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## *The new testament doctrine of the future life*

R. Brown

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THE NEW TESTAMENT  
DOCTRINE OF THE  
FUTURE LIFE

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## ABSTRACT OF THE CONTENTS OF THE THESIS

CHAPTER ONE. Old Testament conception of the after-life vitiated by Sheol conception; transformed by theological developments during and after the Exile; the way of faith-realism; the eschatological resurrection-hope;

CHAPTER TWO. Modification of resurrection belief; moralisation of Sheol; variety of views concerning mode of resurrection; individual and corporate aspects fused.

CHAPTER THREE. The quest of the historical Jesus; the Kingdom of God as synonymous with eternal life; fellowship with God as central to Jesus' teaching; realised eschatology; repentance, faith, obedience and renunciation; futurist eschatology; scope of resurrection; judgement; heaven and hell; other aspects of his teaching; Jesus' attitude to own death.

CHAPTER FOUR. Centrality of resurrection in Acts; place of eschatology in Lukan theology; value of Luke's exposition; the Ascension; hieratical interpretation of Resurrection in Hebrews; eschatology and ethics in James; salvation in I Peter; descent into Hades.

CHAPTER FIVE. Paradoxical nature of Pauline eschatology; theories of development; the 'formal eschatological' and the 'empirical experiential' lines of thought; Paul's conversion and influence on his eschatology; his Christ-mysticism; his futurist eschatology: The Parousia; the resurrection of the body; judgement; the consummation; his contribution to the New Testament eschatology.

CHAPTER SIX. Eternal life as a fundamental theme of John; emphasis on realised aspect of eschatology; retention of futurist aspect; meaning of 'eternal life'; judgement; universalism; distinctive features of Revelation's eschatology including millennarianism.

CHAPTER SEVEN. Faith and history in the Resurrection traditions; the empty tomb and the appearances; the Resurrection as the basis of all major aspects of Christian theology.

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

In attempting to survey the New Testament doctrine of the future life in an essay of the present type one quickly becomes aware of the truth behind the Johannine hyperbole that if all "that Jesus did...were all to be recorded in detail, I suppose that the whole world would not hold the books that would be written" (John 21:25 N.E.B.); and most Christian theologians would probably agree that the same point could be made, though admittedly with reduced validity, with regard to the New Testament's eschatology. One illustration of this will serve to make the point: the debate which has taken place during the last three decades since the publication of R. Bultmann's 'demythologising' essay in 1941, which vitally affects some of the basic beliefs of New Testament eschatology, has produced enough written material to create a not-inconsiderable library in itself.

One is therefore faced with a task of Herculean dimensions, unless one imposes certain limitations on the essay; otherwise the brief would become impossible.

The first limitation is that all consideration of critical questions connected with the authorship, date and place of origin of the twenty-seven books must be ruled out, except in so far as they occasionally affect the interpretation of the eschatology. Secondly, it means that in the selection of illustrative texts, one is forced to be representative rather than exhaustive, while minute exegetical examination of a large number of texts is also ruled out, except in a few instances.

## II

A third limitation imposed by the vast amount of relevant material on the subject of eschatology is that matters which in themselves are of considerable intrinsic interest, and which would demand fuller treatment in a study of larger proportions, have had to be either summarily reviewed or relegated to the foot-notes so that more salient topics may be accorded the space which their importance merits. A final limitation is that the ramifications of eschatology, which embrace the whole sphere of Christian theology, can only be briefly indicated rather than expounded. J.A.T. Robinson states that "every truth about eschatology is 'ipso facto' a truth about God"...(and)... every statement about God is 'ipso facto' an assertion about the end, a truth about eschatology."<sup>1</sup> It is hoped that this will be borne in mind when the limitations of the essay become obvious.

The scope of the essay is to examine the New Testament doctrine of the future life, firstly by tracing its origin in the Old Testament and inter-testamental periods, followed by an exposition of the doctrine as found in the various books of the New Testament; this leads on to a separate consideration of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ as the fundamental datum of New Testament eschatology, and therefore of its theology, including a discussion of the attempts that have been made to re-interpret it in the light of modern knowledge, followed by a brief exposition of its meaning as the foundation-truth of all the major doctrines of Christianity.

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1. In the End, God, London, 1968, page 47.

### III

In dealing with the themes of eschatology - traditionally conceived as those of death, judgement, heaven and hell, - one can hardly hope to be able to present new concepts, because the truths with which it deals are timeless and unchangeable; they belong to "the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). Yet the changes brought about in man's estimate of Christianity by modern critical thought are especially noticeable and acute in the sphere of eschatology and have made a re-thinking of it essential, not only because "the unescapable framework of eschatology...has always dominated Christian thought from the days of Jesus and the preaching of the Apostles",<sup>1</sup> but also because it is a subject of perennial and absorbing interest to all thoughtful persons.

The arrangement of the thesis necessitates a final comment. Chapters one, two and three contain no anomalies in this respect and have self-explanatory titles. In chapter four, for the sake of convenience, Acts, Hebrews and the Catholic Epistles (except I, II and III John) have been grouped together. Chapter five contains the Pauline exposition, and includes, 'pace' the 'computer' critics, what some would regard as the 'deutero' - Pauline works such as II Thessalonians, as well as Ephesians, and the Pastorals, though it is hoped that this codification will not be interpreted as an obvious begging of the question; the arrangement is not intended to convey the impression of agreement with the theory of

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1. Barrett, C.K., The Gospel According to St. John, London, 1955, page 58.

#### IV

Pauline authorship, though it would not be difficult to cite reputable scholars who would support it in the case of the epistles involved. Chapter six deals with the Johannine literature, including the Fourth Gospel, I, II and III John, and Revelation. The final chapter creates no problems in this respect. Quotations are taken from the Revised Version unless otherwise indicated.

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CHAPTER ONETHE OLD TESTAMENT PREPARATION

The division of opinion among scholars concerning the value of the Old Testament's eschatology with regard to the doctrine of the future life is a reflection of uncertainty and ambivalence in the books of which it is composed. The two extreme positions are represented on the one hand by G. Parrinder, who states<sup>1</sup> that its views on this topic "... are so inadequate as to constitute the great weakness of ancient Hebrew (but not New Testament) teaching"; and on the other hand by N.A. Logan, who posits a definite hope of a future life even in the book of Genesis, in reference to the promise of perpetuity made to Abraham and his descendants: "Nothing less than resurrection was in the mind of Abraham and of all the faithful after him".<sup>2</sup> The consensus of opinion correctly avoids both of these extreme positions by asserting that, although there is no definite and unambiguous doctrine of a future life in the Old Testament until the fourth century B.C. at the very earliest, there is before that date a development of ideas without which the growth of any worthwhile belief would have been impossible.

The present chapter will show the validity of this statement by a review of the most important evidence, which, for purposes of analysis, is best considered

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1. Parrinder, G., Upanishads, Gita and Bible, London, 1962, page 64.
2. Quoted in: Rowley, H.H., The Faith of Israel, London, 1956, page 165.

chronologically<sup>3</sup>, with the Exile<sup>4</sup> being regarded as the water-shed, not only of the history of the Jews, but also of their theological development, especially in the field at present under consideration. Before they went to Babylon, the Hebrews' ideas of the after-life were dominated by the conception of Sheol, "...a blind alley along which thought and faith could make no progress";<sup>1</sup> but during and after the Exile, there were theological and historical developments which were to play a major part in the rise of belief in the future life. These developments led to a dissatisfaction with the negative and unproductive conception of Sheol and to the eventual expression of a definite hope of resurrection during Maccabaeae times.

The next chapter will outline the important developments which took place during the period covered by the apocalyptic literature, which exercised a decisive influence on first-century Judaism, and, because of this, on the New Testament doctrine of the future life. Thus, although there is little direct teaching about the after-life in the Old Testament, it will be shown that in this respect, as in other aspects of Biblical revelation, the Old Testament was truly a 'preparatio evangelii', and that Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 15:4 that Christ was raised on the third day 'according to the scriptures' is fully justified.

Pre-Exilic beliefs about the future life were vitiated by the idea of Sheol, which was "...entirely unconnected with the religion of Yahweh".<sup>2</sup> The derivation

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1. Robinson, H.W., The Christian Doctrine of Man, Edinburgh, 1943, page 40.
  2. Burney, C.F., Israel's Hope of Immortality, Oxford, 1909, page 13.

of the Hebrew word שֵׁאֵל is uncertain. At least five etymologies have been suggested. The first states that the word is derived from the verb שָׁאַל which means 'to ask' or 'to enquire', the idea being that Sheol was the place of judgement where the dead were requested to give an account of their deeds. But the idea of judgement plays very little part in the Old Testament picture of Sheol. A second theory believes that the word is derived from the root שָׁמַל which denotes 'depth' or 'hollowness', the original sense thus being 'the deep' or 'hollow place', which fits in with certain descriptions of Sheol to be considered below (compare the expression: 'to go down to Sheol', also considered below, on page 5). A third possible derivation is that from the root שָׁמַל which means 'to be desolate'; the addition of the letter ש would strengthen the word, so that the meaning would be 'the desolate realm' or 'the non-world'. A fourth suggestion was put forward by W.F.A. Albright, who noted that the word is used without the article, suggesting that it is a proper <sup>noun</sup>/'shu'ara', which denoted the underworld in Babylonian mythology. Finally, some scholars think that the word was derived from the root שָׁמַל and that it meant 'the western land', which was often thought to be the entrance to the underworld in ancient belief (compare the Babylonian word 'Shil-(L)-an', which had this meaning).

'Sheol' is used sixty-five times in the Old Testament, together with three other words which may be regarded as synonyms: אֵי ( = 'the pit'), used sixty-eight times; תַּיִם ( = 'the pit'), used twenty-three times; and יִרְבֵּךְ ( = 'destruction'), used six times. Some scholars (e.g. E.F. Sutcliffe),<sup>1</sup> have suggested that these

1. Sutcliffe, E.F., The Old Testament and the Future Life, Westminster, 1946, pages 39 following.

words denote places of punishment within Sheol, but none of the passages cited seems to need this interpretation, and it appears likely that it was not until the inter-testamental period that such divisions were thought of as existing in Sheol. So it is best simply to regard them as synonyms of Sheol (they sometimes occur in parallelism with Sheol).

It is impossible to trace the ultimate origin of the idea of Sheol. It was probably part of the stock of ideas which the Hebrews inherited from their Semitic background in pre-historic times, and it is really "a piece of pure Semitic heathenism"<sup>1</sup>. It possibly developed as a by-product of ancestor-worship, as an extension of the idea of the family or tribal grave. 'To be gathered to one's fathers in peace', or to be granted decent burial in 'the grave of my father and my mother' was considered to be a final boon to earthly life (e.g. Genesis 15:15; Samuel 19:3), and this accounts for the respect paid to dead bodies in order to prevent injury or desecration (e.g. Genesis 50:25-26. Contrast 1 Samuel 31:12 following). This idea is said to have resulted in the graves of the tribe, and later, those of the nation, being regarded as united in one, thus producing the idea of Sheol (compare Ezekiel 32:22 following, where the graves of various national groups are regarded as being systematically arranged in Sheol). This theory, however, is disputed by some scholars such as W. Eichrodt,<sup>2</sup> who believes that the two ideas, of Sheol and of the family grave, existed side by side, even though, logically

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1. Charles, R.H., A Critical History of the Doctrine of the Future Life, London, 1913, page 3.
2. Eichrodt, W., Theology of the Old Testament, Vol. II, London, 1967, pages 220 following.

speaking, they were not compatible. The graves gave the living visual re-assurance of the survival of the dead, but it needed imagination to be able to conceive of Sheol. This is also the view of R. Martin-Achard<sup>1</sup>: "Sheol is, in fact, a sort of vast grave of which the individual tombs are merely particular manifestations. For the Israelite, the question as to whether the departed is dwelling in his sepulchre or in the realm of the dead does not arise; the former denotes the latter....both these possibilities were simultaneously entertained. The soul of the departed is bound both to the grave and to Sheol".

The practice of burial in the ground resulted in Sheol, the 'vast necropolis' (Martin-Achard), being thought of as a subterranean cavern, located in the lower parts of the earth (Psalm 63:9) or 'beneath the waters' (Job 26:5), and the normal word used to describe entrance to Sheol is  $\aleph \aleph \aleph$  = 'to go down', (compare page 2). The expression 'they that go down to the pit' is a common one to describe the dead (e.g. Isaiah 14:19). The book of Job describes the 'bars' and 'gates' of Sheol, to emphasise that it is 'a land of no return' (Job 17:16 ; 7:9). This spatial imagery is carried on throughout the Old Testament. Sheol was sometimes personified as Death (Hosea 13:14), and is described as opening its mouth (Isaiah 5:14) or as swallowing its prey (Numbers 16: 30-32).

In order to understand the state of the dead in Sheol, it is necessary to consider briefly the main ideas of Old Testament psychology. This is not consistent,

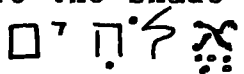
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1. Martin-Achard, R., From Death to Life: A Study of the Development of the Resurrection in the Old Testament, London, 1960, Page 38.

and although generalisations must be made in a study of this kind, they must be recognised as such; it seems impossible to analyse logically the Old Testament's doctrine of man and the relationship between the various parts of which he is made up to produce a consistent pattern. But the essential point is clear: that man was seen as a unity, a unity of body and soul. "The Hebrew idea of personality is an animated body and not an incarnated soul".<sup>1</sup> Man was a 'psychophysical organism',<sup>2</sup> that is, he was composed of a body and a soul, both of which were vital to real life. This union between body and soul was thought to be so close that the Hebrews were not able to think of any real existence without the body, a belief which had an important influence in shaping the idea of the after-life in the latest parts of the Old Testament. "The body is not the prison of the soul, but, on the contrary, is indispensable to it, and therefore, to be deprived of the body is an evil thing for the soul. Without the body the soul cannot live; though it survives, its lot is a pitiful one; it is condemned to mere existence. It has no prospect of salvation, no possibility of life, except in returning to the body in the resurrection of the latter".<sup>3</sup>

According to R.H. Charles,<sup>4</sup> there are two main psychologies in the Old Testament: the earlier one assumed that man was made up of body or flesh, (  $\text{גוֹשׁוֹת}$  ), together with the spirit or soul (  $\text{נֶפֶשׁ}$  ;  $\text{רוּחַ}$  ), the

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1. Peake, A.S., The People and the Book, Oxford, 1946, page 362.
  2. Johnson, A.R., The Vitality of the Individual in the thought of Ancient Israel, Cardiff, 1949, page 39.
  3. Martin-Achard, From Death to Life, page 32.
  4. Charles, A Critical History, pages 38 following.

latter two terms being regarded virtually as synonyms, though the 'spirit' eventually came to be used to describe the deeper spiritual feelings, in contrast to the 'soul', which denoted individual, personal consciousness and feeling. Thus, the only difference between 'spirit' and 'soul' was really a difference of function. At death, the destruction of the body meant that the connection between it and the 'soul' or 'spirit' was discontinued, though it was thought that the 'soul' or 'spirit' did manage to continue in a tenuous sort of way by going down to Sheol, where it managed to 'subsist', even though it was no longer alive in the fullest sense. Where this view prevails in the Old Testament, "...the souls or shades are conceived as possessing a real measure of conscious and active life, with free movement and memory and interest in the earthly fortunes of their descendants, as well as some power to influence these fortunes".<sup>1</sup> The story of Saul's consultation with the witch at Endor, where the shade of Samuel is called an 'elohim' (Hebrew: ) and is represented as having consciousness, together with a knowledge of, and interest in, the affairs of the world, forms a good example of this (1 Samuel 28), as does also the 'taunt-song' in Isaiah 14, where it is implied that there was recognition and memory among the shades. These passages, however, are not numerous.

The prevailing view throughout the Old Testament is a much more pessimistic one. It is based on a trichotomous view of man's nature, whereby man was seen as made up of body, soul and spirit, the soul being

1. Baillie, J., And the Life Everlasting, London, 1961, page 59.

regarded as a product of the spirit's indwelling the body, with no independent existence of its own at all. When the body died, the 'spirit returned to God who gave it' (Ecclesiasticus 12:7), and the soul, having lost its 'energising' principle, became defunct and was virtually annihilated, being left with nothing to give it existence. It was still thought to descend to Sheol, but its life there was characterised by lethargy and weakness. Although not strictly non-existence, life in Sheol was the end of any meaningful existence; it was "virtual annihilation".<sup>1</sup> In Isaiah 26:14 the inhabitants of Sheol are called 'the dead ones' and the expression 'a dead soul' (  $\text{נַפְשׁוֹתַי} \text{ מֵתוֹת}$  ) is sometimes used (e.g. Numbers 6:6). If the word  $\text{נַפְשׁוֹתַי} \text{ מֵתוֹת}$  which is the one most commonly used to describe the dead, is to be derived from the root  $\text{נָפַת}$  which means 'to be sunken' or 'slack', and then 'to be weak', then it would epitomise this idea of impotence, and is best translated "Weaklings".<sup>2</sup> Powerlessness was the basic feature of life in Sheol. The "Weaklings" lived in an environment described in terms of darkness, dust and decay (e.g. Job 10:21-22; 17:16; 14:10, respectively). They are said to be asleep (Job 14:12), and Sheol is consequently described as a land of silence (Psalm 94:17). It is also a 'land of forgetfulness', where all real existence is at an end (Psalm 39:13). In Job 3:14-19 it is implied that social and moral distinctions were no longer operative.

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1. Johnson, The Vitality of the Individual, page 93.
  2. North, C.R., Isaiah XL-LV, Torch Commentaries, London, 1959, page 43.

"But against this conception of a levelling-down there is opposed a contradictory and apparently more primitive tradition, in which each retains his rank in the Beyond, where social order is perpetuated, and where the common lot of death does not, even in shadowy Sheol, exclude definite distinctions among the perished."<sup>1</sup> Examples of this include Ezekiel 28:10 and 31:18. When the "tripartite" view of man prevailed, the conception of Sheol became correspondingly more and more gloomy. This view produced the unmitigated pessimism typified by the writer of Ecclesiastes,<sup>2</sup> who believed "There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest" (9:10).

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1. Martin-Achard, From Death to Life, page 39.
2. The conventional interpretation of the book of Ecclesiastes as thoroughly pessimistic is challenged by Rev. William Johnstone, "The Preacher as Scientist", Scottish Journal of Theology, Volume 20, No. 2, June 1967, pages 210 following, in which he argues that the apparent pessimism of the author is an attempt to explode the assumption, then current in the Wisdom schools, that man can fully understand the ways of God - such an attempt is bound to lead to "vanity", which is simply "the recognition that the pursuit of empirical knowledge cannot lead to a final or a full satisfaction". The author thus seeks to show that "there is a larger value, a fuller worth, and a dimension of experience which are just not amenable to scientific investigation", a truth which not only demonstrates the author's deep religious perception and renders the conventional view of Ecclesiastes untenable, but which also makes it particularly relevant to the sceptical scientific and technological age in which twentieth-century man lives.

The greatest deprivation suffered by the shades was that they could no longer enjoy fellowship with God. This is the aspect which is most often stressed (e.g. Psalm 6:5; 88:10-12; Isaiah 38:11). "The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence (Psalm 115:17) R. Martin-Achard says that this "is indubitably the most unendurable characteristic of Sheol, the most mournful consequence of death"<sup>1</sup> Although, as a result of a developing idea of God's omnipresence and omnipotence, Amos stated that even Sheol was not beyond the range of His interest (Amos 9:2), this assertion did not affect the nature of Sheol. In fact, the pre-Exilic prophets encouraged the tendency to destroy any thought of life and real existence in Sheol just because they saw such a tendency as dangerous to their belief in the Living God who acted within human history. The idea of corporate personality meant that the individual enjoyed only a minor importance vis-a-vis the community, because it was with the nation of Israel that God had established His covenant. The working out of God's plans for His people was always envisaged as taking place on this earth, and this meant that the prophets before the Exile were not basically interested in the individual and what happened to him after death. They believed that each person received his due reward within this life, and it was not until the sixth century B.C. that the rôle of the individual was seen to be important. The prevalence of necromancy also led these prophets to distrust the doctrine of Sheol, except that they acquiesced in it and tried to relegate it to an unimportant place in Hebrew thought. Both the pre-Exilic

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1. Martin-Achard, From Death to Life, page 42.

prophets and the Deuteronomic editors of the Old Testament were determined to destroy spiritualism and similar cults, because they were characteristic of heathenism and depended on the notion that the dead could still 'chirp and mutter' (Isaiah 8:19. Compare 1 Samuel 28: the witch of Endor). It was almost inevitable, therefore, that they should support the view which denied any vitality to the dead. Thus, up to the Exile, and in most circles, well beyond the Exile, Hebrew ideas about the after-life were vitiated by the Sheol doctrine, which was "...irreconcilable with any intelligible belief in a sole and supreme God".<sup>1</sup>

W. Eichrodt agrees that "...the Mosaic religion hermetically sealed the gate of Sheol....it was the shattering experience of God's will to rule which shut the gate of the kingdom of the dead and proscribed any dealings with the departed".<sup>2</sup> But he also correctly points out that this negative attitude eventually contributed to the growth of a solution of the problem of death and what followed it in "exclusively moral terms".

The accounts of the translation to heaven of Enoch (Genesis 5:24) and of Elijah (2 Kings 2:11), were regarded as atypical; they merely show that for a certain spiritual élite, it was thought that God could 'cheat' Sheol, but in the nature of the case, such occurrences were the exception rather than the rule. They do not contain any real belief in a future life, and merely illustrate the same point as that made by Amos: that when circumstances merited it, God's power could be extended to cover the realm of Sheol. The stories of the recalling of the soul

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1. Charles, A Critical History, page 51.
2. Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, Vol. II, page 221-222.

back from Sheol found in connection with Elijah and Elisha (1 Kings 17:17 foll; 2 Kings 4:31 foll; 13:21 foll.) have no relevance to the development of the idea of the after-life, because once again, the incidents were special cases, and the persons 'raised' had to die again. They simply illustrate again the idea of God's power as revealed in the actions of His prophets.

The exegesis of the fourth Servant Song in Isaiah 52-53 is much more difficult, not least because of the 'oscillation' which existed in the Hebrew mind between the concept of the individual and the group to which he belonged. If the verses in which the Servant's vindication by God (53:10-12) refer to the nation of Israel or to a faithful remnant within the nation, then the question is reasonably simple: the passage would refer to a national regeneration or 'resurrection' at the end of the Exile, and would be analogous in meaning to the vision of the valley of dry bones in Ezekiel 37, to be considered below. If the Servant, however, denotes an individual, the problem is much more difficult. There is a wide variety of opinion among scholars concerning the question of whether the words used in these verses imply the resurrection of the Servant, and if they do, concerning what type of resurrection is implied: a restoration back to life and longevity on the earth, or a resurrection in the full eschatological sense of translation to God's presence in the spiritual world. Two relevant considerations are: firstly, that the words used in these verses do not explicitly describe the Servant's resurrection, which is proved by the disagreement between experts about what they mean; and secondly, that it would be unusual, even if it is admitted that the words do denote such a process, for what would admittedly be

a new and revolutionary doctrine, to be expressed in such inexplicit language. Also the main interest of the author in this passage is not the problem of the possibility of a life after death, but the vindication of the Servant, and ultimately, the vindication of God and of His ways with the people of Israel. This last point is made very forcibly by R. Martin-Achard: "...the resurrection, if resurrection there be, is not anthropocentric, its end is not to render to man what belongs to man....it is theocentric, and its aim is to render to God what belongs to God. Its basis and its aim are nothing other than the very revelation of the Living God".<sup>1</sup> C.R. North<sup>2</sup> believes that the mid-sixth century B.C. is too early for one to assume that the idea of resurrection had been formulated with any certainty in Israel. In view of these considerations, it is probably best to suppose that the writer "is feeling his way; he senses that the Servant ought to escape death; so he asserts it without being able to explain the modality of an event that is beyond his understanding....More than this must not be read into the prophet's words, and we cannot say with certainty whether the writer of the fourth Song believed in the resurrection of the Servant....Isaiah 53 may perhaps enable us to obtain a glimpse of the resurrection of an individual unique in the annals of the Chosen people, but it does not allow us to make any general statement about the resurrection of the dead."<sup>3</sup> The incidents concerning the translations of Enoch and

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1. Martin-Achard, From Death to Life, pages 117-118.
  2. North, C.R., Isaiah XL-LV, Torch Bible Commentaries, London, 1959, pages 138 following.
  3. Martin-Achard, From Death to Life, pages 116 and 123.

Elijah, together with the restoration of the Suffering Servant, do, however, illustrate the existence of an important perception which was to play a decisive part in transforming the idea of the future life: the perception that Sheol was not a fitting end for faithful servants of God. This conviction became overpoweringly strong in post-Exilic times, and it will be shown later that it was one of the most potent factors in the emergence of the idea of the after-life. But until the Persian Period, Hebrew thought was dominated by the Sheol doctrine, which remained the orthodox one until the last two centuries B.C., during which it underwent transformation in most circles of Jewish thought, though not in all. For some Jews, death remained a 'cul-de-sac' with no goal at its end: "The dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward". (Ecclesiastes 9:5).

But the historical and theological results of the Exile ultimately led to the virtual destruction of the Sheol belief. The Exile, which from a national and political point of view was a disaster for the Jewish people, was religiously probably the most formative event in its history, apart from the Exodus, because the common view of the nation as the exclusive religious unit was altered and the corporate aspect of religion was seen to be merely complementary to the individual aspect. The nation continued to play a very important part in eschatology, but the worth of the individual person in the sight of God was more fully recognised and because of this, there developed a greater interest in what happened to the individual after death. Inevitably, this led to a strong dissatisfaction with the orthodox

Sheol doctrine, and produced the reaction against it which is found in the book of Job and in certain psalms which are normally assigned to the post-Exilic period. The negative idea of Sheol acted as a type of 'foil' against which these protests were developed. It was seen that for a life of fellowship with the Living God to end in the 'blind alley' of Sheol was a theological 'non sequitur', and the unshakeable faith in God which produced these objections was eventually to become the foundation doctrine on which an enduring belief about life after death was to be based.

The Exile thus affected the whole subject of eschatology, mainly because of the new emphasis and value which was placed on the individual person. Judah ceased to exist as a political unit, so the religious importance of the individual was increased. Jeremiah's work in this respect was crucial. He emphasised the idea of an immediate personal relationship between God and the individual, which he believed to be of the essence of true religion. The 'new covenant' (Jer. 31:31 foll.) would involve intimate personal fellowship between God and man; it would be spiritual rather than external; and it would be redemptive. Ezekiel carried this position further. He stressed that every soul belongs to God and is in direct moral relationship with God (Ezekiel 18, passim). The individual is responsible to God only for his own actions and is free from any guilt for the 'sins of the fathers'. Repentance would inevitably lead to forgiveness, but conversely, any fall from grace would result in punishment.

Once the religious value of the individual had been

thus recognised, the question of what happened after death was almost certain to increase in importance, and Ezekiel's dogmatic overstatement of the case made the problem even more urgent. His ideas tended to 'atomise' the nation into a series of separate individual units, which were completely independent of each other. But it was an overstatement and oversimplification of the case to state that the individual did not suffer for the sins of others. Sometimes, 'the children's teeth were set on edge', and it was also seen that within the limits of the present life, the individual person was not always accorded his exact reward or punishment. On the contrary, it was all too obvious that the wicked did not 'meet with darkness in the daytime', nor did the righteous 'come to their graves in a full age' (Job 5:14 and 26). Thus, Ezekiel's over-emphatic individualism, as developed in some of the Psalms (e.g. 34:19-21; 37:28) and Proverbs (11:31), made the problem of the future life even more acute. Confronted by the Sheol doctrine on the one hand, and by dogmatic individualism on the other, one of two attitudes was possible: one could become sceptical and cynical, as did the author of Ecclesiastes, probably written circa 200 B.C., who came to the conclusion that "There is one event to the righteous and to the wicked" (9:2), and who followed his reasoning to its logical result: "Eat thy bread with joy and drink thy wine with a merry heart... for man knoweth not his time" (9:7 and 12).<sup>1</sup> Or one could disagree with the orthodox doctrines and attempt to find

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1. But compare note 2 on page 9 for a different evaluation of Ecclesiastes' position.

a way round them. This latter attitude is typified by the authors of the book of Job and of certain psalms, especially Psalms 16, 49 and 73, which will now be considered.

These passages are open to a wide variety of interpretation. Job 19:25 foll. is a classic 'crux interpretum' of Old Testament study, for example, not least because of its textual uncertainty, and several competent scholars would agree that "it can be made to refer to life after death only by a most liberal latitude in translation, a strong attachment to the Latin version and reminiscences of Handel's 'Messiah'. The Hebrew text is difficult, but it is unlikely that the vindicator is God, and Job almost certainly means that he will be vindicated before he is dead".<sup>1</sup> R.H. Charles reads the passage as follows:

"I know that my Redeemer (or Vindicator) liveth,  
And that at the last he will appear above (my) grave;  
And after my skin has been destroyed,  
Without my body I shall see God,  
Whom I shall see for myself,  
And my eyes shall behold, and not another",

which seems to be a far too optimistic translation of the Hebrew text. It is impossible in the present study to go into details of the text, but a much more realistic and accurate rendering of the broken Hebrew text into English is provided by the following translation, by R. Martin-Achard:<sup>2</sup>

"But I, I know that my defender is alive,  
And at the last, he will stand up on the earth,  
And after they have torn my skin to shreds,  
this (?)  
rent from my flesh, I shall see God.  
I myself shall see Him, myself, my eyes  
will see Him, not another,  
my reins are wasting within me".

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1. Snaith, N.H., The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament, London, 1944, page 90.
  2. Martin-Achard, From Death to Life, page 166.

R.H. Charles believed that both here and in Job 14: 1-15 ("Oh, that thou wouldst hide me in Sheol...") there is a "momentary anticipation" of a future existence.<sup>1</sup> Several other scholars would agree with this verdict, at least in a tentative way. E.F. Sutcliffe<sup>2</sup> states that the author "seems to be reaching out after something more satisfying than the common view, but not yet to have grasped it securely", while D.S. Russell speaks of this "glimmering of hope" as a tentative possibility rather than as a definite doctrine.<sup>3</sup> The Versions interpret the passage in different ways: the Septuagint is ambiguous, because it reads: "I know that he is eternal who is to deliver me on earth, to restore my flesh which is suffering this. For that which has been wrought for me is of the Lord, that I will know myself, that my eye has seen, and not another." ("To restore" is a translation of the Greek word ἀναστῆσαι, which could refer either to healing or to resurrection.). The Vulgate rendering may be translated as follows: "On the last day I shall be raised from the earth and be clothed once more with my skin, and in my flesh I shall see God". The words "in my flesh" (Latin = 'in carne mea') imply a definite resurrection. But even if the passage is interpreted positively in this way, it must be noted that it does not imply a fully-fledged doctrine of the future life, because at the most, it only contains the idea of a temporary and exceptional restoration of life for the purpose of Job's vindication. This is proved by the fact that the

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1. Charles, A Critical History, page 69.
2. Sutcliffe, The Old Testament and the Future Life, Westminster, page 165.
3. Russell, D.S., The Jews from Alexander to Herod, Oxford, 1967, page 150.

Sheol doctrine is consistently maintained throughout the book of Job apart from the two passages in question (chapters 14 and 19). However, the point, both in Job and in the Psalms which will be considered below, is not whether they contain a definite doctrine of the future life, which is to apply a false yardstick to them, but the faith which lies behind them. A.B. Davidson fixed on this important point when he stated that the thought expressed here could only reach its logical conclusion in a belief in a future life:

"...this principle...grasped with convulsive earnestness in the prospect of death, became the Hebrew doctrine of Immortality."<sup>1</sup> Both main factors in the development of the idea of a future life are to be seen in the book of Job: the need for a solution of the problem caused by the lack of proper retribution within the present life, and the invincible conviction of close fellowship with God. W. Eichrodt calls this line of thought produced by these twin factors "the way of faith-realism",<sup>2</sup> In commenting on the passage Job 19:25-27, Eichrodt says: "In faith he has accepted the word of God...as in itself the essence of life and of blessedness even for the individual believer; and in comparison with this, death has no more terror and the suffering of life is no longer a temptation".<sup>3</sup>

The same two factors which are in evidence in the book of Job are found once again in certain psalms which are normally assigned to the period between the end of the Exile and about 300 B.C. The three outstanding ones

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1. Davidson, A.B., Commentary on Job, Oxford, 1903, pages 291-292.
2. Eichrodt, Theology of Old Testament, Vol. II, page 517.
3. Eichrodt, Theology of Old Testament, Vol. II, page 519.

in this respect are Psalms 16, 49 and 73. The admitted ambiguity of the language used in these psalms has produced a wealth of conflicting interpretations, some scholars asserting that they contain a faint adumbration of the idea of a future life, while others deny this, and refer the passages either to the idea of rescue from imminent death or earthly troubles rather than resuscitation after death. Dogmatism is out of place, whatever the view taken; it is not legitimate simply to dismiss the passages categorically as non-eschatological, nor is it permissible to overstate the case and postulate in them an explicit doctrine of the after-life.

Psalm 16:10-11 reads as follows (Revised Version):

"For thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheol; neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption.

Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; in thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

R.H. Charles rejected any reference to a future life here and interpreted the words to refer to the community, according to the idea of corporate personality. Some interpreters take the words to mean that Yahweh would not allow the psalmist to die prematurely, but would give him a new lease of earthly fellowship with Him before death. But there is no reference in the rest of the psalm to the idea of sickness or the likelihood of death, so this seems to be a forced interpretation. If the term 'Sheol' is being used literally, and not metaphorically, as such an interpretation would necessitate, then it is reasonable to suppose that there is here a hesitant belief that the psalmist would escape from it. It is interesting to note that verse 16 was applied to the Resurrection of Jesus by the Apostolic Church, showing that it was interpreted

positively from an early period in Church history (see Acts 2:25 foll. and 13:36 foll.). But once again, the real question is not whether there is an exceptional statement about the conquest of death. The point is the certainty of unbroken communion with God. "Because of the presence of the Living God the problem of death becomes secondary; in some sense death is blotted out, it retreats... in the presence of the Living God it loses its importance...he who has the God of Israel for his portion possesses a never-failing joy; in some sense he lives in a sort of eternal present."<sup>1</sup>

The next passage for consideration is Psalm 49:15, which reads (R.V.): "But God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol: for he shall receive me". The subject of the psalm as a whole is the untenability of the orthodox doctrine of Sheol. The basic difficulty of interpretation is whether or not the first person singular pronouns refer to the individual psalmist. If they do, then it is difficult to interpret the words in any other way than that of individual continuation of life after death. This view of the passage is corroborated by reference to verse 14, the previous verse, where Sheol is explicitly and literally used to denote a place of punishment for the wicked: "They are appointed as a flock for Sheol" (in reference to the wicked). (This is one of the earliest references to the idea of Sheol as a place of retribution for the wicked). It is therefore legitimate to interpret 'Sheol' in a similar literal fashion in verse 15, to mean that the righteous, who suffer during the present life, will receive their deserved

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1. Martin-Achard, From Death to Life, pages 151-152.

recompense in a future existence. If it refers merely to a temporal delivery, from earthly trouble, then this would imply that the wicked ultimately still fared better than the righteous, which would cut across the whole argument of the psalm. This is the position adopted by E.F. Sutcliffe.<sup>1</sup> C.F. Burney put forward a similar viewpoint: "The more I examine this psalm, the more does the conviction force itself upon me that the writer has in view something more than the mere temporary recompense of the righteous during this earthly life."<sup>2</sup> An interesting point with regard to both Psalm 49:15 and 73:24, which will be considered next, is that the word translated 'receive' (Hebrew:

תָּרַץ ) is the same term as that used of Enoch's and Elijah's translations to heaven in Genesis 5:24 and 2 Kings 2:3 foll. This suggests that the passages from the two psalms ought to be interpreted positively; but the Hebrew word is used quite often with no eschatological meaning, so the point is not decisive (e.g. Psalm 18:16).

The final passage for consideration is Psalm 73:23-26, which also illustrates the 'way of faith-realism'.

- "23. Nevertheless I am continually with thee;  
 thou dost hold my right hand.  
 24. Thou dost guide me with thy counsel,  
 and afterward thou wilt receive me to glory.  
 25. Whom have I in heaven but thee?  
 And there is nothing upon earth that I  
 desire besides thee.  
 26. My flesh and my heart may fail,  
 but God is the strength of my heart and  
 my portion for ever."

As in Psalm 49, the question at issue here is the unmerited

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 1. Sutcliffe, The Old Testament and the Future Life, page 102.  
 2. Burney, Israel's Hope, page 41.

suffering of the righteous and the blatant prosperity of the wicked. "The wicked...increase in riches" and are "always at ease". (verse 12). This posed a tremendous problem for the psalmist: "When I thought how I might know this, it was too painful for me". He solves the problem partly by recalling that the prosperity of the wicked does not last for long; they will "become a desolation in a moment" (verse 19). Then, in verse 23, he remembers that Yahweh is always with him, and in verses 24-25 he expresses his belief that fellowship with Him is the 'summum bonum' of life, asserting that he will maintain his faith in Him despite his own frailty of flesh and lack of courage: "God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever". The crucial words requiring interpretation are those in verse 24: "And afterward receive me to glory". (Hebrew:   
 וְאַחֲרַיִךְ יִקַּח מֵיְיָ וְאַחֲרַיִךְ יִקַּח מֵיְיָ! Literally the words mean: 'and after glory thou wilt take me'.   
 וְאַחֲרַיִךְ 'glory', can be understood in several different ways). H. Gunkel, who believed that the idea of life after death appeared nowhere in the Psalter, thought that an emendation of the text was necessary here, and altered it to:   
 וְאַחֲרַיִךְ יִקַּח מֵיְיָ וְאַחֲרַיִךְ יִקַּח מֵיְיָ! which means: 'Thou wilt strengthen my liver in the way', which would merely be an expression of confidence in God's guidance and support.<sup>1</sup> Another scholar who rejects any reference to the afterlife here is N. Snaith, who states: "The argument is valid only in the English version. The Hebrew reads 'the heavens'. He is speaking geographically. Further, 'kabob', 'glory', means honour and prosperity

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1. Martin-Achard, From Death to Life, page 162.

in the things of this life; it means 'heavenly bliss' only with the English Evangelicals of a former generation. The 'after' means: 'after these temporary distresses'." <sup>1</sup> But the majority opinion of scholars favours a positive interpretation of this verse. It has already been noted that in verse 24b there is again the occurrence of the 'technical term' for assumption or translation, (  $\pi \rho \acute{\alpha}$  ). Another relevant consideration is that when the psalmist speaks of God "receiving" him, it must be noted that he was confident that he already possessed God's fellowship on earth, so that the clause would have little meaning if it did not refer to a future existence. Many first-rank scholars, therefore, see here a tentative adumbration of the idea of a future life (including R.H. Charles, C.F. Burney, E.F. Sutcliffe, H.H. Rowley). But all make the point that the vital factor is not the contents of the statements themselves, but the conviction of fellowship with God which lies behind them, and which was so real that before long it became impossible to draw the dividing line between such a faith in God and belief in a future life. This idea is the main contribution of the Old Testament to the New Testament doctrine of the future life. Although it is only "a glimmering of hope rather than the shining of a certain faith" <sup>2</sup>, the important thing is that the implications of man's fellowship with God were being realised, and once this process reached fruition, belief in a future life was inevitable. "Such a personal relation to God implicitly demands more,

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1. Snaithe, Distinctive Ideas, page 89.
2. Russell, The Jews, page 150.

and can only be satisfied with a doctrine of personal immortality".<sup>1</sup>

The breakthrough eventually came within the context of the hope for the nation concerning the Day of the Lord. Although the Old Testament prophets showed virtually no interest in the Sheol doctrine, because of its heathen associations and because any undue emphasis on it might lead to a diminution of the importance attached to this life, yet they still maintained their interest in eschatology, but it was the communal aspect rather than the individual aspect that interested them: "...Israel indeed looked forward to a blessed immortality, but... the nation and not the individual was the unit of immortality in which it put its trust."<sup>2</sup> Their hope for the future lay in the nation: God would establish His Kingdom on earth, and those who were fortunate enough to be alive at the moment of its inauguration would enjoy the benefits which it conferred. Those who had died before this would share in the Kingdom only in the sense that their work had contributed to its advent, and that they would be remembered for this. But after the Exile, with the development of individualism, it was felt to be illogical that those who had served God faithfully on earth should fail to share in the messianic age simply because they died before it was established. This development of what W. Eichrodt calls 'the eschatological resurrection hope',<sup>3</sup> culminated in the expression of the two most explicit passages concerning the future life in the Old Testament: Isaiah 26:19 and Daniel 12 2-3, which are apocalyptic in nature but which

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1. Robinson, Christian Doctrine of Man, page 41.
  2. Baillie, And the Life Everlasting, page 59.
  3. Eichrodt, Theology, Vol. II, page 515.

will be considered here because they fall within the pages of the Old Testament. Thus, as R.H. Charles points out:<sup>1</sup> "The belief in a blessed future life springs not from prophecy but from apocalyptic... Not even a hint of it is to be found in Old Testament' prophecy. On the other hand, the apocalypticist made it a fundamental postulate of his belief in God."

The Isaiah Apocalypse (Isaiah 24-27) is normally assigned to a date between the fourth and third centuries B.C. H.H. Rowley<sup>2</sup> believes that it cannot be earlier than the time of Alexander the Great, and the hope of resurrection which it contains may have been created by the suffering of the pious Jews during the period of upheaval which followed his death, circa 323 B.C. Some commentators believe that the reference in 26:19 is to a national rather than an individual hope of resurrection, which illustrates just how closely the two eschatologies were intertwined. Two passages from the prophets are often cited as<sup>a</sup> foreshadowing of this hope of national resurrection: Hosea 6:3 and Ezekiel chapter 37, where it is argued that the concept of resurrection is used metaphorically to suggest the re-surgence of the Jewish nation, and it seems possible that the language used by Ezekiel, and the actual form of his vision, the valley of dry bones, did have some influence on later thought, helping to give currency to the idea of resurrection, not only for the nation, but eventually for the individual also. In the Revised Version, the passage reads as follows:

Thy dead shall live; my dead bodies shall arise. Awake and sing ye that dwell in the dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast forth her dead".

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1. Charles, A Critical History, page 178.
2. Rowley, H.H., The Growth of the Old Testament, page 150.

If one is content to accept this rendering, then the balance of probability lies with the national interpretation, the pronouns 'thy' and 'ye' referring to the nation of Israel. The development of thought in the overall context makes this reasonably clear. In verse 11, God's zeal for His people is mentioned, and in verses 16 foll., the author describes the sufferings of the people of God and their decimation by enemies; but he believes that their numbers will be supplemented by an act of God which is described in verse 19. H.H. Rowley states: "...there is here no thought of individual resurrection, though the form of the passage may have played some part in preparing men for such an idea."<sup>1</sup> E.F. Sutcliffe is of a similar opinion.<sup>2</sup> However, if one follows the Versions, it is possible to make certain emendations which would introduce the idea of individual resurrection. As emended, the passage reads as follows: "Thy dead shall live; their corpses shall rise. They that dwell in the dust shall awake and sing. For the dew of lights is thy dew, and the earth shall give birth to the shades". (D.S. Russell's translation.)<sup>3</sup> 'Their corpses' is the reading of the Syriac and the Targum. 'They that dwell in the dust' is the reading of the Septuagint, supported by the reading of the Isaiah scroll from Qumran. The translation 'dew of lights' (Hebrew: טל אורות), is said to be a better rendering of the Hebrew (compare Psalm 104:2), and the reference would be to the regions of light where God exists. Further support for the individual interpretation is said to be provided by the

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1. Rowley, The Faith of Israel, page 167.
  2. Sutcliffe, The Old Testament and the Future Life, page 228 following.
  3. Russell, The Jews, page 216.

sequence of thought in the immediate context, because in verse 14, it is stated that the heathen oppressors are dead and will not live, so that by contrast, verse 19 requires to be interpreted in an individual sense. Death is a permanent state only for the enemies of God. Those who had been faithful to God during their earthly lives would not suffer the same fate but would be recalled from the 'dust'. It has also to be remembered that in the same Apocalypse, in 25:8, the author describes how God 'hath swallowed up death for ever', which is said to lend support to the individual interpretation of 26:19. R.H. Charles favoured this interpretation, and states that in this passage there is found "a truly spiritual doctrine of the future life, because that life stands in organic and living relation to the present life in God which the faithful enjoy on earth".<sup>1</sup> He also shows that in this passage there is the idea of a double restoration: restoration to fellowship with God and to the people of God, and that for the first time there takes place a synthesis of the eschatologies of the individual and of the nation. R. Martin-Achard also believes that the passage must be interpreted in this way, though he prefers to understand it as a prayer rather than a statement: "In the form of a prayer, Isaiah 26:19 proclaims the resurrection of the dead...The concept of resurrection does not appear to be absolutely novel to the writer of the prayer... The resurrection is seen as a possibility already glimpsed and now defined with precision, rather than as a 'creatio ex nihilo'. Isaiah 26:19 thus implies that in the fourth century there were believers who could admit

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1. Charles, A Critical History, page 128.

the possibility of a new life after death".<sup>1</sup>

With regard to this passage, if it is to be interpreted in the individual sense, certain other points are worthy of comment. Firstly, it is the earliest reference in the Old Testament to this conception. Secondly, it illustrates how the idea of bodily resurrection was the natural category of thought for the Jews to use, in view of their belief about the unity of man's personality: "...human nature was conceived by the Hebrew as a unity requiring both elements, body and soul, to constitute it...If the Hebrew was to acquire any idea of life after death which possessed a real vitality...there would have to be a resurrection of the dead body for the recovered soul to animate it."<sup>2</sup> Thirdly, the passage does not suggest the idea of a general resurrection, even of Jews, but only that of a selective resurrection of faithful Israelites. The final point is that some scholars would discern in this passage a certain amount of retrogression from a spiritual point of view when it is compared with the passages from the psalms discussed above, because they express the hope that the man who lives to God will avoid Sheol completely, whereas in the Isaiah passage even those who are to be resurrected are represented as having to wait in Sheol until they are raised.<sup>3</sup>

The first unmistakable and undisputed reference to the idea of individual resurrection in the Old Testament

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1. Martin-Achard, From Death to Life, page 127.
2. Robinson, H.W., Religious Ideas of the Old Testament, London, 1956, page 97.
3. O. Cullmann argues that the concept of sleep as applied to the dead is not metaphorical, but has a literal meaning. See note on page 78.

is that found in Daniel 12:2-3:

"And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life and some to 'shame and everlasting contempt.

