

CHAPTER NINE

THE EARLY CHURCH'S NEAR EXPECTATION
OF THE PAROUSIA

That the early church certainly thought of the Parousia as (in some sense) near has become evident in our examination of those passages in which a delimited expectation is often understood—wrongly, in our opinion—to be present. The perspective of I Thess. 4, 13f. (cf. I Cor. 15, 51) is that of watchful expectancy, not of certainty that the Parousia will not occur for centuries or millennia.¹ II Thess. 2, 7 speaks of τὸ μυστήριον τῆς ἀνομίας already at work (ἤδη ἐνεργεῖται), stamping the present with the character of the End.² The apparent stability and permanency of the world and its institutions are called in question (cf. I Cor. 7, 31). Paul can speak of an 'earnest expectation' (ἀποκαταδοκία) (Phil. 1, 20, Rom. 8, 19),³ and of 'groaning' (στενάζω) (II Cor. 5, 2, Rom. 8, 23), showing the intensity and earnestness of hope. Expressions such as ἐν ταῖς ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις,⁴ ἐπ' ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν τούτων,⁵ ἐπ' ἐσχάτου τοῦ χρόνου,⁶ and ἐσχάτη ὥρα⁷ designate the present in its unique relationship to the End. Paul characterises the present as a dawn (Rom. 13, 11f.) and Christians as those 'on whom the end of the ages has come' (I Cor. 10, 11); he maintains that ὁ κύριος ἐγγύς (Phil. 4, 5). The present generation must experience all the signs (political, cosmic and personal) of the End (cf. Mk. 13, 28ff. par.), signifying

¹ Cullmann, *Early Church*, p. 152, says 'no one reckoned on the period between the ascension and the return of the Master lasting for centuries.' Certainly they did not write from the perspective that the period prior to the End would *definitely* be very long.

² Cf. Frame, *Thessalonians*, p. 264; Bornkamm, in *T.W.N.T.* IV, p. 830. Cf. I Jn. 4, 4.

³ Delling, in *T.W.N.T.* I, p. 392, makes no allusion to the Christological basis of this earnest hope. But Phil. 1, 20f. has in mind the perfection of salvation in Christ, and Rom. 8, 18ff. has the 'revealing of the sons of God' (8, 17) as the object of creation's ἀποκαταδοκία.

⁴ Cf. Acts 2, 17, II Tim. 3, 1.

⁵ Cf. Heb. 1, 2, II Pet. 3, 3.

⁶ Cf. Jude 18, I Pet. 1, 20.

⁷ Cf. I Jn. 2, 18.

that the Parousia of Jesus is not far distant. The End comes 'quickly' (ταχύ) (Rev. 22, 7; 12; 20, cf. Heb. 10, 37).

Significantly, this belief that the Parousia is not far off appears to persist even in those parts of the New Testament where it is often said that near-expectation is missing. Here we mention first, the Epistle to the Ephesians. Many conclude that here all hope of a speedy End has been subsumed under the concepts of catholicity and of the 'summing up of all things in Christ' (cf. 1, 10; 1, 23; 4, 14f.).¹ But the expression in 5, 16 ἐξαγοραζόμενοι τὸν καιρὸν suggests that the hope of a speedy End is not entirely lacking; the verb ἐξαγοράζομαι seems to imply urgency,² and this because αἱ ἡμέραι πονηραὶ εἰσιν and because the present God-given opportunity for repentance and faith is not unlimited but has its determined measure.

Secondly, we draw attention to Jn. 14, 19; 16, 16f., where, we suggest, it is correct to understand a near-expectation of the Parousia in the expression μικρὸν . . . μικρὸν. Clearly John's peculiar methodology must be borne in mind³ and this, surely, allows us to draw out of the theme of 'departure—return' in chapters 13—17 not solely the thought of Jesus' departure in death and his return at the Resurrection,⁴ nor solely the thought of his departure in the Ascension and 'coming' in the Spirit,⁵ but also the thought of his departure and absence in this interim and his return at the Parousia; the Evangelist is likely to have had in mind the situation of the disciples in the last hours before the Passion, *and* the situation of his *readers*.⁶ In this case, μικρὸν has relevance for the expectation

¹ Cf. Hort, *Prolegomena*, p. 142; Abbott, *Ephesians*, p. xx; Westcott, *Ephesians*, p. xxxv; Allan, *Ephesians*, p. 40; Goodspeed, *Ephesians*, p. 65; Mitton, *Ephesians*, pp. 238f.; Nineham, in *Studies in Ephesians*, pp. 33f.

² In Dan. 2, 8 the phrase is used *in malam partem*. Buchsel, in *T.W.N.T.* I, p. 128, comments, 'es bedeutet, entsprechend dem Sinn des *ex* in vielen Kompositis, auch ein *intensives Kaufen*, ein Kaufen, das die vorhandenen Möglichkeiten ausschöpft. So Kol. 4, 5, Eph. 5, 16 τὸν καιρὸν ἐξαγοραζόμενοι. Καιρός steht hier für das, was die Zeit an Möglichkeiten enthält. Das soll unter Aufwand von "Kosten", von Anstrengungen, "restlos ausgenützt", angeeignet werden.' Cf. further Abbott, *Ephesians*, pp. 195f.

³ Cf. Barrett, *John*, p. 409, 'Most of this language is marked by a studied ambiguity . . .'

⁴ As in Murray, *Jesus according to St. John*, pp. 280f; Strachan, *Fourth Gospel*, p. 296; Bernard, *John*, pp. 512f.; Tasker, *John*, pp. 182ff.

⁵ As in Calvin, *John*, II, pp. 147f.; Bauer, *Johannes*, p. 199; Temple, *Readings*, pp. 293ff.; Holwerda, *Spirit*, esp. pp. 65ff.

