MEDIEVAL READINGS
OF ROMANS

Edited by
William S. Campbell, Peter S. Hawkins
and Brenda Deen Schildgen

ROMANS THROUGH HISTORY AND CULTURES SERIES
The Rhetorical-Theological Presence of Romans in Dante: A Comparison of Methods in Philosophical Perspective

William Franke

The essays by Jean Doutré, Peter S. Hawkins, and Brenda Deen Schildgen on the medieval reception of Romans employ different and apparently incommensurable methods. Taken together, however, they show that history, semiotics, and philology can all converge in illuminating the way that theological ideas are inflected by time and tradition; they demonstrate in particular how the meaning of a discourse such as that of Paul’s Letter to the Romans depends essentially on how it becomes incarnate in history from age to age. Stepping back from specific fields of scholarly specialization in order to view these convergences, a more philosophical method conceived broadly in terms of the history of ideas may also prove fruitful. It can help bring to light some crucial conceptual contours of the appropriation of Romans in the Middle Ages.

In “Female Monasticism in the Twelfth Century: Peter Abelard, Heloise, and Paul’s Letter to the Romans,” Brenda Schildgen reads a handful of letters exchanged between Abelard and Heloise, placing them in a general historical context and situating them for their use of Paul and specifically of Romans. On the basis of this analysis Schildgen proposes some hypotheses regarding the significance of Romans in the twelfth century. It turns out that Heloise attributes a very specific meaning to the Letter as she uses it to construct an argument in favor of making adaptations in the Benedictine Rule that will render it more practicable for women living in religious community. As abbess of a female monastery, Heloise pleads for a new Rule that will relax the rigors of the Law in the interest of nurturing inwardsness and faith. Rigid adherence to regulations is not the most important thing in Christian spiritual life in general, she points out, and Paul’s

Letter to the Romans provides an emblematic, authoritative statement in support of this principle. Schildgen shows the extent to which Heloise’s argument assimilates and even derives from Romans’ own meditation on Law and its limitations. Abelard then takes up and expands on Heloise’s citations and commentaries, evidently endorsing her argument as a valid application of the principles articulated in Paul’s Letter. He accordingly responds with considerable comprehension to her claims concerning special female exigencies that require a different discipline from that laid down by the Rule for male communities.

Schildgen’s paper in this way highlights the antinomian connotations of Romans. In this Letter, taken jointly with the Letter to the Galatians, Paul meditates on the Torah and comes to the conclusion that in God’s providential plan the Law was given as a “schoolmaster” — παιδαγωγός (Gal 3:24) — meant to bring us to salvation. In itself, however, the Law can lead only to condemnation (4:15). Still, it does so precisely in order that grace may abound. A certain transcendence of Law and of every possibility of comprehension of God’s saving act is the upshot of Paul’s boldly original meditation, and this suspension of all legal calculation and coercion has remained the hallmark of the theology of Romans (and Galatians) ever since. It is the seed of the notion of salvation by faith alone, and not by works of the Law (however good and many they may be), which was eventually to sprout in the Reformed theology conceived by Luther.

Working from a methodological position that is apparently the polar opposite of a historical approach, Jean Doutré develops a semiotic interpretation in his paper “Romans as Read in the School and in the Cloister,” which compares two important medieval commentaries on the Letter, one by Peter Abelard and the other by William of Saint Thierry. The semiotic method works on a principle of binary oppositions, in this case focusing particularly on the opposition between Abelard’s theological versus William’s mystical reading of Romans. Doutré’s method discriminates between different significances of the same passages as found in these different authors, or sometimes even within the text of a single author. He thereby interrogates the significance attributed to certain passages in Romans when read in Scholastic and again in monastic ambiances. Such a structural method serves, in this way, to disclose significant patterns within the conceptual fabric of the historical cultures to which the texts analyzed belong. In the end, structuralist tools are applied in order to obtain a more precise knowledge of an aspect of the theological history of the twelfth century.

A more philological method is employed by Peter Hawkins as he explores the question of what specific significance Romans has for Dante. His answer requires considerable hermeneutical effort and erudition, for it is not very evident on the surface of Dante’s texts that Romans has any particular importance in them at all. Most
The theoretical foundation of human learning.

In any case, I think it should be admitted that parts of the human mind are in

Connect to the other party. Absolute mind and thinking mind.

For some, this means that the human mind is not a passive receiver of information but an active participant in the process of learning.

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The hierarchical structure of this essay's argument is evident in the way the text is organized. The main points are introduced in the introduction, with each subsequent section building on the previous one. The conclusion summarizes the main arguments and provides a final perspective on the topic. The use of paragraphs helps to clarify the flow of ideas, making it easier for the reader to follow the argument. The essay is well-organized and easy to read, with clear transitions between sections.
to God and in turn effects justification and sanctification.

The assurance of the gospel is God's love by Christ in us, which brings us

the children of God.

For this reason we confess the true doctrine of the liberty of
repentance. Those who this doctrine is not the origin of Christ's
restitution is the hinge upon which the Christian Church's witness
stands.

The primary effect of justification is humankind and not an ascendant
soul.

There is victory over sin and there is reconciliation and freedom of
the human nature.

The purpose of the promise is to effect the change by a reconciliation
Christ's presence.

Paul's instruction and reconciliation center on this God has bound us
more to God through love by the unique grace and our duty
of the human nature.

Romans 3:26-3:31 (not many specimens, but several) 3:36

Another look at Abird's Commentary on Romans

H. Lawrence Bond, "Another Look at Abird's Commentary on Romans

James D. G. Dunn

Bond, Ian Christopher Levy, and Thomas R. Ryman.

Some Responses to the Essays of H. Lawrence

Romans in the Middle Ages: Nine —

Notes

James is quoted from James N. D. to whom he refers in his essay.

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