

made. First, Houtman helpfully places the instructions for the building of the tabernacle (Exod. 25-31) in parallel columns with the actual construction of it (Exod. 35-40), thereby allowing the reader to see the similarities and differences in the texts without constantly flipping pages back and forth. Second, the general tone of the commentary is exegetical and critical; while theological comments are sprinkled throughout, the focus of the work is not theological per se. Third, not all of the bibliographical references in this volume are complete, since the full citation can be found in the first volume. This in turn means that one will either have to acquire volume one as well, or do independent bibliographical research, in order to make full use of these references.

In sum, this work is an important addition and contribution to research in Exodus, and will no doubt become a well-worn volume for those involved in the study of that book.

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The Abolition of the Laity: Vocation, Work and Ministry in Biblical Perspective

Paul Stevens

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RÉSUMÉ

Ce livre défend avec des arguments bibliques et théologiques le point de vue selon lequel les ministères de l'Eglise appartiennent à l'ensemble du peuple de Dieu. Il est bien écrit et passionnant à lire. Il se concentre sur le service dans le monde pour le Royaume et non pour l'Eglise. Il considère « la vocation et l'appel » dans le contexte du reste de la vie. Les responsables d'Eglise sont donc ceux qui qualifient et équipent le peuple de Dieu pour le service dans le monde. Servir dans le monde, c'est servir le Royaume ; il s'agit d'un service enraciné dans la création et étayé par une théologie pratique rigoureuse d'un point de vue méthodologique, qui doit être la propriété et l'activité du peuple de Dieu. Le livre est systématique et biblique ; ma seule préoccupation vient de l'insistance de l'auteur sur la doctrine de la « périchorèse ». Cette description des relations au sein de la divinité va, à mon

avis, au delà de l'enseignement des Ecritures. Stevens utilise ce modèle de façon très créative, mais ne lui donne-t-il pas une place trop importante dans l'ensemble de la discussion ? Mais malgré ces réserves, c'est un livre à lire !

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Diese Buch präsentiert ein biblisches und theologisches Argument für die Dienstressourcen der Kirche für das gesamte Volk Gottes. Es ist gut geschrieben und spannend zu lesen. Das Augenmerk liegt auf dem Dienst in der Welt für das Reich Gottes, nicht für die Kirche. 'Beruf und Berufung' werden im Kontext des gesamten Lebens gesehen. Kirchenleitende Mitarbeiter sind daher diejenigen, die das gesamte Volk Gottes zum Dienst in der Welt befähigen und ausrüsten. Dienst in der Welt ist Dienst für das Reich Gottes, ein Dienst, der in der Schöpfung wurzelt und von einer praktischen Theologie untermauert wird, aber mit einer strengen theologischen Methode, die vom ganzen Volk Gottes in Besitz genommen werden muß. Das Buch ist systematisch und biblisch, aber meine Bedenken beziehen sich auf die Betonung der Lehre von der Perichorese. Diese Modell der Beziehungen innerhalb der Gottheit geht meiner Ansicht nach über die Schrift hinaus. Stevens benutzt das Modell sehr kreativ, aber hat es nicht einen zu bedeutungsvollen Stellenwert innerhalb des Gesamtarguments? Trotz dieses Vorbehaltes ist das Buch allerdings ein lesenswertes!

Paul Stevens has done the Church a great service in writing this book. This is a rigorous defence and modern restatement of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers with the wonderfully arresting title 'The Abolition of the Laity'. Throughout this study the author brings together scripture and theology to demonstrate the doctrinal basis of his thesis. He engages with Church history, and with denominational practices to explain and critique the state of the contemporary church. In doing this he reveals the depth of the problem today. We are shown the extent of 'clericalisation' and its concomitant church-centred ecclesiologies. We are presented with a portrait of a church trapped into the consequences of its history, where the creation of power-centred structures places church above kingdom, and where church elites struggle to break free from their corporate socialisation into the privileges of office.

