

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ESCHATOLOGY AND ETHICS  
IN THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS  
(The Problem of Relevancy)

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A Summary

(Roger L. Capps)

The important aspects of Jesus' eschatology can best be examined from a study of His "Kingdom preaching," and scholarly conclusions regarding such proclamation can be grouped into three categories or persuasions: 1) The Kingdom of God Viewed as Present or Interpreted as Spiritual; 2) The Kingdom of God Viewed as Future; and 3) The Kingdom of God Viewed as both Present and Future. Leading scholars of each group offer emphases developed from their individual hermeneutical processes. However, one's interpretation of the relevancy of Jesus' message is largely dependent upon his assessment of Jesus' eschatology.

Although those of the futurist category present diversified methodologies, and draw varied conclusions relative to the permanent significance of Jesus' eschatology and ethics, their general agreement that Jesus preached the imminence of the Kingdom of God must be accepted as having its basis within the Synoptic tradition. Jesus' Kingdom preaching, summarized in Mark 1:15 and parallels, and the "generation passages" of Matthew 10:23; Mark 9:1, 13:10, 14:62 and parallels, are established from historical criticism as part of the primary and therefore authentic preaching from Jesus. Too, it is clear that the early church taught that Jesus would manifest Himself once again (the Parousia) at the End-time within the near future. Therefore, as a literary term, "Kingdom of God" from the standpoint of intentionality should be understood to have a one-to-one correspondence in history. In spite of its scope and unknown qualities, "Kingdom of God" must not be stripped of its temporality. And for Jesus a literal manifestation of the Kingdom was to take place within the period of a generation.

Objections to this conclusion assume that if Jesus predicted a temporal end in the near future His teachings

are based upon false presuppositions and thereby invalidated. To solve the dilemma of the "mistaken Jesus" some propose that Jesus predicted an indefinite interval before the End. Others suggest that the imminent perspective is due to a misunderstanding of the early church or that Jesus was concerned with the certainty of the End or with salvation rather than with time. A number of writers propose that Jesus as a prophet foreshortened the future as prophets were inclined to do. Still others suggest that the validity of Jesus' message was not determined by its genesis, or that His eschatological/apocalyptic language is myth, symbol or form used only to communicate the spiritual essence of His message.

However, not any of these views satisfactorily resolves the dilemma, although some fine insights are offered. Instead, the key to understanding Jesus' prediction of an imminent End is to be found within the Old Testament prophetic tradition. Jesus need not be exonerated from having made a mistake; as God's Messenger He falls within the prophetic tradition and should be permitted prophetic allowances. One of the first titles applied to Jesus was that of "Prophet," a title He did not reject. That He is presented by the Synoptic writers as "more than a prophet" is clear. The Synoptic use of multiple Christological titles implies that they are complementary rather than competitive.

Old Testament prophecy is to be understood in the light of the dialectic between grace and judgment as Yahweh revealed Himself to man. God's judgment is seen to be tempered by His grace, as He, the sovereign God, flexible and compassionate on occasions changed His mind (nacham) and altered the course of His prescribed judgment (though not His ultimate will) for the sake of mankind. A study of nacham within the Old Testament illustrates the diversity of this flexible aspect of God's character.

Old Testament prophets, though intimately related to God and intensely involved in their messages, were not responsible for the fulfilment of their predictions. They

were sometimes dismayed and disappointed by the lack of literal fulfilment, but recognized, nonetheless, that Yahweh alone determined the degree and the time of fulfilment. Jesus Himself acknowledged God's determinative role in deciding the exact time for fulfilling prophecy (Mark 13:32). It is from this perspective that Jesus' prediction of an imminent end should be understood. God is patient and desires that all might have an opportunity to repent (cf. 2 Peter 3:8-10), and perhaps the plea of God's people persuades Him to grant one more year before he inaugurates the End (Luke 13:8f.). This hermeneutical process, while acknowledging the contributions of historical and literary critical studies, applies as well the principle that scripture can interpret scripture.

What then can one make of Jesus' ethics if He be understood as God's prophet who proclaimed that the Kingdom of God would be literally established within the period of a generation? Dividing Jesus' teachings into "eschatological" and "non-eschatological" ethics is unnecessary in the attempt to retain the relevancy of His teachings. Whatever Jesus said was related to His Kingdom preaching, and while eschatology might not have determined the content of most of His ethical precepts, the eschatological element must be recognized. The unity of Jesus' ethics must be retained.

Although the combination of an imminent expectation and permanent ethics may appear to be incompatible, by way of analogy it can be seen that John the Baptist, the Apocalypticists, the Qumran Community and the Apostle Paul--though quite different in many ways--held together this same combination. A study of each of these verifies that Jesus was not alone in proclaiming an imminent Eschaton while proposing an ethic which is relevant for any age. Jesus believed the End was about to come, but those who lived during the interval, which could extend as long as a generation, could readily apply his moral stipulations and principles. Of course, Jesus' eschatology influenced the radical nature of His ethics and helps to explain why



He was silent on many issues. Too, Jesus' eschatological terminology, relative to His prediction, as with Old Testament prophets, was often symbolically expressed. Such language, however, did not diminish the note of temporality, but only intensified it.

Scholars who draw attention to Jesus' call to repentance in preparation for a temporal Kingdom of God are correct to point out that Jesus' ethic is one of preparation for God's coming. If one is to be received by God and accepted into His Kingdom, a change must take place. Repentance is necessary to receiving forgiveness and being established as a "righteous one" for reception into the Kingdom of God. The element of urgency is apparent, for God, who tempers His judgment by His grace and delays His Kingdom for the sake of man, may choose to come soon!



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## PREFACE

The teachings of Jesus within the Synoptic Gospels continues to command the attention of New Testament students, and rightly so. My own interest in the study of the Relationship Between Eschatology and Ethics in the Synoptic Tradition began during my B.D. studies, 1964-67, and later intensified as I studied in 1968-69 under Professor Oscar Cullmann, Basel University. Over the years I have attempted to keep abreast of key contributions to this area, and am indebted to many scholars for their insights. I trust that this study will add somewhat to those contributions.

I thank my Lord, to whom I constantly turned as I struggled with these issues, for the privilege of studying His word. And, of course, there are many professors, colleagues and friends without whose encouragement I never would have dared the research. I am grateful for his guidance to the late Professor William Barclay, with whom I began this project. For critically reading portions of the thesis, I must thank Old Testament Professors Dr. Kenneth Eakins and Dr. Robert Cate, my colleagues for two years at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary; Dr. Richard Hiers, Professor of Religion, University of Florida; Dr. James Blevins, Professor of New Testament, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; and Dr. Jack Sanders, Professor of Religion, University of Oregon. And I am especially indebted to Rev. John Riches of Glasgow University for reading two drafts of the dissertaion and for making valuable suggestions.

I must also thank typists Joyce Bunton and June Cruz, and proofreaders Dr. Margaret Grissom, Ann Middleton and Dr. Charles Bush. My wife, Janice, typed, proofread and encouraged me through the entire endeavor over the past several years. It is with pleasure that I dedicate this work to Janice, WITHOUT WHOM NEVER and to our children, Thomasin and Paul Leon, WITHOUT WHOM SOONER--BUT WITH LESS JOY!

Unless otherwise noted, biblical references are from the Revised Standard Version.

## INTRODUCTION

### Scope, Purpose and Proposals

The scope of this study includes summaries and evaluations of major contributions to a study of "The Relationship Between Eschatology and Ethics in the Synoptic Gospels," and proposals which deal with some of the more pressing problems related to the study. The summaries are categorized according to dominant interpretations of the teaching of the Kingdom of God as attributed to Jesus in the Synoptic tradition. These are: The Kingdom of God Viewed as Present or Interpreted as Spiritual; The Kingdom of God Viewed as Future; and The Kingdom of God Viewed as Both Present and Future. The summaries of positions held by some of the key scholars are presented under the three major categories. This approach offers one an overview of dominant positions held or proposed from the turn of the century until the present.

After a consideration of the dominant views related to a study of the relationship between eschatology and ethics in the teaching of Jesus, a study is made to determine whether or not Jesus did, in fact, predict a literal and temporal coming of the Kingdom of God. Thereafter, in the light of the conclusion that Jesus did proclaim the imminence of a temporal End, several basic proposals are developed with a view toward resolving some of the problems and dilemmas associated with the study. These proposals constitute the contributions of this study to an understanding of "The Relationship Between Eschatology and Ethics in the Teaching of Jesus." The proposals are: 1) Jesus' prediction of an imminent Eschaton as attributed to Him by the Synoptic writers was actually proclaimed by Jesus, and as the Prophet of Yahweh, Jesus

obediently proclaimed the message that Yahweh was about to establish His Kingdom. 2) The disjunction between Jesus' prediction and its fulfilment must be understood in the light of the sovereignty of Yahweh, who can change His mind, as a study of Old Testament prophecy reveals. 3) Jesus, therefore, was not mistaken in His proclamation, and New Testament Christology is not undermined by the failure of His prophecy. Rather, man is now living in an indefinite "grace period." 4) Jesus' ethics were clearly affected by His eschatology, but the fact of His unfulfilled prophecy does not invalidate His ethics as a whole. By way of analogy, it can be seen that other individuals and groups, such as John the Baptist, the Apocalypticists, the Qumran Community and the Apostle Paul, promoted "on-going ethics" in spite of their claims that the End was imminent.

### Definitions

Eschatology. Eschatology and eschatological are cognates of eschaton which means the end.<sup>1</sup> It has been debated whether "eschatology" should or could be given a strict definition such as "the doctrine of the End." If so, it would refer to the end time or the phenomena associated with the consummation of this age such as that described in the apocalyptic literature.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>W. Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, translated by W.F. Arndt and F.W. Gingrich (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 313.

<sup>2</sup>Gerhard von Rad, Old Testament Theology. The Theology of Israel's Prophetic Traditions. Vol. II. translated by D.M.G. Stalker (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1965), p. 114. Von Rad refers to S. Mowinckel, who limits eschatology to writings which refer to the end of this world, thus limiting the term to the Apocalyptic writings, and to G. Hölscher, who also restricts the term to refer to the end of this world. Von Rad believes that such a narrow definition excludes it from the prophetic message. He comments: "The characteristic feature of the prophet's



George E. Ladd sees eschatology as referring to God's redemption, which is shown in His coming in both judgment and salvation, whether or not an end to this world or of history is expected.<sup>1</sup> I.H. Marshall, in a discussion of the difficulties involved in the use of the term "eschatology" and its cognates, concludes that "properly defined and carefully used, the word directs us to an important characteristic of biblical theology--its forward look and the consciousness that the promises of God regarding the future are already being fulfilled in the present."<sup>2</sup>

The broadening of the meaning of eschatology is evident among those who define it as an "existential time of decision." Rudolf Bultmann holds that "The only true interpretation of eschatology is one which makes it a real experience of human life."<sup>3</sup> Yet, such a deduction eliminates the temporal quality of eschatology. Oscar Cullmann observes that while the end time is a time of decision, "every time of decision is not an end time." Cullmann emphasizes end time in the temporal sense of final time, which is certainly different from speaking existentially of the end time.<sup>5</sup>

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message is its actuality, its expectation of something soon to happen. This should be the touchstone of the use of the term 'eschatological.'" Ibid., p. 115.

<sup>1</sup> George E. Ladd, "The Origin of Apocalyptic in Biblical Religion," The Evangelical Quarterly XXX (1958): 140, fn. 1.

<sup>2</sup> I. Howard Marshall, "Slippery Words; I. Eschatology," The Expository Times 89 (1977-78): 268.

<sup>3</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, "A Reply to J. Schniewind," in Kerygma and Myth, ed., H.W. Bartsch and trans., R.H. Fuller (New York: Harper & Row, Pub., Inc., 1961), p. 106.

<sup>4</sup> Oscar Cullmann, Salvation in History, translated by Sidney G. Sowers (London: S.C.M. Press Ltd., 1967), p. 79.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 203f.

Eschatology in the broader sense can include a consideration of both the phenomena which take place prior to the End and the End itself. "Eschatology" defined as a "study of the Last Things" implies that more than one happening is going to take place, whereas a definition of "eschaton" must include the thought of the end of time and history as perceived by man.

It should be kept in mind, as Richard Hiers has suggested, that "eschatology" and the "Kingdom of God" are not synonymous terms. As Hiers observes, within the Synoptic tradition there are what might be called eschatological phenomena which describe the period before the End, such as actions and events before the Kingdom comes.<sup>1</sup> But Jesus Himself did not have an eschatological system, such as "Realized," "Inaugurated," "Spiritual," or "Future Eschatology." These are accommodating terms devised by those who attempt an explanation of Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of God.

Within this study, the term "eschatology" is used to refer to the Synoptic presentation of Jesus' proclamation of the Endtime, particularly as understood by His teaching about the Kingdom of God and the Parousia. (Consummation, the coming of the Son of Man and Judgment are also used to refer to this temporal event.) These terms and their significance for the preaching of Jesus regarding the Eschaton are addressed in this study.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Hiers, The Kingdom of God in the Synoptic Tradition (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1970), pp. 93ff.

<sup>2</sup> "Apocalyptic language" should not be equated with Jesus' eschatology. Rather the phrase is descriptive of a language type in Jesus' day and was employed by Him on occasions to graphically portray aspects of His beliefs regarding a temporal eschaton. This is particularly true within the Synoptic Apocalypse. While such language should not be understood literally, it can be descriptive of a predicted event to take place in historical time. As Douglas Ezell states, "The apocalyptic . . . images allow

Ethics. Ashley Montague defines ethics as the department of human behavior relating to morals or the principles of human duty. The word is derived from Greek and means manners, the manners of people, their way of life. In its more academic sense it is usually understood as the study of wisdom in conduct, of right conduct.<sup>1</sup>

Harold Titus says that "Ethics is the study which deals with human conduct insofar as this conduct may be considered right or wrong."<sup>2</sup> Christian ethics, even more specifically, is defined by D.M. Baillie as ". . . faith and love towards God as He comes to us through our relationships with our fellow-creatures--in short, 'to glorify God and to enjoy him for ever.'"<sup>3</sup> In the teaching of Jesus it is clear that He was concerned with the way man loved God and his fellow man. If man loves God and his neighbor as he should, he is acting properly--rightly--toward his fellow man and is in right relationship with God.

The objective of this study is to evaluate the way Jesus' ethical teachings are related to His message of the Eschaton (Kingdom of God, Consummation, Judgment, Parousia, coming of the Son of Man--phrases used to speak of different aspects of this single event). A study will be made to determine to what extent Jesus' ethics were influenced by His eschatological message and to what extent His unfulfilled prophecy of the End affects a modern understanding of His ethics.

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the New Testament writers to convey the meaning of the divine transcendence within the historical situation without denying the mystery of the eternal nor depreciating the present struggle of the temporal." Douglas Ezell, "Eschatology and Ethics in The New Testament," Southwestern Journal of Theology 22 (2, 1980): 74.

<sup>1</sup> Ashley Montague, Immortality, Religion, and Morals (New York: Hawthorne Books, Inc., 1971), p. 40.

<sup>2</sup> Harold H. Titus, Ethics for Today (New York: American Book Company, 1957), p. 10.

<sup>3</sup> D.M. Baillie, God Was in Christ (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948), p. 44.

### Methods and Problems

Within a study of "Eschatology and Ethics in the Synoptic Gospels" the major concerns of most scholars center upon 1) Jesus' eschatology, 2) the degree to which Jesus' eschatology influenced His ethics, and 3) the relevance of His message, with attention given to His so-called "unfulfilled prediction." Sharp differences in interpretation result among scholars as they apply their tools of New Testament criticism and their hermeneutic principles to pertinent texts and issues.

Before the nature and influence of the Synoptic presentation of Jesus' eschatological proclamation can be determined, a position must be established regarding the authenticity of the Synoptic material. Obviously one's conclusions as to the relevancy of the eschatological proclamation attributed to Jesus are vitally related to whether one believes that the eschatological thought actually came from Jesus, from the Synoptic writers or from the early church. The nature, force and relevancy of the eschatology attributed to Jesus can be dealt with once the source of the eschatological proclamation has been designated.

Therefore, one's methodology must first settle the issue of authenticity--i.e., one must answer the question, "How reliable is the Synoptic tradition?" Once that question is answered, one is free and obligated to explore the nature, force and relevancy of Jesus' eschatology in a study that should employ a method for analyzing scripture in context and for relating the findings to a total hermeneutic process.

The Authenticity of the Synoptic Presentation. The basic critical approaches to studying the Synoptic tradition are textual, historical and literary criticism.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See the articles by Donald Guthrie and Gordon D. Fee in Biblical Criticism: Historical, Literary and Textual,



Each method is supported by sets of principles and presuppositions, although there is some overlapping among them. It is also apparent that scholars seldom rely exclusively upon a single critical area for determining authenticity. Rather, they appeal to various critical tools, now available to the New Testament student, in order to 1) determine the origin and original wording of the saying, 2) examine the context of the passage, and 3) analyze the nature and force of the literary form.<sup>1</sup> As an example of approaches, the redactional critic may concentrate upon the theological interpretation of a Synoptic writer, but the critic's special interest would not cause him to exclude insights learned from form criticism also of the historical critical discipline.

It is obvious that each "editor" of the Gospels was a theologian in his own right. Nevertheless, they were all committed to the task of presenting to their own audiences more than their personal opinions as to how Jesus' proclamation and the events in His ministry could meet needs and attend to problems. The Synoptic writers presented their Gospels in varied forms<sup>2</sup> and through such

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by R.K. Harrison, B.K. Waltke, D. Guthrie and G.D. Fee (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978). For a review of major concerns in New Testament criticism and hermeneutics, see, I.H. Marshall, ed., New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1977). And for an appeal to conservative scholars to appreciate and utilize the contributions of the critical approaches for an understanding of Jesus' teachings, see, George E. Ladd, The New Testament and Criticism (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1967).

<sup>1</sup> For a brief history of literary criticism, including explanations and examples of the methodology, see, William A. Beardslee, Literary Criticism of the New Testament (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970).

<sup>2</sup> The forms, as investigated and explained by Martin Dibelius and Rudolf Bultmann, are succinctly presented in Edgar V. McKnight, What is Form Criticism? (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969). For detailed analyses see Martin Dibelius, From Tradition to Gospel,

literary forms forcefully presented the Gospel to the early church. Therefore, the literary forms within the Synoptic tradition bear the imprint of the redactors<sup>1</sup> as well as the influence of literary tradition within the early church.

Certainly such compositions necessitated modifying and interpreting Jesus' sayings in order to meet the needs of the early church. However, as Bruce Metzger says,

The inference drawn by some form critics . . . that such interpretation has deformed the original meaning of Jesus' teachings is not justified by the literary argument. Reinterpretation and development need not involve deformation, but may be entirely homogeneous with the original meaning, whose vitality is thus unfolded for the benefit of the whole church.<sup>2</sup>

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translated by Bertram Lee Woolf (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935) and Rudolf Bultmann, History of the Synoptic Tradition, translated by John Marsh (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1963).

<sup>1</sup>The history, significance and methodology of redaction criticism is set forth in Norman Perrin, What Is Redaction Criticism? (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969).

<sup>2</sup>Bruce Metzger, The New Testament, Its Background, Growth, and Content (New York: Abingdon Press, 1965), pp. 86f. Metzger suggests that two important factors prevented the "free invention of gospel traditions": 1) Eye witnesses would have checked such distortions; 2) the influence of the rabbinical method of teaching would have impressed the disciples to guarantee the fidelity of Jesus' teachings. Besides these a priori considerations, Metzger observes that internal evidence also supports authenticity. For example, the parables show the tenacity with which the writers retained Jesus' words as they adapted the parables to meet church needs. The fact that there are no parables attributed to the apostles indicates that the method belonged to Jesus and was not the invention of the church. Further, not any of the great teachings from the apostles or from Paul are placed in the mouth of Jesus. And the writers attributed to Jesus sayings which would have been increasingly embarrassing to the church. For example, the "generation" passages (Matt. 10:23 and Mk. 9:1), "both of which seem to predict the imminent end of the age, were retained despite the embarrassment that must have been felt increasingly as time passed without their being

The disciples of Jesus would have begun the process of modifying and interpreting the teachings of Jesus. While the disciples would have been familiar with the responsibility of a student faithfully to reproduce his master's teaching, there is no reason to assume that Jesus' disciples were themselves formally schooled in such a tradition. In fact, the biblical evidence reveals that the religious professionals looked upon Jesus' little band as being uneducated and untrained (Acts 4:13). Martin Hengel believes that there is no evidence that Jesus commanded His disciples to memorize prescribed instructions. Rather, Jesus demanded obedience in the light of the imminent coming of the End. Therefore, "When God's rule is at the gates there ceases to be any point in creating a tradition."<sup>1</sup>

It is logical that the disciples would have related their own missionary task to Jesus' command that they "prepare for the service of the approaching rule of God."<sup>2</sup> Hengel suggests, for example, that in Mark's presentation of the appointment of the "Twelve" (Mk. 3:13f.), "even if the Evangelists' editorial hand can be clearly traced . . . the meaning and purpose of the call of the disciples is entirely faithfully reproduced in this summary. . . ."<sup>3</sup>

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fulfilled in the way that many thought they must be fulfilled. The early church could have allowed such sayings to fall into oblivion, yet these and others have been faithfully preserved despite probable strong pressures to modify or forget them." Ibid., pp. 87f.

<sup>1</sup> Martin Hengel, The Charismatic Leader and His Followers, translated by James Greig (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1981). p. 80.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 81. Hengel suggests that "The disciples were not instructed to reproduce Jesus' message as literally as possible, so that this may be the reason for the relatively early, almost inseparable fusion of their own material and Logia of Jesus." Ibid., p. 82.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 81.



It demands a good deal of faith in unverified presuppositions to accept the conclusions of a methodology that undermines and in some cases dissolves the testimony of the Synoptic presentation. Hengel's comment on this issue needs to be heard:

Strangely enough, the more skepticism about the Synoptic tradition develops into radicalism of the extremist kind, the greater is the tendency to indulge in imaginative hypotheses with regard to the history of primitive Christianity. One might well question whether this process should be equated with genuine progress of a scholarly kind.<sup>1</sup>

The burden of proof rests with those who would undermine the authenticity of Jesus' sayings by deriving their conclusions from a set of presuppositions designed to reconstruct the original settings and/or sayings, or to recover the atmosphere of the early church which would have given birth to such distorted statements. Such radical restructuring of the Synoptic presentation offers little help in understanding Jesus' proclamation. Even Joachim Jeremias, who applies a detailed methodology to determine the original audience and contexts of the parables attributed to Jesus, sounds a note of warning at this point in his acceptance of the following principle of method: "In the synoptic tradition it is the inauthenticity, and not the authenticity, of the sayings of Jesus that must be demonstrated."<sup>2</sup> The principle followed in this study will be to "treat the sayings attributed to Jesus as authentic unless there is clear reason to do otherwise."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 85.

<sup>2</sup>Joachim Jeremias, New Testament Theology: The Proclamation of Jesus, translated by John Bowden (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), p. 37.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. R.T. France, "The Authenticity of the Sayings of Jesus," in History, Criticism & Faith, ed. Colin Brown (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1976), p. 116. The article is a polemic against those who undermine the authenticity of Jesus' teachings, as well as an appeal



Jesus' Eschatological Message and the Problem of Relevancy. Scholars who deal with Jesus' message must concern themselves with the issues centering upon His eschatology. Simply put, one must determine the nature of Jesus' eschatology, i.e., was His eschatological language descriptive of a predicted temporal End to take place within the near future, or did He intend that His eschatological language be understood as "symbol," "myth," "form," for the purpose of communicating the spiritual essence of His message?

If the language is understood to mean a literal, temporal Kingdom to be established, there appears to be the problem of disjunction between Jesus' prediction and its fulfilment. Coupled with the problem of the unfulfilled prediction is the question of the validity and continued relevance of Jesus' message. Consequently, some serious Christological issues are raised. On the other hand, if Jesus' eschatology is interpreted as merely figuratively or spiritually, the concern is to determine the viability of such a view in the light of the understanding of biblical eschatology. Therefore, in a consideration of Jesus' eschatology, the first task is to determine from the historical critical approach what Jesus intended the phrase "Kingdom of God" to convey and how it was received and understood by His first hearers. The second task involves a critical aspect of the hermeneutical process; i.e., to determine the relevancy of Jesus' eschatology for today.

Norman Perrin has rightly seen the endeavor to understand Jesus' eschatology as an attempt to understand the "relationship between historical criticism and

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for the student to appreciate the Synoptic tradition as a reliable record of Jesus' proclamation. It is significant that France does not divorce his study from insights gained through the various critical approaches to the New Testament.

hermeneutics."<sup>1</sup> Understanding this relationship lies at the center of a study of eschatology and ethics in the teaching of Jesus. For this reason, Perrin's delineation of the issues should be studied.

Perrin accepts the following definition of hermeneutics offered by Wilhelm Dilthey and Rudolf Bultmann: "'die Kunstlehre des Verstehens schriftlich fixierter Lebensäusserungen' (the art of understanding expressions of life fixed in writing.)"<sup>2</sup> According to Perrin, the term, "Kingdom of God," should be viewed as a Lebensäusserung, i.e., an expression of life. The procedure for understanding any biblical "expression of life" is twofold: 1) Establish the historical understanding of the expression. This involves determining--insofar as possible--what the text was meant to say by the author and what the hearers actually understood him to say. 2) "Consider the text from the standpoint of its literary form and its language, and from the standpoint of the natural force and function of such a form and such a

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<sup>1</sup> Norman Perrin, "Eschatology and Hermeneutics: Reflections on Method in the Interpretation of the New Testament," Journal of Biblical Literature 93 (March 1974): 5. The key points of this article were expanded in, Norman Perrin, Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976).

<sup>2</sup> Perrin, "Eschatology and Hermeneutics," p. 5. Cf. Perrin, Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom, p. 2. Perrin expands his definition of hermeneutics as "the methodology for reaching an understanding of written texts held to meaningful. Among students of the New Testament it is in particular the methodology for reaching an understanding of the texts which make up the New Testament, or which can be reconstructed from the New Testament, as in the case of the teaching of Jesus." Cf. Rudolf Bultmann, "The Problem of Hermeneutics," in Essays Philosophical and Theological (London: S.C.M. Press, 1955), p. 234. Cf. Edward Schillebeeckx, who defines hermeneutics as "the science of explanation, which examines the prior factors necessary to achieving a hermeneusis or explanation (for instance, understanding of the Bible)." Edward Schillebeeckx, Jesus: An Experiment in Christology, translated by Hubert Hoskins (New York: The Seabury Press, 1979), p. 747.

language."<sup>1</sup>

For Perrin, literary criticism is essential to the hermeneutic process because "it is an important element in moving toward a historical understanding of the text, and also because it opens up new possibilities for a valid understanding of the text in a context different from its original historical context."<sup>2</sup> The final step in the hermeneutical process is the "act of interpretation." According to Perrin, it is the key step in the process since "it is proper to call the act of interpretation itself hermeneutics, because the other elements in the hermeneutical process, textual criticism, historical criticism, and literary criticism, are subordinate to it and designed only to serve it."<sup>3</sup> Perrin is right to emphasize the importance of "interpretation," for in the final analysis one is in search of meaning, truth, relevancy from the Synoptic presentation.

Perrin believes that careful attention to the total hermeneutic process will allow one to understand a text and enter into meaningful dialogue with it.<sup>4</sup> According to Perrin, Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer did not move adequately beyond the first step of this endeavor. For example, Johannes Weiss concluded from historical criticism that Jesus' understanding of eschatology (the Kingdom of God) was historically the same as that of the apocalypticists. He expected a literal End. The Kingdom of God, as a literary form thus required a one-to-one correspondence in history. However, Weiss admitted that such a concept had little hermeneutical significance, and

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<sup>1</sup>Perrin, "Eschatology and Hermeneutics," pp. 4ff., 14. See p. 14 for a summary statement of Perrin's methodology.

<sup>2</sup>Perrin, Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom, p. 9.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Perrin, "Eschatology and Hermeneutics," p. 5.

for purposes of relevancy he retreated to the interpretation of late nineteenth century theologians who promoted the concept of the Kingdom of God as the "highest good and the supreme ethical ideal." Weiss had been so influenced by his background that his historical critical conclusions did not affect his basic theology or personal religious life.<sup>1</sup>

Bultmann, on the other hand, comes to a different hermeneutical conclusion, although he also determined from historical criticism that Jesus' eschatology was essentially in line with Jewish eschatology, but with a difference. Jesus, to Bultmann, stressed the thought of man being "confronted by the immediacy of God and being challenged to decision." Therefore, the phrase, "Kingdom of God," as an "expression of life," in a hermeneutic endeavor, becomes Jesus' "vision of reality." Therefore, Bultmann could admit that Jesus made a mistake regarding the ultimate End, but conclude that it did not affect the validity of Jesus' "understanding of life." In this way Jesus' apocalyptic mythology becomes meaningful to men of any age.<sup>2</sup>

In his own consideration of the relationship between historical criticism and hermeneutics relative to Jesus' eschatology, Perrin proposes what he considers to be a step beyond Bultmann's contributions. This he does by introducing "literary criticism" into the discussion. Two aspects are crucial to his approach. First is the view that eschatological pronouncements functioned to evoke "a response on the part of the reader or hearer that another form would not have evoked." (Of course, this could be approached either from the viewpoint of Jesus' proclamation or from the writer's understanding of what Jesus meant as he--the writer--responded to the needs and concerns of his audience. However, the point of the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 7f.



discussion at hand, in respect to Perrin's view, centers upon a consideration of the term "Kingdom of God" as a forceful literary form.) For Perrin, therefore, there is a significant relationship between the literary form and hermeneutics.<sup>1</sup>

Perrin's next concern is to understand properly, from the literary perspective, the term "Kingdom of God" as a "symbol," although a Jewish apocalyptic symbol. To Perrin, "to consider the nature and function of kingdom of God as a symbol is one way of making progress beyond Bultmann in the discussion of the eschatology of Jesus."<sup>2</sup>

Perrin takes his understanding of "symbol" from Philip Wheelwright and Paul Ricoeur. Both men define symbol similarly although they use different terms. Basically, a symbol represents something else. It "can have a one-to-one relationship with that which it represents" (a "steno-symbol" for Wheelwright), or "it can have a set of meanings that can neither be exhausted nor adequately expressed by any one referent" (a "tensive symbol" for Wheelwright).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 9f. According to Perrin, Bultmann "tends not to be interested in literary form and language of a text as such, but wishes to move directly to the understanding of human existence in the world which is being expressed in the text, whatever the nature of its literary form and language." Bultmann's concern is with the dynamic interaction of text and interpreter as the interpreter questions the text concerning its understanding of human existence in the world, and as the interpreter in turn is questioned by the claims of the text regarding the possibilities of human existence in the world . . . . The interpreter interrogates the text, but 'in the interrogation of a text the interpreter must allow himself to be interrogated by the text, he must listen to its claims.'" Perrin, Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom, p. 11. For Perrin's analysis of Bultmann's interpretation of "apocalyptic mythology," see Ibid., pp. 71-80. Cf. Rudolf Bultmann, Glauben und Verstehen II. (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1952), pp. 226ff.

<sup>2</sup> Perrin, "Eschatology and Hermeneutics," p. 10.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 10f. Perrin says, "What for Wheelwright is a distinction between a 'steno-symbol' and

Perrin agrees that apocalyptic symbols are "steno-symbols," i.e., when the story of history was told in symbols each symbol corresponded to a person, thing or event in history--past, present or future. The ultimate question for this discussion is whether or not the symbol "Kingdom of God" is to be understood as a "steno-symbol" or a "tensive symbol." According to Perrin, the clue to answering this question is found in Jesus' refusal to give a sign. He cites Mark 8:11-13 as an authentic pericope.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, Jesus refused to give a sign, which was to be a one-to-one correspondence and, thus, the fulfilment of a "previously given apocalyptic symbol." To the apocalypticist a "literal intentionality is necessarily implied" in a one-to-one relationship. "But then," according to Perrin, "the steadfast refusal by Jesus to give a sign can be held to imply the opposite, viz, that the symbol 'kingdom of God' is a 'tensive symbol,' that its meaning is by no means exhausted by any 'literal intentionality.'"<sup>2</sup>

What does this mean for an interpretation of Jesus' eschatology? First of all, "the Kingdom of God" is to be understood as a "tensive symbol," or in Ricoeur's designations, it is to be viewed as a "true symbol," rather than as a sign.<sup>3</sup> Secondly, to accept the "Kingdom of God" as a true symbol means that one need not become involved in looking for signs of the End, but can busy himself with

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a 'tensive symbol' is for Ricoeur a distinction between a 'sign' and a 'symbol.'" Ibid., p. 11. See, Philip Wheelwright, Metaphor and Reality (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1962), p. 92, and Paul Ricoeur, The Symbolism of Evil (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), p. 15.

<sup>1</sup>For Perrin this means "(1) that it satisfies the criterion of dissimilarity--Jewish and Christian apocalyptic regularly gives signs--and (2) that it has multiple attestation in the tradition . . . ." Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

the task of exploring "the manifold ways in which the experience of God can become an existential reality to man."<sup>1</sup>

Perrin admits that he comes to the same understanding of Jesus' eschatology as Bultmann. But he feels that his proposal is an advance beyond Bultmann's view. Bultmann concluded from the historical critical approach that Jesus was mistaken in His expectation of the End, but by his hermeneutic method, Bultmann was able to argue for the validity of Jesus' understanding of life." Perrin contends that viewing Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of God "from the standpoint of a literary critical understanding of symbol and the function of symbol," allows for "an even more direct interpretation of the message of Jesus into our own time . . . ."<sup>2</sup>

Perrin is honest in his admission that he is uncertain as to the "kind of response" the symbol should evoke. This area is still open to investigation, and Perrin encourages New Testament scholars not to shy away from exploring the dimensions of this hermeneutical approach.<sup>3</sup>

Perrin's developed system, attended by functional terms and helpful suggestions, illustrates the importance of relating one's interpretation to his/her conclusions derived from an historical critical analysis of Jesus' eschatological proclamation as presented by the Synoptic writers. Most scholars who have studied the nature and force of the eschatological proclamation attributed to Jesus have not developed a system as discernible as Perrin's, but they are, nonetheless, concerned with the consequences of their studies. That is, for most, the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 13. Perrin comments: "That the symbol, 'kingdom of God,' in ancient Judaism had reference to the activity of God is fully established." Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 13f.



ultimate question is, "How relevant are the conclusions of a given study?" For example, this is precisely the point at which Schweitzer's view is attacked. Aside from the accusation that he did not adequately submit his study to the criteria of a sound biblical methodology, the primary criticism from New Testament scholars is that Schweitzer's conclusions leave one with a mistaken Jesus, whose ethic is viewed as limited to a brief crisis period of the early first century.

According to Perrin, an understanding of "Kingdom of God" as a "tensive symbol" permits exploration of God's varied activity among men at the existential level. Such an understanding also avoids a restrictive interpretation of the term which would limit its scope to one referent. However, while the interpreter should refrain from ascribing a fixed definition to "Kingdom of God," there should be no hesitation to believe as do Bultmann and others that Jesus anticipated it as a temporal phenomenon. Whatever "activity of God" or "existential encounter" one may describe in relation to the Kingdom of God, Jesus' understanding must be considered. While one may concede that "Kingdom of God" cannot be exhausted by a single referent, the note of "literal intentionality" should not be relinquished.

Perrin's proposal is one of many attempts to make "sense" out of Jesus' prediction of an imminent coming of the Kingdom of God. Several major attempts to solve the problem are detailed in this study, concluding with the proposal that the key to the issue is found within the Old Testament understanding of the sovereign Yahweh whose prophets proclaim His message with the understanding that He Himself determines the degree and time of fulfilment relative to His judgment and grace.

In order to explain significant contributions to and the state of research on the subject, this study includes summaries of the dominant schools of thought concerning the eschatology of Jesus, as well as the



attempts by certain thinkers to make relevant views derived from their analyses of pertinent biblical material. The tension within the hermeneutical process between critical biblical conclusions and application is a healthy one so long as a balance between them is maintained. However, there is considerable temptation to force an interpretation upon critical conclusions for the sake of "relevancy." At least it can be said of Schweitzer that he did not yield to this temptation. His was a consistent methodology, and he simply acknowledged the dichotomy between his conclusions about Jesus and His message and the spirit of Jesus which can influence and inspire man in any age. One can appreciate the integrity sustained throughout Schweitzer's presentation without agreeing totally with his methodology or conclusions. The same can be said of the approach taken by Jack Sanders, whose views are summarized and evaluated in this study.

One is challenged to handle responsibly the Synoptic presentation of Jesus' eschatology. There are, of course, numerous opinions as to what methodologies qualify as responsible attempts to discover Jesus' authentic eschatological message--as well as His own understanding of His proclamation and the understanding of that message held by His contemporaries. The history of New Testament studies reminds the student who ventures into this field of study that he/she does so with the knowledge that an awesome display of proposals designed to solve pertinent issues and problems have already been submitted by excellent scholars. Therefore, any further studies must appreciate and learn from all valid contributions.

However, one should not shy away from the discussion at hand, or from any subject, simply because many scholars have treated various aspects of it. In the first place, relatively few scholars have actually concentrated upon the major problems related to a study of the relationship between eschatology and ethics in the teaching of

Jesus. Secondly, there are some issues which demand further attention. These issues are 1) the claim that Jesus' ethic must be restricted to those of His own generation if He believed the End was imminent--such an ethic, some believe, is necessarily "other-worldly" in emphasis because of the influence of apocalypticism--and 2) the view that Jesus was mistaken if He predicted the imminent End, with the consequent contention that His eschatology must be reinterpreted and demythologized if His message is to have any relevance for modern man.

This study will show that although Jesus did, in fact, expect the End to come within the period of His own generation, He was not mistaken and that His ethics--for the most part--are still relevant. Therefore, for those of the konsequente Eschatologie persuasion, the dilemma of the so-called mistaken Jesus can be solved, and the charge that the consistent interpretation limits Jesus' ethic can be dissolved.<sup>1</sup> It is hoped that the proposals related to these important concerns will offer viable alternatives for dealing with some of the apparent problems and issues in a study of the relationship between eschatology and ethics in the teaching of Jesus.

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<sup>1</sup>By "consistent" here is meant that Jesus taught the imminence of the End within the near future and that all of His teachings are to be understood in the light of such preaching. To borrow a term does not demand acceptance of all the tenets with which the term has been associated, such as the belief held by some that Jesus' expectation of the imminent coming of the Kingdom ended in disappointment and disillusionment with His death upon a cross.

## CHAPTER I

### MAJOR VIEWS OF JESUS' PROCLAMATION OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Albert Schweitzer's "Thorough-going" or "konsequente Eschatologie"<sup>1</sup> was largely responsible for forcing New Testament scholars in their study of the Historical Jesus to take seriously His eschatology. As a result the portrait of Jesus as a nineteenth century thinker in first century clothing was essentially erased. Scholars began seriously to consider the nature and impact of both Jesus and His message. Primarily their studies centered upon an interpretation of Jesus' eschatological proclamation--as presented by the Synoptic writers--and the impact of such preaching upon His teachings, particularly His ethics.

Three positions have developed during the twentieth century. They are: The Kingdom of God is present or spiritual; the Kingdom is future; the Kingdom is both present and future. These views, accompanied by presentations of key scholars, will now be detailed and evaluated.

#### The Kingdom of God Viewed as Present or Interpreted as Spiritual--An Overview

The Role of Eschatology. Many of those who support the view of the Kingdom as present or interpret it as spiritual neither deny nor ignore the presence of eschatology in Jesus' preaching. Adolph Harnack, for example,

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<sup>1</sup>Schweitzer adopted this phrase to distinguish his position from that of Johannes Weiss, who, in Schweitzer's view, believed that only the "preaching" of Jesus should be interpreted from the viewpoint of eschatology. According to Schweitzer, Weiss "makes Jesus think and talk eschatologically without proceeding to the natural inference that His actions also must have been determined by eschatological ideas." Albert Schweitzer, Out of My Life and Thought, translated by C. T. Campion (New York: Henry Holt and Co., Inc., 1933), p. 48.



admits that the eschatological element must be recognized. Yet he refuses to believe that eschatology could have either helped to determine the nature of Jesus' ethical message or served as an ethical sanction. Among the several appraisals from this school, Harnack reckons Jesus' eschatological message as the "husk of the kernel." And he "shucks" off the eschatological form from what he believes to be Jesus' real message. Harnack admits that Jesus was actually responsible for propagating the idea that the Kingdom was imminent, but for Harnack such a futuristic expectation of the Kingdom became outdated in the first century.<sup>1</sup>

What seems to be Harnack's casual dismissal of Jesus' eschatological message results from his belief that the power of the Kingdom of God can be appropriated by man in any age. Therefore, an emphasis upon the future coming of the Kingdom would undermine the Kingdom's present blessings. To Harnack, "the eschatological view must logically depreciate every blessing which can be possessed in the present life."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Adolph von Harnack, What is Christianity? translated by Thomas B. Saunders, 3rd ed. rev. (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1912), pp. 12ff., 57-62. Note: This book is based on lectures delivered 1899-1900. Cf. Thomas Walker, The Teaching of Jesus and the Jewish Teaching of His Age (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1923), p. 107. He uses the same terminology as Harnack.

<sup>2</sup> Adolph von Harnack, History of Dogma Vol. I, translated by Neil Buchanan from the 3rd German ed. (London: Williams and Norgate, 1905), p. 130. Cf. Hastings Rashdall, Conscience and Christ: Six Lectures on Christian Ethics (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916), pp. 55f. Rashdall, in his criticism of the "Eschatologists," claims that they "see in our Lord's teaching nothing but a piece of tawdry apocalyptic romance of no more present spiritual significance than the expectation of Nero's reappearance, or the vision in the book of Enoch about the stars which became bulls and the cows which gave birth to elephants." Ibid., pp. 55f. Rashdall, while in agreement with Dobschütz's theory of "transmuted eschatology," emphasizes the "present and spiritual" interpretation of the Kingdom of God. Ibid., pp. 57ff.



The view of Walter Rauschenbusch is very similar. He believes that the power of the Kingdom is both available and relevant to modern man, and he is convinced that the only way the Kingdom of God can "become the religious property of the modern world" is to "slough off apocalypticism."<sup>1</sup> Some of this school believe that such an interpretation is in essential agreement with the trend set by Jesus. For example, A.B. Bruce believes that Jesus Himself, as seen from the perspective of Luke's Gospel, established the doctrine of the Kingdom of God "on a higher plane than that of vulgar expectation."<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, scholars of this persuasion do not completely dismiss from Jesus' message the role of eschatology. For instance, according to William Sanday, the real importance of the eschatology of the Gospels lies not in its predictive aspect, but as that element which "supplied the forms under which our Lord expressed His conception of His own person and Mission."<sup>3</sup> Therefore, Jesus

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<sup>1</sup>Walter Rauschenbusch, Christianizing the Social Order (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1912), p. 56. Rauschenbusch believes that Christians "must cease to put their hope in salvation by catastrophe and learn to recognize and apply the law of development in human life." Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>A.B. Bruce, The Kingdom of God (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1893), p. 51. Note: Bruce, a contemporary of Harnack, Albrecht Ritschl and Johannes Weiss, presents a more conservative interpretation than either Harnack or Ritschl and actually moves close to a "synthesis" position on the Kingdom of God, i.e. that the Kingdom was present during Jesus' ministry but would be fulfilled in the future. But his application is that of the so-called "Liberal School." Bruce shows that he is aware of the rising influence of Weiss. He remarks: "Students of the works of this distinguished theologian must be on their guard against his bias as an interpreter . . . ." Ibid., p. 44, fn. 1.

<sup>3</sup>William Sanday, "The Apocalyptic Element in the Gospels," The Hibbert Journal 10 (Oct. 1911): 106. To the credit of Professor Sanday, he acknowledges the influence of apocalypticism upon Jesus, and he accepts the "future sayings" of the Kingdom as authentically from Jesus. Ibid., p. 101.

gave to the apocalyptic form a "new turn and new significance."<sup>1</sup> A.C. Zenos observes that Jesus made apocalypticism useful by accepting it as the vehicle for delivering His ethical and spiritual message.<sup>2</sup>

Some from this school feel that the Gospel writers heightened the apocalyptic note in the message of Jesus.<sup>3</sup> At any rate, they believe it a mistake to take literally the eschatology of the Synoptics, a mistake made by the early church in its expectation of an imminent Parousia, i.e., a "literal fulfilment of the details of the ancient apocalyptic visions."<sup>4</sup> Rather, these scholars generally agree that the eschatological message of Jesus must be taken symbolically, as background and secondary. As a case in point, Emmet believes that if the eschatological sayings are taken figuratively rather than literally, then two major problems can be solved: 1) Jesus' message does not have to be limited to His own day; and 2) one does not have to admit, consequently, that Jesus' life was based on a "fundamental error."<sup>5</sup> Those of this thought insist, therefore, that Jesus' message went beyond the apocalyptic

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 85. Cf. Rauschenbusch, Christianizing the Social Order, p. 57. He claims that Jesus accepted the "Kingdom idea" of His day, as a son and not a slave, and refashioned it with sovereign freedom."

<sup>2</sup> Andrew C. Zenos, The Plastic Age of the Gospel: A Manual of New Testament Theology (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1927), pp. 102f.

<sup>3</sup> Cyril W. Emmet, The Eschatological Question in the Gospels (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1911), pp. 57ff. Walter Rauschenbusch, Christianity and the Social Crisis (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1909), pp. 62f.

<sup>4</sup> William N. Clarke, An Outline of Christian Theology (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1898), p. 441. Note: Clarke proposes that Jesus' prediction was fulfilled at Pentecost in the coming of the Holy Spirit. Ibid. Cf. Charles A. Briggs, The Ethical Teaching of Jesus (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1904), pp. 65, 276. According to Clarke, "we may stand firmly on the conviction that whatever the kingdom was to be, it came." William N. Clarke, The Ideal of Jesus (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911), pp. 69f.

<sup>5</sup> Emmet, The Eschatological Question in the Gospels,

structure. As Zenos remarks, "Outwardly much of what he says is apocalyptic in language and form, but its inner purport is centered about ethical and spiritual values."<sup>1</sup> Walter F. Adeney contends that it was not the intention of Jesus to establish a literal temporal Kingdom, but, as can be determined from His ministry, Jesus fulfilled His plan to establish a spiritual, inward Kingdom in the lives of men.<sup>2</sup> According to Clarke, this contrasted to the eschatological expectation of Jesus' day.<sup>3</sup> A.B.D. Alexander, in agreement with this view, concludes that the Kingdom of God became present in a "real sense," as the "reign of God in the hearts of men."<sup>4</sup>

The caution of those within this school in their approach toward the eschatological message of Jesus is understandable in the light of their desire to make Jesus' message of the Kingdom and His ethical teachings relevant to modern man. There is the fear that if the eschatological message of the Synoptics is taken too literally the theory of Interimsethik would have to be considered seriously as the correct interpretation of the Synoptics, in which case Jesus' ethic would be rendered impractical

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pp. 54-60, 66-77. Emmet feels that some light can also be thrown on certain of Jesus' sayings if eschatology is understood symbolically. Ibid., pp. 57ff.

<sup>1</sup> Zenos, The Plastic Age of the Gospel, p. 105.

<sup>2</sup> Walter F. Adeney, The Theology of the New Testament (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1894), p. 21. Cf. G.B. Stevens, The Teaching of Jesus (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1901), pp. 64f. Also, Bruce, The Kingdom of God, p. 59. To Bruce, the Kingdom is spiritual, near men, "yea in their hearts; there if anywhere."

<sup>3</sup> Clarke, The Ideal of Jesus, pp. 69ff.

<sup>4</sup> A.B.D. Alexander, Christianity and Ethics; A Handbook of Christian Ethics (London: Duckworth and Co., 1914), p. 136. Cf. L.H. Marshall, The Challenge of New Testament Ethics (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1947), p. 28.



and irrelevant for modern man,<sup>1</sup> and Jesus would have to be labeled as a "false prophet."<sup>2</sup> But these problems can be resolved, if one does not attribute to Jesus' eschatological message any degree of validity beyond its function as a mode to deliver His real message; or if one interprets it symbolically, so that light can be shed upon His essential message.

The Kingdom and Human Response. Advocates of this school tie Kingdom possession and appropriation of Kingdom power to human acceptance and to the Kingdom's progress. For example, Benjamin W. Robinson assumes if man receives the Kingdom within his heart, it is also appropriate to believe that "the supremacy of God will come progressively to fruition."<sup>3</sup> According to William Sanday, the idea of progressive growth was a special insight held by Jesus who foresaw the "inevitable and continuous growth" of the Kingdom.<sup>4</sup> And Newman Smyth believes the idea is highly ethical since the Kingdom is viewed as continuing to come

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<sup>1</sup> A.B.D. Alexander, "The Kingdom of God and the Ethic of Jesus," Expository Times 40 (Oct. 1928 - Sept. 1929): 74f. Cf. Lindsay Dewar, An Outline of New Testament Ethics (London: Univ. of London Press, Ltd., 1949), p. 58. Dewar believes that the Interimsethik theory "deprives the ethical teaching of the Gospels of any real relevance or authority for subsequent generations."

<sup>2</sup> Alexander, Christianity and Ethics, p. 135.

<sup>3</sup> Benjamin W. Robinson, The Sayings of Jesus; Their Background and Interpretation (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1930), p. 205; cf. pp. 216ff. Cf. Adeney, The Theology of the New Testament. To him, the concept of progress was original with Jesus. Ibid., p. 22. He also believes the Kingdom will continue to progress and eventually encompass the earth. Ibid., p. 24. Cf. Rauschenbusch, Christianity and the Social Crisis, p. 59f. He too believes Jesus preferred the view of "evolutionary progress" over apocalypticism.

<sup>4</sup> William Sanday, Outlines of the Life of Christ (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2nd rev. ed., 1917), pp. 84f. Cf. Ezra P. Gould, The Biblical Theology of the New Testament (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1901). Gould agrees that the Kingdom of God is to be culminated through a process of sophisticated growth. He contends that through the parables the Kingdom's growth is compared to the "sowing and growth of seed." The growth will take



through "moral forces." He suggests that "this process of the gradual spiritualization of life is to be conceived as a purely religious, ethical process . . . ." <sup>1</sup> It is at this point, so Smyth believes, that Jesus' view of eschatology differs from that of the contemporary apocalyptists. They simply failed to recognize the reality of moral progress. <sup>2</sup>

It is logical that a number within this group establish a close relationship between the Kingdom of God and the Church. Thomas Walker, for example, believes the Church is, in fact, the "Kingdom in this world." <sup>3</sup> Therefore, according to Walker's view, it becomes the responsibility of the Church in this age to spread the Kingdom, and the individual finds his role in relation to the Kingdom's progress within the Church. The Kingdom grows

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place during hard times (tares), but "in the nature of things, growth is a slow process, not an unsure process." The parable of the gradual leavening of the lump of dough also illustrates that there takes place during this gradual growth of the Kingdom "a process of infusion, of influence." Ibid., pp. 25f. See also, S.J. Bonsirven, Theology of the New Testament, translated by S.F.L. Tye (Westminster: The Newman Press, 1963), p. 42. Bonsirven believes that although the Kingdom will not be fulfilled until the time when the Messiah comes to reign, in the meantime the "interplay of human effort and divine action produces a constant growth of the kingdom and of the earthly society which is an incarnation of it . . . ."

<sup>1</sup>Newman Smyth, Christian Ethics (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903), p. 107, cf. pp. 106ff.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. See pp. 96-108.

<sup>3</sup>Walker, The Teaching of Jesus and the Jewish Teaching of His Age, p. 106. Cf. Bruce, The Kingdom of God, p. 266. Bruce suggests that since the Church, as well as the Kingdom, was founded by Christ "it should be practically identical with the Kingdom of God." Bruce adds the interesting note that there may be some who are not in the Church who may be in the Kingdom. Ibid. See also Stevens, The Teaching of Jesus, pp. 63f., who suggests that those who respond to the Kingdom constitute the Church, but the two are not to be equated. To Stevens, the Kingdom of God for Jesus was "something more spiritual than any outward organization could ever be." George B. Stevens, The Theology of the New Testament (New York:

through the dedication of the Church,<sup>1</sup> and as man performs the will of God, the Kingdom moves toward its consummation.<sup>2</sup>

Alexander believes man is able to assist the gradual growth of the Kingdom by working for the betterment of the world.<sup>3</sup> And, according to Stevens, "The Kingdom comes in proportion as God's will is done among men." He believes, consequently, that "the perfect doing of God's will by men would be the perfection of the kingdom."<sup>4</sup> The Kingdom of God, as Rauschenbusch understands it, for example, "is a historical force now at work in humanity." That is, with each step of human progress, the Kingdom moves "toward a social order which will but guarantee to all personalities their free and highest developments."<sup>5</sup> Rauschenbusch believes the Kingdom and man are dependent upon each other; i.e. the Kingdom is dependent upon man's ethical response for its progress, and man is dependent upon the Kingdom's ethical power.<sup>6</sup> According to Clarke,

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Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899), p. 31. Cf. Albrecht Ritschl, Die christliche Lehre von der Rechtfertigung und Versöhnung. Vol. II (Bonn: Vonn Adolph Marcus, 4th ed., 1895), p. 272. Ritschl believes the Kingdom consists of those who believe in Christ.

<sup>1</sup>Walker, The Teaching of Jesus and the Jewish Teaching of His Age, pp. 122ff. Note: Walker is of the opinion, however, that it is very likely that Jesus expected The Society of the Kingdom of God to spread so rapidly that the Kingdom would be consummated in one generation. Ibid., p. 125.

<sup>2</sup>Briggs, The Ethical Teaching of Jesus, p. 40.

<sup>3</sup>Alexander, Christianity and Ethics, p. 137.

<sup>4</sup>Stevens, The Theology of the New Testament, p. 35.

<sup>5</sup>Walter Rauschenbusch, A Theology for the Social Gospel, (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1917), p. 165.

<sup>6</sup>Walter Rauschenbusch, "The Kingdom of God," The Kingdom, I, No. 1 (August 1907). From Rauschenbusch Scrapbook, 1903-07, Sharpe Collection.

the interpretation of the Kingdom of God as a social and ethical ideal includes a principle of the Kingdom which "worthily meets the comprehensive need of man, for it provides for a life in which ethics and religion, personal character and social mission, all come fully to their own."<sup>1</sup>

Ethical Sanctions. Adeney and others within this school suggest that man is to work for the Kingdom, receive his power from the Kingdom, and strive toward the Kingdom, which is the "highest good," the summum bonum.<sup>2</sup> But what motivates a man to respond to the Kingdom, to live responsibly toward God? Several sanctions are submitted. Man is motivated by the desire or demand to imitate God (Mark 5:43-48);<sup>3</sup> by the Kingdom itself, which motivates and compels man through love;<sup>4</sup> by the message of mercy and the Fatherhood of God;<sup>5</sup> and/or by the desire to live right for the sake of Christ.<sup>6</sup> Eschatology is not listed as a major sanction.

Concluding Observations. Some basic proposals of this school, therefore, are: The Kingdom of God is present, and it is progressing gradually through the world. It is

<sup>1</sup>Clarke, The Ideal of Jesus, p. 95.

<sup>2</sup>Adeney, The Theology of the New Testament, pp. 24f. Cf. James Stalker, The Ethic of Jesus (New York: A.C. Armstrong and Son, 1909), pp. 45f.; T.B. Maston, Biblical Ethics (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1967), p. 153.

<sup>3</sup>Robinson, The Sayings of Jesus, pp. 217f.

<sup>4</sup>Albrecht Ritschl, Instruction in the Christian Religion, translated by Alice M. Swing, in The Theology of Albrecht Ritschl, by Albert Swing (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1901), pp. 178f. Cf. the later translation of this work in, Albrecht Ritschl, Three Essays, translated by Philip Hefner (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), pp. 223f. See pp. 221-291 for the complete essay, Instruction in the Christian Religion.

<sup>5</sup>Harnack, What is Christianity?, p. 147.

<sup>6</sup>Stalker, The Ethics of Jesus, p. 53.



present in the hearts of men, and it progresses through the cooperative efforts of men. There is, then, no disjunction between ethics and the Kingdom of God in this interpretation. As man responds to the Kingdom, he accepts the Kingdom's ethics, and he is motivated by the love of God or by the call to imitate God. Such a view does not completely ignore eschatology. Rather, it recognizes eschatology as only the vehicle for the message of Christ, which recognition, of course, results in a denial of the theory of Interimsethik. The ethic of Jesus is freed and becomes eternally valid.

There are, however, some difficulties with such an interpretation. It leads one into thinking that man is an agent of the Kingdom, rather than a recipient of the Kingdom's blessings and/or judgment. If one comes to think God cannot bring in the consummated reign without man's help, then he is in danger of forgetting his true relationship to God. This interpretation, for the sake of relevance, sacrifices the real Jesus of history by refusing to consider seriously the possibility that Jesus' eschatological message was, in fact, real and meaningful to Him and consequently a valid part of His total message.

In a consideration of this school's interpretation, Paul Ramsey charges that Rauschenbusch, for example, departs from the mind of Jesus when he substitutes the law of evolutionary social reform for literal eschatology.<sup>1</sup>

Conrad H. Moehlman agrees that to propose that Jesus relied upon the law of organic development for the growth of the Kingdom is a serious mistake.<sup>2</sup>

Closely associated with the idea of evolutionary growth is the belief that man contributes toward the growth

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<sup>1</sup>Paul Ramsey, "A Theology of Social Action," Social Action 12 (Oct. 15, 1946):10.

<sup>2</sup>Conrad H. Moehlman, "Social Gospel," Encyclopedia of Religion, ed. Vergilius Ferm (New York: The Philosophical Library, 1945), p. 717.



and progress of the Kingdom. The logic here is interesting. In the first place, those of this view must establish the fact of the Kingdom's existence. This they propose to do by claiming that Jesus used apocalyptic terminology as an expedient method to communicate His eternal message. They then suggest that it was through the mode of apocalypticism that Jesus was able to establish His rule within those who gladly received the Kingdom. If man does not receive the Kingdom within his heart, then the Kingdom cannot spread. If man does not respond to the will of God, then the Kingdom is at a standstill. God's purpose for man, in both the initiative and operative stages, becomes dependent upon man's cooperation. Can it be said from the biblical perspective that the reign of God, "Present or Future," is dependent upon man?

Man is not an agent of the Kingdom; he is, rather, a recipient of the Kingdom's blessings, and he stands before the Kingdom's judgment. Jesus did not come preaching, "Come and spread the Kingdom," but, "Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand." And He commissioned His disciples to proclaim the same message. They did not claim to have the ability to bring in the Kingdom, nor did they ever suppose that they were spreading God's rule. Instead they saw themselves as preparing themselves and others for its coming.

Of course, the position held by those of this persuasion is somewhat appealing at the point of relevance. But for the sake of "relevance," much of Jesus' message is seen to be merely a "means" for conveying what are believed to be its essential aspects. The basic interpretive flaw of those who hold to this view is that their final hermeneutic endeavor so dominates their perspective that the eschatological proclamation attributed to Jesus by the Synoptic writers is virtually ignored, or the significance of such preaching is denied.

However, C. H. Dodd offers a corrective at this

point. He believes the eschatology of Jesus must not be ignored and insists that any interpretation of Jesus' preaching must be determined by one's understanding of what Jesus meant by the "Kingdom of God." A presentation and evaluation of Dodd's "Realized Eschatology" follows.

### C.H. Dodd: Realized Eschatology

Kingdom Expectation. C.H. Dodd is undoubtedly the foremost exponent of the interpretation of the Kingdom of God as a "present reality." In his earlier assessment, Dodd came close to accepting the Kingdom view of those within the Social Gospel tradition. For example, in his interpretation of Luke 17:21, which he translated, "The Kingdom of God is within you," Dodd suggested that: "The Kingdom of God in the hearts of men--even in the hearts of a very few--is the germ from which the better order of the Good Time Coming must grow . . . ." He even went so far as to say, "There is a direct and organic connection between the presence of God's rule in a sincere and child-like heart and the final triumph of His cause in all the world."<sup>1</sup>

As his views developed, Dodd's interpretation of the Kingdom of God was more and more shaped by the conviction that the rule of God has already arrived in time.<sup>2</sup> To Dodd, the Kingdom of God is not to be looked for in the

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<sup>1</sup>C.H. Dodd, The Gospel in the New Testament (London: National Sunday School Union, 1926), pp. 37ff. Cf. C.H. Dodd, The Parables of the Kingdom (London: Nisbet and Co., Ltd., 1936), pp. 84f., fn. 1. Dodd claims that to translate ἐν τῷ ὑμῶν "among you" "does not give a logical sense." He suggests that since Jesus did not intend to "localize" the Kingdom, the meaning is "within you." However, Dodd chooses not to emphasize the importance of Luke 17:20-21, because he feels one cannot be absolutely certain that these verses belong to the oldest tradition. (Note: References will also be made to the 1961 revised edition of The Parables.)

<sup>2</sup>C.H. Dodd, The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1944), p. 85. He comments: ". . . it is surely clear that, for the New Testament writers in general, the eschaton has entered history; the hidden rule of God has been revealed; the Age



future; it is not to come "after" Jesus' coming in Galilee; it will not take place after "other things" have happened. The Kingdom, rather, is now a matter of present experience.<sup>1</sup>

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to Come has come. The Gospel of primitive Christianity is a Gospel of realized eschatology." Ibid. It should be observed that Dodd himself admitted that the phrase, "Realized Eschatology," is not very "felicitous." Dodd, however, retained the expression, believing that he had presented whatever balance was necessary. Dodd, The Parables of the Kingdom, 1961, p. viii. In his struggle to maintain this balance, Dodd dealt seriously with the "eschatological strain" in Jesus' teaching, as is apparent in the 1961 revised edition of The Parables. This endeavor can also be noted in his "liking" Joachim Jeremias's "sich realisierende Eschatologie," though he admits to an inability to translate the phrase. C.H. Dodd, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), p. 447, fn. 1. Jeremias's assumption that Dodd's appreciation of the phrase "sich realisierende Eschatologie" meant agreement with it is unfounded. Joachim Jeremias, The Parables of Jesus, translated by S.H. Hooke, rev. ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963), p. 230, fn. 3. Dodd is not the only one who has had difficulty in translating Jeremias's phrase. S.H. Hooke used the expression "an eschatology that is in process of realization," in his translation of Jeremias's, The Parables of Jesus, 1963, rev. ed., p. 230. Other translations have been proposed, but Jeremias, himself, preferred the expression "eschatology becoming actualized," presented by Professor William Hull of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., U.S.A. Joachim Jeremias, The Lord's Prayer, translated by John Reumann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), p. 32, fn. 27, editor's note. Jeremias pays tribute to Dodd for his success in placing the parables "in the setting of the life of Jesus, thereby introducing a new era in the interpretation of the parables." Jeremias, however, faulted Dodd for limiting his attention to the parables of the Kingdom of Heaven, and for what he believed to be the "one-sided nature of his conception of the Kingdom (Dodd's whole emphasis being laid on the view that in the works of Jesus the Kingdom had now finally broken through), resulted in a contradiction of the eschatology which has continued to exercise an influence upon his otherwise masterly interpretation." Jeremias, The Parables of Jesus, 1963, p. 21.

<sup>1</sup>C.H. Dodd, The Parables of the Kingdom, (1936), p. 46.

Dodd places considerable weight upon two verbs for support of his thesis. He holds that the verb ἐγγυλζεσθαι, of Mark 1:15, and the verb φθάνειν, of Matthew 12:28 (par. Luke 11:20), are used in the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew verb naga and the Aramaic verb m'ta, "both of which mean 'to reach,' 'to arrive.'"<sup>1</sup> Therefore, Dodd concludes that Mark 1:15, like Matthew 12:28 and Luke 11:20, should be translated, "The Kingdom has come."<sup>2</sup>

This conclusion clearly affects Dodd's translation and consequently his interpretation of other passages such as Luke 10:9-11, which he renders; "Say to them 'The Kingdom of God has come upon you' (ἡγγυλκεν ἐφ' ὑμᾶς) . . . . And if you enter any city and they do not receive you, go into their streets and say, 'Even the dust which sticks to our feet from your city we wipe off for you; but all the same, be sure that the Kingdom of God has come (ἡγγυλκεν).'"<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Dodd, The Parables of the Kingdom (1936), p. 44.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 44f.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. Shortly after his 1936 edition of The Parables of the Kingdom, Dodd wrote History and the Gospel, which was published in 1938. As he describes Jesus' style of ministry, Dodd observes that when Jesus commissioned His disciples to carry His message, "All they were to do was to heal the sick, to cast out demons, and to say, 'The Kingdom of God is at hand'" (Matt. 10:7-8; Lk. 10:9-11). And he suggests that Jesus' ministry also turns upon the same proclamation: "'The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God has drawn near; repent and believe the Gospel' (Mark 1:15)."  
C.H. Dodd, History and the Gospel (London: Nisbet & Co., 1938), p. 123. However, to assume a change in Dodd's position because these translations appear to support the view that the Kingdom is imminent rather than present would be to misunderstand it. The emphasis of Dodd's view here, as before, is upon the realization of God's concern for man. God demonstrates His power through Jesus, who can cast out demons by the finger of God precisely because the Kingdom of God has come upon man (Luke 11:20). For Dodd, Jesus' concern for man "expresses that sovereign mercy of God in calling whom He will into His Kingdom . . . ." Ibid., p. 124.



Dodd believes that the various aspects of the kerygma of the early church can be found in the summation of Jesus' preaching as presented in Mark 1:14-15, "Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.'" For example, to Dodd, the clause, "'The Kingdom of God has drawn near,' is expanded in the account of the ministry and death of Jesus, His resurrection and exaltation, all conceived as an eschatological process."<sup>1</sup> For Dodd, "The Kingdom of God is conceived as coming in the events of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and to proclaim these facts in their proper setting, is to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God."<sup>2</sup>

Dodd maintains that with the coming of Jesus a contrast is drawn between the past and present. For example, he is convinced that such passages as Matthew 11:12,13 (par. Luke 16:16) sufficiently demonstrate this view. "John the Baptist marks the dividing line: before him, the law and the prophets; after him, the Kingdom of God. Any interim period is excluded."<sup>3</sup> Therefore, to Dodd, the earliest tradition indicates that "Jesus was understood to have proclaimed that the Kingdom of God, the hope of many generations, had at last come. It is not merely imminent; it is here."<sup>4</sup>

Thus, Dodd argues strongly for an "either-or" interpretation of the Kingdom of God. He accuses the proponents of konsequente Eschatologie of attempting a compromise with their proposal that the Kingdom of God is "imminent." This position to Dodd, is an attempt to resolve the

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<sup>1</sup> Dodd, The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Dodd, The Parables of the Kingdom, (1936), p. 48.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

problems raised by the two strains of Kingdom sayings, that is, one set "which appeared to contemplate the coming of the Kingdom of God as future, and another set which appeared to contemplate it as already present . . . ." <sup>1</sup>

Dodd suggests that whatever is made of the imminent sayings of the Kingdom, "the sayings which declare the Kingdom of God to have come are explicit and unequivocal. They are moreover the most characteristic and distinctive of the Gospel sayings on the subject." <sup>2</sup>

Dodd contends that there are, in fact, no passages which teach explicitly that the Kingdom is future. For example, to Dodd, Mark 9:1, the nearest future-equivalent to "the Kingdom of God has come," is not very clear. In Dodd's view, "The meaning appears to be that some of those who heard Jesus speak would before their death awake to the fact that the Kingdom of God had come." <sup>3</sup>

He treats Mark 14:25 similarly. When Jesus says that He will not drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when He drinks it new in the Kingdom of God, he means, Dodd believes, that He "will never again partake of wine at any earthly meal, but he will drink wine in a new sort, 'in the Kingdom of God.'" <sup>4</sup>

Dodd, however, deals seriously with the two strains of Jesus' teachings. He holds that both are deeply embedded in the earliest form of the Gospel tradition and that it would do violence to the record to attempt to remove either. One of these strains, he says, "appears to

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 53f.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 56. Dodd claims that the "with you" peculiar to Matthew is "clearly a secondary addition to the original saying," and Luke turned the saying into a prediction of the second coming by adding the phrase, "until the Kingdom comes." Therefore, to Dodd, Luke's version also "seems to be secondary." Ibid., p. 56, fn. 1.



contemplate the indefinite continuance of human life under historical conditions, while the other appears to suggest a speedy end to these conditions."<sup>1</sup>

For Dodd, a possible solution would be to "make full allowance for the symbolic character of the 'apocalyptic' sayings." He believes "The course of history, past, present and future, with its climax in the Day of the Lord, is presented in a series of symbolic visions."<sup>2</sup> Dodd suggests that while we cannot be clear as to how literal the apocalyptic writers intended their predictions to be, we can assume that they used apocalyptic imagery in an attempt to convey those concepts of ultimate reality which lie beyond man's conceptual capacity.<sup>3</sup>

Dodd's assessment of apocalyptic language is important for an understanding of his treatment of the Kingdom of God in the preaching of Jesus. Jesus, according to Dodd, used the phrase "the Kingdom of God" to include traditional concepts of the blessings and judgment of God. And Jesus Himself who is the bearer and representative of the Kingdom of God is presented as the "traditional and symbolic figure of the Son of Man."<sup>4</sup>

Dodd believes that with Jesus, the ultimates (God's blessings and judgment; His rule and mercy) have been made available to man. That is, Jesus takes upon Himself the role of the Son of Man, and now, so Dodd contends,

The ancient images of the heavenly feast; of Doomsday, of the Son of Man at the right hand of power, are not only symbols of supra-sensible, supra-historical realities; they have also their corresponding actuality within history. Thus both the facts of the life of Jesus, and the events which He foretells within the historical order, are 'eschatological' events, for they fall within the coming of the Kingdom of God.<sup>5</sup>

Dodd contends that the Gospel's eschatological motive, with respect to the second advent of Christ, resulted from the influence of the Apostle Paul (cf.

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., (1961 rev. ed.), pp. 79f.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 80.      <sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 81.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 81f.      <sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 82.

1 Thess. 5:2-8) and was attributed to Jesus ("placed . . . in the mouth of Jesus") by the writers. According to Dodd, a number of the parables which refer to a crisis in the ministry of Jesus and which encourage an attitude of watchfulness, preparation and expectation were structured by the Gospel writers to convey this eschatological motive. Dodd maintains that the parables, however, were applicable to Jesus' own ministry during which He challenged men to respond to the present Kingdom.<sup>1</sup>

Dodd believes it important to understand that through such parables Jesus was pointing toward His resurrection and not to His second advent. He was preparing His disciples for a "crisis," but they could not comprehend its seriousness. Therefore, when Jesus was brought to trial, the disciples were unprepared. They were frightened and confused. And they were not ready for Jesus' resurrection. But it happened. He returned to them soon! Jesus then gathered His disciples, now convinced and more responsive to His directives, and He "let them loose on the world . . . ." As a result, "a new era began: the Kingdom of Christ on earth. And that is what He said would happen."<sup>2</sup> The eschatological fervor of the early Christians led to a shift of emphasis from Jesus' resurrection to His second advent. This Dodd contends, was a misunderstanding, since Jesus' "total career on earth was the crisis in which the long awaited kingdom of God came upon men. The crisis

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. (1936), pp. 154-175. Dodd refers to some of these as "zero-hour" parables, such as the "Waiting Servants" (Mark 13:33-37 and Luke 12:35-38). Other parables which appear on the surface to be eschatological in nature are interpreted by Dodd to refer to the political or historical crises which Jesus and His disciples faced; e.g. the attack of the authorities upon Jesus or the anticipated destruction of the temple and Jerusalem for which the disciples should be prepared at all times (The Faithful and Unfaithful Servants, Matt. 24:45-51, par. Luke 12:42-46; The Ten Virgins, Matt. 25:1-12, and the parable of The Talents, Matt. 25:14-30, par. Luke 19:12-27). Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> C.H. Dodd, The Coming of Christ (Cambridge: The University Press, 1951), pp. 12-15.



began when He started His ministry; it was complete when He returned from death."<sup>1</sup>

According to Dodd, when the expectation of Christ's imminent return waned among the early Christians, they responded with new expressions of confidence in God's promises. They came to understand the "resurrection, exaltation and second advent as being . . . inseparable parts of a single divine event. It was not an early advent that they proclaimed, but an immediate advent."<sup>2</sup> They believed that men could repent because the new age had already arrived. And the proof for them that it was here, Dodd believes, "was found in the actual presence of the Spirit, that is, of the supernatural in the experience of men." It was in that kind of supernatural world that the disciples could expect the appearance of the Lord on clouds of glory. This, to Dodd, was their understanding of Jesus' paradoxical teaching: "'The Kingdom of God has come upon you,' he said, while He also bade them pray, 'Thy Kingdom come.'"<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 16. Cf. C.H. Dodd, About the Gospels (Cambridge: The University Press, 1958), p. 11. Dodd says that the resurrection of Jesus is "the true end of the story which relates how the Kingdom of God came to earth." Cf. also Dodd, The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments, pp. 85f. Dodd says that the matter of the presence of the Kingdom of God can be discerned in five ways, once one makes the transfer of prophecy about the Day of the Lord to the historical crisis. First of all, "it is fulfilment." This is Mark's inscription over the entire Gospel. The Day of the Lord has dawned. Secondly, "the supernatural has manifestly entered history." Miracles of healing take place; His power is demonstrated. Thirdly, "this open manifestation of the power of God is the overthrow of the powers of evil." Jesus claims that He casts out demons by the "finger of God." Fourthly, judgment has come upon the world. With Christ's death, God condemned sin in the flesh. Lastly, eternal life has been made available through the resurrection of Christ.

