

CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY



Volume 72:2

April 2008

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The Law and the Lord's Supper

Since the law and gospel are so central to Lutheran theology, it should have been expected that their relationship to one another and their function in Christian life would eventually disrupt The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS). While the dust from the 1970s has settled down on our side of the fence, this is still a live issue in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) which has not resolved the question of whether certain persons, because of different orientations, may be kept out of the ministry. The “gospel argument” as it started out in the LCMS is that biblical strictures were limited to Old and New Testament times and are not applicable today. Scott R. Murray’s *Law, Life, and the Living God*, which lays out historical and theological issues on the third use of the law among twentieth-century American Lutheranism, was at the center of a past symposium. Murray puts his oar in the water again in the lead article of this issue.

The remaining articles address the Lord’s Supper, each coming from a different angle. Peter J. Scaer finds in the miraculous feedings in Mark’s Gospel allusions to the Lord’s Supper as not only a well-ordered sacred banquet but also an occasion for discourse. With recent Lutheran rapprochements with the Episcopal Church in America and the Church of England, Lutherans remained haunted by how close their Reformation era forebearers were in the doctrine of the Lord’s Supper during the Reformation era. Answering part of this question is Korey D. Maas’s article on Robert Barnes. Who may be admitted to the Lord’s Supper is a perennial issue in the LCMS. Joel D. Biermann, from our sister seminary, presents familiar arguments in a fresh manner in “Step Up to the Altar.” The April 2008 visit of the pope to our country keeps alive the Reformation era discussion of how our church should relate to Rome. If a fence were drawn down the middle of world Christendom, Lutherans would be on the same side with Roman Catholics looking at the Reformed on the other side. Opportunity for further discussion has been made by the accession of Joseph Ratzinger as bishop of Rome. A world renowned theologian in his own right, Benedict XVI was friend to the late confessional scholar Hermann Sasse. Coming from Germany, he has an intimate knowledge of Luther that was lacking in his predecessors. Presenting an in-depth, insider’s examination of the current pope’s views on the Lord’s Supper is Father James Massa. We call attention to the third section of his article, “Difficulties with Luther,” especially footnote 18. These articles are sure to stimulate reflection on our own faithful confession and administration of this blessed sacrament.

David P. Scaer
Editor

Book Reviews

***Friendship and Society: An Introduction to Augustine's Practical Philosophy.* By Donald X. Burt. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999. 251 pages. Paperback. \$25.00.**

Burt's book is an essay in organizing Augustinian materials around contemporary topics in ethics and social and political philosophy, a companion to his earlier *Augustine's World: An Introduction to His Speculative Philosophy* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1996). The issues addressed include the nature of ethics, friendship, the family, and a range of questions involving the state, including law, violence, war, and the relation of church and state. In dealing with these broader subjects, however, Burt is not afraid to make occasional application of Augustine's thought to specific contemporary issues such as capital punishment and abortion.

The book is not an introduction to Augustine's thought in its *historical* context. References to Hobbes, Locke, and Nietzsche are more frequent, for example, than those to Cicero or Ambrose. That is quite consonant with the declared intentions of the author (himself a philosopher), but it does make this book a rather particular sort of introduction to Augustine's thought.

The contemporary theological context in which Burt's contemporary application of Augustine takes place is that of post-Vatican II Roman Catholic theology. Sometimes, as in his discussion of the salvation of those who have no explicit knowledge of Christ (52–53, 203–204), Burt is scrupulous (though not uncritical) in acknowledging Augustine's distance from contemporary Roman teaching. At other points, however, as in his discussion of Augustine's teaching on the subordination of wives to their husbands, his attempt to vindicate Augustine in contemporary terms leads him onto shaky ground. Burt identifies Augustine's position as based on a "culturally-influenced conviction" (106). Augustine was quite capable of making an acute discrimination between what is natural and what is merely cultural or conventional, but, in fact, he did not see such a distinction here.

