

Shorter Notices

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Contested Ethnicities and Images. Studies in Acts and Art. By David L. Balch.
Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 345. Tübingen: Mohr
Siebeck, 2015. Pp. xx + 479. €159.

This volume contains essays that Balch published from 1982 to 2012 in various venues. The essays are grouped into three sections: part I is about Luke–Acts; part II about Roman art, especially domestic art; and part III comprises two book reviews. A CD is included to view the images discussed in part II of the volume. Original essays introduce parts I and II. Such a collection of essays written over an extensive period of time allows one to see the major trends of B.’s scholarship and its evolution.

Part I groups eleven essays which focus on the debates that took place in Rome, Athens, and Jerusalem at the turn of the era about the possibility of a citizenry that included multiple ethnicities. To illustrate the various positions in these debates, the essays of this section compare and contrast the discourses found in Luke–Acts, 2 Maccabees, Eupolemus, the Greek additions to the book of Esther, the *Letter of Aristeas*, and by authors such as Josephus, Isocrates, Plutarch, and Dionysus of Halicarnassus. The latter author is the most solicited conversation partner with Luke–Acts returning in nine of the eleven essays of this section. The last essay of the section connects the issue of multiple ethnicities with the broader question of continuity and discontinuity when interpreting the NT. Accordingly, B. considers that Luke–Acts urged a political change in favor of a church membership open to multiple ethnicities. Hence, it provides a valuable model to advocate for changes such as the request of the delegates to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (B.’s denomination) to encourage bishops to ordain qualified lesbian, gay, and transgender persons as pastors.

Assuming that early Christians met in private houses for worship, several essays of part II explore how visual representations found in the houses of Pompeii and Herculaneum would have impacted early Christian imagination, especially concerning the roles of women in the Corinthian church. Domestic art would, for instance, show dying Dionysian maenads and other female prophets. In addition, one essay challenges a common belief that early Christians reclined at the Lord’s Supper by pointing out that Roman art frequently shows people sitting at tables and that gardens in Roman houses often included benches that could be used to seat a large number of guests.

Because of its detailed study of ancient Greco-Roman texts and visual representations, this collection of essays exemplifies a thorough engagement with the ongoing debates about ethnicity and gender roles that impacted early Christianity.

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Certain Sainthood: Canonization and the Origins of Papal Infallibility in the Medieval Church. By Donald S. Prudlo. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 2015. Pp. xii + 217. \$49.95.

Prudlo's book traces two developments that occurred between 1150 and 1350. One was the growth of papally controlled canonization. In contrast to local cults, a papal canonization called the entire church to venerate the saint, and was preceded by careful investigation to minimize the possibility of error. P. ably argues that popes chose to invest these canonizations with greater solemnity, universality, and certitude in order to compete with episcopal canonizations, which persisted locally until the 17th century (34–35, 74).

The other development was the increasing resistance to papally declared saints. Initially this resistance came only from Cathars and Waldensians. But with the Roman centralization of saint-making, Catholics were being told to revere saints who were unknown or even unappealing to their local churches. Some lay Catholics refused to venerate inquisitors such as Peter of Verona, while some secular clergy were unenthusiastic about the proliferation of mendicant saints (110–18).

The claim of papal infallibility in canonization, P. proposes, arose from the clash between these two developments. This claim made papal canonizations superior to local ones, while delegitimizing the rejection of new saints. By the middle of the thirteenth century, the canonization liturgy included a prayer that God not permit the pope to err. In the 1250s, Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas taught that error was impossible in a papal canonization (124–30). Indeed, Thomas's distinction between the pope's infallibility in matters of faith and in canonization anticipated the post-Tridentine distinction between the primary and secondary objects of infallibility. By the early 14th century, the Inquisition treated the rejection of a canonized saint as heresy. P.'s interpretation of his theological sources is consistently persuasive, although the causal connections he makes are occasionally less so.

Throughout this volume, P. engages with Brian Tierney, whose *Origins of Papal Infallibility* (1972, rev. 1988) located the matrix of papal infallibility in the disputes about the poverty of Christ under John XXII (1316–34). P.'s account places its origins more than half a century earlier.

Despite some unnecessary repetition, P.'s book is well argued, and significantly advances our understanding of the early development of papal infallibility.

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