

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

edge of uncertainty", an erudite, inquisitive, forward-looking romp in the interstices. Of course, one must say that even in its ambitious constructive project it remains primarily deconstructive (deconstructing even the very space of the incantation itself: *tehom*, the Hebrew deep) in orientation. But that's precisely what makes the book what it is—for better or for worse, it is difficult to say.

The book's spur is what Keller takes to be the curious fate of a single verse (Genesis 1:2), from which she then follows a path exposing a tradition of socio-political, ethnic, and gender oppression accompanying a privileging of the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* which, as she argues, sought to expunge the unruly *tehom* from the divine act of creation for fear that it threatened God's omnipotence—in the end suppressing and even at times demonizing the *tehom* as well as all therewith identified (women, non-whites, non-Christians, etc.). Written in four parts, the book attempts to trace both what Keller calls this "tehomophobic" tradition (most pronounced in Irenaeus and Barth), as well as a parallel tradition (which she attempts to recover and revive) of "tehomophilia" (most pronounced in mystical and negative theological traditions, although she finds riches of both phobia and philia in Augustine). Part 1 primarily sets the stage for such a tracing, while parts 2 and 3 unfold the hermeneutic along, respectively, formally theological and other, more literary lines (she looks at Job, Moby Dick, Babylonian mythology). Part 4 then comprises Keller's constructive work which begins with a specific translation, following a little known Jewish tradition, of the first verse of Genesis as a subordinate clause to the second verse: "In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep..." In part 4's six chapters, she takes on, respectively, each of what she identifies as the six salient terms of the verses, treating each in turn as something of a linguistic icon opening an endless hermeneutic, a bottomless deep of possibilities of meaning, a celebratory "incantation at the edge of uncertainty." It is in this sense that the book remains deconstructive even in the midst of its constructive project. For while Keller admits that such a *tehom*ic theology as she puts forward would be by definition feminist (if only because the tradition of *creatio ex nihilo* has been so often rigidly masculinist), at the same time she wishes, she claims, "not so much to stand outside this tradition as to let its own lost waters liquefy its boundaries" (xviii). Taking her cue from Derrida, she reads *tehom*, deconstructively, as above all a chaotic, flooded and flooding matrix of possibilities of meaning, a matrix without origin, uncreated by God but also not a second "principle" (certainly not a Goddess, as it were), but something of a self-heterogeneity—indeed, one might say God's own bottomless potentiality. *Creatio ex profundis*, as she calls it, is a theology of becoming which, more than opposing classical theism with a simple nihilism or a pantheism, blurs the edges of all three. She proposes, instead, a

panentheism. She writes, "Let us mark the interstitial strategy of such a *tehomie* apophysis with the very 'en' of panentheism. The 'en' designates an active indeterminacy, a commingling of unpredictable, and yet recapitulatory, self-organizing relations... The 'en' asserts the difference of divine and cosmic, but at the same time makes it impossible to draw the line" (219). It is precisely this impossibility, moreover, Keller claims, of drawing the line between the divine and the cosmic which gives human existence along with human creativity, in all the wealth of its socio-political, ethnic and gender specificities, its true dignity.

Overall the book is impressively broadly researched as a piece of scholarship, cleverly written (although much too much so at times), and poignant and original in many of its hermeneutical excursions. Parts 2 and 3 are especially rewarding to read for Keller's insightful and lively engagement with classical and classic texts. Her constructive work, however, is often somewhat less satisfying, being (perhaps in good deconstructive style) ultimately little more than a fantastical work of sheer *bricolage*. Complexity science, feminist theology, ecological theory, gender and ethnic theory, process thought, literary criticism—all this and more is thrown generously into the pot, or rather into the sea (into the deep, as it were) so that her endlessly romping and suggestive (yet ever recapitulative) method intends, one might suppose, to reveal her main message in action. Such is a *tehomie* theology, certainly. However, in this author's opinion, *creatio ex profundis* is something that does not actually seem to take place here. Rather, the reader is only and ceaselessly bombarded with something of an irrepressible flood of metaphors, of traces of meaning (indeed, of traces of traces of meaning), an unruly and seemingly never-ending restlessness of possibilities—and all with a great flourish, a showy style of painfully clever, even *obscenely* clever, manipulations of bottomless signifiers. But alas! it is a play of which one grows weary all too soon (indeed, the book drags to its end). Of course, I would still recommend it to anyone interested in theological thinking in the context of "postmodernism." But I would suggest (since each of the six chapters of part 4 of the book simply reiterates the same theme from a slightly different standpoint each time) that the reader would more fruitfully turn the majority of his/her attention to the first three parts, and especially to part 2 which, with some seriousness surely deserving of notice, engages and duly and provocatively challenges theological history.