

THE DESTRUCTION OF DEATH: AN EXAMINATION OF
ISAIAH 25:8 AND 1 CORINTHIANS 15:54

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Isaiah 25:8 fits snugly within the framework of the Isaianic Apocalypse, i.e., chapters 24-27. Despite various critical attempts to relegate this section to a late-dated, non-Isaianic unit, the fact remains that it is closely connected with the preceding chapters. The apocalyptic message of Isaiah 24-27 is a future promise of judgment for the enemies of Yahweh and a restoration of the Israelite community on an eternal basis. The statement of 25:8a represents the thanatology of the apocalypse, i.e., the destruction of physical death by Yahweh the God of Israel.

1 Corinthians 15:54 is a quotation of Isaiah 25:8. It occurs within the context of a positive statement concerning physical resurrection, against the Jewish Hellenistic anthropological dualism which was a cancer to the Corinthian church. 1 Corinthians 15:54-55 is a good example of certain midrashic tendencies that the apostle Paul inherited from his first century Jewish orientation. It is the effort of Paul to lend support to a current exposition by a plurality of OT scriptures couched in a particular literary fashion, and it evidences the high view he had of the OT and its application.

Although there is a definite difference in the quantity of revelation concerning death in the OT as compared to the NT, there is no contradiction between the concepts of Isaiah 25:8 and 1 Corinthians 15:54. The former is a basic promise upon which the Israelite could lean, the latter a Christian confirmation of that promise integrated into the NT teaching of Christ and what will occur at his coming.

The attempt to pool and understand passages like Isaiah 25:8, 65:17-20, 1 Corinthians 15:54, and Revelation 21:4 as they reflect upon one another leads to the raising of obvious theological questions concerning the chronology of last things and the use of the OT in the NT. Answers to such questions do not come quickly, nor do they lend themselves to shallow dogmatism. The promise of Isaiah 25:8 and 1 Corinthians 15:54 is a promise of the destruction of death. It is a promise to be acted upon, not argued about.

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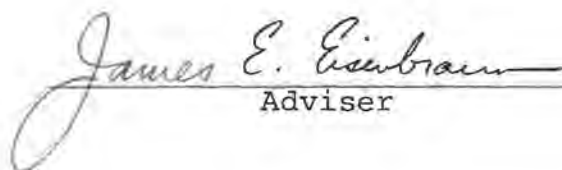

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INTRODUCTION: THESIS STATEMENT

Rather than striving to solve a certain theological or exegetical problem, this thesis is the attempt to understand fully one particular OT passage and its New Testament quotation. I have assayed to isolate the salient points of issue with regard to the passage in both the Old and New Testament contexts. I have then gone on to present the broad lines of argument with regard to these points and to present my own conclusion whenever possible.

The OT passage is Isaiah 25:8. It occurs within the Isaianic Apocalypse of chapters 24-27, which in turn occurs within the wider framework of Isaiah. It is a clearly defined unit, yet inseparably connected with the preceding chapters concerning the condemnation of nations. Isaiah enumerates the workings of Yahweh in the blessed kingdom to come as he speaks of the divine provision for the subjects of the kingdom in 25:6. Then, in verses 7 and 8, he credits Yahweh with performing four negative actions in his involvement with the kingdom: he will destroy the enfolding shroud of all people, he will swallow-up death, he will wipe tears away from all faces, and he will remove disgrace from his people. The present study is an examination of the second of these four: "He will swallow up

death forever." I will approach this verse from historic, exegetical, and literary vantage points.

1 Corinthians 15:54 will be approached from similar vantage points. There are two major discrepancies in wording between the two passages that deserve attention:

"Swallow" is normally taken as an active verb in the Isaianic passage, and passive in the Pauline passage. Second, the swallowing of death is "forever" in the OT passage and "in victory" in the NT. Further, certain Jewish midrashic tendencies of the Corinthian passages will be shown.

In an attempt to provide theological discussion based upon the first two chapters, in chapter three I will survey the approach of various theologians as they apply the passages under scrutiny to their own theological grid. I will then go on to show what are some of the major theological ramifications and questions of the passages as they reflect upon one another and other scriptures as well.

CHAPTER I

THE ISAIANIC PASSAGE

A basic presupposition of this thesis is that the quotation of Isaiah 25:8 in 1 Corinthians 15:54 will never be understood unless the original Hebrew passage is understood first. Proceeding from this presupposition, the purpose of this chapter is to investigate Isaiah 25:8 from a historical, exegetical, and literary vantage point.

Historical Matters

There are two pertinent historical matters with regard to Isaiah 25:8. The first of these is entitled "Date" and the second is entitled "National Setting." The latter is in more or less in the form of a review.

Date

The discussion of the date of Isaiah 24-27, and specifically 25:8, is inseparably involved in the discussion of the literary genre of the passage. Therefore, what is discussed at this point may somewhat overlap or amplify the study of literary genre which comes at a later place. Very generally, it can be said that those scholars who represent the historical-critical school opt for a later date for 24-27 than do the scholars of a more conservative camp.

In all of the scholarship that represents Christendom there is a glaring lack of consensus regarding the dating of this section, among the historical critics and conservatives alike. This lack of consensus is not exclusively the product of recent studies though, for as early as 1898 Terry gave evidence of the same phenomenon as he specified the views of: 1) Bleek, who dated Isaiah 24-27 to the time of Josiah just after the overthrow of Babylon; 2) Gesenius, who believed that the author lived among the Babylonian exiles; 3) Knobel and Davidson, who theorized that the context of these chapters was in Judea, following Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of Jerusalem; 4) Ewald, who put them after the fall of Babylon in the time of Cambyses; and 5) Stade, who placed 24-27 in the Grecian period.¹

Basically, there are three different methodologies that are used in determining the date of the section. First, there are those who date 24-27 by determining the ideas that are prominent in the section, and supposedly already having a studied knowledge of the historic origins of specific Hebrew ideas, they date the section according to this knowledge. Obviously, there is a certain amount of circularity latent in this method.

Then there are those who, having taken note of certain references to the destruction of an unnamed city, attempt to identify the anonymous city and thus pinpoint the

¹Milton S. Terry, Biblical Apocalypics (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1898), p. 99.

historical setting. This approach is not illegitimate, yet it is obvious that if one is wrong as to his identification of the unnamed city, then he will be wrong about the historical setting also.

Third, there are those who determine the date of 24-27 by a study of the language and literature of the section, and a comparison of its linguistic-poetic features to other A.N.E. poetry. Certainly such a discipline is extremely useful, yet present-day knowledge of Hebrew poetry is not so sweepingly comprehensive that it would allow for dogmatic dating proposals.¹

The present writer feels no discomfort whatsoever in taking the dates that are implied in the superscription in Isaiah 1:1 as being the dates of the life and ministry of the prophet Isaiah and the book that bears his name. Probable dates for the ministry of Isaiah are 740-701 B.C., although the possibility exists that he ministered also prior to 740 B.C. and following 701 B.C.² Isaiah 24-27, and specifically 25:8, also fits into the chronological framework of 740-701 B.C. Critics have historically attempted to disparage the genuineness of these chapters despite the fact that there is "nothing in the words

¹Richard J. Coggins, "The Problem of Isaiah 24-27," ExpTim 90 (August 1979):330-32.

