# Kerux

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"vita vestra abscondita est cum Christo in Deo"
Colossians 3:3

# CONTENTS





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# THE END IN THE BEGINNING:

# A BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL CATECHISM FOR YOUNG AND OLD

## Joshua

James T. Dennison, Jr.[1]

After the Pentateuch (five books of Moses; Hebrew *Torah*) come the _____?

> Historical Books (as they are usually labeled in Christian circles)

What are these?

> They are the divinely inspired record of the story of the nation of Israel from Conquest (Joshua) to Destruction of Jerusalem, Exile to Babylon (Judges through Chronicles) and beyond (Ezra-Nehemiah and Esther).

How are these books listed in the Hebrew canon?

> Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings are called the "Former Prophets" (*Nebiim*), while Chronicles through Esther (also Ruth) are part of the "Writings" (*Ketubim*).

What is the narrative plot of this portion of the Bible?

> It recounts the drama of Israel's occupation of the Promised Land followed by the drearily redundant 300-year record of idolatry, divine judgment, deliverance (Judges). The rise and demise of the Hebrew monarchy is narrated in the "one two" books, Samuel through Chronicles. Ezra to Esther concludes the narrative story with a remnant of Judah returned to the land and another remnant preserved in Persia. The biblical theology of the Historical Books features the eschatological Joshua, the eschatological deliverer ('Judge'), the eschatological king (Davidide) and the eschatological exilee[2] (remnant and dispersion). That multi-form eschatological person, our Lord Jesus Christ, displays his story provisionally by anticipation in the record of the OT Historical Books.

Why is the book of Joshua first among the Historical Books?

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[1] I wish to acknowledge many pleasant conversations about this book with my friend, Randy Bergquist. The content of this article is, of course, my own formulation and responsibility.

[2] I have coined this word to express the notion of 'one exiled'; it better expresses the "filling up" of the exile and dispersion in Christ Jesus (cf. Matthew and Luke's genealogies of our Lord, 1:1-17, esp. 12-16 and 3:23-38, esp. 23-27 respectively in which he is the accomplishment of the whole history of redemption from Adam to the incarnation, exilic era included).

It is the aperture to a narrative which unfolds the history of Israel over a millennium (ca. 1400-400 B.C.)—the closure of which is the era of revelatory silence (i.e., God ceases to speak after the Persian Era) until that dramatic silence is shattered by the eruptive intrusion of the kingdom of heaven's God in heaven's royal God-the-Son (Mt 4:17; Mk 1:15; Lk 4:43).

What does "Joshua" mean?

It is the Hebrew word *Jehoshua/Jeshua* for "savior" or "deliverer"

What is the Greek word for "Joshua"?

*Iēsous* or "Jesus" in English

So Joshua, the son of Nun (Josh 1:1) is the _____?

Protological Joshua-Jesus

As such, he anticipates the _____ ?

Eschatological Jesus-Joshua

How do you know this protological/eschatological pattern is Biblical and not just your own formulation or invention?

From Hebrews 4:8—"For if Joshua had given them rest, he would not have spoken of another day after that."

**NB:** the protological Joshua-Jesus who could not give the Israel of God "rest" prefigures the eschatological Jesus-Joshua who has completed the (Sabbath) "rest" for the Israel of God (Heb 4:10). The son of Nun anticipates the Son of God.[3]

But Joshua is a warrior figure, an instrument of conquest and death to the pagan powers of Canaan.

Yes he is

And Jesus is a warrior figure, an instrument of conquest and death to the principalities and powers and rulers of darkness.

Yes he is (Col 2:15; Eph 4:8; cf. Rev 1:16, 18; 12:7-9; 17:14; 19:11-16, 19)

Thus, the protological/eschatological Joshua paradigm ties together two figures in redemptive history and two eras of redemptive history.

Yes it does: Joshua-Jesus of Nun with Jesus-Joshua of Nazareth; the era of settlement of the Promised Land with the era of the gospel of good news in a "better country".

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[3] The reader may be interested in the author's lectures on the epistle to Hebrews for more details on these passages, especially number 11: http://nwts.edu/audio/JTD/Hebrews.htm .

And the self-disclosure of God's plan to the protological Joshua is mimetic of the self-disclosure of God's plan to the eschatological Joshua.

Yes it is: Canaan mirrors Heaven

What aspect of God's plan in history is specifically revealed in the protological and eschatological Joshua?

Conquest and Settlement

Explain

The protological and eschatological Joshuas conquer the land of promise by expelling the enemies of the Lord God, while simultaneously bringing the redeemed of the Lord into their inheritance.

How does the protological Joshua conquer the land?

He leads the army of God in a "divide and conquer" strategy by cutting through the center of Canaan and then rolling back the flanks south and north.

How does the eschatological Joshua perform this "conquest" function?

He divided the enemy powers of hellish darkness from his elect (by taking their place); conquers by vanquishing them (via exorcism); he also renders them impotent (through his omnipotence), then abolished their power by vicariously submitting to their erstwhile bonds and brutality (bloody death). But he magnificently shatters the cords of Sheol and bursts the lifelessness of the grave with resurrection life. He has ruined their tyranny and overthrown their slavery (crushed the head of the serpent). He has defeated and destroyed them in fully entering into their hour of darkness-death and crushing them with his hour of resurrection-light and life.

[***For the following material, the reader will need a good Bible atlas. The following are recommended:*** *Carta Bible Atlas* (the most detailed, but has some liberal-critical dates which do not mesh with the Biblical data); Lawrence, *IVP Atlas of Bible History*; Beitzel, *New Moody Atlas of the Bible*.]

Where is this strategic pattern recorded?

The first half of the book of Joshua (esp. chapters 5-12) contains the narrative précis of this strategy

Where was Israel's base camp out of which they marched against the enemies of God?

Gilgal (5:10), just west of the Jordan River and northeast of Jericho (4:19)

Where is the narrative of Israel's conquest of the cities in the central regions of Canaan?

Jericho (6); Ai and Bethel (7-8); Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth and Kiriath-jearim (9:17)

What direction does Joshua turn after splitting Canaan through the middle?

South (10)

He then returns to his base camp in _____?

Gilgal (10:43)

Next, he turns his attention to the north and the Canaanite coalition under _____?

Jabin, King of Hazor (11:1) and the "kings of the north" (11:2)

Where is the record of the conquest of the northern regions of Canaan?

Joshua 11:1-15

Chapter 11:16-23 provides _____?

A summary of the conquest of Canaan from north to south, sandwiching the cities of the central regions in between as they lie in proximity to Joshua's base camp at Gilgal. Notice the bracket feature which envelopes v. 16 and v. 23.

But not all the Canaanites were subdued.

No, some remained in the land to become a stumbling block to the people of God (Jdg 1:19, 21, 27-36; 2:1-3; cf. Num 33:55; Josh 23:11-13)

Where is the narrative of the allotment of inheritance for the 12 tribes?

Josh 13-22

How is this divided?

Chapter 13 lists the eastern (Transjordanian) tribal inheritance of Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh

Chapters 14-22 detail the inheritance of the remaining tribes (Cisjordanian): Ephraim, half tribe of Manasseh, Judah, Benjamin, Simeon, Zebulun, Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, Dan

What is the biblical theological significance of this pattern—conquest and settlement?

God's promise to provide a land for his people, purified of those who hate the Lord and his commandments, apportioned among his people according to their patriarchal families—all this is provisionally realized in the Israelite theocracy.

But "provisional" means "not final".

Yes, the presence of sin in the theocracy (both in sinful Israelites and sinful pagans) underscored the impermanence and un-finality of the theocracy. In fact, theocracy was an

ideal never accomplished in the history of OT Israel (nor ever intended to be accomplished therein); it was rather a revelation of what was to be in an eschatological theocracy not of this world. As a foretaste of this, Israel was to remove the enemies of God from Canaan and take their inheritance in a land sanctified by the tabernacle presence of a holy Lord. But the remainder of in-dwelling sin in the people of the inheritance was a reminder that earthly Canaan-land was not heavenly God-land. The eternal theocracy in the land of eternal inheritance was the eschatological arena of the *visio Dei* ("vision of God", face to face) and the *sanctus patria* ("holy country"). Only the eschatological Joshua (the very face of God) could bring the eschatological Israel of God into that land of an everlastingly holy inheritance.

What is contained in the Jericho narrative (Josh 2-6)?

Not only the supernatural power of God in destruction, but the supernatural power of God in salvation

***For the archaeology of Jericho's destruction,*** see the work of Dr. Bryant Wood at the website of Associates for Biblical Research (http://www.biblearchaeology.org/ ).

What is the approximate date of Jericho's fall?

ca. 1407 B.C. (i.e., the date of the Exodus [1447 B.C.] – 40 years wandering in the wilderness = 1407 B.C.)

How is God's supernatural power evident in the fall of Jericho?

Josh 6:20—"the wall fell down flat" (NASB) at the shout of the people of Israel and the blowing of the trumpets. The immediacy of the collapse strongly suggests preternatural power, not mere natural reverberation leading to collapse. This also appears to be the implication of Heb 11:30 ("By faith the walls of Jericho fell down")—i.e., that eschatological faith ("the evidence of things not seen," Heb 11:1) participates in the powers of the supernatural arena. Thus, the fall of Jericho was an act of the supernatural arena breaking out in the temporal/historical arena.

Where is God's supernatural power of salvation present at Jericho?

In the narrative of Rahab

Who was Rahab?

A prostitute (Josh 2:1; Heb 11:31; Jam 2:25) who lived in a house built on the walls of Jericho (Josh 2:15)

How was she saved?

By faith (as are all sinners who are saved)

Where is the evidence of her faith?

In her confession of faith (Josh 2:9-13) in which she identifies/unites herself to the supernatural power of the Lord God who dried up the Reed Sea, who released the children of Israel from Egypt, who defeated the Amorite kings of the Transjordan, Sihon and Og.

To what is she united/joined?

By faith, to the Lord God—Creator of heaven and earth (Josh 2:11).

By faith, to the Lord God of New Beginnings who parted the Reed Sea so his people could cross over on dry ground, confirming their transition from the old era to the new era.

By faith, to the Lord God of Salvation who brought his people out of Egyptian bondage and carried them to Shittim "beyond the Jordan" (vv. 1, 10).

By faith, to the Lord God of Victory who joined himself to his people in armed conflict with the Amorite kings, empowering them to triumph.

In sum, she united herself by faith to this heavenly, all-powerful Lord God who first united himself from his heavenly arena to her heart, mind and soul.

She too was made a partaker of this "eschatological faith"?

Yes, her eschatologically gifted faith (per Hebrews 11) is that same supernatural work of the Spirit of the Lord received in the life of every redeemed sinner (even a prostitute!).

Rahab is saved—from her sin, from her prostitution (cf. 6:25), from her former life, from her Canaanite paganism, from her covenant with death apart from the grace of God (a divine and supernatural grace), which delivers her into life and light and immortality.

Her eschatological faith is her vertical (below up) response to God's vertical (above down) penetration into her heart and life. The heavenly substance of what is hoped for becomes her possession by faith. The evidence of the invisible heavenly arena suffuses her consciousness and her spirit. So that she becomes united to the eschatological-heavenly as she is united by transformation/regeneration to the Lord God of that arena.

Supernatural-heavenly eschatological power in the end of Jericho and its death.

Supernatural-heavenly eschatological power in the beginning of eternal life in Rahab's heart, confession, life-action.

Why did Rahab dangle a scarlet cord from the window of her house on the wall of Jericho (2:18)?

It was her 'exodus' sign of transition from the death-sentence curse to the life-continuing blessing. Even as Israel in Egypt escaped death by the scarlet blood of a lamb marking their abodes while death passed over, so Rahab passed over from death to life by a scarlet emblem of salvation marking her abode.

Rahab's salvation and Jericho's destruction follow what event?

> The children of Israel crossing the Jordan River

What is the significance of this passing through the waters?

