

in all believers as another fulfilment of God's promises. Interestingly, Thompson thinks that references to the 'fullness' of the Spirit always occur in ethical contexts. In chapter five he argues that the beginning of Acts shows the redundancy of the temple and that Stephen's speech is the climax of this part of the book, opening the way for the proclamation among the Samaritans and the gentiles. He also shows how the apostles are the leaders of the new community. In the sixth chapter he develops this into the view that the authority of the Law has passed to the apostles; they are now the ones who guide God's people and the decision of the Council in Acts 15 is based on their authority.

Throughout the author largely stays away from issues of introduction such as authorship and the enigmatic end of Acts. His dialogue with other scholars is mostly limited to the footnotes and is – regrettably – almost exclusively with English language works. Chapters five and six do, however, begin with brief surveys of what others have said. Thompson shows that there is no real difference between Paul as presented in Acts and Paul as we see him in his letters. Much attention is given to Luke's use of the Old Testament and to the unity of Luke and Acts. However, nearly all passages discussed are in Acts 1-15 so the reader only gets to know the first half of Acts. Another downside of Thompson's approach is the lack of application. Especially the final chapter, which argues that the apostles are the 'legislators' for the new people of God, raises questions: Should the church still have apostles? Or would Thompson argue that their authority was incorporated in the scriptures of the new covenant? Are we still bound by the apostolic decree?

This book stands out by its emphasis on the realised inauguration of the Kingdom; yet it is decidedly not charismatic or Pentecostal. It will stimulate those who teach and preach Acts.

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***Romans: The Divine Marriage. A Biblical
Theological Commentary***

Tom Holland

Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick, 2011, 543 pp., pb., \$56,
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RÉSUMÉ

Ce commentaire de Tom Holland s'inscrit dans la ligne de son ouvrage antérieur en adoptant une lecture du corpus paulinien selon une perspective communautaire. Holland comprend l'Évangile comme l'annonce d'un nouvel exode et élabore davantage cette approche dans ce commentaire. Il y offre une analyse de l'épître verset par verset et traite en outre de la nouvelle perspective sur la théologie paulinienne en considérant la position de N.T. Wright et celle des réformateurs sur le sujet de la justification. Le choix de l'image du mariage pour représenter l'Évangile

est central dans son approche. On doit cependant considérer que des images comme celles du corps, de la famille ou de la parenté paraissent bien davantage celles que Paul a choisi lui-même pour exposer sa pensée. Néanmoins, ce commentaire a le mérite de présenter à un large public évangélique une approche de l'Évangile fondée sur la notion d'alliance.

SUMMARY

Tom Holland's commentary on Paul's Epistle to the Romans follows his earlier work in applying a corporate reading of the Pauline corpus. Holland understands the gospel as a 'New Exodus', a perspective further developed in this commentary. In addition to providing a verse by verse commentary, Holland deals with the New Perspective on Paul by engaging with N.T. Wright and the Reformers in relation to justification. Central to this book is its choice of marriage as an image representing the gospel. However, images such as 'body', 'family' or 'kinship' perhaps seem more obviously Pauline choices with which to convey this concept. Nonetheless, this is a worthwhile book that introduces a covenantal approach to the gospel to a wider evangelical audience.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Tom Hollands Kommentar über den Römerbrief folgt seinem vorangehenden Werk darin, dass er eine gemeinsame Lesart für den paulinischen Korpus anwendet. Holland versteht das Evangelium als einen „Neuen Exodus“, einen Aspekt, den er in diesem Kommentar weiterentwickelt. Der Autor bietet nicht nur eine Vers-für-Vers-Kommentierung, sondern befasst sich auch mit der Neuen Perspektive zu Paulus, indem er sich mit N.T. Wright und den Reformern auseinandersetzt, wenn es um Rechtfertigung geht. Das zentrale Anliegen dieses Buches ist das Bild der Ehe als eine Metapher für das Evangelium. Jedoch scheinen Metaphern wie Leib, Familie, Verwandtschaft die naheliegende Wahl von Paulus zu sein, um diese Vorstellung zu vermitteln. Nichtsdestoweniger ist dies ein wertvolles Buch, das eine größere evangelikale Leserschaft mit einem Zugang zum Evangelium vertraut macht, der vom Bundesdenken herkommt.

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'This commentary seeks to correct the faulty reading that results from placing the individual at the center of the message of Romans. One of the repercussions of such individualism is that almost all hymns speak of individual Christian experience instead of the corporate people of God.' With these bold words, Tom Holland introduces his new commentary on Paul's letter to the Christian church in Rome. Holland is Head of Biblical Research at the Wales Evangelical School of Theology and the author of *Contours of Pauline Theology* (2004), in which he has already proposed a corporate reading of Paul's letters. Central to this approach is the 'New Exodus' paradigm: Jesus the Messiah is greater than Moses, and the New Testament shows that God has acted decisively in the death of his own Son, to bring

about salvation, not from physical or political bondage but from spiritual slavery. In *Romans*, Holland applies this corporate reading to Paul's letter to the Romans.