⁶ Cf. Barrett, *John*, p. 409.

of the Parousia, and the idea of the speedy coming of the End is not entirely lacking.

Thirdly, in Luke's gospel, where the emphasis is so frequently said to rest on the present duration as an indefinitely long period,¹ two passages deserve special notice. The first is Lk. 13; 6-9. Lk. 3, 9 (Mtt. 3, 10) has already declared that judgement is not far distant, ἡ δὲ ἄξινη πρὸς τὴν ῥίζαν, and in 13, 6ff. the opportunity for repentance is shown to be strictly limited and short.² The extra year's grace is wrested from the owner of the vineyard³ and there is yet time for repentance;⁴ but the present time is the final opportunity and has therefore a crucial, urgent character. It is not yet too late to repent; but the time is limited . . .⁵

The other passage is Lk. 18, 1-8. As it stands now, this parable speaks not simply of prayer in general (cf. v. 1) but of the prayerful longing of the faithful for the Parousia (cf. v. 8b); if this is the meaning imposed by Luke⁶ it is especially significant that he has emphasised ἐν τάχει.⁷ Although the possibility of delay is envisaged⁸ this idea is held in tension by the ἐν τάχει.⁹ As in the case of the parable Lk. 13; 6-9, there is a tension of delay and nearness; though the End delays, it is near, and though near there is yet time to repent. There is little warrant for understanding ἐν τάχει as 'suddenly' or 'unexpected';¹⁰ in keeping with its general New

¹ Cf. Conzelmann, *Mitte*, p. 129; Cadbury, *Luke-Acts*, p. 292; Grässer, *Problem*, pp. 178.; Creed, *Luke*, p. lxxii.

² Leaney, *Luke*, p. 207, comments, 'Only a short time for the inhabitants to change their ways.'; cf. also Creed, *Luke*, p. 181.

³ Cadbury, *Luke-Acts*, p. 296 is surely wrong in holding that the chief point of the parable is the vinedresser's delay. It is not without significance that Conzelmann makes only fleeting reference to the parable; *Mitte*, p. 55. n. 2 ('Jesus dürfe nach 13, 18f. die Frist nicht eigenmächtig abkürzen').

⁴ Cf. Jeremias, *Parables*, p. 157.

⁵ If this is Luke's alternative for Mk. 11; 12-14, Mtt. 21; 18-22 (cf. Creed, *Luke*, p. 181), it is particularly important to notice that he has recorded a parable more definitely emphasising urgency.

⁶ As many think; cf. Klostermann, *Lukas*, p. 177 (who mentions Jülicher and J. Weiss); Jeremias, *Parables*, pp. 115f.; Bultmann, *Geschichte*, p. 108.

⁷ By placing ἐν τάχει at the end of the sentence Lk. has given it special emphasis (cf. Plummer, *Luke*, p. 415; Cranfield, 'The Parable of the Unjust Judge', in S.J.T. xvi, 1963, pp. 297 ff.)

⁸ But Cadbury, *Luke-Acts*, p. 296, goes too far; cf. also Geldenhuys, *Luke* p. 448 (following Zahn), 'According to the context the teaching here is that the final events will be very long in coming . . .'

⁹ To say that the parable cannot speak of a near End because it envisages delay (cf. *authorities in n. 1 above*) is to exhibit an unjustified monism.

¹⁰ Zahn, *Lukas*, *ad loc*; Jeremias, *Parables*, p. 116; Geldenhuys, *Luke*,

Testament usage¹ it means 'without undue delay'. Some² understand v. 8b as toning down the eager hope of the faithful contained in v. 8a; but 8b does not so much tone down 8a as explicate its serious demand—'. . . the saints must remember (this is the point of v. 8b) that the Parousia, when it comes, will mean judgement for them as well as for their persecutors. Will they themselves be found faithful, when the Lord comes.'³

Besides these two important passages, we might mention Lk. 13, 22ff., where the theme is, 'strive to enter . . . before it is too late', and Lk. 12; 57-59, where the emphasis is upon hasty repentance. It appears that Luke is not unsympathetic to the hope of a speedy End nor unaware of the tension between this hope and the need to take full advantage of the present opportunity for obedience.

The writer of the Pastorals, too, has laid great weight on the significance of the present, and the care with which he seeks to regulate the life and worship of the community suggests that he did not believe the End must certainly come within a few years.⁴ Nevertheless, certain expressions appear to hint, at least, at the idea of the Parousia's nearness. I Tim. 4, 1, ἐν ὑστέροις καιροῖς is the first, where the exact phrase may have been chosen from stylistic grounds,⁵ but it is difficult to dismiss from it the sense inherent in ἔσχαται ἡμέραι.⁶ Even if ὑστέροι καιροί means simply a time later than that at which the warning purports to have been penned,⁷ it is

p. 448; Grässer, *Problem*, p. 38, n 3, take it in this way. But Arndt and Gingrich, *Lexicon*, p. 814, do not mention this as a possibility (similarly Liddell and Scott). Jeremias, *Parables*, p. 116 offers as support the LXX of Dt. 11, 17; Jos. 8, 18f and Ps. 2, 12 but Cranfield, 'The Parable of the Unjust Judge' has shown that these references tell rather against the translation of ἐν τάχει as 'suddenly'.

¹ Cf. Acts 12, 7; 22, 18; 25, 4; Rom. 16, 20; I Tim. 3, 14; Rev. 1, 1 etc.

