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## Book review: The One, The Three and the Many: God, Creation and the Culture of Modernity by Gunton, Colin E.

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necessity of the universe that seemed to undermine the very idea of divine revelation.

B.'s book will need a good deal of glossing by teachers who choose it as a text for courses in comparative theology or in the Abrahamic traditions. Some fuller transitions between chapters would have strengthened its pedagogical legs, as would more regular summaries of the sort only the final chapter now contains. On balance, B. has written a fine study that one hopes will entice others to do a bit of fence-straddling, from which those of us who prefer the relative comfort of one side or the other will learn a great deal. Among the most gratifying of B.'s contributions here in his continuing insistence that we in our century take the relevant Jewish and Islamic sources and themes at least as seriously as Aquinas did in his.

*Saint Louis University*

JOHN RENARD

THE ONE, THE THREE AND THE MANY: GOD, CREATION AND THE CULTURE OF MODERNITY. By Colin E. Gunton. The 1992 Bampton Lectures. New York: Cambridge University, 1993. Pp. xiv + 248. \$54.95; \$15.95.

Gunton's point of departure is his observation that modernity's isolated self and postmodernism's decentered, fragmented self reflect extremes that result from an insufficiently developed notion of relation, such that the former excludes the "other" and the latter "simply seeks to render it irrelevant" (69). His study intends to overcome such extremes by a critical and constructive analysis of modernity's understanding of the relationship between God and creation. G. argues that, while relations are constitutive, they also exist only between distinct others, thus allowing for genuine particularity. The possibility of such distinction-in-relation is grounded in God's triunity; creation needs God, according to G., in order to "give things space in which to be" (71).

This rich and multilayered study is realized in a chiasmic structure. Four observations about modernity comprise the first half: modernity's disengagement, the displacement of the other, the "false temporality" of modernity, and the modern problem of meaning. These are answered in reverse order with four theological chapters: on foundationalism, on the concept of relation, on spirit and particularity, and on the triune God.

G.'s concern is to develop a notion of universality that allows the particular to "be itself," for which he turns to nonfoundationalism. While his explicit discussion of this form of rationality is brief, it clearly undergirds his constructive proposal for trinitarian theology and the doctrine of creation. Drawing on the work of the 19th-century Anglican poet and thinker Samuel Taylor Coleridge, G. proposes an

understanding of the Trinity as the *Idea Idearum*, an idea that grounds three “open transcendentals”: the unity and diversity of human culture, the dynamism of the individual and society, and the relation between time and space and eternity and infinity.

G. argues for these trinitarian transcendentals as mediating concepts for the tension of homogeneity and fragmentation present in modernity, a tension that he traces to antiquity, in the contrast between Heraclitus and Parmenides. The Spirit is an important and flexible idea in this mediation as the principle of concrete particularity, maintaining “the concreteness of things in their particular configurations in space and time: in their *haecceitas*” (201). By this work of sustaining the relationship of creation and divinity in all its particularity, the Spirit brings creation to perfection, a recapitulation that reflects G.’s appreciation of Irenaeus’ teleologically oriented economic starting point.

Some oversights undermine the power of G.’s address. Drawing on the work of thinkers such as Václav Havel and Alain Finkielkraut, G. provides a compelling account of the ills of contemporary culture in the wake of Kant. But he never allows those who argue against the bias of the universals touted by such authors to make their case. It is curious that a study so attentive to particularity would sideline the insights of liberation and feminist theologians, for whom the critique of the homogeneity of contemporary culture is a well-developed thesis.

Theologically, G.’s nuanced use of the terms “hypostasis” and “perichoresis” are certainly due to his reading of the Orthodox theologian John Zizioulas. But G. ignores the appearance of these concepts in the well-documented explosion of trinitarian theologies in Roman Catholic thought in the wake of Karl Rahner (most recently in the work of Catherine LaCugna).

While I charge G. with a certain insularity, his work merits wide and careful consideration. His study is meticulously structured, replete with signposts that enhance its readability as well as sturdily conveying his vigorous and thoroughly theological intellectual program.

*Fairfield University*

NANCY A. DALLAVALLE

**THEOLOGY AND DIFFERENCE: THE WOUND OF REASON.** By Walter Lowe. Indiana Series in the Philosophy of Religion. Bloomington: Indiana University, 1993. Pp. xiii + 181. \$29.95.

Commentators lament the failure of theology to engage the work of Derrida. While deconstruction has affected biblical studies, its theological appropriation has been largely limited to those intent upon



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