

APPENDIX TWENTY-EIGHT

Quotations On Inaugurated Eschatology

QUOTATIONS ON INAUGURATED ESCHATOLOGY

What the Jews expected of the future is still expected of the future; but the future event is no longer the centre of the redemptive history; rather, that centre lies now in a historical event. The centre has been reached but the end is still to come. I may illustrate this idea by an example: **The decisive battle in a war may already have occurred in a relatively early stage of the war, and yet the war still continues.** Although the decisive effect of that battle is perhaps not recognized by all, it nevertheless already means victory. But the war must still be carried on for an undefined time, until "Victory Day." Precisely this is the situation of which the New Testament is conscious, as a result of the recognition of the new division of time; the revelation consists precisely in the fact of the proclamation that **that event on the cross, together with the resurrection which followed, was the already concluded decisive battle.** In this faith-given knowledge, which likewise has as a result a harvesting of the fruits of that battle, consists that participation of faith in God's Lordship over time of which we spoke in the preceding chapter.

Upon the basis of this position, however, we must now say against Martin Werner, as well as against Albert Schweitzer, that the entire perspective in which they place the New Testament is not correct. They regard as the mid-point of the process the future coming of the Messianic Age, whereas the mid-point of time in the entire New Testament and **already for Jesus** is rather the historical work of Jesus himself. Accordingly, everything is to be explained from the point of view, not of the future, but of this event. It simply is not true that Primitive Christianity has the same eschatological orientation as does Judaism. To be sure, it has **also** an eschatological orientation. The Jewish expectation concerning the future retains its validity for Jesus and throughout the entire New Testament, but it is no longer the centre. That centre is the victorious event which the historical Jesus sees is being fulfilled in the exercise of his calling: "The blind see, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and to the poor the gospel is preached" (Matt. 11:5). For the Primitive Church after the death of Jesus, the crowning act of this work is the mighty fact of the resurrection of Christ. No other point of time in the entire process, either in the past or in the future, can have so central a significance as this one does for men who are convinced that Jesus Christ has risen in bodily form as the first-born of the dead!

He who does not see that the radically new thing in the New Testament is the Primitive Christian shifting of the centre of time can understand Christianity only as a Jewish sect. In reality, the Christian hope is not the Jewish one. To be sure, hope is also present in Primitive Christianity in its full intensity, indeed in increased intensity, although the event hoped for is no longer the centre of time. The fact that the Primitive Christian hope is still more intense than the Jewish one might give rise to the erroneous opinion that, according to the New Testament, eschatology stands in a particularly explicit way in the centre of what happens. Intensity and central position, however, are not to be confused. In reality, the increased intensity of hope in Primitive Christianity is to be explained by the very fact that the centre of time is not in the object of hope but rather in an already occurred historical fact. This then means that the hope for the future can now be supported by faith in the past, faith in the already concluded decisive battle. That which has already happened offers the solid guarantee for that which will take place. **The hope of the final victory is so much the more vivid because of the unshakably firm conviction that the battle that decides the victory has already taken place.**

With this decisive battle is connected the New Testament "expectation of the imminent end." This expectation, which is so much discussed by Martin Werner, really roots in the faith that

the redemptive event has already occurred and been completed. It must be strongly emphasized that this faith is the prior ground of the expectation that the end is imminent. Therefore it is not true that this faith in a fulfilment that has already taken place in Jesus Christ is a “substitute” for the unfulfilled expectation of the immediate coming of the Kingdom of God; on the contrary, this faith produced the expectation. The essential point in the proclamation that “the Kingdom has come near” does indeed concern chronology, but in the closest connection with the knowledge concerning the already reached decision. The chief point in question, therefore, is not the limitation that the imminent end will come within a generation, although this limitation is actually present in the New Testament. The theologically important point in the preaching of the nearness of the Kingdom of God is not this fact, but rather the implicit assertion that since the coming of Christ we already stand in a new period of time, and that therefore the end has drawn nearer.

~~~ O. Cullmann, *Christ and Time* (London, 1951), pp. 84-85, 86-87.



“Now is the judgment.” The whole life of Jesus had been a judgment, but that judgment reached its climax in the Cross before which the whole world stood condemned. If the world had been left alone to face its condemnation, the judgment of the world would have been the triumph of Satan, the prince of this world. As Tempter he would have succeeded to the uttermost; as the Great Accuser he would have won his case; as Destroyer he would have been free to claim his own. But because Jesus identified himself with the accused, the Cross became the defeat of Satan and the point where all men, released from Satan’s power, were drawn into unity with Jesus, and therefore into unity with the Father.

For John the eschatological events of the Last Day are so completely present in the person of Jesus that he has little to say about any final crisis. He never discusses whether or not all men will in the end be saved. But he does say that God intends the salvation of all, that God’s work of universal salvation has been accomplished once-for-all by Christ on Calvary, that Christians ought to abide in his love and not to be content with anything less than love’s total victory, that the final judgment will not be different in character from the judgment of the cross by which the prince of this world has been cast out and all men drawn, in fact if not yet in faith, into unity with the Crucified.

