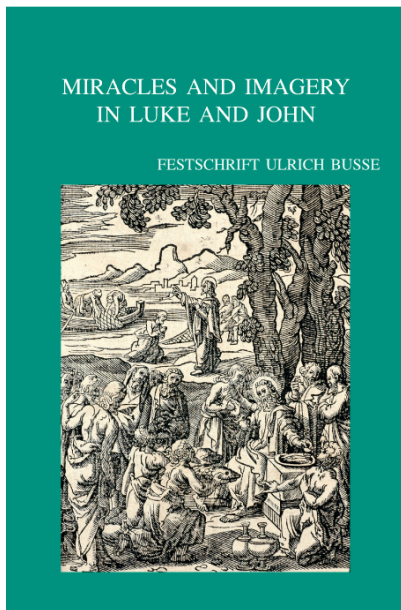


RBL 06/2009



Verheyden, J., G. Van Belle, and J. G. van der Watt, eds.

Miracles and Imagery in Luke and John: Festschrift Ulrich Busse

Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum
Lovaniensium 218

Leuven: Peeters, 2008. Pp. xviii + 287. Paper. €78.00.
ISBN 9789042921153.

Peter J. Judge
Winthrop University
Rock Hill, South Carolina

This volume is a testament to the life and scholarship of Ulrich Busse on the occasion of his formal retirement as professor of theology at the University of Essen. As the title indicates, the twelve contributions center on the great foci of Busse's career: miracles in the Gospel of Luke (see especially his *Die Wunder des Propheten Jesus: Die Rezeption, Komposition und Interpretation der Wundertradition im Evangelium des Lukas*, 1977) and images in the Gospel of John (see especially *Das Johannesevangelium: Bildlichkeit, Diskurs und Ritual*, 2002).

Paul Hoffmann (Bamberg), for whom Busse was an assistant from 1977 to 1982, opens the volume with "Blinde Führer? Christliche Gemeindeleitung im Visier des Lukas," a study of the "blind guides" and the teacher-disciple relationship mentioned in Luke 6:39–40, within, of course, the Q complex that makes up the sermon. Hoffmann first attends to the original wording in Q, with the judgment that Luke 6:39bc, 40 (with a couple of changes) is essentially the text of Q. As for the position of the sayings in Q, Hoffman thinks, against Schürmann and others, that Luke has placed them here in the sermon from their original context. Finally, Luke's redactional purpose in H's view was to shift the emphasis of the sayings away from concern about false teachers to the responsibility of leaders in the Christian community to follow the example and teaching of Jesus.

Rudolf Hoppe (Bonn), in “Lk 5,1–11 unter Anthropologischem Aspekt,” takes up a Lukan story that Busse himself studied several times: the miraculous catch of fish. He sees the pericope as an “Idealszene” in which the reader becomes aware of possibilities in the kingdom present in Jesus. Simon Peter is the ideal disciple whose humble self-understanding enables him to be commissioned by Jesus. James and John “get it” when they witness the scene between Jesus and Peter; these fishing partners become partners in discipleship as well. The crowd are those who see only miracle, and about them Jesus remains reticent. As we discover in the rest of the Gospel, however, what we learn here about ideal discipleship can be shipwrecked when focus is lost on Jesus as the point of intersection for the divine and human worlds.

Bart J. Koet (Utrecht/Tilburg) and Wendy E. S. North (Durham), a Lukan and a Johannine scholar, respectively, put together a study of the figure Martha in her two most prominent Gospel appearances: “The Image of Martha in Luke 10,38–42 and in John 11, 1–12,8.” They call attention to an activity that typifies Martha in both Gospels: *διακονία/διακονεῖν* (Luke 10:40, noun and verb; John 12:2, verb). Traditionally, she is stereotyped as the patron of cooks and housewives, but these authors conclude that, in Luke, Martha is rather a servant of the kingdom of God. The story of the two siblings is “not one of opposition between inferior work and superior position” but a clear call to full discipleship “intended to clarify the priority between two important virtues, one being to receive the master and the other being to learn from the teacher”(65). Meanwhile, “in John’s interpretation of Luke’s material,” Martha’s call and capacity to grow in discipleship is fully exploited to the point that she is a model of the same (66).