<sup>2</sup> Dodd, The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments, p. 33.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

Dodd, therefore, does not claim that the eschatological element has been completely removed from the biblical perspective. He admits that "there remains a residue of eschatology which is not exhausted in the 'realized eschatology' of the Gospel, namely the element of sheer finality."<sup>1</sup> To him, the biblical view of history insists there must be an end. "Thus the idea of a second coming of Christ appears along with the emphatic assertion that His coming in history satisfies all the conditions of the eschatological event, except that of absolute finality."<sup>2</sup>

Dodd, careful not to be misunderstood at this point, adds that it would be incorrect to assume that Jesus' ministry, death and resurrection are to be understood as "provisional, or as anything short of the unique and absolute entrance of the Kingdom of God, the eschaton, into human experience."<sup>3</sup> Man can anticipate the fulfilment of God's purpose in history, but he cannot understand it, or predict what God will do. Dodd explains:

He can never forecast the shape of things to come, except in symbolic myth. The true prophet always foreshortens the future, because he, of all men, discerns in history the eternal issues which lie within and yet beyond it. The least inadequate myth of the goal of history is that which moulds itself upon the great divine event of the past, known in its concrete actuality, and depicts its final issue in a form which brings time to an end and places man in eternity--<sup>4</sup>the second Coming of the Lord, the Last Judgment.

One must not imagine, Dodd cautions, that the historical order can contain the whole meaning of the absolute. The symbols speak of those inexhaustible realities which have entered into history and are yet to be fulfilled. To

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 93.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 96.



Dodd, it can be said that "The Son of Man has come, but also He will come, the sin of man is judged, but also it will be judged."<sup>1</sup>

Eschatology and Ethics. Dodd agrees that Jesus apparently predicted an imminent end of history and that He was ultimately mistaken. However, Dodd believes that upon closer examination, this assumption is easily dispelled. We must remember, Dodd cautions, the two main groups of sayings in Jesus' teachings which leave us with a paradoxical picture of time.<sup>2</sup> One group of sayings seems to point to a continuation of history with no thought given to an end. Another group, eschatological in nature, appears to associate the coming of the Son of Man in glory, the kingdom of God, and the Last Judgment, with the historical ministry of Jesus Christ, sometimes they associate it with historical crises yet to come; and sometimes with that which lies beyond all history, in another world than this.<sup>3</sup>

Dodd proposes that these paradoxical sayings can be accepted "all at once." This can be done, he believes,

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<sup>1</sup>Dodd, The Parables of the Kingdom (1961 rev. ed.), p. 83. It should be noted that Dodd does not mean that there will be future events on a historical plane designed to bring fulfilment to the Kingdom of God. To him, the "future tenses" are only an accommodation of language. The following comments are important to his position. He writes: "There is no coming of the Son of Man in history 'after' His coming in Galilee and Jerusalem, whether soon or late, for there is no before and after in the eternal order. The Kingdom of God in its full reality is not something which will happen after other things have happened. It is that to which men awake when this order of time and space no longer limits their vision, when they 'sit at meat in the Kingdom of God' with all the blessed dead, and drink with Christ the 'new wine' of eternal felicity . . . . But the spirit of man, though dwelling in history, belongs to the eternal order, and the full meaning of the Day of the Son of Man, or of the Kingdom of God, he can experience only in that eternal order. That which cannot be experienced in history is symbolized by the picture of a coming event . . . ." Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Dodd, The Coming of Christ, pp. 16ff.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

once one allows for the fact that "The human mind of Jesus Christ was a poet's mind." Such an allowance would accommodate the view that Jesus could perceive the fulfilment of the Kingdom as coming imminently, but He could also accept the fact that it had already come. Dodd said that Jesus "saw that Day come, in the brief spell when He worked and suffered in Palestine. He saw it extended into the world beyond history, where alone the Kingdom of God can be perfectly revealed. And yet it was there, really and actually. The Day had come."<sup>1</sup>

Of course, Dodd rejects the idea of "interim ethics," although he admits that "The predictions of Jesus have no long historical perspective."<sup>2</sup> It has already been seen that, according to Dodd, Jesus was primarily concerned with an immediate crisis, that of the coming Kingdom. For Dodd, however, "this does not necessarily mean . . . that He believed that history would come to an end shortly after his death."<sup>3</sup> In fact, Dodd contends that

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 20f.

<sup>2</sup> Dodd, The Parables of the Kingdom (1961 rev. ed.), pp. 83f.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 84. For example, Dodd admits that if such apocalyptic predictions as Mark 13:30 and parallels and Mark 14:62 and parallels are taken literally, "they seem to point to an event expected to happen very soon indeed . . . ." Ibid., pp. 78f. However, Dodd believes that Matthew and Luke add to Mark 14:62 "words which show that they understood it to refer to something beginning 'from this moment.'" For example, in Matthew 26:64 the phrase ἀπ' ὁρῶν is added, and ἀπὸ τοῦ οὐνοῦ is added to Luke 22:69. Dodd also observes that since Luke omits the phrase "coming on the clouds of heaven" he presents the view that "It is the session at God's right hand that is immediately impending . . . ." Ibid., p. 78 and fn. 2. As for Mark 14:62, Dodd concludes that the picture of the Son of Man coming with clouds, "standing, as in Daniel, for the ultimate triumph of the cause of God, should have its historical counterpart in events immediately impending (as is implied in the language of the Gospels), and these can hardly be other than the sacrificial death and resurrection of Christ." Ibid., p. 82.



the issue is not the end of time--imminently, or in the distant future. What is important is that the Kingdom of God has come, and man can live in a new age. Man can now receive both the grace and the judgment of God. Jesus' ethic, therefore, becomes "a moral ideal for men who have 'accepted the Kingdom of God,' and live their lives in the presence of His judgment and His grace, now decisively revealed."<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, according to Dodd, Jesus' ethic was not meant for a "brief and special period in human history." Rather, it is "the absolute ethic of the Kingdom of God, the moral principles of a new order of life. The implied major premiss of all His ethical sayings is the affirmation 'The Kingdom of God has come upon you.'"<sup>2</sup>

Relevance of Jesus' Ethics. Jesus' ethic, Dodd insists, is not for those who anticipate a "speedy end of the world, but for those who have experienced the end of this world and the coming of the Kingdom of God."<sup>3</sup> Jesus brings before man an "absolute ethic." This means to Dodd, that Jesus' ethic is so far beyond man's attainability that one is forced to recognize the seriousness of God's standards, admit his inabilities to satisfy God's law, and throw himself on the mercy of God, who is ever ready "to give us the Kingdom."<sup>4</sup>

Dodd does admit, however, that the eschatological language pervaded the New Testament and that its influence

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>2</sup> Dodd, History and the Gospel, p. 125. Dodd submits some examples of what he means: "The Kingdom of God has come upon you, therefore love your enemies that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. The Kingdom of God has come upon you, therefore if hand or foot offend, cut it off . . . ." Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. Cf. Dodd's position in, The Coming of Christ, pp. 19f. in which he contends that Jesus' ethic is "too universal, too permanent," to be understood as an "interim ethic." His teachings, rather, assume the continuation of human society much as we know it today.

<sup>4</sup> Dodd, History and the Gospel, p. 126.

upon ethics was considerable.<sup>1</sup> The Gospel of Matthew serves as a good example. According to Dodd, one of the distinctive characteristics of the Gospel of Matthew is the emphasis upon the Law. Dodd sees this element as the result of Matthew's attempt to meet the needs of a community of believers who were compelled to adjust to an "indefinite postponement of the second advent and judgment . . . ."<sup>2</sup> Dodd observes that the church had "to organize itself as a permanent society living the life of the redeemed people of God in an unredeemed world."<sup>3</sup> But at the same time, Matthew presents the view that Jesus' earthly ministry "consisted chiefly in the exposition of the new and higher Law by which His people should live until His second coming."<sup>4</sup> Dodd concedes that "This line of thought clearly had great influence in determining the form in which popular Christianity emerged in the second century."<sup>5</sup>

As Dodd sees it, the eschatologist anticipated a goal, the fulfilment of God's purpose. And he expressed his views graphically through apocalyptic terminology. He essentially believed that God would bring judgment and salvation and that His Kingdom would be established. There were, according to Dodd, two ways of looking at this eschatological proposal. One view anticipated the end of history as man knows it and the beginning of an entirely new age. Another view saw God's Kingdom as inaugurating a "new age of history in which the power of God would be signally at work."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> C.H. Dodd, Gospel and Law (New York: Columbia University Press, 1951), p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Dodd, The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments, p. 53.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 53f.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 54.

<sup>6</sup> Dodd, Gospel and Law, p. 27.



Dodd holds that the early Christian community came to believe that the Kingdom of God had actually come, that God had begun a new age in history made possible by His mercy. Some early Christians anticipated immediate fulfilment of God's purpose with the coming of an imminent judgment and the close of history. This belief, Dodd submits, was clearly unfulfilled, and the church was forced to revise its expectations.<sup>1</sup> As a result, out of this revision a certain tension developed as a key element in their understanding of the Kingdom of God. They believed that "the Kingdom of God will come; it has come; Christ has come; Christ will come."<sup>2</sup>

Dodd understands this tension to have influenced ethics among the early Christians. The first instance is observable during a period in the ministry of Paul when he taught Christians to concentrate only on those aspects of life which would survive the passing of heaven and earth.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Dodd, The Coming of Christ, pp. 5f. Dodd believes that the early Christian community anticipated the imminent return of Christ and that this expectation, though expressed in "fantastic imagery," was based on an important fact: Christ's life, death and resurrection. The firm belief in the accomplishments of Christ, Dodd observes, "became very important when the expectation of His early return proved an illusion. The Church was mistaken about the date of the great event." Ibid., p. 6. Dodd points to the record which shows that the early Christians did not give up, because they knew that the victory had already been won in Christ and that they had shared in it. They continued to hope; they even anticipated Christ's return. But, according to Dodd, they were realists. They knew there were still battles to be fought. The victory had been won; it was yet to be won. So they lived in tension, "between realisation and expectation." Ibid., pp. 7-9.

<sup>2</sup>Dodd, Gospel and Law, p. 28. According to Dodd, this element of tension is obvious in Mark's summary statement of the kerygma, "The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is upon you" (Mk. 1:15). Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 28ff. See Ibid., pp. 28f., where Dodd discusses Paul's advice regarding marriage and other daily activities and relations in the light of his belief that "the structure of this world is passing away" (1 Cor. 7:29-34).

This "sense of transience," Dodd believes, provided "a motive for moral earnestness and a sober sense of responsibility." That is, this eschatological element "enables us to contemplate the ultimate ethical demand as absolute claim upon us, whatever temporary and provisional forms it may take."<sup>1</sup>

The second notable impact of eschatology upon the ethics of the early church, Dodd claims, relates to a decline by the church in its belief in an imminent end to history. The church came to understand the significance of what God had done in history. It came to realize that, "Whatever else might be about to happen, 'the age to come,' that altogether new period in man's history which had been the goal of so much expectation, really had come."<sup>2</sup>

This second observation is important to Dodd's interpretation of the relationship between eschatology and ethics in the teaching of Jesus. Dodd believes that the early church came to realize that new moral possibilities were available to those who respond to Christ because of God's decisive act through Him. The believers were confronted with the reality that all of Jesus' teachings were ". . . orientated towards this absolute, which is the Kingdom of God, now come upon men in judgment and in mercy."<sup>3</sup>

Dodd sees the absoluteness of Jesus' ethic made apparent in man's inability to attain His ideals. The absoluteness inherent in His precepts are beyond man's reach, Dodd contends, because "we never do and never can love our enemies . . . we never can be entirely free from selfish cares . . . ."<sup>4</sup> Jesus' absolute ethics "are not of this world, though they are to be put into practice in this

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>3</sup> Dodd, History and the Gospel, p. 128.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 127.



world. They stand for the unattainable which we are bound to strive to attain. For to 'receive the Kingdom of God' is to place ourselves under this absolute obligation."<sup>1</sup>

Dodd insists his is not a perfectionist view destined to frustrate those who receive the Kingdom of God. Rather, "It is," he believes, "the recognition that an unattainable ideal lays infinite obligations upon us; that the best we can do lies under the judgment of God; but that the judgment of God carries forgiveness within it."<sup>2</sup>

Dodd suggests that the ethical teachings of Jesus must be understood in the light of His appeal to man to "repent" and believe the Gospel because the Kingdom of God is upon him. This, according to Dodd, involves more "a disclosure of the absolute standards which alone are relevant when the Kingdom of God is upon us" than "detailed guidance for conduct in this or that situation."<sup>3</sup> This, for Dodd, does not mean that Jesus' instructions are necessarily general or abstract propositions. Jesus clearly describes for man definite "pictures of action in concrete situations" in which these standards are to become operative.<sup>4</sup>

How then can these high moral standards be fulfilled? Dodd suggests that the prospect of their fulfillment lies with God who desires to give the Kingdom to His "little flock." It is through repentance that man can move from God's judgment upon his evil to forgiveness and acceptance. The high standards of God's ethical precepts make man aware of his sins and expose his need for for-

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Dodd, The Gospel and Law, p. 32.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 60f.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 61. See Ibid. for a list of these situations, for example: "Give to everyone who asks." "Turn the other cheek." "Never worry about food and drink."

givenness. He is thrown back upon the inexhaustible mercy of God, and it is there that he finds forgiveness.<sup>1</sup> It is "at this point," Dodd believes, that "the ethical precepts begin to take on a fresh aspect. They become not only the standards by which our conduct is judged, but guideposts on the way we must travel in seeking the true ends of our being under the Kingdom of God."<sup>2</sup>

Observations. Dodd's presentation of the ethics of Jesus as "guideposts" for those who live under the

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<sup>1</sup>Dodd, The Gospel and Law, p. 62. The element of mercy and forgiveness is central in Dodd's treatment of Jesus' "ethics of the Kingdom of God." This is clear in his comparison of Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of God to Jewish views of the Kingdom. Jesus' view of the Kingdom is similar to the Jewish understanding in two ways. The first finds its expression in Jesus' saying "whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child will never enter into it" (Mark 10:15). This is similar to the Rabbinic expression "'to take upon oneself the malkuth of heaven.'" Of course, with Jesus there is an intended contrast. The Rabbis meant that one must observe the letter of the Torah, whereas Jesus contrasted the way of a little child with the way of the "wise and prudent." For Jesus, "to accept the sovereignty of God is something other than scrupulous observance of the Torah." Dodd, The Parables of the Kingdom (1936), pp. 41f. The second is seen in the "Thy Kingdom come" petition of the Lord's Prayer. This saying, according to Dodd, parallels the Jewish Prayer, "May He establish His Kingdom during your life and during your days." These expressions allow us to see that Jesus used the phrase "The Kingdom of God" in ways similar to the traditional Jewish understanding. That is, "The Kingdom of God may be 'accepted' here and now, and its full blessings will be enjoyed in the end by those who have fulfilled the necessary conditions." Ibid., pp. 42f. But, according to Dodd, Jesus' primary understanding of the Kingdom of God did not fit into the contemporary Jewish view. He explains: The Jewish Rabbi may have encouraged his followers to repent and obey the Torah in order that they might take upon themselves the Kingdom of God. But Jesus says to man, "The Kingdom of God has come upon you" (Matt. 12:28 par. Luke 11:20). Therefore, it is not simply a matter of obeying the commandments of a king. Rather, the power of God is at work in the world; "the 'eschatological' Kingdom of God is proclaimed as a present fact, which men must recognize, whether by their actions they accept or reject it." Ibid., pp. 43f.

<sup>2</sup>Dodd, The Gospel and Law, p. 62.



present rule of the Kingdom unquestionably leaves the modern Christian with an ethic that appears just as relevant today as it was for those of Jesus' own generation. The time-gap has been dismissed completely, and the life-standard of the historical Jesus becomes eternally approachable. Since Jesus' ethic of the realized Kingdom has become eternally valid, adequate directions can be offered to those who seek true existence under the Rule of God.

There are, however, some complications associated with Dodd's generally valuable interpretation. In his contention that the Eschaton has moved from the sphere of expectation into that of realized experience, Dodd has rendered the Synoptic view of the future Judgment ineffectual. He contemporizes the Judgment and emphasizes what is an important New Testament insight in his claim that man, by being unfaithful to God, passes judgment upon himself.<sup>1</sup> But in the assertion that man himself is the final voice of judgment, the future Judgment concept evaporates, and as Richard Hiers charges, "the Judge has also become superfluous."<sup>2</sup>

Dodd also dissolves the expectation of a temporal Eschaton at the expense of the urgency of Jesus' ethical demands. In his interpretation, Jesus' eschatological language becomes only symbolical. Jesus' appeal to apocalypticism becomes merely a vehicle used to speak of the eternal order through which eternal issues are laid bare. These issues in turn are presented to make man aware of the urgency of decision making before it is too late to act. But if there is no temporal End, then the urgency of right conduct at the moment becomes completely spiritualized. While Dodd's emphasis is important, it is not the complete New Testament view. As T.F. Torrance charges, with such a

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<sup>1</sup>Dodd, The Parables of the Kingdom (1961 rev. ed.), pp. 138f.

<sup>2</sup>Hiers, "Interim Ethics," Theology and Life 9 (1966): 229, fn. 26. John Knox also criticizes Dodd for spiritualizing the Judgment. John Knox, Christ the Lord (New York: Harper & Row, 1945), pp. 26ff.



handling of the Eschaton, "the eschatological tension is transmuted into a dialectic between the supernal world and this world, and the Kingdom of God becomes ultimately docetic, almost a Platonic magnitude, and the word eschaton loses its original meaning."<sup>1</sup>

The basic criticism leveled against Dodd is for his failure to deal adequately with the eschatological passages, which he himself admits are equal in importance to the non-eschatological strain.<sup>2</sup> It should be observed, both from the point of criticism and in fairness to Dodd, that his position concerning the "futurity" of Jesus' message is not always clear. His views indicate clearly at most points that he believes God's rule--the Eschaton, the Age to Come, the Parousia--has already arrived in time, but he nevertheless observes that there remains the element of "sheer finality" within Jesus' teaching which cannot be explained adequately by the theory of "realized eschatology."<sup>3</sup>

#### The Kingdom of God Viewed as Future--An Overview

While a number of scholars accept the view that Jesus preached the imminence of the End, they, nevertheless, do not come to the same conclusions as they evaluate the influence of Jesus' eschatology upon His total message. When explaining how Jesus' ethic can offer permanent relevance in the light of His eschatology, their individual

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<sup>1</sup> T.F. Torrance, "The Modern Eschatological Debate," Evangelical Quarterly XXV (April 1953): 105.

<sup>2</sup> I.H. Marshall remarks concerning Dodd's "realized eschatology" that "although this theory has commanded, and continues to command, considerable support in this country (Britain), it has found little favour elsewhere. Its principal weaknesses are that it has to explain away a considerable amount of the teaching of Jesus which is ineluctably future in its reference, and that it is reduced to the necessity of demythologising those aspects of Jesus' teaching about the future which resist all attempts of the critic's penknife to pare them away." I.H. Marshall, Eschatology and the Parables (London: The Tyndale Press, 1963), p. 16.

<sup>3</sup> C.H. Dodd, The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments, p. 93.

interpretations are even more striking. Much of the relationship between eschatology and ethics revolves around the question of "relevance"; therefore, it is not surprising that Schweitzer's Interimsethik theory is often the focal point of an individual's proposals. Many of those who believe that Jesus' message was for the most part eschatologically oriented reject the theory of Interimsethik because they conclude that its acceptance leads inevitably to a denial of the eternal validity of Jesus' teaching.

Since these scholars accept as basic to their interpretations the belief that Jesus was convinced of the imminence of the End, the real differences in their views, therefore, are to be found in the importance which each places upon the role of eschatology within Jesus' teaching. Consequently, several positions emerge from those who interpret the Kingdom as future.

Jesus Preached the Imminence of the End; Eschatology Dominant as an Ethical Sanction. Among those scholars who believe the message of Jesus must be accepted in the understanding that He and the early church looked for a literal temporal and imminent coming of the End, Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer appear the most influential. They force upon the New Testament student an open and honest approach to the teachings of Jesus. Their interpretations, however, have not enjoyed widespread acceptance even by the "eschatologists."

Weiss has been accused of tying the ethic of Jesus too tightly to His teaching of an imminent Kingdom;<sup>1</sup> the ethic, it is charged, which Weiss interprets as being temporary, is an ethic meant only to see man through a short-term existence. It has been charged that the view held by Weiss (particularly as expressed in the first edition of

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. the discussion by Norman Perrin, The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus (London: S.C.M. Press, Ltd., 1963), p. 22.



Die Predigt) leads to "an altogether too negative and world-despising ethics."<sup>1</sup>

Yet, it cannot be said of Weiss that he did not believe in the eternal validity of Jesus' ethics. In the second and enlarged edition of Die Predigt, Weiss admits that from his stance in the first edition of Die Predigt one might objectively conclude that he left little room for the understanding of Jesus' message as valid for all ages. But he explains that in the brevity of the first edition it was not practical to give a complete account of Jesus' ethic. He concedes that during the ministry of Jesus, as thought of the downfall of the world receded, Jesus gave Himself to things of this life. He rejoiced, was sad, mourned and was glad. He delivered ageless parables which bear little trace of otherworldliness or talk of the end of the world or of the Judgment. Weiss suggests that during such moments Jesus gave to mankind those ethical principles which have eternal validity for men of every age.<sup>2</sup>

According to Weiss, some of the ethical ideas and principles of Jesus which are not related to His eschatological preaching are expressed in His discussions with His opponents, e.g. the dispute about hand-washing, Jesus' defense of marriage and the sanctity of oaths. These precepts were spoken by Jesus as from a preacher, rather than as from a herald of the Kingdom.<sup>3</sup> More importantly, Weiss admits that the "double-love commandment" (the Kern und Stern) of Jesus' proclamation is independent of the

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<sup>1</sup> J.G. Tasker, "Dr. Paul Feine on the Apocalyptic Teaching of Jesus," The Expository Times 21 (1909-10): 456.

<sup>2</sup> Johannes Weiss, Die Predigt Jesus vom Reiche Gottes (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2nd ed., 1900), pp. 134ff.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 137.



eschatological form. It can be detached, Weiss observes, from Jesus' messianic preaching and can serve as a regulative principle of Christian ethics for all men of all ages.<sup>1</sup>

Weiss concludes that Jesus' ethics are relevant to men of any age, but he observes that the basic fault of the so-called "liberal" interpretation (the Kingdom of God is present in the hearts of men and progressing throughout the world) is the claim by its exponents that such a concept actually came from the mind of Jesus. Weiss strongly rejects this claim and seeks to disprove it. He concedes, nevertheless, that the liberal interpretation is more relevant to modern man than a wholesale acceptance of Jesus' proclamation of an imminent Kingdom.<sup>2</sup>

In the same way, Schweitzer believes Jesus understood that the Kingdom would come in the near future and felt that it could even be forced into time through His preaching and His action.<sup>3</sup> To Schweitzer, therefore, all

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 137f. Cf. Johannes Weiss, Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God, translated and edited by Richard H. Hiers and David L. Holland (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), eds.' introduction, pp. 52f., and pp. 135f. (Note: The translation is of the first edition of Die Predigt.) While Jesus' ethic of love is not viewed by Weiss as having been grounded in eschatological expectation, it should be observed, however, that Weiss is convinced that the proclamation of Jesus in general was "set forth in the context of that expectation." Weiss contends that "Apart from a few moments of prophetic inspiration when Jesus spoke of it as if it had already come, he consistently looked for the coming of the Kingdom in the near future." Such a view is clear in the first edition of Die Predigt (1892) and also in the second. Weiss, Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God, eds.' introduction, p. 53, and pp. 78f. Cf. Weiss, Die Predigt, 2nd ed., p. 70.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Johannes Weiss, Die Nachfolge Christi und die Predigt der Gegenwart (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1895), pp. 163f. Cf. Weiss, Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God, eds.' introduction, p. 22.

<sup>3</sup> Albert Schweitzer, The Quest of the Historical Jesus, translated by W. Montgomery (London: Adam & Charles Black, Ltd., 1954), pp. 389ff.

of Jesus' preaching, as well as His action, must be seen in the light of His eschatology. Consequently, Schweitzer claims that Jesus preached a strong message of repentance in an attempt to prepare men for the Kingdom's appearance; and He taught an ethic which was directed toward those of His own day--those living during that short interval before the coming of the Kingdom. His was, then, a hard Interimsethik.<sup>1</sup>

As a result of his interpretation, Schweitzer has been charged with formulating a theory which necessitates a restriction of Jesus' ethic to His own time. But the charge is unjustified. Schweitzer, e.g., maintains that Jesus' ethic of love is relevant for modern man or man of any age. He claims that since Jesus' death, His Spirit and His ethic of love are no longer restricted to the historical perspective which He held while on earth.<sup>2</sup> Schweitzer suggests that while men today cannot accept Jesus' historical understanding, they can, nevertheless, recognize Jesus' apocalyptic world-view as the crater from which bursts forth the flame of the eternal religion of love.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, in the final analysis, Schweitzer falls back upon the liberal interpretation in an attempt to make Jesus' ethic eternally valid, and in doing so he attempts to connect the Spirit of Jesus with the Historical Jesus.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 352ff. He comments: "The phrase, 'Repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand' and its variants belong to the public preaching. And this, therefore, is the only message which He commits to His disciples when sending them forth. What this repentance, supplementary to the law, the special ethic of the interval before the coming of the Kingdom (Interimsethik) is, in its positive acceptance, He explains in the Sermon on the Mount." Ibid., p. 352.

<sup>2</sup> Albert Schweitzer, The Mystery of the Kingdom of God. The Secret of Jesus' Messiahship and Passion, translated by W. Lowrie (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1913), pp. 103ff.

<sup>3</sup> Albert Schweitzer, Out of My Life and Thought, pp. 68ff.

<sup>4</sup> He writes: "We of to-day do not, like those who were able to hear the preaching of Jesus, expect to see a



Schweitzer's attempts to associate the Spirit of Jesus with the liberal interpretation of the Kingdom of God is weakened by his contention that this process of spiritualization was begun by Jesus Himself.<sup>1</sup> Even Richard Hiers, generally one of Schweitzer's strongest defenders, charges that a concrete connection between the Historical Jesus and the Spirit of Jesus, as suggested by Schweitzer, cannot be made. Hiers also observes that Schweitzer is inconsistent since he admits on the one hand that human effort cannot build the Kingdom of God, but contends on the other hand that "We must indeed labor for its realization."<sup>2</sup>

A number of New Testament scholars agree with Weiss and Schweitzer that the ethic of Jesus was determined to a large degree by His eschatology. Alfred Loisy, for example, contends that all of Jesus' message must be considered in the light of His belief in the approaching End.<sup>3</sup> And George Tyrrell, who believes Jesus felt that the Kingdom "could not delay beyond a generation,"<sup>4</sup> suggests that Jesus

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Kingdom of God realizing itself in supernatural events. Our conviction is that it can only come into existence by the power of the spirit of Jesus working in our hearts and in the world. The one important thing is that we shall be as thoroughly dominated by the idea of the Kingdom, as Jesus required His followers to be." Out of My Life and Thought, p. 68.

<sup>1</sup> Schweitzer, The Quest of the Historical Jesus, Introduction, p. XV.

<sup>2</sup> Hiers, Jesus and Ethics (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1968), pp. 65f.; cf. p. 65, fns. 94, 95. See Albert Schweitzer, "The Conception of the Kingdom of God in the Transformation of Eschatology," in E.N. Mosley, The Theology of Albert Schweitzer (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1951), pp. 116f.

<sup>3</sup> Alfred Loisy, The Gospel and the Church, translated by Christopher Home (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912), pp. 73ff., cf. p. 86.

<sup>4</sup> George Tyrrell, Christianity at the Cross-Roads (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1910), pp. 48f.



"did not come to reveal a new ethics of this life, but the speedy advent of a new world in which ethics would be superseded."<sup>1</sup> According to Tyrrell, Jesus' ethic was meant for this life not for the next, and much of His ethic "is coloured by the immediate expectation of the end and is applicable only to such an emergency."<sup>2</sup> Similarly Charles Guignebert maintains that Jesus' message was an eschatological Interimsethik and must be interpreted, therefore, in the light of His eschatology since Jesus taught that "the practical ordering of a normal life is impossible" in view of the imminent Kingdom.<sup>3</sup>

Maurice Goguel also claims that Jesus' ethic must be understood as having been addressed only to those living during that particular period.<sup>4</sup> To Goguel, Jesus' ethics attest to His primary concern to prepare men for the coming of the Kingdom.<sup>5</sup> Millar Burrows agrees that Jesus did not give instructions with a long duration of the present order in mind and that certain of His demands were only for the immediate period.<sup>6</sup>

Martin Dibelius proposes that Jesus' ethic is so generally conditioned by His eschatology that even the sayings which do not specifically refer to an imminent expectation should be understood in the light of the eschatological background.<sup>7</sup> And as already seen, Richard Hiers also believes that Jesus' preaching of the Kingdom's

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 50; cf. p. 55.      <sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>3</sup>Charles Guignebert, Jesus, translated by S.H. Hooke (New York: University Books, 1956), p. 373.

<sup>4</sup>Maurice Goguel, The Life of Jesus, translated by Olive Wyon (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1949), p. 581.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 581ff.

<sup>6</sup>Millar Burrows, An Outline of Biblical Theology (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1946), p. 162.

<sup>7</sup>Martin Dibelius, The Sermon on the Mount (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940), pp. 60-64.

imminence was the context for His ethics, although he contends that the primary sanction for Jesus' ethics is the nature and will of God, not eschatology.<sup>1</sup>

Although these men believe that Jesus' ethics were specifically for those living during His day, they, without exception, propose to show that much of the message of Jesus can be accepted as relevant for any age. According to Loisy, the ethic of Jesus can become relevant for any age if it is reinterpreted. He suggests that Jesus' message be detached from its earliest contexts and that man put less stress upon the imminent "coming" of the Kingdom. Loisy contends that Jesus expected the Kingdom to come soon, but the church came instead. Therefore, one should recognize that the church is the transitional institution, whose efforts will ultimately benefit the Kingdom.<sup>2</sup> Tyrrell likewise insists that although Jesus took the apocalyptic message which He preached literally and not symbolically, His message can be "reclothed" and made relevant for modern man. Tyrrell believes "Any construction of the transcendent that yields the same fruits as the apocalyptic construction is true to the 'idea' of Jesus."<sup>3</sup>

Guignebert holds that Jesus' ethic of perfection and love transcended His own age despite the "time error."<sup>4</sup> And Goguel advises that Jesus' ethic is made relevant for modern man through His call to personal sacrifice in preparation for the Kingdom and through dedication of the total self to God, the Father. To Goguel, this faith for

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<sup>1</sup> Hiers, The Kingdom of God in the Synoptic Tradition, p. 68.

<sup>2</sup> Loisy, The Gospel and the Church, p. 168.

<sup>3</sup> Tyrrell, Christianity at the Cross-Roads, p. 104.

<sup>4</sup> Guignebert, Jesus, pp. 388f. According to Guignebert, Jesus' message--both His eschatology and His ethics--must be viewed from the perspective of redactional modification. Ibid., pp. 389ff.



today, and for any age, has been made possible by Jesus Himself through His completed sacrifice; it is a faith which was made firm by belief in the Resurrection.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, Dibelius is of the opinion that the fact of the Resurrection makes it possible for Jesus' ethic to become valid for all ages. Dibelius rejects the theory of "interim ethics" because he feels that the theory denies the lasting validity of Jesus' ethic. Yet, he maintains that the hope of a future consummation can serve as incentive for one to direct his full attention toward the Kingdom and the fulfilment of God's will.<sup>2</sup>

Although Burrows does not believe Jesus had in mind a long period of time, he too rejects the "interim ethic" proposal, because, to him, Jesus' ethic was meant for all men of all ages. To Burrows, Jesus' ethics are "independent of the accuracy of his predictions regarding the time of the kingdom's coming."<sup>3</sup> He suggests that it is best to spiritualize the eschatology of the Synoptics as did John in his Gospel. But he advises that one should hold to Jesus' belief (expressed in apocalyptic language) in the "inevitable triumph of God's will."<sup>4</sup> Like others, Hiers does not believe Jesus intended His message for later generations. Yet he is convinced that Jesus' message can still be valid for any age since what Jesus said in the first century about man and God was true.<sup>5</sup>

Jesus Preached the Imminence of the End;  
Eschatology Significant as an Ethical Sanction. Some "futurist" scholars, convinced that Jesus believed the Kingdom to be imminent, see eschatology as very influential upon Jesus' ethics. However, they insist that Jesus'

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<sup>1</sup> Goguel, The Life of Jesus, pp. 580-586.

<sup>2</sup> Dibelius, The Sermon on the Mount, pp. 51ff.

<sup>3</sup> Burrows, An Outline of Biblical Theology, p. 217.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 218f.

<sup>5</sup> Hiers, Jesus and Ethics, pp. 163ff.



ethics can be viewed as relevant only when interpreted apart from the eschatological sanction.

Wilhelm Bousset, for instance, asserts that Jesus' ethic was "greatly strengthened by the eschatological colour of his preaching."<sup>1</sup> It was an ethic for those of His day, not initially intended for all ages, an ethic of heroism which no one could ever imitate completely.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, J.E. Carpenter believes that Jesus never intended to found a new religion, or inaugurate "a new morality for ages yet unborn . . . ."<sup>3</sup> Jesus' time, Carpenter holds, was one in which the forces of the Kingdom would be at work for a very short time only. And eschatology proved to be an important ethical sanction at the outset of the Christian movement.<sup>4</sup>

To F.C. Burkitt, Jesus taught a preparation ethic, i.e. the responsibility and "privilege of the Saints was to work . . . for the wages of life, when the Kingdom should come at the end."<sup>5</sup> Burkitt admits that much of Jesus' ethic, therefore, cannot be totally separated from his eschatology.<sup>6</sup>

Similarly, Morton S. Enslin contends that Jesus' ethics cannot be totally separated from His eschatology, because much of what He said was determined by eschatology.<sup>7</sup> Walter E. Bundy is also in agreement with this view. He

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<sup>1</sup> Wilhelm Bousset, Jesus, translated by Janet Trevelyan (London: Williams & Norgate, N.D.), p. 148.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 149ff.

<sup>3</sup> J.E. Carpenter, The Historical Jesus and the Theological Christ (Boston: Beacon Press, 1911), pp. 82, 107ff.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 87.

<sup>5</sup> F.C. Burkitt, "The Parables of the Kingdom of Heaven," The Interpreter 7 (1910-11): 148, cf. p. 136.

<sup>6</sup> F.C. Burkitt, The Earliest Sources for the Life of Jesus (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, rev. ed., 1922), p. 74.

<sup>7</sup> Morton Scott Enslin, The Prophet From Nazareth

asserts that the message of Jesus cannot be understood apart from His eschatological preaching, and he maintains that there are definitely some teachings of Jesus which "belong to the ethics of eschatology."<sup>1</sup> Consequently, Bundy accepts in part Schweitzer's theory of interim ethics, although he believes that one need not classify all of Jesus' teachings under "eschatological ethics."<sup>2</sup>

Some scholars reject the theory of interim ethics but still admit that Jesus' eschatological preaching cannot be totally separated from His ethics. John Knox, for example, refuses to accept the theory of interim ethics, but he admits that certain of Jesus' sayings were affected by eschatology and can be explained by the theory. To Knox, however, the very most that can be said about interim ethics is that this view explains why Jesus did not say certain things. It does not clarify what He did say.<sup>3</sup> Albert Knudson criticizes the theory of interim ethics because he feels it demands the admission that Jesus' ethic as a whole has lost its eternal validity. He does admit, however, that the ethical teaching of Jesus was, in part, an interim ethic.<sup>4</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, likewise, insists that Jesus' ethic is not to be viewed simply as an ethic for an interim period, although he believes that much of Jesus' ethical teaching cannot be understood apart from His eschatological message. According to Niebuhr, it is clear

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(New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1961), p. 122. Cf. Morton Scott Enslin, Christian Beginnings. Vols. I & II (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1938), p. 165.

<sup>1</sup>Walter E. Bundy, Jesus and the First Three Gospels; An Introduction to the Synoptic Tradition (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955), pp. 107, 164.

<sup>2</sup>Walter E. Bundy, The Psychic Health of Jesus (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1922), pp. 216f.

<sup>3</sup>Knox, Christ the Lord, pp. 48f.

<sup>4</sup>Albert Knudson, The Principles of Christian Ethics (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1943), pp. 158, 42f.



that eschatology was important as a sanction for the early church.<sup>1</sup>

These men of the "futurist" school also present ways in which they believe the ethic of Jesus can be made eternally relevant. Bousset, for example, who does not believe Jesus ever thought His message would be brought down through the centuries (because He expected a sudden "great disruption of all existing circumstances . . ."<sup>2</sup>), claims that Jesus' ethic of lofty individualism is relevant for men of any age.<sup>3</sup> He suggests that Jesus' eschatology should be re-interpreted so that the relevancy of His ethics can be retained. Bousset sounds much like Harnack in saying that "The form of his (Jesus') preaching of the Kingdom was transitory, and its husk has already shed itself. But within the form there lies an eternal content."<sup>4</sup>

Carpenter, likewise, feels that the Gospel's association with eschatology must be considered temporary. To him, it is "eschatological Christianity" which has failed because of the unfulfilled expectations of Jesus and the early church;<sup>5</sup> and while eschatology was a necessary motive during the initiatory stages of Christianity, it is no longer a valid sanction. Carpenter suggests, therefore, that one today must "transpose the ethical demands of Jesus into conditions of our own day; and withdraw the limitations of time and circumstance which bounded His view."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, An Interpretation of Christian Ethics (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1935), pp. 55f.

<sup>2</sup> Bousset, Jesus, p. 150.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 151ff., cf. 164f.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 97.

<sup>5</sup> Carpenter, The Historical Jesus and the Theological Christ, pp. 107ff.

<sup>6</sup> J.E. Carpenter, The First Three Gospels (London: The Lindsey Press, 1906), pp. 375f.



Niebuhr is of the opinion that Jesus' ethic cannot be limited to any particular age. He suggests that apocalyptic myth permits man to view God's moral plan from beginnings to fulfilment, i.e. beyond temporality.<sup>1</sup> Burkitt recommends that Jesus' total message be spiritualized and allegorized so that it can achieve eternal relevance. Yet, he insists that during the process of updating Jesus' message one must admit that Jesus, as well as the early church, accepted as literal fact the eschatology which He preached.<sup>2</sup> Bundy agrees that modern man cannot accept the same world outlook Jesus held, but believes Jesus' summons to prepare for the coming Kingdom still remains an urgent appeal for modern man.<sup>3</sup>

Knox insists that Jesus' ethic is a universal ethic and was not, therefore, determined by His eschatology.<sup>4</sup> While he believes Jesus was not speaking to men over the centuries, Knox reasons that if Jesus had been, His teaching would not have been essentially different.<sup>5</sup> He surmises that Jesus was concerned with revealing the absolute will of God, and He would have expressed that thought in similar terminology regardless of the age.<sup>6</sup> Knudson also holds the view that Jesus did not have today's complex society in mind when teaching His ethic, and modern men cannot, therefore, follow either His example or His teachings as an infallible guide for their lives. He

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<sup>1</sup> Niebuhr, An Interpretation of Christian Ethics, pp. 56ff.

<sup>2</sup> Schweitzer, The Quest of the Historical Jesus, Preface, p. vii.

<sup>3</sup> Bundy, The Psychic Health of Jesus, pp. 216f.

<sup>4</sup> Knox, Christ the Lord, p. 49.

<sup>5</sup> John Knox, The Ethics of Jesus in the Teaching of the Church (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1961), p. 46.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

contends, however, that there are some fundamental moral principles that Jesus taught which apply to any age, and these principles are "universal and absolute."<sup>1</sup> According to Enslin, Jesus' ethic cannot be understood simply as a preparation ethic after the manner of Schweitzer's "interim ethics." It is the ethic of the Kingdom of God, and it has been made relevant by Jesus Himself who, being eternal as the "essence of the divine," can give direction to men of any age through the quality of His own life.<sup>2</sup>

Jesus Preached the Imminence of the End;

Eschatology Less Significant as an Ethical Sanction. Some scholars who admit that Jesus preached the imminence of the Kingdom cannot fully accept that His ethics were significantly influenced or determined by His apocalyptic views. The eschatological preaching for them is to be seen as a tool, symbol, or mode, but not as the essence of Jesus' message; it must be re-interpreted if it is to have any meaning for modern men.

Among these scholars is E.F. Scott who admits that the purpose of Jesus' apocalyptic language was to "intensify the moral demand of Jesus,"<sup>3</sup> but he insists that it was not to shape the message of Jesus, and therefore, must be understood symbolically and figuratively.<sup>4</sup> Scott supports the view that certain of the "renunciation sayings" were meant for a short duration, but he maintains, nevertheless, that the theory of interim ethics should not

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<sup>1</sup> Knudson, The Principles of Christian Ethics, p. 43.

<sup>2</sup> Enslin, The Prophet From Nazareth, pp. 216f.

<sup>3</sup> E.F. Scott, The Ethical Teaching of Jesus (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1940), p. 45.

<sup>4</sup> E.F. Scott, The Kingdom of God in the New Testament (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1931), pp. 116ff. cf. pp. 135ff., 184-195.

be accepted since it rests upon "the false hypothesis that the intention of Jesus was to prescribe a number of set rules."<sup>1</sup> To Scott, Jesus simply employed the method of apocalypticism to reveal His deeper message, and consequently some of His sayings were affected by the use of this tool. Nevertheless, on the whole, Jesus' message "claims a permanent value" and is not dependent upon apocalypticism.<sup>2</sup>

Burton Scott Easton also holds that although Jesus' message was cast in the framework of apocalypticism, what is really important about His message is not the note of the imminence of God's apocalyptic judgment, but rather, "humanity's constant liability to death"<sup>3</sup> and the fact of God's nearness to human souls.<sup>4</sup> To Easton, Jesus' ethic is not based on eschatology, but upon the character of God. Therefore, man's duty is to imitate God and follow Jesus' ethic, which has become eternally relevant for man.<sup>5</sup>

William Manson, who agrees that Jesus preached the imminence of the Kingdom of God (although it was somehow already present among the poor), believes He did not fully accept the apocalyptic views of His day,<sup>6</sup> but gave to His Kingdom view "an immediate ethical spiritual interpretation."<sup>7</sup> The message of the urgency of the Kingdom was primarily one of "moral urgency."<sup>8</sup> According to Manson, the ethic of Jesus is not limited to a particular period of time, as advanced by the interim ethic view, but it is, rather, a Christ-Ethic and consequently relevant for any

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<sup>1</sup> Scott, The Ethical Teaching of Jesus, p. 43.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>3</sup> Burton Scott Easton, Christ in the Gospels (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930), p. 176.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 181.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 176.

<sup>6</sup> William Manson, Jesus and the Christian (Grand Rapids: Wm.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), p. 165.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., pp. 172f.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 168.



age.<sup>1</sup> Manson suggests that Jesus offers man the opportunity to prepare for the Kingdom of God, to come into fellowship with Him, to be motivated by the love of God, and "to live by the power and in the spirit of the Father-God."<sup>2</sup>

The question of Jesus' timing--the actual imminence of the End--is avoided by some scholars of the "futurist" persuasion who see Jesus' ethics as eternally valid in spite of their assessment that His prediction went unfulfilled. Are Jesus' ethics relevant even though His Kingdom expectation was not fulfilled? The question is answered briefly by these scholars who do not hesitate to lay the less significant apocalypticism aside in order to accept the eternal truths of Jesus' message.

J. Middleton Murry, for example, holds that Jesus was mistaken. He reasons, therefore, that the apocalyptic expectation which Jesus held is no longer relevant.<sup>3</sup> Yet, Murry feels Jesus taught an ethic of eternal quality, which is illustrated most perfectly in the parable of the Last Judgment. To Murry, one must act in love toward his brother if he is to become a son of God and find entrance into the Kingdom.<sup>4</sup>

Latimer Jackson also believes that Jesus confidently expected an imminent Kingdom. He holds that since history has shown Jesus to have been mistaken, it must be admitted that His message of the imminent Kingdom, the coming of the Son of Man and the Judgment must be regarded as the "husk" but not the "kernel" of Jesus' message. According to Jackson, Jesus' eschatology passes away, but

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>2</sup>William Manson, The Gospel of Luke (London: Hodder and Stoughton, Ltd., 1930), p. 74.

<sup>3</sup>J. Middleton Murry, The Life of Jesus (London: Jonathan Cape, 1948), pp. 260ff.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 273ff.

His ethic, the essence of His message, remains.<sup>1</sup>

Edward W. Winstanley agrees that Jesus' eschatology needs to be reappraised since His expectations were unfulfilled. He recommends the method of spiritualization as found, so he believes, in the Gospel of John.<sup>2</sup> Winstanley says that Jesus used the eschatological form as an "ethical vehicle."<sup>3</sup> To Winstanley, Jesus' ethics are related to, but not dependent upon, His eschatology, a time-conditioned outlook. His ethics are separate and "possess perpetual validity."<sup>4</sup>

Observations. While those of the futurist school basically agree that a critical study reveals that Jesus is presented by the Synoptic writers as proclaiming an imminent coming of the Kingdom of God, they offer various opinions concerning the degree to which Jesus' eschatology influenced His ethics. The variety of opinions at this

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<sup>1</sup> Latimer Jackson, The Eschatology of Jesus (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1913), pp. 338ff. Note: In spite of his futurist position and his re-interpretation of eschatology, Jackson still finds some present value and significance in Jesus' eschatology. Ibid., pp. 350ff.

<sup>2</sup> Edward W. Winstanley, Jesus and the Future (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1913), pp. 358ff., 383f., cf. 399f. Cf. Chester C. McCown, who also believes that the eschatological message must be spiritualized for the sake of Jesus' ethical teaching. He maintains that if modern man takes the apocalyptic message of Jesus literally, then His message as a whole will have to be regarded as having no permanent validity. McCown suggests that modern man can accept Jesus' message if His ethic is "understood in the light of social ideals of the ancient Orient, and not in the light of Hellenistic Christianity . . . ." Chester C. McCown, The Genesis of the Social Gospel (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1929), pp. 364ff. To McCown, Jesus' ethical sanctions are not eschatological, but inward and moral, because the Kingdom is to be a product of "social forces." Ibid., pp. 327f. McCown rejects the idea that Jesus' ethic was controlled by some consistent eschatological scheme. Chester C. McCown, The Search for the Real Jesus (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940), pp. 272f.

<sup>3</sup> Winstanley, Jesus and the Future, p. 383.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 396ff.



point illustrates the difficulty involved in translating the Synoptic eschatology into relevant concepts for today.

Many of these scholars, in the interest of relevance, develop hermeneutics that are barely related to the results of their critical studies. For example, some resort to the concepts of the "liberal school;" others claim that the early church misunderstood Jesus' preaching and inappropriately applied to Him a radical eschatology; while still others insist that Jesus' eschatology must be understood symbolically, spiritually or as a mode to convey Jesus' ethical message. These hermeneutic proposals represent attempts to make Jesus' ethics and in some cases his eschatology relevant for modern man. Coupled with the hermeneutic presentation is the desire to exonerate Jesus from having made a mistake in His prediction of an imminent End.

The dominant perspectives among those who believe that Jesus is presented by the Synoptic writers as proclaiming the imminent coming of the Eschaton may be seen in five interpretations hereby presented as held by Richard Hiers (consistent eschatology--relevancy retained), Jack Sanders (consistent eschatology--relevancy rejected), Joachim Jeremias (eschatology examined in the light of God's grace), Rudolf Bultmann (eschatology demythologized and existentialized) and Amos Wilder (eschatology interpreted as myth, symbol, poetry). The position of each man is presented, followed by an evaluation of his hermeneutic in relation to his critical conclusions.

#### Richard H. Hiers: Consistent Eschatology--Relevancy Retained

Expectation. Of the modern exponents of "futuristic eschatology," none has spoken with a more authoritative note than Richard H. Hiers, who strongly contends that the view "That Jesus expected the Kingdom of God to come in the near future cannot be disputed by anyone who



takes the synoptic evidence seriously."<sup>1</sup> To Hiers,

The synoptic evidence leaves little doubt that Jesus expected the coming of the Kingdom of God, the Son of man, the time of Judgment, and also, probably, the resurrection of the dead of previous generations, to take place in the future, in fact in the near future. The Present age or world would give way to a New world: the Kingdom of God would then be established both in heaven and on earth.<sup>2</sup>

It is Hiers' contention that neither Jesus nor the disciples believed that the Kingdom was either realized or actualized on earth. He makes clear his position in the claim that "It is . . . unlikely that any of the synoptic evangelists or their 'sources' (Mark, 'Q,' 'M,' and 'L') thought that the Kingdom of God was yet present or had been present on earth. For the Historical Jesus and the synoptic tradition alike, the Kingdom of God was still to come."<sup>3</sup> Hiers concedes that Jesus believed there were

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<sup>1</sup> Richard H. Hiers, The Historical Jesus and the Kingdom of God (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1973), p. 106.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 5f.

<sup>3</sup> Richard H. Hiers, The Kingdom of God in the Synoptic Tradition, p. 4. Hiers believes that "most of the synoptic evidence indicates unambiguously that Jesus and his followers looked for the coming of the Kingdom in the future . . . ." Ibid., p. 3. He is convinced, for example, that "Jesus was certain that the Kingdom of God would come soon, at the latest while some of those about him were still alive. In all likelihood, he proclaimed its imminence: it was coming very soon; it could come at any time. For this reason, numerous sayings and parables emphasize the need for constant readiness: 'Watch! For you do not know the day or the hour'" (Mark 13:33-37; Matt. 24:42; 25:13; Luke 12:38,40). Hiers, The Historical Jesus and the Kingdom of God, pp. 15f. Hiers does admit, in his discussion of the so-called parables of Growth (Seed Growing Secretly, Mustard Seed, and Leaven; Mark 4:26-29, 30-32; Matt. 13:33, par. Luke 13:20f.) that Jesus or the evangelists "may have thought the Kingdom present on earth in some hidden or incipient fashion." Hiers, The Kingdom of God in the Synoptic Tradition, p. 77. But he suggests that it is "equally possible and more consistent with the evidence which looks to the

present during His ministry certain "eschatological phenomena" (Preparation for the Kingdom's coming by preaching and exorcisms), but he insists that Jesus did not proclaim the presence of the Kingdom.<sup>1</sup> He charges that the tendency of some interpreters to circumvent the synoptic evidence which supports the futuristic view is occasioned by the dogmatic interests of the interpreters.<sup>2</sup>

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coming of the Kingdom as a still future event, to see the point of comparison in the certainty with which the final result may be expected." In other words, the believer could anticipate with confidence that the Kingdom of God is definitely coming. Hiers, The Historical Jesus and the Kingdom of God, p. 16. Therefore, according to Hiers, "it seems more likely that these parables were intended to give encouragement to his (Jesus') companions who, with him, were engaged in an urgent mission of preparation for the coming of the Kingdom." Hiers, The Kingdom of God in the Synoptic Tradition, p. 77. Hiers believes that Jesus, throughout His ministry, led His disciples to believe in the imminent coming of the Kingdom of God. He urged them to pray for its coming (Matt. 6:10, par. Luke 11:2), to desire it, and to believe that God would give the Kingdom to them (Matt. 6:33; Luke 12:31f.; 18:1-8). He also taught them that some of those listening to Him would see the Kingdom of God come (Mark 9:1; cf. Mark 13:26; Matt. 16:28; Luke 21:31; Mark 13:30 and Luke 17:20-18:8). This futuristic emphasis was not simply a part of the early ministry of Jesus, but also of the later (Mark 14:25, par. Luke 22:18; cf. Mark 15:43). Hiers, The Historical Jesus and the Kingdom of God, pp. 13ff.

<sup>1</sup>Hiers, The Kingdom of God in the Synoptic Tradition, p. 97. Cf. R.H. Hiers, "Satan, Demons, and the Kingdom of God," Scottish Journal of Theology, 27 No. 1 (1974): 35-47. In this article Hiers details his position that exorcisms and Jesus' conflict with Satan on earth are not signs of the presence of the Kingdom of God, but that they are preliminary activities in preparation for the coming of the Kingdom of God.

<sup>2</sup>Hiers acknowledges that there are also a number of passages which are often used by some interpreters to support the case for realized eschatology, but he believes that these passages "indicate fairly clearly that Jesus regarded the coming of the Kingdom as a future, supernatural occurrence." The Kingdom of God in the Synoptic Tradition, pp. 3f. A brief look at Hiers' interpretations of some of these passages follows. Luke 17:20-21b. While admitting that what Jesus meant in this saying is not



absolutely certain, Hiers believes that if Luke's interpretation is correct, then it cannot mean that the Kingdom of God is present in the person of Jesus or that it is present at all. He contends: "On the contrary, these verses point to its appearance dramatically and unmistakably in the future. When Luke 17:21b is taken in its context, the meaning emerges clearly enough: When the Kingdom of God comes, everyone will know it; there will be no need for authenticating clues or signs." Ibid., p. 29. When it comes it will be "unmistakable and universally visible . . . ." (Luke 17:20f.). Jesus also assured His disciples that it would happen "speedily" (Luke 18:8, 21:34-36). It will be the time of the Judgment, managed by the Son of Man (Luke 21:36). (Hiers observes that these two events--the coming of the Kingdom and the coming of the Son of Man--cannot be separated; both will occur together, "as different aspects of the same great event." (Cf. Mark 9:1, par. Matt. 16:28; Mark 13:29, par. Luke 21:31; also, Mark 8:38f. and Matt. 10:7,23). If a person will be admitted to the Kingdom, then he must be approved by the Son of Man (Matt. 13:41-43). Hiers, The Historical Jesus and the Kingdom of God, pp. 28ff. Hiers also maintains that in several passages there is evidence that "Jesus' campaign against the demons is preliminary and preparatory to the coming of the Kingdom of God" (Matt. 12:28; par. Luke 11:20). Hiers, The Kingdom of God in the Synoptic Tradition, p. 30. Connected with this struggle against Satan or the demons is, Hiers claims, Jesus' practice of exorcisms. According to Hiers, "Through the exorcisms, Jesus is binding Satan, defeating his forces and loosing or 'plundering' his victims, liberating them for the life of fidelity to God in this age, and thus for eternal life in the age to come" (Mark 3:27). Ibid., p. 49. He asserts: "Certainly the Kingdom of God would not be established on earth until Satan has finally been overthrown or bound." Ibid., p. 55. Hiers maintains that this struggle for control over the earth can also be observed in Matt. 11:12 (cf. Luke 16:16). He remarks: "Whether the Kingdom of God has been coming violently or suffering violence, the meaning is approximately the same; the struggle for dominion over the earth has started. In war, both sides 'suffer violence,' and the end, victory, 'comes with violence.'" Ibid., p. 41. According to Hiers, the concept of a period of tribulation, which was to precede the "final age of salvation" (cf. Dan. 7:7-27), is also dealt with in the synoptic tradition, particularly in the so-called Synoptic Apocalypse. These thoughts are attributed to Jesus (Mark 13:5-37, par. Matt. 24:4-42, par. Luke 21:8-36) with the promise that the one who endures through this time of tribulation "will be saved." (Mark 13:13). The conflict will be frightening (Mark 13:19), and pretentious Messiahs will attempt to lead the disciples astray (Mark 13:24; but eventually the total victory will belong to God, and the Son of Man will come



Expectation and Ethics. Hiers agrees with Schweitzer and Bultmann that within the Synoptic Gospels "the urgency or crisis of repentance and decision arose out of the conviction expressed in Jesus' parables and other teaching alike, that the Kingdom of God, Son of Man, and Judgment had drawn near."<sup>1</sup> Hiers claims that

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triumphantly (Mark 13:26ff.). Hiers believes that while the arrangement of such sayings may be the work of the early church, such concepts were still likely a part of Jesus' preaching. For example, in the "Lord's Prayer," Jesus advises His disciples to pray: for the imminent coming of the Kingdom; for deliverance from the Evil One; for God to bring the Kingdom before the time of tribulation. Jesus "taught his followers to pray that God might, after all, spare them the necessity of going through temptation." Hiers, The Historical Jesus and the Kingdom of God, pp. 25f. Hiers also claims that the controversial verse concerning the position of John the Baptist in the Kingdom of God supports the futuristic view of the Kingdom. He comments: "Why is the least in the Kingdom greater than John? Because anyone then and there is greater than anyone here and now." Hiers, The Kingdom of God in the Synoptic Tradition, p. 59. Hiers argues that "It is not unlikely that the meaning of the half verse, if authentic, is this '. . . but the least in the Kingdom of Heaven will be greater than John is (now).'" Ibid., p. 60. And of Matt. 10:23, Hiers submits: "The meaning of the verse . . . could not be clearer: Jesus tells the twelve that the Son of man will have come before they complete their mission through the towns of Israel." Ibid., p. 66.

<sup>1</sup>Richard H. Hiers, Jesus and Ethics, p. 124. Cf. Hiers, The Kingdom of God in the Synoptic Tradition, p. 13. He comments that Jesus believed that "The Kingdom of God, the Son of Man, and the judgment were near . . . ." Hiers feels that Jesus' anticipation of the Kingdom to come momentarily led Him to judge the fig tree for failing to produce figs out of season. According to Hiers, "Jesus expected to find fruit on the fig tree because he was expecting the messianic age to begin; for in the messianic age, figs--together with all other products of nature--would always be in season." Richard H. Hiers, "Not the Season for Figs," Journal of Biblical Literature, 87 No. 4 (1968): 395. Hiers also claims that Jesus' radical action of cleaning the Temple can be understood in the light of His expectation of the Kingdom as imminent. Like man, the temple had to be readied for the coming of the Kingdom. Richard H. Hiers, "Purification of the Temple: Preparation for the Kingdom of God," Journal of Biblical Literature, 90 No. 1 (1971): 82-90.

since Jesus was certain that the Kingdom would come soon, and because of His understanding of the radical character of God's will, He "sought to prepare men for this impending crisis by demanding repentance or radical obedience to God's will."<sup>1</sup> "The Kingdom of God was coming. Men should repent. Men should be merciful, for God is merciful. What should a man do? That which is the will of God."<sup>2</sup> Jesus, then, encouraged His hearers to prepare for the Kingdom because only those with certain attitudes (beatitudes) and those who are found to be worthy will be able to inherit it (Mark 10:17,30). It is for those who will give up their lives for it (Mark 8:35-37 and parallels) and for those who will take the difficult path which leads to the Kingdom (Matt. 7:14) and the entrance into it (Mark 9:43,47).<sup>3</sup>

Hiers defends Schweitzer's theory of Interimsethik against those who claim that such a theory automatically invalidates Jesus' ethics. He sees in Schweitzer's view, "no mention of 'prudent rules,' 'relative requirements,'

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<sup>1</sup> Hiers, Jesus and Ethics, p. 95. While Hiers adopts some of the phrases used by Bultmann, he definitely does not agree completely with Bultmann's concept of radical obedience. Cf. Ibid., pp. 95f.

<sup>2</sup> Hiers, The Historical Jesus and the Kingdom of God, p. 37.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 15. It is the view of the Synoptic Gospels, Hiers believes, that those who respond properly to the message of salvation would belong to the Kingdom of God, in which "the power of the Evil One would be forever bound or broken: there would be no more sickness, pain, hunger, misery, or death. Instead, men and women would live like the angels, they would see God, and forever share the blessings of life in the Age to come, material as well as spiritual: food, drink, companionship with the righteous of all generations. But the unforgiving, the unrighteous, the unrepentant would forever be excluded from these joys, perhaps with the added misery of knowing that they had missed their great opportunity through their indifference to those in need around them in their life in the Old world" (Matt. 25:1-13; Matt. 25:14-30, par. Luke 19:12-26; Matt. 25:31-36; Luke 16:22-26). Ibid., p. 39.



or 'exceptional commands' . . . ." <sup>1</sup> Accepting Schweitzer's phrase, Hiers agrees that "The 'ethics' of Jesus was 'interim ethics,' ethics for the interim, a summons to action in the time that remained before it was too late, before the coming of the Kingdom and the time of Judgment." This emphasis upon the End-time, did not, Hiers believes, undermine ethics. "Rather, it was all the more important that people now trust God and do his will." <sup>2</sup> After all, Hiers proposes, why should a person who is anxiously anticipating the coming of the Kingdom of God be anxious about food, drink, clothes, or even life. He just needs to trust in God and believe that He will supply them as an aspect of the Kingdom of God. <sup>3</sup> Hiers insists, therefore, that it should be recognized that Schweitzer, in keeping with this emphasis, ". . . defined interim ethics

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<sup>1</sup> Hiers, Jesus and Ethics, p. 92. Hiers suggests that Schweitzer certainly might have mentioned some "prudent rules," etc., "in order to account, in part at least, for such directives as those reported in Mark 10:21; Matt. 8:21f.; Luke 9:60 and 20:35f." Ibid. It is the contention of Hiers that the reluctance by many scholars to understand correctly Schweitzer's position ". . . has resulted in confusing rather than clarifying the character of Jesus' teaching, and has directed attention away from the radical claim which it expresses: the demand for repentance, moral transformation, conversion." Richard H. Hiers, "Interim Ethics," p. 233.

<sup>2</sup> Hiers, The Historical Jesus and the Kingdom of God, p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 19f. Hiers also believes that Jesus' admonition, "'Make friends quickly with your accuser, while you are going with him to court . . . ' is surely a piece of 'ethics for the interim' and was not intended as a moral maxim for his followers in centuries to come" (Matt. 5:25f., par. Luke 12:57-59; cf. Luke 16:9). "Make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous mammon . . . ." Ibid., pp. 29f. According to Hiers, "How one responded to the message of the Kingdom in the meantime was what mattered (Luke 14:15-35). Men must seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, do His will, respond with mercy, forgiveness, helpfulness to their neighbors. Those who do seek God's Kingdom above all else and live accordingly shall receive it, and there receive all such



as repentance . . . in preparation for the coming of the Kingdom."<sup>1</sup>

Although Hiers maintains that Jesus' imminent expectation of the Kingdom and judgment was definitely the context for His ethics,<sup>2</sup> he does not accept the idea of the Kingdom's imminence as the predominant ethical sanction. Rather, Hiers agrees with Windisch, Wilder, Bornkamm, and R. Niebuhr that "the basic content of Jesus' ethical teaching was not derived from His belief in the nearness of God's Kingdom, but from His perception and convictions as to God's nature and will."<sup>3</sup> To Hiers, however, there can be no separation, in the teaching of Jesus, between the nearness of the kingdom and the doing of God's will. He believes that even the Twelve, as they were sent upon their mission, participated in the call for man to respond to God's righteousness and Kingdom. He comments: "By preaching that the Kingdom of God is at hand they warn men that they now have their last opportunity to choose between God and other masters, for only those found faithful to God (and his righteousness) can hope to enter his Kingdom."<sup>4</sup>

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things as food and drink and clothing as well" (Matt. 6:33, par. Luke 12:31). Ibid., pp. 35f.

<sup>1</sup>Hiers, Jesus and Ethics, p. 92.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 96.

<sup>3</sup>Hiers, "Interim Ethics," p. 230.

<sup>4</sup>Hiers, The Kingdom of God in the Synoptic Tradition, p. 68. According to Hiers, with the coming of the Kingdom of God, the Old Testament understanding of righteousness was not radical enough. He who anticipates the Kingdom must be even more righteous than the Pharisees or he will not be able to enter it when it comes (Matt. 5:20-25; Mark 10:7-12; Matt. 5:33-37). Hiers, The Historical Jesus and the Kingdom of God, p. 21. Hiers believes that the coming of the Kingdom of God called for a total love for God (Matt. 7:12, par. Luke 6:31) and for Godly love to be expressed toward the needy of the world (Mark 10:21, par. Matt. 19:21, par. Luke 18:22; cf. Luke

Hiers also makes the connection between eschatology and ethics within the teaching of Jesus in his interpretation of the "Wise Steward" (Luke 16:1ff.). He claims that this parable, like so many of the parables and other sayings attributed to Jesus, "is a summons to a decision of ultimate consequence," Hiers feels that the parable teaches that "Those who wish to inherit the Kingdom should profit from the example of the sons of this world. They should now give what they have to the poor, for only such--the poor and their benefactors--can hope to be received into the Kingdom."<sup>1</sup>

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6:20f.; 14:15-24; 16:22 and Luke 12:33; cf. Matt. 6:19f.). (Also Luke 14:13f.; Matt. 10:42). It means that one's attitudes must be right toward others: in forgiveness (Matt. 6:12; 6:14, par. Mark 11:25; Matt. 18:21f., par. Luke 17:3f.; Matt. 18:23-35); in judging properly (Matt. 7:1-5, par. Luke 6:37f., 41f.); in honor (Luke 14:7-11); in humility (Matt. 5:3,5); in servitude (Mark 9:33-35; 10:43f.; Mark 10:15). The responsive ones who possess such attitudes will be ready for the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom demands righteousness, and it will be only for those producing the fruits of it (Matt. 21:43; cf. Matt. 12:33,35, par. Luke 6:43-45 and Matt. 3:8-10, par. Luke 3:8-9; cf. Luke 13:6-9). Ibid., pp. 22ff.

<sup>1</sup>Richard H. Hiers, "Friends by Unrighteous Mammon: The Eschatological Proletariat (Lk. 16:9)," Journal of the American Academy of Religion 38 No. 1 (1970): 36. Hiers suggests that the lesson in Luke 12:57ff., par. Matt. 5:25f.; is similar to that in Luke 16:9. "While one has time, he should act appropriately . . . . Soon comes the Judgment, when the fate of each will depend on how he has responded to those about him during his life in the old world." Ibid.; cf. Hiers, Jesus and Ethics, pp. 164f. He remarks: "The future advent of the Kingdom was clearly a matter of consequence to Jesus. Its coming, though still future, was a decisive factor in the present situation. Soon it would be too late to repent. Those found unprepared--having exploited their fellows, or failed to respond to them in times of distress, in short, those who were indifferent to God and neighbor--would be judged adversely." Also, Hiers, The Kingdom of God in the Synoptic Tradition, pp. 72ff. According to Hiers, Jesus illustrated through certain parables that He demanded total dedication to the Kingdom (Hidden treasure and Pearl; the Rich Man and a Camel) and conscientious preparation for the Kingdom (Ten



Expectation and Relevance. Regarding the expectation of the imminent Kingdom, Hiers feels that Jesus was obviously mistaken since "The Kingdom of God simply did not come, certainly not in the form that He expected and announced that it would."<sup>1</sup> He comments: "World events have made it plain that the Kingdom of God is not immanent in human history and that Jesus' teachings do not tell all that one needs to know in order to decide and act obediently and responsibly in confronting the complexities of this multiproblem world."<sup>2</sup>

According to Hiers, Jesus did not, ". . . so far as we can tell from the Synoptic evidence, intend His message for later generations, centuries, or us."<sup>3</sup> Yet Hiers insists that such an admission does not invalidate Jesus' teaching for modern times.<sup>4</sup> Rather, he is convinced that the message of Jesus is still valid if what Jesus had to say about God and man in the first century was true.<sup>5</sup>

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Maidens). Other parables, Hiers claims, illustrate the kind of behavior which Jesus felt to be appropriate for those who hoped to enter the coming Kingdom (Talents or Pounds; Faithful and Wise Servants), while still others point out the "ultimate importance of repentance" (Lost Sheep; Lost Coin; Prodigal Son).

<sup>1</sup>Hiers, Jesus and Ethics, p. 150.

<sup>2</sup>Hiers, "Interim Ethics," p. 220. Hiers maintains that "Even if it could be shown, exegetically, that Jesus did think that the Kingdom had come, we would still have to conclude that he was mistaken, for there is no evidence that it did come, either in or during his ministry, or subsequently." Hiers, Jesus and Ethics, p. 150. Cf. Hiers, The Historical Jesus and the Kingdom of God, pp. 111f.

<sup>3</sup>Hiers, Jesus and Ethics, p. 149.

<sup>4</sup>Hiers, "Interim Ethics," p. 227.

<sup>5</sup>Hiers, Jesus and Ethics, pp. 149f. He comments: "Jesus was mistaken in believing that the ambiguities of historical existence were about to be resolved in ultimate judgment and redemption, but His understanding as to what God requires and desires of men is not thereby



In view of his conclusion that Jesus preached the Kingdom as imminent, but was mistaken in His expectation, Hiers develops two features of the eschatological hope which he believes are relevant for today's moral situation. The first feature is the shortness of time. He proposes that man has only one short life, therefore, he should respond to a neighbor in need at the opportune moment, since there is always the possibility that neither he nor the neighbor will be present tomorrow.<sup>1</sup>

A second way in which eschatology can be seen as relevant to the contemporary moral life, according to Hiers, is "as hope." He believes that eventually God will redeem history and then "the ambiguities of history will be resolved. The principalities and powers, including our own will to power, will be judged." Hiers suggests that belief in the Judgment can also be an incentive to act responsibly. Expectation of the Judgment, for example, should cause one to act more responsibly in a given situation toward his neighbor.<sup>2</sup>

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discredited." Ibid., p. 150. He contends further that "Although Jesus may not have intended His ethical teaching as a guide for later generations, it has nonetheless come down to us. The God whose nature and will are the basis for Jesus' teaching is still the God whom Christians acknowledge as the Heavenly Father." Hiers, "Interim Ethics," p. 232.

<sup>1</sup>Hiers, Jesus and Ethics, p. 165. Cf. Hiers, "Interim Ethics," p. 232. He remarks: "We may not expect the world to pass away and God's Kingdom to come within our own generation, but we may expect to pass away ourselves; the shortness of our span of years--our own, and our neighbor's--adds an urgency to our moral decisions and actions . . . ." Hiers warns that others "will pay tomorrow for our decisions and indecisions of yesterday and today." He feels, therefore, that "All ethics are interim ethics." Hiers, Jesus and Ethics, p. 166.

<sup>2</sup>Hiers, Jesus and Ethics, pp. 166f. Cf. Hiers, The Historical Jesus and the Kingdom of God, pp. 113ff., in which Hiers suggests that while primitive eschatology (including that of Judaism, Jesus and the early church) is mythological, it should not be understood "simply as

Hiers cautions against a type of optimism which is grounded simply in the fact of the world's continued existence. At the same time, however, he feels that one should not adopt a pessimistic attitude by continually anticipating the cataclysmic end of history. Such a view, he suggests, "has more the appearance of Amos' 'day of Yahweh' than Jesus' 'good news' of the coming Kingdom."

Hiers remarks:

Our optimism takes the form of hoping that the world as we know it--improved, perhaps, by temporary "proximate" solutions--will be permitted to continue indefinitely into the future. In that case, however, the radical sayings of Jesus about selling all and giving to the poor, or taking no thought for the morrow, however "sublime," cannot be followed responsibly, even if he meant them to be obeyed literally.<sup>1</sup>

Hiers believes that even if Western civilization, as we know it today, "must go under," hope should not be relinquished since "God is the one who is at work in and against history to bring his purposes to fulfilment." He feels that man should no longer hold to the view that God

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quaint myths." Rather, to Hiers, "The important theological problem is to find the meaning of the 'myth.'" He believes that in the light of present interest in the hope of a "better age" or "better world" and the "End-time," the perceptions and affirmations which underlie the eschatological message of Jesus have a continuing vitality and relevance. For example, within the teaching of Jesus, "the possibility, in fact the certainty that historical existence on earth will come to an end is acknowledged without despair." Hiers suggests that "The interim is an existence marked by moral seriousness, concern for the well-being of others, and the fulfillment of life rather than absurdity, egoism, and futility. Moral effort exerted against the flux of history does not lapse into passivity, cynical indifference, or hatred of the enemies of the movement when human and social realities fail to fall into the envisioned perfection. A higher Will or Purpose is affirmed than that of finite and pretentious men."

<sup>1</sup> Hiers, Jesus and Ethics, p. 151.



will bring in the Kingdom through the natural evolutionary process or from the moral efforts of man. Rather, he suggests that "If history is to be redeemed, it will be as in the case of our own little individual histories: A miracle of his (God's) grace."<sup>1</sup>

Observations. Richard Hiers presents a persuasive argument in support of consistent eschatology, closely following the positions held by both Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer. He substantially defends the view that Jesus proclaimed the imminent coming of the Kingdom of God, and that Jesus' ethics must be interpreted in the light of such preaching.

