

# *Man and his salvation*

*Studies in memory of S. G. F. Brandon*

*edited by Eric J. Sharpe and John R. Hinnells*

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# 7

F. F. Bruce

## *Salvation history in the New Testament*

### I

In one of his earliest works—*Time and Mankind* (1951)—Professor Brandon described the distinctive Hebrew conception of history as ‘the revelation of divine providence’<sup>1</sup> and discussed the part played in this conception by the motif of ‘salvation history’ (*Heilsgeschichte*), which (following Gerhard von Rad) he considered to have played a significant part in Israel’s amphictyonic cultus, and then in the Yahwistic narrative, ‘enshrining,’ as he says, ‘not only a brilliantly told story of the nation’s past, but a veritable philosophy of history, in which is set forth in the clearest way the great doctrine which was ever after to dominate the Hebrew mind and to determine its peculiar destiny, namely, that of Israel’s election by Yahweh to be his own people among the nations of the world.’<sup>2</sup> The Yahwist thus ‘gave to the recollection of the past a new status and value’ in a way which ‘marks the passing from the intuitive stage of thought to that of the explanatory’, thus ‘bringing into history the teleological motif, from the influence of which history has never since been able completely to emancipate itself’.<sup>3</sup>

In the Pentateuch the outstanding instance of the cultic recital of Yahweh’s mighty acts is the direction in Deut. 26: 5ff. that the Israelite settler in Canaan, presenting the first fruits of his harvest at the sanctuary, should recount the story of his father, the ‘wandering Aramaean’,<sup>4</sup> who

went down into Egypt and sojourned there, few in number; and there he became a nation, great, mighty and populous. And the Egyptians treated us

1 Brandon, *Time and Mankind* (1951), pp. 59ff.; cf. the chapter entitled ‘History as the revelation of divine purpose’ in his *History, Time and Deity* (1965), pp. 106ff.      2 *Time and Mankind*, p. 82.      3 *Ibid.*, pp. 83f.

4 Cf. von Rad, *Das formgeschichtliche Problem des Hexateuchs* (1938), pp. 3ff., English translation in chapter 1 of *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* (1966), pp. 1ff., especially pp. 3ff.

harshly, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage. Then we cried to Yahweh, the God of our fathers, and Yahweh heard our voice, and saw our affliction, our toil and our oppression; and Yahweh brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terrors and signs and wonders; and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey . . .

This outline recurs, in amplified form, in a number of psalms (cf. Pss. 78; 105; 106) and in Ezra's prayer of confession recorded in Neh. 9:6ff. In Ps. 78:67 the recital continues on past the settlement in Canaan to Yahweh's establishment of the Davidic dynasty on Zion:<sup>5</sup>

He rejected the tent of Joseph,  
 he did not choose the tribe of Ephraim;  
 but he chose the tribe of Judah,  
 Mount Zion, which he loves.  
 He built his sanctuary like the high heavens,  
 like the earth, which he has founded for ever.  
 He chose David his servant,  
 and took him from the sheep folds;  
 from tending the ewes that had young he brought him  
 to be the shepherd of Jacob his people,  
 of Israel his inheritance.  
 With upright heart he tended them,  
 and guided them with skilful hand.

This form of the tradition of salvation history persists into the New Testament, where it appears succinctly in Luke's account of Paul's speech in the synagogue of Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:17ff.):

The God of this people Israel chose our fathers and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with uplifted arm he led them out of it. And for about forty years he bore with them in the wilderness. And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as an inheritance, for about four hundred and fifty years. And after that he gave them judges until Samuel the prophet. Then they asked for a king, and he gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. And when he had removed him, he raised up David to be their king, of whom he testified and said, 'I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will.'<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> This forms an exception to Professor von Rad's generalisation that Yahweh's guarantee of the continuance of David's dynasty, unlike his deliverance of Israel from Egypt, 'was never taken up into the series of these confessional statements' (*Old Testament Theology*, English translation, I [1962], p. 306).

<sup>6</sup> A conflate quotation from Ps. 89: 20; I Sam. 13: 14; Isa. 44: 28.