~~~ George B. Caird, “Judgment and Salvation,” *Canadian Journal of Theology*, Vol. 2, No. 4, pp. 235, 237.



The Pauline *kerygma*, therefore, is a proclamation of the facts of the death and resurrection of Christ in an eschatological setting which gives significance to the facts. They mark the transition from “this evil Age” to the “Age to Come.” The “Age to Come” is the age of fulfilment. Hence the importance of the statement that Christ died and rose “according to the Scriptures.” Whatever events the Old Testament prophets may indicate as impending, these events are for them significant as elements in the coming of “the Day of the Lord.” Thus the fulfilment of prophecy means that the Day of the Lord has dawned: the Age to Come has begun. The death and resurrection of Christ are the crucial fulfilment of prophecy. By virtue of them believers are already delivered out of this present evil age. The new age is here, of which Christ, again by virtue of His death and resurrection, is Lord. He will come to exercise His Lordship both as Judge and as Saviour at the consummation of the Age.

The preaching of the primitive Church had, as we have seen, an eschatological setting. Its terms were borrowed from the traditional eschatology of Judaism. But it differed from all

earlier prophecy and apocalypse in declaring that the eschatological process was already in being. The Kingdom of God had made its appearance with the coming of the Messiah; His works of power and His “new teaching with authority” had provided evidence of the presence of God among men; His death “according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God” had marked the end of the old order, and His resurrection and exaltation had definitely inaugurated the new age, characterized, as the prophets had foretold, by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the people of God. It remained only for the new order to be consummated by the return of Christ in glory to judge the quick and the dead and to save His own from the wrath to come. The whole was conceived as a continuous, divinely directed process, in which past, present, and future alike had eschatological significance. In the recent past lay the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ; the experience of the present attested His power in the Church through the Spirit; the near future would bring the final revelation of the meaning of the whole.

Paul’s preaching was centred in the proclamation of the facts of the death and resurrection of Christ. His interpretation of these facts starts from the application to them of eschatological categories. Thus he says that in the death of Christ God manifested His righteousness and condemned sin in the flesh. The manifestation of righteousness and the condemnation of sin are functions of the Last Judgment. Again, he says that in the Cross God triumphed over principalities and powers. The overthrow of the “kingdom of the enemy” is in eschatological tradition the coming of the Kingdom of God, that is, the ultimate divine event. Similarly, the resurrection of Christ is for Paul the first stage of that transfiguration of human nature into a heavenly condition which the apocalypses predicted. He is the “first-fruits of them that sleep,” the “first-born from the dead,” and in union with Him Christians have already experienced the “new creation,” and are “being transfigured from glory to glory.” Thus the death and resurrection of Christ are interpreted as the divinely ordained crisis in history through which old things passed away and the new order came into being.

It is in this light that we must understand all that Paul says about redemption, justification, and the end of the Law. The “redemption” of Israel out of Egyptian slavery had already become for the prophets a foreshadowing of the ultimate “redemption” of the people of God from all the evil of this present age. It is this ultimate (eschatological) “redemption” that Paul sees to have been accomplished through the death and resurrection of Christ. Again, the very idea of “justification” implies a judgment which has already taken place. The righteousness of God is already revealed, and it has taken the form, as the prophets had foreseen that it would, of the “justification” of His people. And nothing short of the appearance of the Age to Come could supersede the Law, which was the complete expression of the purpose of God for man in “this age”. In dying to the Law, and rising into newness of life, Christ had made the decisive transition, on behalf of the whole people of God.

