

“In Christ” in Paul

Michael J. Thate, Kevin J. Vanhoozer, Constantine R. Campbell, eds
Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014 (577 ss).

This multi-authored volume is a gold mine. Creativity and curiosity mark these essays, as each author grapples with the meaning of Paul’s notion of “in Christ.” For the Apostle to the Gentiles, Christ is the center of gravity in time and space, and the major character in the play of salvation; past, present, and future. But what is Paul referring to by the mysterious phrase, “in Christ?” Several options present themselves including: self-perception, legal status, ontological condition, or perhaps, mystical encounter. The theme of this book is to investigate and explore the rich possibilities associated with the Pauline gesture, and as readers we come away with a better explanation and understanding of this provocative and enigmatic terminology.

Following the stimulating ‘call’ and the articulation of the need for this book (A Theological Introduction), Kevin Vanhoozer offers his own formidable perspective on the subject, moving from prepositions to metaphor, and reception history to systematic theology. This is vintage Vanhoozer that rigorously sets the tone for the whole book.

Part 1 consists of ten papers by biblical scholars who delve into the niche of Paul’s language, “In Christ,” and seek to clarify his meaning, especially in textual and historical contexts. Author and title will be noted. Douglas Campbell (Participation and Faith in Paul), Constantine Campbell (Metaphor, Reality, and Union with Christ), Grant Macaskill (Incarnational Ontology and the Theology of Participation in Paul), Susan Eastman (One-self in Another: Participation and the

Spirit in Romans 8), Matthew Croasmun (“Real Participation”: The Body of Christ & the Body of Sin in Evolutionary Perspective), Isaac Augustine Morales, O.P. (Baptism and Union with Christ), Michael Gorman (Paul’s Corporate, Cruciform, Missional Theosis in 2 Corinthians), Michael Thate (Paul and the Anxieties of (Imperial?) Succession. Galatians and the Politics of Neglect), Joshua Jipp (Sharing the Heavenly Role of Christ the King: Paul’s Royal Participatory Language in Ephesians), Michael Thate (Paul, Phronesis and Participation: The Shape of Space and the Reconfiguration of Place in Paul’s Letter to the Philippians).

The enormous value of these chapters is the breadth of scholarship and the range of discussion about union and participation in Paul’s thought. While not comprehensive in scope, the specific co-subjects and texts examined are extremely useful for opening up possibilities for better deciphering Paul’s perspectives concerning this complicated saying.

Part II offers an interesting outlook for Pauline studies, notably reception history. There are six essays on several influential theologians, which indeed underscores an initial and ongoing interest in the subject of being ‘in Christ.’ Author and title will be mentioned. Ben Blackwell (Two Early Perspectives on Participation in Paul: Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria), Darren Sarisky (Augustine and Participation: Some reflections on his Exegesis of Romans), Stephen Chester (Apocalyptic Union: Martin Luther’s Account of Faith in Christ), Julie Canlis, (The Fatherhood of God & Union with Christ in Calvin), T. Robert Baylor (“One with Him in Spirit” Mystical Union and the Humanity of Christ in the Theology of John Owen), Keith Johnson (Karl Barth’s Reading of Paul’s Union with Christ).

The striking import of these chapters is the investigation into the time, place, and thought of leading theologians in their contexts. Through an examination of reception history, it is argued, there will be an opportunity to learn more, not only about the theologians studied, but also about the apostle and his 'in Christ', as represented in their eyes.

Part III contains three papers that are a more systematic treatment of union and participation as they examine doctrinal orientations. Author and title will be listed. Ashish Varma (*Fitting Participation: From the Holy Trinity to Christian Virtue*), Mary Patton Baker (*Participating in the Body and Blood of Christ: Christian Koinonia and the Lord's Supper*), Devin Singh (*Until We Are One? Biopolitics and the United Body*).

The profound relevance of these chapters is their practical character and concerns. Following what has preceded them in the book, the emphasis is now on how union and participation in Christ should make a difference in the whole of life.

This volume is a first rate inquiry into an important topic for the individual and the church. The essays are of a very high caliber and the scholarship is careful and astute. Surely, the question of Paul's meaning(s) of "in Christ" is a crucial topic for exploration and then application for believers, as they life their faith out into the world.

Gregory J. Laughery

The Presence and Absence of God

Ingolf U. Dalferth, ed

Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009 (236 ss).

This outstanding book, while now ten years old, is intriguingly up to date on one of the central philosophical and theological issues of our times. Questions concerning the presence and absence of God are still hotly debated today and this volume from a Claremont Conference delves into this controversy with rigor and insight. What makes this theme so vital is that it remains relevant for each person in each generation – no one escapes it.

Following the interesting essay: 'God, Time, and Orientation' by Dalferth, there are four sections in the book. First, *Biblical Traditions* comprises three thought provoking papers. 1) 'The Absence of the Deity in Rape Scenes in the Hebrew Bible,' Leah R. Schulte and Tammi J. Schneider. 2) 'Is God Absent or Present in the Book of Esther? An Old Problem Revisited,' Kristen De Troyer and Leah R. Schulte. 3) 'Ways of Presence and Modes of Absence in the Gospel of Luke, - Or: How scripture works,' Stefan Alkier. These three contributions deal with theological and cultural issues of the presence and absence of God in relation to the biblical text, and draw some intriguing conclusions.

Second, *Jewish Theology and Philosophy* offers three stimulating essays. 1) 'The Hiddenness of God in Early Hasidic Thought – The Hiding of the Hiding of God's Face,' Jerome Gellman. 2) 'The Hiddenness of God in Spinoza; A Case Study in Transcendence and Immanence, and Absence and Presence,' Philip Clayton. 3) 'God's Givenness and Hiddenness: Franz Rosenzweig on Human (Did) Trust and Divine Deception,' Claudia Welz. The three papers on Jewish thinkers,