> It marks yet another transition in the pilgrim sojourn of the people of God. As the passage of the Reed Sea signaled the transition between the old (era of slavery) and the new (era of sojourn in the land between), so the passage of the Jordan once more marks the transition between the old era and the new era. In this case, the end of the wilderness sojourn and the beginning of the settlement in the land of promise. Over Jordan means no longer in the land in between; rather now in this new beginning, possession of the land of rest. As the Reed Sea was the boundary between slavery and freedom, so the Jordan River is the boundary between homelessness and permanent settlement.

Where does this pattern of water ordeal transition find its climax in redemptive history?

> In the passage of the eschatological Joshua (who is at once the eschatological Israel) through the waters of the Jordan River. When Jesus Christ comes "to fulfill all righteousness" (Mt 3:15) at the Jordan, his passing through the waters marks the eschatological transition between the old and the new—the age of the law and the prophets and the age of the eschatological law-giver and the eschatological prophet who is the bringer of the age of the eschatological gospel in its fullness. In Christ Jesus, the new Joshua, the new Israel, the new beginning occurs once and for all. In him, old things have passed away; in him, all things are made new. No more bondage, no more wandering in between, no more exclusion from the Promised Land, no more conflict with the enemies of the kingdom of heaven—in him, the new age erupts on the plane of history and all the old is fulfilled in him in the now/not yet kingdom of God which he brings. He is the last truly new-thing transition in the history of redemption—all the old/new transitions are complete and finished in him.

Does the succession of Moses by Joshua bring these two into dramatic narrative interface?

> Yes

How?

| | |
|---|---|
| Moses crosses the Reed Sea (Ex 15) | Joshua crosses the Jordan (Josh 3) |
| Moses sends spies to Hebron (Num 13) | Joshua sends spies to Jericho (2) |
| Moses' son is circumcised (Ex 4) | Joshua circumcises sons of Israel (5) |
| Moses observes Passover (Ex 12) | Joshua observes Passover (5) |
| Moses receives the law at Sinai (Ex 20) | Joshua renews the law at Ebal/Gerizim (8) |

Is the narrative recapitulation more than paradigmatic duplication?

Yes, it demonstrates an unfolding pattern of on-going exodus motifs

How?

| | |
|---|---|
| Exodus liberation from bondage | Liberation from desert wandering |
| Exodus tyrant overpowered | Tyrants defeated in battle |
| Exodus Reed Sea crossing | Jordan River crossing |
| Exodus covenant at Sinai | Covenant renewal at Shechem |

The mighty acts of God (*magnalia Dei*) are replayed in the life of Moses and Joshua. The narrative reduplications underscore the exodus motif as a continuing aspect of the life of God's people as they transition into the next era of the history of redemption. The past is not merely left behind, it remains existential in the on-going grace of God whose exodus narrative repeats itself from the generation of Moses to the generation of Joshua. And all this reaches its once-for-all accomplishment in the age of the Lord Jesus Christ (eschatological Moses and eschatological Joshua). In him, we discover finality of exodus, finality of wilderness sojourn, finality of water ordeal transition, finality of promised land possession—all final in Christ Jesus whose narrative replays the past in lasting existential drama.

But there is another retrospective pattern broader than the exodus motif in Joshua?

Yes, notice the patriarchal paradigm of chapter 24:2-4, 32. Present redemptive history is united to past redemptive history in unfolding organic continuum.

How is the narrative in the days of Joshua related to the days of the patriarchs?

By way of provisional promise and fulfillment

Explain

The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had promised in a covenant of grace the following gifts: a land, a great nation, a blessing for all people. In the days of Joshua, the land is Canaan; the nation is the multitude of the children of Israel; the blessing to all people includes Israel and Gentile Rahab (and her family).

Does the blessing feature fold in Gentile as well as Hebrew?

Yes it does. Here in the case of Rahab, a foretaste of Gentiles grafted into the tree of Israel. It is a blessed provision anticipating the great harvest of the nations out of the life, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom there is neither Jew nor Gentile.

And there is more of this wonderful anticipation in the book of Joshua?

Yes, in the subterfuge of the Gibeonites (9)

Who were the Gibeonites?

> Hivites (9:7) who dwelt in Canaan at the time of Joshua's conquest

How were they folded into the people of God?

> By tricking Joshua with the pretense of having journeyed from far beyond Canaan so as to join themselves to the people of God.

What induced them to pose this subterfuge?

> Three things: the conquest of Jericho and Ai (9:3), the report of God's saving power in Egypt (v. 9) and his conquering power in the Transjordan (v. 10).

What did Joshua do?

> Joshua made a covenant with them (v. 16) promising them they could join the children of Israel in life and avoid the death sentence of the children of Canaan.

But deceit was involved.

> Yes, but nevertheless Joshua had given his word that they would live and that these Gentiles too would be grafted in to the people of God, albeit as manual servants (v. 21). Better a servant in amongst the ransomed people of God than a corpse in amongst the pagan Gentiles of Canaan. The inclusion of the Gibeonite Gentiles among the people of God is a provisional fulfillment of the patriarchal covenant promise to include the Gentiles in the grace of life (which the Gibeonites embraced by sojourn and profession) and not to destroy them in the wrath of death.

After the conquest, settlement and allotment of the land, how does the book of Joshua end?

> With a testamentary farewell and a covenant renewal (24)

Are there any precedents for this pattern?

> Yes. Genesis 49 and Deuteronomy 33 are both chapters that contain the farewell testament of transitional figures in the OT history of redemption, namely Jacob and Moses.

What is central to these blessings lavished on the sons and daughters of the tribes of Israel?

> The grace of God is the foundation of these covenant blessings

Is Joshua's farewell covenant renewal also a part of the grace of God in its unfolding redemptive-historical continuum?

> Yes, there is no works-merit principle in Israel at Joshua 24 (as there is not in Gen 49 and Deut 33). It is all the grace-faith principle which issues from God's all-gracious divine and supernatural sovereignty.

How is the grace of God disclosed in the covenant narrative of Joshua 24?

Notice the emphatic divine "I"—God alone is the agent of favor and blessing. Israel is the recipient of God's free, unmerited favor.

Over what period of time is God's grace reviewed by Joshua at Shechem?

From the age of the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob) to the age of Moses and the Exodus to the age of Joshua and the conquest/settlement. God acts first (grace); Israel reacts in response (out-of-grace grateful obedience).

Thus, the covenant of grace narrative paradigm unites the stories of the patriarchs (climactic testamentary farewell, Gen 49), the story of the exodus and wilderness sojourn (climactic testamentary farewell, esp. Deut 33) and the story of crossing Jordan to possess a land of milk and honey (climactic testamentary farewell, Josh 24).

**NB:** each testamentary farewell is retrospectively, existentially and prospectively oriented.

Jacob looks back to Isaac and Abraham. He affirms the present status quo. He projects the future promises to God's people saved by grace.

Moses looks back to Jacob, Isaac, Abraham (Deut 29:13; 30:20) as well as back to Egypt and the wilderness sojourn. He affirms the present status quo. He projects the future promises to God's people saved by grace.

Joshua looks back to Jacob, Isaac, Abraham, to Egypt and the wilderness as well as the conquest and settlement of the Promised Land. He affirms the present status quo. He projects the future promises to God's people saved by grace.

**NB:** the redemptive-historical connection (organic continuum) and narrative development of each of the farewell discourses:

Patriarchal emphasis of the divine initiative of grace calling sinners out of the world of darkness; exodus emphasis on the redemptive grace of the blood of a lamb and freedom from the bondage of the powers of the evil age transitioning to a sojourn with the presence of God in the land in between; final rest in transition from sojourn to settlement in possession of God's land of milk and honey.

Divine and Supernatural Call (all of grace)

Divine and Supernatural Redemption (all of grace)

Divine and Supernatural Rest (all of grace)

**NB:** every part of these unfolding connections contains a promised blessing of grace to Gentiles as well as Hebrews.

Where is the last (i.e., *the* eschatological) testamentary farewell in the Bible?

John 14-17, our Lord Jesus Christ's so-called "Farewell Discourse"

What are the elements of this testamentary farewell?

A divine and supernatural choice (all of grace)—Jn 15:16

A divine and supernatural redemption in which our Lord "lays down" his life for his people—Jn 15:13

A divine and supernatural presence via the Holy Spirit for the time of sojourning in between the now and the not yet—Jn 16:13-14

A divine and supernatural blessing to the nations, Gentiles as well as Jews—Jn 17:20-21

A divine and supernatural conquest of their enemies through the One who has "overcome the world"—Jn 16:33

A divine and supernatural rest in a land of "prepared places" which shall never pass away—Jn 14:2-3

**NB:** it is the divine and supernatural Son of God who discloses himself in the Testamentary Farewells of Jacob, Moses and Joshua, while incarnating the salient elements of those farewells in his own life, passion, death, resurrection and ascension. The covenant of grace comes to climactic fulfillment in his incarnation, testifying that throughout redemptive history that covenant has always been of grace, grace alone, nothing but grace.

In conclusion, review the pattern of the protological and eschatological Joshua/Jesus.

Protological Joshua—

leads his pilgrim people out of the wilderness

leads his pilgrim people through the waters dividing the old era from the new

confirms the law of God

conquers his people's enemies

ushers his people into their allotted inheritance

renews the covenant of grace

bids farewell in testamentary fashion

Eschatological Joshua—

carries his pilgrim people with him out of the wilderness land in between

embodies his people as he passes through the waters declaring the end of the old era and the dawn of the new

confirms the law of God from the mount, writes it on the heart

conquers the enemy principalities and powers and rulers of his people in this present evil age

draws his people with him into his own land of eternal rest

renews the covenant in his own precious blood

bids farewell in testamentary fashion assuring the elect of better things to come

How does the end of the book of Joshua bring us back to the beginning?

It contains a theologically pregnant thematic inclusio

How?

The death and farewell of Moses (Deut 31-34) signals the end of the old provisional era of liberation and wandering and the beginning of the new more permanent era of occupation and settlement.

The death and farewell of Joshua (Josh 23-24) signals the end of the old provisional era of occupation and settlement and the beginning of the new more permanent era of rest in the land of milk and honey.

But does not this final paradigm (Joshua) prove to be a failure—impermanent, not final, un-eschatological?

Yes, because sinful Israel at Joshua's death will remain sinful Israel after Joshua's death. Only the Eschatological Joshua who is the Eschatological Israel can complete and fulfill the paradigm of sinful failure with his sinless perfection and success.

The end of Joshua, son of Nun, leaves us yearning for the coming of Joshua, Son of God. And so we rest in him completely, finally and perfectly (Heb 4:8-9).

*K:JNWTS* 31/2 (December 2016): 15

## The Nativity, or Christmas Day

George Herbert

Unfold thy face! unmask thy ray!
Shine forth, bright sun! double the day.
Let no malignant misty fume,
Nor foggy vapor, once presume
To interpose thy perfect sight
This day, which makes us love thy light
For even better, that we could
That blessed object once behold,
Which is both the circumference
And center of all excellence:
Or rather neither, but a treasure
Unconfined without measure;
Whose center and circumference,
Including all pre-eminence
Excluding nothing but defect,
And infinite in each aspect,
Is equally both here and there,
And now, and then, and everywhere,
And always, one, himself, the same,
A being far above a name.
Draw nearer, then, and freely pour
Forth all thy light into that hour,
Which was crowned with his birth,
And made heaven envy earth.
    Let not this birth day, clouded be,
    By whom thou shinest, and we see.

*K:JNWTS* 31/2 (December 2016): 16-19

# The Aperture and Closure of Obadiah:

# Patterned Symmetry of Visionary Imagery[1]

Obadiah 1, 21

James T. Dennison, Jr.

