

Colin Gunton's Doctrine of Creation in "God, Creation, and the Culture of Modernity"

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[0 : 00] I have given you a handout, but that's just sort of in case when you leave today you're confused about what I said. You can take a look at it afterwards. On page 1, actually the top of page 1, that is basically the outline. If you take a look at that throughout the talk then you will be able to follow. The name of, as Bill said, the name of the talk is rather a long one. It's based on a book. The name of the book is *The One, The Three, and The Many, God, Creation, and the Culture of Modernity*. The author of the book is Colin Gunton. The reason I chose this particular book is that over the past few years my interest has been along the themes of creation and culture and also what it means to be a human being. This book addresses this interplay between what it means to be human, what it means to be human embedded in a culture and embedded in a culture that is embedded in God's creation. My original intention was to speak on a book that I recently read by Craig Gay, *The Way of the Modern World or Why It's Tempting to Live as If God Doesn't Exist*. But then I found out that he attends here sometimes so I didn't really want to review his book while he's here. However, he does quote Gunton a few times. And so I thought that might be a good option. I also wrote a paper a few years ago on what it means to be a human being. And this was at Regent. And I did okay in the paper but at the front page when I got the paper back, the paper was my professor wrote, good job, but Colin Gunton would have helped your argument. So anyway, I did the paper. I did the paper. I did the paper. I did the paper. I did the paper and I did okay in the paper. But at the front page when I got the paper back, my professor wrote, good job, but Colin Gunton would have helped your argument. So anyways, those are the two reasons that I am reviewing this book.

Colin Gunton was born in 1941. He grew up in England. He was a systematic theologian who made great contributions to the doctrine of creation, as well as the doctrine of the Trinity. He was a professor of Christian studies at King's College in London since 1984. As a minister, he was also actively involved in the United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom since 1972.

Sadly, he died in 2003, three weeks before becoming an elected fellow at King's College. He is known at Regent College also. I believe he has spoken there a few times.

The background of the book is it's a result of a series of lectures that he gave at King's College. The lectures were on the theme of culture, but it didn't take long before Gunton came to the conclusion that any study of culture had to take into account had to take into account a theology of creation. For it is in creation, the world that we see and live in, it's in creation that culture has shaped and lived. So that's the background of his book.

The aim of his book is to make a theological assessment of our era, to look at the world and where we stand now. And specifically what Gunton lays out is a theology of creation that is thoroughly Trinitarian in its approach. As we will see, Gunton sees our culture, and he's writing from a Western perspective, or you might also say a Northern Hemisphere perspective, because he includes Russia and Eastern Europe in his assessment.

[3 : 52] So he sees our culture as one that is fragmented, in which people live alienated lives from one another, creation and God. And he believes that the reason we find ourselves in this state of confusion is because we as Christians have not had a robust theology of creation. We have not sufficiently grounded our theology of creation in the triune God revealed in Scripture. And that to him makes all the difference.

So the structure of the book is as follows. The book is divided into two parts, part one and part two. The first part gives an assessment of where we are, and part two is what his suggested recommendation.

So, and then the first chapter goes, part one starts with an assessment of culture. And it says, he uses the word the one very often. But what he refers to that, what he means with that is the one society.

So when you see that in your sheet, that's what that refers to. So he starts with the one society, the many individuals within the society, and then he goes on to time and space and truth and meaning. And then in part two, he goes on to time and space and time, the many individuals and the one society.

[5 : 15] Actually, what I'll do is let me read from Genesis chapter 2 to give us just a bit of context of the kind of doctrine he's talking about here.

So this is from Genesis chapter 2, verses 15 to 24. The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.

And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.

Then the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone. I will make him a helper fit for him. So out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them.

And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds and to the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him.

[6 : 25] So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept, took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.

Then the man said, This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man. Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. This is the word of the Lord.

What we see in this text, according to Gunther, is beings in relationships.

And this in three distinct senses. God relates to Adam and Eve. He speaks with them. He gives them the task and the privilege of keeping the earth and naming the beings within it.

We also see relationships between humans. Adam is an individual, and to be an individual is to be isolated, alone. And he cannot find his equal among the animals, none that will enable him to truly be himself.

[7 : 38] Therefore, God provides Eve. Only after Eve arrives is Adam able to transcend his individual state in relation. And this is the case for Eve also, in relation with Adam.

And then the other relationship that we see here is the creation and humanity. Creation is under the regency of Adam and Eve. They tend creation. They name creatures within it.

In Gunther's words, The world is what it is by virtue of its relation to those who bear the image of God. End of quote. So here we have an idea of what Gunther's theology of creation aims for.

The created world reflects in different ways the being of God in communion. The human creation, this is a quote, The human creation made in the image of God reflects most directly the divine being in communion.

