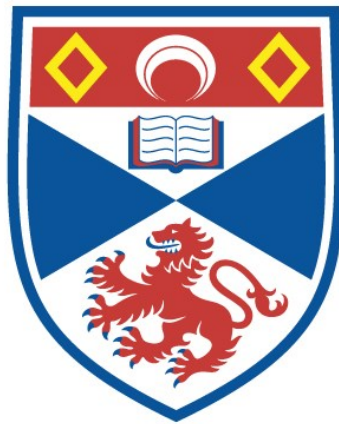


**BELIEVING CHRIST'S RETURN : AN  
INTERPRETATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE DYNAMICS OF  
CHRISTIAN HOPE**

Jonathan Gallagher

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD  
at the  
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AN INTERPRETATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE DYNAMICS OF CHRISTIAN HOPE

A Dissertation  
presented to  
The Faculty of St. Mary's College  
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In Partial Fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

by  
Jonathan Gallagher

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Believing Christ's Return:

An Interpretative Analysis of the Dynamics of Christian Hope

Jonathan Gallagher

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the dynamic of hope, specifically the Christian hope as it is expressed in the expectation of Christ's return. This belief has a number of implications, and affects the believer's attitude to God, man and the world, the relationship to past, present and future events, and the understanding of meaning and purpose in life. The examination of the belief in the parousia is primarily concerned with the question "why?" The question "Why the parousia?" is basic to this thesis, and the various sections reflect the different modes of answer.

Section One examines the belief as it is portrayed in the New Testament by a brief review of its role and importance (with several examples), followed by a more interpretative analysis of the concept of the "God who comes," and the implications of the parousia parables.

Section Two provides a wide-ranging summary of the different manifestations of the parousia hope in Christian history, along with some comment and analysis of its influences and consequences.

Section Three illustrates the implications and effects of a strong parousia belief through an account of the nineteenth century Millerite movement.

Section Four enters into greater detail with an examination of the role that the parousia belief plays within a group that strongly affirms its importance: the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This examination is both on a personal and community level, and provides considerable material for understanding the factors influencing the adoption and consequent effects of this belief.

Section Five reviews the interpretation of the parousia belief in modern theology and comments on the relative attitudes and outlooks that result both from an acceptance of the belief and from its denial. This leads on to a discussion of the concept of the "delay," a major influence on the parousia belief in contemporary thought.

Section Six provides some synthesis of the various elements of the parousia belief, and also indicates other more abstract implications and components. The parousia belief is seen as a part of an ordered belief structure; then as a major belief in terms of hope, consummation, termination, purpose, vindication and so on. Yet finally it is the temporal aspect so frequently noted in other Sections that is of greatest importance, and the interaction of time and the parousia provides the conclusion -- the concept of a dynamic, time-related belief that activates the present out of the future.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the following thesis is based on the results of research carried out by myself, that it is my own composition and that it has not previously been presented for a higher degree. The research was carried out at the University of St. Andrews under the supervision of Dr. G. B. Hall.

Jonathan Gallagher

CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that Jonathan Gallagher has fulfilled the conditions of the resolution of the University Court, 1967, No. 1, and that he is qualified to submit his thesis in application for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Dr. G. B. Hall  
St. Mary's College,  
University of St. Andrews

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To Ana

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## INTRODUCTION

The belief in Christ's return has been a continuing part of the Christian gospel since its inception, and has produced a wide range of reactions and responses ranging from high-handed dismissal to fanatical acceptance, from crass literalism to total re-interpretation. The parousia has always raised questions as to its meaning, significance, teaching, timing, process, procedure; and its theological and practical implications can never be ignored even by those who treat the subject in a wholly negative manner. The parousia even makes a sizeable impact by its absence, since any theological or philosophical scheme provides some alternative outlook or objective.

Within the contemporary religious scene the Second Advent is regarded with considerable suspicion and is often completely abhorred. Since the parousia can be such an influential and determinant belief and can affect to various degrees man's total outlook on the world, God, religion, behaviour, and himself, it is for many a very uncomfortable and disturbing doctrine. The promise of Christ to return, however understood, requires some sort of reaction.

The parousia belief runs counter to a number of world-views and is thus a highly-controversial belief. Consequently it may be viewed as rather an unsettling concept that appears to result from a highly pessimistic outlook, requiring the dramatic intervention of God to solve the human catastrophe; hardly a gratifying picture of humanity

and the Christian's role in the transformation of man into the children of God. The parousia may also be viewed as an unpleasant disrupter of peaceful Christian existence within the quiet harbour of the Church, an unwanted challenge to strenuous spiritual activity, an evangelist's unpleasant whip for more commitment and better service, or a device to ensure spiritual submission through an attitude of fear and dread -- all ways in which the parousia belief has been used and abused.

Thus the parousia may have a multiplicity of effects on both doctrine and practice, desirable and undesirable depending on one's perspective. Generally, however, the negative implications loom largest, and the perceived problems detailed above have direct consequences for ecclesiastical authority, the nature of the church, the concept of salvation, the purpose and necessity of witness, personal devotion, the nature and purpose of God, Christology, and a whole host of other areas of theological and practical interest, let alone the understanding and response to the anticipated future in which eschatology has a major influence.

Due to its unfortunate associations, the parousia belief has not received much attention from theologians. The parousia has often been adopted by peculiar fanatics as their ideological base or used as an excuse for highly eccentric behaviour. The parousia has also been strongly emphasized by sectarian groups with no pretensions to theological or critical scholarship. Gross literalism and obviously fallacious interpretations of the parousia doctrine combine to form an emotive but dubious base which may be unacceptable to others who have

a greater demand for consistency, order and intelligibility in the use of the New Testament material. Thus to investigate a subject that has for so long been a preserve of militant fanatics or plebeian sects is hardly appealing to the more serious student, although the area may well attract the attentions of sociologists and psychologists since the history of the parousia belief is tied up with millennarian and "revolutionary" manifestations.

Despite, and perhaps because of, the understandable hesitancy of Christian believers and theologians to examine this concept of Christ's return, this hope provides an interesting and enlightening example of the implications and effects of belief. The parousia as formulated and understood both now and in the past provides a convenient case study of the consequences of a specific belief and its impact on the believer's world-view. In one sense it hardly matters whether such a promise was made, or whether the parousia has any intrinsic validity. The very fact that it was and continues to be believed illustrates its importance and relevance, and is worth a second look from that reason alone. Whatever one's own belief, it is highly illuminating to see the effect of such a promise proclaimed, accepted, and developed, a simple enough concept (phrased as "I will come again") that has massive implications for the past, present and future aspects of God, man, and the universe.

Following this line of reasoning, there can be no attempt at making value judgments as to the "correctness" of this belief. Indeed such a faith-concept lies outside of the verifiable, since its only absolute verification is in its occurrence, and faith in this future

occurrence is based on the one credited with making the promise, Jesus Christ. That is not to say that no attempt may legitimately be made to determine the authenticity, content, and context of that promise, or to examine the implications and meanings that this promise has had or has been imbued with. Yet it must be admitted that the parousia belief remains part of religious faith, and is in the end either assented to or rejected.

This study follows a particular plan in its approach to the question of the parousia belief, beginning with the Biblical data and moving through a historical overview on to case-studies of the more practical and visible effects of the parousia belief. This leads into some discussion of the motivating factors involved, and the ensuing effects of belief, which eventually makes up the basis for the final section which is primarily concerned to examine the parousia belief as a philosophical answer to various needs, motivations, and objectives of man. Six major sections are thus included, and are briefly described below.

There can be no parousia belief without the New Testament, and the story must begin there. The primary concern of Section One is to examine the parousia as set forth in the New Testament, to relate this concept to other eschatological terms and descriptions, and to draw some conclusions as to the basic meaning and purpose of this belief. It is the belief that is of central interest, and textual arguments over the fundamental parousia statements must be passed by. The question is not so much "what?" but "why?" and "how?"

The belief in Christ's return has played an interesting part in the history of Christianity, and provides considerable cause for reflection. In Section Two this history is reviewed in order to provide the historical base for an understanding of the effects of various interpretations of the parousia belief.

The practical expression of the parousia belief is further developed using an analysis of the nineteenth century Millerite movement (Section Three). With this more modern example of a strong parousia belief in operation it is somewhat easier to examine the questions of why the parousia is believed. The motivational factors are investigated and some of the prevailing theories noted, along with an attempt to provide an overall synthesis of this particular expression of the parousia belief in practice.

Contemporary Adventism provides one of the best examples for a deeper study of reasons and motivations behind the parousia belief, along with its consequences for and impacts on doctrine and practice. For this reason a case study of modern Adventism (SDA) is made the subject of Section Four. The intensity and depth of feeling caused, the confidence and assurance developed, and the practical enthusiasm and activity produced by the parousia belief are all seen as having their main focus in the capacity of this belief to provide both answers to problems and difficulties, and stimuli to further search and action.



A review of the treatment accorded the parousia belief by various modern theological schemes is the main objective of Section Five. The relative significance or insignificance of the parousia belief in modern theology is another level of answer to the question of the parousia belief's relevance, and the debate over eschatological concepts and the supposed delay of the parousia only serves to heighten the importance of this question.

In Section Six, various aspects of the parousia belief are considered, along with some analysis of how beliefs are ordered, so that some comprehension may be gained as to why this belief is adhered to. In addition there is some discussion of the relationship of the parousia belief to time, an aspect of fundamental significance in relation to the parousia hope and which provides a fitting end to the attempt to examine the dynamics of hope, since hope exists in time and is dynamically related to time.

One final caution: this study is not a statement of belief, but a statement about belief. While any analysis of such subjects that lie so close to personal motivations and emotions must of necessity be sympathetic and considerate in order that they may be understood, the purpose here is not to present a dogmatic defence of the parousia doctrine. On the contrary it seeks to consider the reasons for the belief, to answer the very basic question "Why the parousia?" that can be answered at so many levels. This is an attempt to take the parousia belief seriously, to understand its impact and effect upon the believer, to examine why it is believed, and how it is integrated

into a complete belief structure.

The beginnings of belief in the Gospel proclamation; the course of the parousia belief in history; its reasons, implications and results, both theoretically and experientially; these are the subjects of this study, an examination and analysis of the dynamics of Christian hope expressed in the belief in Christ's return.

SECTION ONE

THE PAROUSIA BELIEF IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

0 Introduction

The basis for Christian hope is found in the New Testament, and no study of this particular aspect of belief can have any other point of departure than in some review of the Biblical material. This section attempts to examine in summary form the parousia belief as expressed in the New Testament, and to note some of its consequences and associated effects. This then sets the scene for the historical and theological developments of later sections.

Belief in the parousia continues to the present and has a long, though varied, history as Section Two shows. The parousia statements in the New Testament have produced many reactions, and some kind of belief in a future parousia of Christ is promoted by a number of religious groups, both past and present. In general, however, the parousia belief cannot be counted a major force within Christian history or contemporary Christianity, and has not attracted much scholarly attention. The need for some analysis of the belief is illustrated by the fact that no "history" of the doctrine appears to

exist, and even where mentioned it is only treated in a very minor and limited way. [1].

This thesis is primarily concerned with the "why" rather than the "what" of belief. Perhaps the most frequent "reason why" given by those who believe in a future parousia is that such an event is "taught by Scripture" or "promised by Jesus." Thus the first answer to the question why demands some investigation of the parousia as professed and described in the New Testament. Those that hold to the expressions of the future coming given by the New Testament writers evidently accept their validity and authenticity. In order to understand this belief, it is therefore necessary to adopt a rather similar stance in respect of the textual material. Those who believe in the parousia (who may generically be termed "Adventists") buttress their belief by appeal to what appeared to them to be clear expressions of hope and definite predictions contained in the New Testament. For this reason, this review of the parousia belief as witnessed to by the New Testament writers requires that the actual statements are taken as valid expressions of Christian hope.

This in turn leads to another point of considerable importance. "Adventists" generally regard the Bible as inspired, and thus a record of God-man communication that is the basis for belief. [2]. Consequently the contributions of historico-critical scholarship may not be of very much relevance in establishing why the parousia is believed, and therefore while they cannot be entirely ignored, such aspects will not be considered in great detail here. That is not to say that a belief in Biblical inspiration and critical scholarship

cannot be combined, but that in examining the question "Why the parousia?" the answer that validates belief through an appeal to a divinely-inspired statement or promise is final and cannot be taken any further.

On account of these two aspects -- belief in Biblical inspiration and in the authenticity of its statements -- the modern debate over New Testament eschatology and the teachings of Jesus must be largely bypassed. [3]. In the subsequent discussion of the New Testament parousia expressions, some support is to be found within contemporary scholarship for the validity of eschatological hope and will be included so far as it relates to the significance and effects of the parousia belief. But it should be made quite clear from the outset that this study is not meant as a review of current literature dealing with eschatology or with textual criticism of those passages referring to the parousia expectation. [4].

In a sense this study is the corollary of a hypothesis. The basic hypothesis centres on the viability of the parousia belief itself. If, says the hypothesis, the New Testament statements concerning the parousia are taken at "face value," then what are the consequences? This entails an examination of the importance of such statements within the New Testament, and of the reality and effects of the belief that derives from them; it also requires that the textual material is understood from the "Adventist" perspective, i.e. viewing the statements in a "parousia" sense. It is therefore an excursion that involves a "willing suspension of disbelief." [5]. Insofar as a complete review of all the New Testament references is impracticable,

this examination will first consider the general emphasis on the parousia hope, and then some specific examples.

The title of this thesis indicates that belief is not viewed as a static phenomenon. The concept of time is of fundamental importance in the consideration of the parousia belief, and was so from the beginning. Time-related aspects (soon, imminent, not yet, delay, etc.) are very much connected with the parousia belief and are considered in later sections. However some brief mention is also required here. After all, the "Dynamics of Christian Hope" are the main concerns here, and dynamism can only be seen against the background and impact of time. But the first requirement is to examine the importance and prominence given to the parousia belief by the writers of the New Testament.

1 The Importance of the Parousia Belief in the New Testament

At the heart of Biblical redemptive truth is the Blessed Hope of the personal, glorious second advent of Jesus Christ. [6].

The doctrine of the second advent is the very keynote of the Sacred Scriptures. [7].

Approaching now the subject of the second coming of our Lord, we may note that Scripture everywhere fixes the eyes of our hope upon that coming event, that final wonder of grace. [8].

This [second coming] doctrine is one of the fundamental doctrines of Holy Scripture. It finds a larger place in the pages of Holy Writ than any other doctrine of the church, this glorious event being mentioned more than three hundred times in the New Testament... [9].

Whatever the precise accuracy of such assertions, it does seem that the parousia is referred to by the majority of New Testament writers, [10], and that it is seen as the primary objective of hope. [11]. Apart from the more obvious descriptions of the parousia (Mk. 13 and parallels, Jn. 14, 1 Thess. 4, 1 Cor. 15, Rev. 14 etc.), it appears that the parousia belief is held as a controlling assumption in many instances, being used to confirm specific activity and to

encourage right living, [12], e.g. "Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come" (1 Cor. 4:5), "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ," (Phil. 4:20), "Be patient ... unto the coming of the Lord," (Jas. 5:7), "Abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming." (1 Jn. 2:28). [13]. As Manson puts it, "Faith shapes itself around an eschatology of the Parousia." [14]. The parousia is described as "the blessed hope and the glorious appearing," (Tit. 2:13), the revelation that is awaited (1 Cor. 1:7), the deliverance from the wrath to come (1 Thess. 1:10), the promise of reward (2 Tim. 4:8, also Rev.), the elimination of the wicked (2 Thess. 2:8, 1:8), the judgment of all (2 Tim. 4:1), the arrival of salvation (Lk. 21:28, 1 Pet. 1: 5,7), grace (1 Pet. 1:13), gladness (1 Pet. 4:13), glory (2 Thess. 1:10, 1 Pet. 5:1, 4), and so the list could be multiplied. Such evidence makes it clear that the parousia belief was a significant force within early Christianity, a conclusion that is reached by many other commentators. [15].

A wide variety of terms and images are used to describe the parousia and other associated eschatological themes. It is not possible to review all such concepts here, but some examples will be noted later. The key term is of course parousia. This has become the technical term par excellence for the future coming of Christ. It was perhaps inevitable that the New Testament writers would adopt this term which is so descriptive of their hope: the connotation of a royal visitation gave some indication of the glory and majesty which was to attend the coming of the divine Lord and Ruler, the coming to presence



idea that demonstrated the purpose of the coming and its eternal effects, and the consummative arrival of the King that resolved present conditions.

Above all, parousia indicates the coming of someone. The central figure of Christ in all these end events could never be left out so long as it was remembered that the coming was personal -- the return of the Lord, the Saviour -- and reflected their personal experience and knowledge of him. Thus while many other words are used to describe the same event, it is parousia that remains the dominant expression. [16].

The parousia cannot be seen in isolation, however. Within the New Testament, clear expression is given to the eschatological content of the gospel and the parousia must be seen as part of this emphasis. Nor can the parousia be detached from the basis for hope, and the foundation of the Christian message: the resurrection. [17]. Indeed the parousia is ultimately dependent on the resurrection, for without the resurrection there can be no return. Thus the parousia, although of considerable importance for the New Testament writers, cannot be viewed as paramount and assertions as to its overriding significance must be treated with caution. But as the supreme objective and goal, as the prime hope of the early Christian community, it is of great importance. [18]. This section thus continues with an examination of some examples that illustrate how the parousia is depicted in the New Testament.

## 2 Examples

### 2.1 Mark 13

This chapter has received a good deal of attention and many different interpretations have been suggested. [19]. While some have disputed the nature of the parousia described here, it is evident that if this chapter is taken to reflect the understanding of the early Christians [20] then it provides a basis for the parousia belief. Following the position outlined in the introduction to this section, the chapter may now be examined from the perspective of the parousia, i.e. how does this chapter help in answering the question "why the parousia?"

So what does Mark 13 say? What are the main points of interest in relation to the parousia belief? A careful reading of the chapter in context reveals that the expectancy of the parousia underlies the whole of the discourse. In fact Christ twice has to warn against deceivers (vv.6, 21), against an overkeen or confused hope, and also has to deny the close identification of national disaster with the end (vv.7, 8). The specific prediction of the future parousia (v.26) is couched in language borrowed from the book of Daniel and other prophetic works, yet is a completely new application. The Son of man

does not come to the Ancient of Days but to the earth. He does not come to receive the kingdom he comes to complete it. He does not come as the recipient of his Father's favour but as the King of glory himself, returning to judge. [21].

What is particularly significant here is the situation and setting in which this long (by Marcan standards) exposition is given. The time of preaching and healing is about to close. These are the last instructions. Jesus sees death approaching. What to say? How to say it? A reiteration of moral precepts or perhaps an overview of their past experiences? It surely is most significant that Jesus is recorded as choosing to use the last precious moments to answer a question that looked forward. It is not the past that looms large, it is the time to come, and the "end-time" at that. Eschatology is the dominant factor, the determinant of action -- "take heed" (vv.5, 9, 23, 33), "watch" (vv.35, 37) because of the anticipated events. The parousia is the driving force; the motivation for the present is the understanding of the future.

The final message is not one of smooth contentment, a placid living of life "as best you can." Disaster, catastrophe, violence, destruction and persecution combine to form a bleak and terrifying picture. Yet the depressing future is entirely transformed by the terminal event, "the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory" (v.26). The parousia is the new hermeneutic, the key to action and comprehension that is given in these last words to the disciples before the climactic events surrounding Jesus' death. The objective of hope is in the parting promise to return.

The timing of the discourse is thus of great importance. So too are the circumstances in which the question of the disciples is set. Jesus tells them that the beloved temple, the symbol above all symbols of Israel's position as the people of God, is to receive the ultimate condemnation: total destruction. To the disciples this means quite literally the end of the world. [22]. The reply recorded is in the same mode. There is no time to explain, no time to raise further questions. The differentiation between temple destruction and parousia is diffuse. [23].

The images utilised here would have been familiar to any Jew. The use made of Old Testament passages, especially Daniel, is unmistakable. [24]. The use of apocalyptic imagery cannot be made a reason for dismissing them. On the contrary, it can be considered a reasonable step to make use of past descriptions of future cataclysmic events in portraying the final and ultimate entry of Yahweh [25] into the world, the very parousia of Jesus Christ himself. And as many commentators have noted [26], this chapter contains much that is anti-apocalyptic, and cannot really be termed a "traditional" apocalypse. The primary objective of Jesus' parting words is not to impart strange and obscure apocalyptic imagery, or to inculcate esoteric knowledge of the future but is a warning not to be distracted by what were considered by many to be harbingers of the end ("the end is not yet", v.7) and to be ready (a present state). As has been remarked, "Mark's whole understanding ... points to an eschatology understood in mission, not in withdrawal." [27]. While the objective, the hope detailed by Christ is other-worldly, the response is not to be

a passive awaiting. The future is formulated in the command to present activity and preparedness, in the commission to publish the gospel (which is itself past, present and future) "among all nations" (v.10). To refer to these expressions as Jewish-based apocalyptic visions is to avoid facing their real implications and to deny their Christo-centric base. The purpose of Mark 13 surely is not to provide a special chart for the future but to provide a ground-base so that belief and expectancy might be maintained. Christ did not directly answer the disciples' question. He did not tell them "when", he did not remove the need for readiness by identifying the date of the parousia (the end of the world). [28]. But in order to prevent any shattering of faith that might occur at the destruction of the temple, the necessary response to that overwhelming calamity is detailed (vv.5-23).

This extreme relevance of the parousia hope and the eschatological rather than apocalyptic base found here is well expressed by Lane:

Mark cautions his readers that the community is to find its authentic eschatological dimension not in apocalyptic fervour but in obedience to Jesus' call to cross-bearing and evangelism in the confidence that this is the will of God which must be fulfilled before the parousia. Jesus' words provided the bed-rock for the Christian hope. The witness of the eschatological community not only focuses on the suffering Son of Man whose crucifixion and resurrection comprise the core of the gospel but also looks forward to

the triumphant Son of Man whose appearance represents the one event in light of which the present is illumined. [29].

From this perspective, the setting and the purpose of this "Last Teaching" are clear. Yet the exact words and phraseology also illustrate specific points that relate to the parousia belief. That the expectation of the Son of man's parousia is the main subject here is evident from the context: the warnings not to be deceived by false claimants, and the "eschatological manifestations" that surround the coming: wars, earthquakes, famines, suffering, persecution. The primary emphasis of the parousia is not on these catastrophes and woes but on eventual salvation: "he who endures to the end will be saved" (v.13b).

Much dispute has arisen over the differentiation of the two major strands of prophecy present in this discourse: the fall of Jerusalem and the end of the world (or age). That no precise separation has been possible illustrates that such an approach is rather inapplicable. Some events very definitely refer to the first century; others do not. The obvious conclusion must be that both "events" are so intertwined in the original discourse that exact delimitation is impossible, and quite possibly, undesirable. [30]. It would seem that both strands are juxtaposed here such that each becomes a symbol for the other. The suggestions that they are immediately consecutive, or contemporaneous, or totally idealised must all be dismissed as not being true to the text.

The section of Mark 13 describing the parousia of the Son of man is immediately preceded by eschatological symbols of the greatest magnitude. Cosmic disruption and dislocation are part of the traditional imagery associated with the coming of the Lord, the beginning of judgment and the realization of his complete dominion. [31]. The awesomeness and absolute seriousness of the parousia are indicated by these concomitant signs, the greatness of which illustrate the supreme importance accorded the event in the "Last Teaching." This is to be the achievement of God's kingdom in its totality, the magnificent, supervening parousia: "And then they will see the Son of man coming in clouds with great power and glory." The word "they" obviously refers back to the elect of v.22, an identification confirmed by the following verse (v.27) describing the gathering of the elect. It is to them that the promise is made, this is to be their hope and objective.

What then does this parousia mean? Firstly it is culminative. Cranfield calls the "then" of v.26 "the final eschatological 'then'". [32]. Then the telos arrives and completion is enacted. This is the decisive act of God that is paralleled in so much Old Testament literature, the coming of the mighty Lord in all his kingly authority. Then all the indicative signs will have been fulfilled, the last day will have arrived.

Then will be the ultimate theophany, the coming-to-presence, the arrival of the Son of man in his complete power. All the attributes of the appearance of God are there: the heavenly "catastrophes," the clouds of majesty, the great power and glory. As Beasley-Murray puts it:

The chief contribution of Mark 13:24-27 to the descriptions of the parousia in the Gospel is the clear depiction it gives of the event as partaking of the nature of a theophany ... [The passage] in reality serves to link the parousia with those representations of the coming of God which are so the core of the Old Testament hope. [31].

The parousia is the culminative theophany, the final and consummative coming of God. The parousia is also apocalyptic, in the sense of a revealing, an unveiling, "the manifestation of that kingship of Christ which has all along been a reality." [32]. The master of the house returns and "they shall see" (v.26). The Son of man returns with great power and glory, the very antithesis of his first advent. Then "the dark things are made plain," and thus "His coming 'with the clouds' will mark the end of the veiledness that characterizes both Jesus and the people of God. As such the parousia provides the kernel of Christian hope, for the triumph of the Son of Man is the one event in the light of which the contradictions of the present are illumined and resolved." [33]. The terms used here in Mark are examples of exaltation language. The suffering servant, the Son of man who has had to endure so much and whose work appears to



have accomplished so little is the one who returns so gloriously. And it is given to the elect to see this vindication of their Lord, the ultimate proof of the correctness of their convictions. But not to them only:

His disciples must "walk by faith, not by sight", but "then" that painful not-seeing will be ended. The Messianic veiledness will at last be altogether done away. Not only the disciples, but all men are included in that "they shall see." [34].

To quote Beasley-Murray once again:

That is the final significance of the parousia teaching in Mark, as it is in the remaining Gospels: the sovereignty of God which is salvation is begun and completed in him who is the Mediator of the Kingdom, Jesus, the Christ and the Son of Man. In him faith and hope are one. [35].

Above all, the parousia is purposeful and personal. It is not to be some intangible and unintelligible fall of the divine curtain. The Son of man comes in order to gather his elect, to complete the plan of salvation, to restore complete divine-human communion, and to fulfil his promise of being together with his own: "That is the goal -- that they may be united to Him, Whom they have loved." [36].

The very space and attention that Mark gives to this preaching of the parousia indicates the very powerful and prominent effect that these words had on the disciples. And with the benefit of hindsight, such promises obviously became more valuable to them, and provided a motivation for continued activity when the bodily presence of Jesus was no longer with them. The promise of the parousia provides the objective and the certainty of the disciples' hope, and gives an answer to the old, old question of suffering and despair, to the ever-present question "Why do the wicked prosper?"

But whatever the other implications, the primary reason this description of the parousia was given was to encourage watchfulness and preparation. The words are a warning and a promise, not a theological treatise on "The End." This is the most immediately practical teaching available at this so important a time when words are precious because they must be few. This is the "last message" before the denouement, the last chance to prepare and encourage the disciples before the climax comes -- the turbulent, confusing, and distressing events of the passion. The importance of this discourse can hardly be minimised: it owes its significance both to the drama of its content and to the drama of the time, the true kairos of the fulfilment of God's purpose.

2.2 Luke 17:20-37

Coupled with the warning not to be deceived by those who claim to have observed the parousia (v.20, 21) [37], is a vivid description of its overwhelming manifestation as a highly visible event that permits no doubt or uncertainty (v.24). The image of the lightning flash from one horizon to the other is given in the context of a Son of man saying, and then joined to a reference to his impending passion to illustrate the stark contrast between the two events (v.25). As Marshall comments, "when the Son of man appears, there will be no mistaking his appearance in glory -- a glory that contrasts with his earlier suffering and rejection by the present generation." [38].

The validity of the parousia is essentially within itself. There is no "proof," and although the preliminary "signs" point towards its coming, the certainty and truth of the parousia lies ultimately in its occurrence. In this the parousia parallels the life and work of Jesus which were also self-justifying, yet the parousia is to be divine activity that will be acknowledged by all. As Ellis comments on Luke 17: "The appearance of the kingdom in Jesus' mission was evident to believers by his acts. How much more will his glorious and public parousia be self-validating." [39].

The social and moral conditions of mankind that prevail at the time of the parousia are graphically portrayed under the symbol of the "days of Noah" (v.26, 27), and this provides parallel imagery to illustrate the concept of deliverance out of "the world" by God and

the judgment (destruction) of the wicked. This latter aspect is emphasized by the reference to the experience of Lot in Sodom (v.28, 29) -- the inevitable and irresistible righteous judgment of God. The imminence of the event is indicated by the imagery of flight, and the danger of ignoring God's warning highlighted by the proverb, "Remember Lot's wife." (v.32).

These proverbial images are followed by others. The first emphasizes selflessness in this life by a reversal saying. [40]. Then the unexpected and separating nature of the coming is portrayed by the nighttime arrival and the taking of one and leaving of the other (v.34, 35; emphasized in Mt. by the parable of the sheep and the goats). Finally the certainty of all Jesus' statements -- the parousia, judgment, retribution -- is made dramatically plain by the picture of the vultures gathering around the carcass. (v.37).

In direct opposition to what is frequently asserted about Luke's intention, the text demonstrates that he maintains the concept of a sudden and unexpected parousia. [41]. The time cannot be calculated and is therefore imminent to all. "The full realization of God's reign will come, not with premonitory signs nor by observable progress from one locality to another, but in an unheralded and universal manifestation. The world is going about its normal business and, in a moment, the kingdom of God is upon it." [42].

2.3 Luke 21:7-36

Once again this passage describing the parousia begins with a warning -- surely a significant aspect of the discourse. The disciples are not to believe the End is upon them when false Messiahs come, or even when certain traditionally expected "eschatological" signs appear: wars and tumults. The key to the introduction is "the end is not yet" -- the parousia is not immediate. The second section (vv.10-19) deals primarily with witness and endurance -- with the assurance (paralleling Mark) that those who do endure will be saved. The third section describes the fall of Jerusalem which is merged into the images of the End and of the parousia of the Son of man. This is (as Mark) to be the achievement of salvation, the drawing near of a redemption eagerly awaited. The concluding section emphasizes the need to watch and endure, and also affirms the unchangeable and ineradicable nature of the proclamation: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away" (v.33), a statement which embraces the parousia promise. The eschatological day will "come upon you suddenly" (v.34) and universally (v.35). The parousia is the dramatic inbreaking of the Son of man that has implications for all, both now and in the future.

The significance of Luke's account is that it maintains the strong emphasis on the immediate relevance of the parousia, yet is put in such a way that an "any moment" expectation is totally untenable. None of the other gospel accounts suggest such an expectation, but the record of Luke is an effective buffer against the concept of

overwhelming imminence. Luke is neither explaining away the delay nor destroying the present relevance of the parousia message. The parousia is placed in the context of present activity: the time is not of central importance, but preparedness is. The parousia cannot be put off into the indefinite future, nor can the parousia paralyze activity through a concept of absolute imminence. The parousia is seen as soon, near, close; yet the terms are not primarily chronological but designed to encourage spiritual response in the present.

The essence of the parousia belief here described is: "Watch at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of man" (21:36). As Geldenhuis puts it:

However different the lives of people may be in many respects, they will all be identical in one respect -- everyone will have to meet the Lord Jesus face to face at His second advent, when he comes in divine power and glory. So the urgent question for each one is: am I prepared for his coming? [43].

2.4 Matthew 24 and 25

Matthew 24 provides the most extensive account of the discourse concerning the parousia of the Son of man. [44]. Most of what is contained in Mark 13 is incorporated here, along with logia from the teaching recorded in Luke 17. To the actual description of the End is added vivid picture language that is designed to reinforce the main message.

Matthew is the only evangelist to employ the actual term parousia to describe the coming of the Son of man. This need not be too surprising since the word accurately represents the scene in view and therefore is a legitimate expression. Certainly the use of the parousia by Matthew cannot be taken as a reason to reject his account as purely secondary and much edited.

The main affirmation in Matthew's account is of the reality and certainty of the parousia of the glorious Son of man. All the apocalyptic signs are included to emphasise the majesty of the returning One, and the contrast of this return with Jesus' earthly life:

Here too the imagery of cosmic upheavals is used to point to the great truth which is involved: that the Son of man will come. He will bring about this transformation of the old world into the new.

He will be visible in the majesty and "glory" of God which was his own by virtue of his origin, before the world came into existence (Jn. 17:5). Before his glory, even the light of the sun, moon, and stars is no more than darkness. And he comes in the "power" of God, the power which once brought the world into being and is now exercised by the Messiah, with divine authority, to renew the world....

He who is now going to his death in weakness and darkness will appear once more with great power and glory. He who is now going to appear before his judges will then pronounce sentence on these men. He is now on earth in the form of a servant, but he will come again on the clouds of heaven majestic and glorious. He is now unknown, but he will be seen by all. [45].

Matthew also includes some further material. The logion that indicates the End is to be preceded by the evangelising of the world, has been the subject of some debate, especially as to its influence on the time of the parousia. Some have made this a requirement, a precondition of the parousia. Yet in the context it is surely a statement of fact, an observation rather than a predictive sign to be used as a device in computing the date of the parousia. This latter point is of particular interest in the light of the further saying given by Matthew that indicates the time of the parousia is known only to the Father (v.36). This "logion of ignorance" has caused problems to some, especially in the area of Christology, but is surely a



corrective supplied to avoid time-setting -- as witness the use to which v.34 has been put by some.

Matthew also records some of the same "proverbial images" found in Luke -- the fig tree, the days of Noah, the separation of the two women (Matthew adds two men in the field). But there are more.

The need for constant watchfulness is aptly illustrated by the thief entering at night: the Son of man comes "at the time you least expect." The concept of stewardship and faithful preparation for the Lord's return is indicated by the wise servant. The wicked servant's approach stresses the disastrous attitude of dismissing the imminence of his master's return -- an encouragement to constant expectation.

All these representations are followed by two extended illustrations in Matthew 25, which are obviously closely connected with the prophetic discourse. While they are more fully discussed in a later section ("The Parousia in Parables"), it is important to note a few points here.

The first picture that describes the bridegroom, the wedding, and the girl attendants (vv.1-13) [46] is of particular significance since it illustrates the attitude of belief in the parousia. The foolish maidens were not censured for their lack of belief, but because of their presumptuous attitude towards the event. They were not ready for the coming because it did not fit their expectation as to its timing. This parable is therefore an invaluable corrective to the problem of the wicked servant. He dismissed the imminent aspect of

the parousia: "My Lord delays, he is not coming soon." The foolish maidens on the other hand overreacted and presumed that the parousia of the bridegroom would be absolutely imminent, and they were not prepared to wait.

It seems that these two aspects of the parousia were held in tension by portraying the contrasting attitudes of different people and groups: the faithful and the wicked servant, the foolish and the wise maidens. The repeated command is to watch, for the time is unknown; the parousia is both imminent and non-imminent. [47].

The next illustration is that of the Talents (vv. 14-30), and provides a clear picture of preparedness coupled with ongoing activity. Belief in the parousia is not to be either an excuse for doing nothing or for living as if there would be no future accountability. All three servants were very much aware of the return of their master, of his parousia. Two worked towards his return, and prepared. Yet while they expected some time in which to work, they were conscious that the Lord could come unexpectedly and were not like the wicked servant in thinking of a delay.

The one who did nothing was also very expectant. Indeed he was so overwhelmed by the thought of his master's parousia that he did not occupy himself, and thought of the parousia in the negative terms of judgment rather than in the positive terms of reward and commendation. The clear teaching here is that the parousia must always be kept in mind as an ever-present possibility, but that it must not be a belief that prevents the continuation of work for the

Master.

The concluding picture in Matthew 25 (vv.31-46) is not really a parable at all, but a pictorial description of end-time events. Judgment is enacted on two groups typified as sheep and goats, the only real symbolism present in the description, which once more encourages the solemn realization of future accountability, and the very real nature of the parousia, which is a parousia to judgment, the enthronement of the righteous judge. The ultimate objective is always in view: the righteous are to be rewarded with eternal life (v.46).

The parables and added imagery are a major part of the extra teaching recorded by Matthew. In providing a longer and more detailed account of the parousia, Matthew shows more of the implications of the parousia belief, especially in regard to the question of when. It would seem that parables provided a useful way of imparting difficult information and in this case it does appear that the parousia is not meant to be awaited with a sense of absolute chronological imminence.

