imply, however, that Gunton forgoes the right to add significant new insights where warranted.

Nevertheless, it is true to say that Gunton's theology is a continuation of that of the Reformers. This is revealed in two ways, firstly, through his adherence to the priority and the centrality of the person and work of Jesus Christ in his theological project and, secondly, through the attention that he afforded to the complementarity of the work of the Son and the Spirit in the economy of redemption. Although many theologians from the Reformed tradition affirm B. B. Warfield's characterisation of Calvin as "the theologian of the Holy Spirit,"[44] the subsequent Reformed tradition has not always held the person and work of the Spirit with the same balanced regard that is characteristic of Calvin's theology. According to Ian Hesselink,

> In the seventeenth century a scholastic orthodoxy on the one hand and a one-sided pietism on the other dealt crippling blows to Calvin's balanced presentation of the work of the Spirit. These two movements were followed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by a liberalism that

[42] Colin E. Gunton, 'The political Christ: some reflections on Mr Cupitt's thesis' in *Scottish journal of theology* 32, no. 6 (1979).
[43] Colin E. Gunton, 'Editorial: Orthodoxy' in *International journal of systematic theology* 1, no. 2 (1999), 114.
[44] Benjamin B. Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine* (Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1956), 484. Cf. Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed., 146.

> talked much about 'spirit' but which knew little of the biblical understanding of the Holy Spirit.[45]

Nevertheless, Hesselink goes on to argue that Christian theology has "much to learn from Calvin in particular, and the Reformed tradition in general, about the Spirit and creation, the relation of the Word and Spirit, the Spirit and the church and sacraments, the Spirit and tradition, the Spirit and the Christian life."[46]

Contrary to the widespread belief about the irrelevance of the doctrine of the Trinity for life, Gunton argued that the revival of interest in trinitarian studies that took place in the latter decades of the twentieth century happened precisely because it was discovered that "the doctrine is not, as has sometimes been supposed, simply a dogma to be affirmed or denied, but a resource for the life of the Christian community and for thought not only about God but about all aspects of human life in society and in the world."[47] More importantly for this study, he held that trinitarian theology stands or falls according to the strength of its pneumatology.[48] Here Gunton was alluding to the "manifest weaknesses" in the Christian theological tradition's treatment of the person and work of the Spirit,[49] which may be traced to the fact that "pneumatology was in general given far less attention in the patristic period than Christology."[50] In fact, as we shall argue in the discussion below, the same is true for the Reformation tradition as a whole.

The thesis developed and defended in this study is that Colin Gunton's trinitarian pneumatology is an example of Reformed theology that is unapologetic in its presentation of a simultaneous emphasis upon the person and work of the Son and

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[45] I. John Hesselink, 'The charismatic movement and the Reformed tradition' in *Major themes in the Reformed tradition*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 380.
[46] ibid., 383f.
[47] Gunton, 'The Trinity in modern theology,' 954.
[48] Colin E. Gunton, 'Foreword' in *Christ and the Spirit: the doctrine of the incarnation according to Edward Irving* by Graham W. P. McFarlane (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1996), ix.
[49] Gunton, 'Pneumatology,' 644.
[50] ibid., 645.

the Spirit. Indeed, it will be argued that Gunton's mature trinitarian theology is founded upon a perichoretic complementarity of the second and third divine persons in the economy of redemption. Moreover, his thought is distinguished by an insistence that pneumatology must not be treated separately from christology, or vice-versa, because studies of Christ and of the Spirit are as much mutually interdependent as the persons of the Son and Spirit are perichoretically interrelated persons.[51] Gunton's intentions in this regard are clear:

> No trinitarian theology is adequate without attention first to the particular shape taken by the life, death and resurrection of the second person of the Trinity incarnate, Jesus of Nazareth, and second to the characteristic form taken by the work of the Spirit who, by relating people and things to Jesus, brings about their proper perfection.[52]

Understood in this way, the strength of trinitarian theology is dependent upon the extent to which it embraces mutually-informing doctrines of Christ and the Spirit. The fact that the Western theological tradition has had to contend with a widespread inability to provide adequate weighting to the humanity of Jesus, according to Gunton, is symptomatic of an inadequately trinitarian theology. For him, "the doctrine of the Spirit is the key to an understanding of the humanity of Christ."[53]

That does not mean that Gunton was ignorant of the difficulties confronting a comprehensive and systematic articulation of a doctrine of the Spirit. He noted two in particular: "the paucity of direct reference to the Spirit's activity" in scripture and

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[51] Gunton's views about the perichoretic relation of christology and pneumatology find support in the trinitarian theologies of Catherine LaCugna and Kilian McDonnell. La Cugna, for example, stated that "Christology and pneumatology ought to be developed in a manner which makes explicit the connection between the salvific missions of Word and Spirit, and their origin in the divine processions." Catherine M. LaCugna, 'Re-conceiving the Trinity as the mystery of salvation' in *Scottish journal of theology* 38, no. 1 (1985), 19. Kilian McDonnell argued that there "can never be a balanced doctrine of Christ without the recognition that pneumatology is the point of entry into Christology and ultimately the Trinity." McDonnell, 'The determinative doctrine of the Holy Spirit,' 153.

[52] Colin E. Gunton, 'The indispensible God? The sovereignty of God and the problem of modern social order' in *Beyond mere health: theology and health care in a secular society*, ed. Hilary D. Regan, Rod Horsfield and Gabrielle McMullan (Kew, VIC: Australian Theological Forum, 1996), 15.

[53] Gunton, 'Pneumatology,' 646.

the ever-present danger that anthropocentrism poses for theological studies.[54] In the first place, Gunton observed that "because of the essential self-effacingness of the Spirit's action, his activity has often to be read between the lines of scripture."[55] Secondly, he recognised that the increased interest in spiritual matters in contemporary society did not necessarily indicate that people were concerned with understanding more about the things of God. There is ample evidence, he argued, to support the thesis that modern persons are often confused between issues pertaining to 'spirit' – understood as either the human spirit or as *zeitgeist* – and those concerning the Spirit of God.

> One of the features of modern religious life is that because of New Age and other parts of the religious growth industry, there is a new attention being given to the Holy Spirit. Those who observe these matters tell me that popular religious bookshops have many books on the Spirit. That is not necessarily a good sign, for it is not our business to speak too much *about* the Spirit. We speak *from* him, for his business is to allow us to speak about Jesus Christ, the way to God the Father. If we are too confident in our Spirit talk, it may be that we are beginning to talk of ourselves again, not about the one of whom the Spirit speaks.[56]

Finally, Stephen Holmes argues that Gunton "must be read to be understood."[57] It is to be noted that even a casual reading of Colin Gunton's writing reveals that the doctrine of the Spirit is an integral part of his theological project and its expression is distinguished by a twofold focus: "*the Spirit in relation to the world*" and "*the Spirit in the Trinity*."[58]

The discussion which follows will examine the personal, historical, philosophical and theological context within which Colin Gunton worked before passing onto a detailed examination of his trinitarian and pneumatological theology.

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[54] Colin E. Gunton, 'The church as a school of virtue? Human formation in trinitarian framework' in *Faithfulness and fortitude: in conversation with the theological ethics of Stanley Hauerwas*, ed. Mark Theissen Nation and Samuel Wells (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 216.
[55] ibid.
[56] Gunton, *Theology through preaching*, 114.
[57] Holmes, 'Introduction,' 4.
[58] Gunton, 'Pneumatology,' 647.

Chapters One and Two, therefore, treat contextual matters that are crucial for an informed discussion of Gunton's theological project as a whole. Chapter Three presents a detailed examination of the content of his trinitarian theology and, therefore, constitutes the theological preparation that must precede an analysis and evaluation of the place and importance that Colin Gunton assigned to the person and work of the Holy Spirit in his trinitarian theology as a whole.

The distinction that Gunton himself drew between the Spirit in relation to the immanent Trinity on the one hand, and the activity of the economic Trinity in the world on the other, will serve as a framework within which an exposition of his distinctive trinitarian pneumatology will be conducted. The specifics of Gunton's position regarding the Spirit in the immanent Trinity are examined in Chapter Four where his understanding of the Spirit as person is discussed. Chapter Five treats Gunton's view of the Spirit as transcendent and, thus, facilitates the transition of the discussion from the immanent to the economic Trinity. When Gunton spoke about the Spirit in relation to the world, he was greatly influenced by Basil of Caesarea's conception of the Spirit as God's perfecting agent in creation. What Gunton intended by speaking thus will be examined in greater detail in the sixth chapter. The study is brought to conclusion with a series of summary statements about Colin Gunton's trinitarian pneumatology, before suggesting a number of avenues for further research that have been prompted by this study.

Chapter One

Colin Gunton's personal context

A biographical sketch of Professor Colin E. Gunton yields important background material and helps establish the claim that he was an important English theologian. Gunton's importance derives from his significant contribution to contemporary theological discourse, principally as Professor of Christian Doctrine and as a director of the Research Institute in Systematic Theology at King's College, London, appointments he held until his death on the sixth of May 2003.

In its attempt to articulate an informed understanding of the significance of Gunton's contribution to Christian theology, this chapter affords due recognition to the influence that personal context has exercised over the development and expression of his thought. More specifically, a discussion of Gunton's personal biography provides the framework within which an exposition of his personal context may take place. Gunton himself identified the important role that personal biography fulfils in the attempt to develop familiarity with a writer's thought. He observed that

> We know from – for example – a good biography that we can learn a great deal about another human being. A biography is a kind of definition by narrative, yet the narrative is not the whole. In an adequate biography it will constitute also the grounds for an account of character, by which is meant something impressed by the life of the basic material, which was given at birth, so that, at the end we can make an at least provisional judgement on the kind of person with whom we are dealing.[1]

Certainly, then, the true significance of Gunton's contribution to the Christian systematic theological enterprise cannot be grasped without due recognition of the immediate personal and professional context in which Gunton lived and worked. In

[1] Colin E. Gunton, 'Towards a trinitarian reading of the tradition: the relevance of the 'eternal' Trinity' in *Trinitarian soundings in systematic theology*, ed. Paul Louis Metzger (London: T & T Clark, 2005), 64.

his own words, an adequate "provisional judgement on the kind of person with whom we are dealing"[2] and the significance of their contribution will be achieved to the extent that a dual focus is maintained upon both the *person* and their *work*.

Colin Ewart Gunton was born on the nineteenth of January 1941 in Colchester, Essex and died on the sixth of May 2003 at Brentwood, Essex.[3] The son of Herbert Ewart Gunton, an accountant, and Mabel Priscilla Bradley, Colin Gunton married his childhood sweetheart, Jennifer Mary Osgathorpe on the eighth of August 1964 and together they had four children: Sarah Jill, Carolyn Jane Gunton Evans, Christopher John and Colin Jonathan.[4]

While, according to Bruce McCormack, a long-time friend and academic colleague, "Colin Gunton was widely regarded as the most significant English theologian of his generation, a man who helped to restore dignity to the study of dogmatic theology at a time when its fortunes were in decline,"[5] the sum of Gunton's contribution to academic theology cannot be understood, according to McCormack, "if we do not have an appreciation of who and what he was when home, away from the demands of his academic life."[6] Gunton's professional, academic life was supported by and grounded in the context of his immediate family and congregational community.[7]

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[2] ibid.

[3] *Colin Ewart Gunton curriculum vitae*, available from http://www.deepsight.org/goscul/fbiblio.htm (accessed 3 October 2005); Andy Goodliff, 'Colin Gunton' available from http://andygoodliff.typepad.com/my_weblog/colin_gunton.html (accessed 21 February 2008).

[4] 'Gunton, Colin E(wart) 1941-2003' in *Contemporary authors* vol. 216, ed. Scott Peacock (Dertoit, MI: Thompson Gale, 2004), 133.

[5] Bruce L. McCormack, 'Foreword' in *Trinitarian soundings in systematic theology*, ed. Paul Louis Metzger (London: T & T Clark, 2005), 3.

[6] ibid., 4.

[7] Indeed, it would be difficult to overlook the significance that community - familial, collegial and ecclesial - played in the development, refinement and articulation of Colin Gunton's theology. He acknowledges that "Especially important for me are two features of my life: the continuing theological life of the Research Institute in Systematic Theology, many of whose members are mentioned in the footnotes, along with others who have helped along the way; and my wife and

This point is echoed by Stephen Holmes who suggests that the importance of Gunton's intellectual achievements can only be grasped with prior acknowledgment of the way in which his theology was developed out of a long-standing commitment to the congregation at Brentwood United Reformed Church, the local church where he served as associate minister for twenty eight years.[8]

Although there is a dearth of published material dealing with Gunton's life, a common theme to be found in the extant literature is the observation that apart from a love for systematic theology, Gunton's passions were rooted in distinctly family-orientated activities such as gardening, music, choral singing, rambling and cycling. Indeed, his colleagues often had cause to emphasise the central importance of Gunton's wife and family in the midst of an enthusiastic and hectic academic lifestyle. His wife, Jenny, for example, "supported and sustained him in his prodigiously energetic life."[9] It seems that as "voluble and excited as he could become in his public life, Colin was calm and peaceful at home. He was an avid gardener ... He loved to cycle ... [and] he loved holidays in the Lake District."[10]

Public life for Gunton, by way of contrast, was one in which he entered into the fray of scholarly debate with enthusiastic vigour. His colleagues often noted the sense of animation and anticipation that was generated by Gunton's presence during theological discussion and debate. The excitement, it appears, stemmed not from an intention to become argumentative for argument's sake; rather theology "was

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family, through whose support so much is made possible." Colin E. Gunton, *Father, Son and Holy Spirit: essays toward a fully trinitarian theology* (London: T & T Clark, 2003), xviii.

[8] Stephen R. Holmes, 'The Rev Prof Colin Gunton: classical theologian who sought to expose the intellectual incoherence and ethical confusion of modern society' in *The Guardian* (London), Tuesday, 3 June 2003, 23; cf. Stephen R. Holmes, 'The theologian as preacher, the preacher as theologian' in *The theologian as preacher: further sermons from Colin E. Gunton*, by Colin E. Gunton, ed. Sarah J. Gunton and John E. Colwell (London: T & T Clark, 2007), xix.

[9] Michael Banner, 'The Rev Professor Colin Gunton: advocate for an unapologetic theology' in *The Independent* (London), Thursday, 22 May 2003, 20.

[10] McCormack, 'Foreword,' 3.

exciting when Colin was around because it excited him so and his excitement was contagious."[11] Gunton's intensity, it seems, displayed the seriousness with which he approached the theological task.

> One always knew when Colin Gunton was in the room. His presence was palpable. In the question-and-answer sessions that inevitably followed the presentation of academic papers at conferences, he seemed always poised to come off his seat, to lend support to one speaker, to reject vehemently the position of another, or simply to add a pertinent observation. He was full of nervous energy because, for him, wherever theology was being done, there was a great deal at stake.[12]

Education

Colin Gunton attended Nottingham High School (1952-1960) and was awarded a scholarship to read the classics at Hertford College in 1960.[13] Gunton's tertiary education commenced at Hertford College, the University of Oxford (1960-1964). He gained a Bachelor of Arts (*Literae Humaniores*) before subsequently moving to Mansfield College (1964-1966, 1967-1969) which was considered to be "the centre of Free Church intellectual life in Oxford."[14] While at Mansfield College, Gunton read theology and was awarded the degrees of Bachelor of Arts (Theology) in 1966, Master of Arts (1967), and Doctor of Philosophy (1973).[15]

Gunton also earned a doctorate in divinity from the University of London (1993)[16] and received an honorary Doctor of Divinity from the University of Aberdeen in 1999.[17] Shortly before his death, Gunton was awarded an earned Doctor of Divinity degree from the University of Oxford.[18]

Gunton's doctoral research at Oxford commenced in 1967 under the

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[11] ibid., 1.
[12] ibid.
[13] 'The Rev Professor Colin Gunton' in *The Times* (London), Monday, 19 May 2003, 27.
[14] 'The Rev Professor Colin Gunton' in *The Daily Telegraph* (London), Tuesday, 20 May 2003, 23.
[15] Holmes, 'The Rev Prof Colin Gunton,' 23.
[16] 'Gunton, Colin E(wart) 1941-2003,' 133.
[17] *Colin Ewart Gunton curriculum vitae*, available from http://www.deepsight.org/goscul/fbiblio.htm (accessed 3 October 2005).
[18] Robert W. Jenson, 'Colin Gunton (1940-2003)' in *Theology today* 61, no. 1 (2004), 85.

supervision of an American Lutheran, Robert Jenson, who steered Gunton toward an investigation of "the nature of God and the way he is known and named or described."[19] That choice of topic exerted significant influence over Gunton's theological formation and the direction that his subsequent work was to take. His doctoral dissertation analysed and compared two influential modern approaches to the doctrine of God and led to the conclusion that although there are radical differences between an emphasis upon revelation and the doctrine of the Trinity (Barth) and process theology's resort to reason (Hartshorne), there are also significant similarities shared by the two approaches.[20] The dissertation received critical acclaim as "a first-rate study of the doctrine of God in Charles Hartshorne and Karl Barth, one which reflected not only refined skills in doctrinal theology but also considerable philosophical acumen."[21]

One of the features of Gunton's life that became apparent during his Doctor of Philosophy studies was the commitment he held to the principle of theological integration in one's life. In fact, Bruce McCormack observes that Gunton's studies were extended because of an unwavering commitment to the practice of – as opposed to a simple intellectual assent to – the integration of theology in life. McCormack adds that Gunton's PhD

> would take six years to complete – with good reason. His teaching career was launched only two years into his research when he became a lecturer in Philosophy of Religion at King's College London in 1969. And, of course, Colin had to become an ordained minister in the United

[19] Colin E. Gunton, 'Theology in communion' in *Shaping a theological mind: theological context and methodology*, ed. Darren C. Marks (Aldersgate, UK: Ashgate, 2002), 33. Robert Jenson was a visiting fellow at Oxford and returned to America before Gunton finished his dissertation. The task of supervision passed to John Marsh, Principal of Mansfield College, and later to John Macquarrie.

[20] Colin E. Gunton, 'Becoming and being: a comparison of the doctrine of God in process theology and in Karl Barth.' (Dissertation, PhD, University of Oxford, 1972). The dissertation was published subsequently as *Becoming and being: the doctrine of God in Charles Hartshorne and Karl Barth*, (Oxford: Oxford University, 1978), before being revised and expanded for the second publishing as *Becoming and being: the doctrine of God in Charles Hartshorne and Karl Barth*, 2nd ed. (London: SCM, 2001).

[21] McCormack, 'Foreword,' 2.

> Reformed Church before completing his degree – which again said a lot about how he understood the nature of theology, its purpose, its public.[22]

According to McCormack, it is possible to learn a great deal about Gunton's intellectual orientation from the very beginning of the time he spent reading theology at Mansfield College. To be married while studying theology in the mid-1960s was frowned upon by the Mansfield establishment.[23] Nevertheless, the "fact that Colin chose not to submit to the powers that be in this regard tells us a great deal about the way he thought theology should be integrated with everyday life."[24] Michael Banner concurs, adding that Gunton was "a dissenter by disposition, and he would have been appalled by the notion that he might ever become an establishment figure."[25] It seems that Gunton simply refused to permit his growing international reputation as a theological scholar and the constant stream of invitations to deliver lectures and the conferring of honorary degrees that it produced to divert his attention from the importance of the serious business of engagement with and promotion of systematic theology's apologetic.

Michael Banner also observes a certain irony in the fact that Gunton's academic career is bracketed by two significant events: his first teaching appointment as lecturer in philosophy of religion at King's College, London, and being permitted to supplicate for the Doctor of Divinity degree from Oxford University. Banner remarks that Gunton

> would have chuckled at the story of the one-time rebel honoured by his old and very established university. … If the irony of the lecturer in philosophy of religion becoming a courageous voice calling theology back to its proper task, against the fashionable stream, frames the career at one end, recognition from Oxford University in the award of a DD

[22] ibid.
[23] Gunton married in 1966, the same year that he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts from Hertford College and commenced postgraduate theological studies at Mansfield College, Oxford. 'Colin Gunton' available from http://www.theopedia.com/Colin_Gunton (accessed 11 May 2007).
[24] McCormack, 'Foreword,' 1.
[25] Banner, 'The Rev Professor Colin Gunton,' 20.

> frames it at the other. Gunton was not a man to rest on his laurels or proclaim his achievements, but it must (and indeed should) have given him a certain satisfaction to see the lone voice of the early part of his career become the voice of a wise elder statesman, even as early as his appointment to a chair in Christian Doctrine at King's in 1984.[26]

In 1969, as mentioned earlier, Gunton was appointed lecturer in philosophy of religion at King's College, London, before achieving promotion firstly to the position of senior lecturer in systematic theology (1983) and, secondly, as Professor of Christian Doctrine at the University of London in 1984. Together with Christoph Schwöbel, Gunton founded the Research Institute in Systematic Theology, King's College, in 1988. Gunton became the director of the Institute in 1998 and continued in that position until his death in 2003.[27]

Colleagues have noted that under Gunton's leadership, King's College became well known for the vibrancy and excitement that was generated amongst staff, students and visiting scholars alike. Stephen Holmes, a faculty member with Gunton at King's, for example, observes that Gunton's enthusiastic leadership ensured that the Research Institute for Systematic theology "became internationally famous as a place where a remarkably high level of intellectual engagement was combined with a profound sense of scholarly community."[28] Graham McFarlane, one of Gunton's doctoral students, bears testimony to the importance of Gunton's influence upon the development of English post-graduate study of theology.

> Prior to Gunton's professorship, postgraduate studies was an isolated affair. At King's, however, Gunton established a context within which postgraduate studies could flourish. He did this by setting up weekly research seminars where faculty and postgraduate students would meet, listen to an academic paper and discuss for 2-3 hours. As an academic, this is the ideal working environment. … Needless to say, this academic

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[26] ibid.

[27] The Research Institute in Systematic Theology had only one director at a time. The inaugural director was Christoph Schwöbel (1988-1993). Schwöbel was followed by Alan Torrance (1993-1997/8) and Colin Gunton (1988-2003).

[28] Holmes, 'The Rev Prof Colin Gunton,' 23.

model is now essential to any serious postgraduate community.[29]

Notwithstanding the importance of the resurgent interest in the study of systematic theology generated by the Research Institute in Systematic Theology, it could be argued that Gunton's greatest legacy lies with the number of students over whom he has had great influence.[30] McCormack observes that Gunton's influence is proportional to his sense of collegiality: "What students loved about Colin was that he took their ideas with great seriousness. He understood them as junior colleagues, men and women whose thinking was a great source of stimulation to his own."[31] Elsewhere McCormack adds that the secret of Gunton's influence is to be found in his "ability to truly be *with* his students, to treat them as junior colleagues in a shared research project rather that talking down to them as mere students."[32] That particular point is repeated by Stephen Holmes who notes that Gunton's "academic life was rooted in local community as well; he gave himself generously to his students, respecting them as conversation partners and often as friends."[33]

Christian vocation

Apart from his academic responsibilities, Gunton is also well known for the maintenance of a strong connection with his local church congregation. Indeed, it has been observed that such an allegiance to the local church lies at the root of Gunton's theology.[34] Alan Argent, for example, observes that "Colin was proud of the fact that he was the first minister to have been ordained in the new United Reformed

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[29] Graham W. P. McFarlane, 'Profile: Colin E. Gunton' in *Catalyst* 27, no. 2 (2001) available from http://catalystresources.org/issues/272mcfarlane.html (accessed 27 April 2006).
[30] See, for example, Andy Goodliff, 'KCL Theology PhDs under Colin Gunton' available from http://andygoodliff.typepad.com/my_weblog/theology_phds_under_colin.html (accessed 21 February 2008).
[31] McCormack, 'Foreword,' 1.
[32] Bruce L. McCormack, '*The one, the three and the many*: in memory of Colin Gunton' in *Cultural encounters: a journal for the theology of culture* 1, no. 2 (2005), 17.
[33] Holmes, 'The Rev Prof Colin Gunton,' 23.
[34] 'The Rev Professor Colin Gunton' in *The Times* (London), Thursday, 19 May 2003, 27.

Church."[35] Gunton was ordained, however, as a university lecturer and it was the prompting of the Rev. Daniel Jenkins, a visiting professor at King's College, that brought the situation into sharp focus: a congregational understanding of the church, he held, did not permit one to be "a shepherd without sheep, a pastor without a flock."[36] Armed with this new insight into the importance of the connection between the local church congregation and academic theology, Gunton accepted a position as associate minister of Brentwood United Reformed Church in 1975 and faithfully served that congregation for twenty eight years in both pastoral and pulpit ministry.[37]

Brentwood United Reformed Church is one of seventeen hundred and fifty congregations throughout England, Scotland, and Wales in which the quarter of a million attendees are served by eleven hundred men and women who are the United Reformed Church's ministers. The denomination was formed in 1972 by the union of the Congregational Church in England and Wales and the Presbyterian Church of England.[38] The Reformed Churches of Christ subsequently joined the union in 1981 and were followed by the admission of the Congregational Union of Scotland in the year 2000.[39]

Although one of Britian's smaller Christian denominations, the United Reformed Church stands firmly within the historic Reformed tradition. Theologically

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[35] Alan Argent, 'Rev Professor Colin Gunton' in *The Times* (London), Monday, 2 June 2003, 28.
[36] ibid.
[37] McCormack, 'Foreword,' 2.
[38] Several authors make reference to the fact that, prior to the union which formed the United Reformed Church, Gunton's Christian heritage had been within English Congregationalism. See Christoph Schwöbel, 'The preacher's art: preaching theologically' in *Theology through preaching: sermons for Brentwood*, ed. Colin E. Gunton (London: T & T Clark, 2001), 17; McCormack, '*The one, the three and the many*: in memory of Colin Gunton,' 13; Hans Schaeffer, *Createdness and ethics: the doctrine of creation and theological ethics in the theology of Colin E. Gunton and Oswald Bayer* (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 2006), 48 n. 86; Holmes, 'The theologian as preacher,' xii. Nevertheless, Alan Argent has observed that "Colin was proud of the fact that he was the first minister to have been ordained in the new United Reformed Church, all other URC ministers having formerly been ordained as either Congregationalists or Presbyterians." Alan Argent, 'Rev Professor Colin Gunton,' 28.
[39] United Reformed Church, *What is the URC?* available from http://www.urc.org.uk/about_the_urc/what_is_the_urc/index.htm (accessed 1 June 2005).

speaking, "the United Reformed Church holds to the Trinitarian faith expressed in the historic Christian creeds and finds its supreme authority for faith and conduct in the Word of God in the Bible, discerned under guidance of the Holy Spirit."[40] From an ecumenical and ecclesial perspective, however, a strong sense of commitment to Christian unity means that "the United Reformed Church is also a broad church. Its membership embraces congregations of evangelical, charismatic and liberal understandings of the Christian faith."[41] One can only speculate about the extent to which Gunton's influence remains within that denominational structure because he also served as the convenor of the doctrine and worship committee of the United Reformed Church during 1985-1991.[42]

In the light of the discussion above, it is not without significance that Gunton's ministry within the Brentwood congregation is most clearly understood pastorally and theologically. Firstly, from a pastoral perspective, Gunton was convinced that authentic Christian ministry is 'lived theology' inasmuch as pastoral ministry is inherently relational because – to be specific – *personal* relationships form the basis of life as the community of believers.[43] McCormack recalls that Gunton, the pastor, strove to maintain a sense of connectedness between his twin responsibilities of theology and pastoral practice.

> He once said to me that a church should never have more than around eighty members. He wanted to know not only each person's name but what was happening in the lives of each of them and one could not do that in a large church.[44]

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[40] ibid.
[41] ibid.
[42] Holmes, 'The Rev Prof Colin Gunton,' 23.
[43] In the 'Preface' to his first volume of sermons, for example, Gunton was candid about the symbiotic importance attached to and derived from his pastoral duties. He remarked that it "is one of the great blessings of my life to have been able to preach to the same congregation for a quarter of a century, in the latter part of the period approximately once a month." Colin E. Gunton, *Theology through preaching: sermons for Brentwood* (London: T & T Clark, 2001), viii.
[44] McCormack, 'Foreword,' 3.

Secondly, Gunton's theology, according to Stephen Holmes, is informed by and grounded in his commitment to the local church congregation so much so that his theology must be read in the light of that service.[45] Holmes' claim in this regard is validated by several of Gunton's Brentwood parishioners who describe him as a man who did not think too highly of himself, and yet was one who "practised what he preached."[46] Gunton himself acknowledged the interconnectedness of theology and life when, in reference to Brentwood United Reformed Church, he asserted that "right theology begins here, where the Gospel is proclaimed by word and sacrament and lived out in the company of others."[47] The Christian theological pursuit, according to Gunton, derives importance precisely because it is, in large part, conducted within the context of the ministry of the Church and because it affords acknowledgment of concepts formulated by others within the Christian tradition. Indeed, according to Gunton, 'right' theology is that which emerges from the midst of the worshipping community of believers, those who, as stipulated by Calvin, hear the gospel of Jesus Christ proclaimed through the preaching of the Word of God and by participation in the sacraments.[48] Elsewhere Gunton acknowledged that theology's task is "to essay a rational account of the creed of the Church while remaining deeply entrenched in the gospel."[49]

The centrality of the ecclesial context for the practice and pursuit of theology was made clear by Gunton when he wrote that

> the ministry of the church is an inescapable context for the work of a theologian if it is to continue to be rooted in the historical contingencies that make the practice [of systematic theology] what it is. Outside of it

[45] Holmes, 'The Rev Prof Colin Gunton,' 23.
[46] Tony Cheer, Sheila Maxey and Charles Steynor, 'Foreword' in *The theologian as preacher: further sermons from Colin E. Gunton* by Colin E. Gunton, ed. Sarah J. Gunton and John E. Colwell (London: T & T Clark, 2007), x.
[47] Gunton, 'Theology in communion,' 36.
[48] ibid.
[49] Gunton, *Father, Son and Holy Spirit*, 34.

> the discipline of theology becomes rootless and loses its reason for being, however much some recent developments have attempted to evade this fact.[50]

Academic context

Gunton's untimely death has precipitated interest in an assessment of the value of his contribution to dogmatic and systematic theology.[51] Robert Jenson, for example, observes that

> Colin Gunton died at the height of his powers, leaving nevertheless a large body of writing and a remarkable cadre of graduate students and deeply influenced colleagues and former colleagues, centered around King's College (London), where he spent his entire teaching career. It is not too much to say that, through his books and the people he influenced, he has been the leading agent of a transformation of the British theological landscape. Where once biblically and systematically driven theology had been a rarity, it is now found across the academic and ecclesial spectrum, as often as not in the person of a King's graduate.[52]

Although Gunton has been described as one of "the most distinctive and powerful voices in British theology,"[53] one suspects that his influence draws at least as much from a distinctive orientation with which he approached the task of systematics as it does from the method or content of that theology. Stephen Holmes, a colleague of Gunton at King's, states that quite apart from providing "inspirational teaching at King's College London, he pioneered a vision of classical Christian theology as a credible intellectual discipline which, far from needing to accommodate itself to modern fashions of thought, provided the resources needed to criticise them."[54] Gunton's intellectual power and perseverance were energised by

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[50] Gunton, 'Theology in communion,' 31.

[51] While many writers refer to Colin Gunton's death as "untimely," Sarah, his daughter, argues that perhaps the timing of his death is better understood as having taken place within the timeframe designated by God the Father. This revised understanding, Sarah Gunton argues, would have raised no argument from her father. Sarah J. Gunton, 'Preface' in *The theologian as preacher: further sermons from Colin E. Gunton* by Colin E. Gunton, ed. Sarah J. Gunton and John E. Colwell (London: T & T Clark, 2007), vii.

[52] Jenson, 'Colin Gunton (1940-2003),' 85.

[53] Holmes, 'The Rev Prof Colin Gunton,' 23.

[54] ibid.

the unshakable conviction that "the task of theology was to explicate its claims, not apologise for them."[55]

This approach was at least as much counter-cultural as it was innovative, drawing as it did upon Gunton's unswerving belief in the importance of theology – theological studies are viable and valuable disciplines, deserving of a place within the university curriculum and should not be seen to make the concession of going "cap in hand to philosophy to establish its foundations or credentials."[56] Gunton himself adds that "far from requiring us to go cap-in-hand to modern cultural forms for assistance, Christian theology is in a strong position to offer a model of rationality which will throw light on many of the problems which our culture faces."[57]

The clearest example of the distinctiveness of Gunton's thought in this regard is to be found in an appreciation of his point of departure for the theological task. Rejecting the accepted notion that systematics commenced with an abstract philosophical notion of the being of God, Gunton chose to follow the lead of the Cappadocian Fathers and vigorously argued for the understanding that God is a trinitarian community of persons. He also wrote extensively on the doctrines of

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[55] Banner, 'The Rev Professor Colin Gunton,' 20.

[56] ibid.

[57] Colin E. Gunton, 'Knowledge and culture: towards an epistemology of the concrete' in *The gospel and contemporary culture*, ed. Hugh Montefiore (London: Mowbray, 1992), 92. The "model of rationality" that Gunton refers to here is an attempt to think about the one and the many – i.e., the individual and the collective – in such a way as will neither subordinate nor assume one to the other but which will do justice to the dynamic tension which constitutes each in their respective identity and relationality. Gunton sees the example of this 'rationality' instantiated in the notion of person as explicated by trinitarian theology. In particular, Gunton is concerned to avoid modalistic tendencies in trinitarian discourse specifically by placing more emphasis upon the concepts of 'person' and persons-in-relation. His aim was to correct alternation between collectivist and individualist constructs on the grounds that both are detrimental to the concept of person insofar as collectivism fosters the "abolition of personal particularity" while individualism denies that "personal existence subsists in concrete relation to others." ibid., 94. Gunton's ideas in this regard were expounded more fully in *The one, the three and the many: God, creation and the culture of modernity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University, 1993). The extent to which his trinitarian formulation is distinct from other expressions within the Reformed tradition constitutes in part the raison d'etre of this study and, therefore, will receive a fuller examination and evaluation in the chapters which follow.

Christ, creation, revelation and atonement. The centrality of the doctrine of the Trinity in Gunton's theology constitutes a major point of interest for this dissertation and will be elaborated further in subsequent chapters.

It is nevertheless appropriate at this juncture, to highlight the sense of 'freshness' and revitalisation that Gunton brought to the English theological academy. His rejection of the traditional philosophical apologetic in preference for a theology that was constructive and exegetical cut across the generally accepted position adopted by the majority of the most influential theological faculties in England of the period. This approach to the theological task was not received favourably by established figures, indeed it was

> so unfashionable as to appear merely quaint; that it might now be regarded as in the mainstream of English-language theology is due in large part to Gunton's unswerving commitment and intellectual power. He worked with admirable energy and integrity – even if the admiration of some was grudging.[58]

The entirety of Gunton's academic career was spent at King's College, London. While continuing his doctoral studies, Gunton commenced lecturing in philosophy of religion. In the period 1980-1984, Gunton was lecturer in systematic theology before being appointed as professor of Christian doctrine in 1984. He went on to become the dean of the faculty (1988-1990) and, ultimately, the Head of Department for Theology and Religious Studies during 1994-1997.[59] According to Jenson, Gunton's "almost limitless ambitions for the King's College London theological faculty … and for making it a centre from which to reinvigorate British systematic theology"[60] meant that theological studies at King's College were revitalised under Gunton's leadership. The extent of the success of his efforts,

[58] Holmes, 'The Rev Prof Colin Gunton,' 23.
[59] 'Gunton, Colin E(wart) 1941-2003,' 133.
[60] Robert W. Jenson, 'Afterword' in *Trinitarian soundings in systematic theology*, ed. Paul Louis Metzger (London: T & T Clark, 2005), 217.

moreover, was noted by T. F. Torrance, one of the leading Reformed theologians of the later twentieth century, who described King's College as "the strongest theological faculty in Britain, to which I often recommend students."[61]

Notwithstanding the fact that Colin Gunton spent his entire academic teaching career at King's College,[62] his international reputation and influence grew commensurately with an impressive record of academic appointments and responsibilities.[63] Gunton's colleagues, however, argue that his legacy should not be calculated by the number of invitations to deliver international lectures but by the

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[61] Thomas F. Torrance, 'Thomas Torrance responds' in *The promise of trinitarian theology: theologians in dialogue with T. F. Torrance*, ed. Elmer M. Colyer (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 314.

[62] A press release announcing the 2003 Fellows of King's College makes note of the fact that at the time of his death, Colin Gunton was "about to complete his 33rd year of unstinting service and loyalty to the College." King's College London, 'King's announces the 2003 Fellows', a press release dated 29 May 2003 available from http://www.kcl.ac.uk/phpnews/wmview.php?ArtID=393 (accessed 11 May 2007).

[63] A summary of Gunton's academic appointments and responsibilities includes
1969 Lecturer in the Philosophy of Religion, King's College, London
1977-87 Secretary, Society for the Study of Theology
1978-1990 Joint Editor, King's Theological Review
1980 Lecturer in Systematic Theology, King's College
1983 Senior Lecturer in Systematic Theology, King's College
1984- Professor of Christian Doctrine in the University of London
1985-91 Convenor, Doctrine and Worship Committee, United Reformed Church
1988-90 Dean of the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, King's College
1990 Didsbury Lecturer, Nazarene Theological College, Manchester.
1992 Bampton Lecturer in the University of Oxford.
1993 Warfield Lecturer, Princeton Theological Seminary. Topic: Revelation Revisited
1993-4 President, Society for the Study of Theology
1994-7 Head of Department, Theology and Religious Studies, King's College
1995 Hulsean Preacher, University of Cambridge
1995 Dale Lecturer, Mansfield College, Oxford.
1996 Visiting Professor, University of Kiel
1996 Dominion Chalmers Lecturer, Ottawa, Canada.
1997 Visiting Professor of Theology, University of Copenhagen
1997 Keene Lecturer, Chelmsford Cathedral
1997 Ryan Lecturer, Asbury Theological Seminary
1998 William Hodgkins Lecturer, Cardiff Adult Christian Education Centre
1998- Director, Research Institute in Systematic Theology, King's College, London
1998- Joint editor, International Journal of Systematic Theology
1999 Drew Lecture on Immortality, Spurgeon's College, London
2000 Shenfield Lecturer, St Mary's Church, Shenfield, Essex
2001 The Dr J. Campbell Wadsworth Memorial Lecture, McGill University, Montreal.
This comprehensive listing of Gunton's academic appointments was sourced from *Colin Ewart Gunton curriculum vitae*, available at http://www.deepsight.org/goscul/fbiblio.htm (accessed 3 October 2005). A more comprehensive biography of Colin Gunton's life and academic career is provided in an appendix below (see page 258).

number of his former students that have pursued academic careers of their own and are teaching theology in various locations throughout the world.[64] Nonetheless, his involvement in the wider theological academy via a prodigious publishing record, membership and leadership of theological societies, and editorial responsibilities for various theological publications has guaranteed Gunton's importance for Reformed, English, and systematic theology.

Gunton's influence spread wider than King's College through his involvement in various organisations, including his co-editorship of the *King's theological review* and a directorship of the Research Institute in Systematic Theology (1998-2003). Although this institute was founded and operated from within King's College, participation in the group's activities was by no means restricted to institute faculty members, staff and students. The responsibilities of the Research Institute are threefold: "a weekly interdisciplinary research seminar (for staff and students in Systematic Theology and Christian Ethics) held in all three terms; a series of one-day conferences, devised particularly to enable part-time students to share in the intellectual life of the Institute … and an international three-day conference every two years."[65] The proceedings of the conferences are published by T & T Clark and to date include six titles, four of which were edited by Colin Gunton.[66]

Beyond his teaching responsibilities with King's College, Gunton exerted considerable influence in the area of theological publishing. He was joint editor of

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[64] Banner, 'The Rev Professor Colin Gunton,' 20; Holmes, 'The Rev Prof Colin Gunton,' 23.

[65] Research Assessment Exercise 2001, *Structure, environment and staffing policy*, available from http://195.194.167.103/submissions/Textform.asp? (accessed 12 April 2006).

[66] The volumes edited by Gunton are *God and freedom: essays in historical and systematic theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995); *The doctrine of creation: essays in dogmatics, history and philosophy* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997); *The theology of reconciliation: essays in biblical and systematic theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2003). Other volumes include: Christoph Schwöbel and Colin E. Gunton, eds., *Persons, divine and human: essays in theological anthropology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991); Christoph Schwöbel, ed., *Trinitarian theology today: essays on divine being and act* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995); and, Stephen R. Holmes and Murray A. Rae, eds., *The person of Christ*. (London: T & T Clark, 2005).

King's theological review from 1977 to 1990[67] and in 1996 was invited to join the editorial board of the *Neue zeitschrift für systematische theologie und religionsphilosophie*, a leading international journal encouraging scholarly dialogue between continental Europe and the English-speaking world in the area of philosophy of religion.[68] Gunton was also one of the founding editors of the *International journal of systematic theology*, a journal that commenced in 1998 and is co-published by the Universities of London and Oxford. He served in that editorial capacity until his death in 2003.[69]

Colin Gunton was also an active secretary of the Society for the Study of Theology, and served as the society's president during 1993-1994.[70] The value of his input to that group has been recognised recently through the establishment of the Colin Gunton Memorial Prize, which is awarded to the winning entry in an annual essay competition conducted jointly by the Society for the Study of Theology and the *International journal of systematic theology*.[71]

International lectureships

As Gunton's international reputation grew, so too did the number of invitations to present prestigious annual lectures in well-known universities from both sides of the Atlantic. During his career, Gunton presented the 1990 Didsbury Lectures, the 1992 Bampton Lectures, the 1993 Warfield Lectures, the 1997 Ryan Lectures, the 1999 Drew Lecture, and the 2001 G. Campbell Wadsworth Memorial

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[67] 'Gunton, Colin E(wart) 1941-' in *Contemporary authors* vol. 192, ed. Scott Peacock (Detroit, MI: Thompson Gale, 2002), 183.

[68] Christoph Schwöbel, 'In memoriam' in *Neue zeitschrift für systematische theologie und religionsphilosophie* 47, no. 2 (2005), 129f.

[69] McCormack, 'Foreword,' 2.

[70] 'Gunton, Colin E(wart) 1941-2003,' 134; 'Gunton, Colin E(wart) 1941-,' 182.

[71] Information regarding this essay competition may be obtained from the Society for the Study of Theology website at http://www.huss.ex.ac.uk/theology/sst/prize.html.

Lecture.[72]

The Didsbury Lectures were established by the Nazarene Theological College in Manchester as a forum through which its own faculty and students, together with the wider academic and Christian community, might enjoy first-hand engagement with well-known academics in ecclesiastical history as well as the areas of biblical studies, systematic and dogmatic theology.[73] Colin Gunton was invited to present the Didsbury Lectures during the Summer of 1990. His lectures treated matters pertaining to the doctrines of Christ and creation and where subsequently published jointly by Paternoster (Carlisle, UK) and Eerdmans (Grand Rapids, MI) as *Christ and creation*.[74]

The Bampton Lectures are held on either an annual or biennial basis at the University of Oxford, and involve a series of eight divinity lecture sermons preached at the Church of St Mary the Virgin.[75] Oxford University's statutes and regulations governing the Bampton Lectures state that the presentation's content should serve to edify the Christian faith by rejecting heresy and providing instruction upon doctrinal issues and matters arising from the practise of faith among the earliest Christian communities.[76] Gunton was invited to deliver the 1992 Bampton Lectures and chose to address the relationship between God, creation and the modern world. He commenced the lectures by observing that human history testifies to a tendency to alternate between the competing interests of the 'one' and the 'many.' He argued that

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[72] *Colin Ewart Gunton curriculum vitae* available from http://www.deepsight.org/goscul/fbiblio.htm (accessed 3 October 2005).
[73] Kent Brower, 'Celebrating 25 years of the Didsbury Lectures' in *The link* (2003), 7.
[74] Colin E. Gunton, *Christ and creation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992).
[75] Oxford University statutes and regulations governing the Bampton Lectures specify that the lectures may be held each year during either or both Hilary and Trinity full terms. The regulations also permit the lectures to be presented in alternate years. University of Oxford, 'Statutes and regulations: Part 4: Bampton Lectures,' available from http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/statutes/354-051a.shtml (accessed 8 May 2006).
[76] ibid.

the particular issue of the one and the many lies at the heart of philosophical and theological inquiry and can only be resolved adequately with a sufficiently trinitarian understanding of reality. Gunton's Bampton Lectures were published as *The one, the three and the many: God, creation and the culture of modernity*.[77]

The Warfield lectures, held in honour of Annie Kinkead Warfield, are hosted each year by Princeton Theological Seminary. Annie Kinkead Warfield was the wife of B. B. Warfield, eminent Presbyterian theologian and distinguished professor of theology who served as principal of Princeton Theological Seminary from 1887 to 1921.[78] Colin Gunton was invited to present the Warfield Lectures during the Spring of 1993 and he took the opportunity to call for a re-examination of the doctrine of revelation, suggesting that the doctrine was simultaneously neglected and overused. Gunton's Warfield lectures were subsequently published as *A brief theology of revelation*.[79] Throughout that volume, Gunton argued that a "proper systematic weighting and integration"[80] of the doctrine of revelation is moderated by christological and pneumatological mediation inasmuch as revelation is that which "happens as the Word of Truth is mediated in the present by the Spirit of Truth."[81]

The Keene Lectures, held in the Chelmsford Cathedral, are open meetings serving as a forum for the discussion of pertinent theological topics. The lectures are named after John Henry Keene, an extremely public-spirited Chelmsford citizen whose generosity led to the establishment of the Keene Lecture Trust Fund. This fund permits Chelmsford Cathedral to invite prominent speakers to present lectures

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[77] Gunton, *The one, the three and the many*, 17.
[78] Princeton Theological Seminary, *University of Oxford Professor to deliver Princeton Theological Seminary's Annual Warfield Lectures April 4–7* available from http://www.ptsem.edu/news/pr-bin/2005/Warfield.php (accessed 8 May 2006).
[79] Colin E. Gunton, *A brief theology of revelation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995).
[80] ibid., 18.
[81] ibid., 124.

on matters of contemporary theological interest.[82] Gunton's lecture, 'Is Christianity a post-modern religion?', provides an examination of the core elements of post-modernism before examining the question of whether or not Christianity is a religion from an intellectual as well as a social and political point of view. This lecture, to the best of my knowledge, remains unpublished.[83]

Gunton presented the Ryan Lectures at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky, on the sixth and seventh of November 1997. All three lectures delivered in the Kentucky chapel share the unifying theme of divine action treated from the perspective offered by the doctrines of creation, redemption and eschatology.[84]

The Drew Lecture on Immortality at Spurgeon's College, London, was given by Gunton on the eleventh of November 1999. The lecture was a critical engagement with the understanding that the Christian church is the earthly presence of the eschatological kingdom. Gunton made the observation in the subsequently published[85] version of the lecture that it may well have been subtitled "a conversation with Robert Jenson, with particular respect to the First Letter to the Corinthians."[86]

An invitation issued by Reverend Canon Paul Brett, the Rector of St Mary's Church, Shenfield, Essex, afforded Colin Gunton the opportunity to present the 2000

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[82] Chelmsford Cathedral, *The Keene Lectures 2005* available from http://www.cathedral.chelmsford.anglican.org/blue1/keene.htm (accessed 8 May 2006).

[83] Colin E. Gunton, 'Is Christianity a post-modern religion?' a lecture presented under the auspices of the Keene Lectures at Chelmsford Cathedral, Chelmsford, UK (23 April 1997).

[84] Gunton's lectures were entitled i) 'In the beginning God: the creation of heaven and earth', ii) 'In the fullness of time God: the redemption of all things', and iii) 'In the end God: eschatologies, secular and religious.' See Asbury Theological Seminary, 'Previous Kentucky chapels: Fall 1997 KY chapels' available from http://www.ats.wilmore.ky.us/community/kentucky/prev_ky_fa97.htm (accessed 9 May 2006).

[85] Gunton's 1999 Drew Lecture was published on three separate occasions: ''Until he comes': towards an eschatology of church membership' in *Called to one hope: perspectives on the life to come*, ed. John Colwell (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 2000), 252-266; ''Until he comes': towards an eschatology of church membership' in *International journal of systematic theology* 3, no. 2 (2001), 187-200; and as the final chapter in Gunton, *Father, Son and Holy Spirit*, 216-234.

[86] Colin E. Gunton, ''Until he comes': towards an eschatology of church membership' in *International journal of systematic theology* 3, no. 2 (2001), 187.

Shenfield lectures.[87] In those lectures, Gunton addressed issues related to the person and work of Jesus Christ. Revised versions of Gunton's address were subsequently published as the christological chapters of *The Christian Faith*.[88]

The G. Campbell Wadsworth Lectures, conducted on a biennial basis at McGill University in Montreal, are intended to promote scholarly discussion of the life and works of John Calvin. The lecture series was established in 1997 following a bequest to McGill University from the estate of Dr. G. Campbell Wadsworth, a "Minister of the Montreal West United Church … a keen student of the history and doctrine of the Reformation, and an active member of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches."[89] After Alan Torrance, who delivered the first lecture in 1999, Colin Gunton was invited to present the second G. Campbell Wadsworth Lecture in 2001. Gunton's lecture was christological in nature, laying stress upon the mediatorial humanity of the person of Jesus Christ. The lecture was subsequently published as chapter 10 of *Father, Son and Holy Spirit*.[90]

Academic honours

Throughout his professional life Gunton was the recipient of several significant honours, including honorary degrees and invitations to visiting Professorships. It has been noted above that Gunton was awarded earned Doctor of Divinity awards from the University of London (1993)[91] and the University of Oxford shortly before his death.[92] In recognition of his service to British theology, the University of Aberdeen conferred an honorary Doctor of Divinity upon Gunton

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[87] Colin E. Gunton, *The Christian faith: an introduction to Christian doctrine* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2002), xii.
[88] ibid., esp. chapters 4-6.
[89] McGill Faculty of Religious Studies, *Endowed programs*, available from http://www.mcgill.ca/religiousstudies/lecture-series/ (accessed 10 May 2006).
[90] Gunton, *Father, Son and Holy Spirit*, 164-180. In the first footnote of that chapter, Gunton observes that the lecture was also "published in *Pro Ecclesia* 11 (2002), pp. 146-58."
[91] 'Gunton, Colin E(wart) 1941-2003,' 133.
[92] Jenson, 'Colin Gunton (1940-2003),' 85.

in 1999.[93]

During 1996 Gunton was invited to take a visiting Professorship at Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel. The following year, 1997, Gunton travelled to Denmark to attend the University of Copenhagen in the capacity of visiting Professor of Theology.[94]

One of the final honours awarded to Colin Gunton was in recognition of the significant part that he played in the resurgence of interest and vitality in the discipline of theological studies. In July 2003, Gunton was installed as an elected Fellow of King's College. Unfortunately, the untimely nature of his death meant that that particular honour was conferred posthumously. [95]

Bibliographical

Gunton has been described as a distinctive and powerful voice within systematic theology,[96] one who acted as "the leading agent of a transformation of the British theological landscape"[97] because of his unwavering defence of the claim that classical Christian theology is a valid intellectual discipline deserving of inclusion within the university curriculum.[98] Theological study is not only a valid academic discipline, according to Gunton, but is indispensable for the holistic functioning of the university insofar as "many of the questions that trouble our modern culture are

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[93] *Colin Ewart Gunton curriculum vitae* available from http://www.deepsight.org/goscul/fbiblio.htm (accessed 3 October 2005).

[94] ibid.

[95] 'Fellows' in *The Times* (London), Monday, 14 July 2003, 28; Jenson, 'Colin Gunton (1940-2003),' 85.

[96] Holmes, 'The Rev Prof Colin Gunton,' 23; see also Christoph Schwöbel, 'A tribute to Colin Gunton' in *The person of Christ*, ed. Stephen R. Holmes and Murray A. Rae (London: T & T Clark, 2005), 16.

[97] Jenson, 'Colin Gunton (1940-2003),' 85.

[98] The university, according to Gunton, is orientated toward the attainment of two goals: one intellectual, the other practical. Gunton claims that theology meets both criteria insofar as it is "both a theoretical and a practical discipline, the theoretical aspects centring on an enquiry into the meaning and truth of the Christian faith, and so of the world in which we live, the practical on the training of people for ordination in the church or assisting them to find meaning in their lives." Colin E. Gunton, 'Doing theology in the university today' in *The practice of theology: a reader*, ed. Colin E. Gunton, Stephen R. Holmes and Murray A. Rae (London: SCM, 2001), 442.

theological in character and cannot be understood adequately without some of the tools of systematic theological inquiry."[99] Gunton's point, of course, is that theology's unique contribution arises because "without trained theologians we shall simply not understand many strands of contemporary intellectual debate."[100]

Notwithstanding the importance of Gunton's contribution as an apologist for the wider task of systematic theology,[101] his major academic contribution lies within the particular emphasis he gave to the doctrine of the Trinity.[102] This distinguishing feature of his theology is the outworking of a concern for issues surrounding the doctrine of God. Gunton acknowledged that "the nature of one's doctoral research … set[s] the frame and agenda for the way in which questions are thereafter approached"[103] before adding that his own doctoral studies[104] included "a concern with the nature of God and the way he is known and named or described."[105]

That is not to suggest, however, that Colin Gunton is a single-issue theologian. On the contrary, the corpus of his published work covers the full range of topics addressed by the discipline of systematic theology including works treating the philosophy of religion, the doctrines of Christ, incarnation, atonement, creation, and the divine attributes. A major focus of his published work, though, coincides with the area of concern for this study, namely the doctrines of Trinity and Holy Spirit. For example, Gunton stated that *Father, Son and Holy Spirit: toward a fully trinitarian*

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[99] Colin E. Gunton, 'The indispensability of theological understanding: theology and the university' in *Essentials of Christian community: essays for Daniel W. Hardy*, ed. David F. Ford and Dennis L. Stamps (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 269.
[100] ibid., 270.
[101] Murray Rae observes that "Colin helped a great many people to recover confidence in the intellectual coherence and explanatory power of the Christian faith at a time when it has been under siege." Murray A. Rae, 'Introduction' in *The person of Christ*, ed. Stephen R. Holmes and Murray A. Rae (London: T & T Clark International, 2005), 12.
[102] Banner, 'The Rev Professor Colin Gunton,' 20.
[103] Gunton, 'Theology in communion,' 32.
[104] Colin E. Gunton, 'Becoming and being: a comparison of the doctrine of God in process theology and in Karl Barth.' (Dissertation, PhD, University of Oxford, 1972).
[105] Gunton, 'Theology in communion,' 33.

theology was a deliberate attempt to explicate "an account of the work of the triune God in which a more secure place is sought for the doctrine of the Holy Spirit."[106] Robert Jenson remarks that although this particular volume was to be the last that Gunton prepared for publication before his death, he "left the draft of the first volume of a projected three-volume systematic theology."[107] The manuscript to which Jenson refers had been drafted by Gunton during a three-month residency at the Center for Theological Inquiry in Princeton, New Jersey, during the autumn of 2002. Various sections from the draft manuscript were presented by Gunton to his colleagues at the Research Institute in Systematic Theology and students at King's College during the winter of 2002-2003 as seminar papers and class lectures. However, because of the premature nature of his death, Gunton never completed his proposed systematics.[108] Responsibility for the editing, preparation and possible posthumous publication of those surviving manuscripts has fallen upon some of Gunton's closest colleagues who were trusted to ascertain whether "anything of the work he had underway when he died was sufficiently complete to be placed before a wider readership."[109] In the recent past, three more volumes of Gunton's work have been published, including a second collection of sermons,[110] an edited volume of Gunton's lectures on Karl Barth,[111] and another containing the transcripts of three

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[106] Gunton, *Father, Son and Holy Spirit*, xiii.

[107] Jenson, 'Colin Gunton (1940-2003),' 85. Elsewhere, Jenson remarks that the, as yet, unpublished first volume of Gunton's systematics employs a strongly pneumatological structuring principle, focusing as it does upon God's action in the economy of salvation. Robert W. Jenson, 'Colin Gunton: *in memoriam*' in *Karl Barth Society newsletter* 28 (2004), 4.

[108] There is some confusion over what Gunton had planned for the project which was intended to represent his mature theological thought. Jenson suggests that Gunton intended to produce a three-volume dogmatics while Holmes and Schwöbel indicate that four volumes were proposed. Gunton himself merely refers to "my projected dogmatics." Jenson, 'Colin Gunton (1940-2003),' 85; Stephen R. Holmes, 'Foreword' in *Father, Son and Holy Spirit: essays toward a fully trinitarian theology* by Colin E. Gunton (London: T & T Clark, 2003), x; Christoph Schwöbel, 'A tribute to Colin Gunton,' 17; Gunton, *Father, Son and Holy Spirit*, xiv.

[109] Holmes, 'Foreword,' ix.

[110] Colin E. Gunton, *The theologian as preacher: further sermons from Colin E. Gunton*, ed. Sarah J. Gunton and John E. Colwell (London: T & T Clark, 2007).

[111] Colin E. Gunton, *The Barth lectures* ed. Paul H. Brazier (London: T & T Clark, 2007).

lectures in which Gunton treated the relation between revelation and reason in the history of philosophy and Christian theology.[112] At the time of writing, the much anticipated first volume of Gunton's systematics is being prepared for publication by his literary executors, Robert Jenson and Christoph Schwöbel.[113]

Colin Gunton was indeed a theologian of considerable significance. Not only did King's College, London, undergo a radical revitalisation under his leadership, but his influence continues to be felt on both sides of the Atlantic as well as throughout continental Europe and the remainder of the English-speaking world. Together with a cadre of like-minded academics, Gunton's enthusiastic articulation of Christian theology lay behind a resurgence of interest in systematic theology, especially from a Reformed and trinitarian perspective.

Gunton's legacy, according to Michael Banner, another colleague from King's College, cannot be measured by the usual standards applied to academics – namely, an assessment of the person's publishing record – but rests with the numbers of students and colleagues in whom Gunton fostered the enthusiasm to pursue careers in academic theology.

> Colin Gunton not only had his own enthusiasms, but could inspire them in others and for that reason his career has not ended with his death. His legacy is not first of all, then, in his written work, considerable though that is, but in the huge numbers of students and colleagues throughout the world and at all stages of their careers, who were touched and inspired by his enthusiasm for the task of theology, and by a life which bore witness, along with his words, to his lively and humane Christian faith.[114]

In public, Colin Gunton was animated and vitally concerned for the important

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[112] Colin E. Gunton, *Revelation and reason: prolegomena to systematic theology* ed. Paul H. Brazier (London: T & T Clark, 2008). Although this volume has not been published at the time of writing, the publishers have advised that the publication date is scheduled for the 1st of October 2008. See http://www.amazon.co.uk/Revelation-Reason-Prolegomena-Systematic-Theology/dp/0567033562 (accessed 23 May 2008).
[113] Holmes, 'Foreword,' ix.
[114] Banner, 'The Rev Professor Colin Gunton,' 20.

issues that were at stake whenever theology was discussed. In private, however, as was earlier observed, Gunton thoroughly enjoyed the simple pleasures of life such as choral singing, gardening, cycling and rambling. According to Stephen Holmes, Colin Gunton the *person* was a colleague who exerted considerable influence for a variety of reasons, not the least of which was that his "many friends knew his profound Christian faith, his zest for life, his constant cheerfulness and his deep sense of vocation."[115]

This chapter has provided a brief sketch of the biographical background of Colin Ewart Gunton. But this is only a part of the task of providing an adequate explanation of the whole ecclesial, social and academic setting within which Colin Gunton lived and worked. Together with his personal context, his particular theological and historical context also have bearing upon an informed understanding of the significance of Colin Gunton's contribution to the revitalisation of systematic and trinitarian theology in Britain and beyond.

Commentators, we have seen, have not been slow to point out that at the beginning of his academic career Gunton was a lone voice arguing for a return to a theology that was consistent with both the scriptural revelation of God as triune and the received traditions of the early Christian church.[116] There is little doubt that Gunton would have derived a certain degree of satisfaction, according to Michael Banner, when it became obvious that there was a slow but perceptible change occurring within British theological studies.[117] Douglas Knight suggests that there were many factors that gave rise to a fresh sense of enthusiasm within British theology, not the least of which was Colin Gunton's scholarly and intellectual

[115] Holmes, 'The Rev Prof Colin Gunton,' 23.
[116] Banner, 'The Rev Professor Colin Gunton,' 20; McCormack, '*The one, the three and the many*: in memory of Colin Gunton,' 14.
[117] Banner, 'The Rev Professor Colin Gunton,' 20.

effort.[118]

The next chapter will consider Gunton's historical and theological context. It will be particularly concerned to explore the significance of the multitude of influences, historical, theological and philosophical, that helped mould Colin Gunton's theology.

[118] Douglas H. Knight, 'From metaphor to mediation: Colin Gunton and the concept of mediation' in *Neue zeitschrift für systematische theologie und religionsphilosophie* 43, no. 1 (2001), 119.

Chapter Two

Colin Gunton's historical, philosophical and theological context

The previous chapter established that Colin Ewart Gunton was one of the most significant theological minds in English systematic theology in the final decades of the twentieth century. However, a full appreciation of the import of Gunton's theological project requires not only a review of his biographical context but an examination of the extent to which his particular historical, philosophical and theological context also influenced the development of his mature theology.[1]

To know, for example, that Gunton was English and operating within the philosophical and theological climate of late twentieth century thinking is important for the task of understanding his theology because, in his own words, "where and when we are has something to do with who we are: with our particular being, or *hypostasis*."[2] A survey of the historical, philosophical and theological context within which Gunton worked should therefore serve to situate him within the broad sweep of Christian twentieth century theology and provide insight into the way and the extent to which he was influenced by the work of other thinkers of that period.

For Colin Gunton, systematic theology was an immensely important undertaking. The specific doctrinal matters that captured his attention and were included as central themes throughout his published works reflect influences

[1] Christian theology, according to Stanley Grenz and Roger Olson, is that discipline which "describes faith within a specific historical and cultural context, and therefore it is unashamedly a contextual discipline." Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E. Olson, *20th-century theology: God and the world in a transitional age* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1992), 9.

[2] Colin E. Gunton, *Christ and creation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 38.

inherited from his own Reformed[3] tradition as well as from the wider Christian theological tradition.

Gunton's theological project was clearly a continuation of the theology of the sixteenth century Protestant Reformers – John Calvin in particular. There are many other influences to be detected in Gunton's theology, however. From the Early Church period, it becomes clear that Gunton's thought was framed in dialogue with patristic thinkers such as Irenaeus, the Cappadocian Fathers and Augustine.[4] From the post-Reformation period, authors such as John Owen (1616-1683) and Edward Irving (1792-1834) both played crucial roles in the development of his theology. A number of theologians from the twentieth century have also exerted considerable influence upon Gunton's thought as he entered into dialogue with a broad range of theological traditions. Among these one may include Karl Barth and Eberhard Jüngel from the Reformed perspective and Robert Jenson[5] and John Zizioulas representing

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[3] It is to be noted that although the Reformed theological tradition commenced in a formal sense during the sixteenth century Protestant Reformation in Western Europe and, subsequently, in the British Isles, the Reformers themselves were thoroughly influenced by and immersed within a theological heritage that has its roots within the very earliest Christianity.

[4] One must tread warily here, for although Gunton repeatedly engages with the thought of Augustine, he is not always in accord with Augustine. In some places Gunton openly criticises the influence that Augustine has had upon the development of Western theology. See, for example, Colin E. Gunton, 'Augustine, the Trinity and the theological crisis of the West' in *Scottish journal of theology* 43, no. 1 (1990), 33-58; Colin E. Gunton, 'Newman's dialectic: dogma and reason in the seventy-third Tract for the Times' in *Newman after a hundred years*, ed. Alan G. Hill and Ian T. Ker (Oxford, UK: Oxford University, 1990), 310; Colin E. Gunton, 'Relation and relativity: the Trinity and the created world' in *Trinitarian theology today: essays on divine being and act*, ed. Christoph Schwöbel (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 106; Colin E. Gunton, 'Atonement and the project of creation: an interpretation of Colossians 1:15-23' in *Dialog: a journal of theology* 35, no. 1 (1996), 35; Colin E. Gunton, 'God the Holy Spirit: Augustine and his successors' in *Theology through the theologians: selected essays, 1972-1995* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 105-128; Colin E. Gunton, 'Persons' in *Dictionary of ethics, theology and society*, ed. Paul Barry Clarke and Andrew Linzey (London: Routledge, 1996), 640.

[5] Robert Jenson was Gunton's doctoral supervisor at the University of Oxford – see Colin E. Gunton, 'Theology in communion' in *Shaping a theological mind: theological context and methodology*, ed. Darren C. Marks (Aldersgate, UK: Ashgate, 2002), 33. However, one must not overlook the theological differences between these two highly significant trinitarian theologians. Since Gunton was Reformed and Jenson Lutheran, it should come as no surprise that their main point of contention was christological – Gunton holding, for example, that Jenson identified the incarnate one with the pre-incarnate Word in too strong a manner such that "Jesus' humanity is in danger of being invaded." Colin E. Gunton, 'Creation and mediation in the theology of Robert W. Jenson: an encounter and a convergence' in *Trinity, time and church: a response to the theology of Robert W. Jenson*, ed. Colin E. Gunton (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 85.

the Lutheran and Eastern Orthodox theological traditions respectively.

