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BOOK REVIEW

L. Ann Jervis. *Paul and Time: Life in the Temporality of Christ*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2023. Hbk. 224 pp. ISBN 9781540960788. \$26.47

In this book, L. Ann Jervis, emerita professor at Wycliffe College, University of Toronto, offers a fresh perspective on Paul's theology of time. She challenges the common interpretation of Paul's understanding of time that Christians live in the overlapping time frame of both present evil and new age, whereby they experience the so-called "already/not yet" salvation. Instead, she proposes that Christians live in exclusively the "already" saved time in Christ, the time of which is called "life-time." So, there is no dimension of "not yet" in Christian life. Jervis's central thesis is as follows: There are two kinds of time: either "life-time" or "death-time." In the life-time, Christians will experience the time of Christ, which is eternal, because of the union with Christ, while on the other hand, the person who is not united with Christ lives in "death-time" which ends in the day of the Lord. Both times are mutually exclusive and different in quality; people live either life-time or death-time, so there is no place of overlapping. She states, "Believers do not live in eschatological tension due to the overlap of two ages. Paul does not think that either those in Christ or those who are not live in any sort of overlap. There is no both/and but only either/or" (133). Jervis's proposal is grounded in both sound exegesis of Paul's authentic letters and the notion of the temporality of "being in Christ," a neglected area in scholarly discussions thus far.

In the first three chapters, Jervis examines two influential schools' understanding of Paul and time: the salvation-historical and apocalyptic interpretation of Paul. In chapter 1, Jervis deals with N. T. Wright, O. Cullmann, and J. D. G. Dunn, respective-

ly, as representatives of salvation-historical interpreters of Paul. After describing their features of Pauline time, she summarizes, “Salvation historical thinkers describe the peculiar situation of already-not yet as the two ages overlapping . . . The age to come has come, but the old age continues. Believers live in the overlap of the ages” (16–17). In chapter 2, the apocalyptic interpreters, including A. Schweitzer, J. L. Martyn, D. Campbell, and others, are introduced. Jervis summarizes, “Time in the apocalyptic reading of Paul can hold within it two competing realities: the present evil age and the new creation . . . The present age is finite, since it will end when Christ returns; the new creation is a kind of temporality that is eternal” (42). In these chapters, the author suggests that “salvation historical and apocalyptic readers . . . share the conviction that currently two ages exist at once and that believers live in both simultaneously” (45). Following the explanations of the common readings provided in the previous two chapters, Jervis turns to the evaluation of those readings of Paul’s time in chapter 3. The fundamental problem of both salvation-historical and apocalyptic readings, she argues, is that “Paul does not speak of the new age” (48) in his undisputed letters. That is, his main interest lies not in the concept of the new age but in “Christ and wonders attending to union with him enabled by the spirit” (59). So, she investigates the significance of the union with Christ in Paul’s concept of the time in the following chapters.

The apex of Jervis’s arguments appears in chapters 4–6 as she spells out the idea that being in Christ means living the time of Christ. She writes, “Union with Christ is union with Christ’s time. Believers have access to the exalted Christ’s own temporality by virtue of their life in Christ” (61). To support this theoretical concept, Jervis points out the following: First, for Paul, God lives both outside of and within time. She writes, “For God, the past, present, and future are one, but nevertheless they are still past, present, and future rather than a singular Now” (70). Secondly, after the resurrection, Christ also lives in God’s time. She writes, “The apostle thinks that Christ’s exalted life and God’s life are consonant” (70). Finally, on this ground, Christian’s union with Christ enables them to unite with Christ’s time. Jervis

