



*Reviews of the Enoch Seminar 2013.08.11*

**James A. Waddell, *The Messiah: A Comparative Study of the Enochic Son of Man and the Pauline Kyrios*. Jewish and Christian Texts 10. London: T&T Clark, 2011. \$120. ISBN: 9780567580320.**

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Recently I prepared my first college-level course on Paul. In so doing, I returned to a letter I had not read in quite some time: 1 Thessalonians. Upon rereading it, I perceived with existential clarity a question that I had heretofore only known abstractly. In possibly his earliest extant writing, the apostle speaks not of the Galilean prophet who figures so prominently in the Gospels. Instead, he proclaims a savior from heaven, descending earthward with angelic trumpets to raise the dead, deliver the righteous, and execute the Day of the Lord. With furrowed brow I wondered, What accounts for this arresting presentation so soon after Jesus' life?

James Waddell has an answer: Enochic Judaism. In *The Messiah: A Comparative Study of the Enochic Son of Man and the Pauline Kyrios*, originally a dissertation written under Gabriele Boccaccini at the University of Michigan, Waddell attempts to establish whether, and if so, to what extent the heavenly figure known from *1 En.* 37–71 influenced Paul's understanding of Jesus as the cosmic lord. His conclusions are *yes* and *a lot*. These results, he hopes, will not only specify the relation between Paul and an important antecedent portrayal of the Messiah but also further the project of situating early Christianity within the Second Temple period, viewing it as one variation among many diverse types of Judaism (or, Judaisms).

Waddell's monograph opens with an introductory statement of both the problem and the methodology to be used in solving it. A significant body of scholarship, guided by an outdated understanding of Judaism and its monotheistic core, argues that Paul's exalted Christology sprouted from the fertile ground of Hellenistic religious speculation (Bousset figures prominently here). However, recent advances in our understanding of Paul's native religion open a new possibility. Perhaps, given the fluid nature of ancient Judaism and its understanding of God, Paul's Christology took root in Jewish soil. Waddell believes he can establish this to be the case through a comparison of the Book of Parables (BP, found in *1 En.* 37–71) and the letters of Paul (LP). The method Waddell offers, surely a sound one, seeks not to itemize parallels but to compare the structure of religious ideologies embedded in these two *corpora*.

Chapters 2 and 3 deal with BP, discussing God (“the divine figure” in Waddell’s preferred locution) and the Messiah respectively. In chapter 2 Waddell explores how BP presents the nature and function of the divine person. The topic is handled competently, though in Waddell’s own words, the investigation uncovers few surprises (p. 47). He examines how BP displays the divine figure as heavenly, holy, foreknowing, merciful, righteous, and eternal (his nature); and as the creator, the revealer of wisdom, the recipient of worship, and judge (his functions). This nature/functions template is repeated in the chapter on the Messiah in BP and the ensuing chapters on the divine figure and Messiah in Paul. The most intriguing aspect of this section is Waddell’s claim that BP makes God repent of sending the flood because it wants to stress human victimization rather than guilt. This in turn fits a polemical doctrine of human enslavement to cosmic powers, typical of the Enochic tradition, and stands in sharp antithesis to the moral logic maintained by the “Zadokite-Sadducean” school with its emphasis on human guilt and terrestrial punishment (pp. 35–36).

The chapter on the Messiah in BP analyzes this figure as human—specifically, as Enoch—heavenly, preexistent, associated with wisdom, righteous, and bearing the divine name (his nature); and as the revealer of wisdom, bringer of salvation, enthroned judge, and recipient of worship (his functions). As I understand them, the main claims of this chapter are four. First, the identification of the heavenly Son of Man with Enoch in 71:14 is an integral part of the text’s messianic ideology, even if added by a later editor. Second, the messiah sits on the divine throne and from it executes judgment, prerogatives belonging exclusively to God in all previous Jewish literature. Waddell maintains this position against Crispin Fletcher-Louis on the one hand, who sees a similar dynamic surrounding the person of Moses in the earlier *Exagoge* of Ezekiel the Tragedian, and against Larry Hurtado on the other, who denies that any mediatorial or messianic figure prior to Jesus assumes this role. Third, the nature and functions of the Messiah show considerable overlap with those of the divine figure. Finally, the phrase “Son of Man” is a title in BP and not a generic term for human/humanity. This claim brings Waddell into an extended argument with Maurice Casey, which, for my money, Waddell wins.

