

## “RAISED ON THE THIRD DAY ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES”: RESURRECTION TYPOLOGY IN THE GENESIS CREATION NARRATIVE

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### I. INTRODUCTION

In the face of certain difficulties at the church of Corinth Paul commences his treatment of the bodily resurrection with several lines that are generally taken as reflecting a creedal-type formula used by the early believers:<sup>1</sup>

Now I make known to you, brothers, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, through which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom remain until now, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. (1 Cor 15:1–8)

For our purposes here we only note the two balanced lines specifically dealing with the death and resurrection: “Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures” (v. 3), and “he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures” (v. 4). Each of these elements consists of a grammatical subject having reference to Christ, of whom is predicated a verbal phrase involving a verb and two prepositional phrases. The last of these prepositional expressions is identical in each, κατὰ τὰς γραφὰς, “according to the Scriptures.” The confession therefore states that both the fact of Jesus having “died for our sins” and the fact that “he was raised on the third day” are two events that each occurred in accordance with the declarations of the holy writings. These latter, of course, can at this early stage only have comprised the books of the old covenant.

The event of his resurrection “on the third day” was also prominent in the teaching of Jesus himself (e.g. Matt 16:21; 20:19; Luke 9:22; 18:33; 24:21). In one place his words seem to entail, in a similar fashion to 1 Corinthians 15:4, that the Scriptures themselves contained a prediction of this very thing. Toward the close of Luke’s Gospel it is recorded:

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010) 745–46.

Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day." (Luke 24:45–46)

His use of the introductory formula "Thus it is written" strongly implies that there was a textual warrant, not only for Messiah's death, nor for his resurrection also, but even specifically for a resurrection on the third day. The identical time phrase also occurs of the same event in the early kerygma of Acts (10:40, "but God raised him up on the third day").

The subject matter of this paper concerns which particular texts of Scripture Jesus, Paul, and the early Christians had in mind which forecast the fact of Christ's resurrection on the third day. In the case of the first credal statement cited above (1 Cor 15:3), regarding Christ's death for sin, certain obvious prophetic passages come to mind. Chief amongst these must have been Isaiah 53, cited or alluded to several times in the NT (e.g. Matt 8:17; John 12:38; Acts 8:32–33; Rom 10:16).<sup>2</sup> In this prophecy the credal phrase "for our sins" is clearly sustained: "He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities" (Isa 53:5). Other prophetic texts speaking of Messiah's death might be detected in Dan 9:26, Zech 12:10, and elsewhere, though it would be difficult to identify among these one that so unmistakably defines that death as being specifically for sin. For this latter one might turn not just to those passages where the death of the Messiah was predicted (i.e. "said beforehand"), but to others where this was prefigured (i.e. "pictured beforehand"). A prominent element within the old covenant sacrificial system was the death of an animal, functioning as a figure, often designated a "type" or "shadow," of the coming ultimate death for sin to occur under the new covenant. In general, then, the OT provided not only a good deal of textual support for the death of the Messiah, but also more than one means of demonstrating that such a death was to deal with the problem of sin.

What, then, of Christ being raised on the third day? In addressing these words to the Gentile believers at Corinth Paul evidently expected them to have some comprehension of what he intended. Yet in this case there was no direct verbal prophecy in the ancient Scriptures which predicted such a thing. In view of this, the event claimed in the confession must be wholly supported by means of a figural interpretation of OT texts. Since such figural reading is in fact a major part of apostolic, and also dominical, exegesis this doubtlessly presented no problem to Paul or his contemporary fellow Christians.<sup>3</sup>

As it receives specific reference in the Gospels, primary amongst the scriptural support adduced by the early church for a third-day resurrection would have been that well-known incident recorded in the book of Jonah. It is the teaching of Jesus himself that suggests a typological reading of this event: "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be

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<sup>2</sup> See further, Kenneth D. Litwak, "The Use of Quotations from Isaiah 52:13–53:12 in the NT," *JETS* 26 (1983) 385–93.

