



**Darren O. Sumner, *Karl Barth and the Incarnation: Christology and the Humility of God* (London; New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014), pp. ix, 244, ISBN 9780567655295. £65.00**

This work examines Barth's doctrine of the person of Christ in its relation to the history of Christology. This is an insightful and provocative read for those interested in Barth studies and the merits of Barth's approach to Christology in response to the strengths and flaws present within the historical development of this fascinating doctrine.

Central to Sumner's exploration is the question of the identity of Jesus Christ in relation to the pre-existent Word of God or 'Logos' seen in the prologue of John's gospel. Part 1 lays out the context of this 'identity problem' by reviewing the development of Christology from the early fourth to the late seventh centuries. Sumner contends that there are unresolved issues that persist in traditional attempts to describe the identity of the Logos in relation to that of Jesus Christ by means of either models of instrumentalism or compositionism. Consequently, either the flesh of Jesus Christ was seen as a tool in the hands of the second person of the Trinity and, by implication, not essential to his being, or the eternal Word of God is a part of the composition of the God-man, Jesus Christ, but the two are not identical. The Logos or pre-existent Word is the second person of the immanent Godhead who must be kept completely separate from creation while Jesus Christ is identical with the hypostasis of the Word only insofar as the Word exists for and in the economy. This difference between immanent and economic modes of being within the Godhead was key to safeguarding issues of divine immutability and the Word's impassibility, but it also made it difficult to affirm that God the Word and Jesus Christ are from first to last the same person or 'Subject' since there must be a distinction between the two. Sumner goes on to indicate how this central difficulty impacts upon issues of divine immutability, kenosis and the Word's impassibility in the Reformation developments of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Part 2 of the argument offers a reading and an analysis of Barth's mature Christology in relation to this question of Christ's identity. Chapter 2 traces the development of Barth's own approach from his formative appreciation of traditional 'Logos Christology' evidenced in

the Göttingen lectures in the 1920s to the increasingly more critically engaged view that is found in volume IV of *Church Dogmatics* [CD]. One matter in which this development in approach can be seen concerns the *anhypostasis/enhypostasis* distinction offered by the early church, which is the teaching that Jesus' humanity has no self-standing existence or personhood apart from its union with the Logos. Traditionally construed, this distinction ensured that the *assumptio* was entirely one-sided in that the Logos remains its only subject. While initially finding this doctrine useful in opposing the Historical Jesus movement within modern Protestantism, it was his engagement with Lutheran and Reformed schools of thought, and especially with the *extra Calvinisticum*, that caused Barth to distance himself from the model of 'Logos Christology'. Barth came to regard the Logos concept as a theological 'placeholder' that is given greater meaning by the history and life of Jesus Christ. For Barth, according to Sumner, there can be no immanent-economic distinction concerning the Son's identity. While the Logos concept serves an important theological function in affirming the preexistence of Jesus Christ, it is the identity of the second person of the Trinity as he exists *ensarkos* that is more basic to his identity. Therefore, it is not simply that the true humanity of Jesus Christ must be upheld when considering his identity, but that in the incarnation of the Son the triune God has freely made humanity to be *essential* to the immanent divine life.

In Chapter 3, this understanding of Barth's account of the Word's divine-human existence is presented in a way that seeks to redress the problems identified in the first part of the study. With a focus on CD II/1-2 and CD IV/1-2, the author explores four themes that best display Barth's Christology: election and covenant, time and eternity, the communication of natures, and the *status duplex*. The argument presented is that Barth's 'critically receptive' method of inquiry into the classical doctrine of the incarnation led him to appropriate the key concerns of patristic, early medieval, and later Reformed theological traditions while steering clear of the conceptual problems inherent within each. Having presented an approach that reframes and moves beyond such basic Christological concepts fundamental to traditional theology, the third and final part of Sumner's study evaluates Barth's work first in terms of its coherence with Chalcedonian orthodoxy

(Chapter 4), and second in terms of its effectiveness in redressing the identity problem (Chapter 5). In short, Sumner maintains that Barth's Christology offers resources for thinking through and beyond the constraints of the doctrinal expressions of the ancient church and the Reformation while still remaining faithful to the orthodox tradition.

This volume successfully covers key developments in Barth's own theological writings as well as surveying the views of important figures from ancient, medieval and Reformation theology in a technically engaging yet readable manner. The content is enjoyable yet highly provocative. Sumner's reading of Barth, which is influenced by the work of Bruce McCormack, is highly controversial. Other interpretations of Barth, as espoused by figures like Paul Molnar, argue that Barth was more favourable to the traditional position; that the subject of the incarnation is still the eternal Word of God and that the identity of the second person of the Trinity is not essentially determined by the mode of the economy. Not only does this reading suggest Barth's approach to have greater distance from earlier theologians than might be true, but to posit the humanity of Jesus Christ as being essential to the immanent divine life also surrenders God's freedom and identity, making it contingent upon creaturely reality. Additionally, Sumner's argument is one that pits metaphysical and post-metaphysical worldviews against one another, favouring the latter. The reasoning is helped along by the claim that Chalcedonian orthodoxy, with its use of notions such as persons, natures and substances, was formed from concepts 'drawn from elsewhere than revelation christocentrically conceived' (p. 16) whereas Barth's 'actualist' approach is more faithful to the reading of scripture. This argument is given force through the demonstration of how key scriptures fit with Barth's post-metaphysical worldview, yet there is much less attention given to the traditional reading of those same scriptures as influenced by a metaphysical hermeneutic.

Therefore the claim that Barth's approach is more faithful to Scripture is asserted but not sufficiently demonstrated within the overall argument. In fact, it should be noted that the very concept of 'actualism' that influences Barth's thought is not drawn directly from Scripture either. Some might also question whether the ancient Church actually believed that Jesus Christ and the Word of God were, by implication, not one and the same subject. Certainly readers

interested in early Christianity and the development of Christology may be inspired, provoked even, to revisit the writings of earlier theologians for themselves in view of Sumner's claims. If he is correct, there is surely much opportunity for further fruitful enquiry to come. This work is a welcome contribution to theological scholarship and a worthwhile addition to the personal library of theological students and professionals alike.

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**Andrew Shepherd, *The Gift of the Other: Levinas, Derrida, and a Theology of Hospitality* (Cambridge: James Clarke and Co., 2014), pp. xi, 264, ISBN 9780227174845. £22.50**

Andrew Shepherd starts his book, *The Gift of the Other: Levinas, Derrida, and a Theology of Hospitality*, by drawing attention to the shadow-world of refugees, asylum seekers, poverty, fear of terror, and the purported breakdown of community in contemporary Western society, despite a perceived increase in 'connectedness' and 'openness' (p. 1). Noting the philosophical and ethical thinking of hospitality arising from the conflicting territory of these global concerns, Shepherd's book sets out to provide a theological account of hospitality. The book essentially falls into two main sections, weighted towards the second half. The first three chapters cover Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida's thinking on hospitality towards the other, and the second part (over the course of four chapters) cover Shepherd's rehabilitation of hospitality 'upon theological foundations' (p. 13).

Shepherd's presentation of Levinas and Derrida is instructive. It is also commendably generous, although the lengthy quotations could be substantially cut or paraphrased. Drawing on both figures together in this manner is fruitful for thinking about hospitality. Shepherd lucidly demonstrates the important ways in which Levinas puts ethics firmly on the table as a response to the face of the other, and how