It is only when Hiers moved into the interpretative phase of his hermeneutic that his presentation lacks substance. In his assessment of Weiss' attempt to claim continued relevance for Jesus' message, Hiers observes that Weiss retreats to the principles of the "liberal interpretation." Likewise, Hiers shows little concern for demonstrating how his own critical conclusions relate to his scheme for understanding how Jesus' eschatology, in spite of His mistaken prediction, is still relevant for today. Hiers yields to a "personalized eschatology," which is similar to Bultmann's existential position. That one's "personal time" may be short cannot be refuted. The development of a "theology of hope" is also a healthy concern in the light of man's plight and the manipulative powers of the mighty. However, these concerns may be unaffected by the belief in an imminent Eschaton. Further, Hiers presents no a priori evidence for his claim that Jesus' mistake in predicting an imminent End does not discredit His understanding of what God desires and requires of men.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 166.



Jack Sanders: Consistent Eschatology--Relevancy Rejected

Expectation. Jack T. Sanders contends that any attempt to modernize Jesus is a wasted effort, and there is left, he believes, only one alternative--to deal with the foundation of Jesus' teaching--"that is, with his basic religious orientation."<sup>1</sup> To Sanders, Schweitzer is right in his view that "Jesus' ministry was primarily determined by his imminent eschatology . . . ."<sup>2</sup> Sanders is quite frank in his position that "any view that holds that Jesus did not proclaim an imminent eschatology will have to be considered erroneous."<sup>3</sup>

Expectation: Ethics and Relevance. In his consideration of the current relevance of Jesus' ethics, Sanders is mainly concerned with testing the validity of Jesus' general ethical principles. Succinctly stated, he

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<sup>1</sup> Jack T. Sanders, "The Question of the Relevance of Jesus for Ethics Today," Journal of the American Academy of Religion 38 (June 1970): 132. Note: This article was later revised and published in Jack T. Sanders, Ethics in the New Testament (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), pp. 1-29.

<sup>2</sup> Sanders, "The Question of the Relevance of Jesus for Ethics Today," p. 132.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 133 (underline added). Sanders insists that "Any view . . . which holds that Jesus did not proclaim an imminent eschatology, i.e., did not preach that the Kingdom of God was about to come, was even in the process of dawning, misses an essential point. That Jesus held an imminent eschatology will have to be considered a fact." Sanders, Ethics in the New Testament, p. 5. To Sanders, Jesus' endorsement of the ministry of John the Baptist (Matt. 11:7-11a; 16-19 par.), His statement on entering the Kingdom violently (Luke 16:16, Matt. 11:12f.), His parable of the fig tree (Mark 13:28f.), and Jesus' statement that he saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning (Luke 10:18), as well as some of the "entering the Kingdom" sayings (Mark 9:43-47; 10:15; Matt. 21:31b; Luke 11:52) are enough to prove so convincingly that Jesus held an imminent eschatology that "any view which does not treat Jesus as espousing (such) a view will have to be considered self-apocopating." Ibid., pp. 5f.

concludes that "there is hardly any hope of finding individual instructions that will still be valid after nearly 2000 years . . . ." <sup>1</sup>

Sanders' redactional approach is to evaluate the ethics of the Synoptic Gospel writers, who like Jesus, were basically eschatological in orientation. To him, the primary Markan ethic, for example, is one of discipleship; it is an ethic which calls one to follow Christ, and the call must involve persecution while the church awaits the Parousia. <sup>2</sup> Mark, in Sanders opinion, is not really interested in the welfare of the world or even its inhabitants--"other than to persuade as many of them as possible to repent and follow." Mark, he claims, really has no ethic for this day and had little to offer his own generation. To him, Mark's "imminent eschatology is so much the basis of his outlook that he cannot even pass on Jesus' command to love in its original meaning; instead he appeals for what one today would have to call retreat from the world and its problems." <sup>3</sup>

In his assessment of Luke, Sanders claims that there is the endorsement of the Markan ethic of "watching and waiting," but that Luke is more realistic in dealing with the delay of the Parousia and elevates the period of waiting into a consistent theology. <sup>4</sup> Yet, while Luke encourages the church to "watch" and "endure," he does very little in the way of suggesting "detailed or explicit guidelines for life in the world during the extended time of awaiting the parousia." <sup>5</sup> The desire of Luke to "hold

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<sup>1</sup> Sanders, "The Question of the Relevance of Jesus for Ethics Today," p. 131.

<sup>2</sup> Jack T. Sanders, "Ethics in the Synoptic Gospels," Biblical Research 14 (1969): 20f. Note: This article was later revised and published in Sanders, Ethics in the New Testament, pp. 31-46.

<sup>3</sup> Sanders, "Ethics in the Synoptic Gospels," pp. 21, 31.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 21f.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 22f.

on to the orientation toward the future as in Mark" was, in Sanders' opinion, "ultimately fatal" to Luke's ethical perspective. He concludes that Luke ". . . is unable seriously to deal with the problem of responsible ethical behavior and offers only a vague glimpse of what one's ethics should be, i.e., one should be good."<sup>1</sup>

The writer of Matthew, Sanders observes, was also aware of the problem of the delay of the Parousia, but unlike Luke, he did not attempt to develop a consistent theology around the problem. He claims that Matthew concentrated instead upon ethical issues and "made a much more thorough attempt to deal with the extended interim on a practical level; for the First Gospel is in large part concerned with Christian life."<sup>2</sup>

According to Sanders, Matthew portrays Jesus as the One who has come to "fulfill all righteousness." Jesus, as the true interpreter of the law, declares that the ultimate command is to "love God and to love one's neighbor . . . ."<sup>3</sup> Sanders contends that Matthew, in addition to taking the "love commandment" as the norm for interpreting the Torah, also includes a further development of his Christian ethics for the interim, i.e. the "lex talionis regarding forgiveness" as seen in Matthew 6:14f. and in the parable of the Unforgiving Servant,

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 25, 31. See Sanders' interpretation of the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10:29-37) for an understanding of this "good ethic" view. Ibid., pp. 24f.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 26f. Note: Sanders agrees with Gerhard Barth, who is of the opinion that "Matthew does not present Jesus as the giver of a new law, but as the true interpreter of the already existent law." See Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew, by Günther Bornkamm, Gerhard Barth, and Heinz Joachim Held, trans. Percy Scott (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963, first German ed. pub., 1960), pp. 75-105.



Matthew 18:23-35.<sup>1</sup> This "Character of eschatological judgment," Sanders suggests, can be seen further as a "somewhat impure form" of the stipulation in Matthew 5:19, "Whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so will be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven."<sup>2</sup> Therefore, as with Mark and Luke, the ethic of Matthew, in Sanders's opinion, really hinges upon his eschatology. He remarks:

It seems to be Matthew's preoccupation with entering the Kingdom that allows him to mingle the apocalyptic lex talionis together with the Torah as interpreted by the Great Commandment. Both point to the Lord's coming! Both would fall out if the Lord were not coming. The "true" Christian is for Matthew the one who strives for righteousness that he may enter the Kingdom; way of salvation and character of Christian existence are thus one and the same.<sup>3</sup>

The ethic of Mark and Luke, to Sanders, becomes an ethic of escapism and irresponsibility toward one's fellow man because it is dependent upon an eschatological orientation, i.e. the Parousia expectation. The essence of such an ethic, in Sanders' analysis, is that when God comes, He will set everything right; and the Christian needs only to hold on and be good. Sanders believes there is a serious problem with this kind of ethic:

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<sup>1</sup> Sanders, "Ethics in the Synoptic Gospels," pp. 28f.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 29f. (underline added). According to Sanders, Jesus' command to love one's enemies was not presented as some ideal toward which man should strive with the feeling that it is unattainable. Rather, Jesus expected His disciples to obey this command. Sanders contends, however, that the command is relevant only in the light of the impending End. Cf. Sanders, Ethics in the New Testament, p. 17. Sanders cites the parable of the Good Samaritan to support his point. Here Jesus describes a man whose behavior is "not of this world." He accepts the command to love. In turn, the hearer learns that "to accept the demand of the parable is to accept an eschatological reality: the imminent arrival of the Kingdom of

. . . if God is not coming, if one has to reckon with the continuing existence of the world and its problems and with the continuous existence of other men with their needs, then the course of Mark and Luke--to place responsibility for the resolution of those problems and needs on the God who is now not coming--could hardly escape the designation "callous"--if one should seek to apply such an ethic today, that is.<sup>1</sup>

Since Matthew develops his ethic within the same eschatological framework, Sanders also lays the above charges against him. But, according to Sanders, Matthew's eschatology affects his ethic even more dramatically. He reasons that Matthew's ethic demands righteousness during the interim. But Matthew is unrealistic because he "expects the Christian to attain perfection prior to God's coming, even though the coming is no longer soon."<sup>2</sup> Sanders suggests that "As long as God is coming soon, it is possible to demand absolute righteousness." But Matthew failed to adjust to the consequences of an indefinite delay. Consequently, Sanders charges that Matthew's attempt to develop an ethic for the interim leads to "an impossible ethical situation." Matthew demands perfection and love during this period, but he fails to see that ". . . the delay of the parousia undercuts the premise, the righteous God is coming soon/therefore be absolutely righteous now, since it is the imminence involved in the indicative of that premise that is enabling of the absoluteness of the imperative." To Sanders, "An uncompromising demand for absolute righteousness is futile in a world that must live with its continual problems. Paul recognized that (cf. Gal. 3:10f.); Matthew did not."<sup>3</sup>

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God who vindicates the righteous." Ibid., pp. 6ff., 17. (See below, for further comments on Sanders' interpretation of this parable.)

<sup>1</sup> Sanders, "Ethics in the Synoptic Gospels," p. 31. (Underline added).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

According to Sanders, the synoptic Gospel writers consistently depicted Jesus as one whose ministry and teachings were determined by His "imminent eschatology." He demanded from His followers nothing less than perfection and complete righteousness. Sanders insists that "Such obedience is possible only if the end has drawn near. Once the pressure of the imminence begins to be released, the command must be relaxed."<sup>1</sup> The question Sanders raises is not simply whether Jesus' ethics are relevant for today, but whether it is possible "to find any way in which Jesus may be determinative for responsible ethical behavior in the world today . . . ." And his stark opinion is that "neither his teaching, nor his life, nor the Jesus who confronts the hearer of the church's kerygma is able to transcend the time-bound character of imminent eschatology."<sup>2</sup> Sanders remarks,

To put the matter now most sharply, Jesus does not provide a valid ethics for today. His ethical teaching is interwoven with his imminent eschatology to such a degree that every attempt to separate the two and to draw out only the ethical thread invariably and inevitably draws out also strands of the eschatology, so that both yarns only lie in a heap.<sup>3</sup>

Observations. In addition to his redactional critical approach, Sanders presents a brief critique of a selected number of scholars who have also attempted to understand the relationship between eschatology and

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<sup>1</sup> Sanders, "The Question of the Relevance of Jesus for Ethics Today," p. 139 (underline added). To Sanders, "those sayings in the Sermon on the Mount authentically from Jesus can be considered an impossible ethic only if one is to go on living in the world. If the end of the world has drawn nigh, bringing with it God's righteousness and judgment, the 'impossible' ethic becomes both possible and consistent." Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Sanders, Ethics in the New Testament, p. 31.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 29.



ethics in the teachings of Jesus. From these evaluations one can detect to some extent some of Sanders' exegetical preferences. For example, he contends that the problem cannot be resolved by demythologizing Jesus' eschatological message since the Christian must recognize that he is still a part of an ongoing world. That is, even if one thinks in terms of the "existential imminence" of his own future, he cannot accept such a concept as equivalent to "Jesus' belief that God was about to judge the world." Sanders believes that Schweitzer was more correct than Bultmann in understanding that "Jesus' view of imminence, upon which his ethical preaching was based, was and must remain an eschatological view."<sup>1</sup>

Sanders also charges that J.M. Robinson's existentialist view is "out of step with the times." He comments:

It is, . . . then, the continual pressure of the continuous existence of the world and its problems that finally breaks apart an existential approach to Christian ethics. Eschatology has turned out to be a hydra that rears another head even here. In other words, the ethical implications of the new quest of the historical Jesus would appear to be inappropriate to the modern understanding of the "world."<sup>2</sup>

Bornkamm's solution is also unacceptable to Sanders. He claims that even Bornkamm's somewhat uncritical acceptance of the Sermon on the Mount as being authentically from Jesus Himself will not allow for any view which minimizes Jesus' demand for radical obedience. Jesus' call to perfection (Matt. 5:48), according to Sanders, is not in harmony with Bornkamm's contention that Jesus presented an ideal ethic toward which man

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<sup>1</sup>Sanders, "The Question of the Relevance of Jesus for Ethics Today," p. 136. Cf. Sanders, Ethics in the New Testament, p. 13.

<sup>2</sup>Sanders, "The Question of the Relevance of Jesus for Ethics Today," p. 143. Cf. Robinson, A New Quest of the Historical Jesus, pp. 122f.

should strive but not expect to achieve. For example, the command to love one's enemy is not just an ideal to strive for; it is to be done! But this kind of love is possible, Sanders contends, only if there is due pressure from the imminent eschaton. Yet, on the other hand, it is an impossible ethic only if the end does not come. Therefore, Bornkamm does not resolve the problem simply by claiming that the love commandment "overcomes the impossible ethics of Jesus." Bornkamm sees the Sermon on the Mount as an "ideal" which allows for relaxation in terms of fulfilment. Sanders, however, interprets Jesus' demands as requiring exact obedience in order to satisfy the coming God, and so he cannot accept Bornkamm's "presently unrealizable ideal" interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount.<sup>1</sup>

Sanders also finds fault with the attempts of Ernst Fuchs and Herbert Braun to show the relevance of Jesus' ethics. Fuchs attempts to deal with the problem of the commandment to love by retreating to a doctrinal solution. That is, he holds that the commandment is valid "only for believers" because Jesus Himself has fulfilled the commandment for the believer. Sanders charges that this solution provides little help for modern man, who finds specific guidance for his life preferable to a doctrinal presentation.<sup>2</sup>

To Sanders, Braun's treatment of the love commandment is also an unsatisfactory retreat to a doctrinal solution. Braun claims, as Fuchs, that Jesus' commandment to love is valid "only for the believers" because Jesus Himself has fulfilled the commandment for the believer.

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<sup>1</sup> Sanders, Ethics in the New Testament, pp. 14-17.  
Cf. Bornkamm, Jesus of Nazareth, pp. 109ff.

<sup>2</sup> Sanders, Ethics in the New Testament, pp. 18f.  
Cf. Ernst Fuchs, "was heisst: 'Du sollst deinen Nächsten lieben wie dich selbst'?" in Zur Frage nach dem historischen Jesus (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1960), pp. 12-16.

Yet, for Fuchs there is a future fulfilment of the command which cannot be given up, and Sanders suggests that problems arise at this point for Christian ethics. To Fuchs the crucified Jesus, who acted in love, expected His disciples to respond in acts of love. Sanders observes that according to Fuchs the disciple is entrusted with the love commandment "in the present in prospect of what is yet to be." And the problem is that Fuchs "cannot be seen to have offered assistance in the formation of a valid and consistent ethics for today, since the orientation toward a future of fulfilment cannot be given up."<sup>1</sup>

Herbert Braun believes that Jesus' ethics are valid not because they come from Jesus, but because they are inherently valid. Of this view, Sanders says that it clearly resolves the problem of the loss of transcendence, but it just as obviously avoids the eschatological issue. He claims that Braun has succeeded in opening the way for Jesus' ethics to be brought "into the modern world" but he has not resolved the question as to whether Jesus Himself possesses "a validity for ethics today . . . ." Sanders observes that in Braun's view the role of Jesus need not be considered at all since His ethics are independent from Him. To Braun, the essence of Jesus' ethics--"the love commandment"--does not need an authoritative Jesus in its claim to eternal validity, "'even if the apocalyptic horizon sinks.'" Sanders charges that the problem with Braun's view is his failure to recognize that the call for such "unlimited love is a possibility for one only if the imminent coming of the Kingdom of God be presupposed."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 18-21. (Quote is from p. 20.)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 23-28. Cf. Herbert Braun, "The Problem of a New Testament Theology," translated by Jack T. Sanders, Journal for Theology and the Church 1 (1965): 169ff.



Sanders' basic presupposition is that the ethics of Jesus are valid only if the end comes soon! And his insistence upon this single hermeneutical principle makes for some forced conclusions. For example, in his interpretation of the parable of the Good Samaritan, Sanders describes the Samaritan as one who has chosen to accept the demands of living up to the expectations of agape, a man whose actions make sense "only if the God who vindicates the righteous is about to come . . . ." He is one who has left this present world: "for where are the Samaritan's family and employment, whence come his unlimited leisure and unlimited funds?" Here then is a man who, according to Sanders, has entered into the world that has become the Kingdom of God. The person who accepts the demands of the parable chooses to be cut off from all present obligations and to respond to a captivating eschatological reality--the imminence of God's rule.<sup>1</sup> Sanders contends,

That is the only hope of the one who accepts the demand of the parable; for the one who accepts the demand of the parable is destined to leave this world one way or another. If the righteous God does not come shortly, the one who accepts the demand of the parable will either starve to death or wind up a derelict. The only circumstance under which the Samaritan's 'comportment with reality' becomes a possibility is a belief in God's coming Kingdom and a belief, in fact, that the Kingdom is coming so soon that one stands to gain by living as if it were already present.<sup>2</sup>

Sanders forces the issue when he attempts to use this parable to support his premise that the ethic of Jesus is valid only if the Kingdom comes soon. What is so unusual about this story? It is possible that Jesus used a local story to teach a lesson and to illustrate that the Samaritan was willing to do what the law demanded in such a situation. In what was likely the original Sitz im

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 6-9.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

Leben, Jesus taught the Jews what they had ignored, and with a bit of irony He reminded them of God's command to take the initiative to show love and concern for those in need. Even a Samaritan's love had outclassed their own! Jesus illustrated that God expects radical expressions of love as the norm from His people. The expectation of the imminent Kingdom of God would serve to heighten one's response to the demands of agape, but the call to love is not invalidated if the end does not come when expected! The picture here is very clear.

The ordinary activities of everyday life provided the Samaritan with the opportunity to help a person in need, and the situation demanded a response whether God was coming soon or not! The wounded man had a "basic right" to the love of the Samaritan. That is not to say that the reaction of the Samaritan was common for his day and time. If so, Jesus never would have told this parable. But he is one who responded as God expects His people to give of themselves in such circumstances. The love of the Samaritan is a clear description of the "what 'more' have you done" that Jesus speaks of in the Sermon on the Mount. The Samaritan is presented as an example of one who is "perfect in love as God is perfect." His acts are akin to God's who pours out the rain and causes the sun to shine upon all who have needs. He does not respond to prove that he is ready for the coming God. Rather, his is an expression of pure love. And when the coming God comes, and He certainly may come soon, the Samaritan does not have to fear the judgment. He has demonstrated his readiness for the imminent coming of the Kingdom of God. What may have appeared as radical to the Jews was the norm for the Samaritan who had accepted the demands of agape. As the people of God, nothing less was demanded of them!

Joachim Jeremias: The Imminent Kingdom--Delayed

Expectation. While it is true that Joachim Jeremias will refer to a passage like Mark 2:19 as "Realized Eschatology,"<sup>1</sup> he stresses, nonetheless, the futuristic aspect of the Kingdom, and he views Jesus as the Consummator of the world, coming as the Messiah to bring in the imminent Kingdom.<sup>2</sup>

According to Jeremias, Judaism understood and acknowledged God as king and believed that "In the present age his reign extends only over Israel, but in the end-time he will be acknowledged by all nations."<sup>3</sup> Jesus, however, Jeremias contends, did not consider the Kingdom of God to be present.<sup>4</sup> He maintains that Jesus came as the eschatological messenger of God--"God's last and final messenger. His proclamation is an eschatological event. The dawn of the consummation of the world is manifested in it. God is speaking his final word."<sup>5</sup> According to

<sup>1</sup> Jeremias, The Parables of Jesus, p. 117.

<sup>2</sup> Joachim Jeremias, Jesus als Weltvollender. Beiträge zur Förderung christlicher Theologie, Vol. XXXIII, No. 4. (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1930). Cf. Joachim Jeremias, New Testament Theology: The Proclamation of Jesus, p. 139. Jeremias attempts to show that an analysis of the synoptic material indicates that there is "an earliest stratum in which the eschatological time of distress and the revelation of the basileia that follows it are expected soon."

<sup>3</sup> Jeremias, New Testament Theology, p. 100.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. Jeremias comments in response to whether Jesus considered the Kingdom present or future, or whether He combined both concepts: "The answer to this question is easy. The second petition of the Lord's Prayer . . . shows quite certainly that Jesus used the term malkūtā in its eschatological sense. This is in fact confirmed by his words at every step."

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 85. Jeremias claims that Jesus tells some of His disciples that they will see the Kingdom come in power (Mk. 9:1). To Jeremias, Jesus also indicates that the Judgment will precede the imminent Kingdom, and the Kingdom entrance sayings (e.g. Mk. 9:43-48) speak of



Jeremias, "Jesus not only utters the message of the Kingdom of God, he himself is the message."<sup>1</sup> He comes bringing salvation and mercy in the present,<sup>2</sup> but the Kingdom will ultimately come.<sup>3</sup> He writes:

We are confronted with an assured result: nowhere in the message of Jesus does the basileia denote the lasting reign of God over Israel in this age . . . .<sup>4</sup> Rather, the basileia is always and everywhere understood in eschatological terms; it denotes the time of salvation, the consummation of the world, the restoration of the disrupted communion between God and man.<sup>5</sup>

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the eschatological basileia. He also claims that the metaphor of the "eschatological banquet" is clearly to be understood in an eschatological way. Besides that, Jesus preached the nearness of the Kingdom (ἤγγικεν ἡ βασιλεία), and he "sent his disciples out with the same message." Ibid., p. 100. Jeremias contends that "even in the ἐντός ὧν ἔσται saying (Luke 17:21b), the basileia is understood eschatologically; it is coming suddenly." Ibid., p. 101.

<sup>1</sup> Jeremias, The Parables of Jesus, p. 229.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 115-145. Cf. p. 230.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 226.

<sup>4</sup> Jeremias, New Testament Theology, p. 101.

Jeremias admits that "this idea is, in fact, present in Matt. 21:43 . . .," but he claims that "the verse is absent from Mark, and is therefore an addition." Ibid. He also admits that there are Kingdom passages which contain the temporal ἐν that conveys the dynamic concept, but he interprets them in such a way that the present sense is eliminated. Some of these passages are: Matt. 20:21, which Jeremias suggests does not mean "'in your kingdom', but must, as the parallel Mark 10:37 ἐν τῇ ἐξουσίᾳ σου shows, be translated in personal terms, 'when you are king'; Matt. 16:28, "coming as king"; Mark 14:25, "when God has established his reign"; Luke 22:30, "when I am king"; and Luke 23:42, ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ σου, which Jeremias claims has better textual support than εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν σου, and should be translated, "when you come (again) as king." Ibid., p. 98, fn. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 101f.

Jeremias suggests that if one is to understand what Jesus believed about the future, then he must start from Jesus' own "conviction that his mission was the prelude to the coming of the eschatological time of distress."<sup>1</sup> According to this view, Jesus believed that the Kingdom of God would come "through suffering and only through suffering."<sup>2</sup> Although the time of distress, or catastrophe is not given a date by Jesus, Jeremias maintains that Jesus did give indications that the end would be soon.<sup>3</sup> Jeremias asserts that the "subject of all actual eschatological preaching is the imminent intervention of God, and not an intervention after thirty or forty years."<sup>4</sup> And he is convinced that the result of his investigation shows that there is "no saying of Jesus that

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 127.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 129.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 131. For example, Jeremias believes that the parable of the Fig-tree Turning Green and the petition, "Thy Kingdom come," indicate that the Consummation will be soon. Ibid. Jeremias contends that a number of sayings refer to the urgency of the moment due to the impending crisis. E.g.: Luke 10:4 (The disciples must proclaim the nearness of the Kingdom as quickly as possible. "Every minute is precious.") Ibid., p. 133. Luke 13:1-5 (The call to repentance receives a heightened sense of urgency because, although there is a "last respite," "it will not last long.") Ibid., p. 134. Cf. the parables of the Ten Virgins and the Great Supper, which convey, to Jeremias, the call to "Act immediately! There is still one last final chance of reprieve." Ibid., pp. 134f. He maintains further that the "generation sayings" (with the exception of Mark 13:30) are sayings of extreme rebuke. The warning comes--"Destruction faces them." Ibid., p. 135. According to Jeremias, both Matt. 10:23 and Mark 9:1 refer to the near end. The persecuted messengers will not have completed their task before the Son of Man will intervene. Ibid., pp. 135f. Mark 9:1 reveals that the tribulation, which will take place during the passion of Jesus, will not reach its climax because "the intervention promised by Mark 13:20, par.; Matt. 10:23 will occur, so that at least some disciples will escape a violent death" Ibid., p. 137.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 131.

postpones the end into the distant future."<sup>1</sup>

Expectation and Ethics. Jeremias stresses the point that Jesus comes bringing salvation and mercy in the present.<sup>2</sup> However, Jeremias is careful to distinguish between the "coming of the Kingdom" and the "time of salvation," although he contends that the dawning of the Kingdom is accompanied by the dawning of salvation.<sup>3</sup> In

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 139. Jeremias admits that the Synoptics indicate that there will be a short period of grace "between the announcement of the final catastrophe and its coming" (e.g. Mark 9:1, par. Luke 22:19b), but he contends that the interval must not be regarded as a period of incalculable length. Ibid. Jeremias observes that the announcements of the approaching end seem to conflict with the sayings of "watchfulness" which envisage a delay of the end (e.g. Matt. 24:48, par.; Matt. 25:5; Mk. 13:35 (cf. Matt. 24:43); Matt. 25:10), and he admits that "The evangelists do, in fact, relate these four parables to the delay of the parousia." Jeremias, however, claims that these parables, "like so many others," have undergone a change of audience, first having been directed toward Jesus' enemies "and applied secondarily to the disciples." Jeremias concludes, therefore, that originally these parables did not refer to the delay of the Parousia, "but to the suddenness with which it would come" (cf. Matt. 24:45-51; Servant Left in Charge). He remarks: "Old as it is, the interpretation of them (the four parables) as referring to the delay of the parousia is not the right one. Originally they were all parables of crisis, aimed at giving the warning, 'Take care, disaster is hanging over your head!, before it is too late.'" Ibid., pp. 138f.

<sup>2</sup> Jeremias, The Parables of Jesus, pp. 115-145. Cf. Jeremias, New Testament Theology. For example, according to Jeremias, the dawn of the time of salvation can be seen in the baptism of Jesus (p. 53); in Jesus' victory over Satan (pp. 94ff., 75); in the eschatological presence of the Spirit (p. 82); and in the life and ministry of Jesus--"More than John" has come (p. 83).

<sup>3</sup> Jeremias, New Testament Theology, p. 102. Jeremias suggests that in Jesus' emphasis upon the dawning of the Kingdom, salvation can be seen in definite illustrations and symbols. For example, there is the cry of "joy" (Luke 4:16-21) because the time of salvation is dawning--"is being fulfilled today." Ibid., p. 105. The dawning, even the presence of salvation can be seen in the wedding symbol. Further the light shines into the dark world; "The harvest has come"; "The fig-tree shoots"; "The



fact, he summarizes his eschatological position in the expression sich realisierende Eschatologie, which, if translated "eschatology becoming actualized . . . denotes the age of salvation now being realized, the consummation bestowed in advance, the in-breaking of God's presence into our lives."<sup>1</sup>

Jeremias is so intent upon demonstrating the effectual power of the imminent Kingdom for salvation that his view at times is similar to that of "realized eschatology." This stress is particularly evident in his discussion of discipleship and salvation as he emphasizes the impact that the time of salvation, which has become present through Jesus, has upon those who respond to Jesus' message. According to Jeremias, "the time of salvation is . . . the time when the will of God is valid in all its earnestness. The presence of the kingdom of God means establishment of the coming world's divine justice . . . ."<sup>2</sup>

Jeremias suggests that the Sermon on the Mount is not meant by Jesus to be a complete regulation of a disciple's life, but "rather, what is here taught is symptoms, signs, examples, of what it means when the kingdom of God breaks into the world which is still under sin, death, and the devil." Jesus shows what the "new life" is like, and says in effect to His disciples:

"You yourselves should be signs of the coming kingdom of God, signs that something has already happened. Through every aspect of your lives, . . . you should testify to the world that the kingdom of God is already dawning. In your lives rooted and grounded in the basileia, the

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new wine is offered"; "The best robe is given to the lost son"; "The bread of life is given to children"; "The peace of God is offered and judgment decreed." Ibid., pp. 106f.

<sup>1</sup> Jeremias, The Lord's Prayer, p. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Joachim Jeremias, The Sermon on the Mount, trans. Norman Perrin (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), p. 32.

kingdom of God, the victory of the kingdom of God should be visible."<sup>1</sup>

According to Jeremias, it is within the relationship which is formed by the dawning of the Kingdom of God, accompanied by the dawning of salvation, that one can discover the real motive for ethical action and discipleship.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 33. It might be noted that Jeremias wrote these views in 1959 (German edition) and since that time has somewhat radicalized his view on the Kingdom as future. However, in his discussion of discipleship in one of his latest works, New Testament Theology, he makes such statements as: "Anyone who belongs to the basileia, belongs under the divine law of the new creation" (p. 211). "Anyone who belongs to the reign of God and may address God as Father stands under the new law of God, which is part of the new creation and replaces the divine law of the old aeon." Ibid., p. 104. "What all these passages say is that love is the law of life under the reign of God" (pp. 212f.) Cf. pp. 211f. for comments on passages, Mark 12:28-34, par.; Matt. 7:12, par.; Luke 6:31; Luke 6:36). Jeremias makes other remarks which bring him close to the position of "realized eschatology." He writes, e.g., ". . . the kingdom of God overwhelms the senses, it sweeps men off their feet, and it becomes a matter too obvious for words that a man should surrender everything to gain this treasure." Ibid., p. 217. He suggests that disciples should show that they belong to the reign of God by the way they greet people on the street and by their disciplined use of words. ". . . membership of the basileia in ordinary life is expressed by an indefatigable capacity to forgive the brethren . . ." (p. 221). He observes that when one is in the sphere of the basileia there is concern for the poor (p. 221); and the roles of women (pp. 223ff.) and children (p. 227) become elevated. He believes that even one's politics are already largely determined, if he belongs to the reign of God (p. 228). Cf. pp. 231ff. for more references to the influence of the Kingdom. Note: In the reference to children, Jeremias comments: "Closely connected with the new position which Jesus accords to women in the sphere of the approaching basileia is a new view of children" (p. 227). Yet, elsewhere he suggests that Jesus "opens the basileia to children (Mark 10:14) and to those who can say 'Abba' like a child (Matt. 18:3)" (p. 116). And of the poor, Jeremias suggests that what Jesus proclaims to them is: "You share in God's reign (Luke 6:20) . . . . The poor are promised that God will intervene; nor are they put off with hopes for an indefinite future; the time of salvation is manifested, realized, actualized for them even now" (p. 113).

He dismisses as the main sanction for discipleship the "notion of merit" within Judaism<sup>1</sup> and claims that within the sphere of God's reign "another motive for action takes the place of the idea of merit and the claim to reward: gratitude for God's grace."<sup>2</sup> To Jeremias, it is this "law of love" which is the "law of life in the new age," that is, the "eschatological law of God."<sup>3</sup>

Jeremias, therefore, does not consider the expectation of the imminent Kingdom to be the primary sanction for ethical conduct. He does propose, however, that the theory of "interim ethics" offers an element of validity which is decisively important, since, as he believes, "the whole preaching of Jesus is in fact directed to the imminent End." To Jeremias, Jesus is the bringer of God's final word, and one's response to the word is a matter of life and death.<sup>4</sup> He asserts: "The hell of which Jesus speaks (Matt. 5:22, 29, 30) is not something that lies in the distant future, but a threat that is drawing near to his hearers."<sup>5</sup> Yet, in Jeremias' view, God gives one last respite; "it is pure compassion on the part of God that allows the fig-tree to stand for one year more (Luke 13:6-9)."<sup>6</sup>

Expectation and Relevance. It is the view of Jeremias that Jesus' ethic does not call for a straining

<sup>1</sup> Jeremias, New Testament Theology, p. 215.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 217.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 214.

<sup>4</sup> Jeremias, The Sermon on the Mount, p. 10.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 10f. He refers to some crisis-sayings, which he believes speak of the imminent judgment. They are: "Matt. 5:25, 26 (be reconciled before it is too late); Matt. 7:21-23 (before the judgment seat of God what matters is not having said, Lord, Lord, but having done God's will); Matt. 7:24-27 (the flood threatens)."  
Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 11.



toward the maximum possible effort; neither is it "an ethic of the death hour, nor the utterance of a voice from a world on the brink of catastrophe."<sup>1</sup> While Jeremias admits that the "dynamic of eschatology lies behind every word of Jesus,"<sup>2</sup> he is, nonetheless, convinced that "Jesus quite certainly did not proclaim an exceptional law for a short interim period; his words have validity not only up to the End, but also after it (Mark 13:31)."<sup>3</sup> He claims, moreover, that the ethical demands of Jesus are not a code of behaviour related purely to this world but concern the order of life in the coming reign of God, which regulates the life of the disciples even now.<sup>4</sup> But, for Jeremias, it is not an ethic which must be viewed "as an expression of anxiety in face of catastrophe. Rather the dominating thing for Jesus is something quite different: knowledge of the presence of salvation."<sup>5</sup> The Gospel of Jesus, according to Jeremias, does not call man to hold on simply because the final victory is at hand;<sup>6</sup> nor does it leave man to rely upon his own strength as does the law. Rather, the Gospel "brings man before the gift of God, and challenges him really to make the inexpressible gift of God the basis for his life."<sup>7</sup>

Jeremias believes that Jesus was obviously mistaken in His expectation of an imminent end. But he contends that it is important that Jesus' pronouncement was not that of "apocalyptic speculation," but rather, "spiritual judgments." His was a call to prepare for the coming of the reign of God while there was still time. Since the end did not come, Jeremias proposes that "God has granted

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>4</sup> Jeremias, New Testament Theology, pp. 204, 230.

<sup>5</sup> Jeremias, The Sermon on the Mount, pp. 11f.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., pp. 9ff., p. 35.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

a last period of grace." And, "the most important function of eschatology is that it keeps alive knowledge of this respite."<sup>1</sup> Jeremias observes that even Jesus Himself qualified His sayings concerning the nearness of the end; God "shortens" the time of distress for those who cry out to Him (Luke 18:7f., Mark 13:20 par.). Therefore, God can also grant the request, "Let it alone this year also, and lengthen the period of grace (Luke 13:6-9)." Jeremias suggests that God's will is not unalterable. For the benefit of those who pray, He will rescind His will. For Jeremias, the grace of God is the keynote in the eschatological calendar. He comments:

Jesus sets God's grace above his holiness. It can shorten the time of distress for his people and lengthen the opportunity for the unbelievers to repent. All human existence, hourly threatened by the catastrophe, lives in the interval of grace: "Let it alone this year also, in case it perhaps bears fruit" (Luke 13:8f.).<sup>2</sup>

Observations. The uncertainty of Jeremias's eschatological view can be seen in the evaluation of his stance by several scholars. He has, for example, been accused by A.L. Moore of minimizing the Parousia through reinterpretation.<sup>3</sup> The charge is valid since Jeremias does, in fact, accept the conclusion of C.H. Dodd that "Jesus evidently made no distinction between parousia, resurrection, consummation and the building of the New Temple, and that all these phrases describe the triumph of God that is to follow soon." Jeremias remarks:

This interchangeability of different phrases is a characteristic of the pre-Easter tradition. In no saying of Jesus do resurrection and parousia stand side by side as two events: it

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<sup>1</sup> Jeremias, New Testament Theology, p. 139.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 140.

<sup>3</sup> A.L. Moore, The Parousia in the New Testament (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1966), p. 2. Cf. Jeremias, The Parables of Jesus, 1963, pp. 100f., 221.

was the Easter experience which led to the systematization of the course of events into a sequence of resurrection, exaltation and parousia.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, Gösta Lundström considers the view of Jeremias a strong defence of the futuristic interpretation of the Kingdom,<sup>2</sup> while both George Ladd and Norman Perrin interpret Jeremias as attempting to relate both the present and future stresses of the Kingdom.<sup>3</sup>

Although Jeremias occasionally moves toward the view that Jesus taught both the presence and the future coming of the Kingdom of God, he is adamant in his view that Jesus taught that the consummation of the Kingdom of God was imminent--to come in the very near future. A dilemma of Jesus' having been mistaken in His prophecy results from Jeremias's conclusion that Jesus proclaimed an imminent End. However, he proposes the key for developing a biblical hermeneutic for resolving the problem. That is, God has delayed the End, and man is presently living in a grace period.

If God has delayed the End and has allowed an extended grace period, what effect do such concepts have

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<sup>1</sup>Jeremias, New Testament Theology, pp. 285f. Jeremias believes that the disciples "must have experienced the appearances of the Risen Lord as an eschatological event, as a dawning of the turning point of the worlds." Ibid., p. 309. According to Jeremias, Matt. 28:18 means that "the prophecy that the Son of man would be enthroned as ruler of the world was fulfilled in the resurrection." He comments further: "This, then, was the disciples' immediate experience of the resurrection of Jesus: not as a unique mighty act of God in the course of history hastening towards its end (though this is what it must have seemed to them after a short interval), but as the dawn of the eschaton. They saw Jesus in shining light. They were witnesses of his entry into glory. In other words, they experienced the parousia." Ibid., p. 310.

<sup>2</sup>Lundström, The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus, p. 249.

<sup>3</sup>Ladd, Jesus and the Kingdom, pp. 26f. Perrin, The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus, pp. 81f., 87f.



upon New Testament Christology? This question will receive further attention. It will also be proposed that although Jesus did predict the imminence of the End, New Testament Christology is not weakened by the argument that God in His mercy decided to delay the End and extend His grace rather than to consummate the Kingdom as Jesus predicted He would.

Rudolf Bultmann: Eschatology Demythologized and Existentialized

Expectation. Rudolf Bultmann's eschatology is difficult to assess. For him, eschatology must mean more than the "end of the world" or the "end of time" or existence which man measures chronologically. He admits that Jesus and the prophets proclaimed a mythological eschatology which included the view of an imminent end and a final judgment. And he agrees that Jesus believed, along with His contemporaries, that the eschatological drama would soon take place.<sup>1</sup> He interprets, for example, Luke 17:20,21 to mean that the "Kingdom of God is (suddenly) in your midst," i.e. that the Kingdom is future, but imminently so.<sup>2</sup> The Kingdom is "dawning" or "breaking in," but it is not yet present. The Kingdom is a power, "which, although it is entirely future, wholly determines the present."<sup>3</sup>

Bultmann contends that the meaning of Jesus' eschatological preaching goes beyond the myth of a cosmic event at the end of time. To him, Jesus' insistence that man

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<sup>1</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, Jesus and the Word, trans. L.P. Smith and H. Lantero (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934), pp. 38f. Cf. Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, Vol. I, trans. Kendrick Grobel (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1952), p. 22. Bultmann even supposes that the eschatological interpretation is taken for granted among European scholars and, as far as he can see, "also among American New Testament scholars." Rudolf Bultmann, Jesus Christ and Mythology (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Bultmann, Jesus and the Word, p. 40.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 51.

take seriously the "will of God" is central to His eschatological proclamation. That is, God's will is seen in His demand for justice, obedience, and love of neighbor and in His promise soon to judge the thoughts and actions of all men. Bultmann sees the eschatologist as one who reminds man of the inadequacies of his own structures and of the need to repent in the light of impending judgment. The message of the end also includes the challenge for man to abandon his own insecurity and to accept the future that is controlled by the transcendent "always coming" God. The eschatologist appeals to man to give up his temporary relationship with the finite world which faces impending doom and the judgment of a Holy God. The eschatological preacher believes the "hour of crisis" has come, and he invites man to receive salvation by repenting and preparing for the "always coming" transcendent and powerful God.<sup>1</sup>

Bultmann is not satisfied with what he views as the goal of the eschatologist's invitation. He understands the appeal of the eschatologist as an invitation to repent and prepare for the coming God in order to move into a state of transcendent bliss and consolation conducive to perennial worship of a Holy God. Bultmann contends that this picture is no less mythological than the "Platonic conception of bliss as philosophical dialogue." He insists that one must look to a deeper interpretation of the Christian myth.<sup>2</sup>

For Bultmann, the significant contribution of the Christian myth is this: the Christian views man as temporal and historical. Since man has a beginning and an end, the world beyond becomes for him an eternity of that which is new. The Greek, on the other hand, conceives of man as

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<sup>1</sup> Bultmann, Jesus Christ and Mythology, pp. 22-27.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

a spirit, not subject to time and history. Through useful symbolic pictures, therefore, the Christian eschatologist appeals to man to prepare for God's unknown future. For Bultmann,

This, then is the deeper meaning of the mythological preaching of Jesus--to be open to God's future which is really imminent for every one of us; to be prepared for this future which can come as a thief in the night when we do not expect it; to be prepared, because this future will be a judgment on all men who have bound themselves to this world and are not free, not open to God's future.<sup>1</sup>

Bultmann admits that the early Christian community retained and continued Jesus' eschatological preaching in its mythological form, but believes Paul began a demythologizing process that was developed radically by John.<sup>2</sup> That is, in the Gospel of John, "the original meaning of the gospel comes out in fullest clarity, in that the evangelist while making free use of the tradition, creates the figure of Jesus entirely from faith."<sup>3</sup> Bultmann argues that since "de-mythologizing has its beginning in the New Testament itself, . . . our task of de-mythologizing today is justified."<sup>4</sup> It is up to the historian to attempt to recover the life of Jesus through the "process of critical analysis" with the understanding that the gospels are designed to ". . . proclaim Jesus Christ and were meant to be read as proclamation." Not any of the Gospel writers, including Luke, sought to present a history of Jesus.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bultmann, Jesus Christ and Mythology, pp. 31f.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 32ff.

<sup>3</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, "The Study of the Synoptic Gospels," in Rudolf Bultmann and Karl Kundsinn, Form Criticism. Two Essays on New Testament Research, trans. Frederick C. Grant (New York: Harper and Row Pub., 1962), p. 70.

<sup>4</sup> Bultmann, Jesus Christ and Mythology, p. 34.

<sup>5</sup> Bultmann, "The Study of the Synoptic Gospels," p. 70.



Bultmann readily admits to accepting the modern world-view as "the criterion of the interpretation of the Scripture and the Christian message."<sup>1</sup> He contends, however, that rejection of the scriptural world-view, which to him is "the world-view of a past epoch," need not lead one to reject the scripture.<sup>2</sup>

It is important to understand clearly Bultmann's purpose for rejecting the scriptural world-view. He believes it to be obsolete and unacceptable to modern man, whose thinking has been conditioned by science rather than myths. The task of the Christian is to preserve the Christian message, the kerygma, and Bultmann is convinced this can be done best through de-mythologizing. He does not see the task of the Christian as disclosing the core of a message which can be accepted by reason alone. Rather, he suggests that the kerygma is not addressed to "the theoretical reason, but to the hearer as a self." Bultmann feels that de-mythologizing can make clear the function of preaching as a personal message, thus eliminating a false stumbling-block and bringing into sharp focus the real stumbling-block, the word of the cross.<sup>3</sup>

Bultmann agrees with those who hold that the modern world-view or the scientific method of inquiry, which in principle is the same today as it was in ancient Greece, has shaped the thinking of modern man. As a result, man depends upon the scientific world-view for his daily life. His perspective contrasts to the ancient world-view of the Bible, which is largely mythological. Modern man, therefore, does not believe in miracles, because they and other strange phenomena do not fit into the lawful order of his world-view. Modern man searches until he finds an explanation for strange and unnatural

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<sup>1</sup> Bultmann, Jesus Christ and Mythology, p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

occurrences.<sup>1</sup>

Bultmann advocates abandonment of the biblical world-view and encourages the acceptance of the modern world-view in order to expose the "real stumbling-block" --the Word of God which calls man out of his man-made security. Bultmann acknowledges that scientifically oriented modern man is presented with the temptation to rely upon his knowledge of the laws of natural, social and economic life to structure his own life. But to him, the Word of God warns man not to be deluded into believing that he can guarantee his own security. Rather the Word ". . . calls him to God, who is beyond the world and beyond scientific thinking."<sup>2</sup> The Word of God urges man to reject human security and calls him to a freedom which is only experienced as he yields to the law of God.<sup>3</sup>

According to Bultmann, the Word of God calls man to a freedom which differs significantly from "subjective freedom." Subjective freedom, to him, is ". . . the illusory idea of freedom as subjective arbitrariness which does not acknowledge a norm, a law from beyond. There ensues a relativism which does not acknowledge absolute ethical demands and absolute truths. The end of this development is nihilism."<sup>4</sup> Bultmann contends that the freedom of subjective arbitrariness carries the illusion of security ". . . because it is not responsible to a transcendent power, because it believes itself to be master of the world through science and technology."<sup>5</sup>

For Bultmann, the purpose of de-mythologizing is to make clear the Word of God which calls man ". . . into genuine freedom, into free obedience . . . ." The objective of de-mythologizing is to interpret the scripture and seek the deeper meaning of the mythological concepts by freeing the Word of God from an obsolete world-view.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 37f.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 42f.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 43.

Bultmann argues that it is wrong to accuse de-mythologizing of removing the element of mystery from the Word of God. He contends, to the contrary, that the true meaning of God's mystery is made clear through this method. This does not mean the mystery of God can be explained rationally; instead, there is understanding. Bultmann explains that man can understand God's grace and accept it by faith, though he may not be able to account for it rationally. God does not act in an irrational manner, but the mystery remains--"because it is inconceivable that he should encounter me in His Word as the gracious God."<sup>1</sup>

Expectation, Ethics and Relevance. In his consideration of sayings attributed to Jesus by the synoptic writers, Bultmann observes so many parallel proverbial sayings in rabbinic literature that he decides, ". . . one may even say, 'Not one of the ethical precepts of Jesus was, or needed to be, entirely unique.'"<sup>2</sup> However, Bultmann allows for the possibility that many of Jesus' ethical teachings are original with Him, although some of them are obviously products of the early church.<sup>3</sup>

Bultmann concludes his investigation convinced that "both the eschatological and the ethical teaching of Jesus belong equally to the oldest stratum of the tradition, so that one can hardly call either one of them secondary."<sup>4</sup> Once he concludes that the eschatological

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<sup>1</sup> Bultmann, Jesus Christ and Mythology, pp. 43f.

<sup>2</sup> Bultmann, "The Study of the Synoptic Gospels," p. 55.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., see pp. 58f. for a listing of some of these sayings in both categories. Bultmann comments: "Even though many of the sayings may have originated in the community, the spirit that lives in them goes back to the work of Jesus." Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 72f. By this Bultmann does not mean that the prophetic and apocalyptic sayings attributed to Jesus are necessarily originally from Him. Rather, the



and ethical teachings of Jesus belong to the oldest stratum of the tradition, Bultmann deals with the issue of determining the relationship between these two strands of Jesus' preaching and teaching.

Bultmann rejects the "interim-ethic" position, claiming that Jesus' demands have an "absolute character, and are by no means influenced in their formulation by the thought that the end of the world is near at hand."<sup>1</sup> To him, this interim ethic theory limits the ethic of Jesus to those emergency demands which were valid only for the short duration before the end of the world.<sup>2</sup> But he contends that the imperatives of Jesus "are clearly meant radically as absolute demand with a validity independent of the temporal situation."<sup>3</sup> He maintains that the demands of Jesus are not motivated by any sort of reference to the impending End, but they are God's verdict over a world that is ripe for judgment, and the verdict comes to expression in the eschatological proclamation.<sup>4</sup>

Bultmann also rejects the idea that Jesus' ethics are presented as conditions for entrance into the Kingdom of God, although he admits that "In form this is certainly

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formulation of such sayings, as arranged by the church from various sources and influences, make up part of the oldest stratum of the tradition. See Bultmann, History of the Synoptic Tradition, pp. 108-130.

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 73. (Note: See p. 24 for a list of some of those sayings which, to Bultmann, are not influenced by belief in an imminent end.)

<sup>2</sup> Bultmann, Jesus and the Word, p. 129. Bultmann does admit that the interim ethic theory offers an element of truth in its insistence that the words of Jesus regarding the will of God must be understood completely in the light of the eschatological. Ibid., p. 126.

<sup>3</sup> Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, Vol. I, p. 20.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

true again and again . . . ." <sup>1</sup> He argues that this relationship between ethical behavior and entrance into the kingdom does not result in any real union and is merely superficial and external. Such a relationship is, to him, an inconceivable view in the light of the seriousness of Jesus' moral demands. <sup>2</sup>

Bultmann also refuses to accept a third position which holds that Jesus' preaching of the imminence of the Kingdom of God is simply the mythological or symbolical form which He used to convey His "general faith in God as the Judge and Rewarder." This view, to Bultmann, does not take seriously the moral earnestness of Jesus' prophetic mission. <sup>3</sup>

How then does Bultmann view this relationship between eschatology and ethics? He suggests that one ". . . must probably conclude that in the eschatological as in the ethical teaching of Jesus the same fundamental view of God and man is presupposed." <sup>4</sup> It appears that Bultmann does not perceive the eschatological and ethical teachings of Jesus as distinctively separate and parallel elements in His proclamation. Rather, according to Bultmann, both Jesus' ethics and His eschatology are founded upon His understanding of the "ever-coming" Holy God before whom unworthy man must bow in repentance in order to receive salvation. Man is placed in the crisis decision as the future faces him now, and he must decide for the world or for God. Jesus' appeal to man is not to accept an individual or social ethic, but to see that the "moment of decision" offers him the possibility of yielding his every claim and gives him the opportunity to

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<sup>1</sup> Bultmann, "The Study of the Synoptic Gospels," p. 73.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

"submit obediently to the will of God."<sup>1</sup> Bultmann suggests that ". . . the unity of the eschatological and the ethical message of Jesus may be so stated: Fulfilment of God's will is the condition for participation in the salvation of his Reign."<sup>2</sup>

According to Bultmann, "The fulfilment of God's will is the condition for participation in the salvation of God's reign in this sense, that it means nothing else but true readiness for it, genuine and earnest desire for it."<sup>3</sup> Bultmann believes that when one desires the Kingdom he will fulfill the will of God. This means he will fulfill God's love command willingly and not as some irksome requirement of the Kingdom. "Rather," to Bultmann, "there is an inner connection: Both things, the eschatological proclamation and the ethical demand, direct man to the fact that he is thereby brought before God, that God stands before him, both direct him into his Now as the hour of decision for God."<sup>4</sup> Bultmann insists that the relationship between eschatology and ethics forms a false unity if it is made ". . . by conceiving God's Reign as the triumph of the Demand for Good either in the human mind or in historical human affairs."<sup>5</sup>

Bultmann believes that to acknowledge Jesus' error of calculation as to the time of the Eschaton does not mean that His ethic must be considered invalid. To him, the error itself is not significant. What is important, he suggests, is the concept associated with Jesus' conviction of the imminent End which led Him to make such an error. That is, like many prophets before Him, Jesus was so overwhelmed by His sense of God's majesty and will for

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 74. Cf. Bultmann, Jesus and the Word, p. 84.

<sup>2</sup> Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, Vol. I, p. 20.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 20f.      <sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 21.      <sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 19.



man that He foreshortened God's forthcoming judgment. For Jesus, therefore, the hour of decision had struck. To Bultmann, the error which Jesus made is related to His historical perspective, but His "understanding of human life" does not stand or fall upon His expectation of an imminent Eschaton.<sup>1</sup>

Observations. In his categorization of the "types of traditional material" in the Synoptic Gospels, Bultmann allows a degree of credence to the "prophetic and apocalyptic sayings" of Jesus. These sayings include Jesus' proclamation of the coming of the Kingdom of God, His call to repentance, His promise of salvation for the prepared and judgment for the unrepentant.<sup>2</sup> Although Bultmann believes we "cannot now define with certainty the extent of the authentic words of Jesus, we are nevertheless able to distinguish the various levels of tradition," and through careful historical investigation we can discover the center or core of the message "which holds the secret of its historical power."<sup>3</sup>

Bultmann admits that even after the secondary layers of the tradition have been removed in order to reveal the essential stratum's center, absolute certainty as to authenticity cannot result. In fact, he believes that "for no single word of Jesus is it possible to produce positive evidence of its authenticity . . . ."<sup>4</sup> Bultmann insists that this conclusion does not result in abandonment of scripture or in skepticism. Rather, he maintains that by careful analysis, a whole series of words

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<sup>1</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, Primitive Christianity in its Contemporary Setting, trans. R.H. Fuller (London: Thames and Hudson, 1956), p. 92.

<sup>2</sup> Bultmann, "The Study of the Synoptic Gospels," p. 56.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

found in the oldest stratum of tradition may be uncovered which "give us a consistent representation of the historical Jesus."<sup>1</sup> As an example, Bultmann observes that some of the sayings of Jesus have their parallels in ancient prophecy rather than contemporary apocalypticism. These sayings are briefly and vigorously expressed. He believes that, although the Christian community did produce prophetic sayings and place them in the mouth of Jesus,<sup>2</sup> among some sayings one may recognize "authentic words of Jesus."<sup>3</sup> In the main, Bultmann believes that ". . . according to the testimony of the earliest Christians themselves, they owed their eschatological enthusiasm to the prophetic appearance of Jesus."<sup>4</sup>

Bultmann observes that the Gospels were not written out of historical interest but as a result of the worship needs and in response to the kerygmatic preaching and understanding of the early church. And, to Bultmann, "these works are completely subordinate to Christian faith and worship."<sup>5</sup> He feels it is not surprising, therefore,

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 57. (E.g.: Rev. 3:20; 16:15; Matt. 10:16a; Lk. 10:19f.; Matt. 16:18f.; 18:20; 28:19f.; Lk. 24:49. The Church also added to other sayings such as Lk. 6:22f.= Matt. 5:10-12; Mk. 13:5-27 and parallels.)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 56. (E.g.: Lk. 10:23f.= Matt. 13:16f.; Matt. 11:5f.= Lk. 7:22f.; Lk. 6:20f.= Matt. 5:3-9; Lk. 12:8-9 (cf. Mk. 8:38); Matt. 23; Lk. 11 and Mk. 13:2.) Sayings on repentance, which represent the oldest tradition, can be found in such passages as Mk. 8:35; Lk. 9:60,62. Ibid., p. 61. Cf. pp. 61-63 for other passages which represent the oldest stratum of tradition in the teaching of Jesus.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 56f.

<sup>5</sup> Bultmann, The History of the Synoptic Tradition, p. 374.

that so much emphasis was placed upon the death and resurrection of Jesus, since these two elements formed the Passion unit and presented to the believers the "decisive event in the progress of salvation."<sup>1</sup> Bultmann agrees with M. Kahler that "With some exaggeration one might describe the gospels as Passion Narratives with extended introductions."<sup>2</sup> Bultmann believes it was out of the interest of faith and under the influence of "devout imagination" that the resurrection narrative was composed.<sup>3</sup> And he contends that due to attention given to the resurrection stories of Jesus, resurrection legends were created which were later shifted to non-resurrection scenes. For example, Bultmann (his obvious doubt fused with expressed authority) suggests that the "Transfiguration Narrative, probably originally one of the resurrection stories, shows clearly the way in which legends created by faith influenced the narrative and gave to it their own peculiar character."<sup>4</sup> He also believes that the confession of Peter (Mk. 8:27-33; Matt. 16:17-19) is "probably a Resurrection Narrative which has been dated back into the Life of Jesus."<sup>5</sup>

Bultmann's form critical method is hardly perfect. He himself admits as much. In speaking of the task of removing secondary layers of tradition and of coming to the "center" where the secret of the historical power of the tradition rests, Bultmann cautions that

It cannot be denied that even here many uncertainties remain, and that the historical work still to be done at this point is neither

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<sup>1</sup>Bultmann, "The Study of the Synoptic Gospels," p. 64.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 66.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 68. (underlining added).

<sup>5</sup>Ibid. (underlining added).



complete, nor can ever arrive at absolutely certain results; but if the work is done in accordance with clear methods, it cannot result in complete skepticism.<sup>1</sup>

Bultmann's honesty should be appreciated. Since he does not claim "completeness" for the conclusions wrought by his form critical analysis, there should be little temptation for anyone totally to accept his assessment of the various strata in the synoptic tradition. To do so would exceed Bultmann's intentions. An analysis of his treatment of the prophetic and apocalyptic sayings of Jesus should convince the observer that it would be naive to accept uncritically Bultmann's division of the synoptic tradition into categories of "authentic" or "unauthentic" teachings of Jesus.

Bultmann's "conclusions" are riddled with phrases which convey uncertainty, although they are sometimes paradoxically mixed with statements of firmness and authority. For example, in his analysis of Luke 11:49-51 = Matthew 23:34-36, "A Threat to this Generation," Bultmann makes the following assessment:

It is characteristic that a Jewish prophetic saying should be adapted by the Christian tradition. I do not think it certain that the saying must have arisen after A.D. 70 (Wellhausen and Reitzenstein). If it did not, then it is possible that Jesus made the quotation, though equally possible that it was ascribed to him by the tradition.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 60f.

<sup>2</sup> Bultmann, The History of the Synoptic Tradition, p. 114. The German follows for the purpose of comparison: "Charakteristisch ist, dass ein jüdisches Prophetenwort von der christlichen Tradition angeeignet ist. Dass das Wort nach 70 entstanden sein müsse (Wellhausen und Reitzenstein), halte ich nicht für sicher; ist es nicht der Fall, so ist möglich, dass Jesus das Wort zitiert hat, jedoch ebenso möglich, dass es ihm die Tradition erst in den Mund gelegt hat." Rudolf Bultmann, Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition (Göttingen: Vanderhoeck & Ruprecht, 1931), p. 120

Bultmann readily concedes that his methodology, designed to recover the core of the Gospel record, has hardly been perfected. Therefore, if Bultmann himself acknowledges the tentativeness of his own conclusions concerning the authenticity of the Gospel material, one should hesitate to label a passage as "unauthentic upon the basis of Bultmann's research.

One more example, this one related to Matthew 23:34-36, will adequately illustrate the point that Bultmann's conclusions are often indefinite. It should be remembered that this is not so much a criticism of Bultmann as it is an observation of his own admission. In his consideration of the prophecy of the destruction of the temple, Bultmann observes that

The prophecy of a cosmic catastrophe was perhaps already associated with the prediction of the destruction of the temple in Jewish heretical circles. In that case Jesus' foretelling of the destruction of the Temple goes closely with the prophecies in Matt. 23:34-36, 37-39. And that makes it possible for Jesus to have taken this prophecy up, as he did others, which spoke of the Son of Man. All this of course is nothing more than a possibility. For my own part I find the hypothesis of a mythological origin the more probable because of the "three days" in Matt. 14:58 and its variants.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bultmann, The History of the Synoptic Tradition, p. 121. The German follows: "Und dieser Mythos könnte in der Tat die Voraussetzung des Herrenwortes sein; die Weissagung von der kosmischen Katastrophe ist vielleicht schon in häretisch-jüdischen Kreisen mit der Weissagung der Tempelzerstörung verbunden gewesen. Jesu Weissagung der Tempelzerstörung würde dann in engen Zusammenhang mit den Weissagungen Mt. 23, 34-36, 37-39 Parr. gehören. Und es bestünde die Möglichkeit, dass Jesus diese Weissagung, die eben vom Menschensohn redete, aufgegriffen hat, so gut wie andere Menschensohn-Weissagungen. Un mehr als Möglichkeiten handelt es sich vorläufig nicht. Mir scheint sich die Annahme mythologischen Ursprungs besonders durch die 'drei Tage' in Mt. 14, 58 und Varianten naheulegen." p. 127.

Note: two more examples follow, accompanied by the scripture to which each statement refers and the page reference in the German edition.

Any analysis of Bultmann's methodology must keep in focus his ultimate purpose. His goal is not to undermine or to destroy the scripture, but his aim is to "uncover" the central aspect of Jesus' message so that its eternal relevance can be observed. In fact, Bultmann contends that the question of how much Jesus contributed to the eschatological message and how much other people added is of only secondary importance.<sup>1</sup> Bultmann believes it is important to strip myth, which he claims is traceable to late Jewish apocalypticism, from Kerygma, in order to disclose the dynamics of Jesus' understanding of human life.<sup>2</sup> He maintains that since Jesus was interested primarily in communicating the meaning of human life, He did not perceive as His central purpose the conveyance of the "mythological concept" that the Eschaton was near at hand. According to Bultmann, Jesus simply used this myth as the form through which His real and eternal message finds its outward expression.<sup>3</sup> However, as Kümmel observes,

Jesus, like the whole of the New Testament, meant the eschatological prediction to be understood as something real in the future  
 . . . Jesus considered his own appearance

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"Vielleicht ist auch das Präteritum (ἐβάρυνσα) Mt 1, 8, das Mt und Lk in das Präsens verwandeln, für die Christliche Redaktion bezeichnend; man kann es freilich auch als Semitismus verstehen." (p. 117).

"Es ist möglich, dass einzelne Weherufe ursprünglich, dass andere sekundär dazugetreten sind, und dass zur Bildung der letzteren ursprünglich nicht als Weherufe formulierte Sprüche benutzt sind." (Lk. 11:43, 46, 52, 42, (30), 44, 47, 49-51 and parallel) pp. 118, 119.

<sup>1</sup> Bultmann, Jesus and the Word, p. 123.

<sup>2</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," in Kerygma and Myth, Hans Werner Bartsch, ed. (New York: Harper and Row Pub., 1961), p. 3. (Note: The original English edition was published in 1953 by S.P.C.K.)

<sup>3</sup> Bultmann, Jesus and the Word, pp. 55f.



to be an event in time. But the value of this exegetical judgment is at once taken away when Bultmann interprets the "futurist" eschatology as nothing but a part of the mythological picture of the world from which we must free the New Testament . . . .<sup>1</sup>

Amos Wilder: Eschatology Interpreted as Myth, Symbol, Poetry Informally Determined Jesus' Ethics

Expectation. Amos Wilder agrees with Schweitzer's interpretation that Jesus expected the Kingdom imminently. He comments: "Almost all feel that a flood of light is thrown upon him and his teaching and the early church by recognizing that he expected the end of the age and the last word of God upon human history, the coming of the Son of Man, the harvest, in his own generation, if not in the very year of his ministry."<sup>2</sup> According to Wilder, the Kingdom of God in the teaching of Jesus definitely did not refer to some "mystical kingdom of the soul," nor did Jesus use the phrase to mean "a slow developing movement in history." Wilder also insists that Jesus was not referring to the Church when he spoke of the Kingdom. Rather, he contends that, "the reign of God as Jesus used the term . . . meant the undisputed sovereignty of God over his creation. And this was 'at hand.' It was coming soon and once-for-all. Indeed it was already making its power felt."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Kümmel, Promise and Fulfilment, p. 147.

<sup>2</sup>Amos N. Wilder, Eschatology and Ethics in the Teaching of Jesus (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950), pp. 38f. Cf. Amos Wilder, New Testament Faith for Today (New York: Harper & Row, 1955), p. 74. Wilder believes that the early church was correct in believing that Jesus looked "forward to the impending judgment and renovation . . . . Jesus testifies that in his generation God is bringing in the new age, and this is a matter of good news and of warning." To Wilder, this means that "we have . . . to come to terms with the fact that Jesus proclaimed the judgment and the new age as near at hand." Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>3</sup>Wilder, New Testament Faith for Today, p. 75.

Expectation and Ethics. Wilder claims that within the teaching and ministry of Jesus, "the time of salvation has come and the time of law and prophets is drawing to a close"; therefore, he contends that the ethics of Jesus are eschatologically conditioned. Wilder believes that the Synoptic Gospels disclose that as the new age breaks in upon the old, a crisis is constituted, during which time heavy demands are made upon the sons and heirs of the Kingdom. According to Wilder, "These were the throes of the end-time in which men were living, and the claims made upon the faithful were therefore eschatologically conditioned. These claims are often formulated by Jesus in terms of discipleship to himself or of 'following' or confessing him."<sup>1</sup>

Although Wilder admits that the ethics of Jesus are eschatologically conditioned, he does not accept the theory of "interim ethics." He charges rather, that the theory has "tempted men to surrender up in despair the question of the historical Jesus, his significance, his authority."<sup>2</sup> Wilder contends that the ethic of Jesus "does indeed constitute an emergency ethic, but the emergency is not that of Schweitzer's interim, rather it is that of Jesus' mission."<sup>3</sup> Wilder submits that Jesus' coming incurred a

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<sup>1</sup>Wilder, Eschatology and Ethics, p. 163. Wilder admits "that a most significant factor in the presentation, if not in the content, of the ethical teaching was the eschatological expectation." "It is," he contends, "difficult to deny that Jesus' whole call to repentance and his urgent summons to the righteousness he preached were set against a background of vivid eschatological rewards and punishments which he saw as imminent. And it is difficult to deny that some of his demands, certainly as laid on certain individuals, were extraordinary demands conditioned by an extraordinary situation." Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 10. Wilder is also convinced that the relation between eschatology and ethics was much the same for the early church as it was for Jesus himself. Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 16. Wilder is consistent in his view

"new situation" which in turn demanded a "new ethic." But the ethic for the situation, according to Wilder, can "best be characterized not as interim ethics but as ethics of the time of salvation or new-covenant ethics."<sup>1</sup>

Although Wilder admits that the "markedly drastic demands" of Jesus arise out of a condition of crisis,

That crisis . . . is not one created by the imminence of the Judgment but by the conflict of two eras, the death throes of the one and the birth pangs of the other; a crisis inseparable from the errand of Jesus. This crisis is urgent in a double sense: (1) it requires espousal of the gospel immediately by all for their own salvation, and (2) it calls for the uttermost devotion of disciples for its successful issue.<sup>2</sup>

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with his contention that just as Jesus, Paul also speaks not of an interim ethic, but of an emergency ethic. Wilder comments: "It is not an interim ethic in the strict sense, any more than in the case of Jesus, but rather an emergency ethic. The real situation of the church makes this counsel wise, as would be true in some analogous critical situations in the history of missions." Wilder says that the theme for 1 Cor. 7 is "Every one should remain in the state in which he was called (v.20)," but the reasoning here, according to Wilder, is not that of the expectant Parousia, but rather of a situation which calls for an emergency ethic. Amos N. Wilder, Kerygma, Eschatology, and Social Ethics (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), p. 20. This pamphlet was originally published under the same title in W.D. Davies and David Daube, eds., The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology (Cambridge: University Press, 1954).

<sup>1</sup>Wilder, Eschatology and Ethics, p. 160. He remarks: "Thus the ethic is not as an interim ethic . . . . Rather, it can be best designated an ethic of the present Kingdom of God or a new-covenant ethic." Ibid. "It is not primarily an ethic for the relations and conduct of the future transcendental Kingdom. Nor is it a Kingdom ethic in the sense that its practice would admit to the Kingdom nor that it would 'build' the Kingdom. It is a Kingdom ethic in the sense that it represents the righteousness of those living in the days of the new covenant and empowered and qualified by the reconciliation and redemption of that age." Ibid., pp. 160f.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 176.



Wilder argues that "If Jesus did really so repeatedly call on men for the impossible, for the utterly exceptional, in view of the fearful tension of the interim before the Judgment, and if he did thus dissolve in such claims the standing norms of conduct, how could he possibly have preached such optimistic and long-range sapiential and serene ethics in almost the same breath?"<sup>1</sup>

According to Wilder, it is not possible to solve this dilemma if one holds to the basic assumption "that the eschatological was literally and prosaically conceived by Jesus." He contends that "Such an assumption naturally demands interim ethics, but interim ethics, even in part, clashes irreconcilably with characteristic veins of Jesus' preaching."<sup>2</sup> Wilder maintains that as long as a "false emphasis is thrown on the interim in even a part of the teaching it will be impossible to grasp the fundamental unity of Jesus' religious outlook and ethical demand." He admits, however, that it is "just to relate the extreme demands to the 'crisis,'" but he insists that "the error arises in the meaning given to the crisis here in view." Furthermore, he feels that

As long as the superficial and temporal aspect of the crisis is given first place of importance this same artificial conception of the interim and of interim ethics will mislead us. But give the crisis its true and fundamental meaning of the hour of decision for Israel offered in the clash of the two eras and the errand of Jesus, then the tension is assigned its natural cause, and the more urgent ethical claims their more natural occasion. The apocalyptic event in the future is secondary to and derivative from the judgment inherent in the offered time of salvation.<sup>3</sup>

Wilder admits that Jesus "presented the in-breaking future that constituted this crisis in terms of the Kingdom of God, usually in apocalyptic terms." "This,"

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 178.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 179.

according to Wilder, "was the inevitable language of his people for so significant an hour."<sup>1</sup> Yet, Wilder contends "that Jesus' demands grew out of the concrete crisis of his situation rather than out of the interpretation of it in apocalyptic terms." Therefore, for Wilder, "The apocalyptic event in the future is essentially of the character of myth, and the interim thus created is formal and conceptual rather than real."<sup>2</sup>

Thus, although Wilder believes that Jesus taught "that the new era is to have its all-important manifestation in a supernatural way: advent of the Son of man, Judgment and the miraculously instituted Kingdom," and that Jesus also cast His ethic, "with the repentance it involves, in the form of entrance conditions to that Kingdom," he insists, nonetheless, that "the conception of that eschatological culmination so partook of the nature of myth or poetry that it did not other than formally determine the ethic."<sup>3</sup>

According to Wilder, the Judgment, and talk about rewards, "including the Kingdom," are for Jesus and the early Christian community only "representations, with full validity and credibility, indeed, of the unpropheable, unimaginable but certain, God-determined future." Wilder claims that this future and God's work in it lend "immense weight and urgency to their present moral responsibility."

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 180.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 182.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 161. Wilder contends that it must be recognized that "the New Testament doctrine of the return of Christ (or Jesus' announcement of the coming of the Son of Man) belongs to the order of symbolic and mythopoetic statement and was not understood literally in the late Jewish and early Christian religion . . . ." According to Wilder, such language was used by the early Christians to ascertain "what could neither be doubted nor delayed: the assertion of God's control over history. And they knew that this action of the Lord of history would turn upon the figure of the Christ and would involve the vindication of his first coming." Wilder, New Testament Faith for Today, p. 104.



Yet, Wilder contends that "this temporal imminence of God is but a function of his spiritual imminence, and it is this latter which really determines conduct."<sup>1</sup> Wilder feels, 'therefore, that Jesus' ethics are not conditioned by the shortness of time, but they are rather, "responses to the nature of God, along emphatically positive lines. God's generosity, his forgiveness become determinative."<sup>2</sup>

Wilder charges that the "thoroughgoing eschatological interpretations of Jesus' message and work" by Weiss and Schweitzer, "implied an otherworldly outlook and a transcendental view of the Kingdom which could easily find a place in the theology of crisis."<sup>3</sup> Wilder claims, however, that such a view is a false interpretation of the "emergency." He contends that while Jesus certainly did speak of the "immediate coming of the heavenly Son of Man-Judge to usher in the new age," He nevertheless, "does not speak of the end of the 'world.'"<sup>4</sup> Wilder insists further that neither can Jesus' "current images for rewards and punishments" be used to support a charge of otherworldliness, "since these were the least significant of the

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<sup>1</sup>Wilder, Eschatology and Ethics, p. 161.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 162. Wilder contends that the ethical sanctions of the Jewish motive of the "imitation of God" and the "sanctification of the name of God" are both echoed by Jesus. Ibid., p. 200.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>4</sup>Wilder, New Testament Faith for Today, p. 86. Wilder maintains that "It is the Gospels which fill in the picture with their details of the Great Assize and the adjudication of final rewards and penalties." Ibid. Further, Wilder feels that "the Jewish outlook shared by Jesus did not distinguish sharply between an earthly future and a transcendent future. The two were commonly merged. Otherworldly language was used to portray the splendors of the new age but a timeless angelic and purely spiritual existence was not intended." Ibid., p. 87.



motives for ethics found in either Judaism or his own teaching."<sup>1</sup>

A distinction must be made, Wilder maintains, between what he labels as Jesus' "ethics of the Kingdom" (or "the new-covenant ethics") and "the special claims made upon disciples in the short period when the Kingdom is still struggling with the present evil age." Wilder contends that it must be remembered that the basic claim is still the new-ethic, and there is no difference in the Kingdom member's "essential motive or responsibility of single-mindedness and total abandonment to God."<sup>2</sup> But, according to Wilder, during the time when the old order is superseded by the new, a struggle takes place, and temporary demands are made upon particular individuals under certain circumstances. These demands, Wilder summarizes "as those we associate with witness, missionary and martyr."<sup>3</sup> He contends that Jesus is "so peculiarly the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 91. Wilder remarks: "The emancipation which Jesus announced as good news to the multitudes was something far more actual than a promise of spiritual rewards in a world to come." Ibid., p. 92. Wilder maintains that the terms and symbols with which Jesus spoke of the new age, such as the "new temple," the "resurrection life," and "thrones or tables," are not to be "misinterpreted as evidence of otherworldliness on his part. It does not represent escapism. It is an affirmation of life, here and hereafter, both." Ibid., p. 89.

