Jervis, L. Ann. *Paul and Time: Life in the Temporality of Christ*. Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 2023. Pp. xxxiv + 190. Hardcover $32.99.

With *Paul and Time: Life in the Temporality of Christ*, L. Ann Jervis enters a long-standing debate in Pauline studies regarding how the apostle conceives of temporality. The starting point of her investigation is the observation that a large part of Pauline research, despite significant methodological differences, implicitly or explicitly operates on a two-age interpretative model: the coexistence or overlap of the "present evil age" and the "age to come" (p. ix), with Christ's resurrection inaugurating their overlap. This "already–not yet" eschatology has become something of a consensus and has significantly shaped the discussion since Oscar Cullmann's classic study *Christ and Time* (p. xix). This paradigm undergirds both dominant readings of Pauline temporality—the salvation-historical model, which views time as linear, sequential, and teleological, and the apocalyptic model, in which time is disrupted or invaded by God's eternity (pp. xxiv, xxxiv).

Against this backdrop, Jervis fundamentally challenges the two-age paradigm. Her central thesis is that Paul does not conceive of two overlapping ages but rather of two qualitatively different kinds of time, which she terms "death-time" and "life-time" (p. x). Accordingly, Paul does not envision Christian existence as a life lived between two cosmic epochs. Instead, to be "in Christ" is to participate in a new temporality altogether, the life-time constituted by the risen Christ himself.

Already in the introduction, Jervis makes it clear that her project is not primarily historically reconstructive but rather theologically hermeneutical. For her, time is not a neutral category but always already conceptually and ontologically pre-shaped. Therefore, she begins with a reflection on philosophical concepts of time and the implicit assumptions about time in modern interpretations of Paul (pp. xiii–xxxiv). The actual texts of her analysis are the undisputed Pauline letters; later writings such as Ephesians are not cited in the main argument of the book, with the exception of a few references in the footnotes (p. 190). This exclusion may be intentional to focus the argument on the most narrowly defined Pauline corpus possible.

The first two chapters are dedicated to a critical review of the history of research. In Chapter 1, Jervis discusses salvation-historical models that locate Paul within a linear, teleological time structure in which the event of salvation is oriented toward a future conclusion (pp. 1–17). Chapter 2 deals with apocalyptic readings that operate more with discontinuities, invasions, and cosmic power constellations (pp. 19–45). Despite all the differences, Jervis diagnoses a common underlying assumption in both approaches: the

notion of an "already–not yet," which describes the existence of the believers in a tension between two eons (pp. 16–17, 45). This very basic assumption is systematically questioned in the further course of the book.

The argumentative turning point occurs in Chapter 3. Here, Jervis argues that while Paul explicitly speaks of the "present evil age" (Gal 1:4), he notably does not speak of the "coming age." Instead, Paul, according to Jervis, consistently focuses on Christ himself. Terms like "new creation," "eternal life," or "Kingdom of God" do not function as temporal markers of a new era (p. 49), but as different ways to describe life in and with Christ (union with Christ) (p. 56). The fundamental opposition, therefore, is not between two times but between two ways of existence: a life determined by death and a life anchored in participation in Christ (p. 59).

In Chapter 4, Jervis unfolds her own model of time. "Death-time" refers to a mode of existence that is determined by death, ultimately leading to its end, and is therefore ontologically deficient (pp. 64, 66). "Life-time," on the other hand, is God's own time, which is present in the resurrected and exalted Christ (p. 66). A decisive characteristic of this time is its fluidity: the "past, present, and future are one" (p. 70), not strictly separated from one another. Whoever is in Christ already lives in this divine time, even though they continue to exist within chronological time (p. 74). As she puts it, "Those in Christ Jesus will physically die, but they live" (p. 74).

Chapter 5 applies these considerations in Christ's temporality. Christ himself is the place where God's time is present. His past (death and resurrection), his present (exaltation), and his future (*parousia*) do not form strictly sequential stages but coexist in his person (p. 77). The *parousia*, therefore, does not mean an ontological change in Christ, but the revelation of what is already the case, as Jervis states, "The eschatological events in which Christ acts confirm and manifest the present nature of Christ's life" (p. 89). Chapter 6 carries this claim into detailed exegesis, especially of 1 Cor 15 and Rom 8, where Jervis reads Paul's eschatological language not as describing a transition from one age to another but as narratively unfolding the single reality of Christ's life-time (pp. 93–115). What is commonly designated as "future" thus consists in the universal manifestation of what is already true in Christ rather than the arrival of a fundamentally new temporal order (pp. 109–10, 115).

Chapter 7 places Jervis's approach in the context of the discussion on *unio cum Christo*. She argues that many representations of the union with Christ do not adequately reflect their temporal implications. For Paul, she argues, the believers do not live "in an age," but "in the being of Christ,"

such that union with Christ entails participation in Christ's own temporality. However, she clarifies that this participation does not remove believers from human chronological time; rather, "Union with Christ does not transport believers out of human chronological time, but it does transform the living of human chronological time" (p. 124). From this transformed mode of temporal existence follows her distinctive claim regarding death. For her, physical death does not mean a return to death-time, because "Even before their bodily transformation, there is no death-time in the temporality of those united with Christ" (p. 130).

