COLIN E. GUNTON'S CHRISTOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY: HUMANITY'S RELATIONSHIPS IN THE IMAGE OF CHRIST

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ABSTRACT. The anthropology of Colin E. Gunton begins with the Trinity and specifically, the person of Christ. From trinitarian persons, Gunton deduces the ontological definition of what it means to be a person, that is, a being in relationship and in distinction, or 'free relatedness'. To be a person is to be in the image of the personal God, which is christological language, for it is Christ who bears the image of God in its fullness. As the true image bearer, Christ's humanity is paradigmatic of what it means to be in relationship: with God, with the world and with other human persons. Gunton's christology is also thoroughly pneumatological, borrowing Irenaeus' metaphor of God's 'two hands in the world': The Son and the Spirit. Not only do the Son and the Spirit mediate God's presence to creation according to Irenaeus, but Gunton builds on this metaphor to include the Spirit's mediation of the eternal Son to the Father as well as the Incarnate Son to humanity. The Spirit also reshapes humanity to be in the image of Christ, through his relationships with God, with the world and with other human persons. This is an eschatological project, for in this reshaping, the creation is recreated toward its teleological perfection. The article concludes with a potential direction for future study within Gunton's christological anthropology. To conceive what it means to be human *theologically*, Gunton insists that we must look to Christ's own person.

KEYWORDS: Christological Anthropology, Colin Gunton, image, relationship, trinity

Colin E. Gunton (1941-2003), systematic theologian at King's College London, worked extensively in the doctrines of creation, the Trinity and christology. Because of that, his theological anthropology is built robustly with these doctrines as its pillars and especially with christology as the most prominent. Gunton presents a constructive narrative christological anthropology. This article will first chart Gunton's theological anthropology, analyze his christology and then return to outline his distinctively *christological* anthropology.

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Gunton's Theological Anthropology

Errors in Method

Gunton discusses poor content and method in theological anthropology. First, Gunton contends that the content of theological anthropology often belies human ontology, or that which humanity is. Philosophers from Augustine to Descartes have proposed introspection as an ideal way to know oneself. Gunton demurs, calling that the 'least reliable form of knowledge' (Gunton 1992: 72). The emphasis on the internal self and the mind is ill-founded, for it lacks the human ontological reality of body. This error, Gunton observes, stems from the Greek dualistic notion of the mind's superiority to the body as seen in Plato's tripartite soul in the *Republic* where the appetitive is near sinful, needing to be harnessed by reason, and Plato's remarks on the mind's imprisonment to the body in *Phaedo* (Gunton 1991: 50-51; Höhne 2010: 3-5). According to Gunton, Descartes likewise conceives a human ontology where 'a mind [is] pushing around a mechanical body' (Gunton 1991: 47). For this, he admonishes Descartes. The mind alone cannot pilot anthropology. The image of God in humanity is commonly said to be found in rationality, thus emphasizing the mind and deemphasizing the body. Gunton argues that this hierarchical human ontology ultimately leads to a non-relational ontology. If humanity is in some capacity 'more' mind than body, this diminishes mankind's embodied relationships with the world and with others, and prominently so for Gunton, in sexual distinction (Gunton 1991: 48, 59-60). Gunton firmly places both mind and body and its consequent relations in the heart of his theological anthropology. Mere self-analysis cannot lead anthropology because it encourages a Platonic mind-body dualism that overplays internal aspects while neglecting human embodiedness. [Gunton's contention with Augustine's doctrines of the Trinity, christology and pneumatology hinges on Augustine's Neoplatonism (Höhne 2010: 5-7).]

The second error which Gunton notes is similarly methodological. Theological anthropology frequently discerns the kind of thing human is from contrast and comparison with God or non-human creatures (Gunton 1991: 47). The image of God has generally been represented as a characteristic or groupings of characteristics that humanity shares or does not share in common with God. For instance, if God is rational, humanity is like him. If non-human creatures are irrational, humans are, in contrast, rational. By using the method of contrast and comparison, the image of God is yet again found in rationality. The method is sound within itself, but leads to an invalid dualistic outcome, as noted above, that prizes the mind over the body. Gunton offers another way. 'It is better to root contrast in ontology, and not the other way round' (Gunton 1991: 48). Instead of discerning human ontology by first comparing human beings to others, Gunton suggests comparison only after first establishing human ontology. Therefore, Gunton's method works from

a positive account of the ontology of human beings first and only then looks to contrast and comparison.

Starting with Ontology

Proposing theological anthropology begin with ontology, Gunton progresses analogically from trinitarian ontology to human ontology. Taking inspiration from elements of Barth's theology, Gunton maintains that whatever 'person' means for God, it also means for humanity (Gunton 1991: 55). God is three distinct persons by virtue of relationship. Therefore, 'a person or thing is what it is, and not something else, by virtue of the matrix of relationships in which it exists' (Höhne 2010: 2). To be a person is to be in relationships of 'free relatedness', that is, related to another but free to be itself (Gunton 1992: 75). This assertion launches Gunton's anthropology. Like God, humanity is both in communion with other entities but also distinct from them, and humanity knows himself by this relational matrix (Gunton 1992: 72). [Gunton follows both Karl Barth and John Zizoulas in defining persons as beings in relations. See Zizoulas 1991: 41 and Barth *Church Dogmatics*: II.1. Whether Gunton's thinking on human personhood in relation to God's personhood is analogical like Barth or univocal is unclear (Bouma-Prediger 1994: 42; Cunningham 1993: 430). Gunton's work is friendly toward eastern theology and this can garner criticisms of social trinitarianism. Gunton's trinitarian views lend this way, but Gunton does not renounce the trinitarianism of western theology but seeks to incorporate eastern views into it].

