

one wonders if the terms 'mission' and 'evangelism' are not a bit anachronistic and deserving of more nuance and explanation vis-à-vis their socio-historical context. In fact, Plummer nowhere expounds upon his definition of 'the gospel' – perhaps a seemingly innocuous issue, but understanding the content of the message is critical to determining its heralds.

This work will be of interest to pastors and theology students who are seeking an in-depth investigation of the church's role in the world from the Apostle Paul's perspective. Though we have little information in the pauline corpus, Plummer offers a detailed analysis of several strands of Paul's thinking that focuses on this neglected area of importance for the church.

*Nijay K. Gupta, Durham, England*

### ***The Earliest Christian Artifacts Manuscripts and Christian origins***

**Larry W. Hurtado**

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006, xiv + 248 pp.,

\$22.00, pb, ISBN 0-8028-2895-7

#### **SUMMARY**

Hurtado discusses the form of the oldest manuscripts of the Christian Scriptures, in particular the transition from roll to codex and the so-called *nomina sacra* abbreviations. This interesting book is full of data and will increase our respect for the transmission of the Scriptures.

#### **ZUSAMMENFASSUNG**

Hurtado diskutiert die Form der ältesten Handschriften der christlichen Schrift, insbesondere den Übergang von der Schriftrolle zum Kodex und den so genannten *nomina sacra* Abkürzungen. Dieses interessante Buch ist eine große Datensammlung und wird unseren Respekt vor der Überlieferung der Schrift erhöhen.

#### **RÉSUMÉ**

Hurtado étudie la forme des plus anciens manuscrits du Nouveau Testament. Il s'intéresse en particulier à la transition du rouleau au codex et aux abréviations des noms sacrés. Cet ouvrage intéressant fourmille d'informations et invite au respect pour la transmission des Écritures.

\* \* \* \*

This is a book about biblical manuscripts but not about textual criticism. Instead Hurtado, professor of NT at Edinburgh University, looks at the physical characteristics of the earliest Christian manuscripts. The result is an attractive presentation that will even appeal to those who find textual criticism too technical or just boring. Hurtado argues convincingly that we can learn more from manuscripts than which text-form they represent. He shows for example how a single fragmentary sheet of a codex enables scholars calculate the size of the entire codex from which it came.

In the first chapter the author introduces us to the large number of preserved Christian manuscripts which date from the second and third centuries. For example, there are 18 fragments which contain fragments of the Psalms (LXX), 16 of John's Gospel, 12 of Matthew, 11 of the Shepherd of Hermas and just 1 of Mark. Not all books of the OT and the later NT are represented in what survives from this earliest period. Although the vast majority of the manuscripts stem from Egypt, Hurtado presumes that the situation in that country is representative for early Christianity in general. Writings that were later declared apocryphal are far less represented than books of the later NT. There are very early indications that Paul's epistles and the Gospels were copied together into one codex, and from around the year 300 there is a fragment which points to a collection of all Johannine writings (Gospel, Revelation and Letters) in one codex. This is physical evidence for the formation of a kind of canon.

The second chapter focuses on the Christian adoption of the codex over against the roll, which also happened very early on. As our sources do not discuss the reasons for this transition, it is left to later scholars to make out why it happened. Although certainty in this regard cannot (yet) be achieved, Hurtado argues that practical advantages cannot have been the only reason. Anyway, the codex should be seen as an expression of a Christian "material culture". They never used a new roll for any NT text, although they did recycle old rolls. The fact that two of the three preserved fragments of the Gospel of Thomas are on rolls would suggest that "Thomas" was not regarded as Scripture.

Chapter 3 deals with the *nomina sacra*, that is the habit of abbreviating words such as God, Jesus, Lord and Christ. This appears to be a typically Christian convention, not copied from the Jews although possibly inspired by their reverent approach to the divine Name. Hurtado argues that the phenomenon of the *nomina sacra* is not a device to save space but rather an expression of faith. It testifies to the early worship of Jesus as God. Chapter 4 discusses the stauogram, an early combination of the Greek letters tau and rho which was used in many manuscripts to abbreviate the words for cross (*stauros*) and crucify, and which looks like a person on a cross. Hurtado regards it as the earliest visual representation of the crucifixion, far older than any other such picture. The fifth and final chapter deals with various other subjects such as the size of codices, margins, lines per page, reader aids such as spaces, and corrections. It is interesting that Christian codices are generally smaller than non-Christian ones.

For me as an Evangelical scholar the book gave ample evidence of the care the early copyists took in passing the sacred texts on. Although we do not have the autographs, the transmission and reliability of the New Testament text are nothing short of impressive. The book is well-written, illustrated with graphs and photos, and it has the usual indexes. It deserves a place next to Alan



Millard's *Reading and writing in the time of Jesus* (Sheffield Academic Press, 2000) and Harry Gamble's *Book and readers in the early church* (Yale University Press, 1995). Knowledge of Greek is useful to appreciate the contents but not essential. Those who have read Hurtado's scholarly articles on the subject will not find many new elements here.