Finally, the philosophy of history expounded in Rom. 9-11, and more allusively elsewhere, with its acute and convincing valuation of the stages of Hebrew and Jewish history, implies a corresponding valuation of the events in which, for Paul, that history reached fulfilment, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In the New Testament the apocalyptic symbolism of the Old recurs freely, but with a profound difference. The divine event is declared to have happened. Consider the following propositions, taken from all parts of the New Testament:

“The Kingdom of God has come upon you” (Matt. 12:28).

“This is that which was spoken by the prophet” (Acts 2:16).

“If any man is in Christ, there is a new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17).

“He has rescued us out of the dominion of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of the Son of His Love” (Col. 1:13).

“We are being transfigured from glory to glory” (2 Cor. 3:18).

“He has saved us by the washing of rebirth and the renewal of the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5).

“Having tasted the powers of the Age to Come” (Heb. 6:5).

“Born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible” (1 Pet. 1:23).

“The darkness is passing, and the real light is already shining ... it is the last hour” (1 John 2:8).

From these and many similar passages it is surely clear that, for the New Testament writers in general, the *eschaton* has entered history; the hidden rule of God has been revealed; the Age to Come has come.

The characteristics of the Day of the Lord as described in prophecy and apocalypse are boldly transferred to the historical crisis.

First, it is fulfilment. “The time is fulfilled” is the declaration which Mark inscribes over the whole Gospel record. Similarly, Paul declares, “When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son.” The frequent appeals to the fulfilment of prophecy, which the modern reader is apt to find tedious and unconvincing, are a piecemeal assertion of the one great fact that the meaning of history is now summed up.

That which the prophets foresaw was the Day of the Lord, and that alone. The fulfilment of prophecy means that the Day has dawned.

Secondly, the supernatural has manifestly entered history. The arm of the Lord is made bare. “The blind see, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and to the poor good tidings are proclaimed.” The miracle-stories of the Gospels correspond closely with the symbols which the prophets had used to depict the supernatural character of the Age to Come. They may be regarded, once again, as a piecemeal assertion of the one great fact that with the appearance of Christ the age of miracle arrived. The story of His ministry is told as a realized apocalypse.

Thirdly, this open manifestation of the power of God is the overthrow of the powers of evil. “If I by the finger of God cast out demons, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you,” says Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels. The Christ of the Fourth Gospel, on the eve of His death, declares, “Now shall the prince of this world be cast out.” Paul says that in the Cross God triumphed over principalities and powers. The theme recurs in other parts of the New Testament.

Fourthly, this is the judgment of the world. In the death of Christ, says Paul, God manifested His righteousness and condemned sin in the flesh. “This” (according to the Fourth Gospel) “is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world (with the incarnation of the Word), and men loved darkness rather than light.”