Gunton calls 'relation' an ontological category, for 'relation constitutes who and what we are' (Gunton 1998: 206). The defining ontology of humanity is it being in the image of God. This image, Gunton declares, is relational, and therefore, the ontology of humanity calls him to live in a specific set of determinative ontological relations. Gunton explains:

To be made in the image of God is to be endowed with a particular kind of personal reality. To be a person is to be made in the image of God: that is the heart of the matter. If God is a communion of persons inseparably related, then surely Barth is thus far correct in saying that it is in our relatedness to others that our being human consists (Gunton 1991: 58).

A human is necessarily in a network of relationships.

Enacting this structural property of relations causes the image to be vocation as well. 'The image of God is not a static possession but comes to be realised in the various relationships in which human life is set' (Gunton 1992: 60). Using Genesis, Gunton argues that these two relations are established by God: human dominion over the creation and male-female relations (Gunton 1991: 57). Relationship with God calls humanity to relationship with the world and with other human persons. We will now examine each of these

human relations, that is, with God, with the world and with others, as it is represented in the unity of the biblical text (Gunton 1991: 16). [Barth and T.F. Torrance influence Gunton's belief that the image of God includes vocation].

Humanity's Relations with God

We will begin by examining the Trinity's relationality and distinction before looking at how humanity echoes trinitarian relationality and distinction. To launch this task, we must acknowledge the supposedly complex task of speaking about the inner world of God (Gunton 1992: 71). However, if the economic Trinity, as Gunton proposes, reveals the immanent, then to speak of God's inner being is not an impossible task.

What God is in his relations with the world, he is also in his eternal being, because there is no breach, as there is with fallen creatures, between what God is and what he does (Gunton 2002: 101).

This is not to collapse the external works of God with the internal, for the economic Trinity does not reveal the immanent in its totality (Awad 2010: 17). 'Gunton had no intention of introducing economic actions into definitions of the eternal being' (Höhne 2010: 27). Rather, Gunton asserts that the trinitarian distinctions are evident both in God's actions in the world as well as in God's eternal being. God's actions and relations are one, and yet, there can be different kinds of actions and relations among the three divine persons. [On this topic, Gunton rebukes Western theology for what he perceives to be its virtual modalism (Höhne 2010: 28). To be without distinction is to be non-distinguishable; the persons of the Trinity would, in fact, be the same. While western trinitarianism does not deny these distinctions, Gunton is worried about the degree of distinction they hold, as he believes that western trinitarianism has not distinguished sufficiently between the persons].

God is relational within himself (Gunton 2002: 101). The doctrine of the Trinity describes a God in communion of love where each divine person is distinctive and particular (Gunton 1992: 74). The term, 'particular', for Gunton does not denote individual or separate substance but includes relation alongside a distinction of being. This particularity creates personal space, as Gunton shows:

We have a conception of *personal space*: the space in which three persons are for and from each other in their otherness. They confer particularity upon and receive it from one another. That giving of particularity is very important: it is a matter of space to be. Father, Son and Spirit through the shape—the *taxis*—of their inseparable relatedness confer particularity and freedom on each other (Gunton 1991: 56).

The giving of particularity freely allows personal space to be. This happens within the Godhead, but also in relations between humanity and God.

God gives creatures freedom by the Spirit in virtue of their particularity and space from him (Gunton: 1991: 56; Gunton 1992: 78; Gunton 2002: 5; Awad 2010: 19; Harvey 2012: 87). That God did not need to create, but freely chose to do so enables creation to be a distinct entity from God, or to use Gunton's metaphor, space. Creation is not bound up in the substance of God as an appendage of divinity. A lack of distinct creaturely space would be a pantheistic conception (Gunton 1992: 91). Instead, creation exists in free relatedness, or relation alongside distinction (Gunton 1992: 75).

God, through Christ, relates to creation while honoring creaturely space and freedom (Gunton 1992: 76-77). To be a creature is to be in constant interaction with the Creator in a way that is necessary for life itself. Gunton explains this by way of Psalm 104:29, 'When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust' (Gunton 1998: 207). Humanity's very existence is in relation to God, and personal relationship with God is foundational to being human.

This relationship between Creator and creation is pneumatologically and christologically mediated. The Spirit both sets creation free to be itself in particularity, and also directs it toward eschatological fulfilment. The Spirit guides Christ in renewing the whole of creation (Gunton 1992: 90-91, 97; Höhne 2010: 77, 88). Gunton reproduces Irenaeus' two hands metaphor. 'To put it simply: we know God because the Father comes into free relation with us and the world through his Son and Spirit' (Gunton 1992: 74; 2002: 101, 181). Pneumatological and christological lines contour both creation's distance and closeness to its Creator.