²R. K. Harrison, Introduction to the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1969), p. 783.

themselves that passes beyond the Assyrian times."¹ These critical dealings with Isaiah 24-27 are dealt with at a later point in this thesis.

National Setting

The date of 740-701 B.C. for the ministry of Isaiah pinpoints the national setting as during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah.² The ministry of Isaiah is essentially divided up into three main periods, each of the three periods roughly corresponding to the rulerships of the three monarchs mentioned above. The first period of the prophet's ministry is the combined reigns of Uzziah and Jotham, under whose reigns Judah rose to a place of splendour and Mediterranean influence simultaneous with the reigns of Jehoahash and Jeroboam II in the north. The second period is the sixteen year reign of Ahaz who was responsible for considerable religious and political digression. The third period runs through the first fifteen years of Hezekiah's reign and again was a period of advancement, although probably the hearts of most of the people were not committed to the true worship of Yahweh. In support of the importance of mastering the historical flow of Isaiah's time in order to understand the intent of

¹C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, vol. 7, trans. James Martin in *Commentary on the Old Testament* (reprint ed., Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1978), p. 421.

²Leon Wood, *A Survey of Israel's History* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970), p. 354.

Isaiah's writings, Delitzsch proposes that "nothing is more essential, as a preparation for a study of his book, than a minute acquaintance with these sections of the books of Kings and Chronicles."¹

I propose elsewhere in this thesis that the book of Isaiah is an anthology of writings that reflects the entirety of the prophet's life and ministry, and that the section comprising chapters 24-27 is one of a number of units that are discernible in this collective anthology. Can a more precise historical setting be proposed for 24-27 than the forty-year span that has already been adduced? Is it possible to determine during which of the three above named periods of Isaiah's ministry these particular chapters were written? Although myriads of attempts have been made to gain such a determination, there is no general agreement, and a more specific date than 740-701 would have to be viewed with some reserve. These chapters are not purely historical accounts that mention telltale names or battles. They are (as I will presently entertain) of the apocalyptic literary genre, the very definition of which makes it extremely difficult to specify months and years of writing. The dogmatism that is characteristic of past attempts at dating 24-27 is much less than satisfying. Delitzsch has made some worthwhile remarks in this regard. In reference to the historical circumstances of Isaiah

¹Keil and Delitzsch, Isaiah, p. 35.

24-27 he states that they vanish

like will-o'-the-wisps, as soon as you attempt to follow and seize them; for the simple reason, that the prophet lays hold of their radical idea, carries them out beyond their outward historical form, and uses them as emblems of far-off events of the last days. . . . It is quite impossible to determine whether that which sounds historical belonged to the present or past in relation to the prophet himself. His standing-place was beyond all the history that has passed by, even down to the present day; and everything belonging to this history was merely a figure in the mirror of the last lines.¹

And of course, the possibility always exists that Isaiah did not write chapters 24-27 during the time of his active ministry, but penned it during his later years when his ministry was through, if indeed he did retire.

The Assyrians were the foreign power who vexed Judah the most during the years 740-701 B.C. The reader will recall that it was in the year 721 B.C. that the Northern Kingdom fell to that fearsome nation of Assyria, and Judah naturally felt the heat as well. Yet whereas Israel grew sharply weaker following the death of Jeroboam II and eventually succumbed to Shalmaneser V, Judah was at her strongest during these years, and by virtue of a coalition with Syrian states north of Damascus, Judah was able to withstand Assyria. Tiglath-pileser himself mentions this coalition and his encounter with it,² This coalition began in the time of Uzziah who had the honor of leading it.

¹Ibid., pp. 421-22.

²Wood, Survey, p. 353.

Jotham followed his father Uzziah as king, although he was coregent with his father for twelve years. It was at the end of Uzziah's life, and toward the beginning of Jotham's reign that Isaiah began his prophetic work. Jotham was the sixth of eight godly kings that were to rule in Judah. He continued in the strength of his father and Judah remained strong during his rulership. Ahaz, the son of Jotham, was not so divinely approved, and not so adamantly opposed to Assyria. Ahaz's reign was characterized by placation of the Assyrian power (Isa 7-8; 2 Chr 28:20-21) and religious apostasy. Hezekiah succeeded his father Ahaz as king, although again an overlap of regency occurred. Hezekiah was the seventh of the eight godly Judean kings, and religious reform and a renewal of resistance to Assyria characterized his reign. Again an anti-Assyrian coalition was formed howbeit without complete success. In 701 B.C. Sennacherib reacted against the western coalition of which Judah was part, exacted tribute from her, and psychologically defeated her. Isaiah was involved in this situation (2 Kgs 18-19; 2 Chr 32; Isa 36-37).

Exegetical Matters

"Swallow Up"

The verb לָלַךְ found in Isaiah 25:8 is a Piel Perfect, and in its Qal stem it is used to denote the actual act of swallowing, which is what the great fish did to the prophet Jonah (Jonah 2:1, Heb.). In the Piel stem לָלַךְ

highlights the fact (or perhaps result) of a swallowing, that is, a total engulfment or overpowering of that which is swallowed. If one wanted to translate into Hebrew the sense of the English statement "I am destroyed" he could very well use the Pual stem of שָׁלַח (the passive counterpart to the Piel), hence it is used to apply to military destruction (2 Sam 17:16). Because of the Piel connotations of this Hebrew word Girdlestone includes it in his discussion of words which signify destruction.¹ The object of this destruction here in Isaiah 25 is conceived of, Naegelsbach tells us, "as existing no more."²

Frequently the idea of quickness or suddenness is also implied in the contexts of this word.³ Jonah was not swallowed by degrees, the fish suddenly overcame him, and he was in its belly in a moment. The military annihilation of 2 Samuel 17:16 was not a drawn-out campaign, had it actually taken place it would have been a relatively fast maneuver. It is safe to deduce, therefore, that the divine swallowing-up of death shall not be a lengthy process in the struggle of good against bad, rather it shall be a

¹Robert B. Girdlestone, Synonyms of the Old Testament (reprint ed., Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974), pp. 270-71.

²Carl W. E. Naegelsbach, "The Prophet Isaiah," trans. Samuel T. Lowrie and Dunlop Moore, in vol. 6 of Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, ed. John P. Lange, 12 vols. (reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1960), p. 281.

³BDB, p. 118.

quick confounding of mankind's ancient enemy.¹

Other Piel usages of לָלַךְ bring across the same connotations. In the verse immediately preceding 25:8 it is used to refer to the fact that Yahweh shall tear away the veil of mourning² that covers the faces of all people. And in Isaiah 19:3 Yahweh is again the subject when, in reference to the Egyptians, he vows that he will "bring their plans to nothing" (NIV); again the word is לָלַךְ and again it denotes the thought that Yahweh, by virtue of his sovereign plan, will swallow up (overwhelm, suffocate) the puny Egyptian devices.