<sup>2</sup>Wilder, Eschatology and Ethics, pp. 164f. Wilder suggests that "new-covenant" ethics and the "drastic summons to personal discipleship" have the same root, i.e., loyalty to Jesus (discipleship). Therefore, a definite cleavage cannot be made between the two. Ibid., p. 167.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 165. Wilder claims that it is during this time that the children of the Kingdom are "as lambs in the midst of wolves," and it is also at this point "that we find many sayings of Jesus bearing on renunciation and denial of the world which have a special bearing." He feels that "It is the characteristically drastic demands of Jesus in this category that have misled students into thinking that Jesus' ethic was an interim ethic. For such world-renouncing teachings plausibly suggested that their occasion must have been the expectation of the imminent Judgment. But a more convincing

embodiment of the Kingdom," and the work of ushering in the Kingdom is so important that "he may well call on particular men for drastic sacrifices in the pursuit of that work in its various phases and crises . . . . The forms such demands would take would vary with the situation and the individual."<sup>1</sup>

Some of the drastic demands of Jesus, according to Wilder, are restricted to "specific occasions to which immediate application is restricted." For example, the sayings about eunuchs, in Wilder's opinion, does not involve the motive of asceticism, "nor anticipation of the end, but special vocation."<sup>2</sup> Wilder insists, therefore, that the "radical character of Jesus' ethics does not spring from the shortness of time but from the new relation to God in the time of salvation." And, likewise, he asserts that the sanction for the ethic "is not the sanction of imminent supernatural retributions--except formally--but the appeal to the God-enlightened moral discernment recognizing the nature and will of God and inferring consequences (thence eschatologically dramatized)."<sup>3</sup>

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explanation of them can be given." Ibid.

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 166. Although Wilder refutes the theory of "interim ethics," he cites the example of Albert Schweitzer as a medical missionary to support his view of Jesus' drastic demands. He asserts that just as with Schweitzer's move to "turn from his academic career and go to Equatorial Africa as a medical missionary, . . ." certain people are called upon for extraordinary duty, but the same claims might not be placed upon any other single individual. Ibid., p. 190.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 174.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 161. (Underline added). Wilder contends that the group of hard-sayings, which "have led men to think of Jesus' ethics as interim ethics, as determined by the imminent end of all earthly relations," can best be understood as imperatives which demand "complete loyalty" to God's will, but have their special urgency not in the thought of the end, but in the emergency of Jesus' own

Wilder contends that two great objects, equally pressing, stand behind the drastic demands of Jesus. One "was to make clear to his hearers the issues of their own salvation."<sup>1</sup> The second, "and one that determines many of the drastic sayings, and one also that lies back of the more general preaching, is the imperative need of support in the successful prosecution of his own role."<sup>2</sup>

Expectation and Relevance. Concerning the relevance of Jesus' drastic demands, Wilder maintains that such sayings were "least of all general principles of universal application." Rather, he claims that "most of the drastic ethics has its origin in the personal situation of Jesus

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career and in the struggle of the Kingdom in this interim period when the powers of evil are opposing it." Ibid., p. 162. He comments: "In the midst of his ministry this sense of responsibility for the fulfilment of the work of salvation then in course accounts for the drastic and urgent note in the ethics which has led some to the conception of interim ethics. Not the nearness of the end but the supreme significance of his errand and the resistance from the old order governs the world-renouncing claims." Ibid., p. 188.

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 167. To Wilder, "The sacrifice of eye or hand, the need of striving in view of the straitness of the gate, the renunciation of the lower self--these summons had in view the fateful responsibility of men for their own fate." Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 168. He remarks: "His claims are here determined by the practical exigencies of his work, that is, by his need of devoted followers in the vicissitudes and uncertainties of his career. The drastic element often grows out of this, not out of the nearness of the end as such, though the latter is a formal expression of the vast issues of his career. We have in this aspect of it discipleship ethics or mission ethics rather than interim ethics." Ibid. (underline added). According to Wilder, the Kingdom calls for costly witness which is cast in the roles of "missionary and martyr." But the devotion is so closely associated with the role and person of Jesus that the claims of the Kingdom also become claims of discipleship. Wilder believes that "Jesus so identifies himself with the cause of the Kingdom that its demands merge with loyalty to his person." Ibid., p. 175. Cf. p. 164.



in the ministry; that is, that its original occasion and reference should be sought in the exigencies of his work."<sup>1</sup> To Wilder, the original reference offers the true "biographical setting for the so-called ethical absolutes." And he believes that if the correct setting is understood, then, "Their generality of application vanishes, the interim aspect vanishes." That is, they will then come to be viewed as "occasional utterances to particular persons which the sacred records have lifted out of the obscurity of their original moment."<sup>2</sup> Wilder suggests that the drastic sayings can be made relevant but maintains that "such is the work of the preacher not the historian."<sup>3</sup>

Wilder believes that even in modern times, one should take seriously Jesus' language about the Consummation and should recognize the sublime hope which it conveys. He rejects those interpretations which attempt to: (1) make a distinction between "husk and kernel"; (2) allegorize; or (3) literalize Jesus' words of the coming of the Son of Man upon the clouds of judgment.<sup>4</sup> To Wilder, Jesus' message of the Kingdom must be reformulated. He comments:

In any case we cannot today take his words on our lips in the sense he gave them. We cannot announce the impending advent of the Son of Man on the clouds and a forensic world judgment of a final character, nor can we say that God's reign is today in its final stage of ending all evil here and now. Nor can many today be altogether happy with an interpretation of evil in terms of Satan and demonic agency.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 192.      <sup>2</sup>Ibid.      <sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Wilder, New Testament Faith for Today, pp. 84f.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 82. Wilder claims that "if we take these pictures literally we do more than the Jews and early Christians did." He suggests that "What was important to them, will, however, still be important to us: days of reckoning if not a day of reckoning, and God's governance of men and nations to the end of the story." Ibid., p. 102.

Wilder, however, does not dismiss completely the role of eschatology for ethics today. While he insists that "Our appeal should not be to an anachronistic and literal Second Coming or forensic Judgment viewed as impending in our day," he does, nonetheless, believe that "we can properly appeal to rewards and penalties, eschatological and otherwise, as a legitimate way of making clear the fateful character of conduct."<sup>1</sup>

Regarding the Judgment, Wilder agrees with the belief that the New Testament picture of the Last Judgment developed "in a world the dimensions of whose measurement of space and time were diminutive as compared to ours;" and for that reason the concept must be restated. For example, he believes that

. . . this symbol may still dramatize for us the truth that all history makes up one pattern, hidden though it may be to our observation. It also suggests that all history prepares a harvest, moves toward a consummation--likewise hidden to our assessment--which will sum up all that has gone before. And the New Testament finds the secret or law of this pervasive pattern in Christ, in terms of whom also its manifestation will appear.<sup>2</sup>

Wilder advises that the message of Jesus must be annotated and clarified for our day, but at the same time he insists that "Any adequate modernizing of the Good news . . . must use the language of faith; it must be couched in imaginative and emotionally charged symbols, even as it is borne upon a tide of ardor and passion."<sup>3</sup>

Observations. Wilder's hermeneutic process must be considered carefully from two perspectives: His "strict" historical-critical analysis of Jesus' beliefs and proclamation relative to a first century setting, and

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<sup>1</sup>Wilder, Eschatology and Ethics, p. 193.

<sup>2</sup>Wilder, New Testament Faith for Today, p. 105.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 93.

his interpretative endeavor to make Jesus' preaching relevant. Wilder's historical-critical stance places him among those who interpret Jesus as proclaiming the imminent coming of a literal Kingdom of God. However, his literary considerations include the process of demythologizing Jesus' eschatology, and he concludes that Jesus' emphasis upon "reward and penalty" should be understood as only a "formal" ethical sanction. For Wilder, the true sanction, which is the fact of God and His nature and His will for man, lies behind the symbolic picture of the Judgment.<sup>1</sup>

Wilder's assessment of eschatology as merely a formal sanction which only dramatizes the holiness of God, and his contention that eschatology gains real significance only in conjunction with the essential sanction--the nature of God, His holiness and power--are not convincing. Carl Henry subjects Wilder's view to a penetrating criticism. He maintains that "the key difficulty in Wilder's approach is the psychological impossibility of conjuring an eschatology which is in the first place a product of man's ethical convictions into a sanction for those convictions."<sup>2</sup>

Wilder's endeavor is academic since his designation of eschatology as simply a "formal sanction for ethics" renders it functionally impotent as a sanction. The appeals to reward and punishment cannot serve as a strong motivating force to high ethical conduct, since, to Wilder,

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<sup>1</sup> Wilder, Eschatology and Ethics in the Teaching of Jesus, p. 187.

<sup>2</sup> Henry, Christian Personal Ethics, p. 560. Henry suggests that "the significance which Wilder seeks to maintain for the eschatological sanction actually becomes an embarrassment to his viewpoint, for it appears as an artificially grafted appendage with no essential relationship to the whole. If the essential sanction for conduct is spiritual immanence, or an immediate apprehension of God's holiness in present experience, any appeal to a sanction exterior to this can only be an intrusion and an objectionable addition." Ibid., pp. 560f.



"fiction however vivid and compelling has not the substance to serve this purpose."<sup>1</sup> For Wilder, the eschatological language within the message of Jesus is simply pedagogical and secondary in its power as an incentive to ethical conduct. Therefore, the significance of eschatology is not temporal but simply epistemological. If the End, in fact, is really not coming after all, the appeal to repent and receive God's righteousness in the light of His coming Judgment loses its support and ground for being. Temporality becomes nothing more than an imaginative facet of eschatology. As W.D. Davies observes, if the imminence of the End is regarded as "merely formal, a dramatization of spiritual realities in which there is no real temporal imminence contemplated by Jesus, then that imminence cannot have been a considerable factor in his teaching."<sup>2</sup>

#### The Kingdom of God Viewed as Both Present and Future--An Overview

A number of scholars hold to the view that the Kingdom of God was present in Jesus' ministry but that it is yet to be fulfilled.<sup>3</sup> This position may be understood as the "both present and future" or synthesis view. A general overview of several apparent emphases of some scholars within the synthesis category helps to define several problems with which they deal, as well as some of the contributions they have made to the study of eschatology and ethics in the teachings of Jesus.

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<sup>1</sup> Wilder, Eschatology and Ethics in the Teaching of Jesus, p. 111.

<sup>2</sup> Davies, "Ethics in the NT," p. 169.

<sup>3</sup> It is suggested by R.T. France, in agreement with George E. Ladd, that "there is now a consensus of opinion that in Jesus' teaching about the Kingdom of God one must recognize both a present and a future aspect." R.T. France, Jesus and the Old Testament (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1971), p. 161. Cf. George E. Ladd, Jesus and the Kingdom: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), pp. 23ff.

Reaction to Interim Ethics. A common charge among those who accept the synthesis view is that the theory of interim ethics, as understood from a strictly consistent eschatological interpretation, is unacceptable. The main point of contention centers upon the question of the relevancy of Jesus' ethics. To these scholars, an acceptance of the theory that Jesus' teachings were, for the most part, determined by His belief in the imminent end results in an invalidation of His ethics for modern man.<sup>1</sup> Jesus' ethics

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<sup>1</sup>Some of these are: James Moffatt, The Theology of the Gospels (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), p. 61. F.R. Barry, The Relevance of Christianity: An Approach to Christian Ethics (London: Nisbett & Co. Ltd., 1931), pp. 93ff. (Barry claims that if either "Consistent Eschatology" or the "Liberal" interpretation of Jesus' teachings is accepted then there is no way to account for the present existence of Christianity.) Floyd V. Filson, Jesus Christ: The Risen Lord (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1956), pp. 240f. T.W. Manson, The Teaching of Jesus (Cambridge: University Press, 2nd ed., 1935), p. 295. Rudolf Otto, The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man, translated by F.V. Filson (London: Lutterworth Press, rev. ed., 1943), p. 61. F.C. Grant, Basic Christian Beliefs (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1960), pp. 161, 97f. John Wick Bowman, Jesus' Teaching In Its Environment (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1963), p. 104. (Bowman charges that Schweitzer himself believed Jesus' ethics to be "irrelevant to the intellectual demands of our day.") John Wick Bowman, The Religion of Maturity (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1948), pp. 268ff. John Bright, The Kingdom of God: The Biblical Concept and Its Meaning for the Church (New York: Abingdon Press, 1953), p. 222f. G.F. Thomas, Christian Ethics and Moral Philosophy (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), p. 30. Carl F.H. Henry, Christian Personal Ethics (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1957), p. 292ff. H.A. Guy, The Study of the Gospels (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1952), pp. 108ff. T.F. Glasson, "Jesus and His Gospel, Since Schweitzer," Modern Churchman 40 (Sept. 1950): 253ff. T.F. Glasson, The Second Advent (London: Epworth Press, 3rd rev. ed., 1963), p. 141. Georgia Harkness, The Sources of Western Morality (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954), p. 222. Gunther Bornkamm, Jesus of Nazareth, translated by Irene and Fraser McLuskey with James Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1960), pp. 224, 220ff., 109. C. Millo Connick, Jesus: The Man, The Mission, and The Message (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963), pp. 259ff. Herman Ridderbos, The Coming of the Kingdom, translated by H. de Jongste and edited by Raymond O. Zorn (Philadelphia: The

must be seen as valid for any age, eternally relevant, regardless of His eschatology.

Indicative of the general mediating position taken by many who hold the synthesis position is the attempt by some of them to re-interpret the "interim" idea so that certain applicable aspects of the concept might be acceptable. Oscar Cullmann, for example, suggests that the term Interimsethik is viable only in so far as it refers to the applicability of Jesus' teachings to the period between the Resurrection of Jesus and His Parousia.<sup>1</sup> He holds that Jesus taught there would be an interval; and during this interval--"which is shortening with the passing of time"--each individual must respond to Jesus' message in the light of the approaching End. Cullmann believes, however, that "knowing the seriousness of the hour does not depend in Jesus' teaching upon the limitation of the interval to his own generation . . . ." <sup>2</sup> It follows, according to Cullmann, that for each generation the ethics of Jesus are relevant, and this relevancy has been made possible by the "already" which has taken place in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.<sup>3</sup>

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Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1962), p. 269, cf. p. 471. Ralph E. Knudsen, Theology in the New Testament (Chicago: The Judson Press, 1964), p. 382. W.D. Davies, The Sermon on the Mount (Cambridge: The University Press, 1966), p. 148. (Davies claims that Jesus never appeals to the "'End of the world' as a ground for ethical conduct.") Cf. Andrew R. Osborn, Christian Ethics (London: Oxford University Press, 1940), pp. 112f. Osborn insists that since the ethic of Jesus is absolute in its authority and valid for all times, the way of interim ethics "will not stand examination." I.H. Marshall, I Believe in the Historical Jesus (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977), pp. 225f.

<sup>1</sup> Cullmann, Salvation in History, pp. 202, 222f. Cf. H.P. Owen, "Eschatology and Ethics in the New Testament," Scottish Journal of Theology 15 1952: 375f.

<sup>2</sup> Cullmann, Salvation in History, p. 223.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 202f.



R. Newton Flew believes that Jesus expected the end to come soon, but since He was ignorant of the time, He left room for a long interval between His ascension and the consummation. Flew contends, therefore, that Jesus' ethic, which one adheres to during this interval, can be seen as an interim ethic.<sup>1</sup> A.M. Hunter agrees with the view that Jesus' ethic was "meant for an interval." And he suggests that this interim should be understood as that time between the initial coming of Christ and the consummation of all things.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, I.H. Marshall reconstructs the theory of Schweitzer's suggested "interim" to refer to that period of time which is to elapse before the consummation of the Kingdom of God.<sup>3</sup>

In his evaluation of the interim ethics theory William Lillie suggests that the view is relevant at the point of its insistence upon "extraordinary effort and devotion" during the interim period. Lillie re-interprets this period to mean the time between the initial coming of the Kingdom and its future fulfilment. In Lillie's judgment the interim ethics view is weak in its faulty conclusion that Jesus' ethic was relevant only for a short span of time in history and in its refusal to recognize that many of Jesus' ethical statements are not rooted in His

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<sup>1</sup> R. Newton Flew, Jesus and His Church (London: The Epworth Press, 1938), pp. 33f.

<sup>2</sup> A.M. Hunter, Introducing the New Testament (London: S.C.M. Press, Ltd., rev. ed., 1957), p. 37.

<sup>3</sup> I. Howard Marshall, Kept by the Power of God (London: The Epworth Press, 1969), p. 43. Cf. Dale Moody, The Hope of Glory (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), p. 24. Moody believes the phrase "interim ethic" must be recognized as both logical and relevant. For him, "belief in the imminence of the Kingdom of God makes the ethical teaching of Jesus an Interimsethik, a guide to life between the present age and the coming age of glory." Moody suggests that although this view has at times been severely criticized, "all Christian ethics are interim ethics if indeed we are now living between the ages. A pilgrim ethic is an interim ethic, even though the interim be longer than first anticipated."

eschatological proclamation.<sup>1</sup>

George E. Ladd agrees that Jesus' ethics are absolute and eternally valid. He draws his conclusion upon two assumptions: that Jesus was not mistaken in His time-calculation concerning the coming of the Kingdom of God and that the will of God does not change. Jesus' is an ethic which is for this world and not for the "Kingdom Age" itself in which there will be no evil.<sup>2</sup> For Ladd, therefore, it is an interim ethic but not in Schweitzer's sense. It is an ethic meant for that period of time between the "creation and the consummation."<sup>3</sup>

Ethical Sanctions. Many of the scholars who adopt the synthesis interpretation of the Kingdom of God recognize the importance of eschatology within Jesus' teaching, but they do not accept eschatology as the primary sanction for Jesus' ethics. There are obvious emphases of each writer, but most of them believe that understanding the nature of God and making appropriate responses to Him, such as imitation of His character and obedience to His will, are the dominant motivational factors for Jesus' ethics.

Some feel, for example, that the major incentive attached to Jesus' ethic is His call to be like God. C.J. Cadoux, who represents this thought, claims that the primary sanction behind one's response to Jesus' message is not eschatology but imitation of the "Divine Character."<sup>4</sup> F.R. Barry, expressing a similar view, suggests that the appeal for man to be merciful "because God is merciful" is Jesus' great imperative, as is His call to be "perfect as

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<sup>1</sup>William Lillie, Studies in New Testament Ethics (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961), pp. 143ff.

<sup>2</sup>Ladd, Jesus and the Kingdom, p. 291.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 292.

<sup>4</sup>C.J. Cadoux, The Historic Mission of Jesus (New York: Harper & Brothers, n.d.), p. 126. Cf. Owen, "Eschatology and Ethics in the New Testament," p. 376, fn. 3.

the Father is perfect."<sup>1</sup>

Glasson proposes that the primary sanction behind Jesus' ethic is His vision of God, meaning that, as God expresses His love, man should love; as God is perfect, man is to be perfect. Jesus is the exemplar of this imitation ethic.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, I.H. Marshall sees the "character of God" as the dominant sanction for New Testament ethics.<sup>3</sup>

Rudolf Otto feels that man should respond to the demands of the Kingdom because, as one received the salvation of the Kingdom, he should react spontaneously out of gratitude rather than from a feeling of coercion.<sup>4</sup> W.D. Davies believes that a spontaneous love response to God's will should be the natural and primary ethical sanction. The disciple ought simply to respond to God's will out of a sense of thankfulness for having received the grace made possible through Jesus Christ.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Barry, The Relevance of Christianity; An Approach to Christian Ethics, pp. 100f. Cf. J.H. Leckie, The World to Come and Final Destiny (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1918), p. 55.

<sup>2</sup>Glasson, The Second Advent, p. 141. Cf. Moffatt, The Theology of the Gospels, pp. 59f., who also emphasizes the role of love in his proposal that the primary ethical sanction should be one's understanding of God's love as Father.

<sup>3</sup>I. Howard Marshall, Luke: Historian and Theologian (Exeter: The Pasternoster Press, 1970), p. 136.

<sup>4</sup>Otto, The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man, pp. 128ff.

<sup>5</sup>W.D. Davies, "Ethics in the N.T.: A. The Teaching of Jesus," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Vol. II (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), p. 169. Cf. W.D. Davies, Invitation to the New Testament (London: Longman & Todd, Ltd., 1967), p. 196. Cf. Filson, Jesus Christ: The Risen Lord, pp. 242f. Filson proposes that while eschatology is still an important element for ethics (e.g. the thought of the judgment "gives urgency and depth to the ethical demands") the primary sanction is "God's action in



T.W. Manson is among those scholars who believe that the "will of God" is the primary sanction for Jesus' ethic. He submits that God's will comes as a new interpretation of the Law through Jesus to the New Israel.<sup>1</sup> Flew also believes that Jesus' ethic is grounded primarily in His own understanding of the will of God, and advises that man is to obey God as he becomes strengthened by God.<sup>2</sup> F.C. Grant likewise holds that "the pure will of God" is the dominant sanction behind Jesus' teaching.<sup>3</sup> And Bornkamm expresses the same view in his assertion that it is not the expectation of the End, but the will of God which moves man to goodness and expressions of love toward his fellow man.<sup>4</sup>

Ridderbos holds that a study of Jesus' ethics disproves the "consistent" view, since Jesus never appeals to the imminent End of the world in an effort to undergird the seriousness of His commandments. Rather, Ridderbos adopts the belief that the "love commandment" expresses the ultimate of God's will, which serves to move one to right action. And unlike eschatology, it is an appeal which brings eternal validity and permanent relevance.<sup>5</sup>

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Christ." Man, therefore, is called upon "to share in the common life and mission which Jesus began."

<sup>1</sup>T.W. Manson, "Some Reflections on Apocalyptic," in Aux Sources De La Tradition Chretienne (Melanges offerts à M. Maurice Goguel) (Neuchatel: Delachaux & Niestle S.A., 1950), p. 139.

<sup>2</sup>Flew, Jesus and His Church, pp. 46f. Cf. R. Newton Flew, The Idea of Perfection in Christian Theology (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), pp. 3-7.

<sup>3</sup>F.C. Grant, "Ethics and Eschatology in the Teaching of Jesus," Journal of Religion 22 (1942): 366.

<sup>4</sup>Bornkamm, Jesus of Nazareth, p. 223.

<sup>5</sup>Ridderbos, The Coming of the Kingdom, pp. 288f., cf. p. 471f.

Ridderbos believes that the primary sanction of the disciples was not the expectation of the End, but "the law of God the Creator and Preserver of the world, which he has given for the maintenance and the development of life."<sup>1</sup> The position of Ridderbos is clear in his statement, "If, therefore, the question is asked by what Jesus' commandments are regulated, the ultimate answer is only this: by God's will as it is revealed in his law."<sup>2</sup> Ladd also claims that Jesus' ethic has as its sanction the absolute will of God and not the brevity of time.<sup>3</sup> He warns that since no one can set the date, the demand upon the disciple is to be in a state of "constant readiness."<sup>4</sup>

Significance of Eschatology. Some of the scholars who accept a synthesis understanding of the Kingdom of God put little emphasis upon the role of eschatology in the teaching of Jesus and consequently hold that His ethics are only slightly if at all affected by any thought of the End. Several of them, close to a "liberal" understanding, maintain that eschatology was simply the mode which Jesus adopted to convey His teachings. Cadoux, for example, asserts that the substance (ethics) of Jesus' message and not the form (eschatology) is what is essential and relevant.<sup>5</sup> E. Clinton Gardner shares a similar view in his contention that the apocalyptic views of Jesus' day served as a "framework for presenting his fundamental message."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 471.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 291.

<sup>3</sup>Ladd, Jesus and the Kingdom, p. 292.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 324.

<sup>5</sup>Cadoux, The Historic Mission of Jesus, pp. 125ff. and C.J. Cadoux, The Guidance of Jesus for Today (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1920), pp. 67ff. Cf. Connick, Jesus: The Man, The Mission and The Message, pp. 259f., who suggests that the most that can be said about Jesus' expectation of the imminent End is that it supplied the occasion for Jesus' ethic; it "did not account for the stringency of his demands."

<sup>6</sup>E. Clinton Gardner, Biblical Faith and Social

Barry suggests that as Jesus expressed the ethical transformation which His coming wrought upon the world, He did so through the "symbolism of eschatology."<sup>1</sup> And Georgia Harkness believes that the Parousia expectation should not be taken literally. She sees it as "symbolic" of a final consummation. What is important, she says, is not the hope of a "second coming," but the firm belief that the risen Lord continues to present Himself to those who will receive Him.<sup>2</sup> Glasson also suggests that much of the apocalyptic language should be understood symbolically and not literally. Jesus, Glasson believes, used the language of His own day as a vehicle to express such spiritual truths as His final victory.<sup>3</sup>

While most of the scholars in this grouping do not think that Jesus' eschatological views played a large part in the formation of His ethics, some, such as W.G. Kümmel and Carl Henry hold that eschatology is closely related to Jesus' teachings. Kümmel, for example, believes that because Jesus proclaimed the Kingdom's imminence, a Kingdom actually breaking into history through His person, man was urged to repent and prepare for the Kingdom which brings judgment and division.<sup>4</sup>

Carl Henry's view can be contrasted to that of F.C. Grant. While Grant admits that eschatology increases the

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Ethics (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1960), p. 66, fn. 24.

<sup>1</sup> Barry, The Relevance of Christianity, p. 96.

<sup>2</sup> Georgia Harkness, Our Christian Hope (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1964), pp. 131f.

<sup>3</sup> T.F. Glasson, His Appearing and His Kingdom (London: The Epworth Press, 1953), pp. 6ff., 13. Glasson, The Second Advent, pp. vii, 63ff. Cf. Andrew R. Osborn, Christian Ethics (Oxford University Press, 1940), pp. 112f.

<sup>4</sup> W.G. Kümmel, Man in the New Testament, translated by John J. Vincent (London: The Epworth Press, 1963), p. 18.



power of appeal within Jesus' ethics,<sup>1</sup> he contends that Jesus would never have presented an ethic of repentance which would force a man to kneel and beg for mercy at a time of impending judgment.<sup>2</sup> Henry, however, expresses almost the opposite opinion in his suggestion that the call to repentance as a part of the eschatological sanction "is made desperately relevant by catapulting man into a new eschatological situation in which the threat of judgment is suspended above him with imminent implications."<sup>3</sup> W.D. Davies does not recognize eschatology as the primary ethical motive within the teaching of Jesus; he does agree, however, that Jesus' preaching of the imminent Kingdom must be understood as an important sanction since such preaching "lent radicalism to His words and lit up for him the moral plight of man and his duty."<sup>4</sup>

Other scholars who conclude that Jesus taught both the present and future Kingdom also acknowledge the importance of eschatology in Jesus' preaching. Lewis A. Muirhead believes that for the person who desires to receive the Kingdom and escape the judgment, an anticipation of the consummation of the Kingdom will serve to move him to repentance and right ethical action.<sup>5</sup> Filson contends that Jesus' ethics were not determined by an imminent expectation, but he agrees that eschatology is still an

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<sup>1</sup>F.C. Grant, The Gospel of the Kingdom (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1940), p. 170, cf. p. 131. Cf. Grant, Basic Christian Beliefs, pp. 102f.

<sup>2</sup>Grant, Basic Christian Beliefs, p. 98. Cf. Otto, The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man, p. 61. Otto agrees that the eternal and absolute precepts such as love and forgiveness cannot be heightened by thoughts of an imminent Kingdom.

<sup>3</sup>Henry, Christian Personal Ethics, p. 554.

<sup>4</sup>Davies, The Sermon on the Mount, pp. 143f.

<sup>5</sup>Lewis, A. Muirhead, The Eschatology of Jesus (New York: A.C. Armstrong & Son, 1904), pp. 83f.

important element for ethics since thought of the judgment "gives urgency and depth to the ethical demands."<sup>1</sup> G.F. Thomas expresses similarly that eschatology should be recognized as an important sanction since it elicits a sense of urgency by foreshortening the time between an action and the judgment upon it. Also he sees eschatological thought directing one toward God and His absolute goodness, since eschatology itself speaks of the absolutes of life. Thomas says eschatology can also help one to see with clarity "the demands of God's absolute and perfect will."<sup>2</sup> Flew believes eschatology is important for an understanding of the relevance of Jesus' ethic for modern man because, as the backdrop of His teaching, it brings to Jesus' ethic the sense of eternity.<sup>3</sup>

John Bright's position on eschatology is not always obvious, but he clearly believes that eschatology can serve as an important sanction since there is a definite motivating tension present in the thought of those who anticipate the Lord's return soon.<sup>4</sup> Ladd also feels that eschatology was an important ethical sanction, but not "the" primary sanction for Jesus' ethics. He suggests that one should always be aware that he may be a part of the last Christian generation, and for that reason he should be ever ready for the End.<sup>5</sup>

Oscar Cullmann contends that Jesus taught there would be an interval, if even a short one, and during this

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<sup>1</sup> Filson, Jesus Christ: The Risen Lord, p. 243.

<sup>2</sup> G.F. Thomas, Christian Ethics and Moral Philosophy, pp. 31f.

<sup>3</sup> R. Newton Flew, Jesus and His Way (London: The Epworth Press, 1963), p. 71.

<sup>4</sup> Bright, The Kingdom of God, p. 246.

<sup>5</sup> Ladd, Jesus and the Kingdom, p. 335.

interval each individual must respond to Jesus' message in the light of the approaching End.<sup>1</sup> I.H. Marshall agrees that Jesus taught there would be an interval before His Parousia, and through the medium of parables He encouraged His disciples to a life of loyalty and courage.<sup>2</sup>

Observations. Those who hold to the "synthesis" view propose to deal fairly with what they understand to be two aspects of Jesus' perspective of the Kingdom of God; that is, it is present and it is yet to come. However, there are differing emphases within this school. Of particular note are some who believe Jesus taught the Kingdom was present to some degree but was to be consummated within the period of a generation; others understand Jesus to have believed there would be an indefinite delay before the Kingdom would be consummated; still others believe Jesus' predictions of a temporal coming of the Kingdom should not be taken literally.

Those who adopt the latter interpretation appeal to a hermeneutic similar to those proposed by Bultmann or Wilder. They make a serious attempt to see Jesus' message, particularly His ethic, as relevant; but this interpretation forces upon Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of God --as presented in the Synoptic tradition--an orientation different from that of the first century.

On the other hand, the two other views take seriously the Synoptic presentation that Jesus expected a temporal disclosure of the Kingdom of God in the fashion long awaited by Israel. However, neither view offers a satisfactory interpretation. For example, if the Kingdom was expected to be consummated after a short delay, one is left with the problem of Jesus' unfulfilled prophecy. If he was mistaken in His prediction, then the credibility of His claims and teachings must be questioned. Another proposal includes the suggestion that the believer should perceive

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<sup>1</sup>Cullmann, Salvation In History, pp. 332f.

<sup>2</sup>Marshall, Eschatology and the Parables, pp. 40-47.



himself as living in tension between the "already and the not yet." The thought is perhaps a useful existential principle, but it cannot retain--over the centuries--the exigent quality of Jesus' preaching. Further, the suggestion hardly offers an explanation of how Jesus' ethics are still relevant in the light of His unfulfilled prediction.

Another alternative is the proposal that Jesus predicted an indefinite interval to take place between His Ascension and Parousia. This view has much to commend itself--up to a point. That Jesus believed an interval would take place between His Ascension and His Parousia is defended in this study. Surely, some time was needed for the disciples to respond to Jesus' commissioning. Therefore, the belief in an interval would have been attractive to the early church--as an explanation of the Kingdom's delay--during the first twenty-five to forty years after Jesus' Ascension. But the long centuries must surely dissipate the theory. The proposal that Jesus predicted an indefinite interval will receive further attention.

This study now turns to the contributions of I. Howard Marshall who offers a clear interpretation of the Kingdom of God as both present and future within the teaching of Jesus.

#### I. Howard Marshall: An Indefinite Interval Between the Kingdom's Coming and Its Consummation

Expectation. According to I.H. Marshall, the term "Kingdom of God" refers primarily to the action of God as He intervenes in human history with the purpose of establishing His rule, and not so much to the establishment of a "realm," although he believes this thought is also present in the teachings of Jesus.<sup>1</sup> The Kingdom of God, Marshall suggests, must be thought of as coming in stages, i.e., "It came quietly and almost unrecognized in the ministry of Jesus, but He looked forward to its glorious, open

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<sup>1</sup>Marshall, Luke: Historian and Theologian, p. 129.

manifestation and consummation in the future."<sup>1</sup> While Marshall believes that the Kingdom of God became present in the ministry of Jesus through His activity,<sup>2</sup> he is also of the opinion that the Kingdom is yet to be revealed in power. To Marshall,

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<sup>1</sup>I.H. Marshall, The Work of Christ (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970), p. 27. Cf. Marshall, Luke: Historian and Theologian; he observes that there are some passages which refer to the End as "imminent" (pp. 131-134). And on this point, Marshall believes, ". . . there is complete agreement among scholars" (p. 129). He also points out that there is another set of texts which indicate that Jesus saw "his own ministry as a time of fulfilment with regard to the coming of the kingdom." To Marshall, "these texts imply that the kingdom had already come during the ministry of Jesus, and they draw the conclusion that Jesus spoke both of the presence and the future coming of the kingdom. Some way of explaining this polarity is required, and the most satisfactory is that which uses the terminology of fulfilment and consummation to refer to the coming of the kingdom in the ministry of Jesus and to its future coming respectively" (pp. 129f.). Marshall includes in his interpretation an emphasis upon God's action as it relates to salvation. Therefore, in summarizing his understanding of the term, "Kingdom of God," Marshall writes: "God is active; God is active on behalf of his people; God is active in a new way for each hearer of the message." Marshall, "Preaching the Kingdom of God," p. 15. Yet, to Marshall there is more, for "we can also point forward to the future action of God when he will complete his work on behalf of his people." Ibid., p. 16. Marshall appeals to Perrin's proposal that "Kingdom of God" should be understood as a "symbol" rather than as a concept. This means that "as a symbol it evokes the idea (or, as Perrin calls it, the myth) of God's activity in history on behalf of his people, and particularly of a final, eschatological act by God on their behalf. It is this thought of 'God acting on behalf of his people' which seems to me to sum up the meaning of the phrase." Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>2</sup>Marshall, The Work of Christ. For example, he maintains that Jesus waged a battle against Satan with the intention of dethroning him (p. 31), and the mighty acts which Jesus performed "ought to have been sufficient proof that the kingdom of God had really come (Mt. 12:28), but He was loth to provide demonstrations of power to order" (p. 34). For Marshall, Jesus' role concerning the coming of the Kingdom was crucial. He writes: "It is no exaggeration to say that His ministry was the Kingdom of God."

. . . the decisive manifestation of the kingdom is thus placed in the future, but already it is proleptically present in Jesus. In this sense we may perhaps use the phrase sich realisierende Eschatologie to designate the thought of Jesus, although it will be apparent that we use the term in a slightly different sense from Dodd.<sup>1</sup>

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He was the Messiah, and His coming was the coming of the rule of God" (pp. 27f.). Such impressions can also be observed in Marshall's interpretation of Mark 9:1. The saying, he believes, could not be a reference to the coming of the end within a generation, since Jesus expected an interval of a longer duration. Rather, he suggests that "it is more satisfactory to see an allusion to the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus and the coming of the Spirit. At the same time, however, the saying seems to bear some relationship to the story of the transfiguration which immediately follows it; an event which in itself prophesies the revelation of God's kingly power in Jesus." I.H. Marshall, St. Mark (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1967), p. 33. Marshall's interpretation of Luke 9:27, parallel to Mark 9:1, should also be observed at this point, since here his view is amplified. He suggests that Jesus' promise to His disciples that they will see the Kingdom of God means that they will "experience" the Kingdom, "since 'see' need not necessarily be taken literally." That is, as in Mark 9:1, "the reference is not to experiencing the coming of the kingdom as an event but to seeing that it is already present . . . . The presence of the kingdom to which Luke is referring lies in the evidence of its power seen in the events of the resurrection and Pentecost." Marshall, The Gospel of Luke, p. 378. Marshall believes that it is "also possible that the saying was seen by the Evangelists as bearing some relation to the transfiguration, which can be regarded as a revelation of the kingdom of God in the person of Jesus, but this extension of meaning is secondary . . . ." Ibid., p. 379. Further, Marshall maintains that "the saying makes good sense on the lips of Jesus as a prophecy of the coming of the kingdom, which he saw to be associated with his own death and subsequent vindication." Ibid. Of Luke's view of the Kingdom's presence and its future coming, and Jesus' role therein, Marshall believes that "We must admit that the hope of the future coming of the kingdom (Luke 11:2; 22:29f.; 23:42) is not at the centre of Luke's thought but he has certainly not given up the idea. His emphasis is on the presence of the kingdom. Through the preaching of Jesus the power of the kingdom is manifested." Marshall, Luke: Historian and Theologian, p. 134.

<sup>1</sup> Marshall, Eschatology and the Parables, p. 25. Some points of this view which to Marshall have decisive



Marshall agrees substantially with the conclusions of W.G. Kümmel, who demonstrates (Marshall believes) that Jesus not only taught both the present and future aspects of the Kingdom, but that "He also allowed for an interval before the future coming of the kingdom."<sup>1</sup> Marshall seeks to show through an analysis of the parables that Jesus did, in fact, teach that the Kingdom is both present and future and that the disciples were to anticipate His death and an interval of time before His Parousia. He interprets, for example, the parables of the Seed Growing Secretly, the Mustard Seed and the Leaven as bearing witness "to the growth of the kingdom from tiny beginnings until God brings it in, in all its fulness."<sup>2</sup>

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advantages over other theories are: (1) ". . . it does not attempt to force all the evidence into one pattern . . . ."; (2) ". . . it is not forced to reject out of hand any evidence which suggests that Jesus expected an interval before the coming of the kingdom . . . ."; (3) and although the view does not answer the question as to whether Jesus expected His own return, it does permit one to examine references to the Parousia on their own merit. Ibid.

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 34. For further details on Marshall's interpretation of these parables, see Ibid., pp. 27ff. He remarks: ". . . the parables appear to teach both the certainty of growth, thanks to God's care of the seed, and the greatness of the result." He also agrees with N.A. Dahl that the fact of "organic growth" can be used "as an illustration of the divine order and necessity in the coming of the kingdom." Ibid., p. 28. Put another way, by Marshall, the parables of the Mustard Seed and Leaven (Lk. 13:18-21) make two comparisons of the Kingdom of God. That is, "from tiny beginnings it will grow and extend its influence to a tremendous extent. Thus the ideas of growth and of the contrast between the small beginning and the great end result are both present." Marshall, The Gospel of Luke, p. 560.

Marshall charges that "advocates of both realized and thorough-going eschatology deny that Jesus taught the fact of His personal second advent after an interval of time." Marshall, Eschatology and the Parables, p. 17. But he contends that it is difficult to understand why the early church made so much of the Parousia expectation

unless Jesus did, in fact, speak of His own return. He also proposes that an acceptance of the authenticity of the Parousia sayings leads to the conviction that some of Jesus' sayings refer to an interval before the Parousia. Ibid., pp. 21f. Marshall remarks: "There is . . . no a priori reason why Jesus should not have prophesied His own return, or why this prophecy should be less likely on His lips than the prophecy of the imminent coming of the kingdom. The whole theory of thorough-going eschatology can be shown to be vitiated by false assumptions and by a critical analysis of the Gospel material which is entirely arbitrary and unconvincing." Ibid., p. 24. To Marshall, ". . . the view that Jesus did not expect a period of time to intervene between His death and the parousia will not hold water." Ibid., p. 21. Cf. I.H. Marshall, "Luke" in The New Bible Commentary Revised, ed. D. Guthrie, et. al. (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1970), p. 888. He observes that ". . . the evidence is decisively against the view that the early Christians expected the Parousia to happen immediately, and it simply is not true that the parousia has lost all significance in Luke: see 12:35-40; 17:20-37; 18:8; 21:5-36." Marshall cites the same passages in The Gospel of Luke, p. 34, of which he states that "Luke himself clearly allows for the possibility of an imminent parousia." He interprets the parable of the Pounds (Lk. 19:11-27) as being told by Jesus to teach the disciples that they must be involved in service during the period between His ascension and His return. Marshall suggests that the disciples had been taught that "the kingdom had in some sense arrived, and it was natural for them to assume that its consummation would follow once the activity of Jesus extended to the capital city. Luke regards the parable as being told to dispel such hopes." Ibid., pp. 700f. Cf. Marshall, Luke: Historian and Theologian. He notes that the Parousia expectation was "imminent" but not "immediate." See discussions on pp. 79-88, 131f., 136f. Marshall takes issue with J. Jeremias, who contends that in general the parables have been given a change of audience and applied to the situation of the early church which had to deal with the delay of the Parousia. To Jeremias, the parables were directed originally toward the crowds and in particular Jesus' opponents, and served to warn them of an impending crisis at which time they would be judged. Marshall, The Gospel of Luke, p. 533. Cf. Jeremias, The Parables of Jesus, pp. 48ff. Marshall believes that the parables speak of the "in-between" time, and that "it is most probable that they were originally addressed to the disciples to encourage them to live in the light of the parousia rather than that they were originally addressed to the crowds and opponents of Jesus." Marshall, The Gospel of Luke, p. 535. See Marshall's interpretation of Lk. 12:35-48 (The Coming of the Son of Man), pp. 532-545, and Lk. 17:22-37 (The Day of the Son of Man), pp. 656-669,

Expectation: Ethics and Relevance. According to Marshall, neither "realized eschatology" nor "consistent eschatology" can deal adequately with Jesus' ethical teaching since "this teaching is partly related to the eschatological teaching of Jesus and is partly 'timeless' in its reference." And it is not, he feels, necessary to choose between these two strains of teachings.<sup>1</sup>

Although Marshall is hardly in agreement with Schweitzer's "consistent" view, he advises that one should preserve from this theory the important point "that the ethic of Jesus is an interim ethic meant for the time before the full coming of the Kingdom at the Parousia."<sup>2</sup> To Marshall, Schweitzer and Weiss were wrong in depicting the End in catastrophic terms, for although Jesus' ethic is an interim ethic it is not a crisis ethic.<sup>3</sup> He believes that the ethic of Jesus, which is designed for the period before the consummated Kingdom, must be seen in the light of the Kingdom as already present. And one's present "acceptance of the ethic," Marshall feels, "is an indispensable requirement for entry into the consummated kingdom."<sup>4</sup> He further

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which he believes teach that "Jesus himself reckoned with some kind of interval before the parousia, and . . . he identified himself with the coming Son of man." Ibid., p. 657.

<sup>1</sup> Marshall, Eschatology and the Parables, pp. 20f.

<sup>2</sup> I.H. Marshall, Kept by the Power of God (London: The Epworth Press, 1969), p. 43.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 43, fn. 38. Marshall does not mean by this that entrance into the Kingdom is dependent upon one's fulfilment of Jesus' ethic. Man cannot prove himself worthy of God's acceptance. Rather, Marshall suggests that "the ethic is simply the detailed portrayal of the way of life of those who accept the good news of the kingdom." Jesus' ethic is preceded by the Gospel, man responds to the grace of the Kingdom. Ibid., p. 43.



claims that even if one accepts the view that Jesus' ethic "is simply an expression of the meaning of repentance . . ." (as Grässer) there still remains the need of time for its fulfilment. Marshall observes, for example, that ". . . such instruction as that about marriage and divorce, or about the claims of God and Caesar, surely reckons with the fact of normal history continuing at least for some time."<sup>1</sup>

Marshall, however, does not dismiss eschatology as an unimportant sanction during this interim period. In fact, he admits that a vital, ". . . if not the vital, question in the ethical teaching of Jesus . . ." is always, "How may I become a participant in the kingdom?"<sup>2</sup> Consequently, according to his view, man must respond to the Kingdom and its message now and prepare for its consummation. For example, Marshall interprets the parable of the Sower "as a summons to men to listen to the message of Jesus with care,"<sup>3</sup> and to Marshall, the parables of the Tares and Dragnet emphasize not only that there will be a final separation at the Judgment, but also that judgment and separation are taking place even in the present. On the parable of the Dragnet, Marshall suggests that it teaches that "men must therefore ensure that they are not in the category of rotten fish which are rejected."<sup>4</sup> According to Marshall,

Those who respond to the message of Jesus receive the blessings of the kingdom of God, and they are called to a strenuous life of self-denial and perseverance as they wait for the parousia of the Son of man. Luke underlines the call of Jesus to

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<sup>1</sup> Marshall, Eschatology and the Parables, p. 21. In spite of this conviction, Marshall writes in Kept by the Power of God, p. 43, fn. 38, "It goes without saying that, while the principles of the ethic are eternally valid, the teaching is cast in terms of life in this world (to be precise, in the first century A.D.) before the parousia."

<sup>2</sup> Marshall, Eschatology and the Parables, p. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 30f.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

wholehearted discipleship, especially over against the temptation to acquire riches and to settle down into the life of the world.<sup>1</sup>

. In his interpretation of the so-called "Crisis Parables," Marshall claims that some of these parables also speak of the reaction of the disciples in their anticipation of the Consummation and Parousia. It is Marshall's contention that not all of the Crisis Parables can be restricted in their references to the historical plight of the Jewish people; some of them must also be regarded as referring to the time of crisis which would confront Jesus' disciples during the interval between His Ascension and the Parousia. For example, Marshall places the parables of the Children at Play and the Barren Fig-tree among those in which Jesus warned the Jews about the approaching crisis,<sup>2</sup> but he claims that there are other parables through which Jesus encouraged responses from His disciples during the interval. According to Marshall,

He (Jesus) also exhorted His hearers to make certain that they would qualify for admission to the kingdom (parables of the virgins,<sup>3</sup> the king's marriage feast and great supper),<sup>4</sup> especially by living as true disciples (parables of the sheep and the goats<sup>5</sup> and the man on the way to the judge)<sup>6</sup> and by occupying the intervening time in the service of their Master (parables of the talents and the pounds);<sup>7</sup> they were to remain faithful during the interval before the Parousia with its persecutions and hardships (parable of the

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<sup>1</sup> Marshall, The Gospel of Luke, p. 36.

<sup>2</sup> Marshall, Eschatology and the Parables, p. 35.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 40f. (Note: The entire quotation can be found on p. 47. Further references are to more lengthy interpretations of the various parables listed in this quote.)

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 46f.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 43f.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

importunate widow)<sup>1</sup> and to be watchful for the coming of the Son of man (parables of the burglar, the watchman and the servant in authority).<sup>2</sup>

Marshall observes that Jesus' parables indicate that He was concerned about man's conduct in the present and his preparation for the future. To Marshall, Jesus' teaching is "relevant at every point to the life of disciples in the present time and urges them to live a life here and now in which the imminence of the parousia and of the open manifestation of the kingdom of God is the controlling factor; to men who have already accepted the call of Jesus to discipleship comes the call to endure faithfully until the return of their Lord."<sup>3</sup> Although Marshall interprets a saying such as Luke 18:8 to mean that one must not grow slack in waiting for the coming of the End, and even admits that the disciples should "govern their behaviour in the light of the hope of the coming of the Son of man," he, nevertheless, does not believe that the expectation of the Parousia or the consummation of the Kingdom constitutes either the sole or even the primary sanction for conduct. He comments: ". . . this does not mean that they will be motivated simply by the hope of heavenly blessings or the fear of future woe, or that the imminence of the End is what basically animates their conduct. It is not the nearness of a crisis which animates New Testament ethics, but the character of God."<sup>4</sup>

Observations. Marshall endeavors to retain within his hermeneutic process the results of his critical study for an understanding of the continuing relevance of Jesus' message--both His eschatology and ethics. He attempts such retention by suggesting that Jesus' message is not invalidated with the continuation of time since Jesus taught that an indefinite interval would take place between His

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 45.      <sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 36ff.      <sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>4</sup> Marshall, Luke: Historian and Theologian, p. 136.



Ascension and Parousia, and because Jesus Himself admitted that He did not know the day and hour of the End. Here there is no criticism of Marshall's argument for the authenticity of the "Parousia teaching" of Jesus.

However, Marshall's proposal that Jesus taught an indefinite interval of time between His Ascension and Parousia hardly resolves the issue at hand. Even Marshall admits that Jesus taught the imminence of the End, a position which he attempts to hold in balance with his view of an "indefinite interval," but which ultimately undermines it. For example, Marshall suggests that the word "generation" of Mark 13:30 probably means the contemporaries of Jesus, but that Jesus did not mean the end would come within a generation, since the "these things" of 13:29 refer to the signs of the end and not the end itself. However, Marshall undercuts his own view by admitting that Jesus was speaking to His disciples, who upon seeing the signs coming to pass, were "to draw the glad conclusion: the end is at hand--as surely as the sprouting fig tree heralds summer."<sup>1</sup>

Marshall interprets Luke 18:8 to mean that the disciples are assured that God will certainly vindicate His elect, and that "He will answer soon." That is, "to the elect it may seem to be a long time until he answers, but afterwards they will realise that it was in fact short."<sup>2</sup> Here then, so Marshall believes, is "an exhortation to take seriously the lesson of the parable that God will certainly act to vindicate them. Thus an interval before the parousia is presupposed, but the sense of imminent expectation is not abandoned."<sup>3</sup> Herein lies the weakness of Marshall's emphasis upon an indefinite interval. Surely the vindication about

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<sup>1</sup> Marshall, St. Mark, p. 51.

<sup>2</sup> Marshall, The Gospel of Luke, p. 676.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 677.

which Jesus spoke was promised to those whom He addressed. It was justice for themselves which both they and Jesus had in mind.

Therefore, the extended years, from a period of a generation to that of centuries, reveal the incongruity of a view that holds it consistent to believe that Jesus taught both the imminence of His return and an extended indefinite interval between His Ascension and His return. That Jesus taught an interval is apparent, but He certainly did not teach a protracted period of 2000 years.

Marshall is to be commended for refusing to bend to solutions which undermine Jesus' prediction of a literal Consummation, but he needs to provide an interpretation within his hermeneutic process which effectively translates his critical conclusions into relevant concepts, and he needs to develop a resolution to Jesus' apparent erroneous prophecy.

## CHAPTER II

### DISJUNCTION BETWEEN JESUS' PROPHECY AND FULFILMENT: IN SEARCH OF A SOLUTION

The conclusions of New Testament studies support the claim that Jesus is presented by the Synoptic writers as proclaiming the future and imminent coming of the Kingdom of God. Dodd's "Realized Eschatology" is no longer considered seriously among New Testament scholars, although those who hold the "synthesis" view of the Kingdom look to Dodd for support on the passages which they see as teaching the "presence of the Kingdom." However, as already observed, those of the synthesis persuasion who believe that Jesus anticipated a literal establishment of a temporal Kingdom find themselves left--as do the futurists--with the dilemma of Jesus' unfulfilled prophecy.

This study will turn to the proposal that as the Prophet of Yahweh, Jesus proclaimed the imminence of the Kingdom's coming, a prediction which Jesus was not responsible for fulfilling. Therefore, Jesus' prophecy must be understood in the light of the sovereignty of God who, as the Old Testament reveals, may change His mind and alter the predictions of prophecy for the benefit of mankind. Consequently, the concept of an extended delay should be understood as a "grace period."

#### Jesus' Expectation

Jesus never spoke of the Kingdom of God as remote, but at the outset of His ministry His emphasis was upon the Kingdom's nearness (Mk. 1:15; cf. Matt. 3:2, 4:17). Did Jesus, then, believe that the Kingdom of God was present? It has been observed that some New Testament



scholars believe the Kingdom of God became present to some degree within the person and ministry of Jesus, that Jesus was Himself the Kingdom come to earth, and that His miracles, casting out demons, and proclamation were signs that the Kingdom of God had come in some sense at least.

Jesus, however, never claimed that the Kingdom of God was present through His healings, preaching or person. And except for one incident (Lk. 11:20; cf. Matt. 12:28) there is no suggestion that the act of casting out demons was a sign of the presence of the Kingdom of God.<sup>1</sup> The Synoptic writers saw Jesus at the beginning of His ministry in a struggle with Satan (Mk. 1:12,13; Matt. 4:2-11; Lk. 4:1,2), and He was able to repulse all temptations (Matt. 4:2-11; Lk. 4:3-13). A significant accusation leveled against Jesus, after He had delivered a man from a demon (Matt. 12:22), was that He cast out demons only by the power of Beelzebul, the prince of demons (Matt. 12:24; Mk. 3:22; Lk. 11:15). Jesus pointed out the futility of a kingdom or house attempting to stand in a state of division (Mk. 3:23-26; cf. Matt. 12:25-27; Lk. 11:17,18). It was not a division of Satan's forces

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<sup>1</sup> Scholars who support the view that the Kingdom of God was present through Jesus' ministry lean heavily upon Lk. 11:20 for support. Yet, in the light of Jesus' total message and ministry it is more logical to see His statement not as a claim for the Kingdom's presence, but rather as a display of the Kingdom's power through a preliminary action--the phenomenon of casting out demons. Casting out demons was a sign of the coming imminent Kingdom rather than evidence of its presence. Lk. 17:20, which records Jesus' claim, "The Kingdom of God is in your midst," has also been cited as support for Jesus' belief in the presence of the Kingdom. But it is unlikely that the Kingdom could have been present and no one aware of it except Jesus. It is more logical to conclude that He was speaking of the "suddenness" with which the Kingdom would arrive. The so-called "Parables of Growth," usually cited in support of the Kingdom's presence, could also support the view that Jesus understood the Kingdom to be coming. Its presence will be as obvious as a large bush, swollen bread or the plant bursting through the ground!

which was at hand, but instead, Jesus claimed, "If it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you" (Lk. 11:20; cf. Matt. 12:28).

Jesus continued in this important controversy by announcing the binding of the strong man whose house can be easily plundered (Mk. 3:27; cf. Matt. 12:29; Lk. 11:21,22). Through His exorcisms Jesus proved His power to shackle the power of Satan. It was an eschatological act! But it was not the Eschaton! The apocalyptic writers also emphasized the binding of Satan,<sup>1</sup> and the Qumran Community saw the time of suffering as the age of Satan. They longed for the eschatological deliverance which would come in the End.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, the Synoptic writers present Jesus as defeating Satan, though not completely. From the record it appears that Jesus believed that the defeat of Satan was being effected in His ministry. When the seventy returned from their first mission, Jesus said, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven" (Lk. 10:18). The inevitable defeat of Satan was for Jesus apparent; for others the defeat was not so clear because the Kingdom had not come. When the Kingdom comes, all will know. It is unlikely that the uncompromising God will reign on earth in secret. The Kingdom's presence will be as obvious as a vulture hovering over its prey out in the middle of a desert (Lk. 17:37). Jesus believed the Kingdom to be so near that He discerned flashes of the Kingdom's power at work in the courts of Satan.

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Test. Levi. 18:12; Zeb. 9:8; Jub. 10:8; and Cullmann, Salvation in History, pp. 195f.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. A.R.C. Leane, The Rule of Qumran and Its Meaning (London: S.C.M. Press, Ltd., 1966), p. 250. Cf. 1QS (The Rule of Qumran) 10:23 in which it is affirmed that God's righteousness has and will vindicate His people in times of distress; Judg. 5:11; 1 Sam. 12:7; Micah 6:5; Ps. 103:6; Isa. 45:24; Dan. 9:16.

An examination of some of the key passages related to Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of God reveals that for Him the Kingdom was expected within the lifetime of His contemporaries.

Mark 1:15. Jesus never confirmed or renewed the nationalistic hopes of Israel. He never spoke of the restoration of the kingdom of David in power, nor of the Messiah who would overpower all her enemies. But according to Mark, Jesus began His ministry with a message of the Kingdom of God, "The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel" (Mk. 1:15; cf. Matt. 3:2, 4:17).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> There has been considerable controversy concerning the translation of ἥγγικεν in Mark 1:15; Matt. 3:2, 4:17. Of course, C.H. Dodd's translation and interpretation of these passages are at the center of the controversy. Some of the more significant interpretations follow: Dodd, The Parables of the Kingdom, (1936), p. 44, "has come"; R.H. Fuller, The Mission and Achievement of Jesus (London: S.C.M. Press, Ltd., 1954), pp. 20-25, concludes that the Kingdom is not present but near, "so near that it is already operative in advance," p. 25; Matthew Black, "The Kingdom of God has Come," Expository Times LXIII (1951): 298, "has come"; H. Priesker, "ἥγγικεν," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. II, ed. Gerhard Kittel, translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1964), pp. 330-332, "has drawn near to the present"; J.Y. Campbell, "The Kingdom of God has Come," Expository Times 48 (1936-37): 91-94, "has come near"; W.G. Kümmel, Promise and Fulfilment: The Eschatological Message of Jesus, translated by Dorothea M. Barton (London: S.C.M. Press, 1957), pp. 19-25, "has come near"; Oscar Cullmann, Salvation in History, p. 199, "has come near"; K.W. Clark, "Realized Eschatology," Journal of Biblical Literature 59 (1940): 367f., "has come near (to point of contact)"; C.E.B. Cranfield, The Gospel According to St. Mark (Cambridge: University Press, 1959), p. 68, the Kingdom has come near "in a spatial rather than a temporal sense." It has come "close to men" in Jesus and confronts them in His presence; Norman Perrin, Rediscovering the Teachings of Jesus (London: S.C.M. Press, Ltd., 1967), pp. 64-66, observes that no conclusion can be reached, and evidence is equal for and against Dodd's interpretation, but on p. 170 he includes Mark 1:15 among those passages which he believes refer to God's decisive intervention into history as being imminent--"at hand."



While Mark 1:15 is likely an editorial summary of Jesus' preaching,<sup>1</sup> there is no substantial reason to assume that it does not also represent Jesus' literal proclamation at the beginning of His ministry. An acceptance of the translation of ἐγγύζω as "to approach, to come near"<sup>2</sup> shows that for Mark, at least, Jesus' preaching of the "imminent" Kingdom was the essence of His message. John the Baptist had preached the imminent coming of the Kingdom (Matt. 3:2), and according to Mark's presentation, Jesus went further by saying that the time of the Kingdom was fulfilled (Mk. 1:15a). The Kingdom had come near to fulfill the kairos.

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Vincent Taylor, The Gospel According to St. Mark (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1953), p. 165. Taylor understands Mk. 1:14f., like Mk. 3:7-12, to be "one of the summary statements . . . which determine the outline of the Gospel." And "the message of Jesus described in 1:15 is a summary of what Jesus proclaimed." Cf. Matt. 10:7, which is a summary of the same message to be proclaimed by Jesus' disciples at the beginning of their ministry. See also Lk. 9:2. B.H. Branscomb, The Gospel of Mark. Moffatt Commentary (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1937), p. 25; Erich Klostermann, Das Markus-evangelium erklärt (Tübingen: Mohr Verlag, 1926), p. 14; Ernst Percy, Die Botschaft Jesus: Eine Traditionskritische und Exegetische Untersuchung (Lund: C.S.K. Gleerup Verlag, 1953), p. 20. Perrin, The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus, pp. 200f.

<sup>2</sup>Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, p. 213. Within the Synoptic Gospels, ἐγγύζω bears the meaning of "approach, come near" in reference to persons who are (1) approaching, e.g. a place, such as the city gate, Lk. 7:12 or a house, Lk. 15:25; or (2) being approached by: a betrayer, Matt. 26:46, Mk. 14:42; a thief, Lk. 12:33; a blind man, Lk. 18:40; Jesus, Lk. 19:41. It may also be used in reference to an approaching in time, e.g. the Kingdom of God, Matt. 3:2, 4:17, 10:7, Mk. 1:15, Lk. 10:9,11. That is, John the Baptist, Jesus and His disciples proclaimed the coming of the Kingdom of God, not its presence.

The "Generation Passages." Jesus never did say exactly when the Kingdom of God would come, although He gave His disciples good reason to believe that it could happen within the very near future--at least within the lifetime of those who lived within His own generation.

Matthew 10:23. There is, of course, sharp disagreement among scholars as to whether Jesus really said to His disciples, "When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next; for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel, before the Son of man comes" (Matt. 10:23). Albert Schweitzer certainly accepted this promise as authentic, and it became central to his "konsequente Eschatologie." He contends that Jesus expected the Kingdom of God to come before the disciples could return from their missionary enterprise. But with their return and the obvious postponement of the Consummation, Jesus, forced to alter His plans, took upon Himself the Messianic woes and made His fateful journey to Jerusalem where He attempted to force the coming of the Kingdom of God.<sup>1</sup>

The note of immediacy in this passage, as Schweitzer stresses, is quite real. That is, it is real if the passage is accepted as coming from Jesus.<sup>2</sup> It is claimed by some that the saying reflects the Parousia expectation of the early church and was, therefore, placed in the mouth of Jesus. Erich Grässer, an exponent of this position, carries his argument to its logical

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<sup>1</sup>Schweitzer, The Quest of the Historical Jesus, pp. 357ff.

<sup>2</sup>William Sanday's struggle with this logion can be appreciated. He admits that the saying clearly reflects the mind of the writer who undoubtedly believed he was rendering a genuine statement from Jesus. Yet, Sanday hesitates to ascribe the saying to Jesus, believing one cannot be certain. He concludes, nevertheless, that "as the saying stands it certainly refers to the eschatological Coming, and in that sense we should have to admit that it has been contradicted by the event." Sanday, "The Apocalyptic Element in the Gospels," pp. 107f.

conclusion--the exclusion of just about every reference to the Parousia, thereby eliminating not only Matt. 10:23, Mark 9:1, and Mark 13:30 from authentic sayings of Jesus, but also such sayings as the Kingdom petition in the Lord's Prayer, the sayings on preparedness and watchfulness, and ultimately the Parables of Growth (Contrast Parables). All these passages are considered by Grässer to be products of the early church attributed to Jesus in order to keep alive the Parousia hope.<sup>1</sup> Grässer's thesis has support from other scholars.<sup>2</sup>

However, it seems unlikely that the Synoptic writers would have been so deliberately systematic simply to communicate what was already for the early church a definite hope. It is hardly convincing to argue that sayings attributed to Jesus are inauthentic if they parallel a teaching or hope of the early church. In fact, the opposite view would offer a stronger case.<sup>3</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup>Erich Grässer, Das Problem der Parusieverzögerung in den synoptischen Evangelien und in der Apostelgeschichte (Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann Verlag, 1957), pp. 77-178.

<sup>2</sup>Perrin, The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus, p. 83. Here Perrin accepts Matt. 10:23 as having its basis in Jesus' teachings, but in his later work, Rediscovering the Teachings of Jesus, p. 201, he rejects it (as he does Mk. 9:1) as a creation of the early church. He concludes that all the apocalyptic "Son of Man" sayings which speak of Jesus' coming are products of the early church. Cf. Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, Vol. I., pp. 42,55. To Bultmann, the saying reflects the thought of the early church and is Matthew's attempt to stimulate missionary zeal. Cf. J.C.G. Greig, "The Eschatological Ministry," in The New Testament in Historical and Contemporary Perspective, edited by Hugh Anderson and William Barclay (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), p. 114. Greig contends that "the relationship of Matt. x.23 to eschatological references in Jewish literature does not one whit diminish the probability that Jesus can have organized one or several missions whose task it was to prepare Israel for an expected speedy divine intervention in history, and can have used current Jewish allusions to this in a quite literal sense."

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Cullmann, Salvation in History, p. 217.



disciples had surely received such a hope from Jesus during His ministry, and if they did "put into His mouth" this saying, they not only brought upon themselves further embarrassment,<sup>1</sup> but were rather daring in taking the liberty to ascribe to their Lord His own authoritative use of the word ἄμην by which Matt. 10:23b and Mk. 9:1 are prefaced.

Some scholars attempt to remove from this logion its apparent imminent expectation of the Kingdom of God,<sup>2</sup> but they are reluctant to label the saying as secondary. T.W. Manson is an exponent of what could be called the "displacement theory." Matthew, according to Manson, has brought together material which originally was separate, and his compilation "reflects the experience and the

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Gerhard Friedrich, who says of this prediction, "In view of the predicted nearness of the kingdom and the non-fulfilment when the Gospel was written, one may attribute this saying to Jesus Himself." Gerhard Friedrich, "προφητείας; Prophets and Prophecies in the New Testament." In Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. Vol. VI. Edited by G. Kittel and translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1968), p. 845, fn. 402.

<sup>2</sup>It is to Grässer's credit that he does not undermine the authenticity of Matt. 10:23 or other passages in order to undermine Jesus' proclamation of an imminent End. In fact, the contrary is true. Grässer understands Jesus to have believed that after His death the End would immediately follow. This means, therefore, that Jesus did not expect a delayed Parousia. Grässer insists that "The proclamation of the imminent End dominates the message of Jesus from its beginning to its end! From this everything else is to be judged: Jesus has neither inserted with certainty a temporal interval between his death and his Parousia, nor has he made provision in any way for the time after his death." Grässer, Das Problem, p. 75. (Translation, including quotes, is by Roger L. Capps in consultation with W. Paul Hagenau.) Consequently, Grässer believes that the teaching of the Parousia belonged to the community of believers who were eager to explain why the Kingdom of God had not come. He contends that Jesus never gave any indication that there would be a delay in the coming of the Kingdom after His death, since He prophesied no appearance after Easter; no Pentecost; no Ascension; no Church and commanded no Baptism. Ibid., p. 68.

expectations of the primitive Palestinian Church."

Manson derives his conclusion by comparing the saying with other accounts of missionary efforts by the disciples and concludes that, contrary to the implications of Matt. 10:23, the disciples were usually received. Manson also contends that no other passages indicate that the Kingdom of God was expected as imminently as does Matt. 10:23.<sup>1</sup>

J. Arthur Baird suggests that Matthew, misunderstanding Jesus, took Jesus' statement of Matt. 10:23--which originally had a "present, historic" meaning (such as Mk. 9:1, Lk. 10:11b)--and placed it at the end of the mission campaign, thereby reading into it his "belief that the eschaton was coming in that generation."<sup>2</sup> Gerhard Barth contends that Matthew understood the saying to refer to the period of persecution between the Resurrection and the Parousia. Barth believes that Matthew created 10:23a in order to combine it with 10:23b, which to Barth is an obvious indication of persecution current in the church at the time the Gospel of Matthew was written.<sup>3</sup> These attempts to eliminate the implication of the immediacy of the Parousia so apparent in this passage are not convincing. Of course, a redactor has the right

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<sup>1</sup>T.W. Manson, The Sayings of Jesus (London: S.C.M. Press, 1949), p. 182.

<sup>2</sup>J. Arthur Baird, The Justice of God in the Teaching of Jesus (London: S.C.M. Press, Ltd., 1963), pp. 144f. Baird observes that if the passage is authentic and in the right context, it is the only, and therefore, very weak support for a belief in the imminent coming of the Kingdom.

<sup>3</sup>Gerhard Barth, "Matthew's Understanding of the Law," p. 100, fn. 3. Barth admits that what Jesus originally meant by the statement is uncertain. Cf. H.A. Guy, The New Testament Doctrine of the "Last Things" (London: Oxford University Press, 1948), p. 34. Guy suggests that the persecution of the early church could have convinced Matthew that the Parousia was imminent. See also, J.A.T. Robinson, Jesus and His Coming (London: S.C.M. Press, Ltd., 1957), pp. 80, 91f., 126 (fn.1), 137 (fn.1).

to present his own conviction, which appears obvious: According to Jesus, the Son of Man would come before the mission task to Israel was completed.

The interpretation of Julius Schniewind accepts Matt. 10:23 as an authentic saying from Jesus and also contends for the accuracy of Matthew's context. However, his view also eliminates the imminent note of the passage. Schniewind holds that Jesus refers to the Consummation but without the predictions which usually accompany apocalyptic references to the End-time. According to Schniewind, the passage must be examined in the light of Jesus' overall missionary strategy which was to share the good news of salvation to all nations. To accept the saying literally would mean that the missionary message was intended only for a portion of Israel and was not to go beyond Israel to the Gentiles. Schniewind argues that Israel rejected the message and it was then offered to the Gentiles. Therefore, the mission to the Jews is not yet completed (cf. Romans 11), and the Son of Man has yet to

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Robinson claims that the authenticity of Matt. 10:23 is "dubious." He suggests that originally the saying did not refer to the Parousia, but was extracted from a document (from which Mark 13 was also derived) which provided guidance for Christians as the political crisis in Israel developed. If it is a saying of Jesus, Robinson believes it has been rewritten to emphasize chronology. Therefore, the redactor has so drastically changed the saying and the context that the original structure and context cannot now be discerned. Of course, Gerhard Barth believes Matthew makes a connection between the Resurrection and the Parousia. Cf. Kümmel, Promise and Fulfilment, p. 67, who refutes the attempt to connect the Parousia and Resurrection in Mark 9:9, par. Matt. 17:9; Matt. 16:20,21. While there might appear to be a connection in Mark 14:62, no time is given for the Son of Man to be seen, and the Resurrection is not mentioned. Likewise, there is no evidence in Matt. 10:23 which would indicate a connection between the Resurrection and the Parousia.



come.<sup>1</sup> Schniewind's interpretation reads a missionary strategy into the text which it cannot support. There is no emphasis here upon reaching all of Israel before the Parousia,<sup>2</sup> but the text merely implies that most of the cities will have been reached.<sup>3</sup> As Richard Hiers states, the saying could not be clearer: "Jesus tells the twelve that the Son of man will have come before they complete their mission through the towns of Israel."<sup>4</sup>

If the saying is taken literally in its present context, then it is a clear prediction that the End was imminent, that the disciples would actually see it happen.<sup>5</sup> There are other passages which appear to support the view that Jesus anticipated an imminent End (Mk. 9:1, par.; Mk. 13:30, par.; Mk. 14:62, par. Matt. 26:64). These too must be taken seriously.

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<sup>1</sup> Julius Schniewind, Das Evangelium nach Matthäus. Das Neue Testament Deutsch. Vol. I (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968), pp. 130f. Cf. G.R. Beasley-Murray, Jesus and the Future (London: Macmillan, 1956), p. 198. Also, A.L. Moore, The Parousia in the New Testament, pp. 144f. Moore believes the text represents the following missionary strategy: first to the Jews, then to the Gentiles. The Jewish rejection of the Gospel was part of the plan of salvation history. The disciples were commissioned to proclaim the Gospel, and are not responsible for Israel's refusal to accept it.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Kümmel, Promise and Fulfilment, pp. 65ff.

<sup>3</sup> Cullmann, Salvation in History, p. 216.

<sup>4</sup> Hiers, The Kingdom of God in the Synoptic Tradition, p. 66.

<sup>5</sup> William Lillie, for example, suggests that if Matt. 10:23 is taken "literally with its obvious meaning in its present context, we must admit that our Lord's hope was grievously disappointed . . . and that there was a fundamental flaw in our Lord's eschatological expectations." William Lillie, "'The Jesus of History' in 1961," Scottish Journal of Theology 15 (June 1962): 161.

Mark 9:1. Some scholars deny that Jesus could have made the statement in Mark 9:1, "And He said to them, 'Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power.'" (Cf. Matt. 16:28; Lk. 9:27) For example, Friedrich lists this statement as a promise from Jesus that "some of His contemporaries will experience the coming of the kingdom of God in power," but Friedrich recognizes that some scholars believe the statement came from the early church as primitive Christian prophecy which was "designed to comfort and startle in a time of waning eschatological expectation . . . ." <sup>1</sup> However, it is likely an authentic saying from Jesus. <sup>2</sup> It is possible that Mark 9:1 is a detached saying

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<sup>1</sup>Friedrich, "προφητείας," p. 845, fn. 403. Cf. Bultmann, History of the Synoptic Tradition, p. 121. He suggests that "it is a community formula of consolation in view of the delay of the Parousia: at any rate some will still live to see it . . . ." Grässer, Das Problem, pp. 131-137. Cf. Perrin, The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus, p. 139. Here Perrin accepts the saying as coming from Jesus, but in his work, Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus, pp. 19ff., especially fn. 1, p. 20, he rejects his previous conclusion and accepts the view that Mark 9:1 was created by Mark from 13:30 and 8:38 and that, as is true of all the teachings of Jesus, there is really no way to know whether or not this saying is authentic. Cf. J.A.T. Robinson, Jesus and His Coming, pp. 53f., 89f. To Robinson, the saying in its present form is not original to Jesus. The Parousia hope of the primitive church has been read into the saying. Also, William Barclay, The First Three Gospels (London: S.C.M. Press, Ltd., 1966), p. 90. Barclay suggests that Mark 9:1 and the parallels present a word of encouragement "produced when the Second Coming was unexpectedly delayed." Contrast the view of Greig. He writes: "Careful comparison of the parallels to Mark viii 36-ix.1 . . . makes me unable to agree that the nearness of the kingdom is dissociated from the coming of the Son of Man, or that the notion of a speedy parousia is a fiction introduced as a means of comforting the early Church; though it no doubt did have the effect of doing this." Greig, p. 115.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Kümmel, Promise and Fulfilment, p. 29. W.G. Kümmel, "Die Näherwartung in der Verkündigung Jesu,"

which has been placed into this particular context<sup>1</sup> between a call to discipleship and the testimony of the Transfiguration.<sup>2</sup> The simplest step for Mark would have been to exclude the statement since by the time it was recorded the delay of the Parousia would have been difficult for the church to understand.<sup>3</sup> It was obviously important for the redactor to relay the statement from Jesus even though it appears as an intruder.