The prophecy of Obadiah is a "vision" (Hebrew, חֲזוֹן, *hazôn*). As such, it contains visual images (pictures, if you will) of the Lord's sovereign acts against Edom (Mt. Esau, vv. 8, 9, 19, 21) and for Judah (Mt. Zion, vv. 17, 21). The tapestry unfolds in 21 verses and 291 words, yet verses and words flourishing with rhetorical imagery and literary artistry—artistry imprinted with frequent vivid symmetry, whether symmetry of alliteration, assonance, paronomasia, anaphora or even chiasm.[2] There is in Obadiah's visual portrait vibrant imagery of judgment for Edom/Esau conjoined with efficacious visions of gracious deliverance for Israel/Jacob. In fact, this patterned symmetry is present at the opening and closing of the inspired prophet's little book. Obadiah has crafted a paradigm of reciprocal symmetry into the beginning and ending of his visionary revelation which is stunning if not brilliant in its rhetorical, literary and theological magnificence. Not only the march of God's wrath against vicious Edom in an eschatological finality culminating in the end of Esau's mountain kingdom-civilization, but the parade of God's "saviors" ("deliverers", Hebrew, מוֹשִׁעִים, *môshiîm*) in an eschatological finality culminating in the kingdom of the Lord on his mountain glory-Zion.

Obadiah 1 and 21 are interrelated not only by position—aperture and closure of the prophet's small book (the 'least' of all the prophets); Obadiah 1 and 21 are interrelated with the visionary substance of the book as a whole *in nuce*. And this is accomplished by the prophet's rhetorical, literary, theological and eschatological skill, so as to envelop his entire vision from beginning to end[3] in a symmetry of reciprocity via recursive parallel portraiture. All this he accomplishes through: geographical setting, prophetic subject, prophetic agent, directional vectors, duplicate grammatical markers and echoing assonantial endings.

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[1] Cf. the author's audio series of lectures (with handouts) on the entire book of Obadiah here: http://nwts.edu/audio/jtd/obadiah.htm.

[2] For a stimulating discussion of the "poetic devices," see R. B. Robinson, "Levels of Naturalization in Obadiah." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament (JSOT)* 40 (1988): 83-97, esp. 88-95. Note also Ernst Wendland, "The rhetoric of Obadiah's 'day': Its structure and significance," in *Prophetic Rhetoric: Case Studies in Text Analysis and Translation* (2009) 39-66.

[3] Many scholar commentators have noted the inclusio feature of vv. 1 and 21, most recently Elie Assis, "Structure, Redaction and Significance in the Prophecy of Obadiah." *JSOT* 39 (2014): 211. Sadly, Assis periodizes the prophecy into three eras (and thus, three authors/redactors) destroying the obvious wholistic unity (single authorial integrity) signaled by the inclusive envelope.

## Geography and Subject

Let us unfold his remarkable theological tapestry at its aperture and closure. We are first arrested by the subject of the prophecy at the very inception—the prophet is writing what he sees "about", "to", "concerning", "belonging to" (לְ, *le,* Hebrew preposition) Edom (אֱדֹום). At the conclusion of his prophecy, he duplicates the same subject with a symmetrical geographic locater—"mountain of Esau" (הַר עֵשָׂו, *har esaw*). He thus features the name of Edom's progenitor (historical beginnings parallel to historical endings), i.e., an absolute historical birth of Esau/Edom reciprocally joined or related to an absolute historical death of Esau/Edom (cf. v. 18).[4] The symmetry of nation (geographically and nominally) emphatically underscores the beginning and end of that nation, even as the prophetic reflection on that nation begins and ends this tiny corpus of the OT canon. The reader will also observe that the Hebrew preposition returns in v. 21 as focused on what belongs in symmetry "to" (לְ, *li*) Edom/Esau, i.e., to be "judged" (לִשְׁפֹּט, *lispot*).

## Agent

Next, we observe the symmetry of the agent directing this vision—indeed weaving the arras/tapestry with his own omnipotent sovereignty from outside history into history. The Lord is identified initially as Adonai YHWH (v. 1) (אֲדֹנָי יְהוִֹה, "Lord God") as well as YHWH (also v. 1) (יְהוָֹה, "Lord") and that repeated in v. 21 (יהוָה, YHWH) with a duplicate preposition *la* (לַ) "to", "about", "belonging to" "the Lord". We observe the *le/la* preposition with respect to the prophetic agent in v. 1 (Adonai YHWH administers the "battle" "belonging to" Edom), while we also observe the *la/le* preposition with respect to the prophetic agent in v. 21. What belongs "to" Edom in v. 1 is coming judgment. What belongs "to" the Lord in v. 21 is coming deliverance (salvation). Though the duplication of the divine agent reinforces his active agency in the judgment of Edom and salvation of Zion, what belongs "to" Edom and the Lord here is the antithesis of doom and redemption coming "to" the one at the very outset of the vision and transcendently projected to the kingdom "belonging to" the Lord at the close of the vision. NB: the double use of the lamedh (לְ) preposition in both verses 1 and 21 further demonstrates the intentional bracketing of the aperture and closure.

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[4] Commentators have long noted the destruction of the Edomite nation by the Babylonians under their last king, Nabonidus (556-539 B.C.) in a campaign formerly associated with his attacks on Arabian desert tribes—a campaign which took him to the famous King's Highway and thence to troublesome (apparently) Edom in 554/53 B.C. (cf. the reference to "E]dom" in the fragmentary record from his third year in Cogan, *The Raging Torrent: Historical Inscriptions from Assyria and Babylonia Relating to Ancient Israel* (2008) 211, 214-15). In 1994, a relief which appears to depict Nabonidus was discovered at as-Sila on a high rock plateau in former Edomite territory 3 km northwest of Buseirah (Bozrah). The weathered inscription suggests that the Edomite campaign is better dated to Nabonidus's fifth year (551 B.C.). Cf. Stephanie Dalley and Anne Goguel, "The Sela Sculpture." *Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan* 41 (1997): 169-77; Fawzi Zayadine, "Le relief neo-babylonien a Sela' pres de Tafileh: interpretation historique." *Syria* 76 (1999): 83-90; Bradley L. Crowell, "Nabonidus, as-Sila, and the Beginning of the End of Edom." *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research (BASOR)* 348 (2007): 75-88.

## Vectors

There are directional vectors in v. 1 and v. 21. These vectors are indicated by the עַל form in Hebrew. In v. 1, it is the preposition "up against her" (עָלֶיהָ, *aleyha*). The Lord is bringing forces up against Edom. Once again for Edom, the direction is the horizontal historical vector which will bring her up against her terminal end. In v. 21, it is the verb form עָלוּ (*alû*) which means "to ascend up" or "to go up". Here the direction is vertical bringing the 'ascendants' into a non-terminal end or destiny, i.e., the transcendent arena of the transcendent agent who sovereignly interweaves these events on his redemptive-historical tableau. Mt. Zion here is an eschatological dimension more blessed than the mere vertical horizon of ascent to the Zion below (or Jerusalem below = Greek lit. "the now Jerusalem", thus Gal. 4:25). This is clear because the prophet visualizes the Zion Mount "to" be the Lord's kingdom—certainly an eternal eschatological vector!

## Assonance

There are finally two symmetrical assonantial elements in these enveloping verses. The first is duplicate *-îm* (ִים) endings; and the second is duplicate *-ah* (ָה) endings. This repetition of sound in v. 1 and v. 21 underscores (once more) the intentional symmetry woven into the aperture and closure of this remarkable prophetic visionary work. The "nations" (גּוֹיִם, *gôyîm*) are summoned in v. 1 by the envoy of the Lord God (who is the prophet himself replicating the mouth/word of God) to arise against Edom. These nations are the instruments of God's impending judgment, a motif explicitly duplicated in v. 21 (NASB). The *-îm* terminal sound in v. 1 allows the reader/hearer to hear/see the coming clash of destruction delivered by the "nations". But v. 21 also contains the very same *-îm* terminal sound. Here, wonderfully, it is found in the word for "deliverers" or "saviors" or "liberators" (מֹוׁשִׁעִים, *môshiîm*). This word is related to the Hebrew word for "Messiah" and the verb "to save". How pregnant is this word at the conclusion of this remarkable vision. We observe on the tapestry of redemptive history the saviors-deliverers of the people of God; those of times past (i.e., Moses, Joshua, David) and the ONE of time future—Messiah Jesus, once-and-for-all Savior-Deliverer of the people of God. This panoply of "saviors" fills the vision field of Obadiah's last word—his final word to his audience. It is a portrait of the Lord's Messiah ascending to his everlasting kingdom on Zion's eternal mount—the Jerusalem above where the Messianic king whom we know to be the very Son of God sits at the right hand of the majesty on high ruling over the hearts of his sons and daughters with saving grace full and free to weary and heavy laden souls.

That eschatological kingdom is the summum bonum of this last verse of Obadiah (he has saved the best til last) and the final assonantial element in our tapestry of beginnings and endings. In v. 1, the "battle" which erupts against Edom is, in Hebrew, מִלְחָמָה (*milhamah*); notice the terminal *-ah* ending. Now in v. 21, the "kingdom" which appears on (heavenly) Mt. Zion is, in Hebrew, מְלוּכָה (*melûkah*); again, notice the terminal *-ah* ending. The symmetry of these *-ah* ending words in v. 1 and v. 21 is further accentuated by the fact that the word for "battle" and the word for "kingdom" are the very last words in each verse. As if in staccato form—a final tapestry/arras

image—the poetic prophet Obadiah leaves us at the end of v. 1 with a vision of cataclysmic judgment-battle; but at the end of v. 21 (the end of his "vision" prophecy), he leaves us with a portrait of the "kingdom" of the Lord—the "kingdom" of the Lord and of his Christ (Messiah)—the "kingdom" of heaven, as everlasting as the Lord and his Christ and the Zion above.

## Inclusio Artistry

The prophet Obadiah has brilliantly woven together the aperture and closure of his remarkable prophetic vision with literary, rhetorical and theological symmetries. Devices in the text dramatically portray the judgment of the nation of Edom and the salvation of the nation of the kingdom of Zion. These parallel duplications are not accidental—they have been carefully crafted by an inspired artist so as to allow us to see his prophetic message in images of dramatic poignancy. For even Obadiah embeds the redemptive-historical reversal in the protological beginning and the eschatological ending of his magnificent prophetic tapestry. An inclusio of the reversal of condemnation by salvation which is the ever-gracious message of the Law, the Gospel and the Prophets.

Praise the Lord God that we who are in Christ Jesus see all this in the tapestry of our Savior Messiah's life, death, resurrection and ascension to the "heavenly Jerusalem" (Heb. 12:22).

## John Arrowsmith on Grace and Merit[1]

A second branch of God's goodness is grace, which relates to unworthiness, as the former did to misery. God is merciful to the ill-deserving, gracious to the undeserving. So far are we from being able to merit so much as the crumbs that fall from his table, that even temporal favors are all from grace (126).

"Buy without money and without price," because our labor can no way merit his blessings (38).

[1] John Arrowsmith (1602-1659) was a Puritan member of the Westminster Assembly who, in 1644, was appointed Master of St. John's, Cambridge, and later Trinity College Professor of Divinity at the same. These quotes come from his book *Armilla Catechetica; or A Chain of Principles* (1659). Our citations are from the 1822 reprint.

Arrowsmith was esteemed for his rhetorical skills, cf. B. B. Warfield, "Flowers from a Puritan Garden: Selections from Dr. John Arrowsmith's 'Armilla Catechetica;' or, 'A Chain of Principles' (Cambridge, 1659)." *Homiletic Review* 18 (October 1889): 299-306. Example: "There is not a round in the ladder to heaven which doth not give everyone that steppeth upon it just occasion of crying, *Grace, grace*" (304; p. 127 in the 1822 edition).

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# The Babe in the Manger Anticipates Resurrection Life

Luke 1:46-55, 67-79

Scott F. Sanborn

When we celebrate the birth of Christ, do we only celebrate his incarnation or do we also celebrate his death and resurrection? In considering this question, we need to consider the redemptive historical and cosmic significance of Christ's conception. The incarnation of the *person* of the Son of God brought the coming of the kingdom. At the same time, we might note that God had always brought new things in redemptive history through greater *acts of redemption*. Here we think of the exodus preceding both the giving of the law and the tabernacle and the conquest of Canaan preceding the blessed possession of the land. Thus, we might ask, what aspects of Christ's *work* are revealed in the kingdom brought with his incarnation? Did the kingdom—brought to the shepherds that first night—depend only on his work of incarnation alone, or did it also depend on his future death and resurrection?