But by virtue of its relation to both God and man, the rest of the created order, too, is brought into the relation of one and many that all this entails. But where are we now?

[8 : 37] How does our culture reflect this sort of community, this sort of communion described in Genesis 2? So we begin with chapter 1, the one society, and I've labeled it disengagement with God.

According to Gunther, late modernity presents us with grievous intellectual and moral problems difficult to reconcile. We were promised unintimidated, curious, rational, self-reliant individuals, but instead we have a herd society, a race of anxious, timid, conformist sheep, interesting choice of word, sheep, and a culture of banality.

We claim to be free and unique, yet we are able to find dependence and sameness and homogeneity in our culture. There are Coca-Cola advertisements in every city, in every small town that you go to.

And the same thing can be said for iPod or iPhones. We all want to have one. We all want to drink Coca-Cola. We're all the same, is what Gunther is saying.

The intellectual and moral problems we have on our hands come as a result of the numerous paradoxes that we face on a daily basis. We've sought freedom, but we have bred totalitarianism. [9 : 47] Here he refers to Eastern Europe. We've learned how insignificant we are in the vastness of the universe, and yet we've sought to play God in the same universe. We've sought to control the world, and yet we have let loose forces that could very well destroy the earth.

We are better fed, housed, educated, and healthier than ever, but our culture has consigned more people to death by warfare than any previous culture. We're all the same, and we are not free. And according to Gunther, we as Christians must take partial responsibility for this because we have not had a robust theology of creation, or at least we have not communicated it to the modern world.

We have spoken of God and the world he created as one, unchanging, rigid, and inflexible. We have preached God as a single, solitary, divine ruler, and such a God has little regard for particularity, individuality, and uniqueness.

In people and in this world, such a God does not tolerate deviation from his will. In essence, the Christian God is a tyrant, and the Church was his mouthpiece, or is his mouthpiece.

[10 : 54] According to Gunther, conceiving God in such a way was what led philosophers of the Enlightenment, like Ludwig Feuerbach, to say that the worship of God takes place necessarily at the expense of human individuality, individuality, and freedom.

The elevation of God necessarily diminishes the worshiper. And so Western society came to reject God. First, we disengaged from him. We were good students of Descartes here, who taught us that we need to break free from our past and know the world not by engaging with it, but by withdrawing from it, going into our minds, and distancing ourselves from everything around us.

And then, we displaced him altogether. He was no longer needed as a source of unity and meaning of being. His functions were not done away with, but rather we took on his functions.

We stripped them from him, or so we think. We placed God's functions on what Gunther calls a false universal, a false reality, anonymous, impersonal, and inhuman power.

The big ideologies, bureaucracy, artificial language, political slogans of late modernity, we replaced, and I'll say a little bit more about this, we replaced the one, the Trinitarian God of the Bible, we replaced him with our own one, our own cultural God, incarnated in the various isms that we are familiar with.

[12 : 18] Totalitarianism, fascism, communism, socialism, and Eastern Europe, and capitalism, utilitarianism, pragmatism, and lately consumerism, and scientism in the West.

And as history shows, displacing the one, the God of the Bible, with our own God, with our own one, cannot but be disastrous because of its failure in due relatedness to God, the focus of the unity of all things.

In both the failed experiments of modern totalitarian regimes, and the insidious homogeneity of consumer culture, there is a tendency to submerge the many individuals into one society.

Where the true one is displaced, false and alienating gods rush in to fill the vacancy. So, modernity is therefore not distinguished by the priority of the individuals, like we are told in our media, but rather by the form in which the priority of the society takes place.

What's needed is not a knee-jerk reaction against modernity, but a theology that adequately affirms both the unity and plurality of creation. Then he moves on to chapter 2, which is a discussion on the individuals.

[13 : 29] He continues to explain the displacement of God, although this time not in terms of the one society, but in terms of the individuals within it.

The problem in modernity is that we are unable to deal in a helpful way with particularity and uniqueness, because personhood is not defined by that which makes us unique, but by general characteristics that we all have.

So, we are not important as far as we have qualities that make us distinct, such as our family history or our family structure, our strengths or our weaknesses or our joys and our sorrows, our bodily shape or our genetic pattern.

These make us insignificant. What makes us significant is general characteristics that we all have. Let's say, for example, the rational will.

Gunth and Nagan aims at faulty Christian thought on God and personhood, and he lays heavy blame on William of Ockham of the 14th century and his view that God's will was arbitrary and rootless.

[14:35] God had an absolute unrelenting character that denied us any insight into his rationality and the rationality of his creation. There was no relationality between things, and so when God created the world, he didn't take anything other than his arbitrary will into consideration.

So, basically, he just created the world because he felt like it. There was nothing relational about it. Finally, Christ and the Holy Spirit have a very ambiguous role.