After a brief introduction which deals more with biblical theology than with the usual introductory questions, Holland gives a verse by verse explanation of the letter, each chapter starting with the NIV translation. References to earlier research are given in footnotes, Greek words are transcribed and ten excursuses added (e.g. detailed essays on righteousness, justification, sin).

With regard to the New Perspective on Paul, Holland makes a crucial distinction in the way justification is used in Romans 4, between its applications to Abraham (Genesis 15: God's promise) and to David (Psalm 32: the acquittal of sin) respectively. Through this distinction, he is able to build on the New Perspective understanding of the term as developed by N.T. Wright (in relation to Abraham), and on the way the Reformers used the word (in relation to David). This approach reinforces the view that justification is not merely a status of righteousness because of covenant membership, as asserted by the New Perspective, but includes the Reformation ideas of forensic justification and being brought into relationship with God.

Why subtitle a commentary on Romans *The Divine Marriage*? From the preface, I cite Holland's own answer to this obvious question:

Mainly because the central message of the Bible has to do with the drama of God seeking out a people for himself. The Old Testament described Israel as God's bride because she was called to a unique, personal relationship with her God. However, Paul's contention is that national Israel's exclusive claim to be the bride no longer stands. The apostle's message is that God has created a new covenant with those who believe in his Son, and that believing Jews and Gentiles have now become the true bride of God. The Jewish remnant and believing Gentiles both draw from the same divinely-appointed stock as they share the promises given by God to Abraham. The theme of the divine marriage (which is the culmination of the new exodus) shaped and guided the letters that Paul wrote. This is especially true for the letter to the Romans, the letter of the divine marriage.

Personally, I can fully understand the warm reception of this book within the evangelical world. However, exegeses working in the Reformed tradition (with Herman Bavinck as the best known name) have long been familiar with redemptive history as a major guiding thread in the reading of the Bible. A covenantal approach is not new for them, but they will surely appreciate that this approach is now presented to a broader public. A more serious objection is that the connection between the covenantal approach and the theme of the divine marriage will seem strange to them. Why not opt for 'body', a typical Pauline metaphor, also used in Romans, or 'family', or 'kinship' (like Scott Hahn's *Kinship by*

Covenant, 2009) instead of 'marriage'? I would rather see a divine marriage motif in the letter to the Ephesians (chapter 5) or the book of Revelation (chapters 19-21). Does the letter to the Romans provide enough literary context to read almost every chapter through this lens, or was Holland creating a Pauline theology of marriage prior to his exegetical work in the letter to the Romans? It is hard to avoid the impression that he sometimes uses this framework artificially in the exegesis of Romans.

The fact remains that Tom Holland has written a thought-provoking book that will undoubtedly be fruitful for many teachers and preachers. More than any other commentator on Romans so far, he uncovers the Old Testament roots of the letter and shows the impact of Paul's thoughts upon the Christian church today.

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The Bible made Impossible: Why Biblicism is not a truly Evangelical reading of Scripture

Christian Smith

Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2011, 220pp., hb., ISBN 978-1-58743-303-0

RÉSUMÉ

Christian Smith, un sociologue catholique évangélique, défend la thèse selon laquelle la diversité au sein de l'enseignement scripturaire, et la diversité plus grande encore d'interprétations auxquelles il donne lieu, prouve que le biblicisme ne tient pas compte du problème majeur inévitable que constitue ce qu'il nomme le pluralisme des interprétations généralisé. À ce problème sociologique, Smith ajoute que la conception même du biblicisme ne reçoit aucun appui de ce que la Bible enseigne sur elle-même. En outre, il souligne que le biblicisme engendre de graves problèmes pour l'approche pastorale. Il conclut en indiquant des moyens d'avancer vers une approche plus profondément évangélique, christocentrique et post-bibliciste de l'Écriture.

SUMMARY

Christian Smith, an evangelical Catholic sociologist, constructively argues that the diversity of Scripture's teachings and its even greater diversity of interpretations clearly demonstrate that biblicism ignores the basic overriding problem of what he calls *pervasive interpretive pluralism*. In addition to this sociological problem, Smith continues his argument by submitting that the entire notion of biblicism cannot be sustained by what the Bible claims about itself. Moreover, Smith points out that biblicism causes significant pastoral problems. He concludes by suggesting ways we can move forward to a more thoroughly evangelical, Christocentric, post-biblicist embrace of Scripture.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Christian Smith, ein evangelikaler katholischer Soziologe,