

CHAPTER THREE

CONSISTENT ESCHATOLOGY

In its historical context, Schweitzer's interpretation of New Testament eschatology can be seen as a reaction against 19th century immanentism and liberalism. His thesis is as follows.

John the Baptist thought of himself as a prophet. Jesus alone (because of his messianic consciousness) saw him as 'Eljah'.¹ Jesus believed himself to be the Messiah-designate² and had a lively awareness of the nearness of the Kingdom of God and of his own glorification. But first repentance must be proclaimed and effected,³ Jesus leading the way. Thus he effected a synthesis of prophetic and apocalyptic eschatologies.⁴ Through his mighty works he prepared for the Kingdom's dawning.⁵ The mission of the twelve was 'the last effort for bringing about the Kingdom'.⁶ Yet the expected advent delayed and Jesus came to realise that only through his own affliction would the kingdom dawn. The entry into Jerusalem was his 'funeral march to victory'⁷ and he died confidently expecting as the immediate consequence the dawning of the Kingdom and his own 'coming' as Messiah. Jesus' expectation proved wrong.⁸ It was his peculiar consciousness—a secret awareness progressively disclosed to Jesus at his baptism, to the three at the Transfiguration, to the Twelve shortly afterwards and through Judas to the authorities⁹—which gave rise to this false expectation.

Schweitzer extends his thesis to include a study of Paul in which he assumes 'the complete agreement of the teaching of Paul with that of Jesus' (meaning that Paul's thought was thoroughly Hebraic, and dominated by eschatology).¹⁰ Paul (in Schweitzer's

¹ Cf. Mk. 9, 11-13. Mtt. 11, 7ff. 11, 14 'Ηλείας ὁ μέλλων ἔρχεσθαι.

² Cf. *Mystery*, pp. 185f., pp. 254ff.

³ Cf. *Mystery*, pp. 94f.

⁴ Cf. *Mystery*, p. 256.

⁵ Cf. *Mystery*, pp. 256f.

⁶ Cf. *Mystery*, p. 261.

⁷ Cf. *Mystery*, p. 267.

⁸ Cf. *Quest*, p. 369.

⁹ Cf. *Mystery*, pp. 185ff., 214ff.

¹⁰ Cf. *Mysticism*, p. vii.

view) regarded Jesus' death as the inauguration of the Messianic era¹ and believed that an 'overlap' of aeons had occurred whereby the present world order continues, but its relevance is lost to those who are 'in Christ'.² This 'overlap' must cease when Jesus enters fully into his Kingdom³ and this event was regarded as imminent. The lingering power of the angels over the elect mattered little:⁴ the sacraments are temporary *ad hoc* institutions;⁵ ethics, now based on the past inauguration, are but interim ethics,⁶ and the present allows mystical union with Christ whereby one is here in this world, but also transcendently with Christ.⁷

Following upon the loss, in the 2nd century, of 'the expectation of the immediate dawn of the Messianic Kingdom',⁸ Paul's thought (according to Schweitzer) was misunderstood, was Hellenised and translated into non-eschatological terms. The process was begun before the hope in a speedy coming of the Kingdom died, so that when the continued Parousia delay led eventually to the abandonment of an eschatological hope, a Hellenistic dogmatic system replaced it without disturbance.⁹ The process of change can be traced through Ignatius and Polycarp, Justin and John.¹⁰ It was facilitated because Paul's mysticism made Hellenisation possible.¹¹ We must turn to Paul for the gospel of Jesus: but only to 'the authentic Primitive Christian Paulinism',¹² for Greek, Catholic and Protestant theologies 'all contain the gospel of Paul in a form which does not continue the gospel of Jesus but displaces it'.¹³

Recently F. Buri has supported Schweitzer's thesis. He upholds its recognition of the centrality of eschatology in the New Testament, of the centrality for Jesus' and for Paul's thought of a temporarily delimited *Naherwartung*¹⁴ and of the centrality for the life

¹ Cf. *Mysticism*, p. 64.

² Cf. *Mysticism*, p. 192.

³ Cf. *Mysticism*, p. 63.

⁴ Cf. *Mysticism*, p. 65.

⁵ Cf. *Mysticism*, p. 22.

⁶ Cf. *Mysticism*, pp. 297ff.

⁷ Cf. *Mysticism*, pp. 3ff.

⁸ Cf. *Mysticism*, p. 39.

⁹ Cf. *Mysticism*, p. 336.