I'm still talking about William of Ockham. They have a very ambiguous role in his theology of creation. Unfortunately, views such as the one proposed by Ockham stuck with us and, as such, helped set things up perfectly for a battle of the wills, our will against God's will, a lack of proper emphasis on creation, redemption, and completion left us with nothing but self-assertion as a mode of self-defense.

What we didn't realize when we made ourselves gods is that we are now enemies with our neighbor. I must now either escape my neighbor or rule over him. Those are the two options that we have.

Irenaeus, from the 4th century, provides a good corrective view, and Gunton is a big fan of Irenaeus. He uses him all the time. God creates the world out of his particularizing will, and this will is not a result of the absolute oneness, but of the three persons, the Father, Son, and Spirit in relation.

[16:06] The Father wills the world into being. Jesus redeems the fallenness of the world, and the Holy Spirit perfects it. There is a particularizing will towards the other persons in the Trinity, and the persons will for the good, for the redemption and salvation of creation.

So Irenaeus' triune God is one who creates by his will a particular world to which particularity is integral. And the particularity is made visible in Christ, who became human for the sake of the world, and the Holy Spirit, who even now continues to perfect creation.

Then, Gunton moves on to time and space. Gunton places particular emphasis on time.

Basically, time and space are the coordinates we take up as individuals on this earth. It is the year 2009, and we are in Vancouver. Those are our coordinates in time and space.

We live very much in the present, and this is not all bad. Scientific advances designed to make the present more livable are perhaps Western society's most evident success story.

[17:19] Yet, how come people living in underdeveloped societies have more true leisure than we do? We are pressed for time, we are regulated by the clock, we are alienated from time, and judging by the brutal and inhumane instances of modern architecture, we seem to be alienated from space, too.

But the future, too, presents modernism with perplexing challenges. We are obsessed with the future. The scientific advances have made us think that shaping the future just isn't good enough. We want to create the future. I saw an ad earlier this week in SkyTrain. It was an ad for the engineering department at BCIT, and the ad said, why just hope for the future?

Engineer it. And that's a perfect example of we not just shaping a future, but making it. We create our own future. We see these kinds of slogans everywhere. They are supposed to convince us of the illusion that we can create the future, when in actuality, all that's happening is someone else, someone is building yet another unnecessary supermarket, is what Gunton says.

Christian thought, too, has dwelled heavily on the future, not always in helpful ways. Origen, for example, he believed time and space were put in place by God as a way to save us fallen spirits.

[18:37] Time and space were necessary for our salvation. Augustine, too, seems to associate time with sin and fallenness, according to Gunton. What we need is a view of space and time that does justice to both, to eternity and to this world.

The present and the future interweave. They overlap in such a way in which the divinely ordered destiny of life could, by the work of the Spirit, be anticipated in the present. Going forward, we may want to take a look at Irenaeus' theology of time.

His theology was grounded in the goodness of creation, creation, redemption, and completion. And it was grounded in the triune God of the Bible. Christologically speaking, Christ took creation in himself in the act of recapitulation.

I think someone spoke about recapitulation here a few weeks ago. In his death and resurrection, Jesus gave time meaning by being obedient in God the Father. In terms of the Holy Spirit, he is also directed towards time and space.

In the same way that Jesus was, the Spirit perfects the created order, a perfecting that continues to be shaped as recapitulation works itself out in the life of the Church. So, but what about truth and meaning?

[20 : 00] Can we say there is such a thing? Postmodernity seems to think that there is no such thing. The preachers of the postmodern agenda seem to have two arguments on which they hang their hat. They will say that any truth statement is just emotivism, judgments of value, moral or aesthetic.

These are basically expressions of emotions. And relativism, judgments of fact are relative to the individuals or cultures which make them.

There is no means by which to test truth claims. Maybe a good summary of current thought on truth and meaning is as follows. This is a quote by Don Cupid.

Truth is human, socially produced, historically developed, plural and changing. Gutten argues that what he calls the pluralism of indifference, the death of objective truth basically, is destructive to human society.

Radical relativism implies an imperious claim for its own truth which is viciously intolerant because it is undiscussable in the terms of the ideology in which it is propounded.

[21 : 13] Again, Christian theology seems to have sowed at least some of the seeds of its own downfall. Contrary to Irenaeus who held that God's will is free but realized through a kind of community between the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Augustine held that love was subordinate to God's will.

So love is a function of God's will. Creation was produced basically as a pure, unmotivated and therefore arbitrary out of a pure, unmotivated and arbitrary will.

In conclusion, meaning and truth is not well served if it is to be conceived as being the result of an arbitrary will. Arbitrariness suggests irrationality and instability and therefore it lacks meaning.

