Alan H. Cadwallader, *Colossae, Colossians, Philemon: The Interface.* NTOA 127. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2023. ISBN 978-3-525-50002-6. Hardcover, pp. 814. € 200.

Currently serving as a Research Professor at Charles Sturt University, Alan H. Cadwallader is known for his multifaceted expertise, including long-time research on material culture. This new monograph in the series Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus represents a milestone of his contributions to the scholarly world.

Based on extensive study over several decades, Cadwallader has brought together a massive volume on the ancient city Colossae and two New Testament letters, Colossians and Philemon. Already hinted at by the subtitle, *The Interface*, he clarifies that this is *not* a verse-by-verse commentary on those two Pauline epistles. Rather, this book bears a twofold purpose: "My primary purpose herein, an objective that has driven me for more than two decades, is to provide as complete a coverage as possible of the material evidence of Colossae as can be recovered to date.… My secondary purpose has been to establish that textual materials, most fulsomely two books of the Christian Testament, can fruitfully be brought into dialogue with the material resources that have been mustered" (13). Such a characteristic should guide the reader's expectations while using this comprehensive work. In what follows, I will recapitulate the content of every chapter and exemplify some of the highlights therein.

In the introductory chapter, "Colossae and a Material Life" (19–42), Cadwallader begins by reviewing the "material turn" in recent classical and New Testament scholarship. According to him, textuality should be based on materiality, not the other way around. By summarizing some of the representatives over the centuries, Cadwallader shows that critical voices could already be heard as early as the beginning of the "modern awareness" of the scholarly pursuit of the city (e.g., John Luke of the second half of the seventeenth century discussed on pp. 22–24). Full consideration of the materiality of the city, Cadwallader argues, should shed light on how Colossians and Philemon "might have been read, heard and engaged *by* those at Colossae" (34, emphasis original). In other words: "the close reading is directed primarily to what can be learned about Colossae, the city and territory and only secondarily, though importantly, to interactions

with the texts of the Second Testament that are identified as bearing on the discussion" (35).

After setting the tone of his explorations, Cadwallader employs twelve chapters to illustrate various dimensions of Colossae and in what ways such dimensions could reshape our understanding of the two related New Testament epistles. The first two chapters are entitled "Colossae, a Name in Search of a City" (43–69) and "Colossae, a City in Search of a Name" (71–128). The purpose of these chapters is to trace, analyze, and discuss this city's enigmatic name and its actual location. Throughout scholarly history there has been confusion between several possible names of the city (Colossae, Chonai, Colassae, etc.). In fact, when Erasmus worked on his New Testament editions in the sixteenth century, the references to Colossae were already examined and questioned. Later, new discoveries of coins and growing knowledge in numismatics provided substantial information to assess previous proposals. The different spellings in manuscript evidence are also paid attention to, an aspect that may particularly interest the readers of *TC*. For instance, the *titulus* of P46 (Προς Κολασσαεις) can arguably be referred to the alternative spelling "Colassae" at an early date. After extensively discussing the etymology of the city's name, Cadwallader puts the letter opening of Colossians (Col 1:1–2) within this larger context. Contrasting the physical location of the recipients ("in Colossae") with the alternative, universal location "in Christ," the Colossian Paul "set up a tension between the two locations." Cadwallader makes a comparison: "The letter is not to those in Colossae, as if the expression is nothing more than a topographical locator, such as we find in numerous inscriptions. The addressees are a much-narrowed group, yet with a vastly larger scale of references" (126).

Following the detailed examination of the name and origin of the city, chapter 3 turns to the issue of ancient cities and their surrounding countryside (129–83). The basic question is how urban Colossae was and what was its relationship with its territory. Cadwallader first summarizes the literary sources about the city, beginning from the fifth-century BCE historian Herodotus. Additionally, an inscription from Colossae's surroundings (dated 267 BCE) helps to reconstruct and imagine the territorial control of Colossae. Here the competition between this city and Laodikeia is also mentioned. After the latter was founded in around 255 BCE, the territory of Colossae was gradually reduced. The competitive motif among the cities in the Lycus Valley will recur in the next chapter. Based on material evidence, Cadwallader believes, a point of view from the village and countryside

can be given. Moreover, against the background of the rising Laodikeia, Cadwallader offers a foundation narrative of Colossae that highlights its uniqueness and bond with Zeus. Compared to the portrait of Christ given in Col 1–2, Cadwallader sees an alternative foundation story offering "the combination of rural fecundity, urban structures and regulating authority the key elements of a foundation myth now anchored to Christ" (181).