Humanity's Relations with the World

As persons, human beings also relate to the world, or non-human creatures, in mutually constituting reciprocal relationships (Gunton 1992: 73). The world is non-personal but still 'like God: a dynamic of beings in relation', and as such, its own particularity and otherness from God allows commensurate freedom (Gunton 1992: 56). God instituted the world's relationship with humanity and humanity's relationship with the world. Through having dominion over the world, humanity enables it to reach its teleology of praising its maker (Gunton 1992: 102; Gunton 2002: 29).

To be in the image of God is therefore to be called to represent God to the creation and the creation to God, so enabling it to reach its perfection (Gunton 1992: 102-103).

Gunton uses the vocational language of 'called', for humanity, in its makeup, has a vocation to be in relation with the world and the world to humanity.

For the world to be itself, it must be related to humanity, as subordinate to him. Concurrently, the world enables humanity to be a person in relationship, for God-given human dominion procures agriculture, technology, and art, which ultimately enable humanity to image God through his relations with the world (Gunton 191: 56; Gunton 1992: 73).

Humanity's Relations with Other Human Persons

Lastly, we come to humanity's relations with other human persons. One could offer quotidian examples: the clerk at the grocery store, one's boss, one's mother... etc. Clearly, one person has an effect on another. Gunton principally notes the dynamic of sexual relations, though he broadens sexuality to all male-female connections and not simply those denoted by marriage or physical intercourse. These male-female relationships, inaugurated by God in Genesis, reflect the difference and sameness present in the Trinity (Genesis 1:27-28; 2:18-25). Gunton is careful not to claim that sexual relatedness is to be read back into deity. Instead, the Trinity is a communion of persons and that concept of difference and sameness in communion can be seen reflected paradigmatically in male-female relations too (Gunton 1992: 101). [Gunton's thoughts on sexual difference can be traced to his theological mentor, Barth. See *Church Dogmatics* III.1].

In short, Gunton's view of personhood and the image of God sees humanity as a being in imitation of the Trinity's free relatedness. He closely follows the Genesis narrative to outline relations of personhood: male and female (relations with other humans) and dominion over creation (relations with the world), which are both initiated in relationship with the Creator (relations with God). In this way, human persons reflect God's 'eternal relatedness-in-otherness of Father, Son, and Spirit' (Gunton 1992: 101). To be a person in the image of God, according to Gunton, is to be in free relatedness as an echo of the Trinity.

The Image of God and the Fall

Was the image of God lost at the Fall? Gunton scoffs at the question, calling it a 'futile dispute', for Gunton's definition does not allow the premise of the question (Gunton 1992: 107). For Gunton, the image is relational, and the relationship between God and humanity does not disappear at the fall. The whole of the biblical text is a compilation of accounts of the relationship between God and humanity. Gunton alters the question: was the image of God still exercised after the Fall? To this, Gunton responds heartily, 'yes', because men and women still love one another purely, communities of people exist in harmony and creation worships God through industry, agriculture, and craft. However, Gunton quickly follows with, 'but also no'. The image of God is not fully exercised post-fall, for relationship is frustrated with lust,

selfishness, greed, and exploitation (Gunton 1992: 107-108). Therefore, the image of God was marred but not obliterated by the fall.

The height of the failure of the image of God, introduced in the Fall, is idolatry. This is the 'human tendency to displace God as the centre of the universe' (Gunton 1992: 105). Though humanity effects no actual change to the being of God, this is a failure in humanity's view of God. This 'vertical' sin, idolatry, disturbs 'horizontal' relations as well. When humanity does not rightly see God, it also cannot see creation aright. In humanity's relations with the world, Gunton accuses mankind of 'economic oppression, political tyranny and ecological disaster'. With others human persons, humans execute exacerbated sexual relations and the grave offense of murder (Gunton 1992: 104; Gunton 2002: 29). Idolatry, the distortion of the image of God, causes humanity to worship the creation instead of the creator, sully vertical and horizontal relationships alike.

Yet, Gunton assumes that the image of God is indelible, for it consists in relationality with God foremost, which is initiated and upheld by God, not humanity. Mankind's action, though a poor reflection of his imaging of God, does not mitigate the fact that he is ontologically in the image of God, that is, in relationship to God because of God's irrevocable covenant with humanity (Gunton 1998: 207). Owing to his ontological creatureliness, humanity exists in relationship to God, and the image is irremovable.

The entry point for humanity to understand its relationship to God is Christ, who is the economic display of God. Christ is both one of us as human and other than as divine. Jesus' full divinity and full humanity are the reason human beings can both look 'sideways' and 'upwards' to discern the nature of the world and of God (Harvey 2012: 94). Christ's natures are the ground on which humanity can speak of God and see his relations with this God. The Incarnation holds soteriological import but is also a reflection upon what it means to be human in relationship with God (Harvey 2012: 94). Because of this, Christ is the foundation for theological anthropology. If this is so, it is necessary to know who Christ is, so we necessarily move to examine Gunton's ontology of Christ. This will ground Gunton's christological anthropology to which we will return afterward.

Gunton's Ontological Christology

Errors of Christology from Above and Christology from Below

To explore how Gunton's view of Christ launches his anthropology, we must examine his christology. Gunton interacts with contemporary christologies and advocates for right ontology. Recent christology utilizes spatial language with 'christology from above' and 'christology from below' in order to conceptualize christologies that either prioritize Christ's divinity or his historical humanity (Gunton 1983: 34). While there are varied versions within both

christology from above and from below, Gunton uses this reductive shorthand for ease. Gunton chides that a leading interest in deity leads to a functional Docetism, which virtually removes Christ's humanity or even inexorably creates some version of divine hegemony in Christ (Gunton 1983: 6, 10-22, 29, 53; Gunton 1988: 359).