The distinctive Matthean contribution is thus an added understanding of the relevance of the parousia belief within a continuing human situation; that preparedness must not be equated either with an overemphasis on the "now" of the parousia or with an irresponsible attitude to its "then." "Watch" involves an inner state that involves neither computation nor delimitation of time, but an ever-present attitude of expectation to the future. "Watching" is not to be a passive awaiting nor an active engineering of the parousia but an openness to the plans and purposes of God, maintaining a continuing

relationship to the Master (with all its moral and ethical implications), so that when Christ finally does return he will say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Mt. 25:34).

## 2.5 John 14

The farewell discourse recorded by John is by far the most extensive of any in the gospels, and makes up a major part of his account. In contrast to the synoptic accounts which describe the speech (or speeches) given outside in the Temple/Mount of Olives area, John details the private meeting in the Upper Room, and the last gathering of Jesus and his disciples. For this very reason, the record is much more personal and intimate, a report of the last meeting of Lord and followers, and the Master's parting blessings, promises, and warnings all carefully transmitted by the disciple "whom Jesus loved." [48].

Christ's promise "I will come again" lies at the heart of the farewell words. The combination of departure and return is developed throughout this passage, and is fundamental to any understanding of what was promised. [49]. Verses 16 and 17 speak of the coming of the Spirit, and some have concluded that this was to be the fulfilment of the parousia promise. [50]. This cannot be the case as the context of going away to prepare a place "there" and a return to take his followers "there" cannot be made to fit the coming of the Holy Spirit

to be with them "here." In addition verses 19 and 20 point to an eschatological consummation beyond Pentecost ("ye shall live," "at that (eschatological) day").

John records a highly personalised parousia. It is not the Son of man coming on the clouds but the assured return of the disciples' master and friend, Jesus. "I will come again." The hope is not theoretical and objective but practical and subjective, related to the known person Jesus Christ. This strong identification of the returning one with Jesus himself may well be the reason why the synoptic imagery is omitted: there are no clouds, no power and great glory, no theophany of the Son of man, because the eschatological title is not mentioned. [51]. The immensely personal nature of the return is emphasised: Jesus is to be the hope of the disciples, an observation which is highlighted by the "I, me, mine" references: a total of 76 such references in John 14 alone. The final message is that it is only through Jesus that any meaning, purpose, or hope can be grounded and sustained.

Evidently the disciples were disturbed and upset by these predictions of a soon departure. The "Let not your heart be troubled" theme runs through the whole discourse (which continues to the end of chapter 17). The only hope that would satisfy the disciples would be Jesus' return. The assurance is that "where I am, there ye may be also" (v. 3). This was to be the ultimate objective.

The decisiveness of this objective is heightened by the very present implications of the parousia which the discourse contains. This accords with the stress in John on the present experience of salvation and the assertion that the believer already lives in the end-time. The argument that John has eliminated or re-interpreted "naive primitive eschatology" [52] is therefore reversed. The emphasis on the present aspects of the eschatological message only serves to increase its importance. Far from being a denial of the parousia, John's approach is an expansion of its importance and implications, and illustrates the major objective of Jesus' teaching: present response to the future coming. Even the most antagonistic commentator cannot deny the presence of futurist eschatology in John, and without such future elements it is hardly possible that the present elements could function. Indeed it is only because a future parousia, judgment, resurrection, last day are foreseen that the claim for the present commencement of eternal life can be made: "It is because of the sure and certain hope which is represented by the Parousia that a present union with Christ in the Spirit is possible." [53].

Nor is it conceivable that John is primarily concerned to avoid the offense of an imminent parousia unexpectedly delayed. If anything, the stress on the present aspects of eschatological salvation enhances the belief in the soon return of the Master since "this is the last hour," and the process of the parousia is already "begun." The balance between present and future aspects may be tilted in the direction of the former, but John still maintains both

elements. In this he parallels the other gospels, and maintains the tension and the apparent paradox in Time: if it is all future, then there is no real relevance for present belief and behaviour; if it is all present, then there is no expectation and no genuine experience for there is no valid basis for eternal salvation into the full presence of God.

A brief comment on eschatology in John may be in order here. Kysar divides John's eschatology into three components -- in addition to futuristic and present (or "realized") eschatology, he postulates "heavenly" eschatology. This is part of the expected future, but is more concerned with the heavenly objective and status of believers than with the actual coming of Christ to earth at his parousia. Kysar describes this "eschatological attitude": "There is a heavenly home waiting for the Christians. Christ will take them there (14:2-3). In that heavenly place apparently there will be a perfecting of the relationship among Christians and between Christians and God. They will attain perfect oneness (17:23)." [54]. This can be applied directly to the parousia, for it details the purpose and the results of the parousia. The parousia is not to consist of an earthly kingdom set up by Christ. The parousia is above all a "heavenly" event that has the express purpose of bringing the righteous into complete communion with Christ and God. The parousia is not an event that has its primary meaning within the earthly dimension, it is of heavenly origin in both promise and in fulfilment, in conception and completion.

This is to be "that one 'coming' which is the consummation of all 'comings.'" [55]. Christ does truly "come" in his Spirit as he promised his disciples, Pentecost was a fulfilment of this aspect of his coming. And Christ does indeed come to the believer at conversion, and is with him as he promised he would be (Matt. 28:20). Yet these types of "coming" must not be used to destroy the consummative parousia from which all other comings derive their ground and impetus. While John does develop the implications of what Christ has done and what he will do as determinants of the present, "this does not mean that St John excludes the doctrine of a future consummation, of a 'last day' and judgment, and a future state of the blessed..." [56].

The reality of the parousia needs to be stressed. It underlies much of what John says about the present: it moulds present activity and attitudes, it creates confidence, it assures the believer of ultimate complete salvation into the world of Christ and the Father. In John 14:3, Christ "gives to the disciples the assurance of their final beatitude: from where He is He will come again where they are to take them to Himself, that they may be where He is." [57]. This is to be no spiritualised event. It is not identical with the coming of the Holy Spirit, important as that coming was and is. As Calvin puts it:

This return is not to be understood of the Holy Spirit, as if Christ manifested to the disciples a new presence of Himself in the Spirit. It is indeed true that Christ dwells with us and in us by His Spirit. But He is here speaking of



the last day of judgment, when He will finally come to gather his own. [58].

"The primary reference of erchomai therefore is to the eschatological advent of Jesus." [59]. The promise is the glorious return of Christ to take his followers home. Quite clearly and simply stated, it is simply the words of Christ, personal and direct: "I will come again," in which the I is central.

This is the relevance and contribution of John 14. The other gospel accounts provide the earth-shattering imagery, the description of the coming of the Son of man. John gives the personal details, the specific and individual promise of Jesus to his followers, the assurance of eventual salvation into the presence of God and his Son in heaven. The Synoptics and John are not to be placed in opposition; they are complementary aspects of the same event. Salvation is at once cosmic and individual, communal and personal. The parousia event is seen as invading the life of the world and the life of every person, and is to be the ultimate Christian objective.

## 2.6 Summary/Conclusions

The parousia as explained in the farewell words to the disciples comes through as a subject of immense importance. The main points to note may be briefly summarised:

1. The context demands that the parousia promise be taken very seriously. Jesus, with his death awaiting him, is not recorded as reiterating his previous teachings, but as stressing the relatively new concept of his return to them. That he should do this during these very critical circumstances is a most significant factor in the understanding of the parousia belief.

2. The content of the proclamation, and its obvious acceptance by the disciples, support the view that a literal return is promised here. While much of the descriptive imagery has its background in Jewish apocalyptic thought, it is invested with new meaning since a) Christ is placed at the centre of events, and b) the stress is on preparation and watchfulness in the present, not on the planned schedule of future events. The parousia in the farewell discourses is proclaimed and understood as being a "real" event, and not a spiritual relationship or a totally symbolic portrayal of future occurrences.

3. The present implications of the parousia are given far more attention than the details of the actual event. The keynote is "Watch!" and "Believe!" -- so that when the future parousia does come the faithful will be able to take part. In this way the parousia is made far more than a doctrine about future events. It becomes a state of mind, an attitude to the present that determines the way the believer thinks and acts. In this sense, the parousia belief is apparently considered more important than the parousia event.

4. The parousia belief is seen as having a considerable effect on the lives of believers, and of major practical consequence. The parables

and imagery employed illustrate the results and the various attitudes, both positive and negative, to the promised parousia.

5. The ultimate significance of the return is that of hope. At a time when hopes faded and despair and sadness grew, the parousia belief provided the key to continued witness and the assurance of complete salvation. The hope of the parousia was to be the means by which the hope of salvation was to be made effective, the conviction that those who followed Christ would also participate in his resurrection "at the last day." The supreme teaching was "Let not your heart be troubled." Belief in God, and in Jesus Christ, was to be the basis for hope and the assurance of the final promise: salvation, a place prepared in heaven, and the conviction "that where I am, there ye may be also." (Jn. 14:3).

### 3 The God Who Comes

#### 3.1 Introduction

The concept of a coming God is basic to both Testaments. This idea of a divine movement toward man encompasses many Biblical concepts, and the coming-to-presence, theophany, the meeting of God and man all reflect the basic motif of God's purpose: salvation.

It is in this context that this brief study of the "coming Son of man" statements is conducted, a review that leads to the basic affirmation of the gospels -- God with man, Emmanuel -- that is also the major objective of the final coming, the parousia.

The tense of the "coming" verb in the Son of man statements is also of interest. It demonstrates the time relationship, and also indicates the progressive and repeated coming of God, the one who came/comes/will come. Consequently the statements will be reviewed from the gospel perspective of past, present and future.

3.2 The Future: The Final Eschatological Coming

The majority, if not all, of the Son of man [60] sayings that relate to the idea of coming have their point of departure in the vision recorded in Daniel 7:13,14. [61]. The other Old Testament usages in, for example, Psalm 8:4 and Ezekiel, are of secondary importance as are the possible influences of apocryphal references such as 1 Enoch and 4 Ezra. This Danielic connection explains why the primary thought found in most of these gospel Son of Man sayings is that of judgment, with the corollaries of reward and punishment. The major context is that of judgment and authority, which is given to the "one like the Son of man."

The Son of man comes to "reward every man according to his works" Mt. 16:27. In Mk. 8:38 (and the parallel in Lk. 9:26) the same thought is there but is expressed as: "if you are 'ashamed' of me now, I will be 'ashamed' of you then." The executive aspect of judgment, the destruction of those opposed to God, is the context of Lk. 18:8, where it is implied that a remnant of "his own elect" will be living at his parousia. The Son of man comes in his kingdom with all that such a concept entails: sovereignty, power, authority; to complete his kingdom which is to last forever. Coming in Glory. "Coming in his kingdom" is a curious phrase. One might expect an "entering" or an "arriving in" the kingdom. Evidently the kingdom is not a territorial entity, but is rather the sovereign power of Christ. [62]. Thus when the Son of man comes in his kingdom he comes invested with the acknowledged kingly authority of all, received from the Ancient of

days (Dan. 7:9,13,22, 27, etc.).

The parousia as the coming of Christ to judge parallels the God who comes in the Old Testament. [63]. The eschatology of the Old Testament corresponds closely with that of the New. It is the same double perspective, the "realized" events of the God who came and comes, the futuristic anticipation of the God who will come. In the same way as the Christian community looked back to the life, death and resurrection of the One who came down from heaven (cf. Jn. 6:23), the Israelites looked back to their ancestors' meeting with the God who came (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, et. al.), and above all to the meeting of Moses - the representative of the people - with the Lord that came down (Ex. 19:20). The establishing of the covenant with this God who had come down to meet and communicate with them was to be constantly recalled by writers and prophets (Neh. 9:13, Deut. 5:4, for example). Similarly the Exodus was the visible proof of the God who came and interested himself in the children of Israel, the God who personally led them out of Egypt (Josh. 24, Ps. 77, 114 etc.).

But faith did not rest solely on past experience. The earth-shaking Lord that came out of Edom (Judges 5:4) is to come again (Hab. 3:3), "For he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth" Ps. 96:13 (cf. Ps. 98:9). The coming is for judgment, for the justification of the righteous and above all for salvation: "Be strong, fear not: behold your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you" Is. 35:4. The similarity to the final coming in the gospels (and the rest of the New

Testament) is striking.

The emphases on individual responsibility and right action based on right motive are an integral part of the parousia message, a message that continues the love=obey equation ("If ye love me, keep my commandments" Jn. 14:15). The Son of man is to come as the one who expects action in accordance with his explicit teaching and implicit character. Certainly this idea of Christ's return as the righteous judge is the reason for the blasphemy charge that Christ's words occasion at his trial before the Sanhedrin. (Mk. 14:62, Mt. 26:64). Christ, in his use of this terminology, claims divinity and sovereignty over all men. His exalted state is confirmed by his "sitting on the right hand of power," a clear reference to an enthronement beside the Ancient of days which is also an extension of the giving of the kingdom reference in Daniel 7.

One of the Son of man sayings which has a parousia emphasis is often overlooked: Mt. 19:28, a promise to his followers that "in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones ..." The judgment aspect is self-evident, as is the exaltation of the Son of Man. But what is the "regeneration" and how is this a parousia reference? The palingenesia is the creating again, the new birth which from the context is an end-time event encompassing more than the individual Christian rebirth, it is the "new heaven and a new earth" (Rev. 21:1) in which the Kingdom (sovereignty) of God is revealed in its totality. [64]. It is also probable that the promise referred to in 2 Pet. 3:13 is that recorded in Mt. 19:28. The final and complete revelation is the

parousia, the coming of the king "in power and great glory." Thus it is also a re-creating, a transforming event, a concept that is developed in the New Testament outside of the gospels.

The revealing of the Son of Man (Lk. 17:30) is the coming-to-meeting, the epiphany. The parousia is here the encounter between man and God, the consummation of the imperfect present communion, the coming-to-be-with-man (Emmanuel) reaching its glorious fulfilment. [65]. The Incarnation is the coming in humanity, and is in itself only part of the coming that depends on the return -- the returning (analuo) from the wedding (Lk. 12:36), the nobleman returning (hupostrepho) from a far country (Lk. 19:12), the return (heko) of the servant's lord. [66].

It may be remarked that this end-time coming is closely linked with the Dan. 7:13 reference which describes a coming to receive absolute dominion and the legal right to act as judge. This being so, those sayings which are considered as referring to the coming of Christ as a past or present event in the gospels cannot possibly refer to a coming in the form of a kingly parousia since Christ's entrance to this earthly life was anything but majestic or glorious. Certainly there are aspects of divine rulership and judgment in this "veiled" coming of the Son of man (see as an example Jn. 9:39 - "For judgment I am come into this world," but this coming bears no relation to the apocalyptic manifestation of such attributes at the "last day" return of the sovereign Son of man.)



There is however, another group of future-oriented sayings which are not part of this parousia. [67]. These are the predictions of the betrayal, rejection and suffering which the Son of man must first undergo. This coming to be the atoning sacrifice, the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world, is the culmination of the "rapprochement" theme that is so much part of the Son of man concept -- the coming to be with men, living with men, working with men, and eventually dying at the hands of men so that they might be with him through the resurrection for men.

The Son of man must therefore experience the completeness of suffering and the ultimate separation of death, but the end is victory -- resurrection after three days (see Mk. 8:31, 9:12, 9:31, 10:33,34). The prediction is quite specific here; the one who comes as the Son of man is not the Messianic king [68] but the one who is betrayed (Mt. 17:22, 26:2) and crucified (Jn. 3:14). [69]. This extension of the Son of man term to include such a picture of earthly suffering and death ensures that the other-worldly aspect does not predominate to the exclusion of Jesus' humanity. He is the kingly Son of man, but also the suffering, redemptive Son of man who comes to seek and to save that which was lost (Lk. 19:10). [70].

### 3.3 The Past and the Present, the Incarnation

The coming to save as a past and present reality underlines the new significance given to the "coming Son of man" term. In addition, "the Son of man came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mt. 10:45). The claims of sovereignty are set aside; the Son of man is the servant of men, not expecting the worship of those whom he rightfully ruled. While it is recorded that Christ came for judgment (Jn. 9:39), this statement is in tension with another that stresses the aspect of salvation: "I came not to judge the world but to save the world" (Jn. 12:47), the saving of the lost (Lk. 19:10). Here the twin functions of judge and mediating substitute combine, just as the divine and human are both fully part of the Son of man. [71].

It is to the future that the execution of judgment relates, and the time aspect is of importance here. Men may be under judgment now, but the decisive "giving of sentence" is still future. The Son of man comes as the interposing sacrifice, the one who makes atonement, rather than the avenging angel -- "The Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives but to save them" (Lk. 9:56). The immediate possibility of present salvation is a recurring theme [72]; The coming of the Son of man is the provision of salvation, as is made explicit by Simeon's spontaneous praise: "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation" (Lk. 2:30), as well as the assurance given to Zacchaeus, "This day is salvation come to this house" (Lk. 19:9). (cp. Rev.

. 12:10).

The Son is come down from heaven (Jn. 6:38), from above (Jn.8:23), but is here as a man among men, mixing with them and taking part in human activities -- "the Son of man came eating and drinking" (Mt. 11:19). Although the Son of man is a kingly title (see Dan. 7), the picture here is one of humanity and fellowship. The Son of man is the incarnation, the Word made flesh, the one who came (past tense); he who is the same as the Son of God the possessor of divinity, the great king, the one who will come (future tense).

The sending of the Son to man is the most direct expression of the care and concern of God [73] -- "not willing that any should perish." [74]. The Son of man is the Son that is "given to us" (Is. 9:6, . cf. Jn. 3:16). The New Testament makes plain that this is the greatest gift, the only means of reconciliation: "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (Jn. 3:17). "Ownership" of the Son is the means to acceptance of the divine gift -- "he that hath the Son hath life" (1 Jn. 5:12). [75].

The life-giving presence of the Son of man who came is the guarantee of that of the future [76]; the life which begins in the past and present involvement with the God Incarnate is to be the protos completed in the future by the eschatos at his coming.

And so in the present, the one who comes is both exemplar and sacrifice; the "I AM" (note the divine overtones) who is "come that ye might have life" Jn.10: 10; a provision which is both present experience and future reality; the Son of man who came, comes, will come. [77]. The link therefore between the incarnation and the parousia is well established. The "coming" God of the Old Testament has come and is now present with man. The future is his coming to complete that presence, and to make the promise of eternal life which is inherent in the incarnation an absolute reality. [78].

The parousia cannot be comprehended except through the light of the past. The parousia is the return, the coming again of the Son of man. In part, it relates to that coming two thousand years ago. [79]. The parousia can have no real meaning apart from the knowledge already gained concerning the one who is to return. This is the force behind the prayer "Marana tha" (Come, Lord!), the motivation for celebrating the past salvation-performing events "till he come". [80]. For the final "glorious appearing" is only the apocalypsis, the unveiling of the incarnate God, since the proclamation was given before the crucifixion and before the resurrection: "Now is the Son of man glorified" (Jn. 13:31). The incarnation is the beginning of the end, the parousia is the end of the end. [81].

The two basic facts of the Christian kerygma are that the Christ has come and that the Christ will come. [82]. The gospel begins with Andrew's call to Simon Peter, "We have found the Messias" (Jn. 1:41). It has its end in the call of John, "Even so, come Lord Jesus"

(Rev. 22:20).

### 3.4 Conclusion

The repeated emphasis on the coming of the Son of man, past, present and future, is of supreme importance in the interpretation of Jesus: his nature, his mission and his message. It comprises the incarnation, the serving ministry of Jesus, his sacrificial death and life-giving resurrection, and ultimately the consummating parousia. The "coming Son of man" provides a complex but exceptionally useful designate for the expression of the divine-human connection. It is at once an imprecise phrase that could be taken to mean simply "a man," and a highly specific term applied to the eschatological figure of absolute king and judge. Above all, it indicates divine involvement in the condition of man, the Son of man who comes to experience the life of men with all its transience, ignorance, emptiness, frustration, suffering and death; yet who brings to man the hope and the assurance of deliverance, salvation, and eternal life through his coming as our sacrifice. The Son of man comes as a supremely tragic figure. But he also comes as the supremely triumphant figure. The former has come. The latter will come. "Emmanuel" is the eternal objective.

#### 4 The Parousia in Pictures

##### The Parousia Imagery of the Parables

#### 4.0 Introduction

This very brief review of the parousia in parables looks at the pictures used to describe the parousia, and also at some of the implications that such observations have. [83]. Many parables are eschatological (in that they are concerned with the future end-time), and many are directly related to the parousia, a theme that frequently occurs under the symbol of a returning lord. The returning king/lord/bridegroom/vineyard owner/Samaritan all depict a future settlement, the coming to final account, a point that is made very clear in the parables of Talents, Pounds etc. Just as the Labourers in the Vineyard are "paid off," so too the time of reckoning will come. Such concepts are clearly representations of judgment, one of the great eschatological themes. [84].

The idea of harvest is a frequently employed term for the end of the world (explicitly so in Mt. 13:39). The idea of growth followed by harvesting is a frequent parable illustration, and the very concept of planting implies a faith in a harvest at some future date. Thus while the parable of the Tares (Mt. 13) is clearly concerned with the

end of the world, separation and judgment, the preceding parable of the Sower has also the same eschatological "time-designate" which points forward to the harvest of a hundred/sixty/thirty-fold. The story of the seed growing secretly (Mk. 4) has a similar view: awaiting the time when "the harvest is come" (v.29).

In the same way the parables of the Mustard Seed<sup>and</sup> the Leaven are not really just pictures of growth. They are images which point to an end, an eschaton, when the seed has become a tree and when the leaven has caused the dough to rise. This latter parable has well been described as a "picture of final victory." [85]. Both look beyond the time of growth to the end, the completion.

The supper and the marriage feast is another symbol that looks to the future for its meaning. The Messianic banquet was a familiar eschatological term, one which evidently was already current among the Jews at the time of Christ (see Lk.14:15). The idea of sitting down to eat with the Christ in the eschatological kingdom that would eventually come is one that colours all such parables with "futurist" overtones. The parallels with contemporary royal practice (the invitation from the king, the need to respond and to attend, the rejection of those incorrectly dressed, etc.) can only have heightened the idea of God dispensing favour and the importance of the event. One's presence at the king's feast was the ultimate assurance of "salvation," the beginning of real life in the age to come. [86].

Much of the emphasis in the parables recorded by Luke is on vigilance. "Be ready," "watch," and so on are frequent terms that cannot be explained as simply terms showing the importance of present response. They are also eschatological terms that have their primary reference to the future coming. Such eschatological attitudes are an intrinsic part of the parables.

Lastly, the idea of eventual separation is common to various parables. The end-time separation of wheat from tares has already been mentioned; the same chapter contains the parable of the net. Although the net gathers all kinds of fish, it is finally hauled on shore, when the good are collected together while the bad are "cast away." The separation of sheep and goats when the Son of man comes in his glory is the classic example, although this description in Mt. 25 cannot really be termed a parable [87] -- more a "word-picture" of real events. Although the separation may be said to begin in the present, it is at the end that the conclusive separation is made.

The importance of the future is the key to much of the meaning contained in the parables. Whatever the importance of the present, completion lies in the future. The objective of such parables is expressed in the following comment on Mt. 13 : "This note of incompleteness, of preparation, is to be heard through the whole series; in the Sower, in the Seed growing secretly, in the Mustard Seed and the Leaven, even in the Treasure and the Pearl; until the last parable of the Draw-net, we stand beside the angel sorters on the eternal shore, and see the separation and the end." [88]. A futurist



eschatology runs through a large number of the parables. Some of these will now be considered individually so that the implications for the parousia may be more fully developed.

#### 4.1 The Tares, and the Net

These two complementary parables are the most explicitly eschatological of the group recorded in Mt. 13. Both are seen as referring to the end of the world (vv.39, 49), both contain the major teaching of separation only at the completion of the harvesting process, both give the contrasting "fates" of the good and the bad (gathered in; burnt/cast away). The parable of the tares cannot be interpreted as simply a description of the call to decision. It can be seen as an extended parallel of the mission of Jesus (in whom the Kingdom begins -- the man sowing good seed), the work of the enemy, and the incomplete nature of the kingdom until the householder gives the command to harvest. [89]. The final harvesting is a "break in" point at which the completion of the kingdom is shown not to be an evolutionary or developmental process but a dramatic event of divine intervention. The call to harvest is the call of the parousia. The course of this parable also indicates that the imminence of the parousia has to be balanced with the period of operation of the kingdom within this world, the time before the harvest. This time is not determined, but it is a reality. The ultimate end is in no doubt, however. "The Lord not only anticipates the course of history; he reveals what lies beyond history, when the long "age" has been wound

up and the harvest has come. It is an apocalypse, which comes from Christ himself." [90].

So too the parable of the Net. There is the process of catching -- a process related concept. Then there is the separation which is much more a "punctiliar" act. Separation and judgment, reward and punishment [91]; all are aspects of the intervention of God which is the parousia of the Son of man. "So the Parable of the Net points us on, even more distinctly than the parable of the Tares, to the great End of the Age. It bids us Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come (1 Cor. 4:5)". [92].

#### 4.2 The Labourers in the Vineyard

This description of the present activity of the "kingdom's workers" does not leave the impression of an often-repeated daily task. There is just one day, the eschatological day. The labourers work different periods of time, but the time-point of completion is the focus of the parable. The prime concern is what happens when the work is over: "When even was come" (Mt. 20:8) is the time, the time of reckoning. Here again is the idea of reward, the cessation of activity and the "settling up", or judgment. In addition the granting of reward is not made dependent on "length of service" -- eternal life cannot be made into "grades" of reward. The coming to bring reward is so much part of the parousia idea that it is hard to dissociate this parable from such an end-time event. As further evidence the

eschatological context may be noted [93] -- the parable follows an exposition on the judgment, the regeneration and everlasting life and is evidently a continuation of such ideas in "picture form." The parousia of the lord brings the decision and the "payment."

#### 4.3 The Marriage Supper

While this parable does have a direct application in the historical present of Christ's coming, this cannot be made the full interpretation. Just as the "Wicked Husbandmen" enter into judgment "when the lord ... of the vineyard cometh" (Mt. 21:40), [94], so too this parable looks forward to its consummation: the actual eating of the feast and not just the present invitation.

Here there is a connection with the Lord's Supper [95] : eschatological past, present and future communion meal which has its fulfilment when Jesus takes of the fruit of the vine on "that day ... in my Father's kingdom" (Mt. 26:29). The point of consummation, the sitting down to eat, the festivities of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb -- all these lie in the future. The invitation is now. The event is future, the return of the Lord of Glory. The preparations begin now. The wedding garments are put on now. The entering in remains a promise until God is all in all at the coming of the King to reign.

4.4 The Parousia-Parables of Mt. 24-25

Both the point of the parables and their context is the coming of the Son of man. This event, and the uncertainty of its timing, is frequently repeated in these passages and the moral is often given: "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come" (24:42), "be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" (24:44, cp. 24:46, 48, 50; 25:10, 13, 19, 31). All the parables are designed to encourage readiness for the parousia. [96].

The set of parables is introduced in the setting of God's intervention at the time of the Flood (24:37-39) which is given as the parallel for the final intervention of God at the parousia of the Son of man. The Thief at Night emphasizes the unexpected nature of the coming with the corollary of constant readiness. [97]. Yet there is no uncertainty as to the reality of the event. The parousia is certain, the timing is not, since the Son comes unannounced. The same emphasis on the certainty of the coming and the uncertainty of the time is stressed in the parable of the Faithful and Unfaithful Servants. In this parable of contrast [98] the difference is not in the attitude to the actual event. Both servants accept that their Lord promised to return. The difference is in their attitude to the time of that coming and the consequent effect on their actions. One lives in expectation, the other does not and declares "My lord delayeth his coming" (Mt. 24:48).

The contrasting attitudes and actions of those awaiting the parousia are further developed in the parables of the five wise and five foolish virgins [99] and the servants entrusted with varying numbers of talents. All ten virgins had fallen asleep in spite of the warnings to watch. Yet five at least were prepared for the event - the coming of the bridegroom. Five had made no provision and thus betrayed their real attitude to the future coming. Again, like so many parables there is the separation of wise and foolish (judgment), and the entering into the marriage or the exclusion from the marriage by the shut door (reward/punishment). The parousia is the decisive and deciding event. The believer's attitude to the parousia determines his state of readiness, and is the basis for judgment, both positive and negative. [100].

The explicitly future description of the kingdom's attributes is continued by detailing the differing responses to the trust given to the servants. Both this and the preceding parable are expositions of "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened" (Mt. 25:1), a future not a present comparison, for although the attitude of men now is the deciding factor, the deciding event on the Godward side still remains unaccomplished. These parables are only rightly called "crisis parables" if it is understood that the final crisis remains in the future. In particular "the Talents" is a story which is predominantly concerned with the concept of "return". The key phrase is "After a long time the lord of those servants cometh" (Mt. 25:19). This is the moment of truth for those that have been waiting. Here the stress is not so much on the attitude of those who expect the lord's return

(they all appear to believe in the same way) but rather on their actions while they wait for him. Again the parousia is concerned with judgment, but belief alone is not enough. It must be translated into action. Two of the three servants obeyed the injunctions to "Occupy till I come." [101]. One did not. The parousia is the time of reckoning (Mt. 25:19), it is time of salvation ("enter thou into the joy of thy lord" Mt. 25:21,23). It is also the solemn time of executive judgment ("cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness" Mt. 25:30).

The final section of Mt. 25 contains a picture of the Final Judgment. This description is a mixture of parable, of moral teaching and of apocalypse. Parable has broken down under the weight of reality and can no longer give an adequate impression of the absolute importance of these end-time events. Still the message is the same as those parables preceding this "word-picture." The supervening reality of the coming of the Son of man is the theme. The relation of man to this returning Jesus is the only consideration of eternal importance. On this basis alone is the separation, the division of sheep and goat, the reward of "Come" (Mt. 25:34) or the punishment of "Depart" (Mt. 25:41). The point of resolution is the time "when the Son of man shall come in his glory" (Mt. 25:31). "This future is unreservedly ultimate, rigidly alternative, and unspeakably real." [102]. "Faith in his return is evidence that we have to deal with a person and not merely with an abstract idea of Christ." [103].

4.5 Conclusion

Many of the parables are representations of such eschatological terms as judgment, reward, punishment, the world to come, the end of this world, salvation and so on. Above all there is the idea of the return. There are many variations on this theme: the lord of the servants, a king, an owner of a vineyard, a householder and so on. But they all return. Like the Good Samaritan who speaks of the time "when I come again" (Lk. 10:35); like the lord returning from the wedding who blesses "those servants whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching" (Lk. 12:37); like the lord of the servants who commends and condemns, so too is the coming of the Lord, the parousia.

5 Timing the Parousia

The frequent interaction of time and the parousia in subsequent sections calls for some comment in this review of the Biblical literature. So much has been written on the supposed time factors of the parousia found in the New Testament that it hardly seems necessary to add anything here, and almost every possible position seems to have been described. [104]. Consequently, there will be no lengthy discussion here of the question that has plagued the interpretation of the parousia: was the time of the parousia ever stated, even in rough terms? The wide-ranging and exhaustive work by Moore [105] answers this question with a definite no, and there is no attempt to repeat such a task in this thesis. On the other hand, the New Testament does give considerable emphasis to such terms as "soon," "near," "yet a little while," "quickly" and so on in describing the approach of the parousia. These concepts are developed more fully in Sections Five and Six, yet they must also be mentioned here. The fundamental problem here is not one of exegesis exactly, but of time span. From the contemporary viewpoint, it would seem that such "proximate" terms were wrong, since the parousia has not occurred during a wait of nearly two thousand years. Added to this is modern man's proclivity for timing and dating, [106], measuring time with great accuracy, ordering his life by his wrist-watch. Even though temporal concepts are very much part of the New Testament message, were they so chronologically determined then as they are today? [107]. And are such expressions of "imminence" a reflection of foreknowledge, or are they meant to be taken as desires, as indications of will and purpose?



So too the supposed time prophecies -- "this generation," "you shall see," etc. Are they to be taken as strictly chronological terms, were they meant as descriptions of time or of conditions? The debate goes on, and undoubtedly will never be resolved. But it does seem possible to take the strands of prophecy that indicate a soon coming and combine them with equally important statements that refer to some definite "time of waiting." Most Old Testament prophecy, for example, appears to be conditional. Can such an aspect be attached to the parousia proclamation?

The key term used in the New Testament to define the time of the parousia is "unknown." This is repeated again and again, and is diametrically opposed to any form of time-delimitation. The time is only mentioned in non-specifics, the parousia may come at any time, soon or late. Some commentators have been slow to agree that unknown can also mean a long time. The conclusion given by the New Testament is not to be preoccupied with the timing of the parousia, but to "Watch!" and to be prepared in the now. And this is the centre of the message. The parousia belief in the New Testament is not so much accepting the validity of a future event but a state of mind, a present attitude. [108]. This gives the lie to any attempt to date the parousia.

Just one example of presumed time delimitation will be considered here, that of the Mark 9:1 (par. Mt. 16:28, Lk. 9:27). This illustrates the various factors that must be considered, as well as the difficulties in asserting that a definite time was envisaged during which the parousia would occur. The promise that "there be

some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power" immediately follows a very clear reference to the parousia (Mk. 8:38), a pattern that is followed by all three Synoptics. Yet the subsequent Transfiguration narrative is very closely connected to Mk. 9:1 (and parallels). Much depends on the complex concept of the Kingdom, which cannot be considered as being either wholly present or wholly future but having elements of both. [109]. Christ's use of "Kingdom" makes it very plain that the concept is not a static entity but a dynamic image employed with different meanings according to context. That Christ saw himself as ushering in the Kingdom is quite evident, and one acceptable interpretation of Mk. 9:1 is to regard it as a reference to the subsequent exaltation and transformation on the mount. Certainly this is how the disciples appear to have viewed their experience. [110]. Christ's remarks are clearly not primarily a prophecy relating to the end-time parousia. It would seem that he placed two separate but related concepts in conjunction here, one being the glorious completion of the Kingdom and the return of the king, the other the visible manifestation of the king while on earth and while subject to the veil of humanity. [111]. The latter is of course the proleptic vision of the former. This relation between parousia and transfiguration can be further developed, but the close linking of references by Christ is very much a feature of his expositions on the future: a "bi-polarity" or an "ellipse with two foci" [112] as it has been put, in this case the present reality of the divine Son of man and his self-revelation (the transfiguration) which is placed together with and yet in contrast to the final revelation (the parousia). [113]. Thus one may consider the parousia-transfiguration prophecies

as a type of synergistic proclamation, and not as an attempt to identify the time of the parousia, nor as being linked to a "delay." [114].

Much more discussion on this subject will be found in Sections Five and Six. The main points to note here at the end of this section on the Biblical basis for the parousia belief are that:

a) time and the parousia are in some way linked from the beginning, and that this relationship cannot be seen as a one of strict dependence -- that the time of the parousia was delimited (see Section Six, "Time and the Parousia.").

b) the temporal concepts that appear to indicate imminent fulfilment must be balanced against other statements that indicate some time-lapse e.g. "the end is not yet," the gospel to all the world etc. (see also the previous discussion on parables).

c) the emphasis in the New Testament is on the unknown time "such an hour as ye think not," etc. The primary reason here appears to be to encourage the attitude of preparedness and continued expectancy. The time is not defined. To this may be added the point that the major concern of the New Testament is not in detailing or describing this future event, but with making the belief a practical and important aspect of present experience. (See the first part of this Section.)

d) modern concepts of time may differ to some degree from those prevailing in the New Testament (note the discussion in Section Six on kairos and chronos). While too much stress must not be placed on this aspect of the relationship of time and the parousia, it would appear that to locate the parousia expectancy within a deterministic type of chronological time is to miss the whole message of the parousia hope.

e) the delay that appears to be such a major factor now must be very carefully considered (see Section Five). An overemphasis on the perceived delay makes the appreciation of the parousia message that much harder.

Notes to Section One

1. See the comments of L. Berkhof, The Second Coming of Christ (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), 10, 11.
  