¹⁰ Cf. *Mysticism*, pp. 341ff., 348ff.

¹¹ Cf. *Mysticism*, p. 372.

¹² Cf. *Mysticism*, p. 392.

¹³ Cf. *Mysticism*, p. 391.

¹⁴ Cf. *Die Bedeutung*, pp. 25ff.

and growth of the early church of the Parousia-delay crisis.¹ He realises that the weakest point in Schweitzer's thesis is its failure to offer any full and sustained interpretation of the Jesus of history for present faith. Schweitzer's reverence for life maxim is more practised than expounded.² Buri seeks to overcome this deficiency by introducing Bultmann's hermeneutic principle of existential interpretation. 'The New Testament', he argues, 'must be understood as referring to the individual and total human situation present and future, and not—directly—to world history'.³ The basis of eschatology is anthropological: it is the 'will for life fulfilment' in the present, despite the discouragement of knowledge. The essence of New Testament eschatology (he maintains) is the overcoming of knowledge by will, and this is expressed in the form of Judaic apocalyptic. But we can substitute for this form the recognition of each present moment as a creation of God, and hence we can achieve a reverence for each moment as a creation divine. The achievement of all this is precisely what the New Testament means when it speaks of being 'in Christ'.⁴

Schweitzer concentrated upon the initial stage of the development of dogma through Jesus and Paul. Building on this, subsequent development has been reconstructed, notably, by M. Werner. In the 'elucidation of the inner causes of Hellenisation', Werner argues, we need some overall understanding of the ministry and message of Jesus and the thought of Paul which may serve as our point of departure.⁵ Werner believes that Schweitzer's thesis provides this.⁶ His own contribution may be summarised as follows: 'Jesus was wholly at one with late-Jewish apocalyptic in . . . fundamental outlook'.⁷ Because Jesus, the Apostles, Paul and the entire early church were all dominated by the conviction that the End and the Parousia of Jesus as Messiah were immediately to occur, the delay caused an enormous crisis for the church which led to:

¹ Cf. *Die Bedeutung*, p. 27. Buri rejects all attempts to remove this expectation from the centre of the N.T. as 'embarrassment solutions'.

² Cf. *My Life and Thought*, pp. 183ff.

³ Cf. 'Das Problem', pp. 97ff.

⁴ Cf. *Die Bedeutung*, pp. 127ff., 164ff.

⁵ It is Werner's contention that Harnack, Loofs, and Seeberg fail at precisely this point: *Formation*, p. 6.

⁶ Cf. *Formation*, p. 9.

⁷ Cf. *Formation*, p. 14.

- a. falling away of many and the rise of 'heretics' (properly, according to Werner, self-designated 'seekers').¹
- b. the abandonment of the old 'eschatological' understanding of the gospel.²
- c. the reconstruction of belief primarily in terms of Jesus' person (originally conceived as a 'high angelic being') and of Jesus' work (originally conceived eschatologically) in noneschatological categories.³

Werner maintains that we must return 'to that situation in which the Primitive Christian faith, after the death of Jesus, found itself so involved with the problem of the continuing delay of the Parousia'⁴ in an effort to perceive what the 'present significance of this Primitive Christianity' is, now that the content of 'the apocalyptic-eschatological ideas ... in their original form are no more, as such, to be reckoned as Christian truth'.⁵ The task is simply sketched in three pages of postscript.⁶

Our criticism of Consistent Eschatology is most conveniently undertaken in two areas of concern, methodology and interpretation. First, we consider methodology. Werner recognises that since Schweitzer's day form criticism demands comment, but he concludes that where form criticism is used against Schweitzer it is, generally, wrongly turned into an historical criterion.⁷ Schweitzer, to be sure, was a forerunner of the form critics in attacking all subjective criteria of literary judgement, but he failed in that he did not apply his searching criticism of others, to himself. His literary method led him, for instance, to accept the form of the Sermon on the Mount and of the charge to the Twelve (Mtt. 10) as authentic. In both cases, form criticism—without turning itself into an historical criterion—shows us the fragmentary nature of the material.⁸

¹ Cf. *Formation*, pp. 44ff.

² Cf. *Formation*, pp. 71ff.

³ *Formation* pp. 72ff.

⁴ Cf. *Formation*, p. 327.

⁵ Cf. *Formation*, p. 327.

⁶ Cf. *Formation*, pp. 328ff.

