

BOOK REVIEW

George M. Wieland. *The Significance of Salvation: A Study of Salvation Language in the Pastoral Epistles* (Paternoster Biblical Monographs; Carlisle: Paternoster, 2006). xxii + 344 pp. Pbk. US\$39.00.

Wieland's exegetical study delivers what it promises: in addressing the salvation-oriented vocabulary of the Pastoral Epistles ('PE'), the book effectively resolves into a conceptual commentary, pacing in stepwise progression between key passages where instances of 'salvation language' are found. This deliberate movement both strengthens and saps Wieland's terminological focus, as the case for coherence sometimes appears piecemeal when relevant passages are considered in the order in which they appear, rather than by topic. Wieland wisely devotes a substantial concluding section to recovering theological nuances lost or overlooked in the earlier stages of his argument, acknowledging the distinctives of each letter, favouring *congruence* over monolithic coherence, and laying all but a few potential objections to rest.

The paraenetic role of salvation captures Wieland's interest, and the enthusiasm behind his approach is infectious. Even a cursory overview of his book reveals eager attention to the agents, relationships and actions involved in God's saving activity. Questions of *who*, *what*, *why* and *how* populate the table of contents, while the issue of *when*—often a balance between missionary urgency and 'kairological' futurity—causes many of the letters' differences as well as the tensions involved in interpreting them. After a concise introduction to the history of debate over literary and conceptual coherence in the PE with reference to salvation language, Wieland draws the reader into 1 Timothy, where he pauses over each passage that contains a new term relevant to the study; salvation 'language' thus grows through the accretion of related words and phrases. He rehearses the political and religious background of σωτήρ in 1 Tim. 1.1, for example, as a relational title in the LXX and an honorific ascribed by Josephus to Vespasian. As a divine

predicate, ‘saviour’ invites formulaic combination with other terms by implying various ‘saving’ activities. The meanings and orientation of ‘saving’ and ‘being saved’ provide a natural basis for the next chapter on 1 Tim. 1.12-17, where σωσαι and ζωὴ αἰώνιος are taken up along with the status of those to whom salvation may be offered (‘sinners’ and those who ‘believe’). Most welcome is Wieland’s creative solution to the ‘saved through childbirth’ minefield of 1 Tim. 2.15: he composes an imagined scene of synagogal debate, theorizing that ‘Paul’ might have been trying to correct an opponent’s misuse of Genesis material.

A latent limitation in Wieland’s work emerges during a chapter on the θεῶ ζῶντι of 1 Tim. 4.10. While content to dwell at length on some intertexts, Wieland seems quick to dismiss other promising avenues. His earlier discussion of σωτήρ contrasted possessive pronouns used for that title with ‘the absolute way that he [God] is κύριος’ in the LXX (p. 25). But that assessment ignores intensely relational texts like Ps. 8.1 (κύριε ὁ κύριος ἡμῶν) and 110.1 (109.1 LXX, εἶπεν ὁ κύριος τῷ κυρίῳ μου). I understand Wieland’s primary focus on pastoral vocabulary that is explicitly salvation-oriented, but this isolates ‘saving’ terms from terminology in which divine relationship and intervention are less obvious, but still vital. In the same chapter, a survey of ‘living God’ references leads Wieland to Mark Goodwin, who has categorized θεὸς ζῶν as a characterization of Pauline missionary preaching. Wieland quotes him favourably, but he disagrees with Goodwin’s use of the epithet as a cipher for Paul’s commission, and he regrets that Goodwin did not consider the ἐκκλησία θεοῦ ζῶντος of 1 Tim. 3.15. But Goodwin has done precisely that in a work published well before *The Significance of Salvation*. In *Paul, Apostle of the Living God: Kerygma and Conversion in 2 Corinthians* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2001, p. 205), Goodwin posits a subjective genitive in 1 Tim. 3.15, designating the community’s *origin* in the living God. This prompts his re-interpretation of 2 Cor. 6.16b (‘for we are the temple of the living God’), recalling conversion as a foundational experience shared by the community, a recollection that would surely have helped Wieland’s thoroughgoing missional concerns.