Finally, eternal life, the “life of the Age to Come,” is now realized in experience. Christ is risen from the dead, the first-fruits of them that sleep, and we are raised with Him in newness of life. He who believes **has** life eternal.

~~~ C.H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching* (New York, 1962), pp. 13, 36, 42-43, 84-85, 86.

It has come to be a commonplace in Pauline studies that even if Paul retains the eschatological perspective, the centre of gravity has shifted to “realized eschatology.”

The event in history in Jesus Christ is an eschatological event which in some way is related to the age to come and has significantly changed the structure of the time-line. This is reflected in the fact that while believers continue to live in this age, the death of Christ means deliverance from the power of this evil age (Gal. 1:4). Furthermore, God has brought new transforming powers to renew the minds of believers by virtue of which they need be no longer conformed to this age (Rom. 12:2). Here are two sides of the redemptive event in Christ: the meaning of his death and a new indwelling power which in some real way delivers believers from this age even while they continue to live in it. This can only mean that in Jesus Christ, the powers of the age to come have intervened in this age without having destroyed it, which is another way of saying that the God who will intervene in the cosmic apocalyptic event at the end of the age has already intervened in Jesus Christ to bring the blessings of the age to come in advance.

It is because of this modification of the redemptive time-line that Paul can speak of the Kingdom of God not only as an eschatological inheritance but also as the realm of present blessing. God has already delivered us from the power of darkness and transferred us **into** the Kingdom of his beloved Son (Col. 1:13). Although he still lives in the old evil age, the believer in some real sense is also already in the Kingdom of Christ. The blessings of this Kingdom are not to be found on the physical level, but include righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14:17). Eternal life, which is an eschatological blessing, has come to men in the corruption and decay of the old age. The man in Christ shares the life of Jesus’ resurrection and therefore is to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4). Men who are dead in trespasses and sins have been raised up out of the grave of spiritual death by faith and have been made alive with Christ (Eph. 2:2ff).

This can be illustrated by an examination of several prominent Pauline doctrines, particularly those of justification and life in the Spirit — the objective and the subjective aspects of redemption. Furthermore, the eschatological character of both of these events helps to illuminate their relationship to each other.

The centre of Pauline thought is the realization of the coming of the powers of the new age; but this does not mean in any way a minimizing of the truth of justification in favour of mysticism or the life of the Spirit. On the contrary, it means an equal emphasis on the doctrine of justification; for justification is an eschatological event belonging to the end of the age, which, nevertheless, has already taken place in history because of the death of Jesus Christ. The very truth of justification is an element of realized eschatology.

The truth of justification must be understood against the Old Testament doctrine of righteousness, which has an essentially eschatological orientation. God is the righteous lawgiver and judge; and it is only in the divine judgment, when God will render a judicial verdict, that each man’s righteousness or unrighteousness will be finally declared.

The issue of judgment will be either a declaration of righteousness which will mean the acquittal from all guilt, or conviction of unrighteousness and subsequent condemnation. The essential meaning of justification, therefore, is forensic and involves acquittal by the righteous judge in the eschatological day of judgment.

This eschatological significance of justification is seen in several uses of the word *dikaioō*. When Paul says, “Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies;

who is to condemn?” (Rom. 8:33,34), he is looking forward to the final judgment, when God’s verdict of acquittal cannot be set aside by anyone who would bring an accusation which might result in condemnation. When we read that it is not the hearers of the law who in God’s sight are righteous but only the doers of the law who **will be** justified, we must look forward to a day of judgment when God will issue a verdict upon the conduct of men in terms of obedience or disobedience to the law (Rom. 2:13). The temporal orientation of the words “by one man’s obedience many will be made righteous” (Rom. 5:19) is the future judgment when God will pronounce the verdict of righteousness upon the many. The “**hope of righteousness**” for which we wait is the judicial pronouncement of righteousness, that is, of acquittal in the day of judgment. This acquittal is no longer sought by obedience and conformity to a legal code. Such a legal acquittal was insisted on by the Judaisers who would turn the Galatians away from grace to obedience to the law. The Christian hope of righteousness is through the Spirit by faith (Gal. 5:4, 5).

The eschatological setting of justification is seen even more clearly in one of the sayings of our Lord: “I tell you, on the day of judgment, men will render account for every careless word they utter; for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned” (Matt. 12:36, 37).

In the eschatological understanding of justification, as well as in its forensic aspect, the Pauline doctrine agrees with that of contemporary Jewish thought. However, there are several points at which the Pauline teaching is radically different from the Jewish concept; and one of the essential differences is that the future eschatological justification has **already taken place**. “Since therefore we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God” (Rom. 5:9). “Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God” (Rom. 5:1). “You were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 6:11). In these instances the verb is in the aorist tense, expressing an act that has been accomplished. Through faith in Christ, on the ground of his shed blood, men have already been justified, acquitted of the guilt of sin, and therefore are delivered from condemnation.

