Constantine R. Campbell
*Paul and Union with Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012). 479 pages. $34.99.

For a number of years, union with Christ has been a much discussed and frequently debated topic among biblical scholars and theologians. Much of the debate has focused on the meaning and function of union with Christ in the Pauline corpus. Despite the popularity of the topic, there has previously been no comprehensive examination of the doctrine that bridged the disciplines of biblical studies and theology. Constantine Campbell, Associate Professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, has filled this void with a detailed study of the topic. The subtitle of the book aptly describes what Campbell has set out to do: exegesis and theology.

After an introductory chapter, Campbell begins his study with a helpful overview of the major contributions to the topic over the last century. Here he seeks to draw the reader’s attention to important scholarship in recent history in order to set the stage for his own discussion. The results of the historical survey provide the impetus for Campbell’s work. His analysis shows that previous works on union with Christ have tended to either 1) narrowly focus on a single prepositional phrase (such as ἐν Χριστῷ) or 2) broadly focus on theological themes related to union with Christ devoid of exegetical foundations. *Paul and Union with Christ* seeks to provide a thorough exegesis of all the Pauline passages related to union with Christ and then move to theological synthesis.

Following the historical survey in chapter 2, chapters 3-7 are the real “meat” of the book. In these chapters, Campbell offers exegetical analysis of every passage in the Pauline corpus that contains a prepositional phrase related to union with Christ and every passage containing one of the major metaphors that point to the doctrine.

Chapter 3 examines every occurrence of the phrase ἐν Χριστῷ and related phrases (such as ἐν κυρίῳ and ἐν αὐτῷ) in Paul’s writings. Campbell notes that this is the most important phrase pointing to union with Christ and has historically been the focus of most exegetical treatments of the doctrine. Thus, this chapter is the longest in the book (about 130 pages). Campbell begins the chapter with a brief analysis of the multiple functions of the preposition ἐν in the New Testament. He proceeds to exegetical study of each occurrence, helpfully grouping the occurrences into categories of use and making decisions as to the precise function of the preposition in each passage. Some may feel bogged down in this long chapter, but there is much reward in careful reading as the analysis is often very insightful.
Chapters 4-6 continue the exegetical work, focusing on εἰς Χριστῷ, σὺν Χριστῷ, and διὰ Χριστοῦ, respectively. These chapters follow the same structure and approach as the previous chapter. Each is comprehensive in analysis, covering all occurrences of the particular phrase and related phrases.

Finally, the exegetical section is concluded with a study of the major Pauline metaphors related to union with Christ. Campbell rightly notes these metaphors are “one of the most important ways in which Paul expresses his thinking about union with Christ” (p. 267). Thus, chapter 7 examines the body of Christ, building and temple, marriage, and clothing metaphors. This study supports and rounds out the previous exegetical study, showing that themes developed from the prepositional phrases are also present in the metaphors.

After the exhaustive exegetical study, Campbell moves to theological synthesis. In this section, he attempts to draw together his exegetical findings to summarize Paul’s doctrine of union with Christ. Much of this section examines the relationship between union with Christ and other theological issues, such as the work of Christ, the Trinity, and justification. The chapter on union with Christ and justification is particularly helpful. Campbell presents a balanced discussion of the topic, especially as it relates to recent debates surrounding the New Perspective on Paul.

In chapter 12, Campbell draws on his exegetical results to define union with Christ, utilizing four theological terms to do so: union, participation, identification, and incorporation. He settles on these terms because he believes Paul’s doctrine of union with Christ is too complex and multifaceted to be defined by a single term. This will, I think, provide much clarity for readers who find themselves somewhat confused by the concept of union with Christ. Indeed, this is an improvement over many other works which use the term without ever defining its meaning. Finally, Campbell concludes the book with a few suggestions for further study.

The strengths of this book are numerous. First, despite the fact that it is over 400 pages long and deals heavily with exegesis of the Greek text, it is nevertheless very lucid, well-written and easily to follow. The author’s writing style is engaging in that he is able to expound complex ideas in ways relatively informed readers can understand. One need not be a Greek scholar to benefit from this work.

Second, the value of this book lies in its comprehensive analysis of the Pauline corpus. In this respect, the work is truly ground-breaking. While not all passages are treated with equal depth, Campbell is still able to cover every passage sufficiently by focusing solely on the contribution of the passage to understanding Paul’s doctrine of union with Christ. In addition, Campbell is