

Despite raising some methodological questions, this work is very strong in its examination of the poetics of the gospel's Greek. Ultimately, the audience will be reminded of and introduced to a beauty of the Greek often missed in common meticulous exegesis that is concerned primarily with meaning devoid of aesthetic nature. Any reader of Greek will be encouraged to examine the gospel anew to seek the beauty most present in the blessed Beatitudes.

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*Act & Being: Toward a Theology of the Divine Attributes.* By Colin E. Gunton. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002. ISBN: 0-8028-2658-X. Pp. ix + 162.

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Colin Gunton, who was professor of Christian doctrine at King's College, London, confesses that this little book was originally intended to be a draft theology of the divine attributes. It became apparent, however, that much critical analysis needed to be done before construction could be attempted. Indeed, a full three-quarters of the book, six chapters, is a critical discussion of the classical approach to the attributes and the search for trinitarian moorings; not until the final two chapters does he present any constructive proposals.

In the first two chapters, Gunton briefly outlines the problem of the theological tradition as one of eschewing the biblical foundations of the Old Testament in favour of Greek philosophy and religion. Following Schleiermacher's suggestion that the discussion of divine attributes has focused on cosmological causality, he pinpoints Pseudo-Dionysius as the theologian who introduced problematic Platonic and Neo-Platonic dualisms into the Christian tradition. Next he briefly discusses nine methodological problems related to the construction of the attributes; they revolve around the tensions between metaphysical and personal attributes and the role of the doctrine of the trinity in shaping the discussion. The later issue is poignantly illustrated when he discusses the idea of the divine will. Instead of attributing two wills to Jesus, as much of the tradition affirms, he argues instead for *three wills* of the persons of the trinity working *ad extra* in unison and a *general will* of God for the perfection of creation. This makes the scene in Gethsemane an interaction between the wills of the incarnate Son and God the Father.

The following two chapters deal with two major approaches to the question of knowledge of God and the view of attributes which flow from these.

Gunton takes a critical look at the negative theology that arose from the Greek demythologizing of popular religion. Such an approach described the divine being as distinct from all that is finite. In this way God was thought of in opposition to the material. He traces this from the pre-socratic philosophers through the early church, Origen and John of Damascus, and to Thomas Aquinas, though with Aquinas perhaps a friendlier, more trinitarian, reading could be had (see the work of Thomas Weinandy for one example). In the next chapter, he gives an alternative reading of language and knowledge by pointing out scripture's own demythologization of polytheism, followed by a quick summary of the "positives" behind the negative way. Gunton then resurrects and reforms Duns Scotus's univocal doctrine on the basis that our language is part and parcel of the redemptive process. That is, in the case of love for example, "there is a sense in which divine love *becomes*, in the Spirit, human love, in that the latter is, in one respect, identical with the former, because it is the former enabled to become God's love in action" (70). This retrieval of univocal language on the basis of redemption is indeed an approach worth pursuing.

Next Gunton asks two questions. First, in chapter 5, he asks what happens when the doctrine of the attributes takes shape in light of the economy of God's saving acts. To answer this question, taking his cue from Barth's identification of God's act and being, he briefly examines Irenaeus, Nazianzus, Calvin and the protestant scholastics. There is a danger in Calvin and Calvinism of attributing a certain hiddenness to God which is not revealed in the triune identity. Clearly, for Gunton, the economy must determine the shape of God's attributes: there is true knowledge of God's being. In chapter 6 he asks the similar question, what would a doctrine of the immanent trinity have to teach us about the attributes. First he gives "definition" an open and narrative character. That is, God must be defined not logically, which implies complete knowledge, but by the narrative of scripture. To illustrate how the attributes are to be defined trinitarianly, he takes up Barth's discussion of the attributes and suggests a fuller, more pneumatological definition of freedom than the Swiss theologian presented, a freedom that is defined by the inner trinitarian relations of Father, Son and Spirit.

In the seventh chapter, "Attribute and Action," Gunton begins to suggest his own approach to the attributes by discussing the descriptions of God as Spirit and Love found in John. He defines God's love as holy, grounded in the actions of the triune God. With the link between action and attributes, like Barth he argues for the communicable attributes before the incommunicable, even while the latter grounds the former. He then takes the incommunicable attribute of impassibility as a test case and discusses it in light of the cross. In the last chapter, "Hypostasis and Attribute," Gunton seeks to develop distinctive attributes of the three persons

of the trinity. There is a unity of work *ad extra*, yet the causality of the three can be distinguished. This is not unlike the Cappadocian view, in which the Father is the original cause, the Son the creative cause and the Spirit the perfecting cause (Basil). In discussing the communication of idioms he seems to take neither the Lutheran nor the Reformed position, but wants to construe the discussion so that “the incarnation [is] an expression of God’s capacity to be present to the world” (153). It is unclear to me, however, why we would need to eschew the traditional approach to the idioms in order to make this theological move.

As he states at the end of the book, Gunton’s purpose was “to create an awareness of the rift in the tradition and to suggest alternative ways of approaching the doctrine” (154). Indeed, his insistence that any discussion of the attributes should be rooted in God’s revelation, and his suggestions for a fuller trinitarian view certainly point a way forward. Despite the brevity of this book it packs a powerful punch. It is highly suggestive with every issue discussed. Yet one must also keep in mind that these are quick readings of the tradition. If one were to make a stronger case for his suggestions it would need to take fuller dogmatic and historical form. This is the obvious shortcoming of the book: it is too short.

In typical Gunton style, it is a readable and accessible work while at the same time erudition and creativity are evident. Although surely useful not only for beginning students in theology but also for anyone teaching or thinking through the issues involved, it is with sadness that the late Professor Gunton was not able to bring to full fruition the suggestions of his study. Yet his work, not just this little book, will bring much stimulation to anyone interested in the tasks of theology in the contemporary world.

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*Face of the Deep: A Theology of Becoming.* By Catherine Keller. London/New York: Routledge, 2003. ISBN 0-415-25649-6. Pp. xx + 307.

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“Theological discourse, if it will live, will speak in the interstices between its historical densities of text and its creative creaturely hopes. For beyond the nostalgia for a premodern grandeur or the doomed utopias of modern reason, what is the actual work of theology—but an incantation at the edge of uncertainty?” (xviii). Thus proclaims Drew University’s constructive/feminist theologian Catherine Keller in the preface (or rather, “pre/face”, as she writes it) to her most recent book, *Face of the Deep: a Theology of Becoming*. And the book is precisely that: “an incantation at the