<sup>3</sup> Leonhard Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the OT in the New* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2002) 4.

three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matt 12:40). It does not fall within the scope of this article to examine the issue whether “three days and three nights” can in fact correspond chronologically to “on the third day,” a matter which has received considerable attention elsewhere.<sup>4</sup> Here we simply note that Jesus saw the near-death experience of Jonah and his subsequent deliverance as symbolically encoding his own death and resurrection, including the time frame involved.

Beyond this, other passages are not so evident. Yet it is hard to believe that the creedal formula “raised on the third day according to the Scriptures” rests upon the figural interpretation of one sole passage. One other possible text is the prophecy found in Hos 6:2, “After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live in his presence.” While on the surface the words seem to predict a raising up of the nation of Israel from the death-like state that divine judgment had brought upon them, this does not rule out a typological understanding with respect to the Messiah. According to Matt 2:15, this is in fact precisely what Hosea does elsewhere in his short book (11:1, “When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son”). The interpretation of Hos 6:2 as prefiguring Christ’s resurrection was common in the patristic period (e.g. Tertullian, Theodoret), and was also held by major Reformers (e.g. Luther, Calvin).<sup>5</sup> Yet amongst modern scholars such a view is not generally favored.<sup>6</sup>

One objection raised in connection with Hos 6:2, though with wider application, is the fact that none of the NT writers make use of it. While this is true, that does not mean that the text did not have typological import. It is evident that the use or non-use of an OT text ought not to be the determining factor as to whether or not it is genuinely messianic. While the books of the NT contain well over a hundred citations from the old covenant Scriptures that are interpreted Christologically, we are not to understand these particular texts to be an exhaustive list.<sup>7</sup> As regards verbal prophecies, one can readily identify a whole number of these that are not referenced by Jesus or the apostles although they are undoubtedly messianic in nature. Here are to be included Isa 9:6 (“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given ... and his name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God”); Isa 11:1–5 (“A shoot will come forth from the stem of Jesse. ... The Spirit of the LORD will rest upon him”);<sup>8</sup> and Ezek 34:23 (“I will place over them one shep-

<sup>4</sup> For a recent discussion, see Martin Pickup, “‘On the Third Day’: The Time Frame of Jesus’ Death and Resurrection,” *JETS* 56 (2013) 511–42.

<sup>5</sup> It is noteworthy that Targum Jonathan expounded the phrase “on the third day” in Hos 6:2 as “on the day of the resurrection of the dead” (ביום אֲחִיּוֹת מִיָּתִיף).

<sup>6</sup> See, e.g., the discussion by M. Daniel Carroll Rodas, in EBC, vol. 8: *Daniel–Malachi* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008) 256–57.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the OT: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999) 98: “there is no reason to think that the New Testament was exhaustive in citing OT texts which found their fulfillment in Jesus.”

<sup>8</sup> That these verses would have been interpreted messianically in the apostolic church can hardly be questioned. In Rom 15:12 Paul quotes from v. 11 of the same chapter concerning the “root of Jesse” in whom the Gentiles would put their hope.

herd, my servant David, and he will tend them”).<sup>9</sup> Many others could be added. The same could be argued for figural passages. Sidney Greidanus expresses the view that “if typological interpretation is a sound method, it should be able to discover types of Christ which the New Testament writers did not mention.”<sup>10</sup> As a case in point, for the figure of the marriage relationship between Christ and his church, Paul resorts to the “mystery” present in Gen 2:24 (Eph 5:31–32), yet nowhere does he make use of Hosea’s metaphor of God being wed to Israel. At least in this latter case the figurative nature of the relationship is made explicit in its original context (e.g. Hos 2:16, “my husband,” 19, “I will betroth you to me”), while in the former it is not. In view of the foregoing, the messianic non-use of an OT text in the NT is here not considered determinative, whether with regard to Hos 6:2 or any other text.<sup>11</sup>

Other candidates for a typological third-day resurrection, such as Gen 22:4 and 40:20, seem more doubtful.

## II. SYMBOLS OF RESURRECTION

We have noted above that the establishment of textual warrant for a resurrection on the third day requires drawing upon a figural rather than a literal manner of interpretation. In light of this, when considering possible OT texts that are open to such an interpretation we are obviously not looking for passages describing literal resurrections. Rather, our initial aim is to identify resurrection-like happenings, of which Jonah emerging alive from the sea creature serves as a prime example.