Furthermore, the lack of Trinitarian relationality compounds the fragmentation of our culture. If no relationality is evident in God's creative acts, then how can we situate ourselves relationally to him? How can we situate ourselves, think again of the coordinates in times and space in relation to one another and to creation? Gunther is convinced that the answer to these and other related questions are found, first of all, in the theology of creation and the Trinitarian theology.

[22 : 29] So going on to part two. Truth and meaning.

We live in a modern context where relativism and skepticism are dominant trains of thought. The modern enterprise began with a rebellion against the authoritarian...

Actually, this is just a review. Let me just skip this. In part two, the first thing that Gunther argues for is a good dose of humility. He lists it in terms of all kinds of technical terms.

But in a nutshell, he's asking us to be humble about where we are. The Enlightenment project resorted to the rational mind rather than the external world in order to find truth.

What we're looking for is something more humble, an approach that resists the expectation of certainty and infallibility in favor of something that is more open and limited and tentative, according to Gunther.

[23 : 36] We're looking for something more appropriate to the character of being human, of human being. It's important to remind ourselves... I think this is a good reminder that he gives us. It's important to remind ourselves that as humans, we're sinful and we make mistakes and therefore exploring for marks of what it means to be human in God's creation, this quest will always be ongoing, even amidst the revelation that we have through God.

Humility entails maintaining a tension between two opposites. We can pronounce the good of creation. Therefore, the exercise of reason and intellectual work is good.

We are created by God and we have the ability to think rationally, so let's use that. But we're fallen. Let's admit our human limitations. An example of a statement that leads us to maintaining a tension between the two doctrines is given to us by Gregory of Nazianzus.

And this is actually my favorite quote of the book. No sooner do I conceive of the one, the one God, than I am illumined by the splendor of the three, Father, Son, and Spirit.

No sooner do I distinguish them than I am carried back to the one. So let me read that again. No sooner do I conceive of the one than I am illumined by the splendor of the three.

[25 : 05] No sooner do I distinguish them than I am carried back to the one. This statement encapsulates Trinitarian thought. It seems vague and irrelevant, probably, but then theology is done for the glory of God for his own sake.

We shouldn't be looking over our shoulders for marks of relevance, is what Gunton says. Gregory gives us a dynamic dialectic in his example that floats or fluctuates between the oneness and the threeness of God.

So in addition to openness and humility, Gunton suggests that we would do well to look back at Irenaeus and the way he formulated the doctrine of the creation with the Trinity. So here are some thoughts.

Unity and diversity in culture, in the cultural endeavors of truth, ethics, and beauty, science, goodness, and art, knowledge, practice, and aesthetics.

Can we explain creation in a way that does not do away with unity and diversity? or how about the one and the many, the society and the individual?

[26 : 12] We seem to be fluctuating between the individual or with collectivism where both are unbalanced. Space and time, modernity and slave's time over eternity.

We have mechanized time and are now slaves to it. We have made a god of time and space by attempting to conquer and improve it for the sake of this world, so for the present.

But the price has been costly. We are stressed from lack of true rest and alienated from God, neighbor, and the world. Trinitarian theology, therefore, is a sort of theology that will consider the factors of particularity and relationality.

Relationality is basically, refers to an interdependence or a reciprocity of three persons in the Trinity. So God is not absolutely simple.

He's not just, yeah, absolutely simple. God is one, but his oneness derives from a dynamic relationality between the three persons of the Trinity. The three persons are all bound up with each other, so that one is not one without the other two.

[27 : 21] And particularity, this points to the distinctiveness of the persons in the Trinity. How do the three persons not collapse into one? and how does God not collapse into pantheism or a new age God where everything becomes God?

God. So, we need to remind ourselves that when we speak of the Trinity, we are speaking of unfathomably and infinitely suggestive terms.

We're speaking in unfathomable and infinitely suggestive terms. we don't want to explain God away. Space and time.

They enable us to relate to things before and after in an orderly manner and space enables us to understand the various realities we experience. It's not an accident that the human mind seeks to, that we seek for a principle of unity.

We all seek for something, a way to make sense of the world that we live in. The Greeks and the Hebrews did it, but somehow we in our age of modernity we think that we know something the rest of the world doesn't by thinking that nothing in particular holds the world together.

[28 : 41] When we think of God's involvement in his creation, one of the texts that we might look at is the New Testament passage of 2 Corinthians 8 verse 9. Here Paul says, For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor so that you through his poverty might become rich.

Here we get a picture of God's involvement in creation, in Christ, in creation. And God's involvement is marked by divine generosity. We may think of relations with someone else as reciprocal.

I'll scratch your back if you scratch mine, or I'll buy you lunch this week if you buy me lunch for me next week. But God doesn't work like that. God's way of relating to us is through Christ's suffering a new way of being human was created.

