

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE NEW TESTAMENT INSISTENCE ON THE
IMMINENCE OF THE PAROUSIA

In this chapter we pass from the conclusion that Jesus and the early church appear to have awaited an actual Parousia of the Son of Man to the fact that this expectation appears to be coupled with an insistence on its imminence.¹ The imminent character of New Testament hope has long been regarded as a problem,² and a variety of solutions have been proposed. These we now discuss.³

1. Ostensibly the simplest answer to the problem is to accept that Jesus taught that the Parousia was imminent, and to confess that this hope proved to be mistaken. This view is, therefore, akin to the Consistent Eschatology of Schweitzer, except that the error now is confined to the *nearness* of the expectation, not involving the expectation itself. The thesis has a variety of particular forms. Some hold that, though mistaken, Jesus' imminent hope formed an integral part of his teaching and attitude.⁴ Others suggest that whilst he was mistaken, his apparently delimited expectation was only peripheral to his more generally based hope.⁵ Some understand Jesus' imminent expectation in the light of Mk.

¹ Cf. Mk. 9,1 = Mtt. 16, 28. Lk. 9, 27. Mk. 13, 30 = Mtt. 24, 34. Lk. 21, 32. Mk. 14, 62 = Mtt. 26, 64. Lk. 22, 69. Mtt. 10, 23.

² Cf. Muirhead, 'Eschatology' in *H.D.C.G.* pp. 525ff. Scott, *Tributaries*, p. 181. Branscomb, *Mark*, p. 159.

³ The divisions must be somewhat artificial for there will be frequent overlapping: but they are useful for our discussion.

⁴ Cf. Loisy, *Synoptiques*, I, p. 247. Nicklin, *Gleanings*, pp. 436f. Easton, *Christ in the Gospels*, p. 163. Mackinnon, *Historic Jesus*, pp. 206f. Turner, in *A New Commentary*, p. 104. Guignebert, *Jesus*, p. 346. Lowrie, *Mark*, p. 316. Ackermann, *Jesus*, pp. 143f. Manson, *Teaching*, pp. 277ff. Barrett, *H.S.G.T.* pp. 157ff. 'N.T. Eschatology', in *S.J.T.* VI, 1953, pp. 163ff. pp. 225ff. Owen, 'The Parousia of Christ in the Synoptic Gospels', in *S.J.T.* XII, 1959, pp. 171ff.

⁵ Cf. Cullmann, *Time*, p. 88, 149: *Early Church*, pp. 141ff.: 'Eschatologie und Mission' in *E.M.* 1941, pp. 98ff.: 'Die Hoffnung der Kirche auf die Wiederkunft Christi', in *V.s.P.* 1942, pp. 27ff.: 'N.T. Eschatologie und die Entstehung des Dogmas', in *K.r.S.* 1942, pp. 161ff.: 'Die Wahrheit von der Parousieverzögerung', in *T.Z.* 1947, pp. 177ff., 428ff.: Michaelis, *Verheissung, passim*.

13, 32 and maintain that this confession must modify all Jesus' prophetic utterances.¹ Akin to this is the suggestion that Jesus began during his lifetime to remove the element of imminence (so typical, it is said, of apocalyptic) from his hope for the future.² And a further suggestion is that since Jesus anticipated at least a slight interval between his resurrection and the Parousia, his occasional insistence on the nearness is of no consequence, for the principle of an interval (of whatever duration) is established.³

This thesis is propounded often with considerable hesitancy,⁴ since it is recognised that to attribute to Jesus errancy can create (and sometimes has created) great distress.⁵ Nevertheless, it is suggested, errancy formed an essential feature of Jesus' true humanity.⁶ Not all who find this thesis unsatisfactory are motivated simply by a desire to preserve Jesus from the charge of fallibility—the thesis, in fact, contains a number of difficulties both exegetical and theological. Here we wish only to select certain important issues in order to facilitate a re-examination of the passages where an imminent Parousia appears to be foretold.

One of the primary theological questions is the exact nature of Jesus' fallible humanity. Manson⁷ cites as parallel examples of error Jesus' medical diagnosis in certain cases, and his views on

¹ Cf. Michaelis, *Verheissung*, pp. 45f.: Hadorn, *Zukunft und Hoffnung*, pp. 124f.: Titius, *Jesu Lehre*, pp. 147f.: Lake, *Introduction*, p. 32.

² Cf. Taylor, *Life and Ministry*, pp. 76f. Nairne, *Epistle of Priesthood*, p. 207: Baldensperger, *Selbstbewusstsein Jesu*, pp. 254f. contrast Wendt, *Lehre Jesu*, pp. 307f.

³ Cf. Beasley-Murray, *Future*, pp. 191ff. Kümmel, *Promise*, pp. 64ff. 141ff. Flew, *Church*, pp. 23ff. Michaelis, *Verheissung*, pp. 18f. Morgenthaler, *Kommendes Reich*, pp. 68ff.

⁴ Cf. Barrett, *H.S.G.T.*, p. 159. Beasley-Murray, *Future*, pp. 183f. Turner, in *A New Commentary*, p. 104. contrast Mackinnon, *Historic Jesus*, p. 206.

⁵ William Temple, in a letter dated 1913 to Ronald Knox wrote, 'Anyhow I think our Lord definitely rejected the apocalyptic idea of Messiahship. And if I thought He expected an immediate catastrophe other than His own Death and Resurrection, I think I should have to renounce Christianity' (Iremonger, *William Temple*). Cadbury, *Luke-Acts*, p. 283 notes that the idea of errancy is 'abhorrent' to some. Beasley-Murray, *Future*, p. 183, reminds us that 'on this ground Sidgwick felt compelled to abandon Christian faith. Christian believers shrink from admitting that their Lord was mistaken in a major item of his preaching...'