To accept the saying, after the manner of C.H. Dodd,<sup>4</sup> as referring to the presence of the Kingdom removes the embarrassment of the delay of the Kingdom or Parousia (Matt. 16:28). However, such an interpretation has been well refuted by those who contend that the statement refers to the future coming of the Kingdom.<sup>5</sup> Dodd himself later makes a slight shift in his position, and interprets the saying as "traditional language" which assured Jesus' followers of "immediate victory out of apparent defeat . . . . What happened was that He shortly returned, alive after death, invested with the power and

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Zeit und Geschichte. Dankesgabe an Rudolf Bultmann zum 80 Geburtstag, edited by E. Dinkler (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr Verlag, 1964), pp. 39ff. Cullmann, Salvation in History, pp. 211f. Campbell, "The Kingdom of God Has Come," pp. 91f.

<sup>1</sup>From his link phrase καὶ ἐλέγεν αὐτοῖς, Mark is preparing for a new topic, but it is limited to this one statement, which he obviously considers important. Cf. Jeremias, The Parables of Jesus, p. 14, who refers to other passages in which Mark uses this link phrase (2:27; 4:2,21,24; 6:10; 7:9; 8:1f.). Cf. Kümmel, Promise and Fulfilment, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup>Taylor, The Gospel According to St. Mark, pp. 380ff.

<sup>3</sup>Kümmel, Promise and Fulfilment, p. 27.

<sup>4</sup>Dodd, The Parables of the Kingdom (1936), p. 53. He translates, "Has come with power."

<sup>5</sup>Campbell, "The Kingdom of God Has Come," pp. 93f. Kümmel, Promise and Fulfilment, pp. 26-28.



glory of another world . . . ." <sup>1</sup>

The promise of Mark 9:1 is that some of those of Jesus' generation would live to see the Kingdom come in power. This is a problematic passage because of its obvious non-fulfilment. However, in spite of difficulties which accompany the position, both Kümmel and Cullmann believe that Jesus expected some of those who heard the remark to see the final coming of the Kingdom. <sup>2</sup> On the other hand, George Ladd interprets the saying as if it were a prophetic reference to the eschatological "Day of

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<sup>1</sup> Dodd, The Coming of Christ, p. 15. Cf. A.M. Hunter, The Work and Words of Jesus (London: S.C.M. Press, Ltd., 1950), p. 75. Here Hunter translates the saying, ". . . till they see that the reign of God has come with power." Hunter states that in this passage Jesus "is referring to His triumph in the Resurrection and what followed." However, note the difference between the above remark and Hunter's revised comment on this passage in the 1973 revised edition: He suggests that Jesus "is probably referring to the triumph of his cause (the Kingdom) in the resurrection and all that followed." A.M. Hunter, The Work and Words of Jesus (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, rev. ed., 1973), p. 97. In the same edition, p. 128, Hunter refers to Mk. 8:31, 9:1 and 14:62 as evidence that Jesus expected a "'coming in history'--of which the resurrection and the advent of the Spirit were the reality . . . ." Cf. Glasson, The Second Advent, p. 196. Glasson believes Jesus' words of Mk. 9:1 were fulfilled at Pentecost.

<sup>2</sup> Kümmel, Promise and Fulfilment, p. 27. He notes that some would not die before the Kingdom comes. Cullmann, Salvation in History, p. 214. Cullmann believes that the saying means that most would have died, but some would live to see the "final" coming of the Kingdom. He presents a similar interpretation for Mk. 13:30 and Matt. 10:23, while stressing, of course, his "synthesis" ("already--not yet") concept. Ibid., pp. 214-217. However, the point is that it was to happen within the span of one generation! Cf. H.P. Owen, "The Parousia of Christ in the Synoptic Gospels," Scottish Journal of Theology 12 (1959): 181. Owen comments: "This verse alone, then, is virtually certain evidence that Jesus predicted the Kingdom's final advent within the lifetime of at least some of his contemporaries."

the Lord" which anticipates the Consummation, though minus the note of imminence. The Kingdom has come and will be consummated in the indeterminate future.<sup>1</sup>

The Kingdom's nearness had been proclaimed, and the Kingdom's preliminary activity was being made evident through Jesus' exorcisms and miracles. Jesus' words imply that something more than exorcisms and miracles was to take place in the future, something more powerful! The Kingdom was yet to be disclosed, and while the precise day and hour of the manifestation of the Kingdom was indeterminate, Jesus believed that it would be revealed within the time period of a generation.

Mark 13:30. Jesus' statement recorded in Mark 13:30, "Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away till all these things take place," is further evidence that He expected the Consummation to take place in the very near future. Of course, there are authors who contest the authenticity of this statement; that is, they do not believe it originated with Jesus.<sup>2</sup> Mark 13:30 is probably a detached saying which has been fitted by the redactor to verse 29 by the catchword, ταῦτα γενήσονται.<sup>3</sup> Since it is a separate logion, the phrase ταῦτα πάντα

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<sup>1</sup>Ladd, Jesus and the Kingdom, p. 319. Cf. Eduard Schweizer, Das Evangelium nach Markus. Das Neue Testament Deutsch Vol. I (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1967), p. 101. He suggests the passage means that the end has come close to the present time as a prophet would perceive the Consummation--as a mountain might seem near though it is still quite distant.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Grässer, Das Problem, p. 130. He claims that Mk. 13:30, as Mk. 9:1, originated because of the Parousia delay and is a creation of the church. Perrin, Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus, p. 200. Perrin believes Mk. 13:30 is a product of early Christian apocalypticism, and is neither from Jesus nor from Mark, who according to Perrin, never uses μέχρις for "until" but έως instead.

<sup>3</sup>Kümmel, Promise and Fulfilment, p. 60. Cf. Cullmann, Salvation in History, p. 214.



should not be related to a particular event in the Apocalypse,<sup>1</sup> as it is in Mk. 13:29, but the phrase should be understood as a reference to the entire Consummation event.<sup>2</sup>

The translation of γενεα largely determines the degree of imminence, if any, contained in Mark 13:30. Schniewind believes the term refers to the Jewish people as a nation, and as in Matt. 10:23, so Schniewind contends, the connection should be made with Romans 9-11, in which the mission strategy calls for a witnessing to the Jewish people before the Consummation.<sup>3</sup> Although γενεα can mean "all of mankind" (cf. Lk. 16:8), such an interpretation would hardly make sense in the context of Mk. 13:30.

Admittedly, some problems arise from the conclusion that γενεα in Mk. 13:30 means "generation"<sup>4</sup> in the literal sense of "contemporaries," but it is the logical choice. Mk. 13:30 can be placed within the

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<sup>1</sup>Cullmann, Salvation in History, p. 214.

<sup>2</sup>Kümmel, Promise and Fulfilment, p. 60. Cf. G.R. Beasley-Murray, A Commentary on Mark Thirteen (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1957), pp. 100f. Cf. Taylor, The Gospel According to St. Mark, p. 521. Schweizer, Das Evangelium nach Markus, p. 161. Schweizer suggests that Mark 13:28ff. provide an explanation for 13:4f.

<sup>3</sup>Julius Schniewind, Das Evangelium nach Markus. Das Neue Testament Deutsch (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 4th. ed., 1947), p. 175.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Beasley-Murray, A Commentary on Mark Thirteen, pp. 99f. Branscomb, The Gospel of Mark, pp. 239f. Cullmann, Salvation in History, p. 215. Kümmel, Promise and Fulfilment, p. 61. Frank Stagg, New Testament Theology (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1962), p. 314. Schweizer, Das Evangelium nach Markus, pp. 161f. That "generation" in the sense of contemporaries is the usual translation of γενεα can be seen in Matt. 11:16, par. Lk. 7:31; Mk. 8:12, par. Lk. 11:29; Matt. 23:36, par. Lk. 11:51.



company of Mk. 9:1 and Matt. 10:23, for in this statement also, Jesus limits the time of the Consummation, of the coming of the Kingdom of God. As Jesus understood the coming of the Kingdom, some of those who heard His proclamation would not only bear witness to the events which would take place before the End,<sup>1</sup> but would actually be alive at its coming.

Mark 14:62. Another passage which indicates that Jesus would return within the lifetime of some who belonged to His own generation is found in Mark 14:62, "And Jesus said, 'I am; and you will see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.'" <sup>2</sup> If this passage is accepted as an authentic saying from Jesus, it appears that those who persecuted Him were to see Him enthroned and coming on the clouds of heaven;<sup>3</sup> that is, they would witness His return.

Mark 14:62 is possibly a combination of Psalm 110:1, "The Lord says to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool,'" and Daniel 7:13, "I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he

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<sup>1</sup>Kümmel, Promise and Fulfilment, p. 60. Cullmann, Salvation in History, p. 215. Cf. Schweizer, Das Evangelium nach Markus, p. 162. Schweizer believes the saying refers to the coming of the Son of Man.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. parallels, Matt. 26:64; Lk. 22:69. Matthew reproduces Mark, but Luke omits the phrases, "you will see" and "and coming on the clouds of heaven."

<sup>3</sup>It is possible to understand the Lucan and Matthean accounts as describing Jesus as being enthroned from the time of His trial onward. For example, in Matthew ἀπ' ἄρτι is best translated "from now on" or "henceforth" over against "hereafter" (RSV), which implies a point of time in the future. After Jesus' response to the question of Messiahship (Lk. 22:70f. indicates that His answer was accepted as affirmative by His inquisitors) execution was inevitable. But the cross was not to be the end; He was to be vindicated. He would be exalted, and He would return.

came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him." This influence may be notable, especially as seen in the wording of Daniel and the reference to "enemies" in Psalm 110:1. Jesus' words were addressed to those who were to be His executioners; thus the element of judgment is sharp. F.H. Borsch observes that the apocalyptic passage of 1 Enoch 62:5, written, Borsch believes, during the same period as Mark 14:62, speaks even more clearly of this aspect of judgment: "And they shall be downcast of countenance, and pain shall seize them, when they see that Son of Man sitting on the throne of glory."<sup>1</sup>

It appears that Luke might have known of 1 Enoch 62:5, since he refers to the exaltation of the Son of Man but not of His coming (Lk. 22:69). Matthew and Mark move beyond mere enthronement by including the element of the coming of the Son of Man. The wording of Mark 14:62 implies that Jesus' enthronement will be revealed before men; they shall "see" His exaltation. If His executioners are to see Him, He must make Himself apparent to them. The exaltation of the Son of Man without His "coming" would not fulfill 1 Enoch 62:5 or the combined verses of Psalm 110:1 and Daniel 7:13, but would fulfill only Psalm 110:1. Combined, these passages anticipate both the "exaltation" and the "coming" of the Son of Man.

Contrary to the opinion of T.F. Glasson,<sup>2</sup> Mark 14:62 is more than an enthronement passage, for the vindication of the Son of Man includes both His "coming to appear before the Presence of God"<sup>3</sup> and His "coming"

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<sup>1</sup>F.H. Borsch, "Mark XIV:62 and I Enoch LXII:5," New Testament Studies 14 (1967-68): 567.

<sup>2</sup>T. Francis Glasson, "Reply to Caiaphas (Mark XIV:61)," New Testament Studies 7 (1960-61): 88ff. Glasson, The Second Advent, pp. 64f. Cf. Taylor, The Gospel According to St. Mark, p. 569.

<sup>3</sup>Robinson, Jesus and His Coming, p. 58. Cf. T.W. Manson, "The Son of Man in Daniel, Enoch and the Gospels," Bulletin of John Rylands Library 32 (1950): 173. Manson



among mankind upon earth in triumph.<sup>1</sup> The argument that the passage must be seen in the light of its Old Testament counterpart and therefore is to be interpreted only as an 'enthronement passage is not convincing. It is not always in the best exegetical interest of some New Testament passages to determine their meaning dogmatically by their relation to Old Testament settings or passages. For example, Mark 14:62 would have been spoken during a period when Daniel would have been understood messianically. Therefore, as H.K. McArthur says, "The very fact that Daniel 7:13 is interpreted of the Messiah--this is conceded by Glasson--indicates that while the remaining half of the sentence may have been remembered, Mk. 14:62 does not repeat the original meaning of Daniel."<sup>2</sup> The Sitz im Leben of Mark 14:62 is more important than that of the Old Testament situation of Psalm 110:1 and Daniel 7:13. The

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suggests that it involves "going" to the Father triumphant, being vindicated through the Resurrection after His suffering and death.

<sup>1</sup>Beasley-Murray, A Commentary on Mark Thirteen, pp. 90f. He comments: "Neither in Daniel (i.e. Dan. 7:13ff.) nor in the teaching of Jesus is there any ground for thinking that our passage (i.e. Mark 13:26-27) and Mark 14:62 relate to anything other than a parousia to humanity on earth." Ibid., p. 91.

<sup>2</sup>H.K. McArthur, "Mark XIV:62," New Testament Studies 4 (1957-58): 156. See also, Perrin, The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus, p. 143, fn. 3. Perrin presents a synopsis of McArthur's argument, which is a defense of Mk. 14:62 as a Parousia saying, over against Glasson's claim that it is only to be seen as an enthronement passage. Glasson responded to McArthur's argument, but as Perrin points out, he failed to deal with the counter satisfactorily. Glasson also fails to deal with the arguments of R.B.Y. Scott, who defends Mk. 14:62 as a Parousia saying from a linguistic perspective. See, R. B.Y. Scott, "'Behold, He cometh with Clouds,'" New Testament Studies 5 (1958-59): 127ff. Glasson, "Reply to Caiaphas (Mark XIV:61)," pp. 88ff.



Jews to whom Jesus spoke the words would have accepted the statement as "referring to a future 'coming' of the Son of Man."<sup>1</sup> Jesus notified His enemies that they "will see the Son of Man." (Cf. Rev. 1:7a, "every eye shall see Him.")<sup>2</sup> He spoke of an event which was yet to occur, and one which will be directly related to the trial during which He spoke the words.<sup>3</sup> He who was persecuted was to be vindicated before His persecutors.

According to the Synoptic writers, Jesus taught His own Parousia.<sup>4</sup> He believed the Kingdom would come in the near future. He spoke of a "Day" which was yet to come (Lk. 10:12, par. Matt. 10:15); a Day of Judgment for all men (Lk. 10:13-15, par. Matt. 11:21-23; Lk.

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<sup>1</sup>Perrin, The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus, p. 143.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. H.P. Owen, "The Parousia of Christ in the Synoptic Gospels," pp. 173f.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Hans-Werner Bartsch, "Early Christian Eschatology in the Synoptic Gospels," New Testament Studies 11 (1964-65): 394. Bartsch claims that Mark would not have made such a claim (for Jesus) "if it had not already been fulfilled." However, it is not history that Mark communicates to his readers, but a promise. He assures His readers that Jesus would bring to fulfilment that which He had already begun and that His persecutors would behold His performance.

<sup>4</sup>The term Parousia, which essentially means "presence," "coming," "advent," has come to be the accepted technical word for the return of Christ, i.e. His mission advent at the Eschaton, when the Kingdom will come. Among the Synoptic writers, the term is employed only by Matthew (24:27, 37, 39) to refer to the Second Advent of Christ--"the coming of the Son of Man." Actually, the term "second coming" is not found in the New Testament. For the closest parallel see Hebrews 9:28. It is believed that the term was first used by Justin Martyr (mid 2nd century A.D.). Cf. H.K. McArthur, "Parousia," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible. Vol. III (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), p. 659. Cf. Robinson, Jesus and His Coming, pp. 156f., fn.4, for early uses of the term.

17:26-30, par. Matt. 24:37-41; Mk. 8:38, par. Lk. 9:26), and He warned His hearers to prepare for the coming of the Kingdom--the Parousia--the End (Mk. 13:33-37, par. Matt. 25:14-15b, 24:42, 25:13; Lk. 19:12-13, 12:40, 12:38; Matt. 24:42-44, par. Lk. 12:39-40; Matt. 24:45-51, par. Lk. 12:42-46; Matt. 25:1-13; Matt. 25:14-30; Lk. 19:12-27). Jesus looked forward to the time of God's judgment and to the fulfilment of His purpose for man.

### Jesus In The Prophetic Tradition

What then should be made of the Synoptic evidence that Jesus predicted the coming of the Kingdom of God within the period of a generation? Various approaches to answering this problematic question have been made by scholars, and their main suggestions are presented below, along with the proposal that Jesus, as Yahweh's prophet, proclaimed the imminence of the End--at which time a temporal Kingdom would be made manifest--and that Yahweh, rather than Jesus, was responsible for fulfilling the prediction. It is here suggested that Yahweh, as sovereign, alone determines the outcome of a prophet's message, and in the case of Jesus' prediction, as was sometimes true of predictions of Old Testament prophets, Yahweh exercised His sovereignty. He determined not to establish the Kingdom within the period of a generation as anticipated by Jesus and, consequently, by the early church.

Further, it will be argued that, in spite of the fact that Jesus' prophecy has gone unfulfilled, He does not need to be exonerated. He does not need to be cleared of a mistake that might diminish His name, although many have attempted to exculpate Him. As God's messenger, Jesus fulfilled His responsibility by proclaiming God's word. Fulfilment or the lack of fulfilment of prophetic predictions must be viewed from the Old Testament perception of God's prerogative to change His mind. This aspect of God's



character, particularly as it concerns prophecy, will be examined further. However, at this point the immediate task is to establish clearly the prophetic nature of Jesus, which supports the claim that Jesus predicted the End as God's messenger, and that He was not, therefore, responsible for the fulfilment of His prediction of an imminent End.

According to Morton Scott Enslin, Jesus is presented in the Synoptic Gospels as "the flaming herald of the impending new age," who appears on the scene without explanation.<sup>1</sup> In Enslin's estimation,

(Jesus) had become convinced that the long-expected fulfilment of God's promise of old was immediately to be realized; and he had also become convinced that he, Jesus, had been selected by God as his prophet to announce this fact.<sup>2</sup>

There are other scholars who state just as emphatically their conviction that Jesus was first and foremost a prophet.<sup>3</sup> This position must now be examined.

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<sup>1</sup>Enslin, The Prophet From Nazareth, p. 41.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 45. Enslin perceives Jesus to have been the prophet of God who understood His role as that of a herald of the coming New Age, the imminent Kingdom of God. Jesus was the proclaiming prophet. Cf. Morton Scott Enslin, From Jesus to Christianity (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), p. 9. Cf. Hugh Anderson, ed. Jesus (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1967), p. 59. Anderson agrees that "Jesus appeared . . . with a message of the coming kingdom of God, and so the title of 'prophet' could be applied to him . . . ."

<sup>3</sup>E.g., Maurice Goguel, who contends that Jesus, at the beginning of His ministry, was controlled by the prophetic vocation. He was compelled to deliver God's message, to proclaim the coming of the Kingdom of God. Goguel, The Life of Jesus, p. 320. Charles Guignebert asserts, "There can be no question . . . that in Jesus we are dealing with a prophet, a herald of the expected Kingdom." Guignebert, Jesus, p. 295. According to Guignebert, Jesus never openly claimed to be the Messiah, Son of God or Son of Man. Rather, Guignebert suggests that "there are fairly solid reasons for concluding that Jesus simply regarded himself and behaved as a prophet, who felt himself urged by the Spirit of Jahveh to proclaim



### Jesus as a Prophet--A Dimension of Christology

In a study of Jesus as a prophet, there emerges the question of the relationship between Jesus as a prophet and other titles associated with Him. The Synoptic writers clearly present Jesus as being "more than a prophet."<sup>1</sup> Jesus Himself claimed that one greater than Jonah had come (Matt. 12:41, par. Lk. 11:32) and that the prophets and kings had longed to see and hear what was made available to the disciples, but they never did (Lk. 10:23-24, par. Matt. 13:16-17).

This study does not have as its purpose the pursuit of various facets of Christology. The objective of this endeavor is to consider separately the prophetic nature and role of Jesus without denying the importance

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the speedy realization of the great hope of Israel and the necessity of preparing for it." Charles Guignebert, Christianity, Past and Present (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1927), p. 38; cf. pp. 35-38 for a discussion of titles associated with Jesus. Although Joseph Klausner believes that both Jesus and the writers contrive a prophetic presentation so He would be acknowledged as a prophet, Klausner admits that "there is . . . no step in the life-story of Jesus, and no line in his teaching on which is not stamped the seal of Prophetic and Pharisaic Judaism and the Palestine of his day, the close of the period of the Second Temple." Joseph Klausner, Jesus of Nazareth, translated by Herbert Danby (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1925), p. 413.

<sup>1</sup>E.g., in Luke 9:18-20, Jesus' question to His disciples regarding His identity implies that He personally considered as inadequate the popular opinion that He was a prophet. However, Jesus does not reject the title. In response to His question, Peter confessed Him to be the "Christ of God." Luke accepts the title as being correct and develops it further in the Gospel by associating it with the anointed one of God. (Cf. Lk. 23:35: They chide Him at His crucifixion, "He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God.") I.H. Marshall says of this Lukan development that " . . . Luke has seen in the title more than Peter himself may have meant. For the latter, it may have meant no more than 'the promised One', someone more than a prophet." I. Howard Marshall, The Gospel of Luke (Exeter: The Pater-noster Press, 1978), pp. 366f.

of other titles associated with Him. It is obvious that the writers will occasionally apply to Jesus more than one title in a given context, and, apparently, without any conflict of interest.<sup>1</sup> The contention here is that, if Jesus were a prophet, He should be granted prophetic allowances, and His predictions of the imminent end should be evaluated by the criteria related to prophets.

Some scholars contend that the tradition of Jesus as a prophet was originally much richer than the New Testament evidence, but was neglected primarily for Christological reasons. For example, to the early church, Jesus was clearly more than a prophet, and to fuse the title "prophet" with claims that He was Son of God, Messiah, Son of Man, Savior and the Suffering Servant conveys more clearly the significance of Jesus' accomplishments through His life, death, and resurrection than the concept of a "martyr prophet."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The titles Son of David, the "One who Comes," and Prophet are applied by Matthew to Jesus in the context of His entry into Jerusalem (Matt. 21:9-11). And compare the titles applied to Jesus by Peter (as presented by Luke) in his first two sermons in Acts Chps. 2,3. Ferdinand Hahn observes that the concepts of the eschatological prophet and messianic king can be combined, as John 6:14f. illustrates. The people saw Jesus as a prophet, and they wanted to make Him their king. Ferdinand Hahn, The Titles of Jesus in Christology, translated by Harold Knight and George Ogg (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1969), p. 364. Hahn also notes that besides such combinations as found in Acts 3:20, 21a, it should be observed that "ὁ υἱοῦ θεοῦ" is used alongside of the messianically understood 'Son of God' in 1 Thess. 1:10. Ibid., p. 401, fn. 180. Franklin Young, writing in 1949, claims that in the Christological debate, "the title, prophet, has in a sense served as a least common denominator for studies in christology. All could start with the assumption that Jesus was 'at least' a prophet. Beyond that point the battle waxed warm over whether or not he was 'more than a prophet.'" Franklin W. Young, "Jesus the Prophet: A Re-examination," Journal of Biblical Literature 68 (1949): 286.

<sup>2</sup>Enslin, for example, contends that the title "prophet" was pushed into the background by the early



However, even if it be granted that the title "prophet" was not prominent in the Synoptic Gospels, and was totally ignored by Paul, perhaps for Christological reasons,<sup>1</sup> there is no need to create an atmosphere of competition among the various titles associated with Jesus.

To understand Jesus as a prophet who was determined to deliver God's message of the impending Kingdom of God, even if it meant His death, does not establish a challenge to other titles associated with Jesus. Nor does this view undermine the kerygma of the early church which concentrates upon the accomplishments of Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection as Savior. His destiny as a prophet, who was dedicated to the will of God, does not undermine the New Testament view that He came to deal with sin and forgiveness through the giving of His life. Further, to see Jesus as a prophet who was ready to suffer as the Son of Man and to challenge Jerusalem with the word of God, much in the same way as did Ezekiel, the prophet,

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church because other titles, such as "Lord" and "Christ," seemed more significant and worthy. Enslin, The Prophet From Nazareth, p. 58. Cf. Guignebert, who believes that Jesus gave birth to the title of "prophet" in reference to Himself, but that it was the early church, and not Jesus, which ascribed to Him the titles, Son of God and Messiah. Guignebert, Jesus, pp. 268, 295. Hahn contends that the conception of the eschatological prophet contributed to the description of the work and person of Jesus, although such influence "was certainly blurred and covered over by later Christological statements . . . ." Hahn, p. 352.

<sup>1</sup>Gerhard Friedrich suggests that Paul did not refer to Jesus as a prophet because the Jewish Christians used the term to support their emphasis upon the Law and their view of Jesus as the second Moses. Friedrich, "προφῆτης," p. 848. Cf. Hahn, who observes that the concept of Jesus as the eschatological prophet is sustained in late Jewish Christianity, which was influenced by gnostic thought. This is particularly apparent in the Gospel of the Hebrews, in which Jesus is presented as the true prophet. Hahn, p. 384. Cf. Gospel of the Hebrews, Fragment 4.



does not conflict with the redemptive significance of the Cross.<sup>1</sup>

The Revival of Prophecy in John the Baptist and Jesus

Scholars are not in agreement on the question of whether prophecy ceased completely for a period of time during the history of Israel prior to the coming of John the Baptist and Jesus. James Dunn states that "the gift of prophecy was commonly thought to have ceased after the early post-exilic period; neither charismatic prophets nor cult professionals were recognized as exercising the prophetic charisma."<sup>2</sup> This view, which Enslin also accepts,<sup>3</sup> is based upon Zech. 13:1-6; Ps. 74:9; 1 Macc. 4:46, 9:27 and 14:41.

While the cessation of prophecy is predicted in Zech. 13:1-6,<sup>4</sup> and prophetic renewal is promised in Mal. 4:5 and Joel 2:28-29, it would be extreme to conclude that God stopped speaking to His people. As Hahn<sup>5</sup> and Rudolf

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. P.E. Davies, "Did Jesus Die as a Martyr-Prophet?" Biblical Research XIX (1974): 45-47.

<sup>2</sup>James D.G. Dunn, Jesus and the Spirit (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975), p. 82. Dunn recognizes differing opinions, as is clear from his caution that "we should however beware of assuming that this rabbinic dogma was the only possible opinion on the matter . . . ." p. 382, fn. 81.

<sup>3</sup>Enslin, The Prophet From Nazareth, pp. 62ff.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Sotah 9.12, which speaks to this issue: "When the First Prophets died, Urim and Thummim ceased." The implication is that the will of Yahweh could not be known if the major communicative channel were ineffective. According to Gemara 48a, all the prophets are meant here, except Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Cf. Mishnah, translated from the Hebrew with an introduction and notes by Herbert Danby (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 305, fns. 8 and 9.

<sup>5</sup>Hahn, p. 353.

Meyer<sup>1</sup> suggest, it is best to think of prophecy as not completely disappearing, but to see it as expressed in altered forms, with much emphasis upon scripture. This was occasioned by the Rabbis, the Scribes, who became the interpreters of the Word of God.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Rudolf Meyer, "προφητείας; Prophecy and Prophets in the Judaism of the Hellenistic-Roman Period," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. Vol. VI, edited by Gerhard Kittel and translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1968), p. 815.

<sup>2</sup>Although Ps. 74:9 states: "We do not see our signs; there is no longer any prophet, and there is none among us who knows how long," this is likely a reference to the destruction of Solomon's Temple in 587 (so Meyer, p. 814) and not to the desecration of the temple in 167 B.C. Quite naturally the Psalmist would view this as a period when the prophets were silent, a dark period in the history of the people. Similar, but not nearly so devastating was the desecration of the temple by Antiochus Epiphanes in 167. The people were shocked (1 Macc. 1:59), and when they managed to recapture the temple three years later, they mourned over its condition (1 Macc. 4:38-40). They removed the stones of the altar of burnt offering and stored them until a prophet should appear and tell them what to do with them. And they built the altar from fresh stone (1 Macc. 4:44-47). At that point, they clearly were not over this dark period of their history, although they had renewed the temple worship after three years of denial (167-164 B.C.). Another dark period overshadowed the people with the death of Judas Maccabeus in 160 B.C. Thereafter, ". . . there was great distress in Israel, such as had not been seen since the time that prophets ceased to appear among them." (1 Macc. 9:27) It is uncertain whether this statement is meant to convey the view that there were no prophets during this time. Again, 1 Macc. 14:41 adds no clarity to the question: "And the Jews and their priests decided that Simon should be their leader and high priest for ever, until a trustworthy prophet should arise, . . . ." This took place in 141 B.C., and the people anticipated the renewal of prophecy, the coming of one who would be the true prophet. Meyer suggests that this should not be viewed as an expectation of the eschatological prophet, because the expectations conveyed in 1 Maccabees are related to the Hasmonean accomplishments. The fulfilment of the anticipation came therefore in John Hyrcanus when he was installed as the new priest-king (1 Macc. 16:11-22). According to Meyer, "the prophetic office of this ruler and high-priest would seem to give to



Jacob Jocz proposes that during the time of Jesus the prophetic tradition was a strain of Judaism current with other traditions, such as those of the Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes. He contends that Jesus should not be forced into the Pharisaic frame of reference. To Jocz,

The Prophetic tradition may have been submerged but it never died out. There is a close connection between the "humble in the land" of the Old Testament and the "poor-in-spirit" in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus was the heir and spokesman for that tradition.<sup>1</sup>

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1 Macc. 9:27 and 14:41, and finally also to 4:45, a satisfying sense." Meyer, pp. 815f. This was apparently the opinion of Josephus, who wrote of John Hyrcanus, "He it was who alone had three of the most desirable things in the world--the government of his nation, and the high-priesthood, and the gift of prophecy--for Diety conversed with him--and he was not ignorant of anything to come afterward . . . ." The Wars of the Jews I. 2:8 in The Works of Flavius Josephus. 4 vols., translated by William Whiston (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1974 print), Vol. I, p. 16.

The Bath-Qol (heavenly or mysterious voice) was one of the ways Yahweh periodically spoke to His people. This means of communication from God was a substitute but certainly not an adequate replacement for the prophet. Cf. Strack and Billerbeck who designated this Bath-Qol as, "Ersatz der Prophetie." Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrash, 4 vols. (München: C.H. Beck, 1922), Vol. I., p. 125. Cf. Ernest Best, "Prophets and Preachers," Scottish Journal of Theology 12 (1959): 140; Young, "Jesus the Prophet: A Re-examination," p. 291. Enslin suggests such occasions as the word which came to Nebuchadrezzar (Dan. 4:31f.) and the voice of God at Jesus' baptism (Mk. 1:11; Matt. 3:17; Lk. 3:22) as examples of Bath-Qol. Enslin, The Prophet From Nazareth, p. 65f. Hahn contends that behind the giving of God's message through Bath-Qol lies the conviction that from the time of Malachi the prophetic spirit had departed. Hahn, p. 353. Cf. Jeremias, New Testament Theology, pp. 80f.

<sup>1</sup> Jacob Jocz, "Jesus and the Pharisees," The Hebrew Christian LIII (2, 1980): 58. Three accounts within the writings of Josephus would appear to support the view that a submerged strain of prophecy survived in Israel, although Josephus, who attributed to himself prophetic abilities, can hardly be considered an authority on the subject. He recounts the incident of Pollio, the Pharisee, who predicted that Herod would one day punish



his enemies. He records that "God fulfilled the words he had spoken." Antiquities XV. i. 1. (vol. III, p. 349). In his comments on the Essenes, Josephus writes: "There are also those among them who undertake to foretell things to come, by reading the holy books, and using several sorts of purifications, and being perpetually conversant in the discourses of the prophets; and it is but seldom that they miss in their predictions." The Wars of the Jews II. viii. 12 (vol. I, p. 150). (Cf. Jeremias, who admits that the Qumran community testified that the "Spirit of God" had been given to them, but he suggests that this community presents an exception to the orthodox opinion that the spirit of prophecy had been quenched in Israel. Jeremias, New Testament Theology, p. 81.) Josephus also makes reference to a zealot by the name of Theudas, who claimed to be a prophet. Antiquities, XX.v.1. Whiston notes that this Theudas arose about A.D. 45, 46, and is different from the one mentioned in Acts 5:35,37 (vol. IV, p. 124). Compare the contrary view held by David Hill, "Jesus and Josephus' 'messianic prophets,'" in Text and Interpretation, edited by Ernest Best and R. McL. Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979). Hill assumes that the Theudas referred to by Josephus is the same as the one mentioned in Acts, suggesting that "this pseudo-prophet Theudas is mentioned in . . . a Lucan speech attributed to Gamaliel I and therefore having a putative date of at least a decade before the actual appearance of Theudas, who, in the speech, is mentioned as preceding Judas the Galilean" (pp. 147f.). Hill refers to several "prophetic" types mentioned in the writings of Josephus (Judas the Galilean; Theudas, who is actually referred to as a prophet; the "Egyptian" who promised his followers that he would lead them successfully against the Romans; and John the Baptist), and he compares their expectations of the Endzeit to Jesus' belief in the imminent coming of the Kingdom (pp. 145-149). Hill is right in refusing to apply arbitrarily the "criterion of dissimilarity" to all of the sayings and actions attributed to Jesus, as a means of determining authenticity. Hill acknowledges that the principle is valid in many instances, but he contends that "to say that 'we can only feel ourselves to be on safe ground where a tradition cannot be derived from a Jewish environment' is to presuppose that Jesus' message and ministry owed nothing to the Jewish culture, tradition and movements of his time. . . ." (p. 144). Hill suggests that "Jesus' proclamation of the imminent coming of the Kingdom of God, the realization of the divine sovereignty in righteousness, would no longer appear as an unusual feature in his message, since it seems that it is similar to the convictions of Theudas, the Egyptian, John the Baptist and others: nevertheless, it is most surely historical, in spite of this similarity" (p. 149). Of course, one should observe some degree of caution at this point, for Theudas and the Egyptian came on the scene after Jesus and, as did Judas, espoused political aspirations for Israel very different from Jesus' own.

Even so, allowances must be made for the view that anticipation of the "revival of prophecy" continued until the advent of John the Baptist and Jesus,<sup>1</sup> and it should not be assumed that John and Jesus were simply two among many Palestinian prophets. As Leonhard Goppelt observes, ". . . a prophet in Jesus' environment was anything but an everyday occurrence."<sup>2</sup> The conclusion that Jesus falls within the tradition of the Old Testament prophets and, along with John the Baptist, actualizes the promised revival of the prophetic role among the Jews, is deduced from an analysis of Matthew and Mark and the Lukan literature, Luke-Acts. While opinions differ as to whether or not Jesus was regarded as "the eschatological prophet" by his contemporaries, it is nonetheless clear that the "gift of prophecy" appeared in Jesus.<sup>3</sup>

#### The Prophet and the Role of the Holy Spirit

Joachim Jeremias believes that Jesus, during those instances in which He is described as possessing the Spirit, is presented as the prophet who came to declare a new era of salvation. That is, in Jeremias' view, "The eschatological return of the spirit means that God will remain with his community for ever, to complete his saving work."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. the anticipated return of Elijah in Sirach 48:10; "you who are ready at the appointed time, it is written, to calm the wrath of God before it breaks out in fury, to turn the heart of the father to the son, and to restore the tribes of Jacob." Cf. also, Manual of Discipline (Qumran) 9:11; William E. Phipps, "Jesus, the Prophetic Pharisee," Journal of Ecumenical Studies 14 (1977): 27.

<sup>2</sup>Leonhard Goppelt, Theology of the New Testament. Volume One. Ed. by Jurgen Roloff and translated by John E. Alsup (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1981), p. 165.

<sup>3</sup>Dunn, Jesus and the Spirit, p. 82.

<sup>4</sup>Jeremias, New Testament Theology, p. 82.



For example, in His claim that He has come not to abolish the law and prophets, but to fulfill them (Matt. 5:17),

Jesus is claiming to be the eschatological messenger of God, the promised prophet like Moses (Deut. 18:15,18), who brings the final revelation and therefore demands absolute obedience.<sup>1</sup>

The proposal that Jesus was "the eschatological prophet" will be dealt with more fully below. But for now that proposal will be laid aside in a consideration of the role of the "Spirit of Prophecy" upon the birth and ministry of Jesus from the perspective of the Old Testament tradition and the Lukan presentation.

The impact of the Spirit of Yahweh upon chosen individuals during momentous occasions in Israel's history is obvious within the Old Testament. For example, Yahweh took some of His Spirit from Moses, upon whom the Holy Spirit rested (Num. 11:17), and placed the Spirit upon the seventy who were to aid Moses. These men prophesied when the Holy Spirit initially rested upon them (Num. 11:25). The Holy Spirit was present in the lives of such leaders as Joshua (Num. 27:18), the Judges of Israel,<sup>2</sup> Saul,<sup>3</sup> upon such prophets as Elijah and Elisha (2 Kings 2:15), and Ezekiel (Ezek. 3:24); and it was promised that the Spirit would come upon Yahweh's chosen branch from Jesse (Isa. 11:2) and upon His chosen servant (Isa. 42:1, 61:1).<sup>4</sup>

From these references it is clear within the Old Testament that the influence of the Holy Spirit was not restricted to the prophets. Unlike the Rabbis, who regarded the Spirit "almost exclusively as the Spirit of

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 84f.

<sup>2</sup> Judges 3:10, 6:34, 11:29, 14:6, 14:19, 15:14.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Sam. 10:10, 11:6.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. also the coming of the Holy Spirit upon Balaam who prophesied (Num. 24:2ff.) and upon men such as Jahaziel (2 Chron. 20:14) and Zechariah (2 Chron. 24:20).



Prophecy and Inspiration,"<sup>1</sup> the Old Testament shows a variety of Yahweh's servants responding to the impress of His Spirit. However, this observation in no way deducts from the significant role exercised by the Holy Spirit as God led and spoke through His prophets.

The influence of the Holy Spirit upon the conception, birth, character and ministry of Jesus is unmistakable to the writer of Luke-Acts. This apparent emphasis begins with John the Baptist, with whom Jesus closely linked His own ministry.<sup>2</sup> Yet, the role of the Holy Spirit is even more prominent in the conception and birth of Jesus.<sup>3</sup> Luke presents Jesus as one controlled by the Holy Spirit from the beginning of His ministry.<sup>4</sup> Early in His

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<sup>1</sup>Best, p. 131.

<sup>2</sup>For example, the angel declared to Zacharias, John's father, that John would be filled (πληθυνει) with the Holy Spirit while still (or, "from," i.e. at the time of birth) in his mother's womb (Lk. 1:15), and that he would go before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah (1:17). At the time of John's birth, Zacharias was filled (πληθυνει) with the Holy Spirit (1:67) and declared that John (the Baptist) was to be the prophet of the Most High and forerunner of the One who would bring redemption to Israel (1:68-69).

<sup>3</sup>Mary, who questioned the angel's news that she would bear a son, was told that the Holy Spirit would come upon her (ἐπερχομαι ἐπὶ) (1:35); and Elizabeth, the mother of John (the Baptist), was filled (πληθυνει) with the Holy Spirit (1:41) and praised Mary as the mother of her Lord (1:43). After Jesus was born, the Holy Spirit was upon Simeon (ἐπ' αὐτον) (2:25) and he was inspired by the Spirit (2:27) to enter into the temple and praise God for the salvation to be revealed in Jesus (2:29-35).

<sup>4</sup>At Jesus' baptism, the Holy Spirit is described as descending upon (καταβαλινω) Him as a dove (Lk. 3:22). Jesus Himself is described as being full (πληρης) of the Holy Spirit and as one yielded to the Spirit's leading (4:1). He was tempted in the wilderness, but He returned in the power of the Holy Spirit (4:2-14). Cf. Dunn, who suggests that Luke presents Jesus as one who is anointed and empowered by the Holy Spirit. To Dunn, Jesus was within the tradition of the Jewish belief that "to possess the Spirit of God was to be a prophet." Dunn, Jesus and

ministry, Jesus entered His hometown synagogue of Nazareth and, after reading from Isaiah 61:1,2, he declared that the passage was fulfilled in their hearing (Lk. 4:21). Luke 4:18a is particularly relevant to the role of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' ministry:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,  
Because He anointed Me to preach the Gospel  
to the poor.

And 4:19 describes the prophet's mandate: "To proclaim the favorable day of the Lord." When the worshippers reacted negatively to Jesus' comment that the passage had been fulfilled in their hearing, He reminded them of the Jewish maxim, "No prophet is welcome in his home town." (Lk. 4:24, par. Mk. 6:4, Matt. 13:57).<sup>1</sup>

Jesus so closely identified Himself with the Holy Spirit that He warned His opponents that to accuse Him of being in partnership with the devil was a reflection of their apparent inability to perceive God's Spirit in action through Him. Their charge that Jesus had an unclean spirit prompted Him to accuse them of blaspheming against the Holy Spirit. (Mk. 3:20-30, par. Matt. 12:22-32; cf. Lk. 12:10).

Jesus assured His disciples that God would give (δοῶμι) them the Holy Spirit (Lk. 11:13), who would instruct them during times of persecution (12:12). After His ascension, Jesus' pledge to send the promise of the Father upon the disciples (ἐφ' ὑμᾶς) (24:49) finds its

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the Spirit, p. 82. Phipps suggests that, "The vision and voice that he (i.e., Jesus) received at his baptism was similar to the 'call' experienced by some Israelite prophets." E.g., compare Mk. 1:10-11 with 1 Kings 22:19-22; Isa. 6; Ezek. 1-2, Phipps, p. 26.

<sup>1</sup>William Lane observes that this aphorism has essential, though not verbatim, parallels in Jewish and Greek literature. William Lane, The Gospel According to Mark (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1974), p. 203.

The question as to whether Jesus on this occasion referred to Himself as a prophet will be considered below.



fulfilment in Luke's continued record in Acts.<sup>1</sup> Luke offers a complete presentation of the relationship between the Holy Spirit and Jesus--from His birth through His ministry as described in the Book of Acts. The "Spirit of Prophecy" was revived in Jesus.

#### His Application of "Prophet" to His Person and Ministry

Jesus never refers specifically to Himself as a prophet, just as He shies away from applying to Himself other titles, such as "Messiah" and "The Son of God."<sup>2</sup> However, as Ernest Best suggests, it does appear that Jesus "set Himself within the series of prophets,"<sup>3</sup> and

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<sup>1</sup>The Pentecostal event was in fulfilment of Joel's prophecy that God would pour forth (ἐκχέω) His Spirit upon (ἐπὶ) all flesh (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:17-21). Peter declared in his Pentecostal sermon that Jesus, who had been raised from the dead and exalted to the right hand of God, received (λαμβάνω) from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit and poured forth (ἐκχέω) the Spirit upon the disciples (Acts 2:33). Peter describes Jesus as the one whom God has made both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36) and as the one through whom one receives (λαμβάνω) the gift (δωρεά) of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). In his next recorded sermon, Peter describes Jesus as God's servant (Acts 3:13,26), the Holy and Righteous One (3:14), the Prince of Life (3:15), the Christ (3:18), and the Prophet in fulfilment of Moses' prophecy. Moses said, "The Lord God shall raise up for you a prophet like me from your brethren; to Him you shall give heed in everything He says to you. (Acts 3:22) And it shall be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people." (Acts 3:23) Stephen also quotes Moses' prophecy that God would raise up a prophet like him (Acts 7:37).

<sup>2</sup>Contrary to Phipps, "Jesus, The Prophetic Pharisee," p. 26, who comments: "Whereas Jesus seemed quite reluctant to declare himself to be the Messiah, he showed no such reluctance to calling himself a prophet." Cf. Martin Hengel, who observes that Jesus did not experience a definite "prophetic call." Hengel, p. 63.

<sup>3</sup>Best, "Prophets and Preachers," p. 141.



He did not reject the judgment of others that He was a prophet.<sup>1</sup> The account of His rejection at Nazareth (Mk. 6:1-6a; Matt. 13:53-58; Lk. 4:16-30)<sup>2</sup> includes His remark that "A prophet is not without honor, except in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house" (Mk. 6:4). It is likely that Jesus meant Himself--the prophet who anticipated His "ultimate rejection by Israel."<sup>3</sup> The Lukan account substantiates this view. The people threaten Jesus with the "fate of a false prophet,"<sup>4</sup> a reaction which confirmed their opinion that Jesus intended the aphorism as a reference to Himself.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Jeremias, New Testament Theology, p. 78.

<sup>2</sup>There are various opinions concerning the relationship between Luke 4:16-30 and Mark 6:1-6a. For example, Hahn contends that Luke has taken his version from a special tradition and substituted it for the Markan story. Hahn, p. 381. This is in opposition to Bultmann, who suggests a Lukan reworking of the Markan version. Bultmann, History of the Synoptic Tradition, pp. 31f. Cf. Marshall, The Gospel of Luke, pp. 178ff., where the various arguments are set out in some detail. The pertinent information for the subject at hand centers upon the authenticity of Jesus' usage of the aphorism regarding the prophet. Although the writers use the entire incident to their individual Christological advantage, there is no reason to doubt the use of the maxim by Jesus.

<sup>3</sup>Lane, The Gospel According to Mark, p. 203. Cf. Guignebert, Jesus, p. 257, who believes Jesus on this occasion referred to Himself as a prophet. Hahn, p. 381, interprets Luke's presentation as detailing the prophetic character of Jesus' anointment with the Spirit. That is, Jesus is viewed as one who was appointed to the prophetic office in the same sense as Isa. 61:1. Cf. also, Phipps, p. 26, who comments: "According to Luke, Jesus adopted Isaiah's manifesto as his own, (and) referred to himself as a prophet . . . ." Friedrich, on the other hand, contends this reference is not a description of Jesus as a prophet since Jesus does not specifically refer to Himself as a prophet, "but in a proverbial saying compares His fate with that of a prophet." p. 841.

<sup>4</sup>Marshall, The Gospel of Luke, p. 180.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Dunn, Jesus and the Spirit, p. 82, who suggests that the reaction and hostility of the townsfolk, as well as the religious authorities, confirmed that Jesus "stood fully within the prophetic tradition."

P.E. Davies observes that Jesus' rejection at Nazareth was indicative of His almost constant awareness of the "dire fate of the prophets."<sup>1</sup> He warned His disciples that if they followed in the prophetic tradition, they too could expect persecution (Matt. 5:12). He accepted John the Baptist as a prophet, as the Elijah who was to come, and noted that they did to him as they pleased (Mk. 9:13). He charged the Scribes and Pharisees with belonging to a tradition of persecuting the prophets (Matt. 23:29-36, par. Lk. 11:47-51). Obviously, Jesus did not include all the Pharisees in this indictment. When some friendly Pharisees warned Him that Herod was seeking to kill Him, He responded, "Nevertheless I must go on my way today and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem" (Lk. 13:33).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Davies, "Did Jesus Die as a Martyr-Prophet?," p. 42. Cf. Lane, The Gospel According to Mark, p. 203. He maintains that by His statement in Mark 6:4, Jesus "anticipates his ultimate rejection by Israel . . . ."

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Marshall, The Gospel of Luke, pp. 572f., who comments on this verse: "Jesus is thus represented as making his way to Jerusalem because it is only there that he can share the fate of the prophets."

Further, Jesus reckoned Jerusalem as a city noted for killing the prophets and stoning those sent to her (Matt. 23:37-39; Lk. 13:34-35). It is also likely that the Parable of the Wicked Tenants (Mk. 12:1-12, par. Matt. 21:33-46, Lk. 20:9-19) should be understood in the light of those prophetic messengers who were killed. Matthew clearly places Jesus in the tradition of the martyr prophets by his observation at the end of the parable that they (that is, the authorities; Luke lists them as the Scribes and Chief Priests, Lk. 20:19) tried to arrest Jesus but were not successful because of their fear of the multitude who "held him to be a prophet" (Matt. 21:46). Of course, Jesus' own conviction that He would be humiliated and executed is well attested to in the Synoptics (Mk. 8:31, parallels; 9:31, parallels; 10:32-33, parallels). Cf. Davies, "Did Jesus Die as a Martyr-Prophet?," pp. 44f.



The Prophet as Understood by His Contemporaries

When Jesus asked the disciples who the people thought Him<sup>1</sup> to be, they offered a varied report (Mk. 8:27-28, par. Matt. 16:13-14, Lk. 9:18-19). For example, some believed He was John the Baptist or perhaps Elijah (Mk., Matt., Lk.), others assumed that He was Jeremiah (Matt.), yet others thought of Him as one of the prophets (i.e., an ordinary prophet) (Matt., Mk.), while still others believed He was one of the old (ἀρχαῖος) prophets (Lk.). However, in each case, the answer was restricted to the prophetic category.<sup>2</sup>

After Jesus raised from the dead the son of the widow from Nain, the people concluded that God had brought a great (μεγας) prophet among them and that through the miracle God had visited His people (Lk. 7:16). Friedrich concludes that Luke's use of μεγας is meant to convey the view that the people considered Jesus to be above the other prophets and that the event is a sign preliminary to God's coming for the final visitation.<sup>3</sup> However, neither this

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<sup>1</sup>Matthew substitutes "Son of Man" (Matt. 16:13).

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Mk. 6:14-16, par. Matt. 14:1-2, Lk. 9:7-9, in which the writers record the responses of the people to Jesus shortly after Herod executed John the Baptist. For example, it was rumoured that He was: 1) John risen from the dead (Mk., Matt., Lk.); 2) Elijah (Mk., Lk.); 3) one of the prophets (Mk.); 4) one of the old (ἀρχαῖος) prophets (Lk.). "Jeremiah" is the only designation missing; otherwise the report is the same as found in Mk. 8:27-28 and parallels. There is no reason to conclude as does Gerhard Friedrich that originally the people viewed Jesus as one of the ordinary, contemporary prophets. That was merely one of the ways they compared Jesus with a prophet. Friedrich, p. 842.

<sup>3</sup>Friedrich, p. 846. Cf. Hahn, who comments, "μεγας is understood in the sense of peculiar distinction; finally the eschatological aspect is made clear by the statement about the visitation." p. 379.



incident nor the wording clearly implies that Jesus is the eschatological prophet. The people are impressed, and believe that Jesus is a great prophet with abilities beyond that of the normal prophet, and they view the miracle as a visitation from God, Himself, who brings a blessing through this event. More than that should not be inferred from the incident.<sup>1</sup>

Guignebert observes that, "It is as a prophet that those who see and hear Jesus seem to regard him."<sup>2</sup> For example, when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey, some asked, "Who is this?" (Matt. 21:10) And the multitude responded, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee." (Matt. 21:11) When Jesus was being tried before Caiaphas at the close of His earthly life, mockers spat on Him and chided, "Prophecy!" (Mk. 14:65) Matthew, in his version of the incident, includes the phrase, "Who is it that struck you?" (Matt. 26:68; cf. Lk. 22:64) The implication is that the accusers and mockers had heard it rumored that He was a prophet and made sport of "the pretender."

The anointing story in Luke 7:36-50 supports the claim that the people understood Jesus to be a prophet. As Luke presents the events, Simon, the Pharisee and host at the dinner to which Jesus was invited, was dismayed when Jesus allowed the sinful woman to touch Him. Simon's conclusion was "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner" (Lk. 7:39). The assumption is obvious. Simon concluded that Jesus' apparent lack of perception was enough to undermine the view or perhaps

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Marshall, The Gospel of Luke, pp. 286f.

<sup>2</sup>Guignebert, Jesus, p. 257. Cf. Jeremias, who contends that "The unanimous verdict on him was that he was a prophet." Jeremias, New Testament Theology, p. 77.

rumor of the people that He was a prophet.<sup>1</sup>

Luke's further information of the incident reveals that Jesus' response to Simon undermined his conclusion about Jesus. Jesus disclosed not only that He was familiar with the background of the woman, but also that He could read the thoughts of His host. Here Jesus is presented as possessing prophetic insight. He could look into the innermost thoughts and motives of those in His presence. Dunn suggests that this ability "appears to have been regarded as the mark of the prophet by Jesus' contemporaries . . . , if Luke 7:39 is any guide."<sup>2</sup>

#### His Authoritative Actions and Proclamation in Relation to the Prophetic Role

Jesus established a reputation as one who did not act and speak as a traditional teacher. Mark's Gospel is noted for the graphic portrayal of Jesus as a man of determined action, whereas Matthew and Luke's presentations offer strong teachings that frequently overshadow His activities. However, each Gospel writer presents Jesus as one whose forthrightness in His actions and proclamation

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Enslin, The Prophet From Nazareth, p. 59. Marshall observes that Simon assumed Jesus could not be a prophet because "a prophet would not allow himself to be touched by a sinful, and therefore unclean, woman . . . ." To Simon, Jesus was missing that perceptive, clairvoyant quality, a mark of the prophet. Marshall, The Gospel of Luke, p. 309.

<sup>2</sup>Dunn, Jesus and the Spirit, p. 83. Cf. Friedrich, p. 844; Marshall, The Gospel of Luke, pp. 309f. This ability of Jesus to see into the hearts of men and to discern their thoughts is apparent in a number of passages in the synoptic tradition. He perceives faith (Mk. 2:5, par. Matt. 9:2, Lk. 5:20), doubts of the Pharisees (Mk. 2:8, par. Matt. 9:4, Lk. 5:22; cf. Mk. 3:5), the thoughts of His disciples (Lk. 9:46f.), the true inner feelings of the Rich Young Ruler (Mk. 10:21, par. Matt. 19:21; Lk. 18:22), the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and Herodians (Mk. 12:15, par. Matt. 22:18, Lk. 20:23), and the genuine response of Zacchaeus (Lk. 19:1-9) as well as the evil intentions of Judas (Mk. 14:18, par. Matt. 26:21).



(teaching and preaching) elicited responses of astonishment from all who observed and heard Him. But eventually His manner embittered the religious authorities and incurred their wrath. During Jesus' final week in Jerusalem, after He had cleansed the temple, and while He was teaching in the temple, the Chief Priests, Elders and Scribes questioned the source of His authority (ἐξουσία). (Mk. 11:27-33, par. Matt. 21:23-27, Lk. 20:1-8) The ensuing plot to kill Him is proof that they were not satisfied with His answer.

His Actions. Jesus was known to the people as "a prophet mighty in deed and word" (Lk. 24:19), a man through whom God performed "miracles and wonders and signs" (Acts 2:22). As Guignebert says, Jesus was "prolific in miracles, prodigies and signs."<sup>1</sup> From the perspective of the Synoptic Gospels, He went about doing good, healing people and casting out demons. Joseph Klausner contends that Jesus' concentration upon miraculous healings was to influence the people to believe that He was "at least a prophet."<sup>2</sup>

Jesus demonstrated extreme kindness, and He could also exhibit violent passion, such as in the cleansing of the temple and in His tirade against the Scribes and Pharisees. As Klausner observes, "These two extremes . . .

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<sup>1</sup>Guignebert, Jesus, p. 294.

<sup>2</sup>Klausner, Jesus of Nazareth, p. 272. His argument is this: Jesus was determined to convince the people that His message should be heard, and He did so by taking up the role of John the Baptist (p. 267), who was regarded as Elijah; by giving veiled indication that He was a prophet like Ezekiel (p. 257); and by imitating the greatest of the wonder-working prophets. From this approach, Jesus' own disciples became convinced that He was greater than the prophets (p. 268). Hahn comments that "The attestation miracle has at all times its place in connection with the claim of the prophets, and the Old Testament already contains vehement discussions regarding its meaning and trustworthiness." (Cf. Deut. 13:1ff., Jer. 23) Hahn, p. 378.



show in him a character akin to that of the Prophet  
 . . . ." <sup>1</sup>

William Lane describes Jesus' cursing of the fig tree (Mk. 11:12-14, 20-25, par. Matt. 21:18-22) as an "example of prophetic realism similar to symbolic actions of the OT prophets (e.g. Isa. 20:1-6; Jer. 13:1-11; 19:1-13; Ezek. 4:1-15)." <sup>2</sup> This incident, along with the cleansing of the temple (Mk. 11:15-19, par. Matt. 21:12-13, Lk. 19:45-48), serves as a "prophetic sign" to warn Israel of God's forthcoming judgment upon those who have the outward appearances of religion but are inwardly far from God. <sup>3</sup>

His Proclamation. Friedrich says that Jesus "spoke to the people with God-given directness and power as the OT prophets had done." <sup>4</sup> His use of scripture was different from the academic approach of the Rabbis. That is why the people observed that He spoke with authority (ἐξουσία) and not as the Scribes (Matt. 7:29; Mk. 1:21-22; Lk. 4:31-32). <sup>5</sup>

Guignebert suggests that Jesus' response to the Torah was in keeping with the tradition of the early prophets who "never quite accepted the nomistic point of view, and ranked religion of the heart above observance,

<sup>1</sup> Klausner, p. 410. Cf. Friedrich, p. 843. It should be noted that Jesus, in Klausner's estimation, did not have the "wide political perspective of the Prophets nor their gift of divine consolation to the nation." p. 410.

<sup>2</sup> Lane, The Gospel According to Mark, p. 400.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Friedrich, pp. 842f.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Marshall, The Gospel of Luke, p. 191, who says of Luke 4:31-32, that "The account of the mighty works is set against a background of authoritative teaching, so that Jesus' teaching and mighty works are seen to reflect the same prophetic authority."

ritual, purification, and even sacrifices."<sup>1</sup> However, as Guignebert observes, Jesus did not come to destroy the Law, and so, His interpretations were within the spirit of the Law. He "developed and completed" the spirit of the Law and did not contradict it (Matt. 5:17-20). Jesus lived under the Law, and although He was "urged by the prophet in Him," He went beyond the Law "only in the direction which the Law itself suggests."<sup>2</sup> Jesus spoke as one with "divine authorization"; He is portrayed as God's own spokesman. Friedrich suggests that while the term ἐξουσία was not used of the work of the Old Testament prophets, in the Gospels it conveys "something similar to the 'Thus saith Yahweh' of the OT."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Guignebert, Jesus, p. 298. Cf. Klausner, who claims that in His teaching, Jesus, "just like the Prophet, . . . invested himself with the greatest authority and depended but little on the Scriptures." p. 411. Enslin contends that after the demise of prophecy in Israel, due to the withdrawal of the Spirit, there developed a concentrated study of the Law to learn God's will. The scribes became the keepers and the interpreters of the word of God and gradually took over the role of the prophets as God's spokesmen. Enslin, The Prophet From Nazareth, pp. 62f., 65. One Rabbi remarked, "From the day the Temple was destroyed the prophetic gift was taken away from the prophets and given to the Sages." (B.B. 12a) Cf. A. Cohen, Everyman's Talmud (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1949), p. 124. Cohen suggests that "this saying indicates the links in the chain of tradition whereby the Torah passed through the generations from Moses down to the period of the Talmud."

<sup>2</sup>Guignebert, Jesus, pp. 305-307.

<sup>3</sup>Friedrich, p. 843. Cf. Hengel, who agrees with such scholars as T.W. Manson and J. Jeremias that it was Jesus' desire to replace the prophetic formula, "Thus says the Lord," with His own introductory formula, "ἀμὲν λέγω ὑμῖν." Yet, in doing so, Jesus consciously sought to surpass the Old Testament prophetic formula and disclosed His authority. According to Hengel, "messianic" best describes the nature of such authority. Hengel, p. 69. Compare also R.B.Y. Scott, The Relevance of the Prophets (New York: The Macmillan Co., rev. ed., 1963). Scott observes that the word proclaimed by the prophet carried the "power of Yahweh in it, and manifested his presence in a given situation." For example, it is



This understanding of Jesus' prophetic authority relates very well to an apparent Lukan understanding of Jesus as the fulfilment of Moses' prediction that God would eventually call forth a prophet to take up his role, a prophet who would proclaim Yahweh's mandates, commands to be obeyed (Deut. 18:15-19; Acts 3:22; 7:37).<sup>1</sup> Numbers 12:6-8 explains that Moses' reception of Yahweh's message was clear because God spoke to him "mouth to mouth" rather than in a dream or through riddles.<sup>2</sup>

Like the Old Testament prophets, Jesus both blessed and judged. He warned the people (Lk. 6:24f.; Matt. 11:21ff., par. Lk. 10:13ff.; Matt. 23:13-29, par. Lk. 11:42-52), but He also, and in particular, invited them to accept the blessings available to them (Lk. 6:20ff., par. Matt. 5:3ff.; Lk. 18:29f., par. Mk. 10:29f.)

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through the prophet that Yahweh sends a word against Israel, a word that will accomplish what He pleases. (cf. Isa. 55:1,11) According to Scott, it is this view of Jesus which led the centurion to believe that if Jesus spoke, his servant would be healed (Matt. 8:8). The centurion believed that Jesus was under authority, a sent one. (pp. 98f.) Dunn agrees that Jesus, like other prophets of old, saw Himself as God's "sent one." (Matt. 10:40, par. Lk. 10:16; Matt. 15:24; cf. Mk. 9:37, par. Lk. 9:48; Lk. 4:43, par. Mk. 1:38; Matt. 23:34,37). Dunn, Jesus and the Spirit, p. 83.

<sup>1</sup>Cf. C.H. Peisker, "Prophet,": The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Vol. 3 (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1978), p. 83. Cf. Jeremias, who suggests that it is in this sense that Matt. 5:17 must be understood. That is, "Jesus is claiming to be the eschatological messenger of God. . . ." Jeremias, New Testament Theology, pp. 84f.

<sup>2</sup>This passage, among others, deals with a "higher and lower level among the prophets" and the transition from the prophet as "seer" (ro'eh) to a "spokesman" (nabi). Cf. 1 Sam. 9:9, which offers an explanation of the change: "Formerly in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, he said, 'Come, let us go to the seer'; for he who is now called a prophet was formerly called a seer." Cf. Scott, The Relevance of the Prophets, pp. 44f.



This tension was a true mark of the prophet;<sup>1</sup> a tension that takes on a new dimension in a study of Jesus, if He were, in fact, the eschatological prophet.

### Jesus as the Eschatological Prophet

Expectation of the eschatological prophet took two forms in Judaism, and consequently in Christianity:  
1) There was to be a Moses type (Deut. 18:15-18), and  
2) an Elijah type would come as the prelude to the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord (Malachi 4:5).

The emphasis upon the coming of one like Moses is directed to the traditional belief that Yahweh would provide charismatic leadership for His people, that He would speak to them through His chosen servant. This hope was coupled with the promise of Elijah, whose coming would portend the imminent coming of Yahweh, a time when He would fulfill the promises of a new covenant and permanent blessings. This anticipation was developed by the apocalyptic writers during the inter-biblical period into a fervent hope for the imminent coming of the Kingdom of God.<sup>2</sup>

Jesus never specifically refers to Himself as the eschatological prophet, but it is possible that He thought of Himself this way.<sup>3</sup> The writers, from their perspectives,

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Friedrich, p. 843.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Hahn, pp. 354-365.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Friedrich, p. 848. Dunn believes "It is possible that Jesus thought of himself as the eschatological prophet, in view of his application of Isa. 61:1 to himself, but it would be more accurate to say that he saw his ministry as the fulfilment of several eschatological prophecies." Dunn, Jesus and the Spirit, p. 83. Cf. Jeremias, who contends that there is an "eschatological ring" to Jesus' assertion that "more than Jonah" had come (Matt. 12:41, par. Lk. 11:32). New Testament Theology, p. 82.

clearly associate Jesus with both the Moses and Elijah types. For example, the reference to Jesus as a prophet at the time of His eventful entry into Jerusalem may well express the opinion by the people that He was the eschatological prophet. Jesus was called the Son of David (Matt. 21:9), the "one who comes in the name of the Lord" (Mk. 11:9), and the "King who comes in the name of the Lord" (Lk. 19:38). Therefore, many in the crowd may have believed that Jesus was vital to the coming Kingdom of their father David (Mk. 11:10). For them, Jesus of Nazareth could have been The Prophet (Matt. 21:11) they had anticipated.<sup>1</sup>

The post-Resurrection scene of Jesus walking along the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus with Cleopas and an unnamed disciple is telling (Lk. 24:13-35).<sup>2</sup> In their

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Friedrich, p. 846. He suggests that speculation on the part of some that Jesus was John the Baptist raised from the dead (Mk. 6:14, parallels) may have been due to their belief that Jesus was the eschatological prophet.

<sup>2</sup>This Resurrection story is peculiar to Luke's Gospel and it is impossible to separate material original to Luke from other redacted sources. William Manson believes it likely that the narrative "represents a certain elaboration of some original experience" the nucleus of which can be found in Luke 24:28-31, since these verses "associate the revelation of the Lord with the Eucharist." Manson, The Gospel of Luke, p. 268. That Lukan features are evident in the story can be discerned by comparing the literary links of the passage with Luke's description of the feeding of the multitudes (Lk. 9:10-17) and the story of the Ethiopian eunuch. Cf. J.M. Gibbs, "Luke 24:13-33 and Acts 8:26-39 : The Emmaus Incident and the Eunuch's Baptism as Parallel Stories," Bangalore Theological Forum 7 (1,75): 17-30; Marshall, The Gospel of Luke, p. 890. Bultmann assumes that the Emmaus story, which, to him, could have "grown up in Hellenistic-Christian circles of Jewish origin" (Bultmann, The History of the Synoptic Tradition, p. 302), and has the character of a true legend (Ibid., p. 286), is related to the "motif of proving the Resurrection by the appearance of the risen Lord." Ibid., p. 288. It is, to Bultmann, the oldest of the Resurrection stories and was told to give evidence of Jesus' Resurrection and to assure the believers that "it was he who was



reflections upon the ministry of Jesus, the two disciples refer to Him as a prophet, perhaps the most exalted title they could apply to Him without the knowledge of His resurrection.<sup>1</sup> As a prophet Jesus had been "mighty in deed and word before God and all the people" (Lk. 24:19). This description is similar to that applied to Moses in Stephen's sermon (Acts 7:22). And as Moses had been the "deliverer" of Israel (Acts 7:35), the disciples had hoped that Jesus would also be the one who would redeem (λυτρον) Israel (Lk. 24:21).

Obviously these passages suggest a relationship between Jesus as the Prophet and as the Messiah. While opinions regarding this relationship may vary, the issues must center upon the theme of God's final salvation and

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going to redeem Israel." (Lk. 24:21) Ibid., p. 289.

To conclude that the literary form of the story contains legendary qualities does not preclude the historicity of the event. One's acceptance or rejection of the Resurrection as a fact--a decision based upon one's presuppositions relative to the supernatural--determines to a great extent the degree of credibility permitted the story. As to the conversation between the disciples and Jesus, as presented by Luke, there is nothing within the Lukan tradition to cause one to question its authenticity, although the redactor has given the conversation and the entire incident his special touch. The opinion of the "disciples" that Jesus was a prophet is in keeping with public opinion right up until the crucifixion. That Luke does not anachronously inject Christological claims into the conversation of the disciples is a credit to his commitment to express the true feelings of the disciples on the occasion of the event.

<sup>1</sup>Marshall, The Gospel of Luke, p. 895. Cf. Marshall, The Work of Christ, p. 20. He comments: "It is possible to explain much of the work of Jesus in terms of His being a prophet. Indeed this might have been a sufficient designation of His role if He had been simply a mortal man . . . ." The men on the road to Emmaus "needed the appearance of the risen Jesus to confirm their drooping faith and to lead them to the recognition that His claims to be more than a prophet were true."



the coming of His Kingdom.<sup>1</sup> As stated earlier, the main purpose of this study is to deal with the predictions of Jesus, the Prophet, which relate to the coming of the Kingdom of God; the Parousia of the Son of Man; the Consummation.

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<sup>1</sup>For example, Franklin Young contends that during the time of Jesus there was a clear understanding that the renewal of prophecy was related to the coming of the Messiah. He comments: "The spirit was to be poured forth again in these messianic times but not until then. The expectation that in the future the Messiah would come and that his messianic office was to be understood largely in terms of his bearing the spirit of God (or the prophetic spirit) is found in all our sources in one form or another." (Cf. Is. 11:2ff.; 28:5ff.; Psalms of Solomon 17:37; Enoch 49:3; Testament of Levi 18:7; Testament of Judah 24:2) Young, "Jesus the Prophet: A Re-examination," p. 292. Cf. p. 292, fn. 25. Young observes that "The problem of the 'messianic consciousness' of Jesus confronts us if and when we acknowledge that he was a 'prophet' in the eyes of the people and in his own estimation." Ibid., p. 298. Cf. Hahn, who suggests that Acts 7:35ff. should be understood as "a matter exclusively of the Moses typology and of Jesus' eschatological office as prophet without any association of this with the confession of Jesus' messiahship." p. 376. Cf. also the opinion of P.E. Davies, who contends that although Stephen places the death of Jesus in the tradition of the martyr-prophets (Acts 7:52), . . . no special saving significance is attached to it. They accept the historic fact." Davies, "Did Jesus Die as a Martyr-Prophet?", p. 37.

In reference to Luke 24:21a, Hahn suggests that "the hope of the realization of an earthly messianic kingdom" had not been fulfilled and the disciples had been disappointed. There are, he notes, complications in dealing with the passage in the light of the suffering servant concept and the change by the disciples from an expectation restricted to Israel to a more universal outlook. Despite the theological issues involved with the passage, Hahn concludes that it does allow for "an application of the prophet conception to the earthly work of Jesus and a close association with the Messiah conception." Hahn, pp. 377f. Marshall interprets Lk. 24:21 to mean that the hope of the disciples "was that Jesus would crown his prophetic work by redeeming the people, i.e. by setting them free from their enemies and inaugurating the kingdom of God . . . ." The Gospel of Luke, P. 895.

The proposals of Martin Hengel should also be noted. He contends that the unconditional nature of Jesus'

call, seen most radically in Matt. 8:21-22 par. Lk. 9:59-60, cannot be explained fully from the perspective of either the "rabbi-student" relationship or the Old Testament prototype of a prophet's call exemplified in the relationship between Elijah and Elisha (1 Kings 19:19ff.). Admittedly, the latter offers some parallels, but it cannot explain the source of Jesus' extreme demands. Therefore, Jesus' appeal to His followers to abandon everything for the sake of the Kingdom must be understood in the light of His messianic authority. (Hengel, pp. 15-17; 5, 11f., 46, 72) Hengel, who accepts as genuine Lk. 10:18, "And he said to them, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven,'" observes that no "primitive Christian prophet would have had the authority to make such a pronouncement." (p. 65) Therefore, Jesus must be seen as more than the Moses redivivus type; His authority exceeds that of the "contemporary apocalyptic-messianic prophets." (p. 66) Hengel comments: "Whether we describe Jesus as a 'rabbi' or as a wisdom teacher and prophet we shall equally fail to do justice to this unheard of self-confidence which cuts across all the analogies in the field of Religionsgeschichte which are known to us from contemporary Judaism." (Ibid.) According to Hengel, Jesus' messianic authority seen in His "call to follow" is similar to God's call of some of the Old Testament prophets. God called such men as Moses, Gideon and Amos who made radical responses. Likewise, Jesus, through whom the Kingdom of God was about to dawn "in power," called His disciples to follow Him and to serve "the cause of the approaching Kingdom." He called and demanded: "Leave the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." (Lk. 9:60) Hengel, p. 73. Hengel concludes: "As to the call of the disciples, in the last analysis only the call of the Old Testament prophets by God of Israel himself is a genuine analogy." p. 87.

Hengel's thesis well illustrates the view of the Synoptic writers that Jesus was more than a prophet, and his approach helps in understanding a facet of New Testament Christology. Hengel is right to defend his position that the authority demonstrated in Jesus' call of His own disciples can find an adequate analogy only in Yahweh's call of the prophets. Likewise, it is also profitable to compare the calls of the prophets Isaiah (Isa. 6) and Ezekiel (Ezek. 1-2) to the call of Jesus (Mk. 1:11,11; Lk. 4:16-21). Admittedly, there is much more to be said about the Synoptic understanding of Jesus than could ever be formulated in a study restricted to one or two dimensions of the Gospel's portrait of Him. Nonetheless, to study singularly Jesus as a prophet, called to proclaim Yahweh's mandate, "Repent! The Kingdom of God is at hand!", allows one to view Jesus as one who, Himself, admitted ignorance as to the actual time of the Eschaton. Yet, as Marshall observes, "Like a prophet of old He announced that God was about to act, and act soon." (Marshall, The Work of Christ,



Jesus came as the eschatological messenger. He was convinced that God was about to come with consummate grace and judgment and so encouraged and warned His hearers. As Jeremias states,

As bearer of the spirit, Jesus is not only one man among the ranks of the prophets, but God's last and final messenger. His proclamation is an eschatological event. The dawn of the consummation of the world is manifested in it. God is speaking his final word.<sup>1</sup>

What, then, should one make of "God's final messenger?" What should one make of His message? Did time and history validate His claims? Did God honor the prediction of His "Prophet?" It is to these questions that this study must now turn.