Indeed, Burt's reader must, in general, be unusually careful and attentive in order to distinguish Augustine's *ipsissima vox* from Burt's elaboration and application, and the notes are not always an adequate help in this regard. For example, Burt discusses "Authority in a Society of Friends" on pages 68–73 with only one rather peripheral citation of Augustine. Burt is more careful in identifying his debts to and disagreements with other contemporary scholars, and his participation in these debates (e.g., over whether Augustine holds that the state is natural—as Burt argues—or is the result of sin) can be read with profit, though again the reader who wonders how Augustine's thought compares with that of Ambrose will find no help here.

The primary interest of Burt's book (as also many of its limitations) arises from its attempt to bring Augustine's thought into contemporary philosophical context. R. A. Markus' *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine* (Cambridge UP, 1970), though not without a contemporary eye of its own, gives a clearer sense of Augustine's originality in relation to antique and patristic thought. For the neophyte who simply seeks a trusty *vademecum* in his first time through the main features of Augustine's "practical philosophy," the well-worn standby, H. A. Deane's *The Political and Social Ideas of St. Augustine* (Columbia UP, 1963), may still be the better guide.

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***Deuteronomic Theology and the Significance of Torah: A Reappraisal.* By Peter T. Vogt. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006. 242 pages. Hardcover. \$37.50.**

One of the few areas of consensus in modern Deuteronomic scholarship is the contention that the book is a program for reform that is nothing short of revolutionary. The consensus of recent scholarship—led in large part by Moshe Weinfeld—understands Deuteronomy to be a radical shift from the theology presented in Genesis through Numbers. This view maintains that the Deuteronomistic movement sought to correct outdated views of God such as his descent upon a mountain (Exod 19:18, 20), his appearance to Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel (Exod 24:9-11), and his need for a tabernacle (Exod 25:1-40:38). Deuteronomy, say most scholars, seeks to repudiate these anthropomorphic ideas and those like them. It does this, for example, by indicating that Yahweh is not seen but heard (e.g., Deut 4:33; 5:24-26). If earlier Pentateuchal texts proclaim "the *glory* of Yahweh," Deuteronomy's repeated refrain of Yahweh, "the place where I cause my *name* to dwell," combats the belief that Yahweh actually dwelt upon the earth. Another outdated view that Deuteronomy 12 seeks to correct by promoting one central place for worship is in Exodus 20:24-25, which is understood as calling for the building of altars in multiple locations. In these ways, many maintain, Deuteronomy demythologizes, centralizes, and secularizes earlier Israelite politics, theology, worship, and morality. Vogt's view is to embrace Deuteronomy's countercultural message. His claim, however, is that at the center of the book is the sovereignty of Yahweh—and not the Israelite monarchy—and this is manifested through Yahweh's *Torah*.

In the introductory chapter, the structure and theology of Deuteronomy is examined. Chapter 1 then looks at some of the ways in which the theology of Deuteronomy has been understood, namely, in terms of centralization, secularization, and demythologization. Chapters 2-5 evaluate key texts that

are used to support these ideas. They are, among others, Deuteronomy 4-6, 12, and 16-19.

One of the main problems, Vogt argues, is that Weinfeld builds much of his interpretation of Deuteronomy based upon his views of Exodus through Numbers, but these views are inaccurate. Vogt marshals the scholarship of Jacob Milgrom to maintain that since Weinfeld holds to wrong beliefs concerning Israel's earlier sources then his entire edifice of Deuteronomistic centralization, secularization, and demythologization falls like a house of cards.

In another place, Vogt indicates that the books of Psalms and Chronicles contain both the terms "Yahweh's glory" and "Yahweh's name" with no difficulty. There is therefore no need to set up a chasm between these two concepts as they appear in the Pentateuch; earlier Pentateuchal texts announcing Yahweh's glory do not need a Deuteronomistic revolution. Vogt then forcefully argues that Deuteronomy 12 stresses the sovereignty of Yahweh in determining where he will be worshiped, rather than restricting the number of permitted worship sites. He believes the text argues for a central, but not sole, sanctuary. Moreover, rather than repudiating the "crude concept" of Yahweh's real presence, Deuteronomy 4:39 describes Yahweh's presence as being *both* in heaven and with Israel.