This question is raised for us when we contemplate Luke 1:46-55 and 67-79. Each of these texts teach that Christ's conception brought *redemption*. The coming of the kingdom follows the pattern of God's previous acts of redemption. God has performed a new act of redemption that brings the kingdom with Christ's conception. Indeed, Mary magnified the Lord, saying that God had already "done mighty deeds" of mercy through the conception of Christ (1:51, 49-54). Her claim, that God has "brought down rulers . . . and has exalted the humble" (1:52), suggests that the kingdom has come, for it reflects a theme in 1 Samuel announcing the coming of the kingdom (1 Sam. 2:7-8). Mary concludes, noting that this was in fulfillment of the promises to Abraham (1:55). This brings us to Zacharias, who prophesied, indicating that God had *already* begun to fulfill his promises to Abraham (1:73). "He has visited us and accomplished redemption for his people" (1:68). In other words, while Zacharias's prophecy (1:67-79) looks to the future, it also shows us that God has *already* brought salvation through the virgin's conception. The kingdom came in Christ's conception because Christ came *with his redemptive reward*.

And Christ's redemptive reward cannot be conceived apart from his death and resurrection. Why is this the case? Some might claim that the obedience of the unborn Jesus and his sufferings in the womb were sufficient to bring the redemption that brought the kingdom. However this is highly improbable. Admittedly, we must affirm that Christ was not conceived in sin. Also, the fact that John the Baptist leaped in his mother's womb (Lk. 1:44) may indicate that the unborn are in a position to positively engage in the worship of God. Thus, we might say that the unborn Jesus kept the law to the extent that it was possible for him to do so in that environment. And he also suffered for us in the womb.

Nevertheless, as an unborn, he was not in a position to redeem infants, children, and adults; for he was not in an environment where he could obey the law to the extent required of infants, children and adults. Neither had he developed to the point where he could do this. In order to keep the law for us *all*, it was necessary for him to be "tempted in all things as *we*" (Heb. 4:15). Apart from this

we could not have confidence to receive his *mercy* (Heb. 4:16). As Irenaeus said, Christ had to be an infant to redeem infants, a child to redeem children, and an adult to redeem adults. Apart from his positive obedience to the law for all his seed, Christ could not bring the eschatological reward that Adam failed to attain.

Christ also had to bear the wrath of God for the unborn, infants, children, and adults. Thus it was appropriate for him to live through each of these states. And it was also appropriate for him to suffer death at the point when most people are held most accountable—i.e., in adulthood, because God pours out his wrath most fully on those who reject the greatest light. Assuming that the same light is given to a child and an adult, the adult (with greater capacities of apprehension) receives the greatest wrath for rejecting it. In order to die for us all, Christ (in reference to his human nature) had to bear the wrath of God to the greatest degree possible for any human being to receive it. Thus it was appropriate for Christ to die on the cross when he was an adult in his full capacities. In this way, he could bear God's wrath for all—the unborn, infants, children, and adults.

When Zacharias praises God for bringing redemption, he praises God that he has brought redemption for himself (an adult) and for all God's people. Thus, he suggests that Christ's incarnation has brought a redemption that could only come with Christ's adult obedience, death and resurrection. In this way, Zacharias's praise suggests that when Christ came, he brought the redemptive fruits of his future life, death, and resurrection.

### Was Each of Christ's Individual Acts Infinitely Sufficient for Salvation?

Again, it might be thought that since Christ was God, any suffering he underwent possessed infinite value, even in the womb or in infancy. However, if it is held that the infant Jesus' sufferings were alone sufficient extensively and intensively to satisfy God's infinite wrath for sinners, there was no necessity of Christ's death and separation from the face of his Father for our salvation. Yet the Scriptures teach that there was such a necessity. Not that God had to love and save us in the first place—he could have left us in our sins. However, having freely loved us, God's saving love for sinner's compelled him to sacrifice his son on the cross (Jn. 3:16-17). This implies that there was no other way for us to be saved. If there had been, God's love would not have necessitated so great a sacrifice. On the contrary, if any suffering the infant Jesus underwent possessed sufficient infinite value all by itself, it would have been possible for God to take this cup of death from his Son (Mk. 14:35-36) even before he died. God would have rescued Christ from death even before his resurrection—when in fact his prayers were answered (Heb. 5:7-10). But Christ's death was necessary for our salvation. Therefore, the sufferings of Christ in his infancy were not sufficient for our redemption apart from their connection to the whole of his full adult life, death and resurrection.

How are we to make sense of this? For it would seem that any suffering experienced by the infant Jesus would have infinite value since he was the God-man. As God, he was infinite and eternal, and his infinite nature should presumably give infinite value to any suffering he experienced. And does not infinite value extend both intensively and extensively? If it extends intensively, why does he need to experience any more suffering than a pin prick for our salvation? That is, why does not

a pin prick (which is not an infinite decree of suffering in itself) take on the legal significance of infinite suffering when borne by an infinite being?

Perhaps one might respond to this by saying, since the wages of our sins is death (Rom. 6:23), Christ must also die if he is to save us from death. But at first glance this seems to beg the question. Yes, for us infinite suffering (intensively) amounts to physical death and eternal damnation. But if any suffering for him possesses infinite value intensively, why does not a pin prick for him have an infinite value (intensively)? And if it does, why does it not satisfy our experience of intensively infinite wrath[1], even though for us this infinite punishment involves something different? That is, even though our infinite punishment involves hell, why should it not be satisfied by his infinite punishment contained in a pin prick?

### Infinite Wrath Meets Christ's Infinite Nature in his Death

The answer to this seems to be that there is more to the story than the infinite nature of Christ, though this is essential. There must be an *intersection of* God's *infinite wrath with* Christ's *infinite nature* to satisfy eternal wrath. Since Christ is *eternal God*, he had the *capacity* to bear eternal wrath. But he only bore this infinite wrath *when God poured it out on him on the cross.* It was only then that he cried "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me" (Mt. 27:46; Mk. 15:34). As such, the apostles emphasized that "he bore our sins in his body on the cross" (1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18). That is, God did not pour that infinite wrath out on him at every point of his life prior to his death. No doubt, Christ experienced God's wrath legally at every point of his suffering life (Isa. 53:4; Mt. 8:17), but this suffering did not entail the full outpouring of God's infinite wrath until Christ's death. Similarly, the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against sinners throughout their lives (Rom. 1:18ff), but this wrath does not represent the full outpouring of God's wrath against sinners until death, especially in the second death. Thus, it is not sufficient to consider the infinite nature of Christ all by itself and claim that this infinite nature gives infinite satisfactory efficacy to any suffering Christ experienced, even a pin prick. We must also consider the degree of wrath unleashed upon Christ, and that degree was not infinite until his death. Only when the infinite degree of wrath meets the infinite nature of Christ is God's wrath satisfied eternally. In this way, Christ's death and separation from the Father was essential for our salvation. A pin prick or any degree of suffering he actually experienced in his infancy would not do.

Apart from bearing God's eternal wrath in his death, none of Christ's sufferings on earth were of themselves sufficient for our *eternal* redemption. It was only with the completion of his life in death that he "obtained eternal redemption" (Heb. 9:12). Only then did he say "it is finished" (Jn. 19:30). Thus, the fact that Christ brought redemption in his conception and birth indicates that he brought with himself the merits of his future life, death, and resurrection. In Christ's incarnation,

[1] Insofar as a creature can bear it, that is, imperfectly in eternal punishment, not in its full and absolute infinite nature, which is impossible for a finite creature to do.

he possessed the end from the beginning. He laid hold of his future resurrection life—lavishing it on his people and so bringing the kingdom.

### Christ's Infinite Nature and His Active Obedience:

### Are We Right About his Suffering?

However, one might wonder whether our conclusion above can adequately account for the significance of Christ's sufferings on earth (short of his death) since they are interrelated with his truly human *obedience to the law*—which obedience had infinite significance because of his infinite divine nature. Christ's active obedience consisted not merely in acts but also in his continuous heartfelt faith in God's promises[2] together with love for God with all his heart, mind, soul and strength (Mk. 12:30; Lk. 10:27). This involved his active obedience to the Father's will as revealed in the law of God, which entailed for him the carrying out of his Messianic commission (Jn. 6:38-39; 4:34). Thus, in loving God and his neighbor with all his heart (according to the law), he was called to obey the law so that we might receive the eschatological reward Adam failed to attain. And the only way this goal could be attained after the fall was through his sufferings and death. Thus, he was called to actively pursue that calling which involved Messianic suffering on our behalf, the passive reception of which is known as his passive obedience. Again, Christ's active obedience had *eternal* significance because it was performed by his *infinite* divine person. So would not his corresponding sufferings have eternal significance at that time?

In light of this, we might ask if Christ's suffering during his public ministry (short of his death and resurrection) was sufficient grounds for his miraculous deeds after all. Beginning with the baptism of Jesus, the kingdom of God advanced with power (Mt. 11:12), including miraculous deeds and the salvation of souls. This advancement of the kingdom with Jesus' ministry was connected to the greater suffering that Christ endured with the onset and continuation of his early public ministry. His suffering was greater than the suffering he endured in childhood and young adulthood. Jesus was tempted by Satan (Mt. 4:1; Lk. 4:2), endured the unbelief of his closest disciples (Mk. 6:52; 8:17) and was resisted by evil men (Lk. 4:28-29; Mt. 12:14-15; Jn. 8:59). His miraculous deeds were also a transference of the sinner's maladies to himself in exchange for his healing life (Mt. 8:3, 17; 20:34; Lk. 22:51). At each stage of Christ's public ministry his sufferings were efficacious in bringing the kingdom more fully, healing the sick, raising the dead, and bringing forth words of life.

Focusing on Matthew 8:16-17, we find that Jesus' miracles resulted from the fact that "he himself took our infirmities and carried away our diseases". This suggests that Christ's miraculous work involved a transfer of the sinner's infirmities to Christ *at that time*. That is, he bore those infirmities

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[2] We do not mean here trust in God's promises of redemptive grace for himself, of which he had no need. Instead, we mean that he trusted in the promises of God given to the Messiah as the second Adam. This involved Christ trusting that God would be faithful to his promises of salvation to his people through his own work of redemption in his life, death and resurrection. As part of this, he trusted that God would raise him from the dead at the completion of his task. If he endured "for the joy set before him" (Heb. 12:2), he must have believed in the joy set before him.

at the time he healed the sick. (See how the fever is transferred legally from Peter's mother to Jesus when he "touched her hand", Mt. 8:14-15.) And since the evangelist applies this to all God's people (*our* infirmities), this may suggest that at the time of these miracles he bore the infirmities of all God's people. This would undoubtedly require his infinite nature as God. If so, his infinite nature did satisfy God's infinite wrath (at least extensively) during his early public ministry. Further, those miraculous deeds were a foretaste of God's final eschatological salvation. In this sense, it was also necessary for his sufferings to have infinite value (intensively) at that time. But how does this fit with what we have said above, that only when the infinite wrath of God is poured out on Christ on the cross does Christ's infinite nature satisfy eternal wrath? It seems that this was already taking place during his public ministry. And if it was taking place during his public ministry, why did Christ have to suffer anything more than a pin prick during that ministry, with no impending future death.

## The Hypostatic Union and Christ's Sufferings

We believe the answer here is that no aspect of Christ's sufferings (any more than his obedience to the law) can be seen in abstraction from his completed obedience, death and resurrection. Because Christ was God immovable, during his early public ministry his future task was sure to be accomplished. This was true even while he experienced real temptations in his human nature (Heb. 4:15). His Godhood thereby guaranteed the future outcome of his death and resurrection. Looking ahead (horizontally), it guaranteed the future outpouring and satisfaction of God's infinite wrath upon Christ on the cross. And it is this same Godhood whose infinite nature would satisfy God's infinite wrath (vertically). The horizontal and the vertical converge in the infinite person of Christ, who is outside of time. Thus, they could be intimately related to one another in redemptive history.