⁷ Cf. *Formation*, p. 11.

⁸ Cf. Glasson, *Advent*, p. 103. Kümmel, *Promise*, pp. 63ff. Grässer, *Problem*, pp. 18ff. Michaelis, *Matthäus*, II, p. 93. Flückiger, *Ursprung*, p. 26, who all maintain the composite character of Mtt. 10.

In two important instances Schweitzer suspended his literary criterion in favour of historical presuppositions. He combined Mtt. 10 with Mk. 6, though on literary grounds this is quite unjustified,¹ and he transferred the Transfiguration scene to a period preceding the conversation on the way to Caesarea Philippi, though there is no literary ground for doing so.²

The historical criterion which Schweitzer selected 'from within the tradition'³ is the apocalyptic of contemporary Judaism. But the selection of this as the measure of the authenticity of New Testament material raises three important questions:

- i. Is such a narrow and precise criterion necessary?
- ii. Is its selection justified in view of the complexity of thought in contemporary Judaism?⁴
- iii. Can such a criterion allow even the possibility of any *sui generis* element in Jesus' life and work?

In its application the criterion has radical effects which seem increasingly questionable. For example, Schweitzer rejects in the Synoptic material the birth narratives as unauthentic: yet there are commentators who find grounds for treating these narratives with much more respect.⁵ The fourth Gospel, on Schweitzer's criterion, is entirely removed from material bearing on the actual life of Jesus:⁶ yet the historical value of the Fourth Gospel is being increasingly recognised.⁷ As a further example, Schweitzer's criterion rules the 2nd Epistle to the Thessalonians as non-Pauline because 'it explicitly opposes the idea that the return of Jesus is immediately at hand, and enumerates all that must happen before that Day can dawn (II Thess. 2, 1-12)'.⁸ The Epistle, however, *can* be interpreted quite adequately as Pauline.⁹

On the basis of this historical criterion a picture of Jesus as an apocalyptic *Schwärmer* emerges with which certain elements of the New Testament do not accord: these elements are therefore

¹ Cf. e.g. Flückiger, *Ursprung*, p. 25. Kümmel, *Promise*, pp. 62f.

² *Mystery*, p. 180. Schweitzer admits as much.

³ Cf. Werner, *Formation*, p. 15.

⁴ Cf. above, chapter 2, pp. 18ff.

⁵ Cf. e.g. Creed, *Luke*, *ad loc.* Manson, *Luke*, pp. xxf.

⁶ Cf. *Mystery*, p. 9. Werner, *Formation*, p. 47.

⁷ Cf. Barrett, *John*, pp. 116ff. Strachan, *Fourth Gospel*, pp. 27ff. Howard, *Fourth Gospel*, pp. 18f.

⁸ Cf. *Mysticism*, p. 42.

⁹ As e.g. by Lauk, *II Thessalonicher*, pp. 9ff. Oepke, *Thessalonicher*, pp. 128ff.

designated 'later interpretation'. A first century apocalyptic *Schwärmer*, however, is no less an arbitrary creation than (for example) a nineteenth century Idealist, or a twentieth century Jesus of existentialism.¹ Schweitzer's antithesis between the (so-called) historical facts of the Synoptics and the (so-called) theological idealisation of the remainder of the New Testament is not a *necessary* antithesis.² Further, Werner's antithesis between Jesus and all subsequent dogma is not a *necessary* antithesis.³ It is at least possible that cleavage, where it is definitely to be found, is due to alien influences rather than to any inner need for re-interpretation.⁴

We turn now to criticism of interpretation. In representing apocalyptic as the dominating feature of Jesus' thought, Schweitzer omits to notice the considerable variety of expectation contained within contemporary apocalyptic writings.⁵ Most significantly, the work of the Messiah is never represented in apocalyptic as 'forcing in the kingdom', and the idea of a secret life of humiliation prior to exaltation is, generally, lacking.

In selecting apocalyptic as the dominating feature of Jesus' thought world, Schweitzer neglects other prominent aspects of first century Judaism: traditionalism, for instance, amongst the Sadducees, legalism amongst the Pharisees and syncretism where Hellenistic influence thrived. Schweitzer himself noted the inadequacy of apocalyptic in interpreting Jesus' thought, but only conceded that Jesus combined with it the older prophetic ethics.⁶ The New Testament contains hints (at least) that apocalyptic was not the all dominating factor either in Jesus' thought or in the contemporary situation, which Schweitzer imagined it to be. The common people, for example, who both 'heard Jesus gladly' (Mk. 12, 37) and who 'went out unto' John the Baptist 'and were baptised of him, confessing their sins' (Mk. 1, 5) are never represented as acclaiming

¹ Cf. Cullmann, *Unzeitgemässe Bemerkungen*, pp. 266ff.