Here again we find a further illustration of the modification of the antithetical eschatological structure of biblical thought. The justification that primarily means acquittal at the final judgment has already taken place in the present. The eschatological judgment is no longer alone future; it has become verdict in history. Justification that belongs to the age to come and issues in the future salvation has become a present reality inasmuch as the age to come has reached back into the present evil age to bring its soteric blessings to men. An essential element in the salvation of the future age is the divine acquittal and the pronouncement of righteousness; this acquittal, justification, which consists of the divine absolution of sin, has already been effected by the death of Christ and may be received by faith here and now. The future judgment has thus become essentially a present experience. God in Christ has acquitted the believer; therefore he is certain of deliverance from the wrath of God (Rom. 5:9), and he no longer stands under condemnation (Rom. 8:1).

Not only is justification an eschatological truth that has been contemporized by the new structure of the ages; the life of the Spirit is also an element of realized eschatology.

Paul makes it clear that he regards the resurrection of Jesus as the beginning of this eschatological resurrection. The resurrection, previously viewed as a single event at the end of the age, is now seen to occur in several stages: Christ’s resurrection is the “firstfruits” or the first stage of the eschatological harvest; the second stage will take place at the Parousia when those who belong to Christ are raised up; possibly there is a third stage at the *telos* or

final consummation at the end of Christ's reign, which will extend beyond the Parousia (1 Cor. 15:20-24). In any case, the resurrection of Christ, like the Kingdom of God, is an eschatological event that has taken place in the midst of history. The eschatological nature of Christ's resurrection is another of the crucial redemptive events that require us to see a realized eschatology, a restructuring of the redemptive time-line in Paul. This is why the resurrection means the appearance of life and immortality in the midst of history (2 Tim. 1:10).

The eschatological structure of Paul's thought is seen further in the fact that the very gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit is an eschatological concept. The prophets looked forward to the perfect establishment of God's reign when the enemies of God and of God's people would be either converted or destroyed, the burden of evil upon the natural world lifted so that joy and blessing alone prevail, and God's people, repentant, converted, and obedient be gathered in the redeemed land. The means of this conversion is variously described, but one important aspect of this hope was the gift of the Spirit to indwell God's people. The implanting of the *ruach Yahweh* will mean a new heart — a heart of flesh instead of a heart of stone, a life of obedience to God instead of disobedience, and the final realization of the goal of the covenant: "You shall be my people, and I will be your God" (Ezek. 36:28; cf. Gen. 17:7; Ex. 6:7; 2 Sam. 7:24, *passim*). Jeremiah, viewing the same day of redemption, describes it in terms of a new covenant when God will write his law upon the hearts of his people with the result that all shall know the Lord (Jer. 31:31ff). Joel sees an outpouring of the Spirit upon **all** flesh — i.e., not only upon judges, priests, kings and prophets, but upon even the least of God's people (Joel 2:28ff). The important fact to note is that these promises of the gift of the Spirit regenerating God's people are strictly eschatological and belong to the Day of the Lord (Joel 2:31).

Paul recognizes that the gift of the Spirit is an eschatological gift and that the life imparted by the indwelling Spirit is essentially the life of the age to come. This is attested by two Pauline metaphors. The indwelling Spirit is an *arrabōn* and an *aparchē*. The first term is a word used in commercial transactions in vernacular Greek of the earnest-money, or down payment given in advance of the total sum to be paid in full later. The present gift of the Spirit brings a partial but real experience of the life of the age to come (2 Cor. 1:22). In the age to come, the acquisition of the full inheritance (Eph. 1:14) will include the redemption of the body. Paul longs to put on the body not made with hands that what is mortal may be swallowed up in life (2 Cor. 5:4). Then he will receive a "spiritual body" (1 Cor. 15:44), i.e., a body transformed by the Spirit and thereby made imperishable, glorious, and powerful, conformed to the body of Christ's glory (Phil. 3:21). Then alone will the believer know the fullness of life. However, for this Paul must await the resurrection at the Parousia of Christ and the age to come. Meanwhile, the Christian life is far more than hope, it involves more than a "guarantee" of a future experience of life, as the RSV translates it. Christian experience is the life of the Spirit, which is an initial instalment of the fullness of the future life the same in kind although limited in degree. "Realized" eschatology does not displace realistic eschatology; rather, it is the reality of the life of the age to come which makes possible a partial experience of that life in the present age.

The same thought of eschatological experience is expressed by the word *aparchē*. Properly speaking, this means a gift of firstfruits offered to God, but it is used by Paul of God's gift to man. The life of the Spirit does not exhaust the fullness of God's redemptive gifts, for we still endure the bondage to decay which afflicts all creation. God did not create men that they might suffer and succumb to corruption and death. We are waiting eagerly for the adoption, namely, the redemption of the body. This blessing belongs to the age to come. However, in

spite of the fact that we are in this age in bondage to decay and death, we do have the Spirit as the firstfruits of the life of the age to come. Firstfruits means more than the promise given by the sprouting of leaves or the bursting of blossoms; it is more than the expectation held forth by green but indigestible fruits; firstfruits is the actual beginning of the harvest, yet not identical with the harvest itself. Such is the life of the Spirit: the life of the age to come, the beginning of the eschatological harvest, yet not the fullness of that harvest. This life has through the Spirit been made available to human experience even in the midst of the decay and death of this evil age.