To flesh this out a bit, we may say that the infinite Christ, who is outside of time in his divine nature saw both his death and resurrection and his early public ministry as eternally present to himself. And he saw these things, not as abstracted from himself, but as intimately united to himself in the hypostatic union. That is, his early public ministry and his death and resurrection were intimately united to one another since each was intimately united to the eternal Christ, who is outside of time (vertically). As such, both these things (his early public ministry and his death and resurrection) could be organically related to one another in the continuum of redemptive history (horizontally). In other words, as the alpha and the omega, Christ laid hold of the end from the beginning because of the eternity of his own divine person. That is, the person of Christ (outside of time) was the one who accomplished all the acts of our redemption from the point of view of the singularity of eternity. This same one who possessed within himself the accomplishment of all these acts in that singularity exerted his saving power in the accomplishment of each individual act.

## Christ's Early Sufferings Laid Hold of His Completed Work

May we then say that insofar as the eternal Christ suffered during his early public ministry, he laid hold of the infinite efficacy of his future death and resurrection? In his early sufferings, he possessed the end from the beginning because of their organic connection to the whole?

We believe we can properly affirm this as long as we take into account the fact that the obedience of Christ was not dependent on the future obedience of Christ in some circular fashion. That is, Christ's future obedience was not the first cause of which his earlier obedience during his initial public ministry was the second cause. This would make Christ's early obedience dependent on his future saving work. This would be a circular absurdity since that future saving work would itself be partially dependent on his early obedience. *Early obedience* dependent on future obedience, which itself is dependent on *early obedience* is a circular absurdity. It would also destroy Christ's parallel with the first Adam as our meritorious federal head. For then Christ's future obedience would be the meritorious grounds of his earlier obedience, as if that early obedience was given him by grace.

Thus, Christ's early obedience was not dependent on his future saving work. Instead, every act of Christ's saving obedience came *immediately* from his divine person as the first cause *at the very instance he performed each act* of obedience. We are simply suggesting that the full *efficacy* of that obedience was dependent organically on the completion of the whole. Thus, the efficacy of Christ's future death and resurrection intruded itself backwards in the efficacious work he performed during his early public ministry. In other words, Christ's obedience during his early public ministry was the means of dispensing the efficacy of his future death and resurrection. In this way, he laid hold of the end from the beginning.

At the same time, we must also affirm that each of Christ's acts of obedience contributed toward his completed obedience as a whole. That is, each of his acts of obedience (as a ground) contributed toward the overall efficacy of his completed life, death and resurrection.

### Christ's Death and Resurrection Brings the Future Age

We have made our point with Christ's sufferings. Christ's early sufferings (from conception to early public ministry) cannot be abstracted from the whole. As a result, the baby Jesus brought the benefits of his death and resurrection with him in his conception and birth. Can this same point be reinforced by the resurrection of Christ? Before considering this question, let us reflect for a moment on the relationship of Christ's death to his resurrection. This will help us consider the nature of the resurrection when we deal with this question. Christ's resurrection occurred when death could no longer hold him because his sufferings had fully satisfied the wages of sin, which is death (Rom. 6:23; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 3:18). Thus, God declared him righteous (2 Tim. 3:16; Rom. 4:25[3]) since he was no longer legally condemned for sin (Rom. 8:3-4). Having satisfied eternal wrath, God's wrath could no longer be justly charged against him (Rom. 6:9). God does not engage in double indemnity.[4] That sentence of death had been destroyed forever, which meant for him eternal life (Rom. 6:9; 5:17; Heb. 7:25). He entered eternal life above in his resurrection.

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[3] In Christ's resurrection, we were justified because of our union with him who was justified in his resurrection.

[4] Those who believe that God can justly eternally condemn some of Christ's sheep for whom he died (Jn. 10:11, 15, 26) should just as logically believe that he can justly place Christ under his wrath again for those same sins. (Both are double indemnity.) However, Christ can never undergo divine wrath again (Rom. 6:9) because he has satisfied it and

This connection between his death and resurrection is fully implied in 2 Cor. 5:21 and its context. "He made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in him." Since we become the righteousness of God in him, he himself is the righteousness of God. According to this chapter this is grounded in the fact that he not only died but also "rose again on their behalf" (2 Cor. 5:15). As a result, we no longer know Christ according to this age (the flesh) but according to the new creation (of Isa. 66:22). This is confirmed by the fact that those in Christ become a new creation in him (2 Cor. 5:17), which implies that he is a new creation in his resurrection.

Christ's resurrection was for him the breaking into history of the future eschatological judgment, the resurrection of the dead and the eternal city to come. He possessed the eschatological future in his own resurrection life, for he had passed through the eternal/eschatological wrath of God in his death and been vindicated/justified in his resurrection. The judgment has passed for him as one who has entered heaven in resurrection life. And he now possesses the Jerusalem (Isa. 66:10, 20) which will endure forever (Isa. 66:22-24). This is the Jerusalem above, which is therefore our Mother in him (Gal. 4:26). He now possesses the age when "the eyes of the blind will be opened and the ears of the deaf will be unstopped" and "the lame will leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute will shout for joy" (Isa. 35:5-6, NASB), and the dead would be raised (Isa. 26:19), for he possesses a resurrection body in which there is no more lameness, blindness or death. As such, this Christ's heavenly kingdom is now semi-realized for us who are in Christ. We are both raised with him and sojourners in his world.

What of the miracles Christ performed during his earthly ministry, were they not a foretaste of the eternal city to come and thus of Christ's own resurrection life? For Christ healed the blind in anticipation of the age in which there would be no more blindness. In this way, his miracles of healing the lame, deaf and dumb anticipated the age when there would be no more lame, deaf or dumb. He stated this himself when he referred to Isaiah 35:5-6 (the passage we have quoted above) as being fulfilled in his earthly ministry (Mt. 11:5; Lk. 7:22). He raised the dead as a foretaste of the age of resurrection life (Mt. 11:5; Jn. 11:23-26). All of this is intimately related to Christ's own resurrection, for Christ's resurrection is the ground of the future eschatological resurrection from the dead (Jn. 14:19; Rom. 8:11). As a result, the eschatological future broke into the midst of history (provisionally, 1 Cor. 10:11) in Christ's resurrection from the dead (Acts 13:32-34). "The holy and sure blessings of David" given to Christ in his resurrection (Acts 13:34) are the fulfillment of Isaiah 55:3, in which the seed of David receives an *everlasting* covenant and kingdom (55:12-13).

**Christ Laid Hold of His Resurrection before the Time**

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been justified eternally in his resurrection. This can never be reversed and so Christ's sheep shall never perish (Jn. 10:28).

In light of this, we can revisit our previous question: was Christ's suffering (short of his death and resurrection) fully sufficient of itself to be the ground of his miraculous saving deeds? No, since those miraculous deeds were a provisional display of Christ's future resurrection life in the present physical arena. Therefore, they were dependent on that future resurrection and its saving power. They laid hold of Christ's future resurrection before the time. And just as it was with the visible display of his saving work, so it was in the work of salvation in the souls of those he addressed. Christ's death and resurrection were essential to the eternal life he granted to various people during his earthly ministry.

Christ's mighty deeds were foretastes of the future resurrection. As such, they were dependent on the completion of his *whole* work—his obedient life, death and resurrection. Thus, Christ's sufferings prior to his death were finally effectual for this eschatological life because he would complete his test, bear our eternal wrath on the cross and be raised from the dead. In this way, we can see that Christ administered the end from the beginning in all things. He dispensed the benefits of his future death and resurrection before their final accomplishment. Christ's future resurrection life intruded into every aspect of his work on earth. And so it was when the Son of God took on flesh. The babe in the manger brought to earth benefits flowing from his future saving deeds. He laid hold of the benefits of his death and resurrection even in his very conception. The baby Jesus, through the efficacy of his future death and resurrection, brought the kingdom of God and its saving acts when he was born. Glory be to God! (Lk. 2:14)

## Conclusion

If Christ's miraculous work anticipated the resurrection, one might ask, how could he who possessed resurrection life before the time die at all? That is, how could a babe, whose incarnation anticipated unending life ever die? We think an answer to this can be found in recognizing the similarity between Christ's incarnation and the OT acts of God. The OT mighty acts included such things as the exodus (Ex. 14:21-30), the crossing of the Jordan (Josh. 3:14-17), the destruction of Jericho (Josh. 6:20) and the miraculous deeds of the prophets Elijah (1 Kg. 17:17-22) and Elisha (2 Kg. 4:32-35). These OT acts also participated in Christ's resurrection in a way that still allowed them to look forward to greater acts of redemption in the future. That is, they participated in the future resurrection life without being a complete and full expression of that life. Instead, they were an *incomplete* (but nonetheless real) anticipation of the future resurrection life. That is why Christ's resurrection was only anticipated in them; objectively considered they fell short of its final accomplishment. It still awaited the future.

This was also true of Christ's incarnation. In his conception, Christ brought the fruits of his resurrection in a manner appropriate to his incarnation, a manner that allowed room for the future progress of the kingdom in his future ministry—one that left room for his testing, death and irreversible resurrection yet to come. The incarnation anticipated the resurrection.

The coming of Christ's person brought the Kingdom but not in isolation from his crowning work—his final death and resurrection. Perhaps that is one reason Matthew brings the two into such close union (Matt. 1:23 with 28:20)—in both is the Emmanuel presence of God. Praise God, he has bound himself most intimately to us by becoming one of us in his Son. And he has bound himself

intimately to Christ in his resurrection—so that in Christ, he might enter into the same glorious union with us. Let our hearts rejoice in the sweetness of this union with the babe in the manger and his resurrection life. He has brought the end from the beginning even now. Both embody the future Emmanuel presence of God. God with us in incarnation anticipates God with us in resurrection life. Come celebrate the birth of Christ; oh, celebrate his resurrection. We, bound to the babe; we, bound to the resurrected body. The heart of the one above in the heart of the other. He who is present with us now—brings us to him who is eternal.

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# Wolter on Paul's Theology: A Review

Jeanie Crain

In *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*[1](a translation of the German *Paulus: Ein Grundriss seiner Theologie*, 2011), Michael Wolter constructs a careful, comprehensive hermeneutic of Pauline theology which he describes as influenced by recent Anglophone and traditional German interpretation (xiii). As a distinguished, esteemed, and internationally recognized scholar, his work deserves, in fact, requires, thoughtful and respectful study. He sets out to reconstruct the theological content of Paul's thinking based on the seven letters that the "critical consensus" takes to be authentic; he assumes 1 Thessalonians to be the oldest letter, Galatians as written after Philippians and Romans, and the Corinthian letters originating before Romans (1, 6). His contribution as a whole is impressive and will, doubtless, generate and guide future discussions on Paul. His translator, Robert L. Brawley, calls attention to the "fascinating insights" that emerge "from the wide-ranging array of interpretive and theological categories and methods"; Brawley adds "nothing produced insight more than Wolter's reading of Pauline texts themselves" (xv).

Wolter pursues a consistently constructivist presentation: in a symbolic universe where all experiences must be interpreted and their meaning ascribed "into existing knowledge", God is permitted as a transcendent reality (152). He is the reality beyond all images and to which all images refer, which can be spoken of only "metaphorically" (155). Easter, the gift of the Spirit, is "interpreted as an element of the promised eschatological salvific action of God to God's people … through the memory of Jesus' own eschatological proclamation that was now regarded as vindicated through his resurrection and exaltation" as proclaimed by his messengers (152). Wolter insists any theology of Paul must arise from the content of his letters—this separated from a "resonance chamber" of reception-hermeneutical meaning which is largely detached from the past and individual historical circumstances (1).