As said, the next chapter, "Rivals and Neighbors" (185–229), focuses on the competing cities in the Lycus Valley. By looking into the remaining coins in that region, interestingly, Cadwallader points out that the triangulation of cities (Hierapolis, Laodikeia, and Colossae) *cannot* be found outside Christian literary sources. Instead, according to material findings, the pair of Hierapolis and Laodikeia was indeed visible. Hence, Colossae might not be regarded as significant as its neighbor cities, but the Colossians made every effort to build themselves a better reputation and formulate a distinct identity. From the coins they made, it is evident to see the city's self-promotion and the rise of confidence among its citizens. In the light of their rivalry, the mention of the three cities in Col 2:1; 4:13, 15–16 is worthy of consideration. Particularly, the command of letter exchange in Col 4:16 ("ensure that it is read in the assembly of the Laodikeians, as also read that from Laodikeia" [translation by Cadwallader in p. 222]) should not be read plainly. It would require concord between groups from the two competing cities to be connected by the larger community of Christ followers.

In chapter 5, "The Shadow of a Mountain: Cosmic Control" (231–77), Cadwallader analyzes the deities in and around Colossae. Starting from an investigation of a once-lost intaglio, he introduces the goddess Tyche and the role she played in the cosmic order from the Colossian perspective. The significance of the goddess in the ancient world was quite visible. Not only did Plutarch mention that "Tyche is the origin of everything" (257), but this was also evidenced in an inscription opening, "To Good Tyche," on behalf of the benefactor for restoring the order to the waters of Colossae. In the context of such ancient cosmology, the elements (στοιχεία) referenced in Col 2:8 and 20 could likely be governed by the goddess Tyche and her role as the first-born daughter of Zeus (*protogeneia*). However, according to the Letter to the Colossians, the *prototokos* Christ (Col 1:15, 18) should be seen as carrying "a public, cultic and civic-endorsed privilege as the paraded Colossian epithet of Tyche" (271). This comparison illustrates the religious life in this city and the religious alternative offered by Christ followers.

The christological hymn can also be compared to the learned circle in Colossae, as discussed in chapter 6: "Cosmic Visions, Cosmic Learning"

(279–316). Cadwallader describes the school and philosophy in that area by (once again) delving into material grounds. Analysis of a second-century inscription about a Colossian student heading to Smyrna to study philosophy illustrates some backdrop of higher learning in antiquity. The core of learning, *philologos*, shows the devotion to learning and wisdom, defined as follows: "to be focused on the extent of one's reading and learning or at least one's commitment to scholarship, whether in a survey of disciplines or a more focused specialization" (286). Hymns were one of the literary products of ancient philosophers and the learned. The hymn found in Colossians, however, emphasizes the creation and redemption as the deeds of the Father. In the eyes of the Colossian Paul, "For all the philosophical resonances, for all the maintenance of the affirmation of harmony and stability as prime values, albeit anchored to Christ, the writer repudiated the pursuit of philosophy and (human) tradition (Col 2:8)" (315). This again shows the similarities and differences between this Pauline letter and its Colossae context.

Chapter 7 examines the topics related to "Purity, Pollution, Penalties and Power at Colossae" (317–61). Cadwallader makes use of numismatics to reconstruct the dynamics between "coins and the gods." Based on the imprints that remained on the metals, he reminds us of the concord of religion and economy in ancient Colossae. This close bond makes him look at the three prohibitions in Col 2:21 ("do not grasp, do not consume, do not feel") from a different perspective: the sacred laws of Greco-Roman religious groups. By studying inscriptions and archaeological remains, Cadwallader provides a cultic and imperial context for impurity and a second look at the oblivion referred to in Col 2:22. With abundant information on "human commands and teachings," Paul in Colossians proclaims another good news differing from the Roman Empire, offering a counterpoint by the cross and the Son's resurrection. The executive curse and impurity from the imperial power have been transformed into a universal promise from the group of Christ followers. This, in a way, also formulated the distinctiveness of their identity in the Colossian polis.

Next comes one of the shortest chapters in this volume, "Cursing Colossians" (363–85), concentrating on the theme of curses and the vice list that appear in the Colossian letter. The point of departure is a curse tablet found in a village near Colossae. That specific material provides a unique lens to understand a certain nonelite individual and their wishes to "fundamentally destabilizing the established order of society" (372). In comparison, Col 1:21 mentions the audience once "doing evil deeds" before they knew

of Christ. However, through Christ the "circuit-breaker," they could now have reconciliation from the alienation they had experienced (Col 1:22). The comparison with the curse tablet enriches our understanding of "the religious panorama of the locality." It is crucial to remember the purpose of this *comparanda* exercise: "The argument is not that this is specifically what the author was addressing, nor that there was a specific syncretism to which the writer was opposed. Rather, the material evidence, always fragmented and less than desired though it may be, affords an opportunity to hear potential resonances between the letter and the Colossian context" (385).