Here we consider two kinds of event in the writings of Scripture that provide symbolic representations of resurrection. One of these involves the rising up of some element out of the ground, and the other out of water. The suitability of such to portray resurrection is not difficult to appreciate. Resurrection, from a linguistic perspective, is in fact simply to “rise up” (ἀναστῆναι). The upward movement present in both events creates an appropriate association with the movement involved in resurrection. More than this, in one case the rising up is actually out of the ground, a further fact corresponding to physical resurrection. In the other case, to be submerged in water according to biblical poetic imagery is an experience associated with death or a near-death encounter (e.g. Pss 18:4; 69:1–2, 15; 88:6–7; 124:5). This latter is reflected, for example, in Jonah’s prayer, where the “belly of Sheol” (v. 2) correlates with the “heart of the seas” (v. 3). Again with reference to his experience in the sea, in a very resurrection-like statement Jonah uses the term “pit” (תַּחַת), “you brought up my life from the pit” (v. 6), another term closely related to

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<sup>9</sup> John 10:16 possibly makes brief allusion to this passage in the context of Jesus as the “good shepherd,” yet, even if so, the Davidic component prominent in Ezek 34:23–24 is entirely passed over.

<sup>10</sup> Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the OT* 98. See also Walter C. Kaiser, *The Uses of the OT in the New* (Chicago: Moody, 1985) 109. Kaiser here affirms that “nowhere does the NT pretend to be an exhaustive list of types.”

<sup>11</sup> This same principle is applicable not just to specifically messianic texts. Daniel 12:2, which some would regard as the only OT text that explicitly teaches the general resurrection, is remarkably absent from the many NT citations from the OT.

death (cf. Job 33:18; Ps 28:1; Isa 14:15). Similarly, in Paul’s midrashic exposition of Deuteronomy 30:11–14 in Romans 10 we find: “Or ‘Who will descend into the abyss [ἄβυσσος]?’ that is, to bring Christ up from the dead” (v. 7), where the base text of Deut 30:13 simply reads “sea.”

1. *Rising up out of water.* Of these two aforementioned kinds of actions, we shall commence with that concerning coming up out of water. It is this particular manner of action that we see with respect to Jonah. He descended into the depths of the waters, which at all events should have resulted in his death, then he emerged alive after three days (Jon 1:17; 2:10). Not only this, a prominent aspect of this short book is the fact that before this experience Jonah had failed to fulfill his commission (1:1–15), while immediately after it he proceeded to comply (3:1–4). One could say that the figurative death and resurrection demarcates the old Jonah from the new.

This incident concerning Jonah itself relates back to two other OT passages. One of these is the crossing of the Red Sea recorded in Exodus 14–15. As is well known, on this occasion the Hebrews passed through the sea on dry land, while the Egyptians pursuing them were overwhelmed by the waters. It was these Egyptians who had before enslaved the people of Israel. Upon this occurrence at the sea the Hebrews are now permanently free from their previous bondage, their old masters having been destroyed. Similar to the case of Jonah, the event at the Red Sea drew a definitive line between a former way of life and the new. The relationship between the two incidents is evidently more than conceptual. Words and phrases appear in Jonah that are distinctly reminiscent of the earlier event. “You cast me into the deep” (Jon 2:3), brings to mind “Pharaoh’s chariots and his army he has cast into the sea” (Exod 15:4).<sup>12</sup> The two passages each speak of the sea as the “deep/depths,” with both the more common term תהום (Exod 15:5, 8; Jon 2:5), and the much less frequent מצולה (Exod 15:5; Jon 2:3). The phrase “in the heart of the sea” (בלב־ים) in the Song of Moses (Exod 15:8) is paralleled by “in the heart of the seas” (בלבב־ימים) in the prayer of Jonah (Jon 2:3). In both texts the simple verb “descended” is used in the sense of sinking (Exod 15:5, ירדו; Jon 2:6, ירדתי). More unusual is the fact that each context makes reference to God’s sanctuary (Exod 15:15, מקדש; Jon 2:4, 7, היכל קדשך). Yet the feature that perhaps makes the connection between the two most certain is that the name of the sea, ים־סוף (“Sea of Reeds”), appearing in the Song (Exod 15:4), is echoed in Jonah’s reference to the reeds (סוף) that entangled him (Jon 2:5). Outside of the designation ים־סוף there is only one other occurrence of this noun in the entire OT (Exod 2:5).<sup>13</sup> The deliber-

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<sup>12</sup> Although Hebrew uses two different verbs for “cast” here (ותשליכני/ירה), they are virtually synonymous in meaning (cf. LXX, ἔρριψεν/ἀπέρριψάς).

