

Ephesians' household code (*Haustafel*) is puzzling. He laudably cautions that it "is better not to read the Household Code at all than to read it as a privileged, self-assured" male's authorization to dominate and abuse (pp. 107-8). There are, however, implied answers to N.'s questions in his concluding treatment of the code (p. 108). Is it unfaithful to a text that prescribes subordination of women, children, and slaves [he asks] if one answers affirmatively to the Christ who does not "dominate"? Similarly, does not the appeal to the "Spirit-filled life" informing the "drama of liberation" transform the injunctions of the code? Finally, is the "mysterious way in which the chosen vulnerability serves the victory of the reign of God over violence" (p. 108) unfaithful to the text? The implied answer to these questions is a resounding no that defies logic and contradicts the contextual endorsement of patriarchy and slavery. The obvious conclusion to be drawn is that the canon of NT texts does not speak with a single voice, and attempts to make it do so, however laudable, are misguided.

This study has much to commend it; its sensitive and selective readings offer a helpful alternative to violence that is based on NT passages, and it provides a useful study guide for church groups. Yet it falls short of offering a balanced and nuanced treatment of early Christian violence, Scripture, and textual practice.

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MAURO PESCE, *Da Gesù al cristianesimo* (Antico e Nuovo Testamento 11; Brescia: Morcelliana, 2011). Pp. 267. Paper €20.

Mauro Pesce, along with anthropologist Adriana Destro, has pursued the topic of this study for some years, already with an impressive bibliography (four and a half pages of the bibliography at the end of this book). This latest effort poses two familiar questions that it seeks to answer in some preliminary way: Who was the historical Jesus, and how did the movement he began develop into what is later known as Christianity?

Pesce argues that we need a reliable historical portrait of Jesus in order to understand the forces that led his followers in such a new direction. For P., Jesus was a Hebrew ("ebreo") prophet and visionary who did not intend to found a new religion. While much emphasis has been given to Jesus' words and deeds, P. thinks not enough attention has been devoted to his *pratica di vita*, his chosen lifestyle. That lifestyle was eschatologically oriented. Jesus was not primarily a theologian or thinker but a religious person who sought in his practice to accomplish what he thought he ought to do. The primary explanation for the actions of Jesus and his disciples is thus not their theology but their religious experience.

According to P., it is incorrect to think of the quest of the historical Jesus in three modern stages; this works only for the Anglo-Saxon/German world. Rather, the quest is geographically wider and goes back at least to the eleventh century (perhaps even to Origen).

Pesce begins by reviewing the history of research, with suggested lists of unattributed sayings in early literature outside the Gospels: twenty-seven in Paul, eighteen in James, and fifteen in the *Didachē*. He then turns to a study of the remission of sin tied to mutual forgiveness in a social context as essential to Jesus' eschatological vision of the reign of God. His detailed study of what can be known about pre-70 theology of temple sacrifice leads to the conclusion that Jesus did not oppose it, and that it is a methodological error to begin with Jesus' death as sacrifice and judge Israelite religion against it.

Part 2 begins with the question, When can we really speak of Christians? For P., the appearance of the word in Acts and 1 Peter is insufficient, because the reality exists only when there is a clear distinction from Judaism, which does not happen before the middle of the second century and is mostly later. A simple evolution into “the parting of the ways” is facile, and the term “Jewish Christianity” did not exist in antiquity. Historical research therefore must refrain from assuming continuity between the historical Jesus and what by the fourth century became Christianity. The words “Jewish” and “Judaism” can mean an ethnicity, a way of life, a religion, or any combination of the three. Opposing these terms to “gentile” is not helpful because “gentile” means none of the above, and “Christian” refers in modern understanding only to a religion (but possibly also a way of life?). P. argues that a community became Christian only when as such it adhered to a *culture* that was consciously not Jewish.

For P., Justin in the mid-second century represents the attempt to legitimate what has happened: a “Christian” consciousness based on the Jewish Jesus has moved beyond its origins. His well-known description of six kinds of practice of Jesus-believers vis-à-vis the law and those who tried to observe it in several different ways states what has already happened: Justin calls “Christian” only those followers who are not ethnically Jewish (*Dial.* 47). Those who are Jews do not have a name, but they do have a place: the synagogue. Those who are not Jews have a name, Christian, but not a single place to meet.

A final chapter raises questions for reflection. P. is clear that he does not intend in this final section to present evidence or reasoned discussion. Jesus saw himself as living just before the coming of the reign of God and was influenced by Daniel 7, with its key function of the Son of Man. What relationship did Jesus think he had with this figure? Instead of the reign of God came Jesus’ death. For Paul, instead of the reign of God comes the resurrection. P. also raises important issues about which Jesus left no directions because he did not envision them: conversion of non-Jews, nonappearance of the reign of God, and how to organize the community. With these three conundrums the early community of followers had to be inventive.

The flexibility of Italian to create related adjectives and nouns is refreshing: thus such words as *gesuano* (pertaining to Jesus), *neotestamentaristi* (NT scholars), and P.’s invention, *giovannismo* (Johannism, the Johannine literary and theological way of thinking). P. does not escape the pitfall into which we all trip of assigning sayings of Jesus that fit his image of Jesus as authentic (e.g., the eschatological sayings) and those that do not as later additions (e.g., critique of sacrifice). Nevertheless, creative questions are posed here and credible answers are offered. A stimulating read.

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BARTOLOMEO PUCA, *Una periautologia paradossale: Analisi retorico-letteraria di Gal 1,13–2,21* (Tesi Gregoriana, Serie Teologia 186; Rome: Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 2011). Pp. 309. Paper €20.

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