CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE RAMIFICATIONS OF THE INVESTIGATION

This study has discerned that Paul has alluded to or echoed eleven texts from the *OT.* These include three from Genesis (Col 1:6; 2:13; 3:10), two from Isaiah (Col 1:9–10; 2:22), and two from the Psalms (Col 1:19; 3:1). The list is rounded out by a reference each to 1) the exodus deliverance found in the Pentateuch (Col 1:12–14), 2) Deuteronomy (Col 2:11), 3) 2 Samuel (Col 1:13), and 4) Proverbs (Col 1:15–20). The detection of, arguments for, and collection of these findings in one place constitutes a contribution to ‘Old Testament in the New’ scholarship in and of itself. The discoveries, however, lend themselves to further observations and contributions, as will be discussed below.

*Ramifications for the Overall Understanding of Colossians*

What is striking about several of the allusions or echoes of the *OT* in Colossians is that they consistently touch upon the specific theme of new creation. Of the eleven allusions/echoes proposed in this study, four presuppose this framework and build upon it, three directly: Gen 1:28 in Col 1:6, 10, Prov 8:22–31 in Col 1:15–20, and Gen 1:26–27 in 3:10, and one indirectly: Isa 11:2, 9 in 1:9–10. At Col 1:6, Paul echoes the “be fruitful and multiply” language from the creation account of Gen 1 to depict firstly the numerical growth and worldwide expansion of the gospel (1:6a), with the emphasis then shifting to communicating the growth of internal spiritual fruit—like love and faith and knowledge of God (1:4, 8, 10)—among the Colossians in 1:6b and especially 1:10, where the echo is repeated explicitly (the phrase is simply assumed in 1:6b).

Furthermore, this Gen 1:28 “be fruitful and multiply” tradition is interwoven with echoes of Isa 11 at Col 1:9–10 (“Spirit-given wisdom

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1 In the case of the reference to the Hebrew exodus from Egypt in Col 1:12b–14a, Paul has echoed the foundational event of the *OT*, and not necessarily any one individual text. In the case of the reference to Prov 8, the echo is of this text as it stood *in its first century C.E. interpretive development.*
and understanding”) in a mutually interpretive, intertextual web. Isaiah 11:1–9 portrays the future and ideal Davidic king (interpreted by early Judaism as a reference to the coming Messiah), who, by means of his endowment with the Spirit that grants him abundant wisdom and understanding and knowledge of God, establishes the new creational kingdom of God and fills the earth with the knowledge of God. The reader will recall our discussion also of the intertextual conversation between Isa 11:1–9 and Isa 65:17–25, of which the latter explicitly mentions the “new heavens and earth.” According to Paul in Colossians, Jesus Christ is this long-awaited Davidic Messiah, who is, in accordance with the prophecy, filling the earth (ἐν παντὶ τῷ κόσμῳ, Col 1:6) with Spirit-wrought wisdom, understanding, and knowledge of God (Col 1:9–10; see again Isa 11:9; cf. Hab 2:14). The presupposition is that God had inaugurated the end-time new creation of the age-to-come. In Paul’s view, the age of fulfillment of all the or expectations and promises had begun, because Messiah had arrived on the scene of human history (cf. 2 Cor 1:20).

The new creation theme is continued by the apostle’s insertion of a hymn at Col 1:15–20, which describes Christ in the language of the Wisdom figure of Prov 8:22–31 as that tradition stood in its first-century exegetical development. Christ is the reality foreshadowed by the Prov 8 literary personification. He served as God’s agent of creation, through whom all the original creation was made and is sustained (1:15–17), including the spiritual beings that threaten the Colossian Christ-followers. Yet Paul also describes Christ as the agent of the new creation, a reality established through his crucifixion and resurrection (1:18–20). Through Christ, God has effected cosmic reconciliation (1:20; cf. vv. 21–22). Messiah holds preeminence in this new creation by virtue of his resurrection, for his resurrection is God’s first act of the new creation. Christ himself is the “beginning” of the new creation as the firstborn from the dead (1:18).

The imagery of the new creation in Colossians continues on after the hymn of 1:15–20 at 3:10. Here Paul alludes to Gen 1:26–27 and to the creation account of the first man made “according to the image of