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978-0-521-42184-3 - The One, the Three and the Many: God, Creation and the Culture of Modernity The Bampton Lectures 1992

Colin E. Gunton

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This study, based on the Bampton Lectures delivered in the University of Oxford in 1992, examines what is often called the crisis of modernity, with reference not only to modernity but to modern culture in general. Problems of social, theological, and philosophical thought are traced back beyond the Enlightenment to the very roots of Western Christian theology. A response to these problems is essayed by constructively developing conceptual possibilities to be found in ancient and modern theology of the Trinity.

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COLIN E. GUNTON

*Professor of Christian Doctrine,
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*For
Jenny and Sarah*

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Preface

The writing of all books involves a process of discovery. What happened in this case was that what began as a study of culture became both that and a study of the doctrine of creation. The reason is that the human activity we call culture takes shape in the context of what is sometimes called nature. The created world provides the framework within which human activity takes place. Because, however, a salient feature of the culture we call modernity is its confusion about the nature of that relation, a study of our world that would probe its roots will soon find itself running up against the broader question of the character of the world within which that activity takes place.

The writing of all books also involves a process of conversation. Even for those who prefer to write in cloistered calm away from all direct human contact, there is the wisdom of the sources to be consulted. This book has gained from an immensely wider process of conversation. First drafts were read to the weekly seminar of the King's College, London, Research Institute in Systematic Theology, and I have many of its members to thank for comments which have strengthened the argument. I am as always particularly grateful to Christoph Schwoebel, whose careful response to all my writing means so much to me. My wife and our elder daughter have also read and commented on much of the material, and the dedication of the book is a small token of what I owe to them, and not only in this connection.

This book, however, is unlike most others in that it was written to be delivered as the 1992 Bampton Lectures in the University of Oxford, and it is in that connection that I have

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many other debts of gratitude to acknowledge, not least for the opportunity given me by the electors to return to my first university with what is, in effect, a report on a process of thought which first began to take shape there many years ago. One major debt is to Geoffrey Nuttall, through whose initial encouragement I came to take on the lectureship. The second is to the University of Oxford, for the kindness and hospitality of whose representatives I cannot speak too warmly. Finally I would thank Alex Wright of the Cambridge University Press for his patience and encouragement, and for the contributions his readers have made to the process of writing and rewriting.

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