

THE PROBLEM OF AN INTERMEDIATE KINGDOM IN I CORINTHIANS 15:20-28

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I. The discussion of the problem of an intermediate or millennial kingdom in I Corinthians 15:23 and 24 has been clarified in recent years by two monographs. The first of these, *Das tausendjahrige Reich*, by Hans Bietenhard (Zurich 1955) is a spirited exposition of the chiliastic position. Thus, at the conclusion of Bietenhard's able survey article, "The Millennial Hope in the Early Church," he writes:

Today, it is admitted on all hands—except for a few Roman Catholic exegetes—that only an eschatological interpretation is consistent with the text [of Revelation 20]. If the question is still open whether the hope is to be maintained or not, it will now be decided by other than exegetical and historical considerations.¹

Bietenhard takes a similar confident line in the book before us, as he discusses the binding of Satan portrayed in Revelation 20:1-3.

... now the originator of rebellion will for a time be made harmless. In a methodical progression step by step evil will be made harmless and be removed. Indeed precisely from this view of a methodical progression in the destruction of evil at the Parousia there arises the untenability of the church-historical interpretation of the Millennium. (p. 20)

Bietenhard discusses the question of two resurrections on pages 52 to 67. He follows A. Schweitzer's idea that Paul arrived at the belief in two resurrections because of the death and resurrection of Christ (p. 60). Bietenhard recognizes that Paul says nothing specific about a thousand year period lying between the two resurrections. Paul simply declares that the third *tagma* will follow the second (p. 61). Bietenhard offers the interesting idea that John may have learned of Paul's double-resurrection doctrine when he came into Asia Minor. John then accepted this idea and gave it precision on the basis of further revelation (p. 61). Bietenhard argues that Paul leaves room for an end-historical kingdom such as Revelation portrays. He says:

... Paul knew of the present Lordship of Christ which extends over this age, but he did not yet know of a kingdom of Christ in the sense of Revelation 20. According to Paul, Christ rules until that point in time when death as the last enemy will be destroyed. This event takes place according to Revelation 20:14 as an act of the last judgment. But we may say that Paul has *room* for such an end-historical kingdom of Christ as Revelation promises, because the Millennium rules over the old earth at a time when death still

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1. *Scottish Journal of Theology*, VI (March 1953), pp. 12-30.

rules. (p. 88)

A second volume dealing specifically with the idea of an intermediate kingdom is written by Hans-Alwin Wilcke, *Das Problem eines messianischen Zwischenreichs bei Paulus* (Zurich 1967). Wilcke's treatise is number 51 in the series edited by W. Eichrodt and O. Cullmann, *Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments*. Wilcke's study is a Marburg dissertation done under the direction of W. G. Kummel, and is devoted to a detailed study of I Corinthians 15:20-28 and I Thessalonians 4:13-18.

Wilcke gives the results of his exegesis of I Corinthians 15:20-28 in a concise summary (pages 148-49)

1. Paul in I Corinthians 15:22 speaks only of the resurrection of Christians. The basic argument for two resurrections, that Paul had all men in mind, is incorrect.
2. Verse 23 does not speak of a resurrection of several groups: up to and including verse 23, Paul has said only that at the Parousia believers will rise to the same life with which Christ arose.
3. *Telos* in verse 24 can only mean end. There is no thought of a last contingent of resurrected persons. There is no thought of the conversion of non-Christians after the Parousia, or of the second resurrection for judgment.
4. The kingdom of Christ is a present reality. It does not begin with the Parousia. The destruction of the powers does not take place in a hypothetical intermediate kingdom which begins with the Parousia. It happens in the time before the Parousia and at the beginning of the *telos* which is simultaneous with the Parousia.
5. There is in the end-historical events portrayed in I Corinthians 15:20-28 no room for an intermediate Messianic kingdom.

In discussion which follows, I have attempted to deal especially with Wilcke's first and principal argument, that only a resurrection of Christians is contemplated by Paul.

II. THE *EITA TO TELOS* OF I CORINTHIANS 15:24

One of the marks of primitive circumstantiality in Paul's discussion of the resurrection of Christ is the sequence apparent in the series of resurrection appearances. This sequence is marked by the use of *epeita* and *eita*. At verse 7, Paul uses *eita* to mark the time between Christ's appearance to James and the appearance to all the apostles. So also, in verse 24, following *epeita* of verse 23, *eita* seems to measure a time-sequence of greater or less extent between Parousia and *telos*.