Gunton's 1985 inaugural lecture in the chair of Christian Doctrine at King's College[6] marks a significant reorientation of his theological project. In particular, the introduction of the terms 'person', 'particularity' and 'relation' herald the beginning of a search for a more consciously *trinitarian* theology.[7] A subsequent invitation to present the 1992 Bampton Lectures at the University of Oxford afforded Gunton the opportunity to examine the interface of modern culture with doctrinal theology and served as a catalyst for a rejuvenated interest in the doctrine of the Trinity and the person and work of the Holy Spirit. The lectures, published as *The one, the three and the many: God, creation and the culture of modernity*,[8] therefore represent the beginning of a period in which Gunton's writing became increasingly concerned with matters doctrinal and mark a transition in the way that Gunton approached theology. A prior fascination with matters of philosophy of religion – in particular, questions of the importance of language, metaphor and epistemology – gave way to an unashamedly doctrinal approach to the task of theology. Gunton's writing became more focused upon the explication of the doctrines with which much of his later theological thought would be concerned, namely, the interdependence between the doctrines of God, creation, redemption, and eschatology.[9]

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[6] Colin E. Gunton, *The one, the three and the many: an inaugural lecture in the Chair of Christian Doctrine* (London: King's College, 1985). This lecture was reprinted as Chapter Five, 'The concept of person: the one, the three and the many' in *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed. (London: T & T Clark, 1997), 83-99.

[7] Andy Goodliff, 'Notes from Colin Gunton one-day conference' available from http://andygoodliff.typepad.com/my_weblog/2007/09/notes-from-coli.html (accessed 21 February 2008).

[8] Colin E. Gunton, *The one, the three and the many: God, creation and the culture of modernity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University, 1993).

[9] That is not to suggest that there is some form of radical discontinuity in Colin Gunton's theology; rather it is merely the acknowledgment that over time different aspects came into sharper focus and occupied central positions within his theological project. The title of Douglas Knight's 2001 assessment of Gunton's theology is a succinct and accurate description of this reorientation of focus in Gunton's thinking. Douglas H. Knight, 'From metaphor to mediation: Colin Gunton and the

The following overview of Gunton's historical and theological context will be accompanied by a survey of those key thinkers from the history of Christian theology that proved to exert most influence upon the development of his theology.

Historical context

The 1970s and 1980s was a particularly difficult period for English theology as it struggled to maintain relevance in modern society. Moreover, theology in the English academy had become increasingly marginalised and was forced to defend its right to representation within university faculties. Douglas Knight describes a discipline under siege.

> Doctrines were examined to ask which of them insulted the dignity of 'modern man' and ought to be expunged. Tradition, imagination and the indeterminability of the relationship of language and world had to be laboriously defended. Reason and faith were invariably set in opposition, the doctrine of the atonement was losing to theodicy, and Father, Son and Holy Spirit were discovered to be names, and therefore less adequate than concepts.[10]

It was within this social, academic and intellectual milieu that Colin Gunton worked and against which his defence of orthodox Christian teaching was formulated.[11] Contemporary Christian theology, Gunton argued, was divided between

> those who regard modernity as throwing an impassable barrier between ourselves and our Christian past and those who would attempt to see the development of Christian thinking as an unbroken and generally developing process, albeit one which is uneven, episodic and sometimes disrupted. This is to claim neither the automatic truth of the past ... nor the equation of process with progress.[12]

The situation, Gunton observed, was not all that different to the pluralism and

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concept of mediation' in *Neue zeitschrift für systematische theologie und religionsphilosophie* 43, no. 1 (2001), 118-136.

[10] ibid., 118.

[11] See, for example, Michael Banner, 'The Rev Professor Colin Gunton: advocate for an unapologetic theology' in *The Independent* (London), Thursday, 22 May 2003.

[12] Colin E. Gunton, *Yesterday and today: a study of continuities in christology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), ix.

syncretism faced by the early church theologians who succeeded in out-thinking the numerous challenges proposed by the classical philosophical worldview. Modern theologians, he held, were challenged in like manner "to out-live and out-think decadent Western rationalism."[13]

Colin Gunton's analysis of the crisis of modernity and his response to the challenge that it represents is laid out clearly in *The one, the three and the many*.[14] However, it is worth noting that in the same year that his Brampton Lectures were published another important essay appeared, one in which he surveyed the strengths and weaknesses of contemporary English systematic theology.[15] In that essay, Gunton identified the underlying reasons for the poverty of significant intellectual creativity within systematic theology in England. Apart from the contribution of John Henry Newman, he argued, English systematic theology was a tradition distinguished by a lack of lasting achievement. Gunton suggested that

> evidence for the absence of an English tradition of systematic theology is to be found in the fact that apart from John Henry Newman there has been for nearly two centuries very little talent of the kind that will place English theologians in important – or even serious – places in future histories of theology.[16]

The 'occasional' rather than consciously systematic style of English theology,[17] he argued, is overshadowed by the richness of the Scottish tradition which boasts theologians of the stature of P. T. Forsyth and T. F. Torrance, "both of whom are at the very least – like or dislike the content of their theologies as you may

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[13] Colin E. Gunton, 'The indispensable God? The sovereignty of God and the problem of modern social order' in *Beyond mere health: theology and health care in a secular society*, ed. Hilary D. Regan, Rod Horsfield and Gabrielle L. McMullan (Kew, VIC: Australian Theological Forum, 1996), 11; see also Colin E. Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed. (London: T & T Clark, 1997), 167.

[14] Colin E. Gunton, *The one, the three and the many: God, creation and the culture of modernity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University, 1993).

[15] Colin E. Gunton, 'An English systematic theology?' in *Scottish journal of theology* 46, no. 4 (1993), 479-496.

[16] ibid., 482.

[17] Knight, 'From metaphor to mediation,' 120.

– theological talents whose intellectual achievement will continue to live, and on whom a continuing stream of secondary works is to be expected, rather than, say, the occasional doctoral thesis."[18]

It was Gunton's conviction that a specific and distinctively English theology could only be established upon a prior and disarmingly honest appraisal of the past and an expectant approach to the future. Expressed aphoristically, Gunton believed that a backward glance serves to clarify one's vision of the future. Moreover, he insisted that ignorance of the past constitutes a weakness inasmuch as it sentences one to repeat past mistakes while, simultaneously, preventing one from grasping the opportunities afforded by the present.[19] In a theological context, that truism suggests that "a modern systematics done in ignorance of the past will fail to understand what it is doing."[20] Nevertheless, Gunton concluded the article with the suggestion that there is much that can be gained if the weaknesses of the past are identified and overcome. Two such weaknesses were identified: one internal, the other external.

The internal problems plaguing the English theological tradition, in Gunton's opinion, are the consequences of a long-established pattern of pronounced and profound division of thought on any and all theological questions. The prevalence of unhelpful and counterproductive antagonism and argumentation amongst English theologians he saw to be most apparent in discussions of the doctrine of the Trinity. The English theological landscape, he remarked, is delineated by a pluriformity of views and very little consensus, especially within the sub-discipline of trinitarian theology. He went on to note that while there are

> those of us for whom questions laid open by trinitarian conceptuality are the very heart of the matter, opening up vistas and possibilities of almost

[18] Gunton, 'An English systematic theology,' 482.
[19] ibid., 480.
[20] ibid., 495.

> infinite promise; there are others for whom the question is simply a piece of dead tradition, to be left on one side while the real questions are decided.[21]

Externally, Gunton observed that the English theological tradition was beset with problems that may be traced to a deep-seated suspicion of Continental thought which bordered upon fear and resulted in an unhealthy nationalism and isolationism.[22] The situation, according to Gunton, served to inhibit creative thought because of a reluctance to engage with the ideas and concepts employed by theologians from other regions and cultural contexts.[23] Moreover, he held that an inward-looking nationalism which refuses to engage with the divergent theological views present within the whole Christian church only serves to institutionalise problems such that "strengths uncriticized, become weaknesses, while weaknesses are magnified."[24]

Notwithstanding the seriousness of these criticisms, Gunton held that there were several mitigating factors to be taken into consideration that tend to "make this

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[21] ibid., 494.

[22] Gunton's observation is supported by Vernon Storr who identifies prejudicial attitudes to Continental thought in the early nineteenth century as the primary reasons for an eclipse of biblical theology in England. Three reasons in particular are identified by Storr, including i) an ignorance of German biblical criticism among English clergy, ii) the suspicion of any form of novelty, especially following the French Revolution, which accentuated peoples' perception of the authority of church and scripture, and iii) an unquestioning acceptance of the inspiration and uniqueness of the Old and New Testaments. Vernon F. Storr, *The development of English theology in the Nineteenth Century 1800-1860* (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1913), 177.

[23] The ignorance among English biblical scholars and theologians of advances made in German biblical criticism, however, began to change around the mid-nineteenth century, according to Elliot-Binns, because after that time "German influences came in with increasing volume, and … they received a veneration that was excessive; a compensation, it may be, for the previous state of neglect." L. E. Elliott-Binns, *The development of English theology in the later Nineteenth Century* (Hamden, CT: Archon, 1971), 16f.

[24] Gunton, 'An English systematic theology,' 492. John Mozley argued that "German theologians have tended to be more sensitive towards, and more influenced by, contemporaneous movements in philosophy than have their English contemporaries." English theologians of the early twentieth century, on the other hand, were not always successful in avoiding the perils of "superficial amateurishness." John K. Mozley, *Some tendencies in British theology: from the publication of* Lux Mundi *to the present day* (London: SPCK, 1951), 94. A measured and insightful analysis of the distinctive characteristics of the contemporary English theological scheme is provided by Daniel W. Hardy, 'The English tradition of interpretation and the reception of Schleiermacher and Barth in England' in *Barth and Schleiermacher: beyond the impasse?*, ed. James O. Duke and Robert F. Streetman (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1988), 138-192.

picture less bleak."[25] In the first instance, Gunton argued that a tendency toward a plurality of theological positions should not necessarily be conceived as exclusively negative because, given the right conditions, theological plurality that is dialogical – as opposed to the monological variety[26] – may be "productive of truth and light through dialectic and debate."[27] Secondly, Gunton argued that the presence of difference in opinion between theologians is not necessarily an obstacle prohibiting progress. Theology, he held, like all academic disciplines is strengthened and advanced by vigorous debate providing the discussion is geared toward a genuine attempt to advance knowledge. The presence of divergent views within English theology was not the issue, according to Gunton; the real question was whether theologians, through dialogue, were able to demonstrate to the wider community that Christian theology has the resources with which some of the crises of modernity could be healed.[28]

Philosophical and theological influences – Early church

That Colin Gunton's historical context influenced the development of his theology is beyond doubt. However, it was not the only influence. The various theological and philosophical views and movements to which Gunton subscribed, or argued against, were also significant and formative influences upon his thinking.

As indicated earlier, Colin Gunton engaged in the process of theological discussion with relish. Some commentators go so far as to suggest that Gunton adopted a polemical approach to theological discourse while others argue that, while

[25] Gunton, 'An English systematic theology,' 494.
[26] Jürgen Moltmann, 'The adventure of theological ideas' in *Religious studies review* 22, no. 2 (1996), 103.
[27] Gunton, 'An English systematic theology,' 494.
[28] ibid.

uncompromising and unapologetic, his theology remained dialogical.[29] That is not to say that Gunton lacked critical appreciation of the nuance involved in the work of his dialogue partners, nor does it suggest that Gunton was argumentative for argument's sake. On the contrary, Colin Gunton expounded theological points with all the enthusiasm of one who was convinced that theological truth is of crucial importance for the wellbeing of human society.[30]

Moreover, it was precisely because he held that theological truth is important that Gunton argued that a thorough knowledge of the Christian tradition helps frame the work of contemporary theologians. He held, for example, that those theological teachings that were accepted as truth and those dismissed as heresy by earlier generations of Christian theologians, remain important historical resources. The point for Gunton was not so much that of knowledge of history as it was that of identifying with and standing within a living tradition of Christian faith. In this way, Gunton affirmed the crucial role that the Christian theological tradition played in contemporary theology.

> Systematicians are not primarily historians, being concerned essentially with the contemporary statement of the faith of the Church; and yet they need to be deeply conversant with all the theology they can, and especially with the classic texts of the Fathers, the mediaevalists, the Reformers and the moderns. Without the Fathers in particular we fail to come to terms with the essentials of the faith, for it is beyond doubt that those who do not know whence they come soon fall into equivalent errors to those the Fathers fought.[31]

Gunton's thought here provides the framework within which an investigation of the key philosophical and theological influences upon his thought may be undertaken. He believed that a familiarity with the contribution to the Christian

[29] For example, 'The Rev Professor Colin Gunton' in *The Times* (London), Monday, 19 May 2003, 27; see also Banner, 'The Rev Professor Colin Gunton,' 20; 'Gunton, Colin E(wart) 1941-2003' in *Contemporary authors* vol. 216, ed. Scott Peacock (Detroit, MI: Thompson Gale, 2004), 133.

[30] Bruce L. McCormack, 'Foreword' in *Trinitarian soundings in systematic theology*, ed. Paul Louis Metzger (London: T & T Clark, 2005), 1.

[31] Gunton, 'Theology in communion,' 34.

theological task by key thinkers from earlier periods in the church's history served as an antidote to the tendency to repeat similar errors in the present era. Gunton was not advocating a wholesale acceptance of all thought labelled 'Christian,' however. His reading of the Christian tradition was critical, as we shall see in the chapters below, inasmuch as he argued for the retrieval of some teachings that went out of favour or were simply overlooked, as well as for the rejection of other ideas that survived.

Irenaeus of Lyons

Irenaeus of Lyons (c. 130-200) was one of Gunton's foremost theological heroes[32] and his influence upon Gunton's theology is apparent in four ways. In the first instance, Gunton was impressed with the methodological integrity of Irenaean theology. He described Irenaeus as "the first and perhaps greatest defender of orthodoxy"[33] and as "a model for systematic theology."[34] Irenaeus' concern, according to Gunton, was for the establishment of the integrity of the Christian faith and for the defence of that faith, rather than with the construction of a *system* of thought.[35] While Irenaeus' major work, *Adversus haereses*, is overlooked from time to time by some scholars because of its "exuberance and composite nature,"[36] it was, nevertheless, a work held in esteem by Gunton because for him it represented an unapologetic and uncompromising statement of the Christian faith.

The second important feature of Irenaeus' theology was the centrality of trinitarian thought in his work. Gunton was impressed by Irenaeus'

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[32] Andy Goodliff, 'Gunton's theological heroes' available from http://andygoodliff.typepad.com/my_weblog/colin_gunton/index.html (accessed 19 September 2006).

[33] Colin E. Gunton, 'Editorial: Orthodoxy' in *International journal of systematic theology* 1, no. 2 (1999), 113.

[34] Colin E. Gunton, 'A rose by any other name? From 'Christian doctrine' to 'systematic theology'' in *International journal of systematic theology* 1, no. 1 (1999), 7.

[35] Colin E. Gunton, 'Historical and systematic theology' in *The Cambridge companion to Christian doctrine*, ed. Colin E. Gunton (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University, 1997), 15.

[36] Eric Osborn, 'Irenaeus of Lyons' in *The first Christian theologians: an introduction to theology in the early church*, ed. Gillian R. Evans (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), 122.

"straightforwardly trinitarian construction of the act of divine creation"[37] in which the created order is mediated through the Son and the Spirit. The Gnostic heretics that Irenaeus argued against not only denied a trinitarian reading of creation but

> they were subverting the historic gospel of the incarnation by confecting new forms of belief that denied the unity of scripture, the materiality of the saviour and the ethic of holy life in the body which was its inseparable companion.[38]

Thirdly, Irenaeus' trinitarian theology provided the means by which the doctrines of creation and redemption were held together. This can be seen in his insistence that the created order is the location of the divine event of redemption.[39] Gunton remarked that "Irenaeus' doctrine of God is dominated by a concern to establish the continuity between the God who created this material universe and the God whose Son became material within its structures."[40] Moreover, Gunton argued that it was Irenaeus' biblical framework of thinking that enabled him "to articulate a conception of the relation of creation and redemption which has never been surpassed."[41]

The fourth concept that Gunton took over from Irenaeus was the metaphor of the 'two hands' of God as a way of speaking about the work of the persons of the Son and the Spirit in creating, redeeming, and perfecting the world. This particular metaphor is an anthropomorphism uniting the Word and the breath of the Lord (Ps 33:6) in such a way as to convey the idea that God is personally at work in the world via the Son and the Spirit. Gunton, for his part, repeatedly employed this metaphor of the two hands of God to establish a framework within which he was able to expound

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[37] Gunton, *The One, the three and the many*, 2.
[38] Gunton, 'Editorial: Orthodoxy,' 113.
[39] Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses*, 3.16.6 (*PG* 7:924; *ANF* 1:442); cf. 1.21.4 (*PG* 7:663, 666; *ANF* 1:346).
[40] Gunton, 'A rose by any other name,' 9.
[41] Gunton, 'Historical and systematic theology,' 18.

the complementarity of divine action in creation and redemption.

Gunton's theological project as a whole is heavily indebted to the Irenaean concern to highlight the "coherence of God's action in the economy."[42] The importance of the Irenaean influence upon Gunton's theology will be explained further as this study proceeds, especially as it constitutes a central part of the argument of Chapter Five below.

Cappadocian Fathers

Cappadocian trinitarian theology provided Gunton with the conceptual apparatus with which he was able to articulate a doctrine of God as three persons-in-relation. The three fourth century theologians from the Roman province of Asia Minor, Gregory of Nazianzus (c. 325-389), Basil of Caesarea (c. 329-379), and Basil's younger brother, Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335-385), became known collectively as the Cappadocian Fathers.

The importance of the Cappadocians for the history of Christian theology derives from their oversight of a number of groundbreaking innovations in theological metaphysics that, in turn, bequeathed a new conceptuality of person and of being.[43] Testimony to the lasting impact of their work may be found in their contributions to the Council of Constantinople (381) where the so-called third article of the creed was extended in such a way as to afford greater recognition of the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

To say that Gunton drew heavily upon Cappadocian conceptuality is an

[42] Gunton, 'A rose by any other name,' 9.

[43] Colin E. Gunton, *Becoming and being: the doctrine of God in Charles Hartshorne and Karl Barth*, 2nd ed. (London: SCM, 2001), 232. Walter Kasper is another theologian to acknowledge the importance of Cappadocian theology, describing their achievement as a "revolution in the understanding of being." Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1984), 156.

understatement of the highest order[44] because it is employed throughout his trinitarian theology. In particular, the desynonymisation of *hypostasis* and *ousia*, and the prioritisation of 'person' over substance, are foundational concepts in Gunton's doctrine of the Trinity.[45] Gunton held, for example, that the Cappadocian contribution to Christian theology was nothing short of "the truly creative achievement of all trinitarian thought" insofar as conceiving the unity of God as "the way the three persons are from and to one another is truly a revolution in the history of thought."[46]

It is widely acknowledged that the innovation of the Cappadocian Fathers in distinguishing between *hypostasis* (person) and *ousia* (being) opened the way for a legitimately ontological way of conceiving the identity of God.[47] Where previously these terms had been treated as synonyms, they now referred to different and quite

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[44] Neil Ormerod, for example, argues that Gunton is one of a number of contemporary theologians who have "plundered" the resources of the Eastern tradition in general and that of the Cappadocian Fathers in particular. Neil Ormerod, *The Trinity: retrieving the Western tradition* (Milwauke, WI: Marquette University, 2005), 12.

[45] It is to be noted, however, that not all contemporary theologians accept that a prioritisation of 'person' over substance is to be found in Cappadocian theology. See, for example, Sarah Coakley, '"Persons' in the 'social' doctrine of the Trinity: critique of current analytic discussion' in *The Trinity: an interdisciplinary symposium on the Trinity*, ed. Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall and Gerald O'Collins (Oxford, UK: Oxford University, 1999), 137; and, Sarah Coakley, *Powers and submissions: spirituality, philosophy and gender* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2002), 137.

[46] Gunton, *Becoming and being*, 2nd ed. 232.

[47] Boris Bobrinskoy, for example, claims that the Cappadocian Fathers "can truly be called the triad that glorified the Triad." Boris Bobrinskoy, *The mystery of the Trinity: trinitarian experience and vision in the biblical and patristic tradition*, trans. Anthony P. Gythiel (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary, 1999), 233; see also Boris Bobrinskoy, 'The indwelling of the Spirit in Christ: "pneumatic christology" in the Cappadocian Fathers' in *St Vladimir's theological quarterly* 28, no. 1 (1984), 53ff; Ralph Del Colle, 'The triune God' in *The Cambridge companion to Christian doctrine*, ed. Colin E. Gunton (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University, 1997), 129f; Christoph Schwöbel, 'Christology and trinitarian thought' in *Trinitarian theology today: essays on divine being and act*, ed. Christoph Schwöbel (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 131-136; Markus Mühling, 'The work of the Holy Spirit: the differentiation of human and divine salvific acts in the Pneumatomachian controversy' in *The theology of John Zizioulas: personhood and the church*, ed. Douglas H. Knight (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007), 87f. However, it is noted that Lewis Ayres recently argued that the historical question of the *earliest* distinction between the divine nature and the particular 'persons' cannot be established with certainty. According to Ayres, "Basil developed an existing discussion, adding clarity, detail, and a new acceptance that the three persons are co-ordinate realties," which means that "although Basil appears to have been the first to defend the distinction extensively and to describe the distinct persons as simply sharing an ontological status, within a decade parallels appear in a number of contexts where we do not seem to see influence from Basil." Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and its legacy: an approach to fourth-century trinitarian theology* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University, 2004), 202, 204.

specific aspects of what it meant to be God.[48] Gunton remarked:

> By using *hypostasis* to refer to the concrete particulars – the persons – and then proceeding to say that the *ousia* – general being – of God is constituted without remainder by what the persons are to and from each other in eternal perichoresis, these theologians made it possible to conceive a priority of the particular over the universal. God is what he is only as a communion of persons, the particularity of whom remains at the centre of all he is, for each has his own distinctive way of being or τρόπος υπάρξεως.[49]

Put simply: where classical metaphysics posed questions related to the *what* of God, the Cappadocians discovered a way of talking about the *who* of God. More importantly, *ousia* now came to refer to the general being of God which, it was claimed, was constituted by the triune persons-in-relation. In this way, persons and relationality replaced the abstract notion of *substance* or *essence* as ontologically prior categories in trinitarian discourse.[50] The true significance of this innovation is revealed by Gunton's observation that "what might be called the *substantiality* of God resides not in his abstract being, but in the concrete particulars that we call the divine persons and in the relations by which they mutually constitute one another."[51]

The obvious esteem with which Gunton held the work of the Cappadocian fathers is revealed in a personal observation made in the concluding pages of *The promise of trinitarian theology* where he acknowledged that the temptation to entitle the volume *Homage to Cappadocia* was resisted because "it is not my concern to

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[48] Basil of Caesarea employed the terminology of Greek metaphysics with creative licence, according to Stephen Hildebrand, inasmuch as "he adapts, alters, and adjusts what he borrows making it suitable to explain, as far as possible, the Christian mysteries" of God. Stephen M. Hildebrand, *The trinitarian theology of Basil of Caesarea: a synthesis of Greek thought and biblical truth* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 2007), 46.

[49] Gunton, *The one, the three and the many*, 191. In a later publication Gunton was more succinct: "Originally synonymous, or virtually so, with *ousia*, it [*hypostasis*] undergoes a process of desynonymisation, so that it comes to represent concrete particular rather than general being." Colin E. Gunton, 'Indispensable opponent: the relations of systematic theology and the philosophy of religion' in *Neue zeitschrift für systematische theologie und religionsphilosophie* 38, no. 3 (1996), 306.

[50] John D. Zizioulas, 'The teaching of the 2nd Ecumenical Council on the Holy Spirit in historical and ecumenical perspective' in *Credo in Spiritum Sanctum*, ed. José S. Martins (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1983), 49; Schwöbel, 'Christology and trinitarian thought,' 131.

[51] Gunton, *The one, the three and the many*, 191.

canonise any theologian or school, and particularly not to play the East against the West."[52] Nevertheless, he immediately added that

> Despite all that has been learned, and must continue to be learned, from those theologians we call Cappadocian, from one point of view mine is a very Western concern. It seems to me that the interest in recent Western theology in humanisation rather than divinisation is the key to the trinitarian outworking of the Christian gospel.[53]

As much as he did not want to exalt one school of theology over another, Gunton remained convinced that the Western theological tradition, by and large, had failed to appreciate the magnitude of the intellectual achievements of the Cappadocians. Western trinitarian theology, he argued, has tended to prioritise concern for the unity of God, understood as the divine essence from which the three persons draw their divinity.[54] This relentless stress upon the unity of God in the Western tradition, he argued, meant that Christian theology has often experienced difficulty in speaking about the particular actions of the particular persons of the Trinity that were recorded in scripture.[55] Gunton, for his part, sought a way of speaking about God which was consistent with the "variety, richness and complexity" of the descriptions to be found in the biblical narratives.[56]

The themes of person, persons-in-relation, and unity understood as communion were readily adopted by Gunton and will be referred to repeatedly in the

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[52] Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed., 204.
[53] ibid., 205.
[54] Colin E. Gunton, *Enlightenment and alienation: an essay towards a trinitarian theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985), 141; Gunton, *The one, the three and the many*, 191.
[55] Colin E. Gunton, 'Persons and particularity' in *The theology of John Zizioulas: personhood and the church*, ed. Douglas H. Knight (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007), 103.
[56] Gunton, *The one, the three and the many*, 24. Gunton's intentions in this regard remain consistent with Cappadocian thought inasmuch as "while Gregory [of Nyssa] considers questions of terminological distinction between *ousia*, *phusis*, *hypostasis* or *prosopon* to be important, he understands the primary task for an orthodox Trinitarian theologian to be one of setting out an account of theological language and of the divine nature within which one can appropriately deploy the terms on which one settles and within which one can talk the Scriptural language of the Son and the Spirit coming from the Father and acting in the creation." Lewis Ayres, 'On not three people: the fundamental themes of Gregory of Nyssa's trinitarian theology as seen in *To Ablabius: on not three Gods*' in *Modern theology* 18, no. 4 (2002), 451.

chapters to follow. Although Gunton held the theology of the Cappadocian Fathers in the highest regard, it could be said that he was equally enthusiastic in his opposition to Augustine, bishop of Hippo (354-430). In fact, there can be no question that Gunton adopted Augustine as a theological sparring-partner.[57] However, Gunton was not slow to admit the "universal influence"[58] of Augustine upon Christian thought, describing him as the 'father' of Western trinitarian theology.[59]

Augustine of Hippo

Throughout many of his published works Gunton repeatedly takes issue with what he understands to be the largely negative influence that Augustine's theological formulations have had upon the subsequent development of the Western theological tradition.[60] The particular focus of Gunton's objection concerned the impact that Augustine's thought has exerted upon ontological, christological, and trinitarian thought.

In the first instance, Gunton alleged that Augustine's lasting influence may be traced to the Greek metaphysical conceptuality that formed the basis for much of his

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[57] John B. Webster, 'Systematic theology after Barth: Jüngel, Jenson, and Gunton' in *The modern theologians: an introduction to Christian theology since 1918*, ed. David F. Ford and Rachel Muers (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 259f.

[58] Colin E. Gunton, 'Introduction' in *Protestant theology in the Nineteenth Century: its background and history* by Karl Barth (London: SCM, 2001), xvi.

[59] Gunton, 'Augustine, the Trinity and the theological crisis of the West,' 55; Colin E. Gunton, 'Pneumatology' in *Dictionary of ethics, theology and society*, ed. Paul Barry Clarke and Andrew Linzey (London: Routledge, 1996), 645; Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed., 51.

[60] Gunton, 'Augustine, the Trinity and the theological crisis of the West,' 33-58. Lewis Ayres points out that "Gunton does not draw any developed distinction between Augustine himself and subsequent traditions of interpretation." Lewis Ayres, 'Augustine, the Trinity and modernity' a review of *The one, the three and the many: God, creation culture of modernity* by Colin E. Gunton (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1993) in *Augustinian studies* 26, no. 2 (1995), 128. More importantly, Ayres is dismissive of many unsympathetic readings of Augustine's theology on the grounds that "the account of Augustine's trinitarianism found in modern theological writing is often just the re-presentation of no longer tenable scholarly arguments as if they were simply given." Lewis Ayres, 'The fundamental grammar of Augustine's trinitarian theology' in *Augustine and his critics: essays in honour of Gerald Bonner*, ed. Robert Dodaro and George Lawless (London: Routledge, 2000), 51. David Cunningham, however, goes further than Ayres, arguing that Gunton's largely negative engagement with the theology of Augustine constitutes "historical scapegoating," a practice whereby "the decline of trinitarian theology [is explained] by casting aspersions on a particular theologian or theological movement." David S. Cunningham, *These three are one: the practice of trinitarian theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 31.

theology. Indeed, the primary 'problem' with Augustine's theology, according to Gunton, resides in its inability to transcend the restrictions imposed by "the stranglehold of the dualistic ontology."[61] In this regard, Gunton held that Augustine is simultaneously hero and villain insofar as "this great thinker at once broke the chains of Hellenistic determinism *and* tied it to other features of Greek thought which militate against a theological realisation of the full reality of the material world."[62]

The negative influences flowing from an *a priori* commitment to dualistic ontology are most pronounced, according to Gunton, when Augustine came to expound the doctrine of the incarnation because "there are signs that he is rather embarrassed by too close an involvement of God in matter."[63] By way of contradistinction, Gunton argued that the question of whether or not a theology is genuinely incarnational is answered in its treatment of the Old Testament data.

> It should be able to look back at the Old Testament with eyes given by the person of Christ and see there further evidences of that interrelationship of God with his creation which comes to perfection in Jesus.[64]

Secondly, Augustine's christology is problematic in Gunton's view because of the way in which the doctrines of creation and incarnation are conceived. To focus upon the creation accounts of Genesis to the exclusion of the New Testament passages which present Christ as the mediator of creation (e.g., Jn 1:3, 10; 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:16; Heb 1:2) provides grounds for the criticism that Augustine has

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[61] Gunton, 'Augustine, the Trinity and the theological crisis of the West,' 44.
[62] Colin E. Gunton, 'Introduction' in *The doctrine of creation: essays in dogmatics, history and philosophy*, ed. Colin E. Gunton (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 4f.
[63] Gunton, 'Augustine, the Trinity and the theological crisis of the West,' 37.
[64] ibid.

marginalised the importance of christology in the doctrine of creation.[65] By way of contrast, Gunton held that "christology is essential to the doctrine of creation."[66]

Augustine's legacy in respect of the doctrines of creation and incarnation, Gunton went on to add, is demonstrated by the Western tradition's proclivity to discuss the divinity of Christ more than his humanity.[67] Indeed, he held that Augustine was reluctant to commit to a fully incarnational view of the Word of God who *became flesh* in the person of Jesus of Nazareth and, therefore, failed to appreciate the full significance of the fact that the incarnation was the Son's becoming-a-part-of the world. Augustine's hesitancy in this respect was criticised by Gunton on biblical, christological and epistemological grounds. He claimed that Augustine struggled to attribute value to the material creation biblically in his discussion of the Old Testament theophanies,[68] christologically in his engagement with the human story of Jesus,[69] and epistemologically insofar as he was dismissive of the notion that the material order bears significance for meaning.[70]

Augustine's influence upon the Western theological tradition generally, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, has meant that it, too, has struggled to come to terms with the significance of the humanity and divinity of Christ. Gunton argued that with

> few exceptions, the English Puritan John Owen and the nineteenth-century Scot Edward Irving among them, Western theology has for the most part failed to develop adequate conceptual equipment to ensure due prominence to Christ's full humanity. Part of the cause of this may be found in Augustine's reluctance to give due weight to the full materiality of the incarnation.[71]

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[65] Colin E. Gunton, 'Between allegory and myth: the legacy of the spiritualising of Genesis' in *The doctrine of creation: essays in dogmatics, history and philosophy*, ed. Colin E. Gunton (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 61.
[66] ibid.
[67] Gunton, 'Augustine, the Trinity and the theological crisis of the West,' 37.
[68] ibid.
[69] ibid., 39.
[70] ibid., 40.
[71] ibid., 36.

Thirdly, and with respect to the doctrine of the Trinity, Gunton argued that Augustine "either did not understand the trinitarian theology of his predecessors, both East and West, or looked at their work with spectacles so strongly tinted with neoplatonic assumptions that they distorted his work."[72] The result, according to Gunton, is to be found in the way in which Augustine, together with a significant portion of the Western theological tradition which followed his lead, separated the discussion of the triune God from the history of salvation. Thus discussions pertaining to the immanent Trinity (God as God-is-in-God's-self) were abstracted from considerations of what God does in the economy of redemption (i.e., the economic Trinity).

Yet again, Gunton identified the 'problem' as residing within the influence that philosophical categories have exerted upon Augustinian trinitarianism:

> the problem with the trinitarian analogies as Augustine presents them is that they impose upon the doctrine of the Trinity a conception of the divine threeness which owes more to neoplatonic philosophy than to the triune economy, and that the outcome is, again, a view of an unknown substance *supporting* the three persons rather than *being constituted* by their relatedness.[73]

The question that must be asked, according to Gunton, is: "Does Augustine believe that the true being of God *underlies* the threeness of the persons?"[74] The question seeks to establish whether, for Augustine, the divine substance has ontological primacy insofar as it is the *source* of the divinity of the three persons. On the other hand, the Cappadocians, as we have seen, had argued that the *relations* of

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[72] ibid., 41f. Sheri Katz and Antony Lloyd also question the philosophical and theological adequacy of Augustine's particular combination of biblical data, Platonism and Aristotelian logic. Sheri Katz, 'Person' in *Augustine through the ages: an encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 648f; Antony C. Lloyd, 'On Augustine's concept of a person' in *Augustine: a collection of critical essays*, ed. Robert A. Markus (Garden City, NY: Anchor, 1972), 203. Robert Jenson is even more dismissive of Augustine's trinitarian theology on the grounds that it is "pure Platonism." Robert W. Jenson, *The triune identity: God according to the gospel* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1982), 116.

[73] Gunton, 'Augustine, the Trinity and the theological crisis of the West,' 45f.

[74] ibid., 45.

the ontologically-prior divine persons is that which constitutes the *ousia* of God.[75] The significant advances in creative and subtly nuanced theological terminology presided over by the Cappadocians were forfeited, according to Gunton, when Augustine's trinitarianism was formulated upon a substantialist – as opposed to a personalist or relationalist – ontology. For Gunton, this characteristic of Augustine's theology hindered the subsequent development of Western trinitarian theology.

> Augustine is taking a clear step back from the teaching of the Cappadocian Fathers. For them, the three persons are what they are in their relations, and therefore the relations qualify them ontologically, in terms of what they are. Because Augustine continues to use relation as a logical term rather than an ontological predicate, he is precluded from being able to make claims about the being of the *particular* persons, who, because they lack distinguishable identity tend to disappear into the all-embracing oneness of God.[76]

Moreover, in an observation that bears crucial significance for the central concern of this study, Gunton held that Augustine's substantialist trinitarianism led

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[75] It should be acknowledged that the terms employed here are not direct equivalents, and that fact merely serves to compound the problems encountered in comparing the trinitarian theologies of Augustine and the Cappadocians. *Ousia*, for the Cappadocians, was a term used to speak about the *being* of God and, therefore, had the potential to be understood as implying that God's being was constituted by the three divine persons-in-relation. On the other hand, Augustine was using the Latin term *substantia* which was drawn from classical metaphysics and was taken to mean the divine *essence*. Gunton observed that "what might be called the *substantiality* of God resides not in his abstract being, but in the concrete particulars that we call the divine persons and in the relations by which they mutually constitute one another. It could here be argued that when the Western tradition took the decision to translate the Greek *ousia* by *substantia*, which is in point of fact a literal translation of *hypostasis*, it effectively deprived the concept of the person of due weight because it introduced a stress on the *underlying* reality of God. On such a translation, the thought is encouraged that the real *substance* of God, what he substantially is, is the being that underlies the particular persons. What was lost was the force of the Cappadocian desynonymizing of ousia and hypostasis: of making what were synonymous terms into words of distinct meaning." Gunton, *The one, the three and the many*, 191. John Zizioulas states that "For the Cappadocians, 'being' is a notion we apply to God simultaneously in two senses. It denotes (a) the τὶ ἐστιν (*what* he is) of God's being, and this the Cappadocians call the *ousia* or substance or nature of God; and (b) it refers to the ὅπωζ ἐστιν (*how* he is), which they identify with his personhood. ... Given the fact that, according to these Fathers, there is no *ousia* in the nude, that is, without hypostasis, to refer to God's substance without referring simultaneously to his personhood, or to reserve the notion of being only to the substance, would amount to making a false ontological statement." John D. Zizioulas, 'The Father as cause: personhood generating otherness' in *Communion and otherness: further studies in personhood and the church* (London: T & T Clark, 2006), 125. However, Lewis Ayres argues that simplistic caricatures of Augustine's view of the relation between the 'persons' and 'essence' need to be challenged. Lewis Ayres, 'Augustine, the Trinity and modernity,' 130. Elsewhere, Ayres argues that "we should beware of speaking about a substance in which the three persons are 'contained'," because for Augustine, "there is *nothing but* the three co-eternal and consubstantial persons." Ayres, 'The fundamental grammar of Augustine's trinitarian theology,' 68.

[76] Gunton, 'Augustine, the Trinity and the theological crisis of the West,' 44f.

to the depersonalisation of the third trinitarian person.

> Augustine appears to treat the Spirit, in anticipation of a long tradition of Western thought, substantially rather than personally and relationally: as if the Spirit was a substantial presence, given in the womb and, so to speak, preprogramming his [i.e., Jesus'] life, rather than the means by which his humanity was realised in relationship to the Father.[77]

A further consequence of this formulation was that the New Testament's clear emphasis upon the eschatological dimension of the work of the Spirit is almost completely overlooked. Augustine's treatment of eschatology is pneumatologically deficient, Gunton argued, inasmuch as "it is essentially dualistic, tending to require a choice between this world and the next, rather than seeking a realisation of the next in the materiality of the present."[78] Gunton believed that the absence of a pneumatological focus in Augustine's theology, a focus which stands in conformity with New Testament teaching, "must be said to have been one of his worst legacies to the Western tradition."[79]

When all of the above points are taken into consideration, it becomes clear that Gunton's primary objection to Augustine is that the tendency to abstractionism precluded him from developing a theology of God in adequate relation with the materiality of the creation. In fact, Gunton claimed that there was "little doubt that discussions of the immanent Trinity have, in the West since Augustine, worn an abstract air ... [and] have appeared to take on a speculative life of their own, divorced from the history of salvation."[80]

The question, finally, of whether Colin Gunton offered a fair assessment of

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[77] ibid., 40.
[78] ibid., 54.
[79] ibid., 53.
[80] Colin E. Gunton, 'Barth, the Trinity and human freedom' in *Theology today* 43, no. 3 (1986), 317.

Augustine's theology is a point of contention:[81] some argue that he is too harsh altogether,[82] while other authors voice similar criticisms to those raised by Gunton.[83] John Webster, for example, is one who maintains that Gunton's reading of Augustine is "certainly sketchy." Yet Webster is also quick to add that, when read in context, Gunton's treatment of Augustine's influence upon the subsequent Western tradition "is best appreciated as a foil to a constructive doctrine of the Trinity as a communion of persons."[84] Webster, in other words, identifies Gunton's purpose in dismissing Augustine in preference for the Cappadocians as founded upon a desire to reject substantialist categories in favour of more personal and relational ways of speaking about the triune God.

Medieval period

Christian theology in the medieval period, according to Gunton, was concerned with the central question of "its indisputable relation to the culture of Greece and its artistic, philosophical and scientific successors."[85] In particular, the relationship between classical Greek philosophical thought forms and the specifically *biblical* nature of the material with which Christian theologians engaged was seen as an essentially epistemological inquiry insofar as it can be said to be the relation

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[81] A full assessment of Gunton's treatment of Augustine's theology lies beyond the purview of this present study. However, others have undertaken that task. See, for example, Bradley G. Green, 'Colin Gunton and the failure of Augustine: an exposition and analysis of the theology of Colin Gunton in the light of Augustine's *De Trinitate*.' (Dissertation, PhD, Baylor University, 2000); and, Bradley G. Green, 'The protomodern Augustine? Colin Gunton and the failure of Augustine' in *International journal of systematic theology* 9, no. 3 (2007), 328-341.

[82] Neil Ormerod, 'Augustine and the Trinity - whose crisis?' in *Pacifica: Australasian theological studies* 16, no. 1 (2003), 17-23; Neil Ormerod, *The Trinity: retrieving the Western tradition* (Milwauke, WI: Marquette University, 2005), 33-53; see also Green, 'The protomodern Augustine,' 328-341.

[83] For example, Jenson, *The triune identity*, 105-125; Zizioulas, 'The Father as cause,' 115-124; John D. Zizioulas, 'The doctrine of the Holy Trinity: the significance of the Cappadocian contribution' in *Trinitarian theology today: essays on divine being and act*, ed. Christoph Schwöbel (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 44-60; and John D. Zizioulas, 'On being a person: towards an ontology of personhood' in *Persons, divine and human: King's College essays in theological anthropology*, ed. Christoph Schwöbel and Colin E. Gunton (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 40f.

[84] Webster, 'Systematic theology after Barth,' 259.

[85] Gunton, 'A rose by any other name,' 6.

between faith and reason. According to Gunton, medieval scholars pursued their epistemological inquiries with an understanding that treated "reason as essentially religious, in that it was at one with faith in being a distinct but parallel source for knowledge of the one truth, which was divine truth."[86]

Gunton, by having recourse to Irenaeus' view of the essential goodness of the material creation, affirmed that the rational human faculty was 'good' because "by creating the world good, God has made it such a kind as to be a place in which the exercise of reason, as one of several properly human forms of activity, has a place and can therefore be expected to reap its own reward in the achievement of a measure of understanding."[87] Notwithstanding the fact that some theologians spoke about reason in the pejorative sense, Gunton went on to argue that, granted the theological difficulties which flow from an unqualified affirmation of inherent human ability, it "seems unlikely … that any school of theology could exist for long without thinking through the method of reason it deploys."[88]

However, the theologians of the Reformation, Calvin in particular, considered that an over-zealous emphasis afforded to the human faculty of reason should be viewed with suspicion because unaided reason was little more than "a factory of idolatry."[89] Gunton shared these reservations insofar as he held that reason cannot be understood as salvifically efficacious, as if human reason was something other than *human* reason.[90] Gunton's views on the use of reason in the pursuit of theological truths are made clear in his statement that

> differences in conceptions of what reason is able to do *on its own* affect

[86] Colin E. Gunton, 'The place of reason in theology: introductory essay' in *The practice of theology: a reader*, ed. Colin E. Gunton, Stephen R. Holmes and Murray A. Rae (London: SCM, 2001), 150.
[87] Gunton, *The one, the three and the many*, 146.
[88] Gunton, 'The place of reason in theology,' 151; cf. Gunton, 'Historical and systematic theology,' 13.
[89] Gunton, 'The place of reason in theology,' 151.
[90] Gunton, *The one, the three and the many*, 146.

> conceptions of the nature of systematic theology in various ways, especially in determining the place and relation of 'natural' and 'revealed' theology.[91]

The primary objection raised by Gunton to the general orientation of medieval theology, therefore, was that scholastic theology was led astray when philosophical and metaphysical considerations were afforded precedence over the biblical narrative in the articulation of doctrine. In Gunton's opinion, the "mistake of the metaphysical tradition was to understand the divine self-groundedness in a non-trinitarian way, that is to say, apart from the man who died on the cross."[92] This point is elaborated further when Gunton asserted that

> systematic theology is antithetical to philosophy in taking at least part of its character from its relations to particular historical claims which are both constitutive of Christianity and to a degree resistant to certain forms of philosophising.[93]

Gunton further argued that the scholasticism of the medieval period represents an over-balanced prioritisation afforded to the efficacy of human reason which, when combined with a certain drive toward system, results in a "tendency to reduce all Christian teaching to a single principle, and so deny the richness of its various doctrines."[94]

Reformation – John Calvin

The perceived over-emphasis upon the efficacy of reason in theology during the medieval period was replaced by the specifically biblical orientation of the Reformers. John Calvin, described by Gunton as "the impassioned and sometimes

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[91] Gunton, 'Historical and systematic theology,' 13.
[92] Colin E. Gunton, 'The being and attributes of God: Eberhard Jüngel's dispute with the classical philosophical tradition' in *The possibilities of theology: studies in the theology of Eberhard Jüngel*, ed. John B. Webster (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 17.
[93] Gunton, 'Indispensable opponent,' 302.
[94] Gunton, 'Newman's dialectic,' 313.

vituperative controversialist,"[95] is considered by many Protestants to be "the theologian *par excellence*."[96]

Calvin is another of the historical figures to have exercised considerable influence over the development of Colin Gunton's theology. Indeed, Gunton described Calvin as "a figure on the borderlands of modernity"[97] because of the way in which his theology was framed within a trinitarian paradigm that heralds "a major shift away from the language of causality to one of personal action."[98] In this respect, Gunton remarked that Calvin's theology is a significant departure from that of his medieval predecessors.[99]

For Gunton, Calvin's trinitarian theology was an important resource because of the centrality of Christ and the important role assigned to the Spirit. Calvin's emphasis upon the believer's union with Christ, established through a theology of mediation, was also a foundational element in Colin Gunton's thought.[100] For Calvin, a theology of mediation "requires that Christ be both human and divine" because the whole Christ-event is nothing less than God's demonstration of *who* Jesus is and *what* he does, namely "God with us and for us … in Jesus Christ."[101] The way in which Gunton developed a theology of mediation will be discussed in greater detail in the subsequent chapters. However, it is sufficient here to note that Gunton, following Calvin, employed a specifically *trinitarian* theology of mediation.

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[95] Colin E. Gunton, *Intellect and action: elucidations on Christian theology and the life of faith* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 131.
[96] Kevin N. Giles, 'The doctrine of the Trinity and subordinationism' in *Evangelical review of theology* 28, no. 3 (2004), 279.
[97] Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed., 147.
[98] Colin E. Gunton, 'The end of causality? The Reformers and their predecessors' in *The doctrine of creation: essays in dogmatics, history and philosophy*, ed. Colin E. Gunton (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 75.
[99] Colin E. Gunton, 'The Trinity in modern theology' in *A companion encyclopaedia of theology*, ed. Peter Byrne and Leslie Houlden (London: Routledge, 1995), 947.
[100] Colin E. Gunton, 'One mediator ... the man Jesus Christ: reconciliation, mediation and life in community' in *Pro ecclesia* 11, no. 2 (2002), 151.
[101] ibid.

Gunton was appreciative of Calvin's insistence that the Spirit constitutes *the* source of knowledge for the theologian – affirming Calvin's view that the "work of a faithful and obedient Christian theology can take place only in that light."[102] However, Gunton held reservations about the consistency with which Calvin employed trinitarian conceptuality. For example, he remarked that "where Calvin thinks trinitarianly – that is to say, with particular respect to the work of the Son and the Spirit mediating the act and the will of God the Father – he is unequalled; when not, he is often deeply problematic."[103] A case in point, according to Gunton, is an apparent uneven emphasis afforded by Calvin to the Spirit's role in the doctrine of creation over against that which is employed in his doctrine of the Trinity. Here, Gunton expressed disappointment that while Calvin spoke about the Spirit under the head of the Trinity, he failed to give adequate attention to the Spirit's involvement in creation.[104] For Gunton, as we shall see, the Spirit's involvement in the act of creation is as important and as central as that of the Father or the Son.

Notwithstanding the seriousness of these observations, Colin Gunton's trinitarian theology is clearly a continuation of the theology of the Reformers and of Calvin's thought in particular. The point is made clear by Gunton's identification of the unique features of the Christian community: "The Church is distinctively the institution that it is by virtue of its orientation to the Word and sacraments, the two constitutive features of its worship."[105] In another place he argued for the need "to recover again a sense of the Church as the holy people of God, called first and last to

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[102] Colin E. Gunton, 'Doing theology in the university today' in *The practice of theology: a reader*, ed. Colin E. Gunton, Stephen R. Holmes and Murray A. Rae (London: SCM, 2001), 448f.

[103] Colin E. Gunton, 'Aspects of salvation: some unscholastic themes from Calvin's *Institutes*' in *International journal of systematic theology* 1, no. 3 (1999), 253; see also Gunton, *Intellect and action*, 121.

[104] Gunton, 'The end of causality,' 75.

[105] Colin E. Gunton, 'The church as a school of virtue? Human formation in trinitarian framework' in *Faithfulness and fortitude: in conversation with the theological ethics of Stanley Hauerwas*, ed. Mark Theissen Nation and Samuel Wells (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 230.

praise his – threefold – name in all the ways that it can be done: formal worship, holy living and the proclamation of the gospel in all the world."[106] Gunton's Reformed heritage is displayed without reservation here insofar as his description of the distinctive features of the Christian church is a repetition of Calvin's marks of the church.[107]

Enlightenment period

The fruit of the late medieval prioritisation of reason is realised during the Enlightenment period which Gunton regarded as "the second phase of the story" that continues until "roughly to the end of the eighteenth century."[108]

The Enlightenment, also known as the Age of Reason, was a late seventeenth and eighteenth century philosophical movement, originating in France, Britain and Germany, which promoted the authoritative status of human reason. For Gunton, the ascendancy of the claim to the omnicompetence of human reason was the defining feature of the Enlightenment.[109] The point of his criticism was that with a one-sided prioritisation of reason over faith, understood as gift which is *to be received* from God, one cannot avoid the conclusion that "the Enlightenment is in many respects a highly religious, if often anti-Christian, movement – for it makes reason an alternative religion."[110]

Gunton remained deeply suspicious of most of the 'advances' derived from

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[106] Colin E. Gunton, 'We believe in the Holy Spirit, who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified' in *Fire and wind: the Holy Spirit in the church today*, ed. Joseph D. Small (Louisville, KY: Geneva, 2002), 33.

[107] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster John Knox, 1960), IV.1.9.

[108] Colin E. Gunton, 'Protestantism' in *Oxford companion to Christian thought*, ed. Adrian Hastings, Alistair Mason, Hugh S. Pyper, Ingrid Lawrie and Cecily Bennett (Oxford, UK: Oxford University, 2000), 572.

[109] Colin E. Gunton, *A brief theology of revelation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 59; Colin E. Gunton, 'The Trinity, natural theology and a theology of nature' in *The Trinity in a pluralistic age: theological essays on culture and religion*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 101.

[110] Gunton, 'Indispensable opponent,' 301.

the Enlightenment period. His objections were prompted by the historical fact that the Reformation and the fledgling Protestant movement immediately preceded the Enlightenment period with the result that some of the theological advances made during the Reformation came under threat. According to Gunton, the Enlightenment influence upon subsequent Protestant theology was twofold.

> First it is a quarrel within the Christian family, and can be understood as a summons to the Christian church to embody the freedom that it affected to offer. ... Second, however, the Enlightenment was a rebellion against human dependence on divine authority of any kind in favour of a stress on individual rational and moral self-determination. Eighteenth-century Protestant theology was deeply marked by both the rationalism of the Enlightenment and the Pietist reaction against it.[111]

Elsewhere, Gunton suggested that the 'problem' of the Enlightenment can be reduced to the question of the necessity of human freedom. The problem here, however, was that "the freedom which was demanded was not always the freedom of the gospel"[112] especially as it involved such unbiblical notions as i) rejection of the notion of freedom as gift in preference for a possession to be grasped which was ii) conceived in individualistic terms, and iii) "tended to be a freedom of dominion, of control, in marked contrast to the dominion of Genesis 1-2, where the human race is called to cultivate a garden in partnership with the beasts, not as their absolute disposer."[113] The 'error' of such thinking, to Gunton's mind, is that it suggests "a picture of humankind as absolute lord, arrogating divine powers in an abstract way, grasping at divinity."[114]

In addition, and of crucial importance to this present study, is Gunton's observation that some of the developments in the Christian theological project that

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[111] Gunton, 'Protestantism,' 572.
[112] Colin E. Gunton, 'The Spirit as Lord: Christianity, modernity and freedom' in *Different Gospels: Christian orthodoxy and modern theologies*, ed. Andrew Walker (London: SPCK, 1993), 75.
[113] ibid., 76.
[114] ibid.

took place during the Enlightenment directly impact upon the Christian doctrine of the Spirit. He claimed that the

> Enlightenment can in this respect be seen as a movement which attempted to liberate the divine Spirit entirely from the trammels of ecclesiastical control. The tradition since Augustine had tended to make the Spirit immanent – within the institution. After the Enlightenment, the immanence was transferred, so to speak, to human thought and action. Spirit, no longer the transcendent and eschatological Spirit, became secularised in human culture.[115]

His enthusiastic and sustained critique of the Enlightenment influence upon subsequent Christian theology was Gunton's attempt to highlight two 'errors' in particular, namely, the tendency to deny any possibility of knowledge of God derived from worldly structures on the one hand and, the equal and opposite error of associating God too closely with the created order, on the other.

In the former instance, Gunton rejected the Kantian view that knowledge of God cannot be gained through created structures on the grounds that it is merely an *a priori* theory which is not supported by the biblical data. Gunton, following Barth, argued that the doctrine of the incarnation is nothing other than an expression of "the simple insight that in Jesus Christ God makes himself known as the triune God, whose activities towards and in the world take the form of creation, reconciliation and redemption."[116] The continuing influence of Irenaeus' insistence upon the importance of the materiality of the creation is also readily apparent at this point.

Regarding the second 'error,' Gunton argued against any attempt to associate the being of God too closely with that of the material order. Following established Reformed thinking, Gunton held that sufficient 'space' must be maintained between the Creator and the created order – at stake here was the maintenance of the

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[115] Colin E. Gunton, 'The triune God and the freedom of the creature' in *Karl Barth: centenary essays*, ed. Stephen W. Sykes (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University, 1989), 65f.
[116] Gunton, 'Historical and systematic theology,' 17.

ontological distinction between uncreated and created reality.[117] Throughout his published works Gunton consistently maintained the Reformed principle of "an absolute ontological distinction between creator and creation, but one based on God's free personal relation to the world through his Son."[118]

The argument for the maintenance of a proper distinction between God and humanity involved an attack upon the influence of Hegel. Gunton was explicit in his intention to counter "the tendency of Hegelian philosophical theology … to bind too closely the being of God with that of the world."[119] Moreover, he saw clearly that the dismantling of the distinction between uncreated and created reality that was facilitated by some aspects of Hegelianism was to be avoided at all costs insofar as it constituted "a return to a kind of pantheism, the identification of God with the world, and the route to slavery rather than liberation."[120]

In the centuries after the Reformation, however, two theologians in particular captured Gunton's attention: the seventeenth century English Puritan preacher and chaplain to Oliver Cromwell, John Owen (1616-1683), and Edward Irving (1792-1834), an eighteenth century Scottish pastor, both of whom exercised significant influence over Colin Gunton's theological project. Their influence, as will become evident later in this study, is most pronounced in Gunton's theology of the Trinity and the Spirit. Owen and Irving represent historical as well as theological influences upon the development of Gunton's trinitarian pneumatology, a point that was not lost upon Robert Jenson. Gunton, it seems, had, a

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[117] Colin E. Gunton, 'Proteus and Procrustes: a study in the dialectic of language in disagreement with Sallie McFague' in *Speaking the Christian God: the Holy Trinity and the challenge of feminism*, ed. Alvin F. Kimel (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 79.

[118] Colin E. Gunton, *The triune creator: a historical and systematic study* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 67.

[119] Gunton, 'The being and attributes of God,' 16.

[120] Gunton, 'The triune God and the freedom of the creature,' 66.

> penchant for digging out dimly remembered figures of English theological history and discovering great insight in their thought. One of course knew of John Owen as a notable Puritan politician and preacher – but what *exactly* did he preach? And why should we care? Colin would tell you. One was aware of Edward Irving because one knew there had been Irvingites – but just what distinguished Irvingites from other esoteric groups? And is there anything to learn from their initiator? Colin would tell you.[121]

John Owen

Although the English theological tradition had tended to overlook the work of Owen, Gunton identified two concepts in Owen's theology which were incorporated into his own trinitarian theology: an emphasis upon the Spirit's transcendence and a theology of mediation.

Over against a tradition which had spoken about the third trinitarian person in rather vague terms as an immanent force, John Owen's doctrine of the transcendence of the Holy Spirit was considered by Gunton as both refreshingly innovative and important.[122] The significance of understanding the Spirit as transcendent was that it provided Owen with the means with which to reconfigure the way that the Spirit is understood to work in the world in such a way that new light was shed upon what it meant to confess the Spirit as Lord and Giver of life.

Secondly, it is precisely as the *transcendent* Lord and Giver of life that Owen was able to speak about the Spirit as Jesus' 'other,' as the one who mediates the will of the Father to the incarnate Son.[123] Owen had been insistent that the humanity of the Son was as important as the divinity and, therefore, should not be overlooked in

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[121] Robert W. Jenson, 'Afterword' in *Trinitarian soundings in systematic theology*, ed. Paul Louis Metzger (London: T & T Clark, 2005), 219.

[122] Colin E. Gunton, 'The church: John Owen and John Zizioulas on the church' in *Theology through the theologians: selected essays, 1972-1995* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 191.

[123] John Owen, *The Holy Spirit*, ed. R.J.K. Law (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1998), 24; cf. Gunton, 'The church: John Owen and John Zizioulas on the church,' 192.

christological discussion.[124] Gunton, for his part, was quick to realise the theological significance of these ideas.[125] By combining Owen's emphasis upon the transcendence of the Spirit, the humanity of the Son and a theology of mediation, Gunton found a way of speaking that afforded adequate recognition of the importance of the humanity of the Jewish man, Jesus of Nazareth, and provided an active role for the Spirit. Such an explicitly trinitarian configuration held appeal for Gunton because of its obvious pastoral implications. It was immediately apparent to him that a theology of mediation to the Son through the Spirit provided a way of conceiving God's provision to the humanity of Christ and, by analogy, to the concrete lives of Jesus' followers.

Edward Irving

If Gunton drew encouragement from the way in which John Owen spoke of the centrality of the humanity of the Son, in Irving he was to find a way of speaking about the *authentic* humanity of the Son.

During the early decades of the nineteenth century, the doctrines of the Trinity and the incarnation were the subject of much disputation and were in danger of being sidelined in theological discussion. Irving's response was as insightful and innovative as it was unique: he claimed that the humanity of Christ was precisely the same fallen humanity which other human beings share (for which he was convicted of heresy)[126] and, moreover, that Jesus' body had been formed for him in the womb of Mary by the Holy Spirit.[127] In this way, Irving sought to assert the authenticity of

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[124] John Owen, 'A discourse concerning the Holy Spirit' in *The works of John Owen* vol. 3, ed. William H. Goold (London: Banner of Truth, 1966), 168.

[125] Stephen R. Holmes, 'Reformed varieties of the *communicatio idiomatum*' in *The person of Christ*, ed. Stephen R. Holmes and Murray A. Rae (London: T & T Clark International, 2005), 70f.

[126] Graham W. P. McFarlane, *Christ and the Spirit: the doctrine of the incarnation according to Edward Irving* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1996), 61 n. 14.

[127] Edward Irving, 'Preface' in *The collected writings of Edward Irving* vol. 5, ed. Gavin Carlyle (London: Alexander Strahan, 1864), 4. The image of the Spirit's formation of a body for the Son

Christ's humanity, by which he meant that "He took His humanity completely and wholly from the substance, from the sinful substance, of the fallen creatures which He came to redeem!"[128] Gunton remarked that Irving's insistence upon nothing less than "the full and complete humanity of the incarnate"[129] was driven by a desire to take the soteriological implications in the declaration of Hebrews 2:14-18 with utmost seriousness. According to Graham McFarlane, Irving sought "to give theological expression to the creative activity of Father, Son and Spirit in incarnation and redemption."[130]

Framed in this way, the economy of redemption clearly depends upon the work of all three divine persons. Irving's position, therefore, bears as much significance for trinitarian discussion as it does for christology and pneumatology.

> This work of the Holy Ghost, I further assert, was done in consequence of the Son's humbling Himself to be made flesh. The Son said, "I come:" the Father said, "I prepare Thee a body to come in;" and the Holy Ghost prepared that body out of the Virgin's substance. And so, by the threefold acting of the Trinity, was the Christ constituted a Divine and a human nature, joined in personal union forever. [131]

The importance of this way of thinking about the incarnation and the economy of redemption for Gunton's theological project is hard to overestimate. Indeed, Irving's insights helped Gunton to frame his trinitarian theology around the principle of an essential complementarity of christology and pneumatology in which the person and work of the Holy Spirit was no longer subsumed under the head of the person and work of Jesus Christ.

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in Mary's womb is found in numerous places throughout Gunton's work. See, for example, Gunton, *Christ and creation*, 51; Colin E. Gunton, 'Martin Kähler revisited: variations on Hebrews 4:15' in *Ex auditu* 14, no. 1 (1998), 26f; Colin E. Gunton, *The Christian faith: an introduction to Christian doctrine* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2002), 102; Colin E. Gunton, *Father, Son and Holy Spirit: essays toward a fully trinitarian theology* (London: T & T Clark, 2003), 157.

[128] Irving, 'Preface,' 5.

[129] Gunton, 'God the Holy Spirit,' 115.

[130] McFarlane, *Christ and the Spirit*, 15.

[131] Irving, 'Preface,' 4.

Gunton went on to describe Irving as "a great Calvinist theologian who was deeply indebted to eastern ways of seeing the Trinity."[132] The extent to which Irving had been influenced by the pneumatology of Eastern theology and the challenge that his theology represented for Reformed thought is noted by James Purves.

> In Reformed Pneumatology … the Spirit's work has been largely reduced to a role of an epistemological agent in human cognitive appropriation of Christ as Savior and Lord ... Irving, on the other hand, redresses this weakness by helping us to focus on the complementary actions of both the Son and the Spirit in the *actus salus* of Jesus Christ's life and ministry.[133]

Modern Era

A contemporary of Irving's was the German systematician Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834).[134] It has been noted that while Schleiermacher is widely recognised as 'the father of liberal theology,'[135] Irving was "significantly out of step" with the theology of his day and was, therefore, consigned to little more than a footnote in history.[136]

It was observed in the previous chapter that Gunton's doctoral research considered the conception of God in the theologies of Karl Barth and Charles Hartshorne. Despite disagreeing with Barth at several key points, Gunton continued

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[132] It should be noted that Gunton names Edward Irving as the "great Calvinist theologian," a correction of the omission in the previous version of this essay. Gunton, 'The triune God and the freedom of the creature,' 63; cf. Gunton, 'Barth, the Trinity and human freedom,' 328.

[133] James G. M. Purves, 'The interaction of christology and pneumatology in the soteriology of Edward Irving' in *Pneuma: the journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 14, no. 1 (1992), 85.

[134] Irving's contemporaneity with Schleiermarcher and Samuel Taylor Coleridge even extends to the fact that they all died in the same year, 1834. McFarlane, *Christ and the Spirit*, 61 n. 10.

[135] Colin E. Gunton, *Yesterday and today: a study of continuities in christology*, 2nd ed. (London: SPCK, 1997), 3; Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed., 68 n. 21.

[136] McFarlane, *Christ and the Spirit*, 131. Of note is the fact that recently there has been a resurgence of interest in Irving's theology. See, for example, Gordon Strachan, *The pentecostal theology of Edward Irving* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1973); Colin E. Gunton, 'Two dogmas revisited: Edward Irving's christology' in *Scottish journal of theology* 41, no. 3 (1988), 359-376; Graham W. P. McFarlane, 'Strange news from another star: an anthropological insight from Edward Irving' in *Persons, divine and human: King's College essays in theological anthropology*, ed. Christoph Schwöbel and Colin E. Gunton (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 98-119; James G. M. Purves, 'The interaction of christology and pneumatology in the soteriology of Edward Irving' in *Pneuma: the journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 14, no. 1 (1992), 81-90; Graham W. P. McFarlane, 'The strange tongue of a long lost Christianity: the Spirit and the Trinity' in *Vox evangelica* 22 (1992), 63-70.

to hold his theology in the highest esteem and was an enthusiastic supporter of the Barthian project.[137] It is a commonplace in continental theology that Karl Barth's theology was formulated in response to the influence of Schleiermacher as it found expression in nineteenth century theological liberalism. These two giants of modern Protestant theology, according to Gunton, "represent polar opposites in understanding the relation between method and content: between how we go about doing systematic theology and what we put into it."[138]

Schleiermacher instituted profound changes in Protestant theology during the latter parts of the eighteenth century when he incorporated advances in scientific rationalism into the theological task. Gunton identified two crucial implications of this innovation, one methodological and the other theologically consequential.

In the first instance, Gunton objected to Schleiermacher's decision to apply a different methodological approach to the discipline of theology than that employed by other sciences on the grounds that it subjectivises that which must remain objective. Gunton clarifies the criticism by stating that

> Schleiermacher's revolution … introduced into theology a radical distinction between the methodology of theology and that of other disciplines, especially the natural sciences. The one is seen to belong primarily to the sphere of the subject, the other to that of the object. Theology has to do with things of the subject, science with things whose truth is to be judged in abstraction from any relation to the subject. The scientific and the religious spheres are different worlds, and to be approached by entirely different routes.[139]

Secondly, Schleiermacher's methodological prioritisation of the subject over

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[137] The extent of Gunton's understanding and appreciation of Karl Barth's theological project is acknowledged by Stephen Williams in the observation that "Colin Gunton is by reputation perhaps the most significant theological inheritor of Barth's legacy in the United Kingdom in his generation. The most significant of the earlier generation is Thomas Torrance." Stephen N. Williams, *Revelation and reconciliation: a window on modernity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University, 1995), 166.