But no longer do David's dynasty and Solomon's temple mark the climax of Yahweh's saving dealings with his people, as they did in Ps. 78; the mention of David now provides the cue for the superimposing of a Christian recital on that of ancient Israel. The promises made to David regarding the perpetuity of his house are now seen to be fulfilled in 'great David's greater Son', and from David we go straight to Christ:

Of this man's posterity God has brought  
to Israel a Saviour, Jesus.

The story of Jesus, from John the Baptist's ministry to the resurrection appearances, is then summarised, and the relation of this new *kérygma* to that of earlier days is made plain:<sup>7</sup>

We bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers he has fulfilled to us and to our children by raising Jesus, as indeed is written in the second psalm,

'Thou art my Son,  
today I have begotten thee.'<sup>8</sup>

And as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he spoke in this way,

'I will give you the holy and sure blessings  
of David.'<sup>9</sup>

Therefore he says also in another psalm,

'Thou wilt not let thy Holy One see  
corruption.'<sup>10</sup>

For David, after he had served the counsel of God in his own generation, fell asleep, and was laid with his fathers, and saw corruption; but he whom God raised up saw no corruption.

That is to say, the divine promises made to David were fulfilled neither in his own experience nor in that of his immediate successors, but in his definitive descendant, Jesus.

## II

That such a presentation of salvation history is found in Luke's writings is all of a piece with his general perspective; of all the New Testament

7 On the relation of this New Testament *kérygma* to that of the Old Testament, cf. Wright, *God who acts* (1952), pp. 70, 81.

8 Quoted from Ps. 2: 7.

9 Quoted from Isa. 55: 3.

10 Quoted from Ps. 16: 10.

writers he has been called *par excellence* the 'theologian of redemptive history'.<sup>11</sup> According to one distinguished school of thought, that of Rudolf Bultmann and his disciples, this is a feature of the change of outlook occasioned by the delay of the *parousia* (a much overworked factor in the development of early Christian thought, in my judgment), an aspect of the 'incipient catholicism' (*Frühkatholizismus*)<sup>12</sup> which the work of Luke is held to share with other later New Testament documents (outstandingly the letter to the Ephesians).<sup>13</sup> No exposition of this theme has been more influential in recent years than Hans Conzelmann's *The Theology of Saint Luke*,<sup>14</sup> in which it is argued that Luke replaced the primitive perspective, in which the Christ event is itself the *eschaton*, by a new schema in which the Christ event marks the midpoint of time, preceded by 'the time of Israel' and followed by 'the time of the Church'.

The evidence that Luke breaks with the perspective (say) of Mark in envisaging a post-Easter period of rather lengthy duration is not unambiguous. In Mark's eschatological discourse it is stated that 'the gospel must first be preached to all the nations' (13: 10) before the end (*telos*) comes, and if, in Luke's version of that discourse, Jerusalem is to be 'trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled' (Luke 21: 24), the period appointed for Gentile domination need not be greatly prolonged. This statement, though not paralleled in the Markan discourse, is not Luke's invention; it is a commonplace of prophetic expectation, with a counterpart in the Johannine Apocalypse, where the outer court of the temple, unlike the sanctuary itself, 'is given over to the Gentiles, and they will trample over the holy city

11 Cf. Lohse, 'Lukas als Theologe der Heilsgeschichte', *Evangelische Theologie* xiv (1954-5), pp. 254ff.; Flender, *St Luke: Theologian of Redemptive History*, (1967).

12 Cf. Bultmann, 'Heilsgeschichte und Geschichte', *Theologische Literaturzeitung* LXXIII (1948), pp. 659ff. (a critique of Cullmann, *Christus und die Zeit* [1946], translated as *Christ and Time* [1951]), English translation in *Existence and Faith* (1964), pp. 268ff.; Vielhauer, 'Zum "Paulinismus" der Apostelgeschichte', *Evangelische Theologie* x (1950-1), pp. 1ff., English translation in *Studies in Luke-Acts*, ed. Keck and Martyn (1966), pp. 33ff. C. K. Barrett sums up the situation more accurately when he says that Luke 'may present us with some of the raw material of "primitive Catholicism", but hardly with the thing itself' (*The Signs of an Apostle* [1970], pp. 53f.).

