

unnecessary burden on others" (98).

The questions being raised in this study, and its account of economic justice and restoration are thorough and informative. There is, however, one important lacuna, marked by Barerra's confession that the New Testament's eschatological statements about wealth are beyond the scope of his study. The effect is to drive a wedge between Jesus and Paul, and to side with Paul interpreted as having taught by example that "private property is essential to personal enterprise" (91). In order to maintain his emphasis on personal initiative, he is keen to stress that Paul never gave up work. In so doing he conflates the necessity and virtue of work in Christian thought with the necessity to own and produce of modern capitalism. With modern economic theory, he is unable to see where something so economically useless as worship might be relevant to economic life. Christian theology which foregoes eschatology leaves its opponent, unfettered market liberalization, untouched. Christian theology cannot properly engage economic questions if it makes economic security a duty. Only Christians who seek first the kingdom beyond wealth are prepared to take the economic risk of going against the criterion of economic efficiency for the benefit of others' security. As Barerra is well aware (cf. 210, in the very informative case study of agricultural subsidies, which he opposes), even when our economic policies are destructive of others' livelihoods, it is very difficult to persuade anyone to risk their own wealth to change the system.

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***The Church and Deaf People:  
A Study of Identity, Communication and  
Relationships with Special Reference to the  
Ecclesiology of Jürgen Moltmann***

**Roger Hitching, forward by Jürgen Moltmann**

Carlisle: Paternoster, 2003, xxii + 235pp., £19.99, pb,  
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**SUMMARY**

This book discusses deaf people as a cultural and language minority group understood to be facing the problems of institutionalized discrimination. Hitching takes the theology of Moltmann, with its focus on liberation, to best facilitate the church's response to the problem so construed. It also develops an account of how the deaf may be understood as having more direct access to God. The reviewer questions the adequacy of a unifacted construal of the problem of the deaf in terms of liberation, and the presumption of the superiority of unmediated access to God.

**ZUSAMMENFASSUNG**

Dieses Buch diskutiert taube Menschen als seine kulturelle und sprachliche Minderheit, die mit den Problemen institutionalisierter Diskriminierung konfrontiert ist. Hitching

nimmt die Theologie Moltmanns mit ihrer Betonung der Befreiung als beste Möglichkeit der Kirche, auf das derart aufgeworfene Problem zu antworten. Es wird darüber hinaus dargelegt, wie taube Menschen als Menschen mit einem direkteren Zugang zu Gott verstanden werden können. Der Rezensent stellt die Angemessenheit einer einseitigen Konstruktion des Problems tauber Menschen im Hinblick auf Befreiung ebenso in Frage wie die Vermutung der Überlegenheit unmittelbaren Zugangs zu Gott.

**RÉSUMÉ**

Cet ouvrage a pour sujet les personnes sourdes et les considère comme une minorité ayant sa culture et son langage propres et qui se trouve confrontée aux problèmes engendrés par une discrimination institutionnalisée. Hitching part de la théologie de Moltmann qui met l'accent sur le thème de la libération, pour mieux stimuler l'Église à s'attaquer à ce problème. Il s'efforce aussi de montrer que l'on peut considérer que les sourds ont un accès plus direct à Dieu. L'auteur de la recension conteste qu'il soit adéquat de concevoir le problème des sourds en fonction du thème de la libération de manière aussi unilatérale et met en doute l'hypothèse de la supériorité d'un accès immédiat.

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This book would be more accurately entitled *The Church and Deaf Culture*. Hitching discusses deaf people as a cultural and language minority group understood to be facing the problems of institutionalized discrimination. This yields the problem that "Society and the church, in dealing with difference inappropriately, have deprived Deaf people of their dignity" (7), most notably by treating the deaf as needing care rather than as full participants in church life.

Hitching takes the theology of Moltmann to provide the best resources for addressing the problem so construed, though one often gets the sense that this is a pragmatic rather than theological judgement. Witness claims like, "A belief system that emphasises the centrality of eschatological hope in a person's understanding of their being will produce optimistic attitudes...and may therefore act in the interests of deaf people as a powerful liberating tool" (52).

Though refusing to define the essence of deafness, Hitching offers the functional claim that the deaf are somehow closer to truth because their language is less conceptual than spoken language. They 1) have a self-understanding based less on abstract conceptualizations and more on relational experience, 2) can, but not necessarily must, convert their experiences and discourse into propositions in order to make logical sense of them, 3) have a distinctive inner life because "our real identity lies in inner speech", and 4) have a greater sense of immediacy in their encounters with others. In sum, deaf people find the existentialist focus on involvement with God and others more readily achievable in comparison with "the more propositional or abstract understandings that hearing people primarily use" (68).