Several considerations confirm this presumption:

(1) There is a sequence between the two *hotan* clauses of verse 24. The aorist subjunctive of the second *hotan* clause indicates that the destruction of Christ's enemies is prior to the event of the first *hotan* clause, the delivering over of the Kingdom at the *telos*: the delivering over follows the subjugation. This sequence is confirmed by the parallel construction of verse 28. There the *hotan* clause marks the time of the subjugation of enemies. The *hypotage* there used answers to the *katargese*

of verse 24, and is used because the quotation from Psalm 110:1 has been introduced using *hypetaxen*. At the point marked by the *tote* of verse 28, whenever all things have been subjected to Christ, at that time the Son will subject Himself to the Father. The two events are close enough together to come under the limits of the *tote*, and yet there is a sequence implied. Robertson-Plummer paraphrase thus:

'when, however, the all shall have been subjected to Him (the Son), then (and not till then) shall the Son Himself also be subjected to Him (the Father) who subjected the all to Him (the Son), that God may be all in all.'²

The parallelism would suggest that the *tote* of verse 28 brings together in relatively close sequence not only the events of verse 28, but also the same two parallel events as are discussed in the two *hotan* clauses of verse 24.

Therefore, since there is a sequence clearly marked, the *telos* cannot be simultaneous with the Parousia. Because the *telos* is preceded by the destruction of enemies, and the destruction of enemies cannot be put before the Parousia, the *telos* must stand beyond the Parousia and judgment.

The lexical data regarding *telos* are compatible with the foregoing analysis. Arndt and Gingrich distinguish two nuances of *telos*, both of which are subsumed under one general heading. Broadly, the basic meaning is the goal reached, the completion or conclusion. Within this general concept there lie the ideas of (1) "end period" and (2) "end point" or goal. Thayer well says, "what 'end' is intended the reader must determine by the context ..." (3). Hence, the fact that Paul focuses on a goal *beyond* the Parousia is in harmony with the general definition of *telos*. *Telos* is the context equivalent of *synteleia* (Matthew 24:6, 14), referring in general to the end-period. But Paul must allow for judgment and the destruction of enemies and hence fixes more precisely on a goal beyond these events. In Paul's construction, as already argued, the *telos* follows the subjugation of enemies. G. Vos writes, "... by means of *eita* 'the end' is represented as a step subsequent to the Parousia."⁴

The necessity for a real historical sequence between Parousia and *telos* is further made plain by the disastrous consequences for Pauline thought if the *telos* is made to coincide with the Parousia and they are regarded as one event. This identification would ride over the sequences marked by the *eita*, and in so doing would eliminate the judgment events which must lie between. Paul would then be contradicting the teaching he gives elsewhere of the reality of judgment. This is in fact the position to which Wilcke comes. Further, at the conclusion of his work, he says:

The non-Christians, those who for the sake of Christ and by virtue of union with him may not hope for the grace of God, remain forever in death. That is their judgment! And Cullmann is right when he writes: "Above all it seems to me that a 'second'

2. Robertson-Plummer, *ICC*, p. 357.

3. *Lexicon*, p. 620a.

4. Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology*, Grand Rapids, 1952, p. 244.

resurrection in I Corinthians 15:35ff is incompatible with Paul's doctrine of the resurrection in I Corinthians 15:53ff. Paul knows only one resurrection, that with the *soma pneumatikon*."⁵

The included citation from Cullmann is from page 135 of *The Christology of the New Testament*.

A third argument establishing the reality of a time-sequence between Parousia and *telos* is this: time is required for the reign of verse 25. The *gar* clause of verse 25b is attached to the preceding *hotan* clause to give the ground in divine certainty of the fulfillment of the prediction to be introduced from Psalm 110. A reign is essential to the destruction of Christ's enemies. Since the destruction of enemies must follow the Parousia, we must either conceive of the present reign of Christ as extending beyond the Parousia into the age to come, or think of a distinctive phase of His sovereign Lordship which will begin with the Parousia, and project into the age to come. The concept of the projection of the *regnum Christi* into the age to come has been elaborated by Cullmann in the article "The Kingship of Christ and the Church in the New Testament." Cullmann writes:

... just as the *Regnum Christi* has a beginning, so too it has an end. Because the end is in the future it cannot be assigned a historical date like the beginning. But the New Testament does at least indicate the future event which will initiate the final phase of the *Regnum Christi*: The second coming of Christ.... It should be noted very carefully, however, that according to the Revelation of John and I Corinthians 15:23f., the second coming of Christ and the eschatological events associated with it have still to be regarded as the final act of the *Regnum Christi*. For the Son will 'deliver up the Kingdom of God' only when the final struggle has been successfully fought, after Christ's second coming. Thus the final act of the *Regnum Christi* projects into the beginnings of the coming age, the *aion mellon*, the new creation....⁶