² Cf. Burkitt's preface to the English *Quest*, and G. Seaver's unsuccessful criticism of this (in *Schweitzer*, p. 201).

³ One need only compare the entirely positive evaluation of the rise of christian dogma in terms of the elucidation of its inherent significance in Jesus' person and work, in accord with his own self-understanding, offered by Turner, *Pattern*, to see how arbitrary and self-imposed are these antitheses.

⁴ Cf. Cullman, 'Das Wahre', pp. 171ff. who cites the lack of discernment of the continuing work of the Holy Spirit as one cause.

⁵ Cf. above, chapter 2, pp. 18ff.

⁶ Cf. *Mystery*, pp. 256ff. *Mysticism*, pp. 80ff.

the Baptist as 'Messiah',¹ nor do they suggest that Jesus is more than a 'John the Baptist, or Eljah, or one of the prophets' (Mk. 8, 28). Had apocalyptic had such a general, dominating influence, it is difficult to understand why John was held only as a prophet, and neither he nor Jesus attracted messianic acclaim.² The disciples, too, do not appear to have been entirely bound by apocalyptic speculation. Matthew ὁ τελώνης (Mtt. 10, 3), for instance, would have had little in common with the Pharisees amongst whom apocalyptic most probably had some favour. Simon the Zealot (Lk. 6, 15, Acts 1, 13), or ὁ Καναναῖος (Mk. 3, 18. Mtt. 10, 4) was a member of the political zealot group, and others (Judas Iscariot, Simon Peter, the two sons of Zebedee) might perhaps have been:³ according to our survey of this group, its aims were primarily political, its interest quite different from apocalyptic. Jesus himself, also, though most likely influenced by apocalyptic⁴ would hardly have attended only to this pressure. It is clear that he would have been to synagogue services from childhood⁵ and must have been thoroughly familiar with the Pentateuch and Prophets through the lessons, and with Rabbinic Targumim through the sermons.⁶ Surely, these will have influenced him too.

It is specially questionable whether apocalyptic can prove an adequate key in probing Jesus' self-understanding. Difficulties clearly arise in interpreting the (so-called) messianic secret. In Schweitzer's view the secret consists in Jesus' belief that he was Messiah-designate.⁷ This, he argues, is a secret 'of necessity' because it is inexpressible.⁸ Yet Schweitzer's thesis of a double consciousness, which he propounds as a rationale of the secret,⁹ might be expected to have served as a medium for its communication.¹⁰

¹ Neither in the N.T. nor in Josephus.

² Even if the Entry into Jerusalem is understood (with many commentators) as openly messianic, this is not necessarily contradicted: but it is possible that the event was *not* so understood by the bystanders: cf. Cranfield, *Mark*, pp. 352ff.

³ Cf. Cullman, *State*, pp. 15ff.

⁴ Cf. Cranfield, *Mark*, p. 275.

⁵ Cf. Luke's explicit statement, 4, 16.

⁶ Cf. W. Bacher, in *H.D.B.* IV, pp. 640ff.

⁷ Cf. *Mystery*, p. 254.

⁸ Cf. *Mystery*, p. 186.

⁹ Cf. *Mystery*, p. 187.

¹⁰ Schweitzer's argument runs:

a. The secret is inexpressible, hence it *is* a secret.

Further, it is this secret which, according to Schweitzer, Judas betrayed: apparently he *was able* to express it. In fact there is no justification in the Synoptics for holding that this *is* what Judas betrayed.¹ Moreover, the variety and character of terms used or accepted by Jesus regarding his person and work weigh against Schweitzer's analysis of Jesus' self-consciousness. Chief of these is his characteristic self-designation *Son of Man*. The present and future usages of this can be reconciled if we say, *not* 'Jesus expected to be revealed as the Son of Man when the Kingdom dawned', but rather, 'Jesus as Son of Man already (though now in humiliation) expected to be revealed as Son of Man in glory'.² Perhaps, too, Jesus saw his work in the light of the *Servant* of Deutero-Isaiah. In the Baptism narrative (Mk. 1, 11 par.) the βατ-κῶλ contains an allusion to Is. 43, 1.³ 'The voice from heaven . . . comes to Jesus as a summons to accept the task of the one who is addressed in the same way at the beginning of the ebed-Jahweh hymns in Is. 42, 1. Jesus was therefore conscious at the moment of his baptism that he had to take upon himself the ebed-Jahweh role'⁴ Again, in the last supper (Mk. 14, 24, Mtt. 26, 28, Lk. 22, 20. cf I Cor. 11, 24) all four accounts agree⁵ in mentioning both the covenant (διαθήκη) and vicariousness (ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν, ὑπὲρ πολλῶν, περὶ πολλῶν). Though several allusions are probably intended,⁶ Otto⁷ and Cullmann⁸ find