⁶ Cf. Baldensperger, *Selbstbewusstsein*, p. 148. Nicklin, *Gleanings*, pp. 348f. Turner, in *A New Commentary*, p. 100. Nairne, *The Faith of the N.T.* pp. 26, 29. Manson, *Teaching*, p. 282. Owen in *S.J.T.* XII, 1959, pp. 184f. Gore, *Dissertations*, pp. 94f. Taylor, *Mark*, p. 523.

⁷ Cf. *Teaching*, pp. 282f. *Sayings*, p. 37. Quote from *Teaching*, p. 283.

literary criticism, and says 'the unfulfilled prediction of the early Parousia may well be a similar case . . .' Unfortunately, the character of these examples makes them of little value, for they are both details of technical knowledge rather than of religious conviction, and errors of the former kind must, surely, carry a different significance from errors of the latter.¹ Further, Jesus appears never to base his standpoint upon an errant diagnosis or literary judgement,² whereas in the case of the passages in question the temporal aspect (however this is evaluated) is fundamental to the whole assertion.³ As a matter of methodology, too, it is difficult to see why if the clauses 'ye shall see', 'there be some of them standing here', can be dismissed as based on a miscalculation, the other clauses 'The Son of Man coming' and 'the Kingdom of God come . . .' should be allowed to stand, for on what grounds may the distinction be made? Manson⁴ makes the distinction on the grounds that ' . . . the belief in the nearness of the Day of the Lord is not one of the unique features in the eschatology of Jesus, but a belief which, like the belief in demons or the Davidic authorship of the Psalter, was the common property of his generation.' On the other hand, others too expected a coming of the Son of Man!—this too was 'common property'.

In this respect the consistency of Consistent Eschatology appears to be more logical: and, to be sure, many who approach the problem of imminence along these lines conclude by interpreting the 'Kingdom of God' in an 'old liberal sense',⁵ and evacuate the

¹ Cf. Stebbing, *A Modern Introduction to Logic*, pp. 16ff. Lawton, *Conflict in Christology*, pp. 44f.

² Cf. Rawlinson, *Mark*, p. 173. Even in Mk. 12, 35f. the argument hinges on whether or not Jesus' dissatisfaction with contemporary Messianic views was justified (Taylor, *Mark*, p. 492. Although he says 'the argument based on the quotation fails if David is not the speaker,' he rightly adds, modifying this, 'the value of the saying is not thereby destroyed, since its main importance is the light it throws on the manner in which Jesus interpreted Messiahship'.) Concerning Jesus' views on demons cf. Taylor, *Mark*, p. 239.

³ The saying Mk. 9, 1 for instance is—in 1st century Judaism—a platitude, if its essence is simply 'some . . . will see the Kingdom of God come with power', and not 'some of them that stand here . . .'

⁴ Cf. *Teaching*, p. 283.

⁵ Our justification for this phrase is Hunter's statement (in *Interpreting the N.T.* 1900-1950, p. 125) that at the beginning of the century 'we interpreted the Kingdom of God, in some Kantian form of a "republic under the moral law" or as a Christian social reformer's paradise on earth . . .'

Parousia hope of all significance¹—though this is certainly not true of all.²

This thesis must also be questioned on the ground that it tends to overemphasise the skill and religious insight of the primitive Christian community in contrast to that of its Lord.³ This must not be pressed, since it could be argued that the new situation following the resurrection of Christ led to such insight.⁴ At the same time, there is some point in Cullmann's suggestion that if Jesus had so confidently expected an early Parousia, then the early church would surely have abandoned its allegiance to him after the 'cardinal error' had been exposed'.⁵

Those who hold that Jesus, absorbed with his imminent hope in the End, anticipated no appreciable interval at all between his resurrection and Parousia—that he did not in fact differentiate between them⁶—are faced with the problem that certain of Jesus' words and works are interpreted by many⁷ as preparing for and anticipating a new community, a church. We note, particularly, Dr. Barrett's thesis that Jesus 'did not prophesy the existence of a Spirit-filled community, because he did not foresee an interval

¹ Cf. Orr, 'Kingdom of God', in *H.D.B.* II, pp. 849ff. Du Bose, *Gospel*, pp. 63ff. Savage, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, pp. 27ff. Burkitt, *Sources*, pp. 56ff. Easton, *Christ in the Gospels*, pp. 159f. Streeter, in *Oxford Studies*, pp. 425ff. Lowrie, *Mark*, pp. 315f.

² Cf. Cullmann, *Early Church*, p. 147. Michaelis, *Verheissung, passim*. Manson, *Teaching*, pp. 244ff. Beasley-Murray, *Future*, p. 204. Barrett, *Yesterday, to-day and for ever, passim*. Owen, in *S.J.T.* XII, 1959, pp. 171ff.

³ Cf. Nairne, *Epistle of Priesthood*, p. 207. Easton, *Christ in the Gospels*, pp. 159f.

⁴ Cf. Easton, *Christ in the Gospels*, pp. 196f. With reference to a different event, Brandon (*Fall of Jerusalem*, esp. pp. 185ff.) wants to speak of the 'rebirth of Christianity'.

⁵ *T.Z.* III, 1947, pp. 177f. cf. Manson, *Jesus*, p. 149.

⁶ Cf. esp. Barrett, *H.S.G.T.* (It is strange that Beasley-Murray, *Future*, pp. 191ff. in discussing 'The Provision for a period between the Resurrection and the Parousia' does not mention this work.)