In “The Meaning of the Double Expression of Time in Luke 24,29,” Adelbert Denaux (Leuven) and Inge Van Wiele (Leuven) question the somewhat common understanding of the road-to-Emmaus disciples’ words to Jesus, *πρὸς ἑσπέραν ἔστιν καὶ κέκλικεν ἤδη ἡ ἡμέρα*, to mean that it is (almost) dark and the day is nearly over. Their invitation is thus because of the late hour, and this can even be spiritualized to signify protection from the “darkness.” Denaux and Van Wiele show, however, that this interpretation cannot be correct, especially in view of the fact that all the subsequent events of Luke 24 seem to take place on this first day of the week. They argue that the two parts of the time expression are parallel and should be understood simply to mean that the sun has passed its noontime summit: it is “toward evening” as the sun begins its descent. This leads to the further demonstration that the symbolism Luke evokes has little to do with darkness but instead with the fact that the Emmaus meal took place at about 3 p.m., the time for the traditional evening sacrifice and the hour of Jesus’ death, and the narration of all the resurrection events as taking place on the first day of the week.

Tobias Nicklas (Regensburg) offers a study, “*Jesu Zweites Zeichen (Joh 4,43–45.46–54): Abgründe einer Glaubensgeschichte*,” stimulated in part by Busse’s unusual interpretation in 2002 that there is actually a degradation in the royal official’s faith between John 4:50 (belief in the word of Jesus) and 4:53 (belief upon ascertaining that the healing has actually happened). The point was to alert the reader of the Gospel to the inherent danger that faith can deteriorate into inadequacy or even be lost. That was quite a departure from Haenchen’s 1980 comment (edited by Busse) that the official first believes simply that Jesus would heal his son but later comes to fuller faith (in Jesus himself) when he realizes the healing took place at the moment Jesus spoke. Nicklas acknowledges some sense in Busse’s reading—after all, the story could well end with the man believing Jesus’ word and leaving (v. 50). Yet by examining the immediate context (the problems and possibilities raised by vv. 43–45) and the pericope’s relationship to what the Gospel has presented thus far (especially its completion of the Cana-to-Cana cycle), Nicklas concludes that this is a story of genuine faith in which the official comes to understand the “hour” when the Father’s Son, who is the Word, speaks the word.

D. Francois Tolmie (Bloemfontein) seeks to understand Jesus’ gesture of giving bread to Judas in “*Jesus, Judas and a Morsel: Interpreting a Gesture in John 13,21–30*.” Numerous possibilities emerge from the literature, and Tolmie tries to make the best sense of the scene within the “metaphorical network functioning in the Gospel” (123). He first examines the characterization of Judas in the Fourth Gospel (he is basically one-dimensional: the disciple, induced by the devil, to betray his master) and then examines the identification of Judas as the traitor by the giving of the morsel. This results in an interpretation of the gesture as one of feeding by Jesus in a context of friendship, and an ironical act at that. “Jesus, the Bread of Life, the one who provides spiritual life, hands a piece of physical bread to someone who is physically alive, but spiritually dead. ... [Judas] thus receives bread, but not life” (123). With a nod to Busse’s own comment on the gesture (2002), Tolmie points out how it warns the implied reader that it is possible to be close to Jesus and still not understand and not obtain life.

