

## REVIEWS

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*Crucified and Resurrected: Restructuring the Grammar of Christology* by Ingolf U. Dalferth, trans. Jo Bennett (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), xxiii + 323 pp.

The world of English language theology is indebted to the publisher and translator for bringing forth this magnificent work of theology. Dalferth's study is exceptional for scope, the tightness and lucidity of the arguments made, and the creativity of solutions he provides to traditional conundrums in Christological doctrine. Taking occasion from controversies of the late 1980s—the "Myth of God Incarnate" in the UK and the "Tübingen Antithesis" in Germany—Dalferth expertly conducts the reader through popular, attractive but false antitheses. In the process, he works a subtle but unmistakable correction from within his own German Lutheran tradition by moving the argument about justification by faith from the plane of anthropology to that of Christology, when—and this is crucial—the person of Christ is construed in accord with the notion of person provided by the doctrine of the Trinity. In this Dalferth takes up and perfects a line of argument from Eberhard Jüngel, who in turn had resourced himself in Luther's Christology to find a path forward between the competing claims of the twentieth-century giants, Bultmann and Barth.

The basic claim is that the originating and proper form of the Word of God is the resurrection of the Crucified Jesus, in which and by which God determines Himself to the God of love for us. This self-determination to be "our Father" consists in vindicating Jesus *in* His solidarity with sinful humanity *as* His true and beloved Son. Moreover, the Father achieves this solidarity of love in the faith awakened by the Holy Spirit's announcement of Jesus's Sonship in the preaching of the gospel. "As the activity of the Spirit, this divine activity of love is intended from the outset to widen the love between the Father and the Son to that which is other than God and to draw those who are other than God into the love between the Father and the Son" (228). Consequently this Trinitarian grammar of the self-determining Father of the vindicated Son gathering in lost humanity by the Spirit is essential for proper telling the gospel narrative.

The Trinitarian grammar requires that we take the deity of Christ as the deity of *the Son* in its *personal* distinction from and relation to the deity of the Father and the Spirit; consequently, humanity may be included in the relation of the Father and the Son by the Spirit because there is no competition between substances in this inclusion. There is rather compatibility between the deity of the obedient Son and our humanity which He is and has become and forever remains. This Trinitarian grammar brings with it, accordingly, a strong doctrine of the unity of person over against perennial temptations in Christology, today more than ever, to separate the son of Mary and the Son of God, the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith, into diverse magnitudes occasionally related, but not living one life in the Spirit from God for all.

Correspondingly, if the Son of God in His history with us is He who "loved me and gave Himself for me," as the Apostle attests, this self-giving is a "sacrifice of atonement" in a metaphorical, not literal sense, more precisely in the sense of a *cataphoric* metaphor which innovates in language in order to tell something quite new and hitherto unheard of: a king who comes to serve and not be served, a priest who comes to be offered and not to offer any other, a prophet who is what he proclaims. In these ways, the crucified One who lives ever brings the nearness of the God of love which renews the earth.

The triune God is thus the subject of the at-one-ment in every respect. He is not the One who needs to be satisfied or pacified or reconciled, but the One who determines Himself in Christ to

be near in love for us and for all. Hence the Christological claim is universal, but not in the sense of a claim for the superiority of the Christian religion. Rather, the Christological claim to truth is about God's sovereign love for all, whether they know it or not. The mission of those who know, that is, the church, is not proselytizing but holy secularity, "strengthening those trends within the processes of the world that give God's love recognizable form and opposing those trends that obscure and undermine his love" (309).

The gospel of Christ is thus to be proclaimed in word and deed, but, as Dalferth repeatedly insists, even citing in conclusion the Augsburg Confession on the final page, faith is worked and given by the electing Spirit *ubi et quando visum est Deo* ["where and when it pleases God"] (313). God whose being is love surely intends the reciprocating love of His creatures but does not coerce or impose or manipulate it (223). The apparent tension here between sovereign election to faith given by the Spirit as a gift, and the free human response of the obedience of faith, may be seen to correspond to the compatibilism of Dalferth's Trinitarian Christology: precisely in surrendering to the will of God in Gethsemane, the human Jesus shows His truly divine Sonship.

The method by which Dalferth argues these claims is hermeneutical (his word) and pragmatic (my word). That is to say: God in majesty is not the (impossible) object of a theoretical kind of comprehension, but rather God in the economy of creation, Incarnation and holy secularity. This knowledge of God in faith, moreover, is not some kind of private intuition but a social and interpretive process springing from the gospel Word that precedes thought and is given to it. Theology is always seeing to the grammatically correct proclamation of the gospel so that believers can know in their life and work in the world the liberating nearness of the God of love.

The soteriologically diverse portraits of Christ, already in the New Testament literature, are taken as images to be interpreted, not representations to be either conceptualized or for that matter demythologized. As images to be interpreted, they are rather to be deliteralized and decoded as signs pointing to the God of love who comes near. Christ as sacrifice or Christ as liberator or Christ as example make doctrinal sense by their theologically interpreted reference to the liberating nearness of the God of love. Thus Dalferth is able to affirm a pluralism of soteriologies, provided their adherence to the Trinitarian grammar and the Christologically understood doctrine of faith. Trinity and justification by faith thus provide in tandem a kind of metadoctrinal structure, a tribunal of faith over the diverse soteriologies.