A new creation, a new currency if you will, which by the power of the Spirit can be spent now in living the sort of life which Christ's pattern of humility and weakness laid down. God's involvement in the world is marked by generosity.

This generosity was not just present at the cross, however. It's always been present. And unfortunately, again, Christian theology hasn't always shown this.

[29 : 55] Augustine seemed to divorce creation from redemption. And Schleiermacher, a philosopher of the Enlightenment, reacted against Augustine's negative view of creation and minimized sin.

And with that, he minimized redemption. Irenaeus once again comes to our rescue. He maintained that creation, fall, redemption, and completion are distinct periods of God's involvement in the world in this way.

And he was able to do this thanks to his Trinitarian conception of God. God the Father uses his two hands, the Son and the Spirit, to achieve his purposes.

So Paul painted a picture of God's divine generosity in Christ through the cross. And Irenaeus paints a picture of Jesus and the Holy Spirit being the two hands of God.

So here we have a picture that brings us to a place where we can say that we're talking about a dynamic relation here within God, between God and also between God and creation.

[31 : 02] So a dynamic relationality refers to the reciprocal eternal relatedness within and between the three persons of the Trinity.

The Father, Son, and Spirit are involved in an eternal giving and receiving relationship. Key for us here as we deal with the fragmentation of our culture is that in the relations of the Father, Son, and Spirit there is diversity.

There is not a strict, rigid, inflexible unity but dynamic, purposeful direction. There are numerous ways we can apply dynamic relatedness to our lives. On a personal level we can say that we are fully human when we are in relation with others.

This counters both individualism and collectivism. And this also counters our modern idea that we enter into friendships only if they're useful to us or if they're practical to us.

this dynamic relatedness also has applicability for marriage and family and as well as our view on tradition.

[32 : 09] We are bound up with one another. And culturally speaking, we can also say that relationality should help in healing the divisions in the realms of truth, ethics, and beauty.

Dynamic relatedness enables us to see the flourishing of knowledge, practice, and the arts.

Therefore, God's dynamic involvement in time and space is made concrete in Christ.

And this is key. God comes in relation, this is a quote from Colin Gunton, God comes in relation with that which is not himself, so with creation, with us. He comes into relation with us through his Son, the mediator between himself and the creation.

So Christ is not only the word who was spoken from eternity, the word that became flesh, he is also the word that continues to hold together time and space.

The world is held together by Christ. As the Apostle Paul says, all things cohere, all things make sense in Christ. So the Christian contribution to coherence and unity is thoroughly Christological.

[33 : 18] Without God, the focus of unity and coherence in the world is lost. With God, all that we are is rooted firmly in the being of God, in the love which creates and redeems freely.

It is not therefore some thing which holds the world together, but some one, the one through whom in the unity of the Father and the Spirit all things have their being. Going on to chapter 7, one of the criticisms against Christianity is its focus on particularity.

Why? all the fuss about Jesus? What's the big deal? Why do we focus on Israel so much? Neither had any manifest world historical importance.

One died a disgraceful death and the other one never really was a superpower. The perception is that there is something problematic about a faith that focuses so much on one person or one nation.

Other faiths and philosophies focus on general concepts general moral teachings. But Gunther believes that particularity is not a disadvantage.

[34 : 27] a theology that gives let me sorry Gunther argues that contrary to the popular perception that particularity is a disadvantage a theology that gives central place to particularity is precisely what a homogenizing world like ours needs.

Indeed we need to make far more of the great narrative of Jesus. we need to glory in the scandal of the particular Jesus the crucified one. How then do we glory in the scandal of particularity?

How do we glory in the work that Jesus did? And here Gunther makes an interesting connection he says by a theology of the Holy Spirit and when I first read this I couldn't connect the dots but Gunther gives two reasons for having a good theology of the Holy Spirit to explain the scandal of particularity.

Sorry it gets so dense. The first reason is that the Holy Spirit crosses boundaries. The Holy Spirit relates to us other beings and realms that are opposed or separate from us.

For example God comes into relationship with us or with his creation through his Spirit. through his Spirit he creates he renews and he heals.

[35 : 56] The relationship works the other way around too. By his Spirit we or his creation is able to be open to God. The Old Testament speaks of God's Spirit as Ruach the particularizing Spirit and the New Testament speaks of God's Spirit bearing witness with our Spirit when we cry Abba Father.

people come into relationship with other people also by way of the Spirit of God. So this is the third way. We are able to in a limited way transcend or cross the boundaries of space to which we are tied by the Spirit.

Two the Spirit maintains and strengthens particularity. The Holy Spirit does not abolish or obliterate it. The Holy Spirit doesn't want to make us all the same. He does not merge, assimilate or make us all the same.

The Spirit of God establishes each of us as particular beings and works as the perfecter of creation. For example, the Holy Spirit was the one that formed Jesus in the Virgin Mary's womb.