2. Quoting texts such as 2 Tim. 3:16: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God..." etc.
  
3. As examples of the wide range of periodical material, note: C. K. Barrett, "New Testament Eschatology," Scottish Journal of Theology, 6 (1953), 189-196; G. R. Beasley-Murray, "A Century of Eschatological Discussion," Expository Times, 64 (1952-53), 312-316; J. W. Bowman, "From Schweitzer to Bultmann," Theology Today, 11 (1954-55), 160-178; F. F. Bruce, "Eschatology," London Quarterly and Holborn Review, 27 (1958), 99-103; J. Carmignac, "Les Dangers de l'Eschatologie," New Testament Studies, 17 (1971), 365-390; K. W. Clark, "Realized Eschatology," Journal of Biblical Literature, 59 (1940), 367-383; H. Conzelmann, "Present and Future in the Synoptic Tradition," Journal for Theology and the Church, 5 (1968), 26-44; A. Jones, "The Eschatology of the Synoptic Gospels," Scripture, 4 (1949-51), 221-230; W. G. Kuemmel, "Futuristic and Realized Eschatology in the Earliest Stages of Christianity," Journal of Religion, 43 (1963), 303-314; A. Michel, "La Doctrine de la Parusie et son Incidence dans le Dogme et la Theologie," Divinitas, 3 (1959), 397-437; B. N. Nolan, "Some Observations on the Parousia and New Testament Eschatology," Irish Theological Quarterly, 36 (1969), 287-314; D. R. Rose, "Eschatology," The Asbury Seminarian, 30,4 (1975), 50-69; J.-J. de Santo Thomas, "Eschatologie," Revue Thomiste, 67 (1967), 494-515; A. N. Wilder, "The Eschatology of Jesus in Recent Criticism and Interpretation," Journal of Religion, 28 (1948), 177-185; E. E. Wolfzorn, "Realized Eschatology: An Exposition of Charles H. Dodd's Thesis," Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses, 28 (1962), 44-70. Note also the various articles in W. D. Davies and D. Daube, eds., The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956).
  
4. Three good reviews of the basic positions are found in: G. C. Berkouwer, The Return of Christ (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972); H. Ridderbos, The Coming of the Kingdom (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1962); and A. L. Moore, The Parousia in the New Testament (Leiden: Brill, 1966). For some of the more significant implications of the modern theological understandings of the parousia belief see Section Five.
  
5. S. T. Coleridge, Biographica Literaria, ch. 12. Cited in The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations (London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1941), 102. As an interesting parallel, R. Bultmann attempts something of the same in his book Jesus and the Word (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), in which he takes the material of the Synoptic gospels and uses this to analyse various concepts, and puts aside any dispute over the authenticity of the actual text. He remarks: "By the tradition Jesus is named as the bearer of the

message; according to overwhelming probability he really was. Should it prove otherwise, that does not change in any way what is said in the record." Whatever one may feel as to the legitimacy of the latter statement, Bultmann is at least right to take the record and analyse it, since nothing can change what is written there. Acceptance of the content is ultimately a matter of faith, as Bultmann notes in his conclusion: "Whether his [Jesus'] word is truth, whether he is sent from God -- that is the decision to which the hearer is constrained, and the word of Jesus remains: 'Blessed is he who finds no cause of offense in me.'" Bultmann, Jesus and the Word, 14; 219.

6. G. E. Ladd, The Blessed Hope (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), 5.

7. E. G. White, The Great Controversy (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1888), 299.

8. H. Hoeksema, The Lord of Glory, Vol. 4 of The Heidelberg Catechism, An Exposition (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1947), 117.

9. C. B. Haynes, Our Lord's Return (Nashville, TN: Southern Pub. Assn., 1918), 13.

10. "In general the NT writers expected an imminent, dramatic, visible return of Christ to usher in the New Age. The work begun in his ministry death, and resurrection was to culminate in his triumphant parousia." H. K. McArthur, art. "Parousia," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 659.

11. "In adopting this term [parousia], the primitive church declared its essentially eschatological outlook, its belief that the decisive event in the process of salvation, its final fulfilment, still lay in the future." F. C. Grant and H. H. Rowley, eds., art. "Parousia," Dictionary of the Bible (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1963), 728.

12. "The chief motive by which duties, obligations, aspirations and attainments are determined in the New Testament is this, the ever-imminent return of the Lord from heaven." A. J. Gordon, Ecce Venit (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1890), 30.

13. See also Heb. 10:25; 1 Cor. 11:26, 2 Tim. 4 etc.

14. W. Manson, "Eschatology in the New Testament," Scottish Journal of Theology Occasional Papers Number Two (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1957), 7.

15. Thus for example: H. Roberts, Jesus and the Kingdom of God (London: Epworth Press, 1955), 102-103: The Second Coming "represents a conviction deeply imbedded in Scripture, whatever interpretation may be given to its origin and validity." R. Pache, The Return of Jesus Christ (Chicago: Moody Press, 1975), 16: "It has been calculated that 319 verses -- that is one out of twenty-five -- are devoted to the return of Christ. It could, therefore, be affirmed that few biblical

doctrines surpass in importance the one which now occupies us." Gordon, Ecce Venit, v: "The importance of a doctrine may be judged somewhat by the space and prominence given to it in the New Testament. Measured by this standard, the theme of Christ's coming in glory is second to none in Scripture, not even to the atonement, in the claim which it makes upon our consideration."

16. Oepke, commenting on the word "parousia," remarks that: "Apart from the actual occurrence of the word, the whole thinking of Jesus is permeated by ideas of parousia." A. Oepke, art. "Parousia," in G. Kittel, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 865. Note also C. Brown, art. "Presence," New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Vol. 2 (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1978), 865: "Primitive Christianity waits for the Jesus who has come already as the One who is still to come."

17. See J. Plevnik, "The Parousia as Implication of Christ's Resurrection: The Exegesis of 1 Thess. 4:13-18," in J. Plevnik, ed. Word and Spirit (Willowdale, ON.: Regis College, 1975). On hope generally within the NT note O. Cullmann, The Early Church (London: SCM Press, 1956), 143: "To reject hope is to mutilate the New Testament message of salvation in which every element is essential to the whole."

18. J. K. Howard, "Our Lord's Teaching Concerning His Parousia: A Study in the Gospel of Mark: Part III," Evangelical Quarterly, 38 (1966), 156-157: "Christian eschatology, as initially revealed by the Christ Himself, and developed on this foundation by His apostles, is centred on Jesus Christ, not in the Church, not in the revived Israel of the dispensationalist schemes, but solely in the Lord, who in His first appearing initiated the future age, and whose last appearing will consummate it.... The Parousia is the summing up of all the hopes and aspirations of the Church of Christ, it is essential from the very nature of the historical philosophy of Christianity, for the work of Christ remains incomplete until the final consummation." Cp. also Maddox: "Eschatology... is basic to the New Testament material." R. Maddox, "The Sense of New Testament Eschatology," Reformed Theological Review, 36 (1977), 42.

19. For an overview of the various modern interpretations see D. Wenham, "Recent Study in Mark 13: Parts 1 and 2," TSF Bulletin, 71 (1974), 6-15 and 72 (1975), 1-9. Also the first four chapters of Moore, Parousia.

20. Some would disagree here over various points. There are many studies of Mark 13 which take very different positions on form, composition, context, intention and so on: e.g. W. Marxsen, Mark the Evangelist (Nashville: Abingdon, 1969); J. Lambrecht, Die Redaktion der Markus-Apokalypse (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1967); R. Pesch, Naherwartungen: Tradition und Redaktion in Markus 13 (Dusseldorf: Patmos, 1968); L. Gaston, No Stone On Another (Leiden: Brill, 1970); etc.

21. On the point of identification of the parousia with the coming of the Son of man, note the following: "Although the word Parousia occurs only in Matt. in the Gospels, the idea of the Second Coming is clearly indicated elsewhere by different words with essentially the same meaning. Mark (and its parallels) uses erchomai to describe the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory (Mark 13:26 = Matt. 24:30 = Luke 21:27; cf. also Matt. 16:27; 25:31; 26:64)." W. H. Mare, "A Study of the New Testament Concept of the Parousia," in G. F. Hawthorne, ed., Current Issues in Biblical and Patristic Interpretation (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 339-340.

22. As Howard puts it: "The disciples clearly believed the two sets of events to be essentially contemporaneous, a not unnatural mistake, for the Day of the Lord was seen looming behind every calamity or crisis in which the nation became involved." Howard, "Our Lord's Teaching," 151. Cranfield writes of the disciples "who may well have thought of the destruction of the Temple as part of the complex of events leading up to the End." C. E. B. Cranfield, "St. Mark 13," Scottish Journal of Theology, 6 (1953), 195.

23. Cranfield, "St. Mark 13," 298: "We would suggest that neither an exclusively historical nor an exclusively eschatological interpretation [of Mark 13] is satisfactory. Rather we must allow for a double reference, the historical and eschatological being mingled together...."

"We suggest that, while the eschatological and historical are being deliberately brought into relation to each other, there is also a certain restraint, which stops short of direct identification. Historical and eschatological are not only being brought together; they are also at the same time being held apart. Thus room is left for the possibility that the approaching ruin of Jerusalem may be followed by other crises before the End comes."

Note also the words of Heim, cited by Cranfield (*ibid.*, 300): "But all this [i.e. the destruction of Jerusalem and the events connected with it] is for Him only a Transparent standing in the foreground, through which He beholds the last events before the End of the world, in which all this will at last come to its real fulfilment." K. Heim, Die Koenigsherrschaft Gottes (Stuttgart, 1948), 55f.

24. For a wide-ranging review see Hartman, Prophecy; also D. Ford, The Abomination of Desolation in Biblical Eschatology (Washington: University Press of America, 1979).

25. On the Old Testament aspects of the coming God see G. Pidoux, Le Dieu Qui Vient (Paris: Delachaux et Niestle, 1947). See also W. J. Dumbrell, "Spirit and Kingdom of God in the Old Testament," The Reformed Theological Review, 33,1 (1974), 1-10, and Moore, Parousia, 7-18.

26. One example is F. Neiryneck, "Le Discours Anti-Apocalyptic de Mc. XIII," Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses, 45 (1969), 154-164. Of



the various comments made by some on the anti-apocalyptic nature of the discourse, note Howard, "Our Lord's Teaching," 151: "There are certain marked differences between this discourse and normal apocalyptic. Of these perhaps the most noticeable and important is the marked element of exhortation in Mark 13, as Jesus speaks with his disciples, so that, unlike normal apocalyptic, this discourse presents us with matters which are of intense practical importance." According to K. Grayston, "The Study of Mark XIII," Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library, 56 (1973-74), 380: "The marks of apocalyptic are scarce." Indeed the anti-apocalyptic element of Mark 13 is a major factor in C. B. Cousar, "Eschatology and Marks's Theologica Crucis," Interpretation, 24 (1970), 321-335. Beasley-Murray remarks that one of the three factors that made him reject the Little Apocalypse theory was "the lack of genuine parallels to the most essential features of the discourse in pre-Christian Jewish apocalypses. G. R. Beasley-Murray, "Eschatology in the Gospel of Mark," Southwestern Journal of Theology, 21 (1978), 51.

27. Cousar, "Eschatology," 321.

28. "The disciples want to be told what will be 'the sign' -- that is, they want an infallible means of recognising the approach of the End; they want to be relieved of having to watch. But instead of a single sign Jesus gives them a baffling multiplicity of signs. The purpose of his reply is not to pass on esoteric information but to strengthen and sustain faith." Cranfield, "St. Mark 13," 196. "But the day and the hour of His coming Christ has not revealed. He stated plainly to His disciples that He Himself could not make known the day or hour of his second appearing. Had He been at liberty to reveal this, why need He have exhorted them to maintain an attitude of constant expectancy?" E. G. White, The Desire of Ages (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assoc., 1940), 632.

29. W. L. Lane, The Gospel According to Mark (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1974), 447.

30. See footnote 23 above.

31. "The employment of this traditional language shows that the parousia of the Son of Man is the event to which the Bible bears testimony as the climax of history; it has the cosmic accompaniments of the coming of God, for the Son of Man is God's representative in judgment and deliverance, through whom God achieves his final purpose." G. R. Beasley-Murray, "The Parousia in Mark," Review and Expositor, 75 (1978), 577. This is not to deny the reality of the event described. As Ladd comments on the description of the parousia in the Synoptic gospels: "This is poetic language and must be understood against its Old Testament background. The present author has made a thorough study of this language, and has concluded that it is poetic and not to be taken with strict literalness, yet at the same time it is meant to describe actual cosmic events. [Footnote to his Jesus and the Kingdom (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 41-71]. We agree with Beasley-Murray: 'Poetic expression is not to be confused

with allegorism.... When God steps forth for salvation, the universe pales before him.'" [Footnote to G. R. Beasley-Murray, Commentary on Mark 13 (London: Macmillan, 1957), 87-88]." G. E. Ladd, A Theology of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 203.

Note also the comment by Mueller: "One must take into account that nowhere in Old Testament, early Jewish and Talmudic literature do 'clouds' ever play a role when the concern is to express in words the affairs and movement of heavenly beings among one another in the realm of transcendence, withdrawn from the eyes of men. Only when one of them steps out of their hiddenness are epiphany clouds and vehicle clouds brought into play. This observation makes it natural to understand the 'coming' of the Son of Man as a descent from heaven to earth." K. Mueller, "Der Menschensohn im Danielzyklus," in R. Pesch and R. Schnackenburg, eds., Jesus und der Menschensohn (Freiburg: Herder, 1975), 45f. Cited by Beasley-Murray, "Parousia in Mark," 576.

32. C. E. B. Cranfield, The Gospel According to St. Mark (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 406.

31. Beasley-Murray, "Parousia in Mark," 577.

32. C. E. B. Cranfield, "St. Mark 13," Scottish Journal of Theology y, 6 (1953), 302.

33. Lane, Mark, 476.

34. Cranfield, "St. Mark 13," 302.

35. Beasley-Murray, "Parousia in Mark," 579.

36. Cranfield, "St. Mark 13," 303.

37. v. 21: "The kingdom of God is within/among you." Much has been made of this text. The assertion by some that Jesus was teaching an internal coming of the kingdom in the hearts of men is totally unfounded. As Creed comments: "The Kingdom is nowhere else used to express an inner condition of the soul. An inner condition of the soul may qualify for admission to the Kingdom, but it is not itself the Kingdom." J. M. Creed, The Gospel According to St. Luke (London: Macmillan, 1930), 219. See also Manson in H. D. A. Major, T. W. Manson and C. J. Wright, The Mission and Message of Jesus (New York: Dutton, 1938), 596.

38. I. H. Marshall, The Gospel of Luke (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1978), 656.

39. E. E. Ellis, ed., The Gospel of Luke (London: Nelson, 1966), 210-211.

40. "Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it." (Lk.17:33). This

may also be seen as the relative value to be placed on the present life in view of the life to come.

41. Mattill describes Lucan eschatology as "not instant, not distant, but imminent expectation." A. J. Mattill, Luke and the Last Things (Dillsboro, NC: Western North Carolina Press, 1979), 130, while R. B. Ward, "Eschatology in Luke-Acts," Restoration Quarterly, 5 (1961), 156, remarks that "Luke is as eschatological as any writer."

42. G. B. Caird, Saint Luke (London: SCM Press, 1963), 197.

43. N. Geldenhuys, The Gospel of Luke (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1951), 442.

44. For analyses of the discourse see: R. Summers, "Matthew 24-25. An Exposition," Review and Expositor, 59 (1962), 510-511; J. Lambrecht, "The Parousia Discourse: Composition and Content in Mt., XXIV-XXV," in M. Didier, ed., L'Evangile Selon Matthieu (Gembloux: J. Duculot, 1972), 309-342; F. W. Beare, "The Synoptic Apocalypse: Matthaean Version," in J. Reumann, ed., Understanding the Sacred Text (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1972), 117-133; and J. F. Walvoord, "Christ's Olivet Discourse and the End of the Age," Bibliotheca Sacra, 128 (1971), 109-116, 206-214, 316-326; 129 (1972), 20-32, 99-105, 206-210. The various arguments and positions put forward will not be discussed here since the main emphasis is on the nature and implications of the parousia as expressed in the actual record.

45. W. Trilling, The Gospel According to Matthew (London: Burns and Oates, 1969), 202. Note also: "The One who has come in the obscurity of the Incarnation under the figure of the crucified Servant will be revealed to all eyes in the brightness of his divine glory. But the glorified Christ has pierced hands (see Luke 24:39; John 20:27; Rev. 5:6)." S. de Dietrich, Saint Matthew (London: SCM Press, 1961), 127. Similarly Kingsbury: "The arrival of the future kingdom means the 'public' vindication of Jesus, the one crucified and rejected, and, for the righteous, the perfect realization of their hope." J. D. Kingsbury, Matthew (London: SPCK, 1978), 66.

46. Note the remarks made by J. M. Sherriff, "Matthew 25:1-13. A Summary of Matthaean Eschatology?" Studia Biblica II (1978), 301-305.

47. See F. V. Filson, A Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew (London: A. and C. Black, 1960), 257-258: "But his [Jesus'] vivid message of imminent judgment and salvation is truer to the Biblical faith in the living God than alternatives that discard all affirmations about the future, or comfortably postpone the end so far that the urgency of God's claim is lost, or make of judgment an impersonal process, or deny any future consequences for sin, or assume automatic immortality for individuals with no final vindication of God's rule." Yet the whole concept of imminence and its meaning is very complex. A later section deals with the subject at greater length. For the moment note (with reservations) the comment of Dodd: "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." C. H. Dodd, The Parables of the Kingdom (London and Glasgow: Collins-Fontana Books, 1961), 71.

48. Thus Filson: "The immediate occasion for these words of comfort was the nearness of Jesus' death, which would leave the disciples shocked, shattered, and apparently alone in a hostile world.... They will not be left unrescued in the world; their final home will be in heaven, their Father's house, where there are many rooms (vs. 2), one for each of them." F. V. Filson, Saint John (London: SCM Press, 1964), 111.

49. "This departure is in itself the condition of the return: separation, the cessation of the present circumstances of fellowship, was the first step towards complete reunion." B. F. Westcott, The Gospel According to St. John, Vol. 2 (London: John Murray, 1908), 168. "In His Father's house there is room enough and to spare; let them rest assured of it; for the very purpose of their Master's journey (i.e. His death, resurrection, and ascension) is to prepare a place there for them. But this action of His implies also His return, when He will receive them to Himself, His purpose being that where He is they may be also." R. H. Lightfoot, St. John's Gospel (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), 269. "This [Jesus' preparing places for his followers] has consequences. If Jesus goes for such a purpose, He returns (the use of the present introduces a note of greater certainty). The reference to the second advent should not be missed." L. Morris, The Gospel According to John (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1971), 639. "It [the discourse of John 14] is dominated by the thought of the departure and return of Jesus..." C. K. Barrett, The Gospel According to St. John (London: SPCK, 1962), 380.

50. E.g. T. F. Glasson, The Second Advent (London: Epworth Press, 1963); J.A.T. Robinson, Jesus and His Coming (London: SCM Press, 1979 edn.). The latter remarks (page 276) that John 14:3 "describes no second eschatological moment after an interval, but the consummation and fruition of that which is now being brought to fulfilment.... The Parousia is clearly understood not as a separate catastrophic occurrence, but as a continuous pervasion of the daily life of the disciple and the Church." All is fulfilled, "the coming of Jesus to the disciples is indistinguishable from the coming of the Paraclete." C. H. Dodd had previously made a very similar comment: "By now it is surely clear that the 'return' of Jesus is to be understood in a sense different from that of popular Christian eschatology. It means that after the death of Jesus, and because of it, His followers will enter into union with Him as their living Lord, and through Him with the Father, and so enter into eternal life." Consequently, "Christ's death on the cross is His ascent to the right hand of the Father; and His return to his disciples after death, which is so closely associated, if not identified, with the coming of the Holy Spirit, is His second advent." C. H. Dodd, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 405; 395. Bultmann concurs: "In the Paraclete Jesus comes to his own." R. Bultmann, The Gospel of John (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971), 581.

Against this interpretation note Cadman: "Similarly here, we are expected to infer that, although the death of Jesus brings His disciples at once into His Father's house, His coming again is His coming at the last day to take them into the state of final blessedness. We should not allow ourselves to be driven from this conclusion when, as the Last Discourse proceeds, we meet recurring promises of another coming of Jesus which cannot be regarded as repetitions in varying phraseology of the sense we have given to the first one in xiv. 3, since they manifestly refer to the period of the church's life between the departure of Jesus and His coming again at the last day (xiv. 18, 21, 23, 28; xvi. 16, 22). It is characteristic of the eschatology of St. John, as it is of the eschatology of the New Testament as a whole, that the final consummation of the purposes of God, having been fully and definitively anticipated in the person and work of Jesus, should also be in a different way anticipated in the experience of the believers." W. H. Cadman, The Open Heaven (Oxford: Blackwell, 1969), 147-148. See also J. Painter, John: Witness and Theologian (London: SPCK, 1975), 106.

51. See Dodd, Fourth Gospel, 416.

52. Bultmann, John, 524.

53. W. F. Howard, Christianity According to St. John (London: Duckworth, 1943), 123.

54. R. Kysar, John, the Maverick Gospel (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1979), 89.

55. Westcott, John, 168.

56. A. M. Hunter, According to John (London: SCM Press, 1968), 108. Also Howard: "Johannine Christianity shares with the entire primitive Church in the eschatological hope." Howard, John, 122.

57. Cadman, Open Heaven, 147.

58. J. Calvin, The Gospel According to St. John, 11-21, tr. T. H. L. Parker (London and Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1961), 75.

59. Barrett, John, 382.

60. There are various reviews of the debate over the term "Son of man," a debate that is not examined in any great detail here. For a recent summary see I. H. Marshall, "Synoptic Son of Man Sayings in Recent Discussion," New Testament Studies, 12 (1968), 346f. Other recent works include: E. D. Freed, "The Son of Man in the Fourth Gospel," Journal of Biblical Literature, 86 (1967), 402-409;

J. A. Emerton, "The Origin of the Son of Man Imagery," Journal of Theological Studies, 9 (1958), 225-242; C. Colpe, art. "Ho Huios Tou Anthropou," in G. Kittel, ed., Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 400-477; F. H. Borsch, The Son of Man in Myth and History (London: SCM Press, 1967); M. D. Hooker, The Son of Man in Mark (London: Spck, 1967); and many others. For a bibliography refer to P. Ciholas, "Son of Man in the Synoptic Gospels," Biblical Theology Bulletin, 11 (1981), 17-20.

61. Various studies consider the relevance of Daniel 7: W. J. Dumbrell, "Daniel 7 and the Function of Old Testament Apocalyptic," Reformed Theological Review, 34 (1975), 16-23; R. Clark, "Matthew 10:23 and Eschatology (II)," Restoration Quarterly, 8, 1 (1965), 53-69; L. Hartman, Prophecy Interpreted (Lund: CWK-Coniectanea, 1966).

62. Two relevant articles are B. C. Butler, "God's Kingdom: Future or Present," Downside Review 95 (1977), 164-175; and G. E. Ladd, "The Kingdom of God -- Reign or Realm?" Journal of Biblical Literature, 81 (1962), 230-238.

63. An excellent review of the Old Testament material is G. Pidoux, Le Dieu Qui Vient (Neuchatel: Delachaux et Niestle, 1947).

64. A useful study of the transforming effect of the parousia is to be found in W. J. Grier, The Momentous Event (Belfast: The Evangelical Bookshop, 1945); especially 62-67.

65. Eagles has an interesting chapter, "The Significance of His Coming," -- J. E. Eagles, The Final Coming of Christ (London: Epworth Press, 1951), 22-28.

66. The account in John 14 of the future coming has already been mentioned. It is an important part of the concept of coming and return, (see the discussion in Section Six), and can be linked with other eschatological "comings" mentioned by John: the "hour is coming" (5:28), the coming of the "last day" (6:39, 40, 44, 54 etc.).

67. They are of course only future as far as their position in the Gospels is concerned. The events have since taken place and for us make up part of the Son of man's past (and to some degree) present coming.

68. The identification of the Son of man term with that of the Suffering Servant goes completely against the concept in Daniel, in which the Son of man is a divine and kingly description. See R. Clark, "Eschatology and Matthew 10:23, Parts I and II," Restoration Quarterly, 7 (1963), 73-81 and 8 (1965), 53-69.

69. Also: The despised and rejected One (Is. 53:3); the One wounded in the house of his friends (Zech. 13:6); the One received not (Jn. 1:11) and betrayed (Mt. 17:22; 26:2).

70. Mowinckel has an interesting section on the use of the Son of man phrase by Jesus: S. Mowinckel, He That Cometh (Oxford: Blackwell, 1956), 445-450.

71. This combination of divinity and humanity is already present in Jewish understanding. See the summary in Mowinckel, He That Cometh, 429-431, also the whole chapter on the Son of man, 346f.

72. Especially in John: "he that believeth on the Son of man hath everlasting life," (3:26); "I give unto them eternal life," (10:28) and so on. Note also the same aspect in the rest of the NT: "Now is the accepted time ... the day of salvation," (2 Cor. 6:2); "Now is come salvation," (Rev. 12:10). For an analysis of the present emphasis on salvation in John see A. Corell, Consummatum Est (London: SPCK, 1958), 5-9; also chapters 4 and 7.

73. As Minear puts it, "God's love of man, revealed and mediated through the Son of Man." P. S. Minear, "The Coming of the Son of Man," Theology Today, 9 (1952-53), 492.

74. Rigaux refers to this: B. Rigaux, "La Seconde Venue de Jesus," in E. Massaux, ed., La Venue du Messie (Bruges: Desclee de Brouwer, 1952), 173-216. Of particular interest are 199-212.

75. Note also the equivalence of Son and life in other passages of John: "living water," "living bread," -- also "I am the resurrection and the life," "I am the way the truth and the life," (Jn. 11:25, 14:6), etc.

76. "Christ became one flesh with us, in order that we might become one spirit with Him. It is by virtue of this union that we are to come forth from the grave, -- not merely as a manifestation of the power of Christ, but because, through faith, His life has become ours.... It is through the Spirit that Christ dwells in us; and the Spirit of God, received into the heart by faith, is the beginning of the life eternal." E. G. White, The Desire of Ages (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assoc., 1940), 388.

77. Rigaux states that "The Son of man appears to be the centre of end events as Jesus was at the centre of the Kingdom." B. Rigaux, "La Seconde Venue de Jesus," in E. Massaux, La Venue du Messie (Bruges: Desclee de Brouwer, 1962), 212, free translation. As there is an identity between the Son of man and Jesus the centrality of this person in the "coming" events of the salvation process is established.

78. In the words of McNicol: "A stream which moves on towards one glorious future. The appearing of the Lord Jesus himself fills the whole horizon." J. McNicol, "The Hope of the Church," in The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Church, Vol.6 (Chicago: Testimony Publishing co., 1910), 120.

79. See the remarks of M. Goguel, "Parousie et Resurrection," Revue

d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses, 10 (1930), 372.

80. The debate over this Aramaic phrase continues, but the consensus is that the prayer is an invocation and expression of desire rather than a statement of belief in Christ's first coming -- although this is also part of any such invocation. See the article on maranatha in C. Brown, ed., The New International Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. 2 (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1976).

81. Note the discussion on Moltmann and Pannenberg in Section Five.

82. One might say that there is really only one fact: the God who comes; since the incarnation and the parousia of the Son of man are part of the one coming of God to be with man. Only from the human perspective, dominated by the idea of time and history, are these two separate comings (see the discussion on this point in Section Six, Time and the Parousia).

83. The aspects of "realized eschatology" in the parables have been noted in two outstanding works: C. H. Dodd, The Parables of the Kingdom (London: Nisbet, 1935); and J. Jeremias The Parables of Jesus (London: SCM Press, 1963). Other works that include some examination of the parables are those dealing with the kingdom of God, for example N. Perrin, The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus (London: SCM Press, 1975). It is however important to note the future aspect as well: "The parables for the most part clearly demonstrate Jesus' belief that the Kingdom of God would come in the future.... Examination of the synoptic sources shows that all literary strata look to the future as the time when the Son of man will be revealed, the Judgment will take place, and the Kingdom of God will come." R. H. Hiers, The Kingdom of God in the Synoptic Tradition (Gainesville, FL.: University of Florida Press, 1970), 93-94.

84. The judgment was the eschatological theme of the Jews. In the preaching of Jesus it is made clear that the judgment holds no fearful aspects for those that are righteous and that the coming to judgment is to be associated with the divine reward, eternal life.

85. H. B. Swete, The Parables of the Kingdom (London: Macmillan, 1920), 62.

86. It would seem that Jesus applied the banquet theme both to the present (his coming and his rejection by the Jews, the invitation passing to the Gentiles), and to the future (the banquet begins when the Son of man comes).

87. Thus many commentators. Kuemmel is particularly blunt: "There is no parable of the world judgment." W. G. Kuemmel, Promise and Fulfilment (London: SCM Press, 1957), 92n. For a review see G. E. Ladd, "The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats in Recent Interpretation," in R. N. Longenecker and M. C. Tenney, eds., New Dimensions in New Testament Study (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 191-199.



88. Swete, Parables, 64.

89. The importance of allegory is indicated by Black, who points out that although Dodd (for example) follows Juelicher in denying that Jesus used allegory, he still uses allegory in his own interpretation. M. Black, "The Parables as Allegory," Bulletin of John Rylands Library, 42,2 (1960), 273-287. As regards this specific parable see Conzelmann, "Present and Future," 34-35.

90. Swete, Parables, 25.

91. Note that the punishment is given by Christ as the negative of reward. To the good is given, to the wicked there is not given. Punishment is lack of reward, lack of eternal life with Christ.

92. Swete, Parables, 59-60.

93. See Mt. 19:28-30.

94. Cp. "He will come" (Mk. 12:9); "He shall come" (Lk. 20:16).

95. For an analysis of some of the combined aspects of eschatology and communion see P. E. Deterding, "Eschatological and Eucharistic Motifs in Luke 12:35-40," Concordia Journal, 5,3 (1979), 85-94.

96. In this sense they are indeed "parables of crisis." However the crisis is the parousia, and this is what makes them "parables of crisis." (The phrase is Dodd's. See Chapter 5 of his Parables.)

97. Constant readiness would hardly be required if Dodd's interpretation is correct: "The Kingdom of God has come -- unexpectedly, incalculably -- and Israel was taken by surprise." Dodd, Parables, 169.

98. This idea of contrast is brought out by C. K. Barrett in his "New Testament Eschatology: II. The Gospels," Scottish Journal of Theology, 6 (1953), 230-231. Note also the comment (231): "In the person and work of Jesus the sovereignty of God was obscurely manifested, presented to men in a partial, anticipatory manner, so that it could be received only by faith; only the future would vindicate God's power and man's obedience."

99. The title "The Parable of the Ten Virgins" hardly does justice to the contrast theme.

100. Dodd throws out the main thrust of the parable by relegating the parable to the status of a call to decision. All the narrative is supposedly just embroidery. "All the vivid dramatic detail is intended only to emphasize the folly of unpreparedness and the wisdom of preparedness -- preparedness, as I take it, for the developments actually in progress in the ministry of Jesus." Dodd, Parables, 172. Jeremias is a little less dogmatic: "The early church interpreted the

bridegroom as Christ and his midnight coming as the Parousia. It did not deviate from the original meaning since, as we have seen, the eschatological catastrophe and the Messianic Parousia are simply two aspects of the same event." Jeremias, Parables, 53.

101. This phrase is from the very similar Parable of the Pounds in Luke (19:13).

102. R. C. Oudersluys, "The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats (Matthew 25:31-46): Eschatology and Mission, Then and Now," Reformed Review, 26,3 (1973), 157. Dodd denies that there is any "reality" here: "Matthew has found here an allegory of the Last Judgment. This is clearly secondary and may be ignored." Dodd, Parables, 187.

103. P. S. Minear, "The Coming of the Son of Man," Theology Today, 9 (1952-53), 493.

104. Almost every review of the teaching of Jesus includes some discussion of the "timing" of the parousia. See as examples, Manson, Teaching of Jesus, N. Perrin, The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus (London: SCM Press, 1975); also note the central factor of time in such works as W. G. Kuemmel, Promise and Fulfilment (London: SCM Press, 1957), and of course, O. Cullmann, Christ and Time (London: SCM Press, 1971).

105. A. L. Moore, The Parousia in the New Testament (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966).

106. And others not so modern. See the discussion in D. Flusser, "Salvation Present and Future," in R. J. Zwi Werblowsky and C. Jouco Bleeker, Types of Redemption (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970), 46-61.

107. Thus Ridderbos: "This is the truth of the pronouncement that the proximity of the parousia is in a certain sense only another expression of its absolute certainty. That is why it is not so much the proximity as the certainty of the parousia which dominates Jesus' eschatological pronouncements." Ridderbos, Coming of the Kingdom, 521.

108. Attitude was more important than date. Note the comments on Paul's outlook: "Paul, more than anyone else, uses the word Parousia of Christ. He does so particularly in those letters where he is dealing with the subjects of the future bodily resurrection and of the events of the Second Coming. He does not use Parousia simply to describe a presence. Rather, his usage of the word has a dynamic force -- Jesus will come and will be present in resurrection power and glory (cf. 1 Cor. 15:23)." W. H. Mare, "A Study of the New Testament Concept of the Parousia," in G. F. Hawthorne, ed. Current Issues in Biblical and Patristic Interpretation. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 338. Note also "Paul's constant teaching is that the Christians should await His coming, expect it, hope for it." J. L. McKenzie, art. "Parousia," Dictionary of the Bible (London and

Dublin: Geoffrey Chapman, 1965), 639. See also G. E. Ladd here: "Eschatology and the Unity of New Testament Theology," Expository Times, 68 (1956-57), 278: "The future has created the present." 109. Thus the discussions over the nature of the kingdom -- see as examples Perrin, Kingdom of God; Hiers, Kingdom of God; G. E. Ladd, "The Kingdom of God -- Reign or Realm?" Journal of Biblical Literature, 8 (1962), 230-238; B. C. Butler, "God's Kingdom: Future or Present?" Downside Review, 95 (1977), 164-175.

110. Both 2 Pet. 1:16b-17 and Jn. 1:14 appear to be references to the transfiguration.

111. This carries over into the believer's attitude: "The presence and future of the Lord, the 'now already' and the 'not yet' of salvation are dialectically intertwined with each other. For the present Lord of the community is expected as the coming Lord, and the salvation already bestowed is viewed as eternal." W. Schmithals, The Apocalyptic Movement (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1975), 164.

112. W. Manson, "Eschatology," 7; Barrett, "Eschatology," 231.

113. The directing aspect of time is important here (see Section Six). As McKenzie comments, ("Parousia," 640): "A belief that history tends to a term in which judgment will be final, God vindicated, and evil definitively overthrown, it is basic to biblical and Christian faith and cannot be renounced or demythologized without reducing that faith to zero."

114. For an excellent critique of the concept of the delayed parousia, see D. E. Aune, "The Significance of the Delay of the Parousia for Early Christianity," in Hawthorne, Current Issues, 87-109.

SECTION TWO

A QUESTION OF HOPE: THE PAROUSIA BELIEF IN HISTORY

0 Introduction

At the heart of the Christian confession is the concept of hope, expressed in the three aspects of time: hope in the past actions of Jesus as the necessary basis for salvation, hope in the present salvific activity of Jesus in the life of the Christian, and hope in the future work of Jesus to complete this salvation -- a hope that above all finds its expression in the "blessed hope," the return of "this same Jesus."

This expectation of Christ's return has been part of the kerygma from the very first. The twin messages of advent and return may be seen as the two foci of the Gospel, and they provide the church with a dynamic role: proclaiming the salvation manifested in Christ's first coming and preparing for the consummation of salvation at his second coming.

This witness to hope provides a clear insight into the vitality of the church, while the interpretation and emphasis of this hope in turn reveal the interplay between the church, its beliefs and its environment. Thus, for example, in the development of doctrine, the church's understanding of its own position and nature (ecclesiology) is moulded by such external factors as society and contemporary philosophy as well as by internal considerations of its object of hope, the delay in the materialization of this hope, and the quality of hope itself.

The parousia doctrine is therefore at once a determinant and a derivative of the church's own convictions, and throughout the history of the church, both modifies the church's message and is modified by it. The analysis of this complex matrix, this interaction, gives a means of understanding the actions and reactions of the church in various situations, and provides the basis for this study.

The history of the parousia belief is conspicuous by its absence in works describing the development of doctrine. Consequently this section dealing with the historical aspects has had to be more detailed than otherwise would have been the case in order that the implications and motivations of the parousia expectation may be seen in their wider scope throughout past time, and also to provide the essential background of examples for the interpretation of the significance of such a belief, and its implications for and influence on other doctrines. Even so, this review of the past two millennia of Christian history must be greatly curtailed, and the fuller

implications of the belief will be examined later (see Section Six). The primary objective here is simply to document the relative importance of hope in Christ's return throughout the course of Christian history.

