

Suggestively, W. holds that Karl Barth's "high" Christology faces the opposite peril. By espousing a uniquely christological ontology that excludes any appeal to metaphysics and natural theology, Barth risks compromising Jesus's humanity and his commonality with us. Paradoxically, Barth's aversion to a metaphysics of the analogy of being results in limiting, not expanding, the scope of Christ's dominion.

Hence, W. insists both upon the doctrine of the "hypostatic union" as guarantor of the tradition's confession of Christ's uniqueness and upon the legitimacy, indeed, the necessity of reason's probing of the essential traits of human nature, notwithstanding the deformation wrought by the Fall. Throughout the book, the Catholic celebration of *fides et ratio* is on full display.

Avowedly, W.'s is an exercise in "speculative theology." In this regard it is exemplary: a feasting in the company of Thomas the systematician. However, this reviewer would have also appreciated a morning collation with Thomas the *magister sacrae paginae*, showing the scriptural and, indeed, liturgical matrix of the church's doctrine. When W. writes, "In some real sense it is true to say: ignorance of ontology is ignorance of Christ" (8), one understands his meaning in the context of his valid concerns; but his assertion would have confounded the usually voluble Jerome!

W. is alert to "the dangers of an all-too-conceptual or reified vision of the person of Christ that is insufficiently sensitive to the biblical historical life of Jesus of Nazareth as it is portrayed in the Gospel" (116). But at times, in this discerning and demanding study, the shining face of the Savior can appear clouded by the sheer intensity of metaphysical speculation. Nonetheless, the book provides excellent material for a doctoral seminar in Christology, compelling both instructor and students to come to grips with their own positions and their spiritual and pastoral implications in this most crucial of theological disciplines.

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The Gospel of Jesus Christ. By Walter Kasper. Trans. from the German by Sister Katherine Wolff. New York: Paulist, 2015. Pp. xiv + 295. \$49.95.

In an increasingly secular world, the gospel itself specifies the optimal witness of faith through actions closely harmonized with beliefs. Thus Kasper proposes after multiple considerations of modernity, the situation of freedom and of contemporary theology. This volume of the author's collected works includes an early lecture on the situation of faith and a theological reflection on the New Evangelization. A shorter section clarifies the concept of faith and the life of faith.

The first section, "Introduction to the Faith," originally arose as a series of lectures in Münster and Tübingen from 1970 to 1971. K. responds primarily to student unrest after the Second Vatican Council. The author suggests that this crisis signals not the collapse of faith, but a decisive period akin to the Constantinian and Reformation renewals. After analyzing the philosophical backdrop, K. names the present situation

“the Second Enlightenment” (12). This context recognizes the finitude of humans and the restrictions on freedom, unlike the original Enlightenment. While science now explains much of the world, K. nonetheless advises that believing in a “God of the gaps” is insufficient (20). Human beings require meaning in existence and are directed towards transcendence (27).

K. provides several valuable recommendations for this crisis of faith. He draws attention to the Catholic Tübingen School of the nineteenth century, as a preferred method of mediating theology in modernity (10). These scholars avoided negative diatribes and panicked apologetics. K. additionally cautions theologians “to resist the old clerical temptation to form an integralist synthesis in a monolithic understanding of truth” (54). The author has a major grievance against dialectical theology that had “widened rather than bridged the gap between faith and human experience” (11). Unfortunately, the book does not engage in a focused criticism of the latter.

The shorter segment, “Surpassing All Knowledge,” was written in 1987 as an exposition on faith from fundamental theology. The author first identifies the ambiguity of the terms faith and belief in contemporary speech, which can be applied to a range of ideas outside the theological realm. K. posits that many human beings have lost interest in God and “make themselves the forgers of their happiness” (168). He argues that this human indifference can be of greater threat than confrontational atheism. Of further concern, the distractions of constant activity in contemporary society disengage human beings from spiritual contemplation and the conscience.