⁷ Cf. esp. Flew, *Church*, pp. 41ff. Beasley-Murray, *Future*, pp. 191f. Gloger, *Reich Gottes und Kirche, passim*. Roberts, *Kingdom of God*, pp. 38ff. Wendland, *Eschatologie*, pp. 146ff. Schmidt, in *T.W.N.T.* III pp. 525ff. *Die Kirche des Urchristentums*, pp. 258ff. Manson, 'The N.T. Basis of the Doctrine of the Church', in *J.E.H.* I, 1950, pp. 1ff. Walter, *Kommen*, pp. 41ff. Oepke, 'Der Herrrenspruch über die Kirche, Mtt. 16, 17-19' in *S.T.* II, 1948-50, pp. 110ff. Dahl, 'The Parables of Growth', in *S.T.* V, 1952, pp. 132ff. *Das Volk Gottes*. Cullmann, *Early Church*, pp. 105ff. Quinn, 'The Kingdom of God and the Church in the Synoptic Gospels', in *Scripture* IV, 1949-51, pp. 237ff. Behm, in *T.W.N.T.* II, pp. 132ff.

between the period of humiliation and that of complete and final glorification'.¹ Barrett's criticism of Flew's thesis is especially important² and is itself, we suggest, open to some question. His first criticism is that since Christ's death is fundamental to the existence of the new community 'it seems undesirable to say that the foundation of the Church took place before the death and resurrection of Jesus'.³ This, however, (as Barrett notes) is a point stressed by Johnston⁴ which does not rule out the possibility that Jesus regarded the disciples as 'potentially the Church'.

Acknowledging this possibility, Barrett maintains that he can find no evidence for assuming this anticipated community would not be the glorified Church 'in heaven with God'.⁵ Here, however, the problem of Jesus' ethical teaching is raised in an acute form. Dr. Barrett argues that 'the "absolute" ethical teaching of Jesus would be entirely appropriate to such an Israel, in the day when heaven and earth had vanished and with them the Law of Moses'.⁶ Yet it is impossible to overlook the connection of much of Jesus' ethical demand with earthly circumstances,⁷ and the ordinary conditions of human life appear to be in mind. Barrett bids us compare Mtt. 5, 18 with Mk. 13, 31:⁸ on the other hand, we may compare Mtt. 19, 3ff. with its directive concerning marriage and divorce, with Mtt. 22, 30 where 'in the resurrection' such regulations are expressly said to be inappropriate.⁹

Barrett argues that if Jesus had anticipated the existence of

¹ *H.S.G.T.* p. 160. Similarly (either wholly or partially) Johnston, *Church*, pp. 46ff. Kümmel, *Kirchenbegriff*, pp. 27ff. *Promise*, pp. 138f. (and authorities cited p. 139, n. 123). Ackermann, *Jesus*, pp. 119ff.

² Cf. *H.S.G.T.* pp. 137-9.

³ *H.S.G.T.* p. 137.

⁴ *Church*, pp. 50-56.

⁵ Cf. *H.S.G.T.* p. 137. Barrett admits Flew's argument (*Church*, p. 25) that Jesus could foresee an 'enduring organism' without planning for it.

⁶ *H.S.G.T.* p. 138.

⁷ Cf. Mk. 10, 5-12. Mtt. 5, 22f. 5, 33f. 6, 1f. 18, 15f. etc. Wilder, *Eschatology and Ethics*, p. 160 says Jesus' ethic 'is not primarily an ethic for the relations and conduct of the future transcendental Kingdom'.

⁸ *H.S.G.T.* p. 138, n. 3.

⁹ Not all who agree with the thesis concerning Jesus' imminent expectation would describe Jesus' ethic as 'interim': cf. Easton, *Christ and the Gospels*, p. 176; Lowrie, *Mark*, pp. 320f. Many think his ethics presuppose an interval after resurrection and prior to the Parousia—cf. Windisch, *Bergpredigt*, pp. 13f. Wilder, *Eschatology and Ethics*, pp. 37ff. Sevenster, *Ethiek en Eschatologie in de Synoptische Evangelien*, Fison, *Hope*, pp. 68f.

a church he would have spoken of the forthcoming Spirit by whom it would be established.¹ Flew's explanation² about the lack of teaching in the Synoptics is rightly rejected by Barrett.³ At the same time any argument from the Synoptic 'silence' must be open to question and Barrett's own answer to the problem is not wholly satisfactory. He maintains that 'it is easy to understand why Jesus did not foretell the gift of the Spirit to the Church. There was no occasion for him to do so. The period of humiliation and obscurity of the Messiah was to continue until its climax and the day of final glorification. In the former period, the general gift of the Spirit was inappropriate . . . in the latter period it was not a sufficiently significant feature of the eschatological hope to be mentioned'.⁴ The second part of this argument could, however, be applied also to Jesus' absolute ethical demand. If Jesus saw fit to give ethical instruction though foreseeing only 'the reign of the saints in heaven', it is not enough to say that he refrained from teaching about the Spirit because the Spirit was insignificant in that heavenly life: conversely, if the ethical teaching had in mind a continuing earthly life of the new community it might be necessary to find some reason for the lack of instruction about the Spirit other than that offered by Barrett.

This problem of the Spirit notwithstanding, there remain hints that Jesus *did* anticipate a future missionary activity and therefore in some sense a church. There is the calling of the Twelve (Mk. 3, 13f. par) who are to 'be with him' and to be 'sent forth'.⁵ Barrett holds⁶ that 'the "word of God", the "Gospel", the mission of the disciples belong to the period before the crucifixion.' But it is significant that the only fulfilment of the purpose of the Twelve's calling prior to the crucifixion could only be the brief preaching tour (Mk 6, 7ff. par) and this *precedes* the phase of Jesus' ministry during which he appears to have concentrated on teaching his disciples.⁷ If Jesus had not had in mind further, much more extensive

¹ Cf. *H.S.G.T.*, p. 139.

² Cf. *Church*, p. 70.

³ Cf. *H.S.G.T.*, p. 142.

⁴ Cf. *H.S.G.T.* p. 160.

⁵ Both Mtt. 10, 1ff. and Lk. 6, 12ff. assert that the Twelve are 'Apostles': Cf. Rengstorf, in *T.W.N.T.* I, pp. 397ff.

⁶ Cf. *H.S.G.T.*, p. 138.