#### The Dilemma of Jesus' Unfulfilled Prophecy

The eschatological consciousness of the New Testament community cannot be denied. Jesus had proclaimed that the Kingdom of God would come within a generation (Mark 9:1), and the early church was clearly living under the conviction that Jesus would return in the near future.<sup>2</sup> But Jesus' prophecy was not fulfilled. Why? The question deserves serious consideration, because it is critically related to the issue of the permanent relevancy of Jesus' ethics.

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p. 27.) The problem of that prediction never having been fulfilled can be resolved, if Jesus is allowed prophetic allowances.

<sup>1</sup> Jeremias, New Testament Theology, p. 85.

<sup>2</sup> Some apparent expressions of concern regarding the imminence of Christ's return, outside of the Synoptics, can be found in such passages as 1 Cor. 7:25-35, 1 Thess. 4:13-5:11, 2 Thess. 2:1-12, Rom. 13:11-14, Phil. 4:5, Heb. 10:37, 2 Peter 3:1-13, Rev. 1:1-3, 22:20.



### The Predictive Element in Jesus' Proclamation

After His ascension, Jesus' disciples were convinced that His predictions should be taken seriously. A number of His predictions had been fulfilled; He had achieved credibility as a prophetic foreteller. For example, He had predicted His own suffering, death and resurrection.<sup>1</sup> And while some may contest the authenticity of these prognostic statements, Luke 13:33 leaves little doubt that Jesus anticipated a prophet's death in Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup> He also foresaw the desertion of the disciples at the time of His death (Mk. 14:27, par. Matt. 26:31), and He warned Peter of his forthcoming denial.<sup>3</sup>

Jesus also predicted the destruction of the temple (Mk. 13:1-4, par. Matt. 24:1-3, Lk. 21:5-7). By the time Matthew and Luke had written their gospel accounts, Jerusalem would have fallen, and the temple would have been in ruins. Debates still rage over the authenticity of these passages, along with Mk. 13:5-37 and parallels.<sup>4</sup> But such debates should not deter one from examining Mk. 13:2 objectively. Jesus' prediction is related to the kind of judgmental proclamation found in Micah 3:12 and

<sup>1</sup>E.g., Mk. 8:31, par.; Mk. 9:31, par.; Mk. 10:32-34, par.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Friedrich, p. 844; Dunn, Jesus and the Spirit, p. 83, and C.H. Dodd, who comments: "We conclude that Jesus uttered predictions comparable with those of the Old Testament prophets, that is to say, He forecast historical developments of the situation in which He stood. In particular, He forecast a crisis in which he Himself should die and His followers suffer severe persecution; and He forecast historical disaster for the Jewish people and their temple." Dodd, The Parables of the Kingdom, 1961, p. 48.

<sup>3</sup>Mk. 14:30, par. Matt. 26:34; Lk. 22:34.

<sup>4</sup>See Lane, The Gospel According to Mark, pp. 444ff. for the major positions.

Jer. 26:18.<sup>1</sup> Friedrich, convinced that Mark 13 reflects Jewish apocalyptic influence, believes, nonetheless, that the prophecy of the destruction of the temple in Mk. 13:2 is "along the lines of OT prophecy of disaster, (and) is certainly older than the event."<sup>2</sup>

The realization that their expectation of Jesus' imminent return might not be fulfilled within the predicted time posed problems for Christians by the end of the first century. The author of 2 Peter<sup>3</sup> knew there were those who purposely attacked the belief in the imminent return of Christ. He wrote,

(3:1) This is now the second letter that I have written to you, beloved, and in both of them I have aroused your sincere mind by way of reminder; (2) that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles. (3) First of all you must understand this, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own passions (4) and saying, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things have continued as they were from the beginning of creation." (2 Peter 3:1-4)

#### Responses to the Dilemma of Jesus' Unfulfilled Prophecy

Problems related to Jesus' prediction continue to be a major issue. Some assume that if Jesus did predict that His own Parousia would take place within the near future, He was obviously mistaken. For example, Guignebert writes,

The Last Things which Jesus expected did not happen. The Kingdom which he announced did not appear, and the prophet died on the cross instead of contemplating the expected Miracle from the hill of Zion. He must then have been mistaken.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 453.

<sup>2</sup> Friedrich, p. 845.

<sup>3</sup> The debates related to the authorship of 2 Peter are irrelevant to the discussion at hand.

<sup>4</sup> Guignebert, Jesus, p. 537. He comments: "Although



Of course, the question then arises: "If Jesus was mistaken in His eschatology how should one view His ethics? Are they nevertheless relevant or have they become invalid?" In response to this problem, George Ladd criticizes "consistent eschatology," observing that the theory leads one to believe that Jesus was mistaken about the imminence of the End. To Ladd, admitting that Jesus was mistaken in His prediction of the End makes it "difficult to understand how his integrity or authority as a religious teacher can be preserved."<sup>1</sup> Ladd concludes that one is left with a paradoxical situation. The Gospels anticipate an imminent End to which one cannot and should not give a date, and which, consequently, remains remote. Ladd admits that this concept appears to be contradictory. But to him ". . . it is a tension with an ethical purpose--to make date-setting impossible and therefore to demand constant readiness."<sup>2</sup>

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it is an unquestioned fact that Jesus' dream of the future, which embodied the expectation of the Poor in Israel, ended in failure, it is, nevertheless, true that the rise of the Galilean prophet marks the beginning, however accidental, of the religious movement from which Christianity sprang." Ibid., p. 538; cf. pp. 389, 406f. Cf. Bultmann, who comments: "The mythical eschatology is untenable for the simple reason that the parousia of Christ never took place as the New Testament expected. History did not come to an end, and, as every school-boy knows, it will continue to run its course." Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," p. 5.

<sup>1</sup>Ladd, Jesus and the Kingdom, p. 37. Ladd charges: "If it is a fact that Jesus unequivocally thought that the Kingdom of God meant the end of the world in his lifetime, then we must not only admit that he was in error but must recognize that his entire message rested upon a delusion." Ibid. Cf. George E. Ladd, The Presence of the Future (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1974), pp. 40f. Note: This book is a slightly revised version of Ladd's, Jesus and the Kingdom.

<sup>2</sup>Ladd, Jesus and the Kingdom, p. 324.



Rudolf Schnackenburg admits that it is "not possible to explain" the "time-indication" passages such as Matt. 10:23; Mark 9:1 par., and Mark 13:30.<sup>1</sup> But he insists that an error not be attributed to Jesus. Schnackenburg, a Catholic theologian, says, "We part company here with Protestant theologians who admit a mistake on Jesus' part but consider it of no importance for his own position."<sup>2</sup> He suggests that although the early church did not really know how to handle Jesus' sayings of an imminent End, it did at least develop a method which the church today should accept: "namely, to nourish a living eschatological hope from the urgent prophetic preaching of Jesus without drawing false conclusions about that prophecy from individual passages."<sup>3</sup> Again the concept of an ever-present tension dominates.

Howard Marshall agrees that an acceptance of the view that Jesus anticipated the Kingdom in the immediate future leaves one with the problem that if He was mistaken concerning His prophecy of the End, then ". . . the teaching and exhortations which he based on it, is also mistaken."<sup>4</sup> To Marshall, "A message whose validity depends on the coming of the kingdom in the near future loses its validity if the basic premise is false."<sup>5</sup> Marshall's

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<sup>1</sup>Schnackenburg, God's Rule and Kingdom, p. 212. Cf. pp. 203ff. for his interpretations of Matt. 10:23; Mark 9:1, 13:30.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 212, fn. 85.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 212.

<sup>4</sup>Marshall, I Believe in the Historical Jesus, p. 225.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 225f.

solution to this problem involves acceptance of the view that Jesus, more closely related to His proclamation than would have been true of a prophet, was responsible for the veracity of His message.<sup>1</sup> Marshall contends that a study of Jesus' teachings reveals that He taught--not an immediate End--but an indefinite interval, which was to take place between His resurrection and Parousia.<sup>2</sup> The main points of this proposal will be expanded and examined below as a serious attempt to solve the problem of Jesus' unfulfilled prophecy.

Ladd, Schnackenburg and Marshall rightly focus upon the serious consequences of charging Jesus with having been mistaken in His prediction of a Kingdom to come within the period of a generation. However, there is the apparent disjunction between His prophecy and objective fulfilment. The proposal by Ladd and Schnackenburg that some form of eschatological tension should constantly alert the believer to the possibility of an imminently divine intrusion into man's affairs is helpful. The New Testament writers certainly inform their readers of a community of believers who experienced such tension. But the insight is hardly an answer to the question at hand. How long can the tension, as described in the New Testament, retain its vitality or viability? Certainly not for 2000 years! The view better suits Bultmann's existentialism than Ladd's biblical realism. The proposal of an "indefinite interval" leaves one with basically the same question: "How long an interval?" Surely not for 2000 years!<sup>3</sup> The prolonged interval demands that one question

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 228f.

<sup>2</sup> Marshall, Luke: Historian and Theologian, pp. 131f., 136f.

<sup>3</sup> Marshall admits that ". . . it is hard to avoid the impression that Jesus spoke as if the end might come within the lifetime of his hearers; warnings to them to be



the accuracy of Jesus' prediction. Why was His prophecy of an imminent End not fulfilled? Several of the more dominant suggestions merit consideration and examination.

The Claim that Jesus Predicted An Interval Before the End. A.L. Moore proposes that Jesus proclaimed an "imminent" but "undelimited" Parousia. There are, he believes, passages which indicate that Jesus assumed the structure of the church. That is, the church would need time to fulfill some of Jesus' ethical precepts (such as Mk. 10:5-12, marriage and divorce; Matt. 5:22ff., right relationship with one's brother, in order to escape the Judgment; Matt. 5:33f. no swearing -- nothing less than perfection is demanded; 6:1ff., God's reward as the sanction to godly piety, not man's approval; 18:15ff., on reproving one's brother.)<sup>1</sup>

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ready lest the Son of man comes and finds people unready for his coming are pointless if there is not a real possibility of his coming within their lifetime. Even the writer who apologises for the apparent delay in the parousia by telling his readers that a thousand years are like a day to the Lord (2 Pet. 3:8) hardly expected that the end would be as much as two millennia (or more) distant." Marshall, I believe in the Historical Jesus, p. 227.

<sup>1</sup> Moore, The Parousia in the New Testament, p. 96. Moore also suggests that there are "hints that Jesus did anticipate a future missionary activity." This then, would add further evidence to the view that He anticipated an interval of such length that the formation of the church could take shape. Moore suggests further that the missionary activity of the church was made possible because of the "grace period" which God has permitted. Ibid., p. 206. The concept of a "grace period" has much to commend itself and will be dealt with more extensively as an aspect of a suggested solution to the problem of Jesus' unfulfilled expectation. See the section entitled, "A Suggested Biblical Solution."



Oscar Cullmann supports the interpretation that Jesus understood the Kingdom to be imminent, but he also maintains there is sufficient evidence to show that Jesus expected an interval, if even for a short period, as the will of God.<sup>1</sup> According to Cullmann, there is to be "an interval as distinguished from the end, 'an already' from the 'not yet.'"<sup>2</sup> Cullmann admits that there are ethical consequences stemming from the fact that man is now possibly confronted with an indefinite duration of this world's structure, but he feels

it is still important for the extended period that now as before it is an eschatological interval, and that with Christ the end has come nearer since we have entered the 'final' phase, however long it may last.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>For example, Cullmann cites the following passages to support his claim that Jesus expected an interval: Mk. 14:7, "You always have the poor with you . . . but you will not always have me" (Jesus indicates the End will come after His death); Mk. 2:18ff. (Jesus advocates fasting only while the bridegroom is away); Lk. 23:31 (He teaches that the destruction of the temple will take place after His death and before His return); Matt. 16:18 (Jesus predicts that during the brief interval the people of God will replace the temple); Matt. 12:41ff. (He predicts that the Ninevites will judge those of "this generation" because of their rejection of the gospel); Mk. 9:1, 13:30 (Jesus implies that most of those in His own generation will have died before the End); and Mk. 14:62 (He teaches that His "coming" is to take place after the enthronement). Oscar Cullmann, Salvation in History, translated by Sidney G. Sowers (London: S.C.M. Press, 1967), pp. 223ff. For a strong statement supportive of the position that Jesus taught an "interval" see the section on I.H. Marshall above. For a lengthy discussion of his position see, Marshall, Luke: Historian and Theologian, pp. 79-88.

<sup>2</sup>Cullmann, Salvation in History, p. 336.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 337.

R. Newton Flew contends that the Kingdom of God was not only present in the person and ministry of Jesus,<sup>1</sup> but that it is eschatological and will be consummated in the future. Flew observes, for example, that Jesus "seems to have believed that the end of the world was not far away, and that His own Parousia in glory was imminent."<sup>2</sup>

According to Flew, Jesus expected an imminent Kingdom, but He did not believe in an immediate end of human history. Flew believes the greatest proof for that claim "lies in the nature of the ethical teaching." Here, he suggests, one finds the stress of the Now and the Not Yet which is so essential to the Christian way of life.<sup>3</sup> Flew observes that while Jesus shared the views of the New Testament writers that the end was near, He admitted ignorance as to the time, and in so doing left room for an interim period which would possibly develop into "a long interval, between His earthly life and the final consummation."<sup>4</sup>

According to Rudolf Otto, Jesus was eschatologically oriented and obviously expected an imminent consummation. For example, Otto states, "Jesus preached: The time is fulfilled. The end is at hand. The kingdom has come near. It is quite near."<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, it is

<sup>1</sup>Flew, The Idea of Perfection in Christian Theology, p. 5. Cf. Flew, Jesus and His Way, p.22. In respect to Jesus' role as the inaugurator of the Kingdom, Flew remarks: "The reign of God, expected by the Prophets, is now incarnate in Him."

<sup>2</sup>Flew, The Idea of Perfection in Christian Theology, p.2.

<sup>3</sup>Flew, Jesus and His Way, p. 22.

<sup>4</sup>Flew, Jesus and His Church, p. 33.

<sup>5</sup>Otto, The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man, p.59.



equally clear, Otto believes, that Jesus assumed a continued world order--"a certain interval of time."<sup>1</sup> Otto suggests that Jesus could hold such a paradoxical and somewhat irrational view because He was an eschatological type like Zorathustra or St. Francis, both of whom anticipated an imminent end. But unlike them, Jesus, who presented an ethic which called for a new community to continue witnessing in a spirit of love and forgiveness, assumed a continuation of history.<sup>2</sup>

The claim that Jesus anticipated an interval between His ascension and the Parousia must be seriously considered. There are, for example, a number of parables which support the view that an interval of time would elapse before the End would come. This is especially clear in the Parable of the Fig Tree, Matt. 24:32f. and par. Mk. 13:28f.; Luke 21:29ff.; the parables of Watchfulness, Matt. 24:42ff., par., Luke 12:39f.; Matt. 24:45ff., par. Luke 12:42ff.; and the parables of Preparedness, Matt. 25:1-13; Matt. 25:14-30; Luke 19:12-27).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 59f.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 62f.

<sup>3</sup>There is obviously a great deal of controversy surrounding these passages and others which might be interpreted as lending credence to a literal Parousia. It can be argued that the pattern is so obvious that the Synoptic writers very likely took sayings, particularly parables which were originally spoken within the context of a "crisis" experience in the life of Jesus or parables which in their Sitz im Leben referred to the coming of the Kingdom of God, and incorporated them into their challenge to the early church not to give up hope in the return of the Lord. The material certainly appears to be an obvious arrangement of sayings to deal with the problem of the delay, but to admit to rearrangement or adaptation -- obvious rights of the redactors -- does not necessitate acquiescence to the argument that they cannot be considered as authentic Parousia sayings from Jesus Himself. These passages could refer to the coming of the Kingdom of God, the Judgment, the Parousia -- that is, to the Eschaton. Jesus could very well have used many of these sayings



Of course, there are scholars who contend that Luke especially has so recast his Gospel that the Parousia is conveyed as very "delayed." Conzelmann, interpreting Luke's Gospel in such a way, claims that Luke sees the End as being in the unforeseeable future and,

As the End is still far away, the adjustment a short time of waiting is replaced by a "Christian Life" of long duration, which requires ethical regulation and is no longer dependent upon a definite termination.<sup>1</sup>

C.E.B. Cranfield, in his study of the Parable of the Unjust Judge (Luke 18:1-8), has criticized Conzelmann for not taking this particular parable more seriously in a consideration of the Parousia teaching within the Lukan tradition. The purpose of this parable, Cranfield contends, is to encourage the despondent "to have confidence in God's readiness to help."<sup>2</sup> The connection of verse one in this passage with verse eight is important--help is to come with the Parousia, which is near!

An essential "test-question" for all of the Synoptic Gospels would be: "Are there passages within the Synoptics which would suggest an interim beyond a generation or which specifically teach a prolonged delay of the Parousia?"

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originally in His bid to challenge the Jews to get ready for the End, for the Kingdom of God. However, that is far from certain! What is clear is that the writers accepted these as Parousia sayings, and there is no good reason to doubt their loyalty to their Lord's message as they utilized His teachings to meet their own needs. Even Glasson, who argues on the whole that the Parousia belief did not receive any support from Jesus, concedes that "At the same time I would agree that some word of Jesus may have given the original impulse." Glasson, The Second Advent, p. viii.

<sup>1</sup>Hans Conzelmann, The Theology of St. Luke, translated by Geoffrey Buswell (London: Faber and Faber, 1960), p. 132.

<sup>2</sup>C.E.B. Cranfield, "The Parable of the Unjust Judge and the Eschatology of Luke-Acts," Scottish Journal of Theology 16 (1963): 297ff.

Both Matthew and Mark record sayings which seem to place conditions upon the coming of the Son of Man. In Mark, the prelude to the persecution period (an apocalyptic sign) is the proclamation of the Gospel to all nations (Mk. 13:10). Matthew records that the master will not return for a long time (Parable of the Talents, 25:14-30) and that before the End comes the Gospel must be preached throughout the whole world (24:14). Hans-Werner Bartsch contends that Luke corrects the eschatology of Matthew and Mark, who make adjustments to allow for a postponement of the End, and he challenges Conzelmann's thesis that Luke's view portrays an Age of the Church before the End and that Jesus, therefore, marks the center between the ages--Die Mitte der Zeit. Bartsch claims that Matthew and Mark believe the Parousia to be associated with the death and resurrection of Jesus, whereas for Luke the past events which he mentions have not brought in the Parousia, and are, therefore, simply historical.<sup>1</sup>

According to Bartsch, as far as Luke is concerned, all the apocalyptic signs of the End are yet in the future. So Luke corrects the belief within the eschatology of Matthew and Mark that some of the eschatological signs of the End have already taken place and that the Parousia has already occurred. For Luke, the Parousia is yet to occur, but it is expected at any moment. Because Luke separates the Parousia from the Passion of Christ and sees it as a separate event at the Consummation, and that to be soon, he is not certain that the Gospel must first be preached throughout the world before the End comes. The End can come at any time.<sup>2</sup> Obviously, Bartsch goes too far

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<sup>1</sup>Bartsch, "Early Christian Eschatology in the Synoptic Gospels," pp. 387ff.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 391.



in his theory when he claims that Luke corrects an erroneous view held by Matthew and Mark that the Parousia had taken place with the resurrection of Jesus; that "the appearance of the risen Lord was His Parousia;" and that "His day had come with the resurrection and there was nothing to be expected in the future."<sup>1</sup>

Matthew and Mark do not claim that the Parousia has already taken place. There is too much evidence to the contrary. Both Gospels record that the coming of the Son of Man or the Kingdom of God was to take place within a generation (Mk. 9:1, par. Matt. 16:28; Matt. 10:23; Mk. 13:30, par. Matt. 24:34; Mk. 14:62). These Gospels record that the eschatological signs leading up to the End (such as false messiahs, wars and rumors of wars, famines, persecutions, earthquakes, upheavals of nature, powers in heaven shaken) have not all taken place. Rather, they are to precede the Parousia, and it is then that the Son of Man will come in great glory! (Mk. 13:26; Matt. 24:30; cf. Mk. 8:38, par. Matt. 16:27; Mk. 14:62; Matt. 26:64). The event, from Matthew's account, is going to be clearly observable (Matt. 24:26-28), although it will come as a surprise (Matt. 24:37-39). Therefore, a state of constant watchfulness is demanded (Matt. 24:42-44; 25:13). It is significant that Mark ends his apocalyptic discourse with a clear call to watchfulness, "And what I say to you I say to all; Watch!" (13:37) And Matthew records the warning that it is foolish to become negligent in service because the master has delayed His return. The warning is clear: He can return at any moment, so be ready! (Matt. 24:45-51)

Although Bartsch goes too far in his criticism of Conzelmann with the proposal that Luke corrects the eschatology of Matthew and Mark, his challenge to recognize Luke's own emphasis upon the imminence of the Parousia

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 395.



should not be ignored. For example, Luke's account also sounds the call to watchfulness (12:35-38; 21:34-36); the Son of Man could come at any time (12:39f.; 18:1-8; 19:11-27; 22:16,18). Like Matthew and Mark, the writer of Luke does not record the belief that the Parousia might be delayed for an extended period of time, nor does he present a calendar of events which might point to a particular time. Rather the signs of the End--the greatest of these being the ultimate coming of the Son of Man Himself--can occur together and that soon! Like Matthew and Mark's Gospels, the challenge from the Gospel of Luke is surrender of oneself to the vigil of alertness and service in preparation for the sudden End!

The Synoptic writers clearly present Jesus as anticipating an interval between His ascension and the Parousia. But the question as to whether Jesus was mistaken in His prediction regarding the End is not answered by appealing to such evidence. How long was this interval to be? How long does it take a mustard bush to reach maturity, for a seed to disclose itself in new form above the ground, or for the leaven to permeate the dough? For that matter, how long will it take for the fig tree to put forth its tender leaves; how long is a night; how long will the bridegroom tarry; and how long will the master delay? One must take very seriously the view that the writers understood Jesus' prediction to have been directed to the people of His day, not to those yet unborn. This is the essence of prophetic preaching! The End was expected to take place within the lifetimes of those to whom Jesus spoke!<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Compare Cullmann, who argues for an "interval" before the End, but concedes that it was possibly meant to be a short time. Cullmann, Salvation in History, p. 222. And even Ridderbos admits that while Jesus taught that there would be an interval before His return, "there is no assurance that this future perspective might encompass

As the Synoptic writers dealt with the question of the Parousia, there had already been considerable delay. But they were not driven to the point of denying the imminence of His return. Rather, they encouraged constant watchfulness and preparation. They proved their convictions by sharing the records of their Master's proclamation. They believed the Lord could come at any time. It could happen as quickly as lightning flashes across the sky from east to west (Matt. 24:26-27, par. Lk. 17:23-24). The Son of Man could come, even if man had lapsed into an egotistical existence during the delay (Lk. 21:34-36), or while men and women enter into marriage and continue with life without taking seriously their need to prepare for the End (Matt. 24:37-39, par. Lk. 17:26-27). The Parousia could take place at any time--in the evening, at midnight or in the morning (Mk. 13:33-37). There would be no warning. He would come like a thief in the night (Matt. 24:42-44, par. Lk. 12:39-40).

The Parousia (Consummation, Judgment, coming of the Kingdom of God, appearance of the Son of Man) could happen at any time; during the night, after the harvest, after ample time to invest--but not beyond the lifetime of those who were encouraged to be ready for the event. As H.A. Guy reasons, "There would be no point in telling the disciples to be on the watch for an event which was not to happen for centuries afterwards!"<sup>1</sup>

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several centuries." For example, to Ridderbos, Mark 13:10; Matt. 26:13; Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:47; Mark 16:15, 20 all indicate that there will be an interval of "many years," but he grants that "it is very doubtful whether we can go any further and say that here a perspective extending over centuries is opened to the hearers." Ridderbos, The Coming of the Kingdom, p. 488. John Bright also acknowledges that "It would seem, at least, that the New Testament writers understood their Lord to have taught the speedy consummation of all things, and that within the lifetime of those then living." Bright, The Kingdom of God: The Biblical Concept and Its Meaning for the Church, p. 238.

<sup>1</sup>Guy, The Study of the Gospels, p. 115.



The Imminent Perspective Due to Misunderstanding of the Early Church. As already observed, C.H. Dodd contends that the belief in an imminent return of Christ was 'due to a shift of emphasis in the eschatological perspective of the early church from Jesus' resurrection to the second coming. This shift, to Dodd, was a misunderstanding on the part of the early Christians, who even later made yet another shift once the expectation of an imminent return waned. That is, they came to look upon the "resurrection, exaltation and second advent as being . . . inseparable parts of a single divine event." The disciples believed the supernatural had come into their presence through the Spirit. Living in a supernatural world, it was natural for them to expect to see the Lord upon the "clouds of heaven."<sup>1</sup>

J.A.T. Robinson claims that the early Christians are to be credited with the portrayal of Jesus as an apocalyptic preacher. They made the "translation of the eschatology of Jesus into the thought-forms of apocalyptic." Robinson suggests that the translation is particularly obvious in the Gospel of Matthew. According to Robinson, Jesus' eschatology was grounded in an expected crisis and climax of His ministry--namely the death of Jesus--but the early church increasingly referred not to this expected event, "but to a point beyond it, and to certain highly mythological occurrences expected after a gradually lengthening interval."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>C.H. Dodd, The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments, p. 33.

<sup>2</sup>Robinson, Jesus and His Coming, p. 98. Note: Robinson's view is similar to that of C.H. Dodd, but he is reluctant to accept the term "realized eschatology." To Robinson, the Kingdom comes in power, and the Son of Man arrives "only with the death of Jesus," but he believes that even before the death event, "the signs of the messianic age are already to be seen, in anticipation, 'before the time' (Matt. 8:29), in his words and deeds." For his



According to Robinson, Jesus believed that with His Passion the Kingdom would come with power, and the "great 'henceforth' could at last be pronounced."<sup>1</sup> However, the early church, so Robinson believes, announced that some elements of the Kingdom were already fulfilled, while "others still lay purely in the future." That is, for the early church, Jesus' "vindication" had been accomplished, but His "visitation" was "deferred for future, though still proximate fulfilment."<sup>2</sup> Robinson suggests that at Jesus' trial there emerged the formula, "He has sat down, and he will come." And it was out of this development that the language concerning Jesus' "coming on clouds," (which to Robinson originally depicted Jesus' vindication before God) "became assimilated to the other sayings about the 'coming of the Son of Man,' and with them was applied to a coming from God to be awaited by the Church, soon, suddenly and in great glory."<sup>3</sup>

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own view Robinson prefers the term "proleptic eschatology." Yet he suggests that the term "inaugurated eschatology" is even more preferable for "relating that hour to the future and to the final consummation of God's purpose . . . ." He comments: "For at that hour all is inaugurated, yet only inaugurated. From then on that through which in the end of the world must be saved or condemned comes finally into history: thenceforward men are in the presence of the eschatological event and the eschatological community." Ibid., p. 101.

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 83ff., 101.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 15-35, 102.

<sup>3</sup> Robinson, Jesus and His Coming, p. 102.

Robinson contends that the ideas of "vindication" and "visitation" are both integral to a correct understanding of the Parousia concept. They should not be separated into different thought patterns, although Robinson claims they have been separated by the Synoptic writers. According to Robinson, the Synoptic Gospel writers restructure Jesus' eschatology with the result that the thought of vindication becomes attached to one moment--"the Resurrection and the Ascension--and that of visitation to

Certainty of Salvation and not Chronology.

Reginald H. Fuller contends that while Jesus proclaimed the nearness of the Kingdom, His purpose for adopting the apocalyptic framework was to "proclaim the immediacy and finality of salvation He had come to offer." The error perpetuated by such preaching is not serious, according to Fuller.<sup>1</sup> The church itself was so confident that salvation had come in Jesus that His disciples expressed their "overwhelming certainty of the salvation accomplished by Jesus by proclaiming His speedy return."<sup>2</sup>

Fuller maintains that the Gospel writers were in error, but only in so far as they appealed to chronology. That is, they admitted that Jesus' return was delayed,

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another"--the Parousia. Ibid., p. 177. For a consideration of Robinson's proposal that the Gospel of John holds the themes of "vindication and visitation" together as the "same event" see, Ibid., pp. 160ff. Robinson believes that it is also in John's Gospel that "we have the complete integration of eschatology and ethics." Ibid., p.179.

<sup>1</sup>Reginald H. Fuller and Brian K. Rice, Christianity and the Affluent Society (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1966), p.34. Cf. Fuller, The Mission and Achievement of Jesus, p. 120. Fuller believes that Jesus and the church were mistaken in their expectation of a brief interval between the decisive event (the Cross) and the Consummation. Of the "mistaken Jesus" Fuller comments: "It is possible of course that Jesus was accommodating himself to the only (mythological) imagery which was available to him in order to explain the decisive character of his achievement, but this question is raised by a priori considerations which are beyond the province of the historian . . . ." Ibid., p. 120, fn. 1. He suggests Cullmann's war analogy as another explanation. That is, as in a war, once the decisive battle has been won, hasty predictions are made concerning the end of the war. Ibid., p. 120.

<sup>2</sup>Fuller, Christianity and the Affluent Society, p. 35.



but held to the belief that He would return within a generation (Mk. 9:1).<sup>1</sup> To Fuller, they were right, however, in their certainty of the "final and ultimate salvation he has brought." This, for Fuller, is the truth which modern man must grasp, for it is here and not in the expectation of the End that one discovers the relevancy of Jesus' message.<sup>2</sup>

Jesus--Concerned with "Certainty of End"--Not with "Specific Time." According to W.G. Kümmel, the fact that in some texts Jesus restricts the imminent coming of the Kingdom of God to the period of the generation of His contemporaries proves beyond a doubt that for Jesus the eschaton as an actual happening in time was something essential.<sup>3</sup> Of Jesus' proclamation of the imminent Kingdom and the fact of His unfulfilled expectation, Kümmel remarks:

It is perfectly clear that this prediction of Jesus' was not realized and it is therefore impossible to assert that Jesus was not mistaken about this. On the contrary it must be unreservedly admitted that Jesus' eschatological message remained confined at least in this respect to a form conditioned by time, which proved untenable owing to developments after the beginning of Christianity.<sup>4</sup>

For Kümmel this problem is not insurmountable since Jesus did not concern Himself with the question

<sup>1</sup> Fuller, Christianity and the Affluent Society, p. 35. Cf. Fuller, The Mission and Achievement of Jesus, p. 108. It is Fuller's opinion that Jesus is not yet the Son of Man. But the Cross set into motion that which will ultimately be fulfilled; there was suffering but there shall be the final exaltation.

<sup>2</sup> Fuller, Christianity and the Affluent Society, pp. 35f.

<sup>3</sup> Kümmel, Promise and Fulfilment, p. 147.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 149.



of an appointed date. What is important. Kümmel suggests, is Jesus' reason for combining sayings concerning the imminent Kingdom with those which bear witness to its presence.<sup>1</sup> Jesus' purpose in proclaiming the Kingdom's imminence was "to confront men with the end of history as it advances towards the goal set by God . . . ."

Kümmel claims that Jesus "uses the imagery of his time to describe the nearness of the Kingdom of God in order to clothe in living words the certainty of God's redemptive action directed towards the consummation."<sup>2</sup>

Hans H. Wendt believes that Jesus' imminent expectation of the Kingdom was normal in the light of His mission. He comments: "In view of the intensity of His trust in the heavenly state of perfection of the Kingdom of God, He thought the close of the period of the earthly development of the Kingdom comparatively near." Wendt suggests that the usual "offense arising from Jesus being in error" should not be a problem, since He was, in fact, free from speculation as to the time when the earthly Kingdom would reach heavenly perfection.<sup>3</sup>

Jesus, as Prophet, Foreshortened the Future.

F.C. Grant admits that Jesus anticipated an imminent Kingdom, but he insists that Jesus' expectation was "not in the dramatic apocalyptic sense of the supernatural last judgment of all the world."<sup>4</sup> Grant maintains that

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 150f.

<sup>2</sup>Kümmel, Promise and Fulfilment, p. 152.

<sup>3</sup>Hans Henrich Wendt, The Teachings of Jesus. Vol. 2, translated by John Wilson (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1893), pp. 344f. In Wendt's view, the Kingdom will be consummated by God, although the church can participate in the endeavor to extend the Kingdom throughout the world and to bring in the consummation. Ibid., pp. 388ff.

<sup>4</sup>Grant, The Gospel of the Kingdom, p. 146. Cf. Grant, Basic Christian Belief, pp. 100f.

Jesus as a prophet "foreshortened the future" and "viewed as immediate what was either vastly remote or even timeless."<sup>1</sup> Grant believes, therefore, that it was normal for Jesus to hold such a view since

. . . prophets always live proleptically, as much at home in tomorrow as in today, since they see everything in terms of a process, i.e. the realization of the divine will. Our neatly distinguished past, present, and future had much less cogency for the prophetic type of mind.<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, Clarence T. Craig maintains that Jesus clearly proclaimed the imminence of the Kingdom of God. He believes that those sayings of Jesus which appear to weaken His emphasis upon an impending end "probably represent later developments rather than actual words of the historic Jesus."<sup>3</sup>

In response to the problem of Jesus' unfulfilled prediction, Craig suggests that modern man does not have the "biblical authority" to transfer Jesus' belief in the imminence of the Kingdom to the present age. Consequently, man today cannot hold to the same eschatological form which Jesus used when He proclaimed His Kingdom message. Craig insists that "When the New Testament writers said

<sup>1</sup> Grant, The Gospel of the Kingdom, p. 174.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 147.

<sup>3</sup> Clarence T. Craig, "The Proclamation of the Kingdom," The Interpreter's Bible, Vol. 7 (New York: Abingdon Press, 1951), p. 146. For example, Craig states: "Stress upon the delay of the kingdom (Luke 19:11) and upon apocalyptic signs of the end (Luke 21:31) reflect a later time; the same may be true of the most explicit words of repudiation of the Jews (Matt. 21:43)." Ibid. Cf. Clarence T. Craig, The Beginning of Christianity (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1943), p. 79. Craig claims that Jesus was free from giving apocalyptic signs, but He certainly believed that the "long awaited consummation of the reign of God was at hand."



'soon,' they meant 'soon' in relation to their own time."<sup>1</sup> Yet Craig advises that the "man of Christian faith" should not allow the thought of a "mistaken Jesus" to be a "stumbling block" since Jesus' "foreshortened perspective" of the finality of God's Redemption illustrates the reality of the incarnation.<sup>2</sup>

Craig believes that the permanent significance of Jesus' eschatological message lies in His insistence upon the eternal rule of the holy and eternal God.<sup>3</sup> He is a God of power in whom man can trust. Man is relieved from having to depend upon man and is urged to place his trust in God. God is the One who will judge the world, and He will bring it to its completion. Therefore, according to Craig, Jesus' eschatological framework can provide man with "a symbol of the truth that history finds its consummation in Him" and "that history has its meaning in the rule of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>4</sup>

W.R. Inge also believes the key to understanding Jesus' eschatological proclamation is to view Him as foreshortening His vision of the future. Inge contends that the apocalyptic element in Jesus' preaching should be acknowledged, and he admits that "The historical Christ cannot be modernised in the interests of edification."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Craig, "The Proclamation of the Kingdom," p. 153.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. Cf. Craig, The Beginning of Christianity, p. 89.

<sup>3</sup>Craig, The Beginning of Christianity, pp. 89f.

<sup>4</sup>Craig, "The Proclamation of the Kingdom," p. 154. Cf. Craig, The Beginning of Christianity, p. 89.

<sup>5</sup>W.R. Inge, Christian Ethics and Modern Problems (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1930), p. 19.



However, Inge accuses Schweitzer of making Christ into a "psychological monster and His character an insoluble enigma."<sup>1</sup> Inge argues that Schweitzer's theory is too extreme; i.e. the sanity of Jesus is "wholly incompatible with a delusion that He had been commissioned to predict a stupendous miracle, and to warn His contemporaries to prepare passively for it."<sup>2</sup>

According to Inge, Jesus was in the prophetic succession, and the moral exhortations of neither the prophets nor Christ "were determined by their expectation of any miraculous catastrophe." Inge suggests that since Jesus and His disciples were idealists, it is more likely that "in the glow of their enthusiasm, the disciples, and possibly the Master Himself, threw their ideals into the near future, and foreshortened the vision of their fulfilment . . . ."<sup>3</sup>

Validity Not Determined by Genesis. Paul Ramsey proposes that Jesus' ethics should be retained on their own strength and merit. To Ramsey, the "love ethic," which was forged through the Kingdom hope, should not be considered as invalid and irrelevant simply because the apocalyptic expectations of Jesus were not fulfilled. Ramsey argues that whoever dismisses Jesus' ethic because of such reasoning "should reflect that genesis has nothing to do with validity." For Ramsey, the origin and history of Christian love may be important and interesting, but to believe that such factors have anything to do with the value of love, or that they can affect its truth to any degree is to be guilty of the "'genetic fallacy" so prevalent in post-evolutionary thought."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Paul Ramsey, Basic Christian Ethics (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), p. 41.

There are other writers who express similar views. John Fenton, for example, believes that Jesus' message should not be ignored simply because Jesus was mistaken concerning the imminence of the Kingdom of God. After all, Fenton reasons, Jesus was a man of His own day and time, and like others of His era, He had access to ideas "through his parents, teachers, contemporaries, the scriptures and his own conscience." In other words, "All the evidence is that he shared the raw material of his thinking with his contemporaries." What is significant, Fenton suggests, is what Jesus did with this raw material.<sup>1</sup>

It does not follow, so Fenton contends, that Jesus has no authority for man today simply because He was mistaken about the imminence of the end. To Fenton, "It is entirely possible for people to come to a true understanding of themselves, and of what they should do, in circumstances about which they are in error. It happens every day."<sup>2</sup> Fenton is convinced that Jesus' message about the Will of God can stand apart from His message of the imminence of the end. He comments:

The idea that the world was coming to an end soon was the setting in which Jesus operated; it is necessary for us to understand the setting, if we want to make sense of what he was saying. But what he said in his historical context may still be valid for people who do not accept the premises from which he started.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John Fenton, What Was Jesus' Message? (London: S.P.C.K., 1971), p. 20. Fenton suggests that there are other ideas Jesus held which man today cannot accept, e.g., the "Mosaic authorship of the first five books of the Old Testament; the Davidic authorship of the Psalms; and the idea that demons are the cause of various kinds of sickness." Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. Similarly, Richard Hiers believes that



Morton Scott Enslin agrees that scholars should not concern themselves with the task of trying to free Jesus from the apparent stigma of having been mistaken in His proclamation of the imminent Kingdom of God.<sup>1</sup> Enslin believes that while such a task may appear attractive, it is not necessary and is even superficial since Jesus lived in the first century and not in the twentieth. That is, one must simply admit that Jesus' views were not the same as views of the universe today.<sup>2</sup> According to Enslin, Jesus came as the proclaiming prophet. His responsibility was to issue the message given to Him by

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although "Jesus was mistaken in believing that the ambiguities of historical existence were about to be resolved in ultimate judgment and redemption, . . . His understanding as to what God requires and desires of men is not thereby discredited." Hiers, Jesus and Ethics, pp. 150f. Hiers suggests that, "Although Jesus may not have intended His ethical teaching as a guide for later generations, it has nonetheless come down to us. The God whose nature and will are the basis for Jesus' teaching is still the God whom Christians acknowledge as the Heavenly Father." Ibid., p. 232. Hiers believes that while Jesus probably did not intend His message for "later generations, centuries, or us," what He said about God and man in the first century is just as true for man today. Ibid., pp. 149f.

<sup>1</sup>Enslin, From Jesus to Christianity, pp. 2ff. He charges that some are afraid Jesus will be pictured as dying as a "disillusioned man." Cf. Enslin, Christian Beginnings. Vol. I and II, p. 158. Enslin comments: "The Kingdom of God, soon to appear, was the Age to Come, the new age which would suddenly and spectacularly follow the cataclysmic end of the present age." Enslin contends that Jesus' teachings are still relevant although one must admit that when He spoke He did not have the modern world in mind. He was not just speaking over the heads of His contemporaries. He directed His message to them, and was not simply pretending to be interested in them. See Enslin, The Prophet From Nazareth, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup>Enslin, The Prophet From Nazareth, pp. 88f.



God, and He was not responsible for its fulfilment.<sup>1</sup>

Millar Burrows believes that Jesus "was obviously mistaken" in His expectation of an imminent Kingdom, since "These things did not happen then and have not happened yet."<sup>2</sup> However, Burrows reasons that since Jesus thought in first century Palestinian concepts and was unable to "foresee the long stretches of history still ahead," His views should have no bearing on the ideals which He taught. Burrows suggests that "The truth of his (Jesus') teaching on other matters and the validity of His ideals of life are quite independent of the accuracy of his predictions regarding the time of the kingdom's coming."<sup>3</sup>

Burrows insists that the eschatology of Jesus must not be demythologized or "de-eschatologized." Rather, he believes that theology should be occasionally "re-mythologized" because the mythologies of men (including those of scientists) undergo change. Through this means Jesus' teachings can be converted into updated terms of modern thought.<sup>4</sup> Burrows claims that although

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 66ff. Enslin comments: "As the mouth-piece of God he uttered his call, confident that God through him was calling the nation to repentance and to ready itself for the final chapter." Ibid., p. 68.

<sup>2</sup> Burrows, An Outline of Biblical Theology, p. 217.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Millar Burrows, "Thy Kingdom Come," Journal of Biblical Literature 74 (1955): 1f. The entire article is a polemic against any, in Burrows' view, who feel obligated, due to theological bias, to remove the eschatological element from the Synoptic Gospels. Cf. Burrows, An Outline of Biblical Theology, pp. 218f. Burrows claims that because of certain inescapable facts, "the eschatological expectation cannot be regarded as merely a 'mythological' expression of God's eternal sovereignty." These facts are: "(a) for every individual the end of this world is coming and may come at any moment; (b) for every people and civilization there will be a sure doom if it fails to obey God's laws; and (c) the end of physical existence on earth must come eventually, and no hopes

Jesus was mistaken as to the particular "time" of the Kingdom's coming, such "limitations of his world-view do not necessarily invalidate his spiritual insight regarding the ultimate outcome. . . ." <sup>1</sup> The ultimate outcome to which Burrows refers is the "inevitable triumph of God's will." <sup>2</sup>

Validity is related to genesis. The starting point, however, is not the form of the language but the source of the proclamation. The language serves as a means to convey the message, but the source of the message is Yahweh. Naturally the language is important, but it is not decisive. In this sense Ramsey and Fenton are correct--the degree to which Jesus' message was fulfilled is not dependent upon the mode of communication. Jesus was a man of His day and used naturally the styles of communication known to those who heard Him. The hearer was not challenged by the form but by the content of Jesus' message. Literary styles demand hermeneutic considerations, but they do not determine credibility or authenticity. The validity of Jesus' prediction, as well as His other teachings, must be based upon the credibility of its originator. The genesis of Jesus' message is important because He spoke for Yahweh! <sup>3</sup>

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dependent upon the continuance of this world-order can be permanent."

<sup>1</sup> Burrows, An Outline of Biblical Theology, p. 217.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 218.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. G.F. Thomas, who contends that the ethics of Jesus as such (e.g. about God, Man, and the good) were derived, not from the apocalypticists, but from "the Old Testament, the Rabbis, and his own religious consciousness." Therefore, the ethic of Jesus is not invalidated simply because of His error in time. G.F. Thomas, Christian Ethics and Moral Philosophy, pp. 30f. Thomas suggests, for example, that the apocalyptic element in Jesus' thinking "provides the framework rather than the content of his ethical teaching. . . ." Ibid., p. 32.



Although Ramsey admits that "as a consequence of kingdom expectation, Jesus was able to proclaim for the human realm an ethic of obedient love which he formulated so memorably,"<sup>1</sup> Ramsey insists that in no way is the relevancy and practicality of this ethic affected in meaning or value by the eschatological base, since genesis has nothing to do with validity. Carl Henry argues that Ramsey's position is unconvincing. He maintains that, "Jesus claimed the same absoluteness for his eschatology as for his ethic, and the idea that his eschatology can be radically unabsolute and his morality radically absolute, . . . has no self-evident validity."<sup>2</sup> Henry's point is well taken. Jesus' eschatology, in respect to His prediction of the End--atemporal establishment of God's rule--is assumed by Ramsey to be erroneous. That conclusion needs to be re-examined in the light of the view that Jesus' eschatology, as His ethics, has God as its source.

That Jesus proclaimed His message in a first century setting has nothing to do with the failure of his prediction. Prophets before Jesus were sometimes frustrated because fulfilment of their predictions was postponed. Yet, the true prophets were reconciled to the view that their task was to proclaim the message of Yahweh, who only was responsible for its fulfilment. Enslin is right, therefore, in his assertion that Jesus was not responsible for the fulfilment of His prediction of an imminent end. However, that Jesus lived in the first century and perceived the universe differently from

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While Thomas does not use Ramsey's terminology, his position is clear: in respect to Jesus' ethics, genesis does affect validity!

<sup>1</sup> Ramsey, Basic Christian Ethics, p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> Henry, Christian Personal Ethics, p. 550, fn. 6.



modern man has absolutely nothing to do with the failure of His prediction to be fulfilled.

Eschatological/Apocalyptic Language Viewed as Myth, Symbol, Form. As previously observed, Rudolf Bultmann believes the message of Jesus cannot be properly understood unless the Synoptic Gospels are demythologized. By removing myth one is able to determine to a greater degree the essential message of the New Testament Church. This process, Bultmann suggests, was begun by the Apostles John and Paul, and it is legitimate for the student of the New Testament to continue this endeavor. In fact, modern man, who is now familiar with a scientific world-view, is obligated to apply the tools and insights of criticism to the Synoptic record in order to recover the original form of the gospel message from the "mythological layers" of material compounded by an inadequate world-view and by theological misunderstandings. And once the original form has been determined, it too must be demythologized. Therefore, one should keep in mind that Bultmann does not simply propose that eschatological language be interpreted symbolically, spiritually or mythologically for the purpose of teaching truths which escape literal expression. Rather, he insists that the truths of Jesus' message cannot be discovered until myth is stripped from the Synoptic Gospels. These truths, once discovered, must then be rendered into terminology which will convey the existential impact of the kerygma.

Some scholars who attempt to deal with the problems associated with Jesus' proclamation of an imminent End encourage the retention of the eschatological/apocalyptic language, but suggest that it should be understood symbolically or mythically. Such language should be interpreted figuratively or spiritually and seen to convey the essential truths of Jesus' preaching about the End. Each writer will have his/her own emphasis.

H.K. McArthur contends that the first-century

eschatological concepts Jesus held can have meaning only when translated into twentieth-century terminology. Jesus and the writers of the New Testament "may not have intended their eschatology to be taken with Occidental literalness." That is, apocalypticism, by its very nature, is the language of symbol. Or, "it is the language of 'myth.'" McArthur believes the writers were aware that "Coming events could be described, if at all, only in strange and mysterious language."<sup>1</sup> He observes that although the conceptual world of the first century was different from the twentieth, twentieth century man is not closer to the truth. But one must be alerted to the necessity of translating into modern terms the eschatology of the New Testament. Only by this method can such language speak to modern man.<sup>2</sup>

The problem of Jesus' having been mistaken about the end is not, for McArthur, a serious issue. He advises that any Christology which deals with the human side of Jesus must "recognize some limits to his knowledge" and should observe that "it is a distinctive characteristic of human ignorance that frequently we are ignorant that we are ignorant!" Further, McArthur believes that for Christian faith, at least, the new age did begin with Jesus, although not as He had anticipated in every detail. "As has been said: Jesus expected the Kingdom but it was the Church that arrived."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>H.K. McArthur, Understanding the Sermon on the Mount, p. 97. McArthur comments: "The apocalypticists, like modern poets, used their symbols with a freedom which is the despair of the literal-minded reader." Ibid., p. 98.

<sup>2</sup>McArthur, p. 98.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 156. In fact, this position was held by Alfred Loisy as early as 1902 and caused quite a controversy in the Catholic Church. According to Loisy, Jesus expected the Kingdom to come within His generation



In speaking to the concepts of sheer finality and the judgment of evil, as described through eschatological language, McArthur suggests that these are still pressing concerns of man. He comments:

Whatever the time or nature of the final Eschaton may be, we have our private, individual eschatons to face: The hour of death, the fall of the curtain on all that we have done throughout our mortal years. We shall differ as to what extent the eschatological sanctions are to be interpreted symbolically; but they express in dramatic fashion the seriousness of death and life.<sup>1</sup>

E. Clinton Gardner believes that one who understands adequately the "nature of apocalypticism and eschatology" holds the key to answering the inquiry as to whether Jesus' ethic is "undermined for us by the failure of his apocalyptic expectations . . . ." <sup>2</sup> That is,

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and made an announcement to that effect, but it was the Church that came instead. And since its appearance, the Church has had the responsibility of "enlarging the form of the gospel." Loisy, p. 166. Note: Several chapters of Loisy's book were published in French in 1902. (Cf. Ibid., the editor's introduction, p. xi.) A second edition, issued in 1903, was banned by the Holy Inquisition with the approval of Pope Pius X in the same year. Loisy was finally excommunicated in 1908. Cf. Ibid., p. xvi, and John Ratté, Three Modernists: Alfred Loisy, George Tyrrell, William L. Sullivan (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1967), pp. 49-141. To Loisy, a legitimately enlarged and modified conception of the Kingdom which would speak to modern man must urge a less important position for the preaching of the Kingdom as "coming." Loisy admits that such a view might diminish or even eliminate interest in the imminence of the Kingdom, but the Church, he insists, must regard itself as a "provisional institution, a transitional organization." Loisy, p. 168.

<sup>1</sup>McArthur, Understanding the Sermon on the Mount, p. 158.

<sup>2</sup>Gardner, Biblical Faith and Social Ethics, p. 64. On his view of Jesus' Kingdom proclamation, Gardner writes: "The first and most arresting proclamation that Jesus made about the Kingdom was that its consummation was near. While it is likely that the early Christians exaggerated the apocalyptic element in his teaching, it is



according to Gardner, both apocalypticism and eschatology affirm that regardless of what happens "God is still Lord and his Kingdom will ultimately prevail,"<sup>1</sup> and both, therefore, "are forms of myth which express in religious terms what faith believes the unknown future to hold in store . . . ." Such forms, so Gardner believes, were meant to "be taken symbolically and not literally . . . ." <sup>2</sup>

Gardner contends that Jesus' imminent expectation --i.e., His foreshortening of the time--was an inevitable consequence of His conviction that God would win the struggle against evil. For Gardner, the spiritual truth of this fundamental message was not dependent upon the form through which it was expressed. He suggests that Jesus merely used "the conventional apocalyptic forms" to teach a "message of permanent value."<sup>3</sup>

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impossible to understand either Jesus' career or his teaching unless we recognize that he thought of the Kingdom primarily as a future but imminent reign of God." Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>1</sup>Gardner, Biblical Faith and Social Ethics, p. 64.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. Cf. E. Clinton Gardner, "Eschatological Ethics," A Dictionary of Christian Ethics, ed. John Macquarrie (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1967), p. 109. Concerning Jesus' "error" and His use of apocalyptic language, Gardner comments: "The problem with which we have dealt here in terms of the bearing of Jesus' apocalyptic opinions upon his ethics is fundamentally, of course, a christological problem. Christian ethics is clearly theologically rooted, as we have emphasized . . . . It is significant that Jesus viewed himself as speaking with the authority of God and the Kingdom and yet he confessed that he did not know the day and the hour wherein the Kingdom would come (Matt. 24:36) . . . . The purpose of the Incarnation was not to reveal to men scientific or historical truth but rather a knowledge of God, of man, and of God's will for man. Jesus simply accepted the world view of his contemporaries as the prophets before him had done in their day. Such limitation was the result of his human nature just as much as were the experiences of hungering, thirsting, growing weary, and suffering

According to Cyril W. Emmet, the failure of the proponents of Consistent Eschatology to interpret Jesus' eschatology figuratively rather than literally has left their view with two insoluble problems: Jesus' ethics were limited to His own time, and His "whole life was based upon a fundamental error."<sup>1</sup> Of this error, Emmet comments: "Tone down the harsher colours as we will, it seems impossible that a Jesus dominated by an error and living for an illusion can ever retain the reverence of the world."<sup>2</sup>

Emmet contends that the problem of the so-called error of Jesus is eliminated if one simply admits that many of Jesus' eschatological sayings should be taken figuratively rather than literally. He suggests, for example, that few readers would insist upon a literal interpretation of Jesus' return on "clouds of glory." And to Emmet if such a saying can be spiritualized, then one should be willing to spiritualize the phrase "this generation" in Mark 9:1, as well as other eschatological sayings.<sup>3</sup>

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physical death. Jesus' teaching about God, man, and God's will were not dependent upon his apocalyptic views. Rather, they were derived from the religious heritage of Israel and his own religious consciousness. The apocalyptic views of his day served essentially as a framework for presenting his fundamental message." Gardner, Biblical Faith and Social Ethics, p. 66, fn. 24.

<sup>1</sup> Emmet, The Eschatological Question in the Gospels, p. 71.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 72.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 57, 72ff. Emmet contends that once it is conceded that Jesus' apocalyptic language should not be taken literally, and that the figurative element is found in much of His eschatological language, then many of Jesus' sayings will appear to require a spiritual interpretation. Ibid., pp. 54-57. Further, Emmet believes it likely that the synoptic writers, Matthew in particular, heightened Jesus' eschatology by taking sayings literally which He probably intended to be accepted in a "more



T.F. Glasson agrees that if Schweitzer and other eschatologists are correct, then one is faced with the serious problem of a mistaken Jesus. He also contends that proposed solutions which suggest that Jesus' knowledge was limited to thought-forms of His own day, or that His convictions resulted in a case of "prophetic foreshortening" do not erase the difficulty. To charge Jesus with having made such an error, Glasson believes, is to assert that He did not understand His own place in God's revelation in history, and that He emphasized, not moral precepts, but the supernatural. Glasson warns that "some people have abandoned the Christian faith on this issue, finding no bridge between the apocalyptic visionary and the Christ of the Church's worship."<sup>1</sup>

Glasson admits that if certain sayings of Jesus are taken literally, some of His prophecies "were plainly unfulfilled" (e.g., Matt. 16:28; Mark 13:30). He argues, however, that since the Bible shares the pictorial language of the Eastern writers, one should not press symbolic expressions too literally. Rather, to Glasson, the spiritual truths of Jesus' symbolic sayings should be emphasized.<sup>2</sup>

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or less symbolical sense." Ibid., pp. 57f.

<sup>1</sup>Glasson, "Jesus and His Gospel Since Schweitzer," p. 254. Cf. T.F. Glasson, His Appearing and His Kingdom (London: The Epworth Press, 1953), p. 3. He writes personally: "As one who has found in the Gospels his daily food for twenty years, I personally cannot reconcile the impression they make upon me with this picture of a mistaken fanatic bringing the message that millions now living will never die."

<sup>2</sup>Glasson, His Appearing and His Kingdom, pp. 2f. See p. 3 for a detailed list of the passages which, in Glasson's analysis, should be understood symbolically, e.g., Mk. 14:61f.; Matt. 26:64. Cf. Ibid., pp. 32f. Cf. Glasson, "Reply to Caiaphas (Mark XIV:61)," pp. 88-93. Glasson contends that a critical study of the Synoptic Gospels will permit one "to regard the traditional imagery



Reinhold Niebuhr credits apocalypticism with the thought that makes it possible for man to view the total plan of God's moral purpose, from the beginning to its final fulfilment--a plan which places the "final fulfilment at the end of time and not in a realm above temporality . . . ." Therefore, apocalypticism remains "true to the genius of prophetic religion . . . ." <sup>1</sup>

According to Niebuhr, apocalypticism allows one to "state mythically what cannot be stated rationally." "To state the matter mythically is to do justice to the fact that the eternal can only be fulfilled in the temporal." However, Niebuhr admits that the acceptance of apocalypticism as mythical expression is not without problems. For example, "since myth is forced to state a paradoxical aspect of reality in terms of concepts connoting historical sequence, it always leads to historical illusions." <sup>2</sup> Niebuhr submits that Jesus was not free from such historical illusions since "He expected the coming of the Messianic Kingdom in his lifetime. . . ." <sup>3</sup> Yet, for Niebuhr, the historical illusions "do not destroy the truth of the myth . . . ." <sup>4</sup> He suggests that once the

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of Advent and Judgement as symbolic rather than literal" without being disloyal to the teaching and spirit of Jesus. He claims that Jesus simply used the traditional language of His day as a vehicle to express such spiritual truths as: the final victory of Christ, the fact of the judgment, and the certainty of reunion. Glasson, His Appearing and His Kingdom, pp. 13, vii. Cf. Glasson, The Second Advent, p. 117.

<sup>1</sup> Niebuhr, An Interpretation of Christian Ethics, p. 57.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 57f.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

Church was forced to face the reality of an on-going society and its many problems, compromise relative to historical perspective became necessary. Niebuhr's position on this issue is very positive since, to him,

. . .the mistakes which resulted, both from illusions about the course of history and from the adjustments which had to be made when the illusion vanished, do not invalidate the basic insights of prophetic religion. They merely present Christian ethics afresh with the problem of compromise. . . .<sup>1</sup>

In her response to historical illusion, Georgia Harkness contends, for example, that it is unrealistic to believe in a literal Parousia. She suggests that such an expectation can be taken as "symbolic of a final consummation," but to emphasize such a mythological concept de-emphasizes the "first coming" of Christ, and the concentration on the return of Christ is almost inevitably "shunted away from the present scene." Harkness believes the concept of a "second coming" must be demythologized, and even then it should not be considered very important since the hope of the Christian does not lie in such a belief. Rather, Harkness believes, "It is our risen Lord's continuous coming as Holy Spirit to those who will accept his peace and heed his call to service that is our most vital ground of hope."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 58f.

<sup>2</sup> Harkness, Our Christian Hope, pp. 131f. In two of her earlier works, Harkness appeared to be more convinced of the apocalyptic influence upon Jesus. Harkness, The Sources of Western Mortality, pp. 221f. She comments: "the consensus of opinion is that, with all the problems entailed, we must accept the fact that with others of his time Jesus looked forward to a cataclysmic termination of this earthly regime." Also, Georgia Harkness, Christian Ethics (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1957), p. 63. Here she indicates that Jesus accepted the apocalyptic beliefs of His day. In, Our Christian Hope, p. 128, she contends that He transformed apocalypticism so that it no longer portrayed a hopeless world destined for a cataclysmic end.

Latimer Jackson holds that while Jesus was confident of His expectation of the imminent Kingdom, modern man is, nonetheless, compelled to admit that "it has turned out otherwise . . . and . . . the shape in which He announced it, is absolutely inconceivable to modern minds."<sup>1</sup> Hopes such as an external coming of the Son of Man, expectation of Judgment, and anticipation of a Kingdom from above constitute, in Jackson's view, the husk but not the kernel.<sup>2</sup> Jackson believes that modern man is justified in demythologizing Jesus' message; he is even obligated to do so in order to retain Jesus' "great utterances" which are relevant for all time.<sup>3</sup>

Wilhelm Bousset also holds that Jesus was mistaken in His expectation of an imminent End. He observes that the mighty transformation did not take place, and the idea of any universal change, at least "in the shape in which Jesus announced it, . . . has become absolutely inconceivable."<sup>4</sup> Bousset suggests, however, that although modern man cannot pray in the "direct and literal sense" of Jesus' words, "Thy Kingdom Come," he can, nonetheless, find some relevance in Jesus' outlook and should be advised not "to throw away hastily and rashly things of permanent value and importance in the preaching of Jesus." To Bousset, "The form of his (Jesus') preaching of the Kingdom was transitory, and its husk has already shed itself. But within the form there lies an eternal content."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Jackson, p. 341.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 338ff.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 339f.

<sup>4</sup>Bousset, Jesus, p. 96.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 97f.



Bousset believes that Jesus used eschatology. That is, Jesus' stress upon the imminence of the Kingdom served primarily as a "form," a "husk," "a mould into which his genius poured a new content," a means "by which dross was transformed into the clearest, finest gold."<sup>1</sup>

In a view somewhat akin to that of Bousset, E.F. Scott proposes that the method of apocalyptic, not important in its own right, was used by Jesus to stress ethical demands of the Kingdom.<sup>2</sup> He suggests that Jesus' attitude toward apocalypticism was similar to His attitude toward the Law, which He aimed at fulfilling but was opposed to in principle, "and was bound in the course of time to dissolve." Scott claims that Jesus

In like manner . . . accepted the apocalyptic beliefs and used them as the forms in which he proclaimed his message. But the message itself must in no way be confounded with the forms. In its essence it was in conflict with them, and could not fully unfold itself until it had thrown them off.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 87. Bousset feels that Jesus' eschatological message is a reminder that everything has its end and that God determines the aims, goal and end of all things. Ibid., p. 97. Bousset also suggests that, while modern man cannot share Jesus' expectation, shortness of life is reminder enough for man that his "own end . . . still remains a thing of the immediate future." Ibid., p. 98.

<sup>2</sup>E.F. Scott, "The Place of Apocalyptical Conceptions in the Mind of Jesus," Journal of Biblical Literature 41 (1922): 138f. Cf. Scott, The Ethical Teaching of Jesus, p. 45. He comments, ". . . the real effect of apocalyptic hope was not to distort and narrow but to intensify the moral demand of Jesus." Also, E.F. Scott, The Kingdom of God in the New Testament, pp. 82ff., 95.

<sup>3</sup>Scott, The Ethical Teaching of Jesus, p. 44.

According to Scott, Jesus was determined to communicate His conviction that through the power of God the moral forces would ultimately overcome evil. It was, Scott suggests, "By means of apocalyptic, and when necessary in spite of it, he (Jesus) sought to proclaim this faith."<sup>1</sup> Further, Scott believes it must be emphasized that Jesus merely employed the apocalyptic tools to communicate His message, and "He did not allow himself to be fettered by them."<sup>2</sup>

Edward W. Winstanley proposes that while Jesus predicted an imminent coming of the Kingdom of God, He admitted that the time of its coming was indefinite.<sup>3</sup> Winstanley suggests the same can be concluded in respect to the Parousia; i.e. Jesus predicted His exaltation to take place after His death and resurrection, but again the time of His return in glory was indefinite. Winstanley observes, nonetheless, that the disciples were encouraged to watch and to prepare for His return and the coming Kingdom within their own generation (Matt. 10:23; Mk. 9:1, 13:30).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>2</sup> Scott, The Ethical Teaching of Jesus, p. 43. Cf. E.F. Scott, "The Ethics of the Gospels," The Evolution of Ethics, ed. E. Hershey Sneath (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1927), p. 274. He comments: "With the apocalyptic theory for its own sake he troubled himself little, and we cannot suppose that out of deference to it he allowed a mere temporary value to his ethic."

<sup>3</sup> Winstanley, pp. 40ff., 60. He maintains that such a concept can be observed in the "Q" material.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 120ff., 132ff., 138ff. Winstanley comments: "It appears only conformable with His perfect humanity to admit that the Prophet of Nazareth experienced that foreshortening of time-relations which is the trait of all intense and exalted prophecy." Ibid., p. 141.

According to Winstanley, Jesus held an expectation which was a "prophetic, stimulating and valuable product of the Jewish religious imagination. . . but historically (in a scientific sense of the word) a fiction."<sup>1</sup> He is convinced, nevertheless, that there are ways to appreciate Jesus' message in spite of His time-oriented mistake. Winstanley believes Jesus adopted the valid hope inherent within the message concerning the imminent end, transformed it, and gave it "an abiding value, even many centuries after all possibility of its literal realisation in human history had passed away."<sup>2</sup> Winstanley contends it was Jesus' ethical teaching which effected a transformation of the form--eschatology--of His message.<sup>3</sup> That is, "In a word the religious hope outlived the form in which it had to be presented: the Ethics were found to be separable from the Eschatology."<sup>4</sup>

A.B.D. Alexander maintains that the eschatological interpretation attempts to "empty the person and teaching of Jesus of their originality and universality. . . ." and "to reduce the Son of Man to the level of a Jewish rhapsodist," who encouraged man to become indifferent to the world's problems.<sup>5</sup> He charges that the futuristic interpretation "confuses colour with form, by-product with main intention, and finds the ethics of Jesus impracticable because it sees His moral utterances out

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 358.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 359.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 383. Winstanley suggests that modern man might model his own solution to this problem after the Apostle John, who spiritualized the eschatological content of Jesus' message. Ibid., pp. 332ff.

<sup>5</sup> Alexander, Christianity and Ethics, p. 134.



of that perspective which gave them beauty and truth."<sup>1</sup> Alexander believes to accept this view means labeling Jesus as a "false prophet," since "the sudden and catastrophic coming of the kingdom as predicted by the Hebrew apocalyphtics did not take place."<sup>2</sup> Believing that many of Jesus' sayings pertaining to His second coming are "couched in figurative language," and suggesting that it is best to understand the concept of the consummation spiritually, Alexander writes, "Not in a visable reign or personal return of the Son of Man does the consummation of the kingdom consist, but in the complete spiritual sovereignty of Christ over the hearts and minds of men."<sup>3</sup>

Each may uniquely express his position, but the issue is basically the same among those scholars who appeal to a methodology that interprets Jesus' eschatology as myth, symbol or mere form. They argue for the view that the true content of Jesus' teachings lies deeper than can be discerned through a method which interprets Jesus' eschatology as determining His ethics and as teaching a literal, temporal consummation. Therefore, these scholars should not be accused of failing to take seriously Jesus' message. Theirs is a thoughtful attempt to discover the depth and relevancy of His teachings.

These scholars also remind the student of the Bible to take seriously the nature of language when interpreting eschatological/apocalyptic literature. Of course, when it comes to such literature, multiple methodologies in search of "correct conclusions" are

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<sup>1</sup>Alexander, "The Kingdom of God and the Ethic of Jesus," pp. 74f.

<sup>2</sup>Alexander, Christianity and Ethics, p. 135.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 139.

proposed. That is understandable. However, any viable methodology must offer a consistent approach to biblical prophecy as a means of revealing God's purposes in history. Therefore, one's presuppositions should be based upon the scriptural perspective rather than upon premises espoused by philosophy or psychology. For example, if one proposes that because the modern world-view differs so radically from that held by Jesus and His contemporaries, eschatological language must now be interpreted spiritually and/or existentially and can never be expressive of a literal, temporal event--past, present, or future--then the meaning of such language as employed by Jesus is determined by a non-biblical perspective.

It is apparent that the Old Testament prophets and the apocalyptic writers often cast the predictive element of their messages in eschatological imagery. However, their graphic terminology was never intended to undermine the literal aspect of their prediction. The one-to-one correspondence was understood. Rather, their picturesque language was meant to convey the magnitude--whether grace or judgment--of God's forthcoming action. The same allowances must be permitted in a consideration of Jesus' predictions. He used quite naturally on occasions apocalyptic language to speak of God's ultimate triumph in history. Why should He have avoided such a colorful and accepted means of communication? As George Tyrrell argued, it is impossible to maintain "that the apocalyptic imagery of Jesus was but an ethical parable,"<sup>1</sup> He says,

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<sup>1</sup>Tyrrell, Christianity at the Cross-Roads, p. 93. Tyrrell contends that the Catholic Church, at the beginning of the twentieth century, had retained in theological disguise the essential message of Jesus, while Liberal Protestantism had "eliminated what was principal in the Gospel--the apocalyptic emphasis--and had "retained and segregated what was but secondary and subordinate--the moral element. . . ." Ibid., p. 88.



"To pretend that Jesus regarded His apocalyptic portrayal of the transcendent as symbolic is to pretend that His mind belonged to the nineteenth century."<sup>1</sup>

Even F.C. Burkitt, who agrees that modern man must allegorize and spiritualize the message of Jesus for his own use in order to make it relevant to his own age, admits that occasionally interpreters need a book such as Schweitzer's Quest of the Historical Jesus to "teach us boldly to trust the evidence of our documents and to accept the eschatology of the Christian Gospel as being historically the eschatology of Jesus . . . ."<sup>2</sup>

A Suggested Biblical Solution: The Delay Viewed in the Light of Yahweh's Sovereignty

Joachim Jeremias suggests that the End, which Jesus originally thought would be imminent, has not yet come because man is now experiencing a "Grace Period." To Jeremias, God's grace is the key to understanding eschatology. God is the one to determine--as His people cry out to Him--when the End will come. In the meantime, His people live in the "interval of grace."<sup>3</sup> A.L. Moore who argues for an "undelimited" Parousia, agrees that God permitted a grace period which allows for missionary activity in order that men will have "'time for amendment

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 101. Tyrrell, however, recognizes the need to reinterpret Jesus' eschatology. To him, the form of Jesus' eschatology has lost all literal truth (Ibid.), although His "apocalyptic vision" contains a "universal and abiding symbolism" which offers valid spiritual truths. (Ibid., pp. 210ff.) Tyrrell's point is that modern man may not believe in a literal, temporal end, but Jesus did, and modern concepts must not be forced upon Jesus. Ibid., pp. 95f.

<sup>2</sup> Schweitzer, Quest of the Historical Jesus, Preface, p. vii. Burkitt, e.g. sees the Parousia expectation as relevant for modern man, but only when the old formulas and old symbols are translated into modern terminology. F.C. Burkitt, The Gospel History and Its Transmission (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1911), pp. 179ff.

<sup>3</sup> Jeremias, New Testament Theology, p. 140.



of Life and the grace and comfort of his Holy Spirit': time, that is, in which to enter freely into the significance of Christ's work, to exercise faith, and hope and love."<sup>1</sup> This is an interesting proposal. But is it scripturally grounded? One could hope for more substantial support for the theory from both Jeremias and Moore, although Jeremias does make reference to Luke 13:6-9 (Parable of the Unproductive Fig Tree in the Vineyard) as the key to understanding how God's mercy tempers His sovereign judgment.<sup>2</sup>

The theory that Jesus' prediction was not fulfilled due to God's offer of an interval of grace does have support outside of the Synoptic tradition, particularly from the Old Testament prophetic tradition.

Old Testament Prophecy: Unfulfilled and Adaptive Predictions. As argued above, Jesus as a prophet must be permitted prophetic allowances. Therefore, His unfulfilled prediction must be examined in the light of the prophetic tradition of the Old Testament. In this tradition, it was normal for unfulfilled prophecy to be regarded as proof that the word was not spoken by Yahweh (Deut. 18:22)<sup>3</sup> and as evidence that the prophet had not been sent by Yahweh (Jer. 28:9).

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<sup>1</sup> Moore, The Parousia in the New Testament, p. 206. Note: This aspect of Moore's position offers insight into resolving the dilemma of Jesus' unfulfilled prediction, but as noted above, it is a limited perspective. He fails to determine how the centuries long delay--which Jesus obviously did not anticipate--can be reconciled to a "grace period" determined by God.

<sup>2</sup> Jeremias, New Testament Theology, p. 140.

<sup>3</sup> Of course, Deut. 13:1-3 warns that fulfilment of prophecy is no guarantee that a prophet is true. The prophet's proclamation must lead men to worship and serve the one true God. "If a prophet arises among you, or a dreamer of dreams, and gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or wonder which he tells you comes to pass, and if he says, 'Let us go after other gods,' which you have not known, 'and let us serve them,' you shall not listen

However, the Old Testament writers do not cover up cases in which predictions of genuine prophets were not fulfilled as originally described and which can no longer be accomplished because the age and context have passed away. J.J.M. Roberts observes, for example, that Ezekiel's prediction of Tyre's complete destruction at the hand of Nebuchadnezzar (Ezekiel 26-28) never materialized. In reaction to his unfulfilled prophecy, Ezekiel explains that Egypt was to be given over to Nebuchadnezzar as a consolation prize.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, Robert P. Carroll categorizes this prophecy as an "adaptive prediction." That is, the prophet adjusted his prophecy after Nebuchadnezzar's failure to conquer Tyre as described in the prophecy. Carroll's dissonance theory as a means of examining the failure of biblical prophecy deserves careful attention.<sup>2</sup> Surely genuine prophets felt the conflict and tension when their prophecies were not fulfilled in accordance with their expectations.<sup>3</sup> Of course, as Carroll illustrates, Ezekiel was able to make shifts in his prophecy, once he realized that his prophecy

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to the words of that Prophet or to that dreamer of dreams; for the Lord your God is testing you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul." (Deut. 13:1-3)

<sup>1</sup>J.J.M. Roberts, "A Christian Perspective on Prophetic Prediction," Interpretation; A Journal of Bible and Theology XXXIII (1979): 242-243. Cf. Scott, The Relevance of the Prophets, p. 11. Scott cites Isaiah 17:1 in which it is predicted that Damascus will become a heap of ruins. Yet, Damascus still remains a populous, if troubled city.