These characteristics allow deaf people to see God from Moltmann's perspective, continues Hitching, as perichoretically indwelling creation, characterised by non-hierarchical relations of mutual involvement, and calling us to hope. This social trinitarianism yields the claim that Presbyterian and Congregational churches are closest to the kingdom. The emphasis on perichoresis yields the claim that if we view God as involved with all aspects of the created order, then we are more aware of our rights and responsibilities to God, earth and others. For deaf people to appreciate Moltmann's emphasis on hope they "need to go through an awareness-raising and consciousness-awakening process" (127) in which they learn to see their political gains as a partial achievement of divine liberation.

Hitching now develops an account of theology, via a theory of symbol, in which God is allowed to communicate not only through words but through the body and all the senses. Words are the way we perceive the world, and are therefore the codes we use for perception and communication. Deaf people have a visual and spatial code, which suggests that at root, they do not use words. Of course, for Christians, God's greatest communication is Christ, whose calls to follow are answered as we confront our false symbols. Hitching concludes that if Jesus is the main Christian symbol, and if immediacy of relational presence is the ontological basis of being, then the fact that the deaf communicate non-linguistically means they can potentially understand or perceive more accurately in bypassing the obscuring forms of language. In addition to the docetic implications that words inhibit rather than reveal the Word, the lead role given to Moltmann in the toppling of idols is rendered opaque precisely because he "uses images, in the form of theological concepts contained in metaphors, to represent the church" (178). Whereas the deaf are taken to have an advantage in being non-linguistic, Moltmann's apparently complex linguistic and conceptual system is held up as providing the solution to the church's oppression of this minority group.

Hitching's practical recommendations contain few surprises. The church ought to remake its institutional structures on the model of Troeltsch's sect-type in which all power and authority are completely flattened. It ought to resist the modern urge to total planning, creating institutions with space for the interruptions in which otherness can confront us. Learning sign language, and befriending deaf people are marks of a church being open to otherness.

At least two aspects of this account seem problematic. One wonders what Hitching would make of people who are physically deaf but also mentally handicapped. His account would suggest that we should approach these individuals as part of another sub-sub-minority group whom we should strive to include in our churchly power structures. The unrefined construal of the problem in terms of liberation refuses the way notions of care, friendship, family or perhaps hospitality might give the

discussion more depth. One also wonders about the sufficiency of an account which assumes that states of human life which clearly have their problematic aspects are taken to be marks of privileged access to God. Would the mentally handicapped deaf individual be lauded as closer to God on some account of unmediated access, or further from Him in not having access to the symbol codes of deaf culture? Questions like these aside, Hitching is to be applauded for his refreshing interest in a question well beyond the usual narrow range of topics discussed in Christian theology, and his exposing it to serious theological scrutiny.

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## *Romans*

**Leander E. Keck**

Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press,

2005, 400 pages, £11.69, pb, ISBN: 0-687-05705-1

### SUMMARY

Keck aims to lead students to interact with Romans whose theme he sees as being how the gospel stresses the character of God. He claims Romans should be seen as an orientation to Pauline theology. New students will find the clear style, the exemplary biblical exegesis, informative parenthetical remarks, transliterations, definitions, and evaluations of English translations beneficial. Others will enjoy the interaction with recent English works (he rarely cites German or French scholarship) and the discussions of Hellenistic works and authors. The lack of debate with scholarship at times leads to sweeping dismissals of views. This commentary is ideal for an introduction to or review of Romans.

### ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Keck beabsichtigt, Studenten zur Auseinandersetzung mit dem Römerbrief anzuregen, dessen Thema er wie folgt versteht: Er zeige, wie das Evangelium den Charakter Gottes betont. Er behauptet, der Römerbrief solle als Orientierung für die paulinische Theologie angesehen werden. Studenten im Anfangsstadium werden den klaren Stil, die beispielhafte biblische Exegese, informative parenthetische Anmerkungen, Transkriptionen, Definitionen und Bewertungen englischer Übersetzungen hilfreich finden. Andere werden die Interaktion mit neueren englischen Werken sowie die Diskussionen hellenistischer Werke und Autoren genießen (deutsche oder französische wissenschaftliche Beiträge werden kaum zitiert). Der Mangel an Auseinandersetzung mit wissenschaftlichen Standpunkten führt zeitweise zu pauschalen Verwerfungen von Ansichten. Dieser Kommentar ist ideal für eine einleitende Beschäftigung mit dem Römerbrief.

### RÉSUMÉ

Keck cherche à aider les étudiants à aborder l'épître aux Romains. Il considère qu'elle a pour sujet l'Évangile comme mettant en lumière le caractère de Dieu. Il pense que l'épi-