And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever". (Revised Version).

The date normally assigned to the book of Daniel is circa 165 B.C., at the height of the struggle with Hellenism, and it was as a result of this struggle, during which many Jews were martyred for their faith, that the idea of resurrection was formulated in these explicit terms. "Their faith, finding nothing in the present to which it can attach itself, takes refuge in the future and becomes eschatological."<sup>1</sup> The brevity of the passage suggests that the ideas which it contains had by this time become fixed elements in Jewish belief. The main emphasis is on the idea of retribution, which is to be expected when one considers the historical circumstances which led to the emergence of this belief: both the faithful Jews and the apostates during the Maccabaeen Revolt would be resurrected to receive their proper recompense. This close connection between resurrection and martyrdom is one of the distinctive features of the Old Testament doctrine (compare the fourth Servant Song and Isaiah 26). Another feature of the Daniel passage is that for the first time, moral distinctions enter into the idea of the future life; the pre-eminently good and the notoriously evil are to be raised, though the rest of mankind (compare "many" in verse 12), are presumably to continue in the sleep of Sheol. R.H. Charles criticised this element as a "mere mechanical device" to vindicate the justice of God. The

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1. Morgan, W., Dictionary of the Apostolic Church,  
Quoted by Griffith-Jones, E., Faith & Immortality, p.217.

resurrection is no longer based on valid moral principles, because not only the righteous, but also the wicked, are said to share in it. Charles therefore spoke of it as a "lifeless dogma",<sup>1</sup> though it is doubtful if these criticisms are justified, because the wicked are raised to punishment and the righteous to eternal life. (See later, page 37). But whatever the defects of the belief, it was undoubtedly a development of paramount importance in the history of religion when the idea of resurrection thus established itself as part of the definitive doctrines of Judaism.

It now remains to point out some distinctive features of the Old Testament's doctrine of the future life, and to assess its contribution to the New Testament conception.

The basic and vital characteristic is that, although it only appears late in the Old Testament, it was essentially theocentric in nature; that is, it was evolved because of the Hebrews' belief in God. "The prospect of knowing God is what gives the Old Testament hope its particular flavour; it is in this that its really distinctive contribution lies...The really distinctive thing about it is that it starts from God and centres on God. The desire for communion with God rather than concern for justice is the real motive force behind the Hebrew search for a more adequate view of life after death"<sup>2</sup> The work of the Old Testament prophets in establishing ethical monotheism as the basis of Hebrew theology was thus crucial, even though they themselves did not actually

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1. Charles, A Critical History, page 132.
2. Paternoster, M., Thou Art There Also: God, Death and Hell, London, 1967, pages 10-12.

formulate a doctrine of the afterlife. Even though the growth of a definite belief in resurrection was a result of historical events, the ultimate reasons for this growth were theological.<sup>1</sup> Belief in God's omnipotence led to the corollary that even Sheol could not be outside His power and area of interest: 'If I make my bed in Sheol, thou art there' (Psalm 139:8). Another fundamental element in Hebrew theology, that of God's righteousness, led inevitably to the belief that the injustices of this earthly life must be rectified in a future existence. The idea of God's loving-kindness to men involved the conclusion that even death could not break such a relationship. "The Old Testament doctrine of God is of itself enough to explain the entire history of the Old Testament conception of a future life...Its faith is a faith in a living God and therefore in everlasting life."<sup>2</sup> The spiritual insight of the Jews led them to place the emphasis on God, and when the full implications of man's fellowship with God were worked out, the foundation was laid for the New Testament doctrine of the future life. Thus, although one must agree with a scholar of the stature of H. Wheeler Robinson when he states that "...the most marked limitation of the Old Testament doctrine of man (is that)

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1. After a full discussion of the possibility of Persian and Canaanite influence on the Old Testament conception of the after-life, R. Martin-Achard believes that there is sufficient evidence to substantiate the case, but does not regard the influence as decisive: "...the foreign contribution is incontrovertible; nevertheless, the determinative factor came from Israel itself, from its faith in the Living God...". From Death to Life, pages 186-205.
  2. Salmond, S.D.F., The Christian Doctrine of Immortality, Edinburgh, 1901, page 222.

little more than the tendency towards the doctrine of the future life can be found in its pages",<sup>1</sup> one must enter the rider that this 'tendency' contained the seeds of the New Testament doctrine: that it is in fellowship with, and knowledge of, the one true God that man's hope of a future existence lies.

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1. Robinson, The Christian Doctrine of Man, page 70.

CHAPTER TWODEVELOPMENTS DURING THE INTER-TESTAMENTAL PERIOD

The history and spiritual development of the Jews did not end with the close of the Old Testament canon, and before the advent of Christianity there was a period of almost two hundred years during which the beliefs which are only incipient in most of its pages became part of the basic ideas of orthodox Judaism. The apocalyptic period saw considerable modification and development of some of the ideas which were outlined in the previous chapter. R.H. Charles considered the years between about 180 B.C. and the birth of Jesus to be the most interesting and fertile ones in Jewish history. He states that, apart from a study of the Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha, no New Testament scholar can understand the New Testament as "the culmination of the past, nor can any Jew explain how Talmudic Judaism came to possess its higher conceptions of the future life, unless he studies this literature as the sequel of the Old Testament".<sup>1</sup> Far from being a period when prophecy was dead, which was the older viewpoint of this period, it was a time when apocalyptic, the 'child of prophecy', took over the task of interpreting God's ways to men, thus contributing much to the intellectual climate in which rabbinic Judaism and Christianity were born. D.S. Russell agrees with this assessment of the supreme importance of this literature: "In many ways the apocalyptic literature serves as a bridge between the Old Testament and the New Testament,

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1. Charles, R.H., Religious Development between the Old and New Testaments, London, 1914, page 45.

and this is perhaps nowhere more clearly shown than in its belief concerning the life beyond death. Much of the teaching of the New Testament in this respect is inexplicable simply in terms of the Old Testament background, but it can be seen in its true light within the setting of apocalyptic thought".<sup>1</sup>

Whereas the study of the Old Testament's conception of the future life is rendered difficult by the paucity of unambiguous references, the opposite is the case with regard to the literature of the inter-testamental period. There is "a plethora of speculations",<sup>2</sup> and because of this, and the conflicting nature of many of these speculations, it is impossible and therefore futile to try to analyse them into a systematic doctrine of eschatology. All that the present study will attempt is a brief consideration of some of the outstanding developments which have particular relevance to the idea of the future life, and which, despite the wealth of confusing detail, are reasonably well-defined. Development of ideas took place within three main areas of thought: those concerning the Kingdom of God, the Messiah and the future life. The last one is the most relevant at this juncture and it is on this aspect that the present chapter concentrates.

The main feature of the period was the development of belief in resurrection into a fixed and permanent element in eschatology, though it cannot be said to have become a dogma until after the fall of Jerusalem and the disappearance of the Sadducees (70 A.D.). Three views were

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1. Russell, D.S., Between the Testaments, London, 1960, page 143.
  2. Simpson, J.Y., Man and the Attainment of Immortality, London, 1923, page 283.

current during these centuries concerning the after-life: firstly, some of the books retain the conventional Old Testament belief in Sheol; secondly, the majority contain the idea of bodily resurrection, in a great variety of forms; and thirdly, a few books put forward the idea of the immortality of the soul.

Those books which do not mention the resurrection and retain the idea of Sheol include: Ecclesiasticus, Tobit, Judith, Baruch and 1 Maccabees. Their reactionary outlook is typified by the following words from Ecclesiasticus 17:27-28:

"Who shall give praise to the Most High in the grave,  
Instead of them which live and return thanks?  
Thanksgiving perisheth from the dead, as from one  
that is not:  
He that is in life and health shall praise the Lord."

This traditional eschatology was maintained by the Sadducees until they became defunct. But it was a minority view and most of the inter-testamental books do contain belief in the future life, explicitly expressed in terms of bodily resurrection, although there is considerable modification of the ideas of Isaiah 26 and Daniel 12.

The first modification concerns the scope of the resurrection. Some books follow the idea of Isaiah 26 in putting forward the idea of a resurrection of the righteous Jews only. For example, the Psalms of Solomon 3:16 states that the righteous will "rise again into eternal life". Others, on the analogy of Daniel 12, have the idea of a double resurrection of good and evil. This is the position adopted in the Noachic Fragments in 1 Enoch (= 1 Enoch 6-11; 54:7-55:2; 60; 65:1-69:25; 106-107): the righteous are raised to share in the

messianic kingdom, and the wicked are resurrected to suffer judgement. But some writers manage to escape from their narrow Jewish mould by putting forward the idea of a universal resurrection:

"Then also, all men shall rise, some unto glory and some unto shame". (The Testament of Benjamin 10:8): Here the double resurrection is not limited to the Jews, but includes all nations. Other passages which postulate this view include 2 Esdras 7:32-35 and The Apocalypse of Baruch 50-51. It has been noted that R.H. Charles regarded this development of a double resurrection of good and evil as introducing a mechanical and unspiritual idea of resurrection when compared with the idea of a resurrection limited to the righteous only. But to the Jewish mind it was based on the idea of God's justice, which not only required that the righteous should be rewarded but also that the wicked should not be allowed to escape in death unpunished.<sup>1</sup> Also, the idea of a general resurrection of all men, though it was a minority view, was again based on Hebrew theology, as represented, for example, by Deutero-Isaiah (e.g. 45:22).

Another notable change from the previous viewpoint is the modification which occurs in the idea of Sheol. Although a few books retain the former gloomy idea of Sheol, as mentioned above, there is a radical change of view in the other books. There occurs a very significant alteration in the terminology used. Whereas in Isaiah 26 the dead are still referred to as 'shades' and in Daniel 12 are described as 'asleep', the majority of the apocalyptic books use the terms 'souls' or 'spirits'.

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1. Compare above, page 30.

For example, in 1 Enoch 103:4, 7-8, it is stated that the righteous

"shall live and rejoice, neither shall their spirits perish",

but the wicked

"shall be in great tribulation, and into darkness and chains and a burning fire where there is grievous judgement shall their spirits enter".

This was a very important development because it meant that when a man died and his body was destroyed, he still continued to possess personal identity and consciousness, thus modifying the older and typical Hebrew view that personality depended completely on possession of a body. Although the apocalyptists still thought that the souls or spirits possessed some kind of form, this development was a necessary corrective to the crude materialism which is found in some passages such as 2 Maccabees 7, where it is supposed that the resurrected body will include <sup>m</sup>disembled organs:

"These (hands) I had from heaven; for His name's sake, I count them nought; from him I hope to get them back again" (7:11).

This change of terminology is accompanied by a change of conception: the souls or spirits of the dead are described as conscious and as possessing emotions in Sheol. For example, in 1 Enoch 9:10 it is said that the souls of the righteous 'cry' and 'lament' because of men's evil deeds on earth, and in 2 Esdras, 7:80 following, the wicked are represented as wandering in torment, whereas the righteous enjoy peace and content. Although full fellowship with God cannot be enjoyed until after the resurrection, the righteous begin to enjoy a certain amount of bliss in Sheol, which is a revolutionary change from the Old Testament viewpoint.

The most important change in the doctrine of Sheol is that instead of its being the permanent resting-place of the dead, it becomes merely a temporary, intermediate state before the final judgement. It was shown in the last paragraph how the dead were thought to experience a foretaste of their final fate while they were waiting in Sheol. Eventually, this moral differentiation led to the idea of different 'compartments' or 'divisions' in Sheol, which were given names such as Gehenna and Paradise. For example, 2 Esdras 7:36 speaks of "the paradise of delight", which is contrasted with "the furnace of Gehenna". Four such 'compartments', Paradise, Heaven, Hell and Gehenna, are mentioned in the apocalyptic literature, in addition to Sheol itself. This development again was one of tremendous significance, because it implied that a man's fate was to be decided purely on moral grounds, according to the type of life he had led on earth. "It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of this revolution in Jewish thought on the nature of the after-life."<sup>1</sup> R.H. Charles, while thus accepting the value of this development, criticises the concomitant idea that no moral change is possible in Sheol because a man's fate is finally fixed at the moment of death, as a retrogressive step: "Sheol thus conceived is a place of petrified moralities and suspended graces."<sup>2</sup> Although one or two apocalyptic books contain hints that a person's fate may be altered after death (e.g. The Testament of Abraham, chapter 14, where it is said that the prayers of the righteous may gain salvation

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1. Charles, A Critical History, page 187.

2. Ibid, page 187.

for those who were neither outstandingly good or evil), the normal view is that expressed in 2 Baruch 85:12:

"There shall not be there again...change of ways, nor place for prayer, nor sending of petitions,...nor place for repentance of the soul..."

Another question which engaged the attention of the apocalyptic writers was that concerning the form in which the souls or spirits would be resurrected from Sheol. Although the idea of the immortality of the soul is found in a few books, to be considered later, most of the apocalyptists rejected it and express the idea of bodily resurrection. The general tendency is for the earlier books to think of this resurrection in rather crude material ways, as a restoration of the actual particles of the earthly body; but even books which were composed during the Christian era contain the same belief. For example, in 2 Baruch 50:2 the righteous, who have 'fallen asleep in hope', are said to rise again with the bodies in which they died, so that they may recognise each other, and in the Sibylline Oracles, Book IV, lines 181-182, it is stated:

"Then God Himself shall fashion again the bones and ashes of men, and shall raise up mortals once more as they were before".

But the majority of later books, in which the present world is thought to be unfit to be the site of the Messianic Kingdom, have a more spiritual idea of the resurrection: the resurrection body was conformed more closely to its spiritual environment. In 1 Enoch 39:4-5, the author speaks of the 'garments of glory' with which the righteous are to be clothed, and further describes them as 'garments of life from the Lord of Spirits' (62: 15-16), both of which are descriptions of the spiritual bodies of the resurrected dead. 2 Baruch 50-51,

cited above, puts forward the idea that although the dead are to be raised with their actual earthly bodies restored, these would be transformed into more suitable bodies to fit in with their new existence in heaven. The connection between the physical body and the spiritual body is not described in detail by any of the writers, but they obviously suppose that there is some essential connection or 'identity' between them. "The 'spiritual' body, then, is not merely a symbolic body in the sense that it is representational, simply representing the earthly body but being something quite different in identity from it, having no organic relation with it; rather it may be described as constitutive, for it is constituted by body as men understand that term and has the same substructure, however much the concept is spiritualised. The 'spiritual' body is the physical body transformed so as to correspond to that environment which is natural to the nature and being of God himself."<sup>1</sup> The importance of this idea, which is an advance on the conception of a merely physical resuscitation, is that it implies that the next life is a higher form of life which necessitates a new instrument for man's personality to express itself.

The third view evident during the inter-testamental period with regard to the future life was the belief in the immortality of the soul, which is found in a few books, but which did not find a very wide acceptance. The 'locus classicus' for this belief is the Book of

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1. Russell, Between the Testaments, page 161.

Wisdom 3:1-5:

"The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment shall touch them. In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died; and their departure was accounted to be their hurt, and their journey away from us to be their ruin; but they are in peace. For even if in the sight of men they be punished, their hope is full of immortality; and having borne a little chastening, they shall receive great good; because God made trial of them, and found them worthy of Himself".

Thus the bodies of the righteous are left behind on earth at death and their souls pass immediately into the presence of God to wait for judgement. This conception was based on Platonism, with its ideas of the pre-existence of the soul (found in Wisdom 8:19-20) and the evil of the material universe, including the 'corruptible body' (Wisdom 9:15). A slightly different form of the doctrine is found in the Book of Jubilees, in which the souls of the righteous have to wait until the final judgement before they pass to heaven; it speaks of the 'Day of the Great Judgement' and says of the righteous:

"Their bones shall rest in the earth, and their spirits shall have much joy" (23:11,13).

In 1 Enoch 103:3-4, it is stated that the souls of the righteous will enjoy 'all goodness and joy and glory', and that they shall "live and rejoice; their spirits will not perish." However, this development stood outside the mainstream of Hebrew thought and was ultimately rejected. "As writers in the Hebrew tradition, the apocalyptists believed that personality could not be expressed ultimately in terms of soul (or spirit) apart from body. The Greek doctrine of immortality, though it may well have influenced their thinking concerning the after-life, could not in the end be accepted".<sup>1</sup>

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1. Simpson, Man and the Attainment of Immortality, page 157.

Most of the apocalyptic writers believed that the body was an essential element in man's personality, and that it was impossible to draw a hard and fast line between the body and the soul, as did the Greeks; to this majority, such a belief in the immortality of the soul would have meant that only a part of human personality survived death, and such a conception was not satisfactory.

Thus, of the three views concerning the future life which were current during the inter-testamental period: belief in Sheol, in bodily resurrection and in the immortality of the soul, it was the second which won widest acceptance among the Jews, as being the natural development of the theology and anthropology contained within the Old Testament, and which most influenced the Christian doctrine of the after-life as expounded in the New Testament.

The ultimate purpose of this resurrection was judgement, which is described in a variety of ways. The judgement is thought of either as a catastrophic event brought about by God's direct intervention in human history, or as a Great Assize at the end of the world process. Sometimes there was a combination of these two ideas, the first one leading on to the second and final judgement. Usually, the apocalyptists posit the idea of a resurrection of the righteous and at least some of the wicked, which is followed by the judgement and the inauguration of the messianic kingdom. Some books contain the idea of an interim kingdom, a millennium, during which the messiah, after a preliminary judgement of men, would reign in glory for a thousand years. This millennium would be followed by a full-scale

judgement, the creation of a new heaven and earth, and the final resurrection of the righteous. This is the pattern, for example, in 2 Esdras, though the length of the interim kingdom is four hundred years and not one thousand. Some pictures of the happiness of the righteous in the future life are naïve and somewhat crude: for example, in 1 Enoch 10:17 it is stated that the righteous

"...shall live till they beget thousands of children, and all the days of their youth and their old age shall they complete in peace".

But a more spiritual view prevails in other apocalyptic books: in The Testament of Abraham, chapter 20, heaven is described in the following way:

"...there is no toil, neither grief nor mourning; but peace and exultation and life everlasting".

The lot of the wicked is epitomised by the following quotation from 1 Enoch 103:7-8, though again variations occur in individual books:

"(they) shall be in great tribulation, and into darkness and chains and a burning fire where there is grievous judgement, shall their spirits enter".

It has already been noted that the terms 'Hell' and 'Gehenna' are used to describe their place of punishment. Just as the happiness of the righteous is conceived of as eternal, so the lot of the wicked is presumably without respite: in 1 Enoch 22:13 it is stated that the wicked who received punishment during the present life would be condemned to Sheol for ever. In this respect, apocalyptic was following the lead given by one of its first exponents, as expressed in Daniel 12:3, where the author states that the wicked will suffer "everlasting contempt". The basis on which judgement is to be meted out is entirely moral. Men's actions will be weighed

in the scales and reward or punishment dealt out as appropriate:

"On the day of the great judgement every weight, every measure, and every makeweight will be as in the market... and everyone shall learn his own measure, and according to his measure shall take his reward" (2 Enoch 44:5).

This brief review will have demonstrated how radically the apocalyptic writers altered Jewish eschatology during the last two centuries B.C. and the first century A.D. The language and imagery in which they expressed their ideas formed a major part of the religious vocabulary of New Testament times, and Jesus used them frequently; key-words or phrases such as 'Kingdom of God', 'Judgement', 'Parousia', 'Resurrection', 'the Last Day', 'Son of Man', and several others occur frequently in the New Testament, and would be sufficient in themselves to illustrate the influence of apocalyptic there. In addition, R.H. Charles<sup>1</sup> shows how the basic ideas of the Kingdom of God, as developed by the Old Testament prophets and by the apocalyptic writers - that it was to be a Kingdom within man, that it was to be a Kingdom with no barriers of race, and that it was to be finally consummated in the world to come - were all fundamental to the teaching of Jesus, though He spiritualised them and "fused them into one organic whole". J. Baillie<sup>2</sup> selects, as "the most precious contribution of Judaism" to the development of the doctrine of the future life, the fact that in the apocalyptic literature there is a fusing or welding together of the national and individual hopes, and adds that, despite all the

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1. Charles, Between the Testaments, pages 68-71.
2. Baillie, And the Life Everlasting, pages 100-101.

elaborate and often contradictory speculations found in it, "...both parts...have their ultimate roots in a single experience - in the new depth given to life by the prophetic discovery of communion with God".

Yet it is also true that in apocalyptic there is discernible a certain amount of deterioration in Jewish eschatology. W. Eichrodt<sup>1</sup> points out that the centre of interest in apocalyptic becomes anthropocentric rather than theocentric, in contrast to the Old Testament. He states that the "conception of direct assurance of God was replaced by an intellectual theorem", and further criticises "the secularising of the hope of eternity in the service of human self-interest". This loss of genuine theological interest, he argues, is demonstrated especially by the belief in the immortality of the soul, which in effect was to supply a 'substitute' for God by attributing to man an immortal element which was independent of God just because it was immortal, an idea which is completely foreign to the normal Old Testament ideas about human nature. It is also shown by the excessive emphasis which the apocalyptists placed on the idea of individual rewards and punishments, which was "motivated by a desire to penetrate into the mystery of the Beyond than by a real devotion to the Living God..."<sup>2</sup>

But these strictures must not be over-stressed, even though they are partly justified. It was pointed out above that the vital feature of the Old Testament's conception of the future life is its dependence on the

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1. Eichrodt, Theology, Volume II pages 526-527.
2. Martin-Achard, From Death to Life, page 225.

idea of the indestructibility of a man's personal fellowship with God. Although much of the apocalyptic literature is undoubtedly crass and untheological in its materialistic language and imagery, this is not the whole of the picture. For example, in Wisdom 5:15 following, it is clearly suggested that the righteous enjoy a personal fellowship with God in the next life: "...the righteous live for ever, and in the Lord is their reward, and the care for them with the Most High... With his right hand shall he cover them, and with his arm shall he shield them". It is possible here to perceive the same essential insight which characterises the Old Testament, and which was to become the basis of the New Testament faith. In speaking of the Jewish apocalyptists, M. Paternoster makes the following apposite points: "...the future hope underwent two changes. First, it involved 'a new heaven and a new earth'. The hope never became merely 'spiritual'; but it ceased to be merely material... Secondly, it came to be believed that the righteous of the past would be raised from the dead to share in the perfection of the future. The idea of resurrection... suited the Jewish collective hope far better than the more individualistic idea of 'immortality'. None the less it effectively combined hope for the individual and hope for the community... the Jews were believers, passionate believers, in one God, and therefore God is in the centre of their hopes and longings".<sup>1</sup> Although 'human self-interest' did gain a measure of influence during the inter-testamental period, the apocalyptic writers preserved and developed the tentative

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1. Paternoster, Thou Art There Also, page 9.

approaches to the idea of the after-life found in the Old Testament, giving them a wide currency, so that they became the seed-bed in which the Christian gospel of the Resurrection arose.

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CHAPTER THREETHE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

Before outlining the teaching of Jesus about the future life as reported in the Synoptic Gospels, it is pertinent to consider briefly the continuing controversy among New Testament scholars about the dichotomy which is said to exist between the 'Jesus of history' and the 'Christ of faith', which has been one of the most canvassed questions in New Testament studies during the last three decades. Some scholars, especially Continental ones, believe that the outline of the life and teaching of Jesus presented in the Synoptics has virtually been destroyed by form-criticism, with its analysis of the gospel materials into small units which were preserved because they were useful in the preaching situation of the early Church, and which have been indelibly coloured by this milieu, making it impossible for later generations of Christians to construct a reliable outline of our Lord's life and teaching. Other scholars, however, maintain that the radical scepticism shown by many form-critics is not completely justified, and, although most are prepared to admit that the precise order of events in the Synoptics is not absolutely reliable, and that the post-Easter situation of the Church has inevitably affected the materials in these Gospels, yet they maintain that the Synoptics still present a fundamentally reliable account of Jesus' life and teaching, in which the two facets, the life and the teaching, 'cohere'.

This latter viewpoint, which will be adopted as a fundamental working hypothesis in the present chapter, is typified in the work of C.H. Dodd, who, in his book:

'History and the Gospel'<sup>1</sup>, argues that the Synoptics are basically trustworthy as sources of the personality and teaching of Jesus because of the 'coherence' which exists between the two aspects. One example will serve to make the point: Dodd shows that our Lord's concern for the social and religious outcastes of Palestine is demonstrated not only by His teaching in such parables as those of the Publican and the Pharisee (Luke 18:10 foll.) and the Lost Sheep (Matthew 18:12-13 = Luke 15:4-7), and in His statement that "...the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you" (Matthew 21:31), but also in His actions such as "...eating with sinners and publicans" (Mark 2:16) and being the guest of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:7). It is significant that the passages cited represent the four basic sources which are usually recognised in source-criticism of the Synoptics (Mark, "Q", "M" and "L"), because such 'coherence' can hardly be attributed to the ingenuity of the early Church.

In a more recent study of the Resurrection narratives from a form-critical viewpoint, Dodd also shows that, although "it has been not unusual to apply the term 'myth' somewhat loosely to the resurrection-narratives of the gospels...so far as the narratives of the appearance of the risen Christ are concerned, form-criticism offers no ground to justify the use of the term".<sup>2</sup>

A further point which is relevant in this respect is the fact that certain aspects of the doctrine of the future life which become of outstanding prominence in

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1. Dodd, C.H., History and the Gospel, London, 1938, pages 92-3.

2. Dodd, C.H., More New Testament Studies, Manchester, 1968, page 133.

other books of the New Testament, such as the emphasis in the Pauline epistles on the Resurrection of Jesus as the basis of the Christian certainty of the future life, are not at all prominent in the Synoptics. This type of evidence suggests that the Synoptics are reliable and do not merely record "Gemeindeftheologie".

Such facts do not justify an attitude of complete credulity with regard to the materials found in the Synoptics, but they do at least indicate that the thorough-going scepticism which was common among some earlier form-critics is not legitimate. The rejoinder of V. Taylor against such scepticism contains much truth: "If the form-critics are right, the disciples must have been translated to heaven immediately after the Resurrection".<sup>1</sup>

It is instructive to note in this connection that several recent scholars, such as G. Bornkamm, E. Käsemann, J.M. Robinson and others, have modified the hard-and-fast line of the earlier form-critics and in their "new quest of the historical Jesus" have indicated their preparedness to recognise genuine traits in the accounts both of His teaching and His character. Bornkamm, for example, regards the authority of Jesus as being evident in His words and actions, as does also Käsemann.<sup>2</sup> J. Bowden believes that this development represents merely a "change of perspective" rather than a fundamental re-orientation on the part of the form-critics, but it is nonetheless significant.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Taylor, V., The Formation of the Gospel Tradition, London, 1935, page 41.
2. Described in: Easter Faith and History, Fuller, D., Pasadena, 1965, London, 1968, pages 112-144.
3. A Dictionary of Christian Theology, edited by Richardson, A., London, 1969, page 181.

Thus, S. Neill states that scholars can "no longer think of the evangelists as unskilled fitters-together of rags and patches", and believes that it is possible "at least to give an impression, a sketch of Him as historically He was, in the years between 6 B.C. and A.D. 29..." He quotes the opinion of T.W. Manson expressed in the latter's: Studies in the Gospels and Epistles (1962), as follows: "I am increasingly convinced that in the Gospels we have the materials - reliable materials - for an outline account of the ministry as a whole. I believe it is still possible to produce such an outline... We shall not be able to fit in all the details...but we have some details... The quest of the historical Jesus is still a great and most helpful enterprise".<sup>1</sup>

There are few direct references to the future life in the teaching of Jesus as recorded in the Synoptics. "It was not a major concern of Jesus to expound or reassert the views of the future life which he held or shared".<sup>2</sup>

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1. Neill, S., The Interpretation of the New Testament, 1861-1961, London, 1964, page 277.  
T.W. Manson expounds this argument more fully in his article 'Present-day research in the life of Jesus' in: Davies, W.D., and Daube, D., The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology, Cambridge, 1956, pages 211-221, and concludes: "...we are compelled to continue the quest of the historical Jesus...If God did in fact speak to us through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, it is vitally important to know as fully and as accurately as possible what sort of life and death and resurrection became the medium of the divine revelation."
2. Cadbury, H.J., 'Intimations of Immortality in the Thought of Jesus', in S.P.C.K. Theological Collections, Number 3: The Miracles and the Resurrection, edited by Ramsey, I.T., London, 1964, page 93.

The inference to be drawn from this is not that Jesus was uncertain about its existence or that He was indifferent to it, but that it was an axiomatic belief both for Himself and His contemporaries. The afterlife was taken for granted by Jesus and by the majority of His hearers, and he did not need to argue it out except on one occasion in His dispute with the Sadducees. It was "an assured ingredient of His perspective",<sup>1</sup> and without it, much of His teaching, which has been described as "...pre-eminently a treatise upon the attainment of eternal life"<sup>2</sup>, would lose its nerve-centre.

Another reason for the paucity in His teaching of direct and extended reference to the future life lies in terminology. The recurring phrase "Kingdom of God" (or "...of heaven") found some ninety-five times in the Synoptics<sup>3</sup>, is, properly understood, a synonymous expression for "eternal life" or simply "life", which appears frequently in the Fourth Gospel, and which even in the Synoptics is often used interchangeably with the more common phrase "Kingdom of God" (compare, for example, Matthew 25:34 with 25:46; Mark 10:17 with 10:24). This is a basic key to understanding the meaning of eternal life in the teaching of Jesus. Thus, according to G. Dalman, "...'eternal life' radically means participation in the 'theocracy'; and it is substantially the same thing whether it be the entrance into the theocracy or into eternal life that is spoken of".<sup>4</sup>

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1. Cadbury, H.J., S.P.C.K. Theological Collections, Number 3, page 93.
  2. Simpson, J.Y., Man and the Attainment of Immortality, Edinburgh, 1923, page 284.
  3. Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels, Edinburgh, 1908, Vol. I page 93. Edited by Hastings, J.
  4. Dalman, G., The Words of Jesus. Quoted in Strawson, W., Jesus and the Future Life, London, 1959, page 67.

Most expositors emphasise that the basic meaning of the word for "Kingdom" in Aramaic, Hebrew and Greek is "reign" rather than "realm", and this suggests that entrance into the Kingdom is essentially entrance into a new relationship with God, a relationship in which God's rule becomes operative in the life of the individual person. Once this point is grasped, it will be seen that Jesus' teaching concerning the Kingdom of God, is, properly interpreted, teaching about the future life. "A cardinal fact of the Synoptic eschatology (is)...the combination of the present with the future in the conception of the Kingdom of God".<sup>1</sup> The Kingdom of God in our Lord's teaching is thus to be understood eschatologically; it is the breaking into history of the new age, the age in which God reigns. Eternal life is life in this new age, the age of the Kingdom.

Perhaps the clearest statement of our Lord's belief regarding the actuality of the future life is to be found in His reply to the Sadducees' question in Mark 12:18-27, which is a crucial passage. The sceptical Sadducees, who "say that there is no resurrection" (Acts 23:8), attempted to ridicule the whole idea of a future existence by instancing the hypothetical case of a woman who by Levirate law had been married to seven brothers in succession: "In the resurrection whose wife shall she be of them? for the seven had her to wife". The fact that the Sadducees posed this question at all seems to suggest that Jesus was known to be a believer in the idea of resurrection,

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1. Robinson, H.W., The Christian Doctrine of Man, Edinburgh, 1943, page 100.

and that their object was to discredit Him as a teacher.

In His reply, Jesus made two points which are fundamental to the New Testament doctrine of the after-life. Firstly, and this is the main point, He stated that a future life is a necessary deduction from the fact of communion with God in the present earthly existence: "I am the God of Abraham...He is not the God of the dead, but of the living". This insight is the main contribution of the Old Testament to the development of the doctrine of a future life and it was emphasised by our Lord as a complete refutation of the viewpoint of the Sadducees. "This argument is unanswerable; and is indeed the only unanswerable argument for immortality that has ever been given or ever can be given. It cannot be evaded except by a denial of the premises. If the individual can commune with God, then he must matter to God; and if he matters to God, he must share God's eternity... It is in conjunction with God that the promise of eternal life resides".<sup>1</sup>

The second point concerns the nature of the future life, and Jesus perhaps made it to show the Sadducees that belief in resurrection did not involve the crude materialistic conceptions which were often held by their opponents, the Pharisees. Jesus stressed that the future life is not to be thought of as a mere repetition of present existence; the distinctiveness of sexuality is to disappear and men and women are to be "as angels".<sup>2</sup>

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1. Baillie, J., And the Life Everlasting, London, 1961, page 107.
  2. Compare the Apocalypse of Baruch 51:10 and 1 Enoch 51:4.

This is one of the few descriptive statements about the afterlife in the Synoptics, and it makes a negative point in asserting the absence of the physical relationship of marriage; positively, it implies that the close fellowship which may be enjoyed here on earth by those who are married will become the norm for all those who share in the future life. Angels in Jewish thought were regarded as active, personal messengers of God, so, as applied by analogy to the next life, the term implies that the future existence will be personal and active, characteristics which inevitably suggest fellowship. Thus Jesus, like the Old Testament, conceived of the future life not only in individual, but also in corporate terms.

In contrast to the Old Testament, however, in which this idea had been only dimly adumbrated, Jesus asserted that entrance into the Kingdom, into that relationship with God about which He spoke in His clash with the Sadducees, was a present possibility, because of His Incarnation. It is in this respect that the emphasis of the "realised eschatology" school is valuable; it has shown that this vital aspect of our Lord's teaching cannot be eliminated in favour of a purely futurist eschatology, and that to do so would be to destroy one of the fundamental tenets of the New Testament doctrine of the future life, which was later to find classic expression in the Pauline and Johannine literature: that eternal life begins here and now within the present existence. This is the only way in which belief in the after-life can be made existentially meaningful.

Since the publication of C.H. Dodd's epoch-making book: 'The Parables of the Kingdom', in 1935, in which he argued on the basis of texts such as Mark 1:15 ἤγγικεν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ and Matthew 12:28 (compare Luke 11:20) ἔφθασεν ἐφ' ὑμᾶς ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ that the clue to the eschatology of the New Testament is to be found in Jesus' proclamation that the Kingdom of God had arrived, and in which he expounded the meaning of many of the parables within this context, most New Testament scholars have recognised the legitimacy of this element within the teaching of Jesus. But many have declined to accept this conception as an exclusive key to New Testament eschatology, and prefer to speak of "an eschatology that is in process of realisation".<sup>1</sup> Even Dodd himself later spoke of "the not altogether felicitous term 'realised eschatology'".<sup>2</sup> T.W. Manson argued that if the phrase ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ in essence means 'the reign of God', then "there is no point in asking whether it is present or future, just as there is no point in asking whether the Fatherhood of God is present or future".<sup>3</sup>

This mediating position has been adopted by many exegetes during recent years, including W.G. Kümmel: in his study of the eschatology of the Gospels: 'Promise and Fulfilment' (1957), in which he attempts to solve a problem which has been at the centre of much recent discussion of our Lord's eschatological teaching:

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1. Jeremias, J., The Parables of Jesus, page 159. Quoted by Richardson, A., An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament, London, 1959, page 86.
2. Quoted by Richardson, A., An Introduction, page 86.
3. Manson, T.W., The Teaching of Jesus, Cambridge, 1931, page 135.

the problem of a possible error on His part in promising the imminent consummation of the Kingdom, or the disciples' misunderstanding of His teaching on this point. He writes: "If therefore the imminent expectation, being a necessarily contemporary form of expression, can be entirely detached from Jesus' message, the future expectation is essential and indispensable, because in this form alone can the nature of God's redemptive action in HISTORY be held fast".<sup>1</sup> A Richardson himself writes: "Jesus is represented in the Gospels as teaching that the days of his own ministry were the days of the preaching of the reign of God (Luke 16:16)...even now, in the days of his preaching, men could accept or reject God's reign; they could, as it were, anticipate for their own personal existence the day of the Lord; they could in an eschatological sense even now pass through judgement and find salvation. But the fact that the great decision could be taken by those who heard Jesus proclaiming the drawing nigh of God's reign must not mislead us into supposing that the reign of God had already arrived in any other sense than that the preaching is an eschatological anticipation of it".<sup>2</sup>

Whether one goes all the way with the exponents of realised eschatology or not, it is plain from the Synoptics that our Lord's preaching did include this announcement of the actual presence of the Kingdom of God, and that this reality is the motivating force of all His life and the basis of His message. The Kingdom

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1. Quoted by Strawson, W., Jesus and the Future Life, page 158.
2. Richardson, A., An Introduction, page 85.

comes whenever a person accepts the sovereignty of God in his or her life (compare Mark 12:34), and since life in relationship with God is the goal for which man was created ("Seek ye first his kingdom..." Matthew 6:33), Jesus offers to mankind a prophetic foretaste of this "more abundant life" (compare John 10:10), because with His Incarnation, the Eschaton had arrived.

Thus, if one bears in mind the axiomatic nature<sup>1</sup> of the belief in a future life which Jesus and His contemporaries inherited from their predecessors, and realises that much of His teaching about the Kingdom of God is, 'mutatis mutandis', teaching about the future life, it is no exaggeration to state that this latter conception is the "integument of the whole of his teaching".<sup>2</sup>

The demand for repentance with which Jesus opened His public preaching (Mark 1:15) was an essential part of the gospel of the Kingdom of God (compare Mark 6:12; Matthew 11:21; 12:41; Luke 13:3,5;). This involves a complete re-orientation of one's life, involving a complete surrender to the will of God as revealed in the message of Jesus. Repentance must most of all be genuine and whole-hearted (Matthew 21:28 following, the parable of the two sons). Only in this way can the free gift of God (compare Luke 12:32 "...it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom") be appropriated. It has to be received (compare Mark 10:15) rather than earned by man. It is an invitation to a banquet, a free invitation which may be refused (Luke 14:15 following). Unless a man has the right

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1. This is denied by Evans, C.F., Resurrection and the New Testament, London, 1970, page 27.
2. Griffith-Jones, E., Faith and Immortality, London, 1917, page 159.

spiritual disposition, he will be like the guest at the wedding-feast who was found without the appropriate garment (Matthew 22: 11 following).

The concept of repentance is the negative way of expressing the 'modus operandi' of entrance into the Kingdom. The positive aspect is denoted in the Synoptics, and throughout the New Testament, by the concept of faith. To the negative demand of the Baptist for repentance, Jesus added the more positive note of "believing in the good news" (Mark 1:15). Faith involves the possession of a receptive disposition in which alone the seed of the Kingdom can grow (Mark 4:20). The ideal faith is that of the child whose heart is unencumbered by "the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things..." (Mark 4:19). Those who wish to enter the Kingdom are advised to learn from the child the receptive and wholehearted faith by which alone this entrance may be achieved (Mark 10:13 following). Such faith is an universal possibility and cannot be limited to any particular race: Jesus found greater faith in a Gentile than in most Jews (Matthew 8:10).

Besides repentance and faith, Jesus also taught that entrance into the Kingdom may involve renunciation of "all that he hath" (Luke 14:33), whether this be material possessions (Mark 10:17 following), family loyalties (Luke 14:26), or life itself (Mark 8:34 following). The true disciple must be prepared to sacrifice his own life to win the Kingdom (Mark 10:29 following). Such renunciation is the means to an end, the means whereby man gains eternal life: "...there is no man

that hath left house, or brethren...for my sake and for the gospel's sake, but he shall receive a hundredfold now...and in the world to come, eternal life". (Mark 10:29 following).

Thus, repentance, faith and renunciation are the keys to entrance into the Kingdom, entrance into a relationship with God which cannot be broken by death. But death remains as part of human experience, so that full participation in eternal life, vitiated by man's human condition and its attendant limitations, may only be experienced after death. "The tension between the 'now' and the 'not yet', which characterizes New Testament eschatology, is particularly evident in respect of  $\zeta\omega\eta$  ...Christian piety holds the promise of life now as well as in the Age to come...(Christians) possess  $\zeta\omega\eta$  here and now; but their possession of it is 'hidden', like all the eschatological realities".<sup>1</sup>

Thus, along with the recognition of 'an eschatology that is in process of realisation' as an ineradicable element in the Synoptic teaching of Jesus, there must go a recognition of the futurist aspect of His eschatology, which is just as basic and vital to His message and life. Since the publication of A. Schweitzer's monumental work 'The Quest of the Historical Jesus' in 1910, this recognition has been accorded by many exegetes.<sup>2</sup> The evidence for the futurist emphasis is overwhelming. The Lord's Prayer contains a petition

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1. Richardson, A., An Introduction, page 74.
2. C.H. Dodd regards the futurist element in New Testament eschatology as "an accommodation of language" and states that one must "make full allowance for the symbolic character of the 'apocalyptic' sayings". Parables of the Kingdom, London, 1969, pages 79-81.

for the future coming of the Kingdom (Matthew 6:10), and after Peter's Confession, Jesus stated: "Verily I say unto you, there be some here of them that stand by, which shall in no wise taste of death till they see the Kingdom of God come with power." (Mark 9:1). At the Last Supper, Jesus told the disciples that He would not drink again of the fruit of the vine "until that day when I drink it new in the Kingdom of God", (Mark 14:25). Many other references to the Kingdom are most naturally interpreted within this context (e.g. Matthew 5:20; 7:21; Mark 9:47; Luke 12:32). It would also appear legitimate to associate with the Kingdom of God other references within the Synoptics to the consummation of the present world order; references such as those which relate to the coming of the Son of Man, to the tribulations of the End, and to the certainty of judgement (e.g. Mark 13 passim).

This does not involve acceptance of Schweitzer's view that "historically regarded, the Baptist, Jesus and Paul are simply the culminating manifestations of Jewish Apocalyptic thought",<sup>1</sup> because, although Jesus shared the apocalyptic insight that there is to be a future consummation of history as the culmination of God's plan of salvation, He did not share the pessimistic, dualistic outlook which is characteristic of the apocalypticists. He taught His disciples to pray: "Thy Kingdom come...as in heaven, so on earth" (Matthew 6:10), in which the realised and futurist aspects are combined. Attention must now be given to a consideration of some aspects of His teaching concerning the after-life which

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 1. Quoted from: The Quest of the Historical Jesus by Pilcher, C.V., The Hereafter in Jewish and Christian Thought, London, 1940, page 154.

are related to this future consummation.

It has been a matter of considerable debate whether Jesus taught a universal resurrection of the dead for the purpose of reward and judgement or whether He taught a limited resurrection determined by moral considerations. It seems pointless to enter this debate merely by quotation of texts, because unless one is prepared to excise arbitrarily certain passages which support the opposite viewpoint, one is forced to recognise that both conceptions appear in His teaching, as they do in Jewish apocalyptic thought. Passages which support the idea of a universal resurrection of good and bad include the unqualified statement in Mark 12:26: "...as for the dead being raised", and many parables of the Kingdom, which would lose their point if there were no resurrection of the wicked (e.g. the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25:31 following), besides several other passages in the Synoptics such as the condemnation of Sodom, Gomorrah, Tyre and Sidon (Matthew 11:20 following; compare 12:38 following.).

When one is confronted by conflicting data such as these, the only legitimate course of action is to weigh the probabilities and attempt to arrive at a conclusion which does justice to these facts, even if the ultimate verdict has to be one of reverent agnosticism, which would seem to be the only possible conclusion with regard to the point at present being discussed. Throughout the New Testament, it is impossible to draw up a neatly-analysed scheme of consistent ideas, and there are several reasons for this. In the first place, it must be remembered that the concepts with which the New Testament writers grappled were so difficult

'that some confusion and contradiction, to man's finite mind, is inevitable. Secondly, in accordance with the Pauline doctrine of 'kenosis' (Philippians 2:6 following), supported by passages in the Synoptics such as Mark 13:32, it must be recognised that our Lord's views on certain topics were circumscribed by the conditions of His incarnate life and influenced by the intellectual climate in which He lived. This climate has been described by R.H. Charles, referring to the contemporary eschatology, as "...a heterogeneous mass of ideas in constant flux",<sup>1</sup> so it is not surprising if there are incongruous ideas to be found in the teaching of Jesus and the rest of the New Testament. The task of the theologian is not to force this material into a systematic scheme, but to interpret it so that the essential spiritual truths become clear. The New Testament should not be regarded as a source of explicit, objective knowledge about the conditions of the future life, but as a challenge to living which is relevant to the present day. The restoration of this emphasis is one respect in which modern existentialist philosophy has rendered a valuable service to Christianity.