13 Cf. Käsemann, 'Ephesians and Acts', in *Studies in Luke-Acts*, pp. 288ff.

14 English translation (1961) of *Die Mitte der Zeit* (1954); the German title indicates the thesis of the book much more precisely than does the English title.

for forty-two months' (Rev. 11: 2). This passage probably belonged to an independent 'little apocalypse' (the 'little scroll' of Rev. 10: 8-10 which the seer was commanded to eat) which has left traces also in Josephus;<sup>15</sup> in incorporating it into his own apocalypse John placed a new interpretation on it. Luke need not have limited the 'times of the Gentiles' to three and a half years, but he did not think of them as extended indefinitely. On the contrary, those who saw the fall and military occupation of Jerusalem were to take knowledge that the redemption of the saints and the manifestation of the kingdom of God were at hand (Luke 21: 28, 31).

### III

Unfortunately the discussion of the presence or absence of a salvation-history pattern in New Testament document writings has not always been carried on dispassionately. Some members of the Bultmann school, for example, have treated its presence as a deviation from the primitive gospel as well as a symptom of 'incipient catholicism', and have expressed disapproval of it as an attempt to find an adventitious security<sup>16</sup> in place of that challenge to enter authentic existence which is, in their estimation, the heart of the gospel.<sup>17</sup> Much of their criticism is directed against the idea that history *per se* constitutes salvation, an idea which, in its secularised form of Nazi ideology, they had to resist a generation ago.<sup>18</sup> But 'salvation *in* history' is not open to the objections which can be levelled against 'salvation *as* history'.<sup>19</sup> However, the exegete's first question, with regard to this or any other pattern, is not 'Is it right or is it wrong?' but 'Is it there or is it not?'

That it is there in Luke ('wrong' though it may be) is agreed; any

15 In Josephus' moralising reflections on the assassination of the former high priests Ananus II and Jesus son of Gamala (*BJ* IV: 314-25); cf. Bruce, 'Josephus and Daniel', *Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute* IV (1965), pp. 154f.

16 Cf. such an independent disciple of Bultmann as Käsemann: 'To put it bluntly: with salvation history one is always on the safe side' (*Perspectives on Paul*, English translation [1971], p. 62).

17 For an extreme expression of this attitude cf. the title of an essay by Fuchs: 'Christus, das Ende der Geschichte', *Evangelische Theologie* VIII (1948-9), pp. 447ff.

18 Cf. Käsemann, *Perspectives on Paul*, pp. 52, 64.

19 Contrast the German title of Cullmann's *Heil als Geschichte* (1965) with that of the English translation, *Salvation in History* (1969); the change was the author's own decision. The thesis of this magisterial treatment of the subject is certainly not that history *per se* constitutes salvation or revelation.

suggestion that it is there in Paul—that is to say, in the genuine Pauline writings—tends to be resisted or minimised.<sup>20</sup> Good Lutherans as they are, they regard Paul's proclamation as the purest expression of the Christian gospel; but they are prone to recast Paul in an existential image which other students of his writings, approaching them with different presuppositions, do not always recognise as the real Paul.

In this there may be an inadvertent parallel between them and Marcion in the second century. Marcion had no time for salvation history; the gospel as he understood it, and as (in his eyes) Paul preached it, was a new beginning, devoid of all *praeparatio evangelica*, which was first heard on earth when, in the fifteenth year of Tiberius, Jesus 'came down [from heaven] to Capernaum, a city of Galilee', to reveal the unknown Father. He made Luke's record the basis of his *Euangelion*, indeed, but jettisoned the element of salvation history by beginning with the chronological note in Luke 3: 1, going straight on from there to the narrative of 4: 31ff., and omitting Acts from his canon.<sup>21</sup>

Hans Conzelmann, for his part—on quite un-Marcionite principles so far as concerns the Gospel of Luke, in which he finds salvation history expounded—treats Luke 3: 1–20 as the prologue to the Gospel and leaves the first two chapters as a whole out of the picture in expounding Luke's theology.<sup>22</sup> This may seem a little strange, in view of the place which these two chapters give to the history of salvation—salvation, too, in most comprehensive terms, embracing (as in the song of Zechariah) 'salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us' (in good Maccabean tradition)<sup>23</sup> as well as the 'knowledge of

20 Käsemann freely recognises its presence in Paul: 'I would say that it is impossible to understand the bible in general or Paul in particular without the perspective of salvation history' (*Perspectives on Paul*, p. 63, in an essay on 'Justification and salvation history in the Epistle to the Romans'). But he insists that 'salvation history must not take precedence over justification. It is its sphere. But justification remains the centre, the beginning and the end of salvation history' (p. 76).

