

their relation to the God of Israel, who has called them in Jesus to be his people' (186).

It is worth considering the following addition to Deines' argument. The decision of the council in Jerusalem was taken in a unique redemptive-historical situation in which two Christian cultures – an older (the mother church in Jerusalem) and a younger (the daughter church at Antioch) – had to match with each other. The younger had to respect the older, the older had to accept the younger. As early Christianity developed, however, things rapidly changed. Jewish Christians became a small minority and the traditional distance between believers of Jewish and non-Jewish backgrounds faded away. This explains why, already in the time of Augustine, the need to keep the Apostolic Decree was no longer felt in the Christian church (*Contra Faustum* XXXII 13).

In our opinion, the author has achieved his goal of offering contributions to a theologically motivated historiography that is methodologically open to the conviction that God acts in history. Our own (Reformed) tradition also stresses the importance of reflecting on the past in terms of redemptive history, which is essentially parallel to what Deines explores as 'salvation history' or '*Heilsgeschichte*'. We regret, however, that, despite his acknowledgement of the revelatory character of Scripture (263-308), he speaks disparagingly about scholars who hold the view of the apostle John being eyewitness and author of the Fourth Gospel as fundamentalists (373-374). In conclusion, we think that Deines has provided contemporary scholarship with a reasonable defence of a theological historiography and a way forward in applying this methodology to our study of the past.

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### *Union with Christ in the New Testament*

**Grant Macaskill**

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013; 353 pp., hb.,  
 £75; ISBN 978-0-19-968429-8

#### ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Der Autor untersucht kompetent die Darstellung des Einswerdens von Menschen mit Gott im Neuen Testament. Er legt großen Wert auf vorangegangene Studien und Hintergrundmaterial. Dabei präsentiert er eine tiefgehende Analyse des gesamten Neuen Testaments und zeigt dessen theologische Einheit auf. Jedoch stellt das Buch keinen originären Beitrag dar.

#### RÉSUMÉ

L'auteur livre ici avec compétence une étude de la conception du Nouveau Testament sur l'union des êtres humains avec Dieu. Il accorde une grande attention aux études précédentes et aux données concernant l'arrière-plan. Il

considère l'ensemble du Nouveau Testament de façon approfondie, montre son unité théologique, mais, finalement, ne propose aucun apport original.

#### SUMMARY

Macaskill competently studies the portrayal of the union of human beings with God in the New Testament. He gives much attention to previous studies and to background materials. The entire New Testament is surveyed in some depth, and its theological unity shown, but the book does not make an original contribution.

\* \* \* \*

This is a detailed academic study by an evangelical scholar who teaches New Testament at St Andrews University in Scotland. It is an important contribution to the ongoing debate which is being pursued both in the narrower arena of Reformed theology and also in the wider constituency of Pauline scholarship. This author, however, is not confined to the Pauline evidence but asks questions about the motif of participation in the New Testament as a whole. What does this concept signify? What are the other ways of expressing the relation between God and his people? And to what extent is this particular motif a unifying factor in New Testament theology? The brief Introduction aptly sums up the conclusion that there is 'a remarkably cohesive portrayal of the union of human beings and God' in the New Testament.

The monograph follows the time-honoured pattern of beginning with a survey of past scholarship, paying particular attention to works on Paul from Deissmann onwards and offering brief critiques where required. This panorama broadens out to take in patristic and modern Orthodox theology followed by Lutheran and Reformed theology, with some attention being given to the more Reformed and the more Barthian traditions. The author is particularly concerned with the danger of reading and (mis)understanding the New Testament in the light of these later developments.

A different kind of preliminary to the topic is a critical survey of background material in the New Testament era, especially in the area of speculations concerning Adam, that is often thought to have provided the terminology and framework of thinking, but which the author finds to be of dubious value.

We are now almost exactly halfway through the book and at last get down to the New Testament. If the book has been somewhat tedious so far and the comments brief and not always adequately substantiated, there is now a change in character. The tone and the style do shift somewhat, and the author enters his own area of expertise with a fuller treatment of topics and fresh discussions of familiar passages. He commences with the use of temple and body language, citing Ephesians as a kind of mature example or benchmark, against which examination of the earlier Pauline letters can proceed. He then draws in texts from all over the New Testament which can be understood as expressions of this motif.