Readers of this journal will find much in Vogt's work that is theologically faithful and exegetically stimulating. He consistently argues for a holistic understanding and synchronic reading of the Pentateuch, while maintaining that Yahweh's real presence is in both heaven and on earth through his appointed means. It is unfortunate and contradictory, however, that Vogt believes *Torah* obedience was the means for Israel to actualize Yahweh's presence. Another shortcoming is that nowhere in his book does Vogt argue for Mosaic dating or authorship. Nor does he discuss the fact that Deuteronomy is structured upon second millennium Hittite treaties; this means it cannot be a document written to validate the Josianic reformation.

These reservations aside, this volume offers a refreshing examination of Deuteronomy that respectfully but forthrightly challenges prevailing opinions. Vogt's study is a must read for all who seek to understand the profound theology of this book.

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***The Third Greatest Miracle of Christianity: The Appearance of Jesus to Paul (The Conversion of the Apostle St. Paul).* By William J. Hausmann. Overland, MO: Toelion Productions, n.d. 208 pages. Paperback. \$12.00.**

The author, a retired parish pastor with a Ph.D. from Drew University, has devoted his retirement years to bringing together his lifetime interest in the life and writings of the apostle whom the author argues was the major figure in the apostolic church. After explaining why the conversion of Paul ranks only after Jesus' resurrection and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, Hausmann divides his study into twelve chapters with each devoted to an aspect of the apostle's life. Chapter two, the longest chapter, lays out theories for the conversion episode and answers questions of Paul's character. Several chapters present how Paul was accepted and rejected in the early church and how the apostle's theology was in agreement with that of Jesus as presented in the Gospels. Hausmann presents his case against the backdrop of contemporary scholarly views that are often at odds with the traditional appreciation of the apostle. Pastors will find here materials for their own reflection and for edification of their members in private study or for congregational seminars.

David P. Scaer

***The Thirteenth Apostle: What the Gospel of Judas Really Says.* By April D. DeConick. London and New York: Continuum, 2007. 224 pages. Hardcover. \$19.95.**

***The Gospel of Judas: Rewriting Early Christianity.* By Simon Gathercole. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007. 208 pages. Hardcover. \$39.95.**

The public unveiling of the *Gospel of Judas*, whose text is now known from a recently restored manuscript dating from AD 220–340 that contains the only extant copy of this gnostic Gospel, was quite the media event. For prime impact, it took place through a National Geographic TV special that was broadcast on April 9, 2006, the first day of Holy Week. "The Judas Gospel" by Andrew Cockburn was the lead article in the May 2006 issue of *National Geographic Magazine* (78–95). The National Geographic sponsored translation with interpretation was released in conjunction the TV special: Rudolphe Kasser, Marvin Meyer, and Gregor Wurst, with additional commentary by Bart Ehrman, *The Gospel of Judas* (Washington, DC: National Geographic, 2006). This book was later followed by the critical edition of the Coptic text of what remains of Codex Tchacos: Rudolphe Kasser, Gregor Wurst, Marvin Meyer, and François Gaudard, *The Gospel of Judas, Critical Edition, Together with the Letter of Peter to Philip, James, and a Book of Allogenes from Codex Tchacos* (Washington, DC: National Geographic, 2007). At least eight other publications from other publishers came off the press in 2006 and 2007, whose authors were all featured in a meeting of scholars that I attended last November (see David

Scaer's "Musings on the 2007 Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature" on pages 182-184 above). Scholars agree that this Gospel was written by Sethian Gnostics who were attacking apostolic Christians for their reliance on the apostles for their teaching, especially teaching about the atoning death of Jesus which the author(s) of this Gospel found reprehensible. Two of the books featured in this session are reviewed here, both being of significant help in understanding the history and contents of the *Gospel of Judas*.