We should beware of suggestions that Jesus was in some way pushed around by the Word, by his 'divine nature'. He *was* the Word, but the Word became truly and fully human, God the Son self-emptied into the condition of the flesh, the while remaining fully himself (Gunton 2002: 103).

Inversely, Gunton comments on the recent popularity of christology that prizes Christ's humanity and rejects Chalcedonian ontological commitments in lieu of the 'historical Jesus'. This potentially involves the opposite error of concocting a divinized man (Gunton 1983: 58-60, 98-99, 168; Gunton 1988: 360). Neither kind of christology in exclusion reaches an accurate dogmatic restatement of the portrayal of the Christ of the New Testament.

There are soteriological consequences to these christologies as well. The New Testament writers 'all write of Jesus as inseparably bound up with God's saving activity' (Gunton 1983: 74). So, while connection between Christ and his saving work is needed, the problem of christology with a predilection for the divine is collapsing christology into soteriology. Here, Gunton praises Wolfhart Pannenberg's for avoiding Kantian thought, which Gunton claimed did not create distinction between christology and soteriology and therefore, 'failed to ground the significance of Jesus for salvation in reality' (Gunton 1983: 29). If there is no distinction between who Jesus is and what Jesus did, an essential part of theology is lost, the human historical reality of Christ. According to Gunton, Pannenberg rightly centers his christology in the historical events of Jesus and allows christology to be appropriately distinct from soteriology (Gunton 1983:29-30).

The opposite issue is overemphasis on Christ's humanity which effectively strips him of divinity. Salvation requires God made *man*. Gunton's admiration for Pannenberg's approach to christology ends because of Pannenberg's Hegelian framework which fails to see the salvatory aspects of christology as immanent (Gunton 1983: 29). The effect of this thinking is Christ's divinity is deemphasized to the point that Christ is not God made man and his death is not the death of the Son who carries the weight of sin (Gunton 1988: 360). For Gunton, salvation requires that Christ retain both the proper divinity and full humanity.

Scripture as Method

With these problems in view, Gunton proposes his own account of christology, and he uses Scripture as a distinctive in his method. Christology must be

theological. That is, christology must evaluate Jesus' relation to God as seen in the New Testament texts (Gunton 1983: 60-61). Gunton points out the theological void in christology which prizes Christ's humanity. In its efforts to get 'behind the text', it lacks examination of Jesus' relationship with the Father, or theology.

Furthermore, Gunton explains the error of christologies which do not adhere to the New Testament ontology of Christ. Often, contemporary christologies attempt to avoid ontology altogether, but this culminates in the use of preconceived and erroneous ontology instead of that based on the New Testament texts (Gunton 1983: 172). Preconceived ontological commitments can bleed into the content of this type of christology, and then, New Testament texts do not shape the form of knowledge, but the preconceptions do instead (Gunton 1983: 31). This can be seen, Gunton argues, in contemporary christologies overtly influenced by existentialism, feminism and Marxism (Gunton 1988: 361). Christianity must base its views of Christ squarely on the Bible.

Gunton's Ontological Christology

With these considerations, Gunton proposes a christology which is ontologically rich and scripturally based. Gunton's christology, closely informed by the New Testament texts, allows the divine and human as well as the temporal and eternal to coexist as constituents of Christ's identity (Gunton 1983: 114-115). He opposes spatial metaphors because they are visually based, and vision allows only one object to be in a space at a time. This is not helpful for a biblical christology because Christ exists in two spaces, divine and human, at the same time (Gunton 1983: 114).

Gunton believes that the metaphor of hearing is more apt. In music, three notes can be played concurrently, and each retains itself while creating a new chord. This is better.

In Jesus Christ there are two co-present realities—what Chalcedon called the human and the divine natures—which in their association, the 'hypostatic union', form a new reality which yet does not do away with the specific characteristics of the old (Gunton 1983: 115).

The Incarnate Christ inhabits both the eternal and the temporal, as well as the ethereal and the earthly. Akin the musical chord, Christ can simultaneously be God and man, dwelling as both divine and human. This Gunton calls both ontological and in line with Scripture, for it follows New Testament claims (Gunton 1983: 83-84).

Consequently, how Christ is both God and man needs to be untangled. Theories of kenosis have grappled with how to reconcile Christ's two natures. In doing so, kenotic theories have often posed that the eternal Son temporarily abandoned divine attributes which were incompatible with humanity

(Gunton 1988: 371). Soteriological alarm bells immediately ring for Gunton, for the Gospel requires Christ to be fully God so that he can effect salvation, and God cannot empty himself of divinity and remain God (Gunton 1983: 172; Gunton 1992: 83). [Kathryn Tanner offers a contemporary interest in kenotic theories, finding the natures of Christ as non-competitive. 'Jesus therefore mediates divinity and humanity because he unites both and not because he is something in between' (Tanner 2010: 157). See Tanner K (2010) *Christ the Key*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.]