Amidst this crisis, the book puts forward the indispensable role of Christian communities to demonstrate the credibility of faith. The author formulates that the renewal of the church and growth of faith are directly related; communities of vibrant Christians that bear witness are the only reliable signs of faith. Each offers a “preamble” that exhibits the possibility and responsibility of faith to others (51). Consequently, a secular observer can be opened for the movements of grace. It is Jesus himself who sets human beings free, arouses us to faith, and models belief, by loving and empowering humanity to refocus their lives towards other human beings and God (103).

The final section on the New Evangelization was a common text for K.’s lectures as bishop of Rottenburg-Stuttgart. K. locates the New Evangelization’s origin with *Repartre de Cristo*, acknowledging it can be perceived as indoctrination or as reactionary (231). Thus he emphasizes that evangelization based on the gospel connects to inherent, enduring human longings. Even more, the gospel offers the fulfillment of human beings. The author notes pointedly that “for the Synoptics, *kingdom of God* and *life* become interchangeable concepts” (Mark 9:43, 45; 10:17; Luke 18:18) (235).

The author proposes that the New Evangelization must offer a living transmission of the life of Christ and tradition. K. expects that many people have heard of Jesus Christ, but have never met him in a personal way. He therefore recommends good preaching and gradual guidance through the events of Jesus’s ministry and passion, not a “superficial Jesuism” (272). Most complex topics of Catholic theology are best apprehended after an intimacy with the life of Christ. Moreover, K. distinguishes the parts of *id quod traditur* and *id quo traditur*; the style of the communication remains

decisive. Christians must always strive to discuss the tenets of faith with fresh relevance (242).

K.'s volume endorses several wise approaches to twentieth-century secularism. He insists that ecclesiology must be built upon Pneumatology; the church then remains chiefly an event and something happening (110). As usual, K. readily demonstrates his attention to the philosophical underpinnings of the modern era. He skillfully presents how the New Testament and church answer the struggle for human freedom (100–102). A worthwhile addition to the book would include an assessment of witnessing faith to the growing nonreligious or technological utopianism.

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The Crucifixion: Understanding the Death of Jesus Christ. By Fleming Rutledge. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015. Pp. xxv + 669. \$45.

For Christians in the United States, impatience with the crucifixion is a perpetual temptation. We much prefer the hopeful message of Easter Sunday to the unsettling and even haunting message of Good Friday. According to Rutledge, an Episcopal priest and accomplished preacher, we are predisposed to forget that the most important thing Jesus did was die a godless death among criminals (71). In this, her most recent work, R. attempts to resolve this shortcoming by reclaiming the cross as “the touchstone of Christian authenticity, the unique feature by which everything else, including the Resurrection, is given its true significance” (44).

To make her case, R. proposes to return the crucifixion to the center of Christian proclamation with a novel combination of biblical, patristic, and pastoral insights. She devotes part I of the book to exploring the scandalous nature of crucifixion and how it illuminates other themes at the heart of the Christian story. She then examines, in part II, how New Testament authors and prominent theologians supported these connections, not with systematic theories, but with a variety of overlapping motifs. To interpret the crucifixion rightly, she argues, we must first take seriously its centrality in the Gospels, the godless character of its execution, the longing for justice it expresses, and the dominion of sin that it overthrows. Similarly, we can only grasp how the crucifixion determines the meaning of other themes by seeing how each motif contributes some insight to the whole, without exhausting its range of meanings. In this respect, R.'s approach proves to be both comprehensive and well-suited to the proposed aim of the book.

Especially instructive is R.'s argument (in part I) that the manner of Jesus's death, and not merely the fact of his death, contributes to what is so theologically valuable about the cross. What Christians proclaim as God's way of setting the world aright is an accursed death, designed to shame and dehumanize as well as inflict pain. Indeed, as R. notes, “No other mode of execution would have been commensurate with the extremity of humanity's condition under sin” (102). Jesus died the way he did, in other