1 Death of a Vibrant Hope: The Post-Apostolic Discontinuity

Considerable change in the Christian expectation differentiates the second-century church period from the time of the apostles, an "order of magnitude" discontinuity which separates the New Testament writings from the earliest non-canonical records of the emergent church. This "quiet revolution" is at the heart of the debate over the impact of presumed delay of the parousia.

In the New Testament, the dramatic, personal and visible return of the living Saviour is both explicitly stated and implicitly assumed. This belief is put forward as the motivating hope of the Christian, the man ever-expectant. The emphasis is on a Saviour crucified, resurrected, ascended, and soon to return.

Yet by the time of the early post-apostolic writers, the change is already clear. That central, living hope is dying and the orientation of the Christian is changing. The all-embracing consummation preached by the apostles begins to drift away, gradually to be replaced by either hope in death [1] (the transmigration of the souls to heaven with a hope in good works as a passport), a hope in the kingdom of God as already present in those that are holy and good (the church), a hope in progress and the perfecting of the saints on earth, or a hope in the rapid achievement of a new Golden Age, even a hope of a materialistic millennium.

While many writers have noted such a change, it is frequently remarked on either as a subsidiary point before passing on to a review of the doctrinal formulations of the "Fathers" or, at the opposite extreme, used as a peg on which to hang a complete theory of doctrinal development. [2]. Very few have taken the time to examine the change itself. Eschatology [3] is all too often either a Christian "appendix" or a secret formula used to explain the whole development of Christianity. In practice it is neither, since it cannot be a "tacked-on" doctrine, nor can it be understood as some sort of philosophical hermeneutic that can be used to explain Christian history. [4]. That aside, the decay in the hope of a proximate parousia is by far the greatest point of note in tracing the line of Second Advent thought and belief through the first few hundred years of Christian history.

Discussing the characteristics of what he terms "sub-apostolic" eschatology, Dewick notes "the slow but steady decline of the eager expectation of an immediate return of the Lord," and that "with every fresh decade the primitive hope silently retires more and more into the background. It has never entirely disappeared, and has always remained to revive in times of special anxiety or trouble, but generally speaking, it has ceased to be a living power in Christendom." [5].



From a comparison of early patristic thought with that of the New Testament, it is evident that the decay in the parousia expectation occurred relatively rapidly, with varying degrees according to author. Hence, according to Werner, "the evolution and transformation of the Primitive Christian faith was conditioned no longer by the original eschatological sense of imminence, but very soon also by the non-fulfilment of this expectation consequent on the delay of the parousia." [6]. Lampe argues along similar lines: "As the Parousia was delayed, and the primitive Church's sense of urgent and immediate crisis began to fade in the minds of many believers, eschatology began to be replaced, according to one line of thought, by mysticism, or, as we might more accurately say, by pneumatology " [7].

Continuing the analysis through to the apocalyptic literature of the early Christians, Dewick can only say that "This literature has departed very far from the earliest type of primitive Christian eschatology. The Second Coming of the Lord is no longer the keynote; the freshness and conviction of the apostolic teaching is replaced by an elaborate artificiality." [8].

To say the Second Coming is no longer the keynote is perhaps to rather understate the case. Possibly the early church fathers are taking the concept for granted, but in their literature there is not much material directly related to the parousia. That is not to say that eschatological concepts have entirely disappeared. The change is one of emphasis, "a vague future of blessing and judgment centring round Christ" [9] rather than the central, consummating return of the

living Saviour. Filson identifies "a persisting note of eschatology" in the post-apostolic age, but also that "eschatology did not hold the prominent place that it had in the message of Jesus and the apostolic age" [10], whilst Cooke gives a picture of an "arrested development" which is reflected in "the tendency to stereotype the phrases of the Gospels and the Epistles into set statements." [11].

A perceptive account of this change in attitude is that of Ruether, couched in rather socio-political terms:

After the first generation or so, the original apocalyptic view of salvation began to fade from the center of the church's thought to its left-wing, heretical fringes and the church, which had once viewed itself as the beachhead of an apocalyptic revolution, incorporated itself back into the historical process and interpreted itself as the bearer of the new and final stage of salvation history. With the shift from the expected messiah to the Christ who had already come, the mood shifted from revolutionary crisis to victorious advance from the basis of present possession. This possession was read backward into a salvation history that began with the first promise made to Adam and Eve after the expulsion from Paradise and ended in the coming of Christ and the historical mission of the church. [12].

The claim made by Duffy that "the patristic tradition witnessing to the centrality of the Parousia in the Christian mind is clear and constant" [13] cannot be accepted. Indeed the very reverse is true. While some eschatological concepts remain, they are generally concerned with the reign of the righteous, the last judgement or with the blessedness of the soul reaching Paradise after death.

In view of the critical importance of the early church's witness to a plurality of hopes, some examination of the actual documents must be made. [14]. This review of certain post-apostolic writings is not in any sense exhaustive, yet it does give an overall picture of their conception of the parousia.

At this point, the distinction between post-apostolic writings and those of the New Testament should be emphasized. They are no longer considered to be "given by inspiration of God" (2 Tim. 3:16), they are not the determinant of faith. As Froom pointedly remarks,

These second-century writings are in sharp contrast to the inspired Scriptures of the apostles. These successors were already definitely influenced by the sophistries of the day ... The views of some were tinged with Jewish concepts; others were marred by gross extravagances. The very inferiority of the writings enables us to attach a higher value to the superiority of the canonical writings of the apostles, for these fragmentary works were but the "lingering echoes," in distorted form, of those vital

messages before them, written under inspiration. [15].

One important example of early Christian eschatology is found in the document known as the Didache (circa 150 AD, with much earlier material). [16]. Yet even here there is little extension or elaboration of the New Testament concepts, they are merely presented in a combined, summary form appropriate for the instruction of new converts. Thus it is much more concerned to teach ethical standards and practices than to discuss ideas of the coming end-time. Two relevant reflections of the New Testament teachings are the petition asking God to "make it [the Church] holy, 'and gather' it 'together from the four winds'" (Didache 10:5,6) -- a reflection of Mt. 24:31 -- and the appeal quoted from Rev. 22, "Our Lord, come! Amen." [17]. Yet one could argue that the first reference seems to point to a developing ecclesiology rather than an elaboration of the parousia, while the invocation could be regarded as simply the accepted standard appeal for God's presence and has no definite parousia connotation. Even in the predominantly eschatological section sixteen the writer's thought is not so much of the parousia, rather it is the terrible picture of the last-day troubles and persecutions and the work of the "World Deceiver." After all this, however, "The Lord will come and all his saints with him. Then will the world see the Lord coming on the clouds of the sky " (Didache 16:7). [18].

In Clement's First Epistle to the Corinthians (circa 95 AD) [19] the parousia is understood to be very much associated with the future of the righteous -- a future resurrection of the just, the transformation of mortality into immortality and the last judgment,

the setting right of all wrongs. The hope of the apostles is still alive, it is still a fast-approaching event (1 Clement 23). Yet the concern is far more with church organization [20] and right action -- the Christian in the World. Clement also seems to believe in the "assumption" of saints into heaven, the beginning of the "hope in death." (see 1 Clement 5:7). He also uses the supposed existence of the phoenix as "evidence" for the resurrection! (1 Clement 25).

The letters of Ignatius [21] (c. AD 110) were composed soon after 1 Clement. He refers to the martyrdom of Paul as something to be desired, and hopes to follow in his footsteps and "come to meet God" (Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians, 12), [22]; see also to the Trallians, 12:2; to the Romans, 1; 2:2; 5:9). Again the disembodied soul of Hellenistic thought intrudes here.

At no point does Ignatius mention the parousia, although he believes he is living in "the last days" (to the Ephesians 11:1), [23], and he advises his friend Polycarp to "mark the times" (to Polycarp 3:2), [24]. Yet even these "last days" look back rather than forward as a description of terminal events. Of course he is perhaps more concerned to fight the Docetists and their destructive influence, but the parousia suffers from neglect, unintentional or not.

Similarly the Shepherd of Hermas [25] (c. 150 AD), though little concerned with the "things to come", does refer to the fact "whenever the building of the tower is finished, that is the end" (Vision 3, 16:9), [26], and also to some future occasion "when the mercy of the Lord shines forth" (Similitude 4, 53:2), [27]. Yet although the

concept of a future age is retained (Vision 4, 22-24), [28], there is no explicit mention of the parousia.

The writings of Justin Martyr [29] (c. 150AD and later) provide something of a contrast to the foregoing. The parousia is here retained as a normative expression of future hope, the provision of God of a final consummative end. It is debatable how far Justin's philosophical concepts have affected his understanding of the parousia event (there appears to be some considerable emphasis on "realized eschatology"), yet the anticipation of a soon, literal parousia is clearly a part of his understanding of the future. How much this perception affected his life and outlook is difficult to say.

The Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians [30] (C. AD 130) presents what was probably the general consensus; Christ was to come as Judge, to raise the dead and to empower the saints to judge the world. The nearness of the coming has gone, the parousia is the final settling of accounts at some future date coincident with the end of the world, and is no longer portrayed as a day-to-day expectation that is part of the motivation of the Christian community.

Clearly eschatological motifs are still very much present in the general scheme, yet they hardly approach the dynamism and conviction of the consummation in Christ that characterise the canonical writers. The centrality of such belief has disappeared and "eschatology" has produced some strange offspring. Papias lapses into a materialistic millennium characterised by the superabundance of consumables [31], while the writer of the Epistle of Barnabas is too

concerned with working out his time setting and hidden meanings (and thinking of the approaching tribulation) to be much interested in the parousia.

As time goes on the general trends are either to postpone the advent and to individualize the parousia (Christ comes at death etc.) or to spiritualize and allegorize the whole concept. There also remains a considerable parallel stream of chiliastic thought that has its base in Jewish apocalypticism. This latter thought tradition has its origins in the visionary outlook and literature of the intertestamental period and is a confused mixture of eschatological dreaming, prophecy and hope -- primarily for deliverance from earthly oppression (especially political domination). It is characterised by a world view that denigrates the present and looks for an intrusive catastrophic end through the transforming activity of God.

While the world-centred, political aspects of Jewish apocalypticism are clearly at odds with the Christian kerygma, apocalyptic thought [32] cannot be dismissed as being a redundant thought or expression of the God-man-earth relationship. On the contrary, it has been argued that "apocalyptic is the mother of Christian theology" [33], and there is some validity in such an observation.

In the present context however, it is the Jewish national/political expectations which are problematic since when transferred into a Christian setting they give rise to the same type of concepts of this-worldly rule and justification for the privileged "racial"

status of the Church. The rule of the saints in their imperfection opens the way for the abuses and intolerance of the Church in later times.



## 2 The Mutation of Hope

This mutation of the parousia-hope into either Hellenistic pneumatology or Jewish-style earthly millennialism reflects both the outside environment of the early church and the internal problems arising out of the continuing non-fulfilment [34] of the parousia expectation and the increasing need to defend specific beliefs. Christ had not come -- why not? Yet the "parousia problem" was certainly not as significant as others that plagued the nascent church, and the change in the objective of hope is to be associated with the development of an organized church with a definitive locus in history (and all the philosophical problems that entailed) rather than the unconsummated hope which is made almost the sole determinant of church development by some. The parousia hope fails by default, not from active disbelief.

Thus the absorption of Hellenistic concepts into the Christian scheme -- in particular the idea of the immortal soul -- brought about a severe devaluation of the parousia expectation, for what need did the Christian have of some future coming of Christ if he was already assured of moving up to heaven when he died, except perhaps as part of some final cosmic "mopping-up" operation? Macquarrie is very definite on this point:

Although the hope remained vaguely future, the temporal element in it had been greatly dimmed down.... So when Christians died, their hope was that their souls would go at once to heaven.... Two theological consequences would seem to follow from such a teaching. One is a doctrine of the immortality of the soul, as against the biblical belief in the resurrection of the body, for how otherwise could the faithful exist in heaven between the time of their deaths and the final resurrection? The other is belief in some immediate judgment of a person at the time of his death in advance of the final judgment, either admitting him to heaven or consigning him to purgatory or hell. The effect of such developments was to deprive the original eschatological expectations of most of their power. [35]

Lampe notes that "in various Gnostic systems the Christian expectation of the Parousia, and of the consummation and fulfilment of God's mighty acts in redemption which have caused His Kingdom to become operative in the present age, is replaced by the theme of the soul's ascent to heaven." [36]

This pneumatological interpretation of the future was adopted by "orthodox" Christianity -- either directly from Greek philosophy or by way of the Gnostics -- so that the problem of unfulfilled eschatological hope might be resolved, and to assure the righteous of an immediate reward at death. Lampe comments: "The Spirit-guided march to perfection has replaced the urgent expectation of a

catastrophic consummation." [37]. Such a philosophy accelerated the demise of the parousia hope since not only did it explain the future of the individual (soul), but also provided a developmental model for the organizing church: progressing with its work of saving and perfecting souls, God's active agent in the world gradually bringing in the Kingdom of God. This "evolutionary" principle was in harmony with the increased formalization of the church's organization and doctrine, a development which could hardly be correlated with an imminent parousia, a "catastrophic" concept that was increasingly redundant.

The return to apocalyptic as a replacement hope appears to be in direct opposition to the philosophy just described. However, as millenarian concepts are developed and Jewish ideas incorporated, the focus is on the vindication of God's people, self-centred; and soon it is eschatology without ho eschatos -- without Christ -- and is more concerned with the setting up of the earthly reign of the saints than any coming of Jesus. Thus the Montanists looked for the coming of the New Jerusalem, rather than the parousia of Christ. (This factor is repeated in the millenarianism of later ages -- very often there is no coming Christ, only the presence of some "divine" leader of the saints in their earthly struggle to bring in the Utopia).

In this situation the church self-confident is born, militant and triumphant in its position, the just avenger and the preserver of true doctrine against the forces of evil. In millennialism the church finds both its raison d'être and its objective of hope, the land of the saints and their eternal reign being very much an extension of the

present reality of the church. The outworking of such concepts is however highly dependent on the understanding of the millennium. Thus there is within the early church a polarization of opinion between the materialists and their rather "carnal" ideas and the spiritualizers who (like Origen) were offended by such orgiastic future delights and who preferred to see the millennium as a time of great spiritual pleasures. Since the "materialists" based their interpretation very much on a literal understanding of Old Testament kingdom and restoration promises, they were often condemned as Judaizers. Indeed much millenarianism was very closely linked to Jewish expectation -- thus the comment by Danielou that "Millenarianism is the form in which Jewish Christianity expressed the doctrine of the Parousia." [38]. After the excesses of the Montanists the idea of a spiritual millennium became dominant, leading eventually to the identification of the time of the church with the millennium.

Eventually a very comforting philosophy was developed. The living Christian was bringing in the earthly millennium, the dead Christian was already with his Lord; and the church was in the envious position of both eating cake now and having it in the hereafter.

To the adjustments of a philosophical nature -- the "spiritualization" of hope on the one hand and its "materialization" on the other [39] -- must be added the changes resulting from the very nature of the church-in-the-world. In order to preserve some clear differentiation between church and non-church, to maintain some kind of church unity and to contain the debilitating effects of various "infections" that were attacking the Christian organism, efforts were

made to present some sort of unified front, to fend off the worst "infectious" errors and to provide a more organized structure.

The confrontation with the varied groups coming under the umbrella term "gnostics" presented the greatest crisis to the nascent church after the attempts to retain Christianity within the bounds of Judaism. The need to define doctrine in clear terms to meet the spiritualizing and allegorizing gnosis brought about the beginnings of the rigid formulation of faith -- the expression of belief in a creedal form, assent to which became the test of orthodoxy and eventually, the means of salvation.

The setting up of a normative canon in response to Marcion's heterodox emendation of the apostolic writings, and the preoccupation (of subsequent centuries) with the doctrine of God and of Christ left little time for expanding the concept of the church's hope. In a sense such a parousia hope became more and more irrelevant since it did not appear to deal with the problem subjects of the time, nor did it relate to an increasingly organized church concerned with its own position in the flow of history. The parousia is not eliminated from belief, nor is it denied; it is retained as part of the various creedal statements of the church and perhaps continued as more of a popular hope than the concern of the theologians. [40].

The popularizing of the church's hope in a type of "revival" movement was paradoxically one of the most damaging influences on the parousia doctrine. The work of Montanus and his followers was an attempt to correct the "falling away" -- the loss of the prophetic

office and the decline in evidence of the Holy Spirit's presence, the increasing formalization of belief and worship and above all the decay in the expectant attitude of the church. Montanism's emphasis brought together spirit-revealed prophecy and its rapid fulfilment in the immediacy of the coming kingdom, the new age that was just about to be installed.

While Montanism was a mixture of many factors (including a strong emphasis on perfectionism and the leading of an ascetic life), it is the emphasis on the ways of the past, a harking back to early days of the Christian community, that predominate. Thus it is best viewed as a conservative reaction, a re-emphasis on declining ideals, an attempt to return to "primitive Christianity" (the first of many such attempts). "The initial popularity of Montanism points to anxiety and discontent. It stood for, though it distorted, some things which had been prominent in primitive Christianity: confidence in immediate action of the Holy Spirit, prophecy as its normal medium, expectation of a speedy Parousia, stern preparation for it." [41]. "Montanism revived in a most vigorous fashion the sense of immediate urgency and crisis characteristic of primitive eschatology." [42].

This militant adventism (or is it millenarianism?) was marred by unorthodox intrusions -- the setting of dates, the identification of a mountain in Phrygia as the "landing point" of Christ and of the New Jerusalem, the introduction of extreme asceticism (all Christians to be celibate, rigorous fasting, severe penance and so on), along with the great appreciation of martyrdom. (In this latter point, Montanism was hardly alone since various writers within "orthodox" Christianity

promoted similar attitudes. Perhaps this was just one "overemphasis" of this apocalyptic community).

Looking in from the outside it seemed that the stress on the parousia was the main point of imbalance (this certainly provided the impetus to Montanism's missionary zeal) and the reason behind the extremes of this counter-church. Add the emphasis on spirit-filled leaders rather than an official church hierarchy and it is not surprising that Montanism was put beyond the pale, outside of what was now deemed orthodox.

The long history of Montanism with its effective missionary work and organizational structure could not but adversely affect the official church. No doubt in the eyes of the "orthodox" brethren the great error of Montanism was the undue emphasis given to eschatology, in particular the parousia. As a result it is hardly surprising that little promotion of this belief occurs in the writings of the official church, and this failure of adventism during the latter half of the second century may well have contributed to the success of the trend to spiritualize the advent or to make the parousia so far off as to make its relevance negligible.

Under attack from both external forces (including the threat against its very existence -- persecution) and internal dissent, the church found it necessary to change its rather tolerant attitude so that it might survive. Heresy attacked the spirit of the church, the pagan government the body. A Christian had no rights since he was practising an unrecognized religion and possessed only a degree of

toleration dependent upon the particular emperor of the time. While persecution did revive the fading hope of escape from a hostile world, this was sporadic and during the times of indifferent toleration attempts were made to justify the position of the church and the virtues of the Christian. He was declared to be an upright and clean-living citizen of the present order, possessed of a good moral character and only "revolutionary" in terms of his religious beliefs, not in his political actions. This is the great age of the apologetic, the defence of the value and correctness of Christianity against the charges of subversion and moral laxness. Yet the need to be a faithful steward and to "occupy" until Christ came presented the difficulty of living a respectable life of hard work in the present world while still theoretically looking for a better world that was soon to break in. For some this was a very trying practical difficulty and the desire to "conform" in matters of society and practice made the expectation of a new world order difficult to maintain. The present world appeared much less evil than many had said and the keen anticipation of Christ's glorious return to take the saints home to paradise seemed much less necessary.

Others, resisting the dreams of the world, could look back to the blessings already available in Christ. As Filson remarks, "the more he [the Christian] sensed the greatness of his present privilege, the less prominent could be his emphasis on what was still to come."  
[43].



The focus becomes backward rather than forward. The ecclesiastical observances that had developed also hindered an "upward-looking" hope. The feast days, the annual days of remembrance, the regular cycle of worship meetings -- even the Eucharist -- by their very repetition cooled expectancy as service followed service and year followed year in an unending succession. Feeling lapsed into formalism and all remained "as it was from the beginning."

These varied factors of increased regulation in belief and worship, the increased structuring of the Church and the emergence of a hierarchial structure that decided for the believers (identifying the bishop rather than the people as the church), the need to define doctrine in response to divergences and outright denial of the faith, and all the other determinants made the initial hope of the church -- the personal return of the church's "founder" -- that much more difficult to retain. In particular the setting down of required beliefs into set forms removed some of the essence of hope. The parousia loses its incisiveness as it becomes a proposition that must be agreed to rather than a personal experience that engenders hope and motivates the receiver. As Beasley-Murray puts it: "At best it is a dogma to be believed, but it no longer inspires." [44].

That is not to apportion blame. The Christian church could hardly have survived (or so it would seem) without organizing and defining doctrine in response to the threats which, it appeared, could well have overthrown it. Yet as the church became more and more a

permanent institution for the believers rather than a temporary shelter on the way "home", some reduction and temporizing of the Christian hope was bound to occur.

### 3 Church and State: The Changed Hope.

The elevation of Christianity from despised "atheism" to the status of the officially recognized religious system of the Roman Empire ensured that the trend towards organizational structuring of the church -- the institutionalization of the People of God -- was made a permanent direction for future growth. With the aid of civil power, the church was able to ensure its own survival and to cut down those who might oppose or weaken it, first by excommunication from the source of salvation (membership of the church) and then later by execution.

Perhaps some deep-thinking churchmen of Constantine's time saw the official recognition of Christianity as the beginning of the rule of saints on earth. Many undoubtedly welcomed the new order as being conducive to the better fulfilment of the church's task. But the rise to "official religion" status brought in its train the introduction of various non-Christian beliefs and practices into the church and the gradual insinuation of contemporary philosophy and ethics.

Another far-reaching result was the confirmation of the church's position as the agency of salvation within the world, God's institution on earth with heavenly powers. Thus for many the great hope of the first Christians in a returning Saviour became the great hope in the all-conquering magnificence of the Church; no longer the ekklesia -- the called-out ones -- but the ones that called in, an

all-inclusive formula for the salvation of society. In such a situation the need of the community for an "other-worldly" hope or a future time of peace was far less important [45] than during the era of persecution. As Macquarrie points out, "The Church was at home in society and any revolutionary sense of eschatology had disappeared." [46]. Certainly the formation of such an organization with control in all spheres (religious, political, economic, social and all the rest) did not come about overnight, but by the time of Constantine the seeds of the inclusive, universal system are already there. What chance for a hope in a returning King? The Church was King already!

#### 4 The Redundant Hope? -- The Role of Augustine

The increased realization of the church's self-importance finds considerable expression in the foremost theologian of the first millennium outside of the New Testament era. While Augustine makes it clear that there is to be a return of Christ, that at the very end there will be judgment and completion, his major thought is of God's city -- the church -- in the now. His message is "the Church is even now the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of heaven" and that the millennial reign of the saints with Christ has already begun on earth consequent on his first coming. [47].

In this, Augustine follows the fourth century writer Tichonius who propounded a novel system of interpretation. According to Tichonius the first resurrection is spiritual and the millennium a present reality begun at Christ's first advent. Strangely enough Tichonius was a Donatist and applied the beasts of Revelation 13 and the impure woman of chapter 17 to the Roman church and its leaders. As to the second advent, he expected it in AD 381 since his "millennium" was a period of 350 years. [48]. Despite his heretical position in the eyes of the Roman church, the teachings of Tichonius in regard to biblical interpretation were adopted by others, the most important being Augustine. The emphasis on the first advent and the vagueness of the second advent are prominent in Augustine, while he also promotes the concept of partial comings of Christ through the church. [49].

It must be borne in mind that Augustine is attempting to provide answers in a very troubled time. The carnal nature of the millennium as propounded by the contemporary chiliasts was repugnant to many, Augustine included, and the spiritualization of the millennial reign appeared to be the more pious interpretation. The church also had to be defended as the true and valid institution of God against the attacks of the pagan critics. Above all the church needed a conviction of its "divinely-ordained authority" in an age that threatened the complete annihilation of Christianity by the barbarian invasions. That this was no small worry is evident in the destruction of Christianity in North Africa (Augustine's homeland) by the Vandal host.

Despite the above qualifier, it is to Augustine that the praise or blame must go for providing the theoretical base and systematics that gave the Catholic church its "realized eschatology," its conviction that the Kingdom of God had found its exclusive fulfillment in the institution of the church. As Desroche comments, "It is generally admitted that the decline of this [parousia-based] millenarianism coincided with the rise of Augustinian theology" [50]. This "de-futurizing" of the church's hope by Augustine is remarked on by Reuther:

Augustine's decisive contribution was the reinterpretation of the thousand-year messianic reign as the era of the historical mission of the church ... Such a view, in practice, tended to bind salvation within the

sphere of the historical church as the expression of final and definitive epoch of salvation. The roots of the absolutization of the church, the infallibility of its insight into truth and the perfection of its possession of grace clearly lie in this interpretation of the epoch of the church in terms of a realized eschatology of an already present messianic age. There is literally no future history beyond the church because the church has become the fulfilment and goal of world history. Beyond the church there is only a timeless heaven to which the church itself provides the exclusive gateway. [51].

So for Augustine there is no soon coming of Christ. The parousia is not near, it is not seen in the same way as the New Testament writers describe it, indeed it is reinterpreted in a spiritual, almost evolutionary manner in which the church gradually brings in the kingdom. This loss of "parousia perspective" and the elevation of the church as the present reign of God led to an obscuring of eschatology. Future events were hardly relevant if they brought no improvement on the present.

Augustine's theology provided a useful base for the development of a church-centred world-view that looked to itself and the present as the location and dispensation of salvation. While Augustine himself may not have firmly advocated what later transpired, it is clear that the church, although still professing Christ as its hope, had now replaced the parousia with a hope centred in itself. [52]. The church had become the progressive movement for the salvation of

the world (since outside of the church there was no salvation) and would finally bring in the perfect age on earth.

This church-centred hope came to be the standard thought of the succeeding ages. The monolithic structure that was eventually established found its raison d'être and its fulfilment in such a dogma, and while Christ was still preached as the life-giver, it was life after death (and after purgatory) that was the Christian's hope, not the soon advent of Christ himself. [53].

Once this form of "expectancy," a hope in death, had gained ascendancy, "adventist" hopes became the monopoly of various individuals and fringe groups. [54]. It is to these minorities that attention must now be given, while the major part of Christendom steams on relentlessly, charting its course by (supposed) divine authority, its destiny found in the church as the City of God. [55].



5 Alternative Views Of Hope

Excluded from "mainstream" Christianity with its rather self-motivating hope, the parousia hope became associated with dissident elements that often existed not only at the fringes of Christian thought but also at the more literal fringes of the church's geographical area of influence.

Elements at the fringe of any social or religious movement (and the church is both) tend towards extremism in various directions. This is in no way meant as a disparagement, it is merely an observation. Nor does such a remark mean that those operating at the fringes are more or less faithful to the original traditions or beliefs. At the edges of any system, interactions with a wide range of different factors are higher than at the centre, and such different conditions are likely to result in a number of responses that diverge from the status at the more homogenous and structured centre. Such a model may explain to some extent the persistence and relevance of the parousia hope within such "fringe elements."

Within eastern Christianity there appears to be a continuing attitude of breadth, an inclusive understanding of belief that may have its origins in the prevailing thought-forms of contemporary culture. Thus while the eastern church adopted far more than did the west the rather mystical and spiritualizing concepts of writers such as Origen, the parousia hope continues to be affirmed by some. Nor are these wild extremists, but respected members of the eastern

church. Whether this situation is due to a less rigid formulation of belief in this area, or is a reflection of a differing ecclesiology and concept of authority is hard to say. What is clear is that individuals continue to maintain a strong parousia belief, even though the general trend is away from such literal other-worldly expectations, although the low numbers suggest that they are thinkers at the fringes of the general consensus.

Thus the Persian Jacob Aphrahat (c. 290-c.350) pointed to a literal resurrection at the Second Advent when the kingdom of Christ would be set up. However, it is clear that this coming is not strictly "near" since he considered that prophecies of Daniel 2 and 7 were not completely fulfilled.

In contrast Cyril of Jerusalem (c.315-386) believed the coming to be very near since the heretics inside the church (probably the Arians) are seen as fulfilling Paul's prediction of a falling away (2 Thess. 2:3-10). Antichrist would soon appear. In this latter point, Cyril is typical of the change in emphasis that has occurred. He is more concerned with the coming of Antichrist than the coming of Christ. This focus on the negative aspects of the world's termination is characteristic of many treatises on eschatology of succeeding centuries.

Yet he does emphasize that Christians should look for the coming of Christ in glory and for the resurrection at the advent. This will occur only when the gospel is preached to all the world -- a scriptural note, although it may be seen as illustrative of the idea

of "delay " Cyril remarks on the coming of Antichrist that he is not sure of the time, but he urges his hearers to make themselves "secure beforehand."

Similarly John Chrysostom (c.347-407), for a time patriarch of Constantinople, calls attention to a literal and vivid expectation of the Lord's return, which is the time of resurrection and not to be linked with any "resurrection" of the soul at death. The coming of Christ is to be sudden and unexpected, with Antichrist as the sign of the imminent end.

The anti-Roman stance of the church at Milan provides the setting and perhaps also some of the stimulus for the continuation and re-emphasis of the parousia hope. While the church here can hardly be termed a "fringe group " it must be seen as a counter to what was becoming the major force in Christianity, the church at Rome. The emphasis by Ambrose on the parousia hope is in direct opposition to the prevailing trends of the time, and thus while the church at Milan is hardly at the fringes of the Christian empire, its thinking on the parousia as expressed by Ambrose reflects both an ancient tradition that was rapidly becoming outmoded, and an attack on the increasing strength of beliefs promoted by Rome. Ambrose (c.340-397) speaks of the resurrection of the body at the last trump, a literal second coming and the nearness of the end of the world. (He believed the end would come in his lifetime). In spite of his predilection for the allegorizing of Scripture, Ambrose maintains a firm belief in the real, visible, personal and literal second advent and gives a passionate plea for the necessity of the parousia-hope. [56].

A far clearer expression of the "fringe group" concept is found in the beliefs of the Celtic church. [57]. Not only did this church lie at "the ends of the earth" beyond the continent of Europe, it had both a very different cultural tradition and order of society. This church also experienced a dramatic severing of its links with the continental church and consequently a considerable degree of autonomy and independence was forced upon it.

There can never be an explanation for a religious belief that relies solely on social or environmental factors. It must be admitted that any one particular belief is believed in a way similar to that of the belief in any basic tenet of religion, the belief in God, say. There is no absolute causal relationship between external factors and belief. A system of belief cannot be treated within a completely deterministic framework.

Yet the opposite observation is also clear. No belief is held in isolation to other factors. The parousia hope in particular is related to external influences, and in the present case, to certain social and cultural elements within the Celtic sphere. In comparison with the situation prevailing in continental Europe at the time -- an increasingly structured church order that in many ways paralleled and adopted the old Roman methods of organization -- the Celtic church was a far more open and less formally structured affair, with itinerant priests preaching to small, scattered, agrarian communities that had

no unifying overlord. In such a society there could be no "church" in the highly-ordered, hierarchial sense, only small communities of believers bound together by visiting priests and saintly miracle-workers.

The Celtic lands of the northwest had not been subjected to Roman conquest and occupation, and possessed little in the way of continental philosophy or classical religious tradition. There was no heritage of Greek philosophy, Roman mythology or its classics, nor was there any background of Jewish thought other than what was transmitted through the Old Testament. The Celtic church did not have the cultural and historical traditions of the continentals, but had the myths and legends of native heroes, pagan gods, and mighty men of old. Thus the Celtic church had an independent cultural tradition and world outlook that encouraged, even required, a divergence in the formulation of its religious concepts.

To this was added an independence forced on the British church by the disruption of communication with the continental church due to the barbarian invasions of England and northern France, an attack that caused the dislocation and eventual collapse of the Empire in the west. This enforced self-reliance and the prevailing social and political climate let to the development of a very different style of church order as well as many variations in doctrine and objectives.

This independence of thought that was both culturally promoted and historically enforced leads to a prime example of the parousia hope as an expression of belief by an isolated and relatively independent fringe element; a section of Christianity that is forced to seek its own way and to formulate its particular expression of beliefs out of contact with the major body.

Having few contacts with the continental church, and possessing only a relatively small number of doctrinal books, the Celtic church tended both to preserve traditions that had been altered on the continent (for example, the date of Easter) and to develop those concepts that were particularly useful and relevant to them. It would appear that the parousia hope fell into both categories -- an old-established belief that received new emphasis.

Since they had to rely on the Bible rather than on appeals to the Church Fathers, and being part of a very different cultural tradition, it is not surprising that the parousia-hope is interpreted in a manner out of harmony with the contemporary concepts of the "main" church. Hardinge writes:

A consideration of these Celtic doctrines [including eschatology] reveals a significant independence of thought and exegesis. There might have been here and there the echo of some phrase coined by a theologian of the West, but for the most part the Celtic teacher phrased his understanding of the meaning of the Bible in his own words, seeking always

to apply it to some practical need. Celtic theology is biblical theology with no patristic emphases. [58].

Thus the expectation of the parousia is not dulled by a spiritualized interpretation -- either a hope in the coming of Christ at death or a hope in the coming at the end of the Church's millennial reign. The parousia is taught in clear apostolic terms, with the emphasis on the literal. There is no allegorizing, no speculation, only a hope reflective of that of the early church.

"Patrick and the early Celtic Christians believed that the second advent of Christ and the end of the world were near at hand." [59]. They looked for a returning Christ who would come as Judge, who would come in glory, and who would come for his own to restore them to the perfection of his original creation.

The striking similarity of the hope detailed here to the expression of the parousia in the New Testament reflects the Celtic church's strong emphasis on Biblically-oriented teaching, and it may also reflect some parallels between the church in the first-century Mediterranean world and the fourth and fifth century Celtic world. An identity should not be made, but the picture of small communities of believers meeting together, itinerant evangelists, the newness of the message, all these and more may be correlating factors. While such a comparison may be interesting, its analysis lied outside the scope of this study.

The re-establishment of the connection between Celtic and Roman Christians marks the beginning of the end of Celtic Christianity. The conflict that developed over the evangelisation of England in the seventh and eighth centuries, and the strength (in numerical terms) of the continental position (made very clear in times of disagreement) made the gradual incorporation into the continental church inevitable. While the Celtic church as a recognizable unit is only slowly extinguished, and while certain specific beliefs and practices remained for a time [60], the picture is one of absorption into the larger body. For the Celtic church it meant an adoption of the thought of the majority -- the European church. With its incorporation, the hope of the Celtic church disappears.



## 6 Medieval Differences: Conflicting Hopes

During the Middle Ages various groups and individuals arose in opposition to the Catholic view of a present millennial reign of the church and the rule of God's substitute on earth in the form of the pope. The protest was often a complaint against the worldly living of the clergy and the material demands of the church in the form of taxes and tithes, usually couched in prophetic form using apocalyptic symbolism derived from books such as Daniel and Revelation. Authority was found in some type of direct spiritual revelation, a higher source that superseded the authority of the established church.

In view of the eschatological framework of such messages and the emphasis laid on a future hope, there is a point of contact with the parousia belief. Although it is difficult to generalise over such a wide span of space and time, the frequent use of the indwelling spirit to justify statements and actions and the repeated emphasis on millennarianism of a rather "socio-economic" kind suggests a reaction more in line with a rebellion of the have-nots against the haves rather than a re-emphasis of the parousia doctrine or some kind of theological rethinking. [61].

In fact while there is much in the way of the apocalyptic and revolutionary such as the avenging saints smiting the apostates and pagans, the identification of the pope as antichrist and so on, the parousia belief is of very limited importance. The stress is on the rapidly-approaching end, the judgments of an angry God and the blessed

future of the saints rather than on the return of Christ. Messianic hopes reside more in the various individuals and charismatic leaders than in the true Messiah.

