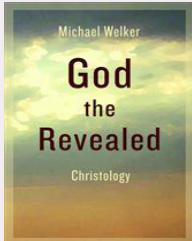


A thought provoking new publication on Christology

Book Title:
God the revealed

Book Cover:



Author:
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ISBN:
978-0-8028-7157-2

Publisher:
Eerdmans, 2013, \$29.00*
*Book price at time of review

Review title:
A thought provoking new publication on Christology

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How to cite this book review:
Vorster, J.M., 2014, 'A thought provoking new publication on Christology', *In die Skriflig* 48(2), Art. #1850, 1 page. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ids.v48i2.1850>

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It is not without reason that Van de Beek calls this age the 'age of Christology' in his article 'Theologen van de twintigste eeuw en de christologie' he published in *Acta Theologica* 22 in 2002. The question of Jesus to his disciples in Matthew 16:15 still reverberates in theology today – especially as a result of Bonhoeffer's question: 'Who is Jesus Christ for us today?' It is precisely with this question Welker starts his recent publication on Christology. Against the backdrop of the European experience of Jesus Christ as a cultural icon, Welker develops a Christology that does not only respect tradition, but also addresses modern people's search for God, their experience of spirituality and a Christian founded criticism of society.

After Welker notes the modern views of Jesus Christ, he offers a probing inquiry into the different waves of research on the historical Jesus. He points out the shortcomings of this research in a scientifically justified manner and warns that the results of such research offer very little when it comes to people's search for God. He continues to examine the doctrine of resurrection and highlights the importance of the acceptance of the reality of the resurrection, the nature of the appearances of the resurrected Christ and the meaning this holds for pneumatology and ecclesiology.

In an extended section on the Theology of the cross Welker indicates that it is especially in this regard that the Reformation brought a revolution. He shows that the events on the cross not only centre on the suffering God, as was variedly argued following the time of Bonhoeffer, but also on the God who redeems and judges. As part of this discussion he deals with the concepts of sin and atonement. In the fourth section Welker discusses the meaning of the elevated Christ and his divine rule. His point of departure is the offices of Christ – prophet, priest and king, as emphasised by Calvin. The outward form of the reign of Christ corresponds to his offices. The reign of Christ invokes the church and frees up the dynamics of prophetic testimony and the practice of love. It is because of Christ's office of three kinds that theology is not a spiritual matter, but has public meaning. Welker continues to describe the important balance needed between the public and the eschatological Christ.

The last section of his book deals with the two natures of Christ. Here he also maintains that there should be a balance between the nearness and depth of the incarnation, and the richness and breadth of salvation. Welker points to the value of the classical doctrine on the two natures of Christ, but also indicates that it is sometimes reduced to the detriment of the believer's experience of a relationship with God. In a striking discussion he shows the presence of Christ as prophet, priest and king and the implications this has on the ministry, the experience of the sacraments and the preaching of the Word. He goes beyond this to point out the importance Christ has for the search for truth and justice within our societies and for practicing a relevant Christian ethics. A well-founded Christology gives meaning to the church, the worship service and preaching. It also inspires topical criticism of society and gives content to a relevant ethics.

Much has been written in the last decades on Jesus of Nazareth. Who was he? Did he really exist? Was he only a historical prophet? What is his relevance today? Welker's book offers answers to all these questions. He develops Christology in a theological-scientific manner in such a way that it does justice to the Christian tradition, to the biblical testimony and that it leaves room for the development of a Christ-founded ethics and social critique. The book can be recommended for all who are interested in systematic theology. Scholars in biblical theology and ecclesiologists can also profit from this valuable publication.