Wolter thinks of his work as "an actual systematically and descriptively constructed presentation" (4), suggesting early into his effort an interpretation of Paul's conversion and mission as a language event and, more disturbingly, treating the incarnation and salvific death of Jesus, not as the objective reality of ontological God breaking into objective history, but as an event leading to a profession based on an "assurance of faith" that comes to separate Christians from non-Christians. He offers an interpretation of the Pauline understanding of faith as one that views "certain matters as genuinely factual because these matters—and this foundation makes its *assumption* of reality first and foremost a *certitude of faith…* [that] coincide [s] with reality according to God" (85). He then concludes "Christian faith is confident in itself that its assumption of reality is true, because it coincides . . . with the determinacy of reality by God" (85). Wolter's language leans heavily on a tradition of liberal thinking which prefers to discuss religious experience and religious thought under the philosophical terms of "determinacy" and "transcendent reality", while avoiding any

[1] Baylor University Press, 2015. 476 pages. Cloth. ISBN: 978-1-4813-0416-0. $79.95.

mention of the supernatural power of God. He also seems less interested in the truth of Scripture as a whole than in the words of Paul as recorded in a few select letters and the resulting historical emergence of Christianity.

Wolter comments in his "Prologue" that many presentations organize themselves around "redemption history . . . partly undergirded in a Trinitarian way . . . that also many systematic theologians use" (3). They begin "with what Paul has to say about God and creation, then deal with soteriology (with the themes 'humanity,' 'Jesus Christ,' 'redemption,' 'Spirit'), proceed to ecclesiology and ethics, and end up with eschatology" (3). His footnote references the German theologians Jürgen Becker and Udo Schnelle. Yet others approach Paul through Romans, where Paul formulates "an explanation of his theology". Here he refers to British biblical scholar C. K. Barrett and British NT theologian James D. G. Dunn (3). He rejects both structural approaches, finding them "neither developed from nor based on that which is to be described but either superimposed or by which a structuring principle from a still frame of Pauline theology . . . for its entirety is created." Wolter creates a work which, he confesses, goes "its own way," culminating in a structure that is "extensive" and "distinctive," its various parts semantically coherent, although not actually fitting together (3). Wolter seeks to understand Paul's theology in terms of theological concepts found in the apostle as well as sorting through linguistic interpretations that have applied theological terms in anachronistic ways. He shapes his central point as "faith in Christ" which annuls the existing boundaries between Jews and Gentiles, but creates new boundaries between believers and unbelievers.

Wolter's causal rejection of "redemption history" brings to mind several influential voices. Although now dated, Oscar Cullmann's *Christ and Time* (1945) paved the way for thinking about time and history as redemption history. For Cullmann, redemption history is a single, unrepeatable process leading into and out of Christ; in the Christ-event, the eternal becomes historical and the bearer of the eternal Word; thus everything in faith hangs on the revelatory events of biblical history. Herman M. Ridderbos, one of the twentieth century's most influential NT scholars,[2] describes standing before "the imposing edifice of Paul's theology" and scholars' views of "the architectonic structure and arrangement of the building as a whole," and looking to find an entrance through which to give "insight into the fundamental structure of Paul's preaching and doctrine"; he finds his entrance in the "redemptive-historical method of interpretation" (Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, 13, 43). Geerhardus Vos, a pioneer in biblical theology, in his inaugural address at Princeton Theological Seminary in 1894, at a time when biblical theology was emerging as its own science and discipline, distinguished it from all other sciences by insisting it claimed "for its object not the thoughts and reflections and speculations of man, but the oracles of God" (*Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation*, 19). Vos explains that in all of the other sciences, a human being approaches the objective world, subjects it to scrutiny, and compels it to submit to his experiments; theology, however, reverses subject and object, understanding it is "God who takes the first step to approach man for the purpose of disclosing His nature, nay, who creates man

[2] Though Wolter ignores him, his title duplicates Ridderbos's more Biblical and orthodox treatment published in 1975 (Editor).

in order that He may have a finite mind able to receive the knowledge of His infinite perfections" (ibid., 5).

It does not come as a surprise that Wolter (a post-Kantian scholar concerned with the reconstruction of language, the exact meaning of phrases, and the topography of semantic fields) would reduce theology to conceptual, logical analysis or that he would relegate God (outside an experiential presence of the Spirit, 151), to transcendence (140) an "assumption of reality" (85), and metaphorical expression (155); or that God as God should be defined as "the reality that determines everything" (219). Wolter writes "talk about God, God's being God, and God's action occupy a central position in the context of justification of Pauline theology," understood in the narrow sense of "theo-ology" and the particular "essence" of God (373), and used as a generic designation which is always singular in nature (374).

In his important chapter on "The Holy Spirit," Wolter acknowledges God's presence among humans through the mode of the Holy Spirit, but God "remains transcendent" and retains a Barthian "character of otherworldliness" (149) in which an infinite chasm exists between divinity and humanity, impassable by attempts to define God in concepts. Barth though believes this gap can be filled only with the inbreaking of revelation in Jesus, the Scripture becoming the Word, that is, the Lord Jesus Christ (*The Epistle to the Romans* [1968] 91-94)[3]. Wolter talks about Paul's "christological confession that (spoken in a Pauline fashion) could not be expressed until after Easter" in that it lies "outside of the assurance of reality of Christian faith" (96). The God Wolter conceptualizes still seems to stand apart as an a-temporal, a-spatial, eternal infinitude described as a "theocentric orientation" in Paul's theology. Wolter painstakingly avoids giving ontological reality to God, although he does (as previously referenced) talk about "the determinacy of reality by God as coinciding with assumptions of reality in the sense of correspondence" (85). This language differs considerably from that of Vos, who says the distinction between the Creator and the created is absolute and that God takes the first step toward man to disclose his nature. What Wolter concludes of Paul may, in fact, better reflect his own thinking: "the *theo-logical*, that is, the accent related to God, is found only rarely in the texts" (74). Rather, he thinks of Paul as reformulating "the particular character of Christian faith for Christian communities in his time" (cf. *Theologie and Ethos im fruhen Christentum,* 2009). In addition to his work on Paul, Wolter is known for writing the lead essay in *The Quest for the Real Jesus* (2013) challenging a group of international scholars to respond to him with their views on the historical Jesus. In this essay, he argues generally there can be no approach to Jesus that is not an image or construction. When, in fact, Wolter does address ontology, he does so in relation to the "ontological dignity of the reality of faith" (91) and "in the light of the antithesis 'human being' versus 'God'" in his discussion of justification (371).

Wolter describes his work as among those presentations "oriented toward a historical paradigm" which reconstruct Pauline theology (2). The interpreter, as he acknowledges, will include his own theological thinking in such "constructs." Wolter, however, hopes to be objective in his

[3] Cf. Cornelius Van Til on the deceit of this language, *Christianity and Barthianism* (1965) (Editor).

abstracting, systematizing, reshaping and creating a context for the interpretation of statements contained in Paul's letters. He quickly lays to rest any attempt to raise a singular "*the* Pauline theology" (2) on any textual basis, remarking that no one letter develops Paul's "theological convictions and ideas in their entire amplitude and completeness," and all the letters are dependent on communication situations (2). It should be noted that Wolter talks about a "distinctive language of interpretation" in which certain concepts, such as "atonement" and "substitution," come to belong to biblical thought only through a process of transference and "retrospective systematization" (100). He explains "how" he organizes his chapters about theological concepts categorized as "emic," or that appear in Paul, such as "gospel," "faith," "Holy Spirit," and "hope," and "etic," or anachronistic constructs (do *not* appear in Paul, 3, 100). Among the latter, he includes the "salvific effect of Jesus' death," "ethics," and the "doctrine of justification" (3). He surmises "a reflection of perspectives . . . in view of the status of sources is better suited than an approach from a single perspective to allow the profile of Pauline theology to become evident" (3).

Wolter's search is clearly not about God's saving acts recorded in the Bible as a whole so much as it is a search to find out what was originally meant by Paul in his letters (2). When speaking about Paul's conversion and call, he talks about perception, experiential knowledge, contextual identification, and an ascription of "meaning to the experience of his vision" (25). Paul himself becomes an interpreter of his own experience. Paul interprets his vision as one in which God is the actor and then deduces his own role to "proclaim the gospel about him [Jesus] among the gentiles" (27). Importantly, however, Paul "always speaks about solely *one* gospel." What Paul calls "My" gospel is always "God's gospel" and "Christ's gospel" (53-54). The problem that arises resides not so much in Paul's interpretation of his vision of Jesus as in Wolter's interpretation of God as "the subject matter of the knowledge" revealed (57, n16). So viewed, this "subject matter" of "knowledge" carries a hint of some striving after a perfect certainty of truth with its innermost alliance within self-consciousness. Contextually, Wolter is addressing the "good news" Paul has received through Jesus Christ, the vehicle and content of revelation (56) and what he remembers of Jesus' proclamation (151). What disturbs is that God still functions here as some Hegelian absolute consciousness in a rational system. The gospel of God that Paul is set apart for (Rom. 1:1) has its focus not "on the side of the *source* of the gospel but on the side of its *content* and its *proclamation*" (57).

Wolter further leans in the direction of modern liberal scholarship when he dedicates his book to the "Benedictine Abby of Saint Paul Outside the Walls of Rome," speaking of it as bringing into being "a culture of cooperation of spiritual fraternity and academic work" reflecting "one of the most important theological insights of the Apostle Paul . . . that there is one body of Christ always, diverse only in its external form, that the unity of this body comes about by way of nothing other than through the common 'Christ-faith' of all its members, and that the one Christianity, therefore, can never be anything other than such a pluralistic as well as ecumenical matter" (xi).

In approaching this unity, Wolter finds a "theological correlation of 'gospel' and 'faith'" (75), faith being defined "by the same content as the gospel" and interchangeable with "Christ" (73). In his profile of Paul's theology, Wolter can say "'believing' means nothing other than to hear the proclamation of Christ propounded by Paul as the 'word of God'" (77). What Paul proclaims

"becomes God's word solely because what it speaks about is that God has acted through Jesus Christ for the salvation of humanity" (66). Nonetheless, this emphasis on "proclamation" and "propounded" brings to the foreground a view of reality in which language and interpretation become the way in which God speaks: "Paul's gospel is heard as that which it claims to be, namely as God's word" (67). Wolter seeks to get back to what was heard when Paul was alive and speaking, what was written in his letters, what is now read, re-read, and re-interpreted. In his "Preface to the English Edition," Wolter hopes the translation will strengthen "the communication in Pauline scholarship across language and cultural borders" (xiii), here expressing his kinship with the plural, ecumenical outreach. He has won warm reception from both systematizing theologians and NT scholars on Paul, although he clearly clings to his own post-modern hermeneutical and constructivist climate.

Choosing to organize his work about concepts, Wolter realizes it "already anticipates a certain understanding of Pauline theology" and that, in a sense, it takes a determined course: "a book's chapters can always advance only in its own direction" (4). He then lays out an organizational plan in which he begins with a comprehensive narrative and biographical section (chapters II, III) presenting the "antecedents of Pauline theology" (4). These account for the period before Paul's conversion and call (which he insists comprise not two, but only one event, 23)—the event itself and the events leading up to it, making them "the object of his theological argument" (4). He builds early the idea that "Paul did not dispose of his Pharisaic past" (4) and that he did not change sides from Judaism to Christianity, determining such a depiction as "anachronistic" (24).

The next chapters introduce the various concepts that must be viewed in light of linguistic interpretations: proclamation of the gospel (IV, 51-69)—"in Paul everything begins with the proclamation of the gospel" (4); faith (V, 51-69), complementing this proclamation, and giving "consent to the gospel" or conversion "as well as an abiding characteristic of the Christian life" (4). The redemptive, salvific effect of Jesus' death, with Jesus exclusively the basis of Christian belief (VI, 95-124), could have been part of faith, as could baptism (VII, 125-46) and the discussion of the Holy Spirit (VIII, 147-75), these constituting Christian identity and ethos. Because Paul "used the Spirit profiled entirely as an eschatological category" (IX, 177-220), Wolter makes this chapter follow VIII; Christ-mysticism and participation in Christ, having to do with "the eschatic Christ community and experiential sharing in Jesus' salvific destiny" (5), he views as a counterpart to eschatology (X, 221-51). Finally, he turns to three chapters on ecclesiology (XI, 253-300), ethics (XII, 301-29), and justification (XIII, 331-99), concluding the latter with "God justifies a person on the basis of his or her faith" (4), and ends with the poignant, culminating question of "What Becomes of Israel?" (XIV, 401-25), followed by an epilogue (427-44). Wolter's approach then is a retrospective reconstruction of Paul's faith-experience and the resulting theology in which Paul works out a Christian identity for those who respond in faith to a gospel that becomes "the subject matter and the vehicle of revelation" (56).