² Klostermann *Lukas*, p. 179, quotes Wellhausen that 8b 'erscheint als redaktionelles Nachtrag: hier wird ein Dämpfer aufgesetzt (cf. Mal 3, 2): sie sollen nicht so eifrig nach seinem Tage rufen'. cf. also Conzelmann, *Mitte*, p. 103; Grässer, *Problem*, p. 38.

³ Cranfield, 'The Parable of the Unjust Judge' in S.J.T. xvi, 1963, pp. 297ff.

⁴ Cf. the emphasis on the writer's own ministry of the gospel in the present period (I Tim. 1, 12; 2, 7; II Tim. 1, 3; 1, 11; 2, 1f., 4, 7; 4, 17); on sound doctrine (I Tim. 1, 5f., 1, 18ff., 2, 5f., 3, 15; 4, 1f.) and on moral uprightness (I Tim. 6, 3f., 6, 11f., II Tim. 1, 6f., 2, 14).

⁵ Cf. Dibelius, *Pastoralbriefe*, p. 40, 'Die Wahl der Ausdruck ὑστέροι καιροί (nicht ἔσχαται ἡμέραι) ist vielleicht durch den künstlich-futurischen Charakter der Stil . . . bedingt'. (Those who favour Pauline authorship would take another view here.)

⁶ Cf. Spicq, *Pastorales*, p. 136.

⁷ As Dibelius, *Pastoralbriefe*, p. 40; Parry, *Pastoral Epistles*, p. 24; Easton, *Pastoral Epistles*, pp. 138f., maintain.

pregnant with overtones of the Parousia.¹ Next, I Tim. 6, 14 ἡν καιροῖς ἰδίοις δεῖξει. Here there seems to be no need to discern polemic against Parousia-delay grumbling!,² nor should we conclude that the Parousia is thought of as far distant:³ the End *is* to appear at its own (divinely) appointed time, and the stress lies in the assurance and urgency contained in that thought. Another expression is ἐν ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις in II Tim. 3, 1. Falconer comments, '... though the men are present, the end is not thought to be so near as in Paul's epistles.'⁴ But Spicq's comment,⁵ 'ἐν ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις désigne la période qui précède immédiatement la parousie... Mais rien n'est dit de la durée de ces derniers temps...' is, surely, right. The character of the present is referred to as an interim bounded by the Parousia which can occur at any moment.⁶ In II Tim. 4, 1 we meet the expression τοῦ μέλλοντος κρίνειν. RV, RSV, Moffatt and NEB all translate, 'who shall judge', but it might perhaps be that we should understand a sense of nearness here, and 'that his appearing to judge is not far off.'⁷

So we have some grounds for saying that the sense of nearness persists. Since this, as we have argued, appears to be an undelimited nearness, no belief being held that the End *must* come within a specified period, it is now necessary to define it more narrowly, and this we do in the first place by drawing attention to its origins. Our examination of Old Testament and inter-testamental expectation⁸ emphasised how Israel's hope that God would intervene decisively in history was based consistently upon the fact of his past and present activity in the salvation-history. The same is true also of the early church as we find its hope conveyed in the New Testa-

¹ Cf. II Thess. 2, 3f., which, perhaps, the writer had in mind?

² As e.g., Falconer, *Pastoral Epistles*, p. 157, holds.

³ As e.g., Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles*, p. 116, suggests.

⁴ *Pastoral Epistles*, p. 89.

⁵ *Pastorales*, p. 366; contrast Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles*, p. 156.

⁶ Because it is the character of the present which is referred to, perhaps, the article is omitted (cf. Spicq, *Pastorales*, p. 366; Lock, *Pastoral Epistles*, ad loc), though Parry (*Pastoral Epistles*, p. 62) takes the omission as grounds for translating 'times of extremity', in a general sense.

⁷ Falconer, *Pastoral Epistles*, p. 94. Arndt-Gingrich, *Lexicon*, pp. 501f., noting the frequent occurrence (84x) of μέλλω with present infinitive in the N.T., say that this can mean 'on the point of...', but place II Tim. 4, 1 under the second meaning, the weakened sense used as a periphrasis for the future. Blass-Debrunner, *Grammar*, p. 181 para 356, 'Μελλειν with the infinitive expresses imminence.'

⁸ Cf. above, chapter 2.

ment. Two features, in particular, in the salvation-history events created and sustained the early church's intense Parousia hope.

1. The first is their conviction that in Jesus Christ ἡγγικεν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ (Mk. 1, 15 par.). This particular reference, since it appears to be a summary of Mark's (or of his source),¹ clearly reflects the early church's understanding of Jesus' message (however much this may have coincided with Jesus' own understanding of it).² ἡγγικεν here most probably means 'has come (near)'. The LXX usage³ may be inconclusive,⁴ but the parallelism here with πεπλήρωται must, surely, be decisive,⁵ for there can be no doubt as to the meaning of this word.⁶

At the same time, the flexibility of the word ἡγγικεν (reflected in the LXX usage, and manifest in the temporal and spatial possibilities it contains)⁷ helps to suggest that the 'coming' of the Kingdom of God was not understood in a straightforward, but in a complex manner,⁸ and this is, surely, because the expression ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ held for the early church a special significance (over against its meaning in Judaism). It is not that the early church saw in the proclamation simply a call to repent in order to

¹ Most agree that Mk. 1, 15 is an editorial compilation; cf. Rawlinson, *Mark*, p. 13; Sharman, *Son of Man*, pp. 99f.; Lohmeyer, *Markus*, ad loc; Lagrange, *Marc*, p. 18; Percy, *Botschaft*, p. 20; Branscomb, *Mark*, p. 25; Klostermann, *Markus*, p. 14, etc.

² Cf. Percy, *Botschaft*, p. 21; Rawlinson, *Mark*, p. 251.