21 Tertullian, *Adv. Marcionem* iv: 7.

22 He points out that the opening sentence of Acts 'seems to fix the limits of the first book in such a way that the story of his [Jesus'] birth and childhood is not included' and relates the 'began' of Acts 1: 1 to that of Luke 3: 23 (*The Theology of Saint Luke*, p. 16). It is possible that the 'first book' of Acts 1: 1 was Proto-Luke (cf. Williams, 'The date of Luke-Acts', *Expository Times* LXIV [1952–3], pp. 283f.; *The Acts of the Apostles* [1957], pp. 12f.); but Professor Conzelmann's examination of the third Gospel is not limited to Proto-Luke.

23 Cf. Winter, 'Magnificat and Benedictus—Maccabean psalms?' *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* xxxvii (1954–5), pp. 328ff.



salvation in the forgiveness of sins' (Luke 1: 71, 77). Again, the song of Simeon practically supplies Luke's history with a title in the words 'Mine eyes have seen thy salvation'<sup>24</sup>—salvation, once more, in comprehensive terms, including 'a light for revelation to the Gentiles' as well as 'for glory to thy people Israel' (Luke 2: 30–2).

Outside the sphere of influence of the Bultmann school, the place of salvation history in Paul's thinking has been recognised by scholars of widely divergent viewpoints. We may think, on the one hand, of the late Johannes Munck's major work, *Paulus und die Heilsgeschichte* (1954),<sup>25</sup> and, on the other, of Professor Brandon's account of Paul's peculiar contribution to the Christian idea of history as 'a two-phased plan in a divine teleology'.<sup>26</sup> How far Professor Brandon's outlook differed from Professor Munck's is evident from his full-scale review of the English translation of *Paulus und die Heilsgeschichte*,<sup>27</sup> yet it was plain to both that Paul thought in terms of salvation history.

The Paul of Acts clearly thinks in such terms—not only in his synagogue speech at Pisidian Antioch, but also in his address to the Athenian Areopagus. This address, as Professor Conzelmann points out, 'takes world history as one of its themes', embracing 'the ideas of the Creation (the past), of God's dominion over the world (the present) and of the Judgement (the future)'.<sup>28</sup> The claim that the fact of Jesus marks the end of the time of ignorance and the irrevocable declaration of God's will, with the accompanying summons to repentance, is underlined by the framework of universal history in which it is set. It should be emphasised, indeed, that the interval preceding the future judgment is no long one: the summons to repentance is enforced by the certainty of the coming judgment day. A judgment in the indefinite future is a less pressing sanction than one which is fixed and imminent. But, for those who cannot see salvation history as a prominent motif in Paul's thought, the presence of this framework would in itself, apart

24 So, at the end of Luke's narrative, the gospel is summed up as 'this salvation' (Acts 28: 28; cf. 13: 26).

25 English translation, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind* (1959). A preliminary study of Rom. 9–11, which formed part of the basis for this work, was published later as *Christus und Israel* (1956); *Christ and Israel* (1967).

26 Brandon, *History, Time and Deity*, pp. 148ff. (On pp. 148f. he makes some noteworthy observations on the senses in which Christianity may be called a 'historical religion'.)

27 Brandon, 'The perennial problem of Paul', *Hibbert Journal* LVIII (1960), pp. 378ff.

28 *The Theology of Saint Luke*, p. 168.

from any other consideration, be a sufficient argument that the Areopagus address is thoroughly Lukan and essentially non-Pauline.<sup>29</sup>