Chapter 4 applies the nature/functions template to the divine figure as depicted in LP. Waddell surveys the data to show that Paul presents God as one, divine, heavenly, and righteous (his nature); and as creator, revealer of wisdom, active in the life of the messiah, savior, the recipient of worship, and judge (his functions). The chapter opens with the claim that little of what Paul says concerning the divine figure is controversial, because the identity of God, presupposed in most Jewish literature of the time, was simply embraced by Paul. This point, made with little comment, is somewhat surprising in light of the book’s introduction, which explicitly places the monograph within the scholarly debate concerning whether and how Christian convictions concerning the divinity of Jesus revolutionized Jewish monotheism.

Chapter 5 proceeds to examine Paul’s understanding of the Messiah. Waddell explores the evidence in LP which portrays the Messiah as human, heavenly, preexistent, pre-human (e.g., the rock of the exodus in 1 Cor 10), the image and glory of God, bearing the divine name, angelic, and sinless (his nature); and as active in creation, salvation, forgiveness, and judgment; as associated with God’s power; and as receiving worship (his functions). Among the significant arguments expressed in this chapter are 1) the real preexistence of Christ (against, e.g., James D. G. Dunn); 2) the possibility of angelomorphic Christology in Paul, based mainly on Gal 4:13–14

(expressed tentatively in this chapter but with more assurance later); and 3) the association of Jesus with God's power (Rom 1:16–17; 1 Cor 1:22–24, 15:1–4, 12–13; Phil 3:10, 20–21) as part of a traditional way of conceiving the Messiah's activity. Though acknowledging that the evidence in LP for the worship of Jesus is striking (with Hurtado), Waddell argues that in light of BP it is not unprecedented (against Hurtado). The chapter closes with an excursus on the referent of θεός to Jesus in Rom 9:5. Waddell answers affirmatively, but leaves open the question of its significance.

The body of the study concludes with a chapter bringing into explicit comparison the nature and functions of God and the Son of Man in BP and God and Christ in LP. A series of charts brings the results of previous chapters into a helpful synopsis. Waddell finds most noteworthy that, according to his conclusions, the Son of Man and the Pauline Kyrios share a combination of diverse characteristics, which are nowhere else brought together in a single messianic figure. Both agree that the Messiah is human, heavenly, preexistent, associated with wisdom, associated with the divine name, eschatological judge, and the recipient of human worship. Waddell writes,

It is only when these conceptual elements are taken together that we begin to understand the unprecedented level of development of messianic thought in BP. Such a level of development precludes any suggestion of coincidental development or parallel development of the same combination of messianic conceptual elements in LP. (p. 184)

Despite this direct line of influence, Paul does not merely reproduce Enoch's Son of Man crowned with a different title. The role of Christ as mediator of creation, as a crucified and risen savior, and as an agent of forgiveness are all unique Pauline emphases. A final, lengthy excursus attempts to demonstrate that because Paul assigns Adam a negative role in his theology, he has good reason to avoid the title "Son of Man" (=Adam) when applying the nature and functions of this mediator to Christ.

I will divide my response to Waddell's work into three categories: first, worthy questions provoked by but falling outside its scope; second, the accomplishments it achieves; finally, a critique of its possible shortcomings.

Waddell's conclusions raise questions which merit further investigation. Two in particular strike me. First, granting that BP has influenced Paul's theology, how might the Jesus tradition fit into this picture? It is significant that those aspects of Paul's messianism that Waddell singles out as having no precedent in BP are paralleled in the gospels. Like the Pauline Kyrios, the Markan Son of Man is crucified and risen, forgives sins (Mark 2:10), and offers himself as an atoning sacrifice (Mark 10:45). How might the lines of dependence Waddell isolates be redrawn into webs of interrelationship?

Second, how does Paul's confessed Pharisaic training align with the Enochic background that Waddell posits? Related to this, how does Paul's preoccupation with the proper interpretation of Torah sit next to the relative disregard for Abraham and Moses in the Enochic corpus? Waddell's conclusion is stated carefully: that tradition of Judaism which provided Paul *with his beliefs about the messiah* was Enochic Judaism. Does this suggest that it was only the messianic portrayal of BP that made itself felt on Paul? Was this influence a carryover from before his

conversion? Or, to tie this question to the preceding, was it mediated to Paul through some form of early Christianity? These are all worthy lines of research opened by Waddell's study.