³ Cf. Dodd, *Parables*, p. 44 (and in *E.T.* XLVII, pp. 936f., 138ff.) Kümmel, *Promise*, pp. 21ff.; Campbell, in *E.T.* XLVIII, pp. 91f.; Clark, in *J.B.L.* LIX, 1940, pp. 367f.; Black, in *E.T.* LXIII, 1952, pp. 298f. Dodd argues that 'ἡγγικεν could be used to translate Hebrew and Aramaic verbs meaning "arrive" without being untrue to their meaning', and Black (following M. Paul Joüon, in *Recherches de Science Religieuse*, Tome XVII (1927), p. 538) concludes that 'the parallel at Mk. 1, 15 πεπλήρωται like the parallel at Lam. 4, 19 (18) may be taken to support the translation of ἡγγικεν = q'rabhath by "the Kingdom of God has come".' But contrast Kümmel, Campbell and Clark.

⁴ Because although the majority usage might tell against Dodd's view, Kümmel (*Promise*, p. 24) acknowledges that 'the translators of the Septuagint occasionally stretch the meaning of ἡγγικεν to the marginal case of "approaching to".'

⁵ Cf. Lohmeyer, *Markus*, ad loc; Flückiger, *Ursprung*, pp. 96ff.; Black, in *E.T.* LXIII, 1952, pp. 298f.

⁶ Cf. Delling, in *T.W.N.T.* VI, p. 289f.; also III, p. 463 n. 37, '... Mk. 1, 15: von dem καιρὸς schlechthin, der, von Gottes Volk auf Grund der Verheissung erwartet, mit dem Auftreten Jesu gekommen ist.'

⁷ Preisker, in *T.W.N.T.* II, pp. 330f., and Fuller, *Mission and Message*, pp. 20f., give details.

⁸ Kümmel, *Promise*, p. 23, n. 13 complains that no explanation is given

attain salvation,¹ nor simply the challenge to decide for God, against all the attraction of the world,² not yet simply the promise that the End was soon to arrive,³ but rather that it saw in this proclamation a *Christological affirmation*: 'The Kingdom has come close to men in the person of Jesus and in his person it actually confronts them.'⁴ Jesus' healings and exorcisms are a pointer to this fact (cf. Mtt. 12, 28; Lk. 11, 20).⁵ (Significantly φθάνειν⁶ whose precise meaning is disputed⁷ is probably a further indication that the Kingdom's presence though real, is complex).⁸ Jesus' preaching is essentially a self-offering (cf. Lk. 4, 16ff., Jn. 4, 26f., etc.), his teaching concerns final judgement and final forgiveness (Mk. 2, 9f.)

Since this theme has been elaborated more than once⁹ we do no more here than draw attention to the fact that the basic affirmation that the Kingdom of God has come (near) in the person of Jesus Christ, runs throughout the New Testament. The pre-New Testament hope in the coming of the Kingdom of God looked for three major events: the judgement upon sinners, the blessing of the faithful, and the overthrow of all rebellious powers (and so, essentially, the renewal of the world). Each aspect is seen in the New Testament as fulfilled—in Christ.

In Christ, the final judgement is enacted. That is certainly the conviction of those elements in the New Testament witness which point to the vicarious judgement of sin in and through the

why ἤγγικεν should have been used in the tradition, if it was meant to mean 'has come'. It may perhaps be that ἤγγικεν was thought specially suitable in view of its flexibility to denote the real, though Christological and proleptic, presence of the Kingdom of God.

¹ As Case, *A New Biography*, pp. 244f., maintains.

² Cf. Bultmann, *Theology*, p. 21 holds this.

³ As Schweitzer, *Mystery*, pp. 69f., holds.

⁴ Cranfield, *Mark*, p. 68.

⁵ Cf. also Mk. 3, 27; 7, 37; 5, 19; Is. 35, 5-6, 61, 1. Hence the Fourth Gospel designates them as σημεῖα (cf. 20, 30).

⁶ The word nowhere else appears in the gospels. But cf. Phil. 3, 16, Rom. 9, 31, II Cor. 10, 14, I Thess. 2, 16 and 4, 15.

⁷ Kümmel, *Promise*, p. 106, finds the old meaning 'to anticipate' only in I Thess. 4, 15 and concludes that the meaning 'has arrived' is therefore conclusive for Mtt. 12, 28 par. Morgenthaler, *Kommendes Reich*, pp. 36f., however, suggests that an examination of its usage shows it to have a proleptic character.

⁸ Cf. Cullmann, *Time*, p. 71; Michaelis, *Matthäus*, ad loc Mtt. 12, 28; Flückiger, *Ursprung*, p. 95.

⁹ Cf. esp. Cullmann, *Time*, pp. 121-174; Filson, *New Testament*; Barth, *C.D.* III/2, pp. 437ff.; Stauffer, *Theology*, pp. 51ff., etc.

death of Jesus (cf. Mk. 10, 45, Rom. 6, 10; 8, 1; II Cor. 5, 14 etc.).¹ This judgement, though focussed in the Cross, in fact embraces the entire incarnation (cf. Mk. 10, 45, Jn. 13, 4-11, Phil. 2, 6ff.) Though, to be sure, 'All that Jesus does and all that he teaches is directed towards man, who is "lost", not in order to judge him or to lecture him, but in order to save him, to bring him back to God . . .',² yet judgement of man's sin is brought to a head and, in its finality enacted in the Cross (cf. esp. Gal. 3, 10).³