In the ninth chapter, Cadwallader turns to another important topic he has learned from material culture: onomastics, the study of names (387–443). By analyzing the 167 known names from Colossae, a relatively fair overview of the ethnicities and status can be given. On this basis, he shows that the city was full of "Greekness," consisting of many Greek names (72 percent). The name of Apphia "our sister" (Phlm 2) also occurs in the inscriptions twice, probably with a Phrygian origin. Based on the distribution of the names, Paul's coworker in Colossians, Archippos, could likely be sent by him outside the local territory. Somewhat surprisingly, no Jewish names were found in the remaining evidence, which seems to contradict the presence of Jewish communities as claimed by some biblical scholars. However, the possibility of using homonyms among the Jews cannot be excluded (cf. Col 4:11: Jesus/Justus). Based on his onomastic studies, Cadwallader further suggests that the pair of "Greek and Jew" rendered in Col 3:11 should receive fuller attention. According to him, the writer of the letter had in mind the dominant (if not proud) Greek ethos of the Colossians while addressing this. It was to raise the consideration of inclusiveness among the recipients and perhaps also those in Laodikeia.

As the title of chapter 10 indicates, "Christian Identity, the Gymnasium and Gladiatorial Conflict" (445–506), this chapter deals with athletes and soldiers in antiquity and the athletic and military images in Colossians. Cadwallader first brings two inscriptions to the front, one honoring Zenon in the Olympic competition, another for a certain Kastor. Using this as the background, he then looks at a potential list of athletic imagery in the Pauline letter heuristically: Col 1:29; 2:1, 5, 15, 18, 23; 3:15; 4:12. Instead of discussing athletic words and phrases separately, he states that one should "place athletics into the total educational, civic and imperial model and method to test what ancillary connections may be present in the letter" (493). In other words, the discernment of athletic imagery is more compli-

cated and nuanced than scholars commonly think. Moreover, Cadwallader believes that the Letter to the Colossians is not only a Christian text but "a participant in the social and political tensions of the age and of the region" (494). In the light of this, he introduces the famous gladiator theme and compares the death of a gladiator with that of Christ. Indeed, death was fundamental for gladiator identity, but the primary crown was athletic glorification. Similarly, "filtered through a gladiatorial lens," Christ's death brings an even more expansive view of glory and salvation (505–6).

The penultimate chapter revisits the issue of slavery and its governance in the city of Colossae (507–70). The most obvious topic related to this is, of course, Onesimos in the Letter to Philemon. New Testament scholars often consider Onesimus a runaway slave under Roman law (a so-called *fugitivus*). However, Cadwallader points out that there was no grounded evidence supporting the assumption that the slavery system of Colossae was governed by Roman law. Instead, he illustrates the multiple legal systems at Colossae through three types of epigraphical evidence: public memorialization of deceased individuals, the receipt of penalties for grave interference, and governmental advice for managing pluralities of legal interests. The implications of these findings are twofold. First, Onesimos can be considered a runaway slave, but under a Greek legal system (a δραπετικός). Second, Paul did not argue for manumission on Onesimos's behalf, since in Greek laws a manumitted slave did not fully equate with the *libertus* of Roman law. Consequently, according to Cadwallader, "efforts to set manumission into an egalitarian claim for Paul's nurture of a positive relationship between Philemon and Onesimos are misplaced" (570).

In the last chapter, "Death and Families at Colossae" (571–641), Cadwallader discusses the necropolis at Colossae and the family composition of the city. The material evidence offered by graveyards not only unearths the most common grave type surrounding that city (*chamosorion* and its *bomos* [funerary altar]), but the study also offers "hard data" for a close reading of Colossian families and households. Admittedly, the available number of epitaphs (sixteen in total) is less than ideal to depict an overarching picture of the family hierarchy. Yet it does allow Cadwallader to give a glimpse of this topic. It is better advised to speak of "households" rather than the modern construction of family. In this regard, the *Haustafel* in Col 3:18–4:1 can be situated well in the ancient household background. On the one hand, it "is a reassurance that the Christians are not the manic subversives that some have alleged" (640–41). On the other hand, the household code in the letter helps to shape the identity of Colossian Christ

followers, which "came to be imbibed as a personal, not just presented as a public, code." This allowed them to "negotiate their way in the city and its territory" (641).

After such a long journey toward this ancient city, Cadwallader concludes with a three-page brief reflection (643–45). He believes that any future *comparanda* attempts should derive from Colossae itself and remain "a controlled, imaginative reconstruction" (643). Then follow four useful appendixes: (1) ancient testimonia for Colossae, (2) an updated concordance of the coin types, (3) a comprehensive list of names from Colossae, and (4) a concordance of Colossian inscriptions. There are also two full-color maps, an extensive bibliography, and several indexes (on ancient literature, inscriptions and papyri, coins, modern names, place names, subjects, and key Greek and Latin words).

If I were to summarize this gigantic book and its achievements, the best way would perhaps be to refer to the author's own words (albeit in a very modest way): "This study has shown that when the existing materiality of Colossae is taken seriously, new understanding can be made that diminish the heavy demand on a small aggregation of literary sources that has previously been the operating epistemology" (643). Together with many helpful tables and illustrative pictures, Cadwallader is to be praised for composing this authoritative handbook on Colossae, its surroundings, and all related matters. Readers will definitely benefit from his meticulous discoveries, insightful comments, and critical assessments of previous and contemporary scholarship.

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