In forming his kenotic theory, Gunton examines the work of Edward Irving (1792-1834) and P. T. Forsyth (1848-1921). Irving too bemoans notions of kenosis as the 'sloughing off of certain attributes' (Gunton 1988: 364). To solve this problem, Forsyth redefines kenosis as God's self-reduction or self-retraction instead of self-emptying or self-removal of divine attributes. In using these terms, Forsyth disagrees that Christ's divine attributes are removed, but instead the divine attributes incompatible with humanity are changed from actual to potential (Gunton 1983: 171-172). Divinity does not disappear, but instead becomes latent. There is no loss of divinity, but a change in its expression. This arrives closer to Gunton's reading of Scripture, but still, Gunton faults Forsyth for splitting Christ into two: 'one [operation] of divine humbling and the other of human exaltation' (Spence 2012: 54). Gunton ultimately objects to the premise of kenotic theories altogether, stating that they are inherently dualistic:

Kenotic theories, far from replacing two-nature doctrine, in fact *presuppose* the latter and then proceed to say that they cannot go so far as Chalcedon but must in some way qualify the assertion of unity so that it is not quite so bald (Gunton 1983: 172).

Gunton defends the unity of Christ against two-nature accounts which effectively, in his view, split Christ into two separate persons. Gunton contends that the actions of Christ have been historically divvied up and accredited to either his humanity or his divinity. This, Gunton argues, is tantamount to making Jesus into two persons, and he firmly eschews the view of the two natures of Christ as independent substances or 'rival principles' (Gunton 2002: 105). Still, Gunton must grapple with the two natures of Christ.

To do this, Gunton defines natures not as things or attributes but instead as the ways in which Jesus is and acts. This is in contrast to how he sees the tradition as defining Christ's two natures as 'separately conceived' so that the attributes of one nature must also be applied to the other. Gunton seeks to protect the simultaneous divine and human actions of Christ (Gunton 2002: 95). Jesus is one person whose acts, or 'movements' as Gunton prefers (borrowing from Forsyth), are concurrently divine and human (Gunton 2002: 95; Spence 2012: 53). Therefore, 'to seek the Jesus of the New Testament is to

seek a human and earthly figure whose intrinsic meaning is to be expressed in expressions employing the word God' (Gunton 1983: 182). Gunton argues for the unity of divine and human actions in Christ's Incarnate life.

Christ and Creation

Though Gunton vigorously protects unity in the person of Christ, he also recognizes the unique distinctions of divine and human. He shows this in his account of Christ's relation to creation. Christ has lordship over creation and is a creature. Christ is Creator and, at his Incarnation, re-creator, and ultimately, the one through whom creation finds fulfillment (Gunton 1992: 24). In his distinction from the Father, Christ uniquely accomplishes creation, while at the same time, the act of creation is also accomplished through the unified action of God (John 1:3; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2). Christ is Creator.

The incarnate Son also recreates creation too. God created Adam to govern the world, and where Adam failed, the second Adam, Christ, succeeds. Humanity, because of sin, lost its ability to govern the world rightly so that restoration can only be achieved by one with divine power (Gunton 1992: 91). And so, Christ '[enters] the structures of fallen space and time in order to *recreate*—to reorder teleology, to direct again to perfection' (Gunton 1992: 91). In the Gospels, the divine Christ reestablishes the kingdom of God, reestablishing the dominion over the world that was first given to Adam and Eve. This Kingdom of God is a future Kingdom too, and it is through Christ's lordship that creation will achieve its final teleology. Christ is always intimately involved with creation as the one establishing and reestablishing it to its fulfillment. [Christ's authority is shown both in the spiritual world but also the material world, for these are intertwined. Exorcising demons and calming seas alike show Jesus' authority over all creation (Gunton 1992: 17, 19).]

But Christ is fully a creature too. He is composed of the 'tired and soiled matter of the earth' (Gunton 2002: 32). Gunton identifies New Testament passages that have historically shown Christ as the lord of creation, and he draws attention to the lesser-made assertion that these passages also display Christ's unique humanity. The temptation and death of Jesus reveal his human temptability and suffering, the virgin birth shows his human lineage, and the resurrection demonstrates Jesus to be Messiah, a human rejected by his own (Gunton 1992: 26-28). Gunton perceives how the same action in the life of Christ can display both his lordship and creatureliness. Christ's ontological status as divine and human means that his relationship with creation is one of authority over creation and one of creatureliness himself.

En route from Gunton's theological anthropology to his particular *christological* anthropology, it was crucial to examine his christology broadly. Gunton's christology has strong ontological distinctives that follow from his desire

to avoid splitting Christ into two separate persons. He views kenotic theories as doing just that, and also worries about the shortcomings of christologies exclusively undertaken ‘from above’ or ‘from below’. Gunton unifies the person of Christ through his emphasis upon Christ’s life as a singular personal action while also recognizing Christ’s two distinct natures as both Creator and creature.

Gunton’s Christological Anthropology

The Two Hands: The Son and the Spirit

Since Gunton borrows from Irenaeus’ metaphor of the ‘two hands’ of God in the world, which are the Son *and the Spirit*, why not, you might ask, turn now to an account of decidedly *pneumatological* anthropology? (Gunton 2002: 101). Both the Son and the Spirit are fully and truly God in the world, though the work of the two hands are not merely repetitions of the same activity. Rather, the actions of the Son and the Spirit in the world are distinguishable, and Gunton locates his anthropology in Christ.