Wolter acknowledges a number of people and conversations which, he says, helped him "to find a way out of blind alleys" and showed him the paths he needed to follow in his construction of Pauline theology ("Preface to the German Edition"). Among these, he noted learning that the "Lutheran and the New Perspective are not the only options that exist [one thinks of James Dunn,

N.T. Wright, E.P. Sanders, and Krister Stendahl], and that all participants in the discussion about Pauline theology are well advised to listen to the voices of Orthodox theology" (xi-xii). As previously noted, he also credits the international and ecumenical circle of exegetes associated with the *Colloquium Oecumenicum Paulinum.* In translating *Gerechtigkeit* as "justice," Brawley notes that Wolter wishes to discourage juridical connotations (xv). While he does not subscribe to any notion of salvation earned by meritorious behavior before God (works salvation), neither does he dismiss the importance of the individual's status before God (God's elect, covenanted people). "Paul," Wolter proclaims, "self-evidently and without any restriction sees the gospel proclaimed by him and 'Christ-faith' as standing in a fundamental and unbroken continuity with the theological foundations and traditions of Israel" (435). What Israel was as "the people of God" now belongs to all believers in Jesus Christ (434). Here, when Paul talks about God as God, "he dissolves the distinction between Jews and gentiles in anthropology and subsumes both under the generic 'human being,'" pointing out that "on a semantic level on which God is God [one single exemplar], therefore, Jews and gentiles can be nothing other than humans" (374). Wolter finds "the Pauline doctrine of justification" an anachronism and calls it "a construct of Paul's interpreters" (334). Only after long, intricate discussions about the gospel, faith, and the Holy Spirit does Wolter address justification in his thirteenth chapter, calling it "Justification on the Basis of Faith".

In the "Epilogue," Wolter drives home his central argument that the identity of those who believe in Jesus Christ and are baptized into him is located *beyond* the distinction between Jews and Gentiles (435). "Belonging to Jesus Christ both annuls the existing boundaries among humans [Jews and Gentiles] and also draws new ones" [believers and unbelievers], creating a new identity [Christian], "something like a *tertium genus hominum,* even if this designation is first encountered in authors of the second century" (434-35). Further, Wolter declares, "*God* is always the subject of justification or the source of righteousness, and *humans* are always the recipients" (335) such that human faith and believing become the basis for receiving righteousness. He thus makes "What Becomes of Israel?" the highlight of his presentation (XIV). Here, the gospel and Christ-faith fulfill Genesis 12:3 and 18:18 that God as God is, in Abraham, blessing all nations (437). The mission of Jesus becomes God's salvific care for Israel. He says that Paul's line of argument in Romans 9:30-10:4 "indicates that 'Christ-faith' also stands in continuity with Israel's striving for righteousness" as recipients of what God gives (437). In the final sentences of his epilogue to Paul and Jesus, Wolter proclaims that "in the allotment of salvation and perdition in the judgment, God is guided solely by how one has responded to his interpretation of himself" and continues to say, "it is *God* who stands behind this program [on the side of Jesus "interpreting himself as the inbreaking of God's royal sovereignty into the reality of humans"] and who . . . has vindicated it on Easter" (444). What becomes suspect, however, is exactly this extension of a limited human interpretive scheme to the self-disclosure of an infinite, eternal, and objectively present ontological God "in so far as He has revealed Himself" to his finite creation (Vos, ibid. 5).

Wolter describes NT research as a "hermeneutical enterprise that is always determined by the scholar's presuppositions and perspectives rooted in their individual culture and confessional traditions" (xiii). He clearly is concerned with historically-seated ethos and traditions. Even more

to the point of his "this-worldly" emphasis (in his chapter on the Holy Spirit), Wolter insists that Paul never ascribes any "particular materiality" to the Spirit, and concludes the most one can say about the question of "'substance' [is] that [it] *categorically* eludes human concepts of matter, because this substance [within the terms of "intramundane substantiality"] exists only as God's reality" and can be spoken about in human language only metaphorically just as in principle "it is possible to speak about God's reality in human language only metaphorically" (155). Still, he confesses, for Paul, "the Spirit is not simply 'like something' but also is 'something'" (155). What this something is, Wolter calls an "assurance of reality" (this coming early in his chapter on "Faith", 85). He acknowledges the point that faith and believing currently carry denotations of deficient knowledge, and "not knowing". Paul, he insists, understood faith differently: "it views certain matters as genuinely factual because these matters—and this foundation makes its *assumption* of reality first and foremost a *certitude of faith*—coincide with reality according to God" (85). For these reasons, he concludes, "we call 'faith' an assurance of reality." The emphasis here still resides on the side of a knowledge of an other-worldly God operative and generative in humans through the Holy Spirit. Wolter says of Christian faith (as noted earlier), it is "confident in itself that its assumption of reality is true, because it coincides in the sense of the so-called correspondence theory of truth with the determinacy of reality by God" (85).

In his section on "The Theology of the Gospel," Wolter points out that Paul "does not defend himself against the accusation that his gospel is only of a human sort and origin," choosing instead to work out a contrast between "'revelation'. . . with 'tradition' or 'teaching' . . . as a contrast of two different forms of communication—*divine and human"* (56). He then juxtaposes antithetical terms: God/human; "to reveal"/ "to pass down tradition"; and gospel/ "tradition of the ancestors" (56). The origin of the gospel is not of a human kind but comes as a revelation (and one wishes he would linger or say more about revelation) through Jesus Christ (he quotes Galatians 1:11-12 and 15-16). He here makes the point important to the greater movement of his work (brought to conclusion in his chapter "And What Becomes of Israel?") that the gospel of Jesus/God unites a traditional world divided into Jew and Gentile to an emerging new world divided into believers and unbelievers. The logical move, however, at this point in his outline involves Wolter's understanding of the spread of the gospel in its addressees, who agree with the gospel: "attaining the conviction that what he has said in his 'gospel' about God and Jesus is *true"* (71). With faith defined as an assumption of a certitude of reality, it becomes predictable that Wolter can make the point that "Paul himself nowhere made the question about the origin of faith a topic of discussion," but that exegetes have read Paul's "theological reflection in their own theology" and brought it "under the constraints of their own system" (78). Wolter then rounds out his discussion of faith by saying "because Christian faith finds its distinctiveness in the assurance that it is *God* who has acted in Jesus Christ, faith necessarily implies the assurance that arises from it, that assurance that precisely through it a new reality has been created" (93).

In his introductory outline, Wolter says of Paul that he "used the Spirit profiled entirely as an eschatological category" (5). In concluding his chapter on "The Holy Spirit," he confides, "We have hereby come full circle" (174). The Holy Spirit makes possible in its presence and work "the assumption of the reality of 'Christ-faith'" (175). The assurance is "that the transcendent God is

present through God's Spirit in the believers and in their fellowship in such a way that God determines them and their expressions of life and makes them manifestations of God's reality in the world" (175). Wolter surmises, hope belongs "to the basic equipment of Christian existence just as self-evidently as the other three attributes," i.e., faith, baptism, and the Spirit (5).

In the "Christ Mysticism" chapter which follows, Wolter's presents "the eschatic Christ-community as an experiential sharing in Jesus' salvific destiny already in the present" (5). For Wolter, eschatology functions as "an anachronistic artificial word" derived from the seventeenth century and generally designating "last things" (180). He says the term has been used "for all kinds of concepts of the end and beyond" (180), but explains that semantics divides eschatology into three fields: individual, universal, and cosmic (181). The first asks about individuals's expectations about death whereas the second and third "inquire about events that come to pass for humanity or the entire world as it exists." Wolter continues, "Moreover, it also raises the question about the character of the reality that arises from these three 'endings.'" In the third field, "theological eschatology frequently deals with its subject as the 'end'-time counterpart of creation"; both the Old Testament and early Judaism expected a correspondence between "primordial time" and "end time", with God restoring "the original order of creation" at the end. Wolter moves the argument to cosmological time when he says the essence of talking about the "end" leads "beyond the end of the present state of affairs (of human life, human history, and the world as it exists) to make statements about conditions that have *no* end . . . because they will endure forever—in that God is 'all in all' (1 Cor. 15:28c)." "Paul," he says, "never wrote an article 'On the Last Things'" (181).

Perhaps the most revealing aspect of Wolter's discussion of eschatology comes at the end of the chapter when he talks about "God's eschatic dealing with the world," an event that will manifest "God as God, that is, as the reality that determines everything" (219). In this final event, Jesus will transfer his sovereignty to God or subject himself to the Father for the purpose "that God will be all in all" (1 Cor. 15:28c). "The ministry of the Son stands in service to the universal self-implementation of God's being God" (219), rather than "God in so far as He has revealed Himself" (Vos, ibid.). The Christ event in Wolter yields to a concept-eluding, semantic theocentric masquerading itself as God. Wolter cannot bring himself to address a sovereign, supernatural God who breaks into history providentially. He prefers to view Scripture in its historical and human form, reading, re-reading, and reconstructing it conceptually. With God defined as "the reality that determines everything," Wolter reduces eschatology, predictably, to "matters that concern speaking or thinking about last things" and suggests itself as a paradigm for making Paul's theology perceptible (181). He concludes his chapter on eschatology by commenting, "We can thereby detect in Pauline eschatology the same theocentric substructure that determines the interpretation of gentile Christian faith… characteristic of his theology of the gospel in general" (220).

## Reviews

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Daniel I. Block. *For the Glory of God: Recovering a Biblical Theology of Worship*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014. Cloth. 432 pp. ISBN: 978-0801-02698-0. $36.99.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism starts with the question, "What is the chief end of man?" The answer is: "To glorify God and enjoy him forever." When the church bears the image of her King, she glorifies God; this is seen in concrete terms in how God is worshiped. And what does the Bible say about the worship of God? That is the question which Daniel Block answers in *For the Glory of God: Recovering a Biblical Theology of Worship*. The subtitle makes clear that Block has serious reservations about the way God is worshiped in many contemporary evangelical churches. In particular, he observes that many Christians fail to pay due attention to the Old Testament in their thinking about worship.

Reading Block's *For the Glory of God*, one recognizes that Block is a very able Old Testament scholar who has the gift of applying his academic knowledge in a focused and pastoral manner. He has written a study of such a comprehensive nature that it will not be surpassed any time soon, although this applies more to the Old Testament material that he handles than the New Testament. Block has organized the biblical data according to the perspectives of various worship-related themes. This is shown by the chapter titles, such as "The Object of Worship," "The Subject of Worship," "Daily Life as Worship", "The Ordinances as Worship," "Prayer as Worship," "Music as Worship" and the like.

What I find to be the two greatest strengths of Block's work are his strong emphasis that worship ought to be God-centered and that our whole life ought to be a worship of God the Creator and Redeemer. Present-day church life is quite often greatly influenced by the idea prevalent in contemporary culture that the satisfaction of man (and, we must add, of the natural man) is the measure and rule for church life in all its aspects. Block rightly points that the contemporary melodies and hymns used in many congregations are a very clear symptom of this attitude. Real worship brings one to a realization of God's holiness and majesty. Real worship of God is not merely one component of our life, but is bound up with all our activities.

In all honesty, I must add that Block's book has also some serious weaknesses. I certainly do not deplore the fact that such great attention is given to the Old Testament, although I regret that the New Testament material is mostly no more than an afterthought at the end of each chapter. But when a man writes a study that sets out to be a guide for contemporary worship, we cannot but notice that he has paid insufficient attention to the Old Testament dispensation's having been surpassed by that of the New Testament.