⁷ Cf. Mk. 6, 30f. 7, 24. 9, 30-31. 10, 32. Johnston, *Church*, p. 54, holds that the initial mission occurred whilst Jesus' early optimism lasted. Cf. Taylor, *Life and Ministry*, pp. 134ff.

preaching by the disciples, it is difficult to understand why *after* this short tour he should have laid such emphasis on training them. We notice also such references as Mk. 13, 10 and 14, 9, which must be discussed at a later stage,¹ but which most probably support the conclusion that Jesus anticipated a missionary activity during the interval between his resurrection and the final consummation.

This leads to a consideration of the suggestion that since Jesus expected *some* interval, the *length* of that interval is secondary, and that a miscalculation on Jesus' part here is insignificant.² This solution encounters the difficulty that, of the passages in the Synoptics which pose the problem of an imminent expectation most acutely, three (Mk. 9, 1. Mk. 13, 30 and Mtt. 10, 23) are introduced by the clause *αμην λέγω ὑμῖν*. The serious significance of this introductory clause has sometimes been recognised,³ but often overlooked.⁴ In the Old Testament and Judaism *αμην* (אמן) denoted absolute certainty. Schlier writes, 'In allen Fällen ist das אמן die Anerkennung eines Wortes, das "feststeht", und dessen Festigkeit für mich und dann überhaupt in dieser Anerkennung verpflichtend wird. So heisst אמן: *es steht fest und es gilt.*'⁵ This same force is retained in the New Testament.⁶ The word has, actually, added emphasis since it is found here only in connection with sayings of Jesus, giving 'emphasis and solemnity to that which follows'.⁷ Two very far-reaching questions arise from this consideration. The first is, if Jesus was mistaken in an assertion so solemnly introduced and emphatically affirmed, what reliance, if any, can or ought to be placed on words not so introduced?

The second is, if Jesus knew himself to be limited in his knowledge of the Parousia's date,⁸ or if he was not sure about his knowledge here, was it not arrogance or lack of humility to make such solemn affirmations that it would come within his own generation? This

¹ Cf. below, pp. 202ff.

² Cf. authorities cited above 93, n. 3. Cf. also the suggestion that since Jesus' imminent hope was basically theological, the occasional delimitation of his hope is of no import—authorities cited above 92, n. 5.

³ Cf. Beasley-Murray, *Future*, p. 186. Nicklin, *Gleanings*, p. 346.

⁴ Cf. Manson, *Teaching*, pp. 277ff. Cullmann, *Early Church*, p. 152.

⁵ In *T.W.N.T.* I, p. 339.

⁶ Cf. Martin-Achard in *Vocabulary*, *ad loc.*: Blackman, in *T.W.B.* p. 18: Carrington, *Mark*, p. 188. Manson, *Teaching*, pp. 105ff. Cranfield, *Mark*, pp. 139f.

⁷ Taylor, *Mark*, p. 242.

⁸ Cf. the argument of the authorities cited above, pp. 92f.

difficulty could be eased if Mk. 13, 32 could be shown to be unauthentic as many claim.¹ But the saying may well be genuine: as a piece of Christian apologetic² it is unnecessarily offensive³ and quickly proved difficult:⁴ and the inclusion of the phrase *οὐδὲ οἱ ἄγγελοι* would appear unnecessary.⁵ Or the difficulty might be slightly eased if Mk. 13, 32 were only a relative affirmation of ignorance meaning that though the Parousia would come within the contemporary generation, Jesus was not certain of its *exact* date.⁶ Beasley-Murray arguing for this view, holds that if 'Day' and 'Hour' here referred to the 'Day of the Lord' rather than to a 'narrower limitation of time over against a broader period' then 'strictly speaking such an assertion ought to mean that Jesus knew nothing of the Day itself, i.e. of its nature, an impossible view in face of the rest of his teaching'.⁷ But surely, the meaning 'No one, not even the angels in heaven, neither the Son knows anything concerning the *nature* of the Day of the Lord' is so obviously an exaggeration that the limitation of ignorance to a certain aspect of the 'Day' is self-evident. And the particular aspect in the context is 'when' it is to come. Since there is no compelling reason to understand 'that day or that hour' as precise temporal terms, it is natural to take them, following the Old Testament background⁸ as

¹ Beasley-Murray, *Mark* 13, pp. 105f. reviews the ancient and modern 'revulsion against the text'. Cf. further below, pp. 193ff.

² Cf. Loisy, *Marc ad Loc.* Grässer, *Problem*, p. 82. Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, pp. 43f.

³ Schniewind, *Markus*, *ad loc.* rightly notes that the line of argument adopted in II Peter 3, 5ff. was always available and inoffensive. Cf. further Lohmeyer, *Markus*, *ad loc.*: Cadoux, *Historic Mission*, p. 33. Taylor, *Mark*, *ad loc.*

⁴ Luke appears to find the saying difficult. Grässer, *Problem*, p. 82 argues that Luke omits because of his special *Heilsgeschichte* and because Acts 1, 7 suffices. But Luke's supposed programme of salvation-history would not make Mk. 13, 32 necessarily inappropriate, and it remains true that Acts 1, 7 is less offensive. Further, indications of the trouble caused by Mk. 13, 32 are suggested by the variants of Mtt. 24, 36 (*οὐδὲ ὁ υἱὸς* omitted by \aleph^{ca} , W, fr, 700, 565): Taylor, *Mark*, pp. 522f. cites the evasions offered by Ambrose, Cyril of Alexandria, and Basil.

⁵ Cf. Kümmel, *Promise*, p. 42 who maintains this against Dalman, *Words*, p. 194 and Bultmann, *Geschichte*, p. 130 (who suggest that 'neither the Son but the Father' is a Christian addition).

⁶ Cf. Nicklin, *Gleanings*, p. 347. Guignebert, *Jesus*, p. 346. Lake, *Introduction*, p. 32. Beasley-Murray, *Future*, pp. 261f. *Mk.* 13, pp. 107f.

⁷ *Mk.* 13, pp. 107f.