In general, however, Wieland correlates textual evidence expertly, both within the mini-corpus of the PE and in connection with relevant biblical texts. Transitioning from a ‘Summary of Salvation’ in 1 Timothy to an introduction to the same in 2 Timothy, he goes beyond recapitulation, hinting at attendant theological implications. The

balance between textual exegesis and soteriological interpretation is not easy to strike, but Wieland's achievement in procedure is exemplary for junior scholars. Epiphanic imagery produces a 'revelation language' (p. 132, intended perhaps as a subset of 'salvation language') common to 2 Timothy and Titus, as Paul's role mirrors Christ's salvific activity of making known what was once hidden. Wieland even includes a reference chart of similar New Testament instances of revelation through epiphany (p. 121). He sees in 2 Tim. 1.9-10 a liturgical fragment, diverging somewhat from the content of Romans 6 and 1 Corinthians 15 in offering proleptic praise to a death-abolishing saviour, whose epiphany and victory appear in terms appropriate to a Greco-Roman military benefactor. Wieland refines this comparison in Titus, where it is only the identification of the σωτήρ figure with Jesus Christ that distinguishes the hopes of Tit. 2.11-14 from the perspectives of Hellenistic Judaism. But similarities between letters are not overstated here. Wieland aligns 2 Timothy's 'seed of David' allusion in 2.8 with Rom. 1.3-4, but he also links it to Christ's exaltation to kingship (though some of the connections are tenuous), a component of Paul's gospel absent from Titus. In that letter, deliverance sounds more ethical than eschatological to Wieland, and grounded more in the Spirit's renewal and the covenantal promise of God's *hesed* or mercy (Tit. 3.5-6; p. 223), than in the return of the Davidic king.

Wieland's restatement of his conclusions allows readers to review his findings, joining him in the search for similarities and differences. He underlines 2 Timothy's heavier emphasis on *future* salvation, with *present* rescue expressed as preservation in the midst of a hostile setting. Christ's 'future manifestation' is held in common (p. 242), but in varying degrees and nuances. Distinctive accents like 1 Timothy's employment of the 'living God' epithet can demonstrate the ways in which the Old Testament shaped a pastoral author's inclusive teaching. A final chapter notes previous assumptions that this study has challenged, while suggesting implications for future research, perhaps by Wieland himself. There is greater conceptual coherence among the PE than has been assumed in the past, but this coherence extends to an underrated congruence with other portions of the New Testament. The further observation that comparisons with the theology of the PE are best made to particular examples of Pauline thought is an especially shrewd one, since readers will realize here—if they have not already done so!—that this is exactly the task that Wieland has begun so well.

Another suggestion highlights an area in which Wieland still has work to do. His concluding interest is in Rome's *impietas* legislation and the New Testament's development, a relationship that he hopes will be explored in social-scientific conversation. While this point is well taken, it reminds us that his attention to non-paraenetic contexts is often very brief. Wieland frequently hints at underlying questions with rhetorical or imperial connotations: the literary relationships between Paul, Timothy and Titus as rhetorical devices, for instance, or the significance of ascribing imperial titles (lord, saviour) to God and to Christ, but these questions go largely unanswered. It is a useful exercise to map out Tit. 2.11-14 as a parallel translation of early Christian kerygmatic components into Hellenistic-friendly thought forms (pp. 211-12, combining and developing points made by Jerome Quinn and Howard Marshall), but how convincing would this appeal have been? Context is understandably not the book's main point, but a more consistent exploration of the PE's setting would help readers to gauge the pastorals' chances of success in reaching that wider Greco-Roman audience.

Finally, accessibility is an implicit issue throughout the book, both for the intended audience of the PE and Wieland's readers. In forwarding the letters' paraenetic concerns, Wieland accents 1 Timothy's missiological emphases on the availability of salvation, reflected in the letter's rhetoric (p. 68). Likewise, he charts a chiasmic parabola in 2 Tim. 2.8-10 that serves to reinforce the teaching points of Paul's 'costly but purposeful ministry' (pp. 150-51), and similar chiasmic effects in framing Paul's teaching mandate around the salvific operation of God's mercy in Tit. 2.15-3.11 (pp. 215-17). These charts, and the indices of Greek and Hebrew words used here, are among the book's best features, setting out in the structures in clear graphics. They neatly demonstrate Wieland's evident commitment to hortatory teaching, whether in church settings or academic ones. But his insistence on untranslated French and German citations, and the untransliterated Greek in the charts and throughout the volume, may frustrate attempts to bring Wieland's valuable research to most ecclesial and undergraduate students. The case for coherence and congruence is fitfully and wonderfully made: only occasionally could the hidden things have been made known a little more clearly in delivery.

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