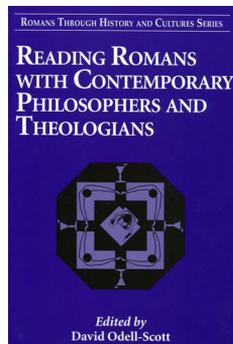


○ **REVIEW OF DAVID ODELL-SCOTT (ED.), *READING ROMANS WITH CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHERS AND THEOLOGIANS*. ROMANS THROUGH HISTORY AND CULTURES SERIES 7 (NEW YORK AND LONDON: T&T CLARK, 2007)**

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This is not a fair review. What I mean is that I was annoyed to begin with and it just got worse through the book. So please keep this in mind as you read the cranky review.

First problem is that throughout the articles are inserted letters (H, A, HA, C, AH, HC, oh and CH). These letters refer to the bottom page, where the letter is repeated along with another version of the sentence that followed the letter in the main text. I got that bit. However, I wasn't sure what the point was, and I was given no explanation of this mystery in the book. Add to that the fact that each article has endnotes and the confusion escalates. I'm reading, reach the endnote marker, my eye has registered something on the bottom of the page in small print, I look down ... bugger it's that H/C/HA/C/AH/HC/CH thing again. So I flip back to the endnotes, and three of the longest essays with most endnotes are incongruent with the reference (Jennings, Ehrensberger and Gignac), which basically made me want to fling the book at something hard. This leads to my second frustration: the sloppiness of the book. It reads as published proofs (first proofs, mind you). Some articles use Greek lettering, some transcribe, and Anderson's article has (inadvertently, I presume) been converted from Greek to Latin lettering, giving us gems such as ofi" and epikumia, ginwskw and my favourite, epikumhsei in big bold lettering. Add to this that some of the articles overlap (Gignac and Sigurdson), some are very short (Cobb's article is 5 pages, Lull's is 7) others are loooong (Gignac's is 51 pages, Ehrensberger's is 40 pages), which makes for a very uneven reading experience. And most of the articles could have done with an editor's hand to kill darlings (that is, the favourite turns of phrase that turn up far too often) and pick up on repeated arguments.

So I felt like I was proofreading, more than reading for enjoyment, which made the experience thoroughly tedious. This has in turn completely biased my impression of the contents, I hate to say.

Reading Romans with Contemporary Philosophers is introduced by the editor, David Odell-Scott and the contents are divided into two parts: Reading Romans and Process Philosophical Theology and Reading Romans and Continental Philosophy.

The introduction gives us the target of the series, which is a more theological interdisciplinary approach. Since I find the disciplinary boundaries of theology to be counterproductive, I welcome this approach. I am not quite sure to what extent it has been accomplished in this particular edition, but please feel free to disagree. Another particular focus is that these interdisciplinary readings all take Romans seriously as scripture, and thus bring a personal faith as well as a communal tradition to their readings. I also welcome this approach, since it is time that these matters were brought out into the open and addressed instead of being kept in the proverbial closet. This can be done well, and it can be done poorly. In this collection we have both, to varying degrees.

The first part consists of two very brief articles by Cobb and Lull, which explains their unique approach to Romans through the lens of process philosophy, which builds on their commentary to Romans from Chalice Press, 2005. Jouette Bassler and David Odell-Scott respond to this commentary, of which they have read the introduction and the treatment of 6:1-8:39. To this Cobb and Lull respond again (the response to Bassler's elegant and open-minded critique is more of a defence). From what I can understand, process theology highlights events and in-out flows over the empirical object. The most dramatic example to result from this theological estuary is interpreting *pistis Christou* as faith(fullness) of Christ.

The second part does not deploy this response structure. Here we have five articles that deal with various continental philosophers' engagement with Paul in two ways. There are the descriptive articles which canvass and engage with philosophical readings of Paul (Jennings, Gignac and Sigurdson) and then there are the juxtapositions of Romans and a philosopher to bring out certain features of Paul (Ehrensberger and Anderson). The descriptive articles focus on Badiou, Agamben (Taubes) and Žižek, with overlapping presentations, especially of Agamben and Badiou. Mercifully the two other contributions deal with other philosophers, namely Ehrensberger and her reading of Paul together with Levinas, and Anderson, who reads Paul with Kierkegaard.

So, am I the wiser for having read this book? I might check out some of the references to Levinas and Kierkegaard, since they were of interest to me in other areas. And Jennings' article is a good introduction to philosophical readings of Paul. But as far as Romans goes, not really.