This viewpoint seems to be borne out by our Lord's answer when challenged to give a direct answer to this problem about the scope of the resurrection. He side-stepped the issue and emphasised the moral demands of this life: "Lord, are they few that be saved? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in by the narrow door..." (Luke 13:23-24). L. Berkhof attempts to escape the

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1. Charles, R.H., A Critical History, page 307.

dilemma by supposing that the variation between the 'inclusive' and the 'exclusive' texts in the Synoptics may be accounted for by the fact that in the latter, "the soteriological aspect of the resurrection is clearly in the foreground, and this pertains to the righteous only. They, in distinction from the wicked, are the ones that profit by the resurrection".<sup>1</sup> A similar viewpoint is expressed in the following words: "While the New Testament expresses the fact of resurrection for all men...its emphasis is upon resurrection as a fruit of redemption".<sup>2</sup>

Further discussion of the problem must be reserved until a later chapter, after other relevant evidence from the New Testament has been reviewed; but the following observation may be made now: one must recognise that in considering this problem, one is faced with one of the inescapable antinomies of the Christian faith. It has already been intimated that a minute review of all the relevant passages in the Synoptics would simply show that both the 'inclusive' and 'exclusive' standpoints are present in the teaching of our Lord. To the human mind, both of these cannot simultaneously be true. There are two possible alternatives when faced with this impasse: one may conclude that one or other of the two positions is false, as did, for example, R.H. Charles, who maintained that the Synoptic material taught only a resurrection of the righteous, and that "the final judgement and the resurrection have no necessary connection";<sup>3</sup> and S.D.F.

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1. Berkhof, L., Systematic Theology, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1966, page 123.
  2. Douglas, J.D., Editor, The New Bible Dictionary, London, 1967, pages 387-388.
  3. Charles, R.H., A Critical History, page 343.

Salmond, who adopted the inclusive position.<sup>1</sup> Or one may admit, in deference to intellectual honesty, that one is confronted by apparently irreconcilable positions, and recognise that "My thoughts are not your thoughts...saith the Lord" (Isaiah 55:8), whilst still believing that one day "shall I know even as also I have been known" (1 Corinthians 13:12). In other words, one must be content to recognise the limitations of human logic and adopt a position of reverent agnosticism.

Although one must agree with H. Wheeler Robinson when he singles as the fact of judgement as "the salient feature of this life beyond death...underlying the whole teaching of Jesus",<sup>2</sup> it is apposite to preface a consideration of this theme in our Lord's teaching with A. Richardson's statement that "the New Testament does not answer the questions we like to ask about such matters as the nature of punishment after death, eternal retribution, and so on; and it is a mistake to erect its symbolic language into metaphysical answers, as it is to ignore the solemnity of the warnings which that language conveys".<sup>3</sup> The emphasis in our Lord's teaching is on the fulfilment of the conditions for gaining eternal life, rather than on the description of what the condemnation will be like for those who do not accept God's offer of salvation.

The standards of judgement are clearly expounded in Jesus' teaching in the Synoptics, and may be summarised as follows.

The first and paramount criterion by which men will be judged is the nature of their response to the

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1. Salmond, S.D.F., The Christian Doctrine of Immortality, Edinburgh, 1901, pages 508 following.
  2. Robinson, H.W., The Christian Doctrine of Man, page 140.
  3. Richardson, A., A Theological Wordbook of the Bible, London, 1969, page 107.

fact of Christ. In Matthew 10:32, Jesus states that acknowledgement of Himself before men will be matched by His acknowledgement "before my Father who is in heaven". Judgement is determined by the relation which a man holds to Jesus, by one's attitude to the offer of salvation which God has made in Him. Thus the first test is one of faith.

The second criterion by which men will be judged is obedience to the will of God as revealed in Christ. Faith must be accompanied by the concomitant works if it is to be soteriologically effective: "At the last judgement, God will look for living faith".<sup>1</sup>

A third criterion of judgement is the possession of a forgiving and merciful attitude towards other human beings. This requirement is the 'sine qua non' for the reception of Divine forgiveness. Only "as we forgive" can we be forgiven (Matthew 6:12 and 14-15; compare 5:7; 18:23 following).

It is to be noted that the standards of judgement are related to God, as revealed in Christ, and to one's fellow-men, and in essence they express what Jesus taught more succinctly in His encounter with the scribe in Mark 12:28 following: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart...Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself". The scribe, who recognised the truth of Jesus' teaching, was "not far from the kingdom of God", which, as has been demonstrated earlier, is to be regarded as a synonymous expression for eternal life (compare the Lukan parallel: "What shall I do to

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 1. Jeremias, J., The Parables of Jesus, page 145, quoted by Strawson, W., Jesus and the Future Life, London, 1959, page 131.

inherit eternal life?...this do, and thou shalt live" (Luke 10:25 following).

A question which must now be faced is that concerning what criteria of judgement are to be applied to those who have never had the opportunity of knowing God as revealed in Christ. There is some evidence in the Synoptics for the view that the standards of judgement will not be absolute for all men, but will be related to the amount of opportunity which a person has possessed. For example, at the conclusion of the parable of the negligent servant in Luke 12, it is stated that "the servant which knew his lord's will, and made not ready, nor did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes", whereas "he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes". (verses 47-48). The principle that responsibility is the corollary of privilege is a common Biblical idea (compare Amos 3:2), and if God's justice is to be maintained, it would seem reasonable to suggest that the same principle applies in reverse i.e. that inadequate opportunity will be taken into account when men are judged, as is obviously implied in the Lukan passage.

W. Stawson suggests that the parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25:31 following provides the answer to this question of how those who have never had the opportunity to know Christ will be judged. He writes: "...in the case of non-believers, their attitude is acceptable because through serving the poor and needy, they have, in fact, served Christ", though "it must not be assumed that this means that the standard of

judgement is easy".<sup>1</sup> Further support for this idea of differing standards of judgement for those who have been denied knowledge of Christ is found in our Lord's words, already mentioned, about "the more tolerable judgement" which is to be pronounced on Sodom, Gomorrah, Tyre and Sidon, in contrast to the Galilean towns of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum, which had entertained "a greater than Solomon" in their midst without responding favourably to His message (Luke 10:12,14; Matthew 10:15; 11:24). (Compare Luke 11:31 following and Matthew 12:41 following).

Whether or not this principle applies not only to those who have never even heard the name of Christ, but also to those whose opportunities have been curtailed and vitiated by circumstances of birth and environment, is a point of contention between Christians. Some argue that anyone who faces the facts of the human situation cannot possibly maintain that a saving knowledge of what Christianity really is has been presented to all of those who live in countries which are nominally Christian: the mental, moral and spiritual limitations imposed on them by their surroundings bar their way to any real knowledge of the essential truths of the Gospel. Those persons who are brought up in the slums of London's East End, Glasgow, Birmingham and Liverpool have sometimes had no adequate chance of accepting Christ as their Saviour and surely cannot be regarded as utterly sinful and depraved simply because

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1. Strawson, W., Jesus and the Future Life, pages 132-133.

they have not responded favourably. If one is to retain belief in a just and loving God, then one is forced to the conclusion that not only those who have never had any chance at all of knowing Christ, but also those who have been denied a full opportunity to love Him, will "receive a light beating". W.R. Matthews writes: "I believe that...many who have had little chance of going far in the life of the spirit here will be given wider experience hereafter".<sup>1</sup>

This line of thought has much to commend it, though it must be noted that not all Christians would assent to it. For example, J.A. Motyer writes uncompromisingly: "...if they do not believe in, and love God manifested in Christ crucified, there is nothing more that God will do."<sup>2</sup>

Another feature of our Lord's Synoptic teaching about the future life which must now be reviewed is that relating to the nature of the rewards and punishment which <sup>are</sup> accorded to the righteous and the wicked respectively. In approaching this topic, it is vital to remind oneself that no one knows what the conditions of the future life will be like and that "this is a region in which agnosticism is assuredly the better part of wisdom...of the specific conditions of its future manifestation there is nothing that we can know. Many questions may be asked but none can be answered".<sup>3</sup> The metaphors which are employed in the New Testament to portray the realities of the after-

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1. Matthews, W.R., The Hope of Immortality, London, 1936, page 65.
  2. Motyer, J.A., After Death, London, 1965, page 50.
  3. Baillie, J., And the Life Everlasting, London, 1961, pages 153 and 193 respectively.

life are images or symbols, and it is unwise and illegitimate to regard them as literal descriptions. Equally, however, one must remember that symbols are symbolic of some reality underlying them, or they would not be symbols. C. Ryder Smith makes this point forcefully when he is discussing the concept of the wrath of God in the New Testament: "An attempt has been made to show that Jesus himself did not accept this doctrine...Without the concept, some parables - such as those of the Wheat and the Tares, or of the Man who Built on Sand, or of the Sheep and the Goats - mean nothing. Without it, much of the apocalyptic teaching of Jesus would hardly make sense. Without it, such phrases as 'eternal fire', 'the outer darkness', 'Gehenna', and 'where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched' would not only be symbolic, but symbolic of nothing".<sup>1</sup> The same observation would apply to the hints about the future state of the righteous, to which attention will be given first, bearing in mind the note of caution sounded by J. Baillie, which must be adopted in attempting to glean from the Synoptics any tentative intimations about the future state of the dead which one may legitimately derive from them.

Many of the terms used to describe the righteous in the after-life denote an experience. This is especially true of the phrase ζωὴ αἰώνιος itself, which, although not as frequent in the Synoptics as in the Fourth Gospel, is found in them (e.g. Mark 10:17; Matthew 25:46). However, one must be careful when expounding the Synoptic teaching of Jesus not to import into the phrase the emphases and nuances which are

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 1. Smith, C. Ryder, The Bible Doctrine of Salvation, London, 1946, page 127.

found more especially in the Fourth Gospel, which contains "the classical treatment of the theme of eternal life".<sup>1</sup>

The adjective  $\alpha\iota\omega\nu\iota\omicron\varsigma$  denotes primarily the quality rather than the quantity of the life thus described, and ought properly to be translated: "belonging to the eternal world". A. Richardson expresses the meaning as follows: "...in the New Testament  $\zeta\omega\eta$ , or more fully  $\zeta\omega\eta\ \alpha\iota\omega\nu\iota\omicron\varsigma$  is an eschatological conception: it is one of the characteristic marks of the Age to Come...Thus, what appears in EVV as 'eternal life' or 'life everlasting' really means 'the life of the Age to Come'."<sup>2</sup> It must be noted, however, that not all occurrences of the word can be fitted into this mould, and, as Richardson points out, although "the phrase need not necessarily imply ever-lasting life...the usual meaning is life after death indefinitely prolonged in the World to Come".<sup>3</sup> Oscar Cullmann in his book 'Christ and Time' has argued very strongly for the retention of the temporal connotation of this phrase. He believes that the fundamental Biblical idea of eternity is that it is simply an extension of time. He refers to the three 'ages' or aeons mentioned in the New Testament: the first being constituted by the period before Creation; the second by the period in between the Creation and the end of the present age; and the third by "the time that extends beyond the end of the present age". He argues that the coming age is limited only at its

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1. Dodd, C.H., New Testament Studies, Manchester, 1953, page 163.

2. Richardson, Introduction, page 73.

3. Richardson, Introduction, pages 73-4.

beginning: "The coming age is limited on one side but unlimited on the other; its beginning is limited, inasmuch as it begins with the events that are pictorially described in the apocalypses, but no limit is set for its end. In other words, it is without end, but not without beginning, and only in this sense is it 'eternal'."<sup>1</sup>

However, probably the majority of scholars would agree that the phrase ought primarily to be thought of not so much in a quantitative sense, denoting length of time, but rather in a qualitative sense, denoting fullness of life with God, life in the age that is eternal. It is eternal from the standpoint of its quality rather than its quantity. "...eternal life stands primarily not for a greater length of life but for a new depth of it...Eternal life...is the kind of life characteristic of the Age to Come. The simpler meaning of the word as 'lasting for ages and ages and never coming to an end' is commonly present in its usage, but it never holds the leading place. The primary reference is always qualitative..."<sup>2</sup>

This meaning is inherent in the noun to which it is applied:  $\{ \omega \eta \}$ . "In Hebrew thought as represented in the Old Testament, 'life' stands for fulness of earthly welfare, for health, vigour, activity and enjoyment unimpaired by the forces of death which lie in wait for man...He lives the best life on earth when he has communion with God, for with Him is the fountain of life, and in His presence is 'fulness of joy'."<sup>3</sup>

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1. Cullmann, O., Christ and Time, quoted in Strawson, W., Jesus and the Future Life, page 182.
2. Baillie, J., And the Life Everlasting, pages 158-159.
3. Dodd, C.H., New Testament Studies, page 161.

Life in all its fulness, as Jesus both exemplified and taught, is only to be found in fellowship with God. "His preaching of the Kingdom is not just the pointing of His hearers to some happy state in the future, when the will of God will be perfectly realised; it is primarily the living of a life of complete loyalty to God and unquestioning obedience to His will...From this central experience all the rest of the teaching on the Kingdom naturally follows."<sup>1</sup>

In His encounter with the Sadducees, already discussed, Jesus stated: "All live unto him" (Luke 20:38). In the parable of the sheep and the goats, the righteous are told: "Come, ye blessed of my Father..." (Matthew 25:34), upon which Strawson comments: "...there is no description of heaven more significant than what is involved in the word 'Come' - for to be with God is to be indeed in heaven".<sup>2</sup> The supreme happiness of the future life is the vision of God, the Beatific Vision, and the joy of being in His presence. In the resurrection life, men are "like angels" (Mark 12:25) who "always behold the face of the Father (Matthew 18:10). The "pure in heart" will "see God" (Matthew 5:8).

The symbol of the messianic banquet (Matthew 8:11) and that of the marriage feast (Matthew 22:1 following) suggest that the experience of fellowship with other members of the redeemed is another aspect of the future life. The references to "Abraham, Isaac and Jacob",

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1. Manson, T.W., The Teaching of Jesus, page 161.
2. Strawson, W., Jesus and the Future Life, page 135.

with whom the "many" will sit at table, and the re-appearance of Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration. (Mark 9:4), suggest this. It is also possibly implied in the parable of Dives and Lazarus, though probably very few scholars of repute would assent to the verdict of J. Paterson Smyth when he says, speaking of this passage: "It is no parable. A parable is the statement of an analogy between visible things and invisible. This is a direct statement about the invisible things themselves. Jesus is telling what happens after death".<sup>1</sup> It is doubtful if our Lord's words to the penitent thief in Luke 23:43 can be adduced here, because they are probably to be "understood as a striking application of the doctrine of Justification by Faith rather than as a metaphysical declaration about the condition of the departed".<sup>2</sup>

With regard to this social aspect of the after-life, V.F. Storr writes: "The immortality to which we look forward must carry with it increased fellowship and a multiplying of common ties of interest and sympathy. For only by such increase of fellowship can personality fulfil its inherent capacity for communion with others...Eternal life is a growing fellowship with God and with humanity...".<sup>3</sup> Another scholar expresses it as follows: "The life of fellowship with God and each other, so clearly emphasised in the teaching of Jesus, is the essential quality of life for the Christian both here and hereafter".<sup>4</sup>

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1. Paterson Smyth, J., The Gospel of the Hereafter, London, 1934, page 61.
  2. Richardson, A., A Theological Wordbook, page 107.
  3. Storr, V.F., Christianity and Immortality, London, 1918, quoted in: Townley Lord, Conquest of Death, London, 1940, page 154.
  4. Conquest of Death, page 154.

It is a debatable point whether or not in Dives' concern for the salvation of his brothers (Luke 16:27 ), it is legitimate to discern a measure of moral progress. Such an interpretation cannot be excluded, despite the disrepute into which this idea has fallen as a result of its abuse in medieval times. The question of the possibility of probation in the future life cannot be settled by bandying about the terms 'Protestant' and 'Roman Catholic'. In the present century many Protestant scholars, have asserted that the false and immoral notions connected with this idea ought not to lead to its complete rejection. For example W.R. Matthews states: "To me the idea of an intermediate state has great attractions... I believe that our opportunities of training and development continue after death..."<sup>1</sup> This is also the opinion of E.J. Bicknell in his 'A Theological Introduction to the Thirty-nine Articles', who points out that "such a belief has been widely held in various forms in all parts of the Church since the second century", and that "when we consider the moral imperfection of so many who die in the faith of Christ and the impossibility of seeing God 'without sanctification' (Hebrews 12:14), it is almost impossible not to think that the life beyond the grave includes discipline through which the character is purified. Some form of purgatory is almost an intellectual necessity".<sup>2</sup> If purgatory is not taken to mean an intermediate state of penal discipline but a process of sanctification,

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1. Matthews, W.R., The Hope of Immortality, page 154.
2. Bicknell, E.J., A Theological Introduction to the Thirty-nine Articles, London, 1955, page 284.

then there is much to commend this view, and there is some support for it in later books of the New Testament, especially I Peter 3:19 and 4:6, which will be discussed later.

These passages which imply a conscious form of existence for the dead must be balanced by noting the use of the metaphor of 'sleep', which is found only infrequently in the Synoptics (e.g. Mark 5:39), though it is a common term in the Pauline Epistles for the state of the dead (e.g. I Thessalonians 4:14. Compare John 11:11). In view of the hints of a conscious existence in the next life which are found in the gospels, especially such passages as Luke 16:22 and 23:43, already discussed, many commentators interpret the term 'sleep' in a metaphorical way. J.A. Motyer, for example says that "...it is a metaphor and ought not to be taken as a literal description".<sup>1</sup> D.L. Edwards agrees with such a view and adds that "...with the idea of sleeping goes the idea of renewal".<sup>2</sup> But O. Cullmann argues uncompromisingly that 'sleep' is to be taken literally, and dismisses the contrary texts, such as the ones considered above, as follows: "All these images express simply a special proximity to Christ... "We wait and the dead wait...the rhythm of time may be different for them than for the living...this expression 'to sleep', which is the customary designation in the New Testament of the 'interim condition', draws us to the view that for the dead another time-consciousness

1. Motyer, J.A., After Death, page 84.

2. Edwards, D.L., The Last Things Now, London, 1969, page 87.

exists, that of 'those who sleep' ".<sup>1</sup>

Whether one takes the language literally or metaphorically, the ultimate hope in the Synoptics and the rest of the New Testament is that the future life will be a conscious, embodied existence. To make such a statement may immediately seem to beg the question; a full answer must be deferred until chapter five when Paul's conception of the spiritual body in I Corinthians 15 will be discussed. For the present, it must suffice to note that both our Lord and Paul were true to the apocalyptic tradition which was part of their inheritance<sup>2</sup> in that they believed that although the physical conditions of this present life are not applicable to the next,<sup>3</sup> yet the dead are not to be regarded as disembodied spirits, in the Greek mould, but as having spiritual bodies with which to express themselves.<sup>4</sup> Thus, "the resurrection of the body stands clear in Jesus' reported teaching. He used the word and the idea behind it, in common with his contemporaries, as a natural vehicle for expressing hope of victory over death".<sup>5</sup>

When one turns from a consideration of the state

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1. Cullmann, O., Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead, London, 1958, pages 51 and 57.
  2. See for example, I Enoch 51:4, where it is stated that after death the righteous will have bodies "made from the light and glory of God".
  3. See Mark 12:25; I Corinthians 15:50.
  4. Notice Jesus' remark: "I will destroy this temple that is made with hands and in three days I will build another made without hands". (Mark 14:58. Compare John 2:19) See also Mark 9:43 following and Matthew 10:28.
  5. Fosdick, H., Guide to Understanding the Bible, page 280, quoted in: Townley Lord, F., Conquest of Death, page 102.

of the righteous in the after-life to that of those who have deliberately rejected Christ after having had a full opportunity of accepting the gospel, one is faced with "one of the most intractable problems of New Testament study".<sup>1</sup> There can be no doubt at all that the teaching of Jesus as reported in the Synoptics does contemplate some form of punishment in the future existence for those who fail to make use of the opportunities they have had, the light that is in them, but questions about the nature and duration of this punishment have been amongst the most perennially and fiercely discussed aspects of His teaching. The difficulties are accentuated by the fact that Jesus used current Jewish eschatological terms in delivering His teaching and it is not easy to determine exactly what the Christian understanding of these terms should be. The words and phrases in question include: 'Hades', 'Gehenna', 'eternal punishment', 'the worm which dieth not', 'the fire which is not quenched', and 'the outer darkness' where 'men will weep and gnash their teeth'. Expert scholars have reached various conclusions about His teaching according to their differing interpretations of these terms, ranging from those who believe that they imply never-ending torture as the fate of the finally impenitent, or who maintain that the terms employed denote the annihilation of such persons, to others who believe that, despite the apparent severity and finality of the terms used, the ultimate purpose of God is the restoration of all His creatures to a state of reconciliation with Himself, so that His

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1. Strawson, W., Jesus and the Future Life, page 143.

punishments cannot be regarded as ultimately retributive but remedial. These three incompatible views have become known by the terms: eternal punishment, conditional immortality and universal restoration. Discussion of this complex issue must again be delayed until a later chapter; at the present juncture, it is necessary only to examine the concepts involved in our Lord's Synoptic teaching and to arrive at such a conclusion as may be possible at this stage.

In a study of the present type, it is not possible to give a detailed exposition of every relevant passage which contains the words or phrases in question. Controversy has probably raged most vehemently around the phrase 'eternal punishment' in Matthew 25:46 (Compare 'eternal fire' in 25:41). M. Paternoster observes: "...from Maurice onwards, tons of ink must have been spilt on this topic alone".<sup>1</sup> In contrast to J.A. Motyer, who argues that the phrase must mean "a conscious experience of endless duration",<sup>2</sup> other scholars would contend that if the chronological or quantitative aspect of the term  $\alpha\iota\omega\nu\iota\omicron\varsigma$  is never uppermost in New Testament usage when the word is used in reference to the future state of the righteous, then it is reasonable and logical to assume that the same connotation, "pertaining to the new aeon", must be its meaning when used in connection with the fate of the wicked. For example, A. Richardson states that: "...if we reflect that  $\alpha\iota\omega\nu\iota\omicron\varsigma$  in this context (Matthew 25:46) probably does not mean 'everlasting', we shall be

1. Paternoster, M., God, Death and Hell, page 109.

2. Motyer, J.A., After Death, page 47.

spared the moral anxieties raised by the translations, 'eternal punishment' (R.V.) or 'everlasting punishment' (A.V.). The real issue concerns the character of the punishment as that of the order of the Age to Come as contrasted with any earthly penalties".<sup>1</sup> Probably the best exposition is that which concentrates attention not on the problem of whether or not the punishment is without end, on "the terrible arithmetic of hell",<sup>2</sup> but on the words of the Son of Man to the two classes of persons described in the parable under the figures of the sheep and the goats. To the sheep, the Son of Man says: "Come"; and to the goats He says: "Depart from me". Strawson observes that the relationships suggested by the words are "...in essence what is meant by hell and heaven. To be in hell is to be sent out from the presence of God: compared with that terrible privation it matters little into what condition or circumstances the cursed ones are sent. What really matters is that they are banished from the face of God. Equally, there is no description of 'heaven' more significant than what is involved in the word 'Come' - for to be with God is to be indeed in heaven; if we recognise the significance of this we can look on 25:46, the conclusion of the story, as no more than a figurative description of what has already been fully set out in these terms of 'come' and 'depart'. 'Eternal punishment' is probably used as a well-known phrase descriptive of the fate of the wicked, without any attempt to face the

1. Richardson, A., An Introduction, page 74.

2. Paternoster, M., God, Death and Hell, page 85.

question of the suitability of punishment which goes on for ever".<sup>1</sup> Concurrence with Strawson's viewpoint would seem to be the most reasonable alternative.

The same method of exegesis, that of exploring the spiritual reality denoted by the imagery rather than the literal meaning of the words themselves, is equally valid when considering many of the other expressions listed above, used by our Lord concerning those who wilfully refuse the offer of salvation. The essential spiritual reality behind all of these metaphors, if such they are, is that they express the certainty of punishment for deliberate sin, the "eternal sin" of "blasphemy against the Holy Spirit". (Mark 3:29), which consists of the wilful reversal of moral values and the conscious choice of evil as one's goal in life. But it is one thing to accept this teaching at its full value and a very different thing to maintain that the imagery supplies details about the nature or duration of the punishment. "The New Testament does not answer the questions we like to ask about such matters as the nature of punishment after death, eternal retribution, and so on; and it is as much a mistake to erect its symbolic language into

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1. Strawson, W., Jesus and the Future Life, page 135. Compare the remark of O.C. Quick, Doctrines of the Creed, page 246, that 'it would be very hazardous to attribute the exact equivalent of the expression  $\kappa\acute{o}\lambda\alpha\sigma\iota\varsigma$   $\alpha\iota\omega\nu\iota\omicron\varsigma$  to Christ himself'. He compares Matthew's use of the phrase 'weeping and gnashing of teeth': "In Matthew's Gospel, the phrase seems to have become a piece of general eschatological imagery inserted by the editor whenever he thinks it appropriate to enforce the point of a saying or parable". (ibid, page 258).

metaphysical answers to such questions as it is to ignore the solemnity of the warnings which the language conveys. The New Testament writers do not seek to satisfy our natural curiosity but to awaken in us a sense of awed responsibility before God, the Judge of all. Such tentative answers as we may propose to these questions must be based not on a few texts but on the total revelation in Christ of God as Holy Love".<sup>1</sup>

This is not a minimising interpretation which fails to be justice to our Lord's words about the "eternal sin"; and the argument that the justice of God demands everlasting punishment of those who reject Him ignores the basic revelation of God's character in Jesus Christ: that God is love, which many Christians would regard not merely as a value judgement but as a metaphysical statement. Jesus' use of the 'a fortiori' argument in Matthew 7:11, ("If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?") suggests that one is justified in proceeding by analogy to argue also that, as God's love is infinite, then a literal interpretation of the phraseology of the Synoptic Gospels with regard to the fate of the wicked is untenable, in much the same way that it is illegitimate to interpret the details of the Book of Revelation to produce a 'blue-print' of heaven.

However, as Richardson's phrase 'holy love' suggests, one must not adopt the position of many moderns,

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1. Richardson, A., A Theological Wordbook, page 107.

who, in reaction to the literal interpretation of our Lord's teaching on this point, go to the other extreme and in effect render the Cross superfluous. It is sometimes argued that as God is love, in the end all men will be reconciled to Him, irrespective of their attitude to the revelation of Himself on Calvary. If this is all there is to it, it is difficult to see why Christ should have suffered at all - if God simply forgives, then nothing more is needed. The Cross becomes a piece of useless embroidery and is completely emptied of its whole meaning. Nowhere in the Bible is it said that "God is love, love, love", yet in both Old and New Testaments is found the statement: "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts,..." (Isaiah 6:3; compare Revelation 4:8). Again this is not to neglect the importance of the fundamental truth that God is love; it is a reminder that His love ought not to be thought of in such a way as to belittle His absolute moral holiness and consequent abhorrence of deliberate sin. D.M. Baillie says that the sacrifice of Christ "is an EXPIATORY sacrifice, because sin is a dreadfully real thing which love cannot tolerate or lightly pass over, and it is only out of the suffering of such inexorable love that true forgiveness, as distinct from an indulgent amnesty, could ever come."<sup>1</sup> This distinction between 'true forgiveness' and an 'indulgent amnesty' is one which is not always made. Yet expiation is a necessity just because of God's love, not something which takes place in spite of it. "Free forgiveness is immoral if it is lightly given...The

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1. Baillie, D.M., God Was in Christ, London, 1955, page 198.

promise of free forgiveness on condition of repentance to men so blind and callous as we are would be demoralising."<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps the clue to resolving the tension between the two viewpoints is best expressed by A.E. Taylor who writes: "If we seriously believe in the fundamental Christian conception of God as being, before everything else, Love, can we suppose the 'many stripes' (Compare Luke 12:47) to mean unending and inexpressible tortures? Can a God of love have designed oubliettes for even the worst among His creatures? ...The severest possible punishment for a spiritual being is to find at the end of life that he has lost the power to continue in the Divine fellowship. Again, it is to be noted that the responsibility for ultimate tragedy rests with man who has loved freedom too well...it is the persistently rebellious sinner who casts himself into the darkness by his very impenitence, just as it is I myself who dash myself in pieces if I insist in walking over a precipice. The 'second death' is a suicide's death".<sup>2</sup>

One final aspect of our Lord's teaching in the Synoptics which must now be considered is that concerning His own death and Resurrection. It has been maintained by many scholars of the form-critical school that the three predictions of the passion and resurrection in Mark 8:31, 9:31 and 10:33 following are to be inter-

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1. Temple, W., Christus Veritas, London, 1925, page 260.
  2. Taylor, A.E., The Christian Hope of Immortality, London, 1938, pages 114 and 123. Compare W.H. Auden's perceptive remark that: "If there are any souls in hell, it is not because they have been sent there but because Hell is where they insist upon being". The Sunday Times, January, 21st, 1962. Article 'Anger' (series on "The Seven Deadly Sins").

preted as 'vaticinia ex eventu', and therefore cannot be regarded as evidence when assessing His teaching. It is impossible here to attempt a full review of the messianic consciousness of Jesus; the matter is at present still very much 'sub judice' and to embark on a discussion in detail would carry one too far afield from the main theme. But at least a brief consideration of the three classic passages, Mark 8:31, 9:31 and 10:33 following, must be made. C.F. Evans, for example, from the form-critical viewpoint, states categorically that "the prophecies of the Son of man's resurrection in the synoptic tradition are accommodations to a steeled belief in terms of death-resurrection", and says that the three passages are, "at least in their present form...probably later Christian formulations".<sup>1</sup> Likewise N. Clark, though rather less dogmatically states: "We cannot build with confidence upon the predictions of death and resurrection that the Gospels contain...Though these bear witness to the assurance of the Church, they are not necessarily evidence for the expectations of her Lord".<sup>2</sup>

However, although it may be admitted that the details contained in these passages are possibly a creation of the early Church in its post-Easter perspective,<sup>3</sup> yet this tradition found in the Synoptics cannot be dismissed in so cavalier a way. It has already been argued that belief in the actuality of the future life is

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1. Evans, C.F., Resurrection and the New Testament, London, 1970, pages 139 and 143.
2. Clark, N., Interpreting the Resurrection, London, 1967, pages 40-41.
3. Compare A.M. Ramsey: "It is possible, as many scholars are inclined to think, that the words have been elaborated and formalised in the light of knowledge after the event". The Resurrection of Christ, London, 1961, page 40.

axiomatic in our Lord's teaching.<sup>1</sup> "The certainty of it shines from almost every page in the gospels".<sup>2</sup> If this is correct, then it is patently illegitimate to exclude the possibility that Jesus did foresee His own resurrection and there are further considerations which support this contention. For example, in Mark 9:10 it is stated that the disciples were "questioning what the rising from the dead meant", which seems to represent a reliable nuance, because it appears to be too subtle an insertion for the early Church to have made unless it is genuine. Another important consideration which supports the authenticity of this trilogy of passages is that there are others in a similar vein, which, although not as explicit, are significant just because of their allusiveness. In Mark 9:9 for example, Jesus, after the Transfiguration, tells His disciples to maintain silence about it "until the Son of Man should have risen from the dead"; Mark 14:28 contains the statement that Jesus said: "After I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee"; and in Luke 13:32, there is the cryptic reference to "the third day I finish my course". Another relevant passage is Matthew 12:40, where the analogy of Jonah being three days and nights in the belly of the whale is cited as parallel to the Son of Man being "three days and nights in the belly of the earth". Again, one may instance the garbled charge at the trial, when Jesus was accused of threatening to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, which was no doubt a misinterpretation or

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1. Though this is denied by C.F. Evans: "...resurrection was not a universally held belief and badge of orthodoxy". Resurrection and the New Testament, London, 1970, page 27.
  2. Strawson, W., Jesus and the Future Life, page 232.

a misrepresentation of a genuine statement which He had made (Compare John 2:21: "He spake of the temple of his body"). These passages show that such forecasts are an ineradicable element in the Synoptic tradition.

Although there has almost certainly been some redaction, such a radical reshaping of the traditions as is envisaged by some of the form-critics would appear to be ruled out by the above passages, and it is better to conclude with A.M. Ramsey that although the "predictions are mysterious and elusive...it is likely that predictions of a rising again were made by Jesus".<sup>1</sup> This is also the conclusion of W. Strawson<sup>2</sup> and V. Taylor, the latter of whom states: "To an extent which cannot now be measured, details...may have been conformed to the story of the Passion. In this there would be nothing unnatural or improbable, but only to this extent is the prophecy a 'vaticinium post eventum'...Did Jesus refer so explicitly to His Resurrection?...it is difficult to suppose that He spoke of suffering and death without any reference to victory and resurrection. In these circumstances it is best to infer that He did speak of His rising again and exaltation, but in terms less explicit than those of 8:31 and parallel passages".<sup>3</sup> In his commentary on St. Mark A.W.F. Blunt adopts the same position: "That our Lord could foresee His death is in no way difficult to credit; nor is there anything impossible in believing that His faith was equally sure of a divine victory to follow on His death".<sup>4</sup>

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1. Ramsey, A.M., The Resurrection of Christ, pages 40-41.
  2. Strawson, W., Jesus and the Future Life, page 219.
  3. Taylor, V., The Gospel According to St. Mark, London, 1955, page 377-378.
  4. Blunt, A.W.F., St. Mark (O.U.P.), 1947, pages 202-203.

Thus one may assert with a considerable degree of confidence that Jesus believed in the ultimate triumph of His cause, and that He expressed this belief in terms of His resurrection, though one has to make allowances for the influence of Gemeinde-theologie during the post-Easter situation. Such an assertion is in agreement with the principle of 'coherence' as expounded by C.H. Dodd, because the hypothesis that Jesus did believe in and teach about His own resurrection is fully in accord with the rest of His teaching and His life, both of which rest upon the conviction that for the person who lives in close fellowship with the Father there can be no finality about death: "He is not the God of the dead, but of the living..." (Luke 20:38). Our Lord's whole life epitomises this truth, and it is the inspiration of His teaching.

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CHAPTER FOURTHE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES, THE EPISTLE TO THE  
HEBREWS AND THE CATHOLIC EPISTLES

As the only direct Biblical source for the history of the apostolic age, the importance of Acts from an historical point of view is obvious. In this respect it makes a very important contribution to the New Testament doctrine of the future life, because it "attests beyond all question a fact which must govern our whole estimate of the historical evidence for the resurrection...the fact of the changed lives and characters of the Apostles. Whatever else we may say of the resurrection, we are compelled by the narrative in Acts to see in it a historical happening adequate to account for the vast psychological and spiritual change thus attested."<sup>1</sup>

But this does not exhaust its importance. Speaking of the historical aspect, M. Dibelius writes: "It was the Acts of the Apostles which first tried to form from traditional material the continuous account of an actual period in history. Many details, however, especially the speeches, will make it clear to the reader that this is not the ultimate object of the book, which aims also to preach and to show what the Christian belief is and what

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1. Selwyn, E.G. Essays Catholic and Critical, London, 1950, pages 293-294.

effects it has".<sup>1</sup>

However, "the eschatological element in the Book of Acts taken by itself is often thought to be slight."<sup>2</sup> The predominance of narrative partly explains this, and further reasons are that eschatology "is taken for granted" and much of it "is tersely given...in rubrics".<sup>3</sup> Another relevant consideration is that Luke (whose authorship of the book will be assumed), was not directly faced with answering eschatological questions, as, for example, Paul was when he wrote I-II Corinthians and I-II Thessalonians. Another reason for this misapprehension of the true importance of eschatology in Acts is that it is not always remembered by those who maintain that the dominating theological interest of the book is the work of the Holy Spirit<sup>4</sup> that to the early Church, the gift of the Spirit was THE eschatological sign 'par excellence'. Like the fourth evangelist, Luke shows that the Holy Spirit could only be given after the Resurrection and Exaltation of Jesus: "Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear" (Acts 2:33). To both of them the work of the Holy Ghost was an integral part of, and in a sense, the culmination of, Christ's work. C. Ryder Smith perceives this when he writes, concerning the

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1. Dibelius, M., Studies in the Acts of the Apostles, London, 1956, page 102. Quoted by Morris, L. The Cross in the New Testament, Exeter, 1961.
  2. Cadbury, H.J., 'Acts and Eschatology' in The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology, Davies, W.D., and Daube, D., Cambridge, 1956, page 310.
  3. Ibid, page 310.
  4. E.g. Evans, C.F., Resurrection and the New Testament, London, 1970, page 133: "Positive doctrine is in Acts rather attached to the Spirit".

beliefs of the early Christians, that to them "...the Death, Resurrection, Ascension and the gift of the Spirit were an organic whole".<sup>1</sup>

Thus the Acts, which is often termed 'the gospel of the Holy Spirit', is, like all the New Testament books, though some more obviously than others, based on the conviction that in Jesus Christ, the Eschaton has occurred, and it might with some justice be called 'the gospel of the Resurrection'.

A consideration of the speeches and conversations in Acts, the former mainly in the mouths of Peter and Paul, bears out this contention. There is hardly a speech which does not have the Resurrection and/or the concomitant gift of the Spirit as its main theme. (e.g. 2:24, 32-33; 3:15,26; 4:10,33; 5:30; 10:40 and passim). It is difficult, however, to determine to what extent these speeches and conversations represent reliable accounts of the original words of the speakers. A widely-held view is that "they may be relatively late stereotyped forms of kerygma in Luke's own day".<sup>2</sup> The possibility that they may be Lukan compositions is strengthened when it is recalled that Luke himself was seldom present on the occasions when the speeches were delivered (the exception is the 'We'-passages e.g. at Miletus in Acts 20:18 following). It is therefore widely assumed that Luke did compile them, in a way similar to that of the Greek historians such as Thucydides (circa 460-395 B.C.), who says in his 'History of the Peloponnesian War' that his rule was "to reproduce

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1. Smith, Ryder C., The Bible Doctrine of Salvation, London, 1946, page 186.
  2. Evans, C.F., Resurrection and the New Testament, page 134.

what seemed to me the most probable and appropriate language for each occasion, while preserving as faithfully as possible the general sense of the speech actually delivered". Therefore, although one cannot regard them as verbatim reports, the speeches may reasonably be taken to give an accurate representation of the gist of what the speakers said. C.H. Dodd's 'The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments' shows that the stereotyped outline of the speeches in Acts conforms roughly to the Markan outline of our Lord's life and teaching, which also suggests that despite their somewhat artificial form, they do preserve a reliable tradition, which is "the ground plan of New Testament theology".<sup>1</sup>

On the basis of the speeches in the Acts, there can be no doubt of the fact that the Resurrection controlled the faith and practice of the early Church. It was "the creative germ of historical Christianity".<sup>2</sup> To be a 'witness to his resurrection' was the main task of the apostles (Acts 1:22; 4:33; 10:41); who "proclaimed in Jesus the resurrection from the dead" (4:2).

Apart from this predominance of the Resurrection of Jesus as "the creative germ of historical Christianity", there are also found certain other familiar features of New Testament eschatology. There is the use of the phrase 'Kingdom of God' (1:3; 8:12; 19:8 et al.) and "nothing obviously distinguishes the term... in Acts from such apocalyptic use as it has in the

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1. Dodd, C.H., According to the Scriptures, London, 1952, page 12.
  2. Blunt, A.W.F., The Acts of the Apostles, Oxford, 1948, page 40.

Synoptic Gospels".<sup>1</sup> Another feature is the conviction that the Resurrection, the Ascension and the gift of the Spirit were "according to the scriptures". The argument from prophecy is prominent in Acts, (e.g. 2:30 following), as in many other New Testament books; its value lies in its emphasis on the conviction that the events of the 'last days' were not fortuitous occurrences, but part of God's overall plan of salvation: "The argument from Prophecy is ultimately an attempt to show that the life and mission of Jesus was no Divine freak or caprice, but part of a well-ordered whole...The Christian Church took over this conception of Prophecy. In the utterances of the prophets they heard the expression of God's eternal will and purpose".<sup>2</sup> H. Conzelmann stresses the author's<sup>3</sup> use of  $\delta\epsilon\hat{\iota}$  as significant in pointing to the necessity of the Passion and Resurrection in God's plan of salvation. The Crucifixion and Resurrection, which are closely linked (Acts 2:24; 17:3), are the outworking of this eternal plan. This is why the verbs  $\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\epsilon\acute{\iota}\rho\epsilon\iota\nu$  and  $\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\iota\sigma\tau\acute{\alpha}\nu\alpha\iota$  are normally used to denote God's action in raising Christ. The subject of  $\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\epsilon\acute{\iota}\rho\epsilon\iota\nu$  is always God, or else the verb is used in the passive form and means 'raised by God'. "This establishes the resurrection as the act of God towards Jesus, and hence the theocentric character of

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1. Cadbury, H.J., The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology, page 311.
  2. Strachan, R.H., The Fourth Gospel, London, 1955, p.260, quoting F.C. Burkitt.
  3. Conzelmann does not accept Lukan authorship.

the whole gospel".<sup>1</sup> Similarly the subject of  $\delta\epsilon\iota\sigma\mu\alpha\tau\acute{\iota}\sigma\varsigma$  is, in Acts, always God, though this usage is confined to Acts (2:32; 3:15,26; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40 and passim).

This eternal plan is to be consummated at the Parousia (e.g. 3:19-21; 7:11). Some scholars (e.g. R. Bultmann)<sup>2</sup> have argued that the Parousia expectation falls into comparative insignificance in Acts, vis-à-vis the Synoptic Gospels, and that Luke was primarily concerned to teach about Christianity's world-wide mission rather than to emphasise the imminent fulfilment of the Kingdom of God. C.H. Dodd also believes that the expectation of the Parousia occupies a relatively unimportant place, certainly in the early speeches of Acts, because the early disciples were so caught up in the first flush of their new enthusiasm concerning the present realisation of the Kingdom that the futurist aspect was relegated into the background.

Both H.J. Cadbury and W.G. Kümmel disagree with this estimate: the latter states that although it is true that "imminent expectation does not stand in the forefront in Acts...(yet)...we must also affirm that for the author of Acts, eschatology is more than a mere 'locus do novissima' (dogmatic pattern of last things)". In view of such passages as Acts 1:11; 10:42; 17:31, he

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1. Evans, C.F., Resurrection and the New Testament, page 21. Compare A.M. Ramsey's comment: "The central theme of the Apostles was not belief in the Resurrection, so much as belief in the God who raised up Jesus...New Testament theism is essentially Resurrection - theism... God had raised him up...(and)...the act of raising reveals the God of Israel, the God who raises from death, the living God". The Resurrection of Christ, page 29.
  2. Bultmann, R., Theology of the New Testament, Vol. II, p. 116 foll., quoted by Kümmel, Introduction, p.120.

concludes that Luke is "always conscious of the approaching end and of the expectation of the parousia... an expectation which remains alive through faith in the Risen One who was exalted for this purpose".<sup>1</sup>

Cadbury argues<sup>2</sup> that the three cardinal features of the eschatology of Acts: belief in the Resurrection, in the reception of the Holy Spirit and the expectation of the Parousia, are intimately connected, in that the Resurrection was the motivating cause of the descent of the Spirit, whose Presence guaranteed the future Parousia.<sup>3</sup>

In a recent criticism of 'Luke's' purpose entitled 'The Theology of St. Luke' (E.T. 1960), H. Conzelmann argues that initially the early Christians were dominated by their expectation of an early Parousia, but that their enthusiasm waned and disillusionment set in when this expectation was not fulfilled. The Church had to come to terms with this disappointment, and certain of its thinkers, including the author of Acts, reinterpreted the primitive apocalyptic hope in order to produce a theology which was capable of serving the Church during the long period which might elapse before the Parousia. In Acts, the emphasis is on the suddenness of this envisaged event rather than its imminence: the author

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1. Kümmel, W.G., Introduction to the New Testament, pages 121-123.
  2. Cadbury, H.J., The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology, pages 300-301.
  3. Compare Kümmel, W.G., Introduction to the New Testament, page 123: "From faith in the presence of the Spirit bestowed by the exalted Lord, the author of Acts forms the history of the eschatological salvation which is spreading in the preaching, and intends thus to make ready for the expected coming of the promised Christ".

stresses that its exact timing must remain unknown (1:7).

So the Parousia expectation ceased to be a cardinal factor in the eschatology of the early Christians and its use as an incentive in ethics fell into abeyance. 'Luke' filled the 'vacuum' thus created in two ways: he emphasised that the interim period was not a purposeless void, a waiting period deprived of any positive meaning, but that was on the contrary an integral and meaningful part of God's plan of salvation. This plan had three definite phases: the period of Israel, culminating in the ministry of John the Baptist; the ministry of Jesus, which is the 'middle of time' (Die Mitte der Zeit, the title of Conzelmann's book); and the age of the Church, the post-Resurrection period.

As a result of this reinterpretation, the Church began to realise its true rôle in the Divine economy, and one result was that the materials about the life of Jesus and the Christian community were collected and preserved in written form. Also, the Church, in its preaching, stressed the Resurrection, the Apostolate and the sacraments, to show its continuity with the incarnate Jesus. Finally, the Church attempted a rapprochement with the Roman Empire and began to formulate its attitude to Judaism.