Also pertinent in the investigation of the word לָלַךְ in the Isaiah 25:8 context is its appearance in the Perfect tense. "Unwittingly we are prejudiced," Sperber says, "and connect with perfect and imperfect the implication of certain well-defined tempora."³ Sperber then goes on to repudiate the accepted terminology of the standard approach to

¹Caution, however, should be taken against making the action involved in the word לָלַךְ as being always sudden or quick. It is not an across-the-board rule to be applied at its every usage. For example, לָלַךְ is used in Isaiah 3:12 to describe how the guides of the people of Yahweh are turning them from the proper path. It seems obvious that this was not a sudden turning, but rather a process or a repeated offense. The context is the determining factor, not the word itself.

²Otto Kaiser, Isaiah 13-39--A Commentary, trans. R. A. Wilson (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974), p. 210. But see also Delitzsch, Isaiah, pp. 439-40, where the writer states that the veil is not a veil of mourning, but rather a veil of spiritual blindness that covers the heart.

³Alexander Sperber, A Historical Grammar of Biblical Hebrew (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966), p. 591.

Hebrew grammar and recommend a set of drastic changes in that discipline. Nevertheless, his point is well taken that the Hebrew tenses are essentially timeless and exist for "dialectic" purposes.¹ The Perfect form of $\gamma\lambda\eta$ then, is not a reflection of past action, rather it is a reflection of an action viewed as completed. Indeed, Kennett cites the $\gamma\lambda\eta$ of 25:8 as a valid example of a Perfect used to represent future action. He calls this the "Perfect of Certainty" or the "Prophetic Perfect."² On the basis of ample evidence therefore, we conclude that because of these grammatical reasons, as well as the rather obvious future-oriented context, this destruction of death by the person of Yahweh is represented as taking place in the future at the time of writing.³

The swallowing of death by the person of God in Isaiah 25:8 is a deliberate play on words. From man's perspective it is death that does the swallowing--it is death that destroys human life. The psalmist pleaded: "Do not let . . . the depths swallow me up" (Ps 69:15). The sage depicted the enticement of a man by evildoers by writing: "Let's swallow them alive, like the grave" (Prov 1:12). In

¹Ibid.

²R. H. Kennett, A Short Account of the Hebrew Tenses (Cambridge: At The University Press, 1901), p. 5.

³"The perf. without waw here occurs in a description of the future, and thus serves asyndetically to stress one aspect of the description." Edward J. Young, The Book of Isaiah, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965), 2:196.

Isaiah 25:8 however, the roles have changed; instead of swallowing and destroying, death will be swallowed and destroyed. The grave will no longer overcome man, but rather God will overcome the grave. Isaiah must have written this verse with a feeling of triumph as he realized this turn of events that is to come in the ultimate kingdom of God.

"Death"

That which shall be swallowed-up or destroyed is death, represented here by the word מָוֶת. Death to the eastern mind of an Old Testament Jew included the end to physical life and more besides. Bavinck, in a very useful synoptic article, informs the reader that death carried with it certain religious and ethical connotations. The death of Genesis 2:17 "places a close connection between man's death and his transgression of God's commandment."¹ Bavinck goes on to posit that this religious-ethical concept of the significance of death is "the fundamental thought" of Scripture and is an "essential element" in the revealed redemptive process.² Death is unnatural; it is not coexistent with the purposes for which God created man.³ "Come sweet death" was a plea that was foreign to

¹The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, s.v. "Death," by Herman Bavinck, 2:811-13.

²Ibid.

³Isaiah 25:8 is used by Lloyd Bailey to show that biological death is "identified with the forces of chaos which Yahweh will defeat" (Biblical Perspectives on Death [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979], p. 77).

the Israelite who lived apart from the fuller New Testament revelation.

It is significant that מוֹת has the article with it in Isaiah 25:8. The article specifies death as being that which has plagued man from the time of the fall.¹ The concept of death is not left to the abstract--it is the death, the experience of every person that is not without admixture of some type of penalty or punishment.²

"Forever"

The time element (or lack of) involved in the overcoming of death is indicated by the Hebrew word עַד, rendered "forever" in the English. It is used in 1 Chronicles 29:11 as an attribute of God--the NIV translates it as "majesty," but it is not completely devoid of temporal connotations. When the preposition ל is attached to the word the superior rendering is "forever"³ which most English versions follow, as noted above. The divine victory over death is conceived of as open-ended and eternal in terms of temporal considerations, and as opposed to terminal human history. עַד is used elsewhere in Isaiah to describe

¹Young, Isaiah, 2:196.

²TDNT, s.v. "ὄνειδος," by J. Schneider, 5:239. The writer uses 25:8 as he discusses "a number of experiences whose common factor is a relation to God disrupted by sinful man. For this reason the whole of man's earthly life stands under the shame to which God subjects man as a sinner . . . The hope of deliverance is oriented especially to liberation from this, e.g., Isaiah 25:8."

³Young, Isaiah, 2:196.

Jerusalem ("its stakes will never be pulled up," 33:20) and the anger of God ("nor will I always be angry," 57:16).

Literary Matters

Discussion of Isaiah 25:8 necessarily involves discussion of literary genre and authenticity. Myriads of books and articles are written on these subjects and it is not the purpose of this paper to digest and condense them all. Rather, I shall attempt to present the broad lines of argument and to present my own perspective.

Literary Genre

Isaiah 24-27 is a distinct unit within the book as a whole and it is here that the speculation begins. There is a definite lack of concensus regarding the relationship of 24-27 to the rest of the book and the literary type it represents. Literary genre is a "major unresolved problem in the study of Isaiah 24-27,"¹ and this problem and the resulting lack of concensus is "conspicuously" present in recent studies.² The disagreements among the scholars are not minor areas of detail either, they are cardinal points of difference. This should warn the student to advance gingerly.

It seems to the present writer, however, that much of the discussion regarding Isaiah 24-27 has been

¹William R. Millar, Isaiah 24-27 and the Origin of Apocalyptic (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1976), p. 9.

²Coggins, "Problem," p. 328.

undertaken in vain, with the wrong presuppositions and approach. It seems that many of the scholars force technique and categorization on the literature of Isaiah that is foreign to a personal, dynamic, and flowing writing that was most likely conceived over a period of years, in a variety of circumstances, addressed to a multiplicity of topics, with a variety of moods. The methods are oftentimes quite sterile and western, erudite scholarship notwithstanding. The author agrees with Harrison in the following quotation:

Isaiah, like the majority of the other extant prophetic writings, represents an anthology of utterances given at various times, and as such the work merits no different treatment from that accorded the other major Old Testament prophecies. In this connection it is important to note that arguments based upon differences of style or literary expression are immediately vitiated by this approach, since an anthology may be taken quite fairly as representing the total style of the author over the different periods of his creative activity.¹

Having stated the above, it is nevertheless important not to toss out the baby with the bath water. There still is immense value in the study of literary genre. The major point at issue with regard to Isaiah 24-27 has to do with the relationship of these chapters to specifically apocalyptic genre. More than eighty years prior to the writing of this paper Milton Terry observed that "all exegetes" regard 24-27 as apocalyptic.² Such is not the case today however, as some have outrightly rejected their

¹Harrison, Introduction, p. 780.