<sup>13</sup> This appears in the account of Moses being placed in an “ark” among the reeds of the Nile. Arguably this text forms an intertext with that under consideration concerning the crossing of the Red Sea, and also with that to be next treated regarding the flood.

ate presence of such a literary relationship between the two texts has received scholarly confirmation.<sup>14</sup>

The other OT event that Jonah's experience calls to mind is that of the flood (Gen 6–8). Again the conceptual connection is obvious. In essence the principal elements of the flood narrative relate closely to those of the Red Sea crossing. By means of water the old humanity perishes, while the new humanity emerges alive. Linguistic connections between the passages are also in evidence. Key terms such as “deep” (תהום) and “dry land” (יבשה) appear in all three contexts. The flood account is further linked to the Red Sea crossing through the synonymous term for “dry land,” חרבה (Gen 7:22; Exod 14:21), and by means of multiple instances of the verb כסה, “covered” (Gen 7:19; ויכסו, 20, ויכסו; Exod 14:28, ויכסו; 15:5, יכסימו, 10, כסמו). Specific connections between the flood and Jonah also exist. Amongst these we include the “wind” (רוח) blowing upon the waters (Gen 8:1; Jon 1:4), the reference to sacrifice upon deliverance (Gen 8:20; Jon 2:9), and more especially in the bird released by Noah from the ark. The fact that the Hebrew for “dove” (Gen 8:8) is the very same word for the proper name Jonah (יונה) itself establishes a strong link.<sup>15</sup>

There being good reason, then, to see the flood narrative, the crossing of the Red Sea, and the account of Jonah as three deliberately designed intertexts in the Hebrew Scriptures, we are now led to the primary question with which we are concerned. If what befell Jonah was, in a figure, a sort of death and resurrection experience, as Jesus himself states, cannot the same be maintained for the other two events? If Jonah's descent into the depths of the seas and rising again alive provides a prefiguration of resurrection, then there is good reason to interpret the flood and crossing of the Red Sea in the same figural manner. Further consideration of these two latter events actually puts this beyond doubt. Besides sharing features and language in common as originally written, these latter two events are also brought together in a specific way in the NT. Each happening, according to the apostles, is to be interpreted as a manner of “baptism.” Paul himself depicts the passing through the Red Sea as the baptism of Israel (1 Cor 10:2, ἐβαπτίσθησαν). His fellow apostle Peter sees the flood and the fact that Noah and his family “were saved through water” as symbolizing Christian baptism (1 Pet 3:21, βάπτισμα). In light of this, therefore, the two events can be seen to relate not merely at the literal level, as shown, but also at the figurative.

This leads us to the question, figurative of what? The connection between the two OT events and baptism is readily appreciated, since all entail entrance into water and a coming out again. Yet baptism itself was an act of symbolic value. Elsewhere Paul plainly explains baptism in terms of a dying and rising again:

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<sup>14</sup> E.g. Phillip Cary, *Jonah* (BTC; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008) 88; Jonathan Magonet, *Form and Meaning: Studies in Literary Techniques in the Book of Jonah* (Sheffield: Almond, 1983) 66.

<sup>15</sup> For numerous other connections between Noah and Jonah, see R. Reed Lessing, *Jonah* (Concordia Commentary; Saint Louis: Concordia, 2007) 38–48.

Or do you not know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in the likeness of his death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection. (Rom 6:3–5)

Accordingly, in seeing the narratives of the flood and Red Sea crossing as baptisms, the apostles cannot have failed to also associate the events described with death and resurrection. These two events, then, together with Christian baptism, all depict in a figure a death of the old and a rising of the new. In a symbolic way, Noah and his family, the Hebrews at the Red Sea, and the Christian believer, were all undergoing a resurrection to new life.