The Spirit led Jesus as a young boy into the temple to have conversations with the chief priests. the Holy Spirit was present at Jesus' baptism.

[37 : 18] He brought Jesus into special relations with his disciples. He led Jesus to and through temptation, teaching, works of power and eventually through suffering, death and the resurrection.

And of course, we know today that the Spirit of God is also the Spirit of the Church. He was present at the ascension of Jesus. He put Christians in special relations with each... He put Christians in special relations with each other.

So this is based on the book of Acts. And Paul conceived of the Spirit as giver of freedom. So in short, God the Spirit is the source of autonomy or freedom, not sameness, because by his action, human beings are constituted in their uniqueness and particular networks of relationality.

So therefore, our theology of the Holy Spirit encourages viewing the human person as a whole, not as mechanistic, which would be a very modern way of seeing us, embracing both relational and non-relational factors, particular, capable of genuine interrelations with others, conscious, subjective, having will, reason and creativity.

We are both body and soul, having our being in a wide range of activities and relation. So overall, we can say that the role of the Holy Spirit is to perfect creation.

[38 : 39] But St. Basil the Great of the 4th century said, he maintained that the distinctive function of the Spirit is to perfect creation, to bring it to completion, to bring creation to that for which it was created.

And Gunton adds, 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. Finally, the Church, chapter 8, going back to culture and society, the Church, this is where the Church comes in for Gunton.

We have essentially laid out a theology of community. The persons of the Trinity do not simply enter into relations with one another, but they are constituted by one another in the relations of Father, Son, and Spirit. Given that we are also beings in relation, created in the image of the Father, Son, and Spirit, how do we relate to creation, both personal and impersonal?

Well, in terms of the personal creation, we relate to it by way of the Church. The human community becomes concrete in the Church, whose calling it is to be the medium and realization of communion with God in the first place and with other people in the second and as a result of the first.

Examples from the New Testament. John insisted that relations within the Church must in some sense reflect those between the persons of the Trinity. Paul insisted that being in Christ, the invisible image of God, implied being in relation, being in communion.

[40 : 17] In Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek nor male nor female. This is according to the book of Galatians. In Corinthians, we see that there are links drawn between Holy Communion and the Heavenly Communion.

The Church, as a metaphor of the body of Christ, is given to us in Ephesians. So there's all kinds of examples of the Church in the New Testament. In short, Paul's near identification of Christ and the Church derived from his theology of community.

And we also see examples in the Gospels of this. John 3.16, where Christ becomes the mediator for the world. Romans points towards communion with creation and Revelation promises a new

heaven and a new earth as a central place of community of the New Jerusalem. Jerusalem. We noted earlier that God's way of dealing with the world is by way of generosity. Here, finally, Gunther draws out what generosity looks like in terms of giving and receiving. God the Father gives up his Son. He allows him to be delivered to evil men. Jesus the Son gives his life. [41 : 28] He offers, he lays down his life. And the Spirit is the gift of the Father, the firstfruits of the perfecting action of God in Christ. The diversity of relations between the persons of the Trinity is marked not by reciprocal action but by giving and receiving.

And for us, this means that at the heart of human being an action is a relationality marked by giving and receiving. We respond to the self-giving of God in Christ with the ethics of self-giving. In the same way that Christ gave himself for the world, we present our bodies as a living sacrifice holy and acceptable to God. Romans 12 verse 1 We submit to one another out of reverence for Christ in the same way that he submitted to the Father.

Ephesians 5 The focus is not mere reciprocity but transformation. In offering or in giving our praises to God we are being completed or perfected as God's creation.

We can't overstate how radically opposite this is to what the world teaches us. In the world our calling is self-fulfillment essentially on individualistic terms.

[42 : 40] We are told to place ourselves at the center of things and consequently we use both persons and the world to our own means and ends. But the marks of giving and receiving rendering the human vocation as one of giving praise and thanksgiving to God for his goodness has tremendous implications in how we think and act also with the rest of creation.

A quote from Gunton To say that all action should take the form of the sacrifice of praise is to say that action toward the world is action directed to allowing that world truly to be itself before God. This is not a uniform task so the Holy Spirit will direct us in various ways. So William Perkins said if we compare work to work there is a difference between washing of dishes and the preaching of the word but in terms of pleasing God or as far as touching God there is no difference at all.

Both washing dishes and the preaching of the word both please God. So this has great implications vocationally for us. So in conclusion to be created is to have direction a dynamic which derives from the creativeness of all things by the triune God.

Our distinctive features as human beings is that we are a mediating factor we perform a mediating function in the achievement of perfection by the rest of creation.

[44 : 11] We are called to forms of action in science and ethics and in arts in our culture which enable us to take place the sacrifice which enable us to take place the sacrifice of praise which enable to take place the sacrifice of praise which is the free offering of all things perfected to their creator.