⁸ Cf. von Rad, in *T.W.N.T.* II, pp. 947ff.

references to the Last Judgement and the Parousia.¹ Beasley-Murray's case would be helped if the demonstrative adjective were missing: indeed, his argument allows it to lapse when he says, 'If at the present time one were asked, "Have you any idea when war will next break out in Europe?" and the reply were given, "I do not know the day or hour" . . .'²—whereas the point is that 'that day' carries Old Testament overtones which 'the day' in modern usage does not.³

To reconcile Mk. 13, 30—understood as mistaken—with Mk. 13, 32 is therefore an acute problem.⁴ It is a dogmatic point which we cannot discuss here, but it is important to notice that the real issue is much more crucial than the advocates of this solution sometimes suggest: ⁵ a simple recognition of Jesus' ignorance does not answer the question when seen in this form.

2. Another possible answer to the problem of the apparently unfulfilled predictions of an imminent Parousia is to say that the time element in the sayings has no special temporal significance, but has only a pastoral or epistemological basis. This view has been held over a considerable period and has a number of advocates today.⁶ In its demythologization of the temporal element in the Parousia expectation this answer leans towards Bultmann's metho-

¹ Cf. Taylor, *Mark*, pp. 522f. following Lohmeyer (*Markus*, p. 283) "'Jener Tag" ist bekanntlich der Tag des letzten Gerichtes'; similarly Cranfield, *Mark*, pp. 410f.

² *Mk.* 13, p. 108.

³ Feuillet, in *R.B.* LVI, 1949, p. 87 thinks 'that day' refers to the Fall of Jerusalem. Glasson, *Advent*, pp. 97f. thinks it 'may have been an answer to a question about the end of the world or the last day', though 'in itself the phrase "that day or that hour" tells us nothing'. Against both, the O.T. background is decisive. We may also note, with Kümmel, *Promise*, pp. 36f. that 'Jesus uses this term (ἡ ἡμέρα, ἡ ἡμέρα ἐκείνη) invariably for the end of time in the future'. Cf. Lk. 10, 12. Mtt. 10, 15. Mk. 14, 25. Lk. 17, 26. Mtt. 25, 13 (In Lk. 17, 31 Glasson, *Advent*, p. 98 says 'that day' is used of the fall of Jerusalem: but against him rightly Kümmel, *Promise*, p. 38, n. 62).

⁴ Kümmel, *Promise*, pp. 149f. accepts this and says 'we cannot know how to strike a balance between these two series of assertions.'

⁵ Cf. Beasley-Murray, *Future*, pp. 183ff. *Mk.* 13, pp. 99f. Owen, in *S.J.T.* XII, 1959, pp. 171ff. Manson, *Teaching*, p. 282.

⁶ Cf. Titius, *Reich Gottes*, pp. 147ff. Schmaus, *Dogmatik*, pp. 29ff. Graham, *Christ of Catholicism*, p. 299. Levertoff, 'Eschatological teaching in the gospels', in *Theology*, XXXII, 1936, pp. 339f. Oepke, in *S.T.* II, 1948-50, pp. 110ff. Rawlinson, *Mark*, p. 180. Fison, *Hope*, pp. 29ff. and partially Beasley-Murray, *Future*, p. 150f. Guy, *Prophecy*, p. 59. Wilder, *Eschatology and Ethics*, p. 188. Kümmel, *Promise*, pp. 150f.

dological programme, though clearly it aims at something much less radical for it still regards the Parousia as something temporally future—an End towards which Christian hope can be directed.¹

Again the answer appears to be simple and inoffensive: yet there are real difficulties. The argument is that the 'prophetic perspective' which Jesus shared meant that 'time telescoped itself in his vision of the approaching battle of light and darkness'.² Events near and far were seen as peaks standing out one behind the other whilst the plains in between could not be discerned.³ Beasley-Murray⁴ claims that 'every Old Testament prophet', due to the 'intensity and certainty of prophetic convictions invariably express themselves in terms of a speedy fulfilment.' However, as we have already suggested,⁵ even where this is most marked in apocalyptic literature, a temporal nearness is subordinated to a theological conviction: the chronological calculations served a pastoral end. Are we then to say that Jesus followed, out of pastoral expediency, the apocalyptic pastoral method: that he spoke of the Parousia as coming within the life-time of his contemporaries in order to encourage hope and incite watchfulness? ⁶ But as a pastoral expedient the procedure is quite unsatisfactory for it could lead to false optimism and so to disillusionment: ⁷ and, unless the forecast of an early Parousia proved correct, would necessarily create difficulties for the second generation.⁸ Besides, it is questionable how far the solemn asseveration *αμην λέγω ὑμῖν* could be justified on the grounds of expediency, particularly when the pastoral intention could apparently be met perfectly adequately by calls to watchfulness which do not speak of an End coming within a delimited time.⁹

¹ Cf. esp. Graham, *Christ of Catholicism*, p. 297. Fison, *Hope*, p. 70.

² Levertoff, in *Theology*, XXXII, 1936, p. 339.

³ Cf. Schmaus, *Dogmatik*, pp. 29f. following Billot, *La Parousie*: Beasley-Murray, *Future*, p. 204 gives another simile.

⁴ Cf. *Future*, pp. 170, 186f. ⁵ Cf. above, pp. 21f.

⁶ Cf. Beasley-Murray, *Future*, p. 189. Oepke, in *S.T.* II, 1948-50, pp. 110f. Titius, *Reich Gottes*, pp. 147f. Michaelis, *Verheissung*, pp. 5f. 17f. Michel, in *Z.s.T.* 1932, pp. 645ff.

⁷ Continual distress and disappointment has been caused down the ages because of erroneous calculations of this sort: cf. Glasson, *Appearing*, pp. 44f.

⁸ Althaus, *Letzten Dinge*, pp. 275f. followed by Beasley-Murray, *Future*, p. 190, says that the early imminent hope should continually drive the church to preparedness: but it is just not true that a call to preparedness on the basis of an open possibility cannot achieve what a temporally delimited hope alone can.