b. This secret is difficult for us to understand, but everyone then held a 'double consciousness' theory which made the matter intelligible.

¹ Flückiger, *Ursprung*, p. 35 argues that Schweitzer has begun with the idea of 'betrayal' and so thinks in terms of a 'secret', whereas the idea of παραδίδωμι means 'jemanden ausliefern, übergeben, in die Hände spielen . . .' Such a claim to Messiahship could not, of course, have been condemned as blasphemy. It was surely the claim to Sonship which led to this charge. Cf. Flückiger, *Ursprung*, p. 36.

² Cf. Cullmann, *Christology*, p. 164. Cranfield, *Mark*, pp. 276ff. Preiss, *Life in Christ*, pp. 43ff.

³ The apparent reference to Ps. 2, 7 may not be intended—cf. Cranfield, *Mark*, p. 55. Contrast Glasson, *Advent*, p. 119 who thinks 'the combination of these two passages is a stroke of genius'; similarly Schniewind, *Markus*, pp. 12ff.

⁴ Cullmann, *Christology*, p. 67. Cf. *Baptism*, pp. 16f. Cranfield, *Mark*, pp. 54f.

⁵ With the exception of the D text of Luke.

⁶ To the Sinai Covenant (Ex. 24, 6-8) in τὸ αἶμα . . . τῆς διαθήκης (Mk. 14, 24); to the Covenant foretold in Jer. 31, 31 in I Cor 11, 25, as well as to the Servant Songs, Is. 53, 12. 42, 6. 49, 8.

⁷ *Kingdom of God*, pp. 289ff.

⁸ *Christology*, p. 65.

certain reference to Is. 42, 6 and 49, 8 where it is actually the servant who is given 'for a covenant of the people'.¹ This vicarious element seems to be present similarly in the λότρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν of Mk. 10, 45.² It is at least possible that some relationship existed in Jesus' mind between his understanding of himself and the person of the 'ebed JHWH'.³ The term *Son of God* might also be mentioned here. Schweitzer maintained that Jesus became conscious at his baptism of his status as Messiah-designate: the βατ-κῶλ, however, 'confirms his already existing filial consciousness'.⁴ The Transfiguration, similarly, is not a revelation of his status as Messiah-designate, but a confirmation of his Sonship. It is as Son that the demons recognise him (Mk. 5, 7. 3, 11, etc.). It is as 'Christ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Εὐλογητοῦ' that he is condemned (Mk. 14, 61 par.).⁵ Other designations such as *Rabbi*, *Master*, *Prophet*, which other people used of Jesus and which were not altogether repudiated by him, suggest that Jesus was able to create impressions familiar to diverse traditions in Jewish life and thought, and was apparently not unwilling to do so. All these terms indicate that Jesus saw himself as more than Messiah-designate.⁶ The terms of Apocalyptic

¹ This is contested by e.g. Flew, *Church*, pp. 103f. But a consciousness of vicarious suffering in the establishment of a new covenant seems most probably to be present in Jesus' words.

² Of which Cullmann, *Christology*, p. 65 writes, 'Here we have the central theme of the ebed Jahweh hymns, and this is a clear allusion to Is. 53, 5. It is as if Jesus said, "The Son of Man came to fulfil the task of the ebed Jahweh".'

³ Cf. further Zimmerli and Jeremias, in *T.W.N.T.* V, pp. 636ff. and *Servant*. Manson, *The Servant Messiah*. Cullmann, *Christology*, pp. 51ff. For the contrary view, cf. Hooker, *Jesus and the Servant*: Barrett, 'The Background of Mk. 10, 45', in *N.T. Essays*, pp. 1ff.