²Terry, Biblical Apocalypitics, p. 98.

apocalyptic nature.¹ Whether one accepts or rejects 24-27 as genuine apocalyptic is dependent entirely upon how one determines what is apocalyptic and what is not. Some formulate lists of criteria which a given writing must meet in order to be considered apocalyptic.² Others employ a form-critical method based on techniques of form-criticism, poetic meter, structure, etc.³ Although it was observed above that some reject entirely the apocalyptic nature of Isaiah 24-27, scholarly literature for the most part would label it such. The title "Isaianic Apocalypse" prevails in such literature when these chapters are discussed. Hasel declares that whatever approach one might adopt to determine an apocalyptic writing, Isaiah 24-27 would qualify in any case.⁴

The relationship of Isaiah 24-27 to apocalyptic genre is directly connected with the date of the section as well. Dating has already been discussed elsewhere in this chapter, yet just a few words as to how this affects

¹Gerhard F. Hasel, "Resurrection in the Theology of Old Testament Apocalyptic," ZAW 92 (1980):269.

²Milton Terry takes this approach in Biblical Apocalypstics (pp. 11-23), and gives the following as some general criteria: 1) symbolism; 2) repetition; 3) the double picture of judgment and salvation; 4) rebukes, warnings, and counsels to the addressees; and 5) free appropriation of the symbols and language of their predecessors.

³This is the methodology of Millar, Isaiah 24-27. On pages 1-9 of this book he gives extended examples of scholars who have employed both methodologies.

⁴Hasel, "Resurrection in OT Apocalyptic," p. 270.

apocalyptic genre are in order. Apocalyptic genre is often determined by ideas that are found in the writing, and various ideas or concepts are said to originate from various periods in the history of the nation. For example, world judgment is said to be a pre-exilic motif, whereas a prevalent post-exilic motif is Zion the chosen city.¹ It is significant therefore, that within chapters 24-27 of Isaiah there are concepts that are said to be relatively early concepts in Israelite history. Scholars who opt for post-exilic dates must then find viable explanations for the appearance of these early ideas. Otzen admits that the main theme of impending world judgment in Isaiah 24-27 "is an ancient motif with deep roots in pre-exilic prophetic preaching. And the parts of Isaiah XXIV-XXVII dealing with this theme are not apocalyptic, but could easily be from the time just before the exile."² And Hasel acknowledges that "recent studies have emphasized that OT apocalyptic is a legitimate continuation of Yahwistic faith."³ Note the lack of dogmatism in these references--a dogmatism that was so prevalent in earlier critical writings which theorized late dates for this part of Isaiah. A pre-exilic date is not so incredible or unusual after all.

How is Isaiah 25:8 specifically affected by an

¹Benedikt Otzen, "Traditions and Structures of Isaiah XXIV-XXVII," VT 24 (April 1974):202.

²Ibid., pp. 201-2.

³Hasel, "Resurrection in OT Apocalyptic," p. 281.

investigation of apocalyptic genre? Because of the reference to "this mountain" in 6-10a, Otzen relegates the section to the category of a "Zion passage" with "strongly nationalistic tenor" and therefore post-exilic.¹ His method of assigning dates from inherent concepts in apocalyptic literature shows strongly here. Nevertheless, he labels 6-10a as apocalyptic. The victory over death in Isaiah 25:8 involves a resurrection, which explains the emphasis on resurrection in the Isaianic Apocalypse. Further, in the Isaianic Apocalypse the glory of God is a significant theme, and ultimately God's glory "is manifested in the realization of the promise of the destruction of death as expressed in Isaiah 25:8, which goes even beyond the resurrection of the dead." Isaiah 25:8 is definitely future-oriented and fits integrally into the 24-27 section where the future is seen "to a greater extent than in any purely prophetic passage, in terms of a new beginning."² The apocalyptic message of 25:8 is that of a new beginning for the community, and the abolition of death.

Authenticity

Because some have refuted the authenticity of Isaiah 25:8a a few lines are necessary at this point to show the fallacy of this claim.

¹Otzen, "Traditions and Structures," p. 202.

²Hasel, "Resurrection in OT Apocalyptic," pp. 276, 283.

Kaiser writes: "Verse 8a is, as is generally recognized, a later interpolation which interrupts the direct continuity of thought between v. 7 and v. 8."¹ However, the consensus is not so general as one might be led to believe. To be sure some consider 25:8a an interpolation, but others such as Dillmann and Kittel, Hylmo, Rudolf, Procksch, Mauchline, Gray, and Leslie consider it to be authentic.² The conclusion that 25:8a is the product of a later editor seems to stem more from certain presuppositions about the nature of the material rather than any factual evidence. Further, it is a good example of the invalidity of such a sterile approach forced upon such a dynamic writing. The authenticity of 25:8a is to be accepted without reserve.³

Summary and Conclusions

The spirit of Isaiah 25:8 is the spirit of apocalypse. It is the spirit of a future expectation that rises above the fetters of human history, casts off the shackles of human suffering and death, and gazes unashamedly into

¹Kaiser, Isaiah 13-39, p. 199. On p. 201 Kaiser further states that the person responsible for this interpolation was a "later redactor" who "correctly interpreted the preceding verses."

²Hasel, "Resurrection in OT Apocalyptic," p. 276.

³Indeed, in a very involved analysis of the poetic structure of Isaiah 24-27, William R. Millar (Isaiah 24-27 and Apocalyptic, p. 40) shows the "intricate manipulation of bicola and tricola" in 25:6-8 which "reveal once again the ancient canons of Hebrew poetry in full play." The language and structure of 25:8a is an integral part of the totality of the section.

the face of eternity when there will be no time and no death. It is the spirit of a man and a community who, despite the confusing morass of nations that unite to seduce or destroy them, nevertheless look forward to "that day" when Yahweh will judge, vindicate, and reward.

As a-temporal as Isaiah 25:8 is in one sense, it is in another sense very much tied to time and history, for it was written out of and based upon a definite point in history. The authenticity of 25:8a and the continuity of 24-27 with the rest of the book has been expressed in this chapter. Perhaps the main pitfall of those who attempt to deny the authenticity of 24-27 and its Isaianic authorship is that, recognizing 24-27 as a unit, they then conclude that it is a unit exclusive of any continuity with what precedes it. This supposition is a grave error. With reference to chapters 24-27 Young states:

It is obvious that they form a close connection with the preceding prophecies against the nations. Indeed, they are a fitting conclusion to those prophecies. On the other hand, if chapters 24-27 are simply an isolated unit, they are practically impossible to understand.¹

In the chapters immediately prior to 24-27 the main message is an oracle of condemnation and judgment against A.N.E. nations existing at the time of writing. These nations, individuals, and cities can for the most

¹Young, Isaiah, 2:146. At this point the writer goes on to point out verses in the chapters that precede 24-27 that are closely linked to specific verses in the chapters themselves.

part be pinpointed in history. However, in 24-27 the writer moves away from specifics and speaks in terms of generalities as he levels his warnings against not only contemporary powers but also enemies of God in general. Thus, Isaiah 24-27 is both a unit within the book as a whole and a continuation of its preceding chapters.