[138] Gunton, 'Historical and systematic theology,' 17.

[139] Colin E. Gunton, 'The truth of christology' in *Belief in science and in Christian life: the relevance of Michael Polanyi's thought for Christian faith and life*, ed. Thomas F. Torrance (Edinburgh: Handsel, 1980), 95.

that of the object, in Gunton's opinion, resulted in a radical subjectivising of the Christian faith, an innovation that produced profound and lasting implications for the practice of Christian theology. When Schleiermacher made the subject, rather than the object, "the primary reference of theological assertion,"[140] according to Gunton, he opened the way for the mistaken conflation of Christianity's existential relevance with the understanding that Christian theology "is concerned solely with the associated subjective experience."[141]

Notwithstanding the significance of these criticisms, Gunton argued that Schleiermacher was one of the truly great theologians of Christian history because his concern was to articulate the reality of God, albeit expressed in a peculiarly modern and self-consciously systematic manner.[142]

Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Another figure from the early nineteenth century who exercised substantial influence over Colin Gunton's thinking was the poet, philosopher and theologian, Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834). An obituary for Gunton, for example, published in *The Times* of London, makes reference to the fact that his office at King's College was adorned with two portraits.

> One was of Samuel Taylor Coleridge; the other was of the Swiss theologian Karl Barth, whose Reformed faith Gunton shared. The influence of both thinkers was apparent: Barth helped him to see theology as an autonomous discipline; and both Coleridge and Barth (among many others) taught him that any theology worthy of the name was rooted in passionate commitment.[143]

As Gunton's theological career progressed he was increasingly drawn to sources other than Barth in an attempt to find more adequate ways of speaking about

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[140] ibid., 94.
[141] ibid., 99.
[142] Gunton, 'A rose by any other name,' 14.
[143] 'The Rev Professor Colin Gunton' in *The Times* (London), Monday, 19 May 2003, 27.

trinitarian doctrine and, crucially for this present study, the place of the Spirit within trinitarian teaching. The most significant of those sources, according to John Webster, were Irenaeus, the Cappadocians, John Owen and Samuel Taylor Coleridge.[144]

From Coleridge, Gunton adopted a trinitarian conceptuality that influenced his understanding of both the content of theology and its method. Regarding theological method, Gunton remarked that Coleridge, like Irenaeus, deserved to be appreciated as a theologian because he "saw things whole, and yet in their parts as well."[145] Gunton intended, of course, to highlight that Coleridge's importance derived from a theological methodology that sought to be "systematic without succumbing to system, however much he [i.e., Coleridge] hoped one day, as he hoped for so much else, to develop a system of thought."[146]

The content of Coleridge's thought was also important to Gunton because "he came to see the doctrine of the Trinity as the foundation of a systematic quest for truth: as the 'one substantive truth' underlying all truths."[147] Coleridge's description of the doctrine of the Trinity as the *Idea Idearum* (the idea of ideas),[148] moreover, provided Gunton with the conceptual apparatus with which modern atheism's dismissal of deficient and insipid theology could be addressed and refuted via an

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[144] Webster, 'Systematic theology after Barth,' 259. Webster's observation however needs to be juxtaposed with Hans Schaeffer's assessment that Gunton, although initially impressed by the intellectual resources provided within Coleridge's thought, nonetheless "gradually returned to a more explicitly Calvinist way of doing theology." Hans Schaeffer, *Createdness and ethics: the doctrine of creation and theological ethics in the theology of Colin E. Gunton and Oswald Bayer* (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 2006), 276.

[145] Gunton, 'An English systematic theology,' 493.

[146] ibid., 487.

[147] ibid., 491.

[148] Coleridge noted that his opponents were unable to grasp the significance of the *idea* of the Trinity, which he describes as "that *Idea Idearum*, the one substrative truth which is the form, manner, and involvent of all truths." Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 'Notes on Waterland's vindication of Christ's divinity' in *The complete works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* vol. 5, ed. William G.T. Shedd (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1884), 407.

intentionally trinitarian theology.[149] To help in that undertaking, Gunton drew upon Coleridge's insistence that a trinitarian understanding of God was the ground upon which a relational understanding of the human person could be formulated.[150]

The relational concept of person was to exercise a profound effect on Gunton's theological project. He held that the doctrine of the Trinity, understood in a personal and relational way, was not only important in a theological sense – for what it said about God – but it also had a direct impact upon what theologians, potentially, were able to contribute to the anthropological, environmental, and cosmological discussion.[151] Moreover, it is clear that Gunton understood the significance of trinitarian conceptuality for his own project.

> Coleridge's point is that only a God conceived trinitarianly – that is, in terms of his personal otherness to and free relation with the world – is consistent with a universe that is a fit place for human beings to live their lives. It is such a concern for the interrelatedness of things, of world and life, of theology and ethics, that founds the necessity for being systematic in theology, for thinking things together.[152]

Karl Barth

The second of the portraits that hung upon Gunton's office wall depicted Karl Barth, the Swiss Reformed theologian whose theology was to prove so influential in Gunton's thought.

There can be little question about the influence of Barth's thought upon Gunton. Karl Barth's dogmatic task was undertaken in the context of a theological academy that had placed increasing emphasis upon anthropology as a legitimate way

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[149] Gunton, *The one, the three and the many*, 211.
[150] Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed., 96f.
[151] Gunton observed that "we learn from Coleridge not simply that there are analogies to be drawn from the divine to the human person, but that the question of the three in one is also the question of the kind of world we live in." Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed., 97.
[152] Gunton, 'An English systematic theology,' 490; see also Gunton, 'The Trinity in modern theology,' 946.

of speaking about God[153] and of the social upheaval prevalent within German society immediately preceding and following the Second World War.[154] Situated within the distress and dislocation of early twentieth century European society as a background, and the fact that Barth was from the Reformed theological tradition, it should come as no surprise that his was a theology of grace.[155] According to Gunton, moreover, Barth's theology of grace refers specifically to "that covenantal grace which is grounded in the inner-trinitarian, electing, love between the Father and the Son."[156]

Robert Jenson, another accomplished Barthian scholar, argues that twentieth century theology is indebted to Barth's consistent emphasis afforded to the doctrine of the Trinity. It is well-known that Barth insisted that the doctrine of the Trinity was the first thing to be said about God[157] and that it "must have explanatory and regulatory use in the whole of theology … [since] it is not a separate puzzle to be solved but the framework within which all theology's puzzles are to be solved."[158] Gunton, for his part, followed Barth's lead by affirming that the dogmatic task of

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[153] To the extent that it is true to say that Barth's theology is framed in dialogue with Schleiermacher, Grenz and Olson's observation provides invaluable insight into the differently oriented methodology of each of these major Protestant theologians. "We may be tempted to say that whereas Schleiermacher made the mistake of trying to talk about God by talking about humankind in a very loud voice, Barth made the mistake of trying to talk about humanity by talking about God in a very loud voice. Perhaps Barth's error is the slightest, but to make neither one would be far better." Grenz and Olson, *20th-century theology*, 77.

[154] See, for example, Barth's comments about his students at Kurfursten Schloss in Bonn during the summer of 1946. Karl Barth, 'Foreword' in *Dogmatics in outline*, new ed. (London: SCM, 2001), xiii-xiv.

[155] See, for example, G. C. Berkouwer, *The triumph of grace in the theology of Karl Barth*, trans. Harry R. Boer (London: Paternoster, 1956); and, George Hunsinger, *Disruptive grace: studies in the theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000).

[156] Colin E. Gunton, 'A systematic triangle: Hegel, Kierkegaard, Barth and the question of ethics,' a paper presented to a theology seminar held at the Research Institute in Systematic Theology, King's College, London, (19 March 1999), 5.

[157] Barth argued that the first question of the self-revealing God cannot be separated from the second question of how it happens and the third question of the effect upon the one receiving the revelation. Therefore, he held that "we must begin the doctrine of revelation with the doctrine of the triune God." Later, in the same volume, Barth observed that as far as the Western theological tradition is concerned, the placing the doctrine of the Trinity at the start of dogmatic inquiry was a very isolated practice; the exceptions being Peter Lombard's *Sentences* and Bonaventure's *Breviloquium*. Karl Barth, *Church dogmatics* I/1, trans. G. T. Thompson (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1963), 296, 345.

[158] Robert W. Jenson, 'Karl Barth' in *The modern theologians: an introduction to Christian theology in the Twentieth Century*, ed. David F. Ford (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 31.

Christian systematic theology was "to articulate its specific object, the being and action of the triune God."[159]

The doctrine of the Trinity is precisely the point at which the influence of Barth upon Gunton's theology comes into sharpest focus. Although Gunton was well-versed in Barth's thought and affirmed much of what he wrote, he did not slavishly follow Barth in an uncritical manner. Christoph Schwöbel, long-time friend and colleague of Gunton, for example, remarks that "Colin Gunton's own theology developed by developing what he saw as Barth's strengths and by remedying what he saw as Barth's weakness. Every new development in his own theology was re-played, so to say, in his engagement with Barth."[160]

There are many examples in Gunton's work that suggest a significant departure from Barth's views.[161] One area of immediate concern for this present study is the different priority afforded to the person and work of the Holy Spirit in their respective trinitarian theologies. Barth, at the end of his theological career, conceded that much more attention could have been afforded to the place of the Spirit in his own work and that, in his opinion, the theology of the future would be trinitarian theology comprised of integrated christology and pneumatology.[162] It is

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[159] Gunton, 'Historical and systematic theology,' 18.

[160] Christoph Schwöbel, 'Foreword' in *The Barth lectures* by Colin E. Gunton, ed. Paul H. Brazier (London: T & T Clark, 2007), xxi.

[161] Gunton, for example, argues that Barth's trinitarian theology affords inadequate attention to the distinctness of the triune persons and the importance of pneumatological aspects inherent within the incarnation and soteriology. The criticism is directed toward what Gunton believes is Barth's inappropriate emphasis upon christological discussion to the detriment of pneumatological matters, which results in a lack of balance and/or a degree of imprecision. Gunton, 'Barth, the Trinity and human freedom,' 330, 339. In more specific terms, Gunton disagreed with Barth's acceptance of the *filioque* clause and distanced himself from Barth's claim that 'person' was a misleading term in trinitarian discourse. Stephen Holmes, therefore, remarks that "despite his [i.e., Gunton's] evident respect for his dialogue partners in the tradition, his ideas were always his own." Stephen R. Holmes, 'Introduction' in *The Barth lectures* by Colin E. Gunton, ed. Paul H. Brazier (London: T & T Clark, 2007), 1.

[162] Barth, in the last year of his life, reflected upon "the possibility of a theology of the third article, a theology where the Holy Spirit would dominate and be decisive. Everything that one believes, reflects and says about God the Father and God the Son in understanding the first and second articles would be demonstrated and clarified basically through God the Holy Spirit, the *viniculum*

precisely here that the difference between these two theologians becomes most apparent. Gunton was critical of the under-emphasis on pneumatology in Barth's theology and went on to argue that Barth's theology is found wanting to the extent that insufficient attention had been afforded to "the distinctness of the triune persons and in particular to pneumatological dimensions of incarnation and salvation."[163] He was quick to add, however, that although he considered this was a weakness, it was a weakness of balance.

> Barth's weakness is a weakness of balance; there is insufficient weight given to the distinctions between the three divine persons and, in particular, to the reality and distinctive functions of the Spirit, with the result that too much is thrown on to Christology, too much on to the immanent and eternal; and so too little on the particularities of history.[164]

Self-evidently, Gunton's historical context with its own peculiarities and issues was different to that of Barth. Where Barth was concerned with the formulation of a christologically-grounded trinitarian theology over against the preponderance of anthropologically based theologies, Gunton operated in an academic environment in which theology itself was becoming increasingly challenged as irrelevant to modern society. Gunton's response, in part, was to take what he had learned from Barth's trinitarian theology and to extend it pneumatologically in such a way that it became more completely *trinitarian* with increasing societal relevance. Gunton's intentions in this regard are seen in the way that he responded to Geoffrey Nuttall's valid criticism of the inadequate

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pacis between the Father and the Son. The work of God on behalf of creatures for, in, and with humanity would be made clear in a teleology which excludes all chance. I give only indications of what I occasionally dream of regarding the future of theology." Karl Barth, 'Nachwort' in *Schleiermacher - Auswahl: mit eine Nachwort von Karl Barth* by Friedrich D. R. Schleiermacher, ed. Heinz Bolli (Münich: Siebenstern-Taschenbuch, 1968), 311. English translation from Kilian McDonnell, 'A trinitarian theology of the Holy Spirit' in *Theological studies* 46, no. 2 (1985), 193.

[163] Gunton, 'Barth, the Trinity and human freedom,' 329.

[164] Gunton, 'The triune God and the freedom of the creature,' 64.

pneumatology[165] in the first edition of *Yesterday and today: a study of continuities in christology*.[166] By way of response to Nuttall, Gunton's subsequent work is marked by an intentionally *trinitarian* orientation inasmuch as more attention was afforded to the role of both the Son and the Spirit as the Father's 'two hands' in creation, redemption and eschatology. In the last volume that he prepared for publication,[167] for example, Gunton wrote:

> A theology of divine action that does not incorporate the distinctive work of the Spirit as well as that of the Son fails in some way to encompass the breadth of the biblical economy. For it is primarily that with which we are concerned in Christian theology: to show that God the Father creates, acts to provide for and redeem, and will finally complete the world which he has called into being through his two hands, his Son and his Spirit.[168]

In concert with observations made above about the significance of the influence of Irenaeus, the Cappadocians, John Owen and Edward Irving upon the development of Colin Gunton's theology, it is hard to overestimate the extent of Barth's influence upon Gunton. That much is clear because in Gunton's own estimation, "Barth's achievement is immense."[169] Nevertheless, he insisted that the Barthian legacy for systematic theology should be assessed in the light of the fact that the problem of modalism in trinitarian theology was not completely vanquished by Barth. In Gunton's opinion, Barth's theology must be recognised for what it achieved despite the fact that "in its attempt to correct imbalances, it has inevitably created imbalances of its own. These are real weaknesses, but they do not deserve the

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[165] Gunton, *Yesterday and today*, 2nd ed., 221.
[166] Colin E. Gunton, *Yesterday and today: a study of continuities in christology*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983).
[167] Stephen Holmes observes that *Father, Son and Holy Spirit: essays toward a fully trinitarian theology* was "the last writing he [i.e., Gunton] prepared for press before his sudden and untimely death." Stephen R. Holmes, 'Foreword' in *Father, Son and Holy Spirit: essays toward a fully trinitarian theology* by Colin E. Gunton (London: T & T Clark, 2003), ix.
[168] Gunton, *Father, Son and Holy Spirit*, xiii.
[169] Gunton, 'Barth, the Trinity and human freedom,' 330.

harshness of some of the critiques."[170]

Eberhard Jüngel

Although the influence of Eberhard Jüngel upon Colin Gunton's trinitarian theology is not as pronounced as some of the other theologians that have been discussed here, Gunton shared a number of points of identification with Jüngel. He argued, for example, that Jüngel developed a more nuanced presentation of the interrelationship between the metaphysical divine attributes and the more personalist attributes of God than Karl Barth. In this respect, Gunton considered Jüngel to be more philosophically sophisticated than Barth.[171]

The philosophical sophistication of Jüngel's position is evident inasmuch as he sought to address the Western theological tradition's tendency to consider the being of God non-incarnationally and in non-trinitarian terms. Christian theology by definition must be founded upon and bound together by consistency with the biblical accounts of what God has done in Christ (2 Cor 5:19). The incarnation of the Son in the person of Jesus of Nazareth is central to Jüngel's theology and, in this respect, has highlighted the need for Christian ontologies to be informed by and expressed in incarnational and, therefore trinitarian, terms.

> Jüngel thus seeks to show … that there can be an ontology without metaphysics: that is, an articulated account of who God is that neither is determined by *a priori* philosophical decisions and linguistic structures nor generates some timeless theory of being which rules out the forms of divine action from which Christian theology takes it orientation. ... That is to say, theological ontology must be driven by the second set of divine attributes, those derived from a conception of God as personal agent.[172]

Jüngel's distinctive contribution to trinitarian theology, according to Gunton, derives from the way in which the theology of the incarnation is permitted to inform

[170] ibid.
[171] Gunton, 'The being and attributes of God,' 11.
[172] ibid., 12.

his theology of the immanent Trinity.[173] In this way, Jüngel ensured that the historicity of the incarnation was taken into the being of God while simultaneously maintaining an adequate distinction between God and the world. For Jüngel, God is both in the world, in an incarnational sense, while remaining transcendently distinct from the world.

While there is much to commend this formulation, Gunton noted that, as with the majority of Western theology, Jüngel's theology remains inadequately trinitarian. The strength of Jüngel's theology, according to Gunton, is his christological and incarnational emphasis; his weakness, together with that of Barth as discussed above, is an under-emphasised pneumatology.[174] Gunton brought the criticism into sharp focus in the form of a question: "Is the Spirit a relation or a person, and what difference does an answer to the question make?"[175]

John Zizioulas

In formulating an answer to that question, Gunton had cause to draw heavily upon the theology of John Zizioulas who held that, in contrast to the christomonism of Western theology, Orthodox theologians of the Christian East were known as pneumatological specialists.[176] Zizioulas became an important influence on Gunton's developing trinitarian theology insofar as it was through Zizioulas' theology that Gunton came to an appreciation of the relevance of the Cappadocian Fathers for an increased emphasis upon the person and work of the Holy Spirit as a constitutive part of a thorough-going trinitarian theology.[177] Indeed, James Houston observes that the

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[173] ibid., 20.
[174] ibid., 20ff.
[175] ibid., 22.
[176] John D. Zizioulas, 'The pneumatological dimension of the church' in *Communio: international Catholic review* 1 (1974), 157.
[177] Regarding the significance of John Zizioulas' influence upon his own theological project, Gunton acknowledged that "I write as someone who has learned from him important lessons … about the

Cappadocian innovation in theological metaphysics which gave rise to the concept of "interpersonal personhood has now emerged as the dominant theme of contemporary Trinitarian theology."[178]

Important similarities between Gunton and Zizioulas include the insistence that Christian ecclesiology be governed by trinitarian theology, and that trinitarian doctrine itself be founded upon a mutually informed pneumatology and christology.[179] Patricia Fox, for example, remarked that Zizioulas "is adamant that christology and pneumatology exist in dynamic relation to each other and that both always need to be interpreted in the context of this relationship and within the fullness of a theological vision of the triune God, of creation, salvation, Church, the sacraments, [and] the eschaton."[180] That observation is as valid for Gunton's theology as it is for Zizioulas'. Later in this study it will become evident that Gunton's trinitarian pneumatology was formulated within a framework of the doctrines of creation, redemption, ecclesiology and eschatology.

However, the centrality of the Cappadocian concept of personhood in Zizioulas' claim that God's being is being-in-communion[181] constitutes the single most important point of correspondence between his thought and that of Gunton.

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need to specify the type of actions performed by – and therefore the kind of eternal qualities possessed by – the particular persons of the Trinity." Gunton, 'Persons and particularity,' 107.

[178] James M. Houston, 'The personal Spirit and personal appropriation of the truth' in *Trinitarian soundings in systematic theology*, ed. Paul Louis Metzger (London: T & T Clark, 2005), 147.

[179] Zizioulas' position regarding the centrality of the doctrine of the Trinity for Christian systematic theology is made clear when he stated that "Christology itself cannot be treated as an autonomous subject: it is to be conditioned constantly by *Pneumatology*, and as such it is to be organically related to *Ecclesiology*. This brings Trinitarian Theology itself into Ecclesiology." Moreover, he holds that "Ecclesiology in its being related to Christology in and through Pneumatology is to be conceived in terms of (i) Eschatology, as an inevitable component of Pneumatology (cf. Acts 2), and (ii) the concrete *community* of the local church as a natural creation of the *communion* of the Holy Spirit." John D. Zizioulas, 'The doctrine of God the Trinity today: suggestions for an ecumenical study' in *The forgotten Trinity*, ed. Alasdair I. C. Heron (London: BCC/CCBI, 1991), 34.

[180] Patricia A. Fox, *God as communion: John Zizioulas, Elizabeth Johnson, and the retrieval of the symbol of the triune God* (Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier, 2001), 195.

[181] John D. Zizioulas, *Being as communion: studies in personhood and the church* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2004; reprint of 1985).

Zizioulas argued that contemporary theologians are confronted with essentially the same dilemma that the Early Church Fathers faced, namely, the question: "is the unity of God a matter of *singularity* in the objectifiable arithmetical sense or is it a matter of *unity* understood in the form of a *relational oneness*?"[182]

The distinctive answer of the Cappadocians provided the foundational resource with which subsequent theologians were able to conceive of the doctrine of the Trinity in personal and relational categories. Unfortunately that was not the accepted pattern within the Western tradition where priority was afforded to the unity of God understood in substantialist configurations. Zizioulas, Gunton and others were quick to realise the significance of the Cappadocian innovation, incorporating into their own work the notion of divine unity better understood as persons-in-communion where the divine persons are constituted by their relations to each other.

King's College colleagues

Finally, the question of the historical, theological and philosophical influences upon the development of Gunton's theology would be incomplete and adequate without reference to those theologians and students associated with King's College during the final three decades of the twentieth century.

Colin Gunton's theology was conceived, formulated, articulated, and then re-formed within the collegial atmosphere of the weekly post-graduate seminars and the conferences conducted under the auspices of the Research Institute in Systematic Theology at King's College. His purpose throughout was neither selfish nor vainly ambitious inasmuch as he held that Christian theology was that endeavour which was intended to be undertaken within an ecclesial setting. Thus, Gunton's theology is the fruit of engagement in the theological task with others within the academic

[182] Zizioulas, 'The doctrine of God the Trinity today,' 22.

community and, in that sense, must be interpreted in the light of the fact that "Colin Gunton had almost limitless ambitions for the King's College London theological faculty itself, and for making it a centre from which to reinvigorate British systematic theology."[183]

Gunton's faculty colleagues, including Christoph Schwöbel, Stephen Holmes and Murray Rae, exercised significant impact upon the development of his theology inasmuch as many of his publications were first presented as draft papers which were critiqued by them. Gunton regularly acknowledged his colleagues' and students' contributions to a published work.[184]

Stephen Holmes has also remarked about the important and formative role that the critical suggestions of students and colleagues alike had upon Gunton's published works.

> Few of his books do not carry a generous tribute to how one or another of his students or colleagues helped him to grasp some point, and he had recently developed the habit of reading his books in draft to a seminar group, genuinely ready to gain further insight from even the most hesitant or junior voice. The first fruit of this process, The Christian Faith, was a summary of Christian belief, written in preparation for a multi-volume magnum opus, the first chapters of which he had begun to offer to the same group in the weeks before his death.[185]

Two of Gunton's most influential colleagues were Robert Jenson, his doctoral supervisor, and Christoph Schwöbel, fellow director of the Research Institute in Systematic Theology. Significantly, Jenson and Schwöbel serve as Gunton's literary

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[183] Jenson, 'Afterword,' 217.

[184] For example, "This paper was first presented to a seminar on the doctrine of the Trinity at King's College, London, on 26th January 1988. I am grateful to members of the seminar, particularly John Zizioulas, some of whose comments, acknowledged where possible, have been incorporated into the revised work; and Christoph Schwoebel, who read the paper in draft and made some suggestions which have improved the paper in several respects." Gunton, 'Augustine, the Trinity and the theological crisis of the West,' 33 n. 1; see also Gunton, 'An English systematic theology,' 479 n. 1.

[185] Stephen R. Holmes, 'The Rev Prof Colin Gunton: classical theologian who sought to expose the intellectual incoherence and ethical confusion of modern society' in *The Guardian* (London), Tuesday, 3 June 2003, 23.

executors, having accepted responsibility for determining whether any of Gunton's work that remained unpublished at the time of his death was in a sufficiently well-developed state as to be brought to publication.

Jenson's importance for Gunton's theological project can be traced to his encouragement of Gunton to pursue the doctrine of God as the topic of his doctoral dissertation. That decision, as Gunton acknowledged, was instrumental in setting the course for the remainder of his theological career.[186] Several features of Jenson's work are reflected in Gunton's, as for example, Jenson's qualified affirmation of Barth and his criticism of the influence that Augustine continues to exert over the Western theological tradition.[187] This is not to say that Gunton and Jenson agreed on all things theological. The christological teaching known as *communicatio idiomatum*, for example, is one area in which the different positions taken by Jenson's Lutheran and Gunton's Reformed traditions may be discerned.[188]

Christoph Schwöbel, on the other hand, shared Gunton's Reformed heritage. Their collaboration in the Research Institute of Systematic Theology must be assessed in generous terms, especially in light of the impact that the volumes of collected essays from the biennial conferences have had upon contemporary trinitarian theology. Many of those volumes were edited by Schwöbel and/or Gunton.[189] It is also true to say that although Schwöbel was one of Gunton's regular

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[186] Gunton, 'Theology in communion,' 32f.

[187] For example, Jenson, despite conceding that Augustine was one of Christian theology's "history-shaping geniuses," remains critical of his continuing influence over Western trinitarian theology on the grounds that Augustine's thought is too dependent upon classical metaphysics. Jenson, *The triune identity*, 116f.

[188] Jenson, 'Afterword,' 220; cf. Colin E. Gunton and Robert W. Jenson, 'The *Logos ensarkos* and reason' in *Reason and the reasons of faith*, ed. Paul J. Griffiths and Reinhard Hütter (London: T & T Clark, 2005), 78-85.

[189] A list of the volumes published to date is included above at page 32 n. 65.

interlocutors,[190] there is a subtle distinction between their respective theological positions inasmuch as Schwöbel's thought remained closer to the Reformed tradition while Gunton was less concerned with denominational and theological heritage, except, of course, when that heritage is expressly *Christian* heritage.[191]

The specific way in which the theologians mentioned above influenced the development of Colin Gunton's trinitarian theology will be addressed in greater detail in the next chapter. The concern there will be to examine the trinitarian method that Gunton brought to the theological task as well as to offer an explication of the specific content of his trinitarian theology.

[190] See, for example, Gunton, *The one, the three and the many*, 222 n. 14; Gunton, 'An English systematic theology,' 495 n. 19; Gunton, 'The being and attributes of God,' 8; Gunton, *A brief theology of revelation*, 18f; Gunton, *Father, Son and Holy Spirit*, 171; *et al*.

[191] Webster, 'Systematic theology after Barth,' 260f.

Chapter Three

Gunton's trinitarian theology

In his co-ordinating role at King's College and within the Research Institute for Systemic Theology, Colin Gunton played a significant part in the revitalisation of English systematic theology. Together with the doctrine of creation, Gunton's emphasis upon the doctrine of the Trinity as one of the central elements in his theological project is to be counted as one of his major contributions to the task of Christian systematic theology. The considerable part that Gunton played in the resurgence of interest in trinitarian studies is noted by Andy Goodliff.

> There are theologians and then there are theologians like Colin Gunton. His work on the doctrine of the Trinity and doctrine of Creation has helped people understand and grasp their meaning and importance. Colin was one of a group of theologians who helped re-establish theology on a trinitarian basis and do theology from a trinitarian perspective. In short, he took the doctrine of the Trinity seriously.[1]

Colin Gunton did indeed take trinitarian theology seriously. Regardless of whether he was discussing matters pertaining to creation, redemption, or the eschaton, the thoroughly trinitarian nature of Gunton's theological thinking presupposed that any and all divine activity involves all three trinitarian persons in the act of bringing to fulfilment the purposes of God. Robert Jenson observes that Gunton would invariably treat whatever topic he was discussing with insights gleaned from a trinitarian conceptuality and/or methodology. Jenson claims responsibility, at least in part, for what he has labelled Gunton's preoccupation with trinitarianism "for I put him onto the project of his dissertation, comparing Barth's and Hartshorne's doctrines of God. Once he saw the great difference between a

[1] Andy Goodliff, 'Colin Gunton' available from http://andygoodliff.typepad.com/my_weblog/colin_gunton/index.html (accessed 19 May 2006).

decisively trinitarian invocation of God and another kind, he never turned back."[2]

For his part, Gunton argued that trinitarian theology had fallen out of favour among academic theologians in the wake of Enlightenment rationalism because the traditional doctrine of the Trinity was considered as little more than a model.[3] Moreover, acceptance and understanding of trinitarian doctrine among Christian congregations had also diminished, according to Gunton, because the confession of three persons in one being[4] appeared to many as little more than "the product of airy, almost mathematical speculation, divorced from the concrete presence of God to the world through Jesus and the Spirit."[5] Nevertheless, Gunton argued that, despite being focused upon *one* God and *three* persons, the doctrine of the Trinity is not a simple matter of mathematical formulae as such but one pertaining to "the heart of Christian living and thought."[6] Throughout his career Gunton was concerned to argue that a trinitarian conceptuality "is not, indeed, a matter of theory, but of a theology which

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[2] Robert W. Jenson, 'Afterword' in *Trinitarian soundings in systematic theology*, ed. Paul Louis Metzger (London: T & T Clark, 2005), 218.

[3] Gunton argued that Enlightenment criticism of trinitarian teaching "held that the classical doctrine of the Trinity is to be understood as a 'model', developed in its entirety in the past, which may now be obsolete *because the precise form of words in which it was formulated no longer satisfies modern rational criteria or theological developments.*" Colin E. Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed. (London: T & T Clark, 1997), 194.

[4] Gunton adds that "The traditional 'three persons in one substance' tends now actively to mislead, and in two ways. 'Three persons' suggests three separate Gods, not the one God in the threefold richness of his being, while the word 'substance' suggests a static, immovable deity. On the contrary, the conception of God as triune is meant to express a view of one God who is various in his being and is therefore able to be seen as relating himself to the world in a variety of ways." Colin E. Gunton, *Enlightenment and alienation: an essay towards a trinitarian theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985), 141.

[5] Colin E. Gunton, 'Newman's dialectic: dogma and reason in the seventy-third Tract for the Times' in *Newman after a hundred years*, ed. Alan G. Hill and Ian T. Ker (Oxford, UK: Oxford University, 1990), 316. The point is made even clearer by Basil Studer's assessment that "Dogmatic formulas such as 'one *ousia* in three *hypostaseis*' have limited value. They have little place in the Church's preaching, and occur mostly in apologetic or polemical writings, or in works addressed to intellectuals. Creeds, for example, contain a confession of the one God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but generally do not include the word 'Trinity', or dwell on abstract terms like *ousia* or *hypostasis*. The Church prays to almighty God through Jesus Christ his Son in the Holy Spirit. The formula 'one *ousia* in three *hypostaseis*' was crafted on the workbench of theologians; and even for them, it is more of a convenient abbreviation than the last word that might be uttered." Basil Studer, *Trinity and incarnation: the faith of the early church* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1993), 141f.

[6] Colin E. Gunton, 'Theology in communion' in *Shaping a theological mind: theological context and methodology*, ed. Darren C. Marks (Aldersgate, UK: Ashgate, 2002), 35.

bears upon life."[7] He held that the

> Trinity is about life, life before God, with one another and in the world. If we forget that God's life is mediated to us trinitarianly, through his two hands, the Son and the Spirit, we forget the root of our lives, of what makes for life and what makes for death.[8]

The dismissal of the doctrine of the Trinity from the theological agenda on the grounds of perceived irrelevance was a 'problem' that Gunton sought to address. He did not reject the allegation of irrelevance, stemming as it did from the employment of archaic, out-dated language and conceptuality, which held no application in the 'real' world. Rather, he sought a way of speaking about God's involvement in the world that would overcome the common perception that trinitarian doctrine is "one of the *difficulties* of Christian belief: a kind of intellectual hurdle to be leaped before orthodoxy can be acknowledged."[9] Compounding this perception was the fact that the Christian doctrine of the triune God was expressed in increasingly abstract conceptualisations which were divorced from the Christian life of communal worship and praise – the very place and practice that had given rise to the first Christians' attempts to articulate the reality of God experienced as three persons.[10]

Gunton identified two primary conceptual innovations made by early Christian theologians that are crucial for an understanding of the doctrine of the

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[7] ibid.

[8] Colin E. Gunton, *Father, Son and Holy Spirit: essays toward a fully trinitarian theology* (London: T & T Clark, 2003), 11.

[9] Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed., 56.

[10] Colin E. Gunton, *The triune creator: a historical and systematic study* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 64. Gunton's thoughts are echoed by Phillip Cary, who argues that the doctrine of the Trinity is the formalisation and the doctrinal codification of "the most fundamental practice of Christian faith, the act of calling upon the name of Jesus Christ as Lord [, of] … worshiping him as God. The central aim of the Nicene doctrine of the Trinity is to affirm that he is just as truly God as God the Father, even though he is different from the Father – even though, in addition, there is only one God." Phillip Cary, 'The new evangelical subordinationism: reading inequality into the Trinity' in *Priscilla papers* 20, no. 4 (2006), 42. See also Francis Watson, 'Trinity and community: a reading of John 17' in *International journal of systematic theology* 1, no. 2 (1999), 169f; and Kevin N. Giles, 'The doctrine of the Trinity and subordinationism' in *Evangelical review of theology* 28, no. 3 (2004), 272.

Trinity. The first is found in the Council of Nicaea's (325) use of the term *homoousion*, which expressed "the equality of the divinity of God the Father and God the Son."[11] The significance of this declaration was that it provided the conceptuality with which theologians could speak of the triune persons as God without compromising the concept of divinity. The second was the advance in terminological specificity presided over by Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzus and Basil of Caesarea during the fourth century whereby a distinction was drawn between the being (*ousia*) and the persons (*hypostases*) of God. Some scholars describe the advances made by the Cappadocian Fathers as an intellectual revolution.[12] While remarking that this is a frequently overused term,[13] Gunton nevertheless agreed that it is correctly applied in respect of the Cappadocians' trinitarian contribution insofar as

> they further advanced the intellectual revolution, enriching the concept of relationality with one of communion. According to this, God is understood as one whose being is not absolutely simple – as neo-Platonism taught and as the mainstream Western tradition was to continue to teach – but is a being in communion.[14]

In the modern, post-Enlightenment era Gunton identified three primary phases in the development of trinitarian doctrine by Western theologians. Trinitarian dialogue was governed in the first phase by the Reformation's christological emphasis, before, coming, in the second phase, under the influence of the speculative theories associated with Schleiermacher's experientialism and Hegel's philosophical constructs. The third phase, commencing in the 1920s and following the lead

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[11] Colin E. Gunton, 'The Trinity in modern theology' in *A companion encyclopaedia of theology*, ed. Peter Byrne and Leslie Houlden (London: Routledge, 1995), 938.

[12] John D. Zizioulas, *Being as communion: studies in personhood and the church* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2004; reprint of 1985), 17; see also Boris Bobrinskoy, *The mystery of the Trinity: trinitarian experience and vision in the biblical and patristic tradition*, trans. Anthony P. Gythiel (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary, 1999), 233; and Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1984), 156.

[13] Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed., 9.

[14] Gunton, 'The Trinity in modern theology,' 939.

established by the Swiss Reformed theologian Karl Barth (1886-1968), led to the situation where an

> increasingly ecumenical spirit of the era has meant that there is much cross-fertilization between traditions which previously tended to go relatively independent ways. ... recent decades have witnessed a wide range of publications from many places in the theological spectrum, so that it is even possible to say that the subject has become fashionable.[15]

In fact, the resurgence of interest in trinitarian theology was so pronounced in the 1990s that, as was noted earlier, Gunton had cause to remark that

> Suddenly we are all trinitarians, or so it would seem. As the result of a number of influences, both churchly and secular, the doctrine of the Trinity is now discussed in places where even a short time ago it would be regarded as an irrelevance.[16]

Trinitarian methodology

It was argued in the previous chapters that a proper analysis of Colin Gunton's trinitarian theology can only be attained by way of due regard for his personal, historical, theological and philosophical context. Gunton's theology was indeed the product of many influences, some of which have been charted in the preceding chapter. One feature in particular, however, that distinguishes the theology of Colin Gunton is the way in which his theological framework as a whole is centred upon trinitarian conceptuality.

Gunton's theological project is the deliberate promotion of orthodox Christian teaching inasmuch as it is distinguished by a consistency with the received tradition while advocating a firm biblically-based epistemology of mediation.

In the first instance, the importance with which Gunton held the Christian tradition is reflected in the deliberate choice of the title of this work – i.e., *The Lord and Giver of Life* – an unambiguous reference to the third article of the symbol of the

[15] ibid., 937.
[16] Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed., xv.

Councils of Nicaea (325) and Constantinople (381).[17] Gunton remarked that this particular creedal phrase is an orthodox Christian confession of faith made in response to revelation[18] and he refers to it on numerous occasions throughout his published works.[19]

A second distinctive feature of Gunton's theology is that, in conformity to Reformed theological principles, he sought consistency with the testimony of the scriptural account. For Gunton, then, the practice of Christian theology is the exposition of thoughts and ideas contained within the scriptural narrative, which "as

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[17] The question of the relationship between the symbol of Nicaea and the statement of faith that is known as the Niceno-Constinopolitan Creed is highly complex and provides the opportunity for much debate by historians and theologians alike. The finer points of detail in that debate lie beyond the purview of this present study. However, it is important to acknowledge that the epithet "the Lord and Giver of life" was not a part of Nicaea's symbol but was included in an expanded 'third article' recognised by the theologians who met at Constantinople in 381. Historians have argued that the expanded confession of faith in the Holy Spirit was derived from baptismal creeds used in the decade prior to Constantinople. The council, for its part, is thought to have taken a pre-existing formula, adapting and adopting it as a creedal affirmation of the consubstantiality of the Spirit. Although Constantinople affirmed that the Spirit was to be co-worshipped and co-glorified together with the Father and the Son, it stopped short of using the term *homoousios* in reference to the Spirit and did not explicitly name the Spirit as God (*theos*). Although Gunton did not provide a detailed examination of the historical development of the creeds *per se*, he did observe that the "creeds of Nicaea and Constantinople represent two stages on the way to a teaching that God is a Trinity. Nicaea ... confirms the full divinity of the eternal Son of God against any teaching that would make him less than divine, while Constantinople ... follows a period of debate after which the divinity of the Holy Spirit is likewise affirmed." Colin E. Gunton, 'Creeds and confessions: introductory essay' in *The practice of theology: a reader*, ed. Colin E. Gunton, Stephen R. Holmes and Murray A. Rae (London: SCM, 2001), 102f. An excellent discussion of the political, ecclesiastical and theological reasons underlying the 'expansion' of the symbol of Nicaea by Constantinople, an action prompted by the doctrinal controversies that had arisen in the period between the councils, is provided by John N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian creeds*, 3rd ed. (London: Longmans, 1972), Chapter 10, 'The Constantinoplitan Creed,' 296-331. See also Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian church: Nicene and post-Nicene Christianity from Constantine the Great to Gregory the Great AD 311-600*, in 2 vols, new ed. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1884), 638-641, 663-670; Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom with a history and critical notes* vol. 2, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1966), 57-61; and Jaroslav Pelikan, *Credo: historical and theological guide to creeds and confessions of faith in the Christian tradition* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 2003), 7-34.

[18] Colin E. Gunton, *A brief theology of revelation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 13.

[19] Colin E. Gunton, *The actuality of atonement: a study of metaphor, rationality and the Christian tradition* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), 170; Colin E. Gunton, 'Is Christianity a post-modern religion?' a lecture presented under the auspices of the Keene Lectures at Chelmsford Cathedral, Chelmsford, UK (23 April 1997); Colin E. Gunton, 'Martin Kähler revisited: variations on Hebrews 4:15' in *Ex auditu* 14, no. 1 (1998), 25; Gunton, *The triune creator*, 160, 161, 177; Colin E. Gunton, 'The church as a school of virtue? Human formation in trinitarian framework' in *Faithfulness and fortitude: in conversation with the theological ethics of Stanley Hauerwas*, ed. Mark Theissen Nation and Samuel Wells (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 214; Colin E. Gunton, 'One mediator ... the man Jesus Christ: reconciliation, mediation and life in community' in *Pro ecclesia* 11, no. 2 (2002), 157; Colin E. Gunton, *The Christian faith: an introduction to Christian doctrine* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2002), 176.

the record of revelation, provide the source and criterion of Christian theology."[20] The fact that the scriptural record itself does not employ the specific term Trinity is not a problem for those theologians who defend the legitimacy of the doctrine, according to Gunton, because the Christian experience of salvation and living in relationship with God through the Son and by the Spirit is itself existential warrant of the doctrine. The practice of Christian life and worship, Gunton asserted, provides ample grounds for justifying the taking of biblical concepts and developing them in the systematic manner which was finally articulated in the dogmatic formulations issued by the ecumenical church councils of the fourth and fifth centuries.[21] Gunton thus acknowledged the central role that biblical, ecclesiastical, liturgical and doctrinal considerations played in the articulation of the Christian belief in the one God who exists as three persons:

> The doctrine of the Trinity was thus developed in order to identify the God who made himself known in the way that Christians believed, so that a direct, if sometimes unsteady, line can be drawn from the baptism of early believers into the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and the work of the Cappadocian Fathers and Augustine of Hippo several centuries later.[22]

A faith-informed critical engagement with the scriptural narrative of God's direct involvement with the created world, therefore, forms the epistemological base for Gunton's trinitarian theology.[23] Moreover, the way in which God engages with the world was understood by Gunton in terms of the Irenaean metaphor of the 'two

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[20] Colin E. Gunton, 'Historical and systematic theology' in *The Cambridge companion to Christian doctrine*, ed. Colin E. Gunton (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University, 1997), 6.

[21] Colin E. Gunton, 'Using and being used: scripture and systematic theology' in *Theology today* 47, no. 3 (1990), 258. Gunton's point that Christian devotional practice precedes theological reflection is supported by John N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 5th ed. (London: Continuum International, 2000), 255.

[22] Gunton, 'Historical and systematic theology,' 7.

[23] Thus Gunton holds that "we may neither appeal without further ado to the Bible as authority nor engage in systematic theology without in some way or other first giving some epistemological justification. The result is that modern systematic theology inevitably must operate not only with conscious attention to epistemological questions, but do it in such a way as to reveal awareness of the fact that much mainstream epistemological discussion denies its right to exist." Gunton, 'Using and being used,' 252.

hands' of God – the Son and the Spirit.

> In Jesus of Nazareth, as he had done with Israel, God lays out his own logic within the frame of ours, and by his Spirit enables us to understand it, according to his and our limits. The reference to the Spirit is crucial, for everything happens only by the Spirit's action and is made understandable in its own way by his gift. If we are to understand what is going on first with Jesus and then with the human response to him, the central place of the Spirit cannot be ignored.[24]

The importance of Gunton's insight that "the Spirit cannot be ignored" derives from the fact it is finally only through the Spirit that we can have any knowledge of God's logic at all. The Spirit is *how* we know because the Spirit teaches us *what* we know. This point is reinforced through another of Gunton's trinitarian concepts, namely the mediation of God's action *through* his 'two hands.' For Gunton, the Son and Spirit are the divine mediators of knowledge of the things of God inasmuch as "the Father's action is mediated by the Son and the Spirit."[25] That is to say,

> a theology of trinitarian mediation is indispensable for a grasp of the shape of God's manifold action in the world. Of the first 'hand of God' – often referred to as the second person of the Trinity – we must reiterate that he is the focus of God's involvement *within* the world's structures ... But without the equal and simultaneous activity of the other hand of God in the single act of the one God, we can understand neither God's action in the world in general nor this instance of God's involvement in the world in Jesus in particular.[26]

The concept of mediation indeed holds important implications for Gunton's trinitarian theology, especially regarding the relation of the economic and immanent Trinity. If it is true to say, as Gunton has argued, that the Son and the Spirit *are* the agents of the Father's action in the world, then the persons of the Son and the Spirit must, in some way, be intrinsic to God's eternal being.[27] Gunton was well aware of

[24] Gunton, *The Christian faith*, 99.
[25] ibid., 101.
[26] ibid.
[27] ibid.

such a conclusion, observing that:

> What God is in his relations with the world, he is also in his eternal being, because there is no breech, as there is with fallen creatures, between what God is and what he does. Because the Father's action is mediated by the Son and the Spirit, the Son and the Spirit are correspondingly intrinsic to God's eternal being. It would follow that the relation of the Son to the Father in God's inner being is in some way mediated by the Spirit. The Son is – we might say – enabled to be the Son by virtue of the way the Spirit realizes and perfects the love between him and the Father. Only so are the three truly one God.[28]

Although Gunton argued that there is no God other than the one who is revealed in and through the actions of his 'two hands' in the world, he does not overlook the dangers that are latent in such a conception. He identified two such dangers, those of abstractionism and ontological immanentism, describing them as the "twin dangers … of claiming to know too much or too little."[29] In the first place, Gunton warned against the tendency to conceive of the doctrine of the economic Trinity in abstract and general principles such that it becomes a panacea for all manner of modern societal ills – "a kind of magic key to open all locks."[30] Gunton argued, secondly, that an overly immanent ontology provides little comfort to those who too readily identify the being of God with the economies of creation and redemption. The point at stake here is that God's action in creation and redemption understood in a simple linear and sequentially orchestrated manner in which the Father creates, the Son redeems, and the Spirit sanctifies, runs the risk of modalism. Against this view, Gunton argued that there can be no rift between God's being and God's action in the economy of creation and redemption, for that would represent "a disastrous breach between an essence of God, unknowable and indeed impersonal,

[28] ibid.
[29] Gunton, 'The Trinity in modern theology,' 955.
[30] ibid., 954.

and the personal actions in which God presents himself to us."[31] In this way he warned that "a merely superficial appeal to divine involvement in the world" can serve to mask an evasion of the underlying ontological confusion of modalistic conceptions of God's triune being.[32]

Notwithstanding these caveats, Gunton was not oblivious to the important role that ontology played in the formulation and articulation of an adequate doctrine of the Trinity.

Metaphysics

An important foundational point for Gunton's trinitarianism is its departure from the Western pattern of ascribing logical and ontological priority to the unity of God over the diversity of the divine persons. Gunton's trinitarian theology here is more closely aligned to that of the Christian East, in particular to the patristic theology of Irenaeus and the Cappadocian Fathers and draws support from the contemporary Orthodox theologian John Zizioulas.[33]

The Western trinitarian tradition, on the other hand, is heavily influenced by the theology of Augustine of Hippo. Indeed, according to Gunton, Augustine is known as the 'father' of Western theology.[34] Gunton was highly critical of Augustine's treatment of the doctrines of creation and the Trinity on the grounds that Augustine was responsible for the conflation of neo-platonic metaphysics with

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[31] Colin E. Gunton, *Act and being: towards a theology of the divine attributes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 92f. See also Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed., xii, 96; Colin E. Gunton, 'Holy Spirit' in *Oxford companion to Christian thought*, ed. Adrian Hastings, Alistair Mason, Hugh S. Pyper, Ingrid Lawrie and Cecily Bennett (Oxford, UK: Oxford University, 2000), 306; Colin E. Gunton, 'Trinity and trustworthiness' in *Trustworthiness of God: perspectives on the nature of scripture*, ed. Paul Helm and Carl R. Trueman (Leicester, UK: Apollos, 2002), 282.

[32] Gunton, 'The Trinity in modern theology,' 954.

[33] See, for example, Colin E. Gunton, 'Persons and particularity' in *The theology of John Zizioulas: personhood and the church*, ed. Douglas H. Knight (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007), 97-107.

[34] Colin E. Gunton, 'Augustine, the Trinity and the theological crisis of the West' in *Scottish journal of theology* 43, no. 1 (1990), 55; Colin E. Gunton, 'Pneumatology' in *Dictionary of ethics, theology and society*, ed. Paul Barry Clarke and Andrew Linzey (London: Routledge, 1996), 645; and, Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed., 51.

Christian categories[35] and that "he effectively obliterated the Cappadocian claim that God is 'a sort of continuous and indivisible community' and so blunted its ontological cutting edge."[36] The first of these charges introduced and encouraged dualistic principles into Christian theology whereby the categories of the intelligible and ideal were afforded priority over the sensible and material, a move that resulted in what Gunton described as "the stranglehold of dualistic ontology."[37] It was a move that has since proved to have a number of negative implications in the explication of the doctrines of creation, Christ and the Trinity, including the undermining of the personal by prioritising the unity of God over against the plurality of persons, which, in turn, led to "a disparagement of the material dimensions of human being."[38]

Gunton argued that the historical root of the characteristically Western problem of over-emphasis on the unity of God, conceived by way of metaphysical abstractionisms foreign to the biblical narrative, stems from the ongoing influence of Augustine.[39] In particular, Gunton identified Augustine's failure to grasp the significance of the Cappadocian desynonymisation of *ousia* and *hypostasis* as the

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[35] Gunton, 'The Trinity in modern theology,' 940.
[36] ibid., 940f.
[37] Gunton, 'Augustine, the Trinity and the theological crisis of the West,' 44.
[38] Gunton, 'The Trinity in modern theology,' 940.
[39] Colin E. Gunton, 'The triune God and the freedom of the creature' in *Karl Barth: centenary essays*, ed. Stephen W. Sykes (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University, 1989), 59. Gunton's assessment here is directed contradicted by Mary Clark's assertion that there "is no evidence in *De Trinitate* that Augustine asserted divine unity to be prior to Trinity." Mary T. Clark, '*De Trinitate*' in *The Cambridge companion to Augustine*, ed. Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University, 2001), 91. More specifically, and in a stinging criticism of the claim, Michel Barnes argues that uncritical acceptance of the schema dividing trinitarian theology into Eastern and Western types represents a failure to recognise that such a scheme is a historical novelty insofar as it derives "from a book written about 100 years ago, namely Théodore de Régnon's studies on the Trinity. For it is de Régnon who invented the Greek/Latin paradigm [which] … has become the sine qua non for framing the contemporary understanding of Augustine's theology." Moreover, Barnes insists that much contemporary appropriation of Augustine's thought and analysis of its subsequent influence upon Western theology resorts to "broad general characterizations of Augustine's theology" which are, in turn, dependent "upon turn-of-the-century continental histories of dogma." Michel René Barnes, 'Augustine in contemporary trinitarian theology' in *Theological studies* 56, no. 2 (1995), 238f. The work cited by Barnes is Théodore de Régnon, *Étides de théologie positive sur la Sainte Trinité*, vol. 1 (Paris: Victor Retaux, 1892), 339. Cf. Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and its legacy: an approach to fourth-century trinitarian theology* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University, 2004), 123; and, Tarmo Toon, *Classical trinitarian theology* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2007), 75f.

reason for the prioritisation of the divine unity in Western trinitarian theology. Gunton remarks that in doing so

> Augustine is taking a clear step back from the teaching of the Cappadocian Fathers. For them, the three persons are what they are in their relations, and therefore the relations qualify them ontologically, in terms of what they are. Because Augustine continues to use relation as a logical term rather than an ontological predicate, he is precluded from being able to make claims about the being of the *particular* persons, who, because they lack distinguishable identity tend to disappear into the all-embracing oneness of God.[40]

Rejecting the Western prioritisation of the unity of God served Gunton's rhetorical purpose inasmuch as he was thereby able to accentuate the theological importance of a doctrine of the triune God formulated in a way that ensured the priority of the divine persons and the intra-trinitarian relations.[41] Given that the Western trinitarian tradition's conceptual framework is drawn from classical metaphysics which relies upon substantialist categories of thought, Gunton argued it must be seen as a major hindrance to the task of developing a genuinely relational understanding of the Trinity.[42] Gunton's point is a development of Alasdair Heron's observation that the Western theological tradition's persistence with the *filioque* clause is motivated, at least in part, by the commitment to prioritise divine unity for

> if the full unity of the Trinity is to be maintained, the Spirit must be said to proceed both from the Father and from the Son. His being is grounded in that divine unity which underlies and is ontologically prior to the distinctions between the Persons of the Trinity: he cannot therefore be said to proceed from one Person only, for that would be to make the

[40] Gunton, 'Augustine, the Trinity and the theological crisis of the West,' 44f.

[41] In his prioritisation of personal and relational categories of thought over what he labelled substantialist abstractionisms, Gunton did not belittle the importance of ontological conceptuality. To the contrary, he held that within trinitarian theology the concerns of ontology and relation are not opposed to each but "stand or fall together." His point was that person and relation (when used in discussion of God) are themselves ontological categories and, therefore, must not be perceived subjectively (i.e., "*as they appear to us*") but from an objective point of view which holds that "things are constituted by their relation to other things." Colin E. Gunton, *The one, the three and the many: God, creation and the culture of modernity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University, 1993), 194; see especially n. 18.

[42] Colin E. Gunton, 'The being and attributes of God: Eberhard Jüngel's dispute with the classical philosophical tradition' in *The possibilities of theology: studies in the theology of Eberhard Jüngel*, ed. John B. Webster (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 11.

> distinctions between the Persons ontologically prior to the shared divinity.[43]

However, the very insistence that the distinctions and relations between the divine persons are *ontologically prior* is precisely the claim made by trinitarian theologians such as Colin Gunton and John Zizioulas and others who follow Eastern trinitarian patterns.[44] Georges Florovsky, for example, is one mid-twentieth century Orthodox theologian who argued that impersonalist metaphysics must be replaced by "a metaphysics of persons."[45]

Colin Gunton was of like mind. In his doctrine of the Trinity, substantialist metaphysics were dismissed in preference for an ontology in which personal and relational categories took precedence.[46] The attraction of such a model of trinitarian conceptuality for Gunton was that it gives rise to the notion that the community of divine persons in their intra-trinitarian relations *is God*. According to this view, there is no essentially unknowable divine substance or nature, of which the persons partake and from which they draw their divinity, lying behind or under the divine persons.[47]

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[43] Alasdair I. C. Heron, ''Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son': the problem of the filioque' in *Scottish journal of theology* 24, no. 2 (1971), 159.

[44] See, for example, a number of essays in Colin E. Gunton and Christoph Schwöbel, eds., *Persons, divine and human: King's College essays in theological anthropology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991). Especially, Alan Spence, 'Christ's humanity and ours: John Owen' in *Persons, divine and human: King's College essays on theological anthropology*, ed. Christoph Schwöbel and Colin E. Gunton (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 74-97; John Aves, 'Persons in relation: John Macmurray' in *Persons, divine and human: King's College essays on theological anthropology*, ed. Christoph Schwöbel and Colin E. Gunton (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 120-137; Christoph Schwöbel, 'Human being as relational being: twelve theses for a Christian anthropology' in *Persons, divine and human: King's College essays on theological anthropology*, ed. Christoph Schwöbel and Colin E. Gunton (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991),141-165.

[45] Georges Florovsky, 'Saint Gregory Palamas and the tradition of the Fathers' in *Greek Orthodox theological review* 5, no. 2 (1960), 131.

[46] Gunton's intention to employ personal and relational conceptuality as the framework for trinitarian theology is supported by Thomas Weinandy who states: "While I believe both Gunton and Zizioulas are a little harsh on Augustine and the Western tradition (Anselm is more the culprit than Augustine), I nonetheless wholeheartedly support their desire to found the Christian understanding of God on the notion of 'person' and not on that of 'substance'." Thomas G. Weinandy, *The Father's spirit of sonship: reconceiving the Trinity* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 62.

[47] The implications that flow from the insistence that the unity of the triune God derives from the participation of the persons in the divine substance/nature is made clear by Dorothea Wendebourg: "To us, ordinary Christians, there is nothing left but to accept that, beyond the divine reality which reveals itself to us in the course of our salvation, in the experience of grace, there is another level in

Put simply, Gunton advocated that the divine persons-in-relation is God. In this way, the divine nature is understood as wholly personal and relational.

Gunton's position is drawn from and supported by Zizioulas' argument that the ontological primacy of the persons-in-relation takes precedence over more substantialist conceptions of divine being. Zizioulas clearly identifies the danger represented by the Western tradition's prioritisation of the divine unity expressed in metaphysical terms:

> If we speak of the one God as the one *ousia* which is *shared* by three persons, we make the Trinity logically secondary from an ontological point of view: what is shared is prior to what shares in it.[48]

The great weakness of such formulations, Gunton argued, is that they foster alienating conceptions of God because the prioritisation of the unity of the one God takes precedence over an emphasis on the diversity of persons so that the concerns of the many are subordinated to and overridden by the priority of the one, and all sense of particularity is subordinated to the whole.[49]

The process of reclaiming the personal and relational as central elements of a doctrine of the Trinity was given major impetus in the early decades of the twentieth century by Karl Barth.[50] In Gunton's opinion, it is difficult to underestimate the importance of the role that Barth played in the resurgence of trinitarian studies, not because the doctrine was completely ignored before his time, but simply because it was overlooked inasmuch as it was perceived to be irrelevant to life. It was a commonly held belief that the doctrine of the Trinity had been configured in such a

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God, the trinitarian one, which is God's inner, essential, primary being." Dorothea Wendebourg, 'From the Cappadocian Fathers to Gregory Palamas: the defeat of trinitarian theology' in *Studia patristica: international conference on patristic studies (8th: 1979: Oxford, England)*, ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone (Oxford: Pergamon, 1982), 196.

[48] John D. Zizioulas, 'The doctrine of God the Trinity today: suggestions for an ecumenical study' in *The forgotten Trinity*, ed. Alasdair I. C. Heron (London: BCC/CCBI, 1991), 25.

[49] See, for example, Gunton, 'Persons and particularity,' 97.

[50] Gunton, 'The Trinity in modern theology,' 937.

way that it proved inaccessible to all but the most highly-skilled metaphysicians. The result, to repeat the observation made above, was that the Christian teaching of the Trinity doctrine came to be considered as little more than metaphysical and mathematical abstractionism with no relevance to Christian life and worship.

However, as Gunton was quick to point out, systematic theologians must remain discriminating in their use of concepts and vocabulary as they drive toward a clear articulation of the relations of distinction-but-not-separation that exist between the triune persons. He commented: "We do need concepts with whose help the Spirit can be identified, not only as Spirit but in distinction from Father and Son. Otherwise, we shall be in no position to say who or what the Spirit *is*."[51]

Notwithstanding the importance of these methodological and metaphysical concerns for a proper description and analysis of Gunton's trinitarian theology, the specific content of his doctrine of the Trinity remains to be identified.

Colin Gunton's trinitarian theology

It is a contention of this study that Colin Gunton's doctrine of the Trinity cannot be understood apart from an appreciation of the way in which his trinitarian conceptuality is grounded in the actions of God in creation and in the person and work of Christ. For Gunton, the doctrine of the Trinity is "a way of responding theologically to revelation: to the way in which God is truly believed to have made himself known in Christ and the Spirit."[52] He explained that:

> far from suggesting an unrelatedness of God to the world, trinitarian theology is based on the belief that God the Father is related to the world through the creating and redeeming action of Son and Spirit who are, in Irenaeus' expression, his two hands. The doctrine of the Trinity … is indeed *derived* from the involvement of God in creation, reconciliation

[51] Colin E. Gunton, 'God the Holy Spirit: Augustine and his successors' in *Theology through the theologians: selected essays, 1972-1995* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 109.
[52] Gunton, 'The Trinity in modern theology,' 955.

and redemption.[53]

For Gunton, this meant that

> No trinitarian theology is adequate without attention first to the particular shape taken by the life, death and resurrection of the second person of the Trinity incarnate, Jesus of Nazareth, and second to the characteristic form taken by the work of the Spirit who, by relating people and things to Jesus, brings about their perfection.[54]

At one point, Gunton offered a definition of the doctrine of the Trinity as "that theologoumenon developed, in response to Christian experience, to show that God's being is not motionless, impassible eternity but a personal *taxis* of dynamic and free relations."[55] The shift of attention here from the economic to the immanent Trinity is explicable in that, for Gunton, the doctrine of the Trinity was not primarily an exercise in speculation about the inner being of God. Rather, his concern was to state something about the "kind of being that God is,"[56] recalling that for Gunton the being of God is none other than the divine persons-in-relation known through the action of his 'two hands' in the world.

The influence of Karl Barth's theology upon Gunton's thought is clearly evident at this juncture. Christian theology, according to Barth, rightly commences with God and, therefore, with an account of what God has revealed about God's own self. In that respect, the divine identity and attributes constitute the first matters addressed by Christian theology. The source of this information, according to Barth, is revelation and, insofar as the biblical narratives record a process of divine self-disclosure, theologians come to understand that the scriptural narratives outline an increasingly personalised revelation of *who* God is and *what* God is. The introduction

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[53] Colin E. Gunton, 'Relation and relativity: the Trinity and the created world' in *Trinitarian theology today: essays on divine being and act*, ed. Christoph Schwöbel (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 97; see also Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed., 142.
[54] Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed., 171.
[55] ibid., 145.
[56] ibid.

of speech about God as Father, Son, and Spirit in the New Testament writings therefore provides the preliminary foundations for a distinctively *Christian* systematics. In this way, Barth's concern was to expound "a more truly relational conception of the Trinity, in which greater attention is paid to the being of God as consisting in his threeness."[57] More importantly, for our purpose, is the realisation that Gunton followed Barth's lead: "I would here simply reiterate the procedure of Karl Barth on the relations of the revealed and ontological Trinity: that one cannot say of the eternal being of God more than is licensed by his revelation."[58]

The influence of Barth's approach to the doctrine of God on Gunton's theology is further evidenced in Gunton's assertion that whatever can be said about God must be said in such a way as to be consistent with the reality of God's actions in history and the spatio-temporal reality of the incarnation. Thus, Gunton grounded his trinitarian theology and methodology in the doctrines of creation and Christ inasmuch as he believed that any teaching elevated to the status of dogma needed "to be filled out with concrete content by reference to the historic saving activity of God."[59] More particularly, for Gunton, trinitarian theology simply must make provision for the scriptural assertions that "God's being is in some way oriented to the world of time and space that he takes to himself in the Incarnation."[60]

The point of Gunton's discussion about the immanent Trinity is to highlight the ontological distinction between the uncreated and the created. Following the Reformed tradition, Gunton insisted that the creator remains in "absolute qualitative distinction" over against the world even while it is precisely within the created order

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[57] Gunton, 'The triune God and the freedom of the creature,' 59f.
[58] Gunton, 'The church as a school of virtue,' 213.
[59] Gunton, 'Newman's dialectic,' 317.
[60] Colin E. Gunton, 'Christ, the wisdom of God: a study in divine and human action' in *Where shall wisdom be found? Wisdom in the Bible, the church and the contemporary world*, ed. Stephen C. Barton (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999), 259.

that human beings are apprehended by the revelation of God as Father, Son, and Spirit.[61] The point that Gunton wished to make clear in all such discussion was that an ontological distinction between creator and created can only be maintained in terms of God's free and personal relation to that which is not God. That is to say, ontological distinction implies relation. The creator is creator because there is a creation; and the created order is created because it was brought into being by the creator.

> The doctrine of the absolute qualitative distinction between God and the created order depends upon an apprehension of the personal action of God in time and space. The reason, as I have argued elsewhere, is that without a personal relation centred on God's free involvement in the world in Jesus Christ, some logical or ontological – and hence necessitarian – link tends to be made between God and the world.[62]

Creation

Gunton's trinitarian conception of creation is employed to clear the way for a thoroughly and consistently scriptural understanding of God's relation to the created order. His insistence upon christological and pneumatological determinants for a trinitarian doctrine of creation is made clear in the following quotation.

> [A] trinitarian theology of creation makes it possible to understand that the creation remains in close relation to God, and yet is free to be itself. There are christological and pneumatological dimensions to this notion. According to the New Testament, creation is *through* and *to* Christ, and this means that it is, so to speak, structured by the very one who became incarnate and thus part of the created order of which we are speaking. It is good because God himself, through his Son, remains in intimate and loving relations with it. Similarly, when Basil of Caesarea described the Holy Spirit as the perfecting cause of the creation, he enabled us to say that it is the work of God the Spirit to enable the created order to be truly itself. Together the christological and pneumatological structuring of the doctrine provide a ground for the knowledge of both creator and creation, as they are both in themselves and in relation to one another.[63]

The importance of these views lies not only in the fact that Gunton insisted

[61] Gunton, *The triune creator*, 83.
[62] ibid., 95.
[63] ibid., 10.

upon a mutual complementarity of the Son and Spirit in the economy of redemption, but also in the directness with which he spoke of the work of God's 'two hands' as counteracting any tendency to over-state divine transcendence at the expense of immanence. He explained that "the motive for a stress on the importance of both of the hands of God in their distinctive forms of action [is] the Son being revealed as the agent of God's immanent involvement with the created order, the Spirit of his eschatological perfecting activity through the Son."[64]

Gunton went on to add that "the faithfulness of God's giving leads to a doctrine of God's continuing care for the world which is radically different from the deist concern, and leads to the salvation *of*, not *from*, the world."[65] He saw that God's redemptive activity is orientated toward the benefit *of the whole created order*. Creation is redeemed and brought to perfection by christological and pneumatological means because God is concerned with the redemption of the world, not simply rescuing human beings from that which has become irredeemably corrupt and bankrupt.[66]

In a very real sense, God's redemption of the world *must* be the starting point for a discussion of Gunton's trinitarian theology simply because it grounded his treatment of the doctrine of the Trinity in creation. Thus, what Gunton said about the trinitarian persons is also understood as grounded firstly in God's relation to creation and not in the incarnation as is common within the Reformed tradition.[67] The

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[64] Gunton, *The promise o*f *trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed., xxx.

[65] Colin E. Gunton, 'Introduction' in *The doctrine of creation: essays in dogmatics, history and philosophy*, ed. Colin E. Gunton (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 14.