<sup>2</sup>Robert P. Carroll, When Prophecy Failed; Cognitive Dissonance in the Prophetic Traditions of the Old Testament (New York: The Seabury Press, 1979), pp. 174-176. Carroll employs the "theory of cognitive dissonance as a means of analysing the prophetic texts because it provides an account of how people react to the failure of their expectations and therefore it might illuminate some elements of biblical traditions in terms of response to failure of the prophetic visions to be realized." Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>3</sup>For example, Jeremiah was confused and embarrassed



regarding Tyre would not be satisfactorily fulfilled. Therefore, in this incident the adjustment is made and there is minimal tension.<sup>1</sup>

Non-literal Fulfilment. There are also prophecies which fall into the category of non-literal fulfilment. For example, when Jeremiah prophesied blight upon the land of Judah when the Egyptians were driven back to Egypt by the Chaldeans (Jer. 4:23-31), he is confident of the Lord's intentions. Jeremiah speaks for the Lord: "For this the earth shall mourn, and the heavens above be dark. Because I have spoken, I have purposed. And I will not change My mind (nacham),<sup>2</sup> nor will I turn from it,"

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when fulfilment did not match his predictions. Jeremiah had predicted, Yahweh failed to respond as anticipated, and Jeremiah's opponents chided, "Where is the word of the Lord? Let it come!" (Jer. 17:15) The prophet urged God to protect him from shame, and to bring double destruction so that he would be vindicated and his critics dismayed (Jer. 17:18). But when Jeremiah's desires were not satisfied he complained to Yahweh:

O Lord, Thou has deceived me,  
and I was deceived;  
Thou art stronger than I,  
and thou has prevailed.  
I have become a laughingstock all the day;  
every one mocks me. (20:7)

For whenever I speak, I cry out,  
I shout, "Violence and destruction!"  
For the word of the Lord has become for me  
a reproach and derision all day long.  
(20:8)

Yet eventually Jeremiah was vindicated. His prophecies were fulfilled. As Rowley states, "The accidents of time and agent were different, but the essence and content of the disasters came fully upon his generation. But again we may be warned against a too literal reading of prophecy." H.H. Rowley, The Re-discovery of the Old Testament (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1946), p. 289.

<sup>1</sup> Carroll, p. 175.

<sup>2</sup> See below for discussion of "nacham" relative to God's prerogative to offer an opportunity to repent and receive His mercy in lieu of fulfilling promised judgment.



(4:28, NASB)\* Although Judah was punished, and in this sense, Yahweh did not relent, one must agree with H.H. Rowley that ". . . nothing comparable with his (Jeremiah's) expectations came to pass."<sup>1</sup>

This prophecy is similar in tone to Jeremiah's prediction expressed in Jeremiah 9. According to the prophet, severe judgment was to come upon all the uncircumcised, including Egypt, Judah, Edom, sons of Ammon and Moab, ". . . for all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel is uncircumcised in heart." (Jer. 9:26) Judgment did come upon the nations, but Zion was certainly not punished to the degree described in Jeremiah's poem of 9:17-22.

Therefore, it may be concluded that many poetically cast and symbolically expressed prophecies were not meant to be taken literally. For example, the writer of Isaiah 40:4 did not literally expect "every mountain and hill to be made low or the rough ground to become plain." Nor did the author of Isaiah 27:1 expect the defeat of an actual serpent called Leviathan, a dragon who lives in the sea. These pictures communicate the completeness of God's plans once again to deliver Israel from captivity, and they graphically portray His eventual triumph over the enemies of His chosen people.<sup>2</sup>

The prophecy of Joel 2:28-32 is viewed by Luke to have been fulfilled through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:17-21). However, Luke is not concerned with the non-literal fulfilment of the prophecy.

<sup>1</sup>Rowley, p. 288.

<sup>2</sup>R.B.Y. Scott observes that some "predictions are . . . clothed in the language of poetic imagery and hyperbole which no one but the most prosaic literalist could insist on taking as exact description." Scott, The Relevance of the Prophets, pp. 11f.

\* New American Standard Bible

That is, he makes no comment on the failure of the sun to become dark and the moon to turn to blood. Of course, one may argue that an element of the prophecy is yet to be fulfilled. But the fact remains: Luke records the passage as a unit, with the apparent assumption that Peter understood Joel's prophecy to have been fulfilled through the Pentecostal event. As Rowley suggests,

With such a clear example from the early Church of indifference to details, we may be delivered from the spirit that comes to the prophecies of the Old Testament with the preconceived idea that every detail must be fulfilled in literal fashion.<sup>1</sup>

Another example of non-literal fulfilment can be found in the prediction of Babylon's destruction by the Medes (Jer. 51:11,28; Isa. 13:17). According to the description in Isaiah, Babylon's devastation was to be shockingly complete! Destruction was to be compared to that poured upon Sodom and Gomorrah (Isa. 13:19); children were to be dashed to pieces (13:16); the sun, the moon and stars would no longer shine (13:10); the land was to be turned over to the birds and animals never again to be inhabited by man (13:20-22). The prophecy, as worded, clearly went unfulfilled. The Medes fell to Persia, and the Persians conquered Babylon. However, rather than devastating the city, the Persians accepted Babylon's peaceful surrender and made the city a royal residence. The city existed for centuries thereafter, although it became nonexistent as a power.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Rowley, pp. 287f.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Rowley, who states, "Yet again, while we can find no literal fulfilment of this expectation, we can find its substantial fulfilment. For Babylon, the proud ruler of kingdoms exercised but a short-lived sway, and her empire was swallowed in the Persian empire. As the mistress of Israel's world she ceased to be, and whether she fell to Mede or to Persian was not the vital matter." Rowley, p. 290.

From the New Testament perspective, this passage also warns against a literal interpretation of passages



Prophecy and God's Prerogative to Change His Mind.

There is a dialectical pattern to the prophetic tradition which can be eradicated only by removing great sections of material from the Bible. That is, God comes in salvation, and He comes in judgment. The dialectic is due to the ongoing dialogue between Yahweh and His people. The people rebel, but it is God's desire to bring them to salvation. Is there a biblical rationale which explains God's decision on given occasions to bestow salvation or judgment? Theologically, one must admit that sovereign decisions possess inherent validity whether understood by man or not. Yet man continues to believe that an enlightened understanding of God's actions will enable him to establish a viable relationship with Him. The Old Testament provides a graphic display of God's coming in both salvation and judgment.

Much of the history of Israel can be viewed from the perspective of God's involvement with a rebellious people, who are both rebuked by Yahweh's spokesmen and courted by Yahweh in His attempt to win them to Himself and mold them into an obedient people. However, Yahweh's judgmental predictions, while genuine and serious, cannot be fully appreciated unless they are also understood as earnest pleas for the people to repent, return to Him and escape His intended judgment. Carroll suggests that,

Because the call to repentance allowed the possibility of change being introduced into the community it also guaranteed the moral freedom of that community and preserved in some sense the sovereignty of Yahweh to withdraw the word of judgment.<sup>1</sup>

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which adopt Old Testament examples and/or metaphors employed originally in non-literal predictions. A case in point is seen in Revelation when the writer selects Babylon as a metaphor to depict the enemy (Rome) of God's people. God's judgment will be decisive, but the language portrays that judgment symbolically.

<sup>1</sup>Carroll, p. 22.



This sovereign trait, which can be understood as divine privilege influenced by Yahweh's mercy, deserves considerable attention.

The Old Testament writers did not hesitate to present the dynamic, flexible aspect of Yahweh's character. To change His mind was a sovereign prerogative which Yahweh exercised in several judgments and decisions. Some incidents other than those specifically related to prophetic prediction supplement the evidence and demonstrate the importance of this sovereign trait for understanding the redemptive history of the Old Testament. For example, God became so disappointed with man that He regretted ever having created him, and He decided to destroy mankind through a flood. However, His mercy prevailed in the sparing of Noah. (Genesis 6:5-8)

(5) The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

(6) And the Lord was sorry (nacham)<sup>1</sup> that he had made man on the earth and it grieved him in his heart. (7) So the Lord said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the ground, man and beast and creeping things and birds of the air, for I am sorry (nacham) that I have made them!

(8) But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.

The writer of this account does not deem strange this ability of God to regret having created man. He says

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<sup>1</sup>Nacham (נָחַם nāḥam) occurs most frequently in the Niphal and Piel and primarily means "to repent, to relent, to be sorry or to change one's mind." Both the KJV and RSV use "repent" as the dominant translation. The majority of the references are records of God's actions rather than man's and open a view of God's intense involvement with man. A second primary meaning of nacham is "to comfort" (Piel) or "to be comforted" (Niphal, Pual, Hithpael). Marvin R. Wilson, "נָחַם (Nāḥam)," Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament. Vol. 2. Ed. R. Laird Harris, et. al. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), pp. 570-571. R.B. Girdlestone, Synonyms of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1948), p. 89. Yahweh is a God of feeling; He is compassionate. He hears man and observes his actions. God's plans are often conditioned by the response of men. Cf. M.R. Wilson, p. 571.

nothing of this act of repentance as a threat to God's authority; His sovereignty remains intact. This great God, who originally observed that bringing man into being was good (Gen. 1:31), changed His mind.

Yahweh regreted yet another of His major decisions. He had reluctantly agreed to the demand of the people for a king and commissioned Samuel to anoint Saul as the first earthly king of Israel. (1 Samuel 8-10) But Saul did not live up to Yahweh's expectations, and He was sorry that He had made Saul king. (1 Sam. 15:10-11)

(10) The word of the Lord came to Samuel: (11) "I repent (nacham) that I have made Saul king; for he has turned back from following me, and has not performed my commandments." And Samuel was angry; and he cried to the Lord all night.

Samuel's anger and his night-long cry unto Yahweh had no effect on His decision to remove Saul from the throne. Saul had committed the sin of failing to carry out the "ban" (herem) against Agag, the king of the Amalekites (1 Sam. 15:1-9), and his subsequent repentance was a sham. Yahweh held to His decision, and Samuel was given the unenviable task of delivering the message. (1 Sam. 15:24-31; 34,35)

(24) And Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned; for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice. (25) Now therefore, I pray, pardon my sin, and return with me, that I may worship the Lord." (26) And Samuel said to Saul, "I will not return with you; for you have rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you from being king over Israel." (27) As Samuel turned to go away, Saul laid hold upon the skirt of his robe, and it tore. (28) And Samuel said to him, "The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day, and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you. (29) And also the Glory of Israel will not lie or repent; (nacham) for he is not a man, that he should repent." (nacham) (30) Then he said, "I have sinned; yet honor me now before Israel, and return with me, that I may worship the Lord your God." (31) So Samuel turned back after Saul; and Saul worshipped the Lord. . . . (34) Then Samuel went to Ramah;



and Saul went up to his house in Gibeah of Saul.  
 (35) And Samuel did not see Saul again until  
 the day of his death, but Samuel grieved over  
 Saul. And the Lord repented (nacham) that he  
 made Saul king over Israel.

This incident leaves some questions unanswered. One may wonder about Yahweh's reasons for not relenting and sparing Saul. Perhaps the demand for purity and obedience were crucial as Yahweh established an earthly monarchy through which He could relate to His people. Perhaps Saul's repentance was shallow, and Yahweh's standards were so high that not even Samuel the great judge could sway Yahweh's mind on this occasion. What one learns is that God does form immutable plans and that He so attends to events that His ultimate purpose cannot be thwarted. The Psalmist could write;

The Lord has sworn  
     and will not change his mind (nacham)  
 "You are a priest for ever  
     after the order of Melchizedek."  
 (Ps. 110:4)

Ezekiel 24:1-14 describes the firmness of God's intentions to execute His promised judgment. This passage is a description of Babylon's seige of Jerusalem on January 15, 588 B.C.<sup>1</sup> Ezekiel follows the Lord's instructions to pronounce judgment upon Jerusalem through a graphic allegory of a pot of boiling flesh. The Lord is not satisfied with the response of the people. Their impurities must be completely removed. The punishment prescribed for the "bloody city" is extremely thorough, and from Ezekiel 24:14 there seems to be no apparent recourse.

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<sup>1</sup>This incident is also described in 2 Kings 25 and Jeremiah 52. See, Herbert G. May, "The Book of Ezekiel; Introduction and Exegesis," The Interpreter's Bible. Vol. 6. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1956), pp. 194ff.



I the Lord have spoken; it shall come to pass, I will do it; I will not go back, I will not spare, I will not repent (nacham);<sup>1</sup> according to your ways and your doings I will judge you, says the Lord God.

In Jeremiah 15:1-9 there is a description of God's intention to judge His people severely because of their rebellion and failure to repent. These verses are logically divided as follows: 15:1-4 ends a unit related to an impending drought and other disasters (14:1 - 15:4); 15:5-9 begins a collection of the prophet's lamentations and intercessions on behalf of the people. Both 15:1-4 and 15:5-9 speak clearly of God's determination not to yield to the pleas of the prophet to reverse His forthcoming judgment. Not even Moses and Samuel, great intercessors for the people, could have persuaded God to relent on this occasion (15:1).

According to Jeremiah 15:6, God's unwillingness to change His mind is due to the failure of the people to demonstrate genuine repentance. This time God seems determined not to relent. The prophet speaks for the Lord; "You have rejected me," says the Lord, "you keep going backward; so I have stretched out my hand against you and destroyed you; -- I am weary of relenting (nacham)."

Would God have repented (changed His mind) if the people had repented and turned to Him? There are, in fact, accounts which reveal that God did relent in response to the passionate intercession of worthy servants, who cried out on behalf of a rebellious people. Moses' appeal in the wilderness is a case in point. Because of the manifest rebellion of the people through their creation and worship of the golden calf in the wilderness, God pledged to consume all of them except Moses, from whom He promised to

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<sup>1</sup>See also Zechariah 8:14, 15; "For thus says the Lord of hosts: 'As I purposed to do evil to you, when your fathers provoked me to wrath, and I did not relent (nacham), says the Lord of hosts, (15) so again have I purposed in these days to do good to Jerusalem and to the house of Judah; fear not.'"

bring forth a great nation. (Exodus 32:7-9) At this point in the narrative Moses daringly interceded on behalf of the people, with the result that God changed His mind and preserved them. Exodus 32:11-14 reads,

(11) But Moses besought the Lord his God, and said, "Oh Lord, why does thy wrath burn hot against thy people, whom thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? (12) Why should the Egyptians say, "With evil intent did he bring them forth, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth"? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent (nacham) of this evil against thy people. (13) Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou didst swear by thine own self, and didst say to them, "I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it for ever." (14) And the Lord repented (nacham) of the evil which he thought to do to his people.

That the Lord can call forth judgment upon the people and then mercifully decide not to execute His plan in response to an appeal on behalf of the people is also made plain in Amos 7:1-6. In a vision to Amos, Yahweh disclosed His plan to bring a plague of locusts upon the people, but He relented because of the plea of Amos. (Amos 7:2-3)

(2) When they had finished eating the grass of the land, I said, "O Lord God, forgive, I beseech thee! How can Jacob stand? He is so small!"

(3) The Lord repented (nacham) concerning this; "It shall not be," said the Lord.

God then disclosed in a vision to Amos His plan to bring a judgment by fire, and again Amos cried for mercy on behalf of the people. And, "The Lord repented (nacham) concerning this; 'This shall not be,' said the Lord God." (Amos 7:6)

God is free to alter His plans as He pleases. He is sovereign. He can make declarations, then cancel or change them. That is His prerogative. This does not mean that God's value system vacillates, depending upon His mood. He is not a capricious being. Rather, His predicted judgments and blessings are always related to



His dealings with man, and His fulfilment or His failure to fulfill these predictions are sometimes conditioned, though not determined, by man's response to His demands. This is very clear in Jeremiah's Parable of the Potter. (Jeremiah 18:1-12)

Yahweh exercises His will as sovereign agent among His people and ultimately determines their destiny. Yet, they are subjects with free wills. They can rebel and make themselves liable to Yahweh's judgment. His standard is unchangeable. However, Yahweh can alter His intended judgment if men repent. The converse is also true. His predicted blessings can be negated if His people rebel against His will for them. God's judgments and blessings, therefore, are conditioned by the repentance of the rebellious people, or by the rebellion of once loyal subjects.<sup>1</sup> This is explicitly expressed in Jeremiah 18:5-10.

(5) Then the word of the Lord came to me: (6) "Oh house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter has done?" says the Lord. "Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel. (7) If at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, (8) and if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will repent (nacham) of the evil that I intended to do to it. (9) And if at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will build and plant it, (10) and if it does evil in my sight, not listening to my voice, then I will repent (nacham)

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. James Philip Hyatt, "The Book of Jeremiah," The Interpreter's Bible. Vol. V (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1956), p. 960. The possibility for a change in predictions relative to man's repentance is descriptive of a "contingent element in prophecy," which, according to Rowley is implied in all prophecy. Rowley, p. 290. Cf. Gurdon C. Oxtoby, who refers to such prophecies as "conditional predictions." (e.g. Jer. 18:7-10) Gurdon C. Oxtoby, Predictions and Fulfillment in the Bible (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1966), pp. 77f.



of the good which I had intended to do to it."<sup>1</sup>

Yahweh's willingness to temper His judgment with mercy is vividly portrayed in the Book of Jonah. Jonah was commissioned to preach condemnation to the people of Nineveh. After his initial resistance to the task, he went through the streets of Nineveh and cried out, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" (Jonah 3:4) He delivered no message of hope. There was no appeal to the people to repent and escape the judgment; no recourse was suggested. However, Nineveh did repent, from the greatest to the last; and the king himself proclaimed a time of repentance and fasting with the hope that "God may yet repent (nacham) and turn from his fierce anger, so that we perish not." (Jonah 3:9) And God did repent. "When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God repented (nacham) of the evil which he had said he would do to them; and he did not do it." (Jonah 3:10)

God's mercy was well known to Jonah, who perhaps initially resisted God's commission to preach condemnation to Nineveh because he knew that if Nineveh repented, God would change His mind and spare the people. It happened just as Jonah feared it would, as his lamentation reveals:

That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish;  
for I knew that thou art a gracious God and  
merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in  
steadfast love, and repentest (nacham) of evil.  
(Jonah 4:2)

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<sup>1</sup>The same idea found in the "Potter" analogy of Jeremiah is seen in Ezekiel 33:13-15 and Ezekiel 18:30-32. Yahweh's desire is to save His people. His condition is that they repent and produce fruit worthy of repentance. Ezekiel 18:30-32 is very telling: (30) "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, says the Lord God. Repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin. (31) Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed against me, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? (32) For I have no pleasure in the death of any one, says the Lord God; so turn and live."

During a period of severe conflict with the false prophets of Judah, Jeremiah was instructed by God to stand in the court of the Lord's house and declare to the people God's plan to take vengeance upon all the nations and turn the cities into a wasteland. (Jeremiah 25:30-38) God, however, preferred not to effect His intended judgment. He desired that the people receive Jeremiah's message as a warning and return to Him so that He could change His mind. This is clear from Jeremiah 26:2-6.

"Thus says the Lord: Stand in the court of the Lord's house, and speak to them; do not hold back a word. (3) It may be they will listen, and every one turn from his evil way, that I may repent (nacham) of the evil which I intend to do to them because of their evil doings. (4) You shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord: If you will not listen to me, to walk in my law which I have set before you, (5) and to heed the words of my servants the prophets whom I send to you urgently, though you have not heeded, (6) then I will make this house like Shiloh, and I will make this city a curse for all the nations of the earth.'"

After Jeremiah prophesied as the Lord had commanded, he was seized by the priests, prophets and people and taken to the princes of Judah who sat at the New Gate of the house of the Lord to hear the charges against Jeremiah. Jeremiah took this opportunity to repeat the message of the Lord's desire to change His mind about destroying the cities of Judah.

Now therefore amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the Lord your God, and the Lord will repent (nacham) of the evil which he has pronounced against you. (Jeremiah 26:13)

The princes and people advised the priests and prophets that Jeremiah did not deserve to be put to death, and some of the elders of the land took the stand in support of Jeremiah's claim by citing a former occasion in Judah's history when God averted His judgment because the people repented at the preaching of Micah. (Jeremiah 26:18-19)



(18) "Micah of Moresheth prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and said to all the people of Judah, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts. Zion shall be plowed as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the mountains of the house a wooded height.' (19) Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah out him to death? Did he not fear the Lord and entreat the favor of the Lord, and did not the Lord repent (nacham) of the evil which he had pronounced against them? But we are about to bring great evil upon ourselves."

Norman F. Langford says of Joel 2:12-17 that one is "presented with a picture of a God who turns back on his course, who appears to change his mind and abandon his original intentions."<sup>1</sup> Man's own "repentance" as sometimes the basis of God's repentance is clearly presented in Joel 2:12-14. In this passage shub describes man's turning to God, and nacham expresses God's change of mind.

(12) "Yet even now," says the Lord, "return (shub) to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; (13) and rend your hearts and not your garments." Return (shub) to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and repents (nacham) of evil. (14) Who knows whether he will not turn and repent (nacham) and leave a blessing behind him, a cereal offering and a drink offering for the Lord, your God?"<sup>2</sup>

2 Samuel 24 presents the account of David's census of Israel and Judah, and Yahweh's consequential judgment of David's action. David is advised by the Prophet Gad to choose from among three possible punishments: three years of famine; three months of being pursued by his enemies;

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<sup>1</sup> Norman F. Langford, "The Book of Joel-Exposition," The Interpreter's Bible. Vol. 6. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1956), p. 748.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. John A. Thompson, "The Book of Joel-Introduction and Exegesis," The Interpreter's Bible. Vol. 6. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1956), pp. 747-748. Thompson suggests that Joel expresses the hope that when God turns and visits His people, He may "leave a blessing behind him as he returns to heaven. Grain and wine for food were regarded as blessings from God (Deut. 7:13), and here the prophet emphasizes their religious use as the means of sacrificial worship (1:9,13)."



or three days of pestilence. David decided that it was better to fall into the hand of the Lord than the hand of man, for he believed in the greatness of the Lord's mercy. (2 Samuel 24:1-15) What follows in the account is the description of the pestilence, God's change of mind and David's concern for the people. (2 Samuel 24:15-17)<sup>1</sup>

(15) So the Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning until the appointed time; and there died of the people from Dan to Beersheba seventy thousand men. (16) And when the angel stretched forth his hand toward Jerusalem to destroy it, the Lord repented (nacham) of the evil, and said to the angel who was working destruction among the people, "It is enough; now stay your hand." And the angel of the Lord was by the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. (17) Then David spoke to the Lord when he saw the angel who was smiting the people, and said, "Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly; but these sheep, what have they done? Let thy hand, I pray thee, be against me and against my father's house."

The Psalmist beautifully summarizes the biblical picture of this compassionate trait in Yahweh's character. In Psalm 106, the sinfulness of the people of Israel and their deserved punishment are described. But the mercy of God is the dominant theme of this Psalm. The Psalmist understands that Yahweh's projected punishment is not fixed. He is a God of mercy and dynamic in His relations

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<sup>1</sup> A parallel account of this incident is recorded in 1 Chronicles 21. There is one striking difference. In the 2 Samuel account, God is angry with Israel, and He incites David to take a census of Israel and Judah, for which the people are duly punished. In the Chronicler's record, Satan is the instigator. Although Satan is the culprit here, it is assumed that God is the ultimate source because He permits Satan to tempt David. The consequences of David's deed, and God's merciful alteration of His intended punishment as described in 1 Chronicles is almost identical to the account in 2 Samuel. "And God sent the angel to Jerusalem to destroy it; but when he was about to destroy it, the Lord saw, and he repented (nacham) of the evil; and he said to the destroying angel, "It is enough; now stay your hand." And the angel of the Lord was standing by the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite." (1 Chronicles 21:15) Compare Robert P. Carroll's analysis of the difference between these two accounts. Carroll, pp. 200-201; Cf. p. 242, fn. 16.

with a rebellious people. The Psalmist's knowledge of the history of Yahweh's interaction with His people convinced him that Yahweh did and, therefore, can change His mind (Psalm 106:44-46).

(44) Nevertheless he regarded their desires,  
when he heard their cry.

(45) He remembered for their sake his covenant,  
and relented (nacham) according to the  
abundance of his steadfast love.

(46) He caused them to be pitied  
by all those who held them captive.

Perhaps the writer of 2 Peter offers the best solution after all for understanding Jesus' unfulfilled prediction of an imminent End. He turns man's attention from his own anxious anticipation of the End to reflect upon the sovereign rights of God, rights which are tempered by His mercy. God's primary concern is not time, but man. He is concerned about His Covenant and His promise to bring it to fruition. Yahweh's postponement of the End is due to His forbearing spirit; He does not want anyone to perish, but He desires that all should reach repentance. The End will come as Yahweh ordained, but He is not obligated to present man with a detailed scheme of preliminary events or a time-chart of the Consummation. Yahweh is in charge! The elect who cry out to Him day and night must trust Him to stage His vindication according to His own purposes. (Compare Luke 18:7,8) This is how the writer of 2 Peter expresses it in 3:8-10:

(8) But do not ignore this one fact, beloved,  
that with the Lord one day is as <sup>1</sup>a thousand years,  
and a thousand years as one day. (9) The Lord is  
not slow about his promise as some count slow-  
ness, but is forbearing toward you, not wishing  
that any should perish, but that all should reach  
repentance. (10) But the day of the Lord will come

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<sup>1</sup>It is a misunderstanding of 2 Pet. 3:8 to assume that the writer proposes an extended delay over countless centuries based on a calculation that 365,000 days to man is but a day to God. One is clearly back to zero when the converse of the formula is considered.



like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up.

R.B. Girdlestone contends that the principle described in 2 Peter 3:9 is a "fundamental principle of revealed theology. . . ." That is, God is slow to anger and ready to proscribe, relax or postpone His impending judgment if men genuinely repent. It is this principle which He exercised in His relationship with Israel, other nations and even individuals. For example, because of his repentance, even Ahab escaped Yahweh's immediate judgment (1 Kings 21:27-29).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>R.B. Girdlestone, The Grammar of Prophecy (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1955), p. 27. Cf. Millar Burrows who says of 2 Peter 3:9 that "what may be called a commutation of eschatology begins already in the New Testament with the explanation of the delay of the parousia as due to God's patience." Burrows, An Outline of Biblical Theology, p. 218. Ernst Käsemann argues that by the time 2 Peter was written "the whole community is embarrassed and disturbed by the fact of the delay of the Parousia, a fact naturally used by the adversaries to bolster up their argument (3:9)." Ernst Käsemann, Essays on New Testament Themes, translated by W.J. Montague (Naperville, Ill: Alec R. Allenson, Inc., 1964), p. 170. Käsemann acknowledges that the writer is combating the views of Gnostics, who insist that there is no resurrection or a Parousia (Ibid., pp. 171ff.), but he also contends that within the church itself "the rejection of the primitive Christian hope has sunk to the level of derision" (Ibid., p. 170). However, a more likely interpretation is presented by Charles H. Talbert who contends that 2 Peter "offers no evidence for serious Christian disturbances caused by the delay of the Parousia." Charles H. Talbert, "II Peter And The Delay Of The Parousia," Vigiliae Christianae 20 (1966): pp. 137, 145. Rather, Talbert proposes that the document, in the form of a farewell speech (Ibid., pp. 139ff.), is an attack against the Gnostics (scoffers, heretics) who assume a superior understanding and have rejected belief in the Parousia-judgment. The writer encourages his audience to remember the predictions of the prophets and the commandment of the Savior through the apostles. They are warned not to give up Christian tradition and revelation (Ibid., p. 139), because "the certainty of the Parousia-judgment is guaranteed by the apostles who saw at the Transfiguration a



As Jeremias suggests, God will redirect and change His will for the benefit of those who cry out to Him.

Jeremias comments:

Jesus sets God's grace above his holiness. It can shorten the time of distress for his people and lengthen the opportunity for the unbelievers to repent. All human existence, hourly threatened by the catastrophe, lives in the interval of grace: "Let it alone this year also, in case it perhaps bears fruit" (Luke 13:8f.)<sup>1</sup>

Disconfirmation or postponement of Jesus' prediction of an imminent Kingdom may pose certain problems to one's faith in the biblical tradition and in Yahweh Himself. On the other hand, if the disconfirmation of Jesus' prophecy is viewed as an intentional change in plans by a merciful, loving God, who chooses on occasions to redirect a prescribed course of action or judgment, then one's faith in the biblical God should be strengthened. When Jesus' prediction is placed within the Old Testament prophetic tradition of God's coming in both judgment and salvation, there is open to the Christian an exciting and viable proposal for dealing with Jesus' unfulfilled prophecy. Roberts suggests that,

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foreshadowing of the second advent" (Ibid., p. 138). According to Talbert, "The heretics who are speaking of a delayed Parousia are Gnostics who advocate a realized eschatology. They, therefore, would be disturbed by any hope of a future Parousia" (Ibid., pp. 142f.). However, from the writer's perspective the heretics will receive the very judgment which they reject (Ibid., pp. 143f.). The lapse of time "means that God is merciful, not desiring that any should perish." And because the implication of the judgment is moral living, "it is clear from the context . . . that the function of the Parousia-judgment in II Peter is to motivate moral behavior. To deny the judgment, however, is a rationalization for licentious conduct" (Ibid., p. 143). Therefore, the writer of 2 Peter is not concerned with a church-wide disturbance over the delay of the Parousia, although there would have been concern over the delay, but his purpose is to combat false doctrines and to encourage the church to believe in the "promises" which will find fulfilment in a patient and merciful God.

<sup>1</sup> Jeremias, New Testament Theology, p. 140.

. . . unfulfilled and unfulfillable prophecies may or may not raise certain problems for faith, but they undoubtedly underscore the conditional nature of biblical prophecy. The biblical god, unlike the static, eternally unchanging god of Greek philosophy, can change his mind. He repents of proposed plans of action, he reacts to the changing attitude of his human subjects, and this may result in divinely inspired predictions failing to materialize.<sup>1</sup>

One must be careful not to force a position in order to support a theory. When one deals with the problem of the disconfirmed expectation of an imminent Parousia, he must adhere to a hermeneutic which requires a careful examination of the sources and one that protects their original premises.<sup>2</sup> An examination of the pertinent passages of scripture reveals that Jesus did expect the Kingdom of God to come within the generation of those to whom He spoke. Further, the early church anticipated Jesus' imminent return based upon His own proclamation. The failure of conservative scholarship to deal adequately with this unfulfilled prophecy and anticipation is due to a justified fear of attributing a mistake to Jesus, resulting in an erosion of Christology.

However, Jesus' predictions can be understood as a part of that prophetic tradition which on occasions Yahweh determined to alter, change, or redirect for the benefit of mankind. The attributes of God are not offended by this view, nor is New Testament Christology weakened. Yahweh is still seen as coming in salvation and judgment, as demanding purity from man, and as punishing the rebellious. Yet, in spite of His demand for perfection, His judgment can be tempered and even changed by His mercy. Yahweh's manifestation in Christ, who brought the final message of salvation and judgment, reveals His intense involvement

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<sup>1</sup>Roberts, p. 243 (underline added).

<sup>2</sup>Carroll, pp. 2-3.



with man. His postponement of the consummation discloses a divine attitude natural only to a dynamic, immanent Being. And this action is sharply contrasted to a static, totally transcendent deity. Because of this divine trait, man now lives in an undeserved grace period. Yahweh changed His mind for the sake of man. His divine action is a reflection of the mercy which He revealed so clearly and fully in Jesus Christ.

Helmut Thielicke agrees that the delay of the End is indicative of the mercy of God, who even demonstrates such mercy with His law; a law which is "limited to the interim emergency period of this aeon." The law, Thielicke suggests, has been altered by a patient God out of consideration for the hardness of man's heart. But just as the law did not exist from the beginning, so it will not last into eternity. Thielicke believes that the law "will disappear when the kingdoms of this world have been supplanted by the second coming, and when the petition is answered: 'Thy kingdom come!' (Matt. 6:10; 20:30 . . .)." <sup>1</sup>

Therefore, the concept of a "grace period" does not undermine the justice of God. At most, it declares that the sovereign God determines when and how His justice will be exacted. As Millar Burrows insists, the main stress of Jesus' message was the "ultimate triumph of the justice of God," a justice which cannot be wrought through the social order. Burrows cautions against speculating as to when God will bring about His justice. One can only believe that if the fruition of God's will is to come in history then the continued delay is because of God's patience. <sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Helmut Thielicke, Theological Ethics. Vol. I. Foundations, ed. William H. Lazareth; translated by John W. Doberstein (London: A. and C. Black Ltd., 1968), p. 572.

<sup>2</sup> Burrows, An Outline of Biblical Theology, pp. 218f.



### CHAPTER III

#### ESCHATOLOGY AND ETHICS IN THE TEACHING OF JESUS

If Jesus is accepted as a prophet who was responsible as God's Messenger for proclaiming the news that God was about to establish His Kingdom, Jesus should not be charged with having made an erroneous prediction. Such a view is hermeneutically significant. Jesus' ethics are not to be dismissed because His fundamental proclamation seems faulty. Further, the temporal aspect of Synoptic eschatology can be retained through an understanding of Jesus' prediction in relation to Yahweh's sovereign right to postpone His ultimate will for the benefit of mankind.

Jesus proclaimed Yahweh's message that the End was imminent, admitting that He Himself was unaware of the Father's timetable (Mk. 13:32). Therefore, everything Jesus preached must be understood from the perspective that He anticipated the establishment of a temporal Kingdom within the period of a generation. Consequently, His ethics were most certainly influenced by His eschatology. However, His ethics--for the most part--are not invalidated by the fact of His unfulfilled prophecy. Jesus was not the first or the last to promote "on-going ethics" while living in anticipation of the imminent End.

#### Expectation and Ethics

Some scholars speak forcefully in support of their claim that Jesus predicted the imminent coming of the Kingdom of God. Richard Hiers, e.g., comments: "That Jesus expected the Kingdom of God to come in the near future cannot be disputed by anyone who takes the synoptic evidence seriously."<sup>1</sup> And Jack T. Sanders believes that

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<sup>1</sup>Hiers, The Historical Jesus and the Kingdom of God, p. 106.

"any view that holds that Jesus did not proclaim an imminent eschatology will have to be considered erroneous."<sup>1</sup>

Other scholars, much more cautious, assume that anyone who concludes that Jesus expected the Kingdom imminently automatically accepts Schweitzer's "interim ethic" and rules that Jesus' teaching and preaching are irrelevant. However, it should be noted that Schweitzer himself does not rule out the applicability of Jesus or His ethical precepts for this day and time. He has often been misjudged on this issue. It is also quite clear that a number of scholars understand Jesus to have preached the imminence of the Kingdom, but they do not feel bound to accept Schweitzer's "interim ethic" view completely.

Although Schweitzer may have written before the development of some of the "modern critical" approaches to biblical study, his fundamental theory, which was essentially taken from Johannes Weiss, is correct. Simply put, Schweitzer insists that all of Jesus' teachings must be understood in the light of His belief in the imminent coming of the Kingdom of God. As previously stated, to agree with Schweitzer on this issue does not obligate one to accept all of his conclusions or methods for reaching them. Schweitzer is often criticized for leaving a disillusioned Jesus crushed by the wheels of time upon a cross. Actually, he does not leave Jesus there experientially, since for Schweitzer, the Spirit of Jesus lives on in the hearts and lives of men and women who accept Him and allow His "ethical religion of love" to control their lives.<sup>2</sup> While Schweitzer's view may not be satisfactory

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<sup>1</sup>Sanders, "The Question of the Relevance of Jesus for Ethics Today," p. 133.

<sup>2</sup>Schweitzer, Out of My Life and Thought, p. 37. He comments: "The error of research hitherto is that it attributes to Jesus a spiritualizing of the late Jewish Messianic Expectation, whereas in reality He simply fits into it the ethical religion of love. Our minds refuse at first to grasp that a religiousness and an ethic so deep and spiritual can be combined with other views of such naïve realism. But the combination is a fact."



to some, at least it proved to offer positive inspiration for him.

The obvious weakness in Schweitzer's presentation is his failure to accept the accounts which portray the resurrected Jesus. His view leaves no hope of a temporal consummation as presented by the Synoptic writers. This is a serious error in his presentation, but at the same time, his contributions to an understanding of the relationship between Jesus' eschatology and His ethics are considerable. Some scholars insist upon dividing Jesus' ethics into "eschatological" and "non-eschatological ethics." That is, they believe that while some of His ethics were influenced by His eschatological preaching, other precepts are devoid of such impact. Other scholars contend that not any of Jesus' teachings were influenced by His belief in a temporal consummation. However, it is not necessary to strip Jesus' ethical teachings from His eschatological proclamation. There is no need to develop methodologies for rescuing Jesus' "eternal ethic" from His "limited" eschatological perspective. His message must be seen as a whole, constituent of every aspect of His preaching and teaching. The unity between His eschatology and ethics must be preserved.

This study will briefly present some of the more important scholarly approaches to the problem of determining the degree to which Jesus' ethics were influenced by His eschatological preaching. The section will conclude with the proposal that Jesus' ethical teaching and His eschatological proclamation can be understood as a unit and that His ethics in general can be understood as permanent even though He believed in the imminent coming of the Kingdom of God.

### Eschatological Ethics

Among the group of scholars who emphasize the eschatological aspect of Jesus' preaching as it relates to His ethics, some refer to particular teachings which



they believe are either determined by Jesus' eschatological message or are strongly influenced by such preaching. Some of these men conclude that many of Jesus' ethical stipulations cannot be understood apart from His eschatology and to some degree are bound to the occasion on which He presented them. Still others believe that although His ethics are strongly influenced by His eschatology and cannot be properly understood apart from such preaching, they are, nonetheless, permanently relevant.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>In order that such sayings can be evaluated conveniently at this juncture, a listing of the men with some of their positions follows: Guignebert, e.g. is convinced that there are some "inapplicable" injunctions from Jesus that cannot be understood apart from His eschatological outlook. Some of these are: "prohibition of oaths," "the command to turn the other cheek," and the command to "sell all one's possessions." To accept these is to recognize that Jesus was suggesting the "practical ordering of a normal life is impossible" in view of the imminent Kingdom. This, to Guignebert, is an "eschatological Interimethik." (Guignebert, Jesus, p. 373) Knudson also admits that the theory of "interim-ethik" is partially correct: e.g., he claims that Jesus' sayings "concerning property and self-renunciation may in some respects have been conditioned by the apocalyptic hope of his day, and other phases of his teaching may also have been thus affected." (Knudson, The Principles of Christian Ethics, p. 43) He suggests that there are also sayings which are so extreme in form that they seem to be "inconsistent with the existence of organized society." He remarks: "Such sayings as these, it is obvious, must be interpreted in the light of his life and teachings as a whole and in the light of the times in which He lived. He shared, for instance, the apocalyptic hope of his day, and in not a few instances his moral judgments were no doubt colored by this fact. His ethical teaching was in part an 'interim ethic.'" (Ibid., p. 158) Carpenter believes that although Jesus' ethics as a whole are permanent, some obviously assume an imminent end, e.g. renunciation of family and property and the warning that "no man who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the Kingdom of God." And some of His demands to individuals such as, "sell all you have," are, Carpenter feels, peremptory demands "in view of an impending crisis--'the Kingdom of God is at hand,' you must break every tie if needful, to get ready for it." (Carpenter, The First Three Gospels, p. 375; Cf. Winstanley, Jesus and the Future, pp. 82ff.) According to Goguel, Jesus' whole message was oriented toward preparing man for the approaching End. The



Beatitudes, e.g., "do not proclaim a reversal of values, . . . but . . . they are the condition of obtaining the supreme good, which is the Kingdom of God." (Goguel, The Life of Jesus, p. 581) Goguel claims that the exhortations for renunciation and sacrifices are likewise for the sake of the Kingdom of God, and those moral precepts which seem to reach beyond the significance of a preparation for the Kingdom (such as "love your neighbor") were formulated by Jesus--not to describe the Kingdom--"but in order to define an ideal which must be realized before the coming of the Kingdom." (Ibid., p. 582) Enslin claims that a number of Jesus' ethical precepts cannot be understood apart from His eschatology. For example, "'If any man would go to law with thee, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also'; 'Resist not him that is evil'; 'Give to him that asketh'; 'Turn the other cheek.'" (Enslin, The Prophet from Nazareth, p. 122) To follow these instructions implicitly, Enslin believes, "would mean the collapse of society . . . . The demands are impossible if life is to continue as it is." To Enslin, the point is that life was not to continue. The End was at hand. (Enslin, Christian Beginnings, p. 165) Yet, he does not see this as an "interim ethic," but as an ethic to be lived out in the Kingdom of God. It is to be adopted now in this life, if one expects to enter the Kingdom. It is then, a "Kingdom Ethic." (Ibid., p. 166) Enslin comments: "This is to be the kind of life lived in the new age soon to appear. To achieve entrance men must begin to live as though the change has actually taken place . . . . Why concern oneself about wealth, clothing, position, bodily comfort, dignity, national pride which is affronted by subjection to a foreign power? The time is too short for indulging in such trivialities." (Ibid., cf. Enslin, The Prophet from Nazareth, p. 125) Tyrrell, on the otherhand, believes that Jesus did not come to reveal a new ethic, but he came to declare "the speedy advent of a new world in which ethics would be superseded." (Tyrrell, Christianity at the Cross-Roads, p. 50) Schweitzer believes that within the teaching of Jesus the emphasis upon the imminence of the end-time can be seen in His attitude toward children, who will not die but will move into the Kingdom, and in the renunciation of material goods--"earning of one's living has lost its justification." (Schweitzer, The Kingdom of God and Primitive Christianity, p. 97) According to Ramsey, there are two categories of eschatological sayings within the teaching of Jesus; one set consists of sayings which are eschatologically conditioned but can be translated into relevant terms without significant loss of meaning. Among them are Jesus' teachings about doing good on the Sabbath, i.e. the Son of Man can come on any day, so do good while you can; anger; making friends (Matt. 5:22,25,26); radical morality (Matt. 5:29,30); and radical dedication to God (Lk. 9:62). (Ramsey, Basic Christian Ethics, pp. 32f.) To Ramsey,



other eschatological sayings belong to that category which has been so strongly affected by Jesus' eschatological message that "they cannot be translated from their mother tongue without danger of serious loss of meaning." Some of these are Jesus' teaching about "non-resisting, unclaiming love, . . . unlimited forgiveness for every offence, giving to every need, unconditional lending to him who would borrow." (Ibid., p. 34) Bundy also believes that there are sayings within the Sermon on the Mount which reveal that Jesus expected the Kingdom to come soon. For example, the "retaliation sayings" (Matt. 5:38-42) have as their background "a real world on the verge of collapse and an unreal offer that is about to supplant it--the kingdom of God." These sayings, Bundy believes, are "motivated entirely by despair for the old, hope and longing for the new. They belong to the ethics of eschatology." (Bundy, Jesus and the First Three Gospels, p. 107) He also claims that the command to love one's enemies (Matt. 5:43-48) is one of Jesus' "heroic paradoxes" which cannot be understood apart from the eschatological background. "It is a last heroic effort in this world. It demands what in normal existence would be impossible." (Ibid., p. 108) Bundy also believes that some of Jesus' "Conditions of Discipleship" (e.g. Lk. 14:25-27, 17:33; Matt. 16:24,25, par. Mk. 8:34,35, Lk. 9:23,24) are "so mystifying in nature, so disconcerting to normal human intelligence, so disdainful of ordinary human existence with its loves and loyalties, as to sound fanatical. Their extreme severity is best explained by their eschatological background, the cosmic crisis. They belong to the ethics of eschatology." (Ibid., pp. 163f.) According to E.F. Scott, there are teachings within Jesus' ethic, such as the "renunciation" passages, which can be understood only in the light of His expectation of the imminent end. These were "unique emergency" orders which are similar to war-time commands and are not permanently relevant. (Scott, The Ethical Teaching of Jesus, pp. 52f.) Scott, however, does not accept the theory of "interim ethics" completely. (Ibid., p. 43) Burrows maintains that Jesus did not give instructions with "a long duration of the present order" in mind, and some of His demands, therefore, "such as selling all and giving to the poor, may have been intended for the immediate situation . . . ." (Burrows, An Outline of Biblical Theology, p. 162) Hiers, in defense of Schweitzer's theory of Interimsethik, suggests that the man who is anxiously anticipating the coming of the Kingdom of God would not be anxious about food, drink, clothes, or even life itself. His main concern is to trust God and believe that God will supply him with all of these needs along with the Kingdom of God. (Hiers, The Historical Jesus and the Kingdom of God, p. 20) Hiers believes, e.g., that Jesus' admonition, "'Make friends quickly with your accuser, while you are going with him to court . . .'" is surely a piece of 'ethics for the interim' and was not intended as a moral maxim for his followers in centuries to come."



(Ibid., pp. 29f.) Jack Sanders contends that the demand upon the disciple to be "righteous" is clearly based upon Matthew's understanding of Jesus' eschatology. That is, Matthew understood Jesus to have taught that if one is to enter the Kingdom of God then he must be righteous. Therefore, "The 'true' Christian is for Matthew the one who strives for righteousness that he may enter the Kingdom; . . . ." (Sanders, "Ethics in the Synoptic Gospels," pp. 29f.) Yet, this is a requirement that is practical, Sanders insists, only if the Kingdom is going to come soon! That is, as long as God is coming soon, it is possible to demand righteousness, but "such obedience is possible only if the end has drawn near. Once the pressure of imminence begins to be released, the command must be relaxed." (Sanders, "The Question of the Relevance of Jesus for Ethics Today," p. 139) Sanders remarks: "Thus those sayings in the Sermon on the Mount authentically from Jesus can be considered an impossible ethic only if one is to go on living in the world. If the end of the world has drawn nigh, bringing with it God's righteousness and judgment, the 'impossible' ethic becomes both possible and consistent." (Ibid.) In the view of Windisch, some of Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount are to be labeled as "Wisdom" sayings, while others are to be understood as "Eschatological" teachings. Some of the primary sayings which he lists under "eschatological" are: "The Beatitudes, the thematic saying concerning the higher righteousness in chp. 5:20, the sayings concerning 'the two ways' in chp. 7:13f., the words of judgment in chp. 7:21-23, and the concluding parables." (Hans Windisch, The Meaning of the Sermon on the Mount, translated by S. MacLean Gilmour (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1951), p. 26, cf. pp. 27,33,37; see p. 37 for a list of those passages which, to Windisch, represent material "dominated by eschatology.") Grässer also observes that in the Sermon on the Mount there are two strains--eschatologically oriented material and non-eschatological material. He lists the following passages as those which are eschatologically dominated: The Beatitudes; Matt. 5:19f., "Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven"; Matt. 5:25, "Make friends quickly with your accuser, while you are going with him to court . . ."; Matt. 5:29, "If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away; . . ."; Matt. 6:9-13, The Lord's Prayer; Matt. 7:1f., "Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged."; Matt. 7:13f., "Enter by the narrow gate . . ."; Matt. 7:21-23, "Not every one who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven . . ."; plus the parables. (Grässer, Das Problem, p. 69) According to McArthur,

There are also some scholars who concede that Jesus' eschatology strongly influenced His ethics, although they themselves would not fit into a "Futuristic School" along with such men as Schweitzer, R.H. Hiers, M. S. Enslin, and Jack Sanders. Carl Henry, e.g., seems convinced that Jesus' ethics stood alongside His apocalyptic thought<sup>1</sup> and contends that, "although the note of apocalyptic urgency is not conspicuous in some passages of great ethical vigor . . . in Jesus' teaching, we may safely regard that note as presupposed."<sup>2</sup> While Cadoux argues that Jesus' ethics are generally independent of His eschatology, he admits that Jesus' caution against materialism may be a possible exception to the rule.<sup>3</sup> Even

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"about forty percent of the Sermon is directly dominated by eschatology, another forty percent is without any explicit eschatological reference, and the remaining twenty percent is debatable." (McArthur, Understanding the Sermon on the Mount, p. 91. Cf. pp. 90ff. for details on the statistics.) Besides the Beatitudes, of which McArthur claims, "in each case the promise finds its meaning from the over-all eschatological framework," there are the injunctions against anger and adultery which include an eschatological sanction. Other sayings which probably have the Eschaton as a sanction, but not explicitly, are: those on almsgiving, prayer, fasting, the precept of "unconcern for worldly things" and the injunction against judging. McArthur insists, however, that there is "no stress" on the imminence of the Eschaton among these sayings in the Sermon on the Mount, although there are numerous references to the Eschaton. (Ibid., p. 95)

<sup>1</sup> Henry, Christian Personal Ethics, p. 294.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 567, cf. p. 293, fn. 41. Henry lists the following passages as being specifically eschatologically oriented: Matt. 5:3-12, 19f., 21-26, 27-30, 33-37, 43-48; 6:1, 2-4, 5-6, 9-13, 16-18, 19-21, 22-23, 24, 25-33; 7:1-5, 13-14, 21-23, 24-27.

<sup>3</sup> Cadoux, The Historic Mission of Jesus, p. 127.



C.W. Emmet, who insists that "it is impossible" to work out the "interim ethic" theory consistently, observes that there are sayings upon which the view throws some light (such as: "Take no thought for tomorrow"; ". . . away with your cloak and coat"; and "hate your father and mother").<sup>1</sup>

#### Argument From Silence

The fact that Jesus did not bother to concern Himself with specific instructions relating to such matters as politics, social issues and property has led some scholars to conclude that His silence on these matters can be explained to some degree by His expectation of an imminent End. Gerhard Gloege, e.g., feels that Jesus' ethic is marked by a "complete aimlessness." That is, Jesus did not deal specifically with such matters as slavery, property, or money.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, Jesus did not become interested in social change or in programs which would eliminate social evils because He believed that the end of time had set in. He was convinced that, "God's rule is coming. It is no longer worthwhile changing the world by a programme to improve environmental circumstances. God will not change the world, but do away with it."<sup>3</sup> To Gloege, Jesus was not concerned with politics or economics because it was His understanding that "the destiny of man is not to be found in economics or politics, but in the coming God."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Emmet, The Eschatological Question in the Gospels, p. 61. Cf. C.W. Emmet, "Is the Teaching of Jesus an Interim ethic?" The Expositor IV (1912). (The article is a polemic against Schweitzer's view.)

<sup>2</sup> Gerhard Gloege, The Day of His Coming, translated by Stanley Rudman (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1960), pp. 200ff.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 203.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 204.



Georgia Harkness, who believes that Jesus' ethics as a whole are "permanently adaptable," concedes that the "interim ethic" theory helps "to explain in part" Jesus' silence on permanent issues such as "war and slavery."<sup>1</sup> John Knox also admits that Jesus' silence "concerning particular questions of political organization and strategy or of moral casuistry" was due to His belief that such questions lost their relevancy in the light of the imminent End.<sup>2</sup> Knox believes that it also helps to explain why Jesus did not deal with the problem of "evil" since He felt that God would eliminate evil when He comes. From Knox's viewpoint, the argument from silence is negative in nature and helps only in explaining why Jesus did not say more on some subjects. It does not help to interpret what He did say.<sup>3</sup>

McArthur also observes that Jesus was silent on matters such as law and order "because his eyes were fastened upon the expected Eschaton rather than upon the endless march of future generations."<sup>4</sup> McArthur suggests that this would not have been a conscious thing with Jesus, whose silence on such subjects could possibly have resulted from His association with groups who gave such matters little thought.<sup>5</sup> Or perhaps the early Christians, who were themselves not concerned with such questions, "failed to remember sayings of Jesus which shed light on the application of his ethic to the social order."<sup>6</sup> To

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<sup>1</sup>Harkness, The Sources of Western Morality, p. 222. Cf. Thomas, Christian Ethics and Moral Philosophy, p. 30. To Thomas, the only real problem with the relevance of Jesus' ethic is His failure to give concrete guidance for dealing with social evils and evil doers.

<sup>2</sup>Knox, Christ the Lord, p. 48. <sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 48f.

<sup>4</sup>McArthur, Understanding the Sermon on the Mount, p. 96.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 96f., 138.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 138.

McArthur, "The character of the ethic is nowhere explicitly conditioned by the eschatological expectation, although the silence of Jesus with respect to problems of social order may have been due, in part, to his expectation of the Eschaton."<sup>1</sup>

#### Non-eschatological Ethics

Some scholars who do not deny the importance of eschatology in Jesus' teachings insist, however, that His ethics are not "local or transient." L.H. Marshall, e.g., believes that Jesus' teachings are timeless because they deal with spiritual imperatives. Jesus' eschatology only intensified His moral demands.<sup>2</sup> W.D. Davies also believes that Jesus' belief in the End radicalized His teachings.<sup>3</sup> Yet, Davies insists that "at no point does the moral teaching of Jesus rest upon the shortness of the time before the end; nowhere is appeal made to the imminent winding up of all things."<sup>4</sup>

Some men deny that Jesus' belief in the imminent end was a controlling factor in Jesus' ethics presented in the Sermon on the Mount. McArthur, e.g., claims that "There is no reference in the entire Sermon, nor in ethical injunctions outside the Sermon, to the imminence of the Eschaton. Not that Jesus doubted its imminence. But there was no conscious shaping of his ethical demands as Interim Ethic."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 155.

<sup>2</sup> Marshall, The Challenge of New Testament Ethics, p. 195.

<sup>3</sup> Davies, The Sermon on the Mount, pp. 143-149. Floyd Filson agrees that the eschatological emphasis adds a note of urgency to Jesus' ethic, but claims that it does not affect the substance of Jesus' ethical teaching. Filson, Jesus Christ: The Risen Lord, p. 243.

<sup>4</sup> Davies, Invitation to the New Testament, p. 195.

<sup>5</sup> McArthur, Understanding the Sermon on the Mount, p. 96. McArthur contends that it is particularly striking



A number of scholars believe that there are some specific ethical precepts within Jesus' teachings which are totally non-eschatological. A.M. Hunter, e.g., makes the following observation:

To import a reference to the Parousia into Jesus' words about prayer, or forgiveness, or humility, or truthfulness, or trust in God is to read into the Gospel record what is simply not there. Jesus did not say, "Love your enemies because the end of the world is at hand." He bade men love their enemies that, by so doing, they might become sons of their heavenly Father . . . .<sup>1</sup>

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"that Matt. 6:19-34 has no reference to the brevity of time left before the Eschaton. Surely here if anywhere there would have been some had Jesus consciously proclaimed an Interim Ethic." Ibid. Cf. Ridderbos, The Coming of the Kingdom, p. 289, fn. 8. He notes: "A well-known example of a non-eschatological motivation is, e.g., (Matt. 6:34, 'Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.' If Jesus' ethics were entirely eschatologically determined, we might certainly have expected here, 'for tomorrow may be the end,' or 'tomorrow the kingdom of God will come.'" Connick agrees that while eschatology played a significant role in Jesus' ethics, He did not stress the "imminence of the end" in the Sermon on the Mount or in any of His ethical demands outside of the Sermon. Although Jesus proclaimed that the time was short, "the imminence of the End did not account for the stringency of his demands. It provided the occasion for them." Connick, p. 262. Cf. William Lillie, who notes that there is no mentioning of the immediacy of the Parousia in the Sermon on the Mount. Lillie, Studies in New Testament Ethics, p. 144. And according to Bornkamm, the eschatology of the Sermon on the Mount is "concealed." He suggests that Jesus did not need to make an open appeal to apocalypticism with its graphic descriptions of the End, since the "claims of Jesus carry in themselves, 'the last things.'" That is, Jesus' teachings, "lead to the boundaries of the world . . . ." Bornkamm, Jesus of Nazareth, p. 109.

<sup>1</sup>Hunter, The Work and Words of Jesus, (1950), p. 77. A listing of other men and a summary of their positions follows: According to Dobschütz, there are sayings within Jesus' teaching which are "entirely non-eschatological" such as those about trust in God, God's concern for individuals, prayer, not trusting in riches, love for God and neighbor, and forgiveness. Ernst



Dobschütz, The Eschatology of the Gospels (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1910), pp. 152f. Dobschütz believes these sayings make it obvious that Jesus' whole body of teachings are not to be accounted for by His eschatological message. These teachings are of permanent value and separate from His eschatology. (Ibid., p. 158) James Moffatt claims that Jesus' teaching on love for one's enemy is in no way related to His eschatological message. Jesus' conviction about love was determined by His understanding of God's love as a Father and not by belief in the imminent End. (Moffatt, pp. 59ff.) Moffatt also believes that Jesus' advice against the accumulation of riches resulted from His belief that man could not divide his loyalties, and not from an expectation of the End. He notes, too, that while the Apostle Paul advised against marriage because of the imminence of the End, Jesus did not. (Ibid., p. 61) In his rejection of the "interim ethic" theory, Bornkamm charges that such an interpretation "would appear to make the apocalyptic end of the world the ground of Jesus' demands, whereas the love of our neighbour and our enemy, purity, faithfulness and truth are demanded simply because they are the will of God." (Bornkamm, Jesus of Nazareth, pp. 223f.) Cadoux claims that in sayings such as those on prayer, forgiveness, trust in God, humility, generosity to the poor, overcoming evil with good, and truthfulness in conversation, there is absolutely no reference to a coming climax. (Cadoux, The Historic Mission of Jesus, p. 126) Emmet insists that there is "nothing apocalyptic in the parable of the Good Samaritan" or in Jesus' appeal to pray for today's bread or for forgiveness of sins. He observes that when Jesus "speaks about Fatherhood and Sonship, God's gift of love and man's duty of love, about forgiveness and salvation, service and humility, He is not, as a rule, speaking of the end at all." (Emmet, The Eschatological Question in the Gospels, pp. 62f.) McArthur believes that Jesus' teaching on divorce, swearing, and retaliation are not related to His eschatology, and the precept of love for enemies has as its appeal "the nature of God." (McArthur, Understanding the Sermon on the Mount, p. 95) Reinhold Niebuhr cites what he believes to be a number of demands from Jesus in which the apocalyptic note is lacking: Matt. 5:29, 6:20, 31, 10:37, 12:48; Lk. 18:22. However, Niebuhr believes there is "an eschatological element in, and even basis for, the ethic of Jesus." (Niebuhr, An Interpretation of Christian Ethics, p. 56, cf. fn. 31, p. 56) Even E.W. Winstanley, who believes that such ethical stipulations as penitence, selflessness, childlikeness, forgiveness, love, dedicated service to God and neighbor, prayerfulness, suffering for righteousness sake are connected with the preaching of an imminent eschatological Kingdom, claims that "none of them are found to be really dependent on that special time-conditioned outlook." To Winstanley, these principles

### A Natural Unity

It is apparent that some scholars argue for the validity of Jesus' ethics as a whole, believing that a number of His ethical teachings are specifically devoid of any eschatological influence, although some admit that certain of His teachings are best understood in the light of His belief in an imminent End. Still others concede that a number of His ethical precepts are so situation oriented that they were meant only for His time and were not intended for succeeding generations. Bousset, for example, believes that Jesus did not deliver a system of ethics that was meant to be taken over wholesale into the modern world, since He expected a sudden "great disruption

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can be adapted to meet the needs of each age of social change. When separated from their form they "possess a perpetual validity for the realisation of man's best self . . . ." (Winstanley, pp. 397ff.) Windisch, who divides the sayings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount into "Eschatological" teachings and "Wisdom" sayings (which are not affected by Jesus' eschatology), believes that "One can go so far as to lay down the rule: pericopes and logia in which the nearness of the judgment and the eschatological rule of God are not expressly articulated do not need to be directly referred by exegesis to the eschatological situation." Some of these non-affected sayings are: "The sayings about the salt and the light; the logion about sacrifice in Chp. 5:23f.; the saying about spiritual adultery; the prohibitions of divorce, of oaths, and of revenge (!); the command to love one's enemies (!); the saying about the eye; the logion about the two masters; the saying about the mote and the beam; the assurance that prayer will be heard; and the Golden Rule." (Windisch, The Meaning of the Sermon on the Mount, pp. 29f.) Grässer, who also divides the Sermon on the Mount into eschatological and non-eschatological sayings, has a similar list of those teachings which are unaffected by eschatology: Matt. 5:13ff., salt and light; 5:23f., offering; 5:27ff., adultery; 5:31f., divorce; 5:33ff., forbidding of oath-taking; 5:38ff., forbidding of taking revenge; 5:43ff., love of enemies; 6:22, the eye; 6:24, two men; 7:33, mote and beam; 7:7ff., granting of prayers; 7:12, the Golden Rule. (Grässer, Das Problem, p. 69).



of all existing circumstances . . . ." <sup>1</sup> Yet, even Bousset believes it inevitable that during His ministry Jesus would have spoken "golden words" which would be relevant to any age in spite of His belief in the imminent End. Jesus was a social being, and it was natural, Bousset suggests, that in the course of regular conversation He would have spoken from time to time about normal everyday matters. <sup>2</sup>

G.F. Thomas, on the other hand, represents those who believe that Jesus' ethic as a whole was not meant just for a brief interim period before the end of time. To him, "There is not a shred of evidence that he (Jesus) would have wanted to change any of his fundamental ethical principles if he had anticipated that after nineteen hundred years the kingdom would not have come." <sup>3</sup>

According to Rudolf Otto, Jesus' ethic presupposes a continuation of time. For example, he suggests that if Jesus had expected an imminent End, He would not have developed such a marvelous ethic, because there would have been no time to develop it, much less to fulfill it. Even Jesus' preaching on righteousness, Otto believes, "presupposed life and time and duration. His preaching did not correspond with the circumstances of 'a last brief hour,' in which before the inbreaking end, there was only just time for quick conversion, but with lasting relationships and attitudes." <sup>4</sup> I.H. Marshall suggests that Jesus' instruction "about marriage and divorce, or about the

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<sup>1</sup>Bousset, p. 150.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 151ff. Bousset believes that Jesus' ethics are eternally relevant because they are "ethics of lofty individualism." Ibid., pp. 149f.

<sup>3</sup>Thomas, Christian Ethics and Moral Philosophy, p. 30.

<sup>4</sup>Otto, The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man, p. 61.



claims of God and Caesar, surely reckons with the fact of normal history continuing at least for some time."<sup>1</sup>

So the debate continues. Schnackenburg, for example, believes that "The radical moral demands made by Jesus that form part of the most unchallengeable tradition are based primarily on eschatological motives: entry into the kingdom of God, a share in the divine banquet, reign with God, etc."<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, Cadoux claims that Jesus based His ethical teaching "on his own inspired insight into the nature of God and His will for men; and he framed them accordingly with an eye to inherently spiritual and moral values, independently of any forecast, long or short, of the length of time during which human society would continue to exist."<sup>3</sup>

The attempt to remove the stumbling block of Jesus' eschatology from His ethics forces an arbitrary dichotomy within His teaching and preaching: i.e., eschatology is considered to have absolutely no influence upon Jesus' ethics, or His ethics are divided into two categories-- "eschatological" and "non-eschatological."<sup>4</sup> However, why should it be necessary to separate those ethical precepts

<sup>1</sup> Marshall, Eschatology and the Parables, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Schnackenburg, God's Rule and Kingdom, p. 84. Schnackenburg comments: "A share in God's kingdom that was to come and was indeed very near at hand is one of the strongest motives to arouse all of the sound energies in man." Ibid., p. 199.

<sup>3</sup> Cadoux, The Historic Mission of Jesus, p. 127.

<sup>4</sup> Schweitzer's analysis of late nineteenth century approaches to Jesus' eschatology in relation to His ethics is still applicable: "Men feared that to admit the claims of eschatology would abolish the significance of His words for our time; and hence there was a feverish eagerness to discover in them any elements that might be considered not eschatologically conditioned. When any sayings were found of which the wording did not absolutely imply an eschatological connexion there was great jubilation-- these at least had been saved uninjured from the coming débâcle. Schweitzer, The Quest of the Historical Jesus, p. 400.

which seem to imply an on-going normal historical existence from Jesus' teaching about the Eschaton? Cadoux, as a case in point, believes that although Jesus preached both the presence and the future coming of the Kingdom of God, he concedes, nonetheless, that the "burden of His preaching" was the imminence of the Kingdom.<sup>1</sup> How then can Cadoux insist upon a separation between certain of Jesus' ethics and His eschatology? If Jesus' preaching centered upon His proclamation of the Kingdom of God, should it not be assumed that His ethical precepts must be understood in the light of such preaching?

The position of Dibelius should serve as a corrective to the thought of those scholars who see the need to separate Jesus' ethical principles which seem to imply a continuation of history from His expectation of the Eschaton. Dibelius believes that Jesus' eschatological message generally conditioned His entire ethic. He admits that there are sayings such as the prohibition of anger and of taking oaths and Jesus' statement on divorce that do not contain an explicit reference to the imminence of the End, but it is still there and should not be questioned. Dibelius contends that "It is legitimate to suppose that the whole message of our Lord has an eschatological background . . . ."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cadoux, The Guidance of Jesus for Today, p. 67.

<sup>2</sup> Dibelius, The Sermon on the Mount, pp. 60f., cf. p. 65. Cf. Amos Wilder, Eschatology and Ethics in the Teaching of Jesus, p. 101. Although Wilder considers the eschatological sanction to have but a "formal" effect upon the teaching of Jesus, he acknowledges, nonetheless, that the Synoptic writers present eschatology as a dominant ethical sanction. He contends that "it is impossible to presume an absence of it in the teaching of Jesus himself and a subsequent overlaying of Jesus' supposed non-eschatological teaching with this sanction. It is impossible to assign it exclusively to Mark or to pretend its absence from the Source. It is omnipresent in whatever elements or strata we would seek to isolate . . . . We find that there are other sanctions present but these do not supplant the eschatological sanction."



While it is understandable that one may perceive some of Jesus' sayings as more eschatologically oriented than others, there is no need to separate His ethics into "eschatological" and "non-eschatological" sayings. That there is no specific reference to the note of imminence in a particular context does not mean that Jesus' preaching of the Kingdom's imminence is to be totally disregarded in an interpretation related to that setting. Even McArthur, who insists that Jesus never mentions the imminence of the Eschaton in the Sermon on the Mount, admits to the possibility of the Sermon's being an expansion of Matt. 4:17,<sup>1</sup> which would call for an implication of the note of imminence throughout the Mount Discourse.

There is general agreement that the primary sanctions within Jesus' ethics are the nature of God and the imitation of that nature; the need to love God and one's fellow man; and the fulfilment of God's will. Yet, these sanctions are seldom mentioned. Jesus does not need to preface every ethical precept with such statements as: "In the light of the command to love God and your neighbor, you should . . .," "in order to fulfill the will of God, you must . . . ." Who would attempt to divide Jesus' ethics into those "related to God's will" and those "not related to His will?" Admittedly, this line of argument is somewhat elementary, but it serves to illustrate the point that once Jesus made it clear that He had come to preach the nearness of the Kingdom of God and that men should repent and prepare for its coming, there was, thereafter, no need for Him to preface His every ethical teaching with the words, "The Kingdom of God is at hand, therefore . . . ."

It can be demonstrated that belief in the imminence of the End does not preclude interest in ethical precepts which are not necessarily time-bound, and that ethics which

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<sup>1</sup>McArthur, Understanding the Sermon on the Mount, p. 86.



appear to presuppose the "continuation of life for some time" can fit quite naturally into the ethical systems of individuals or groups who live in anticipation of an imminent Eschaton.

Imminent Expectation and Permanent Ethics. Hugh Anderson observes that while the Synoptic writers present Jesus as both a herald of the imminent coming of the Kingdom of God as well as an ethical teacher, they "offer no explanation of how these two phases of his activity were connected in the mind of Jesus himself."<sup>1</sup> Anderson observes further that various attempts have been made to resolve this paradox through proposals which usually regard Jesus' eschatology as secondary. He suggests, however, that

it is just as likely that Jesus first and foremost believed and preached that God's reign was near and summoned his hearers to penitence, faithfulness, and preparedness in the face of of it. We now know that the combination of apocalyptic fervour with strenuous dedication to the Law was not without precedent in Jesus' day--the community of Qumran understood themselves both to be engaged in the warfare of the Last Days and to be devotees of the Law in its entirety.<sup>2</sup>

Besides the Qumran community, this same combination is apparent within the teaching of John the Baptist, the Apostle Paul and within apocalypticism. It may appear somewhat arbitrary to cite two movements (Apocalypticism and the Qumran Community of the Essenes) along with two figures (John the Baptist and the Apostle Paul), which/who are very different in many respects, to support the claim that Jesus was not unique in having taught an on-going ethic--for the most part--although He believed the End would take place within the period of a generation. However, they are analogous in at least one respect. They, as did Jesus, coupled an ethic, which was--in general--relevant to an on-going society, with a belief in the imminent and final disclosure of the transcendent God.

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<sup>1</sup>Anderson, Jesus, p. 60.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

John the Baptist. In a defence of Jesus' ethic, Burton Scott Easton argues that while Jesus did not teach an interim ethic "such an interim ethic seems actually to have been preached by the Baptist . . . as far as we can judge from the scanty remnants of his words."<sup>1</sup> However, Easton's observation will not stand up under examination. Rather, within the New Testament, the figure of John the Baptist is a prime example of a prophet who preached with conviction his apocalyptic message of the coming Judgment, explaining what man must do to escape the Judgment and prepare for the coming of the Kingdom of God which was near. What was a person to do in order to escape the Judgment and prepare for the imminent Kingdom (Matt. 3:2)? John called his audience to "repent, confess, be forgiven, be baptized" (Lk. 3:3). How were they advised to act in the light of the imminent Judgment? John's answers to particular groups may seem out of character, but they illustrate quite clearly, "scanty" though they may be, how John, who anticipated an imminent Judgment, was concerned with ethical directives which would alert man to his responsibilities toward his fellow man in normal, everyday commitments. He advised the multitudes to share their food and clothing with the less fortunate; the tax collectors to collect what they should and no more; the soldiers not to rob violently or accuse anyone falsely and to be content with their salaries (Lk. 3:10-14). How much more practical could a man be? Perhaps these are the "fruits that befit repentance" that John calls his hearers to bear (Lk. 3:8)! Certainly they are relevant instructions for ordinary men and women in their ordinary circumstances of life. Such social concerns are relevant to any age, and they were presented as coming from one who believed in the imminent Judgment!

Apocalypticists. Some scholars, such as M. Rist believe that the apocalypses are almost completely devoid

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<sup>1</sup>Easton, Christ in the Gospels, p. 176.



of any ethical or social teaching,<sup>1</sup> while others, such as R.H. Charles and Leon Morris, believe that the apocalyptic literature is essentially ethical in content.<sup>2</sup> Morris himself concludes that the main interest of the apocalypticist is eschatology and not ethics, but he believes, nonetheless, that

. . . a serious ethical purpose is implied in all they write. The hope they held out at the End was for the righteous, not for all men. And while they fix their gaze on the End, they do not await it idly with no concern for morality. They are anxious that men do the right. Indeed, on occasion the very nearness of the End adds a note of urgency to their ethical concern.<sup>3</sup>

The apocalyptic writers present a strong doctrine of works; good deeds are as "treasures in heaven,"<sup>4</sup> and one is rewarded according to his righteous acts.<sup>5</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup> M. Rist, "Apocalypticism," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible. Vol. I. (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), p. 161. Rist cites 2 Enoch 49ff. as an exception.

<sup>2</sup> R.H. Charles, ed. The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English. Vol. II. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), p. 16. Leon Morris, Apocalyptic (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1972), p. 59. Morris comments: "It is not true that there is no ethical teaching in these writings. The apocalyptists looked for upright conduct and on occasion they can inculcate the demand for social justice quite in the prophetic manner (cf. Testament of Benjamin 10:3). Indeed, it can be said that a serious ethical purpose is implied in all they wrote." Ibid., pp. 59f.) Nonetheless, Morris rightly observes that "in the last resort their interest is in eschatology, not ethics." Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>3</sup> Morris, Apocalyptic, p. 60.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. 4 Ezer. 7:77; 8:33; Syr. Bar. 14:12; 24:1.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Dan. 5:27; 12:3; En. 41:1; Syr. Bar. 1:2ff.; 4 Ezer. 7:32-38; 51:12-14; Cf. Wisd. 4:20 - 5:23; Test. of Ten. Patriarchs, Benj. 10. Yet, note the contrast in Assump. Mos. 12:8, where Yahweh's reward is through His predestined choice and not because of man's righteousness.



just will be saved (En. 51:4; 62:13f.) and, entering the Kingdom after the resurrection, will inherit eternal life.<sup>1</sup> Those who have responded to God's demands will be able to rejoice in the glory of God's eternal Kingdom forever.<sup>2</sup>

The righteous will be unable to intercede on behalf of the sinners in the day of judgment;<sup>3</sup> therefore, impetus is given to ethical and righteous living, and the need of being personally responsible to God in this life is stressed.<sup>4</sup> Enoch holds out for some chance of personal repentance and God's salvation on the very day of judgment,<sup>5</sup> but there is to be no further opportunity thereafter.<sup>6</sup>

The Qumran Community. The Qumran Community illustrates further that preoccupation with eschatological thought does not preclude ethics, does not preclude even a developed ethical system.