The book is structured in three sections, (1) A People without Clergy and Laity, (2)

Summoned and Equipped by God and (3) For the Life of the World. Section 1, in three chapters, asserts the New Testament doctrine of the people (*laos*) of God. This is a doctrine devoid of notions of clergy or laity unless those terms are applied to all members of the family of the church. Stevens asserts that this is 'a-clericalism—one people without distinction except in function, a people that transcends clericalism' (pp. 7, 8). It is this total people of God that theology is 'of', 'for' and 'by'. If theology is 'of' the whole people of God it will go beyond clericalism, if it is 'for' the whole people of God it will always be applied theology and if it is 'by' the whole people of God it will transcend academic boundaries. Thus in the church the theological task demands 'Reinventing Laity and Clergy' (ch. 2), to create what in chapter 3 is delineated as 'One God—One People'.

Section 2 also contains three chapters and explores critically the development of notions of Christian call and vocation. Stevens analyses these concepts in the context of both biblical testaments. He investigates vocation within a doctrinal framework of creation; this roots the concept of call in daily life and work. The realm of the world is the arena of work and service. To be about the work of God in the world is a trinitarian activity. Stevens outlines a structure of work which includes 'Father work—stewardship', 'Son work—Kingdom ministry' and 'Spirit work—giftedness and empowerment'. The work of God the Holy Trinity becomes the vision and definition of the work of the people of God in the world. This is further developed by Stevens with reference to the Eastern churches' understanding of 'perichoresis'. Stevens says 'There was a ministry before there was a world, ministry in the being of God. This mutual interanimation, interpenetration, indwelling, covenant loyalty and othering . . . is the mutual service rendered within God' (p. 141). Stevens uses the Cappadocian fathers and John Zizioulas as ancient and modern exponents of these concepts.

Stevens is not however, against leadership in the church. But it is always leadership designed to enable the whole people of God to be equipped to serve in church and world. They are not a professional class, they do not hold an office, rather they have a role and perform a function. Stevens denies any ontological basis for church leadership.

In Section 3 Stevens presents us with a picture of a serving church: prophets, priests and kings in the world, reflecting the Biblical

metaphors of leadership in both testaments and uniquely revealed in the person of Jesus. This people is equipped and sent into the world to engage and grapple with the powers through preaching, discipleship, prayer and martyrdom. In order to be such a people the church needs to 'live theologically' the subject of the book's epilogue. The people of God need orthodoxy (truthful living), orthopraxy (a life of good works) and orthopathy (a passionate, informed heart) if they are to serve God and his world effectively and as God desires.

Stevens is alert to the need to make doctrine and ecclesiology biblically based theological endeavours and he is largely successful. My one major criticism, however, is the stress given to the doctrine of perichoresis. The application of this idea is thorough and reveals the way in which theology can be rigorous, academic and applied! But to what extent is this doctrine biblical? It certainly takes biblical hints, but then develops them into a somewhat systematic doctrine of the nature of God and the way in which the members of the Godhead relate to each other. In doing so it runs the risk of going beyond the biblical record. I am also intrigued by the way in which the Eastern churches, where this doctrine is of profound importance, have developed a hierarchical and ontological understanding of ministry.

This book is a delight to read, it rediscovers with an exciting freshness and vitality the ministerial basis of the people of God as a whole; it places the Kingdom not the church at its centre; it marshals biblical evidence and theological reflection, both historical and contemporary, in the service of its central thesis; it focuses on the office and the playground rather than the pulpit and the pew. Stevens thus creates a tour-de-force for the abolition of the laity. It is also realistic about the vested interests that militate against any systematic application of its remedies. This book is revolutionary, but the Kingdom and the Church need this kind of revolution. Why? Because the world needs a biblical church freed to be the people of God in the world. This is a timely book. As churches in the west struggle with the decline in the size of their 'ministerial' resources, and develop new ways of generating more ordained clergy, they need to learn the central thesis of this work: Abolish the Laity.

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