There are two further minor details in these OT accounts that we shall briefly explore. While the essential resurrection-type nature of the events has been reasonably established, we further propose that closer examination of the narratives will reveal a three-day time element in both of them. Here we speak more tentatively. Yet to the present writer it does seem that such a time frame is present, more demonstrably in the Red Sea text, yet to the discerning reader also in the flood narrative. Dealing again with the occurrence at the Red Sea first, we find that both the book of Exodus and Numbers provide for us the number of encampments made by the Israelites on their journey out of Egypt. Exodus informs us that the first stage of the journey took them as far as Succoth (12:37). From Succoth they passed on to Etham (13:20). From there they next arrived at Pi-hahiroth (14:2). The book of Numbers corroborates the fact that these were three successive encampments: Succoth, Etham, Pi-hahiroth (33:5–7). Both books then portray the crossing of the Red Sea with the Hebrews setting out from Pi-hahiroth (Exod 14:9; Num 33:8). Since the precise time of the Passover is given for us, the date of passing through the sea can be reasonably deduced. The Passover lamb was slaughtered on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan “between the evenings” (Exod 12:6, **בין הערבים**), generally understood as “twilight” (cf. NRSV ESV NASB NIV NJB). According to traditional Jewish reckoning then, sunset that evening marked the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> of Nisan. Following the consumption of the lamb during that evening meal “in haste” (Exod 12:11), the Hebrews departed. In view of the fact that their number included the elderly and infants, as well as the infirm, it cannot be realistic to suppose that they traveled through the whole of that first night. The first encampment at Succoth then would have been during the night that began the 15<sup>th</sup> Nisan. While no doubt slowed down by old, young, and sick, since the threat of pursuit was a real one, they most certainly would not have lingered in the encampment for more than a single night. Their next stop, at Etham, would have been for the night commencing the 16<sup>th</sup> of Nisan. After that they camped at Pi-hahiroth for the following night, which began the 17<sup>th</sup>. According to this calculation, the crossing of the Red Sea would have occurred during the day of 17<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, that is, the third day after leaving Egypt. If this reckoning is correct, then Israel passing through the sea is not only a resurrection-type event, it is also a third-day event.

The flood narrative is replete with temporal references. One such statement tells us that “on the seventeenth day of the seventh month the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat” (Gen 8:4). We are here given the exact date on which the ark once again touched solid ground following the long duration of the flood. It is very possible that with all such dates in the account the intended point of reference is the years of the life of Noah (cf. Gen 7:11). Yet the possibility exists that even within such a system the starting point for days and months remains that of the regular civil calendar rather than Noah’s birthday, which is impossible to determine. Even if this were not so, the phrase “the seventeenth day of the seventh month” would still have been evocative for the Hebrew reader. It is well known that at the time of the exodus, the Hebrew calendar underwent a dramatic shift: “This month shall be the beginning of months for you; it is to be the first month of the year to you” (Exod 12:2). From that time onward it was the month in which Passover was celebrated which determined the beginning of the year, resulting in what is now generally known as the Jewish religious or festive calendar. So whereas previously the first month of the year had been Tishri, from then on it was to be Nisan,<sup>16</sup> so relegating Tishri to the seventh position. Such a shift in the numeration of months resulted in the first month becoming the seventh, and the seventh becoming the first. Since the flood narrative depicts a time prior to this change, when reading the phrase “seventh month” the mind of the Hebrew reader can only have thought of the month of Nisan. What this in fact means is that the temporal expression fixing the grounding of the ark, “the seventeenth day of the seventh month,” either was precisely or at least calls to mind, the 17<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, the very same day on which the Israelites crossed the Red Sea. While there is no explicit three-day interval here, since the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan would have been a most prominent date for post-exodus Hebrew readers, the time association may be said to be latent.

While not wishing to place too much stress on this point, the possibility exists that the date of the 17<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, what was to be the third day after Passover, finds a place in both the crossing of the Red Sea and the account of the flood.