Perhaps the weakest point in this theory, to which several other scholars, (such as A.L. Moore: 'The Parousia in the New Testament', 1966), have taken exception, is the supposition that it was disillusionment which motivated the re-shaping of the early Church's eschatology. D.F. Fuller argues that on the contrary, "Luke...wants his readers to understand that God's continued working

in behalf of the Church became possible because Jesus rose from the dead, ascended into heaven and continued his working through the outpoured Holy Spirit".<sup>1</sup> In other words, it was the Resurrection and Exaltation of Jesus, together with the gift of the Spirit, which convinced the Church that its life was a continuation of the Incarnation and as such, that it had a vital part to play in God's plan for mankind. No matter how long the Parousia might be delayed, the Church, the new Israel, was fulfilling its necessary rôle in human redemption.<sup>2</sup>

The soteriological effects of the Resurrection are not fully explored in Acts, which is precisely what one would expect if it preserves a genuine description of primitive Christian preaching. The emphasis is rather on the Resurrection's theological and Christological significance. The Resurrection is essentially the triumph of God and the prelude to our Lord's Exaltation (2:33).

The aspect which is most often stressed is that the arrival of the Eschaton necessitates a decision, involving a response of repentance to God's offer of forgiveness in Jesus (Acts 2:38; 3:19).

The benefits of salvation are not expounded in detail. The key term used in this connection is probably "peace" (10:36) which in its Hebraic sense has a wide connotation. Its basic meaning when used to describe the effect of the Atonement is that our Lord's

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1. Fuller, D.P., Easter Faith and History, page 243.
  2. Compare: 'Recent Study of the Gospel According to St. Luke', Marshall, I.H., Expository Times, October, 1968, pages 4 following.

Death and Resurrection ended man's alienation from God and brought men into the closest possible relationship of personal fellowship with Him. The continuity between the two Testaments in their emphasis on this relationship as the essence of life after death has already been noted in chapter three.

The conviction that those who respond to God's offer of salvation may confidently look forward to eternal life is implied in the phrase 'the Prince of life', applied to Jesus (Acts 3:15). This "assurance is given to all men" by His Resurrection (17:31); and neglect to appropriate the benefits of salvation will result in judgement, which is conceived of in futurist terms rather than as an existential reality. (e.g. Acts 10:42; 17:31; 24:25). In Acts 24:15 Paul is represented as speaking to Felix of a double resurrection "of the just and the unjust", a view which is in conformity with the Synoptic teaching of Jesus and Paul's own Pharisaic background and seems to be the majority view of the New Testament.

However, apart from these brief expository notes, in the main it appears correct to assert with C.F. Evans that "there is little positive doctrine of the Cross in Acts, or even of the risen life which the resurrection brings to light".<sup>1</sup>

However, although this interpretation contains an element of truth, it would seem to be rather beside the point thus to denigrate the value of the eschatology of Acts, as Evans appears to do; he labels it as belonging

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1. Evans, C.F., Resurrection and the New Testament, page 133.

to the 'redactive' type, in that it is based on the contrast between man's recalcitrance in crucifying the messiah and God's reversal of this crime by raising Jesus from the dead. He states that this "rudimentary form of resurrection belief...(is)...on the whole the form taken in Acts" and adds that it is not a "particularly creative" type of exposition, because it is negative in its approach, and depends on an emphasis on the dialectic between God and the Jews, whereby man's sin is negated and reversed by God's action (e.g. Acts 2:23-24).

To criticise the eschatology adversely in this way seems pointless because if Luke has correctly delineated the beliefs of the early disciples, such a "rudimentary" type of belief is exactly what one would expect to find in Acts. Luke gives what is presumably a reliable picture of the comparatively simple and more or less unreflecting theology of the early Church: the original disciples were primarily practical evangelists, who did not regard it as their immediate concern to explore the depths of meaning in the facts on which they believed salvation to be based.

Also, it is a debatable point whether the 'redactive' form is quite as negative as Evans supposes. It is possible to see in it a valid use of contrast, whereby Christ's Death, though an apparent defeat, was really a resounding victory, as the Resurrection makes clear. It was only later that theologians such as Paul, John and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews worked out more fully the doctrinal implications of the main fact,

the Resurrection.<sup>1</sup> Nor in view of this, can one expect to find in Acts a consistent scheme of eschatology: "Any distinctiveness which there is in the eschatology of Luke-Acts enriches our appreciation of the variety in early Christianity and warns us from thinking of its message as either a contemporary unity or a rectilinear development".<sup>2</sup>

A more important and creative role is assigned to the eschatology by D.P. Fuller,<sup>3</sup> who believes that in Luke-Acts, the author was trying to provide historical verification of the Resurrection by showing that only this reality, attested "by many infallible proofs" ( *ἐν πολλοῖς τεκμηρίοις* ), could possibly explain the growth of the Christian Church. Paul, who spearheaded the Gentile mission, was converted to his task by an appearance of Jesus; and Fuller argues that in chapters 20-28 of Acts, the author is trying to show how Paul attempted to convince the Jews that the death and resurrection of the messiah was the true fulfilment of the Old Testament, and that this event alone could have brought about his startling conversion from being a "Pharisee of the Pharisees" to being the champion of the Gentile mission. Fuller thus stresses the centrality of eschatology in Acts and argues that it provided the dynamic for the growth of the Church.

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1. Compare the statements of A.W.F. Blunt, who says that the speeches "contain no trace of the systematic Christology which Paul and others afterwards developed.. they seem to be either based on genuine information or to reflect a genuinely primitive tradition of the Christian preaching of these times...(which was)... the first and originative phase in the story of the doctrinal development of Christianity". The Acts of the Apostles, pages 39 following.
2. Cadbury, H.J., The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology, page 321.
3. Fuller, D.P., Easter Faith and History, pages 188 foll.

In his treatment of the eschatology of Acts, S.H. Hooke also assigns to it a central rather than a peripheral place, as C.F. Evans apparently intends to do. Hooke believes that the author of Luke - Acts was concerned to present a theological interpretation of the meaning of the Resurrection, which includes an exposition of the following themes: the Divine necessity of the Death and Resurrection of our Lord; the continuity between the earthly and post-Resurrection body of our Lord, the revelation of the risen messiah in "the breaking of the bread"; the ascension as the necessary condition of the sending of the Holy Ghost; and the function of the Apostles as witnesses to the Resurrection.<sup>1</sup>

One final element in the eschatology of Acts which demands consideration because of its importance is the Ascension (1:9-11), though the exact nature and status of this event vis-à-vis the Resurrection is a matter of continuing debate among scholars. The question is rendered difficult because the explicit evidence for the event is exiguous, as the passage in Acts 1 is the only unquestioned text in which it is fully documented, because Luke 24:51, which is the only other New Testament passage to distinguish the Ascension as a separate event, (apart from the spurious ending to St. Mark), is of doubtful authenticity in that the words "and was carried up into heaven" are omitted in Western MSS and are therefore doubtful. However, the doctrine of Christ's exaltation is basic in the New Testament,<sup>2</sup> and would

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1. Hooke, S.H., The Resurrection of Christ, London, 1967, pages 47 following.
  2. See, for example: Acts 2:33-34; Romans 8:34; Ephesians 4:9-10; I Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 1:3; 4:14; I Peter 3:22; John 6:62; 20:17.

necessarily seem to imply the Ascension, so the paucity of direct evidence is not as serious as some scholars have supposed.

Despite the fact that the two events are clearly separated in John 20:17, a few scholars think that in the original kerygma they were not distinguished; and on the basis of Luke 23:43 ("today...in Paradise") and Luke 24:26 ("behoved it not the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into his glory?"), G. Bertram argues that the original belief probably postulated that Jesus had risen directly from death to heaven. H.J. Cadbury, however, shows that this evidence is not unequivocal and that it is still legitimate to hold that the traditional view was also the primitive one.<sup>1</sup> E. Schweitzer, in his 'Lordship and Discipleship' (1960), says: "that the exaltation really dominated the thought is also shown by the fact that the oldest tradition barely distinguishes between Easter and Ascension...The view that the event of Easter was the appointment to heavenly glory can still be traced behind the Synoptic tradition of the resurrection".<sup>2</sup>

A.M. Ramsey, in his article 'What was the Ascension?',<sup>3</sup> concludes after an examination of the relevant evidence that it implies "that the disciples saw an appearance which brought home to them not only the Resurrection but also the glorious heavenly status of their Master". There

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1. Cadbury, H.J., The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology, pages 301 following.
2. Quoted by Evans, C.F., Resurrection and the New Testament, page 140.
3. In Perry, M.C., editor, Historicity and Chronology in the New Testament, London, 1965, page 135. Quoted by Evans, *ibid*, page 140.

is "no clear testimony to a belief that there had been an event of ascension distinct in time from the event of resurrection"; the evidence implies a "belief... in a concept or *θεολογούμενον* expressed in the imagery of exaltation", though as Ramsey also observes, the two concepts of resurrection and exaltation express distinct truths.

C.F. Evans disputes the legitimacy of interpreting the Ascension as a resurrection appearance which combined the truth of the Resurrection with that of the heavenly status of our Lord: he believes that "what may have been prior as a theologumenon or concept was 'seeing Jesus our Lord' ('maran') as the exalted and coming One, and resurrection as a corollary or extension of that".<sup>1</sup>

Probably the best conclusion is to regard the Ascension, despite the paucity of direct reference to it as a separate event, as the final one in the series of our Lord's Resurrection appearances, and as "an enacted symbol to reveal to the Apostles that the series of appearances to them was ending, that Jesus was entering upon a new mode of existence and activity, and that he was not only raised from death, but exalted into the glory of God".<sup>2</sup>

In similar vein, A. Richardson writes that "the truth of the Resurrection is not the same truth as that of the ascension...The symbol (i.e. doctrine, dogma) of the ascension...is a pictorial way of expressing the significance of the historical event of the resurrection of Christ...The ascension need not be thought of as an historical event, unless it be that of the last resurr-

1. Evans, C.F., Resurrection and the New Testament, page 141.

2. Ramsey, A.M., in: A Theological Wordbook, page 23.

ection-appearance to the disciples...The NT doctrine of the ascension of Christ teaches three fundamental truths concerning the Risen Lord: that he is our Prophet, Priest and King".<sup>1</sup>

Each of these three aspects is touched upon, to a greater or a lesser degree, in the thought of the Epistle to the Hebrews, whose eschatology now falls to be reviewed, though their meaning cannot be elaborated upon here, as this would carry the investigation too far away from its main theme. They are properly germane to the doctrine of the Atonement rather than the doctrine of the future life, though they are obviously relevant in some ways to the latter.

One cannot agree with A. Richardson when he maintains that "Auct.Heb. omits specific reference to the resurrection as a separate event; there is no place for it in his typological scheme".<sup>2</sup> It is true that Hebrews does not mention the resurrection very often, yet the writer lists it as among "the <sup>first</sup> principles of Christ" (6:1 following), and even though the expression used is plural, "the resurrection of dead men", it is surely hyper-critical to suppose that this excludes Christ's Resurrection (compare Acts 4:2), or that the author believed that the resurrection of believers was based on anything other than our Lord's Resurrection. In addition, the Resurrection is explicitly included in the benediction of Hebrews 13:20. So, although one would agree that the Resurrection is not a major emphasis of Hebrews, in contrast to that of the Exaltation of Christ,

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 1. Richardson, A., An Introduction, pages 199-200.  
 2. Ibid, page 203.

which is constantly re-iterated in the epistle (1:3, 13, and passim), to overlook it is to be guilty of a misinterpretation.

Another and perhaps more important misconception that some scholars have entertained with regard to Hebrews is to suppose that it is so thoroughly permeated with concepts derived from Alexandrian Platonism that, although the realised aspect of eschatology is incorporated into the scheme of thought, the futurist aspect is not very prominent and when it is present, it gives rise to incongruity in the author's mind.

E.F. Scott for example,<sup>1</sup> believes that the author tried to re-interpret the traditional apostolic eschatology by using the concept of value rather than that of time in comparing the unreal world of the present existence with that of the real world in heaven.<sup>2</sup> This contrast leads to the presentation of a series of antitheses, whereby the author maintains: that the real world in heaven already exists, though the present order has still to be terminated; that Christians have already reached the heavenly Jerusalem, which exists in the unseen and eternal world; and that the sabbath-rest of the people of God already exists, though it still remains as a prize for future appropriation. Scott believes that in one instance the author is led into a logical inconsistency: in his references to the Parousia (e.g. 9:27 following; 10:25,37; 12:26 following), because, logically speaking, if Jesus has already entered the sanctuary as the great high priest, then the idea of a return to the

1. Scott, E.F., The Epistle to the Hebrews, described in Guy, The New Testament Doctrine of the 'Last Things', pages 137 following.

2. This idea derives in Hellenistic thought from the seventh book of Plato's 'Republic', with its parable of the cave-dwellers and the shadows.

unreal world of this earth is an anti-climax, in that it involves a descent from the real world of heaven to the unreal world below. Thus he writes: "In the writer's essential thought there is no room for the hope of the Parousia".<sup>1</sup> Such a statement reveals a profound ignorance of the intrinsic nature of New Testament eschatology, as will become apparent later in the thesis (chapter five).

C.K. Barrett, however, argues that the thought of Hebrews is thoroughly eschatological, and although not wishing to deny the influence of philosophical ways of thought on the language and concepts which the author employs, maintains that "the characteristically Christian conviction that eschatological events have already taken place (though others remain in the future as objects of hope) is found as clearly in Hebrews as in any part of the New Testament."<sup>2</sup> This, rather than the author's illogicality, is the real explanation of the paradoxical combination of present and future. In Hebrews it is possible to discern the continuing attempt by the New Testament writers to re-interpret meaningfully the futurist aspects of eschatology, especially the Parousia, so that the delay of the latter might not lead to frustration and disbelief, which it would almost certainly have done but for the work of Paul, the author to the Hebrews and especially the fourth evangelist. This problem of the delay in the Parousia will be discussed more fully in chapters five and six.

Barrett thus maintains that the thought of Hebrews

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1. Quoted by: Guy, H.A., The New Testament Doctrine of the 'Last Things', page 138.
  2. Barrett, C.K., 'The Eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews' in: The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology, Davies W.D., and Daube, D., pages 364 following.

is consistent and that "the eschatological is the determining element...the thought of the Epistle...arises out of the eschatological faith of the primitive Church".<sup>1</sup> This contention is illustrated by a consideration of three of the fundamental conceptions of Hebrews: the saints' everlasting rest, in chapter 3; the heavenly Jerusalem in chapters II, 12 and 13; and the heavenly tabernacle of chapter 8. In each case, Barrett argues that the conception is not so much Platonic as eschatological in origin, and that each of these three metaphors illustrates the basic conviction of New Testament eschatology: that eternal life has already begun for those who believe in Jesus, though its reality is hidden to those outside the faith.

Thus he concludes that "the most significant contribution of Hebrews to the growing problem of N.T. eschatology lies in the author's use of philosophical and liturgical language", which he utilised "to impress upon believers the nearness of the invisible world without insisting on the nearness of the parousia".

Hebrews is also a classic example of how New Testament eschatology is often used to reinforce ethics. The author's basic conviction is that fellowship with God is the heart of true religion, and that this fellowship may be established from the manward side by worship; the Jewish dispensation was unable to achieve communion with God because it was imperfect; the whole system of priesthood, sanctuary and animal sacrifice had now been replaced by the atoning work of Jesus Christ, the

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1. Barrett, C.K., 'The Eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews' in The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology, Davies, W.D., and Daube, D., page 366.

faithful High Priest. The author was concerned to show his readers, who were in danger of slipping away from their faith (2:1), the real meaning of Christ's Resurrection and Exaltation as the prelude to His mediatory role on behalf of man's salvation. He is the ἀρχιερεὺς, the author of man's salvation, who suffered so that He might be "a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God to make propitiation for the sins of the people" (2:17).

This 'hieratical' interpretation of the Resurrection is unique in the New Testament: all the functions and activities of the Jewish high priest have been assumed and performed perfectly by Jesus in virtue of His Resurrection: it is because He "abideth for ever" that he "hath his priesthood unchangeable", wherefore he is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near to God through him seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (7:24-25). The cross, where Christ's blood was shed, is an integral part of the Atonement: "Through his own blood (he) entered in once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption (9:12).

Because the writer's interest is thus concentrated on his exposition of the meaning of the High Priesthood of the risen Jesus, he does not expound at length the results of the Resurrection for believers. His main aim, like that of the vast majority of the New Testament writers, is to convince the readers of the fact that eternal life can be a present possession, because in Jesus Christ, the 'end of the times' has arrived, rather than to describe in detail the "better things that belong to salvation" (6:9).

Conversely, he insists that those who have been

"once enlightened, and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost and tasted... the powers of the age to come" will make themselves liable to unremitting judgement if they apostasize (6:4-6). He speaks of "a fearful expectation of judgement" (10:26-27) for those who either reject the proffered salvation or fall away after embracing it and adds: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (10:31). Thus eschatology is used as the vehicle of ethics. The language used is so uncompromising that supporters of annihilationism have often appealed to Hebrews as providing explicit evidence for the validity of their viewpoint with regard to the final destinies of men.<sup>1</sup> But this appeal is illegitimate on two counts: firstly, the language, as always, is symbolic rather than literal; and secondly, it is bad theology to attempt to settle questions of this magnitude by recourse to quotation of isolated texts. This is not to deny that judgement IS a recurring theme in the epistle and that the writer envisages punishment of the utmost severity for those who "spurn the Son of God" (10:29), but to recognise the limitations of human thought and language in speaking of these ultimate realities. If one may be permitted to plagiarise Origen's remark concerning the question of the authorship of Hebrews and apply it to this issue, only God knows the final outcome of the process of redemption and any

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1. Some expositors regard Hebrews 11:35 ("that they might obtain a better resurrection") as evidence that the author believed in a resurrection of the righteous only, which is a fair exegesis (compare the phrase: "the spirits of just men made perfect" in 12:23), but which does not settle the question at issue, for the reasons indicated in the text.

suggestions which the New Testament makes regarding this topic are to be regarded as tentative rather than definitive in nature.

The same connection between eschatology and ethics which has been noticed in Hebrews is obvious also in the Epistle of James and the First Epistle of Peter, which, as they are normally regarded as reflecting the outlook of early Palestinian Christianity, will be considered next.

James especially illustrates this. The epistle is not a theological treatise but a manual of instruction for Christian behaviour, and therefore one cannot expect to find in it a full exposition of the doctrine of the future life: it is, as V. Taylor says, "a homily, or rather a series of homilies, on various practical ethical themes".<sup>1</sup> Consequently, explicit references to the after-life are few. The metaphor of the "crown of life" is used in 1:12, where the term 'life' means, as in the Synoptics and other New Testament books, "the higher life of the soul in fellowship with God".<sup>2</sup> As one might expect in view of James' predominant ethical interest, the theme of judgement is stressed: "judgement is without mercy to him that hath showed no mercy; mercy glorieth against judgement" (2:13), which re-iterates one of the criteria of judgement as expressed by Jesus in the Synoptics, and which is reinforced by an appeal to the advent of the Parousia in 5:7 following. Repentance is stressed, as in the Petrine speeches in Acts (James 4:8 following), because men must be converted if they

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 1. Taylor, V., The Atonement in New Testament Teaching, London; 1946, page 43.

2. Taylor, V., The Gospel According to St. Mark, page 411.

are to be saved from death (5:20). The New Testament writers generally regard man's plight as hopeless unless he repents, which is the only way that God's salvation can become effective in his life. If one translates this into modern terminology, it means that eternal life has only been realised by the individual when it has an existential effect, which is another way of saying that faith without works is dead (compare Matthew 7:21).

The First Epistle of Peter, which has a further point of contact with James in that both of them stress the value of suffering, is addressed to "the elect...according to the foreknowledge of God the Father", which immediately brings before the reader the idea that eternal life originates with God according to the principle of election (compare 2:9; 5:13).<sup>1</sup> Salvation is the outworking of God's eternal plan (1:10 following). Christians have been born again "unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1:3), and their reception of the Holy Spirit is THE sign of the arrival of the new age, an age which had been foreseen by the prophets (1:11-12). Christ's advent came "at the end of the times" (1:20). The dawn of the Eschaton is the result of God's grace, which is to be fully mediated to believers at the Parousia (1:13). Grace, God's free mercy, is of the very essence of eternal life (compare

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1. C.E.B. Cranfield comments: "They are Christians because they are objects of God's gracious choice...The foreknowledge of God includes the distinct though closely related ideas of divine purpose, divine choice, divine providence, and carries with it assurance that their high destiny shall be accomplished". The First Epistle of Peter, London, 1950, page 16.

Romans 6:23).

In line with this is the idea that salvation<sup>1</sup> is something that is received (1:9), or that Christians "by the power of God are guarded" (1:5); God gives men salvation and gives it in such a way that He preserves them to the end. God regenerates believers (1:3; 1:23), because, as in John 3:3, men must be "born anew" before they can see the Kingdom of God.<sup>2</sup>

Salvation, which is a present though primarily a future possession, originates with God; but it is mediated through the Death and Resurrection of Christ: God "raised him from the dead and gave him glory; so that your faith and hope might be in God" (1:21). Christ is the one who "his own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree; that we, having died unto sins, might live unto righteousness" (2:24), which means that Christ suffered the punishment due to man's sin in place of man (compare 3:18). Christ was not defeated:

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1. "'Salvation' is the word that denotes the whole sum of what God has in store for us..." Cranfield, C.E.B. The First Epistle of Peter, page 25.
2. F.W. Beare comments on this as follows: If the doctrine of regeneration found a ready entrance into the Christian teaching, it was because nothing else was adequate to express the sense of newness which men experienced in Christ; the sense that the old life had ended and a new life begun - new not merely in direction and intention, but in essence; the sense that the supernatural, the heavenly, the divine, had broken in and displaced the earthly, natural, mortal life". The First Epistle of Peter, Oxford, 1947, page 38. After a full discussion of the origin of this conception, E.G. Selwyn says that "the claim that the author owed any of his leading ideas to the Mystery Religions must be rejected as wholly unproven". The First Epistle of Peter, London, 1949, pages 305-311.

He was triumphant and now reigns at God's right hand (3:22).

If men wish to gain eternal life, they must make the vital response of faith, leading to obedience, the latter of which necessitates not only righteous living but also a willingness to endure suffering. Jesus was raised so that men's "faith and hope might be in God" (1:21) and the end of their faith is "the salvation of their souls" (1:9). Faith is vital: "the proof of your faith (is) more precious than gold that perisheth" (1:7). Genuine faith ought to have ethical repercussions: ("unto obedience": 1:2); Christians must be "children of obedience" (1:14), that is, their whole lives must be characterised by this quality. Believers purify their souls in their "obedience to the truth" (1:22). Baptism, as in Paul, is regarded as a dying to sin and entrance into the resurrection-life (3:21). A good manner of life is one of the hallmarks of a true believer just as the indulgence of fleshly lusts argues the opposite (2:11).

Another result of faith is that Christians must be prepared to suffer - they are "called" to this (2:21). Suffering is no longer to be regarded as a mark of Divine disapproval, which was the common Jewish view, but as part of the 'imitation of Christ' and therefore a privilege (2:19-24; 3:17 following; 4:13;).

But present enjoyment of salvation does not by any means exhaust the meaning of eternal life:<sup>1</sup> there is also

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1. Compare C.E.B. Cranfield: "To identify our present experience as Christians with what the New Testament terms salvation is a disastrous illusion. Its result is that we lose sight of the infinite riches God has in store for us...and so, we impoverish that very experience, the importance of which we were so anxious to magnify". The First Epistle of Peter, page 26.

"an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven (1:4), "a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1:5). The ultimate realisation of God's plan is connected with the Parousia (the term is  $\acute{\alpha}\pi\omicron\kappa\acute{\alpha}\lambda\upsilon\psi\iota\varsigma$ ) (1:7, 13; 4:13). The use of the perfect tense in 4:7: "The end of all things is at hand" ( $\eta\gamma\gamma\iota\kappa\epsilon\nu$ ), "implies that events have occurred in which it (the end) is already represented".<sup>1</sup> The eschatological term 'glory' occurs frequently (1:7; 1:11; 4:13; 5:1 et al.). The noun  $\delta\acute{o}\xi\alpha$  and cognate verb  $\delta\omicron\acute{\xi}\acute{\alpha}\zeta\omega$  occur more frequently in proportion to the size of I Peter, than in any other New Testament book.<sup>2</sup> The Resurrection is a manifestation of the 'glory' of Christ (1:21) which will be revealed in its fulness at the Parousia (4:13). Thus the term means the revelation of God's presence and character in the events of our Lord's life, especially the Cross and Resurrection. Christians share in this glory already in view of their proleptic enjoyment of the promised inheritance (compare 4:14 and Romans 8:18). L.H. Brockington<sup>3</sup> explains how in the Old Testament period the idea of the 'Shekinah' was gradually dematerialised and the term was "no longer conceived as an actualised or potential experience in this life but as an element in the messianic age. This new direction of thought came to stay, and glory slowly became eschatological, so that in the New Testament we find it as an integral part of the life of the Kingdom of God, both realised now and expected

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1. Selwyn, E.G., The First Epistle of St. Peter, page 111.

2. Ibid, page 253.

3. In: A Theological Wordbook, page 175.

in the future. The actual and the eschatological elements come together with dynamic certainty in the person of Jesus Christ".

There falls next for consideration a Petrine conception which is one of the greatest enigmas of New Testament eschatology: the descent into Hades (3:19 following; 4:6). Salmond says these two passages are among "the dark oracles of the New Testament, the unsolved if not insoluble problems of its interpretation".<sup>1</sup>

Before attempting an exposition of these verses, it is necessary to note their context and purpose. In 3:19 following, the author is trying to encourage persecuted Christians by citing the example of our Lord, who suffered unjustly but was vindicated by God. Therefore Christians must similarly be prepared to endure persecution. The author then states that after death, Christ "in the (spirit)" ( Πνεύματι· ἐν ᾧ καὶ ) "preached unto the spirits in prison..." ( τοῖς ἐν φυλάκῃ πνεύμασιν προεβλήθη ἐκήρυξεν ). The verb used ( κηρύσσειν ) is normally used in the New Testament of preaching the gospel (compare 4:6) ( εὐαγγελίζομαι ).

There are two main respects in which interpretations of the passage have differed: the identity of the recipients of the preaching and the content of the proclamation.

With regard to the first of these, some interpreters have supposed that the passage means that Jesus preached to the pre-diluvian sinners of Noah's day, while others have referred it to the world of the dead generally i.e. to all mankind in Hades, who were denied the opportunity to repent because they were born before the Incarnation,

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1. Salmond, S.D.F., The Christian Doctrine of Immortality, page 365.

a theory which, according to Salmond, "does meet at least some of the requirements of the exegesis very fairly".<sup>1</sup> E.G. Selwyn interprets the recipients to be the disobedient spirits imprisoned by God for recalcitrance (Genesis 6:1-6 compare II Peter 2:4; Jude 6).<sup>2</sup> This however involves taking ἐκήρυξεν in the sense of 'preached' or 'proclaimed the end of the evil angels' sway', which is not its normal sense in the New Testament, where it invariably means 'to preach the good news'.

Rendel Harris<sup>3</sup> makes the ingenious suggestion of a textual emendation. He believes that in both 3:12 and 3:19 there are references to the book of Enoch (in which Enoch is said to have carried out a mission to the fallen angels in Hades to pass judgement on them). His suggestion is that after ἐν ᾧ καὶ the name Ἐν ᾧκ or Ἐν ᾧχ has been omitted by a scribe, and that with the addition of this name, the passage would read: "...by which (spirit) Enoch went and preached

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1. Salmond, S.D.F., The Christian Doctrine of Immortality, page 385.
  2. Selwyn, E.G., The First Epistle of St. Peter, pages 315 following. In his essay 'Eschatology in I Peter' ('The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology' pages 394 following), Selwyn says: "...the context of the passage is baptismal rather than eschatological, and the 'spirits in prison' are to be identified with those spirit-powers of evil whose rebellion Jewish tradition associated with the age preceding the Flood...however, in I Peter 4:5-6, ...the main reference is to the impending judgement...the reference is ...to those only who have died in the Christian faith..."
  3. Harris, R., Emendations to the Greek of the New Testament, pages 5 following. Quoted by: Guy H.A., The New Testament Doctrine of the 'Last Things', page 97.

to the spirits in prison".

However, this explanation has not won wide acceptance because, as Selwyn points out,<sup>1</sup> the reference to Enoch is "abrupt and quite unprepared for", and because  $\epsilon\upsilon\ \omega$  cannot be dependent on  $\pi\upsilon\epsilon\upsilon\mu\alpha\tau\iota$  so the phrase must mean 'in the course of which' (i.e. the interval between Good Friday and Easter Day) 'Jesus preached...'. Nor would a reference to Enoch be apposite, because his message was one of condemnation, which is not conveyed by the term  $\epsilon\kappa\ \eta\ \rho\upsilon\ \xi\ \epsilon\upsilon$ .

The majority opinion has followed the lead of E.H. Plumptre's suggestion in 'The Spirits in Prison' (1871),<sup>2</sup> which is as follows: "The love which does not will that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance, proclaims evermore to the spirits in prison, as during the hours of descent into Hades, the glad tidings of reconciliation". This endorses the Church's verdict in including the Descent in the Apostles' Creed.

The statement in 4:6 is then most naturally interpreted as a continuation of the same thought: that the spirits in prison (here called  $\omicron\iota\ \nu\epsilon\kappa\rho\omicron\iota$  ), were given a chance to repent because the opportunity was denied them during their earthly lives. E.G. Selwyn, however, refers the passage to Christians who had died before the Parousia (compare I Thessalonians 4:13 following), and translates it as follows: 'so that although they have been judged, humanly speaking, in the flesh, they may live to God's likeness in the

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- 1: The First Epistle of St. Peter, page 197.
  - 2: Quoted by Salmond, S.D.F., The Christian Doctrine of Immortality, page 373.

spirit'.<sup>1</sup> The connection of thought would therefore be with the verses which follow verse 6, and a paraphrase would run: 'The dead will soon live in the spirit, like God, because the Parousia is imminent'.

It is important to remember that this subject "is more a matter of theology than chronology...(and) ...We can understand the descensus as a part of the triumphant activity of Christ who is lord of hell as well as of heaven and who thus completes His involvement in every conceivable area of experience".<sup>2</sup> That is, the descent emphasises the completeness of Jesus' human experience; and it is linked with the thought of His victory over all demonic forces, a conception which finds expression especially in the Pauline corpus (e.g. Colossians 2:15).

C.E.B. Cranfield counsels agnosticism in saying that "the best thing is to realise that we encounter here a mystery which is still a secret from us", though he adds that one must reverently...accept the hint...that the reach of Christ's saving activity is not to be limited by our human desire to get things neat and tidy in pigeon-holes of our choosing".<sup>3</sup>

A.T. Hanson is more explicit and slightly more sanguine in his conclusion: "The suggestion found in I Peter that the descent gave an opportunity for those who died before Christ to hear the gospel is rather too mythological for modern minds, but it may be regarded as a hopeful symbol of the destiny of those who have died

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1. Selwyn, E.G., The First Epistle of St. Peter, page 215.
  2. The New Bible Dictionary, page 307.
  3. Cranfield, C.E.B., The First Epistle of Peter, page 86.

without ever having heard the good news of Christ".<sup>1</sup>

In concurring with this conclusion, it is apposite to point out that it is congruous not only with our Lord's explicit teaching about the "few stripes" (Luke 12:48), but also with what is surely one's God-given sense of justice.

In considering I Peter's contribution to the understanding of New Testament eschatology, E.G. Selwyn<sup>2</sup> argues that it does not consist in any 'transposition' of eschatological concepts into a modern 'key' but rather in its emphasis on the facticity of the events on which salvation is based, especially the Resurrection. "It is these strange facts of history and experience, not the eschatological terms in which they were originally forecast, that admit of and call for conceptual description".

The Second Epistle of Peter has several features meriting consideration, albeit briefly, because they are discussed more fully on other pages in the essay. II Peter was possibly the last book in the New Testament to be written and reflects the disillusionment concerning the delay in the Parousia which would have proved serious for Christianity's future but for the re-interpretation achieved mainly by Paul and the fourth evangelist, which will be discussed later. In II Peter 3:3-4, it is obvious that opponents were beginning to scoff at Christianity because of the non-fulfilment of this fervent hope. The

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1. In: A Dictionary of Christian Theology, edited by Richardson, A., London, 1969, page 94. Compare R.H. Charles' verdict: "We have here a clear apostolic statement that the scope of redemption is not limited to this life in the case of certain individuals, human or angelic". A Critical History, page 377.
  2. In: The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology, pages 400-401.

author says that their scepticism is evidence of the imminence of the Parousia, which will be followed by the judgement and the destruction of the impious by fire (3:7 following).

The faithful, however, will gain entrance into the eternal kingdom of Christ (1:11), involving "new heavens and a new earth" (3:13). In 3:11 following, the connection between ethics and eschatology, which is a characteristic feature of the New Testament doctrine of the after-life, is made plain. Another distinctive feature of II Peter is the emphasis which is placed on 'knowledge' (1:2-3, 5, 8, 12 et al.), used, as in John 17:3, to denote a personal relationship to God or to our Lord.

A final passage which demands consideration is that in which the author speaks of Christians becoming "partakers of the divine nature" (1:4). The theology of the Greek Orthodox Church has emphasised this aspect of the future existence, more definitely than has the Western Church, though the 'deification' referred to is not to be interpreted in any pantheistic sense. R.P. Teilhard de Chardin sees the culmination of the world - process as ending "in the bosom of a tranquil ocean, of which, however, each drop will still be conscious of being itself"<sup>1</sup> which would be a legitimate rendering of this text. Others refer it to the 'rebirth' of John 3 or the *κοινωνία Πνεύματος* of such passages as II Corinthians 13:14 and Philippians 2:1.

The Epistle of Jude has obvious affinities with II Peter. The main theme of the epistle is the seriousness

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1. See page 263.

of sin, which merits "the punishment of eternal fire (17), further defined as "the blackness of darkness (13), and which will be meted out on the basis of a universal judgement (14 following). Jude thus underlines one of the basic eschatological truths of the New Testament: that of the certainty of judgement.

Conversely, for those who are true to the "faith once for all delivered unto the saints"(3) there awaits "the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life" (21), when God will set the faithful "before the presence of his glory" (24), which epitomises the fundamental Biblical understanding of the future life as fellowship with God.

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CHAPTER FIVETHE PAULINE CORPUS

Presumably, not many scholars would demur from the estimate of H.A.A. Kennedy that "St. Paul has laid the foundation for the eschatology of the Christian Church";<sup>1</sup> but when one tries to collate and systematise his teaching concerning the future life, one is faced with what is probably in the last resort an impossible brief. This is caused partly by the obvious and undisputed fact that the Pauline epistles were 'ad hoc' compositions written by a practical missionary who was not consciously trying to construct a consistent and neatly-rounded eschatological scheme.<sup>2</sup> But even when allowance has been made for this, the eschatological material in the Pauline corpus presents one with such a variety of concepts that it seems to defy consistent, logical exposition. This is probably what Kennedy means when he later says, paradoxically, that "Paul has no eschatology".<sup>3</sup> Perhaps one ought to appeal to

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1. Kennedy, H.A.A., St. Paul's Conception of the Last Things, London, 1904, page 3.
2. Compare Fitzmyer, J.A., The Jerome Bible Commentary, London, 1968, page 801: "A sketch of Pauline theology is a systematization of the Apostle's thought in a form in which he himself did not present it".
3. Kennedy, H.A.A., St. Paul's Conception of the Last Things, page 20. Compare Robinson H.W., The Christian Doctrine of Man, page 113: "It must not be assumed that Paul attained or even sought systematic consistency of statement. The Hebrew mind often rested in an antithesis, if not a paradox".

what R. Otto called the "essential irrationality"<sup>1</sup> of the eschatological frame of mind, and recall to mind the Jewish apocalyptic literature of which Paul was the heir and which R.H. Charles called, as noted in chapter three, a "heterogeneous mass of material in constant flux".

Many students of Pauline thought have tried to explain the absence of logical consistency by claiming that it is due to a development in the apostle's thoughts about the last things, and that it is possible to trace this development in the epistles, from the traditional Jewish-Christian exchatology of I - II Thessalonians to the more 'refined', or one might almost say 'de-mythologised', eschatology of the Captivity Epistles, which represent the final stage in his thought. This structuring of Pauline thought was strongly supported by R.H. Charles at the turn of the present century, and has been adopted by many subsequent scholars, including, for example, A. Schweitzer, R. Bultmann and C.H. Dodd.

Before continuing the discussion about this, it is necessary to trace in more detail the course of this alleged development, from the typically-Jewish apocalyptic material of the earlier epistles to the 'Christ-mysticism' of the later ones.

The first phase is represented by I-II Thessalonians, in which several themes which were commonplace in Jewish apocalyptic are found: the appearance of the anti-Christ and the occurrence of the great apostasy; the

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 1. Otto, R., The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man, English translation, page 59. Quoted by Guy H.A., The New Testament Doctrine of the 'Last Things', London, 1948, page 75.

Parousia and the accompanying judgement; and the final resurrection and settlement of men's destinies.

It was a widely-held belief during the last two centuries B.C. and the first century A.D. that opposition to God would reach its climax in the appearance of an individual or nation which would epitomise all that was evil and satanic and which would make a final but unsuccessful attempt to oppose and defeat God's purpose. This, however, would merely be the prelude to the inauguration of His Kingdom. It is possible to see the influence of this belief in several places in the New Testament (for example, in Matthew 7:15, where Jesus warns the disciples against false prophets; and in Mark 13, where He warns them about those who say: "Here is the messiah", and forecasts the advent of "false messiahs and false prophets", who would try to lead the elect astray by "signs and wonders".). Evil would find concrete embodiment in the antichrist.<sup>1</sup>

The same circle of ideas is present in I - II Thessalonians. The main passage is II Thessalonians

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1. The term  $\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\acute{\iota}\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma$  is found in the New Testament only in 1-2 John (e.g. 1 John 2:18,22, 4:3), but some scholars see an oblique reference to him in the "abomination of desolation" of Mark 13:14, where it is argued that the use of the masculine participle  $\acute{\epsilon}\sigma\tau\eta\ \kappa\acute{\omicron}\tau\alpha$  after the neuter term 'abomination',  $\beta\delta\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\upsilon\gamma\mu\alpha$  implies a personal embodiment of evil. In Revelation 13 and 17 there is a vivid portrayal of the antichrist, though the term itself is not used. The author has "abandoned all the mythical and apocalyptic conceptions that clustered round the Antichrist legend", and he applies it to "some seductive deadly error spreading within the Church". Howard, W.F., Christianity According to St. John, London, 1943, page 126.

2:3 following, in which Paul describes how, before that day (i.e. the Parousia), came, there would be a great rebellion against God, and the man of lawlessness would be revealed. He<sup>1</sup> is also referred to as "the son of perdition", who opposes and exalts himself against "all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God". He would be revealed immediately before the second advent, but would be destroyed eventually. Then would come the great apostasy at the instigation of this antichrist, but all these adverse events would be the prelude to the final triumph of Christ.

The programme for the Parousia is clearly expounded. Paul believed at this stage that it would take place within the lifetime of himself and his contemporaries (compare I Thessalonians 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23. Note especially 4:15 where Paul appeals to the authority of Jesus to substantiate this belief); and he stresses its suddenness: it would come as "a thief in the night" (I Thessalonians 5:2). The Lord "shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God" (I Thessalonians 4:16 following), the dead would be raised and the living caught up to meet the Lord in the air. After this would come the judgement, involving the destruction of the man of sin (II Thessalonians 2:8 following) and of all those who were wicked. "And so shall we ever be with the Lord" (I Thessalonians 4:17). This picture could probably be paralleled in almost every detail from the Jewish apocalypses of the

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1. Paul's language implies a personal embodiment of evil.

last two centuries B.C., apart from the obvious Christian elements.

Paul also deals with the question of the fate of the righteous dead, who, it was feared, might not be able to take part in the glories of the messianic kingdom because they had died prematurely.<sup>1</sup> Paul assures his readers that the dead would take precedence over the living at the Parousia, and that both would be "ever with the Lord". (I Thessalonians 4:16-18).

Supporters of the 'developmental' theory of Pauline thought maintain that the harsh and typically Jewish vindictiveness which is present in such passages represents an immature and sub-Christian stage in His theological development. The crass materialistic nature of the descriptive passages (e.g. "...caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air...") and the stress which is placed on the negative aspect of destruction and loss (especially in II Thessalonians 2:8-10), are said to show a marked contrast to the positive aspects of redemption found, for example, in Romans 9-11, where Paul looks forward to the conversion of the fulness of the Gentiles and the Jews before the Parousia, so that "God might have mercy upon all" (Romans 11:32).

When one passes on to the next stage, that represented by I Corinthians, probably written circa 55 A.D., it is argued that the process of change is already

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1. It has been noted that this problem led to the explicit formulation of the hope of resurrection in Maccabaeian times. See page 30.

evident, involving the jettisoning of certain of the alleged 'cruder' elements in Paul's thought, and the incipient development of other conceptions which are said to be more spiritual and ethical in tone. There is no further mention of the antichrist, though the hope of the Parousia taking place within Paul's own lifetime is still found (for example, in 4:5; 11:26; 15:51-52 and 16:22). Although Paul still thought of the resurrection of Christians as taking place at the "last trumpet" (15:52), after which the living would be transfigured (verse 53) to join the perfected Kingdom, the scholars who believe that his thought underwent a radical development discern in this chapter a dichotomy between two views, which ultimately led to a vital change in his thought concerning the resurrection of the dead. According to I Corinthians 15:51-52, the resurrection of those 'in Christ' is to take place at the Parousia, but according to Paul's theory of the "spiritual body", it ought to have already taken place at death; this suggests that his 'Christ-mysticism' was beginning to affect his inherited Jewish ideas, and this leads in II Corinthians to the latter's disappearance.<sup>1</sup> (This point will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter).

Thus, when one reads the epistles which Paul wrote during the third phase of his doctrinal development, viz.: II Corinthians and Romans, it is possible to

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1. C.H. Dodd speaks of "a reconciliation to experience"; Rylands Bulletin, January, 1934, quoted in: Baker's Twentieth-Century Encyclopaedia of Religious Knowledge, edited by Loetscher, L.A., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1955, page 350. Quoted by Morris, L., The Cross in the New Testament, page 213.

detect "an essential change in the apostle's views of the future".<sup>1</sup>

The idea of a visible Parousia and concomitant resurrection of believers gives way to the hope of instant fellowship with Jesus Christ immediately after death; and a more comprehensive view of the effects of the redemption achieved by Christ's Resurrection is evident. Paul wishes "to be absent from the body and at home with the Lord" (II Corinthians 5:8). In this passage, II Corinthians 5:1-8, Paul has now made a conscious break with his previous view, and the resurrection-life is thought of as the immediate sequel to death. He hopes that he and others may escape the rigours of physical death and pass by transformation directly into the next life. But this thought gives way to the idea that at death we HAVE ( *ἔχομεν* ), a spiritual body awaiting us. This line of thought is said to continue and complement the idea of the "spiritual body" in I Corinthians 15:35 following, where the idea of resurrection at death is said to be already latent. In Romans 8:19, there is no more talk of resurrection at the Parousia, but of the revelation of the sons of God and of the glory which they already possess (compare Colossians 3:4). Christians are represented as already experiencing the resurrection-life because they are "dead unto sin but alive unto God". (Romans 6:11).

The fourth and final phase in Paul's thought, according to this hypothesis, is that represented by the epistles to the Colossians, Philippians and

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1. Charles, R.H., A Critical History, page 397.

Ephesians, written, according to many scholars, about 3-5 years after those mentioned above in phase three. The Jewish apocalyptic programme and phraseology are now relegated completely into the background and the perspective is radically different from that of phase one. The change is said to be so startling that some scholars have doubted the Pauline authorship of some or all of the Captivity Epistles, but there seems no valid reason for doing this, certainly not 'en bloc'.

One of the main ideas of the three epistles named is the cosmic significance of Jesus Christ, who is presented as the agent of creation, the uniting principle within it and its final goal. (Colossians 1:16-17). His redemption extends to the realm of spiritual creatures: "all things in the heavens and upon the earth" are to be summed up in Him, which must include their salvation (Colossians 1:16; compare Ephesians 1:10).

Thus, during the period of Paul's literary activity, covering a period of about 10 to 12 years of his life, his doctrinal views are said to have been in process of continual change: early on, his views were formal and rigid, and cast in a typically Jewish mould; then, in stages two and three, his thought began to be modified, and when the final stage is reached, the transformation is complete and he has reached full theological maturity.

It was noted above that both A. Schweitzer and C.H. Dodd accepted the idea of development in the Pauline corpus, and as twentieth-century discussions of New Testament eschatology have until recent years largely turned on the views associated with their names, their theories must now be examined.