[66] Gunton, *The actuality of atonement*, 137; cf. Christoph Schwöbel, 'God, creation and the Christian community: the dogmatic basis of a Christian ethic of createdness' in *The doctrine of creation: essays in dogmatics, history and philosophy*, ed. Colin E. Gunton (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 149-176.

[67] For example, Cynthia Campbell acknowledges that although Reformed theology accepted the doctrine of the Trinity as a central element of Christian faith, "very little substantive discussion of the Trinity occurred until Karl Barth made this doctrine the theme both of his consideration of

tendency in the Reformed tradition to focus upon an ethic of redemption/salvation at the expense of a trinitarian theology of creation was criticised by Gunton for giving rise to a view of salvation that is conceived anthropocentrically, not universally or cosmically: God's redeeming actions are understood in the narrow sense of applying to humankind, rather than to the whole of the created order. The danger for christology in such a restricted focus, according to Gunton, consists in the unfortunate side-effect of accentuating the divinity of Christ while overlooking the salvific significance of the Son's identification with and participation in the created order specifically as the *human* person of Jesus of Nazareth.

Christology

In Gunton's view, the question of the relation of christology to trinitarian theology could only be answered with an adequately trinitarian and christological conception of creation because not only were all things created *through* Christ (Jn 1:3, 10; Rom 11:36), but it is precisely *in* the created order that Christ became incarnate as the revelation of God. The dilemma posed by this seemingly circular, mutual dependence is also to be found in the two central christological questions confronting the theologians of the early church, namely the *divinity* and the *humanity* of Christ. [68] The question of the relation of the two natures of Christ proves to be problematic for trinitarian theology in the sense that, it, too, concerns the direct involvement and presence of the creator *in* that which is created. For Gunton,

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revelation and of his theological anthropology." Cynthia M. Campbell, 'Trinity' in *Encyclopedia of the Reformed faith*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1992), 375. Barth, as is well-known, held that any discussion of the doctrine of the Trinity and of christology must account for the connection between the formal dogma and the material dogma – i.e., the self-revelation of God as triune takes place in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Karl Barth, *Church dogmatics* I/1, trans. G. T. Thompson (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1963), 47, 295.

[68] An example of the circular and mutual doctrinal dependence in Gunton's theological project is found in the complementary ideas represented by the suggestion that christology and trinitarian theology must be grounded in the doctrine of creation, as argued here, and its counterpart statement where Gunton claims that "Christology is simply not determinative enough of the doctrine of creation in the West." Gunton, 'Christ, the wisdom of God,' 259.

therefore, a christologically-grounded trinitarian theology must take into consideration that

> some account of the divinity of the historical Christ is a necessary condition of a Christian Trinity, as distinct from some merely rational triad [and, second,] … a firm hold on the material humanity of the Son is a prerequisite for a doctrine of the Trinity that does not float off into abstraction from the concrete history of salvation.[69]

In the history of Christian doctrine, Chalcedonian christology became accepted as orthodox teaching about God's involvement in the world in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. To Gunton's mind, the symbol of Chalcedon (i.e., *vere homo, vere Deus*) is nothing short of "a critique of certain, virtually unquestionable, philosophical dogmas about the nature of deity."[70] Moreover, the confession is thus to be understood as a contradiction of "the heart of the mainstream Greek philosophical tradition."[71]

Notwithstanding the advances achieved by the fourth and fifth century church councils, however, the Western christological tradition has never completely dispensed with the dualistic tendencies inherited from classical philosophical thought. According to Gunton, the tendency toward dualism in Western theology is clearly evident in the way Roman Catholicism and Protestantism alike have tended to overlook the humanity of Christ in their respective christological formulae. He went on to argue that the Western tradition as a whole is marked by the extent that "such stress is placed on the divinity of Christ that his humanity, although asserted, appears to be overwhelmed and effectively to play no substantive part in the drama of salvation."[72]

The point of Christian theology's emphasis upon Christ's divinity is to

[69] Gunton, 'Augustine, the Trinity and the theological crisis of the West,' 37.
[70] Gunton, 'Christ, the wisdom of God,' 249.
[71] ibid.
[72] Gunton, 'Newman's dialectic,' 319.

accentuate the scriptural testimony that redemption is something that God has done (Acts 2:36; 2 Cor 5:18-21; 2 Tim 1:8-10). Unfortunately, that emphasis is all too often accompanied by the corresponding under-emphasis upon the salvific efficacy of Christ's humanity. The result, Gunton maintained, is the loss of the important observation that Christ is our representative, a point made clear in the New Testament. The author of the letter to the Hebrews, for example, claims that it is precisely Jesus' *humanity* – the same humanity as that of those for whom he came, sin apart (Heb 2:12f) – that is his qualification as our representative.[73] In that sense, then, Christ's humanity is as important as his divinity in the divine plan of reconciliation because "the humanity of Christ is the concentrated – and so representative – offering through the Spirit of true humanity to the Father."[74] Following the lead of Chalcedon, Gunton insisted that Christ's divinity and humanity are essential elements in an adequate doctrine of atonement because

> the centre of the doctrine of atonement is that Christ is not only our substitute – 'instead of' – but that by the substitution he frees us to be ourselves. Substitution is *grace*. He goes, as man, where we cannot go, under the judgement, and so comes perfected into the presence of God. But it is grace because he does so as God and as our representative, so that he enables us to go there after him. That is what is meant by the ancient teaching that Christ is our mediator. He brings us to the Father as one of us, but does so as one who, because he is God incarnate, is able to do so.[75]

The discussion of the representative character of Christ's humanity is one of those points where Gunton's thinking is seen to shift from a treatment of christological matters to those that become increasingly pneumatological. That point becomes clear when we consider that, for Gunton, as the quotation above indicates, the person of Jesus Christ is the mediator of salvation and, as such, it is through him

[73] Colin E. Gunton, *Christ and creation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 27.
[74] Colin E. Gunton, 'The sacrifice and the sacrifices: from metaphor to transcendental' in *Trinity, incarnation and atonement: philosophical and theological essays*, ed. Ronald J. Feenstra and Cornelius Plantinga (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University, 1990), 225f.
[75] Gunton, *The actuality of atonement*, 166.

that sinners are brought into reconciliation with God. However, it is important to note that Gunton employed a specifically *trinitarian* theology of mediation, which is to say he not only referred to the mediation of salvation through Christ to human beings in or by the Spirit, but also to the Spirit's mediation to Christ's humanity of that which Jesus required to live in full obedience to the will of his Father.

Here it becomes obvious that the trinitarian christology and pneumatology of Edward Irving exerted a major influence upon Gunton's trinitarian theology. He readily acknowledged that it was his "sitting at the feet of the great Edward Irving in particular"[76] that gave rise to a clearer understanding of the complementarity of the persons and the work of the Son and the Spirit. Despite the fact that Irving was convicted of heresy[77] for teaching that "at the Incarnation the eternal Son took to himself the fallen flesh that all human beings share,"[78] Gunton maintained that such a censure was unwarranted because it was based upon a flawed reading of Irving's thought. "Irving's concern is not, of course, to teach the sinfulness of Christ, but to give an adequate account of the representative nature of his humanity."[79] The significance of Irving's christology as an influence upon Gunton's trinitarian theology derived from the fact that it is a specifically trinitarianly-controlled christology. The incarnation is a work of the triune God; it is as much pneumatological as it is christological, for it is "through the leading of the Holy Spirit [that] the incarnate Son is able to bear fallen flesh through all the trials of his human life without himself falling."[80]

Gunton was insistent upon the interrelatedness of a theology of mediation and

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[76] Colin E. Gunton, *Yesterday and today: a study of continuities in christology*, 2nd ed. (London: SPCK, 1997), 221.
[77] Graham W. P. McFarlane, *Christ and the Spirit: the doctrine of the incarnation according to Edward Irving* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1996), 61 n. 14.
[78] Gunton, 'The sacrifice and the sacrifices,' 219.
[79] ibid.
[80] ibid., 220.

trinitarian theology on the grounds that it is as the Father, the Son, and the Spirit that God mediates salvation. Here again Gunton's thought was influenced by Irving.

> The first step to be taken in such a process of salvation is that the Son should assume flesh taken, so to speak, randomly from the fallen world … And to that end, argues Irving, the Holy Spirit formed for the Son a body from the fallen flesh of Mary ... Irving's second and crucial step is to reestablish the place of the Holy Spirit in the theology of the Incarnation.[81]

The importance of Irving's thought for Gunton's trinitarian theology stems from the fact that it provided the source of the principle of mediation with which Gunton was able to argue for a version of economic trinitarianism that afforded due recognition of the biblical attestation that "at the heart of the divine revelation is that God's life is shared with us in Jesus Christ, by his Spirit."[82] To express the matter in Irenaean terms, the 'two hands' of God are the way in which God acts in the world such that redemption is effected *in* Christ *through* the Spirit.

The *person* of the Son: humanity and particularity

The Son's humanity and particularity were important concepts for Gunton precisely because, he saw that it is the *person* of the Son who redeems and makes acceptable a holy people for God. The emphasis that Gunton laid upon the unity of the person of Jesus Christ in the construction of his trinitarian theology was not unintended. To the contrary, Gunton held that in "Jesus Christ, we meet a single person whose acts are at once human and divine, not a cobbling together of two externally related quantities."[83] More specifically, he held that "Jesus is one person, because he is the hypostatic or personal union of God the Son with the man Jesus of

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[81] ibid.
[82] James M. Houston, 'The personal Spirit and personal appropriation of the truth' in *Trinitarian soundings in systematic theology*, ed. Paul Louis Metzger (London: T & T Clark, 2005), 145.
[83] Gunton, *The Christian faith*, 96.

Nazareth." [84] Accordingly, Gunton argued that the divine purpose in the incarnation is none other than the action of God whereby

> the eternal Son of God empties himself by adding humanity to his being, in obedience to the Father and by the enabling of his Spirit, to bear his own human body, to *become* human as the God-man who is the agent of our salvation. He is thus one person who is at once the Son of God and, in the Fathers' adaptation of the biblical expression, the Son of Man.[85]

Trinitarian theology must afford due recognition of the fact that the incarnation takes place *in* the created material order, according to Gunton, otherwise it will not be able to convey the enormity of what God has done in Christ. Therefore, the content of the good news of Jesus Christ is the testimony that "the Father interrelates with his world by means of the frail humanity of his Son, and by his Spirit enables anticipations in the present of the promised perfection of the creation."[86]

Reference to the perfection of the created order as the eschatological outcome of the triune God's redemptive mission highlights the stress that Gunton gave to the christological and pneumatological elements which, in turn, were constitutive for his trinitarian theological project as a whole. His intention was to articulate a particular orientation toward the whole Christian theological enterprise, one that would accentuate an understanding of the trinitarian complementarity of the person and work of the Son with that of the person and work of the Spirit. Moreover, it was Gunton's commitment to talk consistently and repeatedly of God's 'two hands' in simultaneity and complementarity – i.e., perichoretically – which gave rise to his call for a re-examination of the relation of christology and pneumatology. He advocated

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[84] ibid.
[85] ibid.
[86] Colin E. Gunton, 'The church on earth: the roots of community' in *On being the church: essays on the Christian community*, ed. Colin E. Gunton and Daniel W. Hardy (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1989), 67; see also Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed., 72.

that trinitarian theology must afford "a greater emphasis in the action of the Holy Spirit towards Jesus as the source of the *particularity* and so historicity of his humanity."[87]

Here, Gunton was arguing for a fuller integration of christological and pneumatological concepts as the means of ensuring that systematic theology remained consistent with the scriptural presentation of the mediation of the Spirit to the humanity of the Son. That mediation is something which happens within the created order because, as we discussed above, the incarnation of the Son takes place in the world with all of the implied and attendant spatial and temporal limitations. Gunton argued that while the Reformers are to be credited with reconceiving the doctrine of creation in such a way that the impersonal causality of a metaphysically construed doctrine was replaced by a model which focused more upon personal agency and trinitarian mediation,[88] they were less successful in articulating a view that afforded full recognition to the ongoing nature of mediation within the created order. Gunton held that insofar as the tradition attributes "creation to the Father, salvation to the Son and life in the church (etc.) to the Spirit,"[89] it fosters a theologically inadequate view that fails to safeguard against modalistic readings. It therefore represents an example of a non-trinitarianly and non-mediatorially conceived pneumatology that tends "to limit the Spirit's activity to the application to the believer of the benefits of Christ."[90] This inadequacy is corrected, in Gunton's opinion, by seeking a greater role for the Holy Spirit than has often been the case within the Western tradition and by speaking of divine activity in terms of trinitarian

[87] Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed., 68.
[88] Colin E. Gunton, 'The end of causality? The Reformers and their predecessors' in *The doctrine of creation: essays in dogmatics, history and philosophy*, ed. Colin E. Gunton (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 76.
[89] ibid., 76f.
[90] Gunton, *A brief theology of revelation*, 120.

mediation such that "creation, reconciliation and redemption are all to be attributed to the Father, all realised through the work of his two hands, the Son and the Spirit, who are themselves substantially God."[91]

The principle of trinitarian mediation therefore provided Gunton with a way of speaking about the pneumatological equipping and empowering of Christ's humanity. That concept, taken over from Irving, became a central tenet of Gunton's thought because he held that the "humanity of the Word is most satisfactorily articulated where attention is given to his relation to his Father as it is mediated by the Spirit."[92]

Pneumatology: the *person* and *work* of the Spirit

Gunton's trinitarian theology is heavily influenced by the Eastern theological tradition insofar as he employed personal and relational categories of thought in preference to the substantialist conceptuality that is so prevalent within the Western tradition. At the same time, the importance that Colin Gunton afforded to the Holy Spirit in his trinitarian theology stands in direct contrast to the oft-repeated criticism that both the charismatic movement and Eastern Orthodoxy "develop an insufficient christological doctrine of the Spirit."[93] Gunton's theological project is distinguished by the fact that he took elements from the Eastern tradition (e.g., a personal and relational ontology) and also from the Western tradition (e.g., the priority afforded to Christ) in the development of a unique trinitarian theology. Moreover, it is precisely in relation to these points that Gunton's trinitarian doctrine of the Spirit emerges as distinctive among Reformed pneumatologies.

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[91] Gunton, *The triune creator*, 153f.
[92] Colin E. Gunton, 'Creation and mediation in the theology of Robert W. Jenson: an encounter and a convergence' in *Trinity, time and church: a response to the theology of Robert W. Jenson*, ed. Colin E. Gunton (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 86.
[93] Gunton, 'God the Holy Spirit,' 110.

Gunton held, first, that the individualism of much post-Enlightenment thought is reflected in the pneumatology of "the mainstream dogmatic tradition, which tends to concentrate on the work of the Spirit as applying to believer and Church the benefits of Christ."[94] This concept, he argued, is foundational to much Western pneumatological thought.[95] The danger in the formulation, however, as Gunton correctly identified, is that the *person* of the Holy Spirit is often overlooked in a configuration that is almost wholly orientated to an explication of the Spirit's function. Gunton's position represents a reinforcement of Thomas Smail's argument that any predisposition toward conceiving the Spirit as functionally subordinate to the Son automatically implies a degree of imprecision about the *hypostasis* of the Spirit and ensures that pneumatology will be treated as a sub-category of christology.[96]

The general tendency to subordinate pneumatology to christology – or worse still, the subordination of the person of the Spirit to the person of the Son – is a weakness in the Western theological tradition because in

> such an understanding the Spirit is identified almost exclusively in terms of his function, and as such in relation to the Son who saves us … [Moreover,] because the function is defined so narrowly – almost wholly christologically – such a move maintains an effective *ontological* subordination of Spirit to Son and militates against an identification of the Spirit's specific *persona*.[97]

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[94] ibid., 105.

[95] Karl Barth's trinitarian theology is cited by both Colin Gunton and Tom Smail as an example of the Western tradition's tendency to conceive of the Spirit as the 'applier of Christ's benefits.' See Gunton, *A brief theology of revelation*, 120; Gunton, 'God the Holy Spirit,' 105f; and Thomas A. Smail, 'The doctrine of the Holy Spirit' in *Theology beyond Christendom: essays on the centenary of the birth of Karl Barth, May 10, 1886*, ed. John Thompson (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick, 1986), 93-96.

[96] Smail, 'The doctrine of the Holy Spirit,' 106. See also, D. Lyle Dabney, '*Pneumatologia Crucis*: reclaiming *Theologia Crucis* for a theology of the Spirit today' in *Scottish journal of theology* 53, no. 4 (2000), 515f; and Hendrikus Berkhof, *The doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox, 1964), 21ff.

[97] Gunton, 'God the Holy Spirit,' 106. The Western tendency to subordinate the Spirit to the Son, against which Gunton argued so strenuously, finds expression in David Coffey's claim that the "entry of the eternal Spirit into God's plan of salvation happens *through Christ and in dependence*

The theological sophistication of Gunton's thought is evident in his treatment of the question of subordination. He remained opposed to modern egalitarian readings that anathematise any and all suggestions of subordination, while arguing that some form of subordinationism is proper within trinitarian theology.[98] Although Gunton dismissed out of hand any form of ontological subordinationism as an invention of speculative metaphysical theology, he argued for an intratrinitarian *taxis*, or economic subordinationism on biblical grounds.[99] Both accents – dismissal and affirmation – are contained in Gunton's statement that the "Son and the Spirit are as truly and fully God as is the Father, in and through their economically subordinate functions of doing the will of the Father in the world."[100]

Gunton recognised that scripture leaves open the possibility of a subordinationist interpretation in such passages as 1 Cor 15:28. However, he was quick to point out that this subordination is economic as opposed to ontological subordinationism. Gunton's position is clarified further in the statement that

> the priority of the Father is not ontological but economic. Such talk … would seem to suggest a subordination of *taxis* – of ordering within the divine life – but not one of deity or regard. It is as truly divine to be the obedient self-giving Son as it is to be the Father who sends and the Spirit

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on him. We can even call it an 'incarnation' of the Holy Spirit in Christ, provided that we keep the word in inverted commas, understanding it by analogy to the incarnation of the divine Son in the human being of Jesus." David M. Coffey, 'The "incarnation" of the Holy Spirit in Christ' in *Theological studies* 45 no. 3 (1984), 466 (emphasis added).

[98] He argued, for example, that the "Son and the Spirit, as the ones who obey and are sent, are subordinate, though that is not the teaching known as subordinationism, because they are fully divine *as obedient to and sent into the world* by the Father, and therefore as such are economically although not ontologically subordinate." Gunton, 'Persons and particularity,' 98; cf. Gunton *Father, Son and Holy Spirit*, 82. Despite an initial misreading of Gunton's position vis-à-vis the question of subordination in trinitarian theology, Kevin Giles concedes that Gunton's thought is sufficiently nuanced to ensure that recognition is afforded to the economic subordinationism present in some passages of scripture while avoiding subordinationist readings of the immanent Trinity. Kevin N. Giles, *Jesus and the Father: modern evangelicals reinvent the doctrine of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 303.

[99] Gunton, *Father, Son and Holy Spirit*, 39; Colin E. Gunton, 'Being and person: T. F. Torrance's doctrine of God' in *The promise of trinitarian theology: theologians in dialogue with T. F. Torrance*, ed. Elmer M. Colyer (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 120.

[100] Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed., 198.

who renews and perfects.[101]

The whole of Gunton's trinitarian theology, therefore, is seen to be orientated toward the articulation and maintenance of a theology capable of holding in tension simultaneous claims to the unity and particularity of the divine persons and work. According to Gunton, the Son and the Spirit though perichoretically-related, are distinct and particular persons whose work in the economy of redemption is also mutually-informing and complementary of the other's, and yet remains distinct. For Gunton, therefore, christology and pneumatology are also to be understood as inseparable, mutually-informing but distinct areas of study. Gunton's rejection of any hint of ontological subordination between the divine persons, moreover, is the precondition for a dismissal of depersonalising tendencies vis-à-vis the Spirit.

Colin Gunton's doctrine of the Spirit

A thorough reading of Gunton's corpus reveals a process of development within his pneumatological thought. That process began with a colleague's criticism of his early christological thought. Geoffrey Nuttall, in private correspondence with Gunton, observed "that it was an odd book on Christology that contained so few references to the Holy Spirit."[102]

However, in a deliberate reversal of Nuttall's criticism, we could add the observation in relation to this present study that it is a strange essay indeed that presumes to address pneumatology by deliberately beginning with christological discussion. The point here is not mere facetiousness, but is directed toward

[101] ibid., 197. Gunton's formulation here follows closely that of Karl Barth who held that it is as divine to obey (i.e., the Son) as it is to send (i.e., the Father) and that the man Jesus of Nazareth is none other than "God Himself as the Lord become Servant … [and also] God Himself as this Servant become Lord. God does what this man does. Or rather this man does what God does. But either way this life is fulfilled in a personal act. We have to think of the unity of this personal act when the New Testament calls this living One alone among all the others Lord, but also the Servant." Karl Barth, *Church dogmatics* IV/3.1, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1961), 40f.

[102] Gunton, *Yesterday and today*, 2nd ed., 221.

highlighting the fact that, for Gunton, it was impossible to speak of christology and pneumatology independently of each other because each perichoretically informs the other. Indeed, for Gunton, it is axiomatic that there "is no Spirit without the Son."[103] Inasmuch as this is an accurate reading of Gunton's theological and trinitarian presuppositions, his position is consistent with Yves Congar's observation that the measure of the "soundness of any pneumatology is its reference to Christ."[104]

Another of Gunton's colleagues, James Houston, remarks that just prior to his death Gunton had confessed to feeling inadequately trained for the enormity of the theological challenges and responsibilities he faced. [105] In this regard, Gunton would have identified with Yves Congar's observation about the difficulty and seemingly unrewarding nature of the effort required to formulate an adequate pneumatology.[106] Notwithstanding the difficulties of the task, Gunton embraced the challenge to address the perception that inadequate attention had been afforded to the third trinitarian person in the Western theological tradition. Gunton held that the tendency to overlook the importance of the person and work of the Holy Spirit in theological discourse in general, but in trinitarian formulations in particular, inevitably resulted in conceptions which threatened the full personhood of the Spirit. Houston supports Gunton's understanding: "I agree with Gunton, and from my perspective, such minimizing of the Spirit surfaces in the Western doctrine of the *filioque* and the Reformation emphasis on the Word over Spirit."[107]

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[103] Colin E. Gunton, 'The Spirit moved over the face of the waters: the Holy Spirit and the created order' in *International journal of systematic theology* 4, no. 2 (2002), 197.

[104] Yves M. J. Congar, *I believe in the Holy Spirit* vol. 2, trans. David Smith (New York, NY: Seabury, 1983), 152.

[105] Houston claims that "I first met Colin Gunton, as a student at Hertford College, Oxford, in the early 1960s when I was teaching there in a different discipline." Houston, 'The personal Spirit and personal appropriation of the truth,' 139.

[106] Yves M. J. Congar, *I believe in the Holy Spirit* vol. 3, trans. David Smith (New York, NY: Seabury, 1983), 272.

[107] Houston, 'The personal Spirit and personal appropriation of the truth,' 139.

The specific content of Colin Gunton's doctrine of the Spirit, however, remains to be explained in detail. Here, one should note that the central elements of his theology of the person and work of the Holy Spirit are continuous with some of the concepts introduced during the discussion of his general trinitarian theology. Gunton's pneumatology, therefore, will be explored under the following heads: the complementarity of the Son and the Spirit, the concept of mediation, and the perichoretic interrelatedness of christology and pneumatology. All of these concepts, as we shall see, are interrelated, each having a direct impact one upon the other.

The complementarity of Son and Spirit

Colin Gunton held that an adequate contemporary pneumatology would be concerned, primarily, with a fuller explication of *who* the Spirit is and *what* the Spirit does.[108] Gunton's insistence that pneumatology is concerned with the person *and* the work of the Spirit provides insight into his intentions vis-à-vis the Spirit on the one hand, and gives a certain sense of directionality to the remainder of this study on the other.

The beginnings of an answer to the question of the Spirit's identity – *who* the Spirit is – are located in Gunton's insistence upon the full personhood of the Spirit. Moreover, what Gunton intended by speaking about the *person* of the Spirit is governed by his understanding of the relationship between the Son and the Spirit. Gunton's position is clearly stated thus:

> First, any attempt to identify the Spirit must show that there is a way of God's action towards us and his world which is not *separable* from his action in Christ, but not *reducible* to it either ... the second requirement, which will be to show that on such a basis there can be a legitimate attempt to identify the Spirit both as a trinitarian person and in relation to

[108] Gunton, 'God the Holy Spirit,' 109.

the other persons of the Godhead.[109]

The first point to be addressed, taking the lead from Gunton's ordering in the quote above, is the relation between the Son and the Spirit (and, therefore, between christology and pneumatology). In Gunton's theology that relationship is explained repeatedly via recourse to the Irenaean metaphor of the 'two hands' of God as a way of speaking about God's work in the world through the agency of the Son and the Spirit. Moreover, Gunton is insistent that the economy of redemption is also framed by a principle of complementarity whereby he understood the work of the Son to be complemented by that of the Spirit, which meant that the Spirit is not, therefore, ontologically subordinate to the Son. Gunton's intentions were to argue for a trinitarian theology in which pneumatology was not conceived as a sub-category of christology but one in which christology and pneumatology are perichoretically integrated in such a way that they mutually-inform each other. His doctrine of the Spirit, therefore, offers a specifically trinitarian alternative to what Lyle Dabney has identified as the characteristic dynamic evident throughout the history of Protestant pneumatology: namely,

> a dialectical pendulum movement which swings from a 'Spiritless' theology of the Word, on the one hand, to a 'Wordless' theology of the Spirit, on the other, and which thus consistently moves between a position which plays off Christology against pneumatology to one which simply reverses that order and plays off pneumatology against Christology.[110]

The complementarity of the work of the Son and the Spirit, as we have seen throughout this chapter, is an important concept in the development of Gunton's trinitarian pneumatology. However, as we shall find, it is also an essential component

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[109] ibid., 112.

[110] D. Lyle Dabney, 'Naming the Spirit: towards a pneumatology of the cross' in *Starting with the Spirit*, ed. Stephen Pickard and Gordon Preece (Hindmarsh, SA: Australian Theological Forum, 2001), 35.

in the development of his theology of mediation. In the first instance, it was via the mediation of the Spirit that a human body was formed for the incarnate Son. The reliance upon Edward Irving's thought here is unmistakeable when Gunton states that it was "by the power of his Spirit that God the Father shapes a body for his Son in the womb of Mary, enabling *this* sample of human flesh to be that which it was created to be, in distinction from all other created persons and things."[111]

Of course, speech about complementarity between the work of the Son and Spirit does not in any way threaten the distinctions that exist between the second and third trinitarian persons. Gunton was at pains to establish the point that while the "Son *becomes* flesh; the Spirit acts *towards* and *in* the world. Such a distinction enables us to understand the biblical representations of the work of the Spirit, without overriding the differences that are also apparent."[112]

A theology of mediation

Secondly, the question of the Spirit's personhood as relation to and distinction from the other two divine persons is addressed by way of Gunton's recourse to the concept of mediation. He acknowledged that the Christian tradition has employed the concept of mediation in its soteriology insofar as it has taught that it is *through* the ministry of the Son that the divine plan of reconciliation has been effected (2 Cor 5:17-19) and that it is *by* the Spirit that the salvific benefits of redemption are mediated to believers (Jn 14:25-27; 16:12-15).

In Gunton's theological project, however, the concept of mediation is employed across the breadth of his trinitarian theology: in creation, God's 'two

[111] Gunton, *The Christian faith*, 102. See also Gunton, 'Martin Kähler revisited,' 26; Colin E. Gunton, 'A systematic triangle: Hegel, Kierkegaard, Barth and the question of ethics,' a paper presented to a theology seminar held at the Research Institute in Systematic Theology, King's College, London, (19 March 1999), 7; Colin E. Gunton, *Intellect and action: elucidations on Christian theology and the life of faith* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 80.

[112] Gunton, 'God the Holy Spirit,' 113.

hands' are the mediating agents through whom God created; in christology, the Son's humanity and ministry are enlivened and empowered by the Spirit's mediatorial work; and in pneumatology, the Spirit's mediation to the whole created order is understood as the latter's being drawn toward teleological and eschatological perfection.

Christologically speaking, Gunton's emphasis upon the two principles of complementarity and mediation led him to argue that:

> The Spirit is the Spirit of otherness in being the agent of the Son's movement out of the life of the Trinity to become the mediator of the Father's creating and redeeming action towards and in the world. The Spirit is the mediator of particularity in being the one who forms a body for the Son – *this* Jewish child of *this* Jewish mother – comes upon him in baptism, drives him into the wilderness to be tempted and there supports him so that he may become the particular Israelite that he was called to be and become. The Spirit is the one by whom the Father enables him to speak the truth, heal the sick and endure Gethsemane. It is not until his death that the Spirit is withdrawn, only to raise him from the dead and set him at the Father's right hand to be, until the end of time – not of the kingdom – the mediator of the Father's rule and conquest of death. In sum, the Spirit is the mediator of the Son's relation to the Father in both time and worship.[113]

For Gunton here, following Irving's lead, the incarnation of the Son, and the humanity of Christ in particular, serves as the christological focal point for discerning "the activity of the Spirit as the life-giving power of God in and towards his creation."[114] The influence of Irving's theology is readily discernable in the suggestion that the Spirit's mediation to the Son is a function of the Spirit's transcendence. It is precisely the Spirit's 'otherness,' over against the Son's incarnate state, that permits the use of mediatorial concepts. Moreover, Gunton recognised that by introducing the idea of the Spirit's mediatorial ministry to the humanity of the Son "we shall be able to make far more of the humanity of Jesus – his existence as a

[113] Gunton, *Intellect and action*, 80; cf. Gunton, 'A systematic triangle,' 7.
[114] Gunton, 'God the Holy Spirit,' 114.

creature – than has often been the case."[115] Gunton saw clearly, as Irving had before him, that an increased emphasis upon the humanity of the Son serves to bring the deliberations of Christian theology and the church's proclamation into closer conformity with the letter to the Hebrews, which insists that the Son, through whom God has spoken (Heb 1:2), shares fully in the humanity of his brothers and sisters (Heb 2:14-18), yet without sinning (Heb 4:15).

Gunton's trinitarian pneumatology benefited greatly from this insight. In particular, he understood that the Spirit's mediation of divine empowerment is the means by which the man Jesus is enabled to be who the Father called him to be, namely, the Son of God. In this regard, Gunton remarked that the one Jesus addressed as "*Abba*, Father" (Mk 14:36) "is not only the one to whom he prayed but the one to whom he was, by the Holy Spirit, related in such a way that he became, humanly, that which he was called to be."[116] This way of thinking also provided Gunton with the means with which to argue against those who sought to revive various permutations of patripassianism, because, he remained convinced that Paul's instruction to the Corinthian believers (1 Cor 1:22-24) does not refer to the suffering of God, but rather to "a powerful God mediating his action through that of a suffering man."[117]

Moreover, Gunton pointed out that the principle of trinitarian mediation, upon which he drew so heavily, is a principle that is clearly taught in scripture. He observed that the Fourth Gospel, for example, articulates a principle of mediation in the event of Jesus' baptism (Jn 1:29-34), in his promise to send the Paraclete (Jn 14-16), and on the occasion of his 'breathing' of the Spirit to the disciples (Jn 20:22).

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[115] ibid., 115.
[116] Colin E. Gunton, 'The God of Jesus Christ' in *Theology today* 54, no. 3 (1997), 331.
[117] Gunton, 'Christ, the wisdom of God,' 254f.

Gunton's summary of these events focused upon the mediation of the Spirit to the Son:

> The one who, during his earthly incarnation, is the gift from the Father, made the human being he particularly is by the creating and renewing Spirit, becomes after his ascension the mediator of that same Spirit to those who come to the Father through him.[118]

An emphasis upon the Spirit's work of mediation to the humanity of the Son is required, Gunton argued, precisely because it is all too often overlooked in the Western trinitarian tradition's preoccupation with speech about the salvific nature of the Son's work which is subsequently applied to Christian believers and to the church by the Spirit.

The perichoretic relatedness of christology and pneumatology

The third distinctive feature of Gunton's trinitarian pneumatology also applies to his trinitarian theology as a whole inasmuch as both his theological method and theological content are framed by a perichoretic principle. Methodologically, Gunton's approach is such that the doctrine of God, the doctrine of Christ, and the doctrine of the Spirit are related in such a way that to speak of one is automatically to invoke reference to the other. This is even more evident in respect of the content of these respective doctrines. The discussion above has demonstrated that Gunton's pneumatology has a christological referent and, in a reciprocal manner, his mature christology is thoroughly informed by pneumatological insight. Thus, what Gunton had to say about the person and work of the Son and the person and work of the Spirit constitutes, in large part, the content of his trinitarian theology.

The perichoretic nature of christology and pneumatology in Colin Gunton's theology is clearly evident in his discussion of the persons of the Son and the Spirit.

[118] Gunton, 'God the Holy Spirit,' 113.

For Gunton, the functional subordination of the Spirit to the Son is trinitarianly inadequate insofar as it inevitably results in a weakened christology and pneumatology: christology suffers because inadequate attention is afforded to the constitutive nature of the Spirit's involvement in Jesus' life and ministry, and pneumatology is severely weakened by the limitation imposed by an almost wholly immanent conception of the work of the Spirit in its application of the fruits of Christ's work to the individual believer.[119]

Gunton argued that the tendency of much of the Western theological tradition to regard pneumatology as a sub-category of christology is seen in the way in which the person and the work of the Holy Spirit is subsumed *under* that of the person and work of the Son.[120] The consequences of such a move for the Western tradition, he argued, are twofold: ontologically, the person of the Spirit is subordinated to the person of the Son (a view which finds its liturgical and doctrinal expression in the *filioque* clause), and functionally, the work of the Spirit is severely restricted. Regarding the latter, the particular problem that Gunton identified is that the work of the Spirit is limited to two spheres of operation: an immanent indwellingness of the individual human person (Protestantism) and the Christian church (Roman Catholicism) for the purpose of drawing believers to salvation through Christ in the first instance and, secondly, to an immanent indwellingness of the created order such that the Spirit is understood to be the means by which God holds the whole created order in existence.[121]

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[119] Gunton, *Christ and creation*, 66 n. 23. Gunton is supported here by Christoph Schwöbel, who argued that a neglect of the pneumatological element within the divine work of redemption has prevented a truly trinitarian doctrine of reconciliation. Christoph Schwöbel, 'Reconciliation: from biblical observations to dogmatic reconstruction' in *The theology of reconciliation*, ed. Colin E. Gunton (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2003), 34f.

[120] Gunton, *Christ and creation*, 66; Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed., 199.

[121] Gunton, 'The end of causality,' 75; Gunton, 'Relation and relativity,' 97f; Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed., 142f.

At this juncture the interdependence of christology and pneumatology in Gunton's trinitarian theology is drawn into sharp focus. He held, for example, that it is the Spirit "who mediates the action of God the Father in such a way that the life of the Son, while deriving from the Father and dependent upon him, is given space to remain authentically human."[122] Elsewhere, Gunton remarked that

> Jesus became a free man as through the Spirit he was enabled to reject false paths and accepted the calling of the suffering messiah. As risen and ascended, he mediates to his believers that same Spirit through whose endowment he was able to be authentically himself and offer to the Father the sacrifice of obedience.[123]

According to Gunton, the interdependence of christology and pneumatology is the means by which trinitarian theology may overcome any hint of ontological and functional subordination of the Spirit to the Son. In particular, Gunton held that it is the transcendent Spirit who perfects the humanity of Christ and it is the Son who sends the Spirit to his followers so that, through the Spirit, the whole of creation may likewise be perfected. The Spirit, therefore, "is the one by whom the Father brings particular created things to perfection through the ascended Christ, beginning with the first fruits, his body incarnate, crucified and raised from the tomb."[124] Gunton's trinitarian pneumatology, therefore, as we have argued above, is founded upon the principle of mutual complementarity between the persons and work of the 'two hands' of God at work in the creation, redemption, and eschatological perfection of the world.[125]

To return to a statement made above, Gunton held that an adequate contemporary pneumatology should be orientated toward providing a fuller

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[122] Gunton, 'The end of causality,' 79.
[123] Colin E. Gunton, 'The sovereignty of Jesus: some reflections on the crown rights of the Redeemer' in *Theological digest and outlook* 6, no. 1 (1991), 7.
[124] Gunton, 'The Spirit moved over the face of the waters,' 199.
[125] Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed., 156.

explication of *who* the Spirit is and *what* the Spirit does.[126] The trinitarian pneumatology of Colin Gunton is unique within the Western tradition, and within his own Reformed tradition, inasmuch as he formulated the view that it is precisely the *personal* and *transcendent* Spirit who is the eschatological agent of perfection. The specific questions concerning the place and purpose afforded to the Holy Spirit in Colin Gunton's trinitarian theology is answered by three primary characteristics of the Spirit which Gunton repeatedly emphasised: namely, i) the Spirit is personal, ii) the Spirit is transcendent, and iii) the Spirit is the perfecting agent of the created order.

In the first instance, Gunton's pneumatology is marked by an emphasis upon the *person* of the Spirit insofar as he intentionally followed the Cappadocian pattern of grounding trinitarian theology in personal and relational categories.[127] In this sense, his thought is to be distinguished from the Western tendency which affords priority in the trinitarian discussion to a consideration of the divine substance over that of the particular persons.[128] Gunton argued that when the Western theological tradition translated the Greek term *ousia* as *substantia* "it introduced a stress on the *underlying* reality of God" and ceded much of what had been gained by the Cappadocian innovation.[129] Rejecting the view that the divine persons draw their divinity via participation in the divine substance, Gunton predicated his trinitarian theology upon an unswerving commitment to the view that "God is what he is only

[126] Gunton, 'God the Holy Spirit,' 109.
[127] Christoph Schwöbel observes that Gunton sought to address what he perceived to be an inadequate trinitarian basis to Barth's theology by affording renewed emphasis to the personhood of the Spirit and the mutuality of the work of the Son and the Spirit. Christoph Schwöbel, 'Foreword' in *The Barth lectures* by Colin E. Gunton, ed. Paul H. Brazier (London: T & T Clark, 2007), xxi
[128] Gunton referred to this prioritisation as "that bugbear of Western theology, the transcendentality of the one." Gunton, *The one, the three and the many*, 186f.
[129] ibid., 191.

as a communion of persons."[130] More importantly for this study, he insisted that "we must … speak of the Spirit as a *person* in the eternal Trinity."[131] Therefore, according to Gunton, an adequate pneumatology will be concerned to speak more directly about the particular person of the Spirit, a practice which is often overlooked in the Western tradition.[132]

Secondly, an emphasis upon the Spirit's transcendence distinguishes Gunton's pneumatology from much of the Western tradition, both Roman Catholic and Protestant.[133] Here Gunton sought to overcome the danger of individualism that plagues modern Western society. He held that when the Western theological tradition conceives of the Spirit's work in terms of immanence, it encourages the view that the Spirit's interaction with human beings is conceived *individualistically* and, therefore, in non-christological and non-trinitarian terms.[134]

Thirdly, Colin Gunton's pneumatology is distinguished by an emphasis upon the eschatological nature of the work of the Holy Spirit. For Gunton, the Spirit's work within creation – both human and non-human – is to bring the whole of creation to perfection.[135] Following Basil of Caesarea, Gunton held that "the Spirit is

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[130] ibid.

[131] Gunton, *Act and being*, 145f (emphasis added).

[132] Gunton, *Father, Son and Holy Spirit*, xiv.

[133] According to Gunton, "It is little oversimplification to say that whereas Rome tended to locate the Spirit's action within the institutional church, the Reformation, in effect if not in intention, came to attribute it to the individual. When universalized this gave rise to two characteristic phenomena, rationalism and experientialism, both of which in different ways locate the Spirit's action *within* human being." Gunton goes on to cite Hegel and Lampe as examples of rationalism's interiorisation of the S/spirit, while Schleiermacher is cited as the model of experientialism. Gunton, 'Holy Spirit,' 305f.

[134] Gunton's thoughts are supported by Kilian McDonnell, who states "In both Protestantism and Catholicism, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, or pneumatology, has to do mostly with private, not public experience. In Protestantism, the interest in pneumatology has been largely in pietism where it is a function of interiority and inwardness. In Roman Catholicism, its dominant expression has been in books on spirituality or on the charismatic renewal, or when speaking of the structural elements of the church." Kilian McDonnell, 'The determinative doctrine of the Holy Spirit' in *Theology today* 39, no. 2 (1982), 142.

[135] See, for example, the emphasis that was afforded to the Spirit as 'the perfecting cause' in Part Three of Colin E. Gunton, *The Christian faith: an introduction to Christian doctrine* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2002), 117-191.

the perfecting cause of the creation."[136] For Gunton, then, the Spirit is *in* but not *of* the world for the specific purpose of enabling the created order to be distinct from God and yet related to God, while at the same time drawing the whole of the created order to its divinely-determined teleological and eschatological end which is perfection in Christ (1 Cor 24-28; cf. Php 3:12; Col 1:28).

Colin Gunton's conception of the Spirit as the *personal*, *transcendent*, *perfecting agent* of creation will be examined in greater detail in the following chapters. These headings provide a framework within which a thorough engagement with the content and implications of Gunton's pneumatology may be sought. The distinctive emphases that have been identified as foundational for Gunton's doctrine of the Spirit will be examined with the view to compare his position with other Reformed expressions of pneumatology, and as the means to form a preliminary assessment of each for the Christian doctrine of the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

[136] Gunton, 'The sovereignty of Jesus,' 7; see also Colin E. Gunton, 'The Spirit in the Trinity' in *The forgotten Trinity* vol. 3, ed. Alasdair I. C. Heron (London: BCC/CCBI, 1991), 130; and, Gunton, 'The Spirit moved over the face of the waters,' 203. Cf. Basil of Caesarea, *De Spiritu Sanctu*, 16.38 (*PG* 32:135; *NPNF* 8:23).

Chapter Four

Spirit as person

Colin Gunton held that an adequate contemporary pneumatology should provide a fuller explication of *who* the Spirit is and *what* the Spirit does.[1] In reply to the specific question of the identity and the work of the Holy Spirit, Gunton insisted in the first instance that the Spirit is to be conceived as fully personal.

The question of the personhood of the Holy Spirit is treated at various points throughout Gunton's published works and became especially significant during the latter part of his theological career. It was noted earlier that the terms 'person' and 'particularity' were introduced during Gunton's inaugural lecture in the chair of Christian Doctrine at King's College.[2] According to Stephen Holmes, this lecture marks the beginning of Gunton's search for a more consciously *trinitarian* theology.[3] In Gunton's understanding, grounding the doctrine of the Trinity in the concrete history of salvation not only avoids the temptations of doctrinal abstractionism but ensures that the focus of trinitarian discussion is maintained upon the particular actions of the particular persons in the economy of redemption.[4]

The manner in which Gunton approached the question of the personhood of the Spirit, however, is the same as that employed throughout his systematic theology in general. That is to say, at no one place did he offer a systematic explication of

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[1] Colin E. Gunton, 'God the Holy Spirit: Augustine and his successors' in *Theology through the theologians: selected essays, 1972-1995* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 109.

[2] Colin E. Gunton, *The one, the three and the many: an inaugural lecture in the Chair of Christian Doctrine* (London: King's College, 1985). This lecture was reprinted as Chapter Five, 'The concept of person: the one, the three and the many' in Colin E. Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed. (London: T & T Clark, 1997), 83-99.

[3] Andy Goodliff, 'Notes from Colin Gunton one-day conference' available from http://andygoodliff.typepad.com/my_weblog/2007/09/notes-from-coli.html (accessed 21 February 2008).

[4] Colin E. Gunton, 'Augustine, the Trinity and the theological crisis of the West' in *Scottish journal of theology* 43, no. 1 (1990), 37.

what, precisely, he intended by the assertion of the Spirit's personhood nor of what lay behind his insistence on the personhood of the Spirit.[5] It is possible nonetheless to assemble the central elements of what Gunton intended by speaking of the Spirit as person from his published works because he was remarkably consistent and coherent across the breadth of his writings in what he did say about the Holy Spirit.

His core assertion was that "the Spirit is not some force or possession … As the Spirit of the Father who comes to us through the Son and lifts us up into the life of God, *he is a person*."[6] In a later publication, Gunton wrote that the "Spirit is neither an individual power nor a subjective feeling, but *a person* sent by the Father through his ascended Son,"[7] which led to the conclusion that "we must then speak of the Spirit as a *person* in the eternal Trinity."[8] It is clear, therefore, that Gunton's understanding of the Spirit as person is located within an expressly trinitarian context. This much is obvious insofar as the first two quotes explicitly ground the Spirit's personhood in the personal *taxis* of Father, Son, and Spirit, while the third locates the same in the immanent Trinity.

Beyond a mere assertion of the personhood of the Spirit, Gunton himself pointed to some of the implications of the wider task of speaking of the Spirit's

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[5] There are three articles, however, in which Gunton provided an outline of what he intended by the use of the term 'person' in trinitarian theology. The first is his inaugural lecture in the chair of Christian Doctrine at King's College during which he argued that the Western tradition had conceived 'person' in "two distinct though sometimes overlapping views": i.e., individualistically ("believed almost everywhere, but wrong") and relationally ("neglected but right"). Gunton, 'The concept of person,' 83. The second is a dictionary article in which he traced the development of 'person' as a theological term. Throughout that article he argued for the view that 'person' is essentially a relational concept whereby the relations existing between beings are intrinsic to personhood. Colin E. Gunton, 'Persons' in *Dictionary of ethics, theology and society*, ed. Paul Barry Clarke and Andrew Linzey (London: Routledge, 1996), 638-641. In the third work, Gunton analysed the concepts of person and particularity as they are to be found in the theology of John Zizioulas. He argued that, for Zizioulas, the personal is primordial and other concepts like 'being' or 'communion' are secondary. Colin E. Gunton, 'Persons and particularity' in *The theology of John Zizioulas: personhood and the church*, ed. Douglas H. Knight (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007), 100.

[6] Colin E. Gunton, 'The church: John Owen and John Zizioulas on the church' in *Theology through the theologians: selected essays, 1972-1995* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 203 (emphasis added).

[7] Colin E. Gunton, *Act and being: towards a theology of the divine attributes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 144 (emphasis added).

[8] ibid., 145f (emphasis added).

personhood when he observed that "If the Spirit is a person, then we need to identify, to mark out the being, of the kind of person with whom we have to do."[9] It was his view that if

> there is a point in speaking of Father, Son and Spirit, rather than simply of God, then it is incumbent upon the theologian to say something of that in which their differences consist, whether by means of an identification of the (eternal) being of the persons, or a characterisation of their historic forms of actions – or, best of all, by a relating of the two.[10]

It was Gunton's wish, therefore, to establish a place for the Holy Spirit in trinitarian discourse that would afford a more consistent emphasis upon the particularity and personhood of the Spirit. He held that the Western theological tradition as a whole has "been notoriously weak in giving weight, substance, to the third person of the Trinity"[11] and thus sought to secure "a more concrete *persona* for the Spirit than the Western tradition often does."[12] Gunton's purpose in seeking to address this perceived weakness in Western trinitarian theology was prompted by sociological as well as theological concerns.

Colin Gunton, the theologian, as noted earlier in this work, was also a pastor, one who held that theology was to be practised within and for the benefit of the Christian community that he served. Moreover, it was late twentieth century British society that provides the social backdrop against which Gunton's pastoral ministry and theology must be viewed if his thought is to be read in right context. This was a society which was becoming increasingly focused upon the primacy of the individual, paradigmatically represented by Margaret Thatcher's retort that "there is

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[9] Colin E. Gunton, 'We believe in the Holy Spirit, who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified' in *Fire and wind: the Holy Spirit in the church today*, ed. Joseph D. Small (Louisville, KY: Geneva, 2002), 26.

[10] Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed., xxiv.

[11] Colin E. Gunton, *The one, the three and the many: God, creation and the culture of modernity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University, 1993), 191 n. 12.

[12] Colin E. Gunton, *Father, Son and Holy Spirit: essays toward a fully trinitarian theology* (London: T & T Clark, 2003), xiv.

no society, only individuals and their families."[13] In spite of attempted political revision of the statement,[14] the intent of the British Prime Minister was clear: "the private has analytical and political priority over a public sphere"[15] in such a way that 'society' is redefined as "some kind of abstraction and an alibi for individual responsibility."[16] For Gunton, the 'dogma' of individualism had profound sociological and intellectual implications, while he recognised that the heart of the problem remained theological insofar as it is founded upon the belief that "we do not exist in mutually constitutive relations with each other. We do not need our neighbour in order to be human."[17] Over against such an insular view, Colin Gunton held that trinitarian theology contains the resources to meet the challenge of the rampant individualism threatening the wellbeing of society precisely because it teaches that 'person' is a relational term with implications for the relational and communal 'other.'[18]

Gunton's pastoral concerns were addressed in a threefold theological

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[13] Colin E. Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 12. See also Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed., 13. Here, Gunton presents a paraphrase of the famous quote that is commonly believed to read, "There is no such thing as society, only individuals and their families." See, for example, Patricia Cormack, *Sociology and mass culture: Durkheim, Mills, and Baudrillard* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2002), 117; and, Don Slater, 'Public/private' in *Core sociological dichotomies*, ed. Chris Jenks (London: Sage, 1998), 140. These and other citations, however, are not consistent with the historical record. Margaret Thatcher's comment was made during an interview conducted by journalist Douglas Keay at 10 Downing Street on Wednesday, 23rd September 1987. By way of answer to her own rhetorical question, "who is society?" Thatcher retorted, "There is no such thing! There are individual men and women and there are families." Douglas Keay, 'Aids, education and the year 2000!' in *Woman's own* Saturday, 31 October 1987, 8.

[14] Hugo Young remarks that when "the phrase became famous, official efforts were made to defuse its significance and insist that it didn't mean what it seemed to mean. But it did." Hugo Young, *One of us: a biography of Margaret Thatcher*, rev. ed. (London: Macmillan, 1990), 490.

[15] Slater, 'Public/private,' 140.

[16] Young, *One of us*, 490.

[17] Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 12; see also Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed., 13.

[18] Gunton, 'Persons,' 639; and, Colin E. Gunton, 'Trinity, ontology and anthropology: towards a renewal of the doctrine of the *Imago Dei*' in *Persons, divine and human: King's College essays in theological anthropology*, ed. Christoph Schwöbel and Colin E. Gunton (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 113. However, it is important to note that not all theologians are in agreement about the relational nature of personhood. See, for example, Harriet A. Harris, 'Should we say that personhood is relational?' in *Scottish journal of theology* 51, no. 2 (1998), 214.

response to the theological and social situation as he saw it: first, the personhood of the Spirit is integral to an argument for the relationality of the being of God; secondly, it serves to counteract the depersonalising and subordinationist tendencies in Western theology; and, thirdly, it functions as an antidote to rampant individualism in contemporary society. Before elaborating upon each of these points in turn, a brief survey of the history of person as a theological term may be in order here insofar as it will establish the points of contact between Gunton's thought and that of the Christian tradition.

Person: historical development of a theological term

Theological talk about the *person* of the Spirit is neither a simple nor straightforward matter. Gunton argued that 'person' was a particularly difficult concept to define because "it is one of those fundamental notions … that resists characterization in terms of anything else."[19] Alasdair Heron, for his part, warns that trinitarian theology must bear in mind that the terms 'person' and *hypostasis* "were initially drawn into service to *refer to* rather than to *define* the distinct identities of the Father, of Jesus Christ, or the Holy Spirit. God is neither 'one person' nor 'three persons' in any ordinary sense of 'person'."[20] Gunton, it must be said, was well aware that he was drawing upon a concept with a long and chequered history. He was alert, for example, to the contributions of Tertullian[21] and others who had ensured that in Christian teaching the Holy Spirit was affirmed as the third person of the Trinity. He was also cognizant of the fact that the term 'person' has its origins in

[19] Gunton, 'Persons,' 638.
[20] Alasdair I. C. Heron, *The Holy Spirit* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1983), 174.
[21] Tertullian's reference to the Spirit as the "third Person" of God is a constitutive part of the argument that there is "one only substance in three coherent and inseparable (Persons)." This formulation, of course, was condensed into the programmatic statement "*una substantia, tres personae.*" Tertullian, *Against Praxeas* 12 (*PL* 2:191; *ANF* 3:606f). Modern interpreters of Tertullian, however, need to be aware that 'person' is a term with multiple meanings in *Against Praxeas*, according to Lawrence B. Porter, 'On keeping "persons" in the Trinity: a linguistic approach to trinitarian thought' in *Theological studies* 41, no. 3 (1980), 540.

trinitarian discourse and, therefore, has a theological pedigree[22] which means that theological usage of the term is to be distinguished from other modern definitions that are heavily reliant upon psychological and legal frameworks of thinking.[23]

In an article dedicated to an exposition of the concept of person, Gunton argued that the most common contemporary definition is essentially legal in nature: "a person is any being having rights and duties, including collectives such as corporations."[24] He also observed that the history of Western thought is replete with evidence that the concept has not been employed in a uniform manner and quite often has been used with a number of different meanings. At various times and in various places, he explained, the Western tradition has understood the defining characteristic of person in terms of reason, agency, and relation. In the first instance, Gunton acknowledged that there "is a long tradition, begun in antiquity and re-established in the modern age by Descartes, that reason is the crucial distinguishing mark"[25] of what it is to be person. He was quick, however, to add that conceiving of persons in terms of rational capacity "tends to be an individualistic view, concentrating attention on a quality possessed individually."[26] Secondly, Western thought has also held that persons are those who act so that "it is as agents that

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[22] Douglas Knight remarks that, in Gunton's understanding, "the concept of person is theological." Douglas H. Knight, 'From metaphor to mediation: Colin Gunton and the concept of mediation' in *Neue zeitschrift für systematische theologie und religionsphilosophie* 43, no. 1 (2001), 119.

[23] Karen Kilby makes the observation that advocates of a trinitarian theology that is based upon a social understanding of persons in relation are quick to rehabilitate the term 'person.' What those theologians needed, according to Kilby, "is not a new word but only that in using the word 'person' Trinitarian theology put up a resistance to *some* features of the modern secular understanding of this notion. Our contemporary society's basic understanding of the word, of what it means to be a person, in other words, needs to be reformed by a return to the true Trinitarian understanding. The problem with our usual notion of personhood lies in its connotations of individualism, in the assumption that ultimately each person is an isolated being over against all others. A proper understanding of the Trinity and of the Trinitarian perichoresis … counteracts this, in their view, and enables one to understand persons as by their very nature interactive, interdependent, in communion with one another." Karen Kilby, 'Perichoresis and projection: problems with the social doctrines of the Trinity' in *New Blackfriars* 81, no. 957 (2000), 434.

[24] Gunton, 'Persons,' 638.

[25] ibid.

[26] ibid.

persons are essentially what they are."[27] John Macmurray's theology, in Gunton's opinion, provides an example of the view that holds that persons are agents who act.[28] Thirdly, the understanding that the distinctive relational character of persons is demonstrated by a certain polarity between love and freedom was much more acceptable to Gunton. He went on to argue that to define persons in terms of love is to highlight the principle of "mutually constitutive relatedness."[29] The doctrine of the Trinity is the most profound example of the relatedness of persons in love and freedom, according to Gunton, inasmuch as it is the distinctively Christian teaching that addresses what it means to say that God is love (1 Jn 4:8, 16).[30]

In Gunton's view, an adequate theology of person does not commence with a consideration of what it means to be *human* persons.[31] Rather, he argued that a definition of person should be sought from within the resources of Christian teaching about the one God who exists as three persons-in-relation because the "roots of the notion [of person] lie in trinitarian theology."[32] The origins of trinitarian doctrine, moreover, derive from the fact that the early Christian church professed, in seeming contradiction, claims to monotheism, on the one hand, while continuing to promote the worship of the Father, the Son and the Spirit, on the other. This apparent 'confusion' within the liturgical and doxological practice of the first Christian congregations required doctrinal clarification. The doctrine of the Trinity affirmed

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[27] ibid.

[28] John Macmurray, *Persons in relation: being the Gifford Lectures delivered in the University of Glasgow in 1954* (London: Faber & Faber, 1961); Gunton, 'Persons,' 638.

[29] Gunton, 'Persons,' 638.

[30] Gunton, *Father, Son and Holy Spirit*, 17.

[31] Alan Torrance argues that Gunton's theology is not distinguished by an "endorsement of personalism, dialogical personalism, or some other personalist philosophy but a fundamental methodological conviction, namely, that in attempting to understand what is definitive of humanity the pressure of interpretation must possess a specific directionality – it must think *from* God *to* humanity and not *from* our prevailing conception of humanity … *to* the transcendent." Alan J. Torrance, 'What is a person?' in *From cells to souls, and beyond: changing portraits of human nature*, ed. Malcolm A. Jeeves (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 209.

[32] Colin E. Gunton, *The Christian faith: an introduction to Christian doctrine* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2002), 43.

the validity of both practices by codifying the belief that there are *three* persons who are *one* God.[33] Moreover, it was in the articulation of trinitarian doctrine that the early church theologians first spoke about the 'persons' of the Father, Son and Spirit. According to John Zizioulas, a colleague whose influence upon Gunton was noted above, the "concept of person with its absolute and ontological content was born historically from the endeavor of the Church to give ontological expression to its faith in the Triune God."[34] Historically speaking, then, the concept of person is a specifically *theological* concept, rooted, as it is, in the history of the doctrine of the Trinity.[35]

That the historical origins of 'person' as a trinitarian term may be traced to the theological debates and discussions that occurred during the fourth century is also crucial for an adequate understanding of Colin Gunton's trinitarian theology. Gunton's theology of person, as we shall see, is framed in dialogue with several of the foremost fourth-century trinitarian theologians. In particular, he remained highly critical of Augustine's influence over the Western theological tradition[36] while enthusiastically embracing the theological and ontological innovations of the Cappadocian Fathers.[37]

Augustine: the unipersonal God

Over against a highly critical reading of Augustine's trinitarian theology as a whole, but especially in regard to his failure to grasp the significance of the

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[33] Colin E. Gunton, *The triune creator: a historical and systematic study* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 64; Francis Watson, 'Trinity and community: a reading of John 17' in *International journal of systematic theology* 1, no. 2 (1999), 169f.

[34] John D. Zizioulas, *Being as communion: studies in personhood and the church* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2004; reprint of 1985), 36.

[35] Gunton, 'Persons,' 639.

[36] Gunton, 'Augustine, the Trinity and the theological crisis of the West,' *passim*.

[37] In the concluding pages of the second edition of *The promise of trinitarian theology*, for example, Gunton acknowledged the extent of the Cappadocian Fathers' influence upon his trinitarian theology. Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed., 204.

Cappadocian emphasis upon *hypostasis*,[38] Gunton readily embraced the possibilities afforded by Cappadocian thought to argue for a strongly relational view of person. He argued that the Western intellectual tradition as a whole, following Augustine, has given insufficient attention to the specifically theological nature of 'person.'[39] Indeed, he held that the extent of Augustine's influence in the West is so pervasive that relational and personal conceptions of the being of God were "not developed by later Western thinkers until quite recent times."[40] Moreover, the tendency to overlook relational definitions of person in preference for individualistic conceptions in the Western tradition, according to Gunton, is traceable to Augustine's influence which, in turn, opened the way for Boethius' definition of the person as "an individual substance of a rational nature (*naturae rationabilis individua substantia*)."[41] The Boethian definition of person came to dominate subsequent Western thought and in due course gave rise to the modern emphasis upon rationalism and individualism in the thought of Descartes and his successors.[42]

Gunton argued that Augustine's concept of 'person' is inadequate inasmuch as it fails to afford adequate emphasis to the particularity of the divine persons, a particularity that is grounded in the perichoretic interrelationship of three divine persons. The problem, he held, was that "the distinctive *personae* of Father, Son and Spirit in the being of the one God fall short of adequate identification, so that the drive is to treat God *unipersonally*, with his personhood located in his oneness, not

[38] For example, Gunton argued that "Augustine does not really know what to do with the concept of person, and says, in a well known passage, that he uses it only 'in order not to remain silent'." Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed., 95. Gunton is quoting from Augustine, *The Trinity (De Trinitate)*, trans. Edmund Hill (Brooklyn, NY: New City Press, 1991), V.2.10.
[39] Knight, 'From metaphor to mediation,' 119.
[40] Gunton, 'Persons,' 640.
[41] ibid.
[42] ibid.

his threeness."[43] Elsewhere he added that, in the Western tradition,

> the particularity of the persons tends everywhere to be so subordinated to a relentless stress on the unity of God that theology is often unable to follow Scripture in ascribing particular actions to particular persons of the Trinity, the result being that all is attributed to 'God' in such an undifferentiated way that his actions cease to be trinitarianly construed. The same can be said of the actions of the persons *ad intra*.[44]

The danger that threatens at this point is modalism. Augustine, for his part, attempted to counter this 'problem' by assigning certain activities to particular divine persons in such a way that creation "is appropriated to the Father, redemption to the Son, and sanctification to the Holy Spirit."[45] However, Gunton did not engage with Augustine's theory of appropriations except, perhaps, for a single, oblique reference to the "misuse of trinitarian appropriations."[46] Catherine LaCugna, on the other hand, observed that a doctrine of appropriations must be considered inadequate because "the separateness and individuality of each divine person is more pronounced than interrelatedness and codependence."[47] Gunton, too, was concerned to dismiss any suggestion of separation between the divine persons because of the attendant individualising tendencies. His preference, rather, was to conceive the particularity of the divine persons in terms of perichoretic interrelationship, a move which simultaneously excludes tritheism and individualism.[48]

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[43] Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed., 4.

[44] Gunton, 'Persons and particularity,' 103.

[45] Catherine M. LaCugna, *God for us: the Trinity and Christian life* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 98.

[46] In the example cited, Gunton's discussion makes no reference to Augustine; rather, in that instance, Gunton was discussing models of ecclesiastical hierarchicalism based upon "supposed patterns of relationship between persons of the Godhead." Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed., 73.

[47] LaCugna, *God for us*, 98.

[48] Gunton, *The one, the three and the many*, 190-194; Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed., 198. In spite of the fact that there are only tangential points of correspondence between their respective theological projects (see H. Paul Santmire, 'So that he might fill all things: comprehending the cosmic love of Christ' in *Dialog: a journal of theology* 42, no. 3 (2003), 265), Gunton and Moltmann both employ the concept of perichoresis to speak about the simultaneity of the threeness and the oneness of God in such a way that expressly circumvented inferences of

Gunton acknowledged that it is an oversimplification to suggest that Western trinitarian discourse treats the unity of God before considering the persons, whereas the Eastern tradition proceeds from threeness to oneness.[49] Nonetheless, he argued that the observation does serve to draw attention to an important distinction between the two traditions, namely, the respective weighting afforded to diversity and unity.

> The real difference, however, tends not to be in the starting point but in the way in which the oneness and threeness of God are weighted in relation to one another, and whether, as often happens in the West, the oneness outweighs the threeness and makes the persons functionally indistinguishable to all intents and purposes.[50]

The tendency, prevalent in the Western tradition, to prioritise *ousia* over *hypostasis*, according to Gunton, runs the very real risk of affording ontological priority to the being of God (understood as *substantia*[51]) at the expense of the persons. That is to say, the divine persons are reduced to epiphenomenal status inasmuch as they are seen to be logically secondary, if not actually ontologically subordinate to the being of God.[52] The problem with such a view is that the persons of God encountered in the economy are no longer conceived to be ontologically ultimate, for they are divine only insofar as they share in an unknown and

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tritheism, individualism, and subordinationism. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: the doctrine of God*, trans. Margaret Köhl (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993), 175.

[49] Colin E. Gunton, *Becoming and being: the doctrine of God in Charles Hartshorne and Karl Barth*, 2nd ed. (London: SCM, 2001), 231f; Colin E. Gunton, 'Being and person: T. F. Torrance's doctrine of God' in *The promise of trinitarian theology: theologians in dialogue with T. F. Torrance*, ed. Elmer M. Colyer (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001), 124. The suggestion of such a hard line of demarcation between Eastern and Western trinitarian methodology, as we noted in the previous chapter (page 103 n. 39), is dismissed outright by Michel René Barnes, 'Augustine in contemporary trinitarian theology' in *Theological studies* 56, no. 2 (1995), 238.

[50] Gunton, 'Being and person,' 124.

[51] While *ousia*, in Eastern trinitarian theology, is understood as *being*, that being is not conceived in substantial terms but in personal and relational ways such that the divine being *is* the divine persons existing in their mutually constitutive relations. In this view, the *essence* or *substantia* of God is conceived as persons-in-relation. See Gunton, *The one, the three and the many*, 191; John D. Zizioulas, 'The Father as cause: personhood generating otherness' in *Communion and otherness: further studies in personhood and the church* (London: T & T Clark, 2006), 124-126.

[52] Colin E. Gunton, 'Barth, the Trinity and human freedom' in *Theology today* 43, no. 3 (1986), 325.

unknowable substance lying behind the persons.[53] This, in turn, diverts attention from the relations that constitute the divine persons *qua* persons and from their distinctive historical forms of action.[54]

However, merely to juxtapose an emphasis upon the *oneness* (unity) over against the *threeness* (diversity) of God is to choose between false alternatives, as far as Gunton was concerned. For him, such thinking constitutes "deficient theology"[55] because the divine persons-in-relation *is* the unity of God. In other words, "God is one only as three persons in relation."[56] At this point, the influence of the Cappadocian Fathers on Gunton's theology of person is unmistakeable.