In no greater detail we call attention, secondly, to the belief reflected in the New Testament that in Christ the final blessing of the just has been accomplished. It had been expected that the faithful would receive at the Messiah's hand, reward for their uprightness.⁴ This hope was indeed not unfulfilled, but the 'faithful' have been narrowed down to the one man Jesus Christ.⁵ This is most clearly expressed in the numerous passages which speak of Christ's exaltation (cf. Acts 5, 31; Rom. 3, 24; 5, 1; 4, 25; Eph. 1, 3 etc.)⁶ which is regarded not as something which has occurred to him *only*, but to him as representative.⁷

Finally, in Christ—so the New Testament witness maintains—the final subjugation of rebellious powers has occurred. Already in his ministry (through exorcisms and miracles particularly) Jesus exercised God's sovereignty against disorder and disease.⁸ But the subjugation is especially bound up with the crucifixion and resurrection (cf. Acts 2, 36; Eph. 1, 20-23; Phil. 2, 9). Even death itself has been 'abolished' (καταργήσαντος) (II Tim. 1, 10), so that it can be said, 'whosoever believes on me shall never die.' (Jn. 11,

¹ Cf. Richardson, *Theology*, pp. 215f.; Calvin, *Institutes* II, 16/5 and thereto cf. van Buren, *Christ in our Place*, pp. 40ff.

² Brunner, *Dogmatics*, II, p. 281.

³ Cf. Luther's exposition, in *Galatians*, Clarke ed., pp. 279ff.

⁴ Cf. above, chapter 2, esp. pp. 14f.

⁵ Cf. Manson, *Teaching*, pp. 171ff.; Cullmann, *Time*, pp. 115f.

⁶ Calvin rightly warns against artificially separating the Cross from the Resurrection and Ascension (cf. van Buren, *Christ in our Place*, pp. 81ff.); yet the Resurrection and Ascension have special place in the point we wish to make here.

⁷ Cf. esp. Eph. 1, 3ff., 2, 6-7, II Cor. 1, 10; I Cor. 15, 20f.; Phil. 3, 20; Col. 3, 3f., I Pet. 1, 3f., etc.

Calvin (*Institutes* II, 16/16) writes, 'For since he entered there in our flesh and, as it were, in our name, it follows, as the apostle says, that in a certain manner we sit together with him now in heaven (Eph. 2, 5), since we do not hope for heaven with a bare hope, but possess it in our Head.' Cf. also van Buren, *Christ in our Place*, pp. 86ff., Barth, *C.D.* IV/2, pp. 3ff.

⁸ Cf. Jn. 20, 30; Lk. 10, 18; Mk. 3, 27. Manson, *Jesus*, pp. 33ff.

26). Hence the great stress in the New Testament upon Ps. 110¹ and Christ's exaltation to the position of authority at God's right hand: 'His resurrection is the victory of the new creation over the old'.²

So the final events of the End are, in a real sense, already accomplished—in Christ. This is the first factor upon which the New Testament insistence upon the nearness of the End is based. It is a specific understanding of the past phases of salvation-history as these have been brought to a head in Christ.

2. The second factor on which the near hope is based is the presence of the Spirit in the life of the early church, and its meaning for the church. Throughout the New Testament, the Spirit is regarded as having a twofold focus, both vital for the Parousia hope.

The first focus is the historical life and work of Jesus Christ. The Spirit is regarded as in some way contemporising this historical person and work: ³ 'The Spirit's office is confined to revealing and communicating Christ to the believer'.⁴ To be sure Matthew and Mark, whether in accord with the actual historical situation,⁵ or perhaps because of some express purpose⁶ 'contain astoundingly few statements about the Spirit';⁷ for Luke, 'the chief thing for which the Spirit is responsible is the preaching of the disciples . . .',⁸ preaching being the proclamation of Christ's person and work, the contemporising of the Word.

Paul regards the presence of the Spirit as mediating the presence

¹ Cf. Rom. 8, 34; I Cor. 15, 25; Col. 3, 1; Eph. 1, 20; Heb. 1, 3; 8, 1; 10, 13; I Pet. 3, 22; Acts 2, 34; 5, 31; 7, 55; Rev. 3, 21; Mtt. 22, 44; 26, 64; Mk. 12, 36; 14, 62; 16, 19; Lk. 20, 42; 22, 69. Cf. Cullmann, 'The Kingship of Christ and the Church in the N.T.', in *Early Church*, pp. 105ff.; Caird, *Principalities and Powers*, pp. 80ff.; Leivestad, *Christ the Conqueror*, *passim*.

² Visser 't Hooft, *Renewal*, p. 33. Barth, *Humanity of God*, p. 47, writes, 'He is in his person the covenant in its fulness, the Kingdom of heaven which is at hand, in which God speaks and man hears, God gives and man receives, God commands and man obeys, God's glory shines in the heights and thence into the depths, and peace on earth comes to pass among men in whom he is well pleased.'

³ Cf. Dillistone, *The Holy Spirit in the Life of To-day*, pp. 27f.; Barth, *C.D.* I/1, pp. 515ff.; Hamilton, *Holy Spirit*, pp. 3ff.

⁴ Hamilton, *Holy Spirit*, p. 12.

⁵ Cf. Barrett, *H.S.G.T.*, pp. 140ff.; Schweizer, *Spirit* (ET of the article in *T.W.N.T.* VI, pp. 330ff.)

⁶ It could, perhaps, be argued that there had been a conscious attempt to focus attention solely on the person of Christ and that therefore teaching concerning the Spirit was kept to a minimum?

⁷ Schweizer, *Spirit*, p. 35, and cf. pp. 25-36.