⁹ Cf. Mtt. 25, 13, 24, 42f. Mk. 13, 33f. par. Lk. 12, 35-40. etc.

Or are we, on the other hand, to say that the 'prophetic perspective' was epistemologically inevitable? ¹ If this were so, then the problem posed by Mk. 13, 32 would be even more acute since this saying recognises an epistemological limitation which, it would then be said, Jesus solemnly transgressed. This answer also makes insufficient allowance for a unique *sui generis* element in Jesus' thought and teaching. The inability of scholars, despite intense effort ² to fit Jesus into one mould or another surely suggests not only that our methodology is sometimes difficult to handle, sometimes wrong, but also that the man Christ Jesus *did not* exactly conform to a pre-cast mould ³ but enjoyed a certain freedom over against past and contemporary thoughts and was not entirely bound to the epistemological paths laid out by his forbears and fellows. If he *was* so bound, then it is at least more consistent, with Bultmann, to demythologize not only the temporal framework but also the concept of the Parousia, rather than to leave off where this answer does. ⁴

3. The third answer to the problem of the insistence on nearness is to say that Jesus spoke of certain events as about to occur, at least within the life-time of his contemporaries, but that he did not include amongst them the Parousia. The early church sometimes wrongly interpreted those imminent sayings as referring to the Parousia. The events which Jesus expected imminently, it is said, were the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple, ⁵ the

¹ Cf. Rawlinson, *Mark*, p. 180. Beasley-Murray, *Future*, p. 186. p. 170. Owen, in *S.J.T.* XII, 1959, pp. 171ff. Levertoff, in *Theology*, XXXII, 1936, pp. 339f.

² Cf. Jesus in the mould of the non-apocalypticist (Wrede, Dodd): in the mould of Orthodox Judaism (Klausner): in the mould of the apocalypticist (Weiss, Schweitzer): in the mould of the liberal religious teacher (Harnack, Middleton-Murray, etc.): in the mould of the Essenes (recently Allegro): in the mould of the Zealot (R. Eisler), and in the mould of the existentialist (Bultmann).

³ Cf. Bornkamm, *Jesus*, pp. 56f. Wilder, *Eschatology and Ethics*, pp. 147ff. Flew, *Perfection*, p. 35. Johnston, *Church*, p. 55. Borchert, *Original Jesus*, p. 328.

⁴ Fison, *Hope*, pp. 125ff. interprets the N.T. perspective slightly differently: he warns against abandoning 'Jesus' time' for an abstract philosophical truth, maintaining that lover's time, and so the key to the Parousia's nearness, is understood only in present encounter with Christ.

⁵ Cf. Schmaus, *Dogmatik*, pp. 35ff. Nairne, *Epistle of Priesthood*, p. 206. Muirhead, 'Eschatology', in *H.D.C.G.* pp. 525ff. Lagrange *Marc*, p. 325. Graham, *Christ of Catholicism*, pp. 299f. Levertoff and Goudge, in *New Commentary*, p. 194. Swift, in *New Bible Commentary*, p. 823. Brown, 'Parou-

Resurrection and Ascension, ¹ Pentecost, ² and the church's growth and missionary work. ³ Most advocates of this view do not confine themselves to only one of the events listed but think that Jesus probably had in mind in his prophecies two or more of them. This view is parallel to Realised Eschatology, ⁴ the main difference being that the early church, on this view, is said to have attributed to Jesus only an *imminent* Parousia hope, not the Parousia hope itself. ⁵

One immediate methodological difficulty which this view encounters is that it exists only on the basis of that presupposition of cleavage between Jesus and the earliest community which we have already criticised. ⁶ Whereas the first solution discussed in this chapter appeared to overestimate the early church's religious insight, this answer surely implies that the early church was rather too stupid! ⁷ But the methodological difficulty arises because of a problem in exegesis. Mk. 9, 1, for instance, *in its present context*,

sia', in *H.D.B.* III, pp. 647ff. Feuillet, in *R.S.R.* XXXV, 1947, pp. 303ff. XXXVI, 1948, pp. 544ff. in *N.R.T.* LXXI, 1949, pp. 701ff. 806ff. in *R.B.* LVI, 1949, pp. 61ff. 360ff. LVII, 1950, pp. 43ff. 180ff. *Introduction à la Bible*; Major, *Reminiscences*, pp. 44f. Gould, *Mark*, on Mk. 13, 26. Plummer, *Matthew*, p. 338. Jones, in *Scripture*, IV, 1949-51, pp. 222f. 264ff. Walter, *Kommen*, p. 96.

¹ Cf. Muirhead, 'Eschatology', in *H.D.C.G.* pp. 525f. Gore, *Belief in Christ*, pp. 136ff. Graham, *Christ of Catholicism*, pp. 299f. Major, *Reminiscences*, pp. 44f. Hunter, *Mark*, p. 91. Stonehouse, *Matthew and Mark*, pp. 112f. Holmes-Gore, 'The Ascension and the Apocalyptic Hope' in *Theology*, XXXII, 1936, pp. 356ff.

² Cf. Gore, *Belief in Christ*, pp. 136ff. Levertoff and Goudge, in *New Commentary*, p. 194. Swift, in *New Bible Commentary*, p. 823. Scott, *Tributaries*, p. 56. Headlam, *Life and Teaching*, pp. 260ff. Sanday, *Life of Christ*, pp. 117f. Hunter, *Mark*, p. 91. *Design for Life*, pp. 103f. Prideaux, 'The Second Coming of Christ', in *E.T.* LXI, 1949-50, pp. 240f.

³ Cf. Richardson, *Theology*, p. 87. Graham, *Christ of Catholicism*, pp. 299f. Feuillet (cf. note 5 previous page). Stonehouse, *Matthew and Mark*, p. 240. Jones, in *Scripture*, IV, 1949-51, pp. 222f. 264f.

⁴ Especially as this is presented in a modified form—cf. Dodd, *Coming of Christ*, pp. 26f. Glasson, *Appearing*, p. 191.