Put theologically the created world becomes truly itself the created world moves towards its completion when through Christ and the spirit it is presented perfected before the throne of the Father.

The sacrifice of praise which is the due human response to both creation and redemption takes the form of that culture which enables both personal and non-personal worlds to realize their true being. You can wake up now. I'm done but I have to say that I realized I re-read the book I read the book two or three times because it was it was very difficult for me to comprehend and I get the feeling that maybe I wasn't over my head so if yeah I don't know I know it's very dense and I apologize for the density of it but it was to me it was a book that after reading it a few times and meditating on it it has become a very meaningful book and I do believe that he has some good things to say for for us for our culture for us as Christians in living in the post-modern context so I don't know if there are any questions I don't know if I can answer them if you do have questions but a comment the arts were mentioned several times and it was interesting to hear his outline of our culture as it is now and could be said that the church has been rather especially the politics of the arts suspicious of the arts for about 500 years and it's interesting to note that this outline that he has given was preceded by maybe 60, 70, 80 years by the existentialists who gave expressions through the same concepts about where we came to

Right He talks a lot about the fragmentation for for Gunton the pillars of the pillars of our culture are truth ethics and arts or he he gives various different he explains them various different ways knowledge or science practice and aesthetics but they all come down to to the three three ways of describing it I'm trying to think of some of the other ones truth ethics and arts science practice and beauty those are sort of the three categories that he has and because what he thinks is our

fragmentation the fragmentation in our culture is visible in these these three ways you can't be a scientist and appreciate arts or or or if you're a scientist you are supposed to say that arts does not communicate truth only science communicates truth the artist on the other hand he can't use mathematical precision for example to explain truth as a way of speaking of truth so like those are the examples that he lists within the fragmentation of culture so yeah your remnants is spelled properly there is it is that im, an, in, in of God on the third page

[48 : 30] I guess oh this is in the the handout yeah we've got indian i which would mean presence you know the evil presence i believe um which is it on page one or two uh it's number two okay i believe uh it refers to the closeness uh the closeness of God like we have no longer like God is no longer other for us like yeah i think it should be him and him oh okay okay so it's okay um right but i would say that i don't think traditionally eminence and transcendence are both sides of the same thing they're incorporated together in the person of

Christ you know um and in our belief through the Holy Spirit so in other words God is present or imminent close to us through yes yes um we somehow we need to we need to balance the two um there's we have a tenant i guess the argument that gunton makes is that modernity has made God completely this worldly um so there is um whatever we can say of God uh we can we can um we don't have to look very far um because because we basically we have made ourselves into God so so there's no language of the otherness of God anymore uh the complete you know otherness is an actual experience I feel that both are applicable to our presence right yeah and I disagree with the sciences point if you are a building artist myself

I disagree entirely because I believe you have to have a knowledge of science in order to render something of beauty you know okay and you can look to Leonardo Vinci and Michelangelo and many others the same thing right we are confronted by the perhaps we're confronted anyway by the proper balance of our consideration for the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit our consideration our thought life in their direction the Father has rested in his Son right which sounds as if he stepped aside we know he hasn't and not much is said about the Holy Spirit by Jesus other than the great warning of the one unforgivable sin against the

Holy Spirit so would we be wrongly balanced if most of our consideration is in the direction of Jesus would God would we cause God some displeasure he has rested there we are to rest there too but you sense in certain places in the church the Holy Spirit is raised up much higher or in much bigger consideration than Jesus himself so there seems to be a wrong balance there so how do you look at it yourself your own balance there's a few things Jesus does say something about the Holy Spirit in the church and I'm just looking for it it's in the gospel of John I didn't talk about it I believe it's in it's either in John 15 16 or 17 one of those three chapters where Jesus says

I will send you a helper and he will be with you so the implication is that the Holy Spirit will lead the church right so Gunson I think I would agree with him we need to be careful about downplaying the importance of the Holy Spirit because if we do I mean the Holy Spirit leads the church no no I'm just you know that is it's a concern it's one thing that we need to keep in mind would God be displeased by focusing on Christ personally I don't think so I think God is pleased whenever the name of Christ is mentioned in praise and thanksgiving this image of the Father pointing towards the Son the Paraclete Holy Spirit pointing towards the Son and he seems to be the main object for us anyway without discarding without ignoring the

[54 : 09] Father or the Holy Spirit but what I'm saying is that is it a more healthy place to be emphasizing anything within the theology of the Father and the Holy Spirit Jesus as center I think Gunton would completely agree with what you've said but I think what he's also trying to make a point the point he's also trying to make is that the Holy Spirit one of the functions or he says the primary function that the Holy Spirit fulfills is the perfection of creation and how does he do that by pointing people to Christ I don't know was that powerful question no no no no go ahead John 17 where Jesus prays for the oneness of us with each other and with him and with the