⁸ Schweizer, *Spirit*, p. 43.

of the ascended Christ (cf. Rom. 8, 9-10, I Cor. 3, 7; II Cor. 3, 11), so that the events accomplished in the death and resurrection of Christ are communicated to the believer: 'The Spirit is the Spirit of Christ because his office is to communicate the benefits of Christ's work.'¹ The judgement, the new life, the 'new creation' effected in Christ's person and work, the imperative and the indicative of the Cross and Resurrection, are echoed by the Spirit in the believer.²

The same can be said of the Spirit in John. The Fourth Evangelist 'proclaims, more clearly even than Paul, the present actuality of the salvation which is one day to be consummated'³ and, concentrating more consciously on the interval between Jesus' ascension and the Parousia than the Synoptists, 'interprets its real significance. This interval is eschatologically a continuation of the present kingdom manifested in the earthly ministry of Jesus'.⁴ It is, indeed, so intimately bound up with that historical ministry that that ministry is contemporised in the interval through the Spirit who is 'the eschatological continuum in which the work of Christ, initiated in his ministry and awaiting its termination at his return, is wrought out'.⁵ The Paraclete sayings (cf. Jn. 14, 16; 14, 26; 15, 26; 16, 7; 16, 13f.) emphasise most particularly this relationship between Christ's historical life and work, and the Spirit present with the believer.⁶

The other focus which the Spirit has is the second coming of Christ and the presence of the Kingdom in its consummate form. The first focus is a backward reference, the second looks forward. This forward look arises from the conviction that the presence of the Spirit is a sign of the End and an assurance that the present is already somehow an anticipation of the Last Age.⁷ Whether the Baptist spoke of a bestowal of the Spirit or not,⁸ it is evident

¹ Hamilton, *Holy Spirit*, p. 15.

² Schweizer, *Spirit*, pp. 73f.

³ Cf. Schweizer, *Spirit*, p. 88; Barrett, *John*, pp. 57ff.

⁴ Holwerda, *Spirit*, p. 85; and cf. chapters 1-3.

⁵ Cf. Barrett, *John*, pp. 74ff.; Holwerda, *Spirit*, pp. 25ff.; Schweizer, *Spirit*, pp. 92f.; Barrett, 'The Holy Spirit in the Fourth Gospel,' in *J.T.S.* (NS) I, 1950, pp. 1ff.

⁶ Cf. Barrett, *John*, pp. 75ff.; Schweizer, *Spirit*, pp. 95ff.

⁷ For the expectation that the last times would witness an outpouring of the spirit cf. Joel 2, 28f.; Is. 44, 3, Ezek. 36, 26f.; 37, 14; 39, 29. Test. Lev. 18, 11. Cf. Schweizer, *Spirit*, pp. 12f.; Taylor, *Mark*, p. 157; Cranfield, *Mark*, p. 50; Lampe, *Seal*, pp. 27ff.

⁸ Cf. Eisler, *Messiah Jesus and John the Baptist*, pp. 275ff.; Barrett, *H.S.G.T.*, pp. 126f.; Taylor, *Mark*, p. 157. Contrast Cranfield *Mark*, p. 50.

that the Synoptic tradition (cf. Mk. 1, 8; Lk. 3, 16; Mtt. 3, 11; cf. Jn. 1, 33) saw his witness to Jesus as a testimony to his eschatological significance: 'while John administers the eschatological sacrament of baptism, the coming one will actually bestow the eschatological gift of the Spirit.'¹ This is as clear in the Fourth Gospel² as in Paul,³ but is perhaps most explicit in the terms used by Paul with reference to the Spirit—*ἀρραβών* (II Cor. 1, 22; 5, 5; Eph. 1, 14) and *ἀπαρχή* (Rom. 8, 23): 'Der Geist, den Gott ihnen gegeben hat, ist den Christen Gewähr für künftigen vollen Heilsbesitz.'⁴

This understanding of the person and work of Jesus Christ, and this understanding of the presence and work of the Holy Spirit, are the basis of the early church's insistence upon the nearness of the Parousia. It is a matter of the (now frequently stated)⁵ tension between 'already' and 'not yet'. Not between certain End events which have been accomplished and certain others which have not yet been fulfilled,⁶ but between the End events fulfilled in a mystery already (fulfilled, that is, in the hidden ministry of Christ), and the manifestation of their fulfilment in openness which has not yet occurred and which therefore involves acute tension in the present.

We may enlarge upon this briefly. Clearly the ambiguity concerning the Sovereignty of God, to which the End events were expected to put an end, continued in the Ministry of Jesus: the presence of the Kingdom of God in his person and work was a

¹ Cranfield, *Mark*, p. 49.

² Cf. Holwerda, *Spirit*, pp. 65ff.; Barrett, in *J.T.S.* (NS) I, 1950, pp. 1ff., *John*, pp. 74ff.

³ Cf. Hamilton, *Holy Spirit*, pp. 17ff.

⁴ Behm, in *T.W.N.T.* I, p. 474; cf. Barrett, *H.S.G.T.* p. 153; Hamilton, *Holy Spirit*, pp. 20f.; Schweizer, *Spirit*, pp. 64f.; Cullmann, *Time*, p. 155; Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, p. 209; cf. also Gal. 6, 8; Rom. 14, 17; I Cor. 4, 20.

⁵ Cf. Ridderbos, *De Komst*, pp. 68f.; Cullmann, *Time*, pp. 86f.; *Early Church*, pp. 153f.; Jeremias, in *T.B.* XX, 1941, pp. 22f.; Filson, *New Testament*, pp. 65ff.; Cranfield, *Mark*, p. 408; Morgenthaler, *Kommendes Reich*, p. 73; Flückiger, *Ursprung*, pp. 208f.

