

'Contours of Pauline Theology: a radical new survey of the influences on Paul's biblical writings'

Tom Holland, Christian Focus Publications, 2004 - £14.99

The author is a New Testament lecturer specialising in Pauline Studies at the College. He was formerly a pastor for 17 years. Dr Holland exposes liberal and pseudo-evangelical approaches that have affected mainstream Evangelical interpretation.

The author convincingly shows that the theology of Christ and Paul are one and it is derived directly from the Old Testament. He demonstrates the integrity and unity of the Old and New Testaments. His principled interpretations of 'difficult' passages in Paul's epistles open up our understanding and promote rich new streams of thought.

What is the 'big picture'? 'Paul had a more corporate view of man than is commonly appreciated. This is in keeping with his Old Testament roots.' (page 288) He applies this corporate view to illuminate Paul's teaching on baptism. It is, Dr Holland says, modelled on the Exodus event when Israel nationally was baptised into Moses. The true church is baptised into Christ through his death on the cross. Similarly, 'Paul's doctrine of justification is rooted in the Passover / New Exodus event . . . This is not to deny the necessity of the work of the Spirit to bring individuals to repentance and faith and so enter into the blessings secured



historically on the cross, but it does stress that the doctrine, in Paul's understanding, is corporate' (page 289). 'Paul interpreted Jesus' death, as Jesus himself had done, as the fulfilment of the Passover' (page 290). The 'first born of all creation' text (Colossians 1: 16) is rendered abundantly clear through the lens of the Passover. Jesus was the firstborn of his people, and of creation, hence firstborn of all creation, whose propitiatory Passover death ultimately will usher in Paradise Regained.

In his research the author interacts with proponents of the so-called 'New Perspective on Paul', notably N T Wright. 'N T Wright argues that the Reformers misunderstood Paul, that they had confused their own debate with the legalism of Rome and read their conflict into Paul's conflict with Judaism. I have argued that it has been the other way round. It is Wright who has misunderstood Paul. He has not appreciated that the Reformers did not have an exclusively forensic view of justification. This itself demonstrates that in their exegesis their eye was not on the abuse of Rome but on the biblical text' (page 325). The author then quotes from the Reformers to prove his case.

An important book. I thoroughly recommend it.

College News

Derek (1988-91) and Rosemary Burnside work with UFM in Tordesillas in Spain. They have transformed a shop unit into a meeting room for the church. They have been encouraged by several newcomers attending the new venue, including a Brazilian family. The book table continues to be an important link with the community.