In the exegetical portion of this chapter it has been determined that the burden of 25:8 is future in terms of human history, and in those same terms it has been shown that the occasion of 25:8 will be eternal, that is, a destruction of death that will last forever. It has been further shown that the "swallowing-up" will be brought about by God himself, him being the subject of the verb, and that this swallowing of death is the equivalent of its destruction. Too, it is a safe deduction that the destruction of death by God will be a relatively fast overthrow rather than a long, evolving process, although this certainly is not the main point of the verse. Last, it has been determined that the "death" which will be destroyed is primarily physical death of the individual, but also carries with it connotations of punishment for sin and moral corruption.

It will be noted that the exact chronological framework for this eschatological prediction is not given in the passage itself. The order of events is not specified. I will now proceed to the New Testament revelation where Isaiah 25:8 is quoted in 1 Corinthians 15.

CHAPTER II

THE PAULINE PASSAGE

This chapter follows similar levels of division as the preceding as the following basic studies are elucidated: historical matters, literary matters, and summary and conclusions.

Historical Matters

It is a frequent contention that the majority of the membership of the church at Corinth were a baseborn lot--those who had been born into the bottom level of society and who had entered into the Christian experience from a life of pagan abandonment and sin.¹ Based on some of the scholarly writings in today's literature, one could perhaps be led to conceive of the typical Corinthian as having a highly philosophical, well developed and systematized religious viewpoint. There is an apparent contradiction here. It is a tension that has led one to pose the following question: Were the Corinthians philosophically minded? The same writer concludes that the average

¹Charles R. Erdman, The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1966), p. 13.

Christians at this place were not such philosophically educated people after all, but rather were likely those who subscribed to the more popular "sacramentally oriented" cults of that time and place. Indeed he concludes that with the exception of 2 Timothy 2:18, the New Testament does not contain any teachings concerning the soul or immortality that are of Greek or Gnostic character.¹

The present writer must take exception with Wilson. Beneath any popular religion or movement there is a philosophical base, and although ordinary followers of a particular group may not be able to express the ideological foundation of their religion in highly philosophic terms, they nevertheless believe it and follow through on its ramifications in practice. No one is suggesting that the members of the Corinthian congregation were all ivory-tower sages. What is being suggested is that within the congregation there were followers of certain philosophies who subscribed to these philosophies in practice, and it was these practices (specifically in areas that contradicted Christian practice) that Paul combated. Therefore, there is value in attempting to determine who Paul's philosophical opponents were.

Who were Paul's opponents? This matter is not without disagreement, yet certain suggestions are more palatable than others. Sider argues that the apostle's

¹Jack H. Wilson, "The Corinthians Who Say There Is No Resurrection of the Dead," ZNW 59 (1968):91-92.

opponents were Hellenistic Christians who were skeptical of his teaching of the resurrection.¹ The present writer concurs with this view of the Hellenistic orientation of the Corinthian congregation. It is important to note that although some of Paul's terms can be found in Gnostic, Stoic, or Jewish sources, all of his important terms (especially pairs of contrasting terms) are to be found in the Hellenistic-Jewish theological writings of Philo.² Such writings center around the person of Sophia, who was the personification of wisdom, virtue, and spiritual knowledge. The attainment of Sophia was the ultimate goal of one's existence; Sophia was the content of salvation as well as the means of it. Thus there were differences in spiritual status among adherents of this religion, the higher one's attainment to Sophia the higher his level of spirituality. This existence of different strata resulted in a spiritual elitism, against which the apostle leveled some of his more

¹Ronald J. Sider, "The Pauline Conception of the Resurrection Body in I Corinthians XV. 35-54," NTS 21 (April 1975):428. Elsewhere this same writer gives a good survey of the various theories of the identity of Paul's opponents; he reviews the positions of Schweitzer, Davies, Bultmann, and Barth in "St. Paul's Understanding of the Nature and Significance of the Resurrection in I Corinthians XV. 1-19," NovT 19 (April 1977):125-26.

²Richard A. Horsley, "'How can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?'--Spiritual Elitism in Corinth," NovT 20 (July 1978):207. On this same page the writer is careful to make the following disclaimer: "My intent is not necessarily to establish a source for the Corinthians' religion, although the Hellenistic Jewish theology represented by Philo may actually be such a source . . . I am making rather a systematic comparison."

powerful arguments. The elite (the teleioi) attained to spiritual ecstasy during which time they would exercise coveted gifts of tongues and prophecy. Further, the idea of two opposite types of mankind was inherent to the system: there was the heavenly anthropos who was made in the image of God, and there was the earthly anthropos who had his origin on the earth. The former was incorruptible, the latter mortal. The former experienced special spiritual ability, the latter engaged in a morbid struggle against earthly (physical, material) hindrances.¹

How does this adoration of Sophia at Corinth affect the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 15? Implications of Sophia worship necessitated Paul's positive statement of resurrection in the chapter. His argument is that the mortal bodies of men shall indeed be someday raised. This stood in sharp repudiation of those followers of Sophia who could not conceive of the renewal and reusage of such a repulsive object as a physical body. They could only conceptualize a continued existence of the soul.² Such

¹Ibid., pp. 207-31. The contents of this paragraph are a summary of the salient features of the Corinthians' religion as they have been explained by Horsley. In another article Horsley goes on to show how the manifestation of Sophia was closely tied to speech, i.e., eloquent words, instruction full of content, and discipline in skillful words used to communicate Sophia. Thus, Paul's references to "words of wisdom," "eloquence of men." (Idem, "Wisdom of Word and Words of Wisdom in Corinth," CBQ 39 [April 1977]:224-39.)

²Sider, "Nature and Significance of the Resurrection," p. 131.

an anthropological dualism was not in harmony with truly biblical doctrine. It

denied "the resurrection of the dead" (the body). For it would have been the antithesis to their liberation from bodily and earthly realities, a threat to their heavenly immortality, and the loss of their intimate relation with Sophia and the perfection thus attained.¹

Paul is intent on showing, however, that such a teaching of physical resurrection is not antithetical to biblical doctrine. This intention is shown in his usage of Old Testament passages, one of which is the focal point of the present study, Isaiah 25:8.

Literary Matters

The two literary matters of main concern with reference to 1 Corinthians 15:54 are interrelated. Taken together, each of the two goes a long way in explaining the other. The two matters are: literary genre and discrepancies between the wording of Isaiah 25:8 and 1 Corinthians 15:54.

Literary Genre

The definition of the literary genre of 1 Corinthians 15:54 is no simple undertaking. In an article entitled "Midrashim in the New Testament" M. Gertner refers to various difficult passages in the NT and one of the passages that he considers is 1 Corinthians 15:54.² The

¹Horsley, "Spiritual Elitism in Corinth," p. 231.

²M. Gertner, "Midrashim in the New Testament," JSS 7 (Autumn 1962):267.

title of his article introduces the technique of interpretation that is most frequently discussed when the topic of 1 Corinthians 15:54 surfaces, i.e., the methods of the Midrash.