2. *Rising up out of the ground.* Though perhaps less observed than the foregoing, it can more readily be demonstrated that the rising up from the ground, particularly of plant-life, also pictures resurrection from the dead. This manner of figural usage is first found in the words of Jesus himself:

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. (John 12:24)

Paul also employs a similar metaphor in his chapter on resurrection, the same chapter in which the credal statement under discussion appears. There, in response to the imaginary objector inquiring about the kind of body with which the dead will be raised (v. 35), the apostle responds:

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. Nahum M. Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Exodus* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1991) 54.

What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And as for what you sow, you do not sow the body that is to be, but a bare grain, perhaps of wheat or of some other. But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body. . . . So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body. (1 Cor 15:36–38, 42–44)

While Paul’s explanation is much more detailed than that found in John, in essence the two are saying the same thing. In fact, the correspondence of language at points is extremely close. Both speak of the thing planted as a “grain” (κόκκος), with “wheat” (σῖτος) particularly in mind. Moreover, each expresses the main principle through a virtually identical “unless” (ἐὰν μὴ) construction with the same subjunctive verb “dies” (ἀποθάνῃ). Such a relationship makes one wonder whether the apostle here was actually echoing the words of Jesus conveyed in primitive oral tradition. Whatever the case, at the conceptual level the two show basic concord. Paul, however, more extensively stresses the sowing of the seed (σπέρμα) aspect than the Gospel statement, using the verb “sow” (σπεύρειν) no less than seven times. Jesus alone brings in the idea of what grows up bearing fruit (καρπὸν φέρει). Here he is speaking of the effect of his own resurrection, while Paul is dealing with resurrection in general. The suitability of such a horticultural figure requires little comment. The apparently lifeless entity of a seed or grain placed in the soil later produces growth that springs up out of the ground. The analogy with resurrection can, therefore, be seen to be very appropriate.

Significantly, elsewhere in this same chapter on resurrection, Paul makes use of another closely related metaphor. On two occasions the apostle employs the term “firstfruits” (ἀπαρχή) with reference to Jesus, first in the phrase “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (v. 20), and then “Christ the firstfruits,” also speaking of resurrection (v. 23). It is quite probable that behind this usage, the apostle has in mind the Jewish Feast of Firstfruits. This latter is described for us in Lev 23:9–14, where the same word (ἀπαρχή) occurs in the LXX (v. 10). The purpose of this festival was to celebrate the first growth of the crops. In this observance a sheaf of the firstfruits was brought to the priest, who waved it before the Lord in an act of acknowledgement and celebration (v. 11). Why Paul was drawn to this particular rite at this point of his discussion, was no doubt due, at least in part, to the firstfruits-harvest sequence. While the springing up of the first crops could be taken as both the token and guarantee of a later harvest, so the resurrection of Christ ensures the same for those who belong to him, which is the point Paul makes in v. 23. More than this, one other detail of the festival can hardly have escaped Paul’s notice. The levitical instructions specify the day on which the ceremony was to take place: “The priest is to wave it on the day after the Sabbath” (Lev 23:11). The Sabbath in question is plainly identified in the context as that following the Feast of the Passover, described immediately before this (vv. 4–8). It was also this self-same day from which the fifty days till the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost) were counted (v. 15). Why this day should be noteworthy for Paul, and indeed

for us, is the fact that in the year that Jesus died, “the day after the Sabbath” was the very day of his resurrection (cf. Mark 16:1–2). Since he was raised on the Feast of Firstfruits it can be no coincidence, therefore, that Paul refers to Jesus as the firstfruits from the dead. Here is another strong connection, then, between the action of produce growing up out of the ground and the resurrection from the dead.