"Jesus through the centuries" (Pelikan) has been many things to many people, always contextually appropriated in faith as somehow or other bringing the liberating nearness of the God of love. As a wholly simple being in essence, the God who *is* love can be near to one and all in diverse and real relationships. "Thus God's reality changes according to the other to which he is near. But his essence necessarily remains true to himself and marks him out as God in all his realities." As the living God, living a divine life "God has only one essence, which defines who and what he is, but he has different realities in which he realizes his essence" (169). This is, then, a complex, dynamic, living simplicity of the triune God of love who acquires diverse realities in His history with humanity!

In some distinction from the "Word of God/word of man" binary of dialectical theology, Dalferth accordingly distinguishes *three* orders of genuine knowledge of God: "the initiative of God alone; the direct presence, in the course of a human person's life, of God with a human person who acknowledges him; and the intelligible communication of God's presence to the human person who acknowledges him" (213). Dalferth does not thematize these three orders, but one could organize them as 1) the primary theology of the Word of God, 2) the secondary theology of the churchly confession of faith and 3) academic theology—these three rooted in the second, third and first articles of the creed respectively.

Several questions arise. For a work that is undaunted in starting out from the most searching and skeptical biblical criticism to find its reconstructive way forward to Trinitarian Christology, it seems oddly uncritical to endorse, on the precedent of the New Testament canon's collection of supposedly diverse images of salvation, a seemingly unrestricted range of soteriologies. The Aryan Christ of German Christianity was certainly a timely, relevant and even sincere faith appropriation that wanted to free Jesus from the trappings of Judaism. That should serve as a warning sign.

In fact, however, we do not simply translate the soteriological themes of the New Testament into other idioms more useful to the present; we transliterate terms like Messiah and Abba in order to locate the coming of God, well, *locally*—for "salvation is from the Jews" (John 4:22). We do not simply follow the grammatical *pattern* of New Testament soteriology but receive and

renew key *terms* of New Testament soteriology. Hence a doctrine like the Threefold Office rightly *forces* Christological soteriology to understand the salvation God works in raising his crucified Son in *terms* of *Israel's* messianic expectation.

If that is true, and if the Christological claim is not a claim for the superiority of the Christian religion, the emergence of the Christian religion in separation from normative Judaism (an argument in which Dalferth indulges, 305, to demote theologically the Old Testament theology of sacrifice) seems odd. The fear arises that the old Protestant trope of smearing Catholicism as Judaism *redivivus* rears its ugly head here (297–9), as indeed the old polemic against the “sacrifice of the mass” lies barely beneath the surface. Anselm is defeated, it seems, only to fall into the arms of Abelard. *Pace* Dalferth (294), Christ is the end of Temple and Torah, not by superseding them in a progressive history of salvation, but by fulfilling them ethically and so cancelling them juridically on behalf of sinners in an apocalyptic turn of the ages.

In a work that draws upon Ernst Käsemann, in any case, the functional absence of the apocalyptic motherhood of Christian theology is perplexing. If Käsemann rightly corrected the individualism of the Bultmann school by retrieving the cosmic scope of apocalyptic expectation, he also rightly reinstated the crisis of the world that the proclamation of Christ crucified inaugurates by gathering the *ecclesia* as the interim society and the earthly Body of the risen Lord. This *koinonia* in the Lord's Body and Blood, and not in the first place individuals living in holy secularity, is the signature on the earth of the risen Lord.

The notion of the liberating nearness of the God of love seems not quite adequate to this apocalyptic crisis. For the nearness of the God of love can also and indeed does take the strange form of His wrath against what is against love (I Thessalonians 1: 9–10). Dalferth is surely right to repudiate a cultic or religious separation of the holy and profane; that compartmentalization is characteristic of the old aeon. But affirmation of holy secularity hinges on the apocalyptic judgment on the godless world. “Hate evil and love good!” (Amos 5:14). “Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good” (Romans 12:8).

A final question arises from these apocalyptic considerations about the immanent Trinity and the *filioque*. Dalferth endorses the Western *filioque* on the grounds that it stands for the Christological determination of the Spirit who is and is to be identified as “holy.” To that extent, he is surely right, though the Western concern could be satisfied with a rephrasing like “. . . who proceeds from the Father of the Son.” Yet in virtually the same breath, Dalferth also writes that the Spirit “is not this love [between the Father and the Son], as was held by the Augustinian tradition, but he is the one in and through whom this love is enacted” (227)—an emphatically personal and agential notion. That is an important correction to the Augustinian tradition which, however, does not seem to have been adequately carried through.

Taken immanently, it would imply that in the life of the Trinity the Spirit unifies the Father and the Son, being breathed upon the Son by the Father so that in the Spirit the Son returns the Father's glory. It would also imply immanently that it is the Father who breathes the Spirit on the Son (the so-called “monarchy” of the Father, precisely *not* the *filioque*). Economically these immanent distinctions allow the Spirit to be the One who, so to say, brings about the Father's recognition of his crucified Son, dead, buried and shrouded in the sin of the world which He assumed, as indeed his own beloved Son. In this way the Cry of Dereliction is allowed its full and devastating, albeit momentary, force in the enunciation of divine wrath on the loveless world, even as it allows this diastasis in the relation of the Father and the Son to be reconciled in the Spirit.

In such light, holy secularity is the vocation of the baptized in the conflicted world. It is not a theological legitimation of contemporary secularism. It is rather predicated on the miracle of the self-surpassing love of God who has sought and found the way in Christ beyond wrath to mercy.

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