~~~ G.E. Ladd, *The Pattern of New Testament Truth* (Grand Rapids, 1968), pp. 90, 91-92, 93, 94-95, 97, 100-102.

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There is no book in the New Testament where the eschatology is more closely integrated with the teaching of the document as a whole. It is eschatology thoroughly appropriated and digested both in the mind of the author and in the life and thought of the Christians whom he addresses.

The position is fully illustrated in 1:19-21, when the author speaks of redemption having been already effected “by the precious blood of Christ ... who was foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world, but was manifested at the end of the times for your sake, who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory.” The end, that is to say, has already supervened (4:7) in the advent of the predestined Messiah, in his death and resurrection and exaltation, and in the believing community now called into existence by this new revelation of God.

The end, then, has supervened; the eschatological Messiah has entered history; the eschatological community has been called out of the Jewish and Gentile world. ... Riesenfeld has noted the connection between the ecstatic joy which marked the Feast of Tabernacles in Judaism and the concept of the eschatological joy which was associated with the future salvation.

Our author, therefore, conceives of the end as organically linked with what has already occurred, in the case both of Christ and of the Church: it is not a matter of something wholly novel but of the culmination of something already experienced and known. His favourite terms when speaking of the end are salvation, revelation, and glory. *Parousia*, on the other hand, which is almost a technical term elsewhere in the N.T., does not occur in this Epistle; and, except probably in 4:5, it is the Father rather than the Christ who is thought of as the Judge. Nevertheless, as Bengel observes (on 1 Pet. 4:17) “it is one and the same judgment from the time of the preaching of the Gospel by the apostles until the last judgment,” a doctrine well illustrated in 2:6-8.

~~~ E.G. Selwyn, *The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology*, eds. W.D. Davies, D. Daube (Cambridge, 1956), pp. 394, 395, 396-397.

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It lies at the very heart of the gospel message to affirm that the Kingdom of God has in a real sense become present fact, here and now. We have already remarked upon the dramatic change of tense which the New Testament brings in speaking of the Kingdom. The future tense of the Old Testament (“behold the days are coming,” and the like) has now become an emphatic present: “The kingdom of God is at hand” (Mark 1:15). The final act of the drama has even now begun, the messianic age has dawned; he who is greater than Solomon, greater

than Jonah (Luke 11:31-31), nay greater than temple and law (Matt. 12:6-8), is here. The Servant is even now on the scene (Luke 4:17-21), and his works may be seen of all (Matt. 11:2-6). This is the day which all the past desired to see, but did not (Luke 10:23-24). No need any more to look wildly about for signs of the Kingdom's imminent coming: it is right here "among you" (Luke 17:21). In the person and work of Jesus the Kingdom of God has intruded into the world.

The Cross thus stands in the eyes of the New Testament faith as the very pivot of history. It is the middle point of all things from which all events are to be dated. (And it is a sound instinct, though hardly evidence of deep Christian faith, that we divide all history in B.C. and A.D.). For the Cross is the beginning of the new age and the end of the old. Here Christ laid down his life for sin and broke the power of sin (Heb. 2:14). Then, rising again on the third day, he showed that even that "last enemy" death had been done away (1 Cor. 15:20-22). In fact Paul declared that in the events of Passion Week and Easter the whole history of mankind since Adam has been reversed (1 Cor. 15; Rom. 5:12-21). As Adam in his sin bequeathed to the world the poisonous heritage of rebellion against God and, through it, the sentence of death, so now has come a new Adam, a heavenly Adam (1 Cor. 15:45-49) — a Son of Man — who, obedient unto death, brings life.

Thus the New Testament faith is the victory! And in that victory, it declares, the Christian may participate here and now. In fact the new age has already dawned, and the church is living in that age. The miracle of Pentecost is proof that the end-time has begun, for the outpouring of the spirit spoken of by Joel has taken place (Acts 2:16-21; cf. Joel 2:28-32; 2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13-14). The Christian has been delivered out of the present evil age (Gal. 1:4), has "tasted ... the powers of the age to come" (Heb. 6:5), has transferred his citizenship to that age (Phil. 3:20). He has been freed from the demonic power of evil (Col. 1:13) into the Kingdom of the Son. His natural enmity to God has been removed, for he has been reconciled in Christ to his heavenly Father and King (2 Cor. 5:19; Rom. 5:10-11). He has been adopted as a son in the family of God (Gal. 4:5-7), he has been accounted righteous through his faith (Rom. 5:1-5). Indeed as he confronts his Christ face to face like one beholding the glory of God in a mirror, he himself takes on that image (2 Cor. 3:18). Man, made in the image of God (Gen. 1:27), finds that image restored — becomes at length what he was created to be — in the Kingdom of Christ.

In the service of the victorious and already present Kingdom of God the church is given a joyful and triumphant task. The New Testament church saw itself, as we have said, as the people of that Kingdom, the "eschatological community" which was living already in the age to come. It was, then, to busy itself in those last days between the Resurrection and the expected end in proclaiming the Kingdom in the entire world and in summoning men to its rule.

In the light of what has been said it becomes clear that the Kingdom of God in the New Testament must be understood in a twofold aspect: it has come and is even now in the world; it is also yet to come. In the tension between the two the Church must live, and must always live, as the "eschatological community."

This double manner of speaking which the New Testament employs is not altogether strange. We may observe it, to a certain degree, both in the Old Testament and in the teachings of the Jewish rabbis. The rule of God was always believed to be present fact in that it was not doubted that God was at all times in control, judging the affairs of men in the context of history and summoning men to his service. On the other hand, that rule was always viewed as a future thing to be consummated in the eschatological event at the issue of history. But

whereas in the Old Testament and in Judaism these two aspects of the future thing is made present, the Kingdom is at hand here and now, and one may enter it and know its victory. Furthermore, so the New Testament declares, Christ — through his ministry, his death and resurrection — has made the triumph of that Kingdom sure. The victorious Kingdom is thus no longer a passively awaited thing, but a dynamically active one.

But it is precisely that which introduces the note of extreme tension so characteristic of the New Testament. For although the ministry of Christ was understood eschatologically as the beginning of the new age, that eschatological hope could not be said to have been completely realized in the earthly career of Jesus. The promised victory, although it could not be doubted, was clearly not complete. So the New Testament assumes, as it must assume, a double view of the Kingdom: it has come (“the kingdom of God is at hand”); it is yet to come (“Thy kingdom come”). If it be asked, then, whether the New Testament looked upon the Kingdom as present fact or future hope, the only answer is **both**. Thus while it declared that the Kingdom was present and victorious, it also looked ahead with a heightened longing to the return of the Lord (e.g., Acts 1:11; 1 Thess. 4:15-17; Tit. 2:13) and to the final victory (e.g., 1 Cor. 15:25; Phil. 1:6; Acts 3:21).

That victory was not doubted, but eagerly and imminently expected. The early church felt that it was living in the last days and the time was short. It saw itself, as we have said, as the “eschatological community.”