So Theuda preaches in the villages around Mainz during the ninth century, proclaiming her special revelation and the imminent end of the world; Tanchelm expounds his millennial beliefs in twelfth-century Antwerp; while a little later Eon de l'Etoile claims to be Christ himself returned in glory. [62]. No doubt the expectancy engendered by the parousia belief aided the rise of such "messianic" claimants but the belief itself is submerged in a confusion of worldly hopes and aberrant theology. Such phenomena should be more properly classified as political, social and economic with a pseudo-Christian philosophy providing a unifying "manifesto" rather than an outworking of the Christian hope as detailed in the New Testament. The use of such a doctrine is only peripheral, providing the "explanation" either for particular Messianic claims or for the need to oppose the antichrist, the apostate church. So often millennial dreams are in total opposition to the message of the parousia of Christ that one wonders whether millennialism as expressed in Christian history is really "Christian" at all. [63]. Perhaps such chiliasm should more properly be described as hope engendered by dissatisfaction with the present and desire for a better future, a non-religious hope for change with an overlay of religious terminology. The relevance of such movements to the history of the parousia-belief lies in their distortion and misuse of the Christian expectation, placing the parousia in a context of earthly restitution rather than heavenly salvation.

7 The Joachimite Challenge: A New Hope?

After many centuries of dominance, Augustine's interpretation of the millennial reign of the church was challenged. A spiritual revival and a renewed interest in biblical prophecy brought a re-thinking of the traditional concepts of the Church's absolute and eternal sovereignty. The central figure in this movement is Joachim of Fiore (1130-1202), who set forth a "dispensational" pattern of spiritual history. From Creation to the First Advent was the Age of the Father, and since then the church had been living in the Age of the Son. The inauguration of the final Age, that of the Spirit, was about to occur. The church would then become a pure, spiritual church and a type of perfect millennium would begin.

Joachim himself was reluctant to set dates, but some of his followers were a little less cautious. The years 1200 and 1260 were proposed as the beginning of the spiritual age. Joachim was also unsure as to the position of the second advent in his new scheme, it could be either at the beginning of the age of the Spirit or at the end.

This renewed emphasis on time and the present imperfection of the church brought a change in outlook. The church now had to look forward to its time of supremacy, it did not possess everything in the present reign of the saints. For Augustine there had been a kind of identity between the historical process and the work of the church. By his interpretation of future prophecy Joachim destroyed this

identity, and a new sense of urgency entered in, bringing the idea of preparation for the coming future age, rather than emphasizing the dispensing of salvation in the present.

A useful over-simplification would be to term the traditional view an "evolutionary" and progressive one, while that of Joachim and his disciples was definitely "catastrophic," an inbreaking of the perfect Age of the Spirit.

Not surprisingly, the futuristic aspect of Joachim's interpretation resulted in a re-studying of eschatology. If the last things were soon to come, they became of far greater import than in the previous schema. M.-D. Chenu, remarking on twelfth-century Spiritualist thought, concludes that:

The final trait of this theology ... was that the evangelical revival brought a sharpened sensitivity to eschatology. This was an expected reaction, since the success of monastic Christianity had led many souls into the subtle temptation of surrendering themselves complacently to heavenly contemplation, as if to get a foretaste of glory. The church they said, had sanctified the world ... According to the Cistercian Otto of Friesling, Constantine had inaugurated an era of sacred peace, extending to secular princes, it was now reaching fulfilment in a radiant church.

As it settled down in the world, this monastic eschatological ideal withdrew into its secure fantasies, inattentive to the drama of life, to the desperate call of the church in a state of expansion and peril. It was the apostolic movement which renewed the messianic hope, seeking to detect the advance signs of the time, signs at least of the urgency imposed by that consummation. [64].

The Joachimites and their inheritors, the Franciscan Spirituals, were to shape much subsequent thinking. Indeed it seems likely that the prophetic identifications made were passed on and became part of the Reformation tradition, although as Chenu notes there were dangers: "The way was perhaps open to interpretations by a delirious messianism; at least it was an entirely different eschatology which called for reflection upon the course of history and which draws understanding and drive for the present from the future." [65]. More overt dangers were those experienced by some Spirituals themselves -- the drastic punishment meted out to them for their "heresy" by the church authorities.

The Cistercians were also greatly affected by this new interpretation. The result, according to Coulton, was that "their eschatology was practically that of the early disciples; a close expectation of the Second Coming and a conviction of the imminent appearance of Antichrist ..." Yet their ideas were greatly coloured by medieval concepts of judgment and punishment, and mariolatry was an integral part of their eschatological view. As Coulton continues,

"the medieval artist, who often failed to catch the subtler harmonies of heaven, was never at a loss to represent the horrors of hell; and this disproportion in artistic execution corresponds to a similar want of perspective in men's minds. Christ was now predominantly the dreadful Judge: Mary was the minister of mercy ..." [66]. In this, the Spirituals are far away from the true meaning of the parousia.

Despite the emphasis on the eschatological, the views of Joachim and the more extreme opinions of those who made use of his theories do not make for a return to apostolic concepts. The idea of the three ages is not scriptural and the varied and often contradictory identifications of prophetic symbols are polemic rather than actual. Nor can the dates put forward for the end of the age be correlated with the New Testament and the emphasis on the coming of Antichrist rather than parousia of Christ reverses the outlook of the apostolic writings. [67].

While the Joachimites were awaiting the new age, the "Angelic Doctor" of the Roman church was busy compiling his systematic theology. In his interpretation of the Second Advent, Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) followed Augustine in placing Christ's return at the end of the age (of the church) in a highly-ordered scheme of divine judgment, resurrection, reward and punishment. His major contribution was to formalize the church's position in a rational and well-argued case. The Catholic church still holds to this interpretation and the second coming remains as part of the final "balancing of the books" at some future date.

8 The Taborites: A Violent Hope

The millenarian groups of fifteenth century Bohemia known collectively as the Taborites [68] were among those that utilized parts of the Joachimite teachings. The characteristic ideas of a rapidly approaching world end and the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit are part of their ideology which was far more revolutionary than that of most Joachimites. The following review must of necessity be very brief.

The Taborites are of particular interest as they well illustrate the change from a passive awaiting of the end to an active revolution in order to accomplish it. In such a change, a corresponding shift in doctrinal emphasis is also apparent. In their relatively passive period up to the beginning of 1420 the Bohemian chiliasts rested confident in the soon coming of Christ to inaugurate his kingdom and to eradicate evil. The destruction of the town of Usti and the founding of Tabor mark the beginning of active warfare on the part of the saints, the ushering in of the Age of Perfection by the force of arms. In this latter phase much less is heard of the coming of Christ since the responsibility for the termination of the present age and the initiation of the new is now with the "true" Christian community itself. The military leaders of the Taborites assumed the role of King's assistants, and the coming of the King to his kingdom became contingent on the success of his lieutenants. [69].

Such a development is hardly remarkable since if it is men who are to bring about the transformation of present world affairs (even with some divine assistance) then the expectation of a returning Christ who will accomplish such a change is no longer such a practical necessity. This change of hope is typical of revolutionary chiliasm, and once sanction is given to this type of "forced transformation" by the saints then the parousia hope becomes in reality only a solution held in reserve, a contingency plan for deliverance when things go wrong. [70].



9 The Intrusion Of The Reformation: The Revival Of Hope?

The complex matrices of thought and event that come under the all-inclusive term "the Reformation" cannot be linked to any one principle causative factor. Doctrine and philosophy are intertwined with political, social and religious elements to which is added the impact and effect of the various personalities to make a thoroughgoing analysis of such a historical "event" a practical impossibility. Yet the reorientation of a large section of "the Church" and the reaction of the equally important remainder require an attempt at understanding some of the determinant factors. Despite the more obvious "triggers": the indulgences, the clerical abuses, Luther's studies in Romans and the rest, one major dysfunction [71] is "a return to the realist, historical perspective of Biblical eschatology which envisages both a new heaven and a new earth, an ultimate end in which the fulness of creation is maintained unimpaired in union with a heavenly consummation." [72]. Such a "world explanation" creates a condition of disequilibrium in the current religious system and may be seen as a necessary precondition to the resultant revolution in doctrine and practice of which the Reformation is composed.

In fact one can regard the ecclesiology of the Medieval church from Augustine to Luther as being related to a particular view of eschatology. In Aquinas, the great exponent of Medieval Church theology, eschatology is seen as a gradual process of transmutation into "supernature" and thus the Church, the final authority, is as "static as history," [73].

The reintroduction of a more "interventionist" approach in the understanding of God's relationship to history brought not only an expectation similar to that of the early church but also an expansion of the theme of judgment. Luther's eschatology is, as various writers have noted, very much influenced by the belief in an impending judgment associated with the parousia.

An appreciation of Luther's precarious situation makes his emphasis understandable. At many points in his life he was threatened with imminent death and the concept of a righteous Judge provided consolation and the assurance of final vindication. The intense antagonism of the Catholic church establishment, his excommunication, his trial and the spectacle of religious persecution by the civil powers convinced Luther that only through God's direct intervention was he protected, and caused him to identify (with increasing vehemence) the Pope as Antichrist and the Catholic church as the blasphemous beast. He considered that his only real hope was for Christ to come as vindicator of the righteous and destroyer of the wicked.

Luther expected the end to occur in the immediate future. [74]. He rushed out his translation of Daniel because he wanted it published before Christ came. Yet Luther also does mention longer time periods of up to four hundred years before the advent, based on certain Bible prophecies, although he expected these to be shortened for "the sake of the elect." [75].

In many ways Luther expresses a pessimistic world view and sees the return of Christ as the only hope for the Christian. Luther is not really concerned with the formation of an organized church (although this is forced on him by events) and is much more involved with the idea of individual preparation for the impending coming and judgment. [76].

In this Luther is somewhat distant from Calvin and his concept of the church organization as the kingdom of God on earth awaiting its consummation, a structured unit which waits in its totality for the coming; a form of eschatological ecclesiology as opposed to Luther's eschatology which has ecclesiological requirements faute de mieux. [77]. Calvin writes "For to what end did Christ come except to collect us all into one body from that dispersion in which we are now wandering. Therefore, the nearer His coming is, the more we ought to labour that the scattered may be assembled and united together, that there may be one fold and one shepherd." [78]. This is Calvin's evangelistic drive; the one church ready for its final and total consummation. [79]. The emphasis is very much on the future of the holy congregation, while for Luther the greater concern is with the preparedness of the believer for the parousia and judgment. Yet to make of this distinction a major point of difference between Luther and Calvin would hardly be correct. The question is one of emphasis, and both look towards the parousia with expectation and joy.

10 The Radical Hope

The resurrection of the proximate and intrusive character of the parousia by the early Reformers provides the setting for the activities of the more radical groups whose insistence on the approaching end and the drastic preparations required for the new reign combine both Reformation eschatology and medieval chiliasm. It is the particular view of society -- religious and secular -- that provides the clear demarcation between the Reformers and the Radicals: the doctrinal understanding of the church and the world. These two antithetical viewpoints result in two very different types of action. Luther and Calvin were concerned to modify and utilise the old order so as to benefit the Christian while on earth. The Radicals on the other hand denied the old order and awaited the inbreaking of a new "heavenly" society:

This new order subsists within the present era as a hostile and antagonistic beachhead of a new and coming world, which will soon take over completely as the messianic community of the New Heaven and Earth which is openly manifest with the return of Christ.

Anabaptists recovered the primitive apocalyptic view of the church as a transcendental community that leaps ahead of this present world in anticipation of the future age to come. [80].

Such a viewpoint could hardly avoid the concept of the parousia, and the belief in a soon-returning Christ was frequently a part of the Radical message. This can be understood not only with reference to their view of the church but also as a result of the widespread provision of the Bible in the vernacular. The impact of printing must not be underestimated, since this technological innovation had major consequences in the area of religious belief and understanding, a factor that can only be but mentioned here. The very fact that anyone able to read his mother tongue had the opportunity to expound and interpret Scripture is of great importance in understanding the increased emphasis given to the parousia hope. The frequent reference in the New Testament to the return of Christ, and the receptive attitude of many in a turbulent and perplexing time to such a message of hope must be seen as providing major causative factors for the frequent adoption of the parousia hope within "Radical" groups.

Most obeyed the Scriptural command to wait for the coming of the Lord and were confirmed pacifists. Indeed the stress on a soon return of Judge and Vindicator encouraged such an attitude of patience and non-violence. However some were prepared to suspend the moral and ethical implications of the approaching End, and to utilise this belief as a rallying call to violent overthrow of the civil government.

One of the early radicals was Thomas Muentzer, whose preaching of an imminent establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth was coupled with a type of revolutionary social ideology. In his paper on Muentzer, Zuck attempts to answer the question, "Does eschatological hope result in a responsible life?" [81]. If Muentzer is taken as a representative example, the answer must surely be no. His preaching was inflammatory and he incited his listeners to violence:

But in his sermon to the princes, Muentzer was not content with finding revolution in St. Paul. He used a more inflammatory text, the second chapter of Daniel, to prove that the Lord would complete the history of salvation by means of the divine covenant, and that he had elected a new Daniel (Muentzer) to lead the faltering princes into actual realization of the eschatological Kingdom on earth, the long awaited Fifth Monarchy. What should the princes do? "Wipe out the godless," said Muentzer... [82].

The end of Muentzer's hope was on the "battlefield" of Frankenhausen in 1525, when half of the "army" of peasants were slaughtered by a combined army of Protestants and Catholics. His eschatological hope was "irresponsible," concludes Zuck. [83]. Muentzer brought chaos and disaster to many, which was due to a large degree to his millennial expectations. Yet as seems so often the case, the actual parousia hope appears to be of minor importance in Muentzer's scheme. His use of violent action was the means of consummation, and his eschatological hope cannot be equated with the

parousia hope. Unfortunately such differentiation of eschatological hopes is not often made, and the belief in the return of Christ is confused with the hope of a present earthly Kingdom of the righteous brought in by violent means. The abuse of the original eschatological hope by certain well-meaning radicals brought the parousia into disrepute.

Thus Nicholas Storch, one of the "Zwickau prophets," is supposed to have "claimed that with his gift of prophecy he could foresee that God was about to wipe out the present spiritual and earthly authorities in the church, and that the divine Kingdom would be inaugurated by God's own pious, bold people." [84]. Such attitudes, and the non-fulfilment of their predictions, brought distrust and suspicion to eschatological hopes in general, the parousia included. But worse was to come.

The best known and yet probably least representative example of the radical emphases are the unfortunate events at Muenster between 1533 and 1535. [85]. Here the revolutionary expectations were transformed into armed rebellion against the secular and religious government, and attitudes of perfection were adopted in a situation still very much a part of an imperfect and sinful world. In their attempt to bring in the kingdom of righteousness through the use of the sword, these apocalyptic visionaries destroyed the real hope of the parousia and replaced it with a hope in their own abilities, assisted by an avenging God. Their desired utopia was bound to founder on the fallen and perverse nature of man himself. They too were men. But this is to anticipate the story.

The desire to go beyond the Reformers on the subject of baptism was the initial motivation for the Anabaptist groups. Doctrinal variation among other beliefs soon followed, particularly on the nature of the church, and with the onset of civil persecution due to the apparent revolutionary emphasis (equated with political subversion by many at the time) an apocalyptic vision of the coming battle between the saints and the apostates was promoted by some.

The expulsion of the Anabaptists from Zuerich spread the radical beliefs through southern Germany, Austria, and further east. Some migrated to the relative safety of the Low Countries, until persecution began there too. The terrible persecution inflicted on the "re-baptizers" cannot but have increased their eschatological consciousness, the belief that they were living just before the End. This does not necessarily mean that they were led into political rebellion or revolution, however. Most Anabaptists were highly pacifistic. Michael Sattler [86], an early Anabaptist leader, attempted to organize some of the communities and their beliefs. On the question of violence he stated that "If the Turk should come, no resistance should be offered to him, for it is written, Thou shalt not kill." [87].

The Schleithem Confession of 1527, which owes much to the influence of Sattler, has this as part of article six: "The Sword, which is ordained to be used by the worldly magistrates for the punishment of the wicked, but [sic] must not be used by Christians even in self-defence." [88]. That this was meant seriously is



confirmed by later events -- just after the Schleithelm meeting Sattler and a number of other Anabaptists met their deaths from the worldly magistrates' "sword." Their respect for civil government is therefore the more surprising, since Anabaptists were severely punished and widely persecuted by the civil authorities.

Yet not all Anabaptists remained such submissive subjects. Others adopted more antagonistic views, and saw the rule of these worldly persecutors as soon to be destroyed. The line between awaiting the End and ushering it in is a fine one, and some Anabaptists do not seem to have been prepared to wait so quietly. The apocalyptic preaching by the minority that advocated a more direct form of action brought disaster. Many of the persecuted were ready to follow a visionary leader in the establishment of the new order, the kingdom of God on earth.

One such visionary was Melchior Hofmann, "the evil genius of Anabaptism," [89], who had been "rebaptized" in 1529. He became an influential leader-teacher of the north German and Dutch Anabaptists. Hofmann calculated the date of the parousia to be 1533 and died in a prison cell still awaiting his Lord's return. The significance of his prophecy lies not with Hofmann himself, but with one of his followers, Jan Matthys.

Matthys was convinced of the necessity to bring in the new society by whatever means. With the background of Hofmann's prophecy and hearing of Radical successes in the town of Muenster in northern Germany, he led a large group of Dutch Anabaptists to the city and

gained political control. All those unwilling to be baptized were forced to leave.

Muenster was then identified as the New Jerusalem in an intense expectancy of the imminent end. After the death of Matthys during the siege undertaken by both Catholic and Lutheran forces the leadership was taken over by Jan van Leyden who instituted a legal system that invoked the death penalty for many "offences" and introduced communism of property and also polygamy. While military exigences can account for some of these actions, it is clear that by now the fanatics had taken complete control. Indeed it seems likely that Jan van Leyden became insane towards the end, being crowned king and parading through the town in majestic robes.

At length the besieging forces were victorious, the defenders were either slain or captured, to be tortured later. The harm done to the Anabaptist movement was immense as they were now generally regarded as highly dangerous, and condemned from all sides as political revolutionaries and religious heretics. Anabaptists paid dearly for the actions of these extremists: "It has been estimated that in the ten years after the fall of Muenster no fewer than 30,000 Anabaptists were put to death in Holland and Friesland alone." [90].

Yet this revolutionary episode cannot be made to exemplify the beliefs of the majority. Most Anabaptists were totally pacifistic and firmly believed that Christ would return to justify them, only a minority being convinced of the necessity of violence to bring in the kingdom. [91]. As Christie-Murray correctly differentiates, "Some

were strongly Adventist, accepting the almost immediate return of Christ, other were Millennialists, looking for a rule of the saints (themselves) over a world subjugated by Christ ruling from an earthly throne." [92].

The Muenster aberration has its ideological roots in these millennialist concepts, not in the almost opposite ideas of adventism which represents a greater consensus of belief on eschatological questions. Yet the reign of Jan van Leyden at Muenster dramatized for many, both then and since, the dangers of eschatological beliefs, and the parousia-hope was marred by unsavoury connections with polygamy, religious fanaticism, execution of the saints' opponents and communism of property. It appears almost inevitable that as soon as a parousia-hope is formulated then some faction will take hold of such a future expectation and turn it into a dangerous and damaging absolutist concept to the detriment of the Christian's valid hope of salvation-consummation. [93].

The usual reaction of the rest of Christendom to such activities is one of opposition and denial [94] to the extent that the parousia-hope is also rejected. This process of extremism and resultant backlash necessitates an understanding of the integral features of such eschatologically-dominated movements. The key is not the parousia belief but the admixture of chiliasm (that goes back to Jewish antecedents [95]) and a combination of social, economic and political unrest that finds its expression in millennial form. [96]. The parousia doctrine is normally of very minor significance and finds only limited expression in the "ideology" of the movement.

While the parousia concept is frequently one of the eschatological beliefs held by those of the more "Radical" persuasion, (necessary beliefs in view of the world-scheme that required a new church and a new social order, coupled with a very Biblical religion), it is not shown in a good light by the dramatic affairs of either the battle at Frankenhausen or the seige of Muenster. The forcible creation of the kingdom of God (and also the "stage-management" of the parousia, one presumes) is not a truly Christian concern. The use of violence surely runs counter to the basic message of Christ, and of his divinely-effected not humanly-arranged parousia. It would seem that most Anabaptists accepted such reasoning. Payne comments: "The use of force was almost universally rejected by the Anabaptists, save in the quite exceptional circumstances heading up to the Muenster episode." [97].

Both pacifist and revolutionary apparently had similar eschatological objectives. The disagreement was over the means by which the hope was to be achieved. As Littell remarks, eschatology was a common ground for revolutionaries and non-resistants.[98]. Both the violent Anabaptists of Muenster and the pacifist Hans Hut were agreed on the approaching return of Christ.[99]. Yet the two "wings" are diametrically opposed on the present implications of such eschatological concepts, and this may be the reason that Smithson comments that "On eschatology there were great differences of opinion among the Anabaptists. In some groups the belief that in the near future Christ would come to reign over His saints and to subdue all their enemies, accounted for the wildest fanaticism." [100]. Littell

on the other hand terms Anabaptist views as "Quiet Eschatology."  
[101].

All the foregoing demonstrates the varied aspects of eschatological hope which cannot be made identical with the parousia hope. The importance and emphasis given to the parousia expectation, the question of violent and human "assistance," the exact nature of what is to be expected -- all this determines the validity and the influence of the parousia belief. Yet it does seem clear that the actual parousia hope does not attain the supreme place in Anabaptist eschatological thinking. It certainly did not do so in the affair at Muenster. This episode does illustrate once again the fact that the parousia hope can be used as part of a "revolutionary" ideology, but that if this occurs in a violent and this-worldly form then the parousia hope is changed from a hope in divine action into the validation and culmination of a man-centred revolution. Those like the Hutterites did not make the parousia into a means of overthrowing the present through the work of man, but treated it in accordance with the outlook of the New Testament writers, and incorporated it into their pacifistic outlook on the world -- which turned to God for their eventual deliverance.

The differentiation mentioned by Christie-Murray above is useful in analysing the attitudes to the parousia: Adventist or Millenarian [102]. While there is some overlap in the concepts, the methodology of attainment is very different. The basic point of divergence is on the question of how the eschatological hope is to be achieved. Millenarianism focuses on the bringing in of the Kingdom for the

vindication and pleasure of the "righteous," and often is seen as having to be brought in by violent methods. Adventism can be seen as having its primary focus in the activity of God and in the personal nature of his Advent. The efforts of man cannot be stressed in such an understanding.

Whatever the end, whatever the circumstances, whatever the motivations, there is no warrant in the parousia promise of Christ for the activities of the violent Anabaptists. Their hope becomes a misguided, hopeless hope, and their actions compromise the true nature of the parousia hope.

11 A Confused Hope: Post-Reformation Parousia Beliefs

With the greater exegetical freedom brought by the Reformation came the multiplication of prophetic interpretations and advent expectations with all their consequent disharmony and infighting. This is particularly true of the troubled times of the Civil War and the Commonwealth in seventeenth century England. The most significant expressions of eschatological thought for the period are found here, as a brief consideration of Continental attitudes will show.

The conflicting and often abstruse theological arguments in Germany reduced the thought of the Reformation to creedal formulae and theological systems, and stifled the new expression of a living expectation. The resulting reaction of Pietism turned thought inward and the emphasis on individual experience gave new life to the spiritualisation of hope at the expense of a more "realistic" advent expectation. Even so, a change in the still-prevalent concept of a present millennium to a future millennium begun by Christ's return did occur. Daniel Cramer was one of the first German pre-millennialists whilst Matthias Hoe von Hoenegg promoted the expectation of a heavenly reign of the saints during the millennium (as did his Scottish contemporary, William Guild).

In France the Huguenots continued to promote their opinion that the Pope was Antichrist and would be destroyed by the return of Christ, an imminent reality. The strength of persecution against them perhaps prevented a more positive approach to the parousia expectation

as they were more concerned with their own survival and vindication than with any analysis of the deeper meanings of Christ's return.

So it is primarily in England that the interest lies. The study of prophecy, especially those of Daniel, led many to an expectation of the soon-coming kingdom of Christ on earth. The Lord Protector, Oliver Cromwell, justified his position and actions by such an expectation and the Little Parliament of 1653 attempted to set up Christ's kingdom by legal enactments. The whole history of the Commonwealth is set against a background of millennial hope, the most extreme but certainly not the the only manifestation being that of the Fifth Monarchy men. They identified the stone of Daniel 2 as the coming kingdom of God, the fifth of the "world empires," and they saw their role as bringing in this new kingdom, by force if necessary.

Such ideas were only extreme forms of what was a widespread belief in the soon return of Christ and the inauguration of the millennium. [103]. A vast amount of popular literature reflects the interest of the whole community, not just of the scholarly world, in awaiting the coming Saviour. There was little uniformity of opinion: writers such as John Tillinghurst expounded a spiritual rather than a secular and militant millennium, while Thomas Goodwin wrote of the coming of Christ to rule with the saints after the resurrection. Peter Sterry waxed eloquent on the rediscovered "treasure" of the Second Coming, and William Sherwin stated his conviction that "the great Personal appearance of the coming of Christ, now shortly approaches." [104].



But once more the parousia hope is confused by many with a type of Judaistic messiah's reign on earth, a temporal and secular rule which reflects to some degree the troubled political and social environment: the execution of a king supposedly ruling Divine Right, the rise in the power of the gentry (or was it a reaction to an encroachment on their establishment power?), the frustrated expectations of a Puritan community -- all of which and more found justification in the attempt to initiate God's direct rule on earth. The activists and the extremists are the ones remembered [105], the pacifists and those "awaiting on the Lord" for his advent and not for an earthly millennium brought in by man's efforts remain generally unrecorded and forgotten.

The legacy to subsequent generations is a consciousness of Christ's proximate return. The expression of such consciousness is in multiple form, and the developments of interpretation such as the preterist, futurist and millennial views come from this period and the post-Reformation age as a whole. [106].

12 Hope in an Enlightened Age

The second advent beliefs of the eighteenth century are an extension of the many and varied views that arose in the period following the Reformation. The role played by such a belief must be seen against the background of the times, the social, economic, political and religious environment of the particular location. Yet the belief is not only reflective of conditions, it is also an active agent in the moulding of contemporary thought and practice.

The conflict in the American colonies between the different communities with their different philosophies, particularly the antipathy between the theocratic Puritan groups and the sceptical products of the Enlightenment can be related to but not equated with the two mutually exclusive eschatological theories: the long-established premillennial views and the new postmillennial views (mainly due to Daniel Whitby) that were spreading in from an England now almost dominated by this interpretation.

The postmillennial view looked at the resurrection as a figurative event with a consequent temporal millennium, brought in by the gradual process of socio-political development and the proclamation of world peace. The premillennialists on the other hand were opposed to what they saw as a spiritualized and degenerate hope, a hope centred on the progress of a beneficent mankind. They took a much more pessimistic view of the human race which needed either the Coming of Christ alone to restore the world and bring about God's

Kingdom, or the strenuous activities of the saints; (and perhaps also the punishment of the wicked by the righteous) along with Divine aid which would enable Christ to come into his kingdom.

The Great Awakening in the America of the 1740's saw a widespread revival in religious activity, a movement which has been well documented. Yet there is at the back of this revival the influence of the parousia-hope in many minds, for example Cotton Mather: "O that our minds may be as deeply engaged in thinking on the second coming of our Lord, as the saints of old were in thinking on His first." Samuel Willard was also convinced: "This is the day that I love that I wait for ... It will not be long before that day shall come; these are the last days, and the winding up of the time that we live in." [107].

The "eschatological communities" that to varying degrees expected the end of the world and the coming of the Messiah are also of interest. Although their part in promoting a general advent expectancy is minor they well illustrate the prevailing beliefs and attitudes of the time. [108].

It is hard to escape the conclusion that the parousia expectation played a significant part in the enthusiasm of the early eighteenth century in America. [109]. This was not to last, however. The influence of Deism and Enlightened thought coming especially towards the latter part of the century, along with the rise of progressivism and later the events and effects of the American Revolution brought a renewed confidence in the affairs of men and a consequent reduction in the hope of God's soon intervention. Certainly there was no

widespread anticipation of a returning Christ -- man in his enlightened state seemed to provide a better, and certainly more tangible, hope.

The self-analysis consequent on the American Revolution brought a national awareness which was expressed in eschatological (although not necessarily Christian) terms; the idea of providential purpose later termed "Manifest Destiny." Thus although the Puritan experiment to create God's kingdom in the New World had failed, the new combination of states with a continent at its disposal saw a new telos, expressed according to the individual's belief: the opportunity of a deified Province for the betterment of Man, the gift of God to his faithful servants so that they might be part of a real, earthly yet Divine Kingdom [110], or the community of believers given the means by which to live until Christ returned in glory.

The religious revival in America during the eighteenth century has its counterpart in the "Methodist" movement in England. Although separation from the established church did not formally take place until after John Wesley's death, the movement was often at odds with the state Church. But it does not seem that Adventism or Millennarianism played any real part in the movement. Wesley certainly believed in a Second Advent and called it a "comfortable doctrine" [111], but its importance appears to be rather slight. Later in life Wesley adopted the double millennium views of Bengel.

Among the more unusual and at the time highly controversial views of the returning Christ were those of Emanuel Swedenborg. Believing that he was living in the last times, Swedenborg claimed that the coming of Christ was not a personal appearance but an invisible revelation to Swedenborg himself. The Last Judgment, he held, had taken place in 1757, and the "Coming" supposedly occurred in 1770. This "coming" was envisaged by his followers as present, "at hand," the instrumentality for establishing the New Church. [112].

This spiritual, invisible interpretation has attracted others (such as the explanation by the Jehovah's witnesses of the "1914" date), and is a means of removing by "rapture" the church from the world (for which an invisible parousia is a necessity). There is an evident opportunity for abuse since there is no possibility of verifying such a contention.

The Shakers are another "adventist" group of the eighteenth century. Following their prophetess, "Mother" Ann Lee, this group had a strong adventist emphasis as is evident from the name they adopted, "The United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing." Yet the parousia of Christ at the end of time was transformed into the coming of Christ as Ann Lee. Again Messianism and socio-political hopes combine to distort the parousia expectation and replace it by a presumed fulfilment in the form of an all too human leader.

This pattern is repeated in the "Southcottites", an "adventist" movement that centred around Joanna Southcott (1750-1814) as the "woman clothed with the sun" (Rev. 12:1) and the bride of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7). Her prophetic role culminated in an expectation of a new virgin birth in 1814 with Joanna as the mother-to-be. The non-fulfilment of this prophecy and Joanna's death left the movement in chaos; only a few "splinter" groups survived.

This misapplication of advent expectation is a frequent occurrence and the critical attitude of many analysts is easily understood. The ridiculous nature of some "adventist" claims is undeniable. But to draw on such confused expectations and misguided prophets (or prophetesses) as being representative of the parousia prophecy is as false as these same failed predictions.

13 Advent Hope: A "Living" Parousia

The shock to the notion of man's betterment and progress which the French Revolution occasioned turned many to a reconsideration of the Advent. The return to the prophetic [113] was accompanied by a revival in premillennialist thought, since the placing of the Advent at the end of the coming "Golden Age" seemed, in the light of events, to rather misread the situation.

In Europe there was a marked reversion to a premillennialist view expecting a proximate parousia based on interpretations of Revelation by such writers as William Cunninghame and J.H. Frere. The publication of Lacunza's Venida del Mesias en Gloria y Magestad under the pen-name Juan Josafat Ben Ezra in 1812 and Irving's subsequent English translation returned the focus to an imminent glorious advent. The result was the rapid rise of a vigorous advent movement, its greatest strength being in Britain but involving all of Europe. From notes over a hundred European interpreters who, combined with the influence of many Protestant preachers, created a vast expectant group of "Adventists." [114].

Yet this was no unified movement working together to prepare the world for the soon coming of Christ. Although it might appear that these interpreters had the same end in view and would therefore combine their energies this was not the case. The problem was one of contradictory interpretation. The desire on the part of some to set dates for the termination of Old and New Testament prophecies as the

keys to the Coming, and the varied, individualistic views on the meaning, purpose and events associated with Christ's coming led to fragmentation. The Conference called by Drummond in 1826 at his home in Albury Park, even though attended by the major British expositors, was unable to arrive at more than a generalized conclusion due to the many differences of opinion. [115].

In the same year as the conference, the commentator Samuel Maitland adopted the Futurist interpretation of the sixteenth century Jesuit Ribera; and the subsequent use of Futurism by the Oxford Movement (1833-41) added confusion to the already disturbed scene. After various continental writers had promoted a premillennial position, the Preterist view came in and eventually exercised a dominant place in continental thought.

With the date setting of the 1870's and the unfortunate developments in Irving's congregation [116] which led to the accusation of heresy and the secession to form the Holy Catholic Apostolic Church, "Adventism" became associated with extremism and strange doctrine, out of favour with the orthodox churches. The Advent Hope in Europe faded under a cloud of suspicion, and with the rise of evolutionary teaching and liberal theology, became just another part of a rather outworn creed. [117].

In America, the story follows a different course. In the first half of the eighteenth century a widespread expectancy of an imminent parousia was to be found in the new nation. Starting a decade or two later than its European counterpart, the American Advent movement and



in particular those who followed William Miller formed the largest and most coherent group of "Adventists" up to that date. [118]. It is with this movement that the term Adventist originates, initially used as a derogatory description and later to distinguish them from post-millennialists and pre-tribulationists.

The Millerites formed an interdenominational group [119] that emphasized the soon return of Christ and which placed other doctrinal matters on a secondary plane. The Millerites, though the strongest and most consolidated part of the Advent Awakening (due perhaps in part to their emphasis on the date 1843, later modified to 1844), were not operating in a vacuum. [120]. Many other churches were "aroused as never before" with the proclamation of the imminent and "glorious advent of the Kingdom of God." [121]. The parousia hope was an important part of the contemporary religious scene.

The continuing idea of man's progress towards a Utopian condition convinced some that America was God's tool for the evangelization of the world, that the Kingdom of God would be brought in through the work of the American Nation. This was coupled with a social, secular gospel of good works and the desire to end injustice and oppression, the righting of the world's wrongs through human agency. It was thought that once this was accomplished, then the kingdom of God would be present in its peaceful perfection. Over against this belief in progress as the hope of mankind was a literalistic interpretation of the Scriptures that saw in the "signs of the times" (a very important phrase of the time) the fulfilment of prophecy as a mechanistic chain of events that "must" unfold, terminating in

Christ's descent from heaven. This is the time of the "charts," the preoccupation with speculative mathematics and the systematization of eschatology that destroys the parousia hope by placing it in a time-table of events that are scheduled for the "End." The evident absurdity of attempting to compartmentalise God and his actions in time led to the ridiculing of the parousia hope itself since the advent was expressed in so crass and objectivized terms.

The Millerites must be seen against this background of rather complacent confidence that a man-created utopia was about to be brought in on the one hand and a highly schematic popularist eschatology on the other that treated the Bible as if it were nothing but a computing device for the time of the world's End. Miller and his followers fit neither category, yet are compromised by association, particularly with the latter. Their use of prophetic time periods and the calculation of the parousia time made them targets for the accusation of time-setting false prophets, while their futuristic hope brought the condemnation of the liberal "progressives" who looked for the coming of an earthly Age of Perfection based on the efforts of man.

Despite what seemed to be an over-emphasis on chronology, the Millerite movement was surprisingly free from extremism [122] and from any emphasis on militant revolution. The event expected was a coming Christ without the attendant violence or fanaticism of some earlier eschatologically-dominated movements. This parousia emphasis falls more in line with orthodox expectation than with the revolutionary millennialism of such groups as the Taborites, the Anabaptists at

Muenster, or the Fifth Monarchy Men.

The failure of their specific prediction broke the movement up. [123]. Many gave up their adventist beliefs; some gave up religion entirely. Those that retained their adventism were divided among a number of groups, of which the Evangelical Adventists were the largest. This group has since died out and the largest present body to trace its origins to the 1844 "Great Disappointment" are the Seventh Day Adventists. Some of the other original and successive splinter groups are also still in existence. In addition, there are now other groups who have taken up some parousia beliefs from this "Advent" background (the beginnings of Jehovah's Witnesses under Charles Taze Russell are an example. [124]).

The usual response to the Millerite phenomenon among other Christian groups was an aversion to the concept of a proximate parousia, most churches adopting a form of postmillennialism that placed the second advent in the distant future at the end of an earthly millennium of perfection and peace. [125].

The multiplicity of sectarian groups from the nineteenth century onwards and the breakup of conventional Christian "demarcations" make an exact history impossible, but there are some interesting trends in the interpretation of the parousia belief that deserve some attention.