A long-standing practice in Judaism was the establishment of schools for the purpose of the study and exposition of the Torah. Following the reading of a passage of Scripture, a searching (Drash) was made in order to discover the true meaning and the legitimate interpretations of the text. Many of the explanations were based on oral tradition that had been transmitted within the community from time immemorial. These expositions of Scripture came to be known as Midrash.¹

The principle presupposition of the Midrash tradition is as follows:

God speaks once. From that one utterance of His I draw at the very least two inferences, such being God's strength. Thus a single verse may be construed as conveying innumerable meanings, whereas identical meaning is never conveyed by several verses. Indeed in the school of R. Ismael it is taught: Even as from a hammer striking a rock there issue innumerable flashes of fire, so from a single verse flash forth innumerable meanings.²

The midrashim were expounded for a particular purpose--to make the Scriptures relevant for the common man,

¹Samuel Rapaport, A Treasury of the Midrash (New York: Ktav Publishing House, Inc., 1968), pp. 1-2.

²William G. Braude, "Maimonides' Attitude to Midrash," in Studies in Jewish Bibliography, History, and Literature, ed. Charles Berlin (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1971), p. 75. The writer goes on to show how, in one of his writings entitled Guide, Maimonides disregards this principle (pp. 76ff).

i.e., to actualize them.¹

The hypothesis is that the apostle Paul stood well within the mainstream of the tradition of the Midrash, and that he employed this particular hermeneutic as he handled various OT texts, 1 Corinthians 15 being one such text. The present writer concurs with this hypothesis, although he is quick to posit that it may be more accurate to refer to midrashic tendencies in a given NT section, rather than labelling that particular section as being a strict midrashic literary unit.²

Proceeding from the theory that 1 Corinthians 15:54 is an OT verse that was quoted in a midrashic unit (or at least a unit having midrashic tendencies), some essential characteristics of Midrash will now be presented:

First, there are "visible" and "invisible" midrashim. A visible midrash occurs when a Scripture reference

¹Although Daniel Patte (*Early Jewish Hermeneutic in Palestine*, SBL Dissertation Series 22 [Missoula: Society of Biblical Literature and Scholars Press, 1975], pp. 117-27) takes exception to this by attempting to show that the Midrash tradition was not a formation of tradition through the actualization of the Bible to the life of the community, but rather it was a legitimation of an already established tradition by means of Midrashic exposition of the Bible.

²See Merrill P. Miller, "Targum, Midrash and the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament," *JSJ* 2 (October 1971):44. He makes this rule: "The minimum requirement for the use of this term [midrash] as a substantive will be the presence of a literary unit to which the biblical citations or allusions clearly belong as formative elements in some stage in the development of that literary unit." Note that 1 Corinthians 15:54 fits very nicely into this criterion.

is cited, followed by the interpretation. An invisible midrash occurs when the biblical reference is not given and its Midrashic nature is often hard to discern. 1 Corinthians 15:54 fits into the latter category.¹

Second, the method of the Midrash often used a quotation technique known as an haraz. A haraz results when a plurality of passages are quoted together without warning or explanation from the writer.² This is also one of the factors that shows the midrashic tendencies of the verse under discussion, for verses 54-55 are a definite haraz, Isaiah 25:8 and Hosea 13:14 obviously linked in this way.

Similar to a haraz, and yet not identical, is what is referred to as a conflate. A conflate exists when a plurality of passages are not only quoted together, but also actually woven together. An unknowing reader could actually get the impression that that which was quoted was one passage rather than a plurality.³ A case can be made for calling 1 Corinthians 15:54 and 55 a conflate, for although Isaiah 25:8 is quoted as one complete sentence and so is Hosea 13:14, yet there are two things in 1 Corinthians

¹Gertner, "Midrashim," pp. 268-70. E. Earle Ellis uses similar terminology as he discusses "implicit" midrash in "Midrash, Targum and New Testament Quotation," in *Neotestamentica et Semitica*, ed. E. Earle Ellis and Max Wilcox (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1969), pp. 62-63.

²Harold S. Songer, "Isaiah and the New Testament," *RevExp* 65 (Fall 1968):461.

³*Ibid.*, pp. 461-62.

15:54 and 55 that bring it close to being a conflate. First, there is no intervening word or words between the two OT passages that would show the reader that they are in fact two passages, not just one. Such intervening words are supplied in sections of Romans, where for example Paul multiplies OT passages in 10:16-11:9. At this place phrases such as the following occur: "For Isaiah says" (10:16), "Moses says" (10:19), "Isaiah boldly says" (10:20), "But concerning Israel he says" (10:21), "Don't you know what the Scripture says?" (11:2), "as it is written" (11:8), and "And David says" (11:9).¹ But no such phrases are supplied in 1 Corinthians 15:54-55, and so an ignorant reader might have the impression that the OT quotation was from one source.

A second indication of the conflate character of this section is the appearance of the word *ἅμα*. This word appears in the apostle's rendering of both OT verses and therefore is a thread that weaves the two together.

The writer concludes that 1 Corinthians 15:54-55 are a *haraz*, i.e., a plurality of passages quoted together. Further, these verses are a conflate, i.e., a plurality of passages not only quoted together, but also in effect woven together.

A third characteristic of 1 Corinthians 15:54 that leads the writer to reckon it as having midrashic

¹All quotations at this point are from the New International Version of the Bible.

tendencies is the introductory formula that Paul uses to present the Isaiah quotation. He states that Isaiah 25:8 is ὁ λόγος ὁ γεγραμμένος. This is typical language employed by first century orthodox Jews when they introduced OT passages into whatever discussion they were undertaking. Respecting the formulas introducing quotations of Scripture in the NT, Metzger writes that "much of both the NT and of the Mishnah reflects the methods of argumentation employed by those who had been reared and trained in orthodox Judaism of the first century."¹ He goes on to show that the Mishnah shows a greater preference for words of "saying," whereas the NT shows a balance between words of "saying" and words of "writing" (i.e., "as the Scripture says," and "as it is written," etc.).² Any student of the Bible is no stranger to such formulae; they occur frequently in the biblical text and give strong indication of the first century Jewish orientation of the NT.

A last similarity between 1 Corinthians 15:54 and 55 and midrashic literature has to do with multiple proof-texting. Dead Sea scroll evidence reveals that the Qumran community relied upon such proof-texting as a support for

¹Bruce M. Metzger, "The Formulas Introducing Quotations of Scripture in the NT and the Mishnah," JBL 70 (1951):297.

²*Ibid.*, p. 305. The writer goes on to make an observation that will be welcomed by the more conservative interpreters of Scripture; he points out that all of the formulas--both in the NT and the Mishnah--indicate that the writers held to the "very highest" view of the Scripture that they quoted (p. 306).

the traditions that it wished to perpetuate. This was typical of orthodox Judaism of that time,¹ not only this particular sect. It originated from the conviction of the need to confirm any given point by two or three witnesses, in this case Scriptural witnesses. 1 Corinthians 15:54-55 reveals this tendency since it is the citation of two texts in order to muster support for the particular doctrines under consideration.²

I conclude that if 1 Corinthians 15 is not a strict Midrash, then it certainly demonstrates tendencies similar to midrashic technique.

Discrepancies

A comparison of Isaiah 25:8 and 1 Corinthians 15:54 in their original languages shows that there exist certain apparent discrepancies in wording between the two. The two major variants are: First, the verb "swallow" in the Hebrew is portrayed in the active voice, God being the subject who will do the swallowing, whereas in the Pauline passage "swallow" is in the passive, death being that which will be swallowed up. Second, in Isaiah 25:8 the swallowing of death is pictured as being "forever," whereas in 1 Corinthians 15:54 the swallowing of death is "in victory."