Pieter J. Lalleman, London, England

*The Thirteenth Apostle:  
What the Gospel of Judas Really Says*

April D. DeConick

London: Continuum, 2007, xxi + 202 pp., £16.99,  
hb, ISBN 978-0-8264-9964-6

SUMMARY

In April 2006, the National Geographic (NG) Society published a transcription and a translation of the gospel of Judas and featured a televised documentary which portrayed Judas as the closest of Jesus' disciples. In her most recent monograph, April DeConick acts as a spokeswoman for a group of scholars arguing that this new gospel does not rehabilitate Judas, but rather understands him within a Sethian gnostic context as a demon. Her reassessment is based upon six corrections to the original NG translation.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Im April 2006 veröffentlichte die National Geographic (NG) Society eine Abschrift und Übersetzung des Judasevangeliums und sendete einen Dokumentarfilm im Fernsehen, in dem Judas als der Jünger dargestellt wurde, der Jesus am nächsten stand. In ihrer neuesten Monographie spricht April DeConick für eine Gruppe von Gelehrten, die argumentieren, dieses neue Evangelium sei keine Rehabilitierung des Judas, sondern es verstehe Judas innerhalb einer sethianischen Gnosis als eine Dämon. Ihre Neubewertung basiert auf sechs Korrekturen an der ursprünglichen NG-Übersetzung.

RÉSUMÉ

En avril 2006, la Société Nationale de Géographie (britannique) a publié une transcription et une traduction de l'évangile de Judas, et a présenté un documentaire télévisé qui faisait de Judas le disciple de Jésus le plus proche du Maître. Dans cette récente monographie, April DeConick se fait la porte-parole d'un groupe de spécialistes soutenant la thèse que ce nouvel évangile, loin de réhabiliter Judas, le présente comme un démon en le situant dans un contexte gnostique. Cette interprétation se fonde sur six corrections apportées à la traduction initiale de la SNG.

\* \* \* \*

One can categorize DeConick's corrections into three groups. Although she cites semantics and grammar in each case, other factors play a significant role. Two of her corrections deal with lexical semantics (44:21, 46:17-

18), three deal primarily with context (46:5-7, 56:18-19, 56:23), and one deals with an emendation of the Coptic text (46:25).

In the two cases dealing strictly with lexical semantics, DeConick argues convincingly that the NG translators forced the translation to produce a beneficent Judas. Her next three corrections derive largely from context and not grammar. If the extensive lacunae around these three passages were to be restored, the discussion might be renewed. DeConick's analysis of the second passage from this group could be enhanced; in 46:5-7, she correctly cites the particle  $\omega$  as emphatic, but she translates and references it in a footnote as an interjection (pp. 53, 187 en. 29). Likewise, DeConick's gloss could be improved here by reassessing her uses (1) of the Greek loan word  $\gamma\eta\eta\tau\alpha\kappa\kappa\epsilon$  and (2) of the difference between transitive/intransitive and active/passive (pp. 79, 188 en. 9). This passage should read "Master, never does my (emphatic) seed submit to the archons!" Whereas the NG team interpreted this statement by Judas as a question, DeConick correctly renders it as an exclamation. The decision is one that derives more from context than from grammar, however.

One of DeConick's corrections concerns an emendation in the Coptic transcription. Unfortunately, the NG non-disclosure policy forced DeConick to rely on second-hand information in 46:25, where the emendation involves an entire word-phrase rather than one letter as she states (p. 54). The problem is not a supplied <N> as DeConick supposes, but is the correction of the original noun phrase which followed the <N> to a wholly different verbal phrase (<N> $\eta\eta\kappa\kappa\tau\eta$  →  $\eta\eta\kappa\kappa\omega\kappa$ ). DeConick's thesis, however, is firmly supported by the reinterpretation of the phrase "will curse" as "to you and" in this passage, but this is only secondarily related to the text critical/paleographic reconstruction termed "a terrible mistake" (ibid.).

DeConick's most compelling argument for her reassessment of the gospel of Judas does not rest in these revisions to the NG translation. Her Sethian gnostic reading is far more natural than NG team's translation which appears to have been influenced by the patristic descriptions of the gospel of Judas. In particular, she maintains that the appellation "O Thirteenth Demon" (pp. 77, 109-124, 44:21) is an immediate association with the Demiurge, the evil God of the Old Testament. Ironically, the demon Judas understands Jesus better than his disciples – parallel to the demons in Mark's gospel (pp. 103-108). In this manner, the gospel of Judas parodies the "Apostolic" gospels, and argues for a Sethian gnostic worldview (ch. 8).

In the main text of the book, DeConick is generally conservative in her criticism of the NG project, but she is less sympathetic in "Appendix 4: Q&A with April DeConick." She describes the NG team's monopoly of the document as having "robbed the academic community of the opportunity to freely discuss this Gospel..." (p. 181) and as "at the expense of our field... in terms of