Cappadocian Fathers: distinct persons in relation

The discussion in the chapters above has canvassed the extent of the influence that the trinitarian theology of Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory of Nazianzus exerted upon Colin Gunton's thought. His understanding of 'person', for example, is clearly formulated upon concepts drawn from Cappadocian trinitarian theology.

Insights gleaned from the Cappadocian desynonymisation of *ousia* and *hypostasis* are foundational for Gunton's theology of the trinitarian persons. Prior to the mid-fourth century, these terms had been considered as synonyms, but under the stewardship of the Cappadocian Fathers they were redefined in such a way that "*ousia* came to be used for the being of the one God; *hypostasis* for the three persons

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[53] Gunton, 'Augustine, the Trinity and the theological crisis of the West,' 57. Gunton's observation here is supported by Catherine LaCugna who adds that Augustine's doctrine of God teaches that "in some sense nature or essence precedes person: the three persons are divine because they share the same divine nature." LaCugna, *God for us*, 98.

[54] Colin E. Gunton, 'The Trinity in modern theology' in *A companion encyclopaedia of theology*, ed. Peter Byrne and Leslie Houlden (London: Routledge, 1995), 953.

[55] Gunton, *The one, the three and the many*, 25.

[56] Gunton, 'The Trinity in modern theology,' 954.

in whom the being of God … consists."[57] The significance of the Cappadocian innovation, according to Gunton, should not be underestimated for, in their insistence

> that the persons were hypostases, real beings, the Cappadocians struck a blow in favour of the belief that persons are not merely appearances but concrete realities. By insisting also that the three persons were not three gods but by their inextricable relatedness constituted the being of the one eternal God, they made it possible for later thinkers to conceive that persons are relational beings: that they have their being only in relations of free and mutual reciprocity with other persons.[58]

Elsewhere he argued that "the real development of a relational conception of the person is owed" to the Cappadocian Fathers who conceived the being of God (*ousia*) as the community of divine persons-in-relation.[59]

Person as a relational concept

Following the lead of the Cappadocians, Gunton held that 'person' is a theological category which is "both ontologically and logically primitive: the personal is both that from which other realities take their meaning and that which is irreducible to other (less than personal) entities."[60] Gunton was adamant, however, that the term, as it is used in trinitarian discourse, does not carry any hint of the modern tendency to conceive of persons in an individualistic manner.[61] "The notion

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[57] Gunton, 'Persons,' 639.

[58] ibid. Gunton's point is echoed by Markus Mühling who states that "Fourth-century Cappadocia may have seen nothing less than an ontological revolution. Beginning with the exact conceptual differentiation of *ousia* and *hypostasis* within the bounds of a doctrine of the Trinity, a genuine Christian ontological system came into being which ran contrary to all Hellenistic philosophies, regardless of whether they were Platonic, Aristotelian or even neo-Platonic. This Christian system allowed for the ontological priority of the person over substance, of the particular over the general, of freedom over necessity and relationality over individualism." Markus Mühling, 'The work of the Holy Spirit: the differentiation of human and divine salvific acts in the Pneumatomachian controversy' in *The theology of John Zizioulas: personhood and the church*, ed. Douglas H. Knight (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007), 87.

[59] Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed., 94.

[60] ibid., 11; cf. John D. Zizioulas, 'The teaching of the 2nd Ecumenical Council on the Holy Spirit in historical and ecumenical perspective' in *Credo in Spiritum Sanctum*, ed. José S. Martins (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1983), 36.

[61] The matter is brought into clear focus by Gunton when, in a discussion of the implications of the *imago Dei*, he rejected individualistic conceptions of human persons on the grounds of an analogy with the triune persons – as they remain persons-in-relation so, too, is human personhood configured relationally. Gunton, *The triune creator*, 208; cf. Knight, 'From metaphor to mediation,' 121.

of there being three persons in God is problematic for us," he argued, "because we think that person means individual in the modern sense of one whose being is defined *over against*, even in opposition to, other individuals."[62] Against this view he argued "that a person is different from an individual, in the sense that the latter is defined in terms of *separation from* other individuals, the person in terms of *relations with* other persons."[63] Elsewhere he added: "To think of persons is to think in terms of relations: Father, Son and Spirit are the particular persons they are by virtue of their relations with each other."[64] Understood in this way, a person is not to be conceived as "an individual centre of consciousness or something like that – although that may be part of the matter – but to be one whose being consists in relations of mutual constitution with other persons."[65]

Gunton's thought at this point is indebted to the trinitarianism of the Cappadocian Fathers as read through the theology of John Zizioulas.[66] While there are differences between Zizioulas' and Gunton's understanding of 'person' as a theological term, both rely heavily upon the Cappadocian innovation of identifying *hypostasis* with person.[67] Zizioulas describes this innovation as a unique example of

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[62] However, Gunton's rejection of individualistic interpretations of 'person' in trinitarian discourse did not preclude him from distinguishing between the divine persons. He held that the "trinitarian notion of person does incorporate one aspect of the notion of individuality, because it holds that each person is unique and irreplaceable. The Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Spirit, and all three of them are essential to God's being as God. On the other hand, these three are, while distinct from one another, not in competition, as in modern individualism, but entirely for and from one another. There is accordingly an orientation to the other within the eternal structure of God's being." Gunton, *The Christian faith*, 186f.

[63] Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed., 11.

[64] ibid.

[65] ibid., 195.

[66] Neil Ormerod argues that Gunton's appropriation of concepts drawn from Cappadocian theology is "mediated" through the writings of John Zizioulas. Neil Ormerod, *The Trinity: retrieving the Western tradition* (Milwauke, WI: Marquette University, 2005), 12.

[67] Gunton affirmed Zizioulas' argument that the person of the Father is "the eternal cause of both the being and the divinity of the other two persons" because it accentuated that divinity was personally, not substantially, derived. Nevertheless, he was uncomfortable with the notion of the "monotheism of the Father" because of the dangers represented by ontological hierarchicalism and subordinationism. Gunton, 'Persons and particularity,' 97, 106. Gunton protested that while the claim that the Father is the cause of the Son and the Spirit "preserves the due priority of the Father

cross-fertilisation between Greek and biblical conceptuality which served to ground a definition of 'person' in the trinitarian understanding of God.[68] The significance of the Cappadocian contribution, according to Gunton, derives from the emphasis that is placed upon the "logically irreducible concept of the person as one whose uniqueness and particularity derive from relations to others."[69] The person, understood thus, is constituted by the divine relations in such a way that the person *is person* only insofar as the person is related to and constituted by the 'other.' It is essential that the nuance in Gunton's position on this point is not overlooked for, over against some aspects of the Western tradition, he held that "only a person can be personal; and a relation is not a person."[70] Persons, he argued, "are not relations, but concrete particulars in relation to one another."[71]

For Gunton, therefore, 'person' implies relationality not individuality; and relationality necessitates particularity and otherness. Particularity, otherness and

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in the Godhead, I do not believe that it allows for an adequate theology of the mutual constitution of Father, Son and Spirit … Whatever the priority of the Father, it must not be conceived in such a way as to detract from the fact that all three persons are together the cause of the communion in which they exist in relations of mutual and reciprocal constitution." Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed., 196. The point of distinction, it seems, is that, for Zizioulas, the unity of God subsists in the *person* of the Father while, for Gunton, because the divine persons are *constituted* by their relations, divine unity is a function of both personal and relational concepts. Cf. Zizioulas, 'The Father as cause,' 136. Najeeb Awad offers a critique of Zizioulas' reading of Cappadocian theology, arguing that a patro-centric conception of the monarchia of the Trinity derives from Basil's theology and is to be read in the light of the important modifications made by Gregory of Nazianzus. Najeeb G. Awad, 'Between subordination and koinonia: toward a new reading of the Cappadocian theology' in *Modern theology* 23, no. 2 (2007), 196-199.

[68] John D. Zizioulas, 'Human capacity and incapacity: a theological exploration of personhood' in *Scottish journal of theology* 28, no. 5 (1975), 410f.

[69] Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed., 96

[70] ibid., 92.

[71] Gunton, 'Augustine, the Trinity and the theological crisis of the West,' 42. What Gunton intended by speaking about the divine persons being constituted by their relations is, however, something very different to that conception of persons proposed by Paul Fiddes. The view of 'person' as a subject *with* relations is dismissed by Fiddes in preference for an understanding of the person *as* relation. He states: "I suggest that we should go further in the direction of a relational understanding of God than this, and think of the 'persons' in God as not simply formed by their relations, but as being the relations themselves. The relations do not simply *make* the hypostases what they are, but *are* themselves hypostatic. The term 'hypostasis' as used by the Church fathers indicates distinct identity and particularity of being, and so to equate relationships with hypostases is to affirm that the relationships are three identities in God and are more being-full than anything in created reality." Paul S. Fiddes, 'The quest for a place which is 'not-a-place': the hiddenness of God and the presence of God' in *Silence and the Word: negative theology and incarnation*, ed. Oliver Davies and Denys Turner (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University, 2002), 51f.

relationality are therefore mutually constitutive concepts in Gunton's theology of person.[72] Persons, conceived thus, are not isolated, individual subjects but remain persons who are constituted by their relations. The trinitarian persons, therefore, "do not simply enter into relations with one another, but are constituted by one another in the relations."[73] At this point it becomes apparent that Gunton drew heavily upon the concept of *perichoresis* as a means of simultaneously speaking about the divine persons who, as persons-in-relation, mutually indwell each other.

Perichoresis: Spirit must be viewed as person

Perichoresis is a theological term which was first used in christological debate as a way of talking about the relation of the two natures of Christ in the hypostatic union.[74] Importantly, when used christologically, perichoresis did not imply interpenetration of the two natures.[75] It was not until the innovations of pseudo-Cyril in the sixth century that perichoresis found its way into trinitarian

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[72] The mutually constitutive and interrelated nature of these concepts in Gunton's thought may be construed as follows: 1) Particularity is predicated on Otherness because Otherness distinguishes Particularity (i.e., makes the Particular to be Particular); 2) Particularity is predicated on Relationality because Relationality constitutes the Particular (i.e., in relation to the 'Other'); 3) Otherness is predicated on Relationality because Relationality constitutes Otherness (i.e., in relation to the Particular); 4) Otherness is predicated on Particularity because Particularity distinguishes the Other (as 'Other'); 5) Therefore, Relationality, Particularity and Otherness are simultaneously and reciprocally constitutive of 'person.'

[73] Gunton, *The one, the three and the many*, 214. Miroslav Volf adds an important gloss to Gunton's formulation: "Community is not simply a collection of independent and self-standing persons; inversely, persons are not merely so many discrete individual parts and functions of the community. Persons and community are epiprimal in the Trinity." Miroslav Volf, '"The Trinity is our social program": the doctrine of the Trinity and the shape of social engagement' in *Modern theology* 14, no. 3 (1998), 409.

[74] Oliver D. Crisp, 'Problems with perichoresis' in *Tyndale bulletin* 56, no. 1 (2005), 121.

[75] In the earliest uses of perichoresis in christology "there is no clear notion of interpenetration," according to Crisp, 'Problems with perichoresis,' 122. See also, George Leonard Prestige, *God in patristic thought* (London: SPCK, 1964), 291. However, that assessment does not hold for the christology of John of Damascus (c. 676-749), who, according to Prestige, was "misled by the uncompounded verb χωρέω (= hold, contain) into thinking that they indicated a sort of penetration or permeation. Applied to the two natures this idea made the περιχώρησικς the actual process of their union, whereas in Gregory and Maximus it had been the result of their union. Consequently in John's Christology it is difficult to avoid practical Monophysitism unless the περιχώρησικς or co-inherence of the humanity and the deity is reduced to a purely formal relationship." George Leonard Prestige, 'Perichoreo and perichoresis in the Fathers' in *The journal of theological studies* 29, no. 113 (1928), 243f. Cf. Jürgen Moltmann, 'Perichoresis: an old magic word for a new trinitarian theology' in *Trinity, community, and power: mapping trajectories in Wesleyan theology*, ed. M. Douglas Meeks (Nashville, TN: Kingswood, 2000), 113f.

discourse as a way of expressing the co-inherence of the Father and Son (Jn 10:30; 17:11, 21).[76] More importantly, the transition from the christological to the trinitarian lexicon entailed an alteration to the term's meaning. Prestige makes much of the subtle but significant variation in meaning that perichoresis underwent as it was incorporated into the trinitarian vocabulary.

> It is no longer perichoresis 'to' one another, but perichoresis 'in' one another ... Perichoresis 'to' one another might imply that the Persons were equivalent or alternative; perichoresis 'in' one another implies that they are coterminous and co-extensive.[77]

The importance of perichoresis for an understanding of Gunton's insistence upon speaking of the Spirit as person draws upon the fact that his doctrine of the Trinity afforded priority to personal and relational categories to such an extent that he was able to affirm that "there is no relational being of God which is not that of the three persons in mutually constitutive perichoresis."[78]

A recent study, however, has questioned the validity of Gunton's employment of perichoresis as a dynamic term. David Höhne argues that Gunton misinterpreted the Greek Fathers' use of perichoresis in reference to the immanent Trinity. While the term refers specifically to relations between persons in such a way as it may "be expanded to include the interaction between persons and the impersonal world," Höhne remarks that it was never intended by those authors as "a way of conceiving what reality truly is, everywhere and always."[79] Without diminishing the seriousness of this observation – for it has very real implications for

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[76] Paul S. Fiddes, 'Participating in the Trinity' in *Perspectives in religious studies* 33, no. 3 (2006), 385. Cf. Crisp, 'Problems with perichoresis,' 122.
[77] Prestige, *God in patristic thought*, 298.
[78] Gunton, 'Being and person,' 128.
[79] David Alan Höhne, 'What can we say about perichoresis?: An historical, exegetical and theological examination of Colin Gunton's use of the concept.' (Dissertation, MTh, Moore Theological College, 2003), 130f. However, a more positive assessment of Gunton's use of perichoresis as a dynamic concept is provided by Graham Buxton, *The Trinity, creation and pastoral ministry: imaging the perichoretic God* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2005), 137-140.

Gunton's doctrine of the immanent Trinity[80] – it is important to recognise that in the formulation of his theology of person Gunton employed the concept of perichoresis as a way of speaking about the mutual interdependence of the Son and the Spirit in the economy of reconciliation. His point was that there is not only co-inherence between the divine *persons* but that there is also a perichoretic element to the respective *missions* and *functions* of the Son and the Spirit which can be described in terms of complementarity. Gunton employed the concept of perichoresis to speak about the activities of the 'two hands' of God in creation, redemption, and consummation as a 'working-together' of co-equal, consubstantial 'persons.' It is precisely this emphasis upon mutuality and complementarity which lies at the heart of Gunton's trinitarian theology of mediation, a topic that will be examined more closely in the following chapter.

The importance of Gunton's use of perichoresis as a way of conceiving the divine persons specifically as persons-in-relation is that it offers an alternative to the reluctance exhibited by some streams of the Western trinitarian tradition to speak about the full personhood of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, the hesitancy to speak explicitly about the Spirit as person led to the overstated but nonetheless insightful description of the Spirit as the forgotten person of the Trinity.[81] Colin Gunton, however, is one Western theologian who could not be accused of 'forgetting' the Spirit. His insistence that the Spirit is fully personal, moreover, was intended to counter the

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[80] Bruce McCormack, for example, argues that "Gunton wants to use the concept of perichoresis to describe the element of *similarity* in the analogy and not, as the ancients would have it, the element of *dissimiliarity*. The price he pays for this is a conceptual fuzziness in his doctrine of the Trinity. ... [He] so erodes the distinction between divine persons and human persons with his use of the concept of perichoresis that the recollection that humans are individuated by the bodily existence is not allowed to play the role it should – that of reminding us that perichoresis has to be unique to God." Bruce L. McCormack, '*The one, the three and the many*: in memory of Colin Gunton' in *Cultural encounters: a journal for the theology of culture* 1, no. 2 (2005), 15.

[81] George Johan Sirks, 'The Cinderella of theology: the doctrine of the Holy Spirit' in *Harvard theological review* 50, no. 2 (1957), 77. A fuller discussion of Christianity's 'forgetfulness' of the Spirit was provided at page 3, n. 9 above.

depersonalising tendencies that often plague Western pneumatologies, including those views which conceive of the Spirit as the causal force empowering pre-existing communities and/or individuals.[82] The problem of depersonalisation of the Spirit, according to Gunton, is found in Christian speech "of 'grace' as a sort of fluid poured into the person (that is the 'Catholic' tendency); or (the Protestant side) we have identified the Spirit's action with warm feelings, subjective inspirations and the like - a sort of religious fix."[83] For Gunton, the issue of increasing depersonalisation was not only a religious and theological problem, but also held important sociological implications for contemporary society as a whole. Here it becomes clear that it was a combination of theological and pastoral concerns that prompted Gunton to argue for the importance of personal being[84] and for the imperative of theological talk about God and humans.[85]

The historical background of 'person' as a specifically theological term, and Gunton's use of that term in his trinitarian theology, provides the occasion for the more specific question: what, then, did Colin Gunton intend by arguing that the Spirit is a person? His purpose, as we shall see, was to demonstrate that the Spirit's personhood was an essential ingredient in a relational conception of God. Moreover, an insistence upon the personhood of the Spirit provided the means of addressing depersonalising and subordinating tendencies in Western pneumatology as well as the rampant individualism of contemporary society.

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[82] Colin E. Gunton, *The actuality of atonement: a study of metaphor, rationality and the Christian tradition* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), 196.
[83] Gunton, *Father, Son and Holy Spirit*, 79.
[84] Colin E. Gunton, 'The God of Jesus Christ' in *Theology today* 54, no. 3 (1997), 325.
[85] The regard with which Gunton and others held the need for greater attention to be given to the question of personal being was such that it was made the theme of a conference held under the auspices of the Research Institute in Systematic Theology. The title of the edited volume of collected essays from that conference serves to establish the point. Christoph Schwöbel and Colin E. Gunton, eds., *Persons, divine and human: essays in theological anthropology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991).

Spirit as Person

For Gunton, the question of the personhood of the Father is so self-evident that it does not require defending.[86] The personhood of the Son is equally obvious inasmuch as it is "as an authentically human agent, that he is the divine Son."[87] However, the question of the personhood of the Spirit is not as straightforward, primarily because the scriptural narratives do not speak of the Spirit as person in the same way as they do with reference to the Father and the Son. Nevertheless, the personhood of the Holy Spirit in Colin Gunton's trinitarian pneumatology is affirmed in an unambiguous way inasmuch as the Spirit is held to be "a *person* sent by the Father through his ascended Son."[88] On this point, Gunton was in good company, for John Owen before him had argued that "the Holy Ghost is a *divine, distinct person*, and neither merely the power or virtue of God, nor any created spirit whatever."[89]

The personhood of the Spirit in this view is located in the economy of the Father's sending of the Son, who, in turn, sends the Spirit. The connection between the concept of 'person' and the economy of redemption in Gunton's thinking was made explicit when he argued that "the best way to define the person is ostensibly by indicating where persons are to be found and the way that they are conceived to be and act."[90]

It is precisely here, however, that one is confronted with an apparent and potentially damaging circularity in Gunton's argumentation. While Gunton recognised that the theological concept of person was forged in the heat of the attempts by early Christian theologians "to think together the oneness and threeness

[86] Gunton, *Act and being*, 143.
[87] ibid., 144.
[88] ibid., (emphasis added).
[89] John Owen, 'A brief declaration and vindication of the doctrine of the Trinity' in *The works of John Owen* vol. 2, ed. William H. Goold (London: Banner of Truth, 1966), 401.
[90] Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed., 201.

of the Christian God,"[91] with the notion of person affirmed as both a logically and ontologically primitive concept foundational to trinitarian theology,[92] at the same time he acknowledged that it is only through the economy of redemption that the trinitarian persons are known in their specific particularity and respective actions.[93] In other words, Gunton asserted that though an adequate theology of person is ultimately trinitarian in provenance, trinitarian theology itself must be grounded in the concept of persons-in-relation if it is to be consistent with the biblical narrative of redemption found in the New Testament. Gunton foresaw the potential for a similar aporia arising from the mutual dependence between his christology and doctrine of God. There the argument of circularity was overcome, he claimed, because "Christology is the basis of the doctrine of God, but once that is established, the enriched doctrine of God enables us, by a kind of returning movement, to show that the claims of Christology are indeed rooted in the way that God is."[94] Following a similar method of reasoning, it may be argued that while for Gunton the concept of person lies at the core of trinitarian theology, it is in the economy of redemption, insofar as it is the revelation of God's acts, where the three persons, who are in communion, are identified, so that this serves to deepen the understanding of what it is to be person.

Notwithstanding these and other related difficulties, Gunton argued for the

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[91] Gunton, 'Persons,' 639.

[92] Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed., 200. Gunton draws upon Zizioulas in support of this claim: see, for example, Zizioulas, *Being as communion*, 39-41; and, John D. Zizioulas, 'On being a person: towards an ontology of personhood' in *Persons, divine and human: King's College essays in theological anthropology*, ed. Christoph Schwöbel and Colin E. Gunton (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 40f.

[93] Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed., xxv; Gunton, 'Persons and particularity,' 106; cf. Dorothea Wendebourg, 'From the Cappadocian Fathers to Gregory Palamas: the defeat of trinitarian theology' in *Studia patristica: International Conference on Patristic Studies (8th : 1979 : Oxford, England)* vol. 17, ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone (Oxford: Pergamon, 1982), 194.

[94] Colin E. Gunton, *Yesterday and today: a study of continuities in christology*, 2nd ed. (London: SPCK, 1997), 224.

"redemption, rather than the abandonment"[95] of the use of 'person' in trinitarian theology principally because "there is little doubt that at the centre of all trinitarian thought is the question of personal being."[96] That he understood the Holy Spirit to be a personal and particular divine agent is also beyond doubt, for the Spirit is variously described as "a person," "an agent," "a subject," and as "the giver of life and of eternal life" before adding "we must then speak of the Spirit as a person in the eternal Trinity."[97] His position vis-à-vis the personhood of the Spirit is completely unambiguous.

> I would reiterate that the Spirit is not some force or possession operating causally within the believer or the institution, although sometimes our language suggests that way of thinking. As the Spirit of the Father who comes to us through the Son and lifts us up into the life of God, he is a person, and so acts personally, both respecting and granting freedom by his very otherness.[98]

Gunton's opposition to the use of depersonalising language in reference to the Holy Spirit was made explicit in a sermon preached at Brentwood United Reformed Church on Pentecost Sunday, 1995. "It is also important to remember," he proclaimed, "that the Spirit is not understood in the Bible as simply brute power or the source of miraculous happenings. The Spirit is a person - not an *it*, but a *you*."[99]

The distinction that Gunton made between the designations 'you' and 'it' in reference to the Holy Spirit is a foundational element in his trinitarian pneumatology. The point at stake, and for which he laboured so hard, was to establish that a doctrine

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[95] Gunton, *Father, Son and Holy Spirit*, 46.
[96] Gunton, 'The Trinity in modern theology,' 953.
[97] Gunton, *Act and being*, 145f. In 'Walking in the Spirit,' a sermon preached at Brentwood United Reformed Church on the 7th February 1993, Gunton clearly outlined some of the implications of speaking of the Spirit as a person: "We often think of the Spirit as a vague and perhaps powerful source of energy that makes people do odd and special things. That is not the heart of the matter. The Spirit is first of all the one with whom Jesus walked: who formed him in a body in the womb of Mary, led him into the wilderness, supported him as he went to his death and raised him from the tomb. The Spirit is the one sent by the risen and ascended Lord to be God's personal presence to us, the one who brings us to him through the life and sacrifice of his Son Jesus." Colin E. Gunton, *Theology through preaching: sermons for Brentwood* (London: T & T Clark, 2001), 182.
[98] Gunton, 'The church: John Owen and John Zizioulas on the church,' 203.
[99] Gunton, *Theology through preaching*, 111 (emphasis added).

of God that desires to remain consistent with the presentation of the divine economy of redemption revealed in the scriptural narratives must be formulated upon a personal and relational conceptuality. He held the view that an emphasis upon the particularity of the divine 'persons' overcomes the dangers of unitarian views of God (which necessarily give rise to modalistic readings of God's acts in history), while the perichoretic relationality of the 'persons' acts as a foil against tritheistic tendencies. For Gunton, it is the person of the Spirit who acts, together with the person of the Son, to bring about God's purposes in the world. This point will be explained in greater detail in the chapter to follow. Here, however, it will suffice to note that if, as Gunton asserted, God is personal and relational, then God's presence in the world must be a personal presence. Gunton's enthusiastic adoption of Irenaeus' metaphor of the 'two hands' of God demonstrates a commitment to conceiving both the Son and the Spirit as divine personal agents.

At the same time, even with his insistence that the Spirit is fully personal, Gunton himself did not always speak of the Spirit in personal terms. In one place, for example, he stated that "it is not altogether inappropriate sometimes to speak of the Spirit in impersonal or subpersonal terms, as a power or force."[100] A superficial reading may conclude that Gunton contradicted himself at this juncture. However, when read in context, Gunton's concern here was to say something about the presence of the Spirit as divine agent within the material order; to speak, that is, about *how* the Spirit mediates the will of the Father in and to the world. The work of the Spirit, specifically understood by Gunton as God's 'agent' within the world, will also receive a fuller explication in the chapters that follow.

Here it is sufficient to observe that Gunton's seemingly contradictory

[100] Gunton, 'God the Holy Spirit,' 118.

concession to some speech about the Spirit in impersonal terms is consistent with the position taken by Alasdair Heron, who is widely acknowledged as one of the foremost contemporary Reformed pneumatologists.[101] Heron is concerned with the apparent link between the *filioque* clause and the subordination and depersonalisation of the Spirit in Western theology. Heron argues that the *filioque* doctrine, with which much of the Reformed tradition is in agreement,[102] has come under increasing criticism in recent times because of the suspicion that it facilitates the subordination of the person of the Spirit to the person of the Son.[103] He acknowledges that any "subordination of the Holy Spirit to the person of Jesus Christ … tends towards a 'depersonalizing' of the Spirit, a reduction of him to a mere 'power' flowing from Christ."[104] However, Heron was careful to distinguish between depersonalising tendencies in the Western tradition and the use of impersonal language regarding the Spirit. Throughout his 1983 volume, *The Holy Spirit*, for example, he employs the impersonal pronoun "it" in reference to the Spirit.[105] It is clear that Heron did not intend to depersonalise the Spirit but to highlight the fact that the Spirit is person in a distinctive way:

> it remains legitimate to describe the Spirit as the 'third person' (or whatever other term may be preferred) *provided* it is recognised that each of the three is 'person' in distinctive fashion, as Father, as Son, as Holy Spirit. In particular, the difference and the complementarity between the Son and the Spirit should not be effaced. The Spirit is God,

[101] Lee E. Snook, 'What theologians are saying about the Holy Spirit' in *Word and world: theology for Christian ministry* 23, no. 2 (2003), 189.

[102] Alasdair I. C. Heron, 'Questions raised by member churches – attempt at an answer: the filioque clause' in *Reformed world* 39, no. 8 (1987), 847; Alasdair I. C. Heron, 'Holy Spirit' in *Encyclopedia of the Reformed faith*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1992), 177.

[103] Gunton, for example, argued that if "the Spirit is conceived to proceed from the Son as well as from the Father, he easily comes to be treated as subordinate to the Son, and is therefore effectively reduced to the margins, as functionally appearing to do little more than apply Christ's work in the Church or to the individual believer." Gunton, 'Being and person,' 132. See also Gary D. Badcock, 'The anointing of Christ and the *filioque* doctrine' in *The Irish theological quarterly* 60, no. 4 (1994), 242.

[104] Alasdair I. C. Heron, 'The *filioque* in recent Reformed theology' in *Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ: ecumenical reflections of the filioque controversy*, ed. Lukas Vischer (London: SPCK, 1981), 113.

[105] Alasdair I. C. Heron, *The Holy Spirit* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1983).

> but God acting within, directing us, not to himself as Holy Spirit, but to the incarnate Son, and in him, to the Father. It is for this reason that we have throughout described the Spirit as 'it' – not to deny a distinct *hypostasis* or *persona*, a genuine agency and purpose, but to hint, albeit inadequately, at the Spirit's self-effacingness, at the other-directedness of its activity as the light that is seen by what it illuminates.[106]

Gunton, too, was aware of the necessity to nuance carefully the argument about the personhood of the Spirit, adding that "if we are to identify the Spirit as personal or as a person we must be aware of the fact that the attribution is not so obvious as in the case of the other persons of the Trinity."[107]

The person of the Holy Spirit is most definitely not a forgotten or overlooked concept in the trinitarian theology of Colin Gunton. For him, speech about the person of the Spirit entails framing the discussion within trinitarian discourse. Gunton's conception of the Spirit as person, therefore, is developed as an argument for the particularity and relationality of the divine persons, understood perichoretically, and within this argument notions of individualism and depersonalising tendencies are specifically rejected. Understood in this way, Gunton's insistence upon maintaining an emphasis upon the full personhood of the Spirit is a significant contribution to Reformed pneumatology and to the wider Western theological task in general.

Spirit as person: a comparison with Reformed thought

There is a long and important history of pneumatological thought among Reformed theologians. John Hesselink, a scholar, according to Brian Gerrish, with "few equals as an interpreter of the Reformed tradition"[108] argues that "the Reformed tradition – at least certain strains of it – has placed great emphasis on the person and

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[106] ibid., 176.
[107] Gunton, 'God the Holy Spirit,' 107.
[108] Brian A. Gerrish, 'Tradition in the modern world: the Reformed habit of mind' in *Toward the future of Reformed theology: tasks, topics, traditions*, ed. David E. Willis and Michael Welker (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 11.

work of the Holy Spirit."[109] He remarked that the Reformed theological tradition provides

> a great appreciation, deeper understanding, and more comprehensive and balanced presentation of the full power and the work of the Holy Spirit than in any other tradition, including the Pentecostal tradition![110]

John Calvin, for example, has been variously described as *the* theologian of the Holy Spirit,[111] and even the *pre-eminent* theologian of the Spirit.[112] Indeed, one of Calvin's principal legacies to the Christian task of systematic theology, according to B. B. Warfield, was the central focus that he gave to pneumatology. "In his hands," Warfield wrote, "for the first time in the history of the Church, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit comes to its rights."[113] In this regard, T. F. Torrance highlighted that one of the most important features of Reformed theology derives from the fact that

> in formulating his doctrine of the Holy Trinity, Calvin operated with a concept of person ontologically derived from the eternal communion of love in the Godhead, which had been put forward by Richard of St. Victor and Duns Scotus, rather than with a concept of person analytically derived from the notions of individual substance and rational nature, which had been set out by Boethius and Thomas Aquinas.[114]

The importance of Calvin's contribution to pneumatological studies, moreover, coincides with the primary concern of this chapter, namely, an explication of Gunton's argument for greater attention to the personhood of the Spirit. Thus,

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[109] I. John Hesselink, 'The charismatic movement and the Reformed tradition' in *Major themes in the Reformed tradition*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 378.

[110] ibid.

[111] Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed., 146; Hesselink, 'The charismatic movement and the Reformed tradition,' 379; and, I. John Hesselink, 'Calvin, the Holy Spirit and mystical union' in *Perspectives* 13, no. 1 (1998), 15.

[112] Richard B. Gaffin, 'The Holy Spirit' in *Westminster theological journal* 43, no. 1 (1980), 60. Here Gaffin quotes approvingly from Benjamin B. Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine* (Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1956), 484.

[113] Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine*, 487.

[114] Thomas F. Torrance, 'The distinctive character of the Reformed tradition' in *Incarnational ministry: the presence of Christ in church, society, and family: essays in honor of Ray S. Anderson*, ed. Christian D. Kettler and Todd H. Speidell (Colorado Springs, CO: Helmers & Howard, 1990), 5.

Gunton affirmed the general thrust of Calvin's definition of person.

> Calvin's attempt is without doubt an indication of what must conceptually be done in order to secure all the dimensions of a doctrine of the one God who exists only in the communion of the three: the interrelatedness of the persons and the unique individuality-in-relation of each.[115]

Nevertheless, the specific question of the personhood of the Spirit in Calvin's thought is more difficult to pinpoint. Hesselink, for example, remarks that although Calvin affirmed the view that the Holy Spirit is the third trinitarian person, consubstantial with the Father and the Son, it was not always clear what he intended by the term 'person.'[116] What Calvin did offer, however, reveals an apparent indebtedness to medieval and scholastic metaphysical conceptuality[117] inasmuch as he defined 'person' in terms of "a 'subsistence' in God's essence, which, while being related to the others, is distinguished by an incommunicable quality. By the term 'subsistence' we would understand something different from 'essence.'"[118]

Gunton described Calvin's definition as "nearly successful."[119] The deficiency with the definition, as he saw it, was that Calvin had not managed to escape completely from the Western trinitarian tradition's tendency to conceive of the divine persons as logically secondary to that which is ontologically prior, namely, the *nature* or *essence* of God.

The crucial point of distinction between these two Reformed theologians is highlighted by Gunton's insistence that a satisfactory definition of person, as noted

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[115] Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed., 201.
[116] Hesselink, 'Calvin, the Holy Spirit and mystical union,' 15.
[117] Specifically, Gunton argued that "Calvin must be understood as a traditionalist in the light of his intellectual background and history. Here by tradition I refer not to acceptance of the faith that is handed on from one generation to another so much as to the way in which one stands in relation to the tradition of thought from which one emerges." Colin E. Gunton, *A brief theology of revelation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 84.
[118] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster John Knox, 1960), I.8.6.
[119] Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 200.

earlier, must be drawn from "where persons are to be found and the way that they are conceived to be and act."[120] Gunton's expressed concern with matters of location, being, and action was epistemological insofar as he held that knowledge of the divine persons is derived from the way in which they are revealed in the economy of redemption. The point that he made in response to Calvin is that "the God who meets us in the Son and the Spirit is the only God there is."[121]

Another major contributor to Reformed trinitarian thought was the Swiss theologian, Karl Barth (1886-1968). Barth's prioritisation of the doctrine of the Trinity in particular, represents a major influence upon the development of Gunton's trinitarian theology.[122] However, the specific question of the *person* of the Spirit in Barth's doctrine of the Trinity is one of the points with which Gunton disagreed.

It is well-known that Barth was dismissive of 'person' on the grounds that it was misleading, ill-defined, and therefore was to be counted as one of the most slippery terms employed within trinitarian discourse.[123] The problem, as Barth saw it, was that modern psychological understandings of 'person' almost inevitably produce tritheistic interpretations.[124] Gunton remarked that in Barth's opinion, "the concept of 'person' is irredeemable, therefore we must find something else."[125] Barth proposed

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[120] ibid., 201.

[121] Gunton, *Act and being*, 93.

[122] Colin E. Gunton, 'Theology in communion' in *Shaping a theological mind: theological context and methodology*, ed. Darren C. Marks (Aldersgate, UK: Ashgate, 2002), 32.

[123] Karl Barth, *Church dogmatics* I/1, trans. G. T. Thompson (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1963), 401-413. Cf. Thomas A. Smail, 'The doctrine of the Holy Spirit' in *Theology beyond Christendom: essays on the centenary of the birth of Karl Barth, May 10, 1886*, ed. John Thompson (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick, 1986), 88; and, Stephen R. Holmes, 'Introduction' in *The Barth lectures* by Colin E. Gunton, ed. Paul H. Brazier (London: T & T Clark, 2007), 1f.

[124] Barth states, for example, that person "in the sense of the Church doctrine of the Trinity has nothing to do with 'personality.' Thus the meaning of the doctrine of the Trinity is not that there are three personalities in God. That would be the worst and most pointed expression of tritheism, against which we must here guard." Barth, *Church dogmatics* I/1, 403.

[125] Colin E. Gunton, *The Barth lectures* ed. Paul H. Brazier (London: T & T Clark, 2007), 87. Gunton's rhetorical flourish must be read over against Barth who, for his part, avoided the melodramatic and simply stated that in "view of the history of the concept of Person in the doctrine of the Trinity one may well ask whether dogmatics is wise in further availing itself of it in this connection." Indeed, he saw "no cause to wish to outlaw the concept of Person outright or to

the alternative term *Seinweise* ("modes of being") which was incorporated into his programmatic statement: "God is one in three modes of being, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."[126] For Barth, this meant that "the one personal God is what He is not in one mode only, but … in the mode of the Father, in the mode of the Son, in the mode of the Holy Spirit."[127]

Gunton, on the other hand, argued that God "is personal as being three persons in relation, of having his being in what Father, Son and Holy Spirit give to and receive from each other in the freedom of their unknowable eternity."[128] Gunton argued that Barth's language of personhood, derived as it is from the being of one God and made known in three modes of being, "fails to reclaim the relational view of the person from the ravages of modern individualism."[129] Although recognising that Barth's theology of the divine persons fails to provide an adequate safe-guard against suspicions of modalism, Gunton defended Barth against the oft-repeated allegation of modalism, on the grounds that Barth's trinitarian theology does not repeat the heresy of Sabellianism.[130]

Spirit as person and social trinitarianism

Yet another aspect of Gunton's insistence upon speaking of the Spirit as fully personal that has been subject to criticism is the question of the analogy of social relations. Kathryn Tanner has observed that Gunton is one of a number of contemporary trinitarian theologians who argue that the concepts of human person

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withdraw it from circulation. But we could only apply it in the sense of a practical abbreviation and as a reminder of the historical continuity of the problem." Barth, *Church dogmatics* I/1, 412.

[126] Barth, *Church dogmatics* I/1, 413.

[127] ibid.

[128] Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed., 195.

[129] ibid.

[130] The conversational and occasional style of *The Barth Lectures* provides insight into Gunton's view of Barth's alleged modalistic tendencies. He remarked that Barth "is often accused of modalism, and I think that he is near it," before adding the qualification that "I think that he is on a bit of a knife-edge myself, but then all theology is on a knife-edge, it is such a difficult discipline." Gunton, *The Barth lectures*, 88, 89.

and relations are to be modelled on the relations between the trinitarian persons.[131] However, Tanner and other Reformed scholars are quick to point out that an undiscerning equating of the two groups proves to be highly problematic.[132] Their criticism raises the question of the connection between Gunton's view of person and what has been called 'social trinitarianism,' a contemporary form of trinitarian thought viewed by some commentators with guarded suspicion[133] while others reject it outright, considering it an anathema.[134]

Michael Welker's well-known designation of the Spirit as "public person" provides the starting point for a discussion of the inferences and social implications that can be drawn from Gunton's treatment of the Spirit as person.[135] Welker holds that modern concepts of person are almost invariably reductionistic insofar as the term 'person' is understood as a synonym for self and, therefore, perpetuates anthropocentrism.[136] Moreover, he adds that if one conceives of 'person' in terms of a *human* individual centre of action then one is bound to find that "Jesus Christ is the

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[131] Kathryn Tanner, for example, lists the following authors and their respective volumes: "Staniloae, *Theology and the Church*; Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*; Colin Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991); and Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society*, trans. P. Burns (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1988)." Kathryn Tanner, *Jesus, humanity and the Trinity: a brief systematic theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2001), 82 n. 34.

[132] Tanner, *Jesus, humanity and the Trinity*, 82. See also Alistair McFadyen's argument that, as tempting as it is, "I cannot delineate the nature of the individuality of the three divine Persons and then magically transpose that definition into the human sphere. I cannot simply assume that a description of the individuality, personhood and community of the Triune God applies equally, automatically and 'naturally' to human beings." Alistair I. McFadyen, 'The Trinity and human individuality: the condition of relevance' in *Theology* 95, no. 763 (1992), 14; see also Richard M. Fermer, 'The limits of trinitarian theology as a methodological paradigm: "Between the Trinity and hell there lies no other choice" (Vladimir Lossky)' in *Neue zeitschrift für systematische theologie und religionsphilosophie* 41, no. 2 (1999), 184f.

[133] Craig G. Bartholomew, 'The healing of modernity: a trinitarian remedy? A critical dialogue with Colin Gunton's *The one, the three and the many: God, creation and the culture of modernity*' in *European journal of theology* 6, no. 2 (1997), 128.

[134] For example, Kilby, 'Perichoresis and projection,' 432-445.

[135] A 'public person', according to Welker, is "the public, objective and objectified person in front of the mask" of pre-modern understanding of person, and must be distinguished from the individual subjectivity that resides 'behind the mask.' Michael Welker, 'Is the autonomous person of European modernity a sustainable model of human personhood?' in *The human person in science and theology*, ed. Niels Henrik Gregersen, Willem B. Drees and Ulf Görman (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 96.

[136] Michael Welker, 'Spirit topics: Trinity, personhood, mystery and tongues' in *Journal of pentecostal theology* 10 (1997), 31f.

primary individual-human center of action of the Spirit."[137] He observes that to speak of the personhood of the Spirit in terms of Jesus Christ is not mistaken, for it is in accord with the scriptural presentation of the self-effacing nature of the Spirit (Jn 14:26; 16:13f). Nevertheless, to proceed with a conception of person as "an active, centering, individual agent"[138] does not do justice to the concept because it "is only in exchange with an organized social environment that an individual center of action becomes a person. A self-referentially centering agent becomes a person only in union with this organized social sphere, in the latter's relation to the former."[139] Bernd Oberdorfer, who is in agreement with Welker's concept of "public person," argues that the Spirit's non-self-referential character means that the "Spirit's identity, thus, is not defined by its reflection on itself, but rather by its reference to Christ ... The Spirit is what it is not by revealing itself but by revealing Christ."[140] These configurations are but variations on the same principle to be found in Gunton's thought: that is, to be a person is to be in relation. This principle, as we have argued, was foundational to Gunton's understanding of and speech about the divine persons.

> The Father, Son and Spirit are *persons* because they enable each other to be truly what the other is: they neither assert at the expense of, nor lose themselves in the being of, the others. Being in communion is being that realizes the reality of the particular person within a structure of being together. There are not three gods, but one, because in the divine being a person is one whose being is so bound up with the being of the other two that together they make up the one God.[141]

Gunton's ideas about human persons and human society, moreover, were developed from the same conceptual apparatus.

To be is not to be an individual; it is not to be isolated from others, cut

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[137] Michael Welker, *God the Spirit*, trans. John F. Hoffmeyer (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1994), 312.
[138] ibid.
[139] ibid., 312f.
[140] Bernd Oberdorfer, 'The Holy Spirit - a person? reflections on the Spirit's trinitarian identity' in *The work of the Spirit: pneumatology and Pentecostalism*, ed. Michael Welker (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 38.
[141] Gunton, *Father, Son and Holy Spirit*, 16.

> off from them by the body that is a tomb, but in some way to be bound up with one another in relationship. Being a person is about being from and for and with the other. I need you – and particularly those of you who are nearest to me – in order to be myself. That is the first thing to say: persons are beings who exist only in relation – in relation to God, to others and to the world from which they come.[142]

The question of the correspondence of concepts in Gunton's thought with those found in social trinitarianism, however, is not as clear cut as it may first appear. As we noted above, some commentators are concerned by what they claim to be an illegitimate move of speaking analogously about the divine persons-in-relation in one breath and the human community of persons-in-relation in the next. Kathryn Tanner, for example, argues that by ignoring the ontological differences between human and trinitarian relations, theologians face the prospect of failing to maintain the distinction between uncreated and created reality by conceiving divine relations in human terms. Speech which holds that the "Trinity is a perfect community of persons in an ordinary sense of persons, in the way you and I are persons," according to Tanner, runs the risk of falling victim to tritheism.[143]

Another weakness identified by Tanner is the opposite of the first, namely, the temptation to speak of human relations modelled too closely upon that of the divine persons such that one overlooks the qualitative ontological distinction that must be maintained between the divine relations and those shared in human society. The problem, according to Tanner, arises when concepts like co-inherence must be redefined so that what is true of divine persons 'indwelling' each other might also be true of human persons.[144]

Tanner is insistent that "One should avoid modelling human relations directly on trinitarian ones, because trinitarian relations, say, the co-inherence of trinitarian

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[142] ibid., 14. Cf. Buxton, *The Trinity, creation and pastoral ministry*, 93.
[143] Tanner, *Jesus, humanity and the Trinity*, 82.
[144] ibid.

Persons, simply are not appropriate as they stand for human relations."[145] The point is repeated by McCormack who, in an article concerned with an analysis of Colin Gunton's legacy for Reformed theology, remarks that Gunton knew full well that the most foundational characteristic of human individuation is as embodied, material beings. Therefore, according to McCormack, one simply cannot avoid the logic which suggests that insofar "as the 'persons' of the Godhead do not have bodies, they are not individuals in the same sense as human beings are."[146]

The validity of these criticisms in relation to the theology of person as it is expounded in Colin Gunton's trinitarian theology remains to be tested, however. Tanner and McCormack have raised two objections in particular that require further attention. It is claimed, in the first place, that Gunton failed to maintain an adequate qualitative ontological distinction between divine and human persons when what was said of the triune persons-in-relation is applied analogously to interpersonal relations within human society. The primary objection is that human persons do not co-inhere in each other's being in the same way that is true for divine persons. However, framing the objection in this way demonstrates a misunderstanding of Gunton's intentions. His priority, as this chapter has argued, remained the establishment of the point that because all being has its origin in God, and because God is revealed as personal and relational, then 'person' is a relational concept that has logical and ontological primacy.[147] It was here that Gunton used perichoresis as a way of speaking about the dynamic, reciprocal and eternal relatedness of the divine

[145] ibid. The objection that the 'indwelling' of human persons cannot be conceived in the same manner as that of the divine persons is also made by Miroslav Volf, *After our likeness: the church as the image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 210f; and Douglas B. Farrow, 'Person and nature: the necessity-freedom dialectic in John Zizioulas' in *The theology of John Zizioulas: personhood and the church*, ed. Douglas H. Knight (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007), 118.
[146] McCormack, '*The one, the three and the many*: in memory of Colin Gunton,' 15.
[147] Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed., 200.

persons.[148] Importantly, he had already explicitly dismissed the Latin derivative of perichoresis, co-inherence, on the grounds that it was too suggestive of static and substantialist conceptuality.[149] Gunton, as we have seen, was far more concerned with relations *between* persons. Therefore when he spoke of human society as persons-in-relation he intended that human persons were 'in' each other to the extent that their personhood is established via a dynamic and reciprocal relatedness of similarly constituted persons.[150] He observed that even

> within the closeness of a marriage, it is important not to speak of a union of a couple if this suggests some kind of merging into the other. To relate rightly to other people is to intend them in their otherness and particularity, to allow them room to be themselves.[151]

The second objection is best stated as a question: does Gunton's insistence upon speaking of the divine persons specifically *as persons* mean that he intended them to be understood as *individuals* who form a divine society? Thomas Thompson makes an insightful distinction that may prove useful in this regard. He argues that simply affording attention to the place of person and relation in trinitarian theology is not sufficient to warrant the label social trinitarianism because there are major differences to be noted between those works which "espouse a social *analogy* and those that contain social *motifs*."[152] For his part, Colin Gunton was not oblivious to the weaknesses contained in some social models of the Trinity. He dismissed any

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[148] Gunton, *The one, the three and the many*, 163-165.
[149] ibid., 163 n. 10.
[150] See, for example, Christoph Schwöbel's interpretation of Gunton's position in *The one, the three and the many: God, creation and the culture of modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1993): "Rather than projecting the descriptions of the trinitarian being of God directly unto the ideal of a human society, thereby repeating the logic of projection rightly rejected by the Cappadocian critique of the monotheistic political theologies of their day, Gunton asks in what way the doctrine of the Trinity generates transcendentals which allows us to grasp the structure of created being by attempting to make its relations to the being of the triune creator transparent." Christoph Schwöbel, 'Radical monotheism and the Trinity' in *Neue zeitschrift für systematische theologie und religionsphilosophie* 43, no. 1 (2001), 72.
[151] Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed., 203.
[152] Thomas R. Thompson, 'Trinitarianism today: doctrinal renaissance, ethical relevance, social redolence' in *Calvin theological journal* 32, no. 1 (1997), 30.

notion of sociality imported, by way of analogy, into the immanent Trinity, concentrating rather upon the function of the Spirit as the mediator of eschatological perfecting.

> I think that it is important in this context to be aware of the apparently tritheistic tendencies of some of what are called social theories of the Trinity. We are not licensed by revelation to speak of a social life; we are, however, to say that if the Spirit works in a particular way in the economy as the one who perfects the creation, it is reasonable to suppose that he has a similar kind of function to perform in relation to the being of God, to the communion that is the life of God.[153]

Colin Gunton's insistence upon prioritising the economy of redemption as the way in which revelation of the divine love is expressed, led him to speak of the Spirit as fully personal in the sense that it is the person of the Spirit who empowers the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth so that he was enabled to be *who* he was called to be, namely, the Son of God.[154] Moreover, it is the person of the Holy Spirit who also mediates to human beings the salvation that comes by grace through faith on account of Jesus Christ.

In this way, Gunton's theology of mediation, grounded as it is in trinitarian pneumatology, is predicated upon a conception of the Holy Spirit as the personal, transcendent and perfecting agent in the world. The question of what Gunton intended by affording increased attention to the Spirit's transcendence, and the implications of that decision, will be examined in the next chapter.

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[153] Gunton, *The one, the three and the many*, 190.

[154] Gunton, 'The God of Jesus Christ,' 331; Colin E. Gunton, 'A systematic triangle: Hegel, Kierkegaard, Barth and the question of ethics,' a paper presented to a theology seminar held at the Research Institute in Systematic Theology, King's College, London, (19 March 1999), 7; Colin E. Gunton, *Intellect and action: elucidations on Christian theology and the life of faith* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 80.

Chapter Five

Spirit as transcendent

The second distinctive feature of Colin Gunton's trinitarian pneumatology identified in this study is the emphasis that he afforded to the Spirit's transcendence. Indeed, it is true to say that Gunton held that many of the weaknesses characterising the Western theological tradition may be traced to a failure to maintain sufficient emphasis upon the transcendence of the person of the Spirit.[1]

The insistence upon speaking of the transcendence of the Spirit distinguishes Gunton's trinitarian theology from the majority of Western pneumatological thought, both Catholic and Protestant.[2] More specifically, Gunton's position represents a significant challenge to the view that restricts the place of the Spirit to a radical interiorisation within individual human persons. The Holy Spirit, according to Colin Gunton, must be conceived as personal and transcendent, as "free Lord" so to speak, as a foil to guard against "the temptation of identifying him with some immanent causal force: with our ecclesiastical or political institutions, or with some private experiences and beliefs."[3]

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[1] Colin E. Gunton, 'The church: John Owen and John Zizioulas on the church' in *Theology through the theologians: selected essays, 1972-1995* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 189.

[2] Gunton argues that it "is little oversimplification to say that whereas Rome tended to locate the Spirit's action within the institutional church, the Reformation, in effect if not in intention, came to attribute it to the individual." Colin E. Gunton, 'Holy Spirit' in *Oxford companion to Christian thought*, ed. Adrian Hastings, Alistair Mason, Hugh S. Pyper, Ingrid Lawrie and Cecily Bennett (Oxford, UK: Oxford University, 2000), 305f.

[3] Gunton, 'The church: John Owen and John Zizioulas on the church,' 189. An example of the tendency toward an interiorisation of the Spirit in Western theology finds expression in the statement that the "divine agent of holiness *in* the Christian and *in* the Church is precisely the Holy Spirit." Geoffrey Wainwright, 'The Holy Spirit in the life of the church' in *Greek Orthodox theological review* 27, no. 4 (1982), 448 (emphasis added). Another example is provided by Tom Smail, who adds that where liberal Protestanism conceives pneumatology anthropologically, Roman Catholicism does so ecclesiologically. Both conceptualisations are *interior*, he remarks, inasmuch as "the liberals reduce the Spirit of God to the being of man and the Roman Catholics tend to make him the spirit of the Church." Thomas A Smail, 'The doctrine of the Holy Spirit' in *Theology beyond Christendom: essays on the centenary of the birth of Karl Barth, May 10, 1886*, ed. John Thompson (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick, 1986), 90.

A further benefit gained by arguing for an appropriate emphasis upon the transcendence of the Spirit is, as we shall see, that it allows Gunton to afford much more attention to the humanity of Christ than had often been the case in Western christologies. For Gunton, it is through the mediation of the transcendent Spirit that Christ's humanity was formed, empowered, sustained, resurrected and ascended to glory. In short, "Jesus' authentically human life is made what it uniquely is through the action of the Spirit."[4]

It is important to repeat, however, that while Gunton's pneumatology is distinctive among Reformed expressions of the person and work of the Spirit, it is not entirely without precedent.[5] In fact, Gunton's desire to emphasise previously overlooked elements of Christian teaching about the doctrine of God means that he drew upon concepts that had been expressed by theologians from earlier times.

Influences

An appreciation of what Gunton intended by insisting upon the Spirit's transcendence must take account of the influence that key thinkers from the history of Christian thought have exercised over the development of his pneumatology. Without repeating too much of the material covered in Chapter Two above, it is important nonetheless to recognise that central elements of Colin Gunton's view of the transcendence of the Spirit may be traced to the thought of three theologians in

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[4] Colin E. Gunton, 'Martin Kähler revisited: variations on Hebrews 4:15' in *Ex auditu* 14, no. 1 (1998), 26f.

[5] John Owen and Edward Irving, for example, are two such Reformed thinkers who held that Christ's humanity was pneumatically empowered. Moreover, Gunton's theology of the Spirit's mediation to the humanity of the Son is not a concept that is restricted to Protestant thought. Walter Kasper, for example, argued that the scholastic tendency to speak about the divinisation of Jesus' humanity by the *Logos* at the time of the incarnation is one-sided and should be replaced with a view that afforded more attention to the role of the Holy Spirit. That is to say, Kasper dismissed the notion of appropriation (of sanctification of the Son's humanity because of the hypostatic union) in preference for the understanding which holds that the mediation of the Spirit formed the presuppositional ground of the incarnation. In short, Kasper argued that Jesus' humanity was sanctified by the Spirit so that, therefore, the Spirit is the means by which Jesus is enabled freely to obey the will of his Father. Walter Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, trans. V. Green (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1976), 250f.

particular, namely, Irenaeus of Lyons, John Owen, and Edward Irving.

Irenaeus of Lyons

We have previously noted Gunton's appreciation of Irenaeus' metaphor of the two hands of God as a fruitful way of speaking about "the Son and the Spirit, who are the divine mediators of his action in and towards the world."[6]

The Irenaean metaphor is, for Gunton, the most concise intimation of the mutual complementarity of Son and Spirit[7] in the economy of creation and redemption providing a framework within which Gunton was able to expound the view that the work of God is invariably trinitarian because the Father's will is established in the world through the mediation of the Son and Spirit working in perichoretic collaboration.[8] In Gunton's own words,

> All of God's acts take their beginning in the Father, are put into effect through the Son and reach their completion in the Spirit. Put otherwise, God's actions are *mediated*: he brings about his purposes towards and in the world by the mediating actions of the Son and the Spirit, his 'two hands'.[9]

Crucially, Gunton's argument for the complementary nature of the mediating actions of the Son and the Spirit is predicated upon the immanence of the Son and the transcendence of the Spirit.

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[6] Colin E. Gunton, *The Christian faith: an introduction to Christian doctrine* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2002), 10.

[7] Tom Smail employs a similar phrase – "the mutual interdependence of the Son and the Holy Spirit" – as a way of indicating the persons of the Son and the Spirit "work in the closest co-ordination with each other and neither has priority over the other." Thomas A. Smail, 'The Holy Trinity and the resurrection of Jesus' in *Different Gospels: Christian orthodoxy and modern theologies*, ed. Andrew Walker (London: SPCK, 1993), 23, 25; see also Thomas A. Smail, 'The Holy Spirit in the Holy Trinity' in *Nicene Christianity: the future for a new ecumenism*, ed. Christopher R. Seitz (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2001), 163.

[8] Gunton is not alone in identifying Irenaeus as a significant resource in the development of an integrated and simultaneously christological and pneumatological theology. James Purves, for example, draws attention to Irenaeus' bifocal view of God in the economy of salvation and the way in which Irenaeus insists that *together* the Son and the Spirit are the divine agents of the salvific mission of God. James G. M. Purves, 'The Spirit and the *imago Dei*: reviewing the anthropology of Irenaeus of Lyons' in *The evangelical quarterly* 68, no. 1 (1996), 115f.

[9] Colin E. Gunton, *Act and being: towards a theology of the divine attributes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 77.

John Owen

Also previously noted was the fact that another of Gunton's theological heroes was John Owen,[10] the seventeenth century English Puritan whose important contribution to pneumatological study, according to Gunton, included the emphasis he placed upon the Spirit's transcendence and a theology of the church as community.[11]

John Owen's doctrine of the transcendence of the Holy Spirit is as innovative as it is important, Gunton argued, precisely because "it runs counter to theology's tendency to conceive the Spirit as an essentially immanent force."[12] More importantly, though, Owen's christology was enhanced by the understanding that the Spirit was "the 'other' over against Jesus, freeing him to be the true Messiah of God."[13] Gunton remarked that, for Owen, the Spirit was no longer understood as "the immanent possession of Jesus, but as God's free and life-giving activity in and towards the world as he maintains and empowers the human activity of the incarnate Son."[14] In Owen's own words, this concept is expressed as follows:

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[10] Stephen R. Holmes, 'Reformed varieties of the *communicatio idiomatum*' in *The person of Christ*, ed. Stephen R. Holmes and Murray A. Rae (London: T & T Clark International, 2005), 70f.

[11] It should be noted that while Gunton's claim that Owen emphasised the transcendence of the Spirit is not without basis, a close reading of Owen reveals that this is Gunton's interpretation of Owen's position. Throughout Chapter Six of *A discourse concerning the Holy Spirit*, for example, Owen expounds the relationship between the Spirit and the human nature of Christ, arguing that the Spirit's work is concerned with the conception and birth of Jesus (i.e., the *incarnation* of the Son), and the equipping of Jesus to fulfil his calling (i.e., the *mission* of the Son). While Owen does speak about the Spirit's mediation to the human nature of the Son – e.g., "the original infusion of all grace into the human nature of Christ, was the immediate work of the Holy Spirit" (p.168) – his argument concerns the *deity* rather than the transcendence of the Spirit. It is conceded that the Spirit's transcendence is an implied consequence of an argument for the divinity of the Spirit; however, it is equally clear that *transcendence* is not a term employed by Owen. Thus, while Gunton's contention follows logically from what Owen wrote, the terms transcendence and transcendent do not appear within the source cited by Gunton – namely, John Owen, 'A discourse concerning the Holy Spirit' in *The works of John Owen* vol. 3, ed. William H. Goold (London: Banner of Truth, 1966). Gunton, 'The church: John Owen and John Zizioulas on the church,' 191-192.

[12] Gunton, 'The church: John Owen and John Zizioulas on the church,' 191.

[13] ibid., 192.

[14] Colin E. Gunton, 'God the Holy Spirit: Augustine and his successors' in *Theology through the theologians: selected essays, 1972-1995* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 115f.

> By him [the Spirit] he [Jesus] was directed, strengthened, and comforted, in his whole course, - in all his temptations, troubles, and sufferings, from first to last; for we know that there was a confluence of all these upon him in his whole way and work, a great part of that whereunto he humbled himself for our sakes consisting in these things. In and under them he stood in need of mighty supportment and strong consolation. ... Now, all the voluntary communications of the divine nature unto the human were, as we have showed, by the Holy Spirit.[15]

The work of the Spirit in John Owen's theology complements that of the Son insofar as the Spirit's ministry to Jesus is the mediation of the Father's will to the Son through the Spirit. Such an explicitly trinitarian configuration held immediate appeal for Gunton because a theology of mediation to the Son through the Spirit provided a way of conceiving God's provision to the humanity of Christ and, by analogy, to the lives of Jesus' followers.[16] In this way Gunton understood the Father's will to be worked out in the world via a double commissioning in which both the Son (Jn 1:32-34) and the Son's disciples are sent into the world in the power of the transcendent Spirit (Jn 20:22).[17]

Edward Irving

The third theologian whom Gunton had occasion to draw upon in the formulation of his view of the importance of the Spirit's transcendence was Edward

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[15] Owen, 'A discourse concerning the Holy Spirit,' 175.

[16] The concept of mediation, according to Douglas Knight, is "Colin Gunton's most famous phrase" in the sense that it describes the work of the Spirit in terms of a 'go-between' who relates the Father and the Son, the Son and his followers, and God and the world. Douglas H. Knight, 'Father, Son and Holy Spirit – Colin Gunton and the doctrine of God,' a paper presented at *The triune God in the theology of Colin E. Gunton* conference, Spurgeon's College, London (10 September 2007), 6. Cf. John V. Taylor, *The go-between God* (London: SCM, 1972).

[17] During the farewell discourses of John's gospel, Jesus informed his disciples that the Holy Spirit would not be concerned to speak about himself – i.e., to reveal details about the Spirit's place in the immanent Trinity or function in the economic Trinity. Rather, as the self-effacing member of the Trinity, the Spirit's work involves revealing things to Jesus' followers *about Jesus* (Jn 14:25-27; 16:12-15). Thus, an intratrinitarian dynamic is on display here: the overt self-effacing action of the Son and of the Spirit as they each in turn point away from themselves toward the other. The Son does the Father's work and promises to send the Spirit, just as the Spirit teaches the disciples about Jesus and draws believers into union with the Son. Gunton adds, in this regard, that within "the complex interrelations of the persons of the Trinity, the function of the Spirit is to guide Jesus as the one who reveals the Father. The Spirit is thus the one who points away from himself to Jesus, whose will is to do the work of the one who sends him." Colin E. Gunton, *A brief theology of revelation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 76.

Irving. Described by Gunton as "a ground-breaking theologian"[18] who followed closely in the tradition of Calvin,[19] Irving was concerned that the doctrines of God as Trinity and the incarnation of the Son were becoming increasingly sidelined during the early decades of the nineteenth century. He responded by arguing that the revelation of the triune nature of God in the event of the incarnation occurs precisely because the Son becomes incarnate by the power of the Spirit.[20] Most importantly, here, Irving was adamant that the humanity of Christ was precisely the same humanity as that which other human beings share, namely, one liable to temptation and sin. In Irving's words, Christ's "flesh was of that mortal and corruptible kind which is liable to all forms of evil suggestion and temptation, through its participation in a fallen nature and fallen world."[21]

It is an unfortunate fact of history, according to Gunton, that Irving's insight was expressed in language "too subject to misunderstanding"[22] and, consequently, he was dismissed from the Church of Scotland for christological heresy in March 1833.[23] Despite the claims of his detractors, however, it is clear that Irving did not teach that Christ sinned but rather that he was preserved sinless via the empowering of the Spirit. The Son's sinlessness, in Irving's view, was not an accident of metaphysical impossibility but exists as a personal and relational possibility that is consequent upon the transcendent Spirit's moral empowerment of the Son's

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[18] Colin E. Gunton, 'Foreword' in *Christ and the Spirit: the doctrine of the incarnation according to Edward Irving* by Graham W. P. McFarlane (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1996), ix.

[19] Colin E. Gunton, 'The triune God and the freedom of the creature' in *Karl Barth: centenary essays*, ed. Stephen W. Sykes (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University, 1989), 63.

[20] Graham W. P. McFarlane, *Christ and the Spirit: the doctrine of the incarnation according to Edward Irving* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1996), 3f.

[21] Edward Irving, *The collected writings of Edward Irving* vol. 5, ed. Gavin Carlyle (London: Alexander Strahan 1864), 126f.

[22] Gunton, *The Christian faith*, 102.

[23] Irving's excommunication from the Church of Scotland took place on the 13th of March 1883 at Annan in Scotland. McFarlane, *Christ and the Spirit*, 61 n. 14.

humanity.[24]

Edward Irving's insistence upon nothing less than "the full and complete humanity of the incarnate"[25] was driven by a desire to take with utmost seriousness the declaration that Jesus became like his brothers and sisters *in every respect* so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest (Heb 2:14-18). It is crucial to note, however, that Irving's position vis-à-vis the Son's humanity could not be affirmed without a sufficiently robust and supportive pneumatology. The interdependence of christological and pneumatological concerns within Irving's thought enables him to stress the Spirit's transcendence and, in turn, draws James Purves' observation that the "work of the Spirit sustains and validates Irving's Christological assertion as to the corruptibility of Christ's humanity: it is not simply an appendage to it."[26]

Irving's theology serves as a significant source of the conceptual apparatus that Gunton employed in his trinitarian pneumatology. His insistence upon holding to a bifocal emphasis upon the Spirit as personal agent and as transcendent 'other,' for example, was acknowledged as being taken over from Irving. Gunton observed, in this regard, that because "Irving understands the Spirit to be a personal agent rather than some semi-substantial possession, he can understand the Spirit to be present to

[24] Irving's support for the orthodox Christian view of Jesus' sinlessness is beyond doubt. He wrote, for example, "that in its proper nature it [Christ's humanity] was as the flesh of His mother, but, by virtue of the Holy Ghost's quickening and inhabiting of it, it was preserved sinless and incorruptible." On the following page Irving adds: "He [Christ] was passive to every sinful suggestion which the world through the flesh can hand up to the will ; He was liable to every sinful suggestion which Satan through the mind can hand up to the will ; and with all such suggestions and temptations, I believe Him beyond all others to have been assailed, but further went they not. He gave them no inlet, He went not to seek them, He gave them no quarter, but with power Divine rejected and repulsed them all ; and so, from His conception unto His resurrection, His whole life was a series of active triumphings over sin in the flesh, Satan in the World, and spiritual wickednesses in high places." Edward Irving, 'Preface' in *The collected writings of Edward Irving* vol. 5, ed. Gavin Carlyle (London: Alexander Strahan, 1864), 4f.