Schweitzer believed, as noted in chapter three, that

"historically regarded, the Baptist, Jesus and Paul are simply the culminating manifestations of Jewish Apocalyptic thought",<sup>1</sup> and that Jesus, "...in the knowledge that he is the coming Son of Man, lays hold of the wheel of the world to set it moving on that last revolution which is to bring all ordinary history to a close. It refuses to turn and he throws himself upon it. Then it does turn and crushes him... The wheel rolls onward, and the mangled body of the one immeasurably great man...is hanging upon it still."<sup>2</sup>

Thus Schweitzer regarded Jesus as a disillusioned messianic claimant who tried to force the issue and failed, because the future vindication expected by Jesus and expressed by Him in terms of a glorious Parousia never materialised. Paul's eschatology is thus a makeshift expedient. Paul was convinced that the life, death and resurrection of Jesus represented the 'Eschaton', and that the process of history would be terminated before his death. When this hope was not fulfilled, because the Parousia did not take place, Paul was faced with the problem of explaining the delay; and he solved this, according to Schweitzer, by developing his doctrine of sacramental mysticism. He began to teach that the Holy Spirit gives men, through the sacraments, a proleptic foretaste of the benefits of Christ's redemption, though these are only to be enjoyed fully after the Parousia, which is the one consistent element in Paul's eschatology, and remained with Paul to the end. These views were expounded in

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1. See page 62.

2. Quoted by Fuller, D.P., Easter Faith and History, page 75.

three books: 'The Quest of the Historical Jesus' (English Translation, 1910), 'Paul and His Interpreters' (English Translation, 1912) and 'The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle' (English Translation, 1931).

Objections which have been lodged against this hypothesis as it affects the eschatology of Paul are firstly, that it depends on the doubtful assumption, that it was the delay in the Parousia which motivated Paul's change of view, rather than his increasing perception of the scope of Christ's work to include the whole universe, as expressed in the Captivity Epistles; and secondly, that it would be unusual (though admittedly not impossible in view of Paul's cosmopolitan background), for a person reared in the beliefs of Judaism to express his re-shaped ideas exclusively in terms of sacramental mysticism, which is more akin to Hellenistic ways of thought.<sup>1</sup>

The main idea of C.H. Dodd in the realm of eschatology, as discussed in chapter three, (see page 57),

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1. The 'Religiongeschichte' school, assuming the mantle of F.C. Baur, argued during the nineteen twenties and thirties that Paul's theology must be interpreted in terms of the Hellenistic mystery religions. R. Reitzenstein and W. Bousset were the foremost proponents of this viewpoint. It has been revived in more recent decades by R. Bultmann and his school, who believe that Paul's thought was radically influenced by Gnosticism. Other scholars, such as W.D. Davies, one of the leading modern interpreters of Paul's theology, have argued the opposite hypothesis, that Paul's thought is firmly grounded in Judaism, which seems to provide a more convincing interpretation of the data. "Though the surface of Paul's thought may owe much to Hellenism, its sub-soil remained Jewish". Hunter, A.M., The Gospel According to St. Paul, London, 1966, page 11.

is that the New Testament is dominated not by the futurist aspect but by the idea that the 'Eschaton' has been realised in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. This idea is just as relevant to the Pauline epistles as it is to the Gospels, according to Dodd. He supposes that as the expected consummation did not occur,<sup>1</sup> the eschatology of the early Christians became futuristic or apocalyptic in nature, as represented by II Thessalonians 2, Mark 13 and Revelation. But the true continuation of the realised eschatology of Jesus' teaching is to be found in Paul's Christ-mysticism and his doctrine of the Church, which is the counterpart of the "supernatural Messianic community developed in Jewish prophecy and apocalyptic".<sup>2</sup> Although "the hope of glory yet to come remains as a background of thought,"<sup>3</sup> the main interest in the later epistles is the idea of present fellowship with God through Christ. Paul "thus claimed the whole territory of the Church's life as the field of the eschatological miracle".<sup>4</sup> Thus, "the work of Paul and John represents the most significant and far-reaching developments of the apostolic preaching in the New Testament".<sup>5</sup> Dodd regards the Parousia expectation, both in the Gospels and in the Pauline epistles, as a hangover from apocalyptic Judaism, and believes that it is not essential to New Testament eschatology. Although it appears often in the earlier epistles, it becomes less prominent in the later ones

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1. "The great crisis had passed, and yet there was scarcely a ripple on the surface of the great stream of history in the Graeco-Roman world". Dodd, C.H., History and the Gospel, London, 1938, page 151.
2. Dodd, C.H., The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments, London, 1944, page 140.
3. Ibid, page 149.
4. Ibid, page 155.
5. Ibid, page 73.

as Paul developed his Christ-mysticism under the influence of Hellenistic ways of thought.<sup>1</sup>

Although the value of Dodd's work has been widely recognised as a necessary corrective to an exclusively futuristic interpretation of New Testament eschatology, and as the clue to making it relevant to the modern world, his theory has been adversely criticised, not least because its adoption involves what is alleged to be a completely unbiblical view of time and eternity. Dodd believes that the New Testament writers conceived of eschatology not in temporal categories but idealistically in terms of heaven and earth, as in Plato; there is a qualitative difference between time and eternity. In contrast to this, O. Cullmann, in his book: 'Christ and Time' (English Translation, 1951), has argued for what he believes to be the retention of the fundamental Jewish-Christian conception of time, which he believes is linear rather than cyclic: God's redemptive acts are regarded as events in time sequence, and if one jettisons this truth, one is undermining the whole of Biblical eschatology, and of the Biblical understanding of the Living God, who acts in history, which thus becomes 'salvation-history'.

Perhaps the most satisfactory method of approach to this particular problem of Pauline eschatology is that suggested by C.F. Evans,<sup>2</sup> who believes that in his epistles it is possible to discern two types of eschato-

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1. Compare Robinson, H.W., The Christian Doctrine of Man, page 129: "In the earlier stage of his thought... we move in the circles of current apocalyptic imagination...But the failure of this expectation led to the more spiritual development of Paul's thought".
2. Evans, C.F., Resurrection and the New Testament, 1970, pages 155 following.

logical thought, which are not to be thought of as chronologically consecutive but as concurrent, one or the other being uppermost in Paul's mind according to circumstances.<sup>1</sup> This theory is by no means new: a similar idea was proposed by Otto Pfleiderer in his study of 'Paulinism' (1891), in which he concluded that Paul held the Hebrew and Greek (or the 'futuristic' and 'realised') views simultaneously, without any suspicion of inconsistency. The first line of thought is categorised by Evans as the "formal eschatological", and the second "the empirical experiential"; which, he says, Paul nowhere combines "into a systematic relationship".

Thus, at Thessalonica and at Corinth, when Paul is arguing for the possibility of resurrection, he pursues the first line of approach, which involves "a fixed eschatological scheme", including many of the traditional ideas of Jewish apocalyptic, still very firmly fixed in Paul's mind because, if the theory of the Danish scholar J. Munck<sup>2</sup> is correct, Paul regarded his mission to the Gentiles as the penultimate step before the Parousia, which his work would help to bring nearer because it would provoke Israel to jealousy by gathering in a representative nucleus of the fulness of the Gentiles (i.e. Romans chapters 9-11). The eschatological programme in I-II Thessalonians and I Corinthians is "the apocalyptic one of the last

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1. Compare Ramsey, A.M., The Resurrection of Christ, London, 1961, page 110: "...the argument for variations in Paul's belief has been unwarrantably exaggerated".
2. Munck, J., Paul and the Salvation of Mankind, London, 1961, described in: Fuller, R.H., The New Testament in Current Study, London, 1963, pages 76 following.

trumpet" and Paul's thought moves "along the axis of the parousia"; the resurrection of believers is seen merely as one element in the whole scheme which is to be accomplished when the Parousia occurs. Resurrection is simply "the means of being present at the final rendezvous", as it was often conceived in the Jewish apocalypses.

Such a view of the resurrection was not original or distinctively Christian and "so long as resurrection was thought of...(merely)...as a phenomenon of the end, it could play only a limited part in Christian thinking...". But Paul gradually came to see it not only in this light "but as a new and permanent form of existence, characterised by a relationship expressed in the words 'in Christ'. Thus, although "the expectation of the parousia remained with Paul all his life...the realisation of what was involved in being here and now 'in Christ' or 'with Christ' served to unhook some of the links which tied resurrection to apocalyptic expectation, and to allow it to play a more creative role of its own". This "empirical experiential" line of thought supplements rather than replaces the "formal eschatological", which, as Evans shows, is still in evidence in his latest epistles.

The great merit of this theory is that it satisfactorily accounts for all the elements in Paul's eschatology, including the consistency with which he maintains belief in the Parousia, which is the Achilles' heel of the developmental theory, because the occurrence of this belief in Philippians and Colossians, by general consent two of his latest epistles, cannot otherwise be

satisfactorily explained.<sup>1</sup> It also avoids a rather unnatural dualism in Pauline thought. In this connection, W.G. Kümmel notes, quoting J. Klausner, that in other periods of history, "great spirits have expressed themselves differently in style and contents in writings chronologically close to one another",<sup>2</sup> so there is no valid reason why Paul also may not have done so.

Paul's eschatology, therefore, has a two-fold basis: when the historical veracity of the resurrection of Christ or that of Christians was at stake, he concentrated on repeating the tradition ("...which I also received...", I Corinthians 15:3), which was cast mainly in Jewish thought-forms and with which Paul as a learned Jew must have already in many respects been familiar, apart from the main Christian differentia, the resurrection of Christ. When circumstances did not dictate repetition of this tradition, his emphasis fell on the present experience of eternal life;<sup>3</sup> this experience he himself had first realised at the time of his conversion, concerning which event,

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1. Despite the attempts to date all or some of the Captivity Epistles earlier in Paul's life; for example, by D.M. Stanley in: Christ's Resurrection in Pauline Soteriology, 1961, quoted by Evans, page 155.
2. Kümmel, W.G., Introduction to the New Testament, London, 1966, page 188.
3. Compare Dillistone, The Christian Faith, London, 1967. page 157: "When surveying the vast sweep of human history and its denouement at the end or when thinking of the Kingdom of God and its ultimate establishment over all hostile powers, he moves within the framework of a time-flow leading forward to glory and vindication at the end. But when he returns to his favourite phrase 'in Christ', space and time are transcended".

S.D.F. Salmond writes: "...all the distinctive lines of his teaching can be traced back to the impression that was made upon him by the revelation of Jesus Christ TO him and IN him at the time of his conversion. There we have the laboratory of all Paul's doctrine and in a very special way of his doctrine of the resurrection..."<sup>1</sup> Salmond goes on to add: "The historical fact of the resurrection of Christ which makes the objective basis of Paul's doctrine is essentially connected with the experimental fact which makes the subjective basis - the assured consciousness of a power within, the power of Christ's resurrection, which works to life and must ensure the final perfection of the man as such."<sup>2</sup>

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1. Salmond, S.D.F., The Christian Doctrine of Immortality, page 406. J. Jeremias traces ten elements in Paul's thought to the effect of his conversion, viz: the conviction that Jesus was alive, having been raised from the dead by God; the idea that the Cross was not the place of God's curse but the place where God's love was revealed; the belief that man's salvation is the result of God's undeserved grace; predestination, a sense of his own moral failure; antipathy to legalism; his Christian hope; his missionary dynamic; his apostolic authority and his ecclesiology. J. Jeremias, Expository Times, October, 1964, pages 27-30.
  2. Ibid, page 440. Compare Davies, W.D., Paul and Rabbinic Judaism, London, 1955, page 36: "His experience on the road to Damascus led to a tremendous deliverance and transformation in the life of Saul of Tarsus. On the one hand, it meant for him redemption from the power of sin, from the bondage of the Law and from the domination of unseen forces of evil... But not only had Christ broken for him the dominance of evil, He had also supplied him with new power... Henceforth, it was Paul's primary task in life and thought to interpret this experience in terms which would be understood by his contemporaries."

Once Paul had been convinced of the objective truth of the resurrection of Christ, it was this "assured consciousness of a power within" him which became the motivating force of all his later life and the dominating influence on his theology, as is evidenced by the fact that his favourite expression for describing the union with Christ which this power makes possible,  $\acute{\epsilon}\nu$   $\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{\omega}$ , is used one hundred and sixty-five times in his letters.<sup>1</sup> In addition Paul uses other cognate prepositional phrases, including  $\delta\iota\acute{\alpha}$ ,  $\epsilon\iota\varsigma$  and  $\sigma\acute{\upsilon}\nu$ , about thirty-five times. In attempting to delineate the main features of his Christ-mysticism, it must always be remembered that one is here dealing with an experience to which there cannot possibly be any analogy in everyday life; one is dealing with the abstract mystery of God and His relationship with human personality, so one must expect finite human minds to find difficulty in exploring its meaning.<sup>2</sup>

At the end of the nineteenth century, A. Deissmann argued that the Greek preposition  $\acute{\epsilon}\nu$  retained its locative force in this phrase: "It is an expression coined by Paul to characterise the relationship of the Christian with Christ as a sort of localization in the spiritual Christ. This idea...can be represented to our minds by analogy with the expressions 'in spirit' and 'in God', which imply existence in a spiritual

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1. The Jerome Bible Commentary, edited by: Brown, R.E., Fitzmyer, J.A., and Murphy, R.E., London, 1968, page 823.
2. Compare Fitzmyer, J.A., in The Jerome Bible Commentary, page 821: "The basis of the Christian experience is a new union with God in Christ, an ontological reality that is not immediately perceived by man's conscious faculties".

element like air. Must we take the formula's fundamental meaning in the literal sense of the words or treat it as a form of rhetoric? It is not possible to decide with certainty, but the former possibility seems more probable. In any case, whether we take it in the literal or the figurative sense, this formula is the specifically Pauline expression of the most intimate relationship we can imagine between Christians and the living Christ."<sup>1</sup>

J.A. Fitzmyer<sup>2</sup> contends that "the phrase should not be limited to a spatial dimension, for it often connotes a dynamic influence of Christ on the Christian who is incorporated into him...the Christian and Christ are not physically united like the yoke and albumen of an egg. This is the reason why theologians have often called the union 'mystical' (even though Paul does not use the word)".

Some theologians have taken exception to the use of the word 'mysticism' in this connection, possibly because it smacks of the Hellenistic cults in vogue at the time of the birth of Christianity, cults whose influence on the New Testament they are concerned to deny. But much of Paul's language is emptied of its real meaning unless it is a mystical union which he has in mind; for example, in Ephesians 3:17 following, he writes: "...that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith". This is "the breadth and length and depth and height...to know the love of Christ...that you may be filled with all the fulness (τὸ πλήρωμα) of God". Such teaching is a natural extension of our Lord's teaching in the Synoptics such as

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1. Die neutestamentliche Formel 'in Christo Jesus', Marburg, 1892; quoted by Bonsirven; J., Theology of the New Testament, London, 1963, page 319.
2. Jerome Bible Commentary, page 823.

"Come unto me all that labour and are heavy laden..." (Matthew 11:28) and "the Kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21). R.C. Zaehner has called Paul's teaching "mystical to the core".<sup>1</sup> C.K. Barrett, quoting A. Schweitzer, refers to it as "eschatological mysticism"<sup>2</sup> and defines it as follows: "...being in Christ means that the believer shares in the messianic kingdom inaugurated by the suffering and triumph of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Paul's mysticism rests upon a Christ who is primarily the eschatological redeemer, standing upon the boundary of this age and the age to come".<sup>3</sup> Paul's work in thus emphasising the present reality of eternal life, while still retaining the hope of a future consummation is, according to C.K. Barrett, the foundation of the mysticism in the Fourth Gospel, and the latter presupposes the former. This type of 'Christological' mysticism lies at the very centre of Christianity and of the idea of eternal life in the New Testament, and Christians need have no misgivings about it because its goal is not absorption into God, but union with Him through our Lord in the present life and the Beatific Vision in the next.

E.E. Ellis states that "since Albert Schweitzer, two eschatological 'foci', Christ's death and resurrection and the parousia, have been recognised as the key to the meaning of union with Christ",<sup>4</sup> and it is now proposed to examine Paul's teaching about each of these.

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1. Zaehner, R.C., At Sundry Times, London, 1958, page 172.
2. Barrett, C.K., The Gospel According to St. John, London, 1955, page 58.
3. Ibid, page 73.
4. Ellis, E.E., in: The New Bible Dictionary, edited by Douglas, J.D., London, 1967, page 954.

When Jesus Christ died and rose again, He not only gave men the possibility of justification before God (Romans 5:1); His Resurrection also brought into operation a spiritual force which is made available to those who are 'in Christ' through His Spirit, His indwelling presence (II Corinthians 3:17). "The Spirit as immanent deity and as equivalent to divine Wisdom, the Spirit that spoke in the prophets, is now for Paul to be equated with new powers that flowed from the resurrection of Christ and transforms believers."<sup>1</sup>

The spiritual power inherent in His Resurrection is mediated to Christians through His Spirit, which "is not a heightening of our natural spirits but a supernatural power...correlative to miracle",<sup>2</sup> The Spirit is "...a continuously vitalising and energising force, to which the Apostle assigns the attributes of personality because the effects of its presence correspond so widely and so closely to what was known of the self-consciousness and self-direction of Christ".<sup>3</sup>

Paul's life after his conversion was lived by faith in Christ; and faith is the 'sine qua non' for all those who wish to emulate him. Christians are justified by faith (Romans 5:1-2); they are adopted as sons of God through faith (Galatians 3:26), and by faith they are enabled to reproduce Christ's obedience to the Father in their own lives (Compare Romans 1:5: "the obedience of faith").

Faith, as defined by W. Sanday and A.C. Headlam,

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1. Johnston, G., in: A Theological Wordbook, page 243.
2. Micklem, N., The Creed of a Christian, London, 1940, page 141.
3. Scott, C. Anderson, Christianity According to St. Paul, Cambridge, 1961, page 173.

is "not merely assent or adhesion, but ENTHUSIASTIC adhesion, personal adhesion; the highest and most effective motive-power of which human character is capable".<sup>1</sup> Faith does not only involve assent to the truth of the historical facts about Christ and a theological interpretation of these events as redemptive; it also involves, above all, responding to Jesus Christ's revelation of God's love by committing oneself completely to Him. Obviously there is an intellectual element in Christian belief (Romans 10:9), but this "belief of the truth" (II Thessalonians 2:13) is only the basis of faith. Faith<sup>2</sup>, as typified by Abraham (Romans 4, *passim*), involves a personal commitment to our Lord, so that one "lives by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). Faith is essentially an attitude of life, "santification of the Spirit" (II Thessalonians 2:13), involving the whole personality rather than just the brain or intellect. How exactly faith effects the mystical union with Christ must always remain one of the mysteries of the spiritual life, because, as has already been intimated, it is a process which does not lend itself to analysis in this way.

The other method of contact with Christ is baptism, which is closely connected with faith (Galatians 3:26-27; I Corinthians 12:13), of which it is the seal (Romans 4:11; II Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13). Faith may be

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1. Sanday, W. and Headlam, A.C., The Epistle to the Romans, Edinburgh, 1958, page 34.
  2. The noun *πίστις* and cognate verb occur almost two hundred times in the Pauline corpus. (Hunter, A.M., The Gospel According to St. Paul, London, 1966, page 26).

said to be the subjective aspect of the union with Christ, whilst baptism is the objective aspect. In two passages (Romans 6:1 following and Colossians 2:12), the believer is said to be baptised into Christ's death and to be buried with him through baptism into death. This baptism into His death involves mortification of the flesh (compare Colossians 3:3,5) and identification of the Christian with Him in His obedience to the Father, "that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). The believer, by his identification with Christ, dies to the flesh, sinful human nature, "the whole personality of man as organised in the wrong direction, as directed to earthly pursuits rather than the service of God",<sup>1</sup> and is liberated from its power. By thus dying to the flesh, "the carnal nature...all those qualities within us which are in antagonism to God and to righteousness",<sup>2</sup> through this mystical union with Christ in baptism, the power of sin, which is derived from the flesh, its 'point d'appui', is broken. The person who is 'in Christ' dies with Him to sin.<sup>3</sup> This doctrine of the cross is the negative side of Paul's doctrine of the atonement.

The positive side comes out in his doctrine of

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1. The New Bible Dictionary, edited by: Douglas, D.J., page 426.
  2. Peake, A.S., Christianity: its Nature and its Truth, London, 1909, page 124.
  3. Compare Cullmann, O., Baptism in the New Testament, London, 1950, page 23: "According to the New Testament, all men have in principle received baptism long ago, namely, on Golgotha, at Good Friday and Easter". Quoted by Hunter, A.M., The Gospel According to St. Paul, pages 28-29.

Christ's Resurrection. Christ did not merely die to sin: He was raised by the Father and "the life that he liveth, he liveth unto God" (Romans 6:10). His Resurrection places Him in a new relationship with those who believe (Romans 1:4-5). At the Resurrection, Jesus became the Last Adam (I Corinthians 15:45); like the First Adam, He is the source of life for mankind; in His case, the resurrection life. At the Resurrection He became a  $\piνεῦμα \text{ ἰσοπολιτικόν}$  and the life to which He was raised by the Father is mediated to believers through His Spirit,<sup>1</sup> so that Paul can write:...and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me" (Galatians 2:20). So too, all believers, if they become united with Christ by the likeness of His death, will also be joined with Him in His Resurrection: "...if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him" (Romans 6:8). The two crucial events in Christ's life, His Crucifixion and Resurrection, are both inclusive events, and believers, if they are united with Him, form a joint personality so that what happened to Him in each event happens proleptically to them. The baptised person's life should no longer be the expression of the former 'sarx-self' but of the power of Christ's Spirit, which is the motivating force of the believer's conduct, and

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1. Paul's understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity has been aptly called 'economic', (Fitzmyer J.A., in The Jerome Bible Commentary, page 814). That is, as expressed by A.M. Hunter, although "theologically Christ and the Spirit may be distinguishable (I Corinthians 13:14); experientially they are one (II Corinthians 3:17-18)". In Romans 8:9-11 the "Spirit of God", the "Spirit of Christ", "the Spirit" and "Christ" are used interchangeably to describe the indwelling presence of God in the Christian. In II Corinthians 3:17 Paul, in an enigmatic phrase, speaks of "the Lord the Spirit", which is variously interpreted by different scholars.

in the struggle against "the mind of the flesh" (Romans 8:6), which is an inevitable and perpetual danger attaching to man's human condition, he is helped by participating in the Lord's Supper which "is a meal with three aspects; It is a retrospect, for in the sacrament we proclaim the Lord's atoning death (I Corinthians 11:26); it is a communion (koinonia), for in it we share in the living Crucified with all his benefits (I Corinthians 10:16 following); and it is a prophecy, since at the meal we look away to the time when Christ will come in glory (I Corinthians 11:26)"<sup>1</sup>.

"Sanctification of the Spirit" (II Thessalonians 2:13), although it must produce appropriate ethical results if it is real, is not primarily conformity to the moral rules of Christianity but a sharing in the Death and Resurrection of our Lord, that "like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father...we also might walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4). "Newness of life" is existence founded on the realisation that the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus alone make sense of human life and of the universe, and involves, though physically one is still "in the flesh", living one's life in fellowship with God through Christ's Spirit: one's "life is hid with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3).

Thus the believer's union with Christ's death in

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1. Hunter, A.M., Introducing New Testament Theology, pages 98-99.

baptism, and a complementary sharing of His resurrection life, results in "an inclusion or incorporation that connotes a symbiosis between the two;...the ontological reality that is the basis of the union is the possession of the Spirit of Christ".<sup>1</sup> Through the power of the indwelling Spirit, the believer is enabled to serve God in the "newness of the spirit" (Roman 7:6) as opposed to his former life under the Law: "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death" (Romans 8:2). Man's better nature tries to serve God (Romans 7, passim), but only when Christ's Spirit has energised his higher nature can he achieve this aim (Romans 8:9).

But baptism does not work automatically, like a drug or injection, and there is nothing magical or coercive about it: "...the rationale of the sacrament is to be sought in terms not of some 'ex opere operato' magic but of what Wheeler Robinson has taught us to call 'prophetic symbolism' ".<sup>2</sup> Baptism is a corporate application of this idea; it not only symbolises the reality which it portrays, but also in some measure achieves its realisation, a realisation of the death to sin which is the preliminary to the concomitant new life in Christ, the life of the resurrection-era. Men must, by the 'obedience of faith' (Romans 1:5), strive to become what in principle they already are after baptism - new creatures (II Corinthians 5:17). Paul's own life subsequent to his conversion was one of constant moral struggle, "to know Christ and the power

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 1. Fitzmyer, J.A., in: The Jerome Bible Commentary, page 823.

2. Hunter, A.M., Introducing New Testament Theology, page 95.

of his resurrection" because he realised that he had "not already obtained", nor was he "already made perfect" (Philippians 3:10 following). Faith must of necessity involve obedience, as can be seen by comparing Romans 1:8, and I Thessalonians 1:8 with Romans 15:18 and 16:19; or II Corinthians 10:5 following with 10:15.<sup>1</sup>

Such a life will ensure that the believer will produce the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22 following): "The lively commitment of faith must so influence his conscious conduct as to integrate his psychological activity with the ontological reality within him. This is integrated Christian living".<sup>2</sup> Those who still perpetrate the "works of the flesh" (Galatians 5:1 following) are "none of his" (Romans 8:9), because "the Kingdom of God..." (for which phrase one might substitute 'eternal life' or 'life in Christ') "...is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Romans 14:17. Compare Romans 15:13; I Thessalonians 1:6). The whole of Christian life is dependent on the

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1. Compare Dietrich Bonhoeffer's statement on the close connection between obedience and faith: " 'Only those who believe obey' is what we say to that part of a believer's soul which obeys, and 'only those who obey believe' is what we say to that part of the soul of the obedient which believes. If the first half of the proposition stands alone, the believer is exposed to the danger of cheap grace, which is another word for damnation. If the second half stands alone, the believer is exposed to the danger of salvation through works, which is also another word for damnation". (The Cost of Discipleship, London, 1959, page 58)..
2. Fitzmyer, J.A. The Jerome Bible Commentary, page 821.

working of the Spirit. Confession of faith in our Lord is itself the work of the Spirit (I Corinthians 12:3), as is acknowledgement of the Fatherhood of God and a realisation of His love for mankind (Galatians 4:6; Romans 8:15-16; Romans 5:5). Christians worship God by the Spirit (Romans 8:26), and it is participation in the Spirit which produces the fellowship of the Church (Philippians 2:1).

In virtue of this fellowship, those who are united with Christ form a brotherhood which constitutes the body of Christ; the new Israel of God (I Corinthians 12 and Ephesians, passim; Galatians 6:16). "If the Holy Spirit is the dynamic of the new life, the sphere in which it is lived is the Church...Paul's ecclesiology is a branch of his Christology".<sup>1</sup>

Being 'in Christ' is thus a social as well as a personal experience. Paul and the other New Testament authors never conceive of the future life as a purely individual experience, but in corporate terms. This collectivism is not surprising when one remembers that the origin of the Christian doctrine is to be found, in embryo, in Hebrew religion, with its deep-rooted idea of corporate personality, which led to a marked emphasis on the corporate aspect of humanity's contact with God in the theocracy. John Donne's perceptive observation that 'no man is an island unto himself' enshrines the vital truth contained in this important aspect of New Testament eschatology, which it is important to emphasise because it is sometimes overlooked. It should serve as a corrective to a danger to which modern existential philosophy, as applied to the Christian faith, would seem to be exposed: a tendency to stress the individual

1. The Gospel According to St. Paul, Hunter, AM. page 38.

at the expense of the group. Although the New Testament has a considerable amount to say about the individual aspect of the after-life, its main interest is not in the individual person 'per se'; its ultimate hope is not for a selfishly-conceived continuation of isolated existence for the individual, but for a perfected Kingdom of God, in which the individual and corporate aspects of the future life are fused (Compare I Corinthians 12:27: "Now ye are the body of Christ, and severally members thereof"). "To be 'in Christ', while it is a great personal privilege and experience, is a privilege which inevitably puts a man into Church and binds him to his fellow-believers in the one body of Christ".<sup>1</sup> Christ is the "firstborn among many brethren" (Romans 8:29).

Participation in Christ's Body now makes eternal life a present possession. But Paul's theology is not all 'realised'. Believers are already "in the Kingdom of God's dear Son" (Colossians 1:13) and possess the first fruits ( ἀπαρχή ) of the Spirit (Romans 8:23), a down-payment ( ἀρραβών ) which guarantees full possession of the reality later, (II Corinthians 1:22; 5:5), yet they are still subject to the attacks of sin and the onslaught of death. They are still in τὸ σῶμα τῆς σαρκὸς (Colossians 2:11). But the Spirit within them is the guarantee of their resurrection in the next world: "If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, he that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall

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1. Filson, F., The New Testament against its Environment, London, 1950, page 77. Quoted by Hunter, A.M.,  
- The Gospel According to St. Paul, page 34.

quicken also your mortal bodies through his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Romans 8:11). The "likeness of his resurrection" (Romans 6:5) will be realised at the Parousia, when believers will be "conformed to the image of God's Son" (Romans 8:29). Although "Christ in you" is a fact of present experience for the Christian, "the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27) still remains unfulfilled. The resurrection life has only been fully actualised in Jesus Christ, "the first-fruits of them that are asleep" (I Corinthians 15:20), and only at the Parousia, the second of the two main 'foci' of Paul's 'Christ-mysticism' (E.E. Ellis), will believers "be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Romans 8:21).

The main elements in Paul's futurist eschatology are: the Parousia, the resurrection of the body, judgement and the final realisation of God's purpose.

D.M. Stanley and R.E. Brown,<sup>1</sup> whilst allowing that even in Paul's later letters "to a certain extent futurist polarity is retained", believe that in the last few years of his life, as represented by his theology in Philippians, Colossians, Ephesians and the Pastorals,<sup>2</sup> Paul "does not seem quite so assured that he will live to see this consummation" (scilicet: the Parousia) as he was during the period of his earlier letters when his eschatology was dominated by a "parousiac spirituality", and that this development may be illustrated by an etymological study of his three

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1. The Jerome Bible Commentary, page 780.
2. If the latter are to be included in the Pauline corpus.

favourite terms for the second advent, viz:  $\text{Παρουσία}$ ,  $\text{ἀποκάλυψις}$ , and  $\text{ἐπιφάνεια}$ . They show that the term  $\text{Παρουσία}$  is used only in the earlier epistles in its technical sense to denote the return of Christ and that in the later ones it is found only in the sense of "presence" (e.g. Philippians 1:26). It is interesting that I Corinthians seems to be the transition-point in this development:  $\text{Παρουσία}$  is used in I Corinthians 15:23 in its full eschatological sense, yet in I Corinthians 16:17 it is used in its non-technical sense, as it is in II Corinthians 10:10. The term  $\text{ἀποκάλυψις}$  is used mainly in the letters from Paul's earlier and middle periods (e.g. II Thessalonians 1:7; I Corinthians 1:7; Romans 2:5); whereas the third term,  $\text{ἐπιφάνεια}$  is used only once in the early letters (II Thessalonians 2:8), yet in the Pastorals it is used quite frequently in its technical sense (e.g. I Timothy 6:14; II Timothy 4:1,8; Titus 2:13). They comment as follows: "Earlier, he had thought of the coming back of an absent Christ; now he thought of the unveiling or epiphany of one invisibly present even in this age".

A similar observation is made by J.A. Findley,<sup>1</sup> who, commenting on the passage II Corinthians 4:16 to 5:10, says: "...for the first time Paul realises that he will die before the Lord's Return. We do not find him subsequently speaking of the  $\text{Παρουσία}$  in the first person plural of I Thessalonians and I Corinthians".

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 1. Dictionary of the Bible, edited by Hastings, J., quoted by Griffith-Jones, E., Faith and Immortality page 175.

Although many scholars would be prepared to admit that there is a change of emphasis with respect to Paul's belief about the timing of the Parousia, yet on the evidence of the epistles there can still be no doubt that he continued to expect it within his own lifetime, even during the last few years of his life. His watchword through his career was: "Marana tha" - "O Lord, come!" (I Corinthians 16:22). Not only in Colossians 3:4, but also in Philippians 3:20 and 4:5 (compare Philippians 1:6; 1:10; and 2:16), 'parousiac spirituality' is still the motivating force of his thought.

The two aspects of the Parousia which are stressed both in the Pauline epistles and the rest of the New Testament are its reality and its immanence, aspects which are not dissociated, as C.H. Dodd shows: "When the profound realities underlying a situation are depicted in the dramatic form of historical prediction, the certainty and inevitability of the spiritual processes involved are expressed in terms of the immediate imminence of the event. The proposition 'A is involved in B' (by the logic of the moral and spiritual order) becomes 'A will follow immediately upon B'".<sup>1</sup> The undoubted truth contained in this observation ought to mitigate the difficulty which many Christians have felt with regard to the idea of the imminence of the Parousia both in our Lord's teaching and in Paul's eschatology.

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1. Dodd, C.H., Parables of the Kingdom, London, 1969, page 55.

J.A.T. Robinson<sup>1</sup> believes that the New Testament is concerned not with the last things, in the sense that it provides a valid literal description of the Parousia, judgement and resurrection, but that it is concerned with the Last Thing which gives purpose and meaning to all the rest. He argues that "it is impossible to cut the expectation of the Parousia entirely out of New Testament Christianity", yet it is equally illegitimate to treat it as "ballast". The mistaken notion of the imminence of the Parousia arose because of a "misinterpretation, in terms of a 'chronos'-outlook, of a message whose essential truth was bound up with the genuinely Hebraic attitude to time as 'kairos'." He believes that this misinterpretation began with the Hebrew apocalyptists, who attempted to pinpoint the chronology of the end of the world, and that they thus perverted the viewpoint of Old Testament prophecy, which is based on the conception of time as 'kairos'. II Peter 3:8-9 represents the truly-Christian eschatological outlook, in distinction to the apocalyptic one, which has left traces in the New Testament, especially in Revelation. In a similar way to that of C.H. Dodd, he believes that the irreducible element of imminence in the New Testament conception of the Parousia is due to "decisiveness of 'kairos' being translated into immediacy of 'chronos',<sup>2</sup> and that the purpose of its

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1. In the End, God, page 62.

2. Ibid, page 63.

apocalyptic imagery is "to indicate in unmistakable idiom the FINALITY of the processes of life and death, salvation and judgement, set in motion by the events of the Incarnation".<sup>1</sup> Any picture of the End conceived by the New Testament writers had to do justice to both aspects of New Testament eschatology: the realised and the futurist. "This was achieved by the introduction...of the idea of the RETURN of Christ. It was not a new Christ - there could be nothing new after the final revelation of the Incarnation; on the other hand, the return stood for the completion of that which was already final." God's final offer of salvation had already been made in our Lord and decision was essential, because as expressed by O.C. Quick, with whom J.A.T. Robinson seems to be substantially in agreement, "In spiritual reality time is to be measured by God's work. And in the cross and resurrection of Christ his last act for man's redemption has been wrought, his last word spoken".<sup>2</sup>

Thus, the New Testament doctrine of the Parousia enshrines two vital truths of Christianity: "...the conviction that if the events of the Incarnation have the eschatological character asserted of them, then history MUST come to<sup>a</sup> close";<sup>3</sup> and the recognition that "now we see not yet all things subjected to him", (Hebrews 2:8). These two truths are complementary, because "...to understand the finality of the events

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1. Robinson, J.A.T., In the End, God, page 70.
  2. Quick, O.C., Doctrines of the Creed, page 253.
  3. In the End, God, page 70.

of the Incarnation, in order to see them as eschatological at all, it becomes necessary to view them as the first half of a single process that will be completed in the future...it is the certainty of the sequel which seals the events of the Incarnation as eschatological".<sup>1</sup>

The doctrine of the Parousia, therefore, expresses the conviction that the final victory of Jesus Christ is absolutely certain. The Parousia is the V-Day corresponding to the D-Day of the crucifixion, to use O. Cullmann's now-famous analogy. He writes: "...the 'Victory Day' does in fact present something new in contrast to the decisive battle already fought... (but)...this new thing that the 'Victory Day' brings is based entirely upon that decisive battle, and would be absolutely impossible without it. Thus we make for the future precisely the same confirmation as we did for the past. It is a unique occurrence; it has its meaning for redemptive history in itself; but on the other hand, it is nevertheless founded upon that one unique event at the mid-point".<sup>2</sup>

In the Crucifixion and Resurrection of our Lord, the decisive victory has been gained; the battle still continues but its ultimate result has already been made clear, and this is re-iterated in the doctrine of the Parousia, which means that the outcome is a foregone conclusion.

This theological interpretation of the idea of the Parousia avoids committal to a naïvely-credulous belief

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1. Robinson; J.A.T., In the End, God, page 70.
  2. Cullmann, O., Christ and Time, London, 1951, page 141.  
Quoted by Morris, L., The Cross in the New Testament, page 259.

in the literal details of Paul's descriptions, yet it allows, or rather, demands, its retention as a vital element in New Testament eschatology, as opposed to the view of R. Bultmann and others, who regard the Parousia belief as a vestige of Paul's Judaistic background from which he never fully managed to escape, and therefore as a part of the gospel with which modern man can dispense.

The next element in Paul's eschatology which falls for consideration is probably his most original contribution to the New Testament doctrine of the future life, yet it is also probably the most misunderstood and misinterpreted element: his doctrine of the resurrection of the body, which is "a central feature in his later eschatology."<sup>1</sup> In the classic passage for this conception, I Corinthians 15, Paul simultaneously minimises the importance of "flesh and blood", man's physical organism, yet he insists also on the resurrection of the body, which to many persons has seemed to be a logical inconsistency which cannot be resolved.<sup>2</sup> If, however, such persons took the trouble to examine in detail Paul's use of terminology, then they would find it much easier to see how these apparently irreconcilable views are, in fact, compatible, and that Paul's doctrine enshrines and preserves an essential Christian insight into the nature of the after-life: that personal identity

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1. Robinson, H.W., The Christian Doctrine of Man, page 129.
  2. Lamont, C., The Illusion of Immortality, New York, 1957, page 43.

is continued.

The most important distinction to be observed is that which Paul makes between the terms  $\sigma\hat{\omega}\mu\alpha$  and  $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\rho\xi$ , which are only inadequately represented in English translation by the words 'body' and 'flesh'. The essential point is that  $\sigma\hat{\omega}\mu\alpha$  does not denote man's concrete, material body, but "some co-ordinating centre of personal experience belonging to a world which completely transcends, and, for man, supercedes the merely physical".<sup>1</sup>  $\Sigma\hat{\omega}\mu\alpha$  is not, according to J.A.T. Robinson, "something external to a man himself, something he HAS. It is what he IS. Indeed,  $\sigma\hat{\omega}\mu\alpha$  is the nearest equivalent to our word 'personality'...While Paul promises no resurrection of the flesh, he proclaims it for the body".<sup>2</sup> This is the crux of the problem and if this point is taken, many of the difficulties felt in connection with Paul's doctrine of the resurrection-body disappear. Confusion has probably arisen because both  $\sigma\hat{\omega}\mu\alpha$  and  $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\rho\xi$  "represent the whole man under different aspects",<sup>3</sup>  $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\rho\xi$  as "man in the solidarity of creation, in his distance from God,  $\sigma\hat{\omega}\mu\alpha$  (as) man in the solidarity of creation, as made for God".<sup>4</sup> However, one must not press this distinction too much.  $\Sigma\hat{\omega}\mu\alpha$  is not just a 'co-ordinating centre of personal experience' nor 'personality' in any abstract sense, because it does

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1. Robinson, T.H., Job and His Friends, London, 1954, page 104. Compare Hunter, A.M., The Gospel According to St. Paul, London, 1966, page 55: "...the body is the principle of identity which persists through all changes of substance".
  2. Robinson, J.A.T., The Body, S.C.M. Studies in Biblical Theology, No. 5, London, 1952, pages 28 and 31.
  3. Ibid, page 12.
  4. Ibid, page 31.

denote the instrument by means of which we recognise and communicate with others. It is a man's means of expression.

If one interprets Paul's language in this way and preserves the important distinction between the idea of the body and that of the flesh,<sup>1</sup> then the idea that the resurrection of the body involves the resuscitation of the flesh can be seen as a caricature of his true meaning in I Corinthians 15. "Expressed in modern terminology, the distinction is that between organic form and substance or material".<sup>2</sup> It is to be regretted that this distinction became blurred during later patristic times, because the misunderstanding thus produced has persisted right into the twentieth-century, to the detriment of the progress of the gospel.

The origin of Paul's conception of the 'spiritual body', the *σῶμα πνευματικόν*, is probably to be sought along three lines: firstly, Paul as a Pharisee, was the heir to the traditional eschatology of the Jewish nation and his debt to this tradition is shown by his insistence on the resurrection of the body, which was a fixed element in it; secondly, Paul's contact with the Hellenistic world, both at Tarsus and on his journeys, possibly exercised a modifying influence on the crude materialistic ideas of con-

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1. Occasionally Paul uses *σῶμα* to denote the physical body as such e.g. I Corinthians 13:3; but he normally maintains the distinction between *σῶμα* and *σάρξ*; e.g. in Romans 12:1 "Present your bodies as..." means: "Present yourselves as...".
  2. Robinson, J.A.T., The Body, page 129.

temporary Bharisaic thought<sup>1</sup> and caused him to sublimate the unspiritual ideas about the re-animation of dead mortal remains which figure so largely in the Jewish literature contemporary with him, because to the Greek mind, such a conception was abhorrent; thirdly, Paul's doctrine was influenced most of all by his certainty concerning the Resurrection of Christ, gained at his conversion, "the laboratory of all Paul's doctrine and in a very special way of his doctrine of the resurrection" (S.D.F. Salmond, see page 138).

It is not certain what particular heresy concerning the resurrection caused Paul to expound his ideas to the Corinthians. It was possibly a denial of the resurrection of the body (Compare "How are the dead raised? and with what manner of body do they come?" in 15:35) caused by a misunderstanding of Paul's earlier teaching to them, in that they had interpreted this teaching in an indiscriminating and literal way; or possibly some of the Corinthians held the Greek idea of immortality, whereby death was seen as a release from the evil body, which the Greeks despised.<sup>2</sup>

In his exposition in chapter 15, Paul scotches both of these erroneous ideas. He firstly summarises the resurrection appearances of Christ, which are the

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1. "The current view of the Pharisees was that the bodies of the saints were thought of as passing underground from their graves to the place of resurrection, and there rising in the same condition in which death found them" Robertson, A., and Plummer, A., A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, London, 1911, page XXXVII.
  2. "The notion of a higher organism (  $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$  ) was that which repelled the Hellenic mind". Kennedy, H.A.A., St. Paul's Conception of the Last Things, page 223.

guarantee of the resurrection of Christians: if either of these is denied, then Christianity is a meaningless sham (I Corinthians 15:1 following). Then he goes on to argue that Christ's Resurrection is not to be regarded as an isolated case, but is the proto-type, the "first-fruits" of the harvest which is the resurrection of all who are "in Christ" (verses 22-23). At His Resurrection, Jesus became a life-giving Spirit *πνεῦμα ζωοποιοῦν* (verse 45), and transmits the power of His Resurrection to those who are in union with Him by faith, just as the First Adam adversely affected the human race because of its racial solidarity with him (compare Romans 5:12:21).<sup>1</sup> The First Adam's sin revealed the moral character of humanity, which Paul in Romans 8:7 describes as "the mind of the flesh".

Having thus established the causal connection between the Resurrection of Jesus and that of believers, Paul deals with the problem of the nature of the resurrection-body (verses 35 following). It is essential to emphasise the fact that here and throughout the New Testament, it is resurrection of the body about which the authors speak, as opposed to the immortality of the soul, and that there is a great difference between the two. The Greeks had no room for

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1. The solidarity between the First Adam and humanity may be aptly illustrated by the analogy of the solidarity existing in a modern democracy between the leader of a political party and the members of that party; the leader does not act in a private but in a public capacity and his party is committed by his acts. He is the representative of the ideals of the party and his failure inevitably involves that of the party as well. 'Mutatis mutandis', this serves as an illustration of the connection between the First Adam and mankind.

the body in their conception of the after-life; to them it was an impediment and the soul had to be released from it at death. The Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the body preserves the idea of personal continuity. It is based on the idea that the 'body', individual personality, continues after death and that the future life is a conscious, moral existence. "The Christian hope is of the continued existence of the self-conscious ego."<sup>1</sup>

Paul thus avoided the drawbacks of both the Greek and the Jewish conceptions. The Greeks tried to preserve the notion of spirituality but in doing so, they endangered the idea of personal continuity, while the Jews' doctrine of the resurrection body was largely vitiated by materialistic thinking, thus imperilling the element of spirituality in the interests of preserving identity.

Although Paul specifically and categorically rejects any crude ideas of physical resuscitation in his unequivocal statement that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God" (I Corinthians 15:50), he argues forcefully for the idea of the resurrection of the body by showing that "body" does not necessarily mean man's actual physical make-up.

He does this, firstly, by the use of an analogy, which, as an analogy, cannot be regarded as a complete, parallel to the reality which he wishes to describe (viz., the spiritual body), but it does show how the body can be buried and decay yet be raised without

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1. Brown, W.A., The Christian Hope, London, 1912, page 14.

losing its nexus with the original organism. Paul thus insists on continuity between the present physical body and the spiritual body; otherwise, the person who dies would not be the same person who is to be raised.

This idea of continuity is clarified by the illustration of the seed,<sup>1</sup> which is planted in the ground, dies and rises again, but with a new body or format which nevertheless has a real organic connection with the previous article, even though it is totally different from it in its appearance. Thus, if the seed of grain is radically transformed without loss of its essential identity, there is nothing inherently impossible in the contention that the *σῶμα σαρκικόν* is to be raised a *σῶμα πνευματικόν* (verses 44 and 50). This commonplace occurrence of 'death' and 'resurrection' in the world of nature is an allegory of the truth that "the body of our humiliation" will be "conformed to the body of his glory" (Philippians 3:21; compare I John 3:2 "...we shall be like him...").