### III. RESURRECTION PREFIGURED IN GENESIS 1

We now come to relate the foregoing to the creation narrative in the first chapter of Genesis. There we read of what transpired on Day 3 of creation:

Then God said, “Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear”; and it was so. God called the dry land earth, and the gathering of the waters he called seas; and God saw that it was good. Then God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit after their kind with seed in them”; and it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit with seed in them, after their kind. God saw that it was good. There was evening and there was morning, a third day. (Gen 1:9–13)

On this particular day there are two divine utterances. The first of these concerns the appearance of the dry land from the waters (vv. 9–10), the second the sprouting up of vegetation from the earth (vv. 11–12). So within this single day of creation, the two actions that take place relate in fact to the two figures we have been considering above. The first of these contains an action comparable to what was seen in the flood and at the Red Sea, namely, the emergence of dry land from the midst of water. The brief description presented in the Genesis text also includes the same basic key vocabulary items as those other passages together also with the book of Jonah, that is, “sea” (ים), “waters” (מים), and “dry land” (יבשה).<sup>17</sup> The second creative act has an obvious conceptual relationship with the statements by Jesus and Paul discussed above. As seen in those passages, here too we find the words “earth/ground” (ארץ/γῆ), “seed” (זרע/σπέρμα), “sow” (זרע/σπειρέιν), and bearing “fruit” (פרי/καρπός). Not only this, with respect to this latter act, what we find created on this day is in actual fact *the very firstfruits* of the earth. This vegetation rising from the ground was evidently the first ever to do so. Overarching these conceptual and lexical correspondences between Genesis 1 and the earlier passages is of course the obvious yet crucial element that what is there being described is explicitly said (v. 13) to have occurred on the “third day” (יום שלישי/ἡμέρα τρίτη).

We come now to the nub of the matter. If those events occurring at the flood, the passing through the Red Sea and with respect to Jonah are interpreted figurally in the NT, then a consistent interpretation warrants the acts of this day of creation

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<sup>17</sup> One curious lexical feature is the use of *מקוה*, here meaning the “gathering” of the waters (Gen 1:10). This is, in fact, identical to the noun used for the bath employed in later Jewish ritual immersion. In view of the baptismal associations identified in the flood and Red Sea events, this connection is quite remarkable, though most probably wholly coincidental.

being treated similarly. As has been demonstrated, all three of those other events are overtly given figural import in the Gospels and Epistles, whether expressly of Christ’s resurrection in the case of Jonah, or of baptism, indicating the death of the old and the rising of the new, in the case of the flood and Red Sea crossing. Surely, in view of this it is not unreasonable to conclude, and indeed consistency demands, that Gen 1:9–13 also allows a legitimate figural reading along similar lines.

Is there any indication that Paul was aware of such an interpretation? The only way, of course, that we could learn of such a thing would be through what he wrote. While there is no plain statement on Paul’s part to the effect that the Genesis passage was one that he had in mind when he said Christ “was raised on the third day,” there is perhaps the slightest hint that such might have been the case. In the text quoted at the beginning of this article, Paul repeatedly uses one sole verb in connection with the resurrection appearances of Jesus where he affirms that

he was raised on the third day [τῆ ἡμέρᾳ τῆ τρίτῃ] according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared [ᾤφθη] to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that he appeared [ᾤφθη] to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom remain until now, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared [ᾤφθη] to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared [ᾤφθη] also to me. (1 Cor 15:4–8)

Certainly there were alternative words to choose from besides ᾤφθη. In other NT writers we find several verbs suitable for describing resurrection appearances: ἐνεφανίσθησαν (Matt 27:53), ἐφάνη (John 21:1), and ἐφάνη in the longer ending to the second Gospel (Mark 16:9). While ᾤφθη may have been a Pauline preference, the fact is that the language the apostle employs here has distinct echoes of the Genesis text under consideration:

Let the dry land appear [ὀφθήτω] ... and the dry land appeared [ᾤφθη]. ... There was evening and there was morning, a third day [ἡμέρα τρίτη]. (Gen 1:9, 13 LXX).

This is the only creative act in the whole of the Genesis narrative in which the element created is said to “appear.” In light of Paul’s undoubted familiarity with Scripture he can hardly have failed to see the link he was establishing. Perhaps it was deliberate and perhaps he intended his readers to see it also.

We also note that in this same chapter of 1 Corinthians 15 there is unmistakable evidence that in constructing his response to the resurrection issue Paul has been considering the Genesis creation narrative. In vv. 39–41 he lists the various elements created on Days 4–6 (Gen 1:14–27) in exact reverse order (men, animals, birds, fish, heavenly bodies). Since he definitely had these other days of creation in mind, it is extremely plausible that he was also contemplating Day 3 in the context of the same discussion.

