



The Restitution of Jesus Christ - by Kermit Zarley

A Grateful Review — by Barbara Buzzard

I have just finished reading Kermit Zarley's (Servetus the Evangelical) *The Restitution of Jesus Christ* (2008, 566 pages). What a fantastic read! And what a labor of love from the time he first began to wonder about what Jesus *knew* (1980) to the publication of his findings in 2008. Zarley has amassed dozens upon dozens of astonishing and to-the-point quotations that have guided, directed and challenged his thinking. And he has given us this goldmine — because truth matters.

I quickly need to add that the author himself feels that the reader need only read the first three chapters and the introductions to the rest (plus one other chapter) to avail himself of the thesis of this book, and the rest of the material is there as a resource. So don't be daunted by the length of the book. It is a book about Christology — the study of Christ. It examines what is said to be the most popular question of our day: Is Jesus God?

I was fascinated to read of the friendship between Sir Isaac Newton and William Whiston and the very real challenges to that relationship that the issue of the trinity created. Both felt that the trinity was incoherent and yet one went public and one did not (perhaps a forerunner of the don't ask/don't tell policy). Sir Isaac Newton actually wrote more on theology than he did on science, much of it yet untranslated.

I found very valuable the format that Mr. Zarley used to arrange numbers of different translations so as to compare them and also to see where the weight of evidence is, and from what time period. Much modern work, particularly from international scholars, is very revealing of minds able to question and re-visit the evidence, and who have the freedom of the press and publication. After the presentation of material on each topic, Zarley enumerates the pros and cons of differing viewpoints, sums it up, and allows the reader to digest certain points before moving on. For example, he lists all of the versions which call Jesus God in Romans 9:5, and all those which do not. He then gives reasons for the one-Person views and rebuttals, and reasons for the two-Persons views and rebuttals. A great format, I think, and a writing style that targets novices and intends to bridge that gulf between the academy and the pew.

How important is it to understand the principle of agency in Scripture? The agency (sending) principle is vital, particularly so since we have lost what the Jews of Jesus' day so readily understood, practices which were prevalent in both business and law. Without this understanding, one is missing the key to unlocking the riddle of the New Testament.

Far from shying away from the book of John, Zarley applauds the depths of its riches and concludes with the Dutch theologian Ellen Flesseman-VanLeer that by "replacing the expression 'God and man' with 'God in this man'...justice can better be done to the true humanity of Jesus Christ" (*A Faith for Today*, p. 66). Zarley finds that John's most prominent theme is that "God sent Jesus to speak God's words and teach His truth." "Finally, John cannot be saying that Jesus is God because that would conflict with his purpose for writing his gospel... 'but these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.'" Mr. Zarley has done his homework when it comes to investigating how others view the book of John. He quotes C.K.

Barrett concerning John 8:28: “It is simply intolerable that Jesus should be made to say, ‘I am God, the supreme God of the Old Testament, and being God I do as I am told.’”

I was delighted to find all through the book yet more characteristics of Jesus that are not qualities of the Father. These, when compiled, create quite a lengthy list and are a strong testimony to the differences between the Father and the Son. To whet your appetite, consider for a moment that Jesus *depended* on the Father, or that he had needs or that he improved.

One of the benefits of reading widely is to be able to see through another’s eyes. This is well attested to as Zarley tells us what he believes is the most important phenomenon in the New Testament. (I see the strength of his point but confess that I never quite saw it in this way.) It is that in the book of Acts, which records the *acts* of the disciples and early Christians, they *never* proclaimed or announced that Jesus was God!

I won’t keep you in suspense — the second most important phenomenon is that the four gospels never related that Jesus identified himself as God.

Dear reader, do yourself a favor — challenge your critical faculties. (I more or less divide my life into two periods: BT – before thinking, and AT – after thinking.) Zarley, in his examination of the roots of the faith, suggests that the church departed from its moorings very early on and has remained that way ever since. He asks whether Christianity has broken with its parent faith. He finds that the theology which came from the councils led to a considerable alienation from the New Testament. Is the arithmetic of heaven different, wondered Daniel Webster as he confessed that he couldn’t understand it. What are we to make of Abraham Lincoln’s reason for never having joined a church — that he couldn’t understand their creeds? For those really serious about putting on God’s armor, you need the information in this book as part of your arsenal. Wishing you a challenging read. Prepare to be astonished by the evidence.

One point of difference, perhaps just clarification, is that Zarley writes: “So this book’s thesis is that God fully indwelt Jesus [yes, I couldn’t agree more] yet Jesus was no more than a man.” I would say that he certainly was not an ordinary man! He was God’s man, unique, sinless, filled with holy spirit, the most amazing and incredible man, a man with whom God was well pleased. I cringe when the term “mere” is attached to the man Jesus. Of all that he was, he was not mere! I know that Zarley agrees that we exalt Jesus as highly as we possibly can short of breaking the first commandment.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Buzzard