The second of Paul's illustrations is designed to illustrate the reasonableness of this hypothesis of the spiritual body by emphasizing the inexhaustibility of God's creative power (verses 39 following). God has adapted different creatures to their own particular environments: men have bodies which are appropriate to an earthly existence, birds have bodies which fit them for flight and fish have bodies which are suitable to a sub-marine life. God has also created "celestial"

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1. Compare the Johannine use of a similar analogy in John 12:24. Perhaps the original analogy goes back to our Lord.

and "terrestrial" bodies. Paul argues that in view of this tremendous variety, it is not illogical to suppose that God will create, for those who are 'in Christ', a new type of body adapted to the conditions of the next life: "The  $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$  of the believer is to be changed from  $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\rho\kappa\iota\varsigma$ , which by its very essence decays, into  $\delta\acute{o}\xi\alpha$ , which is a divine element".<sup>1</sup>

This is the gist of Paul's argument which he reinforces by drawing a series of contrasts between the two types of body; he does not attempt any description of the spiritual body, but one essential thread in his reasoning throughout this chapter and in other epistles (e.g. Philippians 3:21; Romans 8:11; II Corinthians 4:4), is that his conception of the spiritual body also applies to the body of our Lord after His Resurrection. F.C. Porter, in his book 'The Mind of Christ in Paul' comments on I Corinthians 15 as follows: "Nothing is more remarkable in this great chapter than the consistency and emphasis with which he insists on the identity of the experience of the Christian with that of Christ in the matter of life after death...His assumption throughout is that the resurrection is the same thing in Christ's case as in ours, or in our case as in his".<sup>2</sup> Christians are to be "conformed to the image of his Son" (Romans 8:29).

The question of when Paul thought that this spiritual body would be assumed is still an unresolved

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1. Kennedy, H.A.A., St. Paul's Conception of the Last Things, page 247.
2. Quoted in Baillie J., And the Life Everlasting, page 118.

aspect of his eschatology. In I Corinthians 15:51-52, the "quickenings of our mortal bodies" (Compare Romans 8:11) is said to be destined to take place in "the twinkling of an eye...at the last trump", at the Parousia. But many scholars<sup>1</sup> believe that his views underwent a transformation inbetween the writing of I and II Corinthians, possibly because of some near-fatal experience through which he passed (compare I Corinthians 15:32; II Corinthians 1:9; 4:10-11), and that in II Corinthians 5:1-8 there is evidence of a significant change in his views. It is argued that he abandons the viewpoint expressed in I Corinthians 15 in favour of a belief which, according to R.H. Charles and the others, approximates much more closely to the Greek doctrine of the immortality of the soul. According to these scholars' interpretation of II Corinthians 5:1-8, this passage implies that the spiritual body is assumed at death.<sup>2</sup>

Other scholars, such as J.A.T. Robinson<sup>3</sup> disagree with this assessment and maintain that the passage in question does not deal with the subject of the resurrection and the individual person's condition after death; they believe that both here and in I Corinthians 15, Paul's focus is on the Parousia, and that his

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1. For example, R.H. Charles, C.H. Dodd; R. Bultmann, and W.D. Davies.
  2. Compare Davies, W.D., Paul and Rabbinic Judaism, London, 1955, page 317: "...already the Resurrection body, the body of the final Age to Come, was being formed. Paul had died and risen with Christ and was already being transformed. At death, therefore, despite the decay of his outward body, Paul would already be possessed of another 'Body'. The heavenly body was already his".
  3. Robinson, J.A.T., In the End, God, London, 1968, page 106.

assumption is still that many of his converts will be alive and still in the body (still "clothed", II Corinthians 5:2-4), when it occurs. If this is the correct interpretation, then the supposed contradiction between the two passages disappears: the contrast in both is between the future spiritual body and the present earthly one; i.e. II Corinthians 5:3 might then be paraphrased: "If it is as clothed (i.e. alive) and not as naked (i.e. dead) that we shall be found at the Parousia...".

C.F. Evans rejects J.A.T. Robinson's further point that the assumption of the clothing mentioned in II Corinthians 5:1-5 refers to the body of Christ, the Church,<sup>1</sup> and argues that the apparent differences between I Corinthians 15 and II Corinthians 5 are probably due to the 'overlap' which occurs here between the 'formal eschatological' and the 'empirical experiential' viewpoints, which "contributes somewhat to the difficulties of the passage". Paul, under stress, wavers between the two viewpoints: "...the boundary line between the future and the present is crossed and the resultant picture is blurred, as in Philipians 3:10 following. Thus it is not clear what is the relation... between the new man who is being daily renewed at the expense of the old man's destruction and the house-garment through which what is mortal is completely

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1. Robinson, J.A.T., In the End, God, pages 106-107: "...proleptically, 'we have', whether we are alive or dead, a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, namely, the body of Christ, the Church. This, and not their usual interpretation, as speaking of an individual resurrection body, is, I believe, the primary meaning of these words".

'swallowed up by life'.<sup>1</sup>

The variety of these views would seem to preclude any dogmatic conclusion. Perhaps the most reasonable though tentative conclusion is to suppose with scholars such as A.M. Ramsey,<sup>2</sup> that Paul's idea in both passages envisages "the full redemption of the whole man at the Parousia", rather than to agree with those who see in them evidence of a development in Paul's doctrine, under the influence of Hellenism, whereby his thought moves in the direction of a purely spiritual immortality which is realised in the escape of man's soul from the body at death. Such an interpretation undermines the whole Hebrew-Christian conception of the after-life, and in the absence of specific and unambiguous evidence to support it, must be rejected, despite the academic competence and renown of some of its advocates.

The idea of the certainty of judgement, the third facet of Paul's futurist eschatology, runs through all of his epistles.<sup>3</sup> Before examining this conception in more detail, it is important to remind oneself that "...all Christian teaching about 'the day of judgement' has the value of a parable, and not that of so-called 'literal truth',<sup>4</sup> and that "the end of time can no more be described in non-symbolic terms than can its beginning, the creation".<sup>5</sup> Yet one must also remember that the New

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1. Evans, C.F. Resurrection and the New Testament, pages 158-162.
  2. Ramsey, A.M., The Resurrection of Christ, page 109.
  3. For example, I Thessalonians 3:13; 5:23; II Thessalonians 2 passim; Romans 2:5 following; 2:16; I Corinthians 3:3; 4:5; II Corinthians 5:10; Colossians 3:24 following; Philippians 1:6 and 10.
  4. Quick, O.C., Doctrines of the Creed, London, 1963, page 254.
  5. Hanson, A.T., A Dictionary of Theology, Edited by Richardson, A., London, 1970, page 341.

Testament's description of the final judgement represents, according to C.H. Dodd, "the least inadequate myth of the goal of history",<sup>1</sup> and that the use of such figurative language, must be accepted as an inevitable limitation attaching to man's finite status, and without it theology would be virtually impossible.

The fact of judgement is therefore a constant element throughout Paul's letters. In most passages, Paul adopts the normal Jewish view that the last judgement will take place suddenly, at the end of time, in conjunction with, or rather, as a result of, the Parousia.<sup>2</sup> Paul normally envisages a period of 'sleep' for the dead before the final dénouement (e.g. I Thessalonians 4:13 following; I Corinthians 15:18). The agent of the judgement is either God or Christ (Romans 14:10; II Corinthians 5:10), and it will be conducted by reference to two issues: faith and works (e.g. Romans 2:6; Galatians 6:7-8; II Corinthians 2:15). All men (II Corinthians 5:10) will receive approbation or condemnation on the basis of these criteria, which are essentially the same as those of our Lord in the Synoptic account of His teaching. The day of judgement will "make manifest" every man's work (I Corinthians 3:13). There is no favouritism with God (Colossians 3:25 following), who will bring to light the real nature of each person's character and judge accordingly (I Corinthians 4:5).

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1. Quoted in: The Jerome Bible Commentary, page 778.
  2. Some passages such as Philippians 1:23 and II Corinthians 5:8-10 (compare page 165, above) possibly imply an instantaneous judgement at death. But these passages are in the minority and O. Cullmann denies that they imply immediate transfer to Christ's presence at death; he adds: "All these images express simply a special proximity to Christ, in which those dying before the End find themselves". Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead, page 51.

Paul, in common with the majority of the New Testament writers, is reticent about the condition of the righteous in the after-life and simply uses a number of metaphors to amplify the meaning of salvation. It sufficed him to know, as ultimately it must suffice all Christians, that one is to be "ever with the Lord" (I Thessalonians 4:17). The metaphors which he uses to illustrate the "glory and honour and incorruption" (Romans 2:7) which are to be the reward of those who are 'in Christ' include those of the prize (Phillipians 3:14), the "crown of righteousness" (II Timothy 4:8) and the "incorruptible crown" (I Corinthians 9:25). "Hope" is another term used eschatologically in this sense (Galatians 5:5; Colossians 1:5) and "inheritance" is another (Colossians 1:12; 3:24). The phrase "eternal life" is used several times (e.g. Romans 2:7; 5:21; 6:8; Galatians 6:8), as is the noun "life" on its own (Romans 8:6). Paul's recognition of inescapable human ignorance about the conditions of the next life prevented him from attempting any detailed description of its nature even such as is provided in the figurative language of Revelation: "...no eye hath seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God hath prepared for those who love him" (I Corinthians 2:9 R.S.V.).

In his attitude to the fate of those who are deliberately perverse and of set purpose reject God's offer of salvation, Paul is just as uncompromising as our Lord. Those who have "sowed unto their own flesh" will "reap corruption" (Galatians 6:8). The "mind of

the flesh" is death (Romans 8:6), which is the inevitable "wages of sin" (Romans 6:23). Θάνατος denotes spiritual death rather than physical dissolution; in essence, it is separation from God (compare Matthew 25:41: "Depart from me, ye cursed..."). Those to whom the word of the cross is "foolishness" are already "perishing" (I Corinthians 1:18), which, as I Corinthians 15:18 shows, is the opposite of the transfiguration of those who are 'in Christ'. (II Corinthians 3:18), the renewal of the inner man by the power of the Holy Spirit which results in ultimate redemption (II Corinthians 4:16).

The wicked are subject to the wrath of God, a concept which Paul expounds mainly in Romans (e.g. 1:18 following; 2:5 following; 5:9; see also I Thessalonians 1:10; 5:9). There has been much discussion whether or not the term ὀργή refers to a personal aspect of God's character. Scholars such as A. Richardson, A.M. Hunter and C.K. Barrett contend that it must be interpreted as the personal reaction of God against evil; others, including C.H. Dodd, O.C. Quick and A.T. Hanson, interpret it in an impersonal sense as "a sort of dramatic symbol for the operation of those divinely ordained laws of the universe according to which sin brings punishment upon itself as its consequence".<sup>1</sup>

Thus, C.H. Dodd maintains that Paul "constantly uses 'wrath' or 'the Wrath' in a curiously impersonal way", and that he uses even the phrase 'the Wrath of God' "not to describe the attitude of God to man, but to

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1. Quick, O.C., Doctrines of the Creed, page 257.

describe an inevitable process of cause and effect in a moral universe".<sup>1</sup> Similarly, A.T. Hanson, a chief exponent of this view, states: "The wrath was not an emotion or attitude of God, it was simply a word for what happened to those who broke God's moral laws. It was in fact the 'principle of retribution in a moral universe'.<sup>2</sup> Even such expressions as "God gave them up" (Romans 1:24) are, he says, "evidence not of a personal, but an impersonal reaction".<sup>3</sup>

C.K. Barrett, however, says that "it is doubtful whether this view can stand".<sup>4</sup> Apart from the theological implications of supposing that there is in God's universe an inexorable law of cause and effect working independently of God, several other considerations may be adduced which lead one to support the view that the term ὀργή refers to God's personal reaction to sin. Firstly, although Paul uses the full phrase 'the wrath of God' only three times out of a total of sixteen, this is to be explained not by supposing that Paul thought of wrath as an impersonal reality but by remembering that it was axiomatic for him to regard as in a personal way and there was therefore no need to add the qualifying words 'of God' in every instance; it was not necessary to say whose wrath it was. One must also take into consideration passages such as II Thessalonians 1:8 following, which do not use the word 'wrath' when they are describing the Divine revulsion against sin. Secondly, it is

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1. Dodd, C.H., The Epistle to the Romans, 1932; pages 21,23.
  2. Hanson, A.T., The Wrath of the Lamb; London, 1957, page 109.
  3. Ibid, page 193.
  4. Barrett, C.K., The Epistle to the Romans, London, 1957, page 33.

surely permissible to insist that, in view of Paul's Old Testament heritage, for him, as for the Old Testament prophets (e.g. Ezekiel 38:18 following), wrath represents God's personal reaction to moral evil. This is a reasonable 'a priori' assumption.

Scholars such as A.T. Hanson are motivated by a concern that God's character should not be denigrated by attributing to Him a trait which they consider to be contradictory to His love as revealed in our Lord and which leads to a forensic and expiatory interpretation of the atonement. "If we once allow ourselves to be led into thinking that a reference to the wrath of God in the New Testament means that God is conceived of as angry, we cannot avoid some sort of theory of expiation. We cannot avoid maintaining that in some sense the Son endured the wrath of the Father, we cannot avoid thinking in forensic terms".<sup>1</sup> This is not only unbiblical but is based on a misunderstanding of the Divine love. One must try to avoid thinking of God's wrath in purely human terms as though it were the opposite of the love of God: "...it is not the emotional reaction of an irritated self-concern, as it is so often with us...Rather, if we use human analogies, should we think of that 'righteous indignation' which a good man feels in the presence of stark evil - and multiply by infinity".<sup>2</sup> Nor is 'wrath' to be conceived of as equivalent to hate: it is a function of God's love, which, as A. Richardson reminds one, is essentially "holy love" (see page 83 ).

1. Hanson, A.T., The Wrath of the Lamb, page 193.

2. Hunter, A.M., The Gospel According to St. Paul, page 71.

'Wrath' is the inevitable reaction of God's moral holiness to sin. This is shown above all at the crucifixion: "The cross of Christ is the visible, historical manifestation of the ὀργὴ τοῦ Θεοῦ ; it is the supreme revelation of the wrath of God against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men".

Thus, whatever view is taken of its nature, the wrath of God is essentially an eschatological conception: the Divine wrath is already operative (Romans 1:18 following) in the passion of our Lord, though its full out-workings will not be experienced until the "day of wrath" (Romans 2:5; compare I Thessalonians 1:10), when the risen Lord will come in judgement. God's wrath is ubiquitous in its scope: it is revealed against "all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" (1:18). "All men have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23), which results in His wrath being directed against the whole of mankind; but those who are in Christ are "saved from the wrath of God through him" (Romans 5:9). The implacably evil will suffer "tribulation and anguish" (Romans 2:9; compare Ephesians 2:3-6 and 5:6).

Before attempting an exposition of his ideas about the final destiny of the wicked, a very brief comment must be made about the Pauline doctrines of election and pre-destination. It is not possible in the present essay to enter into a detailed discussion of such passages as Romans 9-11 and Ephesians 1. All that can be attempted here is to make several observations which show that both ideas are an essential part of his theology and cannot be jettisoned because of the

intellectual difficulties which they have created in finite minds.

That both ideas are an indispensable element in his gospel is made obvious by a consideration of such passages as Romans 9:11, where he speaks of men being pre-destined to salvation. God's purpose "is according to election...not of works". Those who are saved are described simply as "the election" (e.g. Romans 11:5); they have been "foreordained...unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ...foreordained according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his will" (Ephesians 1:5 and 11). God chose believers in Christ before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4); they were "chosen from the beginning unto salvation" (II Thessalonians 2:13). Another classic passage is Romans 8:29 following: "...for whom he foreknew he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son...". Many more could be cited, but the point has now been made clear: that it is impossible to eradicate these twin doctrines from Pauline thought. In view of this, and especially because of the difficulties to which they have given rise, it is vital to notice the following points.

Firstly, the emphasis throughout Paul's argument is on God's love and justice rather than on anger and arbitrariness. Paul constantly emphasises that salvation is due to God's grace (Ephesians 2:8; compare 1:6). "Grace and predestination are not two disparate things, but two different ways of looking at the same divine action".<sup>1</sup>

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 1. Morris, L., The Cross in the New Testament, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1961; Exeter, 1967, page 216.

In rejecting as "pernicious" the idea of 'double predestination', A.M. Hunter describes the notion of reprobation as "the shadow side of the doctrine of election" into which Paul does not "peer". He adds that although the idea of predestination to salvation logically implies the opposite, in this respect "Paul is splendidly illogical."<sup>1</sup> The opposite of election, for Paul, is not predestination to perdition; it is unbelief - a self-incurred thing... No man may hold that God has eternally predestined even one soul to damnation and still hold that God is love",<sup>2</sup> an opinion with which one can but agree.

The second thing is that to Paul, election and predestination are assurances of the certainty of

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1. Compare the comments made on page 123 about Paul's indifference to logical consistency.
  2. Hunter, A.M., The Gospel According to St. Paul, pages 74-75. Paul's treatment of the fate of those who have been deprived of an adequate opportunity to hear the gospel message certainly seems to show that the idea of a 'double decree' in connection with predestination is not legitimate, because he hints that the Gentiles will be judged on the basis of the light that is in them, "the law written in their hearts" (Romans 2:14-16). Compare our Lord's similar teaching in the Synoptics. J.A. Motyer makes an apt comment in this connection when he says: "Possibly God has chosen to leave us in ignorance of His plans for those who have never heard in order that it may all the more clearly be our present responsibility to see to it that they do hear". After Death, page 67.

salvation, of the fact that God never goes back on his call (Romans 11:29), and they show that even the response of faith which the believer makes to God's offer of redemption does not fall into the category of 'works', but is part of God's eternal plan of salvation.

Thirdly, it is important to notice that predestination is closely connected with ethics in Pauline thought (e.g. Colossians 3:12: "Put on therefore, as God's elect, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion..."). (Compare Ephesians 2:10). Election is for the purpose of doing the "good works which God afore prepared that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10).

It remains now to expound Paul's teaching about the final destiny of the inveterate sinner. There is undoubtedly some ambiguity here and this has given rise to conflicting interpretations of his thought. In some passages, he definitely envisages a universal resurrection of ALL classes of men as a preliminary to judgement (e.g. Romans 14:10 "We shall all stand before the judgement seat of God". Compare Acts 24:15), though some scholars, in the interests of consistency and 'a priori' assumptions about the after-life, would excise such passages from the text. J.Y. Simpson, for example, arguing for the validity of the position traditionally known as that of 'conditional immortality', believes that the future existence is "a function of goodness",

and that the idea of a universal assize at the end of time is "a survival in St. Paul's mind of his old Jewish eschatology, a reminiscence in eschatological picture language of a Jewish conception of a universal judgement".<sup>1</sup> H.A.A. Kennedy also believes that it is "...simply a portion of the popular religious consciousness of the time, which the apostle has retained without endeavouring to adjust it to his profounder and more spiritual conceptions".<sup>2</sup>

Many scholars would, however, reject this truncated version of Paul's eschatology and maintain that, on the contrary, there is not only evidence of a universal resurrection for the purpose of judgement, but also a considerable number of passages which suggest the possibility that the final realisation of God's purpose will include the reconciliation and restoration of all things into a state of harmony with Himself, "that God may be all in all" (I Corinthians 15:28). Such passages as the following are said to support this contention: I Corinthians 15:22; 15:24-28; Romans 11:12,15 and 25; Philippians 2:9-11; Colossians 1:19-20; Ephesians 1:9-10; I Timothy 2:3-5; 4:10; Titus 2:11. It is interesting to note that many of these, according to general consent, belong to the later period of Paul's

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1. Simpson, J.Y., Man and the Attainment of Immortality, page 292.
2. Kennedy, H.A.A., St. Paul's Conception of the Last Things, page 277.

life, when the cosmic significance of Christ's work was beginning to exercise a dominating influence on his thought and which would suggest, 'prima facie', that a universalistic interpretation cannot be rejected dogmatically.<sup>1</sup>

A detailed exegetical consideration of each passage is impossible here owing to the exigencies of space; a consideration of I Corinthians 15:22 may be taken initially as representative of the debate which has ranged around them and which is still unresolved, probably because, in the last analysis, it is a debate about a problem which is insoluble within the limits of the present life, when we "know only in part" (I Corinthians 13:12).

Those who find the doctrine of universalism in I Corinthians 15:22 argue that in both of its coordinate clauses, the word "all" must be interpreted inclusively; that is, as in the first clause it obviously must denote ALL humanity, who are organically related to the First Adam, then in the second and coordinate clause, the "all" must refer to the totality of human beings. The "all" who are to be "made alive" must be co-extensive with the "all" who "die". Opponents of this viewpoint, however, maintain either that, although the "all" must be understood in this comprehensive way in both clauses, the phrase "made alive" refers to the resurrection of all men merely for the purpose of judgement, and does not necessarily imply

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1. It is to be noticed also that there are no relevant texts in I-II Thessalonians, which are usually regarded as Paul's earliest extant letters.

their ultimate salvation; or they maintain that the phrase "in Christ" is used in a restricted sense and limits the resurrection solely to those who are in spiritual fellowship with Him.

However, it would seem that "the antithesis would rather lose its point, if only a tiny fraction of those who are in Adam will ever be in Christ".<sup>1</sup> Again, as M. Paternoster points out,<sup>2</sup> this would also be unusual from a syntactic point of view, because such a restricted interpretation would mean that the term "all" changes its meaning halfway through the verse, though such a possibility cannot be completely ruled out. It is further pointed out by those who find universalism in this verse that I Corinthians 15:24-28 suggests the final reconciliation of ALL creatures to God, or the final words "that God may be all in all" would not be true. It is instructive to note that the verb ὑποτάσσειν used in verse twenty-eight, is found thirty-three times in the New Testament and the cognate noun ὑποταγή four times, and that in every instance where they are applied to mankind, a voluntary submission is meant. 'Submit' would probably be a better translation than 'be put in subjection'.

There are further passages in Romans which admit of a similar universalistic interpretation, amongst them two verses in chapter eleven in which Paul looks forward to the time when the πλήρωμα of both the Jews and the Gentiles will be gathered to God (verses 12, 25). Πλήρωμα cannot simply mean

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1. Quick, O.C.; Doctrines of the Creed, page 261.

2. Paternoster, M.; Thou Art There Also, page 38.

a portion of the human race, if other New Testament occurrences of the word are indicative of its meaning here (e.g. Mark 2:21; Romans 13:10; Ephesians 1:23; Colossians 2:9). It must mean 'the whole', 'the sum total'. In Romans 11:15 Paul refers to the

καταλλαγή of the κόσμος which has to be interpreted in a universalistic sense if it is to be allowed its full meaning. (compare II Corinthians 5:19 and Colossians 1:20, where the terms καταλλέω and ἀποκατάλλω cannot legitimately be interpreted in any other sense).

The term τό πλήρωμα is also used in Ephesians 1:10, concerning which verse A. Richardson comments as follows: "The New Testament presents God's purpose as that of gathering up all things in Christ. This actual expression (ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι) occurs only at Ephesians 1:10, but the idea is expressed in many different metaphors in the New Testament. The original unity or harmony of things, which was disrupted on a cosmic scale by man's fall into sin, is now being restored by Christ's redeeming work; and what had hitherto existed in a state of separation or even enmity is now being unified in the new-created wholeness of Christ".<sup>1</sup> Later in the same chapter (1:20-23), it is stated that God "puts all things" under Christ's feet, for Christ "filleth all in all"; and it is pertinent to ask how Christ can be said to "fill" a sinful being? In Ephesians 4:8-10, the purpose of Christ's Ascension is said to be "that he might fill all things". Such expressions certainly give weight to the argument for

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1. Richardson, A., An Introduction, page 242.

universalism.

Again, in Philippians 2:9-11, where Paul says that every knee will bow to Christ and every tongue confess His Lordship, a universalistic interpretation would appear feasible. In nine out of ten cases where the word *ἑξομολογεῖν* occurs, it denotes a willing submission (the one exception is Romans 14:11 following).

R.H. Charles believes that the evidence points to one of two alternatives: universalism or annihilationism (that is, the belief that recalcitrant creatures will cease to exist). "Since...all things must be reconciled and summed up in Christ, there can be no room finally in the universe from a wicked being, whether human or angelic. Thus the Pauline eschatology points obviously, in its ultimate issues, either to the final redemption of all created beings, or - and this seems the true alternative - to the destruction of the finally impenitent".<sup>1</sup>

C. Gore agrees with this verdict when he states that "final ruin may involve, I cannot but think, such a dissolution of personality as carries with it the cessation of personal consciousness. In this way, the final ruin of irretrievably lost spirits, awful as it is to contemplate, may be found consistent with St.

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1. There has been much discussion whether Paul contemplates the annihilation of unbelievers or not. H.A.A. Kennedy, after a close examination of Paul's language, points out that "in the Epistles *ἀπώλεια* and *ἀπόλλυθαι* are the exact antithesis of *σωτηρία* and *σώζεσθαι*," and that in each case "the question of the existence of the person had no interest whatever". Paul could think of no fate worse than that of separation from God and this would constitute "unmitigated disaster, *ἀπώλεια*, ruin". See St. Paul's Conception of the Last Things, pages 123 following.

Paul's anticipation of a universe in which God is to be all in all - which does not seem to be really compatible with the existence of a region of ever-lastingly tormented rebellious spirits".<sup>1</sup>

It is impossible to be dogmatic on a subject which has taxed Christian thought from patristic times. The only permissible conclusion at which one can arrive is that contained in the report entitled: 'Doctrine in the Church of England', which states: "There must be room in the Church for those who believe that some will actually be lost and also for those who hold that the love of God will at last win penitence and answering love from every soul that it has created, while probably the majority feel strongly the force of the argument on both sides and are content to hold their minds in suspense".<sup>2</sup> In other words, one must be content, with St. Paul himself, to recognise that "now we see through a glass darkly" and that it is only when man's vision is unrestricted by the inevitable limitations of human existence that "we shall know even as we have been known", (I Corinthians 13:12).

Despite the paradoxical nature of much of Pauline eschatology and the impossibility of resolving definitively all the problems connected with it, several items stand out as constituting Paul's main contributions to the development of the New Testament doctrine of the future life.

There is first of all his emphasis on the fact that eternal life is the gift of God in Christ, in distinction

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1. Quoted by: Simcox, C.E., Is Death the End? London, 1960, page 63.
  2. Doctrine in the Church of England, London, 1938, page 219.

to any ideas of inherent immortality: it is "Christ in you" which guarantees the "hope of glory". The only kind of life which can continue is that which is "hid with Christ in God", the life which Jesus exemplified during His incarnate existence.<sup>1</sup>

Secondly, by his transfer of the idea of resurrection from its Jewish milieu, where it was seen merely as an "adjunct of the end" (C.F. Evans), into its Christian context, where it became the dynamic of present existence, Paul was not only true to the mind of our Lord as depicted in the Synoptics but contributed substantially to the development of Christian theology by making the doctrine of resurrection existentially meaningful and thus relevant to the ongoing life of the human race.

Finally, Paul's doctrine of the spiritual body probably represents, despite its subsequent misinterpretation, the furthest limit to which the human mind can reach in attempting to understand the nature of the embodiment with which those 'in Christ' will be clothed after death. In this connection, W.A. Brown writes: "...this conception of a spiritual body presents difficulties to our thoughts...a spiritual body is a union of opposites which conveys no clear

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1. Compare C.K. Barrett, writing about the fourth evangelist: "It was through the life, and especially through the death and resurrection, of Jesus that men had been admitted to the blessings of the messianic kingdom, and the highest blessing of that kingdom was, as Paul had already seen, the life of communion with Christ Himself: 'for me, to live is Christ' (Philippians 1:21)". The Gospel According to St. John, London, 1955, page 58.

meaning to our imagination...(but)...BODY is the term which lends itself most readily to the expression of this vital faith",<sup>1</sup> and it is still, as John Baillie affirms, "the most reasonable hope for us today".<sup>2</sup>

Thus Paul indubitably may be said to "have laid the foundation for the eschatology of the Christian Church", as H.A.A. Kennedy maintains.

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1. Brown, W.A., The Christian Hope, London, 1912, pages 94-95.
2. Baillie, J., And the Life Everlasting, page 195.

CHAPTER SIXTHE JOHANNINE LITERATURE

C.K. Barrett's contention that "the eschatological element in the Fourth Gospel is not accidental" but "fundamental"<sup>1</sup> is borne out by a consideration of what may be justly regarded as the main theme of the gospel, which is 'life'. This idea is the Ariadne thread of John, as it is of the whole New Testament. Linguistic evidence alone would suggest this: the term  $\text{ἡ ζωὴ αἰώνιος}$ <sup>2</sup> is used only sixteen times in the Synoptics, whereas it is used thirty-six times in John's Gospel and thirteen times in I John. Even allowing for the Synoptists' preference for the synonymous expression 'Kingdom of God' or 'Heaven', the figures are still significant. The evidence they afford is supported by a consideration of how the theme of 'life' unifies the Fourth Gospel, from the Prologue (John 1:4: "...in him was life...") down to 20:31, which is possibly the last genuine chapter of the gospel: "But these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name." In John 3:16 the author states that the purpose of the Incarnation is that men should be given the opportunity of gaining eternal life; Nicodemus is offered re-birth and eternal life; the woman of

1. Barrett, C.K., The Gospel According to St. John, page 58.

2. The Gospel uses  $\text{ἡ ζωὴ}$  on its own nineteen times, and the full phrase seventeen times; the figures for I John are seven times and six times respectively.

Samaria is offered "living water" (John 4:10 following) by our Lord, who is the bread of life (6:35). He is the way, the truth and the life (14:6), the resurrection and the life, who became incarnate so that "men might have life and that they might have it abundantly (10:10). To the disciples, Jesus says: "Because I live, ye shall live also", and by His Resurrection, Ascension and gift of the Paraclete, this promise was fulfilled.

The First Epistle of John, perceptively entitled "The Tests of Life" by Robert Law, is basically an exposition of the criteria by which men may be certain that they possess eternal life.

Both the Gospel and the First Epistle are intended to create faith in Jesus Christ, which leads to an experience of eternal life here and now within the present existence. This emphasis on 'realised' eschatology is probably John's main contribution to the New Testament doctrine of the future life. It has been shown in chapter two that in popular Jewish eschatology of the centuries immediately surrounding the Christian era, participation in the after-life was regarded merely as a post-mortem reward for the righteous; whereas "...in St. John the thought of the present possession is abundantly emphasised".<sup>1</sup>

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1. Pilcher, C.V., The Hereafter in Jewish and Christian Thought, page 171. Compare Winstanley, E.W., Jesus and the Future, page 345, quoted by Pilcher (pages 171-172): "The mystic interpreter of the historical incarnation realised life to be qualitative and universal, dependent on a spiritual, sacramentally-conditioned relationship to an eternal divine being, and no longer a mere attribute - although the highest specific blessedness - of an age or Kingdom to come, depicted according to the categories of Jewish apocalyptic".

The study of the Synoptic teaching of Jesus and of the Pauline Epistles has shown that this emphasis is not an original innovation by the fourth evangelist.<sup>1</sup> But the clarity with which John makes the point is outstanding. This emphasis constitutes John's answer to the problem caused by the delay in the Parousia, which was acutely felt as time went on (compare IIPeter 3:4: "Where is the promise of his coming?"). "It was necessary to find a new way of expressing the fundamental Christian affirmation of the Christian faith, that in Jesus Christ the new age had come, but had done so in such a way that it still remained to come, so that Christians live both in this age and in the age to come. Paul had already laid the foundations for this task by the development of 'eschatological mysticism', but much remained for John to do."<sup>2</sup>

Thus John drew out explicitly the existential meaning of the idea of eternal life without sacrificing the dual polarity of New Testament eschatology, the dialectic between the realised and futurist aspects.

This interpretation contrasts sharply with that of R.H. Charles and other scholars, who regard the passages in which the future realisation of eternal life is described as interpolations which must be excised

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1. "John's formula 'the hour cometh and now is' (4:23; 5:25), with the emphasis on the 'now is', without excluding the element of futurity, is, I believe, not merely an acute theological definition, but is essentially historical, and probably represents the authentic teaching of Jesus as veraciously as any formula could." Dodd, C.H., The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel, Cambridge, 1953, page 447.
  2. Barrett, C.K., The Gospel According to St. John, pages 57-58.

from the text in order to give consistency to Johannine eschatology. But it is surely a misunderstanding to attribute such passages to Judaistic influence or to interpret them as concessions to popular thought. It is very doubtful that the futurist passages such as John 5:28-29 are "in glaring conflict with the fundamental conceptions of this Gospel" as Charles maintains.<sup>1</sup> One cannot excise them simply because they do not fit into one's 'a priori' assumptions. John's stress on the present actuality of eternal life is not to be regarded in a negative way as an attempt to rid Christianity of an alien, futurist element, which John only partially accomplished, but as a positive answer, in which John has been followed by the mainstream of later Christian thought, to explain meaningfully the nature of the period inbetween the Passion, Resurrection and Ascension of our Lord and His Parousia. John presents it as a period when the benefits of salvation may be already enjoyed by the believer prior to their full enjoyment beyond death, rather than as a 'plateau-period' of unfulfilled hope, disappointment and frustration, as it must inevitably have been interpreted but for the work of Paul and John. W.F. Howard is nearer the truth when he states that "it is because of the sure and certain hope which is represented by the Parousia that a present union

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1. Charles, R.H., A Critical History, page 371. Compare Scott, E.F., The Fourth Gospel, Edinburgh, 1906, page 249, who treats such passages as "concessions" to popular thought and says that they "obscure the characteristic teaching of the Gospel".

with Christ in the Spirit is possible",<sup>1</sup> John shows that despite the delay in the Parousia, it is already possible by contact with Jesus Christ to "pass from death to life" (John 5:24; I John 3:14).

Emphasis on the present reality of eternal life is especially noticeable in John's treatment of three basic elements in New Testament eschatology: the resurrection of believers, the judgement and the Parousia.

With regard to the first element, the classic passage is probably John 11:25 following, where Jesus, in his conversation with Martha, shows that eternal life does not begin just at the last day but is possessed already by those who believe in Him.<sup>2</sup>

The emphasis is also apparent in John's treatment of the theme of judgement, which is presented in a similar, two-sided way. The separation of men into 'sheep' and 'goats' is not something which takes place only at the last day (John 12:48); it is being realised during the current life on earth, according to whether

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1. Howard, W.F., Christianity According to St. John, London, 1943, page 123. He did not destroy the distinctive dual emphasis of New Testament eschatology, but achieved a vital change of perspective to show eschatology's continuing relevance to everyday life. "That Christianity was in the end able to survive, and to maintain its unique and authentic tension of realisation and hope, was due in no small measure to John's contribution to eschatological thought". Barrett, C.K., The Gospel According to St. John, page 116.
  2. W. Temple's paraphrase of Jesus' words runs as follows: "Your friend is alive now; for in me he touched the life of God which is eternal; in me, he had already risen before his body perished". Readings in St. John's Gospel, London, 1945, page 176.

men come to the light or reject it and love the darkness instead (John 3:19 following). Those who prefer the darkness are shown up for what they are. The crucifixion of our Lord is the event which sets in motion the process of judgement, because men judge themselves by their reaction to the love of God demonstrated at the cross: "Now is the judgement of this world..." (John 12:31). In this connection, it is instructive to notice that John's word for judgement is  $\kappa\rho\acute{\iota}\sigma\iota\varsigma$ , which denotes the process rather than the sentence (the latter would be  $\kappa\rho\acute{\iota}\mu\alpha$ ). The effect of this is to underline the idea that judgement is not a divinely-imposed sentence on the wicked but a process of self-condemnation which men themselves activate by their refusal to respond to the love of God as revealed in Christ. It is in this sense that Christ may be said to have come into the world for judgement (John 9:39). "Judgement is the form salvation takes for those who will have none of it".<sup>1</sup> It is a process which will be finally completed at the resurrection (John 5:29; I John 2:28), when the last judgement will ratify the current one.<sup>2</sup>

In a similar way to that in which the first two aspects are dealt with, the Parousia is given a two-fold reference: although it is indubitably a future phenomenon (John 14:2-3; 21:22; I John 2:28), yet it

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1. Hunter, A.M., Introducing New Testament Theology, page 136.
  2. Compare Charles, R.H., who says that judgement is "the inexorable sequel which follows rejection of the proffered salvation". A Critical History, page 365.

has already been realised in a proleptic sense in our Lord's Resurrection and Ascension, and the gift of the Holy Spirit (e.g. John 14:26-28; 16:7).

Thus one cannot agree fully with C.H. Dodd when he states that in such ways as those enumerated above, "...the crudely eschatological elements in the kerygma are quite refined away"<sup>1</sup> (Contrast John 5:24). Yet it is correct to assert that John transferred the weight of emphasis from the futurist aspect, though he did not do this with a view to abandoning it; rather, he was concerned to re-interpret it and correct the excessive apocalyptic fervour which characterised some sections of the early Church. If it is correct to suppose with C.K. Barrett<sup>2</sup> that a member of the Johannine school composed Revelation on the basis of the unpublished apocalyptic speculations of John the Apostle, and that the Fourth Gospel was written to redress the balance by showing that the Eschaton had already arrived and that "a transition into eschatological existence" (R. Bultmann)<sup>3</sup> was already possible, then this assertion becomes more readily acceptable.

Having now established the legitimacy and necessity of both types of eschatology in John, it is pertinent to consider what exactly is meant by eternal life, as a present reality which is to be finally consummated

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1. Dodd, C.H., The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments, page 155.
2. Barrett, C.K., The Gospel According to St. John, pages 113-114.
3. Bultmann, R., Theology of the New Testament, Vol. II page 75. Quoted by Hunter, A.M., Introducing New Testament Theology, page 135.

in the future.<sup>1</sup>

In John 17:2-3, the fourth evangelist attempts the only formal definition of eternal life found in the New Testament (Compare I John 5:20). To define it in terms of 'knowledge' as he does, is to court misunderstanding unless 'knowledge' is interpreted in its biblical rather than its secular sense. The Hebrew verb  $\text{יָדַע}$  denotes a moral and spiritual as well as an intellectual knowledge; W.A.L. Elmslie<sup>2</sup> defines it as follows: "In the Bible, 'to know' denotes not surface-acquaintance, but an intimate awareness wherein intelligence comprehends, emotion is stirred and the will responds". Elmslie is speaking primarily with reference to Hosea, but 'mutatis mutandis', his definition of 'knowledge' may be applied to the Johannine description of eternal life, which is attained not merely through knowing God in the intellectual sense, but as a result of establishing with Him through our Lord a

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1. W.H. Cadman states that it is "the interaction between the objective act of God in Jesus and the subjective response of believers that explains the varieties of eschatology in the Fourth Gospel. From one point of view the eschatological act of God was complete when Jesus died on the Cross (17:4; 19:30); in Him all men were objectively drawn into union with the Father. But on the other hand the work of God cannot be said to be complete until, through the renewed presence of Jesus with His disciples, through their preaching of His word, and through the interpreting and convincing power of the Paraclete, the finished work of Christ has been fully appropriated. The Open Heaven, edited by: Caird, G.B., Oxford, 1969, pages 55-56.
2. Elmslie, W.A.L., How Came Our Faith? London, 1962, page 304.

personal relationship of love and obedience such as Jesus enjoyed during His incarnate existence.<sup>1</sup> Jesus Himself embodies eternal life (John 1:4; I John 5:20); He is the Kingdom, as Marcion saw: "In the Gospel the Kingdom of God is Christ himself".<sup>2</sup>

The establishment of this relationship is brought about by faith (John 3:15-16; 5:24; I John 5:13). It cannot be achieved by man's own efforts: God gives eternal life, which is received by believing in Christ (I John 5:11).

Faith in the Gospel and epistles of John is connected closely and specifically with Jesus' Crucifixion (John 3:16) and Resurrection (20:8; 20:29). It is so fundamental to the Christian life that John often simply speaks of "believing" without specifying the object of belief. E.F. Scott has argued that John's conception of faith "implies not so much an inward disposition of trust and obedience as the acceptance

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1. Compare Stevens, G.B., The Theology of the New Testament, Edinburgh, 1901, page 231: "Eternal life is simply THE LIFE - the life which is truly such - life after the divine ideal. It is realised by coming into right relations to God. Entrance into these relations and the maintenance of them may be called by various terms, such as faith, obedience, fellowship, love. They all mean the same thing, or various aspects of the same thing".
  2. Quoted by Hunter, A.M., The Work and Words of Jesus, London, 1968, page 78. Compare Lightfoot, R.H., St. John's Gospel, Oxford, 1957, page 167: "The words 'I am the bread of life' reveal that the Lord Himself is the gift which He brings...the expression should be understood as including the power to bring life into being; life proceeds from life". Compare also Barrett, C.K., The Gospel According to St. John, page 58: "What John perceived with far greater clarity than any of his predecessors was that Jesus IS the Gospel, and that the Gospel IS Jesus...when the gospel was offered to men it was Christ himself who was offered to them and received by them".

of a given dogma".<sup>1</sup> Although John does stress the intellectual element in faith as being primary (e.g. I John 5:1)<sup>2</sup> there can be no doubt that he would not have regarded such an attitude as true faith unless it were accompanied by personal commitment to God as revealed in Christ. That Scott's viewpoint is wrong is evidenced by a consideration of the terms and constructions used by the fourth evangelist. He only uses the noun ΠΙΣΤΙΣ once (I John 5:4) whereas the verb ΠΙΣΤΕΥΕΙΝ is used one hundred and seven times in the Gospel and First Epistle. This suggests that he conceived of faith as a dynamic rather than a static phenomenon, something which increases with fuller knowledge of, and devotion to, its object, which is Christ. Again the variety of constructions which John employs in this connection is also significant. It is not legitimate to draw any hard and fast distinctions between these constructions but their use does show that faith is to be viewed from various aspects and is to be regarded as dynamic rather than passive. For example, the construction ΠΙΣΤΕΥΕΙΝ ΕΙΣ which is not found in the Septuagint or normally in secular Greek, is, out of the forty-five occurrences in the New Testament, used thirty-seven times by the fourth evangelist. (e.g. John 3:18; 4:39; 17:20). J.I. Packer<sup>3</sup> states that this construction conveys "the thought of a movement of trust

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1. Scott, E.F. The Fourth Gospel, page 267.

2. As is evidenced by his use of the construction ΠΙΣΤΕΥΕΙΝ ὅΤΙ. Faith has a definite intellectual content (e.g. John 6:69; 8:24; 11:27; 14:10 following). Christians do have definite intellectual convictions; faith is not nebulous credulity.

3. Baker's Dictionary of Theology, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1960, page 208. Quoted by Morris, L., The Cross in the New Testament, page 176.

going out to, and laying hold of, the object of its confidence". True faith, in other words, takes the believer out of himself and he "abides in" Christ (John 15:3 following). V. Taylor therefore speaks of a mystical union with Christ which results from the faith-relationship. "Faith in the Johannine sense... is mystical union with Christ, fellowship with Him, and, in I John, fellowship also with God or with the Father".<sup>1</sup> As in the Pauline corpus, eternal life is only possible for those who have this faith-union with Christ, which is maintained by participation in the sacraments, through which the Holy Spirit imparts (John 3:5) and sustains life. It is the power of the Holy Spirit which gives the sacraments their efficacy in transmitting eternal life. (John 6:53: "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have not life in yourselves. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day"). The Holy Spirit is "the eschatological continuum in which the work of Christ, initiated in his ministry and awaiting its termination at his return, is wrought out".<sup>2</sup>

The corporate aspect of eternal life is also stressed: it is life within the church, the fellowship of believers, who "are one in Jesus Christ, as the one who reconciled them by dying and rising again in their stead. As divided men, they first meet in his crucified body, in which their old life is put to

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1. Taylor, V., The Atonement in New Testament Teaching, London, 1946, page 139.
2. Barrett, C.K., The Gospel According to St. John, page 76.

death and destroyed".<sup>1</sup>

John's treatment of the scope of the resurrection is in essentials the same as that of Jesus in the Synoptic record, which in turn closely resembles that of Paul: there is to be a double resurrection of all men, good and evil. Only if one is prepared to excise certain passages such as 5:28-29 can this idea be described as being "in glaring conflict with the fundamental conceptions of this gospel".<sup>2</sup> Although many would argue that interpretation of faith in terms of personal trust commits one to the acceptance of some form of conditional immortality, yet this need not logically exclude the idea of a double resurrection, because the righteous will be raised to participate in eternal life whereas the wicked will be raised to receive condemnation. Yet it is true that "the exact relation of 'resurrection' to 'life' is made clear only on the positive side".<sup>3</sup>

John does not elaborate in detail the content of the resurrection-life even on the positive side, though there are some hints which convey something of its nature. For example, it is stated that in the future existence "we shall be like him" (I John 3:2) which is to be interpreted by reference to the  $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$   $\piνευματικόν$  of I Corinthians 15:44, and lends weight to the contention made in chapter three that the resurrection-life is to be an embodied one. Another possible intimation concerning the conditions of

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1. Bromiley, G.W., in Baker's Dictionary of Theology, page 538. Quoted by Morris, L., The Cross in the New Testament, page 178.
2. Charles, R.H., A Critical History, page 371. Compare page 188.
3. Robinson, H.W., The Christian Doctrine of Man, page 146.

the after-life is to be found in John 14:2: "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you." The term *μ ο ν α λ* (literally = staging posts), has been variously interpreted, B.F. Westcott preferring to take it as a reference to temporary halting places on the path to perfection in heaven, rather than to permanent "mansions", which is C.K. Barrett's belief.<sup>1</sup> The former interpretation would imply that moral progress is to be expected after death, and is probably to be adopted if only because of the fact that even the most saintly human beings can hardly be thought to have attained the spiritual and moral perfection which is to be a characteristic of the future existence. Believers possess only a 'down-payment' of the benefits of salvation, which in the next life will be completed by a gradual process of sanctification, rather than instantaneously. H.W. Robinson inclines to this viewpoint when he maintains that "the resurrection will simply be the completion of personality necessary for the full realisation of life".<sup>2</sup>

The final state of those who "die in their sins" (John 8:21) and are thus guilty of the "sin unto death" (I John 5:16), is not specified beyond the use of the term "death". Those who fail to measure up to both of the fundamental tests of life, belief and action; or love of God and love of one's fellow men, as expounded

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1. Barrett, C.K., The Gospel According to St. John, page 381.