Two texts which establish this idea are Hebrews 10:13 and I Corinthians 15:25. Cullmann says:

With the exception of Hebrews 10:13 and I Corinthians 15:25, all the texts we have cited concerning Christ's "sitting at the right hand of God" and the subjection of His enemies presuppose the ascension of Jesus as the chronological beginning point of his lordship. The two exceptions expect the subjection of the powers only at the end of time. The reason for this apparent contradiction is the New Testament's general conception of time, according to which the end phase has already been introduced, but the end itself has not yet come....⁷

Cullmann then presents the idea of two meanings of *katargeo* to resolve the apparent contradiction: *katargeo* may mean "subject" or "destroy":

... Thus II Timothy 1:10 uses it to describe the victory over death

5. O. Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament*, Philadelphia, 1959, p. 155.

6. Cullmann, *The Early Church*, ed. A. J. B. Higgins, pp. 111-12.

7. Cullmann, *Christology*, p. 224.

already achieved by the crucified Christ, whereas I Corinthians 15:25 uses it to describe the victory which will take place only after the return of Christ at the end. The subject of both passages is victory, but in II Timothy 1:10, the power of death is only 'subjected' whereas in I Corinthians 15:26 death is 'destroyed'.⁸

Thus Cullmann's observations agree with our previous analysis of verse 25, and strengthen the conclusion that time is required for the reign mentioned there, a part of which, if not all, must extend into the age to come. And that extension into the age to come is measured by the *eita*: the *telos* cannot be made simultaneous with the Parousia.

III. THE DESTRUCTION OF DEATH AS THE LAST ENEMY

An outstanding feature of I Corinthians 15:20-28 is Paul's repeated use of *pas*, all. The key to this pervasive use of "all" is its occurrence in the climactic citation from Psalm 8. There, and in the parallel citation from Psalm 110, the central theme of the entire section is expressed. All things whatsoever are to be subjected to the Son, so that all enemies are necessarily included. Reicke says, "Investiture with royal power is especially depicted by quotations from Psalms 8:6 and 110:1.... In many of these references there is emphasis on the 'all'...."⁹ Foerster writes, "Paul in I Corinthians 15:25 (adding "all"), 26 refers the passage explicitly to all the powers hostile to God, including death."¹⁰ Because of the absolute comprehensiveness of the "all" of Psalm 8:6 (=I Corinthians 15:27), Paul is justified in adding the "all" to the parallel supporting passage from Psalm 110:1 = I Corinthians 15:26a.

The comprehensiveness of the "all" of Psalm 8:6 is further emphasized by the Apostle in verse 27. The shift to the perfect *hypotetaktai* is appropriate to mark the finality and completeness attained by the aorists which have preceded. The perfect "looks at both ends of the action." All enemies have been destroyed, and the result attained abides.

Further, Paul expresses the completeness of the victory attained by the seemingly banal remark found in verse 27b: "When it says that all things have been subjected, of necessity the one who subjected them to the Son is excepted." The force of the sentence is to teach with absolute logical completeness the subjugation of all things whatsoever, the Father only excepted. The parallel citation of Psalm 8 in Hebrews 2:8 expresses this interpretation even more tersely and explicitly. "In subjecting all things to him, nothing has he left unsubjected to him."

The comprehensiveness of the prediction from Psalm 8:6 is now seen to pervade Paul's whole argument. In verse 4 Paul says Christ was raised according to the Scriptures, though no specific text is cited. In verse 23, Christ is included among those who are to be made alive, and has in fact already been raised. His resurrection is therefore included in

8. Cullmann, *Christology*, p. 225.

9. B. Reicke, *TWNT*, V, 895.

10. Foerster, *TWNT*, II, 814.

the fulfillment of the comprehensive promise that all enemies, including death, will be destroyed. II Timothy 1:10 says that "Christ abolished [katargesantos] death ... through the Gospel" which obviously includes the fact of His own resurrection. Resurrection had been denied at Corinth in the most general terms: "There is no resurrection of the dead." Findlay well says, "The *tines* of verse 12 say 'There is no resurrection'; Paul replies, 'there shall be no death'."¹¹

The comprehensiveness of the "all" of Psalm 8:6 must decide the interpretation of "all" in verse 22b: "In Christ all will be made alive." If "all" in verse 22 does not have the same completeness as the "all" in verse 27, a logical weakness enters Paul's argument. His main purpose in the entire argument is to assure his readers that believers will enjoy the ultimate eschatological victory through Christ (verse 57). If a portion of Adam's race is permanently held by death and never resurrected, Paul's argument is incomplete.