14 The Modern Day: A Proliferation of Hopes

The variety of parousia-related hopes present in the modern situation [126] precludes individual description of all variants. The "traditional" hope of the church has been continued and reinterpreted with reference to current situations, and has been both modified and distorted by the use of scientific concepts and contemporary philosophy. This outline attempts to cover a sample of the more common examples of sectarian belief. [127].

One contemporary "sect" possessing a very dominant parousia doctrine is that of the Christadelphians. The return of Christ is very much a major focus of attention, an event that is followed by a new dispensation under the rule of Christ. Their particular view of the millennium is complex although it appears that it conforms to an earthly understanding in that human affairs (including sin and death) are expected to continue; furthermore the "kingdom" is equated with Christ ruling from a literal, this-worldly Jerusalem.

Christadelphians, like most modern groups who promote "adventist" teachings, take their ideas from the impetus provided by the American Advent Awakening, in particular from the dramatic expectancy of the Millerites. Christadelphianism's founder, Dr. John Thomas, was originally a Campbellite in contact with the Millerites, but disagreeing with the Campbellites on doctrine and with the Millerites on dates formed a new congregation in the late 1840's. He proposed 1866-68 as possible dates for the parousia, but was not dogmatic and

admitted the possibility of error.

For this Christian body the parousia is of supreme importance, and at times even appears to be of greater relevance than Christ's first coming -- at least that is where the emphasis seems to lie. [128]. The overemphasis of any Scriptural point is always dangerous, and a future hope without past relevance and present meaning would be both incomprehensible and an abrogation of the New Testament message.

The Jehovah's Witnesses date from the 1870's and also owe their "adventist" concepts to post-Millerite groups. The first leader of the body that eventually became the Jehovah's Witnesses, Charles T. Russell, gained his ideas of an imminent parousia from an Advent Christian minister, yet soon began his novel interpretations of the nature and meaning of this coming. This sect's repeated setting of dates for the parousia is well known, as is their spiritualized interpretation of the 1914 date. [129].

Marked similarities exist between this group and traditional chiliasts with their stress on the millennial kingdom and the privileges of the saints. To this is added their belief in an already-fulfilled secret parousia, so that the hope in a millennial kingdom on earth is of greater importance than any coming of Christ. Judgment is a key factor in their presentation: the destruction of man and his evil institutions, the condemnation of all other religious groups as apostate, the vindication of God's special people (equated exclusively with members of the Witness organization).

This type of message is reflected in their denial of all human authority and jurisdiction and their focus and extreme reliance on a future (yet still man-centred) hope, a hope which is concerned with vengeance and vindication and that seems to be somewhat at variance with the orthodox conception of the parousia.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormons), dating from the 1830's, also have a strong chiliastic emphasis. Yet again the parousia of Christ is overshadowed by the concept of an earthly, material kingdom. In the Mormon scheme, the coming of Christ is for the purpose of founding an American Zion, very much on the Old Testament model, complete with the hierarchy of the saints. Mormon eschatology in general follows a literalistic application of the kingdom and restoration promises to the Mormon church. The relevance of the parousia is rather limited in such an outlook. [130].

Another group often associated with such chiliastic bodies is the Seventh-day Adventist Church. However, the beliefs of this latter group are considerably different. The emphasis is on the proximate advent of Christ as the objective of hope and not a chiliastic kingdom and reign. Their origins are in the Millerite movement of the 1830's and '40's, and they have remained consistently a "soon advent" body without the setting of particular dates. In this respect they lie far more within the historic witness of the Church to the soon return of her Lord than in the parallel stream of radical Chiliasm. Seventh-day Adventists also teach a heavenly millennium; thus they cannot hold to any notion of a political, material or literal kingdom to be

established upon the earth. They are the largest present denomination with a strong parousia emphasis. [131].

A whole host of other bodies also have some sort of parousia-related beliefs. Of the more traditional might be mentioned the British-Israelites with their application of Israel's promised restoration to the Anglo-Saxons and the British monarchy in Particular. Edward the Eighth (abdicated 1936) was designated as the last British king before the Advent, but later interpretations modified this view while still maintaining the nearness of the end. [132].

Adventism and Pentecostalism are combined in such groups as the Elim Foursquare Gospel Church. The literal return of Christ is expected soon, since all the signs have been fulfilled (although no date is presently set). The work of the Spirit is to provide the necessary preparation. [133].

As for messianic aspirations (which the parousia hope always appears to engender), there have been many modern manifestations, such as Louwrens van Voorthuisen of Holland and Georges Roux of France. The latter gathered together a church who called themselves the "Witnesses to the Returned Christ." Such examples continue the tradition of messianic figures that are so much part of the history of the Messiah/parousia expectation. The parousia still retains a considerable attraction to many, including those for whom it provides an excellent area for rather unorthodox activity.

The development of new technology and the greater understanding of the universe that has resulted from space exploration and astronomy has contributed to the modification of the Christian expectation. Various theories have been propounded that seek to explain man's hope, even his very existence, by postulating the activity of some extra-terrestrial beings. Man's expectation of a "Second Advent" is regarded as a hope in the return of these "astronauts" who were accorded divine status due to their more highly developed technology and civilization. Variations on this type of "explanation" are increasingly common and have given rise to some groups who have combined the Christian hope and scientific speculation in the anticipation that Christ will come in some type of U.F.O. to bring salvation from the stars. [134].

The widespread influence of science fiction may be noted as a contributing factor here. Many stories of this genre are philosophical in nature and attempt to "explain" the future in terms of some sort of divine (and scientific) Providence that assures the continuation of mankind. Since such material is by definition futuristic, it is perhaps not too surprising that the emphasis is on a type of secular eschatology that includes a large amount of hope. Its relationship to the parousia is one that is both parallel and antagonistic: in most science fiction man is the centre of hope. Some novels do, however, suppose the intervention of a pseudo-divine being. [135].



Such alternative expectations are due in some measure to the apprehension caused by present world conditions. More Christocentric hopes have also been aroused, and as the world appears to be reaching crisis point in many areas the parousia hope has again become a significant force in religious belief and practice. A revival of such a hope is evident among various sections of the Christian community and is more apparent on the popular level. Religious hope is now strongly combined with prophecies of doom that come more frequently from scientific studies than from an exegesis of the prophets. Future extrapolations of population growth, energy and food requirements, the probability of war, increasing pollution and so on [136] give a very negative prognosis for the future of man. While some still maintain an optimistic outlook, most future studies are highly pessimistic and have reinforced the need for a hope outside of Man. [137].

Contemporary theologies are frequently moulded by some concept of hope [138], and the meaning of religious experience itself becomes more and more preoccupied with hopeful expectation not only in the individual, but also in the cosmic, universal sense. The parousia has much to say to modern man in answer to his realization of transience, powerlessness and impending disaster. Perhaps more so now than ever the parousia deserves attention as the hope of the Church.

15 Aspects Of The Parousia Hope In History: A Summary

The history of the parousia belief is one of disappointment. Not only is there disappointment in the non-fulfilment of the parousia promise; the repeated, bitter experiences of an expected time not met, the lengthening of time beyond all expectation. There is also the disappointment of the perversion of the parousia hope into chiliastic materialism, political revolutionism, pseudo-Messianism, spiritualized optimism, or any of the other historic modifications that have afflicted the Christian expectation of the Lord's return. The part played by the Second Advent belief in the activity of the church and its constituent believers is not glorious and exhilarating. Rather, it is unfortunate and unsatisfactory; a record of misplaced enthusiasm and deviant theology that has contributed to the lack of appreciation and significance of the New Testament hope. No wonder there exists no "history of doctrine" dealing with the parousia. It would be most depressing reading.

That sad fact aside, some most interesting facets of the parousia hope through Christian history are highlighted by this study. For convenience they are summarised in numbered sections.

1. Decline of Parousia Hope. The decline in significance and relevance of the parousia hope is, without doubt, the most striking factor to emerge from a consideration of the early church period. This can be accounted for by various causes, yet the net effect is a loss of the parousia expectation as a major force in motivating and determining

Christian experience.

2. Distortion of Parousia Hope. The activity of the Montanists provides the first clear case of a distortion of the parousia hope and its coupling with Jewish apocalyptic concepts to form a heterodox expectation. In reality this is a "substitute" hope (the coming of New Jerusalem rather than the coming of Christ), and causes a reaction within "orthodoxy" away from the firm parousia hope because of the extremist associations and chiliastic implications. This imbalance and consequent backlash is a repeated factor in the history of the parousia hope.

3. Spiritualized Hope. The spiritualizing of the second advent is a further trend that develops in the early church period. To various degrees this type of understanding is prevalent throughout the history of the church and compromises the parousia expectation by again providing a substitute hope -- whether in the mystical presence of Christ in the experience of the believer, the coming at baptism, or the parousia at death. In addition the "spiritual" interpretation of the parousia is a frequent explanatory device for the non-occurrence of Christ's coming at a particular date.

4. Hope In The Church. The eclipse of the parousia hope and the rise of hope in the church as the dispenser of grace and salvation, can be traced primarily to the systematisation of doctrine by the highly-influential Church theologians. The loss of the parousia's spiritual significance as a dynamic force is above all a result of the understanding of the kingdom as the present rule of the Church.

5. Sectarian Extremism. The parousia hope as a vital force is consequently emphasized in a sectarian rather than a catholic (meaning universal) setting. The parousia becomes part of prophetic extremism on the fringes of the church rather than a controlling factor at the centre. The result is the wild "Adventism" of fanatics and self-proclaimed Messiahs that are so often found in the study of the parousia hope. Again the parousia belief loses credibility by such associations.

6. Socio-Political Revolutionism. The popular appeal of the parousia belief and its dynamic message of change makes it liable to misuse by social and political revolutionaries, as well as those committed to religious alteration. The Second Coming is often part, although usually a very minor one, of an ideology of revolution; an attack against existing structures and conditions. While revolutionary movements such as the Taborites, the Peasants under Muentzer, the Muensterites, and the Fifth Monarchy Men may more properly be classified as examples of "Political Chiliasm", the Second Advent belief again suffers from a connection.

7. Interpretative Problems. The exact location of the parousia in a future scheme has resulted in various interpretations of how the parousia should be viewed. The nature, meaning and purpose of the Second Advent are evidently dependent on one's understanding of when and how. The wide variation in views: pre-, a-, and postmillennial, pre- and post-tribulation rapture, visible or invisible, literal or spiritual -- make the parousia "all things to all men" and it loses

much of its effectiveness in the arguments between different interpretations. In addition the more modern "interpretations" of the parousia in pseudo-scientific and modernistic terms also damage the specifically Christian hope. Extra-terrestrial visitors conducting a biological breeding experiment hardly enhance the parousia belief.

8. The Problem of Insignificance. Yet perhaps more than any one of the above factors, the virtual ignoring of the parousia and its relegation to a Christian appendix has been the most destructive. The church has through time been preoccupied with other questions and the parousia has been disregarded. It is obvious from this survey that the parousia has never been the subject of special study during the history of the Church except in so far as it has been part of sectarian and fringe group theology. More damning than any perversion or misuse of the parousia promise has been the failure by a large section of the church to acknowledge the parousia as a vital and essential part of the Christian gospel.

9. The Continuing Parousia Hope. One final factor is inherent in this review covering nearly two millennia of Christian history. That is the self-evident fact that the parousia hope continues. Despite all the negative aspects listed above the parousia hope is not dead, but is still a "lively hope." This more than anything else should give pause for reflection since if such an expectation has lasted for so long then Christ's divine promise should certainly be taken seriously.

16 Conclusion: The Definite Hope?

The changing features of the parousia hope through Christian history are illustrative of many of its philosophical aspects. This review provides some of the historical background of the parousia belief so that an assessment of these factors may be made. The loss of the "near expectancy" in the early church, the varied attempts to "explain away" the parousia as an individual's hope at death are part of the formalization and systematizing of faith into an assented body of doctrine which brought a "salvation" dispensed by the "divinely-ordained" church. The recurrent dissent during the Middle Ages against such an overwhelming power-structure was often expressed in eschatological terms, but even so, revolutionary chiliasm rather than the parousia hope seems to be the real driving force.

The re-expression of God acting in history by Joachim, and the fervent eschatology of some of the Reformers returned the parousia to some of its former importance as a motivating power and an object of hope, but divergent interpretations of prophecy (futurism and preterism) and chiliastic extremism caused a lapse of interest in the blessed hope. It remained as a part of belief, (for some nonetheless a very important part), until the widespread expectancy of the parousia during the early nineteenth century, when misplaced attempts at dating again compromised the hope..

Today it is part of a large number of formulations of widely differing viewpoints. "Hope" however, cannot be equated with the parousia, since the parousia is a definite hope, a hope with a clearly-defined telos -- the return of Christ himself.

Berkhof writes that "there is a new emphasis on the future Coming of Jesus Christ in our day. On the whole it can be said that throughout the previous centuries of the present dispensation the Christian church has been looking back far more than it has been looking forward. It has always stressed the first coming of Jesus Christ, and spoke comparatively little about his predicted second coming." [139]. Perhaps it is time to restore the balance.

The history of the parousia belief is disappointing reading. The parousia seems either to be in the background of insignificance or the foreground of extremism. Yet its validity is undeniable, and it can have considerable significance. "Faith in Jesus Christ without the expectation of His Parousia is a voucher that is never redeemed, a promise that is not seriously meant. A Christian faith without expectation of the Parousia is like a ladder which ends in the void." [140].

Jesus Christ, ho protos (the first), is also ho eschatos (the last). Jesus Christ, he arche (the Beginning), is also to telos (the end). The parousia is the expression of both eschatos and telos, the consummation when God is all in all.

Notes to Section Two

1. These factors are exemplified in the course of church history. The influence of Hellenistic philosophy on the parousia doctrine (Christ comes at death, transmigration of souls etc.) and the idea of a present kingdom of God (equated with the Church) in turn contribute to the formation of a particular type of ecclesiology. The concept of the returning Christ and the nature of his church interact very strongly and consequently eschatology and ecclesiology have obvious determinative effects upon one another. This transferral of hope from inbreaking parousia to spiritual coming at death is acknowledged by Catholic writers. O'Connell comments that "The expectation of the Second Coming has been in large measure transferred, in later Christianity, to the coming of Christ at the individual's death." Preface to A. Winklhofer, The Coming of His Kingdom (Edinburgh and London: Nelson, 1963), 11.

2. See for example M. Werner, The Formation of Christian Dogma (London: A. and C. Black, 1957). Some perceptive remarks by McGinn are relevant here: "Although the delay of the Parousia was certainly a crucial factor in the development of Christian thought, the 'consistent eschatological' interpretation, that is, the claim that the loss of the sense of the imminent return of the Lord was the major turning point in the life of the early Church, is open to serious distortion..." B. McGinn, Visions of the End (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 16. The "delay" was an important factor, but certainly not as all-encompassing as some would make out. Pelikan is also to the point: "The impression seems unavoidable that the relation between 'already' and 'not yet' in Christian apocalyptic raised more problems for the philosophical theologians in the early church and for the proponents of 'consistent eschatology' among modern exegetes than it did for believers and worshippers in the second and third centuries." J. Pelikan, The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 126. Others would deny that the delay/non-consummation of the parousia was really determinative. The waning of hope is traced to other factors and not to a presumed crisis over the extension of time. See L. W. Barnard, "Justin Martyr's Eschatology," Vigiliae Christianae, 19 (1965), 86-98. Moule also takes issue with the "evolutionary" aspects thought to be present in NT eschatology: C. F. D. Moule, "The Influence of Circumstances on the Use of Eschatological Terms," Journal of Theological Studies, 15 (1964), 1-15. One historian's conclusion is: "Postponement of the Second advent did not diminish expectation among early Christians. Their eventual departure from belief in the imminent End should be blamed on other factors, not failed predictions." J. Butler, "When Prophecy Fails: The Validity of Apocalypticism," Spectrum, 8,1 (1976), 8.

3. This first use of the term "eschatology" calls for some comment. Despite the ambiguity of the word and its confusing use by various authors it still remains a useful identifier for the concept of "last things." In this study the last things are considered to be those that specifically refer to future events and not such subjects as death, purgatory, heaven and hell, although the present implications of eschatological events are not denied. For a stringent critique of the term, see J. Carmignac, "Les Dangers de l'Eschatologie," New Testament Studies, 17 (1971), 365-390. For a popular complaint against the use



of the word eschatology refer to H. McKeating, God and the Future (London: SCM Press, 1974), 4f. A more median view is that of I. H. Marshall, "Slippery Words. 1. Eschatology," Expository Times, 89 (1977-78), 264-269.

4. As some have tried to make it; for example R. Bultmann, History and Eschatology (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1975). In many ways these two concepts appear to possess similar attributes in Bultmann's treatment. In addition it should be noted that his use of the term eschatology is at variance with the traditional subject matter of the Last Things and the final End.

5. E. C. Dewick, Primitive Christian Eschatology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912), 370. [My italics].

6. Werner, Dogma, 21-22. Note also Visser, who concludes that "The intensity of eschatological hope slackened very soon both in East and West." A. J. Visser, "A Bird's-Eye View of Ancient Christian Eschatology," Numen, 14 (1967), 22.

7. G. W. H. Lampe, "Early Patristic Eschatology," Scottish Journal of Theology Occasional Papers Number Two, (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1957), 19.

8. Dewick, Eschatology, 33. [My italics].

9. S. H. Cooke, article "Parousia," J. H. Hastings ed., Dictionary of the Apostolic Church, Vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1918), 130.

10. F. V. Filson, A New Testament History (London: SCM Press, 1965), 336-337.

11. Cooke, "Parousia", 130.

12. R. R. Reuther, The Radical Kingdom, (New York/Evanston/London: Harper and Row, 1970).

13. S. J. Duffy, article "Parousia," The New Catholic Encyclopedia (London: McGraw-Hill, 1967), 1037.

14. A useful summary of the evidence is found in G. E. Ladd, The Blessed Hope (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 19-31; although he is more preoccupied with refuting the pre-tribulation rapture theorists than with examining the presentations of the parousia hope.

15. L. E. Froom, The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers, 4 Vols., (Washington: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1946-1954), Vol. 1, 206.

16. The edition of the early Christian writers used here is that of C. C. Richardson, tr. and ed., Early Christian Fathers, Vol. 1 of the Library of Christian Classics, (London: SCM Press, 1963). The section dealing with the Didache is found between pages 171-179.

17. Ibid., 176.

18. Ibid., 178-179.

19. Ibid., 43-73.

20. The interaction of eschatology (parousia) and ecclesiology is again apparent. For a discussion of this see L. S. Fiorelli, "Expectancy of an Imminent Parousia and Concern with Church Order: An Inverse Relationship?" The Thomist, 39,1 (1975), 1-23; also Lampe, "Eschatology," 35.

21. Richardson, Early Christian Fathers, 87-120.

22. Ibid., 91.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid., 118.

25. The version used here is by G. F. Snyder, The Shepherd of Hermas, Vol. 6 of The Apostolic Fathers (London, etc.: Nelson, 1968).

26. Ibid., 50.

27. Ibid., 99.

28. Ibid., 57-60.

29. Richardson, Early Christian Fathers, 225-289.

30. Ibid., 132-137.

31. Although this may be poetic licence -- he describes a vine, its branches, twigs and grapes in an ascending geometric series with a multiplying factor of 10,000! The reference is cited by Irenaeus, Against Heresies 5, 33, 3-4.

32. See the various definitions of apocalyptic in such works as: P. D. Hanson, The Dawn of Apocalyptic (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975); D. Sneed, Visions of Hope (Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub. Ho., 1978); L. Morris, Apocalyptic (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972); D. S. Russell, Apocalyptic (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978).

33. E. Kaesemann, Journal for Theology and the Church, 6 (1969), 40.

34. I hesitate to say "delay" in view of the unfortunate associations of the word. See later section on this subject (In Section 5).

35. J. Macquarrie, Christian Hope (New York: Seabury Press, 1978), 89. As an addendum note Cullmann's remarks on this point: "Those who believe in the immortality of the soul do not have the hope of which Paul speaks, the hope which expresses the belief of a divine miracle of new creation which will embrace everything, every part of the world created by God. Indeed for the Greeks who believed in the immortality of the soul it may have been harder to accept the Christian preaching of the resurrection than it was for others. About the year 150 Justin (in his Dialogue, 80) writes of people, 'who say that there is no resurrection from the dead, but that immediately at death their souls would ascent to heaven.' Here the contrast is indeed clearly perceived." O. Cullman, Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead (London: Epworth Press, 1958), 59. It would seem that the church

eventually adopted a compromise solution and retained the concept of final resurrection, combining it with the belief in the soul flying to heaven at death. Either way the significance of the parousia hope is diminished.

36. Lampe, "Eschatology," 18. This concept is developed by Origen: "For Origen the end will be like the beginning, a perfect unity when 'God will be all in all'... The final consummation is likeness to God when all will reach the highest degree of perfection. Origen presents a picture of the soul's progress through various scenes of chastisement, purification and illumination... It is significant that Origen nowhere mentions the doctrine of the second advent. The coming of Christ in glory is for him a spiritual revelation of His true nature." L. W. Barnard, "Origen's Christology and Eschatology," Anglican Theological Review, 46 (1964), 317-318.

37. Lampe, "Eschatology", 35. Note also Kantonen: "The influence of Hellenistic philosophy, represented by the Alexandrian fathers in particular, tended to spiritualize eschatology into a continual inner purification and immortality of the soul." T. Kantonen, The Christian Hope (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1954), 20.

38. J. Danielou, The Theology of Jewish Christianity (tr. J.A. Baker), (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1964), 377.

39. Not only did the Hellenistic philosophical ideas of the immortal soul contribute to a decline in the need for a belief in the returning Lord, but the associated concepts that derive from Plato and others -- the widespread use of allegory and the primacy given to a spiritualizing interpretation (cp. Plato's spiritual forms) -- all this added to the polarization within the church. The "pneumatological" approach and the earthly "chiliastic" view stood in opposition, having conflicting interpretations of the future of man. Some of the chiliasts were rather too literal in their interpretation of the millennium, which led to a vision of sensuous, earthly delights that shocked many pious Christians. Thus the understanding of the millennium's nature became a critical factor in the discussion of the future. The "spiritualizers" argued for a spiritual millennium and also for the allegorizing of Scripture in general. Clement of Alexandria leaned in this direction, while Origen developed the allegorical interpretation into a full-grown theory. The prime reason for this was to combat the crass literalism of the chiliasts. [See for example, R. C. Shimeall, "Reply to Prof. Shedd on 'Eschatology'" in his Christ's Second Coming (New York: J. F. Trow and R. Brinkerhoff, 1866), 14]. Eventually the spiritualizers gained the upper hand and chiliasm became the province of sectarian groups. Neither approach proved beneficial to the parousia hope. The spiritualizers removed its significance and the chiliasts provided a substitute hope, thus leaving the parousia a rather redundant belief. The allegorizing of Scripture also had profound consequences for the church outside the area of eschatology. Indeed many of the doctrinal controversies that followed arose from a speculative spiritualizing of Scriptural statements. Even Augustine is not blameless in this regard. And while the denunciation of chiliasm is understandable in view of its materialistic excesses and literalistic emphases, it led to a discrediting of the parousia with which the millennium was so closely connected.

40. It is always difficult to estimate the opinion of the "common people" since the information passed on from most periods of history is that of a small minority -- those who could write. As Leff remarks, "The historian is confronted with activities which, hitherto at least, have been the preserve of a minority; and to write about them is to write the history of minorities... The sources, whether the official records of royal chanceries, the chronicles of monks or the treatises of schoolmen, derive from exclusive and privileged groups: they record and reflect activities and outlooks not shared by the majority of society." G. Leff, "In Search of the Millennium," Past and Present, 13 (1958), 89-95. As far as believing the second advent is concerned, it would seem that such a hope is often associated with popular rather than academic support.

41. S. L. Greenslade, "Heresy and Schism in the Later Roman Empire," in D. Baker ed., Schism, Heresy and Religious Protest (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 5.

42. Lampe, "Eschatology", 33.

43. Filson, New Testament History, 338. Some Christians were even hoping Christ would not return, at least not soon: "Hippolytus' attitude is typical for the great shifting of christian hope. In his days convinced christians too would prefer the Lord to stay in heaven for some time longer; they are overjoyed to hear that the second coming is not to be expected in the near future and that nobody of their generation needs to fear his witnessing the end of this wicked world. Before he turned montanist even the fervent Tertullian mentions that christians are praying 'pro mora finis.'" Visser, "Eschatology," 15.

44. G. R. Beasley-Murray, Jesus and the Future (London: Macmillan, 1954), 190.

45. Thus Berkhof: "When centuries rolled by without the return of Jesus Christ, when persecutions ceased, and when Christianity received a sure footing in the Roman Empire and even became the State religion, the passionate longing for the appearance of Jesus Christ very naturally gave way for an adaptation of the Church to its present task." L. Berkhof, The History of Christian Doctrine (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1969), 262. Desroches remarks that "This decline of millenarianism also coincides with the ascension of the Christian church to a dominant position." (His emphasis). H. Desroche, The Sociology of Hope (Tr. C. Martin-Sperry), (London, Boston, Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul. 1979), 51.

46. Macquarrie, Christian Hope 89. Referring to the neglect of the second advent doctrine, Auriol writes: "It was not till after the Roman Empire became Christian that the slumber which had begun to pervade the Church terminated in a deep sleep." E. Auriol, "The Actual Neglect of the Second Advent," in E. Bickersteth, ed., The Second Coming, the Judgment, the Kingdom of Christ (London: James Nisbet and Co., 1843), 33-34.

47. Book 20, chapter 9. Thus Kantonen: "As against Montanist dreams of a future millennium, Augustine directed attention to the present. 'Now already' the kingdom in the form of the church is a reality. Now already Christ and his saints rule, for the kingdom is ruled by Christ

through the heads of the hierarchial church who by virtue of the power of the keys sit on thrones as judges. The nations are already being delivered from the power of Satan, and the church is the agency of this process. Resurrection is already taking place, for new life is being obtained through the gospel." Kantonen, Christian Hope, 20-21.

48. Froom, Prophetic Faith, Vol. 1, 465-472.

49. Augustine, City of God, Book 20, chapter 5.

50. Desroche, Hope, 51. McGinn identifies Augustine as "the fountainhead of all anti-apocalyptic eschatology in the Middle Ages." McGinn, Visions, 27.

51. Reuther, Radical Kingdom, 15-16. This is what Cullmann calls "the Catholic absolutizing of the church." He also observes that "what Primitive Christianity says of the future is in large part transferred to the present" in Catholicism, and that "in later Catholicism the relationship between time and eternity is not determined in the same way as in the New Testament." O. Cullmann, Christ and Time (London: SCM Press, 1964), 147.

52. Shklar comments in reference to Augustine's City of God that "The Catholic Church has long repudiated the hope of an early second coming which the early Christians cherished, for these expectations threw doubt upon the doctrine that Christ founded the church." J. N. Shklar, After Utopia (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 179. The relationship between ecclesiology, church authority, and eschatology is much more complex than this, but the point is a valid one. Berkouwer also notes that "The tendency towards realized eschatology and de-eschatologizing in Catholic theology has also been found in the Roman Catholic concept of the church as the body of Christ. Everything seems to be fulfilled in the church." G. C. Berkouwer, The Return of Christ (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 146. See also Berkouwer's whole discussion of the Roman Catholic concept of the fulfilment of the parousia in the institution of the church, 144-147.

53. Thus the rather "personalized" eschatology of Aquinas.

54. As McGinn remarks of eschatology in general: "The history of radical eschatology in the Western world is largely the history of special groups, whether within or without the ruling intellectual, ecclesiastical, and social structure... the history of eschatology is largely the history of sects and sectarian mentality." B. McGinn, "The Abbot and the Doctors: Scholastic Reactions to the Radical Eschatology of Joachim of Fiore," Church History, 40 (1971), 47. Macquarrie makes a similar comment: "The more radical element in the Christian expectation was so native to it that it could not quite disappear, and in fact has burst out from time to time in the subsequent history of the church. But it was now driven into fringe groups and sects, and so it lacked that broad universalism and catholicity that it had had in earlier times. The expectation remained social but it was confined to utopian groups." Macquarrie, Christian Hope, 92-93.

55. That is not to say that there was no belief in the Second Coming. The statement that "Christ will come to judge the quick and the dead" remained part of the frequently reasserted creeds.

In times of trouble there was often a resurgence of

eschatological conviction. Thus in the violent times associated with the new barbarian kingdoms of western Europe, Pope Gregory I was busy prophesying the approaching End and the coming Judge. "His letters and sermons are filled with a pronounced conviction, almost an obsession, with the imminence of the End of the World." McGinn, Visions, 62. Yet again the emphasis is on calamity and destruction rather than the liberating parousia of the Saviour.

56. The following quotation is clear enough: "For the Lord says: 'Then if anyone says to you, "behold, here is Christ, or behold there", do not believe. for there will arise false Christs and false prophets, and they will give great signs and wonders, so that they would lead into error, if it could be done, even the very elect'. And therefore lest the elect be deceived, the Lord warns us of what is to follow; that we might not be taken in by the talk of the prophets, nor any of their wondrous deeds deceive us. But then we shall believe that Christ is going to come, when the full justice will have begun to shine forth. For Christ will be revealed in the full light of His majesty, and just as the lightning goes out from the east, and pours its light over the whole world even to the west, so also the Son of Man, coming with His angels will illuminate this world... But when we shall have seen accomplished what Christ in His gospel predicted before, let us believe His advent, lest while we seek the true light, we fall into shadows of unbelief." Ambrose, cited by Froom, Prophetic Faith Vol. 1, 423-424.

57. For two good introductions to the Celtic Church see L. Hardinge, The Celtic Church in Britain (London: SPCK, 1972); and J. Bulloch, The Life of the Celtic Church (Edinburgh: St. Andrews Press, 1963).

58. Hardinge, Celtic Church, 72.

59. Ibid.

60. Refer to J. L. G. Meissner, The Celtic Church in England: After the Synod of Whitby (London: Martin Hopkinson Ltd., 1929).

61. See especially N. Cohn, The Pursuit of the Millennium (London: Paladin, 1978) and also the review by G. Leff, "In Search of the Millennium," Past and Present, 13 (1958), 89-95.

62. For a review of various "heretical" groups of this period, see M. D. Lambert, Medieval Heresy (London: Edward Arnold, 1947); D. Christie-Murray, A History of Heresy (London: New English Library, 1976); J. B. Russell, Dissent and Reform in the Early Middle Ages (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1965).

63. Similarly the expectation of the end of the world by some at various dates, notably 1000 and 1260 AD, are more concerned with prophetic mathematics, doom and disaster than the coming of Christ and the translation of the saints. In addition some such as Lambert (Heresy, 42) have suggested that the Crusades were motivated by and in turn enhanced millennial enthusiasm: the ushering in of the end of the world by slaying the infidels.

64. M.-D. Chenu, Nature, Man and Society in the Twelfth Century (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1968), 267-268.

65. Ibid., 268-269.

66. G. G. Coulton, Five Centuries of Religion, 4 Vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1923), Vol. 1, 367.

67. Joachimite teachings were adopted by various groups with greater or lesser emphasis according to requirements. See the discussion by A. H. Newman, A Manual of Church History, 2 Vols. (Philadelphia: American Baptist Pub. Soc., 1947), Vol. 1, 555. The Beguines took the Spiritual notions to extremes and prophetesses such as Preus Boneta made spectacular claims. With the lapse into extremism and futuristic extrapolations of Joachimite concepts, the contribution of Joachim was reduced.

68. A good, although rather sociologically biased, review is that by E. Werner, "Popular Ideologies in Late Medieval Europe: Taborite Chiliasm and its Antecedents," Comparative Studies in Society and History, 2,3 (1960), 344-363. See also Lambert, Heresy, 310f.

69. This preoccupation with bringing in the parousia through the efforts of man suggests that such a belief is being used as an explicatory ideology for violent actions. The parousia used as the justifier of revolution perverts the meaning of the belief since it makes God dependent upon the activity of man, who is in reality bringing about his own salvation by violent means. Casting themselves in the role of destroying angels, the Taborites effectively nullified their parousia hope by providing the source of salvation themselves.

70. It appears that some Taborites believed that Christ had already come secretly and that his public appearing would soon occur. See Lambert, Heresy, 317.

71. This particular terminology is derived from Stone who uses it to describe the imbalance between social and political systems existing at the time of the English Civil War. It can also be used to define a disharmony in religious systems: Stone remarks that "new metaphysical beliefs" may be a causative factor. L. Stone, The Causes of the English Revolution 1629-1642 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972).

72. T. F. Torrance, "The Eschatology of the Reformation," Scottish Journal of Theology Occasional Papers Number Two (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1957), 38.

73. Ibid.

74. Thus Luther is recorded as saying on Jan. 1, 1532: "I have another year to preach, but I am afraid I won't live so long. I hope I'll experience the last day. Know that it's at the door... The last day is at hand." In another context he remarks, "I think the last day is not far away." Luther's Works Vol. 54 (T.G. Tappert, ed.) (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), 137, 427.

75. Torrance, "Eschatology", 43. See also Froom, Prophetic Faith, Vol. 2, 283f.

76. This emphasis on the individual was further developed in later Lutheran writing. Kantonen refers to Lutheran eschatology as "an

eschatology concerned with the salvation of individual souls rather than with the kingdom of God either as a present reality or a future hope." He continues the analysis: "Since the fate of each man is sealed at death and he enters directly into eternal blessedness or eternal damnation, the last events tend to lose their significance. The end of the world, the last judgment, and the resurrection add little to the content of the Christian hope beyond uniting the soul to its resurrection body." Kantonen, Christian Hope, 52.

77. Torrance, "Eschatology", 50-51.

78. Ibid., 62.

79. This "eschatological ecclesiology" and evangelistic motive are described by Torrance in a way that illustrates the appeal to the community: "Calvin thinks of the Church as at once a completed structure, the Body of Christ, and the corporate election realised in Christ, and yet as the new humanity, the societas gloriae, launched into history, growing and increasing until the Advent of Christ." Ibid., 58.

80. Reuther, Radical Kingdom, 24-25.

81. L. H. Zuck, "Fecund Problems of Eschatological Hope, Election Proof, and Social Revolt in Thomas Muentzer," in F.H. Littell, ed., Reformation Studies (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1962), 239-250.

82. Ibid., 247.

83. Ibid., 250.

84. Ibid., 241.

85. For historical details see G. H. Williams, The Radical Reformation (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961).

86. For a brief description see G. H. Williams and A. M. Mergal, eds., Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1957), 136-137.

87. G. R. Elton, ed., The New Cambridge Modern History, Vol. II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 125.

88. Ibid.

89. A. G. Dickens, Reformation and Society (London: Thames and Hutton, 1966), 135.

90. Elton, ed., Cambridge History, 129.

91. Compare the interesting parallels between the "Muensterites" of the sixteenth century and the Taborites of the fifteenth. Note particularly the concept of ushering in the Kingdom by the activities of the saints.

92. Christie-Murray, Heresy, 161. The key to the problem here is the radical's understanding of the church's role in history. Reuther remarks that "Taking its self-understanding from this concept of



apocalyptic crisis, the Anabaptist church annulled church history and itself expected no church history, but awaited the speedy return of Christ." Reuther, Radical Kingdom, 28. This being so, the radical Believer was faced with the choice of either watching and waiting for his Lord's return or, by any means possible (including violence and war), hastening the coming of the King and his Kingdom through direct revolutionary action. The admixture of suffering and violence, of heavenly King and earthly kingdom, of passivity and revolution, that is inherent in the radical concept of the church relates directly to the understanding of the parousia, and accounts for some of the strange and often contradictory activities of these apocalyptic believers. Yet it must be re-emphasized that the parousia doctrine was variously interpreted. Its adoption as a revolutionary instrument to be wielded on the battlefield against present earthly leaders (even though they may have been tyrannical oppressors) was clearly an abrogation of the basic message of the parousia which centres on the coming of God as the restorer, vindicator, justifier and saviour.

93. The over-emphasis on the world to come is just as destructive as its denial. The results are seen in such chiliastic groups as the Montanists, the Taborites, and more recently, the Jehovah's Witnesses and others.

94. Sherman deprecates the attitude of the Reformers to the Radicals and states that "a major opportunity... was missed" by the rejection of the hopes and visions of the sectarian, "left-wing" groups. F. Sherman, "The Church and the Proximate Goals of History: A Theological Perspective" in F. Sherman, ed., Christian Hope and the Future of Humanity (Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub. Ho., 1968), 70-94.