But the value of his investigation lies not only in its potential to initiate further research. It also makes substantive contributions in its own right. Most obviously, Waddell has provided us with an extensive treatment of this important and often overlooked topic. The renaissance of Enoch studies continues to bear fruit in New Testament scholarship, and Waddell's volume offers an exemplary attempt to bring these related areas of inquiry into conversation.

Further, the investigation benefits from a sensible method. Waddell is not seeking to list isolated traditions or discrete parallels but to understand how specific religious ideologies, Enochic Judaism and the theology of Paul, configure their antecedent materials into a specific messianic portrayal (p. 17). He does not allow himself to lose sight of each presentation's distinctive characteristics even as he argues for a historical connection between them. Waddell explicates differences as well as similarities, allowing Paul's originality to appear more clearly within the context of his dependence on prior Son of Man traditions.

Finally, Waddell's conclusions mark a real advance in our understanding of Paul's Christology and its relation to contemporary messianic expectations. The overlapping claims made on behalf of both to sit enthroned in God's presence constitute, in my judgment, Waddell's strongest argument, but he draws other noteworthy parallels. Taken together, these give compelling evidence that a genetic relationship must exist between the heavenly Son of Man in BP and the exalted Kyrios who descends to earth with the fanfare of a cosmic parousia in LP. I consider this book a considerable contribution to answering the question posed by Paul's presentation of Christ in 1 Thessalonians.

The answer, however, is not definitive. Waddell clearly wants to push past arguing for a general dependence on messianic/Enochic traditions to claim that the material now in BP mediates to Paul his *incarnational* theology. This sets a high bar, and two interrelated problems make me hesitate before embracing Waddell's conclusions in their entirety. Both center on the identification of Enoch as the Son of Man in 71:14. The first is the date of this identification relative to the text itself, while the second is the method of assessing its significance.

Although most specialists in the Enochic corpus are willing to date BP to the first century C.E. or earlier, far fewer are as confident that ch. 71 is integral to the document as a whole. Its secondary nature has been affirmed by many scholars, including Nickelsburg, Knibb, VanderKam, and Chialà. Waddell advances reasons to date BP early—appealing to scholarly consensus, correlating details in the text with historical events of the first century B.C.E., and positing that the book's contents likely predate its composition—but none of these are decisive for *1 En.* 71. If this chapter is later than the remainder of BP, its unknown date make it suspect as a source of Paul's messianism. Yet it provides essential elements on which Waddell's case rests, supplying the only evidence for a messianic deliverer who is preexistent, heavenly, but also human. Waddell offers several extended discussions of this problem (esp. in ch. 3), but none conclusively show that this passage either is integral to the book or predates the Pauline corpus. The overall argument is sufficiently solid to stand without the support of ch. 71, but not to bear all the weight Waddell puts on it.

Even granting an early date for 71:14, what should be made of its strange identification? There is in chs. 31–70 no evident *incarnation* (a category or something similar to it being necessary for the description *preexistent* to make sense at all; we do not normally say that angels, for example, *preexist* simply because they exist in heaven prior to a given terrestrial appearance). Before 71:14, the ontological connection between Enoch and the Son of Man is thin to nonexistent. Waddell attempts to find anticipations of this equation in successive levels of tradition that make an increasingly strong association between wisdom and Enoch, but I find the textual evidence unpersuasive. The Book of Parables nowhere presupposes that an already-existing heavenly figure has become Enoch nor (according to the solution favored by some) that he exists as Enoch's heavenly double. The language of ch. 71 suggests rather that Enoch is ultimately absorbed into a heretofore distinct Son of Man, not that the two had been equated all along. Given the contents of the preceding chapters, the assimilation of the two figures was apparently made under influences extraneous to BP itself. By contrast, Paul's Kyrios is the preexistent agent of creation who has now taken on flesh in order to provide redemption through his death and resurrection. The interrelation of the human, heavenly, and preexistent aspects of the messiah's nature in BP and LP cannot therefore be set side-by-side as "striking similarities" (p. 183). Unlike the appearance of a heavenly deliverer and enthroned judge, these Pauline elements require a matrix elsewhere than the traditions deposited in BP.

In conclusion, Waddell presents a learned and I believe largely successful attempt to delineate a supremely important and frequently overlooked source of the apostle's messianism. He has done the field of Pauline scholarship a great service and his work deserves close attention by all those investigating Paul's Christology. Perhaps he has made some forays into territory not strictly authorized by the textual data, but his study nevertheless provides both a reliable guide to the messianic outlook Paul shares with BP and provocative soundings sure to excite further investigation.