Referring to the latter discrepancy Gray writes: "St. Paul's εἰς νῆκος rests on an Aramaic sense of נצח

¹Miller, "Old Testament in the New," p. 54.

²Gertner, "Midrashim," p. 282.

and is incorrect."¹ Gray does not expand on what he means by "incorrect"; for the purposes of this paper one could wish that he had done so. Yet he has made a point that will now be discussed.

Was the apostle in error here? Implications for inspiration are obvious, yet the present writer will resist temptation in dealing with those implications and deal with the problem textually instead. At face value Gray's hypothesis could be correct, yet it assumes too much. How does he presume to assert such a thing when he cannot even be sure what Hebrew or Aramaic text Paul was reading from? The fact is that there is ample evidence of a certain fluidity of the text in the first century--families of texts differing from the MT. And variations and peculiarities of OT texts used in the NT can be explained to some extent by this phenomenon of textual dynamism.² Paul could actually have been reading from an Aramaic text, for such an OT text was in existence in the first century and was actually being read in the synagogues.³ Further, one meaning of ܢܠܝ in Aramaic is "to conquer," "be victorious," or "overpower."⁴

¹George Buchanan Gray, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Isaiah, ICC (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912), p. 431.

²Miller, "Old Testament in the New," p. 55.

³A Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels, s.v. "Language of Christ," by James Young, 2:3.

⁴Marcus Jastrow, comp., A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature, 2 vols. (New York: Pardes Publishing House, Inc., 1950), 1:928.

A second reply to the contention of Gray is that the Pauline rendition is buttressed by the constructions of Theodotian and Aquila, who also understood נָצַח as meaning "victory."¹ Gray takes note of this, but appears to implicate Theodotian and Aquila with the Pauline error.² Nevertheless, it is better to take these other texts as being in support of Paul's truth rather than in support of his supposed error.

The other major discrepancy between Isaiah 25:8 and 1 Corinthians 15:54 is that in the Isaianic passage "swallow" is in the active, while in the Pauline passage it is in the passive. Part of what was said pertaining to the first discrepancy may also be said of the second, i.e., the fluidity of first century texts could lead one to the hypothesis that Paul was using a different text than the one preserved by the MT. Indeed, the pointing of נָצַח in the MT as a Piel verb is an interpretation that is based on the fact that the surrounding verbs in the 25:8 context are active and have God as their subject. Paul's text supposes the Pual, and it could well be that the Pual sense was that which was originally intended by Isaiah.³ Conversely, if the Piel sense was meant by the prophet, then the passive

¹Edmund F. Sutcliffe, The Old Testament and the Future Life (Westminster: The Newman Bookshop, 1947), p. 126; Kaiser, Isaiah 13-39, p. 201; and Young, Isaiah, 2:196.

²Gray, Isaiah, p. 431.

³Sutcliffe, OT and Future Life, p. 125.

of 1 Corinthians 15:54 could be a circumlocution for the action of God.¹ By this explanation the Isaianic "swallow" is in fact an active and the Pauline "swallow" a passive. Yet the latter does not contradict the former in that the swallowing in the Corinthian passage is viewed from death's perspective (a passive perspective--it will be swallowed), while in the Isaianic passage the swallowing is viewed from God's perspective (an active vantage point--he will do the swallowing). Only an all too rigid hermeneutical approach would pronounce condemnation on the apostle for such a free rendition of OT Scripture--an approach smacking of nineteenth and twentieth century western dogmatism which does not take into account first century dynamic hermeneutics.

Summary

To summarize, 1 Corinthians 15--and especially verse 54--is a positive argument for the scriptural teaching of the resurrection. It is an argument that is couched in midrashic form, an argument directed against a Hellenistic Jewish teaching that denied the future existence of the human body. The future resurrection was not abnegated by this teaching, but the future resurrection of the physical part of the Christian was.

1 Corinthians 15:54 is not a contradiction of Isaiah 25:8, it is rather a confirmation of it. Both passages

¹Joachim Jeremias, "'Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God,'" NTS 2 (February 1956):159.

look forward to a future time when death as an enemy of God and man will be destroyed, resulting in an eternity that shall be victorious indeed. The apocalyptic promise of Isaiah 25:8 is the apocalyptic promise of 1 Corinthians 15:54 placed in a first century Christian context.

CHAPTER III

THEOLOGICAL CONTEXTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Contexts

The purpose of this section is to show how Isaiah 25:8 and 1 Corinthians 15:54 are used in various theological contexts. Three theological perspectives will be presented, since this will serve to illuminate the passages more fully, to illustrate various theological methodologies and hermeneutics, and provide jumping-off places for further discussion of the teaching of the passages.

Karl Barth

The name of Barth has been blasphemed and its praises sung from the highest roof top. Whatever one may choose to say about this renowned theologian of neo-orthodoxy, and whatever error he may have perpetrated in his ideological sojourn, it nevertheless is true that he has much to say to the church of this century.

One such contribution comes in an exposition entitled "Ending Time" in his massive Church Dogmatics.¹

¹Karl Barth, "Ending Time," trans. Harold Knight et al., in vol. III, 2 of Church Dogmatics, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, 4 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1960), pp. 616-25. The entirety of the present

Barth submits that Yahweh is not only the God of life but also the God of death. He does not have to struggle with death in order to gain the mastery over it. Death, although somewhat a tyrant to man, is not sovereign over God. He says: "The fundamental Old Testament insight at this point is Yahweh's decisive superiority over death and the underworld" (p. 616). Yahweh is the boundary of death as death is the boundary of man.

Still, although he is the Lord of death in that he controls it, God nevertheless does not condone death nor affirm it. He is the Lord of life in that he is the giver of life, and the Lord of death in that he controls death and therefore in that sense he is the giver of death. But he does not control death as an end in itself, he rather controls it for the sake of life. It is here that Barth applies Isaiah 25:8, for he shows how God, in his mastery over death and the underworld, will swallow up death forever. This destruction of death is for the purpose of life, i.e., a victorious eternity for the people of God. In the last analysis, Barth claims, it is God whom the Old Testament man feared, not death.

Anthony A. Hoekema

The eschatological system that A. A. Hoekema is identified with is amillennialism. But within amillennialism

study of Barth's concepts of God, death, and Isaiah 25:8 was obtained from this section.

there exists certain subdivisions which indicate important differences between various proponents of the system. Augustinian amillennialism tends to take the OT prophecies of a glorious kingdom age and apply them to show their fulfillment in the church age. On the other hand, amillennialism as represented by Hoekema takes the OT promises as being basically literal, but applies them to the eternal state rather than a restricted one-thousand year period.¹

Hoekema argues with the editors of the New Scofield Bible with regard to their labelling Isaiah 65:17 as "new heavens and new earth," but calling 65:18-25 "millennial conditions in the renewed earth with curse removed." He proposes that this division of Isaiah 65 is untenable in the light of its immediate context, Revelation 21, and Isaiah 25:8. Pertaining to the dispensationalist's argument that 65:20 mentions death (e.g. "the child shall die a hundred years old," etc.), and death cannot be in the eternal state, Hoekema uses Isaiah 25:8 to show that death will no longer be a factor for God's people in eternity. He then proposes that 65:20 is "picturing in figurative

¹Anthony A. Hoekema, The Bible and the Future (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979), p. 203. It is the contention of the present writer that it is here the dispensational schools with which he has been familiar have failed in their discourse with amillennialism. The tendency has been to find argument with the Augustinian amillennialist to the exclusion of the type of amillennialism that Hoekema propounds. Much noise is made concerning the "spiritualizing" techniques of the amillennialists, and all the while the amillennialism prevalent in this century is far more literal than the dispensationalist might realize.

terms the fact that the inhabitants of the new earth will live incalculably long lives."¹ Thus, along with Isaiah 65:17-20, Isaiah 25:8 is applied by Hoekema to the eternal state.

