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Review of *The Antenicene Pascha: A Rhetorical History*, by By Karl Gerlach

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Vatican II, Volume Two, edited by Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph Komonchak) can be useful to elaborate on the all too human process of determining conciliar teaching. A conciliar or magisterial fundamentalism needs to be avoided, even when dealing with texts from Vatican II. The last two chapters offer a synthesis of the work of two established Italian theologians of the liturgy, S. Sequeri and G. Bonaccorso (chapter eleven), as well as an all too brief indication of where Grillo himself charts the future direction for relating liturgy and theology (chapter twelve). In this last chapter he indicates that anthropology and culture need to emerge as primary factors in delineating a theological estimation of liturgical rites, which insights are very familiar to most students of liturgy and theology today.

The book stands as a building block in Grillo's developing *oeuvre*. Despite his review of several others' works the book is not a primer or introduction. One needs some background in the authors he discusses to understand his useful arguments. The copious bibliography is almost exclusively of European authors (there are only five English entries in seventeen pages). As such it provides those already familiar with the main lines of the contemporary debate about "liturgical theology" in English-speaking countries with a helpful overview, retrospective and critique of these issues in Europe. But the book breaks little new ground. Its most severe limitation is that it demonstrates Grillo's not being in dialogue with authors outside of Europe who have grappled in significant ways with ritual studies and the social sciences (among a plethora of other things) as these relate to a contemporary study of Christian liturgical ritual. However, as Grillo matures and develops (and deepens his knowledge of these and other English language contributions to liturgical theology) it is likely that his will be a significant voice among those in the postconciliar era seeking to develop a stronger relationship between liturgy and theology.

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Kevin W. Irwin

The Antenicene Pascha: A Rhetorical History. By Karl Gerlach. Leuven, Belgium: Uitgeverij Peeters 1998. Pages, 453. Paper, 1570 BEF. ISBN: 90-429-0570-0.

With its engaging writing style, welcome method of investigation, fulsome notes and bibliography, aversion to simple us-vs.-them dichotomy for Sunday observers and Quartodecimans, its keen translations of primary and secondary texts, and refreshingly designed use of rhetorical criticism, *The Antenicene Pascha* is one terrific book. It is dense and difficult, witty and wonderful. The author's direct indictments of much previous work on

Pascha in the first three Christian centuries will likely make a number of authors squirm or turn over in their paschal tombs. But other scholars will enjoy the wealth of information and clearly argued perspective.

As examples of the engaging writing style, one finds Philo of Alexandria portrayed as “[u]rbane but pedantically repetitive, mystical yet conscious of social position and propriety,” and those addressed in 1 Corinthians as “a gaggle of carping enthusiasts, rabid individualists with a boomtown swagger.” Coming upon a description of an Alexandrian bishop’s weariness dealing with those demanding exactness for the end of the paschal fast, we find: “The Bridegroom is absent. Synchronize your watches.” The two ways the fourth-century bishop of Caesarea is usually portrayed are rendered as “either an omniscient Eusebius suppressing information to support some hidden agenda or a rankly stupid Eusebius . . . misconstru[ing] the letters he read”; and the same Eusebius’ image of Victor, bishop of Rome, pictures that he “does not leap tall buildings in a single bound.”

Wonderful in making it clear that making calendars, whether religious or civil, is as much or more about social consensus as it is about accurate astronomy and mathematics. And that these things do not happen overnight.

Because I found the book so engaging and revelatory about many issues of content and method, I regret that it has a rather inaccessible title. Might the work still have been true to its purpose and been entitled something more search-friendly than “The Antenicene Pascha”? Would it not have been more attractive with a title like “Easter in the First Three Centuries” or “Easter after the Death of Jesus.” (Raniero Cantalamessa’s collection of Easter texts beat Gerlach to the most attractive, no-nonsense title: *Easter in the Early Church*.)

There are some stylistic errors and inconsistencies, but few of these impede the progress of the argument or the reader’s fascination with the analysis of texts and past (erroneous) interpretations of the texts. (Among the few, however, I was amusingly derailed into a fruitless search in the OED for what might have been the meaning behind the author’s use of “acribious” [pages 198, 200, 346], “acribiously” [201], and, even, “acribiousness” [207].)

I never did figure out the author’s method for what got abbreviated and what did not, other, of course, than that those I did not know usually were not in the long list and those I could have guessed at were. Especially in the first quarter of the book, there were a number of abbreviations absent from the list.

On the study of the meaning of Easter, liturgical scholars have been overly fixed on mere chronology when recounting the evidence. Karl

Gerlach's rewarding effort in rhetorical criticism gave him, and now us, the ability to see with new eyes contentions regarding the evolution of Easter between the death of Jesus and the congregation of bishops who would discuss the dating of Easter at the Council of Nicaea in 325 C.E.

Another major contribution of the manuscript is to broaden the recurrent dualisms in the academic characterization of the Easter controversies as Jewish vs. Gentile, pascha-passio vs. pascha-transitus, cross vs. resurrection, Quartodecimans vs. Sunday observers, date vs. day, Eastern vs. Western, etc. This is no mean accomplishment because the evidence is not plentiful and, because of this dearth, lends itself readily to easy splits, good guys (whom tradition calls "Christians") and bad guys ("heretics").

An oversight of the book is the presumption that paschal baptism was a continuous practice throughout the period and places of his investigation. Paul Bradshaw, with whose work the author is familiar, has convincingly called this long-time presumption into question. (See Bradshaw's "*Diem baptismo solemniorem: Initiation and Easter in Christian Antiquity*," in Maxwell Johnson, ed., *Living Water, Sealing Spirit* [Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press 1995] 137-47.) In spite of these difficulties, I confidently recommend *The Antenicene Pascha*.

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Calvin's Doxology: Worship in the 1559 "Institutes" with a View to Contemporary Worship Renewal. By Pamela Ann Moeller. Princeton Theological Monograph Series 44. Allison Park, Pennsylvania: Pickwick Publications 1997. Pages, viii-186. Paper, \$25.00. ISBN 1-55635-035-X.

Pamela Ann Moeller offers "a fresh reading" of the final edition of Calvin's *Institutes* in order to show how the theme of worship, broadly understood, permeates the entire work. God's Word and the response of faith form the poles of Christian life, "a life initiated and enabled solely by God, a life constituted by dynamic, dialogical, loving relationship with God and all humankind." That is the context within which to locate Calvin's doctrine about Scripture, preaching, the sacraments of font and table, prayer, the Sunday assembly, and the shape and ceremonies of public liturgy. Moeller stresses the importance to Calvin of God's accommodation to the condition of humankind as creatures and sinners — and, correspondingly, the role which Calvin, for all his emphasis on the intellect and the will, recognizes to our bodily senses and our emotions. Especially in the final chapter, Moeller seeks by a method of "expansive exposition" to extract from Calvin lessons for the church's worship today.



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