~~~ John Bright, *The Kingdom of God* (Nashville, 1953), pp. 216, 231-232, 237-238.



The hour has come. Today is this Scripture fulfilled (Luke 4:21). The Creator Spirit whom the sins of the people had driven into exile with the last of the writing prophets, now broods again over the thirsty land; new creation has begun. The wretched hear the good news, the prison-doors open, the oppressed breathe again the air of freedom, blind pilgrims see the light, the day of salvation is here.

‘Realized eschatology’ is also the meaning of Mark 2:19. To the question why his disciples do not fast, Jesus replied: ‘Can the bridal guests mourn during the bridal celebrations?’ In the symbolic language of the East the wedding is the symbol of the day of salvation, as the language of Apocalypse bears witness: ‘The marriage of the Lamb is come’ (Apoc. 19:7, cf. v. 9; 21:2, 9; 22:17). The day is come, the wedding songs resound. Here is no place for mourning. This is the time for the bridal festivities, why then should my disciples fast?

Heb. 1:10-12, following Ps. 102:26-28, describes how at the *Parousia* Christ rolls up the cosmos like an old garment and unfolds the new cosmos. Even more significant is the passage in Acts 10:11ff; 11:5ff, where Peter, in the symbol of the sheet tied at the four corners and containing every kind of living creature, beholds the new cosmos, restored and declared clean by God. Tent, sheet, and garment are common symbols of the cosmos. To this context Mark 2:21 belongs: the old world’s age has run out; it is compared to the old garment which is no longer worth patching with new cloth; the New Age has arrived.

~~~ Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (New York, 1963), pp. 117, 118.