⁶ Hence, perhaps, we might suggest that Cullmann's 'D-Day' analogy is not altogether satisfactory, for it suggests that though the victory of Cross and Resurrection was decisive, it was only partial; clearly Cullmann himself does not want to assert such a partial victory (cf. *Early Church*, p. 111, where he contends that even in Heb. 10, 15; I Cor. 15, 25, we have to do with a contrast between a present subjection and a future annihilation, rather than a present partial subjection contrasted with a future complete one).

mystery (cf. Mk. 4, 11),¹ and was anything but the obvious, irrefutable, unambiguous display of sovereignty awaited. Though God was really revealing himself in his Word² he revealed himself and his rule in the 'Son of Man' who 'must first serve as the servant of the Eternal and suffer and die as a ransom for all'.³ The final judgement occurred in the obedience of this Son of Man, an obedience 'even unto the death of Cross' (Phil. 2, 8). The final blessing occurred in a form equally hidden and equally Christocentric; participation in the exaltation by the believer is certainly not apparent (cf. e.g. I Jn. 3, 2; Col. 3, 4). The final subjugation of the *ἐξουσίαι* has occurred in total obscurity, indeed in the apparent triumph of rebellious powers over Christ.⁴ Preiss rightly asserts, 'the primitive church saw itself constrained by its Lord to tear in two the traditional eschatology; on the one hand stands what has already been realised by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, and on the other, what will only come through the Parousia'.⁵

Further, the present time is by no means that era of bliss, of unambiguous rule, of the triumph of right and the punishment of wrong which was awaited. Only through the exercise of faith can the present be regarded as the time of the End; the present Lordship of Christ is acknowledged only more or less, only here and there, only in faith.⁶ By the presence of the Spirit the believer is involved in an acute tension between 'now' and 'then'. It is in this understanding of past and present centred on Christ and mediated to us through the Spirit, that the early church has found itself compelled to live in imminent expectation of the End.⁷ One is perhaps tempted at this point to suggest that a concept of revelation demands that

¹ Cf. Cranfield, *Mark*, p. 153, 'The Incarnate Word is not obvious. Only faith could recognise the Son of God in the lowly figure of Jesus of Nazareth...'

² Cf. Baillie, *The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought*, pp. 76ff.

³ Preiss, *Life in Christ*, p. 68.

⁴ I Cor. 2, 8f. suggests that not even the *ἀρχοντες* were aware of the significance of the Crucifixion. Cf. Cullmann, *Early Church*, pp. 111f. Stauffer, *Theology*, p. 125.

⁵ *Life in Christ*, p. 49.

⁶ Hence the church is that sphere within the Regnum Christi in which His Lordship is more or less openly acknowledged, in contrast to other spheres where it is none the less real, but unconfessed. Cf. Cullmann, *Early Church*, pp. 105f.

⁷ How inadequate by comparison the explanation that the imminent hope was essentially a mistake but served a good purpose in that it encouraged moral earnestness and allowed elasticity and mobility! cf. Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, pp. 379f.

the open manifestation inherent in the final events should occur imminently (i.e. by definition it is an urgent necessity).¹ And, to be sure, the present ambiguity and the hidden character of the revelation in Jesus Christ, cry out for the display of that revelation in unambiguous manner.² But Barth³ has warned against finding a basis for the Parousia hope in a deduction from some general insight, or from an analysis of a concept. The New Testament hope rests not on an analysis nor upon a general insight, but upon the event and acknowledgement of revelation. The early church looked for the return of their Lord not simply because the ambiguity of the past and present cried out for it, but because Christ 'showed himself to them as the One he once was, as the One who was with them and indeed in them, but also as the One who stood before them as eternally future'.⁴

The nearness of the end is bound up with the person of Jesus Christ, in whom the events of the end, including their open, unambiguous manifestation, coinhere. In him, death, resurrection, ascension and Parousia belong together. They do not belong together as a general principle⁵ but as a matter of theological, or more exactly of Christological fact.⁶

The Christological unity of the End events is thus the main-spring of the End's nearness. This has two important corollaries. The first is that this Christological unity and this imminence are factors difficult to express; the situation is complex, the older eschatological pattern shattered,⁷ and the nearness of the End, whilst not without chronological connotation² is nevertheless

¹ Revelation, of course, involves not only confrontation with an object but an adequate perception of that object; cf. Torrance, in *Essays in Christology*, pp. 13ff.

² Hence the emphasis within the N.T. is upon the Parousia as the open manifestation of that which has occurred in Christ, in principle and in hiddenness; cf. above chapter 7, pp. 103ff. Richardson, *Theology*, pp. 53f.; this was already perceived by F. D. Maurice, in *The Kingdom of Christ*, (SCM ed.) II, pp. 283f.

³ *C.D.* IV/I, pp. 322ff.

⁴ Barth, *C.D.* IV/I, pp. 326f.

⁵ 'We must be careful not to formulate the answer in a way which would give to this final coming and consummation any other necessity than that of the free grace of God'. Barth, *C.D.* IV/I p. 324.

⁶ Cf. Cranfield, *Mark*, p. 408; in *Essays in Christology*, pp. 89ff.; Barth, *C.D.* III/2, pp. 490f.; Camfield, 'Man in his time,' in *S.J.T.* III, 1950, pp. 127ff.

⁷ Cf. Preiss, *Life in Christ*, p. 49; Cullmann, *Time*, pp. 81ff.