At this point the present writer would like to make the following observation: It is commonly accepted by dispensationalists that Revelation 21 refers to heaven (eternal state), while Revelation 20 refers to the millennium. By process of association, however, it is possible to link Isaiah 25:8, Isaiah 65:17-20, 1 Corinthians 15:54-55, and Revelation 21:1-4 together temporally. Isaiah 25:8 can be linked to Revelation 21:4 by virtue of the fact that Revelation 21:4 is without dispute a quotation of Isaiah 25:8. The indication seems to be that the destruction of death in Isaiah 25:8 finds its fulfillment in the everlasting new Jerusalem of Revelation 21.

That Isaiah 25:8 and 1 Corinthians 15:54 are linked by virtue of quotation is incontrovertible. The implication is that the swallowing of death found in Isaiah 25:8 will find fulfillment in the appearance of Christ, the Parousia.

Further, Isaiah 65:17-20 (see also 66:22) is clearly in view in Revelation 21:1-4. John was no stranger to the OT, in fact it was his life's food and compass. It is no mistake that Revelation 21:1-4 is a clear reflection of

¹Ibid., p. 202.

Isaiah 25:8 as well as 65:17-20. It appears, therefore, that the swallowing of death promised in 25:8 will be part of the promise of a new heavens and earth in 65:17-20, which in its NT application is the New Jerusalem described in Revelation 21. But how can the Isaianic destruction of death be fulfilled at both the Parousia of 1 Corinthians 15 and the eternal state of Revelation 21? It cannot, unless the two occur at the same time, i.e., Christ's return (Isa 64:1, 1 Cor 15:51 and 52), his punishment of the wicked and destruction of death (Isa 25:8, cf. Rev 20:14), the reward of his chosen (Isa 65:8-9), and the new heavens and earth (Isa 65, Rev 21).

Alva J. McClain

The discussion of McClain's theology is based on his presentation of dispensational doctrine in The Greatness of the Kingdom.

Isaiah 25:8 comes into play in McClain's deliberation of the first resurrection, that is, the premillennial special resurrection for the redeemed. He submits that although the resurrection of the unrighteous (which in his scheme follows the millennium) is only implied in the OT, the resurrection of the saved is expressed in various OT passages, Isaiah 25:8 being one such passage.¹ Later, he relegates Revelation 21:4 to the time of the final kingdom

¹Alva J. McClain, The Greatness of the Kingdom (Winona Lake: BMH Books, 1959), pp. 490-91.

of God, that is, the "mergence" of the thousand year kingdom into the eternal kingdom.¹ Apparently he is not aware of the serious problems that derive from this interpretation. As previously shown, Revelation 21:4 is a clear quotation of Isaiah 25:8, therefore it will have to be explained why McClain divides the fulfillment of the two passages by a thousand-year gap of time.²

In addition to this, he submits that the parousia of 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 will be a premillennial "mysterious disappearance of millions of people from the earth."³ Since this is the case, an offshoot would be that Isaiah 25:8 (which, 1 Cor 15:54 says, will come to pass at the events of 15:51-52) is fulfilled at this rapture. But it has already been shown that Isaiah 25:8 can be temporally linked to both 1 Corinthians 15:51-54 as well as Revelation 21:4, and that Revelation 21:1-4 is identifiable with Isaiah 65:17-20. Therefore, it appears to the present writer that McClain's scheme is an unnecessary and unwarranted pigeonholing of various biblical passages to fit a particular eschatological system.

¹Ibid., pp. 513-14.

²It is interesting to note the confusion and apparent contradiction another dispensational writer involves himself in when he applies 21:4 to the millennium and the eternal state both. See J. Dwight Pentecost, Things to Come (Findlay: Dunham Publishing Company, 1958), pp. 488, 581.

³McClain, Greatness, p. 468.

Conclusions

The following lines of theology can be drawn from the examinations of the passages in the previous chapters:

First, although there was a difference in the quantity of teaching concerning thanatology (the doctrine of death) in the two testaments, there was not a qualitative difference in this area. Despite the higher-critical attribution of Isaiah 25:8 and 26:19 to later redactors who clung to a peculiar doctrine of resurrection,¹ the present writer views such teaching as an integral part of the OT (note that the eternality and restoration of Israel implies eternality and restoration of her citizens). Part of the apocalyptic message of Isaiah 24-27 is the destruction of death for the person of the man of God.² The quantitative progression in the NT is seen in 1 Corinthians 15 where it is propounded that this personal resurrection will occur at the appearance of the Messiah and the institution of his eternal kingdom (Isa 65, Rev 21). The OT revelation was in the form of a promise to be relied upon. It was a promise of the future made sure by the character of God howbeit without strict chronological or detailed explanation. This promise is expanded and explained in the NT revelation where the doctrines of resurrection, the second coming of Messiah, and the inception of the earthly kingdom

¹Kaiser, Isaiah 13-39, p. 218.

²Hasel, "Resurrection in OT Apocalyptic," pp. 281, 284.

are elucidated and integrated as parts of the whole.

Second, it is important that the OT promise of Isaiah 25:8 was primarily explained with regard to and applied to the community of ethnic Israel. It is significant then, that this verse is reapplied to the broader Christian community in the 1 Corinthians 15 context. In balance, the universality of Isaiah 25:6-8 is also a factor in this regard; the references to "all peoples," "all nations," and "all faces" give evidence of that. Yet the universality of the passage does not vitiate the fact that the fulfillment of Isaiah 25:6-8 was conceived of as taking place specifically on the holy mountain of Jerusalem, (see verses 6, 7, and 10). The big question has to do with Paul's application of the OT passage of Scripture. Needless to say, this is the basic issue in the dispensationalist versus nondispensationalist debate.

Third, if the quotation of Revelation 21:4 is taken as fulfillment of Isaiah 25:8, and the quotation of 1 Corinthians 15:54 is taken as the same, then the question has to do with chronology. If they are both fulfillments then one is forced to conclude that 1 Corinthians 15:54-55 and Revelation 21:4 transpire at the same time, i.e, the coming of Messiah, the Day of the Lord (judgments and rewards), resurrection, damnation and heavenly attainment, and the beginning of the new kingdom fall in the same time period. Again, this is basic to issues of pre-, a-, and postmillennialism.

Whatever the theological position one might adhere to with regard to these basic issues, it remains clear that part of the future, eternal reign of Christ involves a destruction of physical death for the believer--eternal life in the truest sense.

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