Chapter 8 addresses the difficult questions of suffering, sin, and death—life events of believers in Christ's life-time (pp. 135–57). Jervis argues that these phenomena should not be interpreted as remnants of a continuing old age but rather as an expression of participation in Christ's own existence, which includes the cross and resurrection (pp. 138–40). God's victory over the powers has already been achieved; their continued presence does not mean dominion but gradual disempowerment (pp. 156–57).

The concluding reflection consciously refrains from a mere summary and instead reflects on the ethical and theological consequences of the proposed model of time. Eschatology does not appear as an open drama, but rather as the revelation of a reality that has already been accomplished—"the temporality lived now by those in Christ." (p. 168).

Jervis's study is undoubtedly one of the most original and novel recent works on Pauline concepts of time. Its distinctiveness lies in its consistent Christological focus: time is not conceived abstractly, but from the person of Christ, more precisely, from Christ's own temporality. Methodologically, the book's greatest strength lies in its insistence that Paul's eschatological language must be read on Paul's own terms, without prematurely fitting it into inherited frameworks. By rejecting the overlap-of-the-ages scheme, Jervis clears interpretive space for appreciating the depth of Paul's participationist categories, in which union with Christ effects a total ontological shift from death to life.

One of the most compelling aspects of Jervis's argument is her fresh attention to Paul's semantics of death and life. For her, Paul does not view death simply as the end of biological existence, nor life as its continuation. Instead, as she convincingly demonstrates, death is an enslaving power, and life is union with God through Christ. Seen through this, Jervis makes sense of passages that otherwise sit uneasily with the two-age model. For instance, Rom 6:13–14 and Gal 2:19–20 take on renewed clarity when read as describing the believer's relocation from one kind of time to another.

At the same time, her dismissal of the overlap-of-the-ages framework

raises important questions when set alongside classic interpreters of Paul's temporality. In *Christ and Time* (1946), Oscar Cullmann famously portrayed Paul's eschatology as salvation history, using the analogy of D-Day and V-Day to distinguish between the decisive victory already achieved in Christ's death and resurrection and the still-future consummation of that victory at the *parousia*. Jervis is right to question whether such a linear, quasi-chronological scheme adequately reflects Paul's letters, yet Cullmann's historical sensitivity to the tension between resurrection and consummation still captures something Paul himself stresses in texts like Rom 8, where believers await bodily redemption. By collapsing all temporality into an ontological dichotomy, Jervis risks flattening the very futurity that Cullmann, despite the limitations of his model, rightly discerned in Paul, at least from my perspective.

A comparable apprehension of eschatological tension emerges in J. Christiaan Beker's significant apocalyptic interpretation of Paul, though articulated in a different conceptual paradigm from Cullmann's salvation-historical model. Beker emphasizes both the coherence of Paul's thought and the contingent ways in which it is expressed across diverse communities. For Beker, the eschatological tension between the "already" and the "not yet" is indispensable to Paul's theology, preventing either an under-realized or over-realized eschatology. Jervis's reading shares Beker's insistence on coherence—her "life-time" and "death-time" categories certainly aim at explanatory unity—but her rejection of all temporal tension sets her apart. Here the question arises: does Paul himself not sustain the very paradox Beker highlighted, namely, that believers are already raised with Christ (Col 3:1) and yet still await the resurrection of their bodies (Rom 8:23)? Jervis's sharp either/or may obscure this dialectical element of Paul's apocalyptic logic.

Also, N. T. Wright's defense of inaugurated eschatology provides a useful point of comparison for evaluating Jervis's more recent reading of Paul. Wright portrays Paul as reworking Jewish apocalyptic hopes within the framework of the Messiah's resurrection, emphasizing both the historical and covenantal dimensions of the new age—that it has begun but is not yet consummated. Jervis, by contrast, interprets Paul's language as signaling a radical shift in mode of existence rather than overlapping epochs. In a way, her perspective exposes potential limits in Wright's apocalyptic framework, but it also underestimates how effectively his inaugurated eschatology preserves the tension between present transformation and future consummation. Having said that, Wright's emphasis on continuity with Israel's story

and anticipation of future fulfillment offers a balance that Jervis's binary framework may obscure.

Finally, the comparison with Beverly R. Gaventa is particularly instructive. Like Jervis, Gaventa reads Paul as strongly theocentric and apocalyptic, but she maintains the real tension between God's achieved victory and the continuing power of sin, as reflected in her *Our Mother Saint Paul*. Jervis's tendency to interpret suffering, sin, and death primarily through a participationist lens undermines the existential gravity of Pauline lament (Rom 7:13–25; 8:22–23; 2 Cor 1:8–11), a tension rooted in common life experience, which, in my estimation, is better suited to "already-not yet."

Despite these objections, Jervis's *Paul and Time* is a daring reappraisal of Pauline temporality. By pressing beyond the familiar overlap-of-the-ages model, she reframes Paul's outlook in terms of death-time and life-time, ontological conditions that define existence in Christ. The result is a vision of Christian life not as suspended between two eras but as wholly embedded in the divine life made present in Christ. A contribution this novel will surely be remembered, less as a final solution, and more as a productive provocation, and therein lies its lasting value. In conclusion, this book deserves careful engagement and will undoubtedly provoke fruitful debate in Pauline studies for years to come.

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