⁴ Cranfield, *Mark*, p. 55.

⁵ Some of these passages seem to draw the Servant and the Son together. At the baptism the βατ-κῶλ might be said to confirm a filial consciousness in a context of dedication to the mission of the servant. In the case of the Transfiguration, the confirmation of Sonship is linked, at least in Luke, to the mission of suffering (cf. ἔλεγον τὴν ἔξοδον αὐτοῦ, ἣν ἤμελλεν πληροῦν): cf. also Mtt. 11, 25-30 where an expression of filial consciousness is followed by a passage (vv. 28-30) reminiscent of the mission of the Servant (cf. esp. 'for I am meek and lowly' Is. 50, 6. 53, 3f.).

⁶ We may note also such references as Mtt. 12, 42 = Lk. 11, 31. Mtt. 13, 16. Lk. 10, 21ff. Mtt. 19, 16ff. = Lk. 18, 18f (where Jesus' answer couples, as on a par, obedience to the commandments and allegiance to himself). Mk. 2, 6ff., where, even if the term Son of Man is a gloss (cf. Rawlinson, *Mark*, *ad loc.* Taylor, *Mark*, *ad loc.* Cranfield, *Mark ad loc.*) the proclamation of forgiveness cannot be questioned; here—if not blasphemy (the answer of

are also seen to be insufficient, and the future tense not comprehensive enough, to express Jesus' consciousness of his own person and work.

When Jesus' self-consciousness is understood in wider terms then the secret of his person becomes intelligible, and is better formulated as the Son of God secret. It consists in the fact that 'God was in Christ' (II Cor. 5, 19): in him was the Eschaton—yet not in glorious majesty but in the form of a servant 'to save his people from their sins' (Mtt. 1, 21. Mk. 2, 6).¹ It arises from the fact that Jesus, Son of God assumes the role and mission of the Servant, and it is sustained in order that the divine mystery of election (of 'calling' and of 'faith') might be operative. Contrary to Schweitzer's thesis, Jesus did not seek to force in the Kingdom² but declared it to be present already in his own person and work (we shall have to expand on this later).

Jesus' death can hardly be interpreted (as Schweitzer wishes) as meaning for Jesus 'saving others from the Messianic woes'.³ Apocalyptic expectation does not anticipate such a Messianic work. If *λύτρον* is to be identified as meaning *אשם* (in Mk. 10, 45) a sin-offering,⁴ then the matter is even more definite, for nowhere in the gospels or in late Jewish apocalyptic is the bearing of Messianic woes referred to as a sin-offering;⁵ and precisely in the context of Mk. 10, 45 the Messianic woes are *not* mentioned. It is, surely, because Schweitzer's interpretation underemphasises the grace-motif in Jesus' death that he resorts to his thesis of reverence for life, and Werner (following Buri) turns to Jasper's existentialism.⁶

Schweitzer maintains that Jesus expected one single event following his death (the End, involving the general resurrection and his own glorification). We shall argue that apparent references

the scribes)—is an indication of the presence of the final rule of God (cf. Schniewind, *Markus*, p. 23).

¹ Cf. further Schniewind, *Markus*, pp. 41ff. (on Mk. 4, 11f.) Torrance, in *S.J.T.* III, 1950, pp. 298ff. Cranfield in *S.J.T.* V, 1952, pp. 49ff. Preiss, *Life in Christ*, pp. 43ff. Cullmann, *Christology*, *passim*.

² Flückiger, *Ursprung*, p. 38 (and note 57) rightly argues that even in terms of apocalyptic such a mission is unthinkable.

³ Cf. *Mystery*, p. 266f.

⁴ With Jeremias and Zimmerli, in *T.W.N.T.* V, pp. 709ff. and Cranfield, *Mark*, p. 342. contrast Büchsel, in *T.W.N.T.* IV, pp. 341ff.

⁵ Cf. Flückiger, *Ursprung*, p. 33, pp. 80ff.

⁶ The evacuation of a gospel motif is found also in late Jewish apocalyptic (cf. Enoch 98, 10. 53, 2. 60, 6. 62, 9. II Esdras 5, 17f.).

to a speedy coming of the End do not necessitate this view¹ and that there is evidence that Jesus expected a *Zwischenzeit* and made provision for such.² Schweitzer appears to allow one group of references (which he interprets as forecasting a speedy End) to rule out another group (which might be taken as indicating an interval before the End) and this is an instance of quite unsatisfactory 'monist' thinking.³ Taken in conjunction with the soteriological interpretation of Jesus' mission and death, the provision of an interim in which the call to repentance and faith is made possible, is entirely intelligible. The grace-motif of Jesus' life and work is seen to be continued and made effectual in the grace-character of the interim. Divorced, as in Schweitzer's thesis, from such a soteriology, the expectation of an interval must be quite incomprehensible.

