

UNITY OF THE CHURCH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT AND TODAY. By Lukas Vischer, Ulrich Luz, and Christian Link. Translated from the German by James E. Crouch. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010. Pp. xiv + 254. \$40.

This book is a twice-mediated study of ecclesial unity in the texts of the New Testament. It is a translation of a 2009 German work that was itself a new edition of a 1988 work by the same authors. It is also the product of multiple authors, including the late Lukas Vischer, and Ulrich Luz (University of Bern) and Christian Link (Ruhr University). The book is the end product, a “theological rough draft” of a dialogue between Protestant, Old Catholic, and Roman Catholic professors and students in Switzerland. It bears the influence of these dialogue partners and admirably includes, and recognizes, the contributions of the student members of the working group.

Despite collaboration, translation, and revision, the volume succeeds as a survey of the idea of ecclesial unity in the New Testament. This success is due in part to the skilled translation that makes a dense text accessible to English speakers. The book is further enhanced by its focus; rather than attempting a complete New Testament ecclesiology, the authors limit their scope to exploring only the idea of unity in these texts.

Part 1 of the book, by Vischer, addresses the difficulties in using the New Testament as a resource for the healing of ecclesial divisions by discussing the ecumenically problematic relationship of Scripture and tradition. Even as V. acknowledges the progress made by moving from a contrast between Scripture and tradition to discernment between “true tradition” and “distorted tradition” in relation to the Scriptures, he also emphasizes that this convergence alone does not solve the issue of how one uses the biblical witness to address current questions of ecclesial unity; despite the hopes of earlier ecumenists, “the appeal to Scripture does not alone make unity possible” (11).

V. also introduces two central conclusions from the dialogue that shape the remainder of the book: the lack of a coherent concept of unity of the church in the New Testament witness and the abundant evidence of a continuous struggle for ecclesial unity in those same texts. On the former, V. writes that “it is time to abandon once and for all the image of harmonious agreement” (12) that guides many images of ecclesial unity, including some of those most dear to the ecumenical movement past and present. Despite the ideal given in Acts, the evidence suggests that there was no ecclesial Eden in which unity was enjoyed without difficulty or struggle. Rather, ecclesial unity has always been both a “basic gift” and a struggle; it is a gift in progress, rather than a secure possession. Ecclesial unity, V. argues, is therefore found not despite but within the continuing struggle to be united in Christ, to make the basic gift of Christian unity visible and effective.

Part 2, written by Luz with the direct contribution of numerous students, is the most substantive section and provides an exhaustive survey of New Testament data on three levels: the historical evidence in each text for the history of the struggle for unity; the changing, often assumed, understandings of the foundation of unity; and theological reflection on church unity and the implicit ecclesiologies that determine that reflection. The texts are divided between the apostolic and postapostolic period, and between questions of ecclesial unity in relation to Israel and questions of ecclesial unity in relation to gnostic tendencies respectively. An initial section on the historical Jesus and a separate section on the writings of Paul complete the survey. Accounts of the historical evidence of the struggle for unity, the ideas and institutions developed to transmit the gift of Christian unity, and the beginning ecclesiological conceptions of unity found in each epoch and in Paul make for a long treatment, slightly more than half the book. But the sections stand independently and therefore could be useful as discrete points of reference.

Link has the unenviable task in the final part of teasing out a systematic theological reflection from the complexity of the New Testament data. He succeeds in presenting the foundations for further ecumenical reflection on ecclesial unity as struggle and as process. He is especially insightful in outlining the ecclesiological implications of the relationship of the church vis-à-vis Israel that developed in the writings of the postapostolic period. In a final section on “flash points of unity” in which Link discusses still-divisive questions about Scripture, Eucharistic sharing, and ministerial offices, his Reformed commitments surface more prominently; his dismissal of postbiblical developments in these areas sometimes appears to beg the question of the role of Scripture in determining true and distorted tradition raised by V. in part 1. Nevertheless, the book as a whole will be a useful resource for theologians and ecumenists in their attempts to understand the gift and the struggle for Christian unity.

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THE TRINITY IN HISTORY: A THEOLOGY OF THE DIVINE MISSIONS. Vol. 1, MISSIONS AND PROCESSIONS. By Robert M. Doran. Toronto: University of Toronto, 2012. Pp. xv + 425. \$95.

Over the past two decades Doran has been building the elements for a major project in systematic theology. His *Theology and the Dialectics of History* (1990) provided the categories needed for a systematic theology of history in its personal, cultural and social aspects. His shorter, but still substantial work, *What Is Systematic Theology?* (2005), explored how history could be integrated into the systematic task, introducing his readers to what