95. Glasson refers to this "Judaistic Heresy" and notes that "The point which the Reformation Confessions condemned was not the insistence on any length of time but the Judaistic idea of the Messiah's personal reign on earth; this was the head and foot of the Chiliast's offending." T. F. Glasson, His Appearing and His Coming (London: Epworth Press, 1953), 154.

96. Williams notes such concepts: "K. Vos held that the chiliastic millennialists drew very substantial followings because a variety of circumstances drove a tense and anxious populace to anticipate either the trumpets on doom or the heralds of Christ. He believed that the appearance of three comets (in 1531, 1532, and in 1533) finally brought on the madness of the Muenster debacle." He also makes the point that "It is noteworthy that the state of mind that led one segment of the population to hope for a New Jerusalem caused in the other half an equally vivid prospect of a material doom." Williams, Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers, 213n.31; 215n.35.

97. E. A. Payne, in Elton, ed., Cambridge History, 133.

98. F. H. Littell, The Anabaptist View of the Church (Boston: Starr King Press, 1958), 128.

99. Ibid., 128-129.

100. R. J. Smithson, The Anabaptists (London: James Clarke and Co., n.d. [circa 1935]), 139-140.

101. Littell, Anabaptist View, 127f.

102. Refer to footnote 92 above.

103. B. W. Ball, A Great Expectation (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975). See also B. S. Capp, The Fifth Monarchy Men (London: Faber and Faber, 1972); and Froom, Prophetic Faith, Vol. 2 566f.

104. Froom, Prophetic Faith, 568-569.

105. "The Fifth Monarchy Men... had been only the most violent and notorious of the Puritan millennarians, but their excesses served to damn the whole movement." E. R. Sandeen, The Roots of Fundamentalism (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 4.

106. For an analysis of prophetic interpretation see Froom, Prophetic Faith, Vol. 2, Appendices. In summary, the preterist interpretation views prophecy (especially that of Daniel and Revelation) as having been fulfilled in the past: the Antichrist was a Roman emperor (or various emperors), the persecution of the church was exclusively during the first few centuries, etc. The futurist places the same prophecies in the future; all is yet to come. Post-millennialism places the second advent at the end of the millennium, which is usually conceived of as a "Golden Age" of peace and harmony among men. Some type of universal salvation is usually introduced here. These interpretations are relatively modern and thus are not relevant for the major part of Christian history.

107. Froom, Prophetic Faith, Vol. 3, 151, 156.

108. Some of these communities are recorded by Desroche, Hope, 60; and by J. G. Melton, The Encyclopedia of American Religions 2 Vols. (Wilmington, N.C.: McGrath Pub. Co., 1978), Vol. 1, 23-50.

109. For the impact of millennial beliefs in early American self-consciousness see Reuther, Radical Kingdom. See also following note.

110. Desroche speaks of the millenarian emphases of early nineteenth century America as shaping "the American consciousness of a 'redeeming society', dedicated to a millenarian role in the destinies of the world." Desroche, Hope, 61.

111. Quoted in S. Ayling, John Wesley (London: Collins, 1979), 214.

112. See for example Compton's Life of Clowes, cited by W. R. Ward, "Heresy, Schism or Religious Protest" in D. Baker, ed., Schism, Heresy and Religious Protest (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 306.

113. Sandeen states that "The French Revolution was directly responsible for the revival of prophetic concern." Sandeen, Roots, 5.

114. Froom, Prophetic Faith, Vol. 3, 270-271. See also his chart, 744-745.

115. Froom gives five major factors for the collapse of the Advent expectations in Europe, of which disagreements over dating, the nature

of the "cleansing of the sanctuary" (Dan. 8:14), and the role of Israel are the more significant. Ibid., 743, 746-747.

116. Particularly a type of Spirit-revelation, a form of Pentecostalism that claimed superiority to past revelation.

117. Another factor was the gradual adoption of J. N. Darby's pretribulation rapture theories that were part of his new system of "Dispensationalism." Much of his interpretation has become standard "Fundamentalist" thought, especially in the U.S., but his influence extends beyond such groups and today "the thinking of a large number of Christians finds its source in the unique Biblical theology that Darby evolved in the nineteenth century." Melton, Encyclopedia, Vol. 1, 411.

118. See Section Three of this study. For a brief survey of Miller's movement see R. L. Gale, The Urgent Voice (Washington: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1975) and F. D. Nichol, The Midnight Cry (Washington: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1944). For a longer treatment refer to Froom, Prophetic Faith Vol. 4, and the works cited in Section Three.

119. The Millerites did not plan on forming a separate organization but worked within contemporary denominational churches. Some form of separatism was later forced upon them as they began to be disfellowshipped by their churches from 1843 onwards.

120. J. H. Noyes, the founder of the Oneida community, remarked "The Millerites have since met with unbounded ridicule; but it should be remembered that all that portion of the churches who were spiritual, who believed in revivals, and who were zealous and successful in laboring for them had a fit of expectation as enthusiastic and almost as fanatical as the Millerites." Cited by Sandeen, Roots, 49. Sandeen also notes that Miller's interpretation was not dependent on the Old World Advent awakening. Ibid., 50.

121. E. Beecher, quoted by T. L. Smith, Revivalism and Social Reform (New York: Abingdon Press, 1957), 225.

122. In spite of many attempts to ridicule the Millerites, their mistake was only in regard to setting the date. There were no "ascension robes", no hysterical outbursts, no ridiculous scenes. See Nichol, Midnight Cry.

123. Up to this point, doctrinal differences had been suppressed in view of the imminence of the parousia. Its non-occurrence brought the divergent opinions back into prominence. Another factor linked with such an intense expectation is remarked on by Wilson: "The absence of organization [in Adventist sects] sometimes makes such movements particularly subject to dissipation or ... to schism." B. R. Wilson, ed., Patterns of Sectarianism (London: Heinemann, 1967), 16.

124. See the account by Rogerson on how Russell obtained his "Adventist" beliefs: A. Rogerson, Millions Now Living Will Never Die (London: Constable and Co., 1969).

125. "The chief effect of the reaction from Millerism was to speed the adoption of a fervent postmillennialism, attuned to the prevailing

optimism of the age." Smith, Revivalism, 228. "The early success and ultimate collapse of his [Miller's] movement prejudiced the country against all millennial doctrines." Sandeen, Roots, 42.

126. Glasson calls it a "riot of thought and speculation." Glasson, Appearing, 64.

127. For an unsympathetic treatment of some more modern forms of parousia understanding, see again Glasson, Appearing, 53-64. Current trends in parousia-related theology are left to Section Five.

128. Refer to B. R. Wilson, Sects and Society (London: Heinemann, 1961), 230-235, for a reasonably unbiased analysis of Christadelphian parousia beliefs. Also Melton, Encyclopedia, Vol. 1, 409-410.

129. For a detailed examination of Jehovah Witness eschatology refer to E. C. Gruss, The Jehovah's Witnesses and Prophetic Interpretation (Nutley, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1972) and G. D. McKinney, The Theology of the Jehovah's Witnesses (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972), 92-106.

130. Note particularly Number Ten of their "Articles of Faith": "We believe in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes, that Zion will be built on this [the American] continent; that Christ will reign personally upon the earth; and that the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisaical glory." Cited in Melton Encyclopedia, Vol. 2, 6.

131. See Section Four for an in-depth study. An authoritative account of Seventh-day Adventist doctrine is given in Questions on Doctrine (Washington: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1957).

132. See Glasson, Appearing, 61-62.

133. Note the account in Wilson, Sects, 25-28.

134. Various "Flying Saucer" groups are described by Meldon, Encyclopedia, Vol. 2, 198-213. Each one possesses different concepts; some have various types of "adventist" views. Refer also to L. Festinger, H. W. Riecken and S. Schachter, When Prophecy Fails (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1956), and C. Evans, Cults of Unreason (London: Harrap, 1973), 137-175.

135. Just one example of science fiction that has distinctly religious/eschatological overtones is A. C. Clark, Childhood's End (London: Pan Books, 1972). This is an apocalyptic story replete with "other-wordly" overtones. Some points of contact with Christian hope are: salvation comes from a supernatural being (parousia?); mankind is eventually transformed into a new type of being (resurrection?); these changed beings leave the earth for "the stars" (rapture?); some remain unchanged and are destroyed along with the world (judgment and destruction?); those that are "saved" achieve union with the "Overmind" (God?), come into its presence and find consummation (heaven, eternal life, completion of salvation?). The many parallels make the story a type of re-mythologised Second Coming in terms that are more acceptable to modern man.

136. While not prophesying doom in a deterministic sense, the "Club of

Rome" analysis makes it unmistakably clear that unless some action is taken within the very near future then mankind "will have lost the chance for control." D. L. Meadows, et al., The Limits to Growth (New York: Universe Books, 1972). Note particularly the famous words of U Thant that preface the work. See also the problem analyses in The Next Ninety Years: Proceedings of a Conference Sponsored by the Office for Industrial Associates at the California Institute of Technology, 1967).

137. Such pessimism and doom-watching are depressing reasons for an advent hope. To regard the return of Christ merely as a panacea for the world's ills hardly improves the image of the parousia, even though the New Testament makes the recreation of the world part of the parousia-related events. Surely the New Testament's "blessed hope" involves more than this.

138. This extensive area is the subject of Section Five.

139. L. Berkhof, The Second Coming of Christ (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), 10. He also suggests that the last subject to occupy the church's attention will be eschatology.

140. E. Brunner, Eternal Hope (London: Lutterworth Press, 1954), 138-139.

SECTION THREE

THE PAROUSIA IN PRACTICE: THE MILLERITES AS A CASE STUDY

0 Introduction

One of the most overt and extensive expressions of the parousia belief in history is the adventist movement of nineteenth century America known under the collective term, "Millerism." As such, this particular phenomenon provides a wide range of thought and practice relative to the parousia belief, an analysis of which yields some answers to the question of "why?" and gives a better understanding of the function of such a belief as a motivator and determinant of thought and action.

This section is primarily concerned to examine the various factors influencing the adoption of this specific parousia belief, rather than to retell the Millerite story. This latter aspect has been the subject of various works, and only a very brief overview is presented here. Some historical description is however necessary in order that some attempt may be made to answer what is the basic question faced by this thesis: "Why the parousia?" In other words, why was the parousia belief adopted by the Millerites, what aspects of the

contemporary scene does it reflect, what consequences did the belief have both in society and for the individual believer? Once more the impact and influence of the belief in Christ's return is the factor of prime concern, not the relative truth of the doctrine itself. While some "reasons" for belief must be wrapped up in the incomprehensible minds of men, no belief is held unless it has some direct bearing on understanding and experience. The parousia belief is no exception. It too relates to the basic problems and questions facing mankind, and is understood in that way by the believer, as much of the Millerite material demonstrates.

This analysis therefore concentrates on the way the Millerites expressed themselves, and their relationship to other believers, to non-believers, and to their environment in general. While no absolutely determinant scheme can ever be imposed on the formation and development and operation of any belief structure -- for example, the assumption that the Millerites' belief in the imminent End was caused by their socio-economic conditions -- it must also be admitted that the Millerites do reflect (as does any person or movement) certain aspects of the thought and conditions of their time. The role played by the parousia belief as formulated by the Millerites in this complex interrelation with their whole environment provides some of the answers as to why the parousia is believed.

Millerism flourished at a time of considerable change in society, and is contemporaneous with many reform movements. The parousia belief can, in one sense, be regarded as the Reform of reforms, the greatest expression of the desire for a change and improvement in the

condition and nature of man. Yet, as will become clear in subsequent analysis, Millerism also stands in opposition to reforms. It posits a basically pessimistic world-view, an understanding of man and society that demands the parousia as the only practical way of effecting the desired changes. Millerism cannot therefore be equated directly with the reformist tendencies of the age.

Millerism also used to considerable effect the various possibilities open to it -- the increasingly effective communications network and the improved travel, the existence of printing and publishing facilities; so that its spread was not limited to a small area and the work of one man.

The rise to prominence of the Advent belief parallels increased financial difficulty and an adverse economic situation. There were also widespread changes in the structure of society. The vast influx of Catholic immigrants from Europe caused many to fear the assumption of power by the Roman Church. Religious pluralism made the definition of the "right" beliefs impossible and encouraged doctrinal experimentation and the development of faiths more relevant to the emergent social order. It is surely no accident that Adventism arose in a society where so many changes were occurring. Millerism is only one response among various others to the conditions of the time.

Yet any analysis is woefully incomplete that fails to take account of the actual ideas and concepts involved. The preceding factors are important, but they cannot be made the major causes of the Millerite movement. Adventism is primarily a religious and



theological phenomenon that has its basis in a particular understanding of the Bible. The spiritual causes are certainly determinative, for they order the expression of hope and provide the objectives. In asking the question "why?" the primary answer must always be found in the belief itself -- the foundation of hope in the returning Christ and this concept translated into action by the believer. Thus the "first cause" of the Millerite movement is that one William Miller read his Bible, encountered the promise of the imminent parousia, believed, and then began to teach what he had found. Many other factors affect the development of Millerism's subsequent history -- the promotion of Miller's views through the new medium of the press, the acceptance of the belief by many including a large number of clergymen, the encouragement and opportunity given to Miller to travel and present his findings -- influences which if not present would have relegated Miller and his beliefs to the obscurity of just another expositor living during the early nineteenth century in the backwoods of upstate New York. But without Miller and his prophetic interpretation, the originator and proclaimer of the Advent message is lost and the character of the revival in parousia belief is gone. The story begins with Miller.

1 Miller: Preaching the Imminent Parousia

A significant arousal of interest in the doctrine of the parousia and the end of the world had occurred before William Miller (1782-1849) [1] delivered his first "Advent lecture" in a small church of upstate New York. [2]. After a period during which post-millennialism and Universalism had gained the ascendancy [3], the more disturbed conditions of the early nineteenth century had made the belief in progress and the gradual development of the Kingdom of God through human agency much less of an attractive option. The treatment accorded Miller's views usually fell into two main categories: exuberant acceptance or vehement rejection. Miller clearly had a message for his time, and provoked a good deal of controversy. Thus while latter-day prophets of the End are usually treated with scorn, Miller's views were accorded considerable attention and debate. From the amount and scope of the resultant discussion it is plain that his message was not treated apathetically. The numbers involved in the movement, coupled with the violence of the opposition and the importance they accorded the need to denounce Miller's teachings, speak volumes on the impact made by this new parousia emphasis. [4].

Miller's central thesis was that according to the prophecy of Daniel 8:14 the world would end and Christ would return in 1843. He had become a Christian in 1816 after a long flirtation with Deism, and began extensive Bible reading in order to be able to account for his new-found beliefs to his Deist friends. In order to approach this task with the minimum of preconceptions, he used only the Bible with

the marginal helps and a concordance. By 1818 he had discovered the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation and had become convinced that if a prophetic day equalled one literal year [5] then the 2300 days of Dan. 8:14 (and other prophetic time periods) would terminate in 1843. [6]. Worried that he had made some unseen error, he did not mention this conclusion to anyone else but returned to his Bible study to recheck his premises and arguments. This process occupied him for several years, yet he found nothing that led him to change his views on the approaching end. Very conscious of the importance of his discovery, he spoke with and wrote to various minister friends urging them to consider his conclusions and to begin promoting them. Not surprisingly, perhaps, few were convinced and fewer still were sufficiently motivated to preach such a controversial doctrine.

By 1831 Miller was becoming increasingly distressed by the lack of interest and support from the clergy in his findings. After experiencing what he considered a clear directive from God, he accepted an invitation to preach on the subject of the second coming to a nearby Baptist congregation. [7]. He evidently was rather successful since he was invited to continue lecturing during the following week, and soon a spiritual revival began.

On his return home he found a letter from an interested minister friend who asked him to come and speak on his second advent views. The next year he produced a series of articles that appeared in the Vermont Telegraph. Opposition to these unusual views soon arose, yet Miller was not dissuaded from propounding his expectation of the soon return of Christ. The strongest antagonism came from members of the

clergy and from the "infidels" (non-Christians) who subjected Miller to considerable abuse. At home he was evidently well respected since in 1833 he was licensed to preach by the Baptist church at Low Hampton, N.Y.

Three years later Miller wrote out sixteen of his lectures to replace a previous pamphlet consisting of his Telegraph articles. These lectures [8] ran to 223 pages and were <sup>the</sup> first attempt to provide a coherent summary of his views. This book brought Miller increased notice, especially among the clergy. Various papers carried reviews of the book and of the activities of Miller himself, while some others had now come to agree with certain of Miller's findings and were also engaged in the same sort of lecture tours that Miller had adopted. By now he was much in demand as a convincing and effective speaker, and had a large part in many of the revivals of the time. [9]. Yet despite his heavy programme of engagements it is doubtful that he would have had anything like the success that eventually ensued had it not been for the interest and ability of a Boston minister, the Rev. Joshua V. Himes.

Himes [10] was a reformer involved in many issues of the day: anti-slavery, non-resistance, temperance, Christian union, Sabbath (Sunday) keeping, education, and so on. His church on Chardon St. was frequently the venue for a variety of conferences dealing with matters of a radical nature. Himes' involvement with such reform programmes acquainted him with methods of promotion and presentation, and when he accepted the "message of the advent near" he put all this experience to work. In this activity, Himes found the cause that

satisfied his desires for change and reform.[11].

Himes met Miller at Exeter, N.H. in 1839 and became convinced of the imminent parousia views that Miller presented in his lecture series. Himes candidly asked Miller whether he really believed the views he preached. When Miller affirmed that he did, Himes asked what action he was taking to make his conclusions known. Miller's reply was "What can an old farmer do?" explaining that he went and preached this message wherever he was asked. Himes offered his support and services if Miller would be willing to go when and where necessary. He, Himes, would arrange the rest.

With the addition of Himes to the ranks of the unusual assortment of Second Advent preachers and believers came the real beginnings of an organization. The movement was and always remained diffuse and rather uncoordinated since the Millerites were never intent on creating a separate church or religious group. [12]. Their purpose, as they saw it, was to prepare the churches and the whole Christian community for the soon return of Christ. No formal organization, membership or accreditation was ever developed and lecturers went wherever they felt the need demanded. Those that accepted the Millerite scheme remained within local church bodies (until late 1843 and 1844) and formed loose congregations of "Second Advent believers." Himes provided one of the only instruments of control and information viable in the circumstances -- newspapers. The Signs of the Times first appeared in Boston in early 1840, and continued throughout the history of the Millerite movement as an excellent means of communication between believers. Millerite publications were also

used as a major medium for the propagation of their convictions. Through the Signs a much wider audience was reached, and the columns of the paper were open to free discussion. Different positions were debated and the views of opponents to the advent cause were examined.

The Millerite papers [13] provide the most important source of material relevant to the dynamics of the movement, practical examples of the parousia belief in action: poetry, hymns, sermons, expositions, letters, replies to opponents, notices of meetings, conference reports, editorials, news both secular and religious, and all that a widespread but unstructured movement required. The Signs is by far the most important of the papers produced by the Millerites, and this is primarily due to the skills and energy of the editor, Joshua Himes. If Miller was the originator of the Millerite movement, Himes was its promoter and sustainer, the key to the success in human terms of the message of the rapidly-approaching end and the coming of Christ.

The history of the advent believers from here on is one of increasing success and opposition, the tone of the message becoming more urgent as the predicted time approached. Miller had calculated the time of Christ's return to be in the Jewish year 1843, that is between the vernal equinox of 1843 and 1844. March 1844 passed without the expected coming, the so-called First Disappointment. However, with reference to the waiting time of the virgins in the parable of Matt. 25 and also Old Testament parallels of the cleansing of the sanctuary on the Day of Atonement, a "Seventh month" movement began that supposed an extension of time until Oct. 22 or 23, 1844,

the Jewish Day of Atonement (the 10th day of the 7th month according to the Jewish Karaite calendar). Miller was not the promoter of this view and only came round to approving it just before the day arrived. [14].

By this time considerable polarization of feeling and attitude had occurred among the established churches, a factor that made it impossible for those who agreed with Miller to remain within their original denominations. [15]. In many instances they were disfellowshipped or had to leave as the result of ridicule or persecution. This increased the Millerites' conviction that they were right and that there was no possibility of error in their beliefs. The antagonism of the churches was taken as a confirmation of the imminent end and a sign of the depraved nature of contemporary religion. The churches were now apostate Babylon and the call "Come out of her, my people" separated Millerism from its work among the Christian denominations and identified the movement as a independent religious force. The advent believers were fully confident that all had been fulfilled, it only remained for Christ to come. Months, then weeks, then days, were counted as his expected return approached. In this latter phase of the Millerite expectation many examples of firm conviction appear in their publications, testifying to their certainty that Christ would return on the day predicted. "I fully believe our glorious King is coming this Fall. My whole soul says, Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." [16]. "It is nearly two years since we began to wait, and look for the coming of the Son of Man. Though our hope has been deferred many weary days, still our confidence is unshaken. We still believe without a doubt, that he who once said, 'I will come

again, will come, and will not tarry." [17]. "Glory to God! the cause is onward. I am happy in waiting and ministering comfort to others. The Lord will soon come, and then the crown. My heart is full of praise, glory fills my soul. Come Lord Jesus, come quickly. Amen." [18]. They were absolutely convinced of the truth of their hope.

As the day approached, they set their worldly affairs in order and prepared to meet their God. In solemn yet joyful meetings they encouraged one another, and made ever-greater efforts to convince unbelievers. Vast numbers of papers were printed as part of the last warnings; many baptisms were held in the weeks preceding the date set. The day itself saw many small groups of Millerites gathered together to pray and await Christ's coming, singing songs of the approaching Saviour and their readiness to go home with him. In the last hours of time, they expected their Redeemer, the meeting with resurrected friends and family, glorification and immortality, the beginning of eternity.

The day passed, and joy turned to unutterable sadness. The evening turned to night, the night to morning. Nothing. Christ had not come. All their hopes had been in vain, they were lost and confused in an uncaring, mocking world:

All was still ... Everyone felt lonely, with hardly a desire to speak to anyone. Still in the cold world! No deliverance -- the Lord not come! No words can express the feelings of disappointment of the true Adventist then.



Those only who experienced it can enter into the subject as it was. It was a humiliating thing and we all felt it alike. All were silent except to enquire, "Where are we?" and "What next?" [19].

Our expectations were raised high, and thus we looked for our coming Lord until the clock tolled 12 at midnight. The day had passed, and our disappointment became a certainty. Our fondest hopes and expectations were blasted, and such a spirit of weeping came over us as I never experienced before. It seemed that the loss of all earthly friends could have been no comparison. We wept, and wept, till the day dawn. I mused in my heart, saying, My advent experience has been the richest and brightest of my christian experience. If this had proved a failure, what was the rest of my christian experience worth? ... Is all this but a cunningly devised fable? Is there no reality to our fondest hope and expectation of these things? And thus we had something to grieve and weep over, if all our fond hopes were lost. And as I said, we wept till the day dawn. [20].

That day came and passed, and the darkness of another night closed in upon the world. But with the darkness came a pang of disappointment to the advent believers that can find a parallel only in the sorrow of the disciples after the crucifixion of their Lord. The passing of the time was a bitter disappointment.... I left the place of meeting and

cried like a child. [21].

The failure of their hope took away the life of the movement. Various explanations were given of the reason for their disappointment, and this, combined with the underlying doctrinal disharmony, led to the breakup of the movement. Many gave up all expectation of the parousia, some gave up Christianity itself. Others retained their hope in the soon-coming of the Saviour, giving the explanation that this bitter experience had been a time of testing and that they were now in the "tarrying time." [22]. Hope continued that Christ would come within a few years. Some set more dates -- January or October 1845, others looked to 1847, 1853, or 1854. In the midst of this confusion, a conference was held at Albany, N.Y., in the spring of 1845. The leaders attempted to hold the movement together by appealing to their past experience, and they encouraged the believers to continue to await the soon coming of Jesus. But without the unifying force of the "time message" (the specific date), and with no sure "guarantee" of the validity of future hope, division and dissent broke the harmony of the Millerites. The heterogenous nature of the movement became clearly apparent as the central conviction was removed. Doctrinal controversies that had lain dormant under the urgency of the "last warning" rose to plague the followers of Miller. Dispute and disagreement on a wide range of subjects caused the splintering into various groups, continuing the advent message in different forms and with varying degrees of success.

Miller died in 1849 still believing in the imminent advent. One of his last letters was to Himes, in which he confessed "It would, indeed, be a sad and melancholy time with me were it not for the 'blessed hope' of soon seeing Jesus." [23]. Whatever may be thought of his time-setting and other aspects of his prophetic interpretation, his emphasis on the parousia and its dramatic importance to the Christian is in harmony with the New Testament gospel and was effectual in conversions and revivals, as is well documented in the Signs of the Times and elsewhere. Miller was mistaken in his expectation of the parousia in 1843-44, yet in his life and those of his followers the imminent advent was fervently believed and its implications put into practice. The effect was to deepen Christian experience and consecration, to give added impetus to mission and to make the necessary response more urgent. The net result was not the fear of doom but the increased awareness of the necessity of the gospel of salvation. [24]. Miller's appeal, having convinced his audience of the truth of the imminent parousia, was always to repentance and conversion, never a message of fear, doom or damnation. As he himself expressed it: "Millerism is to believe, try to understand, love, and to proclaim to others, the good news contained in the Bible." [25].

According to Miller the essence of Millerism was the good news expressed in the New Testament -- Christ had come, Christ will come. The relationship of Millerism to its environment is of considerable importance and is the subject of the next section. The "why?" of the parousia doctrine includes the many reasons for accepting the belief,

and the contemporary conditions cannot be ignored since they determine in part the response made to any given concept.

But for Miller and his colleagues the principal motivation did not lie in their environment. The prime determinant that they acknowledged was the truth of God's word, and the impact of spiritual conviction is their principal answer to the question why. On the wider scale, why does anyone believe in anything? The response lies in the nature of man and his dissatisfaction with the restrictions, paradoxes and pain of the present, and in his appreciation of an involved God. (See also Section 6). The parousia provides a total explanation for and a resolution to all the problems of man, in all categories of time -- past, present and future. [26]. This issue will be considered later, but is the real motivation for these believers of the advent.

The centrality of this hope in their lives is illustrated in the farewell greeting at the bottom of the letters they sent: "Yours in the blessed hope." This was the great objective, the source of hope and consolation. After Miller had convinced them, this was the only thing that seemed to matter.

## 2 The Parousia Hope in Context: The Environment of Millerism

### 2.1 Preliminary Examination

Two extreme positions are possible in the interpretation of any historical event, both of which distort and misrepresent it to the detriment of correct understanding. One is to see the event without any reference to its historical context, its contemporary situation and background. In such a view the event becomes either an inexplicable occurrence, an accident or the work of some outside force which is not capable of logical analysis. Thus the Millerite movement may be considered to be some type of aberrant religious experience that cannot be explained, the work of the Devil (as some contemporaries claimed) or the work of God alone (as many Millerites believed). Such "explanations" hardly further a better understanding of the Millerite phenomenon. The "divine cause" argument, although a valid answer on one level, does not do justice to the other factors involved. Just about any answer to a question of cause can be that God made it that way (why does snow fall, why do birds sing, why does the world turn?), yet such a response, though correct in one sense, does not permit an understanding of the mechanisms involved and does not educate man to enable him to make use of such observed phenomena. That God made a plucked string to make a sound does not help one become the maker of classical guitars.

This section is therefore concerned to examine the nature of Millerism's environment and the relation between this movement and other contemporary factors. This latter relationship is particularly significant. It is not sufficient to detail the historical conditions of the time and leave the analysis there. [27]. The interdependence or lack of it, is the central issue. At the same time the other extreme interpretative position must also be avoided. This view considers events to be explicable entirely in terms of such observable factors as society, economy, cultural dependence, prevailing philosophy and the rest. Such a causative scheme interprets Millerism as a product of its environment and its people -- a sociological movement, a psychological phenomenon and so on. This also limits understanding since it does not permit any examination of what Millerism itself stated was the central cause: a spiritual experience and understanding that was based on the Bible. Whatever the other factors involved, Millerism was a religious movement and cannot be correctly described without an appreciation of the central importance of its beliefs.

No attempt is made here at a full description of this period of American history. The primary objective is to look at Millerism's contemporary situation and to place such apocalyptic fervour within the context of various other historical phenomena. The 1830's and 40's were times of rapid change in many aspects of American society: the impact of technological development, the growth of education, immigration, increasing democracy, the extension of religious plurality, the demands of urban as against rural life and so on.

[28]. Millerism must be seen against such a turbulent background of change and reform, and has been described by one historian as "the summation of all the reforms of <sup>the</sup> age." [29].

## 2.2 The Reformist Background

The connection between the reformatory spirit of the time and the adoption of strong parousia beliefs is well illustrated in that many Millerites were closely linked with various reform movements, even if their reform interests did tend to wane after their acceptance of Millerism. [30]. Joshua Himes was a staunch supporter of the Anti-Slavery Society both before and after his adoption of Millerism. He had also taken a prominent lead in the establishment of a work school for the education of boys without the means to attend other institutions. Himes was one of a group that in 1838 drafted the constitution of the Non-Resistance Society that advocated a pacifist stance and considered the causing of death by any means a sin. Many of the supporters of this society also advocated the improvement in women's rights, and both Himes and his wife were associated with this. Himes can fairly be described as a practical reformer and, indeed, quite a radical one. [31]. That he should eventually become the organizer of the Millerites with their futuristic message of total reformation is perhaps not too surprising. "In Adventism he saw a cause with few supporters and champions, but which promised not merely a better world, but a world made new wherein would dwell peace and righteousness. If Miller were right, Himes had found the cause of

causes." [32].

Other Millerite leaders were of similar background. Charles Fitch was an active abolitionist and had written a pamphlet on the subject in 1837. Both Joseph Bates and Henry Jones were heavily involved in the temperance and anti-slavery movements. George Storrs too was an advocate of the abolition of slavery.

The adoption of such an all-embracing "reform" as <sup>belief in</sup> the coming of Christ and the destruction of the present world by such men often had the effect of virtually annulling their interest in contemporary reform crusades. After all, if the world's end was imminent, what was the point in being concerned to change its existing structures? The spreading of the warning message and the conversion of souls was far more important. Consequently although apparently paralleling the reform movements of the age, Millerism stands in contrast and opposition to them, not in their laudable objectives but in the process by which they were to be achieved. In his autobiography Joseph Bates makes it clear that his convictions of the imminent parousia required his full-time service to this cause, and thus <sup>he</sup> could no longer occupy himself with the work of anti-slavery and temperance as he had done previously. [33].

Cross apparently understands Millerism as providing a reluctant alternative to reformers who had given up hope of success in their particular movements. Of Millerism he says, "The movement developed in a specific atmosphere of deep pessimism. While it aimed at the final accomplishment of all reform in a single stroke, it was actually



the compensating dream of persons who had abandoned lesser reforms in despair. An escape mechanism, it negated the more broadly popular idea of positive action to solve contemporary difficulties. Basically founded upon similar premises and objectives, it yet ran counter to the other campaigns of the era." [34].

Such an argument of conversion to Millerism faute de mieux is hardly compatible with the available evidence. The testimony of those who adopted Millerite beliefs is a positive "conversion" experience, not the last resort of despair. [35]. As Bates makes clear, he did not give up his reformist ideas due to despondency, but because he had found something better than these admittedly good reforms.

One of the more prominent reforms, and certainly the most portentous, was the anti-slavery movement. Yet this was only part of what was in reality a wide range of humanitarian reform that spanned such areas as aid for the blind, the deaf and the mentally-ill, prison reform, improvements in education. The temperance movement was part of this plan to improve society, whilst the long-fought battle for the rights of women has its origins in this era. Reform in society and politics on the general level has its parallel in the individualistic communities that sprang up, an attempt to better man by erasing adverse influences and providing an idealistic social environment. Hence the experimentation with new codes of ethics, work arrangements and social relationships. [36].

The desire for a changed, better social structure is also evident in the founding of various Peace societies. Whilst the aspirations of such groups were similar in terms of objectives to those of the Millerites, the means were not. The bringing about of universal peace by human effort could hardly be made compatible with the cataclysmic coming of the Lord to establish his Kingdom of eternal peace. This similarity of hopes but difference of process is at the heart of the contrast between the "catastrophic" Millerites and the more "evolutionary" Universalists. The latter had a post-millennial scheme for the future, centred on the idea of man's progress towards the utopian state:

Men of seemingly sober judgment expressed repeatedly their confidence that Christians could remake society in the United States according to a pattern fashioned in heaven, and that such a restructuring of relationships would eliminate poverty, provide equal opportunity in education, and free black men from slavery. Thus they would prepare the way for the coming of Christ to rule over his kingdom. [37].

The Universalists (believing in some type of universal salvation) were the group most strongly condemned in the Millerite papers since their view (of a soon to be inaugurated Golden Age of peace and prosperity brought about by the efforts of good men) was heresy to the adventist, ever-expectant of his Lord's return. Even the infidel was better than those Christians promoting the cry of "Peace and safety!"

### 2.3 Socio-Economic Considerations

In the search for non-religious causes of the period's intense apocalyptic fervour, as well as the continued success of such beliefs over several decades, most "explanations" invoke sociological and economic problems to which such "other-worldly" expectations were a viable response. [38]. Thus the famous label of Clark asserts that "Adventism is the typical cult of the disinherited and suffering poor." [39]. The onset of economic depression in the late 1830's and the social dislocation of the period are certainly relevant to any discussion of contemporary parousia expectancy, yet it is dangerous to draw a straight line between socio-economic hardship and parousia-related hope.

On the surface such a direct connection would appear to be quite plausible. The problems begin once an attempt is made to verify such a blanket assertion. Miller, for example, was not a poor man and was evidently a well-respected citizen of his community. [40]. The bulk of the Millerite leaders were clergymen and cannot be considered representative of the "disinherited and suffering poor." The economic conditions of the time made it inescapable that many of the less-fortunate would become part of the Millerite congregation. Yet the depressed economy and social changes cannot be made ipso facto causes of the Millerite movement. Contemporaneity cannot be equated with cause.

Since the Millerites kept no membership records, took no surveys, and made no censuses, it is difficult to check the validity of Clark's assertion. Even the total number of Millerites can only be estimated, let alone any analysis made of their economic status or social position. However, a later study of such factors in an Adventist group indicates that they came from the "above average" range. [41]. It also appears from Millerite reports that some of the lower social and economic groups had a tendency to be rather antagonistic to such parousia beliefs -- the violence and ridicule came from the inhabitants of the taverns and the streets, the poorly paid and the unemployed. [42].

The above somewhat extended qualifier aside, it is quite evident that Miller's teachings were admirably suited to those who had immediate and pressing problems in life, of which those consequent on a low social status and financial difficulties were among the more decisive. The economic troubles were viewed by Miller and others as one of the "Signs of the Times," and such a general depression affected everyone. While the Millerites' success cannot be equated with the poor economic conditions or the "oppression of the masses," it certainly was true that "The excitement attained general vogue during a severe economic depression." [43].

The greatly disturbed social conditions must be properly understood. Many factors contributed to a social dislocation of unprecedented proportions. The vast influx of immigrants was largely responsible for the massive increase in the population of the United

States, which almost doubled in the period 1820-40 creating tremendous stresses in the prevailing social conditions. Rapid industrialization disrupted the traditional, rural nature of society and posed increasingly complex problems of social readjustment. The westward movement of settlers and the development of new territories brought its own problems of social displacement in both the newly-established areas and in the society left behind. These and other influences encouraged a freer and more fluid social order and a consequent reshaping of its values and practices. Harkness documents this social revolution [44] and quotes the Oberlin Evangelist of August 30, 1843: "That a proposed measure is violent, desperate, disruptive of social order, so far from being a reason why it should be abandoned, is rather an inducement to rush headlong into it. It is truly alarming to contemplate the rampant, restless, reckless spirit of our times." [45].

This social "confusion" was aggravated by the financial disaster of 1837. The economic collapse was due primarily to speculation and the over-extension of credit. This latter factor was result of the intense competition between states over major capital investment projects such as new road, rail and canal systems, from ill-advised expansion, and from widespread property speculation. The crash that came after a poor harvest showed how severely the economic system had been over-stretched and necessitated a period of austerity and re-establishment. Many lost their fortunes in the process. The States of New York and Pennsylvania were almost bankrupt -- what hope for the common worker, whether in industry or agriculture? The farmers found they could not sell their products, the city workers had no

money with which to buy. The message of Miller was certainly significant to those who had lost their earthly hopes. Its popular appeal is testified to by various Millerite writers [46], and it may well be that poverty and social disruption were contributing factors in the decision of many. But Millerism was only one of the many answers of the time. It is surprising that having documented the suffering and hardships of the poor, having made socio-economic factors so determinative in the acceptance of Millerism, and having given dissatisfaction with present conditions and future prospects as so important a cause, Harkness can conclude his study of Miller and his movement with the statement: "But such a conviction was not due to pessimism. It was born of a firm, unfaltering faith in the power of God and the certainty of his vindication." [47]. Perhaps he too was aware of the danger of making social or economic reasons the "gods" of the Millerite movement, although he hardly admits this. There are indeed other factors.