Upon further reflection, at a deeper level, we find a typological reading of the third day of creation, as proposed, to be an eminently suitable figure of resurrection, especially of Christ’s resurrection, which is the concern of Paul’s statement “raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.” The land which was to arise out of the waters on that day has intimate associations with humanity. We are told in the

next chapter of Genesis that “the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground” (2:7), and upon death human beings would return to that same estate (3:19). What was happening on this particular day of creation, therefore, was the emergence of what was the basic substance from which the whole human race was to be created. This connection is further underlined through the literary parallelism present within the creation narrative. As is widely recognized Days 1–3 and Days 4–6 form two parallel series.<sup>18</sup> In these the light of Day 1 corresponds to the lights of Day 4, the waters above and below of Day 2 to the birds and fish of Day 5, while the appearance of land in Day 3 corresponds with the making of land creatures on Day 6, notably man and woman.<sup>19</sup> So what appears on the third day is the essential raw material, so to speak, from which humanity would be derived. Evidently, this situation is analogous to the resurrection of Christ. His rising up from the tomb was in fact the coming into being of the archetypal body according to the nature of which the whole of the new humanity would later be formed. This two-stage sequence and the relationship between what came first and what was to follow, as previously noted, are both present in Paul’s discussion of the resurrection. Having suffered in the flesh, Jesus was raised with an incorruptible “spiritual body” (vv. 44–46), and so is now described as “heavenly” (ἐπουράνιος). As regards those who believe in him Paul states that just as we previously bore the likeness of Adam, “so shall we bear the likeness of the heavenly man” (v. 49). “But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming, those who belong to him” (v. 23). We see, therefore, that such a figural reading lends itself readily to the argument that Paul is conducting.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

We have here advocated that Paul and other early believers might have included Gen 1:9–13 among their stock of OT passages relating to a third-day resurrection from the dead. The validity for the present-day church of the manner of figural reading involved in this requires its own separate discussion. The fact is that most of the NT writers employ such interpretations. Amongst these, of course, we include Paul himself elsewhere in his letters. Mention has already been made of the mystery concerning Christ and the church that the apostle saw in the joining of man and woman found in the second creation account (Gen 2:24; cf. Eph 5:31–32). To this we may add his interpretation of the veil over Moses’ face (Exod 34:33–35; 2 Cor 3:13–16), and the notable case of Hagar and Sarah representing two covenants (Gal 4:22–26). More significant is the fact that even within 1 Corinthians itself, just a short space before his discussion of the resurrection, Paul has presented to his readers a figural interpretation of the rock in the wilderness, of which he categorically stated “the rock was Christ” (1 Cor 10:4). In view of Paul’s approach to old covenant texts exhibited in these passages, it cannot be ruled out that a simi-

<sup>18</sup> See Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15* (WBC 1; Nashville: Word, 1987) 6–7.

<sup>19</sup> Significantly, there is no mention in the Genesis account of animals being created from the dust of the earth like human beings.

lar understanding lies behind his statement “he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.”

Finally, we note that a mere historical approach to OT texts will not enable the reader, whether ancient or modern, to discern figures of the kind we have considered here. Richard Hays alerts us to the radical difference that the new revelation in Christ makes to the reader’s insight into the old covenant Scriptures. In a significant chapter with the title “Reading Scripture in Light of the Resurrection,” Hays avers:

Reading in light of the resurrection is figural reading. Because the Old Testament’s pointers to the resurrection are indirect and symbolic in character, the resurrection teaches us to read for figuration and latent sense. . . . God seems to have delighted in veiled anticipations of the gospel. . . . Resurrection-informed reading sees the life-giving power of God manifested and prefigured in unexpected ways throughout Scripture. . . . The Jesus who taught the disciples on the Emmaus road that *all* the scriptures bore witness to him continues to teach us to discover figural senses of Scripture that are not developed in the New Testament.<sup>20</sup>

In keeping with Hays’s words, it has been our present contention that a resurrection-informed reading shows Gen 1:9–13 as one of those unexpected ways.

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<sup>20</sup> Richard B. Hays, “Reading Scripture in Light of the Resurrection,” 233–34.