## IV

But does the Paul of the epistles reveal a salvation-history pattern of thought? He does, in his earlier and later epistles alike, although his understanding of it is controlled by the centrality of justification by faith in his thought.<sup>30</sup> In writing to the Galatians, for example, he insists that it was in 'the fulness of time' that 'God sent his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons' (Gal. 4: 4f.). The 'fulness of time' means that the age of law had run its course, and was now about to be superseded by the age of the Spirit, inaugurated by the accomplishment of Christ's redemptive work. The age of law was the apron-string stage of the people of God, when they had to be subjected to rules and regulations; now they had come of age and were to exercise responsible freedom as God's free-born and fully grown sons: 'because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts . . . so through God you are no longer a slave but a son' (Gal. 4: 6). As Paul viewed the course of sacred history, the age of law was a parenthesis in the record of God's dealings with his people<sup>31</sup>—a necessary parenthesis in the *praeparatio evangelica*, but one which broke into, although it did not suspend, the operation of God's saving grace.<sup>32</sup> For, centuries before the law was given, that saving grace was enshrined in the divine promise to Abraham and his offspring: 'In you shall all the nations be blessed.'<sup>33</sup> In making this promise, which (according to Paul) was to find its definitive fulfilment in Christ, himself descended from Abraham,

29 Cf. Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, English translation (1971), pp. 515ff. For a different point of view cf. Gärtner, *The Areopagus Speech and Natural Revelation* (1955).

30 Cf. Käsemann, *Perspectives on Paul*, pp. 70ff., where, in reference to the view that justification by faith is a polemical expedient and therefore a subsidiary factor in Paul's theology, he remarks that 'it is not without irony that it is left to radical historical criticism, as represented by the Bultmann school, to defend the Reformed heritage'.

31 Cf. Gal. 3: 19; Rom. 5: 20f.

32 The gospel line, in Paul's view, runs on from Abraham to Christ, and even after the giving of the law 'David pronounces a blessing upon the man to whom God reckons righteousness apart from works' (Rom. 4: 6-8, quoting Ps. 32: 1f.).

33 Gen. 12: 3, LXX (cf. Gen. 18: 18; 22: 18), quoted in Gal. 3: 8, 16.

God 'preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham' (Gal. 3: 8), and in making the response of faith to that promise Abraham became the prototype of all who thereafter, hearing the gospel, were to believe God and have that fact reckoned to them for righteousness. In Christ the patriarchal promise is realised, and in Christ believers receive the inheritance of which the promise spoke, and of which the present impartation of the Spirit is the initial pledge.<sup>34</sup>

Paul had probably been brought up to believe that the age in which he lived ('this age') would be separated from the resurrection age ('that age') by the 'days of the Messiah', and that in the days of the Messiah the law, as known in 'this age', would be abrogated. When he became a Christian this schema was not essentially altered, except for his assurance that, since Jesus was the Messiah, the 'days of the Messiah' had begun. The messianic throne, however, was set up not on earth but at the right hand of God, where the risen Lord would continue to reign until God had subdued all his enemies for him (1 Cor. 15: 24-8). The completion of the messianic reign would mark the inception of the resurrection age. For the people of Christ on earth the 'days of the Messiah' coincided with the 'age of the Spirit', who enabled them to maintain union with their exalted Lord, to experience in anticipation the heritage of glory into which they would enter fully at the resurrection, and to enjoy, as the free-born and adult sons of God, an inward liberty such as was unknown under the law. Paul's denunciation of those who tried to impose the law on his converts was due not only to his indignation at an attempt to deprive them of this liberty but also to the implication that, if the age of law was still in force, the days of the Messiah had not yet begun. If so, Jesus was not the Messiah—hence the vehemence of his anathema on those whose preaching led logically to that conclusion.<sup>35</sup>

The allegorical exposition in Gal. 4: 21ff. of the dispute between Sarah and Hagar over their respective sons (Isaac and Ishmael) is scarcely an instance of the salvation-history pattern as we find it in the treatment of Abraham's faith in the preceding chapter. True, Paul probably saw significance in the fact that the dispute broke out in Abraham's family, so that Isaac represented Abraham's spiritual

34 Gal. 4: 6; 5: 18; Rom. 8: 10ff., 14ff., 23; 2 Cor. 1: 22; 5: 5.

35 Gal. 1: 8f. Cf. Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, English translation (1931), p. 186; Baeck, 'The faith of Paul', *Journal of Jewish Studies* III (1952), pp. 93ff.; Schoeps, *Paul*, English translation (1961), pp. 168ff.; Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (1964), pp. 180ff., 446ff.

offspring, sharers by faith of the promise, while Ishmael represented his biological descendants, still held in legal bondage. But this allegorisation has very little to do with historical exegesis.