2. Robinson, H.W., The Christian Doctrine of Man, page 147.

in I John 3:23 and passim,<sup>1</sup> are sentencing themselves to spiritual death, because such inveterate sinners are cutting themselves off from the only source of life, Jesus Christ, who is the true vine (John 15:1 following): "...the branch cannot bear fruit of itself" (John 15:4). "...God gave unto us eternal life and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life" (I John 5:11-12). Those who do not believe are 'ipso facto' excluded from participation in eternal life, because Jesus IS the "Resurrection and the Life" (John 11:25).

Another way of expressing the same truth is John's statement that "he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36), where the use of the present tense *U'VEE* denotes the fact that the condition is a permanent one. It should be noted that John 3:16, which is sometimes cited to support universalism, besides teaching that "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son that whosoever believeth on him should...have eternal life", also contains the implication that failure to believe involves the loss of that life ("...should not perish, but...").

This clear-cut and uncompromising distinction

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1. Compare Robinson, H.W., The Christian Doctrine of Man, page 145: "The practical test of the presence of this life is found in no intellectual statement of its nature, but in the exhibition of its inherent vitality through love to the fellow-members of the community".

between believers and unbelievers which permeates the thought of the Gospel and First Epistle is the background against which one must assess the alleged references to universalism in the two books. A common citation in this respect is John 12:32: "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto myself". Even if it be true that the word "draw" (ἐλκύσω) implies that Christ will successfully attract all men to himself, the universalistic interpretation is not thereby established because Πᾶν τὸν κόσμον may mean 'men of all nations', in contrast to the particularism which was characteristic of Jewish thought at the time of Christianity's inception and growth (compare the "whosoever" of John 3:16; the "other sheep...which are not of this fold" in John 10:16;<sup>1</sup> John 11:15 following and "all flesh" in John 17:2). This is also a more natural interpretation of the phrase "the Saviour of the world" (John 4:42; I John 4:14) and similar statements such as: "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29) and "I came not to judge the world but to save the world" (12:47).

Those scholars who accept such passages as evidence of universalism<sup>2</sup> usually admit, in deference to intellectual honesty, that "in the Fourth Gospel, as in the Synoptics and the Epistles, the beliefs that the world will be saved and that disbelievers will

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1. Barrett, C.K.,: "Christ then has some sheep in the οὐλή of Judaism, but also others who are not of that οὐλή, that is, Gentiles. John was written in the context of the Gentile mission". The Gospel According to St. John, page 312.
  2. For example, Ryder Smith, C., The Bible Doctrine of the Hereafter, pages 250 following.

'perish' in ruin are held in "unresolved tension". Ryder Smith shows that such "unresolved tension" exists in many areas of Christian theology, including the doctrine of the Trinity, which postulates the idea of Three persons in one God; Christology, where there is the problem of the relationship between the two natures of our Lord; the Atonement, which involves the death of Jesus, who is God and is therefore immortal; and the idea of election, where the conceptions of predestination and free will cannot logically be harmonised. He argues that "all doctrines about God MUST run up into mystery" and that the impossibility of harmonising the conceptions of universalism and conditional immortality (or annihilationism) is an example of what may be regarded as the fundamental antimony whereby "a truth that seems to the mind of man to contradict itself...is harmonious to the mind of God".<sup>1</sup> Concurrence with this viewpoint would seem to be the only satisfactory answer to this otherwise insoluble problem of New Testament eschatology.

In approaching the book of Revelation, which is the one book in the New Testament written from the eschatological viewpoint 'ex professo', it is essential to keep constantly in mind the fact that "it must be read as literature and not as dogma".<sup>2</sup> It has been aptly described as "a complicated web of Jewish and Christian eschatological pictures, very difficult, if not impossible, to reduce to harmony".<sup>3</sup> It is not

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1. Ryder Smith, C., The Bible Doctrine of the Hereafter, page 259.
  2. Salmond, S.D.F., The Christian Doctrine of Immortality, page 347.
  3. Jones, E.G., Faith and Immortality, page 182.

within the scope of the present study either to attempt a comprehensive survey of these pictures or to attempt to reconcile their disparate elements. To do so without reference to the spiritual realities which they are intended to portray is to fall into the fatal error which certain of the fringe sects of Christianity, such as the Jehovah's Witnesses, are guilty: they concentrate attention on the imagery to the exclusion of the message and are thus led into the vagaries of interpretation which they flaunt in their expositions of the book. The correct perspective in which to view the Apocalypse is to realise that, despite the chaos of imagery, Revelation is characterised by an underlying unity of purpose which is based on one of the fundamental ideas of New Testament eschatology: that in Jesus Christ the Eschaton has already occurred, and that the ensuing interval between the Ascension and Parousia is not a static time-lag but a dynamic period, "the time between the times", to use K. Barth's phrase, in which the struggle between good and evil continues, though the issue is never in doubt. It is basic to Revelation's understanding of God's purpose in history that the Kingdom of God is regarded as a 'fait accompli' and that ultimate victory is therefore assured to those who fight under the banner of the Lamb. Thus, beneath the futurist element in its eschatology, which is cast in the language of Jewish-Christian apocalyptic thought, there lies the realised element, without which Christian eschatology

would lose its most distinctive and vital emphasis and, in fact, its whole 'raison d'être'.

R.H. Charles maintains that in Revelation "the ripest products of Christian thought and experience lie side by side with the most unadulterated Judaism".<sup>1</sup> This is a fair comment, but ought not to lead to a denigration of its eschatology if one remembers that the latter element, the "unadulterated Judaism", is merely a vehicle which the author uses to transmit the former element, which contains truths which are of the essence of Christianity. Thus, more recently, W.G. Kümmell has argued that "the theological task of exposition of the Apocalypse can be properly fulfilled only if the impropriety of these conceptions<sup>2</sup> and symbols is expounded and maintained", because otherwise "the Apocalyptist is in danger of falsifying the message of God's goal with world history".<sup>3</sup>

It is now apposite to examine the distinctive features of Revelation's eschatology, which are fourfold: the Parousia, the Millennium, the Resurrection and the Judgement. The validity of the argument outlined above concerning the interpretation and value of these key conceptions may now be tested by a consideration of each

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1. Charles, R.H., A Critical History, page 347. Compare Bultmann's similar estimate that Revelation is "a weakly Christianised Judaism" (Theology of the New Testament, II, 175), quoted by W.G. Kümmell, Introduction to the New Testament, page 332.
  2. Scilicet: the cry for vengeance in Revelation 6:10 and the expectation of an earthly millennium in Revelation 20:2 following.
  3. Kümmell, W.G., Introduction to the New Testament, page 333.

of them in turn.

The perspective of the whole book is dominated by the idea of the Parousia, even though the term  $\Pi\alpha\rho\omicron\upsilon\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$  is not used. In a few passages the presence of Christ is depicted as a spiritual return within the realm of history (e.g. 3:20), which is reminiscent of such passages as John 14:26-28 and others in the last discourses of the Fourth Gospel. But the idea of a visible, objective Parousia is found frequently (e.g. 2:16; 3:11; 22:12,20). It is unnecessary to describe all the relevant textual data about the Parousia; it is more important to notice that its certainty and imminence are both constantly stressed by the author, as is its suddenness. With respect to these aspects it is sufficient to re-iterate the point that was made in chapter five: that the doctrine of the Parousia, which is found in every book of the New Testament apart from Philemon and III John, is of the essence of Christianity, because it emphasises the finality of the salvation which God has offered men in our Lord. The Crucifixion, Resurrection, Ascension and Parousia are in a sense one event - the Eschaton, which has already occurred in the Incarnation though it will finally be consummated at some future point.<sup>1</sup>

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1. "From John, and through the historical appearance of Jesus, the apocalyptic view of history received a new foundation...for John, the starting point of his eschatological hope is faith in the saving act of God in Jesus and in His saving work which portends victory...The appearance of Jesus is the eschatological turning point of history, the pledge of its divine consummation. The conception of salvation history, in whose center Jesus stands, lies at the basis of the Apocalypse's philosophy of history". Kümmel, W.G., Introduction to the New Testament, page 323.

The next element in Revelation's eschatology which falls for consideration is "an element in the New Testament which modern critical theology has not attempted to incorporate":<sup>1</sup> the conception of the Millennium. R.H. Charles describes this as "probably the most unfruitful aspect of New Testament eschatology", which "cannot be said to belong to the sphere of Christian doctrine".<sup>2</sup> Many expositors would agree with this verdict and would follow Augustine of Hippo in attempting to 'spiritualise' the idea by arguing that the first resurrection, that of the martyrs (20:4), is that which the Christian experiences after his burial with Christ in baptism, the thousand years being a symbol of the reign of our Lord in His church. This view is known as amillennialism and is the one which has proved most popular within the mainstream of orthodox Christianity. Another view is that known as post-millennialism, whereby the 'thousand years' is interpreted to mean the interim period between D-Day and V-Day; the Kingdom of God is established by the preaching of the gospel during this period. A third view, which recognises the dangers attaching to any literal or allegorical interpretation of the doctrine,

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1. Hanson, A.T., in A Dictionary of Christian Theology, London, 1969, page 115. He continues: "...the same could be said of the antichrist, which plays some part in Paul's thought and a much more profound one in the Apocalypse...as long as it is realised that antichrist is not exhausted in any one historical individual, but is to be found in various forms in every generation, there is no reason why this compelling symbol should not play a fruitful part in Christian theology".
  2. Charles, R.H., A Critical History, page 350.

is that put forward by J.A.T. Robinson, who believes that millennialism is "best viewed as an attempt to harmonise, under the form of successive events, the two elements of the myth emphasised by the prophets and the apocalyptists respectively, namely, that the meaning of history must be vindicated within history and yet that the complete purpose of God must transcend history". It is "the representation of this tension as two stages" which "leads to error if taken literally". In other words, as in the case of the doctrine of the Parousia, the concept of the millennium must be viewed theologically rather than chronologically, as an attempt to preserve the idea that history is the sphere of God's revelation and that history is to be consummated rather than dispensed with.

The third and fourth main elements in Revelation's eschatology, the resurrection and the judgement, may be considered in conjunction, because here and throughout the New Testament they are closely connected. Millennialism involves the idea of a double resurrection, the first being followed after the Millennium by a general resurrection of good and evil, which leads on to the final judgement made by God (20:11 following). The final state of the righteous is described metaphorically against the backcloth of the picture of the new Jerusalem (21:10 following) and is characterised, for example, by the absence of mourning or weeping (21:4) and the joy of being servants of the Lamb (22:3 following). The ultimate condition of the wicked is portrayed, again in symbolic language, as consignment to the lake of fire (20:10 following), where all those not found in the book

of life are tormented. It seems probable that the author thought of their fate, which is described as the "second death" (21:8), as involving annihilation, though to regard this as supplying an objective fact about the after-life is to disregard A. Richardson's warning that "the modern critical approach to the study of the Bible makes it obvious that it is just as foolish to look in Revelation for an account of the end of the world as it is to look in Genesis for a scientific account of its beginning".<sup>1</sup> To do so would also be to disregard the fundamental canon of interpretation which was outlined earlier: that of regarding Revelation as literature rather than as dogma. If it is thus regarded, then the estimate of E.F. Scott that "in its apocalyptic form, the book belongs to an ancient world, but in its substance it conveys a message which can never lose its meaning"<sup>2</sup> will be seen to be a correct evaluation of its worth and abiding value as a contribution to New Testament eschatology.

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1. Richardson, A., A Theological Wordbook, page 107.
2. Scott, E.F., The Book of Revelation, page 171.  
Quoted by Guy, H.A., The New Testament Doctrine of the Last Things, page 154.

CHAPTER SEVENTHE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST

A major criticism which is sometimes levelled at apologetic works on the Resurrection<sup>1</sup> is that they approach the subject from the wrong viewpoint, in that they begin by an immediate examination of the New Testament evidence without previous recourse to other considerations which are said to be just as vital, viz. the moral and spiritual perfection of the life of our Lord, which makes the Resurrection a natural conclusion to His life, rather than a surprise ending;<sup>2</sup> and the psychological transformation in the disciples after the event.<sup>3</sup> It is argued that such a coldly-dispassionate examination of the data can lead at most to an intellectual conviction that Jesus did probably rise from the dead, and that this conviction falls far short of what Christianity means by faith.

Not all scholars, however, would assent to the validity of this criticism, and in view of the fact that the question at issue, which is concerned with the

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1. F. Morison's book 'Who Moved the Stone?' is thus criticised by L. Barkway, The Creed and its Credentials, London, 1953, pages 44-5, and by W. Neil, 'The Life and Teaching of Jesus', London, 1965, page 78.
  2. Compare Acts 2:24: "Whom God raised up, having loosed the pangs of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it".
  3. Compare Acts 4:13: "...when they beheld the boldness (Πεπρωσικ) of Peter and John...". C.F.D. Moule, in The Significance of the Message of the Resurrection for Faith in Jesus Christ, London, 1968, page 30, refers to their "Pentecostal enthusiasm".

amount, nature and place of historical fact in the Resurrection narratives, has been at the centre of much recent debate about New Testament eschatology, it is not inappropriate at the outset to examine the 'spectrum' of scholarly opinion about this before proceeding to look at the evidence itself, because one's estimate of the value of the latter depends on one's position on the spectrum.

The spectrum of opinion about this basic problem of whether or in what sense, the Resurrection was a real occurrence, is very wide indeed, ranging at the one extreme from the position occupied by R. Bultmann, who believes historical considerations are irrelevant to faith, to that occupied at the other extreme by W. Pannenberg, who contends that history is crucially important to the creation of faith in the Resurrection, and that the outlook for Christianity is bleak if the Resurrection is not in reality an historical fact. In between these are the mediating positions along the spectrum occupied by scholars such as K. Barth, H. Grass, Hans F. von Campenhausen, G. Koch, R.R. Niebuhr, C.H. Dodd and O. Cullmann. A survey of a representative selection of the views of these scholars will show that there are basically four ways of looking at the problem: that of Bultmann and his school, who in a sense shelve the problem by attempting to remove the Resurrection completely from the realm of history; that adopted by Barth, Grass and von Campenhausen, who assert the primacy of faith though they are not so sceptical about the possibility and value of historical evidence; that preferred by Niebuhr, Dodd and Cullmann, who assert that faith and history are both of importance in interpreting

the Resurrection; and finally, that recently canvassed by W. Pannenberg and his school, who believe that history plays a vital rôle in creating faith, which is wholly dependent on it.

The conclusion arrived at when this survey is completed will then lead on to a consideration of the New Testament evidence itself, in the light of this conclusion, including a review of some of the main theories which have been adduced to account for the data. This will be followed by an exposition of the meaning of the Resurrection, with which the thesis will end.

It was the publication in 1941 of Bultmann's seminal work, 'The New Testament and Mythology', in which he argued for a far-reaching 'demythologization' ('Entmythologisierung') of the New Testament, which concentrated attention on the question of whether, and if so, to what extent, the Resurrection may be viewed as an objective, historical event. Before arriving at the views expressed in 'Offenbarung und Heilsgeschehen', the original title of his essay in German, Bultmann had been deeply influenced by the existential thought of M. Heidegger when they were colleagues at Marburg, and as this philosophy lies at the basis of Bultmann's thought, it must briefly be described.

Existentialism is in some ways a reaction against modern society, with its impressive scientific and technological achievements, which, it is felt, have led to the depersonalisation of the individual person. In contrast to this, it stresses the value of the individual person and, in its Christian context, argues that no one can find the clue to existence simply by accepting

wholesale ideas or values which have been inherited from the past. The vital factor in Christianity is present-day experience of Jesus Christ, rather than dependence on tradition. Twentieth-century man has to be confronted with Jesus Christ as the Person who gives men the answer to the 'Angst' or 'dread' which they feel when they are thrust into this impersonal universe, where they are haunted by fears, such as the fear of being alone and fear of death. Present experience of Christ liberates men from the constricting and debilitating hold of this 'dread', and they pass from 'unauthentic' to 'authentic' existence, which is characterised by purposeful living and a concern for the welfare of other men.

Bultmann felt that whenever he attempted to preach the Christian gospel, which he sees primarily as a call to make an existential decision ('Entscheidung') about human life, his effectiveness as a preacher was minimised by the mythological language of the New Testament, which he traces back partly to Jewish apocalyptic thought and partly to the Gnostic myth of a dying-rising god; he believes, therefore, that the only expedient is to re-interpret the mythology in terms which modern man can understand, so that the essence of Christianity, the 'scandal' of the Cross, which is the antithesis of man's pride, the basic human sin, becomes clear and evokes a response of faith: "...faith should not be tied down to the world of mythological representation in which the New Testament moves".<sup>1</sup>

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1. Kerygma and Myth - A Theological Debate, edited by Bartsch, H.W., London, 1953, pages 10-11.

The Cross is the "ever-present reality" which confronts men in the preaching, in the sacraments and in everyday life. "Modern man ought not to be burdened with the mythological element in Christianity. We must help him to come to grips with the real skandalon and make his decision accordingly. The preaching of Christ must not remain myth for him".<sup>1</sup> "Faith in the resurrection is really the same thing as faith in the saving efficacy of the cross...Christ meets us in the preaching (kerygma) as one crucified and risen. He meets us in the word of preaching and nowhere else. The faith of Easter is just this - faith in the word of the preaching".<sup>2</sup>

The following extensive quotations will illustrate Bultmann's argument and his concern that the message of the New Testament should be made relevant to modern man: "Eschatological preaching views the present time in the light of the future and it says to men that this present world, the world of nature and history, the world in which we live our lives and make our plans is not the only world; that this world is temporary and transitory, yes, ultimately empty and unreal in the face of eternity."

"It is possible that the biblical eschatology may rise again. It will not rise in its old mythological form but from the terrifying vision that modern technology, especially atomic science, may bring about the destruction of our earth through the abuse of human science and technology. When we ponder this possibility, we can feel the terror and the anxiety which were evoked by the eschatological preaching of the imminent end of world. To be sure, that preaching was developed in

1. Kerygma and Myth, pages 36 and 122.

2. Ibid, page 41.

conceptions which are no longer intelligible today, but they do express the knowledge of the finiteness of the world, and of the end which is imminent to us all because we are beings of this finite world..."

"Subjective freedom grows<sup>5</sup> out of the desire for security; it is in fact anxiety in the face of genuine freedom. Now it is the Word of God which calls man into genuine freedom, into free obedience, and the task of demythologising has no other purpose but to make clear the call of the word of God. It will interpret the Scripture, asking for the deeper meaning of mythological conceptions and freeing the Word of God from a bygone world view..."<sup>1</sup>

In his specific treatment of the Resurrection, Bultmann is very radical indeed. "The resurrection, he seems to feel, is a miracle in the sense in which miracles do not happen, and so is dismissed as having no historical basis whatever".<sup>2</sup> The only historical fact which is certain is the 'Easter faith' of the first disciples: "An historical fact which involves a resurrection from the dead is utterly inconceivable... The Resurrection itself is not an event of past history. All that historical criticism can establish is the fact that the first disciples came to believe in the Resurrection... The historical problem is scarcely relevant to Christian belief in the Resurrection".<sup>3</sup> Men today cannot "buttress" their own faith in the Resurrection by that of the first disciples; the Easter narratives are only "signs and pictures of the Easter faith".<sup>4</sup>

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1. Bultmann, R., Jesus Christ and Mythology, London, 1958, pages 23, 25, and 43.
  2. Nineham, D.E., Expository Times, July, 1965 page 305.
  3. Kerygma and Myth, pages 39 and 42.
  4. Ibid, page 42.

If one regards them in any way at all as providing historical verification of faith then one is likely to make those who are confronted by them impervious to their real message.

Before attempting a critique of this position, it must be reiterated that Bultmann was motivated by evangelical motives; he felt that he was not carrying conviction as a preacher of the gospel because the 'carton' in which it had originally been enshrined was obsolete and no longer meaningful to modern man. He sees his rôle not as a negative, destructive one, in that he wishes to truncate Christianity, but as a positive one, because he considers his main objective to be the removal of the adventitious stumbling block of mythology so that the essential meaning of the New Testament may be clearly perceived. It is probably unfortunate, and somewhat unjust, that the term 'demythologisation' has become conventional to describe the process of re-interpretation for which he argues; 're-mythologisation' would be a more accurate term to use. Another point which must be made is that his merit as an outstanding theologian can never be questioned. D.E. Nineham describes him as "...a New Testament scholar...notable for a combination of superb technical competence, great width of learning and a concern with the contemporary significance of the texts".<sup>1</sup>

Further, many Christians would agree that there is a considerable amount of truth in what Bultmann says. If the Resurrection of our Lord is regarded just as an event of past history to be demonstrated as factual in the same way that one would attempt to demonstrate the

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1. Expository Times, July, 1965, page 300.

actuality of any other historical fact, then from a theological point of view this kind of approach is virtually valueless. The most important thing about our Lord's Resurrection is not that nearly two thousand years ago a tomb was found empty near Jerusalem and that its former occupant was later seen by His associates; the vital thing is that one can meet and know Jesus today. So Bultmann's work, although not new,<sup>1</sup> has supplied a useful and necessary corrective to a purely historical investigation of the Resurrection data, which misses the whole point. Christians believe not only that Jesus survived death but that He defeated death itself and that men can share in the eternal life which became His by being raised together with Him (Hebrews 2:14-15; Colossians 3:1). One has to live in the conviction that this is true and allow this belief to permeate the whole of one's life before the real meaning of the Resurrection is known.

The Resurrection must be real in the faith of the person who comes to know it, and in the biblical sense of 'knowledge' this means much more than intellectual assent to the truth of the proposition that a particular event took place near Jerusalem circa 29 A.D. To use Pauline language, belief in the Resurrection means to know Christ and "the power of his resurrection" (Philippians 3:10) so that this knowledge re-vitalises one's own life today. One cannot use the faith as the first disciples as a prop on which to rest one's own belief: every person must discover for himself the real meaning of the Resurrection in an 'existential'

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1. At the beginning of the present century, A. Harnack maintained that it is possible to hold the 'Easter faith' without the 'Easter message'.

encounter with Christ.

But Bultmann's position is open to serious objections from several points of view. Firstly, it would seem that he is far too sceptical about the value of the historical facts on which the Gospel is based. Faith IS based on facts and whilst allowing the vital importance of the Easter faith of the disciples, many scholars would insist that there were certain objective historical facts following on the Crucifixion which caused the Easter faith. Christianity is essentially an historical religion and is based on the claims that God entered human life in Jesus Christ; that He was crucified for men's sins; and that on the third day He rose again. If any of these claims is false, then Christianity is not true; it is as simple as that. "Biblical religion rests upon an interpretation of historical facts in which God was believed to be active; if the events did not take place or were radically different in character from the report of them, the Biblical interpretation of them cannot be sustained and faith that God has acted in history collapses."<sup>1</sup> If the Resurrection narratives are just a mythological way of explaining the meaning of the Crucifixion, so that when modern man hears the accounts he responds and sees the significance of the cross for human life, then Apostolic Christianity is based on a total misconception and the whole of the New Testament, which is grounded in the certainty of the actual, objective Resurrection of our Lord, is, in effect, a tissue of lies.

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1. Marshall, I.H., Expository Times, October, 1968, page 7.

A second major criticism of Bultmann's understanding of the Resurrection is that it is so esoteric that it virtually makes a 'neo-gnosticism' out of New Testament Christianity. His attempt to re-interpret the meaning of Easter in existentialist terms is that of a person gifted with a very high degree of intelligence and an academic training which are denied to most men. It deserves mention that in this respect, the earliest Christians were "ignorant and unlearned men" (Acts 4:13), and that "not many wise after the flesh" (I Corinthians 1:26) saw in Christ "the power of God and the wisdom of God". The vast majority of subsequent generations of men have resembled the earliest disciples in their 'ignorance', and one cannot but feel that there is much truth in the protest which J.B. Phillips registers against demythologising in the following words: "...what happens to the idea when it filters through to the general people? Simply the impression that leading theologians and New Testament scholars all regard the stories of Jesus as 'myths'...that means to the ordinary man and woman that they are no more than concocted stories with about as much truth in them as the fables of Aesop and with about as much authority as the myth of Father Christmas. It would not be true to say that Bultmann and his very considerable following have any difficulty in combining their sceptical view of the historicity of the Gospels with a real devotion to the faith of the Church. But this demands an agility and dexterity which escapes me. All that I am concerned with is the effect of the Bultmann 'demythologisation'

upon ordinary, non-theologically trained people".<sup>1</sup>

If Bultmann's philosophy is true, then it means that for millions of people the gospel must remain a closed book, because the Kingdom of heaven has been shut up against them (compare Matthew 23:13). It is pertinent to ask how this can be if "God willeth that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth" (I Timothy 2:4)? Despite Bultmann's undoubted evangelical intention, his attempt at re-interpretation does, in fact, present insuperable difficulties to ordinary people and would appear to lead to more agnosticism and atheism than the mythology with which he wishes to dispense.

A third and final criticism of thorough-going demythologisation is that such a process would destroy theology,<sup>2</sup> which must, in the last resort, use language which is anthropomorphic, because humans have no medium other than their own language with which to talk about God. "Myth...is an indispensable vehicle of religious truth, without which all religion, including the Christian gospel, would be condemned to silence...Myth must therefore be used in communicating and expressing Christian truth...". Fuller suggests that to avoid a crude, literalistic interpretation of the myths, they must constantly be interpreted to protect against "a literal, objectifying misunderstanding", but adds that "it is continually necessary to return to the mythical language as the only language capable of expressing the

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1. Phillips, J.B., Ring of Truth, London, 1967, pages 13-14.

2. Note that 'theologians' such as F. Buri have accused Bultmann of not going far enough, in that he still retains belief in an act of God in Jesus' ministry, which they see as a remnant of mythology and which must therefore be eliminated.

religious truth in all its profundity".<sup>1</sup>

Bultmann's position is therefore vulnerable on three counts: his depreciation of the value of history is unwarranted; his system of thought can only be appreciated by an intellectual élite; and in calling for demythologisation, or even remythologisation, he is attempting the impossible, because theology must of necessity use myths and symbols if it is to make metaphysical assertions, and it is doubtful that the majority of the ones employed by the writers of the New Testament can be improved upon even two thousand years later. One must therefore agree with A. Richardson when he asserts that Bultmann "sets aside the apostolic witness concerning God's action in history in favour of 'another Gospel', namely, the proclamation of God's action in the existential transformation of the individual believer".<sup>2</sup>

Thus, Bultmann's attempt to solve the problem of 'faith' and 'history' in the Resurrection tradition by removing the Resurrection completely from the historical sphere has not by any means won universal acceptance and has led other scholars to suggest alternative solutions.

As one moves along the 'spectrum' one encounters next the viewpoint held by scholars such as K. Barth, H. Grass and Hans F. von Campenhausen, who prefer to believe that although faith is ultimately the only decisive factor in accepting the Resurrection, yet the results of historical research are not without value,

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1. Fuller, R.H.; The New Testament in Current Study, London, 1963, page 31.
  2. Richardson, A., The Bible in the Age of Science, London, 1961, page 112.

even though they cannot in the last analysis help to create true faith. K. Barth may be selected as representative of this viewpoint, because his change of opinion, which caused him to move further along the 'spectrum' away from proximity to Bultmann's position, is significant.

In his 'Epistle to the Romans' (E.T. 1933), Barth had argued that although the Resurrection impinges on history, it is a symbol rather than an historical event: "In the Resurrection, the new world of the Holy Spirit touches the old world of the flesh, but touches it as a tangent touches a circle, that is, without touching it."<sup>1</sup> Barth's reason for thus refusing to allow the Resurrection to be interpreted within the context of history is that "if the Resurrection be brought within the context of history, it must share in its obscurity and error and essential questionableness".<sup>2</sup> In other words, if the Resurrection is a part of history, then it must inevitably share the relativism of the rest of history, and Barth is unwilling to allow this. The Resurrection is an historical event only in the sense that it was discovered or recognised near Jerusalem, circa 29 A.D. Its significance as an act of God is not dependent on this recognition. It may therefore be described as "the non-historical event 'par excellence'".<sup>3</sup> Faith in the Resurrection cannot be created by the empirical evidence; faith is completely the work of God.

In 'The Resurrection of the Dead'; (E.T.1933),

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1. Quoted by Evans, C.F., Resurrection and the New Testament, page 174.
  2. Quoted by Fuller, D.P., Easter Faith and History, page 82.
  3. Ibid.

Barth similarly describes the Resurrection as "a historical divine fact, which as such is only to be grasped in the category of revelation and in none other".<sup>1</sup>

Then, in 'Church Dogmatics', Volume III/2, 437 following, Barth moves further along the spectrum by distinguishing between two kinds of history: normal history, the realm of cause and effect, which he terms 'Historie'; and a supra-history, called 'Geschichte' running parallel to it and intersecting it at certain decisive points, including the Resurrection. The latter is not amenable to historical research, but it has "a tiny historical margin".<sup>2</sup> It is classified as a 'saga' or 'legend', because although it DID take place, its actuality cannot be PROVED by historical research. It is basically 'Geschichte' because it is the result of the activity of God. It is "an event within the world, in time and space...an event which involves a definite seeing with the eyes and hearing with the ears and handling with the hands... The event is perhaps not historical ('historisch') in the modern sense, but it is fixed and characterised as something that actually happened among men like other events and was experienced and later attested by them".<sup>3</sup> Thus the Resurrection becomes a "prism" through which the disciples "saw the man Jesus in every aspect of his relation to them...we are here in the sphere of history and time no less than in the case of the words and acts or even the death of Jesus".<sup>4</sup>

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1. Quoted by Fuller, D.P., Easter Faith and History, page 89.
  2. III/2, page 446. Quoted by Fuller, D.P., Easter Faith and History, page 106.
  3. IV/2, page 143. Quoted by Fuller, D.P., Easter Faith and History, page 148.
  4. III/2 page 442. Quoted by Evans, C.F., The Resurrection and the New Testament, pages 174-175.

Some scholars would regard Barth's position, especially his earlier one, as verging on docetism. If "the Word became flesh", then it is heretical to attempt to abstract any of the events of redemption from real history, as Barth apparently tries to do by his recourse to a 'history' which is not what is normally understood by that word. Even though his motives, like Bultmann's, may be unimpeachable, the creation of this 'ghetto', which is separate from normal history, is said to be illegitimate.

Another drawback of Barth's viewpoint is that it is basically self-contradictory: he affirms that the Resurrection IS historical, in that it was "in time and space...", yet he simultaneously criticises the narratives and says that it is "impossible to extract from the various accounts a nucleus of genuine history."<sup>1</sup> Further, if faith in the Resurrection is absolutely and completely dependent on revelation from God,<sup>2</sup> then the New Testament evidence is superfluous. Barth asserts that one cannot argue back from the accounts of the appearances to the truth of the Resurrection. Prior faith in God and present experience of Jesus Christ are vital if one is to understand the Resurrection. Yet the truth is that there is a direct causal connection between the Resurrection appearances of Jesus and the change in the disciples, which led to the production

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1. III/2, page 445. Quoted by Evans, C.F., Resurrection and the New Testament, page 175.
  2. "...the knowledge of it cannot derive from the knowing man but only from the one who is revealed in it." IV/2, page 149. Quoted by Fuller, D.P., Easter Faith and History, page 148.

of the record; examination of the record must surely, therefore, give some clues concerning the event and its interpretation. The change in the disciples is an empirical fact of history and was produced by the empty tomb and the appearances, so the latter do have a part to play, even though a subordinate one, in the creation of faith.<sup>1</sup>

This point is allowed by R.R. Niebuhr in his book: 'The Resurrection and Historical Reason', (1957), in which he puts forward a theory that although some aspects of the Resurrection may be understood by studying it from an historical standpoint, its full meaning is accessible only to faith. He argues that all phenomena have a 'necessary' aspect, in that they are part of the cause-effect system, but that they also have a 'contingent' aspect because they are characterised by spontaneity as well as causality.<sup>2</sup> If one examines the New Testament data, then it is possible to know something of the Resurrection under its 'necessary' aspect, and such a study may lead to the conclusion that Jesus did in fact rise from the

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1. H.F. von Campenhausen in Der Ablauf der Osterereignisse und das leere Grab, Heidelberg, 1958 allows that the New Testament evidence is basically sound from an historical point of view, but maintains that "the dry historical data...are by no means a sufficient reproduction of the fulness of the resurrection message...", and that "...the credibility of the Easter message does not rest upon strictly historical proofs, but rather... upon the existential verification of the Spirit". Quoted by Fuller, D.P., Easter Faith and History, page 161.
2. "Contingency is here the abstract metaphysical term for what Christian faith calls divine love." Quoted by Fuller, D.P., Easter Faith and History, page 173.

dead. An example of a 'necessary' element within the Resurrection traditions is the continuity between the body of Jesus before the event and His glorified body afterwards. Yet there was also discontinuity because Jesus was not always immediately recognised; this element in the traditions belongs to the 'contingent' aspect. The disciples' response of faith in interpreting the appearances as those of their Master belongs to the 'contingent' aspect as well, and the faith of those who are confronted by the empirical evidence in the twentieth century must arise in the same spontaneous way. In other words, incipient faith may be produced by historical investigation, but the full existential meaning of the Resurrection is only perceptible to those who have faith.

A similar stricture to one that was levelled at Barth's theory is applicable here: how can it be maintained that the Easter faith is basically independent of the empirical evidence when the latter produced the change in the disciples? There is a causal connection between the evidence and the faith, which Niebuhr is not prepared to allow if it means that one can infer the truth of the Resurrection from the change in the disciples. But it is essential to remember that the Easter faith did not arise spontaneously, in a vacuum; it was the disciples' response to what they believed to be an act of God in raising Jesus. It is this prior act of God which makes faith possible and this act of God was carried out on the plane of history. This is emphasised by the 'Heilsgeschichte' school of interpreters, whose opinion one encounters next along the spectrum, away from the extreme historical scepticism

of Bultmann in the direction of the viewpoint held by Pannenberg. Although they deny that the facticity of the Resurrection can be proved definitively by the methods of historical research, yet they maintain that the New Testament evidence has a more important rôle than that which even Niebuhr assigns to it. C.H. Dodd may be selected as representative of this outlook.

In his 'History and the Gospel' (1938), Dodd argues that Christianity is based on the fundamental dogma that God has used history as the 'locus' of His revelation to men, and that as the interpretation of the events of history is itself part of the history which is transmitted to us, then acceptance of the New Testament evidence is also an acceptance of the interpretation of that evidence concerning the meaning of the Resurrection. In other words, if one accepts the evidence as credible, then one is showing faith. Proof as such is out of the question because the truth of God's actions in history cannot be demonstrated in this way. Faith is not self-activating: it is the response of human beings to the 'events-plus-meaning' which are recorded in the New Testament accounts.

Therefore, historical research, 'pace' Bultmann and Barth, in his earlier phase, is not only possible but desirable, because, although in the nature of the case it cannot prove the actuality of the Resurrection, it can show that faith in it is reasonable. Thus, historical enquiry and faith are complementary: faith is the response to God's actions in the sphere of history, whereby those actions are seen to be redemptive. Just as the prophetic insight of men such as Moses and

Jeremiah saw the hand of God in the events of the Exodus and the Exile, so the New Testament writers saw it in the raising of Jesus Christ. In accepting the reliability of their records, one is also committing oneself to the interpretation which those records enshrine and without which they would not exist.

The furthest position at the extreme end of the spectrum away from Bultmann is that occupied by W. Pannenberg, who during the last decade or so, has argued that God reveals Himself to men in normal, mundane history, and that events which may seem unanalogous are not really so. They ought not to be rejected out of hand but should cause men to expand their conception of history to include them. He maintains that to assert that the Resurrection cannot be true because such an event has never happened before or since is illegitimate: the Resurrection data must be examined impartially, without any 'a priori' assumptions about it either way.

If one concludes after an examination of the evidence that the Resurrection is probably true, then the proper course of interpretation is not to suppose the existence of an 'Heilsgeschichte' running parallel to and intersecting ordinary history at certain decisive points, because the whole of phenomena, including the unanalogous elements, is the fabric of history. The Resurrection, although 'sui generis', is to be regarded as an event within world history, and its meaning is to be apprehended by viewing it within the context of the Bible's 'apocalyptic' or teleological view of history, which sees the purpose of God as the unifying

factor behind it. The Resurrection is seen to be the necessary conclusion to God's plan of salvation. Thus faith is generated by acceptance of the facticity of the Resurrection within the overall context of the Bible's apocalyptic view of history, including the hope of the resurrection of the dead (compare I Corinthians 15:12-13; Acts 23:6; 24:15)<sup>1</sup>

Adverse criticism of Pannenberg's viewpoint has been based mainly on the contention that in thus making faith a 'by-product' of historical research, he is denying the place of the Holy Spirit in revelation; he has refuted this and maintains that history itself contains this revelation of the Holy Spirit, which is not to be regarded as a 'supplement' to history. History is revelatory of God in itself.

A second drawback of his theory, it is argued, is that it renders the great majority of Christians dependent for their faith on the work of the historian and theologian. Pannenberg is quite prepared to accept this as true, and believes that it is theology's task to establish the truth of the Resurrection on its historical basis just so that those who have neither the ability nor the opportunity to pursue such study as this involves may have their faith firmly grounded.

The debate about this complex issue will no doubt continue; because history and theology are so closely interwoven within the data that there is probably more than one valid way of approaching the problem. The

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1. "On the basis of the appearances, the disciples were able to say that Jesus had been raised, because they assumed THE TRADITION OF THE JEWISH HOPE OF THE RESURRECTION. If we fail to understand this, we fail to understand the meaning of the primitive Christian gospel of Jesus' resurrection." The Significance of the Message of the Resurrection. p.65 (U. Wilckens).

historian is concerned basically with the value of the empirical evidence; the theologian is, in addition, concerned with the meaning of the facts and the effect which this interpretation of the facts has on the way in which men conduct their lives here and now. Full knowledge of "the power of His Resurrection" must include both of these aspects, and it is the strength of the 'Heilsgeschichte' school that it recognises and gives due weight to both aspects.

In adopting this viewpoint, it is appropriate to conclude the discussion by quoting the words of R.P.C. Hanson, who writes: "The Christ who is believed in is always Christ the Risen Lord, Christ who is worshipped in the Church, the Christ of this side of the Resurrection, the Christ of the Kerygma. It is therefore patently impossible that Christian belief in Christ could be wholly based on, or wholly demonstrated as true by, historical considerations alone. But this does not mean that Christian scholars are bound to deliver themselves over, uncritically and unprotestingly, to the tradition of the Church about Jesus Christ...On the contrary, the Church from the earliest period has produced historical evidence to support its claim, without ever maintaining that historical evidence alone was enough. It has from the beginning pointed, first to the Old Testament, and then to the New, both of which contained what it regarded as historical evidence, and both of which witnessed to the fact that in order to believe in Jesus Christ (including believing in the relevant historical evidence about him), it is necessary to have faith. The necessity for faith means that Christian belief does not rest on historical evidence.

alone as a compelling or demonstrative proof. We must therefore conclude neither that Christian belief is totally emancipated from a consideration of historical evidence, nor that the truth of Christianity rests or can be made to rest on historical evidence alone".<sup>1</sup>

Concurrence with this opinion now necessitates a consideration of both of these vital aspects: the historical evidence for, and the theological significance of, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Of the five passages in the New Testament which form the basis of its evidence: I Corinthians 15:3-8, Mark 16:1-8, Matthew 28:1-20, Luke 24:1-53 and John 20:1-21:25, the first is an obvious starting point, if only because of its chronological priority; it is, according to E. Meyer, probably the "oldest document of the Christian church we possess".<sup>2</sup> Another valid reason is the wide spread of its evidence: Paul records six appearances of the risen Jesus: to Peter, to the Twelve, to the five hundred brethren, to James, to all the Apostles and finally, to himself.

Discrepancies with the Resurrection traditions become obvious immediately one compares this list with those in the Gospels. For example, in the Synoptics no appearance to Peter is reported directly,<sup>3</sup> and there is no mention in the Synoptics of those to the five hundred and to James. Paul does not mention the women at all, yet they figure prominently in the accounts of the four Evangelists.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Hanson, R.P.C., Vindications, London, 1966, pages 66-67.
  2. Hunter, A.M., Introducing N.T. Theology, page 54.
  3. Compare Luke 24:34.
  4. Possibly because women were not recognised as valid witnesses.

Differences within the Gospels themselves are also considerable. In Mark and Matthew, for example, only the women visit Jesus' tomb; Luke says that Peter then went there on his own, whereas John reports Mary Magdalene's visit to the tomb alone, to be followed by that of Peter and the beloved disciple. Again, Mark and Matthew adopt the Galilean tradition in their siting of the appearances of Jesus, in contrast to Luke and John, who prefer the Jerusalem location. A third obvious discrepancy concerns the identity and number of the messenger(s) at the tomb: Mark has one young man, Matthew has an angel of the Lord, Luke has two men in dazzling apparel and John has two angels.

After a detailed discussion of the traditions, C.F. Evans concludes that "however detailed the analysis... it is not simply difficult to harmonise these traditions, but quite impossible",<sup>1</sup> and most scholars would agree with this verdict. Yet one must also remember with E.G. Selwyn that "our duty towards the evidence is not to harmonise it, but to weigh it, and so doing to form as true an estimate as we can of the happenings to which it relates".<sup>2</sup> However, it must be stated that the extent of the discrepancies has sometimes been over-stressed and several points must be made concerning them. Firstly, they do have a positive apologetic value in showing that no harmonising instinct<sup>h</sup> was at work; the variety and lack of homogeneity in the narratives suggest that they

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1. Evans, C.F., The Resurrection and the New Testament, page 128. Probably the best attempt at harmonisation is that by N.P. Williams, The First Easter Morning.
  2. Selwyn, E.G.; Essays Catholic and Critical, London, 1950, page 295.

are not inventions of the writers, in which case the stories would surely have tallied almost exactly. Secondly, it must be remembered that the narratives of the Resurrection, in contrast, for example, to the story of the Passion, were deliberately composed as single stories that would convince the readers of the actuality of the event rather than supply an exhaustive summary of it. "To satisfy this clamant need single stories were enough...there would be no continuous account which traced the succession of events from the Tomb to the final parting of Jesus from His disciples...The earliest tradition was not a record, but consisted of lists of Appearances and single stories."<sup>1</sup>

Another factor which must be taken into account is the influence of the particular theological emphases of the various authors. In this connection, E.G. Selwyn remarks that in the Resurrection narratives one is near to the "borderland of history and symbol",<sup>2</sup> and many scholars believe that in their choice of material the writers may have been motivated by a desire to portray by symbolism particular truths which they wished to express: for example, the difference between the Jerusalem and Galilean locations is explained by some scholars as due to a desire on the part of Mark and Matthew to suggest the world-wide mission of the Church, because Galilee was traditionally the land associated

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1. Taylor, V., The Formation of the Gospel Tradition, London, 1935 pages 59-60.
  2. Selwyn E.G., editor, Essays Catholic and Critical, London, page 281. Later he adds: "Each Evangelist selected the version (sc. of the various Resurrection stories) which best fitted his general purpose and his whole conception of the resurrection". (page 304).

with the Gentiles and appearances there would point to a world-wide mission. C.F.D. Moule<sup>1</sup> offers an alternative suggestion: he suggests that the two traditions are compatible if one supposes that the disciples' movements were determined by their attendance at the Jewish festivals of Passover and Pentecost and that Jesus accommodated His appearances to their movements. Possibly the two traditions may be harmonised by supposing a change of plan on the part of Jesus: the disciples' initial 'hardness of heart' concerning the reality of His Resurrection entailed Jerusalem appearances to re-create their faith in Him, so that the Jerusalem appearances are evidential, whereas the Galilean appearances are vocational in intention, being designed to teach the disciples the world-wide nature of their new mission.