There are two distinct acts of the Spirit’s mediation, or revelation of God: The Spirit’s mediation of the Son to the Father and the Spirit’s mediation of the Son to humanity. The Spirit eternally mediates the Son to the Father by enabling Christ to be in free relatedness to the Father (Gunton 1995: 34; Gunton 2002: 102). Secondly, the Spirit mediates the Son’s manifestation in the world. Unlike Christ, the Spirit is not made man and cannot be found materially *within* the world, yet he facilitates the Son’s entrance. It is by the Spirit that the Father creates Jesus’ body and enables him to be the particular human being he is (Gunton 1992: 90; Gunton 2002: 102). The work of the third person of the Trinity is the mediation of Christ in the world and movement in all things toward their perfection. The Spirit is always involved in the teleological perfecting and recreating of the world through Christ (Gunton 2003: 146). The Spirit is the mediating Spirit.

Gunton chiefly locates the human quest to know God in christology, albeit a very pneumatological christology. As subordinate creatures, and sinful ones at that, humanity cannot approach God on its own terms, but God must come to him (Gunton 1992: 67; Harvey 2012: 91). And God does come to humanity for ‘in Jesus [is] not merely a man but the eternal God who meets us’ (Gunton 1992: 67). God’s initiative to approach humanity within the structures of the world by the person of Christ is the starting point of mankind knowing God. Gunton is unequivocal: theology, and so also humanity’s quest to know himself *theologically*, begins with christology.

Humanity in the Image of Christ

Christ is the revealed image of God, but the image, though acutely shown in Christ, is ultimately a triune reality. ‘The Son images the Father as through the Spirit he realises a particular pattern of life on earth’ (Gunton 1988: 207;

See also Gunton 1991: 58; Gunton 1992: 101, 107). To be in the image of God is to be a person in relation, an ontological description. Christ is the true image of God, and this 'truth' has three aspects: first, Christ's orientation toward the Father; second, his paradigmatic humanity, and third, his enabling of humanity to achieve an orientation toward the Father too.

Christ is in proper relationship with the Father through the Spirit. The intimacy of relation is seen in Christ's preeminence with the Father before the foundation of the world. Because of that intimacy, Christ reveals God to creation and models the fullness of relation with God. Christ by the Spirit overcomes the deprivation of sin and then allows creation to achieve connection with the Father (Gunton 1991: 61; Gunton 1992: 101-102). Christ is the paradigm for proper relation with the Father, and humanity's proper vertical relationship with God enables right horizontal relationships with persons and the world (Tibbs 2012: 118).

Evolving cultural practices and societal values will necessarily change human living and relationships. Roman Christians had to respond to the value of a person in light of gladiator fights. The Enlightenment highlighted individualism and so, it required theological thinking of humanity anew. Today, our Tik-Tok and selfie society offers a new expression of culture which invites fresh theological responses too. Gunton suggests, 'theology goes beyond the writings of the Bible, in seeking to say something of what is true of God and the world as a whole on the basis of the biblical teaching' (Gunton 1998: 41). Theological anthropology, based fundamentally in Scripture but in response to the times, seeks to know humanity, an entity within time, space and culture, and his relationship with God. In the following section, Gunton proposes contemporary and practical ways humanity can be reshaped to the image of God through Christ by the Spirit in relationship with God, with the world and with other human persons.

Humanity in the Image of Christ in his Relations with God

Foremost, Jesus shows proper relations with God. If the foundation of all sin is idolatry, then the Son places the Father at the very center of the universe. According to Gunton, the true image of God in Christ is his obedient relationship with the Father by the Spirit. Since Christ both self-emptied by taking humanity while fully remaining the eternal Son, the Spirit mediated between the Father and the Son and enabled the Son to maintain faithfulness to the Father (Gunton 2002: 103). Christ illustrates right vertical relations, which are foundational for right horizontal relations too.

Christ is also the 'agent of the Father's victory in the world' both at the cross and at the eschaton (Gunton 2003: 152). Christ's Incarnation is the foretaste of perfection to come. His work on earth is a sacrifice, pointing to the ultimate completion of creation through the Spirit. Christ is the perfect

sacrifice and the perfected creation (Gunton 2003: 154). The ‘victory, justification, and sacrifice alike are oriented to the end’, to the perfection and completion of all things (Gunton 2003: 154).

In the same way, humanity is to be like Christ, oriented to the end. Human action can be the Father’s victory and the Spirit’s work of perfecting the world. This type of ‘bearing-the-image’ action requires sacrifice, as it did for Christ. Based on Romans 12:1, Gunton stresses that the Spirit’s perfecting work of reshaping humanity into the image of God entails a ‘certain shape of being before the throne of God’ (Gunton 1992: 117). What humanity does with his body and his soul in relation to the world and others is an obedient sacrifice to God and resembles Christ’s obedience sacrifice. [Gunton stresses the personhood of Christ in its similarity to humanity’s personhood. The degree of similarity Gunton professes is vague, and critics have accused Gunton of placing Christ’s personhood too close to humanity’s, or perhaps as the exact same. This is problematic, critics claim, because Christ’s personhood was affected by the Incarnation and thus sets it apart from human personhood (Bouma-Prediger 1994: 42; Cunningham 1993: 430).]