The concept of totality and completeness in the pervasive "all" provides an answer to the often-repeated idea that Paul is only concerned with the resurrection of the righteous. It may be granted that Paul's basic purpose is to instruct and encourage believers by assuring them of their resurrection. The resurrection-change is indeed essential for inheriting the kingdom and entering into Christ's victory. Nevertheless, Paul has chosen to give his instruction its ultimate ground and guarantee in the citations from Psalms 8 and 110, and those citations clearly teach the subjugation of all enemies whatsoever. Paul asserts the resurrection of believers as involved in resurrection of all the dead. The confidence of the believer that he will rise stands all the more firm because he sees that the one who will raise him has complete authority over death and will raise the unrighteous dead as well.

Exegetical opinion has tended to run to two extremes in handling the demands of the context. On the one hand, by holding to a strict soteriological interpretation of *en Christo and zoopoieo*, consistency with the promise of complete conquest of death is accomplished by holding that the passage teaches a strict universalism, a complete *apocatastasis*. This is the position of M. Risse.¹² On the other hand, there has been a tendency to deny the resurrection of unbelievers. Such was the conclusion of B. Weiss.¹³ The comprehensive demands of the context is exaggerated by the one group into universal salvation; the seeming lack of explicit mention of a resurrection of unbelievers is exaggerated by the other class of commentators into a *denial* of a resurrection of unbelievers. The doctrine of two resurrections seems therefore to be a natural solution for the one condition, as well as an explanation for Paul's apparent silence regarding unbelievers in his discussion of the Parousia. Paul did not mention unbelievers because their resurrection was not in view at that point. The same explanation would apply to the parallel passage in I Thessalonians 4.

11. Findlay, *EGT*. ad loc. v. 26.

12. M. Rissi, *Time and History*, Richmond, 1966, pp. 126-27.

13 B. Weiss, *Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, Edinburgh, n. d., II, pp. 71-72.

For Christ the Creator and Judge to leave a portion of Adam's race, even though unsaved, remaining in death, would be grotesque indeed. Is not death as truly Christ's enemy in the case of the unjust as in the case of the just? Warfield in commenting on I Corinthians 15:20-28 says:

[Paul] begins by reasserting the inclusion of our resurrection in that of Christ, who was but the first-fruits of those asleep, and then justifies it by an appeal to the parallel of Adam's work of destruction, declaring, apparently, that as physical death came upon all men through Adam's sin, so all men shall be rescued from its bondage by Christ's work of redemption. The context apparently confines the word 'death' in these verses to its simple physical sense, while on the contrary the 'all' of both clauses seems unlimited, and the context appears to furnish nothing to narrow its meaning to a class. They thus assert the resurrection of all men without distinction as dependent on and the result of Christ's work, just as all men, even the redeemed, taste of death as the result of Adam's sin.¹⁴

Paul must mean that the unrighteous dead are to be raised in keeping with his statement in Acts 24:15 that there will be resurrection (sic: anarthrous) of just and unjust. Paul must contemplate a third resurrection event in the promised destruction of all enemies mentioned in verse 24.

Paul's subsequent detailed analysis of the "all" of verse 22 also points toward a third resurrection event. He begins with "each," and what follows is the equivalent of counting one, two, three: Christ was made alive as first-fruits and afterward His own will be made alive. where then is the third *tagma*?

It does not seem satisfactory to take *telos* as "remainder" as Lietzmann, Peake, and others have done. The thought would then be, "afterward the remainder will be made alive when He delivers over the kingdom, when he shall have destroyed all enemies." The destruction of enemies must include the destruction of death by resurrection, and the aorist subjunctive vis-a-vis the preceding present subjunctive would mean that such a resurrection had already taken place. It would be contradictory to place the making alive of the remnant as the *telos*.

The third *tagma* is found in the climactic declaration of verse 26: "As the last enemy death is destroyed."

