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Review of The Messiah: A Comparative Study of the Enochic Son of Man and the Pauline Kyrios

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J.A. WADDELL, *The Messiah: A Comparative Study of the Enochic Son of Man and the Pauline Kyrios* (Jewish and Christian Texts in Contexts and Related Studies, 10; London - New York, T&T Clark, 2011).

James Waddell's book *The Messiah: A Comparative Study of the Enochic Son of Man and the Pauline Kyrios*, based on his doctoral dissertation at the University of Michigan, accomplishes what the title leads one to expect, i.e. a survey of similarities and differences between the depiction of the Messiah in 1 Enoch and the letters of Paul, but also more. The volume touches on issues of methodology related to comparative studies, the character of early Jewish monotheism, and the current consensus in Enochic studies. All this is done in service of a comparative treatment of the Similitudes of Enoch to the authentic letters of Paul, in order to ask what is distinctive about each, what is shared in common between them, and whether the sharing of distinctive features without precedent in other earlier or contemporaneous Jewish literature provides grounds for positing Paul's familiarity with the Similitudes, whether directly or indirectly.

The opening sentence of the introduction, "Paul was a Jew," sets the tone for the book, and the discussion of that opening statement clarifies the rationale for the book's focus as well as some of its specific contents. The Jewishness of Paul tells us a great deal about him – but not everything, not least because there were a wide variety of viewpoints and movements within the Judaism of Paul's time. Waddell's survey of the history of research begins with Bousset's classic study, which argued that Paul's view of Jesus owed many of its distinctive features to the influence of Hellenistic religions and Gentile cults. Turning then to E. P. Sanders, Waddell highlights the shift in scholarship that has led to Paul being viewed primarily against the background of Jewish thought. The survey continues with the major contributors to the discussion of early Christology and its relationship to Jewish monotheism, including Hurtado, Bauckham, and Dunn. It is against the background, and in the context of these scholarly discussions, that Waddell's comparative study of the Similitudes of Enoch and Pauline Christology takes place.

An important methodological point in the introduction relates to the nature of comparison. As Waddell himself puts it, "Merely to examine the sources to find precedents and parallels does not really mean much. We have to ask what the individual elements

mean for a particular author or text" (p.17). In other words, it is insufficient (particularly if one is seeking to identify evidence of influence or specific shared tradition) to merely notice similarities of detail. Scholars must also look at how those details are *configured*, at the building and not merely the bricks from which it is constructed.

Another key point, which has yet to be adequately communicated to those scholars working primarily in the domain of New Testament, relates to the date of the Parables of Enoch. For many of us, the consensus with which we are familiar dated this section of 1 Enoch to the 1st century CE. It might then have been available to some later New Testament authors (such as those who wrote the Gospels of Matthew or John) but could not be assumed to be familiar or even to have existed earlier. Among those working in the present day on the Similitudes as their scholarly focus, the consensus has shifted towards an earlier date. Allusions to events which occurred 53-40 BCE, in a manner suggesting they are fresh in the author's mind, point in the direction of a date in the late 1st century BCE (see esp. pp.22-27). If this date is correct, then it becomes possible that, if not the text itself, certainly the ideas contained in it could have been known to the earliest Christians, including Paul.

Chapters 2-5 survey the attributes and activities of the divine figure and of the Messiah in the Enochic material and in the authentic letters of Paul, noting similarities with other Jewish (and to a lesser extent Christian) literature from the same time period, ranging from the Exagoge of Ezekiel the Tragedian to the Dead Sea Scrolls. In the process, Waddell is able to highlight features which he considers distinctive of the Parable of Enoch and Paul's letters. In the process, the book tackles some major interpretative issues, such as the relationship of the Messiah to Wisdom, and the fact that pre-existing and even the carrying out of divine functions does not necessarily equate with an attribution of divinity.

Most of the conclusions Waddell draws are persuasive. If there is a point at which Waddell identifies a distinctive feature of the Similitudes that seems to me less clearly to be such, it is in the fact that the Messiah figure is enthroned and receives worship. While Waddell discusses the evidence from Daniel regarding prostration/worship, noting Daniel 3 where the same sort of phrase, "fall down and worship," is used, Waddell does not discuss the relevant data from Daniel 2:46, where Nebuchadnezzar prostrates himself before/worships Daniel, and no indication is given by the author or the character of Daniel that this was objectionable. Likewise in 1 Chronicles 29:20-23, Solomon is hailed as king precisely by being placed on the "throne of Yahweh" and the people are said to have worshiped/prostrated themselves before Yahweh and the king. And so, while it may be said that 1 Enoch and slightly later Paul's letters depict the Messiah in ways that are not found in other literature of that period, both may have been drawing on material in the Hebrew Bible, or at least royal imagery that had deep roots in Israelite tradition and literature. This does not, however, undermine Waddell's main point, which is to refute the claim that, when the early Christians depicted the Messiah as receiving worship, it was something unprecedented in Judaism. Nor does it detract from his argument that the configuration of details in the Parables of Enoch and Paul suggests a knowledge of the former by the latter, whether in writing or orally.

In chapter 6, Waddell compares the features of the depiction of God and Messiah in the two sources he is studying, providing charts to make the distinctions and overlaps clear. What is not said in one or the other is less significant, since authors do not always write everything they think about a given topic. But the details of the depiction, where these are shared between Paul and 1 Enoch and lacking in other literature from around or before their time, do indeed suggest, as Waddell argues, some sort of influence by one upon the other. How persuasive one finds the case for overlap on a specific detail will

depend on one's exegetical judgment regarding key texts – as, for instance, in the case of the debates about whether Paul thought of Christ as pre-existent. Waddell provides ample discussion of the issues and offers justification for his own exegetical conclusions.

Waddell's book is full of discussions of relevant New Testament and early Jewish works, and touches on a range of related texts and topics that are fascinating (see e.g. the excursus of the Greek Life of Adam and Eve and the question of why, if Paul knew Enochic material, he did not refer to Jesus as "son of man"). Waddell's conclusion about the character of Paul's thought and its relationship to his wider context is guaranteed to stimulate interesting and important scholarly conversations. His conclusion, in his own words, is this: "The old view that Paul's messiah was shaped by a non-Jewish, Gentile context and that the messiah in the Gospels was shaped in a Jewish context is no longer tenable. The wedge must now be considered to have been permanently removed...Paul indeed was a Jew. Now we can say with a high degree of certainty from which stream of Jewish intellectual tradition Paul developed his concept of the Messiah. It was Enoch" (pp.208-209). I highly recommend this volume, and look forward to the discussions that will result from its publication among scholars of ancient Judaism and early Christianity.

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