

absorbed, if not in confirmations without end, at least in a heavy load of administration. He continues to write – the *Confessions*, perhaps the most widely read piece of literature apart from the Bible till modern times. His concern for the unity of the church leads to the fateful coercion of Christians with different views from his own.

In the later decades of his life he is locked in controversy, mainly with Pelagius and with Julian of Eclanum, but still manages a prodigious literary output, most significant of which is the *The Trinity* and *The City of God*. As his life comes to an end he reflects on heaven – with a robust sense that he is firmly on course there. The Vandals sack Hippo but the saint’s works are miraculously preserved.

This book is a very good read, moving along at a respectable pace. It is by no means uncritical of Augustine, but always strives to see him in the best possible light. Some readers may miss an accounting for the more problematic legacy of the great man in these pages. There is a certain sense, reassuring or troubling depending on your perspective, of ‘onward Christian soldiers’ as the drama slowly unfolds. But the end effect is certainly, as Henry Chadwick sums it up, masterly.

*George Newlands,*  
University of Glasgow



***The Theology of Reconciliation*, ed. Colin E Gunton, 2003,  
London: T & T Clark, pp. 177, £25.00. ISBN 0567088898**

Sub-titled “Essays in Biblical and Systematic Theology” this is really a collection of papers delivered at a Conference in 1999 of the Research Institute in Systematic Theology at King’s College, London. They are introduced and concluded by summary remarks from the editor, the late Colin Gunton, whose recent death has deprived academic theology of one of its most productive and influential scholars. Not surprisingly, many of the contributors are King’s College scholars, and many share the

interests for which Gunton himself is well known, such as the theology of Karl Barth, a Trinitarian emphasis, the eschatological dimension.

Christoph Schwöbel's (Heidelberg) programmatic paper is entitled "Reconciliation: from Biblical Observations to Dogmatic Reconstruction". Examination of the concept in the New Testament is followed by the dogmatic reconstruction which seems to consist in rooting it in the doctrine of the Trinity, the Father's faithfulness to the creation, with humanity permitted to become enemy, and the Spirit bringing the work of Christ on the Cross into the present.

More detailed studies of reconciliation follow. Douglas Campbell (King's College), in "Reconciliation in Paul: the Gospel of Negation and Transcendence in Galatians 3.28", studies Paul's treatment and with his novel interpretation of Galatians 3:26-28 sees in these verses the Pauline gospel *in nuce*.

In "Ascension and Atonement" Douglas Farrow (McGill University), goes beyond Barth in insisting that, following the Levitical pattern, understanding of atonement requires a doctrine of the Ascension. (Unfortunately, he does not tell us what exactly he understands by the Ascension).

Murray Rae (King's College) deals with the ecclesiological dimension in "A Remnant People: the Ecclesia as Sign of Reconciliation".

John Webster (formerly King's College, now Aberdeen University), describes his paper, "The Ethics of Reconciliation", as "half way between a theological essay and a homily". To be honest, the homiletic character is difficult to recognise, unless it be in the stern condemnation of any confusion of divine and human action in the work of reconciliation. Any idea of human autonomy, any appreciation of the Church's 'moral actions' - these are to be eschewed.

Rather different in tone is “Between Women and Men” by Sue Patterson. Unlike some feminist writers, she refuses a simplistic categorisation of men, the guilty perpetrators, and women, the innocent victims. Quoting extensively from Miroslav Volf (whom, incidentally, Webster in the preceding article has criticised), she recognises the complexity of the situation, the relevance of the *imago dei*, the relational nature of the person, the key role of imagination. and the relation between Trinitarian and human personhood.

Something of a cuckoo in this particular nest is the paper of Brian Horne (King’s College), “The Cross and the Comedy: Dante’s Understanding of the Atonement” Why Dante here? By contrasting and examining von Balthasar’s claim of the absence of the Cross of Christ in *The Divine Comedy* and Dorothy L Sayers’ assertion that the *Comedy* displays ‘one of the noblest statements of atonement doctrine ever uttered’ Horne develops his own view. Many illuminating insights are here offered into the history and contemporary understanding of the doctrine.

Before Gunton’s final summing up “Towards a Theology of Reconciliation” Robert W Jenson (Princeton) argues for “Reconciliation in God”. This is really an exercise in Trinitarian geometry, in which each of the persons of the Trinity reconciles the other two. Some detailed understanding of the classical doctrine of the Trinity is pre-supposed.

This is hardly ground-breaking stuff, with the contributors at times over-anxious to parade their orthodoxy. Yet there are useful perspectives here on a concept which could yet have singular scope for the theological enterprise to-day.

*D W D Shaw*  
St Andrews