The remarkable literary structure of verses 24-28 argues for a third *tagma*. These verses are composed of nine units, either complete sentences or clauses, disposed in a chiastic pattern. The first and leading thought is the announcement of the *telos*, the far-distant goal of creation and redemption. The second unit is the *hotan* clause: "whenever he delivers over the kingdom to God, even the Father." This clause has its verb in the present subjunctive, putting its action, the Son's delivering over of the Kingdom, at the time of the *telos*. The third clause takes a step back in time since it has its verb in the aorist subjunctive. This is the second *hotan* clause: "Whenever he shall have destroyed all dominion

14. Warfield, *Biblical Doctrines*, New York, 1929, p. 621.

and all authority and power.” The fourth member of the chiasmic figure is verse 25. The sentence is linked by *gar* to the preceding *hotan* clause to provide its logical ground. Paul blends his argument with the allusion to Psalm 110:1: “For he must reign until God has put all his enemies under his feet.” The fifth item in the series is complex, occupying the central and pivotal place of emphasis. This member is the statement, “As the last enemy death is destroyed,” together with its logical ground in the magnificent promise of Psalm 8:6. Again Paul has assimilated the Scripture to his own argument by inserting *gar*: “For God has put everything under his feet.” The rhetorical figure now begins to reiterate in chiasmic sequence the statements already made. The sixth item is the important exegetical and explanatory sentence of verse 27b. It is not only a balance to its opposite number, verse 25, but logically weighty in that it emphatically makes clear that everything whatsoever, the Father only excepted, will be subjected to the Son. The shift to the perfect *hypotetaktai* has the effect of emphasizing the preceding aorists, gathering up the abiding results of the conquest of all enemies. The seventh member is the *hotan* clause of verse 28a: “Whenever all things are subjected to him.” The simple action alone is emphasized in the shift to the passive voice. It is obviously parallel to and complementary of verse 24c: “when he shall have destroyed all dominion, authority and power.” The eighth of the series is verse 28b: “At that time even the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him.” Again, this statement balances and complements 24b: “whenever he delivers over the kingdom to God even the Father.” The final member of the chiasmus is the *hina* clause of verse 28c: “... that God may be all in all.” This statement so beautifully parallels and illuminates its fellow, the original proclamation of the *telos*, that detailed comment is superfluous.

The chiasmic figure calls attention to the point now being made. The complex statement at the pivotal center is highlighted and emphasized. The destruction of death dramatically presented in verse 26 stands at the end of the destruction of enemies, as the last of them. The natural expectation that *eschatos* would be the last in order of a series is fulfilled. Here the last of the enemies is singled out, and its destruction is described with the vivid immediacy of the punctiliar present *katargeitai*. This climactic declaration fulfills the logical demands of the context for a third resurrection *tagma*, both the demand of the comprehensive “all” of verse 27a as well as the demand of the analytical enumeration proceeding from the “all” and “each” of verses 22b and 23a. It does not seem overbold to claim that Paul at verse 24 must have deferred a premature, simple enumeration of the third *tagma* of resurrection until he could assert it with powerful supportive logical and literary structures.

Here we must return to the problem of the extent of “all” in verse 22b. Wilcke gives a brief history of the interpretation of this text, and finds that there have always been varying opinions as to whether it should be taken as a full parallel to “all” of verse 22a, or should be reduced to include only believers. Paul’s belief in resurrection of just and unjust as reported in Acts 24:15 is rejected by Wilcke, since he does not

think Acts gives a reliable picture of Paul's doctrine.¹⁵ However, Paul in Romans 8:11 uses *zoopoieo* precisely in connection with the mortal body of believers. And the logical force of the comprehensive promise from Psalm 8 that all things will be put under the Son, taken in connection with the strong parallelism of the two statements of verse 22 are decisive for the universal extent of the resurrection.

The universal extent of resurrection, completed in a third stage, is the decisive matter in the entire discussion. Once the necessity of resurrection of all the dead is recognized, there is no necessary objection to a third order of resurrection. However, when a third order of resurrection is admitted, the parallel with the Apocalypse becomes obvious. It is therefore appropriate to bring together certain parallels between Paul and the Revelation. I believe these are sufficiently cogent to strengthen the assumption that Paul and the Revelation are in harmony.