⁸ Cf. Preiss, *Life in Christ*, p. 59; Barth, *C.D.* III/2, pp. 490f.

independent of temporal delimitation. It can, therefore, be expressed only obliquely. This accounts for the variety of the New Testament expressions for this nearness¹ and for the use of terms which are either ambiguous or flexible.² It accounts, too, for the otherwise irreconcilable juxtaposition of exhortations to watch expectantly beside warnings to patient endurance in face of the possibility of a delay.³

The second corollary of this Christological imminence is that when and where the significance of the person and work of Jesus Christ is inadequately grasped, or the presence and purpose of the Holy Spirit is imperfectly perceived and understood, then and there the imminence of the End will either evaporate,⁴ or will be expressed in a faulty manner—sometimes in the form of a temporally delimited expectation.⁵

Already within the New Testament there are signs of eschatological misunderstandings which the New Testament writers have to oppose.⁶ In the Thessalonian community there were those who sought to anticipate the End (cf II Thess. 2, 2) and inclined to moral laxity, social irresponsibility and political anarchy.⁷ Paul counters this by a repetition of the significance of Christ's work and of the present period of salvation-history. The materialistic eschatology reflected in the 'Corinthians' excesses in the eucharist (cf I Cor. II, 17ff.) is attacked by Paul with an insistence upon a Christological-

¹ Cf. the imagery of 'standing at the door' (Mk. 13, 29 par., Jam. 5, 9; cf. Rev. 4, 1), 'later times' (I Tim. 4, 1), 'the last days' (II Tim. 3, 1; Jam. 5, 3), 'a last hour' (I Jn. 2, 18; 28), 'the last times' (Jude 18); the imagery of day and night (Rom. 13, 11f., Heb. 10, 25), the expression 'the Kingdom of God is at hand' ((Mk. 1, 15 par. etc., cf. Phil. 4, 5; I Pet. 4, 7) and the expressions of haste (Heb. 10, 37f., II Pet. 3, 9; Rev. 22, 7)).

² Cf. ἔργος, ἐργάζειν (Mk. 1, 15; Mtt. 3, 2; 4, 17; 10, 7; Rom. 13, 12; I Pet. 4, 7; etc.), and ἐφθασεν (Mtt. 12, 28; Lk. 11, 20).

³ Cf. e.g. Mk. 13, 28-30 with Mk. 13, 32-37; Mtt. 25, 5 with Mtt. 25, 13; II Pet. 3, 8 with II Pet. 3, 9.

⁴ Into a gentle hope or a pious optimism; whereas 'das gesamte Neue Testament die Nähe des Endes verkundet und in dieser Spannung lebt: Das Reich Gottes ist nahe herbeigekommen...' (Albertz, *Botschaft*, II/1, pp. 206.) Cf. 'The second coming was one of the primary motives for the Christian life', Barclay, *Mind*, p. 218.

⁵ Cf. Cullmann, in *K.v.S.* XI, 1942, pp. 178.

⁶ Cf. the detailed discussion in Reicke, *Diakonie, Festfreude und Zelos*, Pt. 3, pp. 233ff.

⁷ Cf. II Thess. 3, 6f, 11, rebuking disorderliness; II Thess. 3, 12 and I Thess. 4, 10-12 encouraging quietness and responsible work; II Thess. 3, 11 rebuking 'busybodies'.

eschatological scheme whereby the eucharist is both and ἀνάμνησις (I Cor. 11, 24; 25) and an anticipation of the Parousia (ἄχρι οὗ ἔλθῃ 11, 26).¹ In II Peter, the eschatological scepticism or impatience is met with a reaffirmation of the reality of salvation-history, of the work of Christ, and of the purpose of the present interim (cf esp. II Pet. 1, 16-21, 3, 14-18). When these factors are perceived it can and must still be maintained that 'the Lord is not slack concerning his promise'.²

Other, less obvious, instances of eschatological misunderstanding can be found within the New Testament,³ generally reflecting Judaistic or heathen pressures towards a materialising of eschatology and an anticipation of the End through inadequate appreciation of the purpose of the present opportunity.

In post-New Testament times (up to, and including, the present) such errors continue, often involving a temporal delimitation of the end.⁴ But the New Testament writers maintain a thoroughly Christological eschatology and therefore consistently oppose such misunderstandings. It only remains now to pose the question whether this Christological eschatology was maintained by the New Testament writers on their own initiative, or whether they have followed (in principle at least) Jesus' own understanding and teaching.

¹ Jeremias' thesis that ἀνάμνησις here means 'God will remember me' (*Eucharistic Words*, pp. 162ff.) even if correct (but cf. Jones, in *J.T.S.* VI, 1955, pp. 183ff.), does not rule out the fact that the Eucharistic rite was a 'proclamation of the Lord's death'; cf. Héring, *I Corinthiens*, p. 103; Plummer, *Luke*, p. 246, Reicke, *Diakonie, Festfreude und Zelos*, pp. 257ff. If the Last Supper has, at least, Passover associations (cf. Jones, in *J.T.S.* VI, 1955, pp. 188f.) it is noteworthy that 'the Passover at the time of Jesus looked both backwards and forwards. God's people remember at the feast the merciful immunity afforded the houses sprinkled with the blood of the Paschal lambs and their deliverance from servitude in Egypt' (Jeremias, *Eucharistic Words*, p. 137; cf. Preiss, *Life in Christ*, p. 90). The forward reference is focussed in the expression ἄχρι οὗ ἔλθῃ (cf. Jeremias, *Eucharistic Words*, pp. 115f., 136f.).

² Cf. οὐ βραδύνη; Blass-Debrunner, *Grammar*, para. 180, 5.

³ Cf. Mtt. 24, 31-51 (Lk. 12, 35-46) perhaps reflects an actual situation of revelry and violence connected with a materialistic eschatology; cf. zealostistic impatience in James (1, 3f., 1, 12; 3, 17f; 5, 7f.) connected with misunderstanding as to the significance of the present (4, 13ff.). Cf. Reicke, *Diakonie, Festfreude und Zelos*, pp. 233ff.

⁴ Cf. the examples mentioned in chapter 12, below, pp. 215ff.