April DeConick, more than any of the other authors featured on the panel at SBL, criticized the National Geographic team for rushing to publication without following the scholarly convention of consulting with the wider community of Gnosticism scholars on translation and interpretation questions. DeConick, the Isla Carroll and Percy E. Turner Professor of Biblical Studies at Rice University, has distinguished herself over the past decade as one of the foremost interpreters of the *Gospel of Thomas* and various gnostic writings of the second and third century. Even though her book is a non-technical introduction to the *Gospel of Judas*, she writes as a specialist whose research is grounded in years of studying similar Coptic texts. Readers will notice that DeConick's writing reflects her appropriation of the Bauer hypothesis (i.e., the understanding that there was a wide diversity of "Christianities" from the earliest decades that considered themselves orthodox, but "apostolic Christianity" later won out and suppressed other expressions of Christianity).

DeConick wrote *The Thirteenth Apostle* to clear up flaws she noticed in the interpretation that the *Gospel of Judas* initially was given through the media splash, especially the positive characterization of Judas. Her research led to the conclusion that this portrayal grew from the errant choices that the National Geographic team made in translating the Coptic text. She states, "What I found were a series of translation choices made by the National Geographic team that permitted a Judas to emerge in the English translation who was different from the Judas in the Coptic original" (4). After going through a comparison of several specific translation choices where her translation differs substantively from the National Geographic translation, she concludes that this Gospel does *not* portray Judas as a hero or a Gnostic; contrary to the conclusion promoted by the initial work of the National Geographic team in its media splash, he is a demon more evil than the portrayals in other early Christian literature. DeConick's intimate knowledge of Gnosticism is apparent in both her introduction to gnostic literature and her interpretation of the *Gospel of Judas*.

If DeConick writes about Gnosticism as an "insider" who regularly breathes its air, then Simon Gathercole's *The Gospel of Judas* can be characterized as a balanced discussion by an "outsider" who wants to help readers understand the relationship of this document to what is traditionally understood as "early Christianity." Gathercole, a young New Testament scholar who teaches at the University of Cambridge, has already distinguished

himself in Pauline and Gospel studies but is a relative newcomer to Gnosticism. After an introductory chapter on the intriguing history of Codex Tchacos (discovered prior to 1978), he traces our understanding of Judas (the person) from the canonical Gospels through apocryphal literature to gnostic literature. Although Gathercole does not address translation questions such as those raised by DeConick, his running commentary on the translated text of the *Gospel of Judas* is helpful to the novice who is puzzled by what Jesus teaches here (gnostic doctrine) and the way Jesus criticizes the apostles (representative of apostolic Christianity).

Gathercole certainly affirms the diversity that existed in early Christianity and sees the important window that the *Gospel of Judas* provides to this situation, yet he challenges the Bauer hypothesis, especially as promulgated by Elaine Pagels and Bart Ehrman in their attempts to put all the various "Gospels" into one big melting pot of different perspectives on Jesus. His synthetic chapter on the theology of this Gospel in light of the theology of the New Testament distills important differences on teaching as basic as Jesus' death. He states: "The Jesus of the *Gospel of Judas* is not a person who shares in the world's suffering, but one who in splendid isolation is detached from it. In the New Testament, by contrast, Jesus' suffering and death are central themes, highlighted again and again in its different constituent books . . . [I]t is the solution to human sin and divine judgment" (168-169).

In the end, the *Gospel of Judas* tells us nothing about the historical Jesus or the historical Judas, contains no "gospel" due to its complete distaste for the atonement, but is very important for our understanding of Sethian Gnostics and the debate that raged between them and apostolic Christians in the second and third centuries. DeConick's book is an invaluable guide to those who want to understand the controversy with the translation and interpretation done by the National Geographic team. Pastors with congregation members who are puzzled by the general relationship of the *Gospel of Judas* to early Christianity can direct people to Gathercole's book as a balanced guide to both this document and its place in history.

Charles A. Gieschen

***The Spirit of the Reformation: A Guidebook for Restoring and Reforming the Lord's Supper in Worship.* By Frank G. Ciampa. [Longwood, FL]: Xulon Press, 2007. 124 pages. Paperback. \$13.99.**

The Spirit of the Reformation is an easy-to-read introduction to the Lord's Supper providing biblical and historical background along with practical suggestions. Pastors looking for a resource to provoke discussion among their members will have one here. His earthy style will appeal.

David P. Scaer