[25] Gunton, 'God the Holy Spirit,' 115.

[26] James G. M. Purves, 'The interaction of christology and pneumatology in the soteriology of Edward Irving' in *Pneuma: the journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 14, no. 1 (1992), 83.

and with Jesus in different ways at different stages of the ministry."[27]

By drawing upon resources within the respective pneumatologies of Irenaeus, Owen and Irving, Colin Gunton was able to formulate a consistently trinitarian theology of the Spirit. The Irenaean metaphor of the two hands of God, for example, provided Gunton with a framework within which he developed the potential of Owen's equivalent insistence upon the Spirit's transcendence and Irving's unequivocal attestation to the authenticity of the humanity of Christ. By combining elements from the work of each of these theologians, Gunton articulated a thoroughgoing trinitarian theology of mediation which teaches that the Father's will is mediated to the Son by the Spirit and that Jesus' followers are also incorporated into the Son and the life of God by the Spirit.

Gunton's theology of mediation is one of the *leitmotifs* of his trinitarian theology and, when applied to the establishment of the created order and within the divine event of redemption, is founded upon a consistently applied trinitarian methodology that acknowledges the mutual complementarity and inseparability of the work of God's 'two hands.'[28] When extrapolated soteriologically, this theology of mediation resulted in "a pneumatology of the person of Christ."[29]

From creation to mediation

Commentators have remarked that throughout his theological project Gunton was concerned with the development of trinitarian ontology and the application of insights gleaned from the doctrine of God to the doctrines of creation, anthropology,

[27] Gunton, 'God the Holy Spirit,' 117.
[28] H. Paul Santmire, 'So that he might fill all things: comprehending the cosmic love of Christ' in *Dialog: a journal of theology* 42, no. 3 (2003), 260.
[29] Gunton, 'God the Holy Spirit,' 118.

and ecclesiology.[30] An understanding of the place and importance of the Spirit's transcendence within his trinitarian theology, therefore, is dependent upon recognition of the way in which Gunton understood the interrelatedness of the doctrine of creation, a theology of mediation and the transcendence of the Spirit.

For Gunton, creation was the arena within which revelation is given and the divine drama of redemption takes place. Thus, it is within the created order, and as a result of revelation, that theologians are enabled to infer notions of the Spirit's transcendence. Yet, in saying this, it is to be recognised that it is through the mediation of the transcendent Spirit (and Son) that the creation came into existence in the first instance and thereafter is sustained by the transcendent Spirit (and Son).[31] Thus while epistemologically one moves from creation to transcendent creator and Spirit, ontologically the transcendent Spirit is prior so that it is through the mediation of the transcendent Spirit (and Son) that God creates. Within the created order, the transcendent Spirit mediates divine providence as revelation, redemption, and the leading to perfection.

In this way, Gunton remained consistently trinitarian. He dismissed, for example, the tendency to prioritise i) creation over redemption (on the grounds that if

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[30] For example, Hans Schaeffer, *Createdness and ethics: the doctrine of creation and theological ethics in the theology of Colin E. Gunton and Oswald Bayer* (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 2006), 27; Karen Kilby, 'Perichoresis and projection: problems with the social doctrines of the Trinity' in *New Blackfriars* 81, no. 957 (2000), 437f; and Roland Chia, 'Trinity and ontology: Colin Gunton's ecclesiology' in *International journal of systematic theology* 9, no. 4 (2007), 453.

[31] The parenthetical reference to the Son's involvement in the creation and preservation of the created order does not imply that, for Gunton, there is a secondary role assigned to the Son in this regard. It is, rather, a way of highlighting that this present chapter is concerned with an examination of what Colin Gunton intended by speech about the transcendence of the Spirit. While the focus of the discussion here remains upon the transcendence of Spirit, Gunton's theological project as a whole is thoroughly trinitarian inasmuch as he held that creation is a divine work mediated through the 'two hands' of God, the Son and the Spirit. Furthermore, it is to be observed that throughout his published corpus Gunton consistently followed the traditional ordering of orthodox Christianity's naming the divine persons as the Father, Son and Spirit. See, for example, Colin E. Gunton, 'The doctrine of creation' in *The Cambridge companion to Christian doctrine*, ed. Colin E. Gunton (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University, 1997), 53-55; and Colin E. Gunton, *The triune creator: a historical and systematic study* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 54.

sin had not transpired there would have been no need for the incarnation), and ii) redemption over creation (as in some forms of pre-temporal election) in preference for a model that is both trinitarian and mediated. He argued that "we must attempt a third way of relating creation and redemption, whose centre is still Jesus Christ but whose working out is more shaped by pneumatological concerns."[32] Thus, for Gunton, creation and redemption are related precisely through the concept of mediation, understood in the first instance as a coherent pneumatology of the person of Christ.

Gunton saw, furthermore, that the development of a consistent pneumatological christology was dependent upon an understanding of the Spirit's transcendence, for it is through the Spirit that the Son became incarnate.[33] Moreover, it is the transcendent Spirit of God who mediates moral empowerment to the humanity of the Son of God. Two central concepts in Gunton's pneumatology become clear at this point: that only one of the triune persons became fully immanent, namely, the Son;[34] and, that the Spirit, as transcendent, mediates the will of the Father to the Son and is the perfecting agent of the whole creation.

Gunton argued, therefore, that the divine purpose is achieved via the mediatorial actions of the Son and the Spirit.[35] Even though the work of each of God's two hands is functionally distinct – the Son became incarnate and the Spirit mediates empowerment to the Son's humanity – their actions are directed to the same goal. Inasmuch as the divine purpose is to bring all things to perfection for the glory

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[32] Colin E. Gunton, *Christ and creation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 96.

[33] Colin E. Gunton, 'A systematic triangle: Hegel, Kierkegaard, Barth and the question of ethics,' a paper presented to a theology seminar held at the Research Institute in Systematic Theology, King's College, London, (19 March 1999), 7; Colin E. Gunton, *Intellect and action: elucidations on Christian theology and the life of faith* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 80.

[34] T. F. Torrance's assertion that "there is no Incarnation of the Spirit" is another way of stating Gunton's point. Thomas F. Torrance, *Theology in reconstruction* (London: SCM, 1965), 204.

[35] Gunton, *Act and being*, 77.

of God, the transcendent Spirit's mediation to the humanity of the Son reaches fulfilment in the liberation of the crucified and entombed Jesus from the power of death, an event in which Jesus' authentic humanity is glorified, becoming 'true' humanity.[36] The wider question of the functional distinctiveness of the work of Son and Spirit was addressed by Gunton as follows.

> In the economy, the Son represents God's immanence in history: he becomes flesh, history. The Spirit, contrary to what is often assumed, is God's transcendence. He is God's *eschatological otherness* from the world, God freeing the created order for its true destiny – and so, to use Basil's terminology, its perfecting cause.[37]

In this way, Gunton was able to bring together the concepts of the Spirit's transcendence, divine teleological and eschatological intent with a theology of mediation that is worked out within the created order by the Spirit, who is the perfecting cause of creation. For Gunton, the emphasis upon transcendence was synonymous with the claim that the Spirit is 'other.'

Holy Spirit as transcendent Spirit

The question of what, specifically, Colin Gunton intended by speaking about the transcendence of the Holy Spirit can be stated simply: the Spirit remains 'other' to the Son and to the world. Although Gunton's position may be simple, it is far from simplistic. The subtlety and importance of his position has potential benefits for the practice of theological inquiry, from doctrinal studies through to the conduct of pastoral ministry in the Christian church.

Pastorally, Gunton's emphasis upon the transcendent Spirit accentuates the means by which the things of God are mediated to the ecclesial community of believers. By maintaining that only one of the triune persons became immanent,

[36] Gunton, 'The church: John Owen and John Zizioulas on the church,' 199.
[37] ibid. Cf. Basil of Caesarea, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 16.38 (*PG* 32:135; *NPNF* 8:23).

Gunton argued that although the Spirit may be *in* the world, he is not *of* the world in the same way as the Son who *became flesh and dwelt among human beings* (Jn 1:14). The significance of Gunton's distinction here requires forceful language and he did not equivocate. He wrote:

> it is a mistake to conceive the Spirit in terms of immanence. The essential distinction is this: in Jesus, God is identified with a part of the world; God becomes worldly. Traditionally, this action has been attributed to God the Son. As Spirit, however, God is present to the world as other, as transcendent. …The Spirit is identified with no part of the world.[38]

In advocating a greater emphasis upon the transcendence of the Spirit however, Colin Gunton did not intend to deny the Spirit's presence *in* the world and, therefore, that the Spirit must be immanent in some respect. To the contrary, his desire was to address the perceived overemphasis in Western thought – and especially within his own Reformed tradition – upon the divinity of Christ and the tendency to conceive the Spirit as God's immanence.[39] Although Gunton was often argumentative, if not outright polemical, in his enthusiasm to establish a particular theological point,[40] he cannot be criticised for lacking nuance in his insistence upon speaking of the Spirit as transcendent. His recognition of the importance of both the Spirit's transcendence and immanence is made explicit in the following statement.

> In Jesus of Nazareth, we are confronted by the eternal Son of God, made immanent in fallen matter by the recreating energies of the Spirit, who as free agent is thus *personally* transcendent over the matter he forms into the body of Jesus. But even as immanent, the incarnate Word, as the one who confronts us, is also transcendent, as our atoning Other; and, by a corresponding logic, by his involvement in the redemption of matter, the Spirit is, in a matter of speaking, immanent. The point here is not to play with words ... the outcome here is that although the Son and the Spirit are distinct, as performing different kinds of function in relation to the

[38] Colin E. Gunton, 'Barth, the Trinity and human freedom' in *Theology today* 43, no. 3 (1986), 328.
[39] ibid., 327; Gunton, 'God the Holy Spirit,' 117.
[40] 'The Rev Professor Colin Gunton' in *The Times* (London), Monday, 19 May 2003, 27; see also John B. Webster, 'Systematic theology after Barth: Jüngel, Jenson, and Gunton' in *The modern theologians: an introduction to Christian theology since 1918*, ed. David F. Ford and Rachel Muers (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 259.

> world, they are, as the two hands of God the Father, also inseparable. There is a perichoresis, an interanimation of energies, which makes it a mistake to say of the one, immanence only; and of the other, only transcendence.[41]

One of the specific advantages of throwing more weight upon the transcendent and mediatorial nature of the Holy Spirit's work was that it provided Gunton with a way of speaking about the Spirit as 'other.' Specifically, the very 'otherness' of the Spirit, conceived as *ontological* otherness, ensured that the gift of the Holy Spirit promised by the Father (Lk 24:49; Acts 1:4-5) and sent by the Son (Jn 14:15-20; 16:7-16; Acts 2:33) was not to be thought of in terms of individual possession, but rather as the transcendent Lord and Giver of life who indwells, possesses and sanctifies human persons, especially as those persons are found to constitute the various ecclesial communities that make up Christ's church.[42]

Transcendent Spirit as antidote against individuality

While recognising the validity of the traditional understanding that the Spirit may be *in* human hearts in the sense that the Spirit of God indwells believers (2 Cor 1:22; Gal 4:6), Gunton was adamant that the Spirit as transcendent remains 'other' and so rejected any Hegelian tendency to equate the Spirit of God with the human heart or human spirit. For Gunton, the Spirit's 'otherness' was the guarantee that he mediates Christ's benefits to believers. A theology of mediation through the personal agency of the transcendent Spirit was the mechanism whereby Gunton was able to

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[41] Gunton, 'God the Holy Spirit,' 119.

[42] "It is easy, though wrong, to conceive of the Spirit as primarily the possession of individuals," Gunton argued, because "it should not be forgotten that there is a strong stress in the New Testament that the Spirit works in the *church*: his is a churchly rather than an individual sphere of activity in the sense that particular gifts are given for the building up of the life of the people of God." Colin E. Gunton, 'Baptism and the Christian community' in *Incarnational ministry: the presence of Christ in church, society, and family: essays in honor of Ray S. Anderson*, ed. Christian D. Kettler and Todd H. Speidell (Colorado Springs, CO: Helmers & Howard, 1990), 106f; see also Gunton, 'The church: John Owen and John Zizioulas on the church,' 203.

maintain the "absolute ontological distinction between creator and creation."[43] That distinction is maintained, he held, to the extent that pneumatology is intentional about its use of conceptuality and language. Gunton suggested, for example, that

> we should, among all the other things that we say of the Holy Spirit, give a central place to his being the transcendent and free Lord who creates community by bringing men and women to the Father through Jesus Christ and so into relation with one another. The Spirit is not some inner fuel, compulsion or qualification – in fact he is nothing impersonal at all – but the free Lord who as our *other* liberates us for community.[44]

Gunton's intention by speaking thus was to avoid the danger that the Spirit's interaction with human beings is conceived *individualistically* and, therefore, in non-christological and non-trinitarian terms.[45] An overemphasis upon the Spirit's work *in* the individual, according to Gunton, all too often results in rampant individualism, a tendency that is corrected precisely by a greater emphasis upon the Spirit's community-forming role.[46]

Christologically speaking, however, the emphasis upon a theology of the Spirit's transcendence provided Gunton with the opportunity to address what he called "the Achilles' heel of traditional theology, the treatment of the humanity of Christ."[47] Following the example set by Edward Irving, Gunton was determined to

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[43] Gunton, *The triune creator*, 67.

[44] Gunton, 'The church: John Owen and John Zizioulas on the church,' 194.

[45] Colin E. Gunton, 'Pneumatology' in *Dictionary of ethics, theology and society*, ed. Paul Barry Clarke and Andrew Linzey (London: Routledge, 1996), 647.

[46] Gunton argued that the image of the triune God is borne as much by the community of God's people as it is by the individual person: "According to the ecclesiology of the Fourth Gospel, the Spirit is the one who enables believers to share Jesus' relation to his Father, by incorporating us into it. That relation should not be understood, as it often is, experientially or individualistically – that is, as if individuals in some way replicated Jesus' relationship – but in terms of reconciled personal relations mediated within the structures of a community. These relations begin – anti-autonomously, we might say – by the acknowledgement of a headship ('we are not our own'); but lead to a form of autonomy, according to which the created *telos* of human being – created for community with God and with others – comes to be, in anticipation of the community of the last days, from time to time realised." Colin E. Gunton, 'The church as a school of virtue? Human formation in trinitarian framework' in *Faithfulness and fortitude: in conversation with the theological ethics of Stanley Hauerwas*, ed. Mark Theissen Nation and Samuel Wells (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 230f.

[47] Colin E. Gunton, 'Christology' in *Dictionary of ethics, theology and society*, ed. Paul Barry Clarke and Andrew Linzey (London: Routledge, 1996), 135.

place far greater emphasis upon the humanity of Christ than was common in the Western tradition.[48] Reformed theologians in particular had focussed attention upon the salvific efficaciousness of the cross as a metaphor for the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. In the rush to avoid any hint of Pelagianism, Reformed soteriology often overlooked the fact that it was none other than Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified on Calvary. That is to say, despite Chalcedon's affirmation of the hypostatic union of two natures – divine and human – in the person of Christ, Western soteriology was almost wholly concerned with a divinely-facilitated reconciliation through the saving acts of the Word of God. Even Barth, according to Gunton, may be justly criticised for giving "too little weight to the humanity of the Word."[49] The importance of Christ's humanity in the scheme of salvation was often overlooked, if not actually diminished, especially among Reformed theologians, for fear that it might bear some semblance to a theology of works. [50]

Gunton, on the other hand, drew, as we have already discussed, upon resources found in the respective theologies of Owen and Irving and argued not only for the full identification of Christ's humanity with ours, but also for the saving efficacy of that humanity. It is important here to appreciate the subtlety of nuance with which Gunton developed his position. There is no suggestion that he was advocating that Jesus' humanity is salvific because it is *human* nature; rather, Jesus' humanity is a crucial element of the divine plan of redemption precisely because it is

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[48] Gunton argues that Western christologies are often marked by a "widespread inability … to do justice to the humanity of Jesus." This situation, according to Gunton, arises because of a failure to develop the possibilities contained within the Chalcedonian definition. While the concept of person was used to express the unity of Christ's being, "later theology appeared to lack the conceptual equipment to give full weight to the humanity of the saviour." Gunton, 'Pneumatology,' 646; cf. Gunton, 'Christology,' 135.

[49] Colin E. Gunton, 'Preface' in *Dogmatics in outline* by Karl Barth (London: SCM, 2001), ix.

[50] The insufficient attention afforded to the importance of Christ's humanity in Western theology, according to Alan Spence, is the result of a benign Apollinarianism that permits Christ's divinity to over-ride his humanity. Alan Spence, 'Christ's humanity and ours: John Owen' in *Persons, divine and human: King's College essays on theological anthropology*, ed. Christoph Schwöbel and Colin E. Gunton (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 77ff.

the person of *Jesus*, in his authentic humanity, who is obedient to the will of the Father. And, indeed, according to Gunton's transcendent pneumatology, it is precisely via the mediation of the transcendent Spirit that the human Jesus was enabled to act in obedience to the one he called Father in a way that Adam was not (Rom 5:12, 19).[51]

Transcendent Spirit and the authentic humanity of Christ

In a recent article analysing the cinematic portrayal of Jesus, Blaine Charette remarked that almost all films fail to address the question of Jesus' messiahship adequately.[52] The problem, for Charette, does not concern cinematic accuracy so much as the manner of dealing with the underlying theological and metaphysical beliefs that films attempt to portray. Central to her concern is the wholesale avoidance of addressing the central gospel concerns of Jesus' authority, power and motivation, an avoidance resulting in a procession of caricatures of him.[53] Citing Sidney Olcott's *From the manger to the cross* (1912) and Cecil DeMille's *The King of Kings* (1927) as examples, Charette identified the root of the problem as deficient pneumatology.

> There is no indication in either film of the source of Jesus' miraculous power, but what is particularly troubling is that in the absence of any reference to the role of the Spirit the "ontology" of Jesus is subtly transformed. His miraculous power becomes exclusively invested in his deity; in a sense, it becomes a function of his deity. Jesus is presented as truly divine but in a way that makes him transcendent and less human.[54]

Charette has identified the cinematic manifestation of the very issue that Gunton sought to address, namely, the inadequate attention afforded to the

[51] Gunton argued that "the Spirit is the one who enabled Jesus to be the true human being, the one who as the second Adam – another Adam of flesh and blood – recapitulated our human life in the way it was meant to be." Colin E. Gunton, 'One mediator ... the man Jesus Christ: reconciliation, mediation and life in community' in *Pro ecclesia* 11, no. 2 (2002), 157.

[52] Blaine B. Charette, 'Messiah without anointing: a missing element in cinematic portrayals of Jesus' in *Pneuma: the journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 27, no. 2 (2005), 356.

[53] ibid., 358.

[54] ibid., 359.

particularity of the humanity of the saviour and the mediating function of the Spirit. Gunton reacted to what he perceived to be an overemphasis upon the divinity of the Son in theological discourse, and complained that Jesus' earthly career was in danger of being divorced from the gospel of divine grace.[55] He went on to remark that

> Such signs as the virgin birth and Jesus' miraculous acts are now called in service of his *divinity*, rather than being seen as the locus of, or functions of, his humanity. In effect, a crude theology of interventionism locates the miracles outside what might be called the everyday human life of Jesus.[56]

Gunton proposed that the necessary corrective for this christological inadequacy is to be found in the resources of pneumatology. Specifically, he argued for "a greater emphasis on the action of the Holy Spirit towards Jesus as the source of the *particularity* and so historicity of his humanity."[57] Indeed, he continued, "it is only through the Spirit that the human actions of Jesus become ever and again the acts of God."[58]

The importance of Gunton's assertion derives from his understanding that if "Jesus' humanity was in no way imperilled by its being that of the Word, that is because of the action of God the Spirit."[59] Elsewhere, Gunton made the connection between pneumatological mediation and Christ's authentic humanity even more explicit when he asked: "If Jesus is able freely to do that which is his particular calling, is not the mediator of that calling best understood to be the Holy Spirit, who mediates to him the Father's will, while – graciously – respecting his authentic

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[55] Gunton, 'Martin Kähler revisited,' 21.
[56] ibid., 22.
[57] Colin E. Gunton, 'The church on earth: the roots of community' in *On being the church: essays on the Christian community*, ed. Colin E. Gunton and Daniel W. Hardy (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1989), 63.
[58] ibid., 61.
[59] Colin E. Gunton, 'The end of causality? The Reformers and their predecessors' in *The doctrine of creation: essays in dogmatics, history and philosophy*, ed. Colin E. Gunton (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 79.

humanity?"[60]

Although supportive of the willingness among some contemporary theologians to speak of Jesus as the man who was uniquely filled with the Spirit, insofar as it provides a necessary correction to excessive attention afforded to Christ's divinity, Gunton was nevertheless wary of the dangers of adoptionism.[61] Spirit-christologies, he argued, while accentuating the role of the Spirit in the account of redemption, run the risk of becoming christologies of success inasmuch as they focus upon Jesus' possession of the Spirit.[62]

Gunton's objective, on the other hand, was somewhat different. The corrective required to address an overemphasis upon Christ's divinity, he argued, is found in a theology of the transcendent Spirit precisely because the "humanity of the Word is most satisfactorily articulated where attention is given to his relation to his Father as it is mediated by the Spirit."[63] Moreover, because the Spirit remains as Jesus' 'other,' the Spirit is able to empower the humanity of the Son and, thereby, facilitate Jesus' obedience to the Father's will. Gunton drew heavily upon resources within the biblical narratives in the development of his theology of the transcendent Spirit as central to the life and ministry of Jesus.

> It is noteworthy how repeatedly the Holy Spirit becomes part of the story at crises of Jesus' ministry. We have seen how for Irving it is by the Spirit that God the Father shapes a body for his Son in the womb of Mary, and how for parts of the tradition it is by his Spirit that the Father raises the Son from the tomb. In between, the Spirit maintains the relation between the incarnate Jesus and the Father whose will he is sent

[60] Colin E. Gunton, 'God, grace and freedom' in *God and freedom: essays in historical and systematic theology*, ed. Colin E. Gunton (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 130. See also Gunton's statement that the "Spirit is the one who mediates the action of God the Father in such a way that the life of the Son, while deriving from the Father and dependent upon him, is given space to remain authentically human." Gunton, 'The end of causality,' 79.

[61] Gunton, 'God the Holy Spirit,' 117.

[62] Gunton, 'Martin Kähler revisited,' 22.

[63] Colin E. Gunton, 'Creation and mediation in the theology of Robert W. Jenson: an encounter and a convergence' in *Trinity, time and church: a response to the theology of Robert W. Jenson*, ed. Colin E. Gunton (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 86.

> to do. We can repeat here the allusion to that crucial episode for our theme, the temptation. In all three Synoptic accounts, the Spirit leads Jesus out into the wilderness to be tempted. If, to return to the christology of Hebrews, it is through the Spirit that Jesus offers a perfect sacrifice to the Father as at once priest and victim, it follows, indeed is implied in a strong sense, that the whole of Jesus' authentically human life is made what it uniquely is through the action of the Spirit.[64]

Colin Gunton's emphasis upon the Spirit's transcendence serves to counter problems associated with an overly immanent pneumatology by proposing that the Spirit, as Jesus' 'other,' is "the source of Jesus' authentic humanity."[65] Specifically, Gunton argued that "God the Spirit opens, frees, the humanity of the Son so that it may be the vehicle of the Father's will in the world. The Spirit is not so much an endowment as a personal divine action which enables the incarnate Son to be himself."[66]

The question of what was intended by speaking about Jesus' 'authentic humanity' must be read in the light of the influence that Edward Irving's theology exerted upon Gunton's trinitarian theology. As rehearsed earlier, Irving was insistent that the humanity of Christ was precisely the same as that shared by Jesus' brothers and sisters, sin apart (Heb 2:14-18). Irving's concern was soteriological inasmuch as he held that Jesus can only be considered the representative of all human beings to the extent that he is authentically human, sharing the humanity of his brothers and sisters. Gunton identified with Irving's project, arguing that "if salvation is to be a truly human as well as divine victory over the evil that holds human life in thrall, we cannot affirm a dogma which makes it appear that the flesh Jesus bore was already in some way automatically immune from the sin and stain of that flesh which the rest of

[64] Gunton, 'Martin Kähler revisited,' 26f.
[65] Gunton, 'Barth, the Trinity and human freedom,' 328.
[66] Colin E. Gunton, 'The Spirit in the Trinity' in *The forgotten Trinity*, ed. Alasdair I. C. Heron (London: BCC/CCBI, 1991), 127.

us bear."[67] That thought is made even more explicit in an extended declaration that borders upon a confessional and programmatic statement:

> I believe the saviour must be bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. He must indeed be sinless, and, indeed, free of taint. But if that freedom is to be mediated to us, he must also share to the full the conditions of our taint. For that to be achieved, it is necessary that he be constituted of the same stuff of which we are made, part of a created order, subjected to vanity and in the need of redemption. The taint does not indeed touch him, in the sense that he offers his humanity, through the eternal Spirit, perfect to the Father. But it must be through the Spirit: that is to say, through the process of a life of real struggle and temptation, including a real temptation in Gethsemane to evade the implications of his human calling. [68]

The debate regarding the vexed question of Jesus' sinlessness – normally expressed as a dichotomy between *posse non peccare* and *non posse peccare*[69] – remains as contentious as it was in Irving's day. Gunton, following Irving, argued that Jesus was preserved sinless because of the spiritual and moral empowerment mediated by the transcendent Spirit. Employing, as we have seen, resources found in the christology and pneumatology of Edward Irving, Gunton was able to break free from the constraints of the traditional debate between whether i) Jesus was *unable* to sin on the one hand, and ii) *able* not to sin on the other, by adopting a third alternative which made the important qualification that iii) Jesus was *enabled* not to sin.[70] This important qualification was deemed necessary because it avoided the problematic suggestion that Jesus' humanity, in and of itself, was able not to sin.[71]

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[67] Colin E. Gunton, 'Dogma, the church and the task of theology' in *Neue zeitschrift für systematische theologie und religionsphilosophie* 40, no. 1 (1998), 76.

[68] ibid., 76f.

[69] See, for example, Oliver D. Crisp, 'Did Christ have a *fallen* human nature?' in *International journal of systematic theology* 6, no. 3 (2004), 270-288. Gunton, himself, however speaks in terms of *non potuit peccare* and *potuit non peccare*. Gunton, *The Christian faith*, 105.

[70] In a footnote attached to this discussion, Gunton acknowledges Tom Smail as the source of the expression for the proposed third alternative; however no supporting bibliographical details are supplied. Gunton, *The Christian faith*, 106 n. 5.

[71] A number of commentators have observed that Colin Gunton's theology is marked by an absence of adequate attention to the problem of sin. Paul Molnar, for example, argues that the problem of sin was taken far more seriously by Barth. This apparent oversight, indeed weakness, in Gunton's theological scheme as a whole will be treated in greater detail in the next chapter. Paul D. Molnar,

By holding that Jesus was *enabled* not to sin, the emphasis was thrown upon the necessity of the action of divine grace in the preservation of Jesus as sinless. That is not to say, however, that sinlessness is a simple affair involving only abstract theological theory. For Gunton, Jesus' sinlessness was a question of the totality of his life; a life lived in the company of his disciples and before his Father. Hence the acknowledgement that Jesus' "painfully achieved sinlessness derives from the Holy Spirit's maintaining him in relation to his Father."[72] In this way, then, Gunton was able to maintain that Jesus was "homoousios with us in all things apart from sin."[73] Gunton's christology, therefore, is orthodox insofar as it is consistent with Chalcedon's affirmation of the full humanity of Christ.

It is precisely here that the influence of Owen and Irving upon Gunton's christology and pneumatology becomes unmistakeable. Gunton acknowledged his indebtedness to them when he observed that

> the Puritan John Owen paid close attention to the Spirit's relation to Jesus and was enabled to maintain both that Jesus was the incarnate Son of God and that, as truly a man, he was related to the Father by the Spirit. This distinction between Incarnation and inspiration became the basis of a pneumatologically construed link between Christ and the believer, something exploited by Puritan spiritual writers, and in the 19th century by Edward Irving.[74]

The importance of Gunton's thought here is that a focus upon the Spirit as God's 'other' is to be seen as consistent with the biblical presentation of the Spirit's empowering and equipping of Christ's humanity specifically for the ministry of reconciliation (see Lk 3:21-22; 4:1, 14; esp. Heb 9:14). In fact, Gunton held that

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Divine freedom and the doctrine of the immanent Trinity: in dialogue with Karl Barth and contemporary theology (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2002), 296.

[72] Gunton, 'The church as a school of virtue,' 217. Cf. Calvin, who argued that Christ is free from the stain of sin because "he was sanctified by the Spirit that the generation might be pure and undefiled as would be true before Adam's fall." John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster John Knox, 1960), II.13.4.

[73] Gunton, 'Dogma, the church and the task of theology,' 77.

[74] Gunton, 'Holy Spirit,' 305.

> classic Christian teaching (as it is to be found in Paul and in representatives of both East and West such as Athanasius and Augustine) is that apart from redemption in Christ and its realization through the Spirit there is no true humanity. It is only by the agency of God's two hands, Son and Spirit, that what is fallen, stained and alienated from its true being may be lifted up and restored. We need the other in order to be redeemed.[75]

Pneumatology is therefore the key for this understanding because it points towards the triune "relatedness-in-otherness" and reminds us that if redemption is a work of the triune God then it must be articulated trinitarianly.[76] In the economy of redemption, the Spirit's provision to the humanity of the Son highlights that 'true' humanity, that is, humanity as God intended it to be, is an eschatological concept understood as the authentic humanity of Christ empowered by God's 'other.'[77] In fact, freedom and liberation are consequent upon an obedience that is made possible through the mediatorial agency of the transcendent Spirit: first for Jesus, and then for his followers.

> Jesus became a free man as through the Spirit he was enabled to reject false paths and accepted the calling of the suffering messiah. As risen and ascended, he mediates to his believers that same Spirit through whose endowment he was able to be authentically himself and offer to the Father the sacrifice of obedience.[78]

Moreover, Gunton suggested that as the Spirit aids Christ to be that which he was sent to be (i.e., *for* God and *for* sinners) so, too, the Spirit will be present to those persons who are called to be the sons and daughters of God.[79] This, according to

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[75] Colin E. Gunton, 'The Spirit as Lord: Christianity, modernity and freedom' in *Different Gospels: Christian orthodoxy and modern theologies*, ed. Andrew Walker (London: SPCK, 1993), 82.

[76] Gunton, 'The Spirit in the Trinity,' 134; Gunton, *Christ and creation*, 101.

[77] Gunton's position here is supported by Gerrit Dawson who holds that the risen and ascended Jesus "is what humanity has always been intended to be. He is what we were meant to be before sin and consequent death diminished us. Jesus now is the most fully human person ever to live. Humanity in its highest capacity, deepest joy, and uttermost fulfilment has been reached in the ascended Christ." Gerrit Scott Dawson, *Jesus ascended: the meaning of Christ's continuing incarnation* (Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2004), 131.

[78] Colin E. Gunton, 'The sovereignty of Jesus: some reflections on the crown rights of the Redeemer' in *Theological digest and outlook* 6, no. 1 (1991), 7.

[79] Gunton's intention in speaking about the relation between pneumatological empowerment of Christ's humanity and that of his followers is made explicit in the statement that "Crucial to any

Gunton, is neither an ethic "of self-fulfilment nor of duty, but of grace" because the Holy Spirit "is the one who perfects our humanity by setting it free through Christ."[80]

Spirit as transcendent: a comparison and contrast with Reformed thought

Colin Gunton's unequivocal emphasis upon the transcendence of the Holy Spirit contrasts with the Spirit's indwellingness which is stressed in the bulk of Reformed thought. Cynthia Campbell has observed that there is much to commend Gunton's view that the Spirit, specifically as transcendent 'other,' mediates empowerment to the humanity of the Son. Campbell remarks that Gunton's thought constitutes a challenge, and has the potential to function as a corrective, to the pneumatological impoverishment of much of the Reformed tradition.[81]

The unashamedly central place that Gunton afforded to the person and work of the Holy Spirit marks his thought as unique among Reformed pneumatologies. Specifically, his trinitarian approach to the question of the Spirit's presence and work in the world has important implications for three areas of systematics in particular, namely, soteriology, christology, and anthropology.

Soteriologically speaking, the importance of Gunton's position is that it does not involve a radical departure from the received Christian tradition. Rather, it seeks a fuller explication of elements that were already present – albeit understated and often overlooked. Basil of Caesarea's description of the Father as originating cause, the Son as creative cause, and the Spirit as perfecting cause, for example, is

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understanding of salvation is the relation of the Holy Spirit first to Jesus and then, *and consequently*, to those who are incorporate in Christ by the act of that same Spirit. If the relation of the Spirit to Jesus is underplayed; if, that is to say, his humanity is made too much a function of his direct relation to the Father rather than of that mediated by the Spirit, thus far is the link between his humanity and ours weakened, because more weight is placed upon the miraculous transference of what happened *then* to ourselves *now*, less on that relation mediated in the present by the Spirit of Christ through his body, the church." Colin E. Gunton, 'Salvation' in *The Cambridge companion to Karl Barth*, ed. John B. Webster (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University, 2000), 152.

[80] Gunton, 'The sovereignty of Jesus,' 7.

[81] Cynthia M. Campbell, 'Response to Colin Gunton' in *Theology today* 43, no. 3 (1986), 332.

summarised by Gunton as "all divine action … begins with the Father, takes shape through the Son and reaches its completion in the Spirit."[82] Drawing upon Basil's insight, Gunton sought to reconceptualise the work of the Son and the Spirit respectively on the grounds that "the Son is the focus of the Father's *immanent* action … [while] the Spirit … is the focus of *transcendent*, eschatological action, pulling things forward to that for which God has made them."[83] Gunton's desire here was to address what he perceived to be an imbalance in the way Reformed dogmatics often spoke in terms of the objective nature of the Son's work and the subjective nature of the Spirit's work. This tendency is clearly illustrated in the trinitarian theology of T. F. Torrance, one of the great Reformed systematic theologians of the twentieth century, who often spoke of "the presence of the Spirit as actualising within us the intervening and reconciling work of Christ."[84] Expressed in this way, the soteriological dialectic conceives "the work of the Spirit in God's people as actualising subjectively in them what has been accomplished for them once and for all objectively in the Incarnation."[85]

A more explicit example of the way in which Reformed soteriology conforms to an objective/subjective pattern is provided by Christoph Schwöbel, a close friend and colleague of Gunton's from King's College. Schwöbel argues:

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[82] Gunton, *Act and being*, 113; cf. Basil of Caesarea, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 16.38 (*PG* 32:135; *NPNF* 8:23).

[83] Gunton, *Act and being*, 77f (emphasis added).

[84] Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian doctrine of God: one being three persons* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 153. This particular concept is also present in Torrance's earlier writings where, for example, he observed that justification "is freely imputed to us by grace objectively and we through the Spirit share in it subjectively as we are united to Christ." Torrance, *Theology in reconstruction*, 160.

[85] Thomas F. Torrance, *The school of faith: the catechisms of the Reformed church* (London: James Clarke, 1959), cvi. See also Gary W. Deddo, 'The Holy Spirit in T. F. Torrance's theology' in *The promise of trinitarian theology: theologians in dialogue with T. F. Torrance*, ed. Elmer M. Colyer (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001), 96; C. Baxter Kruger, 'The doctrine of the knowledge of God in the theology of T. F. Torrance: sharing in the Son's communion with the Father in the Spirit' in *Scottish journal of theology* 43, no. 3 (1990), 383; and, Adrio König, *The eclipse of Christ in eschatology: toward a Christ-centered approach* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 144.

> If the work of the Son is the form of reconciliation, the Spirit must, following Basil and Calvin, be the perfecting cause, the *virtus et efficacia*, the power and efficacy of God's action in reconciliation. It is the presence of God's Spirit which makes the reconciliation achieved by God the Father through the Son powerful and efficacious in us. The Spirit is the personal power that constitutes the life of reconciliation. It is the Spirit that authenticates the message of reconciliation to us as God's grace and truth for our lives and so gives our life an orientation that is no longer determined by the past but is oriented towards the future consummation of God's communion with creation. As life in the Spirit, the life of the reconciled is a life in freedom. The Spirit connects the reconciling act of Christ on the cross with our present and with the future consummation of God's community with creation.[86]

Schwöbel's answer to the question of the Spirit's part in the economy of reconciliation is thoroughly Reformed inasmuch as the Spirit makes known and applies the benefits achieved by Christ in the lives of believers. The objective components of reconciliation are christological, while the subjective and appropriative elements are pneumatological. In sum: Christ achieves, the Spirit applies.

Gunton perceived that the weakness in Reformed soteriology is the result of not holding firmly enough to the understanding that redemption is an act of the triune God.[87] While contemporary Reformed writers articulating a covenant theology readily affirm that redemption is a trinitarian undertaking involving each divine person participating, perichoretically, in the actions of the other, they continue to hold to the objective/subjective division within the economy whereby "the Son's self-giving and the Spirit's regenerative work were the execution of the Father's

[86] Christoph Schwöbel, 'Reconciliation: from biblical observations to dogmatic reconstruction' in *The theology of reconciliation*, ed. Colin E. Gunton (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2003), 34.

[87] Gunton draws support from Alasdair Heron who argues that "It has been a weakness of much Protestant theology that – in spite of the place ascribed to the Spirit – it has commonly inclined to describe it simply as applying the fruits of Christ's work to our souls, or as enabling the awakening of saving faith, acknowledging what Christ has done for us." Alasdair I. C. Heron, *The Holy Spirit* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1983), 126.

eternal plan."[88] While Michael Horton attempts a clearer articulation of the importance of Christ's humanity in the economy of redemption, his position, too, is marked by a pronounced Christocentricism and an understated pneumatology that is characteristic of the Reformed tradition.[89]

The tendency to overemphasise christological and underemphasise pneumatological elements in the economy of redemption are symptoms of a thinking that James Purves describes as "monofocal, logocentric theology."[90] Purves' observation here is intended to highlight some of the dangers associated with Reformed theology's tendency toward "an exclusive focus on the Son."[91] Gunton was also aware of this weakness and sought to address the situation trinitarianly by articulating a theology founded upon the principle of complementarity between the person and work of the Son and of the Spirit. He held the view that the mutual interdependence and complementarity of God's 'two hands' in the economy is a profoundly biblical way of expressing what the New Testament writers have to say about the relationship between the Son and the Spirit. Alasdair Heron, an influential contemporary Reformed pneumatologist, observes that

> although the New Testament does associate the Spirit closely with Christ in a way which suggests that the Person and work of the Spirit are to be understood and defined via the Person and work of Christ, it also contains a strand which appears to put things the other way round, and define the Person and work of Christ in terms of the Spirit: Christ is designated Son of God by the descent of the Spirit on him at his Baptism, he himself claims that 'the Spirit of the Lord is upon me' (Luke 4.18ff), and both Matt. 1.20 and Luke 1.35 attribute his birth from Mary

[88] Michael S. Horton, 'Post-Reformation Reformed anthropology' in *Personal identity in theological perspective*, ed. Richard Lints, Michael S. Horton and Mark R. Talbot (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 47.

[89] Horton proposes an account that "provides the soil for a robust notion of the humanity of Christ. God the Father alone could not have saved us. Our Savior had to be the second Adam. Throughout his relatively brief messianic career, Jesus recapitulated Adam's testing in the Garden and Israel's forty-year testing, in his own forty-day probation in the desert and, in fact, in the entirety of his life." What is missing from this account, of course, is any reference to the work of the Spirit. Horton, 'Post-Reformation Reformed anthropology,' 57.

[90] Purves, 'The Spirit and the *imago Dei*,' 116.

[91] ibid., 117.

> to the operation of the Holy Spirit. This suggests that Christ is 'of the Spirit' just as much as the Spirit is 'of Christ'.[92]

Gunton's insistence that the Spirit should be understood principally as transcendent has some crucial implications for his christology. In particular, his thoughts regarding the humanity of Christ give rise to a reconsideration of the sinlessness of Jesus and the salvific efficaciousness of Christ's humanity.

Sinlessness of Jesus

It was argued above that Gunton, following Irving, held that Jesus' sinlessness is not an accident of metaphysical impossibility (i.e., contra *non posse peccare*) but derives from the fact that he was enabled to resist temptation and remain obedient to the will of the Father precisely because of the mediatorial empowerment of the Holy Spirit. The crucial distinction that Gunton made in this regard, however, is that sinlessness is defined personally not substantially: it is the *person* of the Son who is sinless, not the human nature of Christ. Sinlessness, understood thus, is a spiritual/moral reality, expressed in personal and relational terms, and is consequent upon the Spirit's mediation of the will of the Father to the Son.[93]

The view that the humanity of the Son is 'authentic' humanity, that is, the

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[92] Alasdair I. C. Heron, ' 'Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son': the problem of the filioque' in *Scottish journal of theology* 24, no. 2 (1971), 155.

[93] Gunton's position here is supported by John Zizioulas, who argues that "the Son's filial 'Yes' to the Father, which we encounter in Gethsemane and elsewhere, can only make sense ontologically if it points to the eternal filial relationship between the two persons. It is mainly this unbroken eternal filial relationship that accounts for the fact that Christ's humanity, or rather *Christ in his humanity*, never sinned, that is, contradicted the will of the Father, although he was tempted to do so in the desert and before going to the Cross. ... I would certainly agree with C. Gunton in seeing, behind Jesus' obedience to the Father, the eternal response of the Son to the Father's love.' Zizioulas' statement makes no reference to the part played by the Spirit, nevertheless his recognition that "Christ's humanity, or rather *Christ in his humanity*, never sinned" is important precisely because in making this distinction Zizioulas refocused the discussion of Jesus' sinlessness from that of a causality associated with his human *nature* (i.e., ontological) to the obedience of the *person* who is fully human (i.e., moral). John D. Zizioulas, 'The Father as cause: personhood generating otherness' in *Communion and otherness: further studies in personhood and the church* (London: T & T Clark, 2006), 138 (emphasis added).

same as that shared by his brothers and sisters (Heb 2:14-18), is not without precedent in the Reformed tradition. James Torrance, for example, another important Reformed thinker observed that

> Edward Irving the great Scottish theologian in the early nineteenth century and Karl Barth in our own day have said … Christ assumed 'fallen humanity' that our humanity might be turned back to God in him by his sinless life in the Spirit, and, through him, in us.[94]

Nevertheless, the fact that Gunton chose to argue the case in this manner is instructive for understanding the impact that trinitarian conceptuality and an increased emphasis upon the person and work of the Holy Spirit exercised over his theological project. It was observed in Chapter One that Gunton began his theological career as a lecturer in philosophical theology and the influence of that philosophical heritage is abundantly evident in his published works. An enthusiastic embrace of Cappadocian theology and an equally active dismissal of some aspects of Augustinian influence upon the Western theological tradition led Gunton to prioritise personal and relational categories of thought over substantialist concepts in his argument for increased commitment to trinitarian and pneumatological conceptuality.

The extent to which Gunton's thought is distinguishable from a more philosophically-informed Reformed theology is illustrated by reference to Oliver Crisp's recent article addressing the difficulty of reconciling statements affirming Christ's authentic human nature and his sinlessness.[95] Crisp argues that "there does not seem to be any way of making sense of the notion that Christ had a fallen but not sinful human nature" because the Christian tradition has considered fallenness to

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[94] James B. Torrance, 'The vicarious humanity of Christ' in *The incarnation: ecumenical studies in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed*, ed. Thomas F. Torrance (Edinburgh: Handsel, 1981), 141.

[95] Oliver D. Crisp, 'Did Christ have a *fallen* human nature?' in *International journal of systematic theology* 6, no. 3 (2004), 270-288.

entail sinfulness.[96] In particular, Crisp perceives the logical impossibility of arguing that Christ's humanity is constituted *posse peccare* because "Christ's humanity is never in a position to be able to sin. Divine grace prevents that outcome."[97] He concludes, therefore, that the 'fallen, but not sinful' argument fails on the grounds that the human nature of Christ is "prevented" from sinning by the divine nature.

However, Gunton's claim that Christ *is enabled to obey* the will of the Father by the Spirit is not the same as saying "prevented from sinning" inasmuch as Gunton's position operates at the personal and relational level while 'prevention' is a function of metaphysical causality. The difference is located in the understanding that the enabling presence of the Spirit does not override the human weakness of the Son but strengthens the *person* of Jesus in such a way that he is able to live a life of obedience. The strength of Gunton's formulation is that it points to Jesus' life as the example of what it is to live in right-relationship with the one he calls "*Abba*, Father" (Mk 14:36). James Torrance provides valuable support for Gunton on this point.

> Christ does not heal us by standing over against us, diagnosing our sickness, prescribing medicine for us to take, and then going away, to leave us to get better by obeying his instructions – as an ordinary doctor might. No, He becomes the patient! He assumes that very humanity which is in need of redemption, and by being anointed by the Spirit in our humanity, by a life of perfect obedience, by dying and rising again, for us, our humanity is healed *in him*.[98]

Christ's humanity as salvific

In a recent publication providing a detailed comparison of Colin Gunton's theology of the immanent Trinity with that of Karl Barth, Paul Molnar correctly identifies that Gunton's claims about the Spirit's transcendence affords the

[96] ibid., 271f.
[97] ibid., 285.
[98] Torrance, 'The vicarious humanity of Christ,' 141.

opportunity for an increased focus upon the humanity of Christ.[99] Gunton argued that Christ's humanity had received insufficient attention in Barth's christology and in the wider Western tradition as a whole, because of a corresponding under emphasis upon the christological significance of the work of the Spirit and an overemphasis upon the function of the Word of God, or Christ's divinity.[100] Gunton's statement that Jesus' "freedom, particularity and contingency ... are *enabled* by the (transcendent) Spirit rather than *determined* by the (immanent) word"[101] serves to validate Molnar's claim that Gunton "argues that Jesus' significance derives equally from his humanity; and … he argues that the Spirit rather than the Word is the source of Jesus' authentic humanity."[102]

Molnar believes that by affording centrality to the humanity of Christ in his theological scheme, Gunton exposes his christology to criticism on the grounds of the separation of the inseparable and an inappropriate emphasis upon Jesus' obedience.[103] In the first instance, according to Molnar, Gunton's tendency to separate what is inseparable is present in both his trinitarian and christological theology. Trinitarianly speaking, the danger is the separation of Word and Spirit.

Gunton's emphasis on Jesus' humanity sometimes appears to eliminate

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[99] Molnar, *Divine freedom and the doctrine of the immanent Trinity*, 294.

[100] Gunton, 'The triune God and the freedom of the creature,' 63. Oliver Crisp, in a discussion about the source of the power with which Jesus performed miracles, provides a clearly stated example of the traditional Reformed tendency to ascribe priority to the divinity of Christ over against those views which hold to a more complementary operation of christological and pneumatological interests in the mission of God in the world. Crisp asserts that "It could be argued that it is the Holy Spirit that enables the human nature of Christ to perform miracles, rather than Christ's divine nature, if, say, the divine nature of Christ is not thought to act in and through the human nature of Christ in this way during the incarnation. But I take it that this is not the conventional view of the means by which Christ was able to perform miracles. A conventional view would claim that Christ was able to perform miracles in virtue of the action of his divine nature in and through his human nature in the hypostatic union." Oliver D. Crisp, 'Problems with perichoresis' in *Tyndale bulletin* 56, no. 1 (2005), 134.

[101] Gunton, 'The church on earth,' 64.

[102] Molnar, *Divine freedom and the doctrine of the immanent Trinity*, 282.

[103] Molnar remarks that in "his haste to emphasize the human story of Jesus in abstraction from his action as the Word or Son, Gunton has, to a certain extent, made Jesus a passive object who does little more than illustrate for us certain human features that are attributed to the action of the Spirit rather than the Word." Molnar, *Divine freedom and the doctrine of the immanent Trinity*, 298.

> the significance of his being the Word incarnate and at times actually tends to separate the actions of the Word and Spirit instead of seeing these actions in their *perichoretic* unity.[104]

However, Molnar overlooks the fact that Gunton's emphasis upon Christ's humanity is intended, at least in part, to accentuate the particularity and the identity of this one human person, Jesus of Nazareth, who is *the* Son.[105] Gunton's christological formulation draws support from Graham McFarlane who warns that

> If we identify Christ solely as Word, then this description fails to express the identity of the second *person* of the Trinity, and, more importantly, who God is both in his being-for-others and as himself … it is only through the notion of Son that we confront the notion of love.[106]

In spite of the importance of the stress that Gunton laid upon the particularity and unity of the person of the Son, his position appears to be at odds with the Reformed tradition. John Webster, for example, points out that "Gunton's Christology is perhaps the least 'Reformed' aspect of his theology, in that he does not follow the characteristic Calvinist trend of assigning the lead to the deity in an account of the two natures of the incarnate one."[107]

Christological separation becomes apparent, according to Molnar, when Gunton insists that Jesus' "obedience is salvific"[108] for that "implies a practical

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[104] ibid., 282.

[105] Gunton's emphasis upon the *person* of the *Son* is supported by Christoph Schwöbel's argument that a "paradigm shift from natures to persons, from substance metaphysics to a metaphysics of relations" in a specifically trinitarian Christology, and is the means whereby the divinity of Christ may be conceived as consisting in Sonship – i.e., Christ's divinity *is* the relationship of the Son to the Father in the Spirit. Moreover, Schwöbel adds that it is possible to understand that the person of Christ is constituted by two relationships – between i) the intra-trinitarian relations of Father, Son and Spirit, and ii) that of the Son to the whole of humanity. The importance of this configuration, according to Schwöbel, is that this "conceptuality of two 'sets of relationships' is suggested as an alternative to the conceptual scheme of two natures which can also satisfy the criteria of the Chalcedonian Definition." Christoph Schwöbel, 'Christology and trinitarian thought' in *Trinitarian theology today: essays on divine being and act*, ed. Christoph Schwöbel (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 140; and Christoph Schwöbel, 'The renaissance of trinitarian theology: reasons, problems and tasks' in *Trinitarian theology today: essays on divine being and act*, ed. Christoph Schwöbel (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 28.

[106] McFarlane, *Christ and the Spirit*, 20.

[107] Webster, 'Systematic theology after Barth,' 260.

[108] For example, Gunton, *Christ and creation*, 59.

separation of Jesus' humanity and divinity and indeed suggests that it is Jesus' humanity as such that is a kind of passive focal point for the redemption of humanity."[109] Molnar adds, moreover, that focusing attention upon the salvific efficaciousness of the humanity of the Son – in particular his *human* obedience – runs the risk of driving a wedge between the two natures of Christ.

Yet Molnar's argument that Gunton's position tends to separate the persons of the Trinity as well as the human and divine natures of Christ fails to afford due recognition of both the method and content of Gunton's position.

In the first instance, Colin Gunton's theological method is thoroughly trinitarian inasmuch as everything that God *is* and *does* is the province of the three divine persons, Father, Son, and Spirit. Moreover, the divine *existence* and *actions* are those of the three persons precisely because of perichoresis – the "dynamic mutual reciprocity, interpenetration and interanimation" that Father, Son, and Spirit have shared from all eternity.[110] The triune persons occupy pride of place in Gunton's thought precisely because they are both the means and content of God's self-disclosure and action in the world.

Gunton's christology also is equally dependent upon the principle of perichoresis.[111] Despite the criticism of Molnar, Gunton never advocated a separation of the two natures of Christ because, when speaking about the work of the Son, his thought remained consistent with the language and practice of Chalcedon's

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[109] Molnar, *Divine freedom and the doctrine of the immanent Trinity*, 300f.

[110] Colin E. Gunton, *The one, the three and the many: God, creation and the culture of modernity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University, 1993), 163.

[111] Perichoresis, as we observed in the previous chapter, was introduced into the Christian theological vocabulary as a specifically christological term intended to describe the relation of Christ's human and divine natures 'to' each other. Prestige argued that the first use of the term in a trinitarian sense was by pseudo-Cyril, who, in so-doing, presided over a terminological innovation. Applying the term to persons rather than natures, however, meant that pseudo-Cyril subtly, but significantly, altered the meaning of the term from 'to' to 'in' – *perichoresis* thereafter came to mean that the divine persons "possess co-inherence in one another without any coalescence or commixture." George Leonard Prestige, *God in patristic thought* (London: SPCK, 1964), 298.

precedent-establishing use of four negative adverbs to describe the hypostatic union of two natures in the one person. Taking full advantage of Chalcedon's example, Gunton *distinguished* (i.e., without confusion) but did not *separate* (i.e., without division) the two natures of classical christology.[112] He was enabled to hold both emphases together, balancing the tension between them, precisely because his focus remained upon the unity of the *person* of Christ.[113]

If, as the orthodox Christian tradition has taught, the *person* of Christ has two natures – divine and human – that are inseparable, and if the person of Christ is the saviour, then there must be some sense in which the humanity of Christ is salvific.[114] It is not the divinity alone, nor is it the humanity alone, which proves to be salvifically efficacious;[115] rather, according to Gunton, it is the *person* – the whole

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[112] Michael Horton also argues for the legitimacy of distinguishing but not separating the two natures of Christ in theological discourse. He states that "Without separating the two natures of Christ, we must nevertheless distinguish between the everlasting sonship of Christ as a possession and his fulfillment of this human, Adamic sonship *as a commission*. Jesus is not only the Son of God but is also the Son of Adam, Seed of Abraham, Son of David, and Son of Mary who fulfills the *human* destiny of becoming the royal son of God." Michael S. Horton, 'Image and office: human personhood and the covenant' in *Personal identity in theological perspective*, ed. Richard Lints, Michael S. Horton and Mark R. Talbot (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 187.

[113] Gunton's central focus upon the person of Christ echoes the thought of Louis Berkhof, one of the most respected American Reformed systematicians from the mid-twentieth century. Speaking about the *communicatio idiomatum*, Berkhof is insistent that, in Reformed thought, the phrase means "that the properties of both, the human and the divine natures, are now the properties of *the person*, and are therefore ascribed *to the person*. … We must be careful not to understand the term to mean anything peculiar to the divine nature was communicated to the human nature, or vice versa; or that there is an interpenetration of the two natures, as a result of which the divine is humanized, and the human is deified." Louis Berkhof, *Systematic theology* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1958), 324 (emphasis added).

[114] Gunton draws support for this point from Christoph Schwöbel and Alan Spence respectively: Schwöbel argues that "If reconciliation is understood as the work of Christ, and if the work of Christ is understood as mediation, and if Christ is consubstantial with God with regard to his divine nature, his reconciling mediatorial work must be carried out through his human nature." Schwöbel, 'Reconciliation,' 28. Spence adds the insight that "Christ's attitude in laying down his life is an integral part of the efficacy of his death … For if it does not merely consist in his physical death, but in the fear and the tears, in the faith and the prayer and in the submission of the will that led to it, then an active human mind and will are an essential aspect of that whole event." Spence, 'Christ's humanity and ours,' 87.

[115] Although Paul van Buren argues that the obedience of Christ in Calvin's theology is a function of Christ's humanity alone, he goes on to add that this must be weighed against Calvin's insistence upon the unity of the person of Christ: "the same person, who by reconciling us to the Father in His flesh has given us righteousness, is the eternal Word of God." Paul M. van Buren, *Christ in our place: the substitutory character of Calvin's doctrine of reconciliation* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1957), 38; cf. Calvin, *Institues*, III.11.8.

person, in his humanity and divinity – of the Son[116] who is "the one who is obedient to the Father through the Spirit" as he acts in the event of reconciliation.[117]

Secondly, Molnar's objection to the emphasis that Gunton afforded the *obedience* of Jesus is driven by the preconception that obedience is a human work, and a theology of works was anathematised in Reformed soteriology. Here again, however, Molnar appears to have misunderstood Gunton's position which is not focused upon *what* was done but upon *who* did it: identity, rather than act, is central in Gunton's scheme.

Gunton's thought was always centred upon *the person* of the Son, so as to accentuate the identity of the one who obeys, rather than his *obedience* (the act). To put the matter differently, Gunton was always concerned with *Jesus'* obedience, not with Jesus' *obedience*.[118]

The point here is not a matter of indulgent semantics, for the seemingly pedantic distinction does effectively capture Gunton's intent. The whole of his trinitarian theology was formulated using personal and relational categories, a personal and relational conceptuality intentionally employed as the means of speaking about Jesus' sinlessness and, therefore, his salvific efficaciousness. Thus,

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[116] Gunton's prioritisation of the unity of the person of the saviour is echoed by T. F. Torrance, who states that "it was not the *death* of Jesus that constituted atonement, but Jesus Christ the Son of God offering Himself in sacrifice for us. Everything depends on *who* He was, for the significance of His acts in life and death depends on the nature of His Person ... we must allow the Person of Christ to determine for us the nature of His saving work, rather than the other way round." Thomas F. Torrance, 'Cheap and costly grace' in *Baptist quarterly* 22, no. 6 (1968), 295f; see also Thomas F. Torrance, *God and rationality* (London: Oxford University, 1971), 64.

[117] Gunton, 'The sovereignty of Jesus,' 4; see also Colin E. Gunton, *Yesterday and today: a study of continuities in christology*, 2nd ed. (London: SPCK, 1997), 225f; Gunton, 'The church as a school of virtue,' 216.

[118] Gunton's thought here clearly demonstrates that he was positively influenced by remarks made by Cynthia Campbell in response to his 1986 article – 'Barth, the Trinity and human freedom' in *Theology today* 43, no. 3 (1986), 316-330. Campbell suggested that an emphasis upon the *obedience* (i.e., act) of the elected one actively detracts from the freedom to obey of *the elected one* (i.e., identity). A subtle shift of emphasis from act to identity, according to Campbell, throws into sharper relief the view that divine power "operates not by compelling obedience (because there is no alternative) but by empowering humans to realize the life in relatedness for which they were created." Campbell, 'Response to Colin Gunton,' 333.

for Gunton, as for Irving before him, Jesus' sinlessness, as discussed earlier, was not seen as an accident of metaphysical impossibility but rather subsists in the personal obedience of *the Son* to the will of his Father. But, crucially, the Son's obedience is pneumatically enabled inasmuch as the spiritual and moral fortitude required to resist evil *is mediated* to him by the Spirit. In the words of Gunton:

> Jesus is the particular human being that he is by virtue of his relation, as the incarnate Son, to the Father mediated by the Spirit. That which Jesus does in obedience to the Spirit of his Father he does freely, because that is the way by which he is empowered to fulfil the particular righteousness laid upon him. By analogy, this is the case with all human actions.[119]

A third point to be made concerns the anthropological and soteriological implications that flow from the pneumatological empowerment of the Son's humanity. Gunton was certainly aware of the fact that what "the Spirit performs in relation to the humanity of Christ, he can be seen also to do in relation to those who are the adopted – elect – brothers and sisters of the risen Jesus."[120] In other words, as the Spirit mediates the things of the Father to the Son so, too, the Spirit mediates the things of the Father to those who believe and follow his Son (Jn 14:25-27; 16:12-15). Gunton's trinitarian theology of mediation therefore adds validity to the claim that 'As for Jesus, so for us!'[121]

Colin Gunton often referred to the transcendent Spirit's work in Jesus, his followers and the whole of the created order as the perfecting cause of creation, a concept that he adopted from Basil of Caesarea as a means of talking about "God

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[119] Gunton, 'Martin Kähler revisited,' 28.

[120] Colin E. Gunton, 'Election and ecclesiology in the post-Constantinian Church' in *Scottish journal of theology* 53, no. 2 (2000), 222.

[121] The complex theological principle encapsulated by this aphorism finds many different expressions. Alan Spence, for example, remarks that the "man Christ Jesus as the object of the Spirit's sanctifying and renewing work must have learnt and experienced grace as we do, knowing sanctification through suffering and finding God's help through fervent prayer." Spence, 'Christ's humanity and ours,' 85; cf, Smail, 'The Holy Spirit in the Holy Trinity,' 163.

enabling the world to become that which it is intended to be."[122] If, as Gunton and Basil argued, God is bringing the created order to perfection by the Spirit, it is quite in order to speak of the Spirit as God's eschatological agent. An examination of the concept of the Spirit as perfecting agent in Colin Gunton's trinitarian pneumatology will be the central concern of the next chapter.

[122] Colin E. Gunton, *The actuality of atonement: a study of metaphor, rationality and the Christian tradition* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), 82. See also Gunton, *Christ and creation*, 50; Gunton, 'The doctrine of creation,' 142; Gunton, *The Christian faith*, 117-172; Colin E. Gunton, 'We believe in the Holy Spirit, who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified' in *Fire and wind: the Holy Spirit in the church today*, ed. Joseph D. Small (Louisville, KY: Geneva, 2002), 26.

Chapter Six

Spirit as perfecting agent

The two previous chapters have argued that Colin Gunton's trinitarian pneumatology afforded a distinctive emphasis to the Spirit as personal and as transcendent. They offered an explanation of Gunton's conception of the Spirit as a personal divine agent who was *in* the world but not *of* the world in the same way as the Son. The third feature of Gunton's doctrine of the Spirit which was identified toward the end of Chapter Three above – namely, the Spirit as perfecting agent – will be the focus of our discussion here.

It is a commonplace that the final decades of the twentieth century were marked by increased interest in the doctrines of the Trinity and the Spirit among Christian systematicians. What is most interesting, however, is that on the back of the horror of two world wars and innumerable armed conflicts since, those theological developments were taking place within a wider social milieu that was becoming increasingly concerned with the broader question of the very future of the planet. Ecological, environmental and sustainability questions were fast becoming major political and social issues. The importance of these concerns was reflected in a re-orientation of eschatological thought that became evident in the final decades of the previous century, especially as some eschatologies were conceived along political and ecological lines.[1]

Gunton argued that modern culture is shaped by a "false eschatology" that is

[1] Ingolf U. Dalferth, 'The eschatological roots of the doctrine of the Trinity' in *Trinitarian theology today: essays on divine being and act*, ed. Christoph Schwöbel (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 156. The process of re-orientation of eschatological thought away from its traditional christological centre is sharply criticised by in a recent work by Adrio König, *The eclipse of Christ in eschatology: toward a Christ-centered approach* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989). Cf, Colin E. Gunton, 'Dogmatic theses on eschatology: conference response' in *The future as God's gift: explorations in Christian eschatology*, ed. David Fergusson and Marcel Sarot (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 143.

most clearly witnessed within, but not limited to, the over-realised nature of expectations of the health industry in the nations of the first world.[2] The 'false eschatology' that he warned against is the mistaken belief that human ingenuity alone is sufficient to achieve that which remains the divine prerogative. His point was that creation is brought to fulfilment only insofar as the purposes of the creator are worked out within the created order. Gunton, therefore, was arguing for an eschatology that demonstrated "a greater orientation to the destiny of this material creation as the context which is also inextricably bound up with the goal of the human," an eschatology that only finds adequate expression via "a more concrete pneumatology."[3]

The concern for the destiny of the material creation and the goal of human beings were brought together by Gunton when he argued for the recovery of *the project* of creation whereby the created order is perfected and this movement of being-brought-to-perfection is constituted as the creation's praise of its maker.[4] In an earlier work Gunton had remarked that creation's raison d'être is "to achieve perfection through time and to return completed to its creator."[5] The key concept operative in Gunton's thinking here was that the world is "something God creates not as a timelessly perfect whole, but as an order of things that is planned to go somewhere; to be completed or perfected, and so *projected* into time."[6]

Of course, just as the world as a whole is destined for perfection, so too is

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[2] Colin E. Gunton, 'All flesh is as grass: towards an eschatology of the human person' in *Beyond mere health: theology and health care in a secular society*, ed. Hilary D. Regan, Rod Horsfield and Gabrielle L. McMullan (Kew, VIC: Australian Theological Forum, 1996), 29.

[3] Colin E. Gunton, 'Election and ecclesiology in the post-Constantinian Church' in *Scottish journal of theology* 53, no. 2 (2000), 217.

[4] Colin E. Gunton, 'Atonement and the project of creation: an interpretation of Colossians 1:15-23' in *Dialog: a journal of theology* 35, no. 1 (1996), 39.

[5] Colin E. Gunton, *The one, the three and the many: God, creation and the culture of modernity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University, 1993), 120.

[6] Gunton, 'Atonement and the project of creation,' 36.

human being as part of that world: first in the person of Jesus Christ, then of all others insofar as Christ is the concentrated summation of humanity.[7] Not only is human life teleologically orientated by virtue of its creation, "it is created with a view to an end that more than replicated its beginning, because it is given *to be perfected.*"[8] This basic point is echoed in Horton's assertion that "being eschatologically oriented to the future – indeed, to a better world – is intrinsic to humanness."[9]

The question of the interrelatedness of the destiny of the material creation and the doctrine of the Spirit in Gunton's trinitarian theology is answered, according to this study, by the emphasis that he laid upon the eschatological orientation of the Holy Spirit. For Gunton, the Spirit's work within creation – both human and non-human – was seen as nothing other than God's leading and drawing the whole of creation to perfection. More specifically, Gunton held that the Spirit's "function is to perfect creation: that is, to direct the world to its end as creation in saving relation to God."[10]

By appealing to the writings of Basil of Caesarea in this respect, Gunton argued extensively that "the Spirit is the perfecting cause of the creation."[11] In contradistinction, Western theology, according to Gunton, has tended to be

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[7] Colin E. Gunton, 'The sacrifice and the sacrifices: from metaphor to transcendental' in *Trinity, incarnation and atonement: philosophical and theological essays*, ed. Ronald J. Feenstra and Cornelius Plantinga (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University, 1990), 221.