Humanity in the Image of Christ in his Relations with the World

Christ affirmed the world by creating and entering it and governs the world toward flourishing (Gunton 1992: 123). The Fall did not negate the meaningfulness and beauty of the world, as we see from Christ’s relationship with it. Beauty and meaning can exist here. Christ’s material body in earthly time and space is the basis for the Christian appreciation of creation (Gunton 1992: 118, 122).

Because creation is good, human beings may work toward reforming that in the world which resembles fallenness toward God’s intent for creation, praise of Creator. Gunton notes the fragmentation between work and art as well as beauty and efficiency as a result of the Fall (Gunton 1992: 118). The practical outworking of human stewardship varies by circumstance but does touch all of humanity’s interactions with the world: science, technology, craft, and art (Gunton 1992: 119, 122). This work is parallel to the offering of an unblemished lamb of the Old Testament priests. The human priesthood of creation is to, similarly, offer an unblemished world which can worship God. Ultimately, Christ through the Spirit will bring creation to completion, but until then, human persons are charged with image-bearing through stewardship (Gunton 2003: 153). Gunton expresses that this is human work, as it is accomplished by Jesus through the Spirit, and in saying this, he notes a pneumatological aspect to human action in the world (Gunton 1992: 119). Just as the Spirit transforms in relation to Christ’s saving of wayward persons, so mankind transforms the world through wrestling with its waywardness (Gunton 1992: 123). Gunton offers a few examples, such as minimizing animal

mistreatment and animal factory farms, or care of Antarctica or other desolate wilderness regions (Gunton 1992: 119). How humanity exactly transforms the world needs to correspond to the circumstance. Sometimes care of the world requires human activity, but it also may necessitate human *inactivity* (Gunton 1992: 121). To be truly human is to treat the world as Christ does, as bearing beauty and meaning, and as Christ enables the world to praise God through the Spirit, so should human beings.

Humanity in the Image of Christ in his Relations with Others

Lastly, Christ sets the example in relations with other human persons. For Gunton, this occurs eminently in the church, which is by analogy 'the object of the Spirit's particularizing of the action of the ascended Christ in the world' (Gunton 1992: 110). Just as the Spirit facilitates Jesus' particular humanity, so he particularizes Christ's presence in the world now by the church.

The church is an eschatological community, being gradually reshaped in the image of God by the Spirit through Christ (Gunton 1992: 111-112). The work of the Spirit in the church directs humans both to God (vertical) and into community (horizontal). Teaching of the word is the primary vehicle of the community being oriented toward God. Because of this, Gunton opposes a church centered on social activism. For while reshaping structures of the world toward its teleological end is a good, it cannot precede the primary function of the church, to direct toward renewed relationship with God (Gunton 1992: 112). Worship accompanies teaching in this regard, as do the sacraments. The material elements of the sacraments, whether the water of baptism or the bread and wine of the Eucharist, hold a horizontal role in the praise of God. They are the symbolic avenue of belonging in community that reshape relationships with other human persons (Gunton 1992: 114-115). For Gunton, Galatians 3:28 declares this reality. 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.' This communal reorienting to God through the church is not instant transformation, but slowly the Spirit through Christ's work reshapes relationship with God, with human beings and with the world.

Future Direction

There is more still to Colin Gunton's christological anthropology. This brief survey functions only as a beginning point for areas that Gunton or theological anthropology scholars could probe. To deepen Gunton's christological anthropology, future work could elucidate how he imagines the Spirit indwelling Christ and the role of his supralapsarianism.

Spirit Christology

Recognizing the spirit-indwelt humanity of Christ informs the theological study of humanity as a whole. 'Spirit Christology' is a recent movement in

understanding the Spirit's work in Christ. Gunton's theology of revelation makes room for the 'two hands' of God in the world and his distinct emphasis on the Spirit maps onto Spirit Christology (Höhne 2010: 37; Anizor 2016: 120-121). A wide range of spirit christologies exist. Some supplant the divine element in the person of Christ with the Spirit altogether while others maintain the Chalcedonian definition of Christ as one person in two natures with reciprocal relationship between the person of Christ and the person of the Spirit. Admonishing the former, Gunton speaks out against G. W. H. Lampe's Spirit Christology, calling it 'jejune' (Gunton 1988: 373). Lampe's Spirit Christology is unitarian, Gunton argues, and so, he refutes claims that Irving's christology is a 'Spirit Christology'. In Lampe's work, Jesus is the immanence of the Spirit-God, and not divine himself (Gunton 1988: 373-374). Gunton fears Spirit Christology of this sort.

However, many worry that Gunton's christology is precisely this Spirit Christology. In an attempt to protect Christ's humanity and avoid him being pre-programmed, Gunton attributes the works of Jesus to his humanity by the Spirit, seemingly falling into the error he wants to avoid. Christ's obedience to the Father to the cross, for example, is a result of the Spirit instead of an action of the Spirit and the Word jointly (Gunton 1992: 58-59). John Webster critiques Gunton for his 'separation of the Word and the Spirit which gives little room to the Word's continuing activity in the history of the incarnate room' (Webster 2010: 28) Paul Molnar similarly critiques that Gunton 'relegate[s] the action of the Word into a corner and leave[s] the rest to the Spirit' (Molnar 2002: 282, 286, 290). Gunton's emphasis on the Spirit in christology offers a prime comparative study to modern-day Spirit Christology, though more work needs to be done if Gunton is not to fall prey to his own concerns about Spirit Christology.