The real humanity and divinity of Jesus belong within this interpretation of the New Testament teaching. The next stage is to consider the relationship of believers to Christ in terms of participation, especially in baptism and the Lord's Supper with their covenantal framework. This topic leads us back to the death of Christ and the nature of the believer's relationship to Christ. Paul's most characteristic theological term, the tiny preposition *en*, receives some attention, but perhaps needed fuller attention. Readers may be surprised by the sheer amount of New Testament material that is covered in the book and found to be germane to the theme; this is done at the price of what the author himself labels as a patchy treatment. The overall result is a comprehensive study of the topic leading to a plausible hypothesis regarding the uniting category that finds expression throughout the New Testament.

The book is worthy to stand beside the even more detailed work of Greg Beale (*A New Testament Biblical Theology*); the two scholars both find a unity in the theologies of the early church and the especial contribution of this one is to show how the underlying theology can have influenced the surface teaching. This is a remarkable reading of the New Testament. Beside it one could place the detailed, comprehensive exposition of New Testament theology by Udo Schnelle; his index of subjects contains only seven page-references to 'temple, the', and the thought of Jesus as himself the new temple is scarcely recognised, although, of course, he discusses the concept of Jesus as high priest in Hebrews. A debate between these two estimates of the role of this motif in the New Testament must be put on the agenda.

My impression is that Macaskill offers less in the way of new interpretations of the texts and more of the construction of a synthesis expressing the common theology of the early church. It would have been helpful if he had returned to the wider world of the contemporary theologians in the conclusion so as to demonstrate how their work is to be evaluated in terms of its biblical basis. In particular the use of participation language and similar motifs is being discussed vigorously in Reformed circles. Macaskill was able to mention the major work of Constantine Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012) but not to engage with it in any detail. Here, then are three areas where the contribution of Macaskill needs to be brought more fully into the arena.

At my age I may be allowed to let your mind wander from the academy. The second in the series of Tyndale Lectures, delivered in 1943, was given by Basil Atkinson, on *The Theology of Prepositions*; the author was a Librarian based in the Cambridge University Library and a much respected elder friend of the CICCUC (Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union). He pioneered our topic. We still need spare-time theologians to mediate the insights of academic works like this one to the church.

But we also need preaching inspired by deep theology.

One of the best sermons I ever heard was by Roderick Finlayson, Professor of Theology in the Free Church of Scotland College in Edinburgh. The text was Galatians 2:20: 'I am crucified *with* Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth *in* me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live *by* the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself *for* me.' The sermon had four points, identified by the four prepositions: with, in, by, for. But then homiletic genius entered into the sermon construction when the preacher treated them in reverse order! There is no copyright on this structure; I myself have used the framework but not the original wording to develop the text. Try it.

Grant Macaskill belongs to the same tradition as Roderick Finlayson. May his book play its part in helping preachers to find fresh ways to understand the theology of the early Christians and to present it to their congregations.

I. Howard Marshall, Aberdeen

### *Creation, Power and Truth: The gospel in a world of cultural confusion*

Tom Wright

London: SPCK, 2013; xii + 110 pp, £9.99, pb; ISBN 978-0-281-06987-3

#### SUMMARY

In this book the well-known British New Testament scholar addresses what he sees as the main challenges for Christians today. At the heart of it lies the Enlightenment, which according to Tom Wright represents a neo-Gnostic separation of God from the world. The Western societies' arrogant self-understanding over against the rest of the world ('New Imperialism') is an offspring of this heritage. And even if Postmodernism claims to have seen through the power play at the bottom of Modernism, it supports it by rejecting truth as a possibility. Instead of supporting this culture by separating God from this world, Christians are to confront it, by means of faith in God as Creator, Christ as Lord, and the Spirit as the Truth. The book thus represents a profiled picture of what church and Christianity should be in relation to the society of today.

#### RÉSUMÉ

Dans cet ouvrage, le spécialiste du Nouveau Testament bien connu qu'est Tom Wright traite de ce qu'il considère comme le problème majeur auquel les chrétiens doivent faire face aujourd'hui. L'état d'esprit des Lumières constitue le cœur du problème : d'après Wright, il y a là une conception néo-agnostique qui sépare Dieu du monde. Les sociétés occidentales se conçoivent elles-mêmes de manière arrogante comme étant supérieures au reste du monde (une nouvelle forme d'impérialisme) et c'est là un produit de l'héritage légué par les Lumières. Même si la postmodernité prétend avoir discerné les jeux de pouvoir qui ont été à l'œuvre dans la modernité, elle lui emboîte le