⁵ Though many who interpret the imminent references in this way do, in fact, dissolve the Parousia hope altogether: cf. Feuillet, (articles cited note 5 previous page): Jones, in *Scripture*, IV, 1949-51, pp. 264f. Holmes-Gore, in *Theology*, XXXII, 1936, pp. 356ff. Prideaux, in *E.T.* LXI, 1949-50, pp. 240f.

⁶ Cf. above, p. 40.

⁷ MacCulloch, 'Eschatology and the Gospels', in *E.R.E.V.* pp. 381ff. quotes with approval Matthew Arnold's maxim, 'Jesus above the heads of his reporters': cf. similarly Streeter, in *Oxford Studies*, p. 433, who says it is a case of a 'great man misunderstood'.

can hardly be taken as a prediction of the fall of Jerusalem.¹ So the context is said to be due to the Evangelist's misunderstanding. This exegetical difficulty, however, is not easily resolved for the real problem is that the texts are essentially Christocentric and revelational in character and are being (on this proposed solution) treated as non-Christocentric and non-revelational.

Both aspects of this criticism require some expansion. We take it as axiomatic that the Kingdom of God and the person of Jesus are so integrally bound together as to be inseparable.² This is acknowledged by very many scholars to-day and is highly significant for our problem³ for it suggests that just as the Kingdom of God in its realised aspect is inseparable from the person of Jesus Christ so also in its future aspect it cannot be divorced from him.⁴ Fison⁵ rightly remarks, 'we are apt to-day to recognise the practical identity of the coming of Jesus in the past with the coming of the Kingdom of God, but we are strangely loath to commit ourselves to a similar identity in the future. Yet there is no getting away from the latter if we accept the former.' If we recognise this, we shall be careful to see that the concept of the Son of Man coming in clouds with great glory and the concept of the Kingdom of God come with power both have a strictly Christocentric interpretation. It is such a Christocentric interpretation which is lacking in the 'solution' under discussion. To be sure, the fall of Jerusalem is

¹ Chiefly because a) the downfall of Jerusalem is never spoken of as 'coming of the Kingdom of God' (cf. Mk. 2, 22 par. 11, 15f. par. Lk. 13, 1ff. Mk. 12, 9 par. Lk. 19, 41-44, 23, 28f.) and b) other references to 'the coming of the Kingdom' cannot support such an identification (cf. Lk. 11, 2 par. 13, 28f. par. Mk. 14, 25 par). Cranfield, *Mark*, p. 287; Lowrie, *Mark*, p. 315; Guignebert, *Jesus*, pp. 333f.; Kümmel, *Promise*, pp. 26f. Manson, *Teaching*, pp. 279ff. oppose the idea.

² Origen's term *αὐτοβασιλεία* (Migne, *P.G.* xiii, 1197) remains the most convenient short-hand account of the relationship of the Kingdom to Jesus' person and work.

³ Cf. Feine, *Theologie*, p. 99. Kümmel, *Promise*, pp. 105f. Cranfield *Mark*, p. 66. Flew, *Perfection*, p. 35. Preiss, *Life in Christ*, p. 68. Schmidt, in *T.W.N.T. I*, p. 591. Borchert, *Original Jesus*, p. 359. Cullmann, *Early Church*, pp. 115f. Contrast, Sharman, *Son of Man*, pp. 89f. Johnson, *Mark*, p. 153. Morgen-thaler, *Kommendes Reich*, pp. 35ff.

⁴ Cf. Matthew's interpretation of Mk. 9, 1 in Mtt. 16, 28 (Kümmel, *Promise*, p. 27): cf. also the prayer 'Thy kingdom come' (Mtt. 6, 10 = Lk. 11, 2) with the early church prayer *μαρὰν Θα* (I Cor. 16, 22, Rev. 22, 20, Did. 10, 6): Heb. 13, 8 and Acts 1, 11 may also be noted.

⁵ *Hope*, p. 138. Cf. also Forsyth, *Person and Place of Jesus Christ* p. 122. Borchert, *Original Jesus*, p. 374.

rightly understood as a signal manifestation of God's sovereignty in Christ exercised in judgement upon recalcitrant Israel,¹ but it is not *specifically* Christocentric. The Spirit certainly is Christ's *alter ego*,² but hardly 'in great power and glory': and it *is* Christ's *ALTER ego*, not the Son of Man in his historical particularity. The Church may indeed be regarded as the body of Christ,³ but it is not Christ himself, being actually subjected to him: it is not the Kingdom but 'expects the Kingdom and preaches the gospel of the Kingdom'.⁴ If the Kingdom of God come with power is to be interpreted Christocentrically, it is impossible to see how it has come in any or all of these events—though they may point as signs to that coming of the Kingdom which is yet to occur.

Only the resurrection of Christ bears the directly Christocentric character required: but this event is subject to the second criticism raised against this solution, namely that certain sayings are interpreted in a way which diminishes, if not ignores, an essential contrast between concealment and revelation. At least as they stand, Mk. 9, 1 and 14, 62 speak of a *visible manifestation* of the Kingdom of God and of the Son of Man, and this in both instances is contrasted with the hiddenness of the Kingdom and of the Son of Man in the ministry of Jesus.⁵ It is this *manifestation* of the sovereignty of God in the triumphant revelation of the Son of Man in glory and power which alone can fulfil the expectation of the New Testament. The resurrection appearances were witnessed, to be sure, by the disciples: yet the resurrection was no open, universal manifestation and must therefore be distinguished sharply from the Parousia. It seems that verbs of *seeing* are often used in the New Testament in connection with sayings relating to the future coming of the

¹ Cf. Taylor, *Mark*, p. 501. Beasley-Murray, *Mark*. 13, p. 22. Goguel, *Life*, p. 403.

² Jn. 14, 16f. 14, 26f. 16, 7f. 16, 14.