Jan A. Du Rand (Johannesburg), “*The Johannine ‘Group’ and ‘Grid’: Reading John 13,31–14,31 from Narratological and Sociological Perspectives*,” analyzes the first Farewell Discourse of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel. As a narrative, the discourse presents a complete action that communicates the point of view of the narrator and functions to penetrate the reader “to such an extent that he/she is led by the text to discover the real meaning of discipleship” and so become a stronger disciple (128). Applying Mary Douglas’s anthropological model for a sociological reading of the discourse, Du Rand determines that it narrates the perspective of a strong “group” (a high degree of societal pressure to conform) and high “grid” (a high degree of societally constrained adherence by individuals). It reflects a Johannine community that is under the metaphysical leadership

of the Spirit, that has clearly drawn community boundaries as it faces the threat of the world, and that is convinced it will exist forever.

In “Misunderstanding, Irony and Mistaken Identity in References to Jesus as KYPIOΣ in John’s Gospel,” Gert J. Steyn (Pretoria) examines those uses of κύριος in the Fourth Gospel where it seems to be a polite form of address to Jesus in the sense of “Sir,” although there is a certain ambiguity. In fact, Steyn says, these “polite” uses “would never be read in a simplistic manner by post-Easter Christians whenever it is used of Jesus” (158). Rather, even when characters address Jesus politely as κύριος on the surface, there is always a christological undertone for the narrator and the audience. “From their perspective, addressing Jesus as κύριος in different situations by those characters, is the ironical confirmation of his identity, without the characters themselves knowing who he is (158). Even these uses of κύριος contribute to John’s Christology.

Michael Theobald (Tübingen) offers the second study of the miraculous catch of fish in this volume, this one an engaging look at Augustine’s homiletic interpretation of John 21 and its relationship with Luke 5 and a comparison with modern exegesis: “Der Wunderbare Fischzug (Lk 5,1–11 und Joh 21,1–14) in der Deutung Augustins (*Hom. in Joa.* 122–123,3).” Scholars today approach the texts on a literary level with questions about sources and composition; Augustine read them synoptically and compared them with regard to their symbolic or allegorical meaning. Nevertheless, Theobald finds that Augustine was asking essentially the same questions that modern exegetes ask: how to understand the relationship of John 21 to the rest of that Gospel and how to understand the relationship between John’s version of the catch of fish and Luke’s.

Maarten J. J. Menken (Utrecht/Tilburg) wonders about the significance of the reference to Cain in a letter otherwise lacking explicit Old Testament references in “The Image of Cain in 1 John 3,12.” After comparing the text of the letter with the narrative in Genesis and the haggadic tradition, he concludes that, while the problems confronted in 1 John needed no scriptural arguments otherwise, the image of Cain was “too obvious to let it go”—it provided the author with just the characterization he needed to speak to his audience about his opponents and theirs.

In “Miracles Grecs, Rabbiniques et Évangéliques,” Jean-Marie Van Cangh (Louvain-la-Neuve) compares and contrasts the miracles of Jesus with those of the healer-god Asclepius, the itinerant preacher and miracle-worker Apollonius of Tyana, and the rabbinic miracle stories about Honi the Circle-Drawer and Hanina ben Dosa. In each case the method of miracle-working or the ethos and purpose for it are quite different from what is seen in the Synoptic miracles of Jesus. Here faith is a condition for the miracle, not merely faith in Jesus’ power but in his delivery of the kingdom of God. His miracles

mark the end of the old world and the beginning of an eschatological era. They are not for the here and now but a sign of what is to come.

In the final essay, "A Hermeneutics of Relevance: Reading the Bible in Dialogue in African Contexts," Jan G. Van der Watt (Pretoria) is concerned about the gaps between the (northern-dominated) critical methods of biblical scholarship and the existential cultural context of the Christianities of Africa and between those two worlds and the cultural world of the biblical text itself. Van der Watt skillfully takes us through a theoretical discussion and then a practical exercise in building bridges that respect the distinctive integrity of all three "worlds" but establish connections to the ancient and the scholarly world that are relevant and meaningful to the lived world of Africans today.

There are an unusual number of editing errors, but otherwise the volume is well put together with a portrait and bibliography of Busse and the usual indices (authors, biblical and other references) and quality production one has come to expect from a BETL volume.