It is very probable that the Qumran Sect was a community of Essenes.<sup>7</sup> The Essenes were distributed

<sup>1</sup> Dan. 12:2; En. 37:4; 40:9; Slav. En. 66:6; Ps. Sol. 3:16; 9:9; 14:11; Syr. Bar. 14:11-13; 44:15; Cf. 1QH 4:21; 13:17; 18:29f.; 1QS 4:6-8. On concepts of "eternal life" see, E.C. Dewick, Primitive Christian Eschatology (Cambridge: Univ. Press, 1912), pp. 69-79, 83ff., 91f. A.C. Zenos, "Apocalyptic Literature," A Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels. Vol. I, ed. James Hastings (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1906), p. 93. Guy, The New Testament Doctrine of the "Last Things," p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Sib. Or. 3:676; Ps. Sol. 5:18f.; Cf. 1QSb 3:5; 4:25. Perrin, The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus, pp. 179-183.

<sup>3</sup> II Esd. 7:103-105; Syr. Bar. 85:12-15; 4 Ezr. 7:103-105.

<sup>4</sup> D.S. Russell, Between the Testaments (London: S.C.M. Press, Ltd., 1960), p. 156.

<sup>5</sup> En. 50, 50:1-3; Cf. Joel 2:32.

<sup>6</sup> Syr. Bar. 85:12; 4 Ezr. 9:10-12; 7:106-115.

<sup>7</sup> Frank Cross, The Ancient Library of Qumran and Modern Biblical Studies (London: Gerald Duckworth and Co., Ltd., 1958), pp. 37f. Cross comments: "The community at

throughout the Jewish world in small communities, and the Qumran Community was one of the last surviving groups.<sup>1</sup> This community preserved the Old Testament scriptures and most of the Apocalyptic writings<sup>2</sup> as well as the original texts of the Essenes. All three of these were discovered in their library.<sup>3</sup> The writings of the Sect should be dated no later than the last decade of the first Christian century or the early decades of the second, which means that while some of their writings were earlier, others were contemporary with the New Testament texts.<sup>4</sup>

The exegesis of the Old Testament by the Sect was essentially apocalyptic. It resulted in an interpretation that the scriptures are largely prophetic and that the

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Qumran was an Essene Settlement." Cf. K.G. Kuhn, "The Lord's Supper and the Communal Meal at Qumran." The Scrolls and the New Testament, ed. K. Stendahl (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), p. 65. Leaney, The Rule of Qumran and Its Meaning, p. 31. Bo Reicke, The New Testament Era, translated by David E. Green (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1969), p. 170. Matthew Black, The Dead Sea Scrolls and Christian Doctrine (London: Univ. of London, The Athlone Press, 1966), p. 4. Black agrees that this community was Essene, but feels that the Essenes had become somewhat militant by the Qumran stage.

<sup>1</sup> J.W. Bowman, "Eschatology of the New Testament," Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible. Vol. II, ed. George A. Buttrick, et. al. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), p. 138. (See CDC 7:6; 12:22 for references to the camps.)

<sup>2</sup> Some of the later works are missing: e.g. II Baruch, Sim. of Enoch (I Enoch 37-71), II Enoch, II Esdras, (IV Esdras), The Assumption of Moses and the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs. This possibly means that they are post-Essene in date, particularly I Enoch 37-71. See Cross, The Ancient Library of Qumran, p. 150, fn. 7; Ladd, Jesus and the Kingdom, p. 74.

<sup>3</sup> Reicke, The New Testament Era, p. 170.

<sup>4</sup> Black, The Dead Sea Scrolls and Christian Doctrine, pp. 3f.



prophecies are about to come true--now!<sup>1</sup> They held a strong Messianic hope, believing in not one, but two Messiahs (one Priestly of Aaron, and one a Royal leader of Judah)<sup>2</sup> with emphasis upon a third important figure known as the Teacher of Righteousness.<sup>3</sup>

The Qumran Community felt the nearness of the Kingdom and thought itself to be living at the onset of the End-time,<sup>4</sup> in an interim arrangement awaiting an expected change. This strong belief in the coming of the Kingdom<sup>5</sup> and the community's eschatology in general were substantially the same as those of the New Testament

<sup>1</sup> Cross, The Ancient Library of Qumran, pp. 162f.

<sup>2</sup> K.G. Kuhn, "The Two Messiahs of Aaron and Israel," The Scrolls and the New Testament, ed. K. Stendahl (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), pp. 54-64. Kuhn observes that this belief was current as early as 63 B.C. as noted in apocryphal literature, e.g., in Test. Rub. 6:7-12; Test. Sim. 7:1; Test. Levi 2:11 (Cf. Dan. 5:10); Gad. 8:1. Note especially Test. Judah 21:2-5, "To me (Judah) God has given the kingship, to him (Levi) the priesthood; and the kingship he has subordinated to the priesthood." Ibid., pp. 57f. Cf. CD 12:23; 14:19; 19:10; 1QS 9:11. Cross, The Ancient Library of Qumran, pp. 165f. Cf. Krister Stendahl, "The Scrolls and the New Testament: An Introduction and a Perspective," The Scrolls and the New Testament, ed. K. Stendahl (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Black, The Dead Sea Scrolls and Christian Doctrine, pp. 4f. Reicke, The New Testament Era, p. 172. Stendahl, "The Scrolls and the New Testament," p. 12. Cross, The Ancient Library of Qumran, p. 167. Cf. Hos. 10:12; Deut. 33:10.

<sup>4</sup> The anticipation of the End is especially noticeable in the emphasis placed upon the Messianic Banquet by the Sect. Cf. Stendahl, "The Scrolls and the New Testament," p. 10; Bowman, "Eschatology of the New Testament," p. 138.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. 1QM 6:6, 12:7; 1QSB 3:5. Cf. 4QpPs 37:10-11 (Their communal meal was in anticipation of the eschatological (messianic) banquet. 1QS 6:4-6; 1QSaII, 11-22; 1QSaI, 1). Cf. Cross, pp. 62ff.



writings.<sup>1</sup> The coming of the Kingdom would see the overthrow of Satan, which would inaugurate a new age.<sup>2</sup> In this new age--a new creation--there was to be no more evil.<sup>3</sup> At the center there would be a new Jerusalem, a heavenly sanctuary, and a New Temple.<sup>4</sup> As they prepared for the imminent End, they felt themselves to be the chosen remnant; the Heilsgemeinde--the true Israel; the true Priesthood.<sup>5</sup>

Although the Qumran Community expected the End imminently, they were, nevertheless, living in a time when the Kingdom had not yet come and the hour of its coming was unknown. The Sect had to adjust itself to

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<sup>1</sup>Black, The Dead Sea Scrolls and Christian Doctrine, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup>There would be a new era of the Law. Cf. 1QS 8:12-18; Leaney, The Rule of Qumran and Its Meaning, pp. 102f.; Cross, The Ancient Library of Qumran, p. 163. The Rule of War indicates an eschatological battle against Kittin (Rome) (1QM 11:11,12) will take place, at which time the Son of Light will do battle against the Kings of the North (1QM 1:1-4). The war will be long but will end victoriously for the remnant (1QM 1:6). See F.F. Bruce, "The Book of Daniel and the Qumran Community," Neotestamentica Et Semitica: Studies in Honour of Matthew Black, ed. E.E. Ellis and M. Wilcox (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1969), p. 234. Cf. Yigael Yadin, The Scrolls of the War of the Sons of Light Against the Sons of Darkness, translated by C. Rabin and B. Rabin (Oxford: University Press, 1962).

<sup>3</sup>1QS 4:6-8; the world will be made new.

<sup>4</sup>Black, The Dead Sea Scrolls and Christian Doctrine, p. 20.

<sup>5</sup>O. Betz, "The Eschatological Interpretation of the Sinai-Tradition in Qumran and in the New Testament," Revue de Qumran 6 (Feb. 67): 93. Betz comments: "The Qumran community understood itself in the light of the promise to become a 'kingdom of priests and a holy nation' (Exodus 19:6). As God had separated Israel from all the nations and granted His covenant to them (1Q 34 bis II, 5-6), so the Qumran community wanted to represent 'the people of the holy ones of the covenant, the men taught in the commandment' (1Q Milhamah X, 10)." Cf. Joachim Jeremias, "The Qumran Texts and the New Testament," The Expository Times 70 (1958): 69; Cross, The Ancient Library of Qumran, pp. 65f., 165f.

a responsible ongoing lifestyle. As Betz observes, "The holy status of an eschatological community had to become a permanent one, a style of living."<sup>1</sup> The community became a living "sanctuary," a holy place where rules regulated their lives. They belonged to an "eschatological sphere in which the Law determines everyone and everything."<sup>2</sup>

Here was a community that made righteousness the requirement of religious ethics, without hoping to transform the social order of the day. Its ethic did not include a plan to save the world, but was open enough so that "volunteers could come into the community."<sup>3</sup> They sought to fulfill God's will through praising Him and by loving one another. In fact, they themselves were the Holy Temple, who offered sacrifices to God by loving their fellow man. As S.T. Kimbrough states, "they made moral conduct the altar of sacrifice and praise of God the offering."<sup>4</sup>

Although the imminent expectation of the End was an apparent ethical sanction, at the heart of their ethic was their understanding of the "nature of God," who "imparted goodness and righteousness to man through Moses and the prophets." It is logical, therefore, that they would have depended heavily upon the Old Testament for their ethical grounding.<sup>5</sup>

While they believed that God demands perfection, they were aware that man is a sinner who needs to confess and receive forgiveness. Therefore, the confessor was

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<sup>1</sup>Betz, "The Eschatological Interpretation of the Sinai-Tradition in Qumran and the New Testament," p. 94.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 98.

<sup>3</sup>S.T. Kimbrough, Jr., "The Ethic of the Qumran Community," Revue de Qumran 6 (4, 1969): 485. Note Kimbrough for references to Qumran documents.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 486.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 486f.



aware that his conduct was totally dependent on God, and he would pray: "'For without thee no way is perfect and without thy will nothing is done' (Rule XI, 17)."<sup>1</sup> If a person proved to be a deliberate sinner, he was denied purification rites for a period of two years, and afterwards possibly could be readmitted. Therefore, each person was responsible for his own actions and would receive God's eschatological judgment if he consciously rebelled. Consequently, he was "'to cling to all his (God's) commands according to his will' and to the Covenant (Rule V, 1 . . .)."<sup>2</sup>

The rules the community lived by were closely connected with the Law of Moses, which was to be "revered and observed completely."<sup>3</sup> Kimbrough suggests that their moral code was something of an "interim ethic" since they were to "be governed by the first ordinances in which the members of the community began their instruction, until the coming of the prophets and the messiahs of Aaron and Israel (Rule IX, 10-11; cf. Dam. Doc. IV, 8-9)."<sup>4</sup> Yet, their ethic was highly detailed and complex. They believed that the End could come at any time, but since God had not yet come, those in the community needed adequate instructions so that in the normal course of their lives within the community they would know how to live among their fellow man.<sup>5</sup> It was through the living of righteous lives

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 489.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 490.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 492.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. (Rule = The Scroll of the Rule)

<sup>5</sup> Consequently, some "long term" instructions were naturally given, such as the restrictions upon a young man who "shall not (come near) to a woman in order to have sexual relations with her until his completing twenty years, when he knows (good) and evil." (Rule Annex 1, 9-11; also referred to as 1QSa.) Ibid. Kimbrough notes that this complex ethic deals with such matters as "virtue, love, hate, vengeance, justice, holiness, sacrifice, sacred meals, social policies of the Qumranites such as marriage and their attitude toward possession of private property, and other facts of life . . . ." Ibid., p. 498.



among the members of the community that they responded to the ethical principle of Leviticus 19:2; "Ye shall be holy; for I Jehovah your God am holy."<sup>1</sup>

Since this community isolated itself in order to make special preparation for the Eschaton, it is obvious that eschatology became a dominant ethical sanction, but not the dominant sanction. The nature of God; the desire to fulfill God's will, to be righteous as God is righteous, to be perfect and Holy as God--these concepts of Yahweh indicate that the Qumran Community practiced a theocentric ethic. It should also be acknowledged that the ethics of the Qumran Community very likely reflect a degree of adjustment since their eschatological expectations were not fulfilled as anticipated.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, they placed themselves in what they believed to be a temporary situation in which they were governed by a theology of purification and preparation for the Coming God. Their eschatology, which reflected their assurance that God could be trusted to bring an imminent and adequate End to this evil age and begin everything anew, was a part of their theology.

The Apostle Paul. Paul made strategic boasts of his Jewish heritage when combating the "circumcision party" (Phil. 3:4-7), or those who cited their own backgrounds to defend their claims to certain rights or positions (2 Cor. 11:22ff.). As an ambitious Pharisee, Paul had been keen to uphold his ancestral traditions (Gal. 1:14). Having been raised in Tarsus, a city steeped in Greek culture, but under the Roman rule, Paul would have grown up speaking the Greek language.<sup>3</sup> That he knew Greek philosophy

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. DSH, 7:5ff. for an expression of disappointment due to the delay of the anticipated End.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Martin Dibelius, Paul, edited and completed by W.G. Kümmel; translated by Frank Clarke (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953), pp. 15-26. Dibelius

and could quote from their sages, there can be little doubt (Acts 17:16-34). However, Paul was a student of the religion of the Jews and, therefore, based his theology and ethics upon the Torah which, upon his conversion, he interpreted in the light of the kerygma--the news and theological implications of the life, death and resurrection of the Messiah who was known as Jesus. Although known as an apostle to the Gentiles, Paul made persistent appeals to the Jews to receive Jesus as the Christ. W.D. Davies contends that the Hellenistic elements in Paul's writings should not "imply that he was therefore outside the main current of first-century Judaism."<sup>1</sup>

One should not attempt to separate Paul's ethics from his theology, for the two are integrated. As D.E.H.

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observes that the influence of the Jewish and Greek world upon Paul presents a complex figure of a man. He was one for whom the Greek influence (especially in Tarsus) and his Roman citizenship paved the way for him contextually to proclaim the kerygma.

<sup>1</sup>W.D. Davies, Paul and Rabbinic Judaism (London: S.P.C.K., 1948), p. 320. Cf. Günther Bornkamm, Paul, translated by D.M.G. Stalker (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1971), pp. 8ff., for a discussion of the influence of Greek thought upon Judaism in general and upon Paul in Particular. Bornkamm comments: "Nevertheless, there can be no suggestion that the cultural factors in the environment, the enlargement of Jewish theology to include Wisdom, and the adoption of contemporary ways and means of propaganda ever seriously brought Judaism into danger of becoming a syncretistic religion." Ibid. Cf. the discussion, "Jewish and Gentile Cross-fertilization," by D.E.H. Whiteley, The Theology of St. Paul (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), pp. 5ff.; Richard Longenecker, The Ministry and Message of Paul (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971), pp. 24ff. and the discussion, "Paul's Heritage from Judaism," by Morton Scott Enslin, The Ethics of Paul (New York: Abingdon Press, 1957), pp. 1-16. Enslin writes: "There is every reason to believe that before his conversion Paul's outlook on life was that of the normal Jew, though we know almost nothing regarding him before the period of his literary activity." Ibid., p. 10.



Whiteley writes,

In this St. Paul is showing himself to be a true Biblical Jew, for, . . . whereas Greek teachers attempted to develop systems of ethics which were self-contained and self-justifying, the Old Testament based its moral precepts firmly upon the nature of God and His saving acts.<sup>1</sup>

The content of Paul's moral precepts was determined, to a great extent, by his attempt to deal with the needs and problems of the Christian communities to which he wrote. However, Paul did not consciously develop a detailed ethical system. His concern lay elsewhere. His preaching centered around the kerygma which was coupled with the belief that Jesus, the Christ, would return in the near future to judge the world and receive His elect. As Dibelius observes

That belief in the early coming of the "last things"--the eschatological belief--meant that the whole of life was regarded from the point of view of the end: this life was only an intermediate state, and what was to be done in church, the mission, family, politics, and business, was to be done "until he comes" (1 Cor. 11:26). The Christian was living in this world as a citizen of the world to come.<sup>2</sup>

There can be little doubt that the Apostle Paul anticipated the Eschaton, the fulfilment of all that Jesus had begun. Paul was so caught up in the eschatological perspective of his day that in his correspondence to the Corinthians he even advised those who were not married to stay as they were, and the married to live as though they

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<sup>1</sup>Whiteley, p. 204. Cf. Enslin, The Ethics of Paul, p. 1. He remarks: "The clue to be kept in mind in trying to appreciate Jewish ethics is that for a Jew morals and religion were one: 'Ethics is the soul of Jewish religion.'" And Samuel Sandmel, The Genius of Paul (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1958), p. 117, who says of Paul that "his ethics is persistently Jewish--not Greek."

<sup>2</sup>Dibelius, Paul, p. 62.



were not (1 Cor. 7:25-31).<sup>1</sup> Paul believed the form of this world was passing away (1 Cor. 7:31), and the time had been shortened (7:29). He believed there was but little time to prepare for that age beyond history in which there would be no institutions such as marriage. Those who would be ready were to reshape every possible relationship, even the most intimate, in the light of the impending End.

According to Leander E. Keck, Paul's counsel to unmarried Christians "expressly emphasizes the importance of being free from anxiety . . . ." However, Paul's eschatological perspective separates his view of anxiety from that of the Stoic, a view seen in 1 Cor. 7:29a, 31b. That is, to Keck

The Stoic inner distancing is grounded in the nature of the self, Paul's is grounded in the eschatological hour--"the form of this world is passing away." Because this world and its institutions, structures, social status, etc. have no future, Paul urges that Christians not involve themselves in it more than they must, and to make no effort to change their socio-economic status in it. To put Paul's counsel colloquially, "Don't hustle to join (or change) a lame-duck administration."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Paul's words in 1 Tim. 4:1ff., in which he charges that those who "forbid marriage" are heretics, may indicate a note of ambivalence in his thinking on this subject, but it should be remembered that Paul's advice in 1 Cor. 7 is presented as personal advice based upon his desire for Christians to give themselves without hindrance to the task of proclaiming the Gospel. (Note: There will be no attempt here to defend the traditional Pauline authorship of 1 Timothy. It is difficult to imagine even the most loyal of Paul's supporters propagating as his such radical eschatology as 1 Tim. 4:1ff., into the second century. At such a late date, Paul's credibility would hardly have been enhanced. Of course, Eph. 5:22-33, in which Paul describes the relationship between husband and wife as analogous to the relationship between Christ and the church, illustrates Paul's appreciation for marriage.)

<sup>2</sup> Leander E. Keck, Paul and His Letters. Proclamation Commentaries, edited by Gerhard Krodel (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), p. 96. Contrast Enslin, The Ethics of Paul, p. 190. Enslin agrees that Paul's thought in

Paul did, of course, advocate change other than apparent change in conduct, morals, and relationships with God and one's fellow man. For example, he insisted that such customs as circumcision and food laws not be prescribed as unbending Law within the new community (Col. 2:8-19). Women were responsible participants in worship (1 Cor. 11:2-16), and social classes were to be abolished (Gal. 3:28; 1 Cor. 12:13).

That Paul did not promote institutional changes and advocate a revolution within the social structure can best be explained by his expectation of an imminent Eschaton. Paul believed that "all things" would soon be made new! As Keck suggests

What makes Paul appear "conservative" socially

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1 Cor. 7 is not dependent upon Stoic influence, but he suggests that while Paul's stated reasons for celibacy are "1) the nearness of the end which made change of status unwise; 2) the greater freedom the unmarried man had in the service of God, . . . it does not seem improbable that it was due in no small measure to his (Paul's) constant battle with sexual laxity in his churches." Cf. Bornkamm, Paul, pp. 206f. Bornkamm agrees that Paul bases his argument of 1 Cor. 7:29-31 on "the transience of all earthly things," but it must be admitted that more is meant here than "mankind's universal experience of the swift passage of time." Bornkamm writes: "The reason why time is foreshortened and running out is that Christ's imminent coming again and the end of the world are at the very door--so near that many in Paul's own generation would live on to experience them (1 Thess. 4:15ff.; 1 Cor. 15:51ff.; cf. Phil. 4:5). Even though no one knows the day and the hour, and the 'day of the Lord' will come 'like a thief in the night' (1 Thess. 5:1f.), this makes no difference to Paul's conviction that it is near. This is also the context of the directions and counsels in 1 Corinthians 7, and they may not be divorced from it." Bornkamm advises that one should move beyond this perspective to discern that, for Paul, those in Christ "have already been called to a new existence (1 Cor. 7:17ff.), and that accordingly their only concern is with the Lord, now present in the Spirit and soon to come in judgment and salvation." Ibid., p. 207.



is our loss of his eschatological horizon. Once the sense of the imminent end is gone, Paul comes through as a social conservative who urges that everyone stay in his or her place regardless of how long history and society continue. Appealing to 1 Corinthians 7 to say that Paul argues against all social change actually stands the apostle on his head. Paul does not sanctify the status quo as a divinely ordained order but insists on precisely the opposite--it is doomed to pass away.<sup>1</sup>

Keck's observation, helpful as it may be, leaves one with the problem of making Paul's teachings about slavery relevant to treatments of slavery today. (Although the letter to Philemon could be interpreted as a cryptic polemic against slavery.) The same is true of other issues with which Paul dealt briefly or not at all due to his belief in an imminent Parousia, as well as the influence of the social and perhaps political conditions of his day. It must be admitted that Paul limited his attack against slavery as well as other social injustices. Nonetheless, his moral injunctions, in general, have been studied and applied to many peoples and cultures for centuries.

Although Paul's ethics were influenced by his belief in the imminent Eschaton, it would be inappropriate to label them as "emergency instructions" for an interim period. As Herman Ridderbos observes, for Paul, eschatology was "a powerful motive for the Christian life (1 Thess. 2:12)," and that "hope in the appearing of Christ (Tit. 2:13)" was "accordingly the distinguishing mark of the Christian life (Rom. 8:24; Gal. 5:5)."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Keck, Paul and His Letters, p. 98. Keck believes that "Neither society's inherent goodness or rightness, nor God's sanction of the way things are, causes Paul to urge Christians not to change their relation to social structures or the social structures themselves, but the conviction that God will soon change everything anyway." Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Herman Ridderbos, Paul: An Outline of His Theology, translated by John Richard De Witt (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1975), p. 488. Ridderbos writes, "Again



Ridderbos cautions against insisting that Paul believed the Parousia would take place within his own lifetime or within the span of time relative to his generation,<sup>1</sup> but he admits, nonetheless, that "it is difficult to doubt that not only the ancient Christian church, but Paul, too, . . . did not make allowance for a centuries-long continuing development of the present world order."<sup>2</sup>

The point need not be belabored, but it should be stated. In spite of Paul's failure to deal at length with some social issues, his ethics, for the most part, are still relevant to modern man. And as Ridderbos states,

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and again the apostle confronts the church with the day of Christ, on which it will have to appear before its Lord pure and blameless (Phil. 1:10; 1 Thess. 3:13; 5:23; 1 Cor. 1:8). The motive is the more urgent because by this church Paul evidently does not mean the church in its already glorified mode of existence after the resurrection, but simply in its historical appearance, directed toward the parousia." Ibid.

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 489. Ridderbos suggests there is no simple "yes" or "no" to the question as to whether Paul expected the return of the Lord during his own lifetime.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. To Ridderbos, Paul's appeal in Rom. 13:11ff. "points to the fact that the apostle did not expect Christ's coming to be in the distant future." He also suggests that while some desire to interpret the "shortness of time" in 1 Cor. 7:29 as "a divine act of shortening" it is "more probable that the expression simply means 'short.'" Ibid., fn. 4. Ridderbos accepts the fact that Paul did not bother with computing the time of the Eschaton, and even criticized those who were so inclined for failing to recognize that further events were to take place before Jesus' return (2 Thess. 2:3ff.). However, Ridderbos cautions that to observe these elements in Paul's eschatology should "not alter the fact that this nearness is not to be eliminated as a category of time or to be converted into a general denotation of mystical or transcendental 'nearness.'" Ibid., p. 492. Cf. Cullmann, Salvation in History, p. 337. He warns that to remove the imperatives of 1 Cor. 7:29ff. from their temporal context would rob them of their Pauline orientation. That is, "They are found after the statement that the time 'is short'. Paul is not thinking here of centuries . . . ."

"it is of no less importance to observe that this eschatological determination of Paul's preaching and paraenesis nowhere asserts itself as a depreciation of life in the present world."<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the writings of the Apostle Paul further illustrate the error of assuming that eschatologists who anticipated an imminent End were necessarily "other-worldly" in their thinking and failed to offer, consequently, an ongoing relevant ethic.

Summary. Although Jesus believed in the imminence of the End, it is not incongruous that He taught ethical precepts which seem to imply a continuation of society for some time at least. A look at the ethics of John the Baptist, apocalypticists, the Qumran Community and the Apostle Paul offers strong evidence that people who lived in expectation of an imminent End found it both practical and necessary to live by an ethical system for the remaining days, whether long or short. Jesus was no different! He believed that the Kingdom of God would come within the lifetime of those who belonged to His generation, but He did not know the exact time. He taught His followers to live pure, holy lives. They were to be perfect as God is perfect; they were to be more righteous than the Scribes and the Pharisees; they were to obey God's will. They were to love God and their neighbor while they had the opportunity.

While the expectation of the coming of the Kingdom of God naturally radicalized Jesus' demands, the disciples were not advised to isolate themselves and prepare for its arrival. They were called to be responsible toward God and their fellow man. One who followed Jesus was to be judged by the way in which he responded to God and man in the context of his natural existence. And within his own contextual existence, the responsibilities of the disciple were intensified in the light of the possibility that God could inaugurate His Kingdom at any time.

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<sup>1</sup>Ridderbos, Paul, p. 494.



In Jesus' analogies of Noah and the Flood (Matt. 24:37-39, par. Lk. 17:26f.); the two men in the field (Matt. 24:40); the two men in bed (Lk. 17:34); and the two women grinding at the mill (Matt. 24:41, par. Lk. 17:35), the message of preparation and readiness is the obvious theme. Yet, it is significant that in these illustrations men and women are presented in natural circumstances. Not all were asked to leave their professions, their homes and their normal activities in order to prepare for the coming of the Kingdom of God. Rather, man was most often called to respond to the demands of discipleship in his own natural environment, because where man lives, works, rooms and plays is the natural setting for God to evaluate him. It is in his natural circumstances that one can best be judged "prepared" or "unprepared" for the Kingdom of God. Two men in the same bed: one was ready and one was not; two women grinding: one was ready, one was not; two men working in the field: one was ready, one was not; some who were marrying and continuing life as though they had heard the announcement of God's imminent reign were prepared for His coming--others were not! Jesus did not say, "Stop marrying!" It was Paul who cautioned against the distraction of family responsibilities from the primary task of proclaiming the Gospel (1 Cor. 7). Jesus' concern was apparent; whether one married or stayed single, or even became a eunuch for the Kingdom, he had better be ready when the End comes!<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Of course, there were circumstances in which it was impossible for an individual to continue normal family and social relationships after he responded to Jesus' call to discipleship and preparation for the Kingdom of God. (This still holds true today in numerous societies.) His was a radical call to a radical ethic, and not everyone could accept it; many stumbled over His demands. (Cf. Matt. 10:34-36, par. Lk. 12:51-53; Matt. 10:37-39, par. Lk. 14:26-27). It is also apparent that Jesus called some away from their homes and their professions and gave them the special commission to preach the imminence of the Kingdom so that more could hear and make preparation.

In his work, The First Followers of Jesus, translated by John Bowden (London: S.C.M. Press, 1978), Gerd Theissen examines the phenomenon of the "wandering charismatics" (those committed to Jesus who are known in the New Testament and early church history as "disciples," "teachers," "righteous," "prophets," and "apostles") as roles (types, such as Jesus, who as the Son of Man placed radical demands upon His followers and set the example for them; pp. 24-32). He analyzes them in the light of sociological factors, such as movements, responses from the community and analogous groups or individuals.

Theissen's argument follows: The portrait of the followers of Jesus can be better understood if viewed from the perspective that the records were preserved by those who responded to the "transcendent bearer of revelation." The "Jesus movement" existed from about AD 30 - 70 in the area of Syria and Palestine (p. 1). From the New Testament account, the relationship between Jesus and His charismatic followers is "characterized by reciprocal expectation," and "mutually determined roles are assigned to both" (p.7).

The early church consisted of these wandering charismatics supplemented by settled communities (more so in the Hellenistic areas than among the Jews in Palestine, although Jerusalem was clearly settled). The apostles, prophets and teachers exercised considerable authority over many of the churches. Such a development can best be understood in the light of Jesus' radical call, expectations among His followers, and reactions from the community (pp. 8ff.; 19f.).

The wandering charismatics, committed to ethical radicalism, enforced by their expectation of the imminent end of the world (p. 15), became homeless, giving up their families, possessions and protection (pp. 10-14). Yet, the survival of these disciples depended upon sympathizers in the local communities who were integrated into Judaism. Jesus and His charismatic followers, as well as leaders of the early church, such as prophets and evangelists, were accommodated in many homes. Such reception speaks clearly of a latent hospitable tendency which surfaced among sympathizers. These Jewish communities, which initially did not anticipate a break from Judaism, responded to Jesus less radically than the wandering charismatics did, and were soon forced to deal with problems such as regulating behavior, determining authoritative roles, and establishing procedures for receiving and rejecting those who desired membership. Consequently, two social forms of the Jesus movement developed and established complementary relationships (pp. 17-23).

The socio-economic factors of Palestine, and later within the Hellenistic areas, help to explain the atmosphere which gave birth to and tolerated--to a great extent--these two social forms of the Jesus movement. The Gospels describe Jesus as indiscriminately going among the poor, diseased, demon-possessed and the outcast in general. Many



of these people were in a state of "unconscious readiness" to leave everything (pp. 31-46).

Among the factors which Theissen proposes as giving confidence to the Jesus movement, the one most relevant to this study is his observation that Jesus' followers anticipated the imminent coming of the rule of God. In his description of socio-political factors affecting the Jesus movement, Theissen sees the movement as radically theocratic illustrated in the followers' belief in the imminent coming of the Kingdom of God. And, to Theissen, "however one twisted it, this rule of God meant the end of all other rule, even the rule of the Romans and priests." Jesus' followers believed in a miraculous intervention of God, a belief analogous to the essentially contemporary expectations of the prophetic movement, the resistance movement and the Essenes (pp. 59-62). (This is true although these movements were very different in other ways.) Theissen describes the Jesus movement as a prophetic movement, which is similar to but different from a programmatic movement. That is, "a prophet announces what will be, a programme what should be the case" (p. 60). Theissen says of the theocratic aspect of the Jesus movement that,

It was so much taken for granted that the kingdom of God which was to dawn in a miraculous way would also bring an end to Roman rule that the fact did not need to be mentioned. Eyes were fixed exclusively on the new world. This new world was not wholly different. Indeed, according to the beliefs of the Jesus movement it already overlapped into this world. An appropriate date for it could be given: it was to come during the lifetime of the first generation (Mark 9:1) (pp. 62f.).

Theissen resourcefully applies sociological principles to the New Testament setting, and his deductions are interesting and frequently helpful. He takes the Synoptic tradition seriously as a primary resource, demonstrates the importance of understanding the impact of culture (its people, movements, history, beliefs and levels of tolerance), and also demonstrates, as a principle, the validity of strengthening a position by citing common factors from analogous individuals and movements. However, Theissen's thesis cannot be fully accepted. His rather general statement that "anyone who was dissatisfied with things as they were could become a . . . prophet . . .," (p. 36) is somewhat misleading. To the contrary, evidence shows that only especially endowed charismatic figures, such as John the Baptist, Jesus (and perhaps Theudas) were recognized by the people as prophets. Certainly prophets should not be grouped with beggars and criminals. It is more likely that such troubled and displaced figures would have responded to the charismatic



prophet. (See the thesis of Kennelm Burridge, New Heaven, New Earth (New York: Schocken Books, 1969.) Burridge speaks to and illustrates this very point.

Further, Theissen's statement that Jesus' disciples were among those who "lived in unconscious readiness to leave their ancestral homes" (p. 36) is not adequately supported by the Synoptic evidence. In fact, a case to the contrary could be established to demonstrate that some of His disciples never completely detached themselves from their homes, while others were not among the poor and displaced who anticipated a change. That is, some of the disciples, from the Synoptic perspective, were not "poor" comparatively speaking. Perhaps Matthew wanted to escape his ignoble occupation, but he was hardly a beggar, and James and John were fishing partners with Simon (Lk. 5: 1-11). That Jesus' disciples reminded Him they had "left all" to follow Him (Lk. 18:29) was possibly an expression of anxiety and regret in the light of Jesus' demands upon the young man of Luke 18:18-27. It is also clear that Jesus and His disciples frequented Peter's home, and that James and John stayed in touch with their mother, who actively campaigned on their behalf (Matt. 20:20f.). After the crucifixion, some of the disciples, following Peter's example, returned to fishing. Had Peter and Andrew held a boat on deposit just in case? The point is that it is not necessary to conclude that the disciples were in a state of unconscious readiness to follow a wandering charismatic, leaving everything behind. Their sacrifice was real, and as Theissen himself observes, once they had made the choice to follow Jesus, it was difficult thereafter, because of social pressures, for them to retreat from their decision (p. 11).

Note: Because "theological praxis" examines the applicability of interpretive conclusions within a hermeneutic process to moving beyond the cognitive to the affective and effective, the messenger of God's Word is required to test academic conclusions within the milieu of his/her ministry. Such testing involves an intense effort to contextualize the Gospel, taking an indigenous approach to ministry. One must possess a keen socio-anthropological understanding of a particular society, with a special awareness of political, cultural and religious/cultic influences, in order to analyze Christian related movements among diversified peoples. Two different socio-anthropological approaches which attempt to make sense out of the phenomena of "radical" commitment to prophets (charismatics) and the rise of millenarian movements within primitive societies, are found in Burridge, New Heaven, New Earth and Peter Worsley, The Trumpet Shall Sound (London: Macgibbon & Kee, 1957). A brief examination of the conclusions of these two scholars follows:

Kennelm Burridge writes of the rise and contributions, as well as the destruction and ultimate demise of charismatic leaders and millenarian movements. His work is



helpful reading for Christians in countries which provide seedbeds for revolutionary and charismatic leaders who sometimes develop savior complexes.

Within struggling societies exploitation of the poor, ignorant and underprivileged often goes unchallenged, and heroes arise during periods of social unrest, when the ravages of such exploitation become unveiled. The abused respond to dynamic leaders and gain hope from their promises. Prophetic millenarians sometimes rightly and resourcefully challenge those who abuse the oppressed inspiring segments of the population to take the initiative in organizing for the purpose of rejecting oppression. Some leaders train their followers to fulfill their own basic needs. Certainly there are positive features related to the rise of prophets among millenarians, the movements themselves often begun by the charismatics.

On the other hand, some modern day prophets make excessive claims to have a monopoly upon truth and revelation, which they attempt to confirm through incantations and rites. Sometimes these prophets, unprepared for sudden glory, and forgetting the causes that propelled them into prominence, reach for more personal power. Popular reactions to heroes cum dictators can take many forms--mass loyalty fetishily applied; disintegration in the ranks at both high and low levels; or simple rebellion.

Peter Worsley, acknowledging the frequent occurrences of millenarian movements for centuries throughout the world, centers his study upon the "Cargo Cults" of Melanesia as a case study in multiple forms. He concentrates upon those movements which anticipate an imminent change in the social/political/economic structure, rather than upon those groups which anticipate a millennium as a remote possibility and therefore "resign themselves to their present lot and look for salvation in the next world" (Worsley, p. 12).

Worsley presents cases of numerous cults which arose as a result of the economic impact of the white man. The millenarian movements may have appeared to have encouraged regression into the past but were actually attempts to solve the problems created by colonialism. Leaders attempted to lead their people to respond creatively to their plight by seeking new and bright paths which would position them "to reform their own institutions, to meet new demands or to withstand new pressures." In the broadest sense their ambitions, stimulated by enormously inflated wants (Cargo), were "to secure a fuller life" (*Ibid.*, p. 243).

However, the desires of the Cargo Cults cannot be completely satisfied, for the Cargo will never come. There are, however, some positive aspects to the movements, because "the ardent wishes and hopes poured into the movement bolster it up and revive it time after time despite failure. And large-scale activities, some of

Righteousness Demanded in the Light of the Imminent Kingdom

Whereas some writers believe that the Synoptic tradition cannot be interpreted eschatologically because Jesus' ethic reveals "permanently relevant" teachings which presuppose an on-going society, Jack Sanders proposes, to the contrary, that the Synoptic writers present a "time-bound" eschatologically oriented ethic which was not even practical for those who lived during their own time, much less for these "extended days." For example, as Matthew presents it, Jesus' demand for righteousness is possible, "As long as God is coming soon . . . ."<sup>1</sup> Sanders believes that Jesus demanded nothing less than perfection, i.e., complete righteousness. And to him,

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them quite practical, are carried out under the stimulus of these fantastic yearnings." Therefore, the imaginary projection of the people can often be channeled into productive projects, and their work produces a measure of satisfaction and becomes "part of the symbolic validation given to the idea that the things wanted are morally justifiable" (*Ibid.*, p. 247).

While the sociological structures of Jesus' day, about which one would desire more information, cannot be readily correlated to primitive societies as described by Burridge and Worsley, some comparisons are valid. For example, it could be helpful for Christians to look upon the modern day charismatic figure as a cultural dynamic equivalent to the Prophet Jesus for the purpose of perceiving some important biblical truths relative to millenarian movements. Jesus was similar in some ways to prophets of any age and movement. Each is called, spoken through and charismatic (Burridge, pp. 153ff.). Each uses the language of the people to lead them to respond to his mission. Each comes as a deliverer! But Jesus did not come simply to lead people to a better way of life. He was the prophet with the final message. He did not come to be served but to serve. He has been perceived through the centuries in primitive and not so primitive cultures as the One sent by God to prepare His own followers for the establishment of God's perfect Kingdom.

<sup>1</sup> Sanders, "Ethics in the Synoptic Gospels," p. 32.



"Such obedience is possible only if the end has drawn near. Once the pressure of imminence begins to be released, the command must be relaxed."<sup>1</sup> Amos Wilder, himself, admits that "It is difficult to deny that Jesus' . . . urgent summons to the righteousness he preached were set against a background of vivid eschatological rewards and punishments which he saw as imminent."<sup>2</sup>

What then can be said about this call to perfect righteousness voiced by One who believed in the imminence of the End? Rudolf Otto believes that if Jesus preached without any thought of prolonged existence for man, then His preaching could have resulted in nothing more than an urgent appeal to "make haste, repent, that you may escape judgment. An act of remorse, quickly brought about, is all that could be required in these circumstances, a petition for forgiveness, possibly a swift and complete surrender to the mercy of the judge."<sup>3</sup>

If emphasis is placed upon the "presence of the Kingdom," with the view that it is "yet to be fulfilled," this problem appears to be easily solvable. As an example, George E. Ladd believes that it is through the presence of the Kingdom of God that men are equipped to respond to the demands of discipleship and are "enabled to realize a new measure of righteousness."<sup>4</sup> To Ladd,

The righteousness of the Kingdom . . . can be experienced only by the man who has submitted to the reign of God which has been manifested in Jesus, and who has therefore experienced the powers of God's Kingdom."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Sanders, "The Question of the Relevance of Jesus for Ethics Today," p. 139.

<sup>2</sup>Wilder, Eschatology and Ethics in the Teaching of Jesus, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup>Otto, The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man, p. 61.

<sup>4</sup>Ladd, Jesus and the Kingdom, p. 286.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 294.

Ladd feels that the Sermon on the Mount would only be an expression of excessive idealism if understood apart from the belief that God is now establishing His realm here on earth.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, Ladd believes that full righteousness will be realized when the Kingdom is consummated. Like salvation, which can be experienced through the coming of Christ, the righteousness of the Kingdom can also be experienced now.<sup>2</sup>

This "Synthesis" solution is not satisfactory. In the first place, it is not likely that anyone is in a position to prove that the Kingdom of God is present to any degree, either from the biblical evidence or from current observations. Secondly, even if it could be proven that the Kingdom became present in Jesus and enabled individuals to attain to a new level of righteousness, one must move on--in the light of the continuation of normal historical existence for more than 1900 years since the Kingdom's beginning--to explain the course through which the individual may realize supreme righteousness. Ladd does not speak to this issue. Rather, he believes that the Synoptic Gospels leave us "anticipating an imminent event and yet unable to date its coming." He admits that logically this may appear contradictory, but he contends that "it is a tension with an ethical purpose--to make date-setting impossible and therefore to demand constant readiness."<sup>3</sup> Quite obviously the Synoptic Gospel writers never intended to leave "twentieth century man" with the Gospel at all. They were writing for their own day, not "ours." If it is now "our tension" it was not so purposed by either Jesus or the writers.

As Windisch observes, it is also not enough to interpret Jesus' ethic simply as "interim ethics" or as "exceptional legislation." He suggests that

The radicalism of the Sermon on the Mount is not dependent on the imminence of the final revelation, or on the accidental brevity of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 284.    <sup>2</sup>Ibid, p. 288.    <sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 324.



the interim, but on the essential circumstance that the event for which one must prepare is the rule of God; that the summons comes from God who now, by the mouth of Jesus, demands something utter and absolute.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus' radical demands and His ethic as a whole are certainly conditioned by His belief in the nearness of the Kingdom of God. However, one need not conclude that Jesus, impatient as He was with certain practices and rituals within Judaism (cf. Mk. 7:1-23; Matt. 23), sought to undermine and replace the Jewish emphasis upon righteousness. Rather, His ethic included a call to an Old Testament quality of righteousness. For example, Jesus did not demand perfection as God is perfect simply because He believed the Kingdom was at hand. The Jews understood very clearly that God accepts only that which has been perfected; no offering with a flaw is acceptable to God. If God is coming, then preparation is all the more urgent, although the degree of purification required by God is in no way affected. God's standards are not determined by His being proximate in time and history. Jesus alerted man to the urgency of the moment--he had little time left (although that time is undefined) to repent and to prepare for the Royal God. According to William Manson,

Jesus is not commending an ideal of perfected religious living which has only a temporary and provisional relation to the Kingdom of God. Rather does he mean that "one who did not come into genuine fellowship with God now would have no hope of happy admission into the divine presence when the Kingdom was finally established."

Dibelius suggests that the commands of Jesus cannot be understood apart from a consideration of God's grace. He believes that Jesus' commandments must be

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<sup>1</sup>Windisch, The Meaning of the Sermon on the Mount, p. 29. In the light of this understanding of the Sermon on the Mount, it is difficult to understand why Windisch insists upon dividing the Sermon into "eschatological and wisdom" sayings.

<sup>2</sup>Manson, The Gospel of Luke, p. 74.

taken seriously, although they cannot really be fulfilled. He feels, therefore, that they should not be interpreted legalistically. Rather, Jesus' commands are to serve as radical examples of what God demands now from His disciples in the present age. Jesus' ethics, therefore, are signs of the Kingdom, and the demands find their real purpose as they are used to bring about a change within those preparing to receive the Kingdom. His ethic, then, is an ethic of Grace. His ethic stems from the future Kingdom, and the nearness of the Kingdom serves as an eschatological incentive which directs one's attention to the eternally consummated Kingdom and the fulfilment of God's will.<sup>1</sup>

Jeremias, with a similar view, believes that the Sermon on the Mount does not give complete regulations for the disciple's life, but only signs or symptoms of the "new life." The disciples of Christ are, themselves, to be "signs of the coming kingdom of God, signs that something has already happened. The disciples should testify through their actions that "the kingdom of God is dawning."<sup>2</sup>

Sanders presents an interpretation in which he understands the Synoptic writers to have believed Jesus insisted that man must prove to God his righteousness if he expects to be received by God when He comes soon! In contrast, Ladd, Windisch, William Manson, Dibelius and Jeremias express views which steer clear of a "grace by righteous effort," although they each have their own particular corrective. Sanders is correct in emphasizing the radical nature of Jesus' call to perfection. But it is not likely that Jesus' understanding of righteousness was opposed to that of the Old Testament which understands righteousness to be God's accomplishment and not man's. John Knox also offers a needed corrective to the thought expressed in Sanders' view of Jesus' call to righteousness.

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<sup>1</sup> Dibelius, The Sermon on the Mount, pp. 51ff.

<sup>2</sup> Jermeias, The Sermon on the Mount, p. 33.



According to Knox, Jesus'

. . . knowledge that he stood at or just before the final crisis of history allowed for a pre-occupation with . . . absolute righteousness more complete and intensive than in ordinary circumstances might, humanly speaking, have been possible. If this is true, instead of blaming eschatology for the "impracticableness" of Jesus' ethical teaching, we should thank eschatology for that teaching's majesty and permanent relevance. Jesus' ethic was not an interim ethic--it was an absolute, universal ethic--but his clear vision of it was perhaps not unrelated to his expectation of the imminent coming of the kingdom.<sup>1</sup>

The righteousness of God, though understood as grace, comes, nevertheless, with a serious demand. Whoever would enter into God's Kingdom must repent and prepare for its coming.

Entrance into the Kingdom and the Demand for Repentance.

When Jesus proclaimed the imminence of the Kingdom's coming, He demanded a response from His audience. He expected a radicalization of one's conduct. Yet, it is significant that Jesus did not come preaching, "live perfectly in order that you may enter the Kingdom when it comes." It is true that He demanded righteousness and even warned His disciples that they must seek the Kingdom and righteousness and that they were to be more righteous than the Scribes and the Pharisees. But first of all, He came preaching a message in which men were encouraged to yield to God so that they could be "changed" and thereby be ready for the Kingdom. Jesus' ethic, radical as it is, cannot be understood apart from the Grace of God. It is

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<sup>1</sup>Knox, Christ the Lord, p. 51. Compare Joseph Klausner who concludes that Jesus' "extremist morality is accountable as a morality of 'the end of the world.'" Klausner asserts, nevertheless, that "It does not, however, follow that Jesus did not regard such morality as also an end in itself--he was a Jew and brought up on the Hebrew prophetic writings." Klausner, p. 405. (underlining added).

only the changed person, the one who has repented, who will be able to enter the Kingdom. This is preparation for the Kingdom, but it is God's work. Man hears, responds, and God changes. A number of scholars emphasize the theme of repentance in Jesus' preaching--repentance is necessary if one expects to enter the Kingdom of God.<sup>1</sup> One cannot be righteous unless he has repented!

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<sup>1</sup>For examples, see the following: Gloege, The Day of His Coming, p. 205. Fenton, What Was Jesus' Message?, p. 28. Fenton's conception of Jesus' emphasis upon repentance leads him to believe that once a person has turned to God in repentance, he will become more fully aware of God's will for his own life. Therefore, Fenton believes that since one will basically understand God's will after he has repented, there was no need for Jesus to give His disciples detailed instructions on all matters. According to Bornkamm, Jesus' call to repentance meant for one to "lay hold on the salvation which is already at hand, and . . . give up everything for it. . . ." Bornkamm, Jesus of Nazareth, pp. 82ff. Repentance calls one to acknowledge the Kingdom's dawning, and consequently "to recognize and use the last hour, before the catastrophe of God's judgment breaks forth." Ibid., p. 87. Kümmel believes that repentance was for Jesus "the essential pre-condition for withstanding the judgment of God or for entering into God's Kingdom (Mt. 11:21-22)." Kümmel, Man in the New Testament, p. 18. Wilder, Eschatology and Ethics in the Teaching of Jesus, p. 11. Henry, Christian Personal Ethics, pp. 557, 553f. To Henry, one must repent in preparation for the coming of the Kingdom or face the consequences of the Judgment. Thomas, Christian Ethics and Moral Philosophy, pp. 23ff. Thomas believes that membership in the Kingdom is open to those who are willing to respond to its demands of repentance, faith and discipleship. "Indefinite postponement may mean rejection, for no one knows the day or the hour when the Kingdom will come." Ibid., p. 25. Muirhead, The Eschatology of Jesus, p. 84. Hiers believes that "the urgency or crisis of repentance and decision arose out of the conviction expressed in Jesus' parables and other teaching alike, that the Kingdom of God, Son of Man, and Judgment had drawn near." Hiers, Jesus and Ethics, p. 124. Burkitt, "The Parables of the Kingdom of Heaven," p. 148, cf. p. 136. Jackson, The Eschatology of Jesus, pp. 44ff., cf. p. 297. Winstanley, Jesus and the Future, pp. 82-92. Carpenter, The Historical Jesus and the Theological Christ, pp. 80ff. McArthur, Understanding the Sermon on the Mount, p. 94. Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, Vol. I, pp. 20f. Craig, The Beginning of Christianity, p. 88, cf. pp. 80ff.



Weiss, Schweitzer and others rightly emphasize the call to repentance in Jesus' proclamation, for He came announcing the nearness of the Kingdom of God and that man must repent in preparation for its coming. His call to repent must be seen in the light of the Old Testament's concern with repentance, as well as that of others who preached the imminence of the Eschaton, such as John the Baptist and those of the Qumran Community.

Repentance in the Old Testament. One type of "repentance" is seen in reference to Yahweh, who out of His sovereign will determines to change His mind and alter a prior decision or prescribed course of action. The term nacham, as previously noted, is used to describe this divine right. There is, of course, no thought of "remorse over sin" when this term is associated with Yahweh. The typical prophetic Old Testament understanding of man's repentance is described by the term shubh, which means to turn from pagan worship and unrighteousness to God, to respond to Him in true worship and to fully obey His will and Law.<sup>1</sup> The prophets called for a turning to Yahweh, in whom Israel could place her complete trust, for Yahweh is the true Lord of their fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; the one who gave them deliverance from Egypt and entered into a covenant relationship with them.

The prophets (especially Amos) proclaimed repentance in the light of the impending judgment, and followed

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Hos. 2:7, 7:10, 16, 14:1; Isa. 55:7; Jer. 3:12, 14, 22, 4:1f., 5:3, 15:1; Mal. 3:7f. See Joseph Haroutunian, "Repentance," Handbook of Christian Theology (New York: The World Publishing Co., 1958), p. 321. E. Jacob, Theology of the Old Testament, translated by W.W. Heathcote and P. J. Allcock (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1958), pp. 289ff. J. Behm and E. Wurthwein, "μετανοεω μετανοια," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament Vol. IV, ed. G. Kittel (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), pp. 984ff. For a discussion of the term nacham relative to "Prophecy and God's Prerogative to Change His Mind," see above. For an excellent illustration of the important difference between nacham and shubh when the former is descriptive of God's desire to relent and the latter describes man's need to turn to God, see Joel 2:12-14.

with a strict call for high ethical responsibility toward one's fellow man (cf. Amos 5:11ff.). Repentance cannot be separated from discipleship in the Old Testament, but it necessarily leads to obedience to Yahweh and calls for a new heart and new spirit which become possible through divine redemption.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, repentance from the Old Testament perspective is clearly associated with ethical responsibility.

Repentance in the Qumran Community. The note of repentance is also apparent in the writings of the Qumran Community, and the basic emphases of shubh are in no way diminished. Yet, for this community there was the additional incentive to "turn to God" because of their anticipation of the imminent rule of God. Therefore, as J.W. Heikkinen observes, repentance within the community was "the conditioning agent for the future and has its position in the context of the nearness of the final judgment of the coming of the Messianic kingdom."<sup>2</sup>

Although repentance within the Qumran Community does not correspond exactly with the note of repentance within the preaching of Jesus, the Teacher of Righteousness, nevertheless, called for complete repentance in the light of the coming Judgment and insisted that "everything depended on repentance, the turning away from the Old life." (Cf. 1QH 2:8-15; 18:12-15; 1QS 22-24)<sup>3</sup> One's

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Isa. 44:22; Jer. 31:33; Ezek. 11:19, 36:26. Cf. W.A. Quanbeck, "Repentance," Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible. Vol. IV, ed. George Buttrick (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), pp. 33f. Being rightly related to God results in a demonstration of compassion toward one's fellow man who is found to be in need (Ex. 22:21ff.; cf. Lev. 19:33f.; Deut. 16:11, 14:29, 27:19; Job 31:17ff.).

<sup>2</sup> J.W. Heikkinen, "Notes on 'Epistrepho' and 'Metanoeo,'" Ecumenical Review 19 (No. 3, 1967): 314.

<sup>3</sup> Otto Betz, What Do We Know About Jesus? (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1968), pp. 34f. (Cf. 1QH 4:30-40).



conduct and actions were to verify his repentance; fruits worthy of repentance were to be demonstrated in the community. (Cf. 1QS 5:1-11)<sup>1</sup>

John the Baptist's Call to Repentance. The message of repentance "was the basic note in the message of the Baptist (Mk. 1:4 par., Mt. 3:2,8 par., 11 . . .)." <sup>2</sup> He continued the Old Testament prophetic message of repentance, stressing the note of the impending judgment. John believed that the Judgment was close at hand, that the coming of God's lordship was imminent. As Behm and Wurthwein observe, for John, during this "last span of time there is . . . only one task for man, μετανοια." <sup>3</sup> Because of the eschatological emphasis in John's preaching, his demand for repentance is to be understood as going beyond the prophetic appeal. John's message of repentance "stands under the urgency of the eschatological revelation of God . . . ." <sup>4</sup> He called for a "once-and-for-all-time" repentance which was demonstrated symbolically-- "a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Mk. 1:4; Lk. 3:3b). Therefore, John's baptism must be seen in the light of his conviction that the End and its Judgment was imminent. It became an eschatological sacrament. As a baptism of repentance, "it is the last preparation and sealing of the baptised for the coming 'baptism' of the Messiah, and preserves them from the day of wrath to come." <sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 35, cf. p. 42. Betz observes that so much importance was placed upon fruits of repentance that "penitence led to a pious mode of life and justification by grace to a striving for holiness. Jesus, on the other hand, wills man to put his whole trust in God, in the Father who does not reject his child, in the redeemer who breaks the chain of sin and in the creator who makes men new."

<sup>2</sup> Behm and Wurthwein, p. 1000.      <sup>3</sup> Ibid.      <sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Bornkamm, Jesus of Nazareth, p. 47. Cf. Heikkinen, p. 314, who contends that "While the Qumran men practised baptizing in continuous, regulated lustrations, John the Baptist's 'baptism of turning' instituted a once-for-all

The Kingdom of God was foreseen by John to be imminent, and in calling for a return to the Lord, he demanded evidence of true repentance, i.e. fruit which befits repentance (Matt. 3:8).<sup>1</sup> It is significant, as Behm and Wurthwein observe, that "At the portal of the N.T. we thus find a concept of conversion which transcends Judaism and renews the ultimate insights of the prophetic piety of the O.T. (cf. Jer. 31:33; Ps. 51:10), but with a new eschatological certainty."<sup>2</sup> As far as John is concerned, the claim to belong to the seed of Abraham is useless; no one is exempt from the demand. Definite evidence of repentance is required if one hopes to escape the Judgment's wrath: "Even now the axe is at the root of the trees;" John preached, "every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire" (Matt. 3:10). John's baptism and his call to repentance, therefore, surpasses that of the prophets, for it describes the preparation which is essential for the Kingdom. "Repent! for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2).<sup>3</sup> What the Old Testament prophets had hoped for is, for John, nearby. The call is imperative; the Kingdom is imminent.

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eschatological action for the forgiveness of sins and for a social reformation to accord with the requirements of the righteous will of God who was about to inaugurate His judgment and rule."

<sup>1</sup> John demanded more than mere confession. His call to repentance was a call to responsible discipleship. The theology within Joma VIII, 9 (Cf. Aboth R.N. 49) would have met the approval of the Baptist. "He who says: I will sin and repent, sin and repent--is granted (by God) no opportunity for repentance." See Bornkamm, Jesus of Nazareth, p. 82.

<sup>2</sup> Behm and Wurthwein, p. 1001.

<sup>3</sup> The question of authenticity may be raised concerning this saying, since Jesus is presented as proclaiming the same message (Mk. 1:15; Matt. 4:17). There is the possibility that Matthew knew this message to have come from Jesus and assimilated his Master's teaching with John's. Thus Matt. 3:2 would be considered secondary. But this view is challenged by the fact that the Early



The stress upon the imminence of the Kingdom of God in the message of John is further strengthened in his person and ministry. It was the popular belief that the desert would be the place for the announcement of and the beginning of the End of time, and most significantly it was understood to be the place where Israel would prepare for the decisive revelation of the "Coming of God."<sup>1</sup> There was the promise that Elijah would come preaching in the desert prior to the imminent End. Malachi 4:5 warns of God's Judgment, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and dreadful day of the Lord." John became a prophet of the End-time, heralding the imminence of the Kingdom.<sup>2</sup>

John preached an apocalyptic Kingdom; "When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, 'You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?'" (Matt. 3:7). The wrath he spoke of was the impending Judgment. John also preached a Messianic Kingdom. He made no claim for himself (Mk. 1:7, par., Matt. 3:11, Lk. 3:16) but pointed toward the End and tried to awaken in his hearers a feeling of eschatological anticipation by announcing the imminent reign of God. His claim was that One would follow after him who would be empowered to baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire (Mk. 1:8 and par.). And he spoke of the Messiah in apocalyptic language: "His winnowing fork is in his hand,

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Church would hardly have put the words of Jesus into the mouth of John. It is more likely that Jesus accepted John's message and his baptism, thereby sealing the message.

<sup>1</sup> Bornkamm, Jesus of Nazareth, p. 45. Jesus' answer to His disciples' question as to where the End would take place seems to assume a desert setting. "And He said to them, 'Where the body is, there also will the vultures be gathered'" (Lk. 17:37b).

<sup>2</sup> Matthew and Luke clearly present Jesus as designating John as the anticipated Elijah. (Cf. Matt. 11:9f.; Lk. 7:26f.; Matt. 11:14; 17:12f.)

to clear his threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into his granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire" (Lk. 3:17, par. Matt. 3:12).

Such was the message of John. But in spite of his stress upon the imminent End, and even largely because of it, his message, as noted in an earlier discussion, was strongly ethical in content. The imminence of the Kingdom in John's preaching did not mean that the people should give up life. They were, however, to begin living in right relationship to God and their fellow man. John believed that something significant was about to happen, that God was about to act decisively. For him, the shift of the ages was one from remoteness or promise to that of pressing imminence.<sup>1</sup> His call to repentance was meant to turn men toward God, to prepare them for the coming reign of God.

Jesus' Demand for Repentance. When Jesus appeared on the scene, He preached a message of repentance very similar to that of John the Baptist. He accepted John's stress upon the imminence of the Kingdom (Mk. 1:5)<sup>2</sup> and launched His preaching about the Kingdom of God after John had been arrested (Mk. 1:14f.).<sup>3</sup>

Jesus' emphasis was clear: "Repent because the Kingdom of God is at hand." He did not proclaim that repentance would be instrumental in bringing in the

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Robinson, A New Quest of the Historical Jesus, pp. 116f., fn.1, p. 117. Cf. Cullmann, Christ and Time, p. 111.

<sup>2</sup>See Chapter II for a discussion concerning the authenticity of Mk. 1:15. That Jesus preached a radical call to repentance is clear in this summary statement of His proclamation. Too, the Synoptic writers, who had given up much to follow Jesus, were keen to impress upon their readers this aspect of Jesus' message.

<sup>3</sup>The continuity between John and Jesus is further strengthened in Jesus' acceptance of John's baptism as fulfilment of God's will, in that some of John's disciples became disciples of Jesus, and also in the fact that to a certain extent Jesus took over John's ministry after the Baptist had been cast into prison.



Kingdom, as was the Pharisaic formula,<sup>1</sup> but only that the call to decision--the demand for repentance--must be seriously considered because the rule of God was imminent. Therefore, Jesus is not presented as prescribing a formula which would guarantee that if man repents then the Kingdom of God would come. Such a view implies a greater influence by man upon the inauguration of the Kingdom than the Bible allows; it places God in the unenviable position of being dependent upon the good will of man. Jesus' message made clear the roles of both Yahweh and men: God was about to establish His Kingdom, and those who desired to enter must repent in preparation for its arrival.

The writers describe Jesus as one who called sinners to repentance, i.e., those who were willing to recognize their need of repentance; those who were not fulfilling God's law and will. His call to repentance was indiscriminate; it included all,<sup>2</sup> although those who had already pronounced themselves righteous would never

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Flew, Jesus and His Way, p. 25. However, see J.W. Bowman and R.W. Tapp, The Gospel from the Mount (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1957). Bowman and Tapp suggest that failure to repent checks the fulfilment of God's purpose and the coming of His Kingdom. Ibid., p. 32. It is argued in this thesis that man's failure to respond to Jesus' preaching provided for Yahweh a condition which prompted Him to postpone the establishment of His reign. However, it is a misunderstanding to view God's decision to delay the End as being determined by man's inadequate response to Jesus' preaching. Rather, the postponement should be seen from the perspective that it is God's sovereign privilege to temper His judgment by His grace and to delay the End in anticipation that man will repent and turn to Him.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Hengel, p. 61. Hengel comments: ". . . in view of the coming of the Kingdom all were commanded to repent i.e. to acknowledge their own wickedness and guilt and to fulfill the gracious will of God; to do deeds of mercy and love, renouncing all self-glory and all pious claims on their Father in Heaven, and to will unconditionally to practise forgiveness of their neighbour, in response to the uninvited forgiveness, through God's goodness, of their own immeasurable guilt."

make such a confession (cf. Lk. 18:9-14, Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican). That no one was to be exempt from the need to repent is clear in Jesus' comment upon the tragic killing of some of the Galileans by Pilate: "He answered them, 'Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered thus? I tell you, No; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish'" (Lk. 13:2,3). The same comment is made in reference to those who were killed by a tower in Siloam (Lk. 13:4,5). If the people of His day were to avert an impending clash with the Kingdom of God, repentance was necessary.

Therefore, according to the Synoptic record, the note of judgment in Jesus' message of repentance must be taken seriously. The call was to let the anticipation of the impending Kingdom influence one immediately! The moment was urgent! In the Parable of the Rich Fool (Lk. 12:16-21) the moment of urgency is magnified in order to illustrate the point: "It is this very night that one must face the Kingdom. Because of the Kingdom's nearness, one should be repenting instead of building more barns foolishly." Jesus upbraided the cities of Galilee because He was distraught over their refusal to repent and accept His message. All the necessary signs had been given, and for that reason the refusal to repent was to be weighed heavily against them in the Judgment (Matt. 11:20-24).

When the Scribes and Pharisees stalled their repentance with the excuse of insufficient evidence of the Kingdom's nearness, Jesus issued a polemic against the need for signs. Jonah had proclaimed a message of judgment to Nineveh and was himself a sign of repentance. The only sign Jesus gave to the Pharisees was His own call to repentance. That was sufficient. The call to repentance was efficacious for Nineveh, and it was to serve as an adequate stimulus toward moving Israel to prepare for the Kingdom. Here too, repentance is seen to be related to the last Judgment; for the men of Nineveh, who repented



after receiving such little evidence, will judge those of Jesus' generation who turned away from much greater evidence (Matt. 12:38-41, par. Lk. 11:29,30,32). A call for signs in view of the challenge amounted to inexcusable evasion<sup>1</sup> and was, therefore, foolish. The cry for signs by one from the grave on behalf of others was refused and judged worthless<sup>2</sup> (Lk. 16:30,31). The message had been proclaimed; the hearer had been issued a clear option.

While the element of judgment is presented as a vital aspect of Jesus' call to repentance, it is not viewed as the primary incentive to turn and follow Him. Rather, that which should move one to genuine repentance is the desire to be ready for God's reign. Jesus is described as preaching this Gospel, and the joyful news of God's plan to bring imminent rule gave purpose to His ministry. His emphasis "that the decision for the rule of God is a glad one" offers a distinctive difference between His preaching and that of the Qumran Community.<sup>3</sup>

The Gospel writers present Jesus as believing that the angels in heaven rejoice over one repentant sinner because that one will be accepted into the Kingdom of God.<sup>4</sup> The Kingdom will mean total salvation for the repentant. Therefore, grace is understood to follow repentance and as something to rejoice about. Here is the good news--God has made a decisive effort, not to condemn, but to redeem. Jesus is described as one who searched for the sinner, urged every man to prepare for God's rule, and revealed

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<sup>1</sup>Jeremias, The Parables of Jesus, p. 182.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. B.T.D. Smith, The Parables of the Synoptic Gospels (Cambridge: University Press, 1937), p. 138.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Betz, What Do We Know About Jesus?, pp. 40ff. Cf. 1QS 1:22-24.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Smith, The Parables of the Synoptic Gospels, p. 190. There is a close parallel in the saying attributed to R. Abbahu (ca. A.D. 300) that in the world to come the penitent would occupy a higher place than the completely righteous.

that God is willing to go to all extremes to find just one who needs salvation (Lk. 15).

In following Jesus His disciples presented a picture of repentance, of preparing for the Kingdom's coming. The writers see Him offering no convincing display of signs or miracles, no overwhelming proof of His right to make such an announcement. He simply said, "Repent--come and follow me," and the moment of decision came pressing in; and for them it was now or never! Some heard His call and immediately left everything to grasp the offer and follow (Mk. 1:16-20; Matt. 4:18-22). But as Bultmann stresses, repentance means "radical decision" (cf. Matt. 18:8f., 5:29f.) which few are willing to make,

For most men cling to this world, and do not muster energy to decide wholly for God. They do desire the Kingdom, but they desire it along with other things--riches, and the respect of other men; they are not ready for repentance. When the invitation to the Kingdom comes to them they are claimed by various other interests.<sup>1</sup>

From the Synoptic perspective Jesus' demand for repentance carried enormous implications. That is, as God's eschatological messenger, Jesus assumed that one's eternal existence depended upon his response to the message of the impending Kingdom of God. He believed that one should not delay his repentance because the Kingdom would not delay its coming.

In summary it may be said that Jesus' message of repentance was an authentic note from His heritage. The

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<sup>1</sup>Bultmann, Jesus and the Word, p. 32, cf. p. 47. Of course, Bultmann's emphasis upon repentance is a significant aspect of his theological existentialism. That is, when man is encountered by the transcendent God who becomes immanent in human experience, he must decide for or against God--for God's way or man's. This is an impressive and even exciting concept, but it reflects a limited perspective. For Bultmann, encounters with God come in crises, but they are restricted to experiences in a temporary setting. Jesus' call to repentance speaks not only to crisis experiences here and now, but also to the need to prepare for an actual and permanent temporal Kingdom.



Old Testament prophets and those of apocalyptic persuasion preached repentance. John followed in their line, stressing the element of the imminent Judgment, and Jesus Himself continued the message of John in the classical biblical tradition,<sup>1</sup> with the emphasis that one should repent because of the nearness of the Kingdom. His was a call to turn and accept the coming God, to prepare for His rule and receive His grace. Therefore, one's ethical conduct, even his total relationship with God and man, assumes--even demands--repentance, because only the righteous--those who have repented and obey God's will--can expect to be ready for the impending Kingdom of God. Therefore, Jesus proclaimed the imperative. Repent!! because the Kingdom of God is at hand!

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Heikkinen, p. 315. He comments: "Metanoia, then, is the keyword symbolizing the character of the response on the part of men to the preaching of the judgment and the rule of God. It marks a total turning on God's terms, a movement from the direction in which they are going to its opposite in order to be re-established in a relationship of faithfulness to their covenant--God. It draws its force in part from the past, that is, from the prophets, and thus serves as the bearer of the verb shuv in its highest potency. But it draws also its force, in part, from the present events marking the end-time. The new motif which gives a unique energy to the metanoia of the New Testament is the eschatological reality in face of the imminent rule of God." Cf. Gösta Lundström, The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus. Lundström observes that repentance (metanoia) made it possible for man to receive forgiveness, and "God's forgiveness of sins opens the door to the Kingdom of God." Ibid., p. 171. According to Lundström, "The Kingdom of God is absolutely eschatological. It is a Kingdom which is not of this world. It is God's work. It appears at the end-time." Ibid., p. 232.

## CONCLUSION

### Jesus' Prophecy

Jesus, as God's Prophet, proclaimed the news that God was about to establish His Kingdom. The language of the Messenger, so typical of the prophets, was often symbolic in style. However, from the perspective of intentionality, Jesus' proclamation of the coming Kingdom should be understood to mean the future establishment of God's Rule. This means that "Kingdom of God" as a literary term conveys a one-to-one relationship in respect to God's projected rule, although the term should not be restricted to a single concrete definition. However, the term "Kingdom of God" should not be understood simply as an "expression of life" used to communicate Jesus' ability to confront man with God's immanence and thereby challenge man to decision, as in Bultmann's hermeneutical process. Bultmann is led to conclude that Jesus' world-view has no relevancy for man in a scientific orientation. Consequently, Jesus' prophecy of a temporal Kingdom must be demythologized and translated so that His understanding of life can be retained.

Norman Perrin's hermeneutical conclusions are substantially the same as those of his mentor, Bultmann, though Perrin, unlike Bultmann, claims that Jesus used the term "Kingdom of God" as a "true symbol" rather than as a "sign." That is, to Perrin, "Kingdom of God" was not intended to convey a one-to-one relationship to a temporal establishment of the Kingdom of God. Such a view, Perrin believes, releases one from looking for signs of the End and frees one for the task of exploring how God's immanence (activity among men) can become existentially meaningful.

Of course, there are phrases contained in Jesus'



eschatological proclamation which are not to be taken literally, but "symbolic language" only heightens the meaning of the prophet's message. Jesus believed that God would establish His Kingdom within the period of a generation, and the early church conveyed its confidence in Jesus' proclamation through its belief in an imminent Parousia.

God's Sovereignty. The Kingdom did not come and Jesus has not returned. The Prophet's prediction was not fulfilled, and the early church was forced to deal with a delay (2 Peter 3:8-10). The Prophet had performed His task in proclaiming the intentions of God to whose sovereignty would be left the fulfilment. God's decision to delay the fulfilment of Jesus' proclamation is similar to His decisions on other occasions during the history of Israel when He determined to alter the course of predictions for the benefit of mankind. God's sovereignty is reflected in His flexibility as He deals with man. His decisions, as He reveals His will for man through the dynamic of grace and judgment, are not immutable. He can change His mind; His judgment is tempered by His grace. Therefore, Jesus did not make a mistake: Yahweh chose to delay the End.

A Problem. A further point--which may be perceived as a weakness of the interpretation that God is responsible for Jesus' unfulfilled prophecy--needs to be stated. Of course, one may interpret such responsibility in the light of God's sovereign right to act without being obligated to explain His actions to men (Romans 9-11). The view proposed in this study sees God's delay as a demonstration of His grace; that is, He is patient because He desires that none perish but that all have a chance to repent (2 Peter 3:9). But the facts of history show, at least from a New Testament understanding of salvation, that masses of mankind have "perished" during the long delay. Many have rejected the clear option to respond to Christ and follow Him. What may be a sad commentary upon

the church is that many individuals and nations through the centuries have never been presented with a clear option to repent and respond to the Gospel. Therefore, the "grace period" may be understood by some as a "period of judgment."

### Jesus' Ethics

Jesus did not present a system of ethics which He intended to be of such quality that they would possess a self-perpetuating validity. He was no calculating philosopher. He was rather in the lineage of prophets who were dependent upon God. Thus, it was God's nature which largely determined the content of His ethic. Man is to emulate God. For example, he must love as God loves (Matt. 5:44-45); he must be perfect as the Heavenly Father is perfect (Matt. 5:48); he must pray that the will of God be done (Matt. 6:10); he must believe that God will meet his needs (Matt. 6:30; 7:11); he must be concerned primarily with God's Kingdom and God's righteousness (Matt. 6:33). Jesus, then, founded His ethic not upon some new scheme but upon the Old Testament regulation: "You shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy" (Lev. 19:2).<sup>1</sup> Proper response to the Holy God demanded repentance in the light of the imminent coming of His Rule.

To accept as the foundation of Jesus' ethics His understanding of the nature of God does not demand the acceptance of all His ethics as being equally relevant. With such a foundation, Jesus certainly would be free, and He was free, to speak to the men of His own day concerning the impact of the impending Kingdom of God. Jesus did not believe that His ethics would be needed for generations to come, but what He had to say about man's relationship to man and God's relationship to man, about God generally, is still valid. In the everyday course of His ministry, He was bound to speak eternal truths. He was speaking to

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. H.E. Barefoot, "Ethics of Jesus," Review and Expositor 59 (Oct. 1962): 483.



men who, in Jesus' own thinking, might live for another twenty-five years; the Kingdom could delay that long. Why should He not have spoken practical truths about relationships and man's responsibility to both God and man which could be relevant for man in any age? After all, analogous systems--combining thought of the imminent End and on-going ethics--can be found in the writings and/or thinking of other individuals and groups.

However, Jesus did not go into detail as to how man should relate to his society, to his family or to the state. Rather, he concentrated upon those aspects of man's existence which stressed the need to repent and get ready for the coming of the Kingdom of God. This was His task as the proclaiming Prophet. Therefore, what Jesus said was spoken to a specific group of people for a particular season. Nonetheless, with the continuation of time, His ethics have challenged men through the centuries. Like the ethics of John the Baptist, the apocalypticists, the teachers of the Qumran Community and the Apostle Paul, Jesus' ethics--for the most part--contain perpetual relevance in spite of His belief that the Eschaton was about to be disclosed. During the extended "grace period" both Jesus and His preaching can speak to any man who is willing to turn and, in following Him, make preparation for the temporal coming of the Kingdom of God, which God may or may not continue to delay.

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