On the other hand, the 'typological' treatment of the exodus and wilderness narratives in 1 Cor. 10: 1-11, which is closely linked with the presentation of Christ as 'our passover' in 1 Cor. 5: 7*f.*, does exhibit the features of salvation history. The parallel drawn there between the early experiences of Israel and the New Testament phase of the existence of the people of God belongs to the tracing of a recurrent pattern of divine action and human response which was well established in primitive Christianity and appears independently in a number of New Testament writings.<sup>36</sup>

## v

But nowhere does Paul expound salvation history more fully than in his classic exposition of the gospel as he understood and proclaimed it—the Letter to the Romans. The first sentence of the letter includes the statements (1) that 'the gospel of God', to the ministry of which Paul was set apart, was 'promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures' and (2) that Jesus 'was descended from David according to the flesh', while admittedly, and more important, he was 'designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead' (Rom. 1: 1-4).

Not once but in several ways this letter presents God's salvation in a historical setting. The outline in Rom. 1: 18*ff.* of the progressive unveiling of divine retribution against the sin of men—whether of gentiles without the special revelation of the law, or of Jews whose knowledge of that revelation renders them the more culpable—forms the background to the unfolding of divine grace in the gospel.

The portrayal of Abraham as the prototype of the man of faith and ancestor of the family of faith, which was sketched briefly in Gal. 3:6*ff.*, is elaborated in Rom. 4: 1-25.<sup>37</sup> The holy land which was promised to Abraham and his descendants is now expanded to comprise the whole world, which through the gospel is to accept the kingship of Christ. But the central blessing of the promise made to Abraham—justification by faith—is not postponed to the time of ultimate fulfil-

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Heb. 3: 7*ff.*; Jude 5.

<sup>37</sup> Käsemann, 'The faith of Abraham in Romans 4', in *Perspectives on Paul*, pp. 79*ff.*

ment: Abraham received it on the spot when he 'believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness';<sup>38</sup> and the same blessing is enjoyed on the spot by those in any generation who similarly take God at his word.

When this is borne in mind, the defects which have been pointed out in a purely salvation-history approach to Paul are avoided. The challenge to decision can come, and the response of faith can be made, at any point along the line. Yet the Christ event has made a difference to the pointing of the challenge and the eliciting of the faith: the 'now' of 2 Cor. 6: 2 ('*now* is the acceptable time . . . *now* is the day of salvation') is the 'now' of Acts 17: 30f. ('God *now* commands all men everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all men by raising him from the dead').<sup>39</sup>

Another combination of salvation history with the existential challenge is presented in the Adam-Christ analogy of Rom. 5: 12-21. Adam is the solidarity of unregenerate mankind, a solidarity of sin and death, destined to be broken up and superseded by the regenerate solidarity of righteousness and life in Christ. But for Paul, Adam, representative man though he is, is as much a historical figure as Christ, the representative of the new humanity. He traces the time sequence from Adam to Moses, during which sin was present in latent form, as was shown by the prevalence of death, even in the absence of explicit law; from Moses to Christ, during which latent sin was brought into the light and caused to proliferate under the action of explicit law;<sup>40</sup> followed by the new age inaugurated by Christ, into which his followers have entered and in which grace reigns through righteousness to eternal life. But Adam and Christ, the two poles of this course of history, are nevertheless present realities, and the gospel confronts the man in Adam with the call to enter into authentic life as a man in Christ. The salvation history is presented in terms not of evolution from Adam to Christ but of antithesis between Adam and Christ; and also, though not in the same way, the relation between Moses and Christ is one of antithesis, not evolution.

38 Rom. 4: 3, quoting Gen. 15: 6.

39 Conzelmann (*The Theology of Saint Luke*, pp. 205f.) presses a distinction which I fail to see between the emphasis of Acts 17: 30f. and that of Paul's doctrine of resurrection and judgment.