argues, “Paul considers that for believers the human experience of time is enveloped by another temporality” (71). The time that Christians experience in Christ is called a “life-time,” while on the other hand, non-Christian’s time “death-time” that is ruled by death. These two types of time are not another designation for old and new age. She argues, “Living life-time with mortal bodies is not an indication of living in the overlap of the ages or in an already-not yet existence” (74). In chapter 5, Jervis further explains the nature of the exalted Christ’s time with which Christians are united. She writes, “The past, present, and future co-exist at once. Union with Christ makes possible access to Christ’s present and to a significant portion both of Christ’s past and of Christ’s future” (77). Based on her exegesis of the authentic letters, Jervis contends that Christians who are united with Christ experience Christ’s past such as sufferings and death, his present such as Christ’s care, and his future such as the day of Christ. According to her, “The eschatological events in which Christ acts confirm and manifest the present nature of Christ’s life. His resurrection destroyed death for him, as Paul states in Romans 6:9” (89). So are Christians when they unite with Christ. Chapter 6 explores 1 Cor 15 and Rom 8 that are important passages of eschatological events. She writes, “In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul speaks of a future event for the faithful that is certain because they live presently in the victory of Christ’s resurrection” (109); and “That Paul does not connect the revelation to believers with a Parousia-like scene suggests that by the time he writes Romans, Paul sees more clearly Christ’s present glory, even in the midst of the groaning of creation and of believers” (115). For Paul, the future events are present realities in his eyes of faith.

In chapter 7, Jervis examines the basis of her argument, that is, the relation between Christian’s union with Christ and their union with Christ’s time. Though various scholars wrote about the meaning of the union with Christ, Jervis says, “the temporal implication of union with Christ has not been addressed directly” (118). Yet, after reviewing some scholars’ views of union with Christ, Jervis found that “various interpretations entail largely unaddressed temporal implications” (124). She contends that “Paul regarded union with Christ to involve union with a kind of

time” (124).

In chapter 8, Jervis showcases how the standard view of suffering, death, and sin in Christian life changes when her understanding of Paul’s time is applied to them. Standard readings, which assume the overlapping of ages in Christian life, think of suffering, death, and sin as characteristics of the present evil age. On the contrary, Jervis understands “suffering as essential and integral to union with Christ” (138). Concerning death, Jervis’s perspective sees “believers live presently in the victory of Christ’s resurrection” (140). Concerning sin, “Union with Christ is freedom from Sin, but it does not obliterate the capacity for sinning” (142). Therefore, Paul does not see suffering, death, and Sin as “symptoms of the still unvanquished present evil age” (135). Rather, they are the integral parts of living in Christ’s time.

Throughout the book, Jervis sets forth her arguments logically and coherently and offers sound exegetical analyses of Paul’s main letters. Obviously, the great contribution of *Paul and Time* is her insightful rereading of Paul’s view of the time in light of the temporal aspect of the unity with Christ. After being united with the Lord, according to Jervis, Christians live in Christ’s time, experiencing his past, present, and future simultaneously. Also, the meanings of suffering, sinning, and death will be totally changed in Christian life. Unlike the common view of salvation-historical and apocalyptic reading. There is no overlapping time there. Christians live exclusively in Christ’s life-time. Scholars and pastors have been so accustomed to the common framework, “already/not yet” pattern, of Christian salvation, that they tend to easily overlook what Jervis argues. Jervis’s *Paul and Time* will demand scholars, especially salvation-historical and apocalyptic, to reconsider the common framework of Paul’s time.

Having said that, I have a feeling that, judging from the importance of the theme that the book deals with, *Paul and Time* seems not so comprehensive. Other scholars might have written more than 500 pages on this topic. So, I wonder if the book has explored and spelled out the theme thoroughly and strongly enough by doing detailed exegetical analyses of all the passages

in question. Jervis herself seems to admit this in the preface: “[T]his book would have been stronger if I included arguments based on historical situatedness at each point where I interpret Paul’s words” (xiii). So, some may raise questions against the arguments of the book. One question I have is how Paul understood the time of the figures in the Old Testament, for instance, Abraham and David in Rom 4, and Israel in Rom 9–11. Which time did they live in, life-time or death-time? Presumably, it would not be the latter. If so, how was it possible for them to live in life-time without believing in Christ?

Needless to say, however, *Paul and Time* is a groundbreaking work. Jervis’s study cannot be ignored in future explorations of Paul’s theology of time. The implication of the book is huge, either in scholarly discussions or in Christian life. For those who are interested in Pauline theology in general, either scholars or ministers, this book is worth reading.

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