He states that "since the New Testament gives minimal attention to corporate worship, true Christian worship should be grounded on theological principles established in the First

Testament." Not the least consideration about this is that by taking this approach, the author is failing to do justice to the fact that only in the New Testament is the triune nature of God fully revealed. This full revelation of God's triune nature has fundamental implications for both corporate and personal worship. While I am sure that Block would fully acknowledge my observation as such, this insight is nevertheless lacking a fundamental place in his otherwise very comprehensive treatment of his subject.

I would also emphasize that we must not follow Block in his idea that where the New Testament is silent on the specifics of worship, we should simply observe the Old Testament principles. I point in this regard to his statement that families should use the liturgical year to develop a sense of spiritual community, based on the fact that Israel did so in its observance of the Passover. In this assertion, Block not only neglects the fact that the New Testament explicitly denies that Christians under the New Testament are to be guided by the Old Testament cultic calendar, but he also overlooks the fact that Christendom's liturgical calendar has no explicit foundation in the New Testament. Following the church calendar must never be regarded as more than a custom that, while it can be useful, is not a biblical command.

In handling the ordinances of the church, the author defends believers baptism, while offering only a very brief excursus as to what the arguments are for the pedobaptist position. Even very early in church history, we see the Lord's Day as the first day of the week replacing the seventh-day Sabbath as the Christian day of worship. Block rightly sees the seeds for this development as lying in the New Testament itself. In an appendix, he brings together some of the earliest Christian witnesses to Sunday worship. Some of these date from the very beginning of the second century, but the witness of the pagan Roman governor and writer Pliny the Younger is not included in the appendix. In the light of Paul's letters to the Galatians and Colossians, I think that Block is being too charitable towards Christians who worship on Saturday rather than Sunday.

In summary, I would say that Block is an able and more reliable Old Testament scholar than he is a theologian. As long as the reader bears the aforementioned weaknesses in mind, he can certainly profit from the great insight, especially regarding the Old Testament, which he will find in *For the Glory of God*. The author's exegetical skill in the Old Testament and its cultural background leaps out in every section of the book. What we certainly can learn from *For the Glory of God* is that our worship and our whole life ought to be God-centered and the necessity of acknowledging that we can only have access to God through Jesus Christ.

—Pieter de Vries

*K:JNWTS* 31/2 (December 2016): 39-40

Alan H. Cadwallader, *Fragments of Colossae: Sifting Through the Traces*. Hindmarsh, South Australia: ATF Press, 2015. 229pp. Paper. ISBN: 978-1-925232-53-0. $49.

This is an impressive volume, beautifully illustrated with color photos, easy to read and thorough in its coverage of the archaeology and history of the city the apostle Paul never visited (Col 2:1), but to whom he wrote his noted epistle. As the cover photograph indicates, the irony of Colossae is that its huge dual mound (*höyük*, in Turkish) has never been excavated. Here is this major city of Asia Minor, on the great trade and military road from Ephesus to Mesopotamia, situated in the fertile Lycus River Valley near modern Honaz, in the shadow of Mt. Cadmus, still buried beneath tons of grass, dirt and sand. Cadwallader is part of an Australian research team which is attempting to remedy this oversight. His book is an overview of the history of locating Colossae (chapter 1), the military use of the city (chapter 2), the gods worshipped in the city (chapter 3), the amphitheater (common to all Hellenistically influenced cities, chapter 4), the cloth industry (chapter 6), the baths (chapter 7) and the necropolis (chapter 8). The book also contains a glossary of terms, excellent maps and helpful indices.

Anyone working on Paul's epistle will benefit from Cadwallader's superb background survey. Throughout, he tips his hat to the "great surface archaeologist" (39), Sir William Ramsay, whose pioneering work revealed the seven churches of Asia Minor (Rev 2-3) in historico-biblical significance (work supplemented by the late C. J. Hemer). Our author notes his strong disagreement with the higher critical 19th century liberal, Ernst Renan, who disparaged Colossae as "second-rate" and was followed by J. B. Lightfoot (and virtually all others since) in his opinion that Colossae was a city in decline after the famous earthquake of 60/61 A.D. struck the region of Hierapolis, Laodicea and Colossae (19). Cadwallader produces substantial evidence of a flourishing Colossae after recovery from that tremblor—prosperity into and beyond the reign of the Emperor Hadrian (117-38 A.D.) (36-37).

Our author provides occasional reflections on the meaning of passages from Paul's epistle. These are penetrating and important considerations which enliven the arena of the apostolic letter. In fact, this volume is now essential for comprehending the city and culture into which Paul sent his prison epistle. To begin work on Colossians, the pastor and student now need to read Cadwallader's book as an introduction to the epistle. Magnificent piece of work.

—James T. Dennison, Jr.

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Kevin W. McFadden, *Judgment according to Works in Romans: The Meaning and Function of Divine Judgment in Paul's Most Important Letter*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013. 196pp. Paper. ISBN 978-1-4514-6567-9. $59.

How must we understand what Paul writes in his letter about judgment according to works? How can we relate that to his message of justification by faith and not by the works of the law? In the last century, several monographs were devoted to this subject. In the former century in New Testament scholarship, a view on Paul was developed which came to be called the "new perspective". According to the adherents of the new perspective, the message of justification in Paul is not a soteriological message, but a message that rejects ethnic exclusivity. It makes clear

that with the coming of Jesus Christ, a new era in salvation-history has come. The identity markers of the new covenant community are not circumcision, purity rules, the Sabbath and so one, but faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. If the new perspective on Paul is right, the classical Protestant view of justification by faith is actually a grotesque misunderstanding of what Paul really meant.

Now the problem with the new perspective is not so much in what it states, but in what it denies—or at least does not express explicitly enough. There are very important indications that Paul's message of justification is first of all soteriological and has its background in the inability of man to perform the law of God. In this context, I point only to Romans 1:18-3:20. These chapters also show us very clearly that we cannot restrict the works of the law to the so-called boundary or identity makers.

According to the adherents of the new perspective, justification by faith has to do with entering into or belonging to the new covenant community. In the final judgment, new obedience will be the criteria. So man's final salvation is based on the new obedience. But is this really what Paul meant? I am sure that this is not the case. Can the relationship between justification by faith and judgment according to works be explained in another way?

A positive answer is given in this relevant monograph written by Kevin W. McFadden, assistant professor of New Testament at Cairn University (Langhorne, PA). The title under review is a revision of the author's dissertation which he completed at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary under the direction of Tom Schreiner and the guidance of Mark A. Seifrid. McFadden restricts himself to Paul's most important letter, the letter to the Romans. I deem it an advantage that his study is not too elaborate; the concise character enhances its clarity.

In *Judgment according to Works in Romans*, McFadden examines each passage in Romans in which judgment according to works plays a prominent role, namely Romans 1:18-32; 2:1-29; 3:1-20 and 14:1-23. McFadden argues that Paul says God will repay Jews and Gentiles according to their works and that both stand guilty and condemned before God (Rom 1:18-3:20). Paul uses the theme of judgment according to works to make this universal accusation.

McFadden makes clear that on the one hand Romans 14:1-23 is similar to the description of the final judgment in Romans 1:18-3:20, but on the other hand in this passage judgment functions as an exhortation to Christians rather than as an accusation against the world. In distinction to Romans 1:18-3:20, doing the law is not seen as the standard in the final judgment. The final standing of a Christian is grounded in the saving work of Christ.

McFadden says that we must start in Paul with the thought of judgment according to works. Only when we realize that can we understand what Paul writes about justification by faith. Justification by faith must be seen in the context of the final judgment. It is first of all a soteriological category. The revelation of God's righteousness in Christ is an alternative and saving approach to justification in the final judgment. The judgment according to works can only lead to damnation. The gospel of God's righteousness in Christ does not proceed from solution to plight (as E. P.

Sanders argued in *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*), but from the plight of God's deserved wrath to (being declared) just.

Romans 3:25-26 teaches that in the cross of Christ, God demonstrated his righteousness because he had passed over previous sins in his forbearance. In one sense, for the believer the final judgment has already happened. Still, the cross does not replace the final judgment; it does however guarantee the verdict of the final judgment. For Paul, the ground both for present and final justification is the saving work of Christ. The believer knows that his justification is based on what Christ did for him. He died for him, was resurrected for him and prays for him. So it is both a judgment that can be said to be according to works and according to faith because the believer is seen by God as he is in Christ. Although McFadden does not use this expression, we can say that Christ fulfilled the demands of the law for the believer.

Now the great question remains: how can we make sense of what Paul writes in Romans 2 about judgment according to works with the above view on justification by faith and the meaning of the cross of Christ? Since the beginning of Christian commentary on Paul's letter to the Romans, the second chapter has raised exegetical and theological questions.

Three explanations have been given over the centuries. Since the last century, Paul has been accused of inconsistency. This is the view of both E. P. Sanders, whose work *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* was a catalyst of the "new perspective" on Paul, and of the late Finnish New Testament scholar, Heikki Räisänen. Now even apart from one's view on Scripture, inconsistency is a very unsatisfactory explanation, unless an author gives clear indications that he writes in a careless way. But (as McFadden rightly states) incoherence is just for that reason very unlikely in Paul's letter to the Romans. This letter is characterized by the majesty of its arguments.

A second explanation is that Paul speaks of positive recompense in Romans 2 only as a hypothetical possibility. This view goes back to the commentaries of Melanchton and Calvin. The category of the doers of the law in Romans 2 is an empty set, because no one can keep the law perfectly. Many commentators up to the present have followed Calvin and Melanchton here. Almost all these commentators argue that, unlike justification in Romans 2:13, the positive recompense in Romans 2:7 and 10 is fulfilled by Christian obedience, although both Hans Lietzmann and Douglas Moo argue that also in vv. 7 and 10 positive recompense is an empty set.

Third, many argue that Romans 2 describes Gentile Christians who fulfill the law by the Spirit. McFadden does not mention him, but this view was defended by Augustine. Herman Ridderbos and Tom Schreiner see Christian obedience in Romans 2:25-29, but argue that in Romans 2:14-15 Paul is speaking of the occasional obedience of unbelieving Gentiles. Several scholars combine the hypothetical and Gentile Christian view of Romans 2. John Murray, for example, makes a strong argument for the Gentile Christian view of Romans 2:6-11 and endorses the hypothetical view of Romans 2:13. Actually, this agrees with the position of Calvin and Melanchton. McFadden shared this view originally and I myself am at least still inclined to it. We must say that both the hypothetical and Gentile Christian view have their own difficulties.

I fully agree with McFadden that the hypothetical view cannot account for the flow of Romans 2:25-29. It cannot be denied that Paul in Romans 2:28-29 refers to the promise of the Spirit associated with justification by faith. I also share McFadden's view that this makes it likely that Paul views Christian obedience to be that which in some sense receives positive recompense in the final judgment with regard to Romans 2:7 and 10. I am less sure than he that this is also true for Romans 2:13. He thinks that when Paul speaks about the possibility that in the final judgment the thoughts of the Gentiles will excuse them, this is a subtle hint to the category of Christian Gentiles. I don't think that it is necessary, as McFadden argues, that when we allow the possibility of positive recompense by (Gentile) Christian obedience, this must be also true for Romans 2:13 (but let each judge for himself).

I again fully agree with McFadden that Paul's argument in Romans 2 is not contradictory but complex. In Romans 2, Paul speaks both about obedience required by the law and obedience enabled by the Spirit. These themes he unfolds more fully later in his letter.

McFadden's conclusion is that the classical Protestant position that good works are not the ground of justification in the final judgment, but nevertheless are an evidence of it is correct. I would add to McFadden that Paul when speaking about the law in relation to Christian obedience does not speak about doing the law but fulfilling the law by the Spirit (Rom 8:4); and that when Paul speaks of good works he does not mention the law (Rom 13:3; see also Eph 2:10; 1 Tim 2:10; 5:10, 25; 6:18; Titus 2:7).

I consider the monograph of McFadden an excellent study that can help us see that the classic Protestant view on both justification by faith and judgment according to works is exegetically well founded.

—Pieter de Vries