

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**

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### 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-



tre devrait être vue comme une orientation à la théologie paulinienne. Les débutants apprécieront le style clair et l'exégèse exemplaire, ils tireront profit des remarques d'ordre secondaire, des translitérations, des définitions et de l'évaluation des traductions anglaises de l'épître. D'autres tireront parti de la prise en compte des travaux récents en anglais (les travaux des spécialistes de langue allemande et française sont rarement cités) et des informations sur les auteurs et œuvres hellénistiques. L'absence de débat avec les spécialistes fait que des opinions sont parfois rejetées sans autre. Ce commentaire est idéal pour une première approche ou pour rafraîchir sa connaissance de l'épître aux Romains.

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Professor Keck intended this commentary on Romans to meet "the needs and interests of theological students", to whom he has been no stranger throughout the years. Keck discloses his respect for these students and for the text in his call for the student to read Romans first of all, and in his conclusion, an explicit encouragement, for them to read it "again, and again – as an act of praise" (p. 385). Further, rather than merely dispensing facts, Keck aims to lead the students to interact with the apostle's letter so they themselves can decide, "whether, and to what extent, Paul was right" (pp. 33-34). To help them in this process, Professor Keck does give his students guidelines; for example, he claims that Romans should be seen as an "orientation" to Pauline theology, rather than a summary of it. The most noteworthy theme of this orientation, he posits, is how the cross and the empty grave stress the character of God: Romans is "theocentric" because it is first "christomorphic" (p. 37). According to Keck, it is this theme that unfolds as Paul thinks from solution to plight and argues from plight to solution (p. 146). Further, Keck emphasises the importance of understanding the letter as a whole, "for it is more than the sum of its parts" (p. 21). He also hesitates to compare other Pauline works to Romans, lest one misread Romans due to comments meant for another time and place; however, he does compare other Jewish literature (from other times and places) to the letter.

Newer students to New Testament studies will find at least five aspects of this commentary beneficial. 1) Keck writes in a style that is conversational, captivating, and clear. 2) He includes parenthetical remarks to define terms many commentators assume the reader already knows (e.g. "God-fearer" and "paronomasia"). 3) For those unskilled in Greek, he transliterates, defines, and provides word studies for key terms such as *epithymia*. 4) As the book exemplifies biblical exegesis, students can glean how one seasoned scholar approaches a text. It does not demonstrate enough, however, the contemporary application gained from this exegesis. 5) The greatest contribution is Keck's frequent evaluations, critiques, and comparisons of common English translations with one other. This comparison becomes especially enlightening in his treatment of chapters 13-15.

Those familiar with Romans will enjoy Keck's interaction with the most recent English works on the letter (unfortunately, he rarely cites German or French scholarship) as well as his frequent, but not overwhelming, discussions of relevant Hellenistic works and authors; he especially refers to *Wisdom* but also cites other apocryphal works (e.g. *Susanna*, *4 Macc.*), pseudepigraphal writings (e.g. *2 Enoch*, *Jubilees*) and popular authors (e.g. Philo and Plato). One might become frustrated, however, with the lack of debate with both recent and standard scholarship. This is undoubtedly due to the desire to be concise and is perhaps more of a critique of the series rather than the commentator himself; nevertheless, it often leads to sweeping dismissals of views, some of which are commonly held and others of which are greatly debated. For instance, Keck holds "unacceptable" the view held by "many scholars" that 2.14-16 refers to the Christian gentile; however, he does not interact with any of the commentators who hold this view. Moreover, he too quickly passes over debates such as the classification of the genitive *for pistis Iesou Christou*, the identity of the *ego* in Rom 7:7-25, and the interpretation of Christ in Rom. 9:4. Further, he inserts general statements without qualification such as, "Everything Paul says about the Law is negative" (p. 118). The danger, here, is: rather than one understanding Romans and all of its complexities, one could come away only understanding Keck's simplified interpretation of it. To be fair, Keck does discuss some passages in more detail as he highlights their intricacies; for instance, he spends considerable time attempting to account historically for Rom. 13:1-7 and humbly concludes that in the end, "the passage will be more successful in thwarting a convincing explanation than the experts in achieving it" (p. 325). More examples like this – where a master of biblical theology candidly wrestles with the text – would have further enriched this book.

In light of the above and with the awareness that it has been simplified in places, the size and style of this commentary make it ideal for an introduction to or review of Romans. Throughout the years, Professor Keck has contributed so much to scholarship, and with this book, his legacy as one who handles the word without shame and with precision and who seeks to equip students to do the same, continues.

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### *The Oxford Handbook of Theological Ethics*

Meilaender, G. & Werpehowski, W (eds.)

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#### SUMMARY

A substantial guide to the academic field of theological ethics through the medium of originally commissioned essays by (chiefly) North American thinkers, giving a flavour not only of material differences in the constructive projects