IV. THE TRANSITION KINGDOM IN PARALLEL PASSAGES

A. Parallels between Paul and John

One such parallel between Paul and the Revelation is the proportionate emphasis that John and Paul give to the so-called intermediate kingdom. The very term intermediate may be misleading. It is too easy then to picture that kingdom as an isolated somewhat between this age and the age to come, having no meaningful connection with either age. If, however, the total perspective of I Corinthians 15:20-28 is observed, it is clear that while Paul asserts the divine necessity of a reign in the *dei* of verse 25, it is to the end that enemies may be destroyed. And the destruction of enemies is not an end in itself: a still greater goal lies beyond in the *hina* clause of verse 28—that God may be all in all. Obviously, that *telos*, that transition point loomed large in Paul's conception. The same cosmic proportions control John's presentation. The millennial kingdom of Revelation 20:4-6 should be seen as one brief era, but a necessary one for the destruction of the enemies of God. John proposed an historical sequence in the destruction of enemies: the destruction of the beast at the battle of chapter 19; the binding of Satan; the thousand year reign; the loosing of Satan and his destruction; the judgment and the destruction of death; the new heavens and the new earth. Paul knows of these same events: (1) He insists on the resurrection change as necessary for inheriting the kingdom (I Corinthians 15:50). The very point of the account of the resurrection in I Thessalonians 4 is to assure his readers that God will bring the dead and the living along with Jesus at His Parousia into whatever glories may be in store for them. (2) Paul knows of the destruction of the man of sin at Christ's Parousia, and *katargeo* is the strong, decisive word Paul uses in II Thessalonians 2:8 to describe that event. (3) Paul knows of resurrected saints reigning and judging. Their reigning in the future is assumed in the ironic rebuke of I Corinthians 4:8.

"Already you have all you want! already you have become rich!

15. Wilcke, p. 150.

You have become kings—and that without us! How I wish that you really had become kings so that we might be kings with you!” (NIV)
 And at I Corinthians 6:2 and 3:

Do you not know that God’s people will judge the world? Do you not know that we will judge angels?

These are the distinctive motifs that also appear in John’s millennial description. Charles puts it excellently in his comment on Revelation 20:6:

Now it is to be observed that in 1:6 (see note *in loc.*), 5:10, and here the priesthood and the kingship of those whom John addressed are conjoined..... But it is further noteworthy that 5:10 ... and the present passage *connect the priesthood with a special period of kingship*, i.e., that which they are to exercise in the Millennial Kingdom, and share with Christ (20:6) on the earth (5:10)....¹⁶

(4) Paul knows of a future humiliation of Satan as related to triumphant believers: “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet” (Romans 16:20). (5) Paul knows of the last judgment, the destruction of Satan (included among God’s enemies) and the destruction of the last enemy, death. (6) Paul knows of the perspective beyond the *telos*, when God is all in all.

Thus it can be argued that John’s unique kingdom of kingship and priesthood, of reigning and judging, can well be described as transitional. It is a part of this age, in that it has aspects of judgment. Yet the Age to Come apparently begins at the resurrection of the righteous. Jesus speaks of “... those who are considered worthy of taking part in that age and in the resurrection from the dead ...” (Luke 20:35). Hence there is a splice, an overlapping of one Age upon another: it is the beginning of the Age to Come in the resurrection at the Parousia which brings the world under judgment as well as blessedness. John as well as Paul has a transitional kingdom in view.

B. Parallel Citations of Psalms 8:6 and 110:1

Another series of parallels to I Corinthians 15:20-28 lies in the companion citations of Psalms 110:1 and 8:6. Ephesians 1:20-22 weaves together allusions from both Psalms in the order in which they appear in I Corinthians 15:26, 27:

... That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for his church.... (Ephesians 1:19-22, *NIV*)

Again, the citation of Psalm 8:4-6 in Hebrews 2:6-8 is especially interesting. The citation in Hebrews 2 seems to be intended to continue the argument of chapter one. Since Psalm 110:1 is quoted as the last item in the series of Old Testament citations in Hebrews 1 in the

16. Charles, *ICC*, II p. 186.

context of association with angels, the resumptive *gar* of Hebrews 2:5 again in a context of reference to angels is significant. E. E. Ellis has helpful remarks on the essential unity of Hebrews with Paul's exegesis.¹⁷

Chapter one of Hebrews is noteworthy for the magnificent chain of Old Testament citations which illustrate the Divine glory of the Son. In each member of the series of quotations, the Son is set above and contrasted with angels. The concluding and climactic member of the series sharply and dramatically sets the Son high above angels, for in contrast to the Son who can sit at the Father's right hand, the angels are sent forth as ministering spirits.^{17a}

The supreme dignity of the Son provides the ethical motivation of the exhortation of 2:1-4 to give heed to the Gospel. Here is the first instance in the series of hortatory sections of the epistle, set between expository passages. The idea of subjection of enemies to angels was advanced rhetorically in Chapter 1:13, and rejected. Only the Divine Son is competent and worthy to have all His enemies put under his feet. Verse 5 of chapter 2 naturally resumes the line of thought, "Not indeed (*gar*) to angels did he subject the world to come, of which we are speaking." The assumption that the subjugation of the world to come of 2:5 is closely related to the subjugation of enemies in 1:13 explains both the resumptive reference to angels and the explanatory remark "about which we are speaking." This remark is natural if the idea has been advanced previously, and is now about to be illustrated by the parallel and confirmatory citation from Psalm 8.