Another corollary study to that of Spirit Christology is Christ's human nature and whether it was fallen or unfallen. Most of the history of the Christian church has affirmed Christ's unfallen human nature, for fallenness is not essential to humanity. The latter position is friendly to Spirit christology because it leaves room for Christ to be truly tempted and to remain sinless by the Spirit, but it also engenders controversy about original sin and human nature. Gunton attributes a fallen human nature to the Incarnate Christ. In this, he follows his theological mentors of Irving and Barth. Gunton's position gives ample room for the Spirit's work in the life of Christ, and this could be compared with Spirit Christological views of Christ's human nature. [Edward Irving first advocated the position that Christ had a fallen nature and was met with rejection from the orthodox Christian church. [Irving E (1830) *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of Our Lord's Human Nature*. London: Baldwin & Cradock.] Karl Barth (1957, 1969) likewise affirmed this view in *Church Dogmatics* I/2 (edited by G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance Edinburgh: T & T

Clark, pp. 147–59) and was followed by Hans Urs von Bathasar, Wolfhart Pannenberg, Thomas F. Torrance, and J. B. Torrance. A recent advocate includes Thomas Weinandy. [Weinandy T (1993) *In the Likeness of Sinful Flesh: An Essay on the Humanity of Christ*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark.] The view more common within the history of the Christian church is that Christ possessed an unfallen nature. This has been recently defended by Donald Mcleod [Macleod D (1998) *The Person of Christ*, Countours of Christian Theology. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, pp. 224–229], Kelly M. Kapic [Kapic KM (2001) The son's assumption of a human nature: A call for clarity. *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 3(2): 154–166], Oliver Crisp [Crisp O (2016) 'Incarnation without the Fall'. *Journal of Reformed Theology* 10(3): 215–233], and Ian McFarland [McFarland IA (2008) Fallen or unfallen? Christ's human nature and the ontology of human sinfulness. *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 10(4): 399–415].

Supralapsarianism

Gunton agreed with Irving and Barth, too, in their supralapsarian view of election, that in the mind of God, the Incarnation was logically decreed before God allowed sin (Gunton 1988: 362). Gunton objects to the idea that God's first try at the world failed so he had to try again.

We can therefore agree with those who have argued that, had there been no fall, it would have still been the Father's good pleasure to come into personal relation with us through the incarnation of his Son (Gunton 1992: 96; see also Harvey 2012: 91).

Though Gunton holds *supralapsarian* views, most bodies throughout the history of the church have disagreed, instead holding an *infralapsarian* view: God's allowance of sin was logically prior to his decree of the Incarnation.

Gunton's reasons for being a supralapsarian may add to christological anthropology. Supralapsarians offer a variety of reasons that Christ became Incarnate in addition to redemption of sin: God's desire to be united with humanity, God's self-diffusing goodness, God's revelation of true humanity, etc. The perfection of creation is a strong theme within Gunton's work, so perhaps, as a supralapsarian, he might see the perfection of creation as necessary even in a world without sin. Gunton also emphasizes Christ's creatureliness, so there may be anthropological insight in Gunton's supralapsarianism too. The reasons for Gunton's view of the Incarnation could offer fruitful study to christological anthropology.

A common criticism of supralapsarianism is not taking the sin and the fall with due seriousness. Gunton's theology, too, possesses paucity in the doctrine of sin. For Gunton, relationships are stymied by the fall, and sin frustrated humanity's relationships with God, with the world and with other

persons, effecting social structures with sin, oppression and alienation in the world (Gunton 1992: 103). Uche Anizor aptly questions, ‘If creation has always been God’s “project”, which is tending towards eschatological perfection, what effect, if any, did the fall have?’ (Anizor 2016: 81). Gunton sees sin and evil as impeding the perfection of creation, but the exact shape of that impediment for Gunton is a worthy investigation. [One criticism is that for Gunton, sin is having merely wrong *ideas* about God, and does not rightly leave room for sin’s impact on the world (Tibbs 2012: 124; Green 2011: 173). Though Gunton has received broad criticism, at least one, William Baltmanis Whitney, defends Gunton in his approach to the doctrine of sin. See Whitney WB (2013) *Problem and Promise in Colin E. Gunton’s Doctrine of Creation*. Studies in Reformed Theology 26. Leiden: Brill.]

A secondary consideration in Gunton’s doctrine of sin is how sin effects Christians and non-Christians dissimilarly. A Christian’s relationships should be moving toward restoration in the image of Christ whereas theoretically an unbeliever’s relationships would not (Gunton 1998: 207). A difference is clear, yet this is not mentioned in Gunton’s work and may offer a rich discussion in the future.

Conclusion

Colin Gunton paints a vast narrative theology, which begins with the Trinity and highlights Christ as the visible hand of God in the world. From Christ’s human nature, humanity sees what kind of creature he is, his ontology, and what kind of God would condescend to this world. God’s project is one of creating and recreating by the Spirit through Christ. Humanity, too, may recreate the world through his proper relations with God, the world and other human persons like Christ does by the Spirit. Gunton offers a resolutely christological approach and content to theological anthropology.

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