³ Col. 1, 18. 3, 15. Eph. 1, 23. 4, 4. 4, 12f. 5, 30. I Cor. 10, 17. 12, 12. 12, 27. Rom. 12, 5.

⁴ Cf. Visser 'T Hooft, *Renewal*, p. 37. Johnston, *Church*, p. 57. Gloege, *Reich Gottes und Kirche*, p. 259. Schmidt, in *T.W.N.T. III*, pp. 522f. As has been pointed out (e.g. by Rawlinson, *Essays*, p. 212) the identification of church with Kingdom does not occur prior to Augustine.

⁵ Cf. Mk. 8, 38 and its contrast (Kümmel, *Promise*, p. 27, n. 44). Mk. 14, 62 was spoken in circumstances of the utmost veiledness. There seems to be no justification for Taylor's interpretation (*Mark*. p. 568) of *ὄψεσθε κτλ.*, as Kümmel (*Promise*, pp. 49f.) shows.

Kingdom and of the Son of Man.¹ At the eschatological consummation 'wird . . . die Offenbarung eine vollendete und unmittelbare sein'.² We notice also the connection of this future act of revelation with 'glory' (δόξα)³—that essential attribute of God which was veiled in Jesus' earthly ministry.⁴ It is this 'glory' which will appear in the final coming of the Son of Man so that his true nature and the true significance of his earthly ministry will be made unmistakably clear. In certain references to the Parousia 'clouds' (νεφέλη) are mentioned⁵—an Old Testament symbol for God's self-revelation (as also of his 'otherness').⁶

We take it therefore that the *revelational character* of the coming of the Kingdom 'in power' (and of the Son of Man 'in glory') is quite fundamental to the expectation. This does not, of course, mean that *every* instance of a prophecy using the verb 'to see' necessarily is a prophecy of the End.⁷ It does, however, mean that events of an ambiguous nature, events visible only to faith, cannot be said to be fulfilments of a specific Parousia hope. As Richardson writes, 'There is . . . a difference between the revelation that will be made at Christ's Parousia and the revelation that has been given in history. At the Parousia the revelation will be a "sight" revelation as contrasted with a "faith" revelation that is given in history.'⁸

In view of the difficulties attaching to all of the proposed solutions which we have examined in this chapter it is hard to resist

¹ Mk. 9, 1 ἴδωσιν: Mk. 13, 26 ὄψονται: Mk. 14, 62 ὄψεσθε: Mtt. 24, 33 ἴδητε: Mtt. 26, 64 ὄψεσθε: Mtt. 23, 39 ἴδητε: Mtt. 16, 28 ἴδωσιν: Mtt. 24, 30 φανήσεται, ὄψονται: Lk. 13, 35 ἴδητε: Lk. 21, 27 ὄψονται: Lk. 17, 22 ἰδεῖν, ὄψεσθε: Lk. 9, 27 ἴδωσιν: Lk. 21, 31 ἴδητε: cf. also Jn. 17, 36, 16, 19, 22. Heb. 12, 14. I Jn. 3, 2. Acts 1, 11. Mtt. 10, 26. Lk. 17, 30. Rom. 8, 18. I Cor. 3, 13. Rom. 2, 5. II Thess. 1, 7. I Pet. 1, 5. I, 7. 4. 13. 5. 4. Col. 3, 4. Mtt. 24, 30. Lk. 19, 11. I Jn. 2, 28. Heb. 9, 28. I Tim. 6, 14. II Tim. 4, 1. Titus 2, 13.

² Michaelis, in *T.W.N.T.* V, p. 366.

³ Cf. Mtt. 16, 27, 19, 28, 25, 31. Mk. 8, 38, 10, 37, 13, 26. Lk. 9, 26, 21, 27 (also Rom. 5, 2, 8, 18, 9, 23. I Cor. 2, 7. Col. 3, 4 etc.) Kittel, in *T.W.N.T.* II, p. 252.

⁴ Cf. Phil. 2, 6. Jn. 1, 14 ('we beheld' is the testimony of faith: cf. Barrett, *John*, pp. 138f.).

⁵ Cf. Mtt. 24, 30 par. 26, 64 par. Acts 1, 11. I Thess. 4, 17. Rev. 1, 7, 14, 14.

⁶ Cf. Oepke, in *T.W.N.T.* IV, pp. 908ff.

⁷ This is the mistake made by Lohmeyer, *Galiläa und Jerusalem*, pp. 10ff. and Lightfoot, *Locality and Doctrine*, pp. 66ff. Contrast, Stonehouse, *Matthew and Mark*, pp. 183ff. Kümmel, *Promise*, p. 66. Evans, 'I will go before you into Galilee', in *J.T.S.* V, 1954, pp. 3ff.

⁸ Introduction, p. 55.

the conclusion that there are sayings which speak of the Parousia and which speak of it as, in some sense, near: that there is no compelling reason to lead us to conclude that this is due only to a shift of context in the early church for the sayings in question must refer in whatever context they have to the visible manifestation of God's rule in the person and presence of Christ.

These proposed solutions to the problem posed by the New Testament insistence on the nearness of the Parousia have been discussed here only briefly partly because they are (as we have suggested) akin to the more consistent and radical interpretations of New Testament eschatology examined in chapters three, four and five, and partly because it is our purpose at this point only to suggest the inadequacy of these solutions and so to open up the possibility of a further examination of the material. We suggest that a renewed enquiry is justified and that, despite the confident assertions sometimes made that the question is now quite settled,¹ the problem remains to be given a satisfactory solution.

Our immediate aim will now be to attempt, through a re-examination of the relevant material, to answer four questions:

1. Did the early church delimit its expectation of the Parousia?
2. Did the early church think of the Parousia as in any sense near, and if so, in what sense?
3. Did Jesus delimit his expectation of the Parousia?
4. Did Jesus conceive of the Parousia as in any sense imminent, and if so, in what sense?

¹ Cf. for example the leader 'Advent Hope' in the *Methodist Recorder*, for Thursday November 30th, 1961.