Father which is a tremendous statement of the whole thing right right the importance of unity in the church and in the in God the Trinity Liz go ahead I'm not sure I can't if we follow the time and space argument how we in our in the new way of thinking should transcend the time and space coordinates that we're putting into what well Christ well for one thing would you agree that somehow in the modern world we we don't do very well in the coordinates that we have you know in terms of time we are busier than ever we machines were created to give us more leisure but we're busier than ever and at the same time we're obsessed with the future we want to bring in we want

to create the future so something is wrong with how we're doing things now and what Gunton says is time is a part of God's creation and I'm drawing a blank I know what I'm trying to say we seem to in the church for example we seem to prefer one period of time over another we seem to prefer historically for example we have preferred eternity over now but what Gunton argues for and he draws on Irenaeus who said that time is part of God's good creation time is good and God has there have been different different different I don't know seasons is the right word but there have been different blocks of time if I can say it that way that they're not separate they're interrelated but they are distinguishable yet so for example creation is one you know that's one aspect of time the fall is another aspect of time redemption and completion and in Irenaeus' view all are good and so somehow with that view we are able to make we are able to view time as something good in itself not as something to rule over us like what's happening now when time has become a tyrant our clocks have become a tyrant over us I don't know if I'm getting anywhere to answering your questions to your question maybe we can talk about it afterwards and I can dig some more doesn't that view bring us a little closer to certain oriental regions like Buddhism is that such a bad thing is what such a bad thing well that we give a little credence to for example the Buddhist insistence that we pay attention to right now oh I see I think what we are in danger of doing then is we are in danger of saying that creation is not good if redemption is good like if we focus on redemption at the expense of creation then we are saying the time is like like Augustine said time is a part of the fallenness of things but does that make sense like but time time is not fallen time you know when God created the world time was a part of that good creation and if we focus on on redemption then we might at the expense of that we might have not such a good view on creation that would be where Ganteng is going to affirm to affirm now doesn't go matter to affirm the present moment well well I think he would also say we need to have we need to not just look at now we need to also look at creation and we need to also look at the completion of time which is coming so

[60:17] I have a more integrative way of being and living in time yes in giving such an appealing picture of God as Trinitarian relational self-giving self-revealing having a fatherly care of creation is is Gunton perhaps minimizing that other side of God the ultimate judge the one who will ultimately dispose of evil or does he feel over emphasis on that latter part is what has driven people away from faith I think he would definitely say that because we have preached God as a tyrant in his words people have basically said well thanks but I can do on my own he does acknowledge the sinfulness of the fallenness of us of creation but he believes that had we as the church had a more robust theology of creation and and and and trinitarian theology we would have we wouldn't have you know preached

God as a as a as a tyrant he does like I said he does talk about the fallenness of humanity so he's not saying that that God is the you know loving God who sees no who has no justice or no evil doesn't deal with evil in any way interestingly I thought Harvey was going to raise this but there is Stephen Williams here he wrote he edited a book called Revelation and Reconciliation he he gave a review of Colin Gunton's book in Williams' book and he says he basically says exactly what you said that if I may paraphrase you he says the reason culture has rejected God is not because of the Trinity the reason we have rejected God is because we don't want to admit that we're sinners that's that's the reason so he says you know

Gunton's done some good work he doesn't you know he's made some very good points we do need to teach of the you know the Bible teaches the Trinity the God of the Bible is a triune God so we need to teach that but he says ultimately Gunton made a mistake in saying that the reason we have rejected God is because of the Trinity it's because we don't want to admit that we're sinners that's really the crux but that's according to Stephen Williams and I think you probably enjoy his book thank you very much why did these late medieval thinkers apparently turn to this conception of God as naked these are my words I don't want to put words in anybody so naked sovereign will just a blank there it is that's what's happening why did they so turn it has to do with the enlightenment thinking that the turn inward the turn inward in the past there was always a connection between creation and God so when you saw things when you saw trees when you saw mountains there was a connection you knew it reflects a maker whereas in the enlightenment skepticism and some other you know there's probably various factors but basically skepticism came in and said we the mind doesn't know or we don't know

I've gone inward I've gone in myself and all I see is myself I don't see any God and therefore if there is a God then he's just you know like he's not rooted in he's basically his will is rootless it doesn't have there's no connection between creation and and God does that answer your question partly you say the late medieval is offered the enlightenment oh I see no although the seeds were probably what comes up in culture often often takes it doesn't just come up overnight it takes you know a lot of time and people are thinking about these things so maybe the seeds were sown in the middle ages but I think the enlightenment is its own period
I'm eager to close because I don't think I've answered any questions good show thank you thank you thank you attends you moredings and you thanks you you