

# Essay on spiritual christology and art of christology

[Experience](#), [Belief](#)



“ Reason alone cannot lead us to the full understanding and real knowledge of Jesus Christ.” These words attest to Joseph Ratzinger’s standpoint regarding Christology and the hermeneutic of faith. Ratzinger throughout his article, Pope Benedict XVI constrains his readers to tackle faith not only through rational thinking, but by a deeper degree of faith or Christology as opposed to ‘ Jesus discipleship’ as he asserts. According to Ratzinger, a genuine spiritual approach is the only way to understanding Christology, as put forth in the Bible. In this article, he draws biblical examples as a way to explain the importance of spirituality in understanding Christology. A good example of this is Simon Peter’s famous avowal of Jesus Christ as the Messiah. Peter’s confession was the most appropriate as to the real person of Christ, however, Ratzinger states that this avowal was not sufficient in itself. In a nutshell, Pope Benedict XVI, is trying to show us that it is only through a spiritual approach that the true concept of Christology can be understood.

Seven Theses on Christology and the Hermeneutic of Faith, is molded around the fundamental characteristics of the indivisible unity of Jesus Christ, the Church and History. The response to these fundamental characteristics, as explained by Ratzinger, have shifted considerably in the field of Christology; leading to ‘ gray areas’ in theology that question the very nature and person of Jesus Christ. Ratzinger asserts that modern contemporary society of Christians has embraced the person ‘ Jesus’ instead of ‘ Christ’. This has led to ‘ discipleship of Jesus’ instead of ‘ discipleship of Christ’ which marks the true cause of Christology and Christian faith. This article goes on to explain that the Church’s shift in orientation towards ‘ Jesus discipleship’ has been a

serious setback to soteriology or the true meaning of salvation. Ratzinger further explains that the person or man ' Jesus' reflects opposition to all forms of authority; which has consequently led to the belief of ' liberation' contrary to ' salvation' which is drawn from the true understanding of the person ' Christ' or Christology.

Ratzinger unfolds his article in theses. The first thesis concerns the person of Jesus. It depicts the person of Jesus in constant communication with his father. The author asserts that Simon Peter`s confession in the book of Mark provided the mother church with a ' nucleus' around which her interpretation of Jesus would crystallize. The article further explains how the church obtained its title of faith, " Christ the Son of the living God". The unification of Jesus and Christ can be attested to this. Ratzinger`s first thesis also tells us that if we are in pursuit of discovering who Jesus really is, we should constantly engage in communication with the Father, just as Jesus did in his days on earth. This prayer and communication is shown through Jesus` death, Jesus was in constant communication with the Father until his timely death on Calvary. Jesus` entire existence has been described as a ' sending mission' that is friendship, which is evident from intimate friendship relationship that Jesus reserved for his friends. The second thesis entails Jesus death as an act of love, prayer and glorification of God. Jesus is known to have died praying, an ultimate act of worship, which signifies the triumph of love over death.

The third and fourth theses are somewhat similar in their insistence on the importance of prayer. The third thesis states that it is essential to participate in prayer if we are to know and understand the person of Jesus. Ratzinger

illustrates this with some drawn examples showing that in matters of the mind, empathy must be accorded into the person for one to understand or become one with him. I personally differ with this assertion as I believe matters of Christology should not be tied to rational thinking. The fourth thesis also entails importance of prayer. It states that Jesus' praying involves communion with all his brethren. This thesis emphasizes the importance of fellowship and communion described by Paul as the 'Body of Christ'. Through participation in the church, we can call God our Father as we automatically decree to be people of God.

In the fifth and sixth theses, Ratzinger explains the hermeneutic of faith. These theses stress the importance of proper philosophy for the right study of Jesus. In my opinion, this point in the article appears to be a mild contrast to Ratzinger's previous thoughts. This section of the article seems to disagree with the church dogma that is supposedly the root of Christology. However, Ratzinger insists that dogmatic and biblical Christology cannot be separated as Christology cannot be divorced from soteriology. Nevertheless, these two theses resign to the fact that Christology only comes through prayer and not intellectual or rational understanding. The final thesis closes the article by referring to the hermeneutic of faith; stressing the importance of proper philosophy in the study of Jesus.

After studying the article 'Seven Theses on Christology and Hermeneutic of Faith' by Joseph Ratzinger, I am inclined to believe that art can only play a small role in regard to Christology, which only comes through prayer and supplication. Art, however, may form part of the philosophical material that may be used in the study of the person Jesus. In this regard, only 'right' art

may qualify as right philosophical material which Ratzinger insistently states to be useful in the study and understanding of the person Jesus.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Neuman, Matthias, and Matthias Neuman. 2002. *Christology: true God, true man*. Chicago: Loyola Press.

Dunn, James D. G. 2003. *Christology in the making: a New Testament inquiry into the origins of the doctrine of the Incarnation*. London: SCM.

Spence, Alan. 2008. *Christology: a guide for the perplexed*. London: T & T Clark

Astley, Jeff, David Brown, and Ann Loades. 2009. *Christology: key readings in Christian thought*. Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press.

- J. Mathias, *Christology*, Catholic Encyclopedia. accessed on 15/10/2013