The reconstruction of Paul's thought in terms of consistent eschatology is questionable at many points. Werner (less cautiously than Schweitzer) maintains that Paul held Jesus to be an angelic power. To be sure, a certain subordination of the Son to the Father is present (cf. e.g. I Cor. 15, 28). But an angel Christology, as such, seems to be excluded by, for example, Phil. 2, 6 ff. Rom. 8, 37-39, etc. The appellation *κύριε* could conceivably reflect the occasional apocalyptic usage with reference to angels, but is much more likely to follow the frequent usage⁴ of the Old Testament in connection with God; *ὁ κύριος*, never used in the Old Testament or in apocalyptic literature of an angel, is on the other hand the well-used expression for God.⁵ Other titles with a wealth of significance are applied to Jesus in the New Testament⁶ and these must influence our understanding of any 'angel' category of interpretation.

Schweitzer⁷ and Werner⁸ claim that Paul understood Jesus' death and resurrection as the initiation of the End of the world, and that he saw Jesus' resurrection as the literal beginning of

¹ See below, pp. 177ff.

² See below, pp. 95ff.

³ Cf. Schuster, in *Z.N.W.* XLVII, 1956, pp. 1ff.

⁴ Even more frequent than in apocalyptic itself as Werner admits.

⁵ Cf. Michaelis, *Zur Engelchristologie*, pp. 61ff.

⁶ Cf. Taylor, *Names*: Cullmann, *Christology*.

⁷ Cf. *Mysticism*, pp. 54f.

⁸ Cf. *Formation*, p. 72.

the general resurrection. Werner¹ finds this especially in Gal. 6, 14. But, as Flückiger² says, there is no mention here of a process nor of an immediate continuation.³ Contrary to Schweitzer Paul seems to have expected not the completion of a process, although the present involves a process of events—in individual believers (cf. Rom. 13, 11ff.), in the church (cf. II Cor. 10, 16. Rom. 9-11), and in the world (cf. Rom. 8, 20. II Thess. 2). He rather contrasts past *hidden* events⁴ with their expected future *unveiling*: the undeniable manifestation of the One in whom the End events have occurred—hence he awaits Jesus himself, and ‘in glory’.⁵

The contention that at certain points in the Epistles we find Paul’s confident belief that the End must come within a short and limited period must be discussed later.⁶ To anticipate our argument, we suggest that whilst Paul regarded the speedy return of Christ as a real possibility, he nowhere maintained it as certain or necessary, either in his early letters or in his late ones.

Consistent Eschatology concludes that the delay of the Parousia created a total, crucial and indeed fatal crisis in the life of the early church.⁷ This, however, elevates one single area of thought into *the* central problem of the church and ignores a welter of problems concerning faith and life (much more deserving to be termed ‘crises’) which faced the church in its early years, and in the light of which the development of dogma should also be viewed. Fore-

¹ *Formation*, p. 73.

² *Ursprung*, p. 49.

³ Flückiger, *Ursprung*, p. 49 writes, ‘Allerdings scheint Werner der Meinung zu sein, dass Paulus diese Katastrophe für ein sehr langsam fortschreitendes Geschehen angesehen habe, da der Galaterbrief immerhin zwei Jahrzehnte nach der Passion Jesu abgefasst worden ist, zu welcher Zeit eine Verwandlung der Welt noch nicht erkennbar war. Vorsichtig redet er dann auch nur von einem “Beginn” der kosmischen Endereignisse, obschon Gal. 6, 14 mit keinem Wort auf eine bloss beginnende Handlung schliessen lässt.’

⁴ Cf. Col. 2, 3. ‘Wisdom and knowledge hidden in Christ.’ Col. 3, 4. ‘the life hidden in Christ’. Col. 4, 3-7 the gospel ‘hidden in them that are perishing’, ‘treasure in earthen vessels’. Phil. 2, 6ff. Rom. 3, 2f. II Cor. 8, 9.