40 This regime of law is represented as parenthesis (*nomos de pareisēlthen*, Rom. 5: 20), as in Gal. 3: 19.

## VI

One of the most valuable contributions made by Professor Munck to this subject relates to Paul's understanding of his own role in the accomplishment of salvation history.<sup>41</sup> He knew himself called, from the hour of his conversion, to be Christ's apostle to the gentiles; indeed, in the light of that experience he knew himself to have been set apart even before his birth to fulfil that ministry.<sup>42</sup> In his letters and in the record of Acts his call is recorded in terms reminiscent of the call of Hebrew prophets: as Jeremiah was divinely consecrated and appointed, before he was born, to be 'a prophet to the nations' (Jer. 1: 5), as the Isaianic Servant was given to be 'a light to the nations', that Yahweh's salvation might reach 'to the end of the earth' (Isa. 49: 6), so Paul's commission was 'to proclaim the word fully, that all the gentiles might hear it' (2 Tim. 4: 17).<sup>43</sup>

The call of Israel was to make known the saving message of their God to the other nations, and the original apostles and other leaders of the Jerusalem Church regarded themselves as the believing remnant of Israel whose mission was first to bring their fellow Israelites to the acknowledgment of Jesus as the Messiah, so that through their witness the surrounding nations might in turn be brought into allegiance to the Son of David. Something of this outlook appears in the exegesis of Amos's oracle about the re-erection of David's fallen booth ascribed by Luke to James the Just at the Council of Jerusalem.<sup>44</sup> Paul deviated from this understanding of the redemptive plan in one particular which, while it was chronological, was nevertheless of the utmost moment to himself, for it involved his place in the working out of God's purpose. Despite the natural interpretation of those prophetic writings which spoke of Israel's mission to the world, God in his wisdom had so ordered it that the gentiles as a whole were to embrace his salvation, brought near in Christ, before the Jews as a whole did so. If the order of presentation was 'to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile' (Rom. 1: 16), the

41 Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind*, pp. 41ff.—although his clear insight into this self-understanding of Paul is unfortunately linked with an improbable interpretation of Paul as the 'restrainer' of 2 Thess. 2: 6f., taken over from Cullmann, 'Le caractère eschatologique du devoir missionnaire et de la conscience apostolique de S. Paul', *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses* XVI (1936), pp. 210ff.

42 Gal. 1: 15; cf. Rom. 1: 1.

43 An authentic Pauline passage (*me iudice*).

44 Acts 15: 15-18, quoting Amos 9: 11f.

order of acceptance was 'by the gentile first, and only then by the Jew'. True, a small number of Jews (including Paul himself) had already believed the gospel, and this was an earnest of the full-scale conversion of Israel in due course; but for the present the majority of the people were afflicted by a temporary spiritual blindness, which prevented them from recognising in Jesus the true hope of Israel.<sup>45</sup> During this interval the gospel was being eagerly accepted by gentiles, not least as a result of Paul's apostolic energy. The day would come, however, when the people of Israel would recover their spiritual vision and, suddenly realising that the salvation into which the gentiles were entering through faith was their own ancestral heritage, would be stung to jealousy and claim their proper share in the blessings which were primarily theirs. As a son of Israel himself, Paul eagerly desired to speed this happy consummation, and saw in his own apostolate the means of doing so. For while the immediate effect of his ministry was the conversion of gentiles, its indirect effect would be the provoking of this revulsion of feeling in Israel. And Israel's embracing the gift of righteousness through faith in Christ instead of trying to establish their own righteousness by the works of the law would unleash for the world the greatest blessing it had ever known and be signalled by the *parousia*.<sup>46</sup> The course of salvation history would thus be complete. Well might Paul magnify his office, for if he discharged it faithfully and without intermission he would indeed be a figure of eschatological significance, the preparer of the way for Christ's manifestation in glory, as John the Baptist had been for his first appearing.

For Paul, the, salvation history was no mere theological schema, intellectually constructed as an object of admiration or a source of imagined security: it was the redemptive action of God in which he was personally and totally involved—first as its beneficiary when the risen Lord apprehended him and conscripted him as his messenger, and then as its herald among the gentiles. Paul, as much as Luke, presents us with salvation history, but Paul sets it in a perspective which is peculiarly his own.

## VII

A brief mention must suffice for the salvation history perspective of Ephesians, in which the Church, God's masterpiece of reconciliation in

<sup>45</sup> Rom. 11: 25; 2 Cor. 3: 14ff.