[8] Colin E. Gunton, 'Christ, the wisdom of God: a study in divine and human action' in *Where shall wisdom be found? Wisdom in the Bible, the church and the contemporary world*, ed. Stephen C. Barton (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999), 256.

[9] Michael S. Horton, 'Image and office: human personhood and the covenant' in *Personal identity in theological perspective*, ed. Richard Lints, Michael S. Horton and Mark R. Talbot (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 197.

[10] Colin E. Gunton, *Christ and creation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 92.

[11] Colin E. Gunton, 'The sovereignty of Jesus: some reflections on the crown rights of the Redeemer' in *Theological digest and outlook* 6, no. 1 (1991), 7; cf. Basil of Caesarea, *De Spiritu Sanctu*, 16.38 (*PG* 32:135; *NPNF* 8:23). See also Colin E. Gunton, 'The Spirit in the Trinity' in *The forgotten Trinity* vol. 3, ed. Alasdair I. C. Heron (London: BCC/CCBI, 1991), 130; and, Colin E. Gunton, 'The Spirit moved over the face of the waters: the Holy Spirit and the created order' in *International journal of systematic theology* 4, no. 2 (2002), 203.

> so dominated … with what can be called the religious functions of the Spirit – the early theologians, for example, often defended his divinity by appeal to little more than the fact that sanctification is a divine work – that we tend to forget that the Spirit is the Lord and Giver of Life universally.[12]

The deliberate invocation of the confession of the Spirit's divinity made in the third article of the creed formulated at Constantinople in 381 is a reminder that Gunton desired to remain within the broad sweep of orthodox Christian teaching regarding the Spirit. Indeed, as noted above, it is true to say that his theology as a whole avoided the introduction of novel teaching specifically by placing emphasis upon that which was already present, but often overlooked and/or understated, in the Christian theological tradition. Understanding and developing the point that Gunton makes about the Spirit as the perfecting agent of creation, therefore, will involve tracing some of the influences that helped form this aspect of his theology of the Spirit.

Influences

In the review of the various theological and philosophical influences upon the development of Gunton's theology, it was argued that many of the most significant theological figures with whom Gunton engaged were from the patristic period of church history. Three of those early Christian thinkers in particular serve as key influences in the development of what Gunton intended by speaking of the Spirit as an eschatologically orientated, perfecting agent.

Irenaeus of Lyons

The extent of the influence of Irenaeus of Lyons upon Colin Gunton's theology becomes apparent insofar as one simply cannot read Gunton's works

[12] Colin E. Gunton, 'The church as a school of virtue? Human formation in trinitarian framework' in *Faithfulness and fortitude: in conversation with the theological ethics of Stanley Hauerwas*, ed. Mark Theissen Nation and Samuel Wells (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 214.

without encountering repeated and favourable references to Irenaeus' thought, especially the use of his 'two hands' metaphor as a way of speaking about God's work in the world.[13] For Gunton, the Irenaean metaphor functioned as a structuring principle that provided a framework within which he could afford fresh attention to Irenaeus' assertion of the central importance of the materiality of the creation.[14]

Gunton drew heavily upon the Irenaean understanding that redemption is *of* the created order precisely because God's plan of salvation takes place *within* creation.[15] The particulars of what God has done, is doing, and will do are worked out within the spatio-temporal confines of the material order in which the incarnation of the Son took place. In this Irenaean view, Jesus' earthly ministry, culminating in the resurrection and ascension, is the ground for the transformation and recapitulation of the material order to the extent that it is the proleptic fulfilment of God's eschatological purpose for creation. Gunton remarked that, in this regard, Irenaeus grasped the significance of "the eschatological perfecting of our bodily humanity, and its transformation to life with God" in a way that was either misunderstood or completely overlooked by many other theologians.[16]

Augustine of Hippo

One of those who misunderstood the implications of such a view was Augustine, bishop of Hippo, who by way of his neglect of creation might be

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[13] See, for example, Gunton, *Christ and creation*, 75; Colin E. Gunton, *The Christian faith: an introduction to Christian doctrine* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2002), 10; Colin E. Gunton, 'Persons and particularity' in *The theology of John Zizioulas: personhood and the church*, ed. Douglas H. Knight (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007), 106.

[14] See, for example, Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses*, 5.3.2-3 (*PG* 7:1129; *ANF* 1:529f); 5.6.1 (*PG* 7:1136; *ANF* 1:531f).

[15] Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses*, 3.16.6 (*PG* 7:924; *ANF* 1:442); cf. 1.21.4 (*PG* 7:663, 666; *ANF* 1:346). Gunton, following Irenaeus, rejected dualistic conceptuality and warned against "the tearing apart of creation and redemption" in theological discourse on the grounds that, in that view, "redemption comes to appear to consist in salvation out of and apart from the rest of the world." Gunton, *Christ and creation*, 33.

[16] Colin E. Gunton, 'One mediator ... the man Jesus Christ: reconciliation, mediation and life in community' in *Pro ecclesia* 11, no. 2 (2002), 156.

considered to have been a negative influence on Gunton's thinking. An inability to provide adequate attention to the importance of the material creation in Augustine's theology, according to Gunton, results from a failure "to conceive the eschatological dimensions of the Spirit's activities."[17]

Basil of Caesarea

Gunton's insistence upon speaking of the full personhood of the Spirit determined to a large extent the manner in which he interpreted Basil's description of the Holy Spirit as the "perfecting cause" of creation.[18] Gunton took up Basil's insight, adding the observation that "when Basil of Caesarea described the Holy Spirit as the perfecting cause of the creation, he enabled us to say that it is the work of God the Spirit to enable the created order to be truly itself."[19] This would illustrate that Gunton understood the creation's perfecting 'cause' not in terms of some primordial Aristotelian cause, but rather in terms of the divine personhood of the Spirit whereby it is the Spirit as person who is the agent of the creation's perfection. Where Basil spoke of the Father as the original cause, the Son as the creative cause, and the Holy Spirit as the perfecting cause of all things,[20] Gunton was intent upon drawing attention to the personal and trinitarian agency of God's acts in and for the world. The emphasis upon the personal is apparent in Gunton's paraphrase of Basil: "the Father originates; he creates through the Son; and he perfects through the Spirit."[21]

Indeed, it is precisely as 'perfecting cause' that "the Spirit acts over against

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[17] Colin E. Gunton, 'God the Holy Spirit: Augustine and his successors' in *Theology through the theologians: selected essays, 1972-1995* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 126.
[18] Basil of Caesarea, *De Spiritu Sanctu*, 16.38 (*PG* 32:135; *NPNF* 8:23).
[19] Colin E. Gunton, *The triune creator: a historical and systematic study* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 10.
[20] Basil of Caesarea, *De Spiritu Sanctu*, 16.38 (*PG* 32:135; *NPNF* 8:23).
[21] Gunton, 'The church as a school of virtue,' 214.

the creation, realizing the eschatological perfection of the particular."[22] Gunton's statement here draws together two central notions, that of the Spirit who both perfects and particularises. In the first instance, as the perfecting cause, the Spirit is at work within the creation, ensuring the creation's completedness, in the fullness of time, which is its perfection.[23] Secondly, regarding particularity, Gunton remarked that "it is through the Spirit's action that we discern the basis of the world's distinction from God, its being itself, the world."[24] The emphasis that he laid upon the Spirit's perfecting and particularising actions within creation gives rise to the central claim of this present chapter, namely, that Gunton's trinitarian pneumatology is also distinguished by his understanding of the eschatological orientation of the Spirit.

Holy Spirit as perfecting agent

But what, specifically, did Colin Gunton intend by placing such emphasis upon the eschatological nature of the Spirit's work in the world? One of the first points to be made is that by affording attention to the eschatological orientation of the Spirit's action in the world, Gunton was not denying the Spirit's role in the beginning of the world. To the contrary, there is ample evidence throughout Gunton's corpus to support the thesis that the doctrine of creation is one of the central elements in his theological project. The point at stake, according to Gunton, is the very reality of the world, especially as understood in terms of the relatedness and otherness shared between creator and creation.[25] But the juxtaposition of relatedness and otherness must be expressed trinitarianly because, as Gunton observed, "is it not

[22] Gunton, 'Persons and particularity,' 107.
[23] Gunton, 'The church as a school of virtue,' 215.
[24] ibid., 214f.
[25] Gunton argued that the Spirit's eschatological function within the immanent Trinity is also marked by a dual focus, namely "the orientation to otherness and the perfection of particularity." Colin E. Gunton, *Act and being: towards a theology of the divine attributes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 120.

also part of the Christian gospel that we receive our personal particularity as a function of the world's ontological distinctness from God, and does that not need to be founded in a conception of the immanent Trinity?"[26]

Gunton's exposition of creation as a trinitarian work involving Father, Son and Spirit provided the means whereby he added an explicitly pneumatological element to his doctrine of creation. Specifically, he argued that the Spirit was one of the two hands of God through whom the world was brought into being.[27] This, in turn, suggested to him that "a theology of divine action that does not incorporate the distinctive work of the Spirit as well as that of the Son fails in some way to encompass the breadth of the biblical economy."[28]

The divine economy is, of course, not solely concerned with the beginning of creation, but also with its goal. In Gunton's own words, "God's action in and towards the world takes the form of *both* creating what is *and* redeeming what has failed to become what it is called to be."[29] The implication here being that although

> creation has a beginning, and because it is not God it is fragile and limited. But that fragility and limitedness, though they can never be forgotten, are under the promise that in some sense or other they will be transcended, not, however, by their own efforts, but by the perfecting agency of God the Spirit.[30]

The connection is therefore established between the concept of the Spirit as

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[26] Colin E. Gunton, a review of *God as Trinity: relationality and temporality in divine life* by Ted Peters (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1993) in *Theology today* 51, no. 1 (1994), 176.

[27] Gunton is insistent that "all divine action, whether in creation, salvation or final redemption is the action of God the Father; but it is all equally brought about by his two hands, the Son and the Spirit. And these hands do not act separately, like someone holding a baby in one hand and trying to bang in a nail with the other (though I fear that our talk of the Spirit might sometimes suggest that). The Spirit works through the Son, just as Jesus' ministry was empowered by the Spirit. All is the unified action of the one God, the one God of the Old Testament confession, mediated in this twofold way." Colin E. Gunton, 'We believe in the Holy Spirit, who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified' in *Fire and wind: the Holy Spirit in the church today*, ed. Joseph D. Small (Louisville, KY: Geneva, 2002), 25.

[28] Colin E. Gunton, *Father, Son and Holy Spirit: essays toward a fully trinitarian theology* (London: T & T Clark, 2003), xiii.

[29] Gunton, 'Christ, the wisdom of God,' 256.

[30] Gunton, 'All flesh is as grass,' 23.

the divine "perfecting agency" and the eschaton, the goal toward which the creation is being drawn and the reason for which it is being perfected.[31]

Augustine's trinitarian conception of the Spirit as the 'bond of love' which unites the Father and Son in love and thanksgiving is of central importance at this juncture, albeit in a negative sense, because it provided Gunton with a concept that enabled him to speak of the Spirit as the divine agent of perfection. Where Augustine considered the action of the Spirit in uniting the Father and the Son as the closing of an eternal circle,[32] Gunton argued that God's purposes are completed by opening, not closing, the 'circle.'

> The Spirit completes the being of God as the one who perfects the love of God as a being in communion, which means a love whose dynamic is to move outwards towards the other. From this it follows that the Spirit is the agent of the divine movement outwards, to create, redeem and perfect.[33]

It becomes clear that while Gunton's conception of the Spirit was developed in dialogue with Augustinian trinitarianism, the two schemes are to be distinguished by an opposite directionality. That is to say, while Augustine thought of the Spirit as acting centripetally (i.e., as drawing-inwards), Gunton proposed that the Spirit's

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[31] The nexus of i) personal divine agency, ii) of being sustained and perfected, and iii) of being drawn toward the goal of creation as a function of the trinitarian God is also noted by Alan Torrance: "The Christian God is dynamically active as a seeking, vivifying, transforming and reconciling Agent – One whose love does not merely suffer but *actively* opposes, in and through the Body of Christ, all that which would negate the *telos* of the created order." Alan J. Torrance, *Persons in communion: an essay on trinitarian description and human participation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 95.

[32] Augustine wrote that the "Holy Spirit is not just the Father's alone nor the Son's alone, but the Spirit of them both, and thus he suggests to us the common charity by which the Father and Son love each other." Augustine, *The Trinity (De Trinitate)*, trans. Edmund Hill (Brooklyn, NY: New City Press, 1991), XV.5.27. See also Walter Kasper's summary statement: "The starting-point of western Trinitarian doctrine since Tertullian, Augustine and, later, Peter Lombard, was not the different persons of the Trinity and their activity in the history of salvation, but the one essence of God which in itself is triune. The appropriate representational model for this conception is the circle: The Father begets the Son, the Spirit is the mutual love common to Father and Son (*filioque*). In the Spirit, therefore, the circle of the interior Trinitarian life closes. The Spirit is, as it were, what is innermost and most hidden in God." Walter Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, trans. V. Green (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1976), 257.

[33] Colin E. Gunton, 'Pneumatology' in *Dictionary of ethics, theology and society*, ed. Paul Barry Clarke and Andrew Linzey (London: Routledge, 1996), 647; see also Gunton, 'The Spirit in the Trinity,' 131.

orientation is directed *outwards* and toward the 'other' (i.e., centrifugally), though of course for the sake, finally, of drawing creation into the life of God.[34] In Gunton's scheme, then, the Spirit is God-going-out-of-God's-self for the express purpose of gathering the 'other' into relation with God.[35]

This orientation toward the 'other' is expressly eschatological inasmuch as the Spirit is the divine perfecting agency drawing creation to the goal of union and communion with God through Christ. Gunton's intention here is as unambiguous as it is direct. He states that

> the distinctive function of the Spirit is to perfect the creation, and we can interpret this as meaning to bring to completion that for which each person and every thing has been created. In that respect, the distinctive work of the Spirit is eschatological. One way of expanding such an insight theologically would be to say that the Spirit's peculiar office is to realize the true being of each created thing by bringing it, through Christ, into saving relation with God the Father.[36]

The eloquent simplicity with which Gunton conveys complex and complementary concepts is evident in this statement. Moreover, those ideas constitute the central elements in what he intended by speaking of the Spirit as the perfecting agent of God. In the first place, the equating of "to perfect," "to bring to completion," and "eschatological" with the realisation of "true being" demonstrates that Gunton did not subscribe to a narrow understanding in which eschatology and its cognates pertain to the eschaton alone. Rather, he held that the Spirit's eschatological orientation is inherently teleological from the beginning inasmuch as it is *directed* toward the goal of creation, that is, perfection in Christ. In this respect, Gunton

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[34] For Gunton, "God's work 'outwards' is an expression of what he is eternally. The Spirit, we might say, is the motor of that divine movement outwards, just as the Son is its focus and model (*eikôn*)." Gunton, 'We believe in the Holy Spirit,' 30f.

[35] According to Gunton, the Spirit's outward going-ness means that the "third person of the Trinity is the one whose function is to make the love of God a love that is opened towards that which is not itself, to perfect it in otherness. Because God is not in himself a closed circle but is essentially the relatedness of community, there is within his eternal being that which freely and in love creates, reconciles and redeems that which is not himself." Gunton, 'God the Holy Spirit,' 128.

[36] Gunton, *The one, the three and the many*, 189.

understood pneumatological eschatology as the future-orientated activity of the Spirit that takes place in the present (as well as the past and the future), rather than as some purely future-located activity. Secondly, this 'work' of the Spirit is none other than a continuation of the *missio Dei* in the economy of redemption, which, thirdly, is the saving action of the triune God. In this way, then, Gunton understood the Spirit's function of drawing-toward-perfection as none other than "bringing it [the creation], through Christ, into saving relation with God the Father."[37]

It was Gunton's view that pneumatology is inherently christological inasmuch as the Holy Spirit is concerned for the things of the Son, sustaining and empowering his humanity in the first instance, while, secondly, drawing his followers into reconciled relationship with the Father through the mediating sonship of Jesus; and thirdly, the Spirit is involved in drawing the whole of the created order toward teleological perfection in Christ. These points will provide a sense of directionality for the remainder of the discussion in this chapter.

Eschatology and the humanity of Christ

The eschatological role of the Holy Spirit in the particularity of creation, according to Gunton, is witnessed in the first instance in the life and experiences of the particular man, Jesus of Nazareth, who "learned obedience from what he suffered" (Heb 5:8). Moreover, this particular man, Jesus of Nazareth, is the one "who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God" (Heb 9:14), being none other than "Mary's child [who was] perfected through life and death and resurrection."[38] Gunton argued that

> If it is indeed the case that the Father sends him, as is the overall message of the New Testament, it is equally the case that his painfully achieved sinlessness derives from the Holy Spirit's maintaining him in

[37] ibid.
[38] Gunton, 'The church as a school of virtue,' 216.

> relation to his Father. The perfection of Jesus' life as a whole consists in its conforming, realised by his relation to the Father through the Spirit, to that which he was created to be, to his particular *telos*.[39]

The citation makes clear that it is none other than the Spirit who is "the one who enables this right relation to be realised."[40] More specifically, the realisation of right relationship with God the Father is made possible in Jesus' life as a consequence of the Spirit's mediation to the humanity of the Son. According to Gunton, the "Holy Spirit is the perfecting Spirit, breaking in from the eschaton to perfect first the humanity of Jesus and through him that of those for whom he died."[41] In this way, not only is the humanity of the Son strengthened and edified by an increased emphasis upon the Spirit's eschatological and transcendent nature, but it also opens the way for conceiving the Spirit as the divine personal agent through whom the whole of creation is brought to perfection.[42] Clearly, here Gunton has not advocated anything which could not be readily accommodated under the umbrella of the Nicene Creed's third article.

It is precisely as the Lord and Giver of life, moreover, that the Spirit enables "things to become what they are by anticipating what they shall be, a function

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[39] ibid., 217. Gunton is supported here by Thomas Smail who, drawing upon Lk 4:18 and Jn 20:22, observes that the "Son is who he is because he has received the Spirit from the Father and does what he does in the power of the Spirit. It is the Spirit who has been at work perfecting Jesus' humanity that Jesus then breathes on us to perfect ours." Thomas A. Smail, 'The Holy Spirit in the Holy Trinity' in *Nicene Christianity: the future for a new ecumenism*, ed. Christopher R. Seitz (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2001), 163.

[40] Colin E. Gunton, 'A systematic triangle: Hegel, Kierkegaard, Barth and the question of ethics,' a paper presented to a theology seminar held at the Research Institute in Systematic Theology, King's College, London, (19 March 1999), 8.

[41] Gunton, *Act and being*, 103.

[42] The nexus of the christological, pneumatological, anthropological and eschatological aspects of Gunton's theology is located in the biblical concept of sacrifice – i.e., in Christ, all of creation is offered to the Father in the Spirit. "At the heart of what Jesus does is not simply the offering of a human life, but of the concentrated summation of humanity: it is the kind of offering that, so to speak, longs to offer not only itself, but all flesh. That one offering can stand in for the others because, in anticipation of the eschatological presenting of all spotless before the throne, it takes the representative and random sample of fallen flesh and offers it, through the Spirit perfect to the Father." Gunton, 'The sacrifice and the sacrifices,' 220f.

inaugurated and instantiated by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead."[43] In other words, as the perfecting cause of creation, the Spirit's function is to "bring the world through Christ to a completedness which it did not have in the beginning."[44] What Gunton meant by the eschatological orientation of the Spirit is therefore seen to be derived from the understanding that "the Spirit's function in reordering the fallen world [is performed] by redirecting it to its true end in Jesus Christ."[45] In this, what the Spirit does in the world remains distinct, but not separate, from the work performed by the Son because the creation is brought to the Father through the Son.[46]

The work of the Spirit as God's mediating agency in the world and in history is to draw creation to perfection. The scope of the Spirit's work, moreover, extends beyond the renewal of human communities[47] to include the perfection of the non-human creation as well.[48] The significance of the implications of Gunton's conception of the Spirit as the divine perfecting agent in the world is not lost upon Esther Reed who comments "therefore we must take seriously the Spirit's mediation of the presence of God in the historical."[49]

The connection between the historical action and the eschatological orientation of the Spirit in Colin Gunton's thought is established by the way that he understood the resurrection of Christ as the proleptic instantiation of the eschatological age. For Gunton, the Spirit's "transformation of the corpse of Jesus

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[43] Colin E. Gunton, 'The end of causality? The Reformers and their predecessors' in *The doctrine of creation: essays in dogmatics, history and philosophy*, ed. Colin E. Gunton (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 80.
[44] ibid., 81.
[45] Colin E. Gunton, 'The indispensible God? The sovereignty of God and the problem of modern social order' in *Beyond mere health: theology and health care in a secular society*, ed. Hilary D. Regan, Rod Horsfield and Gabrielle L. McMullan (Kew, VIC: Australian Theological Forum, 1996), 18.
[46] Gunton, 'God the Holy Spirit,' 122.
[47] Gunton, 'The church as a school of virtue,' 229.
[48] Gunton, 'Atonement and the project of creation,' 40; Gunton, *The triune creator*, 224.
[49] Esther D. Reed, 'Revelation and natural rights: notes on Colin E. Gunton's theology of nature' in *Trinitarian soundings in systematic theology*, ed. Paul Louis Metzger (London: T & T Clark, 2005), 213.

into the conditions of the world to come"[50] is the inauguration of eschatological freedom and thus the way in which order is restored to creation. In fact, he argued that it is precisely the work of the Spirit, understood in terms of an eschatologically orientated mediation, which ensures that "particular parts of the creation are set free through Christ and enabled to be themselves, and so [are] anticipations of the universal redemption in the age to come."[51] This led him to argue that the

> Spirit is thus the agent and mediator of the rule of Christ in both judgement and salvation until he hands over the rule to God the Father at the end of the age.[52]

In this way, Gunton held that all of creation is being drawn to its intended teleological perfection *in* Christ, *by* the Spirit, *for* the praise and glory *of* the Father. In other words, "whenever the created order, in any of its levels or aspects, is able to praise its maker, there is the agency of the Spirit."[53] Here, it becomes clear that Gunton desired to focus attention on the role of the Spirit as the divine agent of teleological *perfection* and not merely as the facilitator of its *recapitulation*.[54] Against the view that all will be returned to the form of perfection which the world had in the beginning, but had forfeited as a result of the 'fall,' Gunton held that perfection is a christological and eschatological concept[55] and that, through the

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[50] Gunton, 'The end of causality,' 80.
[51] Gunton, 'God the Holy Spirit,' 121.
[52] Gunton, 'The indispensible God,' 18.
[53] Gunton, 'God the Holy Spirit,' 120.
[54] The distinction that Gunton made here is in reference to what he perceived to be the inadequacy of pneumatologies of recapitulation. The problem, he argued, was the lack of eschatological teleology which means that an "eschatology of this kind, with its suggestion of symmetrical outflow and return of things from and back to God, risks suggesting the ultimate pointlessness of creation. Is the world made simply to return to the nothingness whence it came?" Gunton, 'The church as a school of virtue,' 215; see also Gunton, 'The end of causality,' 81.
[55] The view advocated by Gunton at this juncture is not novel. His rejection of theories of recapitulation in preference for an emphasis upon the teleological orientation of creation is shared by a number of contemporary theologians from across the ecumenical spectrum, including Karl Barth, *Church dogmatics* III/1 trans. J.W. Edwards, O. Bussey and Harold Knight (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1958), 228ff; Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian faith: an introduction to the idea of Christianity*, trans. William V. Dych (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1982), 195, 199; and Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: the mystery of Easter*, trans. Aidan Nichols (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 1990), 13f.

mediation of the Spirit, "creation is finally brought to its perfection, its completedness, in the fullness of time."[56] This configuration entails the development of an intentionally pneumatological eschatology which affords

> far more attention to the creation's interest for and in itself: to give more stress both to its particular reality as this universe, the one created by God for a purpose, and to the being of the particular things and persons of which it is constituted.[57]

The stress that Gunton laid upon the importance of the historical particularity and materiality of the creation was matched by a clear-sighted emphasis upon the purpose of the created order in general, and of the human person in particular.[58] In fact, the purpose or *telos* of the human, in Gunton's view, is nothing other than to have been "created for community with God and with others," something which he insisted is realised from time to time within Christian congregations insofar as they represent the anticipated eschatological community.[59]

Eschatology and reconciled relationship with God

The various congregations that are known collectively as the Christian church are formed, nurtured, and sustained via the mediatorial agency of the eschatologically orientated Spirit. This community-forming action, moreover, is not random but intentional inasmuch as God's teleological purposes are brought to pass through the actions of the Son and Spirit. While the Son's obedience is that which proves to be salvifically efficacious, the Spirit, according to Gunton, is "the one by whose agency the Father makes the creation perfect in his Son, [and] is the focus of transcendent, eschatological action, pulling things forward to that for which God has

[56] Gunton, 'The church as a school of virtue,' 215.
[57] ibid.
[58] The emphasis that Gunton afforded to the centrality of the historical, particular and material creation, in contradistinction to that found in more dualistic conceptualisations, becomes clear when he argues that divine redemption and reconciliation is "in and for the sake of the whole created world, 'material' and 'spiritual' alike, rather than by the denial of the material features of createdness." Gunton, *Act and being*, 78.
[59] Gunton, 'The church as a school of virtue,' 231.

made them."[60] Thus, Gunton affirmed that "wherever the Spirit is, there the true end of creation is anticipated."[61]

The Spirit's eschatological work of perfecting the creation involves a vertical element understood as restoration to right relationship with God, and, simultaneously, a rejuvenation of the myriad horizontal relationships that connect human persons and that exist between human beings and the remainder of the created order. While Gunton was adamant that the restoration of relationship in a vertical sense is both "prior and determinative" for all human relationships, he was equally insistent that the importance of the various horizontal aspects of restored relationship cannot be overlooked because they are included within, and indeed are constituted by, the realisation of the former.[62] According to Gunton, the point at stake here is one of the foremost pneumatological principles of the New Testament, namely, that although "the Spirit is the one who enables believers to share Jesus' relation to his Father,"[63] this does not occur apart from but takes place specifically "in terms of reconciled personal relations mediated within the structures of a community."[64] Gunton's views here are echoed by Tom Smail.

> Within the redemptive activity of God the *program* of the Spirit is to take what has been achieved by the Son's obedience to the Father's initiative and to achieve the purpose for which it was undertaken by applying and realizing all that is implicit in it in the lives of people and of societies in a way that is faithful to its starting-point but relevant to the situations to which it is now being related.[65]

When it comes to a discussion of the divine economy of redemption,

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[60] Gunton, *Act and being*, 78.
[61] Gunton, 'The Spirit moved over the face of the waters,' 198.
[62] Gunton, 'A systematic triangle,' 8.
[63] Gunton, 'The church as a school of virtue,' 230.
[64] ibid.
[65] Thomas A. Smail, 'In the image of the triune God' in *International journal of systematic theology* 5, no. 1 (2003), 30f.

Gunton's position was unequivocal: "God is what he does, and does what he is."[66] Later in the same volume, he added that "salvation depends on the unflinching affirmation that the God who meets us in the Son and the Spirit is the only God there is."[67] The economy of redemption, then, is inherently trinitarian inasmuch as the Father's will to save is made manifest in the world through the Son's faithful obedience which, in turn, was made possible through the Spirit's mediation to the Son. For Gunton, salvation is not dependent upon the ritualised slaughter of animals, but is made possible through the selfless sacrifice of "a human being [who is] truly alive."[68] That is to say, salvation comes through the Father's raising of the Son from the dead by the Spirit.[69] Accordingly, the Spirit's work of bringing the whole created order to perfection is witnessed in the world precisely as the anticipation of the liberation of creation from the consequences of the presence of sin and death (Rom 8:18-25), a liberation already achieved in the resurrection of the Son.

Eschatology, its cosmic application and implications

One of the most significant concepts that Gunton learned from Irenaeus was the importance that was afforded to the very materiality of the created order on the grounds that it is within this created realm that the drama of redemption takes place.[70] To hold that the work of the Spirit within the world is concerned with

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[66] Gunton, *Act and being*, 76.

[67] ibid., 93. These expressions, according to Jonathan Dodson, represent the "Guntonian form" of Karl Rahner's *grund axiom*, 'the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity and vice versa.' Jonathan Dodson, 'Colin Gunton's trinitarian theology of creation: creation as creed, *ex nihilo* and trinitarian' available from http://guntonresearch.blogspot.com/2006/02/gunton-on-creation.html (accessed 27 April 2006).

[68] Gunton, *The Christian faith*, 77.

[69] Gunton observed that, on the basis of their interpretation of Rom 8:11 and 1 Pet 3:18, "Some theologians have argued … that it is by his Spirit that God raised Jesus from the dead." Gunton, *The Christian faith*, 10; see also Gunton, *Act and being*, 130.

[70] Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses*, 3.16.6 (*PG* 7:924; *ANF* 1:442); cf. 1.21.4 (*PG* 7:663, 666; *ANF* 1:346). Christoph Schwöbel, for example, observes that Irenaeus' teaching, intended as it was to refute the inherent dualism in his opponents' denigration of the material creation, represents "an *anti-dualistic radicalisation* of the monotheism principle. No realm of reality is excluded from the all-encompassing activity of God the Father who acts through his hands, the Son and the Spirit."

enabling all things – both human and non-human – to be that which they were created to be, as Gunton maintained, is tantamount to affirming that the "Spirit's work is to enable the whole creation to realize its own proper way of being before God."[71] For Gunton, then, the confession of the Spirit as Lord and Giver of life "has to be understood in terms of God's enabling the creation to become that which it was created to be."[72]

Accordingly, the creation's enabling and perfecting is to be understood in terms of "an eschatology of transformation"[73] that is witnessed first in the Father's resurrection of Jesus from the dead through the mediation of the Spirit. The following statement by Gunton makes plain his point here:

> It is the eschatological office of the Spirit that he is the one by whom the Father brings particular created things to perfection through the ascended Christ, beginning with the first fruits, his body incarnate, crucified and raised from the tomb.[74]

In Gunton's thinking, then, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead is not only an event within which all three trinitarian persons participate,[75] but is "the most fully realized eschatology" since the full implications of the eschatological age are made manifest, albeit proleptically, in the glorified humanity of the risen Christ.[76] He went on to add that

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Christoph Schwöbel, 'Radical monotheism and the Trinity' in *Neue zeitschrift für systematische theologie und religionsphilosophie* 43, no. 1 (2001), 68.

[71] Gunton, 'Pneumatology,' 647.

[72] Colin E. Gunton, 'Martin Kähler revisited: variations on Hebrews 4:15' in *Ex auditu* 14, no. 1 (1998), 25; Elsewhere Gunton adds that the "Spirit as the perfecting cause of the creation is the one who enables things to become what they are created to be; to fulfil their created purpose of giving glory to God in their perfecting." Gunton, 'The Spirit moved over the face of the waters,' 203.

[73] Gunton, 'All flesh is as grass,' 36.

[74] Gunton, 'The Spirit moved over the face of the waters,' 199.

[75] Gunton's claim about the trinitarian nature of the resurrection is supported by Thomas Smail who adds that "the relationship between Son and Spirit that is brought to light at the resurrection of Jesus is not a one-way dependence of the latter upon the former, as Western trinitarian thought has often suggested, but rather a mutual interdependence of the one upon the other, the Son upon the Spirit and the Spirit upon the Son." Thomas A. Smail, 'The Holy Trinity and the resurrection of Jesus' in *Different Gospels: Christian orthodoxy and modern theologies*, ed. Andrew Walker (London: SPCK, 1993), 25.

[76] Gunton, 'The Spirit moved over the face of the waters,' 198.

> God the Father raises from death his Son through the power of the Spirit, thus realizing for and in him the life of the age to come. We must emphasize the material dimensions of the event. The one who breathed into Adam the breath of life now raises the second Adam to new life by the transformation of his body not to bodiliness but to a new form of bodily life. The Spirit is the Lord and giver of life, and this means both the everyday life of the mortal and the transformed life of the one whose mortality has put on immortality.[77]

The importance that Christ's humanity and materiality played in Gunton's understanding of the Spirit as perfecting agent was expressed even more clearly when he stated that the "humanity of Jesus Christ is redeemed matter, the only truly – eschatologically – redeemed matter."[78] The humanity of the risen Christ, therefore, was regarded by Gunton as 'true' humanity insofar as it is redeemed and glorified humanity. Moreover, it is toward *this* humanity that Jesus' followers are being drawn as they, too, are perfected by participation in Christ through the sanctifying work of the Spirit. In a very real sense, Jesus' followers are becoming truly human to the extent that the Spirit of God transforms them into Christ-likeness (2 Cor 3:17-18).[79] This understanding led Gunton to state:

> A satisfactory theology of the human person is thus an eschatological one in the respect that it teaches that human beings are created with a future which is something over and above what they are in their beginnings.[80]

The mutually informing nature of the various constitutive parts of Gunton's theology is evident to the extent that his pneumatology directly informs christological, anthropological, soteriological and eschatological aspects of the

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[77] ibid.

[78] Gunton, *Act and being*, 66.

[79] It is important to note the similarity of argument on this point that is advanced by Gunton and T. F. Torrance respectively. Torrance, according to Gary Deddo, holds that it is not only our humanity but also our personhood which is perfected by union with Christ because just as our humanity is derivative from the 'true' humanity of Christ, so too is our personhood. For Torrance, therefore, "our communion with Christ through the Spirit can rightly be understood as our humanization." Gary W. Deddo, 'The Holy Spirit in T. F. Torrance's theology' in *The promise of trinitarian theology: theologians in dialogue with T. F. Torrance*, ed. Elmer M. Colyer (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001), 96.

[80] Gunton, 'All flesh is as grass,' 35.

discussion. Thus, for Gunton, even the question of healthcare was treated as theological.

> It would follow that health, as the perfection of the whole person, is also an eschatological concept, for we shall not be fully healed until the promises, consequent upon the resurrection of Jesus and expounded in 1 Corinthians 15, have been fulfilled.[81]

The promises that are spelled out in the final chapter of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians are framed around the central testimony that Jesus' resurrection from the dead does not signal the end of death; rather, it represents the end of the reign of death.[82] Jesus' resurrection, therefore, signals that death's power over humanity is broken (1 Cor 15:55-57).[83] Consequently, Gunton was quick to acknowledge the importance of the trinitarian principles underpinning eschatological thought when he stated that "eschatological wholeness can only come through particular transforming acts of the one who by his Spirit raised from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ."[84]

Hamartiological weakness

This study has argued that the whole of Colin Gunton's theological project is founded upon an uncompromising emphasis afforded to the centrality of the doctrines of creation and the triune nature of God. One of the most important consequences to flow from Gunton's prioritisation of these particular doctrines is that his theology is thereby enabled to afford due cognizance to the historical and material reality of the created order as the context within which God's redemptive

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[81] ibid.
[82] ibid., 36.
[83] Salvation, according to Gunton, is "what is achieved by Jesus in his life, death, resurrection and ascension." Gunton, *The Christian* faith, 65. Elsewhere he argued that God's victory must be understood in far broader terms than simply "the miraculous transformation of human possibilities effected by the death [of Jesus] on the cross." For Gunton, the whole of Jesus' story is central to the narrative of salvation because the "cross represents the completion of the pattern already made manifest in his life; the resurrection the completion and revelation of the cross as being of universal significance." Colin E. Gunton, *The actuality of atonement: a study of metaphor, rationality and the Christian tradition* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), 75; see also Gunton, 'One mediator,' 149.
[84] Gunton, 'All flesh is as grass,' 37.

activity takes place, a feature which is often overlooked within the Western theological tradition.

That the created order is redeemed in explicitly trinitarian terms in Colin Gunton's theology is beyond question. What is open to question, however, is Gunton's treatment of the situation within which human beings are found and from which they need to be redeemed. Some commentators have observed that adequate attention to the powerfully destructive nature of sin and its crippling effect upon the human condition is conspicuous by its absence in Gunton's thought. Douglas Knight is one writer to question the extent to which the concept of sin is theologically determined in Gunton's theology.[85] In short, the criticism is that Gunton's theology is both characterised and weakened by an inadequate hamartiology.[86]

The criticism is repeated in a recent monograph where Paul Molnar argues that "Barth takes the problem of sin far more seriously than Gunton in that he believes our old sinful selves are doomed to death – they are not merely perfected, but brought from death to new life."[87] Indeed, according to Michael Welker, much

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[85] A thoroughly theological definition of sin, according to Knight, is one which "measures sin from the telos, against what the people of God will become." Douglas H. Knight, 'From metaphor to mediation: Colin Gunton and the concept of mediation' in *Neue zeitschrift für systematische theologie und religionsphilosophie* 43, no. 1 (2001), 125.

[86] At this point in time, research into Colin Gunton's theology remains in its infancy and, therefore, many of the initial observations and assessments are made in internet forums and are yet to appear in a more conventional academic published format. Nevertheless, a number of correspondents note that Gunton's theology does not afford the attention to sin that one would normally expect to find in evangelical and Reformed theology. Examples of the criticism may be found in posts made at http://www.guntonresearch.blogspot.com as the forum of the Colin Gunton Research Discussion Group. One published work to provide a detailed, and more nuanced assessment, is that offered by Hans Schaeffer, in which he argues that while Gunton was reserved in his comments about the question of the *origin* of evil and sin, both "play an important role in Gunton's theology, mostly as a characterization of the current disorder of reality." Schaeffer observes that Gunton's explicitly trinitarian methodology provides "a framework in which sin and evil can be treated adequately." Hans Schaeffer, *Createdness and ethics: the doctrine of creation and theological ethics in the theology of Colin E. Gunton and Oswald Bayer* (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 2006), 76, 95.

[87] It should be noted, however, that Molnar's discussion is not so much concerned with the problem of sin for humanity in general; rather he is addressing the 'problem' of the apparent tension existing between the twin affirmations of the human nature of Christ and the salvific efficaciousness of Jesus' death. Paul D. Molnar, *Divine freedom and the doctrine of the immanent Trinity: in dialogue with Karl Barth and contemporary theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2002), 296.

modern theology has suffered from a seeming inability to afford anything near adequate attention to the dehumanising effects of sin.[88] Such theological short-comings do not do justice, in Welker's view, to the seriousness with which Jesus addressed the abuses of political, social and religious power.[89]

It must be said in Gunton's defence, however, that he did not completely overlook the debilitating nature of sin. In *The Christian faith*, for example, Gunton dedicated the first of three christological chapters to 'A theology of salvation.'[90] Commencing with a definition of sin as "that which ruptures the human relation to God and brings personal, social and ecological disorder in its train,"[91] he went on to explain that the scriptural narratives only speak of sin in the light of what God has done to overcome it. The emphasis in Gunton's treatment of sin here, therefore, is upon God's "merciful refusal to allow evil to take its full course."[92]

In a more recently published essay,[93] he argued that Eastern Orthodoxy as a whole is disadvantaged to the extent that it has not experienced a process of theological refining similar to that which the Western church endured during the sixteenth century Reformation. His criticism is that despite having a firm grasp of the "ontological coefficients of salvation" which guarantees that salvation is of the whole person, "much Orthodox theology fails adequately to encompass the deep fallenness of the human condition, attested as that is both by Scripture's emphasis on the cross

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[88] Michael Welker, 'The addressee of divine sustenance, rescue, and elevation: toward a nonreductive understanding of human personhood' in *From cells to souls, and beyond: changing portraits of human nature*, ed. Malcolm A. Jeeves (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 231.

[89] See, for example, Lk 20:2-14; Mk 11:15 and par.; Mt 23:1-36.

[90] Colin E. Gunton, ''Suffered under Pontius Pilate': a theology of salvation' in *The Christian faith: an introduction to Christian doctrine* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2002), 59-77.

[91] ibid., 71.

[92] ibid., 75.

[93] Although only recently published, this essay was written almost a decade ago. Gunton does not record the occasion for which the essay was written and presented, he does however provide sufficient information to allow one to determine that it was written during 1998. Colin E. Gunton, 'Persons and particularity' in *The theology of John Zizioulas: personhood and the church*, ed. Douglas H. Knight (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007), 98 n. 2.

as the centre of the awesome process and the manifest need of fallen man for redemption."[94]

Gunton's treatment of the problem of sin, moreover, appears to be more concerned with the consequences of the atonement offered by Christ for the whole of the created order – i.e., the project of creation – rather than upon the traditional Reformed view of the total inability of humankind to effect salvation from within its own resources. It seems that, in place of a more traditional emphasis upon the crippling nature of sin, Gunton was concerned with arguing the case for greater attention to "a theology of the eschatological Spirit enabling right human action within the Church and in anticipation of the final reconciliation of all things."[95] In that respect, Gunton's treatment of the debilitating and dehumanising effects of sin tend to be conceived in an intellectual and theoretical manner[96] in contrast to the general thrust of Reformed thinking which holds that sin has a more direct and pernicious effect upon both the individual person and human society.[97] According to Hans Schaeffer, Gunton's emphasis upon the Spirit's present work of drawing the created order to perfection means that "God enables us to experience by grace a foretaste of the perfected eschatological reality" and, therefore, tends towards an optimistic reading of the human condition.[98]

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[94] ibid., 103f.

[95] Colin E. Gunton, 'Election and ecclesiology in the post-Constantinian church' in *Reformed theology: identity and ecumenicity*, ed. Wallace M. Alston and Michael Welker (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 103.

[96] Schaeffer, *Createdness and ethics*, 276, 278.

[97] The Reformed tradition, according to Merwyn Johnson, "has always contained a virulent idea of sin ... [whereby] sin renders human existence both tragic and miserable and takes on a life of its own." Merwyn S. Johnson, 'Sin' in *Encyclopedia of the Reformed faith*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1992), 350. Louis Berkhof, for example, adds that sin, as a moral evil inherent within 'fallen' human nature, is "a radical disease" which produces a deep-seated malaise. Louis Berkhof, *Systematic theology* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1958), 227, 231.

[98] To be fair, Schaeffer argues that Gunton's position vis-à-vis the consequences of human sin upon the created order cannot be described as "too optimistic" but rather should be understood as "moderate optimism." Schaeffer, *Createdness and ethics*, 277f.

Holy Spirit as perfecting agent: a comparison with Reformed thought

Other points of comparison that can be made between Colin Gunton's theology of the eschatologically orientated Spirit and the wider body of Reformed pneumatological thought include his rejection of dualistic and individualistic conceptuality and the emphasis that he placed upon the pneumatological perfecting of creation.

Throughout his published works Gunton repeatedly attacked what he conceived to be the twin anathemas of dualism and individuality. The origins of these concepts in Christian thought, he argued, may be traced to Augustine's use of neo-Platonic metaphysics and his psychological analogies of the Trinity. The impact that dualism and individualism have had upon the Western theological tradition is, according to Gunton, directly proportional and attributable to the influence of Augustine.[99] More importantly for the purposes of this study, Augustine's theology is widely recognised as one of the formative influences upon the Protestant theologies which developed as a result of the sixteenth-century Reformation.[100] The

[99] According to Gunton, "there is much to be said for the claim that the way in which Augustine formulated the doctrine of the Trinity did bequeath problems to the West." Colin E. Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed. (London: T & T Clark, 1997), 2. This claim is supported by citing an "anti-incarnational platonism" as evidence that Augustine's treatment of the interrelationship of God with creation is inadequate to the extent that he appears "rather embarrassed by too close an involvement of God in matter." Gunton also traces "the individualistic concept of person, whose development has had such disastrous effects on modern Western thought," to the Augustinian concept of God. Augustine, he argues, "seeks the human analogue of the Trinity not in the loving relation of persons to each other but inside the head of the one individual, in the structures of the mind's intellectual love of itself." Colin E. Gunton, 'Augustine, the Trinity and the theological crisis of the West' in *Scottish journal of theology* 43, no. 1 (1990), 37; Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed., 93, 92.

[100] Although Gunton acknowledged that there is a mixture of Augustinian and anti-Augustinian strains to be found in the theology of the Reformers, he held that Augustine's doctrine of God and theological anthropology in particular have exercised a disproportionate influence over Reformed thought. Indeed, he argued that the continuity of thought between Augustine and Reformed theology is evident inasmuch as an emphasis upon the universally disabling effect of sin and the radical intervention of justifying divine grace can be traced as "a straight line from Augustine through Luther and Calvin to Reinhold Niebuhr." Colin E. Gunton, 'Reinhold Niebuhr: a treatise of human nature' in *Modern theology* 4, no. 1 (1987), 76f. Alasdair Heron is even more explicit, arguing that "the contemporary Reformed outlook is still consciously western and Augustinian."

observations made here, then, are as relevant to the Reformed tradition as they are to the general Western theological tradition.

The danger of dualistic conceptuality for Christian theology, Gunton held, lies not within the recognition that there are two different kinds of reality, but that these realities are conceived as opposites, as the one contradicting the other.[101] Dualistic thought, he argued, is commonly found in the way that reality is divided into categories of spirit and flesh, or mind and matter. In rejecting this tendency, Gunton was insistent that the temptation to construe such dichotomies is totally confounded by the incarnation insofar as "the reign of God realised in the ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus does not distinguish as we sometimes do between spirit and matter. Creation is one, and its redemption does not make that sort of distinction."[102]

The problem of individualism, on the other hand, is what Gunton labelled the crisis of modernity. Contemporary intellectual patterns of thought are in crisis, according to Gunton, to the extent that they subscribe to the view that "the aim of life is the self-fulfillment of the individual, all other considerations being secondary to that."[103] Not only is individualism unhelpful to the ethical ordering of society, he argued, but it presents Christian theology with significant challenges from the point of view that it "is a non-relational creed, because it teaches that I do not need my neighbour in order to be myself."[104]

For Gunton, dualistic and individualistic conceptualities militate against a

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Alasdair I. C. Heron, 'The *filioque* in recent Reformed theology' in *Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ: ecumenical reflections of the filioque controversy*, ed. Lukas Vischer (London: SPCK, 1981), 114.

[101] Colin E. Gunton, *Yesterday and today: a study of continuities in christology*, 2nd ed. (London: SPCK, 1997), 86.

[102] Gunton, *Christ and creation*, 18.

[103] Colin E. Gunton, 'Trinity and trustworthiness' in *Trustworthiness of God: perspectives on the nature of scripture*, ed. Paul Helm and Carl R. Trueman (Leicester, UK: Apollos, 2002), 283.

[104] Gunton, *The one, the three and the many*, 32.

relational understanding of person. The tendency to conceive 'person' in non-relational ways, he believed, threatens to undermine a theology of community developed out of a trinitarian doctrine of God as persons-in-relation.[105] By way of contrast, Gunton emphasised the eschatological nature of the Spirit's formation of Jesus' followers into Christian communities. Those communities do not represent a flight *from* the world (as in dualistic thought) but are sacramental inasmuch as they are the sign of God's continued and direct involvement *in* the created order. The Christian church's specific purpose, he argued, is to bear witness to the age to come by calling all humanity to repentance and true community by modelling that behaviour in the world.[106] Rather than leaving behind this reality for another (i.e., escapism), the Christian community is intended to represent an anticipation of God's perfection of the material order as the creation is enabled, by the Spirit, to fulfil its created purpose.

With regard to the pneumatological perfecting of the created order generally, Gunton's insistence that the Spirit is active within the whole world, and is drawing it toward its intended goal, is entirely consistent with traditional Reformed thought. Calvin's statement, for example, that the Spirit "sustains all things, causes them to grow, and quickens them in heaven and in earth [by] … transfusing into all things his energy, and breathing into them essence, life, and movement"[107] was interpreted by Gunton as pointing to the ontological and eschatological perfection of creation.[108]

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[105] Against this thinking, Gunton insisted that "God is no lonely monad or self-absorbed tyrant, but one whose orientation to the other is intrinsic to his eternal being as God." Gunton, 'We believe in the Holy Spirit,' 30.

[106] Colin E. Gunton, *Enlightenment and alienation: an essay towards a trinitarian theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985), 105.

[107] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster John Knox, 1960), I.13.14.

[108] Calvin's thoughts, according to Gunton, suggest that the world is ontologically perfected by the Spirit in the sense that it is simultaneously distinct from God and declared to be "very good" (Gen 1:31). On the other hand, the world is also eschatologically perfected to the extent that it is being brought to teleological perfection – i.e., to "completedness, in the fullness of time." Colin E.

Thomas Parker and Allen Miller note that the Spirit's work of perfecting the whole created order is a "classical Reformed understanding."[109] Nevertheless, conceiving the Spirit as God's sustaining, preserving and transforming presence in the world, as Gunton did, serves to broaden the scope of the Spirit's work beyond a narrow soteriological view that is limited to the remedial activity of forgiveness of sin, salvation, and sanctification. The issue at stake here is a more comprehensive understanding of God's *active* transforming and perfecting presence in the world as the whole of creation is guided to its intended goal, over against the view that restricts divine action to remedial actions, to repairing that which is broken.

Reformed systematicians from previous generations had not overlooked this feature of the Spirit's work, according to Parker and Miller, because Reformed theology enthusiastically embraces the notion of the Spirit's presence in the world as God's active facilitation of the transformation and perfection of the *creature* and the *world*.[110] Indeed, in another article, Parker explicitly acknowledges the Spirit's role in individual believers, the various Christian communities, and the world.

> The Reformed doctrine of the Spirit places emphasis on the work attributed to the Spirit in the glorification and perfection of creatures. In relation to the Christian community this is a work of sanctification and in relation to the world as a whole it is a work of transfiguration in which all things come to their fullness in God.[111]

The fact that Gunton spoke so often about the eschatological nature of the Spirit's work as the perfecting of creation is thus consistent with Reformed covenant theology. Michael Horton remarks that covenant theology "has always been

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Gunton, *Intellect and action: elucidations on Christian theology and the life of faith* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000) 104f.

[109] Thomas D. Parker, Allen O. Miller and the Theological Committee of the North American Area of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 'Holy Spirit in church and world' in *Reformed world* 31 (1971), 223.

[110] ibid., 223f.

[111] Thomas D. Parker, '"In the Holy Spirit"' in *Christian theology: a case method approach*, ed. Robert A. Evans and Thomas D. Parker (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1977), 181.

eschatologically orientated, convinced that creation was the beginning rather than the goal of human existence. …Thus, the telos of human existence was not fully present in creation, but was held out as a future reward."[112]

Nevertheless, the emphasis that Colin Gunton afforded to the Holy Spirit as the personal and transcendent divine agent of perfection marks his theology as distinctive within Reformed thought. The specific content of Gunton's trinitarian pneumatology, as we have seen above, may be found in other Christian sources both ancient and modern. What is new in Gunton's passionate argument for greater attention to be afforded to the person and work of the Holy Spirit, however, is the way in which he strove to articulate adequately trinitarian configurations of classic Christian doctrines. This desire is clear in the 'Preface' to the final monograph prepared for publication before his death, where Gunton remarked that the collection of essays presented therein represented an attempt to establish a more secure place for the doctrine of the Holy Spirit than has often been the case in the theology of the Christian West.[113]

It should be acknowledged that Gunton did not intend to detract in any way from the Reformed tradition's prioritisation of the person and work of Jesus Christ; rather, he sought to formulate an explicitly *trinitarian* theology in which the work of the Son was complemented by that of the Spirit. In this respect, Colin Gunton was a passionate advocate for a pneumatology that is not merely a subcategory of christology, but one in which the person and work of the Holy Spirit is co-equal within a fully integrated trinitarian theology. Perhaps the clearest picture of what he intended by arguing for increased attention to the person and work of the Spirit is

[112] Michael S. Horton, 'Post-Reformation Reformed anthropology' in *Personal identity in theological perspective*, ed. Richard Lints, Michael S. Horton and Mark R. Talbot (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 59.
[113] Gunton, *Father, Son and Holy Spirit*, xiii.

contained within his much-loved and frequently cited Irenaean metaphor of the 'two hands' of God. For Gunton, trinitarian theology consists in an explication of what is meant when one holds to the belief that two divine persons, the Son and the Spirit, co-operatively work out the purposes of the Father in the world. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to claim that the principle of co-operative complementarity between the work of the Son and the Spirit is foundational to Colin Gunton's mature theology because, in his own words,

> a theology of divine action that does not incorporate the distinctive work of the Spirit as well as that of the Son fails in some way to encompass the breadth of the biblical economy. For it is primarily that with which we are concerned in Christian theology: to show that God the Father creates, acts to provide for and redeem, and will finally complete the world which he has called into being through his two hands, his Son and his Spirit.[114]

[114] ibid.

Conclusion

Until his untimely death on the sixth of May 2003, Colin Ewart Gunton was Professor of Christian Doctrine and a director of the Research Institute in Systematic Theology at King's College, London. In an academic career that spanned four decades he came to be recognised as "one of the most respected theological voices in English theology in our time."[1] This was due, in part, to the fact that throughout his published works Gunton skilfully combined elements of historical and systematic theology with insights drawn from the Christian tradition as a whole without ever straying too far from his Reformed heritage. Indeed, John Webster would have it that Gunton is to be counted "among the handful of British systematicians of the last century whose work is of enduring value."[2]

The task of evaluating the importance of Gunton's contribution to trinitarian theology is faced with the difficulty of our historical proximity to Gunton's academic career and sudden death. Christoph Schwöbel, one of Gunton's King's College colleagues, is surely right in his observation that the task of assessing the importance of a theologian or a theological school becomes more reliable with the passage of time.[3] Notwithstanding the validity of Schwöbel's observation, it nevertheless remains possible to offer a preliminary assessment of Colin Gunton's contribution to trinitarian and pneumatological studies. And this regardless of the fact that even with Gunton's prolific published output there is as yet no significant body of secondary literature that engages with his theology.

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[1] H. Paul Santmire, 'So that he might fill all things: comprehending the cosmic love of Christ' in *Dialog: a journal of theology* 42, no. 3 (2003), 260.

[2] John B. Webster, 'Systematic theology after Barth: Jüngel, Jenson, and Gunton' in *The modern theologians: an introduction to Christian theology since 1918*, ed. David F. Ford and Rachel Muers (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 262.

[3] Christoph Schwöbel, 'The renaissance of trinitarian theology: reasons, problems and tasks' in *Trinitarian theology today: essays on divine being and act*, ed. Christoph Schwöbel (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 11.

This study would wish to contribute to the body of literature treating Colin Gunton's theology inasmuch as it presents a preliminary analysis and evaluation of his doctrine of the Holy Spirit, being one of the very first readings of his trinitarian pneumatology *in toto*. This said, it is also to be recognised that any appreciation of Colin Gunton's doctrine of the Spirit must take account of the fact that his theological project as a whole is distinguished by a prioritisation afforded to the doctrines of creation and the Trinity.[4]

In the light of the discussion in the chapters above, Colin Gunton's theological project is to be understood as an unequivocal and unapologetic attempt to continue the process of revitalisation of Christian theology along trinitarian lines which commenced in the first half of the twentieth century with Karl Barth and received fresh impetus from Karl Rahner and others in the 1970s and beyond. It was also noted that in the course of developing a self-consciously trinitarian theology, Gunton drew heavily upon patristic sources such as Irenaeus, the Cappadocian Fathers and Augustine. He was also influenced by the post-Reformation emphasis upon the authentic nature of Christ's humanity and the mediatorial role of the Spirit in the theologies of John Owen and Edward Irving. Gunton's most influential interlocutors from the twentieth century were Karl Barth and John Zizioulas.

Although Gunton questioned some aspects of Barth's thought as his own theology matured, Barth's insistence that Christian theology commences with the doctrine of the triune God bequeathed an orientation to Gunton's theological project

[4] To argue about which of these doctrines has primacy in Gunton's thought is a pointless exercise in many ways because, for him, Christian theology is an explication of God's involvement in the created order, or in other words, the divine economy of redemption. Christian theology, therefore, is "the enterprise of thought which seeks to express conceptually and as well as possible both the being of God and the implications of that being for human existence on earth. … The theological task is therefore the conceptual exploration of the rationality of the God so experienced and made known." Colin E. Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed. (London: T & T Clark, 1997), 7.

that was never rescinded. In addition, John Zizioulas' restatement of the significance of the Cappadocian Fathers for trinitarian theology captured Gunton's imagination and provided the resources necessary to argue that trinitarian theology should be more concerned with personal and relational categories of thought than with the substantialist concerns that have tended to dominate the Western trinitarian tradition. Gunton was insistent that "the Western predilection for privileging being over person has crippled its trinitarianism."[5]

With those few broad remarks by way of introduction, we turn to a summary of the central concern of this present study: an analysis and evaluation of the distinctive features of the person and work of the Holy Spirit in Colin Gunton's trinitarian theology. Here it is well to recall two crucial features of Gunton's theological project: first, that he had no desire to introduce novelty but sought rather to develop pre-existing resources within the Christian tradition and, second, the fact that his published works were not presented in the form of a conventionally ordered systematic and dogmatic treatise.[6] Taken together, these features ensure that while the content of Gunton's theology remains orthodox, its presentation is eclectic. He did not, for example, offer a full explication of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit at any one place; nevertheless across the breadth of his writings Gunton's theology of the Spirit is remarkably lucid and consistent. What becomes clear is that an exposition of the person and work of the Holy Spirit, according to Colin Gunton, is founded upon a threefold understanding of the Spirit as person, transcendent, and perfecting agent.

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[5] Colin E. Gunton, 'Persons and particularity' in *The theology of John Zizioulas: personhood and the church*, ed. Douglas H. Knight (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007), 106.

[6] It is to be noted, however, that Gunton did indeed plan a multi-volume systematic explication of his mature theology. Earlier in this study it was observed that Gunton had completed a draft of the first volume of that work and had presented some of the content in a series of lectures and seminars in the months immediately prior to his untimely death in 2003 (see discussion at page 40 above). The manuscript of that volume is in the hands of Gunton's literary executors who are making the necessary editorial additions and/or corrections so that it may be brought to publication. At the time of writing, there is no indication of an anticipated publication date for that volume.

Spirit as person

Colin Gunton's pneumatology is distinguished in the first instance by an unequivocal insistence upon the full personhood of the Spirit. He held, for example, that "the Spirit is not some force or possession … *he is a person*."[7]

In saying this, clearly, Gunton did not operate with a definition of 'person' drawn from an understanding of what it is to be a *human* person, although what he did say holds profound implications for human societies.[8] He argued that, historically speaking, the concept of person is a specifically *theological* concept, rooted, as it is, in the history of the doctrine of the Trinity.[9] Moreover, he held that 'person' is a *relational* concept inasmuch as it refers not to isolated, individual subjects but to the respective trinitarian persons whose personhood is constituted by and in trinitarian relations. In this view, the persons of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit "do not simply enter into relations with one another, but are constituted by one another in the relations."[10] In Gunton's understanding, therefore, 'person' is a theological and relational concept derived from what the Christian theological tradition has said about the three divine persons.

Pursuant to the Christian tradition, Gunton's position vis-à-vis the personhood of the Spirit draws upon the scriptural narratives which record that the

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[7] Colin E. Gunton, 'The church: John Owen and John Zizioulas on the church' in *Theology through the theologians: selected essays, 1972-1995* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 203 (emphasis added).

[8] Interestingly, even when Gunton spoke about a theology of specifically *human* persons, his ideas were expressed in theological and, especially, eschatological terms rather than social and psychological concepts. See, for example, Colin E. Gunton, 'All flesh is as grass: towards an eschatology of the human person' in *Beyond mere health: theology and health care in a secular society*, ed. Hilary D. Regan, Rod Horsfield and Gabrielle L. McMullan (Kew, VIC: Australian Theological Forum, 1996), 34f.

[9] Colin E. Gunton, 'Persons' in *Dictionary of ethics, theology and society*, ed. Paul Barry Clarke and Andrew Linzey (London: Routledge, 1996), 639.

[10] Colin E. Gunton, *The One, the three and the many: God, creation and the culture of modernity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University, 1993), 214.

Spirit was sent by the Father through the Son (Acts 2:33).[11] Specifically, it is in the economy of redemption that the Spirit is seen to be a particular person performing particular actions. However, it is important to note that Gunton held that the scriptural revelation of the particular actions of the Son and the Spirit are the actions of God and not those of individual subjects acting unilaterally. For Gunton, there are two points at stake here: distinguishing, as he does, between the persons of God does not imply that they are understood as separate, individual persons; nor does it suggest that their acts are anything other than the work of the triune God in the economy of redemption. Indeed, throughout his trinitarian theology, Gunton avoided as far as possible any reference to 'individual,' preferring to use the adjective 'particular' as a way of speaking about the specific divine persons. Such deliberate choice of language facilitated the crucial distinction that he made between person and individual: the individual stands over against other individuals, while the person is constituted as person in relation with other persons.[12]

The concept of *perichoresis* was employed by Gunton as a means of speaking about the particular divine persons who, as persons-in-relation, mutually indwell each other.[13] Perichoresis, moreover, provided the conceptual apparatus with which he could speak about the mutual interdependence of the Son and the Spirit in the economy of redemption. He understood that an eternal interrelatedness shared between the divine persons also involved a perichoretic relating of their respective missions in such a way that the work of the Son is informed and complemented by that of the Spirit. For Gunton, then, 'person' was a concept which guaranteed the

[11] Colin E. Gunton, *Act and being: towards a theology of the divine attributes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 144.
[12] Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed., 11.
[13] Colin E. Gunton, 'Being and person: T. F. Torrance's doctrine of God' in *The promise of trinitarian theology: theologians in dialogue with T. F. Torrance*, ed. Elmer M. Colyer (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001), 128.

particular, while perichoresis was that which ensured the unity of the particular persons as triune. Taken together, these concepts – person and perichoresis – aided Gunton's development of a doctrine of the triune God that avoided any tendency toward modalism on the one hand and tritheism on the other.

In that regard, he held that speaking of the Spirit as person – as fully personal as the Father and the Son – was a prerequisite for a genuinely *trinitarian* theology capable of providing an adequate account of what God had done in the world through his two hands, the Son and the Spirit. In addition, an emphasis upon the personhood of the Spirit afforded the means whereby Gunton was able to guard against the subordinating and depersonalising tendencies that he saw within Western pneumatology, as well as the rampant individualism that plagues modern society.

In the first instance, and over against the tendency to depersonalise the Spirit that he saw in Western trinitarian and pneumatological studies, Gunton argued for greater emphasis to be afforded to the *person* of the Holy Spirit because it offered a way of speaking about that which is particular in God: the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Conceiving of the Spirit as God's personal agent in the world, moreover, enabled Gunton to remain consistent with his claim that the being of God (*ousia*) is to be conceived in personal and relational categories rather than the substantialist conceptuality that has dominated the Western theological tradition. Over against abstract conceptions of God, Gunton argued that if the being of God is personal and relational, and if the Spirit is God, then the Spirit, together with the Father and the Son, must be conceived as person-in-relation. The implications of this thinking are profound for Gunton's theology of mediation insofar as it is the person of the Spirit who is God's personal agent facilitating transformation in the world.

Secondly, he held that a renewed emphasis upon the personhood of the Spirit

affords an opportunity to address the perception of the subordination of the Spirit to the Son in Western theology. Gunton rejected out of hand any hint of ontological subordinationism in preference for an understanding of the complementarity of the Son and the Spirit, who, together, are God's 'two hands' at work in the world.[14] Conceiving of the Spirit as a co-equal and consubstantial triune person, moreover, was a crucial element in Gunton's development of a trinitarian theology of mediation in which the person of the Spirit mediates moral and spiritual empowerment to the humanity of the Son.

Thirdly, we have seen that Colin Gunton's theology of the Spirit was motivated, in large part, by pastoral concerns. He insisted that the full personhood of the Spirit is not only a prerequisite for an adequately *trinitarian* theology, but that it was a crucial resource with which to refute the destructive and rampant individualism in modern Western society. He proposed that the Christian view of the triune God – predicated as it is upon three co-equal, perichoretically related persons-in-relation – provides an alternative model of society, one which ascribes great significance to the value and dignity of particular human persons because their very personhood is constituted in their relatedness to other human persons. In this way, the modern world's infatuation with a dogma of individualism is exposed as intellectually, morally and spiritually bankrupt.

Gunton's enthusiasm for the potential that a trinitarian theology of person held to address a confluence of theological, pastoral, social, and political concerns is unmistakeable. He held, for example, that the

[14] To be precise, it should be noted that Gunton's dismissal of any ontological subordination of the persons of the Son and Spirit to the person of the Father, or of the Spirit to the Son, is to be read over against his acknowledgement of the scriptural support for some versions of economic subordination. A discussion of Gunton's distinction between the two forms of subordination is to be found at page 121f above.

> logically irreducible concept of the person as one whose uniqueness and particularity derive from relations to others was developed by the Eastern Fathers in the heat of their concern for the loyalty of the Christian church to the biblical understanding of God. It has continued, like an underground stream, to water the Western tradition, and continues to be desperately needed in our fragmented and alienated society. A person, we must learn and relearn, can be defined only in terms of his or her relations with other persons, and not in terms of a prior universal or non-personal concept like species-being, evolution or, for that matter, subsistent relation (and the list could be much extended from current political debate).[15]

It is clear, then, that Gunton's conception of the Spirit as person was developed as a consequence of his argument for the particularity and relationality of the divine persons, understood perichoretically, and within which all notions of individualism and depersonalising tendencies were specifically rejected. Understood in this way, Gunton's insistence upon maintaining an emphasis upon the full personhood of the Spirit is a significant contribution to Reformed pneumatology and to Western theology in general.