⁵ Cf. I Cor. 1, 8, 13, 10-12. Col. 3, 4. etc. Paul awaits an *open* judgement which will one day be given, cf. Rom. 2, 16. I Cor. 1, 8, 3, 13, 4, 5. When also the full blessing of redemption won through Christ’s death and resurrection would be experienced, cf. I Cor. 4, 5, 5, 6. II Cor. 1, 10, 1, 14, 4, 14. Eph. 2, 7, 6, 8. When all things would be renewed, cf. Phil. 3, 20-21. I Cor. 15, 28. Col. 1, 17, 2, 15, 3, 1. Eph. 1, 20f. Phil. 2, 9f.

⁶ Cf. below, pp. 103ff.

⁷ Cf. Schweitzer, *Mysticism*, pp. 39ff. 336ff. Buri, *Die Bedeutung* pp. 27ff. Werner, *Formation*, pp. 43ff.

most amongst these we mention Judaizing and the tendency towards legalism, giving rise to the problem of the relationship of Jew and Gentile Christians: Gnosticism, leading to the abandonment both of the reality of Christ’s past (Docetism) and also of the future hope (pure mysticism), and giving rise to the problem of holding fast to the ‘tradition’ in the face both of Gnostic eclecticism and also of certain Christian attempts at apologetics: Antinomianism, leading to the abandonment of ethics and giving rise to the problem of maintaining a dialectic of the freedom of the gospel and the obligation of obedient faith: economic communism, leading to the abandonment of personal possessions (Acts 4, 32ff.) and producing ‘busybodies’ (II Thess. 3, 11) and giving rise to the problem of rightly dispensing charity.

These problems, arising from within and from without the Christian community must, surely, be considered as stimuli towards the formation of explicit statements of faith and order, before one supposed crisis (namely that of a Parousia delay) is set up as *the* central impulse. On the thesis of Consistent Eschatology it remains a problem why the Christian sect did not go the way of other disappointed apocalyptic groups whose chosen Messiah had failed them, and in part return to orthodox Judaism, in part linger on as a sect until finally dying out. Gamaliel’s argument (Acts 5, 35ff.) is based on correct premisses backed by precedents and is a valid one. The presence of confessional statements of an early date¹ indicates that it is at least possible and legitimate to understand the growth of Christian dogma as the explication of what was, from the first, true—though for a while only implicit.²

Werner himself cites examples³ of what he calls the translation ‘of the logic of the Parousia expectation into practice’, creating groups fired with expectancy and manifesting either an ascetic world-abandonment or an antinomian world-affirmation, and he recognises that such movements ‘produced great harm’. Surely, had the Christian community held a similar apocalyptic fervour it too would have expressed its logic in practice and stopped work to await its Lord! Yet from the first, it seems, the Christian

¹ Cf. e.g. Phil. 2, 6ff. Cullmann, *Confessions*, *passim*.

² Turner, *Pattern*, pp. 20 ff. cf. p. 22, ‘There are more points of contact between the N.T. and the later church than he (Werner) seems to allow.’

³ He cites Montanus: and two cases related by Hippolytus in his commentary on Daniel (under IV. 18, 1ff. 19, 1ff). Cf. *Formation*, p. 41.

community in its entirety attached firm importance to the present as having an especial place in the total salvation-history.

Consistent Eschatology must further reckon with the difficulty that in spite of being founded (apparently) upon disappointment, the church—to a greater or lesser extent, here and there, and from time to time—continued to live and suffer, to work and witness in a way hardly consistent with such an origin and foundation. Schweitzer and Werner think that disappointment led to Hellenisation. But it is at least possible that Hellenisation came about through 'human faithlessness', which is also an adequate explanation of the loss of expectancy in the church's faith and life.¹

Few writers would deny the value of the impulse given to New Testament study by Schweitzer and other exponents of Consistent Eschatology. Nor would they deny the necessity of taking seriously the eschatology of the New Testament. But the narrowness and one-sidedness of the methodology involved and of the interpretation offered is very apparent.² The expectation of apocalyptic (certainly as Schweitzer understands it) cannot do justice to the soteriological understanding of Jesus' life and death which we find throughout the New Testament. Nor can it account for the fact that in spite of hope such as we find expressed in Acts 1, 6, the early church neither awaited whatever the future should hold with an abandonment of present responsibilities, nor did it die out its 'natural' way, as other disillusioned enthusiastic movements did.

¹ Cullmann, in *K.v.S.* XI, 1942.

² Cf. Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, pp. 34ff.