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BOOK REVIEW

Oliver Crisp and Fred Sanders, eds. *Christology Ancient and Modern: Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013. 212 pp. Pbk. ISBN 0310514975.

Christology Ancient and Modern is a compilation of essays originally delivered at the first annual Los Angeles Theology Conference; in light of John Webster's call for "theological theology," this book is a product of "unapologetic dogmatic theology" (18). It is a very welcome contribution to the issue of Christology particularly and theology generally. The call for unapologetic dogmatic accounts of the classic Christian faith is one that resonates with a generation that has witnessed a seemingly unending variety of "creative" proposals, models, and approaches to theology, drifting increasingly away from an exposition of the one and living faith. Within a primarily Protestant context, the writers represented herein are complementary as representatives of differing trends within that tradition, making for a robust dialogue that does wander far from unifying convictions.

A number of essays emerge as particularly outstanding in their own right. Katherine Sonderegger wonderfully blends a contemplative theological account of the divine nature, the infinite goodness and bliss of the One, with utterly human and grounded concerns. Her essay is a refreshing treatment on a theme that often lacks either the rigor of christological accounts or the aesthetic character of detailed explication. Weaving the transcendental tradition with protestant convictions produces for Sonderegger a form of theological articulation that is compelling.

Peter Leithart's essay on the christological implications of John's temple motif carries the virtues of Sonderegger's own

essay into further corners of the discussion. By expounding Scripture *with* Patristic authors, Leithart demonstrates the richness of continuity within the tradition, as well as effectively settling much hermeneutical and methodological debate by an exercise of theological exposition.

However, in the opening essay, Oliver Crisp treats the “post-metaphysical” tradition or critique in a manner less than entirely satisfying (24). He chooses Bruce McCormack as a figurehead of this approach; McCormack, resourcing heavily from Karl Barth, maintains an ontological vision that is epistemologically derived from the particulars—one might describe it as *a posteriori*. Crisp suggests that McCormack offers limited novelty when compared to medieval nominalism. The issue of postmetaphysical approaches gets little or no exposure following this brief engagement. Given the strength of metaphysically hesitant theology on the contemporary landscape, one would have benefitted from a more robust interaction with penetrating and, for many, compelling critiques of such traditional formulations.

George Hunsinger’s essay provides an articulate and much needed treatment of what he terms “middle” Christologies; those thinkers represented therein no doubt have been subsumed within oversimplified accounts of liberal Christology. One point of consideration is the inevitable struggle of all intellectual dialogue that is the tendency to abuse models and typologies by leaning too heavily on ability to categorize complexities. Therefore, the end for which Hunsinger writes is not easily remedied by providing another model—as much of a legitimate step forward that it is.

In a chapter written by Jordan Wessling regarding the viability of monothelitism, one finds a relatively surface level engagement with the matter itself. The chapter offers limited commentary on other theologians, supplemented by provisional interpretations of Scripture. Moreover, over half of the content is devoted to the doctrine of God’s sovereignty and how that influences one’s reading and regard for the classic Christian creedal formulations. Perhaps more focused exposition on the doctrinal issue itself would make for a more compelling argument.

Finally, Alan Torrance critiques what he determines are philosophically compromised notions of simplicity, maintaining that the biblical witness provides a personal and social reality to God's economy and by implication his immanent life; he suggests that *indivisa* does not represent the biblical image of trinity and personality (194). This approach inadequately considers the essence and transcendence of God. The apparent distance between the incarnate Son and the Father, a distance that he understands to substantiate a critique of the divine *indivisa* of outer works, is remedied by precisely the participatory ontology he deems insufficient. The historic relations between the divine persons does not necessitate a reworking of Trinitarian thought, rather it is a "simple" account of the threefold modal existence of God's essence united with thorough consideration of his transcendence that sustains the uniqueness of that history without challenging categorically basic teaching on the Trinity.

Christology Ancient and Modern is a valuable collection that will serve theological development. This book will be most readily appropriated by academics in the various interrelated fields of theology—biblical studies and systematic theology—most naturally. It would provide difficult and perhaps incomprehensible reading material for those who do not have an acquaintance with christological debate and terminology, a limitation inherent to the task of specialized discussion. One of the potential hindrances that this work may face with regard to a broader audience is that the essays themselves are not intended to be major positional defenses; they are rather arguments of a subtle and varied sort that may make it difficult for some readers to wade through, as there is not always a radical or obvious payoff to one's theological schema.

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