It is interesting to note that the order of thought in Hebrews is parallel to the context of I Corinthians 15:25-27. The thought Psalm 110:1 is advanced first and then confirmed by the climactic parallel from Psalm 8. Further, the same peculiar emphasis on the comprehensiveness of the subjugation promised is made in Hebrews 2:8 as was found in I Corinthians 15:27. In Hebrews, it is said that in the subjection of all things to the Son, the Father has left nothing that is not put under him. Similarly, in I Corinthians 15:27, the explanation is given that the one accomplishing the subjection, the Father, is obviously excepted. The implication is of a total and complete subjugation of all things, the Father alone excepted. Just as in I Corinthians 15, where the theme was the conquest of all Christ's enemies, so here the same controlling redemptive theme is announced in the promise that all the Son's enemies will be put under His feet. Just as I Corinthians, Hebrews 2:9, 10, 14, 15 find the accomplishment of redemption in the conquest of death. Christ was made lower than the angels that He might taste death for everyone. It was fitting for Him, through whom and for whom all things are, to be made perfect through suffering. He took flesh and blood that through death, He might destroy the one who has the power of death, and deliver those in bondage.

17. Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament*, Grand Rapids, 1957, pp. 95-97.

17a. From this point on I have made extensive use of the paper "The Use of Psalms 8 and 110 in I Corinthians 15:25-27 and Hebrews 1 and 2," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, Volume XV, Part I, Winter 1972.

There is yet another parallel between the Corinthians passage and Hebrews. In Hebrews 2:8, the corrective "not yet" is introduced. The promise of subjugation is universal, and all things will be put under the Son's feet, but "not yet" do we see the subjugation completed. The perfect participle *hypotetagenon*, looking at both ends of the action, is strikingly parallel to *hypotetaktai* of I Corinthians 15:27, and the comment previously offered would apply here also. It is striking that the citation from Psalm 8 in Hebrews 2 breaks off with the very line used by Paul in I Corinthians 15:27. It may be that we have here in the seven Old Testament quotations in Hebrews 1, plus the climactic one in Hebrews 2, an example of *haraz*¹⁸ or chain of quotations. This could well be a very primitive formulation of Christian doctrine.

These parallels seem to indicate that there is a continuity in the flow of thought from Hebrews 1 to Hebrews 2. That continuity in thought is natural, if the quotation from Psalm 110:1 and that from Psalm 8:6 are the climactic members of a longer series.

With the parallelism between the exegesis of the two Psalms in Hebrews and I Corinthians established, the two contexts mutually support and explain one another. Hebrews emphasizes the fact that the subjugation of all things is yet future, though a decisive point in the total redemptive plan has been reached in the suffering and death of the Son. Hebrews calls the situation in the future, "the world to come." On the other hand, I Corinthians makes it clear that that situation is a time when Christ reigns and overcomes His enemies. I Corinthians also makes it clear that the time of reigning and conquest is prior to the stupendous eschatological end, the *telos*, and *after* the Parousia. The indication in I Corinthians that the reign and conquest precede the *telos* helps to interpret the *oikoumene* of Hebrews 2:5. Westcott says, "The word is used for the world so far as it is a 'seat of settled government', 'the civilized world'."¹⁹ This definition of *oikoumene*, and the fact that it can or needs to be subjected to the Son sharply distinguishes it from "the city which has foundations", "the heavenly fatherland" (11:10-16), the "continuing city" (13:14), where heavenly perfection would be totally incongruous with the presence of enemies to be subjected to the Son. Indeed, the choice of *oikoumene* instead of *aion* seems particularly appropriate to a situation in which Christ would reign and judge. C. K. Barrett recognizes that *oikoumene* in Hebrews 2:5 is eschatological, and though apparently trying to assimilate it to *aion*, says: "The latter noun [*oikoumene*] is, in this connection, unusual, but it is doubtful whether it is significant for the thought of the Epistle."²⁰ On the contrary, the word is used by Paul at I Corinthians 6:2 and Acts 17:31: "God has set a day in which He is going to judge the *oikoumene* in righteousness, by the man He has appointed." *Oikoumene* is distinctly more appropriate for the limited period in which subjugation of enemies takes place. *aion*, on the

18. Ellis, pp. 49-50.

19. B. F. Westcott, *Hebrews*, p. 42.

20. *The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology*, W. D. Davies and D. Daube, eds., Cambridge Univ. Press 1954, p. 365, f.n.2.

other hand, can and often does mean the eternal state (as in Hebrews 6:5), a nuance for which *oikoumene* would be less appropriate.