Matthew's account shows an apologetic motive in its emphasis on the impossibility of the Jewish slander that the disciples had stolen the body of Jesus; and Mark's cryptic ending at 16:8: ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ which has been the subject of much discussion, may have had a definite motive in that the author intends to suggest by the startled silence of the women "what no words can tell us. The resurrection is not as other events in history. It is in truth the Parousia. It is the coming into the world of the life of the world to come".<sup>2</sup>

Another relevant point, and one of the most important, is that in dealing with the Resurrection,

1. Quoted by Evans, C.F., Resurrection and the New Testament, page 112.

2. Ramsey, A.M., The Resurrection of Christ, page 78.

the New Testament authors were dealing with something that was 'sui generis' and as such, hardly capable of exact documentation in human terms. E.G. Selwyn, writing about the reliability of the New Testament evidence, says that "when we remember that the facts it handles were 'ex hypothesi' such as baffled a complete explanation, and that the first witnesses confessed themselves incredulous and bewildered in face of them, then the existence of discrepancies in the accounts argues a close contiguity with the experiences related; whereas a compact and coherent narrative would have given us cause to suspect the deliberate artifice of later hands".<sup>1</sup>

Nor must one neglect to notice the respects in which the Gospels (including Mark 16:9 following), agree:<sup>2</sup> that Jesus was crucified on the Friday of Passover week; that Joseph of Arimathaea buried Him; that His body was wrapped in linen, and the burial made in a rock-tomb; that women followers of Jesus visited this tomb early on the following Sunday, found the stone rolled away and the body gone; that a message was given to them that He had risen; and finally that He appeared to individuals and groups for a period after this.

Whatever their explanation may be, the discrepancies do not constitute the main problem connected with the Resurrection narratives. The most important problems are: firstly, the relationship between the stories of the empty tomb and those of the appearances;

1. Selwyn, E.G., Essays Catholic and Critical, page 295.

2. See Martin, J., Did Jesus Rise from the Dead? London, 1956, page 36.

and secondly, the nature of the appearances themselves, though the two questions are obviously closely related.

The account of the empty tomb appears in all four gospels, and is implied not only in the early apostolic preaching (e.g. Acts 2:27 and 31; 13:37), but also in the Pauline tradition in I Corinthians 15:3-4: "...how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day..."<sup>1</sup> Yet it is an aspect of the traditions which has led to considerable controversy among scholars.

Some consider that the idea is a later legendary accretion, developed as a polemical weapon against the sceptical Jews. Such scholars would cut the Gordian knot by arguing that there was no tomb at all or that

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1. This is disputed by some scholars, but Ramsey, The Resurrection of Christ, pages 44-45, argues convincingly that "in default of the very strongest evidence that Paul meant something different and was using words in a most unnatural way, the sentence (sc. I Corinthians 15:3-4) must refer to a raising-up of the body". Paul had already preached to the Corinthians about the fact of the Resurrection and he was merely reminding them of this rather than trying to convince them again. The specific mention of 'the third day' supports Ramsey's interpretation, as does also the consideration that to someone brought up as a Pharisee like Paul, resurrection must almost certainly have meant bodily resurrection. Another telling point is that Paul's subsequent exposition in I Corinthians 15 of the *σῶμα* *πνευματικόν* implies a 'bodily' resurrection of Jesus Christ, the "first fruits". Compare Selwyn E.G.: "It is no exaggeration to say that, so far as the documentary evidence is concerned, no fact recorded in the New Testament is better attested than this". Essays Catholic and Critical, page 317; and Gore, C., Belief in God, London, 1939, page 247: "The fact of the empty tomb seems to me as indisputable as any fact of history".

the body was removed by human agency. At the beginning of this century, for example, Alfred Loisy, the French scholar,<sup>1</sup> put forward the suggestion that the story of the burial by Joseph of Arimathaea is completely without historical foundation, and that Jesus' body was thrown into the common burial-ground, Akeldama, which later gave rise to the legend of the empty tomb because the body had disappeared without trace. Loisy supposed that Joseph of Arimathaea himself was a figment of the imagination of the early Christians.

A similar theory was propounded by another French scholar in 1935. G. Baldensperger<sup>2</sup> argued that Joseph of Arimathaea removed the body from the common burial-ground and interred it in his own tomb. This secret was preserved by him until his death, after which Christian apologetic created the story of the empty tomb as an answer to Jewish inquisitiveness about Jesus' burial.

Such a rejection of the New Testament data on 'a priori' grounds and the complete neglect of its historical veracity makes critical assessment of the evidence completely impossible. If one is prepared to accept such procedures, then one may as well not examine the evidence at all. The accounts state categorically that Jesus was buried in a sepulchre owned by Joseph of Arimathaea and this burial was watched by women followers: unless one is prepared to believe this, then further investigation of the evidence is pointless.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Loisy, A., Les Evangiles Synoptiques, two volumes, 1907-1908.
  2. Baldensperger, G., Le tombeau vide.
  3. Compare Selwyn, E.G., Essays Catholic and Critical, London, 1950, page 317: "...to accept them (sc. the gospels) generally as good sources of historical information and yet to refuse to follow them on this point argues an 'apriorism' and an arbitrariness in dealing with evidence which is an affront to scientific method".

A similar stricture may justly be directed against the theory that Jesus was not really dead and revived in the cool of the tomb, later persuading His rather gullible disciples that He had risen. Although this theory has a long ancestry, having been suggested by F. Schleiermacher in 1799, it flies in the face of the evidence, such as the examination of Jesus' body to certify His death (Mark 15:44-45) and the emission of the blood and water after the spear thrust (John 19:34). It is also psychologically impossible - a half-dead corpse would not have inspired men to martyrdom, as the Risen Jesus did.<sup>1</sup> Thus, although this theory has recently been revived by H. Schonfield in 'The Passover Plot', it flounders both on the objective and the subjective evidence and is untenable.

Another rationalistic attempt to discredit the New Testament data concerns the emptiness of the tomb. It is argued that the story of the empty tomb arose later than the reports of appearances and that its inclusion in all four gospels may be adequately explained by supposing that they were all dependent on Mark. The appearances themselves were sufficient evidence of the actuality of the Resurrection (e.g. I Corinthians 9:1: "Have I not seen the Lord?"), and the account of the empty tomb only developed later in contradistinction

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1. "If we now find it impossible to suggest a deliberate fraud on the part of the apostles - and such a suggestion is negatived alike by their character and by the state of despondency and hopelessness in which they were - there is no plausible explanation of the empty tomb." Gore, C., Belief in God, London, 1939, page 247.

to the Greek idea of a purely spiritual immortality, which was the vogue in the Graeco-Roman world of the Gentile mission. By the time that the first gospel was written, it is argued, this superfluous element had been fully integrated into the tradition. In other words, the story of the empty tomb is really a piece of Christian missionary propaganda.

Two main arguments militate against this theory: firstly, it is psychologically unconvincing, unless one is prepared to allow that the disciples later gave their lives for a corpse; and secondly, it ignores the fact that neither the Jews nor the Romans, both of whom had the motive and the opportunity to crush Christianity if they had had the means, were able to produce the body of our Lord. That they did not do so creates the presumption that they could not, and no rationalistic attempt to explain this failure can be produced.

One of the classic studies of the Resurrection published during the present century, that of Kirsopp Lake,<sup>1</sup> presented the theory that the tomb to which the women followers of Jesus went on the Sunday morning was empty, but that they had mistakenly selected the wrong tomb in the early hours of daylight, and the "young man" (Mark 16:5-6) directed them to the correct one. The women's state of disappointment and shock which had lingered with them since the Friday caused them to run away, "for they were afraid..." (16:8).

Lake insists that the theory is only a tentative

1. Lake, K., The Historical Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, London, 1907, which is one of the most exhaustive works on the topic ever to be published.

one and that one must settle the problem of the empty tomb on doctrinal rather than historical grounds. He held the vision hypothesis concerning the appearances of Jesus, and in accordance with this, argues that "if we hope for a resurrection in our case in such a way as to resuscitate the human flesh which will be laid in the ground, we must postulate the same for the 'firstborn from the dead'. If we do not believe, and would not desire this for ourselves, it is illogical that we should believe that it was so for him".<sup>1</sup> It appears that Lake thus denigrates the value of the historical evidence because he had already made a prior judgement about the empty tomb on doctrinal grounds.

His theory, which also involves supposing that the women did not immediately report their discovery of the 'empty' tomb because the disciples were in Galilee, from which location they returned only some weeks later, has been challenged on several counts.

F. Morison<sup>2</sup> disagrees on three grounds: firstly, that the supposition concerning the absence of the disciples from Jerusalem is uncertain, because the Synoptic tradition appears to assume their presence. It is unlikely that Peter, for example, who had shown considerable courage on Good Friday, despite his despicable denial of our Lord, would have fled in such a craven way as Lake supposes, and, together with the other disciples, have left the women, some of whom were relatives of the Apostles, to the possibility of

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1. Lake, K., The Historical Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, page 253.
2. Morison, F., Who Moved the Stone? London, 1958, pages 98 following.

late reprisals by the Jews: Again, if Lake's theory were true, then the Jews would have had a cast-iron case with which to destroy the 'rumour' of the Resurrection simply by the production of the dead body from the correct tomb.<sup>1</sup> Nor must one forget the words of the young man: "He is risen, he is not here..." (Mark 16:6). Another relevant piece of textual evidence is that Mark's term in 15:47 (ἑθέρου), implies that the women took care to determine the exact location of the tomb. It is for reasons such as these that Lake's ingenious theory has not won wide acceptance.

However, the empty tomb, 'per se', is an ambiguous witness to the resurrection, because although it argues the absence of the body, it does not necessarily affirm the reality or presence of the risen Jesus Christ. So one is led to a consideration of what many scholars would regard as the primary evidence for the Resurrection: the evidence of the post-mortem appearances of our Lord.

One of the basic problems in dealing with the appearances is to determine whether they were purely spiritual or visionary experiences; or the apprehension, partly by the normal methods of human perception, the senses, of an objective phenomenon in the world of space and time. Advocates of the first line of approach would attribute the details about corporeality to various

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1. Matthew's account of the guard suggests that the Jewish authorities found the empty tomb an embarrassment. This still holds true even if one admits that the story of the guard arose later for apologetic motives, being the Christian rejoinder to the Jewish charge that the tomb was indeed empty but that the body had been stolen. Compare E.G. Selwyn's comment: "The saying...that the disciples removed the body by stealth represents...the bankruptcy of all attempts on the part of the Jews to suggest any other explanation". Essays Catholic and Critical, page 318.

factors; some regard them as a borrowing from the Jewish conception of the resurrection of the body, and think that it is inconceivable to imagine that the risen Jesus had a 'quasi-physical' body which was still, in some ways, perceptible to the human senses. H. Grass, for example, believes that Jesus did not rise with a "corporeality coming into appearance in this world",<sup>1</sup> though he holds that the appearances were objective and real in that the disciples did see Jesus 'face to face'. Grass is quite prepared to admit that the earthly body of Jesus remained in the tomb and that it had no necessary connection with the "spiritual" body of Jesus in his risen condition. Yet the connection between the two is surely a vital part of the Apostolic doctrine of the Resurrection, as A.R.C. Leaney points out.<sup>2</sup> The correct procedure is not to reject out of hand those features in the narrative which do not fit in with one's 'a priori' assumptions, as both Lake and Grass, for example, do, but to accept the whole of the evidence and frame one's theory on that basis, as Christian orthodoxy has done, even though difficulties still remain.<sup>3</sup>

Even those who accept the vision theory do not speak with one voice: some scholars support the sub-

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1. Grass, H., Ostergeschehen und Osterberichte, Göttingen, 1962. Quoted by Fuller, D.P., Easter Faith and History, pages 152-153.
2. Leaney, A.R.C., 'The Resurrection of Christ' in: Difficulties for Christian Belief, edited by Hanson, R.P.C., London, 1967, page 68.
3. Compare E.G. Selwyn's remark: "Our duty towards the evidence is not to harmonise it, but to weigh it, and so doing to form as true an estimate as we can of the happenings to which it relates". Essays Catholic and Critical, page 295.

jective-vision hypothesis while others hold to the objective-vision theory.

The former, sometimes known as the 'psychological' theory of the Resurrection, depends on the supposition that the disciples, having fled to Galilee after the debacle of the Crucifixion, began to meditate on the words of Jesus and erroneously came to the conclusion that He had predicted His resurrection. As this mistaken notion took hold of them, they began to experience hallucinations, which confirmed them in their mistake. These visions proved to be contagious and after Pentecost, their imagination ran riot and led to the genesis of the Christian Church. The New Testament accounts were composed on the basis of this misapprehension, though they are not the result of an attempt at conscious fraud, because the disciples were sincere in their belief that Jesus really had risen from the dead.

This, in barest outline, is the gist of the theory. But it both fails to explain the facts adequately, and depends on assumptions which are very difficult to uphold. For example, it is based completely on the unfounded belief that the disciples, after the Crucifixion, were in a state of expectancy in which their supposed visions arose, but if the evidence means anything at all, exactly the opposite was true. The two disciples on the road to Emmaus epitomise what must have been their state of mind generally: "We hoped that it was he which should redeem Israel,..." (Luke 24:21). On the contrary, most of them were in a state of fright and despair, which is exactly what one would expect. Peter went to the tomb,

to investigate the women's report and came back bewildered (Luke 24:11 following), and Thomas can hardly be delineated as the type of person who would succumb to wishful thinking.

If the visions were self-induced hallucinations, it is difficult to account for the absence of thaumaturgic elements within the stories, especially so in view of the prominence which this element has within the Gospel story before Easter.<sup>1</sup> Another point is that this theory would seem to involve the elimination of the Jerusalem appearances, which are just as well attested as those in Galilee. Again there is the insuperable difficulty of explaining the empty tomb, which, it has been argued above, is an indelible and reliable part of the evidence. If the visions were self-induced hallucinations, it is difficult to explain why the accounts are so sober in their details. The so-called visions are very prosaic if they were produced by persons in a state of excitement. The details about the wounds which our Lord's body still bore are also difficult to account for; one would expect a much more majestic picture of the risen messiah if a merely visionary experience is the true explanation of the facts. Another interesting feature which demands an explanation is the way in which Jesus was not immediately recognised, and appeared to different people in different ways. The theory of 'collective' visions (see Paul's list in I Corinthians 15, including the appearance to five hundred people at once), is not convincing

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 1. Even though Matthew does heighten the miraculous element in chapters 27-28 of his gospel, the miracles found there do not directly concern our Lord in the sense that He was their motivating cause.

either, because, as B.F. Westcott points out, "simultaneous perception...is not intelligible unless the phenomenon be really objective".<sup>1</sup>

Another damning piece of evidence is the fact that the new teaching which Jesus gave to the disciples did not co-incide with their most cherished hopes: contrast, for example, Luke 24:26 with Acts 1:6. The messiah whom it behoved to suffer continued to contradict their hopes of a restoration of the Kingdom to Israel (Acts 1:6-7).

A final point is made by R.R. Niebuhr when he writes that "those who propound the psychological theories of the resurrection of Jesus usually fail to admit the monstrous character of the interpretation of history which their theories have inevitably, if inadvertently, created".<sup>2</sup> The psychological theory does justice neither to the evidence nor to <sup>the</sup> situation before and after Easter, and must therefore be rejected. "If we cannot believe that the Apostles deceived others it seems (if possible) still more unlikely that they were the victims of deception".<sup>3</sup>

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1. Westcott, B.F., The Gospel of the Resurrection, London, 1891, note on pages 114-115.
  2. Green, M., Man Alive, London, page 48. Compare E.G. Selwyn who says that the subjective-vision theory encounters "acute difficulties from the standpoint both of psychology and history. On the psychological side it requires us to ascribe to the disciples morbid and pathological dispositions which their whole subsequent conduct appears to belie; while historically it involves us in the almost grotesque belief that a world-wide religion of some nineteen centuries' vitality was founded on a series of delusions". Essays Catholic and Critical, page 296.
  3. Westcott, B.F., The Gospel of the Resurrection, page 115.

The objective-vision hypothesis is nearer the mainstream of Christian orthodoxy and is associated in recent times especially with T. Keim, whose book 'Geschichte Jesu von Nazareth' appeared in English translation in 1883. The essence of his theory is that the origin of the visions is to be sought in God rather than in the disciples' imaginations. On the basis of Paul's use of  $\acute{\omega}\phi\theta\eta$  in I Corinthians 15:5-8, where he argued that Paul makes no obvious distinction between the appearances to the persons mentioned in verses five, six and seven and that to himself, even though his was outside the forty days specified by St. Luke as the period during which the others took place (Acts 1:3), Keim supposes that all the Resurrection appearances must be of the same visionary type as that which he presumes Paul to have experienced on the road to Damascus. The details about corporeality are later embellishments. God 'vouchsafed' visions of the risen Jesus to the disciples by causing them to 'see' His apparition, and this 'telegram from heaven' convinced them that He was truly alive.

Keim's inference from the use of  $\acute{\omega}\phi\theta\eta$  has been disputed by several scholars, such as E.G. Selwyn, who argues that although Paul believed all the appearances to be analogous in the sense that they were 'vocational', he did not regard them as strictly parallel "on the evidential plane". Paul's concern in I Corinthians 15:3-8 was to establish his claim to the Apostolate, which had been denied at Corinth, and he was trying to show that "his vision...was accepted by the leaders of the Church as having the same vocational

character as that experienced by themselves...His question 'Have I not seen the Lord?' is none the less fully justified, but as an interpretation rather than as a description of his experience".<sup>1</sup>

K.H. Rengstorff<sup>2</sup> maintains that  $\omega\phi\theta\eta$ , the aorist passive form of  $\delta\rho\alpha\upsilon$ , may be used in three possible ways: when followed by the dative of the person, it means 'Jesus was seen by...'; or it may have a deponent sense and mean 'Jesus appeared' or 'showed himself' (Acts 1:3); or it may be used in the passive form as a paraphrase for the name of God, to mean: 'God let Himself be seen by...'. In the Septuagint, it was commonly used to denote the 'making visible' by God of something that was usually invisible, and Rengstorff believes that the early Christians adopted this usage as a rejoinder to opponents' jibes that the supposed appearances of Jesus were due to wishful thinking. It asserted that GOD had raised Jesus and CAUSED Him to appear.

This interpretation is disputed by C.F. Evans, who says that the idea that the repetition of  $\omega\phi\theta\eta$  in I Corinthians 15:3 following "reflects emphasis on the objective nature of the appearances in face of attempts to reduce them to subjective experiences of the disciples ...is a very dubious deduction...and to talk in terms of subjective and objective in relation to the early Christians would be an anachronism". He also disputes the semantics of Rengstorff's argument at several points (e.g.

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1. Selwyn, E.G., Essays Catholic and Critical, pages 306-307.
  2. In Moule, C.D.F. editor: The Significance of the Message of the Resurrection for Faith in Jesus Christ, London, 1968, page 57.

he denies that when ὤφθη is followed by the dative of the person it means 'Jesus was seen by...'. He states that this requires ὑπό plus the genitive).<sup>1</sup>

Keim's phrase "telegram from heaven" caught popular imagination and his theory was widely canvassed. It has been adopted in modified form by several reputable scholars such as B.H. Streeter, E.G. Selwyn, and C.J. Cadoux.

Streeter, in an essay in 'Foundations', (1912), suggests that the Resurrection appearances were visions "directly caused by the Lord Himself, veritably alive and personally in communication" with His disciples. He believes that the body was possibly removed by human agency. He adds that "there is no difficulty in supposing that the Master would have been able to convince His disciples of His victory over death by some adequate manifestation; possibly by showing Himself to them in some form such as might be conveyed by St. Paul's phrase 'a spiritual body'; possibly by some psychological channel similar to that which explains the mysterious means of communication between persons commonly known as telepathy; or possibly in some way of which we have at present no conception. On such a view the appearances to the disciples can only be called visions, if by visions we mean something directly caused by the Lord Himself, veritably alive and personally in communion with them".<sup>2</sup>

Like Streeter, C.J. Cadoux found it impossible to accept the evidence of the empty tomb as true, and his

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1. Evans, C.F., Resurrection and the New Testament, pages 64-65.
2. Quoted by Ramsey, A.M., The Resurrection of Christ, page 51.

theory resembles Streeter's. He argues that our Lord's appearances were "real manifestations given to his followers by Jesus himself, not by means of his physical body resuscitated from the empty tomb, but by way of those strange processes sufficiently attested to us by psychical research".<sup>1</sup> Thus Cadoux of necessity rejects not only the idea of the empty tomb but also that of the Ascension, which he describes as Luke's "editorial termination to the series of visions of the risen Lord, rather than a record of an actually-witnessed event".<sup>2</sup>

E.G. Selwyn's theory<sup>3</sup> merits fuller consideration than those outlined above because it shows how the vision hypothesis may be held without compromising either of the two vital aspects of the evidence: the empty tomb and the appearances.<sup>4</sup> He rejects the common distinction between 'subjective' and 'objective' visions, because the use of such terminology "has no warrant either from psychology or from philosophy...all visions are objective as well as subjective...the question is whether or not the object which the mind images is real or unreal. In the former case, the vision may be called 'true' or 'veridical'; in the latter case it may be called 'false', and in the case of our Lord's resurrection, that is the issue which is of primary importance".<sup>5</sup>

1. Cadoux, C.J., The Life of Jesus, London, 1948, page 165.

2. *Ibid*, page 166.

3. As expounded in: Essays Catholic and Critical, pages 281-319; and A New Commentary on Holy Scripture, edited by Gore, C., Goudge, H.L.; and Guillaume, A., Part III, The New Testament, London, 1943, pages 301-315.

4. Compare Ramsey, A.M., The Resurrection of Christ, pages 123-124, who says that he "attaches the greatest importance to the event of the Resurrection...his discussion brings into very clear relief the distinctive importance of the two foundations - 'He was raised' and 'He appeared'".

5. Essays Catholic and Critical, page 297.

Thus Selwyn prefers to use the term 'veridical' to emphasise that although the appearances were visions, they arose directly as a result of God's agency. He defines 'veridical' visions as those which are "in concord with the moral law and with divine revelation..." and which are "fundamentally vocational".<sup>1</sup> He instances the visions experienced by persons such as First Isaiah and Ezekiel, and says that "the question is not so much whether an analogy with mystical visions exists, but how far it can be pressed".<sup>2</sup>

The differences within and between the New Testament accounts may be attributed, at least partly, to the fact that "the experiences in question were not all of the same type, though all alike were veridical".<sup>3</sup> Paul's vision near Damascus was an "imaginal" vision, that of the disciples who saw Jesus on the road to Emmaus was an "intellectual" vision, and those to Mary Magdalene and to the Twelve on Easter Day were "exterior" visions; so that they "correspond in many ways with those clearly distinguishable types which are familiar to saints...".

Writing of the empty tomb, "the principal guarantee for Christ's resurrection", Selwyn argues that any hypothesis which tries to dispute its emptiness is doomed to failure because "insurmountable difficulties... attend any theory which attributes the removal of the body either to the devotion of friends or to the malice

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1. Essays Catholic and Critical, pages 300-301.
2. Ibid; page 315.
3. Ibid, page 312.

of enemies".<sup>1</sup> He is not prepared to commit himself to any specific attempt to explain the nature of our Lord's body because "what is involved is such a change in the body of Jesus as takes it out of the category of things to which the laws of natural science apply, and sets it in a relation to experience, both His and ours, to which we know no parallel...the reality to which the evidence thus points is of an order beyond our comprehension".<sup>2</sup> He refutes the idea that Jesus' body was palpable in the sense that it possessed "metrical properties"<sup>3</sup> both on historical and doctrinal grounds: Jesus appeared only to believers or, in Paul's case, to one who was obviously thinking seriously about His claim to messiahship; He appeared in various mysterious ways; and Paul himself refutes the idea that "flesh and blood" can inherit the Kingdom, thus confirming Jesus' hint in Mark 12:25 that the physical conditions of earth are not to be reproduced in the next life. He does not deny that "there really was ...action and speech 'ab extra', but it was not mediated through external matter".<sup>4</sup>

This theory, as Ramsey<sup>5</sup> points out, is "plainly congruous with the Gospel and the Creed", though one consideration which militates against its acceptance is that the characteristics of visions experienced by mystics are not normally like those of the Resurrection appearances, because mystics normally see God or Christ in glory and their visions are produced after meditation

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1. Essays Catholic and Critical, pages 317-318.
2. Ibid, page 319.
3. Ibid, page 297.
4. A New Commentary, page 312.
5. The Resurrection of Christ, page 124.

about the subject. Neither of these two conditions is really fulfilled by the Resurrection appearances.

One is thus led to consider what may be called the orthodox hypothesis of the nature of the Resurrection, which finds classic expression in the works of B.F. Westcott, including 'The Gospel of the Resurrection' (1898). It is still the 'historical faith' of Christendom.

Westcott sees the clue to the mystery of our Lord's Resurrection in I Corinthians 15, in which Paul expounds the doctrine of the  $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha\ \tau\iota\sigma\psi\epsilon\upsilon\mu\alpha\tau\iota\kappa\acute{o}\nu$ . On the basis of this exposition, Westcott believes that Jesus' body was transformed or transmuted in the grave into a spiritual body which was no longer circumscribed by the restrictions of the spatio-temporal world.

He writes: "St. Paul believed, and always acted as if he believed, that the Lord did appear in his human nature as really to him as to the other witnesses of the Resurrection. He asserts that all the appearances were equally actual, that is, external manifestations of the Lord, but not that they were all like in circumstances. There was an objective reality in the revelation of Christ made to him no less than in the revelations to others; but this objective reality was not limited to one outward shape. It was apprehended (as it appears) variously by various minds...A marvellous change had passed over him. He was the same and yet different. He was known only when he revealed himself. He conformed to the laws of our present life, and yet he was not subject to them...Christ sought to impress on his disciples two great lessons, that he had raised man's body from the grave, and that he had glorified it...We

may suppose that the Lord took up into his glorified Body the material elements of that human body which was laid in the grave, though...true personality lies in the preservation of the individual formula or law which rules the organisation in each case and not in the actual but ever-changing organisation which may exist at any moment...a little reflection will show that the special outward forms in which the Lord was pleased to make himself sensibly recognisable by his disciples were no more necessarily connected with his glorified person than the robes which he wore".<sup>1</sup>

The Resurrection appearances were thus temporary accommodations to the disciples, primarily for evidential purposes. But the resurrection-body of Jesus was organically connected with His earthly body, and this is symbolic of the fact that in Him "soul and body in the union of a perfect manhood are seen triumphant over the last penalty of sin".<sup>2</sup>

In commending this theory, which has the great merit of accounting for ALL the facts, A.M. Ramsey says that it is "of abiding importance...It is...both profoundly orthodox and strangely modern. It holds to the New Testament belief that the spiritual and the material are not at permanent variance; both are created by God who wills that both shall be redeemed and exalted. It is congruous also with those factors in modern science and philosophy which suggest that the continuity of a body lies not in the identity of the particles which compose it but in the identity of its organisation or

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1. Westcott, B.F. The Gospel of the Resurrection, London, 1898, pages 111-112.
2. Revelation of the Risen Lord, page 10. Quoted by Ramsey, A.M., The Resurrection of Christ, page 47.

'form' in relation to the person whose it is".<sup>1</sup>

In the last resort, the exact 'modus operandi' of the Resurrection must remain a mystery to human minds, because it was 'a transaction' between God the Father and God the Son, and as such is ultimately incomprehensible to finite minds. But Westcott's theory is preferable to the vision-hypothesis in any of its forms, because each of them destroys a vital and unique aspect of the New Testament: that in the Resurrection, which is an act of re-creation by God analogous to the original Creation, the material as well as the spiritual world was involved: and one must agree with A. Richardson when he writes that "without committing ourselves to any crudely materialistic notions or any over-simple explanations of the mode of the resurrection, we may maintain that the doctrine of the physical resurrection conserves more of the unfathomable truth behind the mystery than does the denial of it. It is a fitting symbol of the truth that the redemption wrought by Christ includes the whole natural order, including the physical world...the whole creation is to be redeemed".<sup>2</sup>

The historical debate will no doubt continue; yet in the last analysis, the empirical evidence concerning the empty tomb and the appearances does not prove anything of vital importance for the Christian. Their meaning can only be truly appreciated when they are seen in the light of present knowledge of our Lord. R. Bultmann is surely right in refusing to tie faith to the results of historical investigation. The vital

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1. Ramsey, A.M., The Resurrection of Christ, page 48.  
 2. Richardson, A., A Theological Wordbook, page 194.

point is how one meets and knows our Lord today. Scholars such as Bultmann have re-vitalised faith for many people by showing that if, when approaching the Resurrection, one is solely concerned with an event which took place roughly two thousand years ago, then one's faith is 'vain', just as certainly as that of those in Corinth who denied the actuality of the Resurrection.

The fact that no appearances were made to those who completely disbelieved in Jesus is felt by some to weaken the evidence for the Resurrection, but it may be instructive in showing something about the conditions under which one may become convinced of its reality. J. Baillie writes that "to make the vision of the risen Christ conditional upon faith in him is by no means the same thing as making it the fruit of faith. To say that I cannot see a certain star without lenses does not mean that the lenses create the star. To say that only a trained eye can find beauty in a certain picture does not mean that the trained eye puts into the picture a beauty that is not really there".<sup>1</sup> He goes on to add that "to make faith depend on the proved historicity of the appearances is to place a weight on the historical evidence which it cannot possibly bear; and it can only lead to perplexity".<sup>2</sup>

Christians will be doubt continue to differ over their interpretation of what it means to say that Christ was raised from the dead, but they unite in proclaiming that Christ is risen, the implications of which now fall

1. Baillie, J. And the Life Everlasting, pages 118-119.

2. Ibid, page 120.

for consideration.

"To learn the meaning of the Resurrection is the task not of one age only, but of all", writes B.F. Westcott,<sup>1</sup> and it is to this task that attention must now be directed. Obviously, within the context of the present study, this cannot be attempted in detail. The object must simply be to show that the Resurrection is the fundamental datum of Christianity, its "Archimedean point" or fulcrum (W. Künneth),<sup>2</sup> and that all aspects of Christian theology have some direct connection with it.<sup>3</sup>

First and foremost, it has to be remembered that the Resurrection was essentially a 'transaction' between the Father and God the Son, and the question of its apprehension by human beings is not its most important aspect. The Easter message is primarily "a message of the Person rather than the doings of the Son of God. It declares something that happened to Him as the climax of His human life and death. Its primary reference is to His experience, not to the experience which others had of Him. Behind the mystery of His new relationship to the disciples lies a prior mystery concerning only Himself and the Father and embodying in one signal event the mighty power of God. And it is this which is the kernel of the Easter faith".<sup>4</sup>

Theologically, the essence of the Easter gospel is the conviction that the Resurrection demonstrates God's righteousness. In both Testaments the 'righteousness'

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1. The Gospel of the Resurrection, page 8.
2. Künneth, W., The Theology of the Resurrection, London, 1965, page 294.
3. "The resurrection of Jesus is...the focus of everything proclaimed in the New Testament, including its statements about God and man" U. Wilckens, in The Significance of the Message of the Resurrection for Faith in Jesus Christ, edited by Moule, C.F.D., page 52.
4. Selwyn, E.G., Essays Catholic and Critical, page 313.

of God is virtually synonymous with 'salvation', the salvation or redemption of which He is the Originator and which involves the re-creation of the image of God which has been defaced by man's sin ("...the gospel of Christ...is the power of God unto salvation ...for therein is revealed the righteousness of God... Romans 1:16-17. Compare Isaiah 45:8). Thus the Resurrection is the supreme revelation of God's purpose and of His power to achieve it: He is the "living and true God" (I Thessalonians 1:9), through whose power Jesus was raised from the dead (II Corinthians 13:4): God raised Jesus up from the dead and gave him glory, so that man's faith and hope might be in God (I Peter 1:21). The Divine plan of salvation to "bring many sons to glory" is achieved by His Resurrection, which is thus the revelation of God's righteousness.<sup>1</sup>

Christologically, the Resurrection is the designation of Jesus as the Son of God (Romans 1:4), not in a generic sense but in a unique metaphysical sense (compare Matthew 11:25-27). Similarly, the Resurrection is the basis for calling Jesus 'Lord' (Romans 14:9; compare 10:9), and messiah (Acts 2:25 following). As such, He is the only Saviour of men (Acts 4:11-12), through whom all will be judged (II Corinthians 5:10).

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1. Compare E.G. Selwyn: Essays Catholic and Critical, page 281. "If it be true that the religion of Christ belongs at once to this world and to the other; if it claims to provide a synthesis between the age-long antinomies of Time and Eternity...and if it asserts that the secret of this synthesis lies in the mediation of a Person; - then clearly supreme importance attaches to those happenings in history in which the Mediator is alleged to have decisively and finally vindicated His character".

Thus the New Testament sees Jesus as Lord, Christ and Judge because of His Resurrection. Cumulatively, these titles imply the attribution of deity to our Lord;<sup>1</sup> and in accordance with this, the New Testament writers regard His Resurrection as the key concept in explaining all the other events of salvation-history, not only during His incarnate life, but also before it, from the beginning of time. For example, if Jesus is God, then He must always have been God (John 8:58) and must have been the agent of Creation (I Corinthians 8:6; Colossians 1:14 following). He must also have participated in the redemptive events of the Old Testament period (Hebrews 11:26; I Corinthians 10:4; I Peter 1:11; John 12:38 following). The Old Testament scriptures found their fulfilment in Christ, the Servant (Acts 3:13; Luke 24:44-46).

The events of our Lord's earthly life, especially the Crucifixion, lose their redemptive meaning if they are considered in abstraction from the Resurrection: Jesus was "put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification" (Romans 4:25). "If Christ hath not been raised...ye are still in your sins" (I Corinthians 15:17). None of the events in our Lord's life has any redemptive meaning except in relation to His Resurrection. D. Bonhoeffer expresses this as follows: "Christian life means being a man through the efficacy of the incarnation; it means being sentenced and

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1. For example, the term *Κύριος* according to its Septuagintal usage as a rendering of *יהוה* implies the divinity of Christ (Philippians 2:6 following).

pardoned through the efficacy of the cross; and it means living a new life through the efficacy of the resurrection. There cannot be one of these without the rest".<sup>1</sup>

The doctrine of the Holy Ghost is also based on the Resurrection: the Holy Ghost is the "other Paraclete" (John 14:16), the 'alter ego' of the risen Jesus, through Whom He was sent into the world. After the Resurrection, Jesus "breathed upon" His disciples (John 20:22) and at Pentecost His promise (Acts 1:4) was fulfilled. It was an axiomatic belief of Judaism, that the Spirit of God would appear in the 'last days' and the early Christians saw the Spirit of the risen Christ as the fulfilment of this eschatological hope (Acts 2:16 following).

The Spirit of Jesus led Paul on his tours. The latter's doctrine of the Holy Spirit is so closely related to his doctrine of Christ that some scholars argue that in II Corinthians 3:17 he identifies them; although this assumption is doubtful, it does show just how close is the connection in Paul's mind between the two Persons. The Holy Spirit is the "eschatological continuum" (C.K. Barrett) in which the risen Christ continues his work, and is consequently the motivating power behind the Christian life. "The existential coming of the Risen One into the temporal world is his presence in the Spirit...it is therefore only in the Resurrection that pneumatology first acquires its essential foundation ...there is no valid pneumatology apart from the resurrection, and every genuine Christology always embraces

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1. Bonhoeffer, D., Ethics, London, 1955, page 91.

a pneumatology".<sup>1</sup>

The Resurrection thus gives rise to, and can alone explain, the doctrine of the Trinity: "...where the risen Lord is at work in the present, there the Spirit is working, and where the Spirit is present, there is the presence of God. This is the meaning of the Trinity and it is possible and legitimate only on the basis of the resurrection".<sup>2</sup>

Ecclesiology also rests on the foundation truth of the Resurrection. Jesus is the "firstfruits", "the firstborn among many brethren" (I Corinthians 15:23; Romans 8:29). Jesus died and rose again to become the head of the new Israel, the community of those who are 'in Christ'. "Jesus was raised from the dead to be the head of a new Israel formed from those of every race and nation who receive his gift of forgiveness, and by faith and baptism make His death their own and become united to His risen life. This is the origin and meaning of the Church."<sup>3</sup> Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep who lays down His life for the flock, is the One who was brought back from the dead (Hebrews 13:20-21).

The Church with its sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist is the extension of the Incarnation; it is the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12:12 following; Ephesians 1:23; 4:15-16). "Without the Church His mission is incomplete, but without the Resurrection, the Church is an idle name."<sup>4</sup> The Eucharist in particular is the

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1. Künneth, W., The Theology of the Resurrection, pages 191, 193 and 194 respectively.

2. Ibid, page 194.

3. Ramsey, A.M.; The Resurrection of Christ, page 91.

4. Ibid, page 93.

method whereby our Lord continues to abide in men and to mediate to them the power of His Resurrection. It does not only have a retrospective ("...proclaim the Lord's death...") and a prophetic reference (till he come..), but also an existential one ("The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion of the blood of Christ?"). It is the rite in which the Church's function as the extension of the Incarnation becomes clear; it is to be noted that the Church is the extension of the Incarnation, rather than a supplement to it or a substitute for it. The rôle performed by the physical body of Christ, which was the instrument of redemption during His incarnate life, and which, according to orthodox Christian theology as expounded by B.F. Westcott, had a vital connection with His glorified body after the Resurrection, is, after the Ascension, assumed by the Church, which is thus "the reality of the present Kyrios in this temporal world".<sup>1</sup> It is the body of Christ which draws its life from the Head. The Father "appointed Christ as supreme head to the church, which is his body and as such holds within it the fullness of him who himself receives the entire fullness of God", (Ephesians I:22-23. N.E.B.).

Thus, "the Cross and Resurrection are the ground of the Church's origin, the secret of the Church's contemporary being, and the goal of the Church's final self-realisation on behalf of the human race".<sup>2</sup>

The Resurrection is also the basis of Christian ethics because in baptism, the believer dies to the

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1. Künneth, W., The Theology of the Resurrection, page 196.  
 2. Ramsey, A.M., The Resurrection of Christ, page 97.

flesh and rises with Christ to a new life, life in the new aeon, life which ought to produce the fruits of the Spirit if it has truly been appropriated (Colossians 3:1 following; Galatians 5:22; 6:10).<sup>1</sup>

But Christians are still in the realm where sin and death are still operative forces; so, even though they are being sanctified by the power of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the risen Jesus (Romans 8:9-13), they too are still subject to physical death. However, Christian ontology, which is again based on the Resurrection, means that they will be resurrected, because death itself has been defeated by our Lord, and if believers share in His sufferings, they will finally attain to the resurrection from the dead (Philippians 3:10-11).

"When a man lives on the foundation of the resurrection, his threatened 'Dasein' becomes now already in faith a liberated being...the powers of death have been overcome...though still standing in the old temporal order, he is spiritually 'at home' with Christ..." so the resurrection becomes "the one remedy for the predicament of existence."<sup>2</sup> It is the risen Lord who has "abolished death and brought life and incorruption to light through the gospel" (II Timothy 1:10). This is the "living hope" possessed by Christians because of

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1. "The resurrection makes a new start in the moral life of man, which every believer is called to reproduce and manifest in his own case...Christ risen from the dead now 'lives unto God', and creates in the hearts of believers a life motivated by a like fellowship with God...The purpose of the resurrection was that believers should be joined with the living Christ, and find grace through that union...this privilege carried with it obligations...". E.G. Selwyn, Essays Catholic and Critical, page 286.
  2. Kunneth, W., The Theology of the Resurrection, page 296.

Christ's Resurrection (I Peter 1:3 following), a hope which transforms human life into 'authentic' existence: "When anyone is united to Christ, there is a new world; the old order has gone, and a new order has already begun" (II Corinthians 5:17.N.E.B.).

One result of this changed outlook is that the Christian's attitude towards suffering is transformed. Paul in II Corinthians 4:7-15 shows how the Christian life, even though, in obedience to the example of our Lord, it involves abject suffering ("...always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus"), is also for that very reason a manifestation of the life of Jesus and the power of His resurrection; because the eternal life which He embodies and offers to men ("...in him was life and that life was the light of men..."), is founded on obedience to God, which in the present world invariably results in "tribulation" (John 16:33). "The gospel of the resurrection is a gospel of salvation, because it offers fellowship with God in a new quality of life, and this is the ground of rejoicing. But this rejoicing does not mean that the Christian is exempt from trials..."<sup>1</sup>

The captain of salvation, the one who in His relationship with God exemplified the essence of eternal life, was made perfect through sufferings and His disciples must be conformed unto his death and share in the fellowship of his sufferings if they are to experience the power of His risen life (Philippians 3:10). Just as it behoved the Christ to suffer and to enter into his glory (Luke 24:24), so those who are 'in Christ' must "reckon the sufferings of the present time to be unworthy of the

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1. Selwyn, E.G., Essays Catholic and Critical, page 286.

glory which shall be revealed to them" (Romans 8:18). By dying they will live, if they live not unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again. Their light affliction will work for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

'Glory' is an important eschatological term in the New Testament, where its primary meaning is God's glory or splendour as revealed to men in Jesus Christ (e.g. John 1:14). But like the other eschatological realities, it is only to be fully enjoyed after physical death. Christian ontology, which is also based securely on the Resurrection, means that at the Parousia, believers will be resurrected and death will be conquered (I Corinthians 15:20-26; Philipians 3:20-21). According to Acts 17:30-31, the Resurrection is the certification to all men that there will be a future judgement, a universal one. Thus the Resurrection is the guarantee of the ultimate victory of goodness over evil. One day all men will have to answer for their deeds. "We must all stand before the judgement seat of Christ" (II Corinthians 5:10). The final destiny of those who have persistently rejected Jesus is not definitively expounded in the New Testament, but the certainty of their judgement is one of the indelible elements in its eschatology. Those who have accepted Him as their Lord and their God will be brought by Him to their original destiny - glory (Hebrew 2:10; I Peter 4:13-14; 5:1), which involves "sharing in the very being of God (II Peter 1:4, N.E.B.).

Nor is it man alone who is affected by the Resurrection: Christian eschatology has a threefold reference: individual, corporate and universal.

The third aspect of the New Testament doctrine of the future life is just as integral to it as the other two. It is not simply the individual person, nor believers in the body of Christ, who are affected by the Resurrection: the deliverance of mankind is to be followed by the liberation of the universe itself from the vanity or frustration to which, in the execution of His plan, God subjected it (Romans 8:21 following). The universe itself is to enjoy the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Christ's Resurrection is to lead to the resurrection of the world.

It is here, as E.G. Selwyn points out,<sup>1</sup> that the distinctively Christian conception of history becomes apparent. In contrast to the cyclic view of history which dominated the Graeco-Roman world, the New Testament affirms that the time-process is linear, which is a logical and unavoidable deduction from the Biblical doctrine of the living God, who has used the sphere of history as the medium of His revelation to mankind. The doctrine of the Parousia enshrines this fundamental truth that history is meaningful, and there is an ultimate purpose behind, and an ultimate goal in, the universe.

"If Christ is risen", says B.F. Westcott in the final sentence of his classic work, "in that fact lies

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1. "...the natural order...is but the vestibule of the supernatural; its bondage is but the presage of liberty; its corruption preparatory to a glorious redemption; the world as we know it is no more than an enclave, soon to be removed, within the reality of eternal life. And the assurance of this derives from the resurrection of Jesus (Romans 8:11, which governs the context)." Man's world is "only part of the whole structure of reality...". Selwyn E.G., Essays Catholic and Critical, page 285.

the pledge of 'the restitution of all things' (Acts 3:21) towards which men are encouraged to work."<sup>1</sup> However remote or difficult this may be to understand, it is a vital part of the New Testament doctrine of the future life. No one can tell exactly how the final consummation will be brought about, but since the Resurrection, the outcome of the world's destiny is certain because it is inseparably linked to what happened on the first Easter Day.<sup>2</sup> Nothing in the universe can remain unaffected by our Lord's Resurrection (Colossians 1:20).

This aspect of the Christian hope occupied the attention of R.P. Teilhard de Chardin, who describes the final stage in the redemption of the universe in the following words: " 'Et tunc erit finis'. Like a vast tide the Being will have dominated the trembling of all beings. The extraordinary adventure of the

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1. The Gospel of the Resurrection, page 247.
2. C.F.D. Moule makes the following tentative observations about this problem, in The Significance of the Message of the Resurrection for Faith in Jesus Christ, page 10: "...is it not conceivable that the total matter of this time - space existence is destined by the Creator not to be 'scrapped', but to be used up into some other existence? This would imply a doctrine of creation, not 'ex nihilo in nihil (out of nothing into nothing) but 'ex nihilo in aliquid novi' (out of nothing into something new); and the latter is certainly congruous with the idea of a God who never creates without a purpose. If so, is it inconceivable that in just that area of the body of Jesus, which alone had been surrendered to death in total absolute obedience to the will of God, this transformation and using up was anticipated; while with the rest of mankind their 'material' returns to the collective reservoir of the totality of matter one way or another, by decomposition slow or sudden, until this totality of things is ultimately used as the material of a new existence in which they, by the grace of God, will share?"

world will have ended in the bosom of the tranquil ocean, of which, however, each drop will still be conscious of being itself. The dream of every mystic will have found its full and proper fulfilment. 'Erit in omnibus omnia Deus'<sup>1</sup>.

The supreme message of the Bible is essentially a message about the power of God: that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. Behind all the sufferings and frustrations of the world, Christians believe that there is a God, the living God, who will not allow evil, sin and death to have the last word. Although they recognise that they see through a glass darkly, they know that this need not prevent them from accepting the belief in eternal life as set forth in the New Testament: the belief, the "living hope", that men's ultimate destiny is union with God in whose image they have been made.

"This is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith." (I John 5:4).

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1. Teilhard de Chardin, R.P., The Future of Man, London, 1964, page 308. Quoted by Hooke, S.H., The Resurrection of Christ, page 197.

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