<sup>46</sup> Rom. 11: 11-16, 26f.

which Jew and gentile become 'one new man' in Christ (2: 15), is also his pilot scheme for the reconciled universe of the future, to be manifested when his 'plan for the fulness of time' is complete (1: 9f.); of Hebrews, in which the age inaugurated by Christ is the age of unobstructed access to God, which the preceding age adumbrated by means of shadows or 'copies', serving as object lessons of the reality now experienced; of the Apocalypse, in which the ancient imagery of the woman, the child and the dragon, the war in heaven, and much else, is reborn to become the vehicle of a new rehearsal of the salvation history consummated in the final triumph of the slaughtered Lamb and his faithful followers.

### VIII

Of all the questions relating to salvation history in the New Testament none is so important as that which concerns Jesus' own attitude. Here the primary fact is that the proclamation of the kingdom of God in itself implies a salvation-history perspective. This is true whether or not the kingdom of God is linked with the Son of Man and no matter how the timing of the kingdom in Jesus' proclamation is understood. It may be understood in terms of realised or futurist eschatology, or in terms of an existential summons. In fact, room must be found for both 'already' and 'not yet' in even the earliest gospel strata bearing upon this question. But no matter: the term itself cannot be understood apart from its Old Testament background, and in particular the announcement in the book of Daniel that, when gentile dominion has run its destined course, 'the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed . . . and it shall stand for ever' (Dan. 2: 44). This kingdom is to be bestowed, when the appointed time comes, on the 'saints of the Most High' (Dan. 7: 18, 22, 27). So when Jesus, on the morrow of John the Baptist's arrest, began to proclaim that the appointed time had fully come and the kingdom of God had drawn near, and called on his hearers to repent and believe the good news,<sup>47</sup> his words must inevitably have been taken to mean that the climax of history was at hand and that the eternal kingdom foreseen by Daniel was about to be established, whatever form that kingdom was to take. Similarly, when he assured his disciples that, 'little flock' as they might be in comparison with the big battalions of the day, it was the Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom,<sup>48</sup> it was difficult to avoid the

47 Mark 1: 14f.

48 Luke 12: 32.



conclusion that they were the 'saints of the Most High' on whom, according to Daniel, that kingdom was to be conferred. Indeed, the whole process of Old Testament history led up to the situation in which these disciples were involved: 'Blessed are the eyes which see what you see! For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it' (Luke 10: 23f.; cf. Matt. 13: 16f.).

The establishment of the kingdom would be attended by a crisis which would overwhelm with disaster those who were not prepared to meet it, as surely as the deluge of Noah's day and the destruction of Sodom overwhelmed those who refused to be warned in time.<sup>49</sup> Between the time of the ministry ('already') and the consummation of the kingdom ('not yet') Jesus saw an interval of indeterminate duration (even if it might not exceed the lifetime of 'this generation'), introduced by the rejection and passion of the Son of Man, apart from which there would be no advent of the kingdom 'with power'.<sup>50</sup> Those parables which presuppose a delay in the *parousia* are not necessarily the product of the historical delay; to suppose that this must be so is to assume in advance that the *parousia* in Jesus' teaching is invariably imminent. In any case, Jesus not only viewed the time of his ministry as inaugurating the consummation of the divine purpose for the world, towards which all past time had been moving forward, but he viewed himself as the key figure and agent in bringing about the culmination of salvation history. The preachers and theologians of the early post-Easter decades, according to their varying perspective as the sequel to Jesus' ministry unfolded itself, were concerned to develop and reinterpret an understanding of salvation history which came to expression in Jesus himself. But as in Paul salvation history is the 'sphere' of the justifying grace of God, so in Jesus it is the 'sphere' of the Father's pardoning love portrayed in his parables and in his personal friendship towards outcasts and sinners.

These reflections were intended to be offered as an inadequate tribute to a scholar whom I had come to appreciate as a colleague and friend for over twelve years, a scholar whose own contributions to New Testament study provided a stimulus and challenge to myself and to many fellow labourers in the same field. The original draft of the paper, completed only a few days before Professor Brandon's untimely death,

49 Luke 17: 22ff.

50 Cf. Mark 9: 1, 12; 13: 30; Luke 17: 25.

ended with an expression of hope that he would continue for many years to enrich us with further contributions to learning as he had so generously done in the past. This hope, alas, must now remain unfulfilled. But with gratitude for all that he was and did may be coupled the hope that his memory will inspire many more to follow his example and shed fresh light on the history of religion.