It would appear that I Corinthians 15:20:28 and Hebrews, chapters 1 and 2, through the use of Psalms 110 and 8, mutually support and explain one another. G. Vos correctly sees that Paul has a "far-sweeping, age—dominating program"²¹ outlined in his terse enumeration: "Christ the first-fruits, afterward they that are Christ's at His coming; after that, the end, when the Son delivers over the kingdom...." The ensuing eternal state is clearly implied. Hebrews fits comfortably into this outline, adding the corrective "not yet" as regards affairs in the present, and distinguishing from the eternal state, a period called "the coming *oikoumene*," which is to be subjected to the Son. Here then is the answer to the question as to the position of the reign indicated in I Corinthians 15:25; Christ must reign, but when? Is He now reigning in the eschatological sense intended, or will that reign commence at the Parousia? Hebrews gives a decisive answer in the *mellousan* of 2:5 and in the *oupo* of 2:8: the reign and conquest of enemies must needs be, but it lies in the future, at and after the Parousia.

Finally, it should be noted that in the context of Hebrews 2, and indeed in the entire book, the motif of inheritance is at work. After the analogy in Hebrew law of the oldest son's prerogative in dividing the inheritance with other members of the family, the redemptive work of Christ is described in Hebrews 2 as "bringing many sons into glory," into their eschatological inheritance.

This concept of an eschatological inheritance is basic in the Pauline eschatology as well. Repeatedly Paul speaks of inheriting the kingdom, and in I Corinthians 15:50 he insists that the resurrection change is necessary for entering into that inheritance. Further, G. E. Ladd has pointed out that the motif of the inheritance actually governs the outline of the apocalypse.

... the little book [of chapter 5] is in the form of an ancient will, which was usually sealed with the seals of the seven witnesses. The book contains God's inheritance for his people, which is founded upon the death of his Son. The saint's inheritance is the Kingdom of God; but the blessings of God's Kingdom cannot be bestowed apart from the destruction of evil. In fact, the very destruction of all evil powers is one of the blessings of God's kingly rule. Here is the twofold theme of the Revelation: the judgment of evil and the coming of the Kingdom.²²

John thus brings into focus the whole Biblical concept of inheriting the kingdom as the issue of the new covenant:

... now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.... He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. (Revelation 21:3-7, *NIV*)

It is probably not accidental that Paul, with a similar thought in mind,

21. *Pauline Eschatology*, p. 226.

22. *A Theology of the New Testament*, Grand Rapids, 1974, p. 623.

speaks of Christ's delivering over His kingdom to God the *Father* (I Corinthians 15:24). The same motifs can be heard in Christ's words at the judgment scene:

Then the king will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the Kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world." (Matthew 25:34, *NIV*)

V. THE TRANSITION KINGDOM IN I CORINTHIANS 15:20-28

We have argued that it is not possible to make the *telos* of I Co. 15:24 simultaneous with the Parousia. Among the events lying between the Parousia and the *telos* is a final conquest of enemies, the last of which is death. Further, the parallel quotations from Psalms 8 and 110, with that from Psalm 8 occupying an uniquely powerful logical and rhetorical position, demand the complete victory over death by resurrection. This interpretation of Paul's use of Psalms 8 and 110 is strikingly paralleled in Hebrews 1 and 2, when there is a more explicit mention of a future *oikoumene*, which is to be subjected to Christ. Finally, parallels between Paul and John as to the principal events, perspectives, and motifs observable in the books, favor the conclusion that Paul and John had the same eschatological scheme in mind. Essential to that scheme is a transitional kingdom, having a complex and meaningful relation both to the concluding era of this Age, on the one hand, and to the Age-to-come, on the other, which begins with the Parousia and overlaps this Age. That is why Paul said in I Cor. 15.25, "For he must reign until God has put all his enemies under his feet." (*NIV*)

THE CHIASTIC ARRANGEMENT OF I COR. 15:24-28

The end—24a

Kingdom delivered over to Father—24b

All enemies destroyed—24c

All enemies put underfoot—25 (Ps. 110:1)

Last enemy destroyed—26

All things subjected—27a (Ps. 8:6)

All things completely and finally subjected (*hypotetaktai*)—27b

All things subjected—28a

Son made subject—28b

"That God may be all in all"—28c