Spirit as transcendent

A second feature of Colin Gunton's trinitarian pneumatology identified in this study is the importance afforded to the transcendence of the Spirit as a way of addressing a perceived overemphasis in Western thought – and especially within the Reformed tradition – upon the divinity of Christ and the tendency to conceive the Spirit as God immanent in the person of the individual believer.[16] The problem, as Gunton saw it, was to be found in the inadequately trinitarian basis of Western theology as a whole.

For Gunton, the Western tradition's tendency to conceive salvation as that work of God which is objectively achieved by the Son and subjectively applied in the

[15] Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed., 96.
[16] Colin E. Gunton, 'Barth, the Trinity and human freedom' in *Theology today* 43, no. 3 (1986), 327; Colin E. Gunton, 'God the Holy Spirit: Augustine and his successors' in *Theology through the theologians: selected essays, 1972-1995* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 117.

life of believers by the immanent Spirit is predicated upon the conception of the Spirit as an immanent possession of the individual believer.[17] As a means to counter the individualism promoted in this view, Gunton sought to develop a pneumatology in which the person of the Spirit is conceived as the objective presence of God operative in the world. He argued that affording greater emphasis to the transcendence of the Spirit and the Spirit's creative and community-forming role provided the means of avoiding the danger that the Spirit's interaction with human beings was conceived *individualistically*.[18]

In his accentuation of the transcendence of the Spirit, Gunton did not deny that recognition of the Spirit's immanence was necessitated by the Spirit's presence in the world. Nonetheless, he held that although the Spirit may be *in* the world, he is not *of* the world in the same way as the Son who became flesh and dwelt among human beings (Jn 1:14). While the "Son *becomes* flesh; the Spirit acts *towards* and *in* the world"[19] in such a way that although the "Spirit may be active *within* the world … he does not become *part* of the world."[20] It was precisely this emphasis upon the Spirit as transcendent which enabled Gunton to conceive of the Spirit as the ontological and personal 'other,' a move which is a precondition for the development of a trinitarian theology of mediation vis-à-vis the work of redemption.

For Gunton, indeed, an insistence on the transcendence of the personal Spirit was a necessary element in a theology of mediation understood as the means of

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[17] Gunton remarked that all too easily "sin and salvation come to be understood individualistically, for salvation is of individuals out of the doomed mass: salvation *from* the world instead of *for* and *into* it." Colin E. Gunton, 'Reinhold Niebuhr: a treatise of human nature' in *Modern theology* 4, no. 1 (1987), 75f (emphasis added).

[18] Colin E. Gunton, 'The church as a school of virtue? Human formation in trinitarian framework' in *Faithfulness and fortitude: in conversation with the theological ethics of Stanley Hauerwas*, ed. Mark Theissen Nation and Samuel Wells (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 230f.

[19] Gunton, 'God the Holy Spirit,' 113.

[20] Colin E. Gunton, 'The Spirit in the Trinity' in *The forgotten Trinity* vol. 3, ed. Alasdair I. C. Heron (London: BCC/CCBI, 1991), 123; cf. Gunton, 'God the Holy Spirit,' 108.

conveyance of God's providence to the humanity of the Son, his followers, and to the entire created order. Here, Gunton drew upon pre-existing resources within the Christian theological tradition. Irenaeus had taught that the materiality of created order was essentially good because it is the arena within which redemption takes place.[21] John Owen spoke about the mediation of the Father's will to the Son through the Spirit.[22] And, Edward Irving had insisted that Christ's humanity was specifically authentic humanity in the sense that, sin apart, it was the same humanity as that shared by Jesus' brothers and sisters.[23] Gunton understood that these insights were pregnant with possibility and, when combined in a creative synthesis, provided a way of conceiving God's provision to the humanity of Christ and, by analogy, to Jesus' followers. Specifically, Gunton argued that it is the transcendent Spirit – Jesus' personal and ontological 'other' – who, as God's presence in the world, mediates between the Father and the humanity of the Son.[24] In short: "God the Spirit opens, frees, the humanity of the Son so that it may be the vehicle of the Father's will in the world."[25]

Not only did the insistence upon Christ's *authentic* humanity help to alleviate an overemphasis upon the divinity of Christ that is all too apparent in Western christology and soteriology, it also afforded the opportunity to expound the pastoral implications of a theology of mediation. Here, Gunton held that it is the transcendent person of the Spirit who mediates spiritual/moral empowerment to the person of Jesus of Nazareth so that, in his humanity, Jesus is strengthened to be the one that he

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[21] Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses*, 3.16.6 (*PG* 7:924; *ANF* 1:442); cf. 1.21.4 (*PG* 7:663, 666; *ANF* 1:346).

[22] John Owen, *The Holy Spirit*, ed. R.J.K. Law (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1998), 22-34. Colin E. Gunton, 'The church: John Owen and John Zizioulas on the church,' 192.

[23] Edward Irving, 'Preface' in *The collected writings of Edward Irving*, vol 5. ed. Gavin Carlyle (London: Alexander Strahan, 1864), 4f.

[24] Gunton, 'The Spirit in the Trinity,' 127.

[25] Gunton, 'God the Holy Spirit,' 116.

is called to be, namely the Son of God. Jesus' followers are also brought into union with the Son and the life of God through the mediation of the Spirit. In this way Gunton understood that both the Son (Jn 1:32-34) and his disciples (Jn 20:22) are sent, in the power of the Spirit, to do the Father's will in the world.[26]

Gunton's insistence upon speaking of the Spirit's transcendence and mediatorial ministry to the humanity of Christ offers much that is attractive to trinitarian theology. To speak about the unity of the *person* of the Son whose humanity is not simply overridden by his divinity stands as a necessary corrective for an overemphasis on the divinity of Christ. According to Gunton, an apparent inability to afford equal, consistent, and simultaneous stress to the two natures of the incarnate Son constitutes the Achilles' heel of traditional christology and soteriology.[27] By way of contrast, he insisted that it is the *person* of the Son who saves and, therefore, Christ's humanity is an indispensable component of a theology of redemption.

For Gunton, the economy of redemption is trinitarian mediation in action. The transcendent Spirit is the personal agency of God in the world, through whom the Father's will is mediated to the Son, to Jesus' followers, and to the world. In this way, the Son and the Spirit – God's 'two hands' in the world – are the means through whom the Father's purposes for the created order are brought to fruition.

Spirit as perfecting agent

In Colin Gunton's trinitarian theology the destiny of the material creation and the goal of human beings are brought together in the project of creation in such a way that the created order is regarded as being brought-to-perfection, as a movement

[26] Colin E. Gunton, *A brief theology of revelation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 76.
[27] Colin E. Gunton, 'Christology' in *Dictionary of ethics, theology and society*, ed. Paul Barry Clarke and Andrew Linzey (London: Routledge, 1996), 135.

which constitutes the creation's praise of its maker.[28] This movement toward perfection could, according to Gunton, only find adequate expression in "a more concrete pneumatology."[29]

Gunton understood the connection between pneumatology and concern for the destiny of the material creation to lie in the eschatological orientation of the Holy Spirit. For him, the Spirit's work within creation – both human and non-human – is nothing short of God's leading and drawing the whole of creation to perfection.

Taking the lead from Basil of Caesarea in this respect, Gunton argued for an understanding of the Spirit as the perfecting cause of the creation.[30] And he understood the Spirit's role as the 'perfecting cause' of creation not in terms of metaphysical causality but of divine personal agency in the sense that it is the *person* of the Spirit who is the agent of creation's perfection.[31] Gunton's concern here was to show how creation is perfected not by the elimination of metaphysical imperfection but through the mediation of the person of the transcendent Spirit who perfects creation by restoring it to right-relationship with God. Perfection, therefore, is not limited to mere aesthetics but includes notions of fulfilment of intended purpose: the creation is made perfect insofar as it is empowered to be what God wills it to be, and is thus enabled to praise its maker.

In giving such significant attention to the eschatological orientation of the Spirit's action in the perfecting of the world, Gunton was not thereby denying the

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[28] Colin E. Gunton, 'Atonement and the project of creation: an interpretation of Colossians 1:15-23' in *Dialog: a journal of theology* 35, no. 1 (1996), 39.

[29] Colin E. Gunton, 'Election and ecclesiology in the post-Constantinian Church' in *Scottish journal of theology* 53, no. 2 (2000), 217.

[30] Colin E. Gunton, 'The sovereignty of Jesus: some reflections on the crown rights of the Redeemer' in *Theological digest and outlook* 6, no. 1 (1991), 7. See also Gunton, 'The Spirit in the Trinity,' 130; and Colin E. Gunton, 'The Spirit moved over the face of the waters: the Holy Spirit and the created order' in *International journal of systematic theology* 4, no. 2 (2002), 203. Cf. Basil of Caesarea, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 16.38 (*PG* 32:135; *NPNF* 8:23).

[31] Colin E. Gunton, *The triune creator: a historical and systematic study* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 10.

Spirit's role in the beginning of the world. He saw creation and consummation alike as the work of the triune God, the divine economy of redemption being as concerned with the beginning of creation as it is with its goal. In Gunton's thinking, indeed, eschatology and its cognates do not pertain to the eschaton alone. Rather, the Spirit's eschatological orientation and role as the divine perfecting agent are to be read as the future-orientated activity of the Spirit which takes place in the present (as well as the past and the future), rather than as wholly future-located activity.

Gunton expounded his theology of the Spirit as the perfecting cause of creation in much the same way as he did his trinitarian theology of mediation, that is, in terms of the perfecting of Jesus' humanity, the perfecting of Jesus' followers and the perfecting of the whole non-human creation. It is here that the sophistication and coherence of Gunton's trinitarian pneumatology come into sharpest relief because the three distinctive features of his thought identified in this study – Spirit as person, as transcendent, and as perfecting agent – are seen as interrelated and cumulative concepts permitting speech about the person of the transcendent Spirit who empowers Jesus' humanity for earthly ministry and who perfects his humanity in resurrection and ascension[32] which is interpreted as the proleptic bringing to perfection of all creation. It is toward *this* 'true' humanity of the resurrected Jesus that his followers are being drawn as they, too, are perfected by participation in Christ through the sanctifying work of the Spirit. For Gunton, conceiving the Spirit as God's perfecting agent was a kind of theological shorthand employed to acknowledge that "the Spirit's function in reordering the fallen world [is performed] by redirecting it to its true end in Jesus Christ."[33]

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[32] Gunton, *Act and being*, 66.

[33] Colin E. Gunton, 'The indispensible God? The sovereignty of God and the problem of modern social order' in *Beyond mere health: theology and health care in a secular society*, ed. Hilary D.

This understanding of the work of the Spirit is a common theme in Reformed pneumatologies. Indeed, it has been included within Reformed thinking from the very beginning. John Calvin, for example, argued that the Spirit is not only the author of regeneration but also of sanctification, preservation and glorification.[34] Moreover, the Reformed doctrine of divine providence is cosmic in scope insofar as it teaches that the "Spirit of God is also at work in the world, preserving, restoring, guiding, and inspiring. Without this general work of the Spirit, the world would be soon in chaos, and mankind would degenerate into bestiality."[35]

Gunton's interests here, were clearly far broader than simply anthropological. Having striven throughout his academic career and in his published works to explicate Christian doctrine in a consistently trinitarian manner, it is hardly surprising that his pneumatology was not restricted to a discussion of the person and work of the Holy Spirit alone. Rather, he sought a more comprehensive understanding of the triune God's active, transforming and perfecting presence in the world as it is guided to its intended goal through the action of the Spirit who is the perfecting agent of all creation.[36] Indeed, Gunton's repeated reference to the project of creation is a way of speaking about the whole complex movement from creation through redemption to consummation.[37]

Regan, Rod Horsfield and Gabrielle L. McMullan (Kew, VIC: Australian Theological Forum, 1996), 18.

[34] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster John Knox, 1960), I.13.14.

[35] I. John Hesselink, 'The charismatic movement and the Reformed tradition' in *Major themes in the Reformed tradition*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 379.

[36] Gunton's intentions are made clear in the claim that it "is the eschatological office of the Spirit that he is the one by whom the Father brings particular created things to perfection through the ascended Christ, beginning with the first fruits, his body incarnate, crucified and raised from the tomb." In this way, "the Father both prevents the creation from slipping back into the nothingness from which it came and restores its teleology, its movement to perfection." Gunton, 'The Spirit moved over the face of the waters,' 198, 197f.

[37] The project of creation, according to Gunton, incorporates aspects of "both creation and providence, [and] is not finally complete without the rescue, through Christ and the Spirit, of all things from

Further, and in keeping with his commitment to orthodox Christian teaching, Gunton never intended that his pneumatology should detract in any way from the Reformation's prioritisation of the person and work of Jesus Christ; rather, he sought to formulate an explicitly *trinitarian* theology in which the work of the Son was informed and complemented by that of the Spirit. In this respect, Colin Gunton was a passionate advocate for pneumatology, conceived not as a subcategory of christology, but one in which the person and work of the Holy Spirit complements that of the person and work of the Son. In other words, he sought to expound a fully integrated trinitarian theology, one in which the Son and the Spirit are complementary and co-equal divine agents of God's economy of redemption.

The distinctive emphasis that Colin Gunton bequeathed to pneumatological studies, therefore, is located in his preference for speaking about the Spirit as person, as transcendent, and as perfecting agent. This emphasis upon the Spirit as the one who draws the whole creation toward its perfection in Christ ensures that Gunton's trinitarian pneumatology remains wholly consistent with the affirmation of the third article of the creed, namely, that the Spirit *is* the Lord and Giver of life.

Avenues for further research

Throughout the research and the writing of this study a number of issues were encountered which, while lying beyond the immediate purview of this project, may prove integral for a well-rounded understanding of Colin Gunton's trinitarian theology. Those issues include, but are not limited to, an understanding of the function of a doctrine of sin in Gunton's theology, the question of the post-ascension relationship between the Son and Spirit, and the implications of his thought for a renewed emphasis upon the doctrine of theosis.

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their bondage to decay and dissolution." Gunton, *The triune creator*, 171; cf. Gunton, 'Atonement and the project of creation,' 36-39.

In the previous chapter, for example, it was noted that the attention that Gunton afforded to the importance of the materiality of the created order as the arena within which redemption occurs was not matched by a correspondingly serious estimation of the 'fallen' state of human beings. This apparent lack of emphasis upon the corruptive and debilitating effect of sin in the world distinguishes Gunton's theology from the soteriology of the Reformers. In fact, Reformed theological anthropology teaches that the total inability of human beings to effect change vis-à-vis their propensity toward sin, on the one hand, is met by a corresponding extravagance of divine grace as the means of restored relationship between 'fallen' human beings and God, on the other.[38] The question of the place and importance of sin in Colin Gunton's theological project, therefore, warrants further research.

Secondly, the question of the post-ascension relationship of the Son and the Spirit focuses attention upon the consistency with which Gunton applied the principle of the complementarity of the Son and the Spirit. Paul Santmire, for example, remarks that Gunton offers an "asymmetrical theology of mediation" because "once Christ has been resurrected by the Spirit, God becomes functionally one-handed. Thenceforth the Spirit basically runs the show."[39] The importance of the continuing ministry of the ascended Christ does not feature prominently in Gunton's trinitarian theology.[40] Similarly, the relationship of the Son and the Spirit at the eschaton, toward which the 'two hands' of God are drawing the creation, was not spelled out in detail. Again, this situation is one that warrants further study.

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[38] Merwyn S. Johnson, 'Sin' in *Encyclopedia of the Reformed faith*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1992), 350-352.

[39] Santmire, 'So that he might fill all things,' 262.

[40] Other Reformed authors, however, have placed much more emphasis upon the importance of the continuing ministry of the ascended Christ, including James B. Torrance, 'The vicarious humanity of Christ' in *The incarnation: ecumenical studies in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed*, ed. Thomas F. Torrance (Edinburgh: Handsel, 1981), 127-147; Gerrit Scott Dawson, *Jesus ascended: the meaning of Christ's continuing incarnation* (Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2004), *passim*; and, Adrio König, *The eclipse of Christ in eschatology: toward a Christ-centered approach* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 146-148.

Perhaps the most promising avenue for further research, however, flows from an appreciation that resources found within Gunton's exposition of a trinitarian pneumatology may prove useful in furthering the discussion of *theosis* or deification.

Theosis

When Irenaeus famously wrote that the Lord Jesus Christ became what we are in order to make us what he is[41] and Athanasius claimed that God assumed humanity that we might become God,[42] the way was opened for the teaching known as deification, even though historians have observed that the term itself originates with Gregory of Nazianzus.[43] The Christian doctrine of deification teaches that human beings through union with Christ are lifted into the divine life of God.[44] Christologically, deification is understood as the humanisation of God in the incarnation which has its returning counterpart in the divinisation of humanity in Christ.[45] There are many expressions of the teaching found in the mystical tradition, especially in Eastern forms of the Christian faith.[46]

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[41] Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* 5. preface (*PG* 7:1120; *ANF* 1:526).

[42] Athanasius, *De incarnatione verbi Dei* 54.3 (*PG* 25:191; *NPNF-2* 4:65).

[43] Julie E. Canlis, 'Being made human: the significance of creation for Irenaeus' doctrine of participation' in *Scottish journal of theology* 58, no. 4 (2005), 449. The late second century theologian Hippolytus is also an important figure in the development of the doctrine of deification, according to Dietrich Ritschl, insofar as, following Irenaeus, Hippolytus developed "a doctrine of participation in Christ expressed as deification or mystical union." Dietrich Ritschl, 'Hippolytus' conception of deification: remarks on the interpretation of Refutation X, 34' in *Scottish journal of theology* 12, no. 4 (1959), 388.

[44] According to Finlan and Kharlamov, some "English language authors make a distinction between divinization (taking on godly qualities) and deification (become a godlike being); others do not." Stephen Finlan and Vladimir Kharlamov, 'Introduction' in *Theōsis: deification in Christian theology*, ed. Stephen Finlan and Vladimir Kharlamov (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2006), 7.

[45] The presence of deificatory language in some patristic works, according to Carl Mosser, reflects the understanding that "individual believers can be deified because the incarnation of Christ deified human nature." Carl Mosser, 'The greatest possible blessing: Calvin and deification' in *Scottish journal of theology* 55, no. 1 (2002), 46.

[46] The presence of variant forms of the teaching in the Christian tradition is the result of doctrinal imprecision in patristic theology, according to Finlan and Kharlamov: "Despite Patristic fascination with deification, the fathers do not develop a 'doctrine' of theōsis. Nor do the doctrinal controversies and decisions of the Church Councils deal with the subject." Finlan and Kharlamov, 'Introduction,' 4; cf. Lewis Ayres, 'Deification and the dynamics of Nicene theology: the contribution of Gregory of Nyssa' in *St Vladimir's theological quarterly* 49, no. 4 (2005), 375-394. For the importance of *theosis* in contemporary Orthodox theology see Vladimir Lossky, *The mystical theology of the Eastern Church*, trans. Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Serguis

In the Western theological tradition, however, reception of the *theosis* teaching has been vastly different: it is received positively, but with some important clarifications, by contemporary Roman Catholicism[47] while it is almost completely dismissed in Protestant thought.[48] The response of the Reformed tradition, specifically, ranges from suspicion[49] to outright rejection.[50] The doctrine of *theosis*, or divinisation, is treated with scepticism, according to Julie Canlis, because Protestant theology as a whole "tends to be skittish about any abrogation of the creator-creature line."[51]

Colin Gunton, for his part, argued strenuously for the maintenance of the absolute ontological distinction between creator and the created but with the important modification that the two are held in relationship each to the other by the

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(Cambridge, UK: James Clarke, 1973), 91-113; and Marta Ryk, 'The Holy Spirit's role in the deification of man according to contemporary Orthodox theology' in *Diakonia* 10, no. 2 (1975), 109-130.

[47] Karl Rahner, for example, argued that divinisation is to be understood as a synonym for sanctification insofar as the "ontological divinization of man … comes to expression in the doctrine of the justifying sanctification of man through the communication of the Holy Spirit to him." Moreover, for Rahner, God remains "absolute mystery" – i.e., ineffable and incomprehensible – in the beatific vision such that the ontological distinction between human beings and God is preserved, even in heaven. Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian faith: an introduction to the idea of Christianity*, trans. William V. Dych (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1982), 118f. See also '*Dei verbum*: dogmatic constitution on divine revelation' in *Vatican Council II: the conciliar and post conciliar documents* vol. 1, ed. Austin Flannery (New Town, NSW: E J Wright, 1965), #2, 750f.

[48] Donald G. Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical theology* vol 2, (New York, NY: HarperSanFrancisco, 1978), 33, 238; Frederick W. Norris, 'Deification: consensual and cogent' in *Scottish journal of theology* 49, no. 4 (1996), 418.

[49] Gunton remarked that "Western theology, rightly in my view, has continued to be suspicious about divinisation." Colin E. Gunton, 'The atonement: R.W. Dale on the centrality of the cross' in *Theology through the theologians: selected essays, 1972-1995* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 171. Myk Habets also observes that in "Western theology the concept of theōsis creates unease and often hostile rejection as it appears to make humans into 'gods.' Reformed and Evangelical Christians in particular have been wary of accepting or even entertaining a doctrine of theōsis." However, Habets goes on to affirm that "Theōsis – the deification of the human person – can and indeed must be seen to be compatible with Reformed theology." Myk Habets, 'Reforming theōsis' in *Theōsis: deification in Christian theology*, ed. Stephen Finlan and Vladimir Kharlamov (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2006), 166, 146f.

[50] For example, Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics* vol. 2, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2004), 190f.

[51] Canlis, 'Being made human,' 449; see also Julie E. Canlis, 'Calvin, Osiander and participation in God' in *International journal of systematic theology* 6, no. 2 (2004), 176.

person of the incarnate Son.[52] What theology has to say about the person of Jesus Christ therefore holds the key for understanding humanity's relation to God. It is therefore not surprising that it was upon christological grounds that he was wary of any talk of divinisation. According to Gunton, divinisation, when used christologically, threatens the authenticity of Jesus' humanity and, when used anthropologically, it claims too much, too soon.[53] The nub of the issue, for Gunton, was expressed as follows:

> There need be no objection to the claim that the end of salvation is to enable us in some way or other to share the life of God, or indeed in some measure to anticipate this in the present. But many forms of the doctrine of divinisation overstep the limits of the distinction between the biblical conception of communion and Platonic participation in deity.[54]

It is clear, then, that ontology, rather than soteriology, constitutes the central concern in Gunton's objection to the doctrine of *theosis*.[55] This conclusion is confirmed by his pejorative reference to "the Greek philosophical divinization of the human."[56]

However, and in no way intending to contradict Gunton's important objections to the apparent blurring of ontological distinctions between uncreated and created reality, it is possible that resources within Gunton's trinitarian theology may be employed to assuage such reservations vis-à-vis the doctrine of *theosis*. It was

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[52] Alan Spence, along with Gunton, understands the *person* of Jesus Christ as the determining focal point of the incarnation. He argues that, far from being "the divinisation of man, or the 'humanisation' of God," the incarnation is to be understood as that event in which the divine and human natures of Christ are unified "in the one incarnate 'hypostasis' or person, so that the actions performed in each nature are in fact the actions of the one person Jesus Christ." Alan Spence, 'Christ's humanity and ours: John Owen' in *Persons, divine and human: King's College essays in theological anthropology*, ed. Christoph Schwöbel and Colin E. Gunton (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 81.

[53] Gunton, 'The atonement: R.W. Dale on the centrality of the cross,' 181f.

[54] ibid.

[55] This is to be contrasted with Ben Drewery's definition of the doctrine of deification as that teaching which pertains to the attainment of ethical perfection, as well as exemption from human emotions or passions, and from mortal corruption or death. Benjamin Drewery, 'Deification' in *Christian spirituality: essays in honour of Gordon Rupp*, ed. Peter N. Brooks (London: SCM, 1975), 38.

[56] Gunton, 'Persons and particularity,' 105.

noted earlier that, by following Zizioulas and employing Cappadocian conceptuality, Gunton was able to argue that 'person' and 'relation' are ontologically primitive categories of thought in trinitarian theology. This move opened the way for Gunton to formulate a trinitarian theology in personal and relational categories.

If the divine nature is persons-in-relation, as Gunton and Zizioulas have argued, then latent within that insight is the possibility to understand *theosis* in terms of a specifically personal and relational participation in the divine being via the believers' union and communion with Christ. That is to say, when "the Spirit of Christ is in us, we are said to be in him, participating by the Spirit in the Son's relationship with the Father."[57] Moreover, when the believer is in union with Christ, he or she is taken up into the life of God – where God, as we have already seen, is the communion of persons-in-relation. Crucially, Gunton and Zizioulas argued that God's being as persons-in-relation is an ontological, not a mystical, statement. It is possible, therefore, to conceive of the early Christian teaching of *theosis* as the believer's participation in the κοινωνία of divine persons-in-relation by accessing the potential within personal and relational conceptuality. The nub of the matter has already been made clear by Georges Florovsky.

> The term *theosis* is indeed embarrassing if we think of it in "ontological categories". Indeed, man simply cannot become "god". But the Fathers were thinking in "personal" terms, and the mystery of *personal* communion was involved at this point. *Theosis* means a personal encounter. It is the intimate intercourse with God, in which the whole of human existence is, as it were, permeated by the Divine Presence.[58]

Some contemporary trinitarian theologians are also beginning to think along these lines. Alan Spence, for example, notes that human destiny "is not that we might

[57] Dawson, *Jesus ascended*, 168.
[58] Georges Florovsky, 'Saint Gregory Palamas and the tradition of the Fathers' in *Greek Orthodox theological review* 5, no. 2 (1960), 127.

be made divine but rather that we might at last become truly human."[59] For Gunton, as we have seen, 'true' humanity is that eschatological reality which is realised in Jesus' resurrection from the dead by the Father and through the Spirit.[60] Therefore, human destiny is to be understood as a resurrected, eschatological and trinitarian reality inasmuch as it involves our incorporation into the life of God, by grace, through faith, and on account of Christ.[61] The connection between trinitarian conceptuality and the doctrine of *theosis* is made even more explicit by Douglas Farrow.

> Deification is a trinitarian event, as Irenaeus long ago taught. It rests first of all on the fact that the uncreated Son becomes a human being, linking God and man in his own person. It rests also upon the work of the Spirit, who reconstitutes us (in the Church) as one corporate-hypostasis with Christ, so that we may participate in his uncreated nature and in his eternal freedom as the Father's Son. Ultimately, of course, it rests upon the Father, who is freedom and who gives freedom.[62]

Participation in God, understood as personal communion through Christ and in the Spirit, has been a part of the Christian tradition from its very beginning.[63] However, it is possible that Protestant reluctance to speak about the deification or divinisation of human beings may be overcome to some degree by Gunton and

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[59] Spence, 'Christ's humanity and ours,' 97.

[60] Gunton, *Act and being*, 66. The stress that Gunton, following Irenaeus, afforded the humanity of Christ is important here because, according to Dietrich Ritschl, the "unbiblical idea of deification can only be replaced by a sound doctrine of Union with Christ if the humanity of the risen Lord is taken seriously in all thinking about the Church and the world." Ritschl, 'Hippolytus' conception of deification,' 399.

[61] Stanley Grenz argued that the divinely given destiny for human beings is to draw existence from and to participate in the dynamic life of the triune God which means that through "the Spirit, those who are 'in Christ' come to share the eternal relationship that the Son enjoys with the Father." Stanley J. Grenz, *The named God and the question of being: a trinitarian theo-ontology* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 11, 366. See also Thomas F. Torrance, *Theology in reconstruction* (London: SCM, 1965), 184f; and, Canlis, 'Being made human,' 449f.

[62] Douglas B. Farrow, 'Person and nature: the necessity-freedom dialectic in John Zizioulas' in *The theology of John Zizioulas: personhood and the church*, ed. Douglas H. Knight (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007), 111.

[63] By the mid second century, for example, Irenaeus had cause to speak about deification. However, it is important to recognise that Irenaeus' doctrine of deification was configured theologically not anthropologically, according to Julie Canlis. The point being that, in his dismissal of Gnostic claims, Irenaeus asserted that "Christ fulfils our humanity in that he is the one who bears the full weight of the glory of God. It is our participation in the Son that is our participation in the divine, and thus our 'becoming human'." Canlis, 'Being made human,' 449f.

Zizioulas' conception of the divine nature as consisting of the κοινωνία of divine persons-in-relation.

Concluding remarks

Colin Gunton was one of the leading figures in a late twentieth century movement which sought to rejuvenate interest in systematic and trinitarian theology. According to Douglas Knight, "he was at the centre of a revival of trinitarian theology and rediscovery of the Holy Spirit."[64] As his theology matured, Gunton had cause to move further from the trinitarian thought of Karl Barth and draw more upon patristic resources in Irenaeus and the Cappadocians. Utilising concepts found in these patristic sources, Gunton sought to develop a trinitarian theology formulated upon personal and relational categories as a corrective to the overemphasis upon substantialist conceptuality in Western thought. He held that a doctrine of God that desires to remain consistent with the presentation of the divine economy of redemption revealed in the scriptural narratives must be formulated upon a personal and relational conceptuality. To this end, he adopted the Irenaean metaphor of the 'two hands' of God as a conceptual framework for a trinitarian theology that emphasised the complementarity of the Son and the Spirit in the economy of redemption.

Colin Gunton's trinitarian pneumatology is distinctive among contemporary Reformed pneumatologies from the point of view that he spoke of the Spirit as person, as transcendent, and as creation's perfecting agent. His doctrine of the Spirit remains wholly consistent with the creed's declaration of the Spirit as the Lord and Giver of life. Moreover, his theology of the Spirit is in harmony with the principles

[64] Douglas H. Knight, 'Father, Son and Holy Spirit – Colin Gunton and the doctrine of God,' a paper presented at *The Triune God in the theology of Colin E. Gunton* conference, Spurgeon's College, London (10 September 2007), 1.

of the Reformation tradition, and with Reformed theology in particular, insofar as it accentuates the fact that it is the person of the Holy Spirit whose work it is to draw the whole created order toward eschatological perfection in Christ. In this way, creation is brought to eschatological fulfilment because it is enabled to offer praise to the Father, through Christ, and by the Spirit.

Soli Deo Gloria.

Appendix

Chronological table of significant events[1]

Colin Ewart Gunton (1941 – 2003)

1941
- 19 Jan 1941 - born at Colchester, Essex
  - child of Herbert Ewart and Mabel Priscilla (nee Bradley) Gunton

1952-1960
- Nottingham High School
  - received scholarship to Hertford College

1960-1964
- Hertford College, Oxford
  - studied Classics
  - graduated with BA (*Literae Humaniores*, class ii, 1964)

1964
- married Jennifer Mary Osgathorpe (8 Aug 1964)
  - children: Sarah Jill, Carolyn Jane, Christopher John, and Colin Jonathan[2]

1966-1969
- Mansfield College, Oxford
  - studied theology
  - graduated with BA (Theology) in 1966
  - graduated with MA in 1967
  - commenced doctoral studies under supervision of Robert W. Jenson in 1967

1969
- King's College, London
  - appointed lecturer in philosophy of religion

1972
- United Reformed Church
  - ordained at King's College Chapel

1973
- University of Oxford
  - graduated with Doctor of Philosophy – dissertation examined the doctrine of God in Karl Barth and Charles Harthshorne[3]

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[1] The following record of significant events in the life of Colin Gunton was compiled by incorporating details gleaned from many different sources, including, but not limited to, references made in his own published works, as well as information gleaned from the Gunton Research Discussion Group (see http://guntonresearch.blogspot.com/), a *curriculum vitae* for Colin E. Gunton as it appeared when posted on the Gospel and Culture website (http://www.deepsight.org/goscul/fbiblio.htm), and a weblog by Andy Goodliff, one of Colin Gunton's students from King's College (see http://andygoodliff.typepad.com/my_weblog/colin_gunton.html).

[2] 'Gunton, Colin E(wart) 1941-2003' in *Contemporary authors* vol. 216, ed. Scott Peacock (Detroit, MI: Thompson Gale, 2004), 133.

1975

United Reformed Church, Brentwood
appointed Associate Minister

Society for the Study of Theology
committee member (1975-1978)

1977-1987

Secretary, Society for the Study of Theology

1978-1990

King's Theological Review
joint editor[4]

1978

Becoming and Being (revised version of DPhil dissertation) is published[5]

St Catherine's, Cumberland Lodge, Windsor (Nov 1978)
delivers paper at conference on Michael Polanyi – topic: christology[6]

1980

King's College, London
appointed lecturer in systematic theology

1982

completes manuscript of *Enlightenment and alienation*

1983

Yesterday and today is published[7]

Bristol Theological Society
delivers paper on 'Christus victor revisited' (15 Feb 1983)[8]

King's College, London
appointed senior lecturer in systematic theology

British Council of Churches Study Commission on the Doctrine of the Trinity
member (1983-1988)

1984

Society for the Study of Theology meeting at Hertford College, Oxford
delivers paper on 'Creation and re-creation' (4 Apr 1984)[9]

King's College conference on Reinhold Niebuhr (19-21 Sept 1984)
delivers paper on Niebuhr's theological anthropology[10]

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[3] Colin E. Gunton, 'Becoming and being: a comparison of the doctrine of God in Process theology and in Karl Barth.' (Dissertation, PhD, University of Oxford, 1972).

[4] 'Gunton, Colin E(wart) 1941-2003' in *Contemporary authors* vol. 216, ed. Scott Peacock (Detroit, MI: Thompson Gale, 2004), 134.

[5] Colin E. Gunton, *Becoming and being: the doctrine of God in Charles Hartshorne and Karl Barth* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1978).

[6] Published as Colin E. Gunton, 'The truth of christology' in *Belief in science and in Christian life: the relevance of Michael Polanyi's thought for Christian faith and life*, ed. Thomas F. Torrance (Edinburgh: Handsel, 1980), 91-107.

[7] Colin E. Gunton, *Yesterday and today: a study of continuities in christology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983).

[8] Colin E. Gunton, '*Christus Victor* revisited: a study of metaphor and the transformation of meaning' in *Journal of theological studies* 36, no. 1 (1985), 129-145.

[9] Colin E. Gunton, 'Creation and re-creation: an exploration of some themes in aesthetics and theology' in *Modern theology* 2, no. 1 (1985), 1-19.

1984-2003

King's College, London

appointed Professor of Christian Doctrine (after retirement of H. P. Owen)

1985

Enlightenment and alienation is published[11]

King's College, London

inaugural lecture in professorial chair, 'The one, the three and the many'[12]

1985-91

United Reformed Church

convenor, Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee

1986

Conference on the commemoration of the centenary of the birth of Karl Barth, Wycliffe Hall, Oxford (18-21 Sept 1986)

delivers paper on Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics* vol. 5[13]

1988

Actuality of atonement is published[14]

Research Institute in Systematic Theology (RIST)

co-founded with Christoph Schwöbel

delivers paper at RIST (26 Jan 1988), 'Augustine, the Trinity and the theological crisis of the West'[15]

delivers paper at conference in honour of Robert Jenson (Dec 1988), 'Divine sovereignty and human freedom in the theology of Robert W. Jenson'[16]

The Congregational Lecture – topic: 'The transcendent Lord: the Spirit and the church in Calvinist and Cappadocian'[17]

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[10] Colin E. Gunton, 'Reinhold Niebuhr: a treatise of human nature' in *Modern theology* 4, no. 1 (1987), 71-81.

[11] Colin E. Gunton, *Enlightenment and alienation: an essay towards a trinitarian theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985).

[12] Colin E. Gunton, *The one, the three and the many: an inaugural lecture in the Chair of Christian Doctrine* (London: King's College, 1985). Reprinted as Chapter Five, 'The concept of person: the one, the three and the many' in *The promise of trinitarian theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 86-103; and as Chapter Five, 'The concept of person: the one, the three and the many' in *The promise of trinitarian theology* 2nd ed. (London: T & T Clark, 1997), 83-99.

[13] Colin E. Gunton, 'No other foundation: one Englishman's reading of *Church Dogmatics* chapter v' in *Reckoning with Barth: essays on commemoration of the centenary of Karl Barth's birth*, ed. Nigel Biggar (London: Mowbray, 1988), 61-79; reprinted as Chapter Four, 'The knowledge of God: 'no other foundation' – one Englishman's reading of *Church dogmatics* Chapter v' in *Theology through the theologians: selected essays, 1972-1995* (London: T & T Clark, 1996), 50-69.

[14] Colin E. Gunton, *The actuality of atonement: a study of metaphor, rationality and the Christian tradition* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988).

[15] Colin E. Gunton, 'Augustine, the Trinity and the theological crisis of the West' in *Scottish journal of theology* 43, no. 1 (1990), 33-58; reprinted as Chapter Three, 'The history: Augustine, the Trinity and the theological crisis of the West' in *The promise of trinitarian theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 31-57; and Chapter Three, 'Augustine, the Trinity and the theological crisis of the West' in *The promise of trinitarian theology* 2nd ed. (London: T & T Clark, 1997), 30-55.

[16] Published as Chapter Seven, 'Immanence and otherness: divine sovereignty and human freedom in the theology of Robert W. Jenson' in *The promise of trinitarian theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 122-141; and Chapter Seven, 'Immanence and otherness: divine sovereignty and human freedom in the theology of Robert W. Jenson' in *The promise of trinitarian theology* 2nd ed. (London: T & T Clark, 1997), 118-136.

1988-90

King's College, London
appointed Dean of the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies

1989

On being the church is published[18]

Society for the Study of Theology meeting at Hertford College, Oxford
delivers paper on 'Trinitarian theology today'[19]

1990

Nazarene Theological College, Manchester
Didsbury Lectures – topic: Christ and creation[20]

RIST conference: Trinitarian theology today (Sept 1990)
delivers paper on 'The Trinity and the created world'[21]

1991

The promise of trinitarian theology is published[22]

Persons divine and human is published[23]

1992

Christ and creation is published[24]

University of Oxford
Bampton Lecturer – topic: God, creation and the modern world[25]

RIST conference: God and freedom (Sept 1992)
delivers paper on 'God, grace and freedom'[26]

1993

The one, the three and the many is published[27]

University of London
awarded Doctor of Divinity

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[17] Published as Chapter Eleven, 'The church: John Owen and John Zizioulas on the church' in *Theology through the theologians: selected essays, 1972-1995* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 187-205.

[18] Colin E. Gunton and Daniel W. Hardy, eds., *On being the church: essays on the Christian community* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1989).

[19] A version of this paper had been presented previously at Chichester Theological College (p.xii). It was revised for publication as Chapter One, 'Trinitarian theology today' in *The promise of trinitarian theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 1-15; and Chapter One, 'Trinitarian theology today' in *The promise of trinitarian theology* 2nd ed (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 1-14.

[20] Colin E. Gunton, *Christ and creation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992).

[21] Colin E. Gunton, 'Relation and relativity: the Trinity and the created world' in *Trinitarian theology today: essays on divine being and act*, ed. Christoph Schwöbel (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 92-112.

[22] Colin E. Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991).

[23] Christoph Schwöbel and Colin E. Gunton, eds., *Persons, divine and human: essays in theological anthropology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991).

[24] Colin E. Gunton, *Christ and creation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992).

[25] Published as Colin E. Gunton, *The one, the three and the many: God, creation and the culture of modernity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University, 1993).

[26] Colin E. Gunton, 'God, grace and freedom' in *God and freedom: essays in historical and systematic theology*, ed. Colin E. Gunton (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 119-133.

[27] Colin E. Gunton, *The one, the three and the many: God, creation and the culture of modernity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University, 1993).

1993 cont'd

Princeton Theological Seminary
Warfield Lectures – topic: the doctrine of revelation[28]

SST, University Hall, Cardiff (29 Mar – 1 Apr 1993)
delivers paper on 'Particularity, plurality and the transcendentality of the one'

Colloquim on P.T. Forsyth's life and theology, University of Aberdeen
delivers a paper examining Forsyth on authority and freedom (July 1993)[29]

5th Edinburgh Dogmatics Conference, Rutherford House (31 Aug-3 Sept 1993)
delivers paper on 'The Trinity, natural theology and a theology of nature'[30]

Conference for T. F. Torrance's 80th birthday at King's College (12 Nov 1993)
delivers paper on 'Revelation and the deposit of faith'

1993-1994

President, Society for the Study of Theology

1994

RIST conference: the doctrine of creation (13-15 Sept 1994)
delivers paper on 'The end of causality'[31]

1994-1997

King's College, London
appointed Head of Department, Theology and Religious Studies

1995

A brief theology of revelation is published[32]

God and freedom is published[33]

Mansfield College, Oxford (23 Feb 1995)
Dale lecturer – topic: R.W. Dale and the doctrine of atonement[34]

University of Cambridge
Hulsean preacher (5 March 1995)

Australian Theological Forum conference, Melbourne, Australia (July 1995)
delivers paper treating divine sovereignty and a theology of social order[35]
delivers paper outlining an eschatology of the human person[36]

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[28] Published as Colin E. Gunton, *A brief theology of revelation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995).

[29] Colin E. Gunton, 'The real as the redemptive: Forsyth on authority and freedom' in *Justice the true and only mercy: essays on the life and theology of Peter Taylor Forsyth*, ed. Trevor A. Hart (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 37-58.

[30] Colin E. Gunton, 'The Trinity, natural theology and a theology of nature' in *The Trinity in a pluralistic age: theological essays on culture and religion*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 88-103.

[31] Colin E. Gunton, 'The end of causality? The Reformers and their predecessors' in *The doctrine of creation: essays in dogmatics, history and philosophy*, ed. Colin E. Gunton (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 63-82.

[32] Colin E. Gunton, *A brief theology of revelation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995).

[33] Colin E. Gunton, ed., *God and freedom: essays in historical and systematic theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995).

[34] Published as Colin E. Gunton, 'The atonement: R.W. Dale on the centrality of the cross' in *Theology through the theologians: selected essays, 1972-1995* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 196-186.

[35] Colin E. Gunton, 'The indispensable God? The sovereignty of God and the problem of modern social order' in *Beyond mere health: theology and health care in a secular society*, ed. Hilary D. Regan, Rod Horsfield and Gabrielle L. McMullan (Kew, VIC: Australian Theological Forum, 1996), 1-21.

1996

Theology through the theologians is published[37]

University of Kiel
visiting Professor

Dominion Chalmers United Church, Ottawa, Canada
Dominion Chalmers Lecturer – topic: The doctrine of creation

preaches at St Peter's College, Oxford (21 Jan 1996)

preaches at Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, KY (11 June 1996)

Australian Theological Forum conference, Brisbane, Australia (July 1996)
delivers paper on 'Dogma, the church and the task of theology'[38]

1997

Yesterday and today, 2nd ed. is published[39]
The promise of trinitarian theology, 2nd ed. is published[40]
The Cambridge companion to Christian doctrine is published[41]
The doctrine of creation is published[42]

University of Copenhagen
visiting Professor of Theology

Durham Centre of Theological Research, University of Durham
delivers paper to weekly seminar meeting on 'Christ: the wisdom of God'[43]

Chelmsford Cathedral
Keene Lecturer – topic: Christianity and postmodernism (23 April 1997)[44]

Asbury Theological Seminary
Ryan Lectures – topic: divine action in creation, redemption, and eschatology[45]

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[36] Colin E. Gunton, 'All flesh is as grass: towards an eschatology of the human person' in *Beyond mere health: theology and health care in a secular society*, ed. Hilary D. Regan, Rod Horsfield and Gabrielle L. McMullan (Kew, VIC: Australian Theological Forum, 1996), 22-37.

[37] Colin E. Gunton, *Theology through the theologians: selected essays, 1972-1995* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996).

[38] Published as Colin E. Gunton, 'Dogma, the church and the task of theology' in *Neue zeitschrift für systematische theologie und religionsphilosophie* 40, no. 1 (1998), 66-79; as 'Dogma, the church and the task of theology' in *The task of theology today: doctrine and dogmas*, ed. Victor C. Pfitzner and Hilary D. Regan (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999), 1-22; and as Chapter One, 'Dogma, the church and the task of theology' in Colin E. Gunton, *Intellect and action: elucidations on Christian theology and the life of faith* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 1-18.

[39] Colin E. Gunton, *Yesterday and today: a study of continuities in christology*, 2nd ed. (London: SPCK, 1997).

[40] Colin E. Gunton, *The promise of trinitarian theology*, 2nd ed. (London: T & T Clark, 1997).

[41] Colin E. Gunton, ed., *The Cambridge companion to Christian doctrine* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University, 1997).

[42] Colin E. Gunton, ed., *The doctrine of creation: essays in dogmatics, history and philosophy* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997).

[43] Colin E. Gunton, 'Christ, the wisdom of God: a study in divine and human action' in *Where shall wisdom be found? Wisdom in the Bible, the church and the contemporary world*, ed. Stephen C. Barton (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999), 249-261.

[44] Colin E. Gunton, 'Is Christianity a post-modern religion?' a lecture presented under the auspices of the Keene Lectures, Chelmsford Cathedral, Chelmsford, UK, (23 April 1997).

[45] Gunton's lectures were entitled i) 'In the beginning God: the creation of heaven and earth', ii) 'In the fullness of time God: the redemption of all things', and iii) 'In the end God: eschatologies, secular and religious.' See Asbury Theological Seminary, 'Previous Kentucky chapels: Fall 1997

1998

The triune creator is published[46]

International Journal of Systematic Theology

founding editor, together with John Webster from University of Oxford.

co-editor (1998-2003)

Theological Research Initiative

first conference at Queen's College, University of Birmingham (Jan 1998)

attended as representative of United Reformed Church and URC Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee

Cardiff Adult Christian Education Centre

William Hodgkins Lecturer – topic: the doctrine of the Trinity (5 June 1998)[47]

1998-2003

Director, Research Institute in Systematic Theology.

1999

International Journal of Systematic Theology

article on 'Christian doctrine and systematic theology' published in first issue[48]

University of Aberdeen

awarded Honorary Doctor of Divinity

Theological convocation at Bangor Seminary, Bangor, ME (Jan 1999)

delivers paper on 'The church as a school of virtue'[49]

RIST, one-day conference on Søren Kierkegaard (19 March 1999)

delivers paper on 'Hegel, Kierkegaard, Barth and the question of ethics'[50]

Center for Theological Inquiry conference, Heidelberg (19-23 March 1999)

delivers paper on 'Election and ecclesiology in the post-Constantinian church'[51]

Society for the Study of Theology, Holland House, Edinburgh (12-15 April 1999)

delivers paper on 'Dogmatic theses on eschatology'[52]

KY chapels' available from http://www.ats.wilmore.ky.us/community/kentucky/prev_ky_fa97.htm (accessed 9 May 2006).

[46] Colin E. Gunton, *The triune creator: a historical and systematic study* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998).

[47] Published as Chapter One, 'The forgotten Trinity' in Colin E. Gunton, *Father, Son and Holy Spirit: essays toward a fully trinitarian theology* (London: T & T Clark, 2003), 3-18.

[48] Colin E. Gunton, 'A rose by any other name? From 'Christian doctrine' to 'systematic theology'' in *International journal of systematic theology* 1, no. 1 (1999), 4-23.

[49] Colin E. Gunton, 'The church as a school of virtue? Human formation in trinitarian framework' in *Faithfulness and fortitude: in conversation with the theological ethics of Stanley Hauerwas*, ed. Mark Theissen Nation and Samuel Wells (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 211-231.

[50] Published as Chapter Four, 'A systematic triangle: Hegel, Kierkegaard, Barth and the question of ethics' in Colin E. Gunton, *Intellect and action: elucidations on Christian theology and the life of faith* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 66-82.

[51] A revised version of this paper was published as Colin E. Gunton, 'Election and ecclesiology in the post-Constantinian church' in *Scottish journal of theology* 53, no. 2 (2000), 212-227; and Colin E. Gunton, 'Election and ecclesiology in the post-Constantinian church' in *Reformed theology: identity and ecumenicity*, ed. Wallace M. Alston and Michael Welker (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 97-110.

1999 cont'd

8th Edinburgh Dogmatics Conference on 'Truth and tolerance: Christian doctrine in a post-Christian society,' Rutherford House, Edinburgh (30 Aug - 2 Sept 1999)

delivers paper on 'a consideration of Christian knowledge claims'[53]

'The future of Reformed theology' conference, Westminster College, Cambridge (2-6 Sept 1999)

delivers paper on 'Divine sovereignty and Christian freedom'[54]

RIST conference, Theology of reconciliation (6-8 Sept 1999)

delivers paper on the theology of reconciliation[55]

Presbyterian Theological Conference, Charlotte, NC (20-23 Oct 1999)

delivers paper on the doctrine of the Trinity

Spurgeon's College, London

Drew Lecture – topic: eschatology and immortality (11 Nov 1999)[56]

2000

Intellect and action is published[57]

Trinity, time and church is published[58]

St Mary's Church, Shenfield, Essex

Shenfield Lectures – topic: the identity of Jesus Christ[59]

2001

Becoming and being, 2nd ed. is published[60]

Theology through preaching is published[61]

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[52] Colin E. Gunton, 'Dogmatic theses on eschatology: conference response' in *The future as God's gift: explorations in Christian eschatology*, ed. David Fergusson and Marcel Sarot (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 139-143.

[53] Published as Chapter Three, 'I know my redeemer lives: a consideration of Christian knowledge claims' in Colin E. Gunton, *Intellect and action: elucidations on Christian theology and the life of faith* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 46-65; reprinted as Colin E. Gunton, 'Revelation: do Christians know something no one else knows?' in *Tolerance and truth: the spirit of the age or the Spirit of God?* ed. Angus Morrison (Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 2007), 1-19.

[54] Published as Chapter Nine, '*Soli Deo gloria*? Divine sovereignty and Christian freedom in the 'age of autonomy'' in Colin E. Gunton, *Intellect and action: elucidations on Christian theology and the life of faith* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 156-173.

[55] Colin E. Gunton, 'Towards a theology of reconciliation' in *The theology of reconciliation*, ed. Colin E. Gunton (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2003), 167-174.

[56] Gunton's 1999 Drew Lecture was published on three separate occasions: ''Until he comes': towards an eschatology of church membership' in *Called to one hope: perspectives on the life to come*, ed. John Colwell (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 2000), 252-266; ''Until he comes': towards an eschatology of church membership' in *International journal of systematic theology* 3, no. 2 (2001), 187-200; and as Chapter Thirteen, 'The church and the Lord's Supper: 'Until he comes'. Towards an eschatology of church membership' in Colin E. Gunton, *Father, Son and Holy Spirit: essays toward a fully trinitarian theology* (London: T & T Clark, 2003), 216-234.

[57] Colin E. Gunton, *Intellect and action: elucidations on Christian theology and the life of faith* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000).

[58] Colin E. Gunton, ed., *Trinity, time and church: a response to the theology of Robert W. Jenson* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000).

[59] Published in revised form as Chapter Four, ''Suffered under Pontius Pilate': a theology of salvation,' (pp. 59-77); Chapter Five, 'The identity of Jesus Christ,' (pp. 78-96); and Chapter Six, ''And was made man': the incarnation and humanity of Christ,' (pp. 97-116) in Colin E. Gunton, *The Christian faith: an introduction to Christian doctrine* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2002).

[60] Colin E. Gunton, *Becoming and being: the doctrine of God in Charles Hartshorne and Karl Barth*, 2nd ed. (London: SCM, 2001).

2001 cont'd

The practice of theology is published[62]

Gospel and Our Culture Network
invited and accepted the position of patron of the network[63]

Conference on Nicene Creed, Episcopal Cathedral, Charleston, SC (Jan 2001)
delivers paper on 'and in one Lord Jesus Christ'[64]

One-day conference to mark Colin Gunton's 60th birthday (Jan 2001)
papers by John Webster, Stephen Holmes, Christoph Schwöbel, and Douglas Knight

McGill University, Montreal, Canada (10 April 2001)
Dr J. Campbell Wadsworth Memorial Lecture – topic: Christ as mediator[65]

32nd Trinity Institute National Conference, 'Who are we? What does it mean to be human?' Trinity Church, New York (3-4 May 2001)
delivers lecture on 'Relational being in the image of God'

2002

The Christian faith is published[66]
Act and being is published[67]

Multnomah Bible College, Portland, OR
delivers lectures on 'The divine attributes'[68]

Centre of Applied Christian Ethics, Ridley College, Melbourne (July 2002)
delivers lectures on 'Christianity's hybrid God,' and 'the Holy Spirit's cosmic and cultural role'[69]

Rollie Busch Chapel, Bayliss St, Auchenflower, QLD (22 July 2002)
Rollie Busch Lecture – topic: 'Christendom's hybrid God'

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[61] Colin E. Gunton, *Theology through preaching: sermons for Brentwood* (London: T & T Clark, 2001).

[62] Colin E. Gunton, Stephen R. Holmes and Murray A. Rae, eds., *The practice of theology: a reader* (London: SCM, 2001).

[63] 'Welcome to our patrons' in *Gospel and Our Culture Network newsletter* 30 (2001) available at http://www.gospel-culture.org.uk/2001.htm (accessed 2 June 2008). The other patrons announced were Archbishop George Carey; Prof. David Ford; Mr. James MacMillan; Archbishop Vincent Nichols; Prof. Geoffrey Wainwright; Archbishop Rowan Williams; and Canon Dr. Tom Wright.

[64] Colin E. Gunton, 'And in one Lord, Jesus Christ ... begotten, not made' in *Nicene Christianity: the future for a new ecumenism*, ed. Christopher R. Seitz (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2001), 35-48, 230; Colin E. Gunton, 'And in one Lord Jesus Christ ... begotten not made' in *Pro ecclesia* 10, no. 3 (2001), 261-274; and, as Chapter Four, 'And in one Lord Jesus Christ … begotten not made' in Colin E. Gunton, *Father, Son and Holy Spirit: essays toward a fully trinitarian theology* (London: T & T Clark, 2003), 58-74.

[65] Published as Colin E. Gunton, 'One mediator ... the man Jesus Christ: reconciliation, mediation and life in community' in *Pro ecclesia* 11, no. 2 (2002), 146-158; reprinted as Chapter Ten, 'The Spirit and Jesus: (2) 'One mediator … the man Jesus Christ'. Reconciliation, mediation and life in community' in Colin E. Gunton, *Father, Son and Holy Spirit: essays toward a fully trinitarian theology* (London: T & T Clark, 2003), 164-180.

[66] Colin E. Gunton, *The Christian faith: an introduction to Christian doctrine* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2002).

[67] Colin E. Gunton, *Act and being: towards a theology of the divine attributes* (London: SCM, 2002).

[68] The content of these lectures was drawn from Gunton, *Act and being: towards a theology of the divine attributes* (London: SCM, 2002).

[69] Gordon Preece, 'Editorial' in *Centre of Applied Christian Ethics newsletter* 7, no. 3 (2002) 1, 6; available at http://www.ridley.unimelb.edu.au/study/images/assets/Acrobat/2002_V7_N3.pdf (accessed 31 May 2008).

2002 cont'd

Resident at Center for Theological Inquiry, Princeton, NJ (Sept-Dec 2002)
drafts manuscript of first volume of systematics
completes *Father, Son and Holy Spirit* (Nov 2002)

2003

The theology of reconciliation is published[70]

Research Institute in Systematic Theology weekly seminars (Jan-Apr 2003)
presents various chapters from systematics manuscript

One-day conference on Christian theology and Michael Polanyi, co-hosted by the Gospel and Our Culture Network and RIST, at King's College (Fri, 2 May 2003)
delivers paper during the conference

Brentwood United Reformed Church
preached, 'Normality and the image of God' (Sunday, 4 May 2003)[71]

Tuesday, 6 May 2003 – dies suddenly and unexpectedly

Father, Son and Holy Spirit is published (Sept 2003)[72]

2004

SST and IJST announce an annual essay competition in memory of Colin Gunton
essay theme for 2004: how is Christ present to the world?[73]
winning essay: Terry J. Wright, 'How is Christ present to the world?'[74]
second placed essay: David Albertson, 'That he might fill all things: creation and christology in two treatises by Nicholas of Cusa'[75]

2005

'The *Logos ensarkos* and reason' is published.[76]
the last essay that Colin Gunton wrote before his death in 2003[77]

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[70] Colin E. Gunton, ed., *The theology of reconciliation: essays in biblical and systematic theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2003).

[71] Colin E. Gunton, 'The Creed (4): Normality and the image of God' in *The theologian as preacher: further sermons from Colin E. Gunton*, ed. Sarah J. Gunton and John E. Colwell (London: T & T Clark, 2007), 23-29. Gunton's sermon was based upon Lk 24:39-40 and was preached on the third Sunday of Easter, 4 May 2003. The lectionary readings for the day were Acts 3:12-19; 1 Jn 3:1-7; Lk 24:36-48. Cf. Stephen R. Holmes, 'The theologian as preacher, the preacher as theologian' in *The theologian as preacher: further sermons from Colin E. Gunton* by Colin E. Gunton, ed. Sarah J. Gunton and John E. Colwell (London: T & T Clark, 2007), xv.

[72] Colin E. Gunton, *Father, Son and Holy Spirit: essays toward a fully trinitarian theology* (London: T & T Clark, 2003).

[73] John B. Webster *et al*., 'Editorial Announcements' in *International journal of systematic theology* 6, no. 2 (2004), 99.

[74] Terry J. Wright, 'How is Christ present to the world?' in *International journal of systematic theology* 7, no. 3 (2006), 300-315.

[75] Ralph Del Colle, 'Editorial' in *International journal of systematic theology* 8, no. 2 (2006), 127; David Albertson, 'That he might fill all things: creation and christology in two treatises by Nicholas of Cusa' in *International journal of systematic theology* 8, no. 2 (2006), 184-205.

[76] Colin E. Gunton and Robert W. Jenson, 'The *Logos ensarkos* and reason' in *Reason and the reasons of faith*, ed. Paul J. Griffiths and Reinhard Hütter (London: T & T Clark, 2005), 78-85.

[77] Robert W. Jenson, 'Afterword' in *Trinitarian soundings in systematic theology*, ed. Paul Louis Metzger (London: T & T Clark, 2005), 220.

2005 cont'd

SST/IJST Colin Gunton Memorial Essay Prize
essay theme for 2005: the sinlessness of Jesus[78]
winning essay: there was no prize awarded for the 2005 competition[79]

2006

SST/IJST Colin Gunton Memorial Essay Prize
essay theme for 2006: the infinity of God[80]
winning essay: Dennis Hou, 'The infinity of God in the biblical theology of Denys the Areopagite'[81]

2007

The theologian as preacher is published[82]

The Barth lectures is published[83]

The nineteenth century theologians was scheduled for publication[84]

SST/IJST Colin Gunton Memorial Essay Prize
essay theme for 2007: the Spirit in the church
winning essay: Mark Weedman, 'The universal Christ, particular Spirit and Christian unity'[85]

2008

Revelation and reason is scheduled for publication[86]

SST/IJST Colin Gunton Memorial Essay Prize
essay theme for 2008: What is theological interpretation?[87]

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[78] John B. Webster *et al*., 'Editorial Announcement: SST/IJST Colin Gunton Memorial Essay Prize' in *International journal of systematic theology* 7, no. 3 (2005), 223.

[79] Oliver Crisp, the Secretary of the Society for the Study of Theology, advised that there was no winner for the 2005 Colin Gunton Memorial Essay competition. Oliver D. Crisp, 'Colin Gunton Memorial Essay' an email sent to Mick Stringer (received 2 June 2008).

[80] John B. Webster *et al*., 'Editorial Announcement: SST/IJST Colin Gunton Memorial Essay Prize' in *International journal of systematic theology* 8, no. 1 (2006), 1.

[81] Dennis Hou's essay will be published in a forthcoming issue of IJST. John B. Webster *et al*., 'Editorial announcement: SST/IJST Colin Gunton memorial essay prize' in *International journal of systematic theology* 9, no. 2 (2007), 129.

[82] Colin E. Gunton, *The theologian as preacher: further sermons from Colin E. Gunton*, ed. Sarah J. Gunton and John E. Colwell (London: T & T Clark, 2007).

[83] Colin E. Gunton, *The Barth lectures*, ed. Paul H. Brazier (London: T & T Clark, 2007).

[84] Colin E. Gunton and Christoph Schwöbel, eds., *The nineteenth century theologians* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2007). Blackwell publishers scheduled the release of this edited volume for 1st September 2007. It is, however, not yet available. See http://www.amazon.co.uk/Nineteenth-Century-Theologians-Great/dp/0631217193 (accessed 23 May 2008).

[85] Mark Weedman's essay will be published in a forthcoming issue of IJST. John B. Webster *et al*., 'Editorial announcement: SST/IJST Colin Gunton memorial essay prize' in *International journal of systematic theology* 10, no. 2 (2008), 129.

[86] Colin E. Gunton, *Revelation and reason: prolegomena to systematic theology* ed. Paul H. Brazier (London: T & T Clark, 2008). Although this volume has not been published at the time of writing, the publishers have advised that the publication date is scheduled for the 1st of October 2008. See http://www.amazon.co.uk/Revelation-Reason-Prolegomena-Systematic-Theology/dp/0567033562 (accessed 23 May 2008).

[87] John B. Webster *et al*., 'Editorial announcement: SST/IJST Colin Gunton memorial essay prize' in *International journal of systematic theology* 10, no. 2 (2008), 129.

Bibliography

Primary works

Gunton, Colin E. 'Becoming and being: a comparison of the doctrine of God in process theology and in Karl Barth.' Dissertation (PhD). University of Oxford, 1972.

_____. 'Karl Barth and the development of Christian doctrine' in *Scottish journal of theology* 25, no. 2 (1972), 171-180.

_____. 'Rudolf Bultmann and the location of language about God' in *Theology* 75, no. 628 (1972), 535-539.

_____. 'Karl Barth's doctrine of election as part of his doctrine of God' in *Journal of theological studies* 25, no. 2 (1974), 381-392.

_____. 'Re-making of Christian doctrine' in *Theology* 77, no. 654 (1974), 619-624.

_____. 'The theologian and the biologist' in *Theology* 77, no. 652 (1974), 526-528.

_____. 'The knowledge of God according to two process theologians: a twentieth-century gnosticism' in *Religious studies* 11, no. 1 (1975), 87-96.

_____. *Becoming and being: the doctrine of God in Charles Hartshorne and Karl Barth*. Oxford: Oxford University, 1978.

_____. 'The political Christ: some reflections on Mr Cupitt's thesis' in *Scottish journal of theology* 32, no. 6 (1979), 521-540.

_____. 'The truth of christology' in *Belief in science and in Christian life: the relevance of Michael Polanyi's thought for Christian faith and life*. Edited by Thomas F. Torrance. Edinburgh: Handsel, 1980, 91-107.

_____. 'Transcendence, metaphor and the knowability of God' in *Journal of theological studies* 31, no. 2 (1980), 501-516.

_____. 'Time, eternity and the doctrine of the incarnation' in *Dialog: a journal of theology* 21 (1982), 263-268.

_____. *Yesterday and today: a study of continuities in christology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983.

_____. '*Christus Victor* revisited: a study of metaphor and the transformation of meaning' in *Journal of theological studies* 36, no. 1 (1985), 129-145.

_____. 'Creation and re-creation: an exploration of some themes in aesthetics and theology' in *Modern theology* 2, no. 1 (1985), 1-19.

_____. *Enlightenment and alienation: an essay towards a trinitarian theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985.

Gunton, Colin E. *The one, the three and the many: an inaugural lecture in the Chair of Christian Doctrine*. London: King's College, 1985.

_____. 'Barth, the Trinity and human freedom' in *Theology today* 43, no. 3 (1986), 316-330.

_____. 'Karl Barth and the western intellectual tradition: towards a theology after Christendom' in *Theology beyond Christendom: essays on the centenary of the birth of Karl Barth, May 10, 1886*. Edited by John Thompson. Allison Park, PA: Pickwick, 1986, 285-301.

_____. 'The Christian doctrine of God: opposition and convergence' in *Heaven and earth: Essex essays in theology and ethics*. Edited by Andrew Linzey and Peter J. Wexler. Worthing, UK: Churchman, 1986, 11-22.

_____. 'Christ the sacrifice: aspects of the language and imagery of the Bible' in *The glory of Christ in the New Testament: studies in christology in memory of George Bradford Caird*. Edited by L. D. Hurst and N. Thomas Wright. Oxford: Clarendon, 1987, 229-238.

_____. 'Reinhold Niebuhr: a treatise of human nature' in *Modern theology* 4, no. 1 (1987), 71-81.

_____. 'Revelation' in *A dictionary of pastoral care*. Edited by Alastair V. Campbell. London: SPCK, 1987, 240-241.

_____. 'The playwright as theologian: Peter Shaffer's Amadeus' in *King's theological review* 10, no. 1 (1987), 1-5.

_____. 'No other foundation: one Englishman's reading of *Church Dogmatics* chapter v' in *Reckoning with Barth: essays on commemoration of the centenary of Karl Barth's birth*. Edited by Nigel Biggar. London: Mowbray, 1988, 61-79.

_____. *The actuality of atonement: a study of metaphor, rationality and the Christian tradition*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988.

_____. 'Two dogmas revisited: Edward Irving's christology' in *Scottish journal of theology* 41, no. 3 (1988), 359-376.

_____. 'When the gates of Hell fall down: towards a modern theology of the justice of God' in *New Blackfriars* 69, no. 821 (1988), 488-496.

_____. 'The church on earth: the roots of community' in *On being the church: essays on the Christian community*. Edited by Colin E. Gunton and Daniel W. Hardy. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1989, 48-80.

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[1] At the time of writing, the publishers, T & T Clark, have advised that the publication date of this volume is scheduled for the 1st of October 2008. See http://www.amazon.co.uk/Revelation-Reason-Prolegomena-Systematic-Theology/dp/0567033562 (accessed 23 May 2008).

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