Many who became Millerites had no personal cause to worry over financial or social problems, and in fact experienced economic hardship and social disapproval as a result of their Millerite associations. The added consideration that there have been many economic disasters and social changes without such an apocalyptic phenomenon occurring makes the real cause(s) of Millerism other than the prevailing socio-economic environment. Millerism was informed and influenced by these factors, and its history would have been very different without them, but they are not absolutely determinative. [48].

The relationship of Millerism to its socio-economic background is admittedly a complex one. There certainly does not exist a direct relation of cause and effect: the environmental conditions did not "cause" Millerism. That has been made clear in the above, and in the documentation to be found in the relevant notes. Many of the interactions and conditions have been described above, and while this is in no way an exhaustive analysis, it is appropriate to note some conclusions.

[1]. The social and economic conditions of the time may well have made a belief with an accent on the future attractive to many whose present conditions were less than satisfactory. That said, there are many qualifiers.

[2]. Socio-economic factors cannot explain why those who had no reason or social "deprivation" joined the movement, nor can a deterministic scheme account for the widespread antipathy of the "have-nots." The wide variation of the response to Millerism and its appeal across the social and economic spectrum argues against such factors. Indeed such an observation makes it very likely that far greater attention should be paid to personal and individual motivations for belief. These latter aspects are not without their social and economic influences, but such influences cannot be considered clear and unambiguous.

[3]. The concept of a returning Christ has far greater implications than the assuagement of social or economic ambitions and desires. The belief does nothing to encourage such aims; on the contrary it has a tendency to replace them. In this respect, whether one is rich or poor, of high or low social status, is of no real consequence since these factors have little relevance in view of the imminent End and the initiation of final Judgement. Indeed, if the parallel of the Rich Fool of the gospel parable is considered, then the belief in a proximate parousia is of more "significance" to the rich than the poor.

[4]. A survey of the social status and wealth of the Millerite <sup>movement</sup> is not now possible. Its actual composition is unknown, and even the exact numbers cannot be determined. Yet from a reading of Millerite publications, and the evidence of the post-Millerite Adventists (see note 41), it is clear that Millerites were not predominantly or primarily associated with the poorer classes. The movement includes the whole spectrum of society, and if the poorer elements are numerically greater then this may only reflect the composition of contemporary society.

[5]. The clashes with street mobs and the antagonism shown by many of those who can be considered as "socio-economically deprived" show that Millerism was not viewed as the means of betterment by a considerable proportion of the less well-to-do. The fact that they postulated an end to contemporary society and the current world-scheme did not necessarily appeal to the "have-nots," particularly as the



belief was involved with a very personal religious commitment.

Many other factors can be mentioned as being relevant to the Millerite preaching of an imminent parousia. General pessimism of the future and severe shock consequent on the French Revolution [49] had renewed the expectation of a coming cataclysm and gave great impetus to the interpretation of bible prophecy. The great impact of large-scale immigration gave many cause for concern, especially as the traditional Protestant dominance seemed to be threatened by the many Catholics arriving from Europe. The anti-Catholic sentiment gave rise to such societies as the American Protestant and Native American Party. Many Millerites were sympathetic to the aims of this society since they were also much concerned by this "threat" to Protestantism. [50]. Another sign of the approaching end, perhaps.

But such factors, although relevant, ignore the real foundation on which Millerism was based. The conditions in which it flourished are important, and provide some (qualified) understanding as to its appeal -- the various fears and problems within that society: the urge towards reform, the financial problems, the frustrated desire for social betterment, the anxiety at the influx of immigrants, the fear of loss of prestige, whatever impact such factors may have they must be subsidiary to the primary expressed motivation which is a religious expression. That too did not arise in isolation, but is both part of and a reaction against contemporary religious values and trends. This significant aspect must now be considered in greater detail.

2:4 Contemporary Religious Conditions

Undoubtedly the greatest "environmental" factor was the contemporary religious scene. Miller may have reached his conclusions independently of other similar theories, but the close agreement among such prophetic studies indicates a common set of premises and procedures. The religious climate contributed to and supported such apocalyptic conclusions. Miller may appear strange to the modern mind, but it was in close harmony with much of contemporary religious thought. One scholar who has no denominational or sectarian axe to grind remarks:

Lest anyone reading the various accounts of the rise of Millerism in the United States come to the conclusion that Miller and his followers were "crackpots" or "uneducated tools of Satan," the following facts should be known: The great advent awakening movement that spanned the Atlantic from Europe was bolstered with a tremendous wave of contemporary Biblical scholarship. Although Miller himself lacked academic theological training, actually scores of prophetic scholars had espoused Miller's view before he himself announced it. In reality, his was only one more voice proclaiming the 1843/1844 fulfilment of Daniel 8:14, or the 2300 days period allegedly dating from 457 B.C., and ending in 1843-1844.... If we condemn him, we must also condemn a large number of internationally known scholars who were among the most highly educated men of their day.

[51].

Another commentator, also not of any Millerite or Adventist background puts forward similar views:

Their [the Millerites'] doctrine ... was nearest to strict orthodoxy of all the creations of the period. On every subject but the millennium the Adventists found the same Bible meanings others found and held them more rigidly than did most. Their peculiarity lay not in radical change from traditional notions but in intensified adherence to them.... All Protestants expected some grand event about 1843, and no critic from the orthodox side took any serious issue on basic principle with Miller's calculations. [52].

This preoccupation with prophetic interpretation can be linked to a number of events related to religious affairs. The capture and subsequent death of the Pope shocked the whole of Christendom, Protestants as well as Catholics. It seemed that this dramatic event presaged some break-up in the traditional scheme, and for some it became the symbol of the coming End. To this "sign" <sup>be</sup> may/added the loss of confidence in the supremacy of man, and his ability to solve his own problems/<sup>which</sup> led many back to the concept of an interventionist God that operated in the sphere of man's activity. This may be seen as a reaction against the emphasis of the Enlightenment on man's reason and the deus ex machina concept of a skeptical Deism. The "religious" events of the French Revolution -- the burning of Bibles, the enshrinement of the goddess of reason, the disestablishment of the

church -- also gave credence to the concept that the End approached, and that the End was the work of a God both angry with the blasphemy of mankind generally and satisfied with the piety of the few. The Bible became the expositor of the End, and also the means by which the date of the End might be calculated.

To this background of religious anxiety and the resurgence of a biblical "activist" idea of God and his impending judgment must be added the particular form of religious experience that found expression in the many revivals of the period. Revivalism and individualistic religion acted synergistically to produce an openness and appreciation of religious propositions that were not necessarily tied into any one religious structure. The emphasis on personal experience and conversion made an "experimentation" with various religious ideas a possibility. Indeed without such a situation it is hard to see how Millerism could ever have arisen, let alone taken so strong a hold.

The religious plurality of the country and the individualistic freedom permitted by the open and still expanding "frontier" (however defined) created a situation within which Millerism became a viable proposition. [53]. The era saw the beginnings of a whole host of new religious combinations: Joseph Smith and the Church of Latter-day Saints, Charles Fourier with a type of Christian Socialism, Alexander Campbell and the Disciples of Christ, modern spiritualism, the growth of Shakerism and Swedenborgianism, the rise of Ultraism and many other variant views.

With such a confused background it is hardly surprising that Millerism was generally viewed as predominantly orthodox and its lecturers invited to speak in the churches of many denominations. The settling of America had been and continued to be associated with millennial concepts of a temporal "kingdom" of peace and freedom, away from the persecutions in Europe. The new nation had a strong self-consciousness of its destiny as the one place on earth where man and his society could be improved and perfected, a situation which activated such evangelistic bodies as the American Home Missionary Society [54] and made evangelism a dominant part of the religious scene. Miller's preaching was clearly a strong stimulus to repentance and conversion, and it was probably for this reason rather than his individualistic eschatology that he was so much in demand among the churches. At this point Millerism is in sympathy with the thought and expectations of the time -- the need for conversion of the nation, the stress on the personal, individualistic nature of religion (paralleling democratic trends in other areas), the millennial consciousness, the necessity of reform, the acceptance of the Bible as the standard in all areas, the high moral standard demanded -- these and other aspects show the common ground that Millerism shared with its contemporaries.

Yet in many ways the Millerites were a reaction against some of these attitudes. Their millennial consciousness was of a world-rejecting nature and ran counter to the idea that America was to be the tool of God, the "Redeemer Nation." They did not look to man as the focus of their expectations, but to the coming of God. The

religious basis for the reform crusades was lacking in the Millerite movement that propounded the uselessness of human reform attempts in view of the culminative, all-embracing answer: the coming of Christ. Thus although Millerism has a background of reformist activity, and although many Millerites had also been part of reform movements, their adoption of the imminent parousia belief of Millerism and the realisation that the world could not be remade into a perfect society by human efforts ensured that Millerism could not be represented or believed as a true reform movement. Their theological premises made it impossible to envisage a scheme of world-betterment, nor was the idea of universal salvation permissible. The parousia concept effectively distinguished between those that awaited the Lord and those who rejected the message. In Millerite minds this became the mark of differentiation, and whatever good reforms were undertaken then they were all quite pointless. What was the point of reforming society if the Lord was coming soon? What was the point in looking to the progress of humanity and the universal salvation of man if you believed the world was about to end and that all men would be judged?

The Universalist approach to salvation was an anathema to Miller and his associates. Of all their opponents, the Universalists were treated with the fiercest antagonism since the Universalist position was completely at odds with the belief in the imminent parousia. Universalists were portrayed as those that cried "Peace and safety" in a time of desperate crisis -- the approaching advent of the Lord. Their eschatological picture was totally different, and their belief that all would be saved by God meant that the decision to await the imminent coming of the Lord and to be ready for his judgment that was

so important to Millerism was made of no great consequence. According to Miller, Universalists were mistaken both in their eschatological outlook and in their understanding of salvation. There was no time left for the gradual redemption of the world, and also the stress on personal choice and conviction in the process of conversion ran counter to the all-inclusive salvation of those who apparently persisted in the rejection of the gospel message. In the end Millerism came to separate itself from the institutional churches which they charged with spiritual lethargy, rejecting the truth of Christ's near advent, hindering the gospel cause, and eventually with becoming part of the apostate spiritual power, Babylon. [55].

Thus while having many principles in common with the various religious groups from which it was composed, Millerism cannot be seen merely as an extension of current religious trends. Its nature is seen in that it ultimately rejected and was rejected by those same churches and in its passionate proclamation of the imminent end of the world. In many areas it ran counter to the general feeling, expecting disaster not prosperity, termination not progress, a coming King not a coming Kingdom based on the work of man. Perhaps Millerism should be more correctly seen as a "negation" of America -- certainly it was a denial of an essential hope of the settlers: a new and better earthly life. Millerism took away the lifeblood of America consciousness by the rejection of its future. God was the future, and his return spelt the end of all this.

### 3 The Practice of Belief: Causes and Effects

The "why?" that stands at the centre of any analysis of Millerism's parousia beliefs involves the whole question of personal motivation. What was the attraction of Miller's beliefs, what was the reason for his success? Above all, why the parousia?

To judge the relevant factors in such a decision-making activity is not a feasible proposition. Belief is hardly such a logical and examinable process, and the causative components may not be evident even to the one making the decision. The individual's own psychology, family environment, social status, employment, personal problems and all the rest contribute to the acceptance or rejection of Millerism, and this on a purely human level. Belief is not explicable in terms of such factors, they only provide the background against which the decision is made, since the reaction may be either positive or negative. Thus the poorer members of society reacted to Millerism in various ways: for those that joyfully identified with the belief in the near advent of Christ there were just as many who treated the whole thing with scorn and ridicule, a fact that is clearly evident in the many confrontations between Millerite groups and stone-throwing mobs.

Explanations of the parousia beliefs promoted by Miller, their causes and effects, are conditioned by the analyst's own beliefs. The concept of divine activity is hardly acceptable to or verifiable by "scientific" investigation, yet this was the usual explanation



employed by the Millerites themselves. Although beliefs and attitudes may be affected by social, economic, philosophical and all other contemporary influences, the central aspect of belief that presupposes a divine being makes such an affirmation the key in understanding the actions and expressions of those who became Millerites. [56].

### 3.1 Emotional/Personal Aspects

The most obvious cause/effect aspect is the resultant creation of positive emotions and the resolution of negative ones through the adoption of Millerism. These highly-personal aspects cannot be examined in depth since the Millerites have not provided much information on this side of their belief. However, one argument used by opponents did result in some discussion, and has been the subject of some study -- the balance of fear and joy within the Millerite movement. [57].

A frequent accusation made against Miller was that his message brought a conversion out of fear for the future, that his preaching of doom and disaster caused people to join the movement out of terror of the judgment. Yet the contemporary evidence -- especially Miller's own lecture series -- indicates that though Miller emphasized the seriousness of future judgment his main concern was the salvation offered by Christ and the joy of Christian experience. The conclusion

of the fear/joy survey was that both were present but that the latter was far more important than the former:

There was fear, there was rejoicing. There was also much fear, and fanaticism, people did silly things, but I believe that this was mainly due to the false reporting of the media and the perversion of Miller's message.... The fearful were the ones on the outside who had not really committed themselves to God.

Miller's message was strong, powerful, his appeals often direct and provoking, yet I do not believe that he set out to create an atmosphere of emotion, fear or even to establish a movement for his own glory. [58].

When questioned directly as to the means by which he had been persuaded of the beliefs he preached, Miller replied that they had arisen from his own personal Bible study, undertaken primarily in order to give an acceptable account for his conversion. "I found in going through with the Bible, that the end of all things was clearly and emphatically predicted, both as to time and manner." The main cause as given by Miller is a doctrinal one based on a belief-experience. As to the effects, Miller continues:

The church has been awakened to study, and the Bible has been read with more interest. In many, and I might say almost every place a revival of religion has followed, which has lasted for months ... Hundreds ... have got a hope

more sure in an experiential knowledge of the justice of God, in the forgiveness of sin, through the blood and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. [59].

### 3.2 "Conversionism" -- The Parousia Belief as Part of Revival

These aspects of revivalism are very much part of the Millerite phenomenon. Miller was invited to other churches by their ministers primarily so a revival could be effected. Such practical effects hint at some of the causes for acceptance: the message paralleled the style of revival that had been popular and which continued to be very much a normative experience for the time. [60]. In addition the emphasis on the shortness of time gave an added impetus to the desire to prepare and repent. After all, if Miller was right in his calculations (and it did seem that his calculations had a valid basis), then eternity was just around the corner. Such a motivation to acceptance was frequently made explicit, one writer in a Millerite paper almost advocating a type of "insurance policy" approach: "We solemnly warn our fellow Christians, of all sects and denominations, to trim their lamps, and be in readiness for the coming of the bridegroom. Do not delay. Get ready. It can do no harm to be prepared, even if the master should not come so soon as anticipated by many of his servants." [61]. Certainly the message gave a strong emphasis to an aggressive evangelistic work of warning, stressing repentance,

conversion and preparation.

Many accounts of the effects of Millerite preaching are to be found in their papers. Representative of such reports is that written by Elder Fleming who details the reactions in Portland, Maine:

Things here are moving powerfully. Last evening about 200 requested prayers, and the interest seems constantly increasing. The whole city seems agitated. Br. Miller's lectures have not the least effect to affright; they are far from it. The great alarm is among those who did not come near. Many who stayed away and opposed seem excited, and perhaps alarmed. But those who candidly heard, are far from excitement and alarm.

The interest awakened by his lectures is of the most deliberate and dispassionate kind, and though it is the greatest revival I ever saw, yet there is the least passionate excitement. [62].

A similar statement comes from one who adopts a more neutral stance:

I believe that Mr. Miller's lectures are so fraught with gospel truth, that, whatever may be his error in relation to the time of our Lord's appearing, he will do great good.... His lectures have been succeeded by precious revivals of religion, in all of these places.... As it

respects the immoral tendencies of his lectures, I have seen none of them. [63].

Even those not in sympathy with Miller's eschatological predictions admitted his beneficial influence, and the lack of emotionalism and fanaticism in his presentations.

Much of the appeal is therefore to be associated with a heightened spiritual experience among those already Christian, and with the conversion of those who had not yet accepted the gospel. The greater stress on the parousia was also felt to be highly significant in this revival:

Many Christians who attended Mr. Miller's lectures here, have regarded them as the means of quickening them to a new spiritual life. I know not that any one has embraced all his peculiar views, but many have been made to feel that time is short, that the coming of Christ is at hand, and that what they do for their fellow men must be done quickly. They have felt that hitherto the doctrine of the second coming of Christ had had little or no practical effect upon them, and, that while they could suppose at least one thousand years between that event and the present time, its influence must be less than if it were a matter of constant expectation. [64].

This aspect of practically-important religious experience is a recurring theme in Millerite literature. While the factor of the definite date introduces a clear objective and very limited timescale, this factor alone is not the major influence here. The theme is one of constant expectation, and it is surprising how little attention is paid to the definite date in the Millerite papers. It would seem that many were not convinced of the exact date put forward, and followed Miller only in believing that the advent was near. This certainly is the main idea in the previous quotation -- the influence of a parousia that is the object of constant expectation. The influence is clearly spelled out as a spiritual revival and renewal, a form of conversion and rededication with the arrival of the parousia seen as near. The Millerite expectation is thus closely linked to the basic evangelistic message, and is a potent force in the encouragement to a higher standard of Christian living.

### 3.3 The Need to Hope: The Future as Better than the Present

The attractiveness of the parousia is heavily bound up with the need to hope. Many of Miller's time appear to have undergone some sort of crisis of confidence in which the common hopes and desires of man became insufficient. Although this is a very subjective evaluation, there can be little doubt that some of the attractiveness of Millerism lies in its provision of hope outside of man -- indeed a type of belief that provides "hope in a time of abandonment," to use Ellul's phrase. Hope is a key phrase in the Millerite proclamation, and its drawing power for those who were increasingly disenchanted with this world's hopes cannot be disregarded. This can be related to the contemporary conditions mentioned earlier, although the fact that Millerism is only one expression of hope, and a world-denying hope at that, means the acceptance of Millerism is related to many other factors, as discussed above. Yet it is still true that to a considerable degree, the acceptance of the parousia hope indicates a rejection of other expectations, with a corresponding change in behaviour and activity. Such a dissatisfaction with contemporary hopes is implicit in Miller's statement: "I have a hope, yes, yes, 'a blessed hope', founded on that word that never fails; my hope is on him, who soon will come, and will not tarry " [65].

Strong expressions of their hope in the parousia of Christ and the corresponding rejection of man-centred hopes are frequent in the poetry of the Millerites. As a source of their personal feelings, this literature is far more productive than their prose works which are much more concerned to give a logical explanation of their

beliefs. Note the forceful convictions of the poem "Longing for Home":

Weary of wandering round and round,  
This vale of sin and gloom,  
I long to leave the unhallowed ground,  
And dwell with Christ at home. [66].

Whatever reservations might be expressed as to its literary merit or its rhyming, the sentiments are very clear. The transformation of present circumstances is an integral part of the Millerite outlook:

O shout my dear brethren, that day long expected  
Is coming -- redemption through Jesus is nigh;  
No longer oppressed, no longer rejected,  
All tears, by our Lord, will be wiped from each eye!

and

But to the saints, what joy and gladness,  
When Christ their Saviour comes in sight --  
He drives away their fear and sadness,  
And now they walk in robes of white. [67].

The Millerite hymnal [68] is replete with other examples of the transfer of hope out of the present into the future, the future of God's acts alone. The reasons for acceptance of this imminent parousia belief must be associated with such concepts, since very few



are convicted by the pure logic of any argument [69], despite all assurances to the contrary. The need to have a firm objective of hope (see above) in the face/<sup>of</sup> what seemed to be very disturbing times and the apparent failure of man to solve his problems must be reckoned as major factors in the growth and success of Millerism. Such a response is not to be deplored or ridiculed. After all, a similar response infused the outlook and expectancy of the early church, and was the object of hope defined by Christ while on earth. However, the "failure of human hope" was not in itself the cause of Millerism. It makes no sense to speak of Millerism as an "invention" to meet a necessity. Yet the need to hope is a significant factor in the spread of Millerism.

The resurrection of the parousia hope appeared to many to be a return to early Christian expectation. In some ways, Millerism does parallel many areas of primitive Christianity. In many others it does not, and no comparison should be overextended. Millerism's fervent expectation of Christ's return appears to be very much in harmony with the New Testament church, even if its date-setting is not. [70]. Through the impetus given to "spreading the word" by such time delimitation, Millerism experienced many of the situations of the apostles' times: deep commitment to their message, an over-powering sense of urgency, the desperate need of true repentance and conversion, the certainty of God's supremacy and future activity over against the plans and works of Man. One contributor to the Midnight Cry puts the position very plainly:

I have been asked what good will result from a belief in this doctrine. I answer, a speculative belief of it will do no more good than a speculative belief in God, unless we try to love and serve him. We believe in no other means of salvation, now, than Peter taught at the day of Pentecost -- repentance toward God, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and obedience to his commands. But we think the subject of Christ's coming so soon, so very solemn in itself, as to lead every person who thinks of it for a moment, to ask himself the question, "Am I prepared for his coming?" [71].

This identification with New Testament times is frequent in Millerite thought and expression. President Weethee of Beverly College wrote in the Midnight Cry: "I am pained at the opposition, coming as it does from the Saviour's professed friends, yet it should not surprise us. Such was the condition of the nominal church at the first advent, and why not at the second?" [72]. Note also the parallelism (and perhaps a note of frustration too) in a letter from S. Palmer: "The doctrine of Christ's coming to judge the world never will be popular! be it so, I glory in the cross " [73].

That Millerism provided hope cannot be doubted. The proclamation of the "blessed hope" is in harmony with the New Testament witness. But the dating of the parousia is totally without Scriptural warrant, and can only be deprecated. As others have remarked, Millerism contained the seeds of its own destruction, and it is unfortunate that the parousia hope lost credibility through the aftermath of 1844. As has been noted above, not all Millerites were agreed on the date, or on the advisability of setting one. It would be most informative to

know what would have happened had a definite date not been adopted. A speculative answer would be that Millerism would probably have had less effect, yet would certainly not have collapsed with the passing of the date. Some might conclude that the date was everything. However this would seem to be an unwarranted assumption. It provided a clear and absolute focus, and also gave a specificity to the message that may have convinced some more out of fear than of true hopeful expectation. But to say that the movement could not have occurred without the date is to stretch the evidence too far. Many did only believe in a "soon" coming. The actual date was only set in the late stages of Millerism. And the continuation of "Advent" congregations beyond the failed date shows that the date was not everything. Hope continued without a specific date, and Millerism, though fragmented into a number of bodies, continues to have a considerable influence. The message of hope that is the parousia could not be destroyed by the error of fixing dates.

#### 4 Conclusions

The implications of such a parousia belief can be seen in the combination of cause and effect. Many of these factors are discussed above; the following is an attempt to systematize the observations. Yet no one set of causes can be the same for each individual, nor can the consequences be identical. Only wide generalizations can be made here. One very obvious motivator was the dissatisfaction many felt with the hopes of the time. The parousia provided a comprehensive

objective of hope that also answered the problems and cares of everyday life. Secondly, the parousia, when combined with a conversion experience, also engendered a feeling of purpose and fulfilment -- it made life worthwhile and gave direction to it. Many of those who adopted Millerism became ardent proponents, giving up much to become preachers of the "midnight cry." A third factor was that the imminent parousia belief made demands on those that accepted it: not only did it provide meaning and purpose, it required a radical restructuring of lifestyle and behaviour. This redirection of activity found expression in a powerful missionary concern, and so not only was the message important in itself, but its success must be linked with the vigour with which the imminent parousia was proclaimed. The time factor is very significant here. While the setting of a definite date may be deprecated, it is difficult to see that the movement would have had as great an influence without it. The time element was of some, although not overriding, importance in Miller's teachings, a fact recognized by many within the movement. [74].

Considerable argument over the nature and effects of Millerite beliefs is present in the literature of the time. [75]. Many opponents were unable to refute Miller's prophetic interpretation and contented themselves with an assertion of the evil influence and detrimental effects of his lecturing, frequently also charging that Miller was mad: "In one view its influence is more pernicious than that of any other system of error. It has a bearing that none other has to blunt the moral sensibilities.... Crowds of young people, eager for a frolic, will rush to hear the ravings of one, who has virtually given notice that his mind has 'sincerely' lost its balance." [76]. In another paper, Miller is described as "probably mad," the article

continuing that "if not a lunatic he is a very dangerous man, and his attacks on Christianity of the most insidious character." [77].

Without any evidence given, it was concluded that Millerite teaching "tends ultimately to the darkest and most destructive infidelity," that Miller and his coadjutors "are now doing more harm to the cause of religion than they can ever hope to repair" and that "William Miller is a weak-minded, vain and self-confident old man " [78]. The "detrimental effect" argument was easily answered by the Millerite press by giving examples of the beneficial results of Miller's preaching. Various non-Millerite journals acknowledged the truth of the Millerites' case on this point [79], making it clear that only those highly prejudiced could maintain the assertion of Millerism's depraving tendencies.

Another "effect" that antagonists charged was that Millerism caused insanity. [80]. While it is quite conceivable that the strong emphasis on the end of the world could be disturbing to some, an extensive study of asylum records indicates that Millerism was often given as a supposed cause without much reason and can be associated with the opprobrium with which Millerism was connected in the minds of some. The Millerites at the time countered the charge by examples of those healed from insanity by their message.

There is little point in detailing all the supposed incidents for which Millerism was blamed. As a final example there was the charge of taking money from a gullible people, a frequently repeated accusation. "We do not hesitate to express our belief, that the sole object of this stupendous humbug, is to fill their [Miller and Himes'] pockets with money at the expense of the credulity of the people."

[81]. This type of allegation is amply refuted by an examination of the lives of the Millerites. Indeed money was the last thing desired by a people who earnestly expected the near end of the earthly economy. Himes made repeated statements in the Signs and the Midnight Cry that he made no money from his part in the movement, in fact the reverse was true -- he supported the cause out of his own means. The same is true for Miller, and the other leaders.

The end effect of Millerism was the exact opposite of that intended. [82]. After the Great Disappointment in October 1844, anyone preaching the imminent parousia was subject to the strongest ridicule. It took a long time for America to forget the debacle of Millerism's end. Yet the continuing tradition of adventist beliefs in the present is primarily due to the Advent Awakening of this period. Millerism's conflicting consequences continue on, the arguments unresolved, the parousia not come. In the whole of the above debate concerning the causes of Millerism, its effects upon individuals and its relationship with society, one aspect has not been defined. There are many external and internal factors that affect the adoption and utilization of Millerite beliefs, as has been clear from the foregoing. But the final question that Millerism poses must be faced: can a religious factor, a belief in a supernatural God, be admitted? Is the expression that the Millerites gave to their belief justified, or must all supernatural and divine elements be dismissed?

These related questions relate to basic presuppositions as to the study of religious phenomena. If there is a place in the analyst's own framework of belief for the possibility of divine activity and human response, then Millerism can be seen as part of man's religious nature and one of his many reactions and beliefs in God. If the

supernatural element is not considered permissible, then Millerism can only be the result of other factors that are translated into a religious phenomenon that has no real validity.

Such questions are similar to those faced by biblical exegetes -- or indeed anyone reacting to and explaining religious phenomena. The decision must be made at some point as to whether the position taken by religious believers is acceptable. The answer may take many forms. One is to deny the divine/supernatural/God-man element entirely, and to describe all religious experience in terms of the presumed contributory factors that have led to this formulation of belief. Religious belief then becomes a resolution of problems, a crutch for the maladjusted, or a misguided attempt to explain the world -- or whatever else may be used in order to explain away the religious content of religious belief.

Alternatively it may be thought that some form of religious experience is valid and acceptable, but that the belief structure under consideration needs to be reinterpreted. In this analysis religious phenomena become reflective of religion rather than descriptive -- in the case of the Millerites one could say that they were "right" to have religious beliefs and to respond affirmatively to God, but "wrong" in the actual formulation of their beliefs: the predicting of a real, imminent parousia for example. Millerism can therefore be viewed as a typical religious response under certain environmental conditions, and has to be seen as related to its time and not really a valid expression of belief today. It may be regarded as valid in that the belief structure meant something to the Millerites of the 1840's, but it cannot now be taken as a valid expression of the true relationship of God to man and vice versa.

This latter position can be formulated in a large number of ways in which the truth of religious experience is retained but the Millerites' specific understanding is rejected. They can then be regarded as misguided, an aberrant group that took a wrong turn, without denying that a valid religious experience does exist.

The last of the range of attitudes would be one which accepted both that religious experience can be valid, and that the Millerites gave a valid expression to it. That is not to completely identify with their belief structure; but is a recognition that their basic theological position may be a true and consistent one. Various shades of opinion are also possible here since one may wish to reject certain Millerite formulations but keep the essential aspects of their beliefs.

The position taken ultimately depends on how the acceptability of religious phenomena is judged. The concept of validity has been used extensively in the above discussion and needs some examination itself. Validity means many things to many people -- for instance, the Millerite movement may be seen as a "valid" expression of man's search for meaning and understanding by a sociologist who may completely deny the "validity" of its religious convictions. The concept of validity as used in this study has a religious sense and indicates some sort of identity between the belief structure of the Millerites and that of the analyst. If there is no correspondence, then Millerism can have no validity in the mind of the analyst -- at least in what it claims. It may still be valid in terms of its relationship to society or to man's hope for betterment or whatever. The very fact that the Millerite movement occurred shows that it had



some intrinsic validity -- it was seen as being valid by a significant number of people living at that time.

On the other side, the fact that a principal component of their belief structure was negated by the passing of the 1844 date shows that in some way the Millerite proclamation was invalid. This factor must be accepted and understood in the analysis of Millerism, yet it cannot be made a reason for identifying the whole of Millerite belief as invalid. The whole discussion of the relevance and validity of belief is continued in Section Six, and the similar situation of Adventists is discussed in Section Four. One last remark needs to be made, however. The concept of validity presumes, in a qualified way, the existence of truth and error. The Millerite experience was, it would seem, both valid and invalid. The conclusions as to how, why and where must be left to the decision of the individual, yet in deciding the validity or otherwise of Millerism the exclusive "either-or" approach must be avoided. It is not sufficient to reject the whole of Millerism on the basis of the falsity of one belief. On the other hand, few would want to accept all their tenets, despite the fact that many did so in the early 1840's. The religious beliefs of others cannot really be looked at objectively since they must invariably be tested against or compared with one's own beliefs. For this reason there can be no conclusion as to the validity of the Millerite expression of belief as this depends to a large extent on the personal predilections of the analyst himself. Yet Millerism may well be seen as a belief structure that possessed both "truth" and "error." Agreement as to which parts can be so defined is impossible, yet the basic premise is surely acceptable. The relationship of valid and invalid beliefs cannot be examined further here -- in a sense the basic purpose of this thesis is this very point: the validity or

otherwise of a religious belief, the parousia.

The ultimate answer to the validity or otherwise of Millerism lies in the belief-structure of the analyst himself. Beliefs can be played off against one another, and the expression of the Millerites themselves must also be treated with respect. They may be out-of-tune with modern trends, a strange phenomenon to present day religious beliefs. But this alone does not negate their belief.

In the aftermath of the failed date, the climax of their hopes, one of the expectant people looked back over the years since Miller first began his announcement of the parousia's close approach. The analysis of the causes and effects is not exhaustive, it takes no account of social phenomena nor of economic trends, it does not investigate the psychology of the individuals nor their cultural dependency. Yet it does provide a valid answer, and a fitting close to the questions of motivation and result:

We have seen how near we can live to God, when we lay ourselves out for it. We have seen how little of this world we can get along with, and serve God. We have seen how much we can help our brother when it is attempted in earnest. And we have learned a little what it is like to suffer with Christ and his early church. Their hope is our hope -- their lot is our lot -- their consolation is our consolation. And soon it will be realized. [83].

Notes to Section Three

1. William Miller was a native of Western Massachusetts, and moved with his parents to Low Hampton, N.Y., at the age of four. This was his home for the rest of his life. For biographical details, refer to S. Bliss, Memoirs of William Miller (Boston: J. V. Himes, 1853), chapters 1-4, and F. D. Nichol, The Midnight Cry (Takoma Park, Washington DC.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1945), chapters 1-3. [Note that there is also a Millerite paper of the same title. In order to distinguish them, reference to Nichol's book will always contain the author's name and the title will be given in full, viz. The Midnight Cry. The paper will be designated Midnight Cry, usually abbreviated to MC.] For Miller's own retrospective defence of his views see William Miller, Wm. Miller's Apology and Defence: August 1, 1845 (Boston: J. V. Himes, 1845). The most accessible collection of Millerite primary sources is J. Hoornstra, ed., The Millerites and Early Adventists (Ann Arbor, MI.: University Microfilms International, 1978).

2. See E. R. Sandeen, The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism 1800-1930 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 57-58. Also L. E. Froom, The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1946-54), Vol. 3, 263f. Smith rather disparagingly remarks that "Miller appeared at the point when revival fires were bringing hopes for the Second Advent to feverish intensity" and that "he gained adherents by advocating a sensational variant of the views they [other evangelists] all preached." T. L. Smith, Revivalism and Social Reform (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1957), 228.

3. Refer to Froom, Prophetic Faith, Vol. 4, chapter 1, especially 30-31. Note also the many disputes in such Millerite papers as the Signs of the Times (abbreviated ST), and the Midnight Cry (abbreviated MC), with proponents of such concepts.

4. Several "refutations" of Miller's theories were produced, such as: "A Cosmopolite," Miller Overthrown (Boston: Abel Tompkins, 1840); J. Dowling, An Exposition of the Prophecies, supposed by William Miller to predict the second coming of Christ, in 1843 (Providence: Daniels, 1840); O. A. Skinner, The Theory of William Miller, concerning the end of the world in 1843, utterly exploded (Boston: Thomas Whittemore, 1840).

As to the total numbers involved in the Millerite movement, refer to Miller's Apology, 22: "In nearly a thousand places advent congregations have been raised up, numbering, as far as I can estimate, some fifty thousand believers." Yet this is a highly conservative estimate, since it includes only those who formed separate groups, and not those who entertained Millerite beliefs but did not totally identify themselves with the more "organized" movement. For further discussion of the larger context of Millerite numbers, see Nichol, The Midnight Cry, 154, 513, and E. N. Dick, "The Adventist Crisis of 1843-44", Ph.D thesis, University of Wisconsin, May 1930, 263-264.

5. A common principle of prophetic interpretation based on such texts as Numbers 15:34, Ezekiel 4:6.

6. Based on the understanding that the beginning of the 2300 days was the same as that of the seventy weeks of Dan. 9:24 — the command to rebuild Jerusalem in 457 BC. Note also the general context: Daniel, chapters 2, 7-9.
7. The circumstances surrounding this call are described by Nichol, The Midnight Cry, 41-44.
8. W. Miller, Evidences from Scripture and History of the Second Coming of Christ About the Year 1843, Exhibited in a Course of Lectures (Troy, N.Y., 1836). Many reprints.
9. Miller himself remarks that "There has been a reformation in every place that I have lectured since I left home, and the work is progressing in every place rapidly." Letter cited in Bliss, Memoirs of William Miller, 133. In an article entitled "Miller's Influence Upon the People" in ST, Apr. 15, 1840, 13, the question is discussed as to whether Miller's lectures had an "evil tendency" to cause fear and excitement through the preaching of the end of the world. The conclusion was that his lectures "have had the happiest effect upon the churches, and the community at large." There then follows a long extract from a non-Millerite paper, the Christian Herald, that describes a nine-day course of lectures by Miller in Portsmouth, N.H., that resulted in an estimated 500-700 conversions. A similar series in Philadelphia resulted in more than one thousand standing to affirm their belief in the "advent near" at one meeting, and between three and four hundred of the "unconverted" requesting prayer. (See Bliss, Memoirs of William Miller, 180). The Signs of the Times is full of records of revivals due to the preaching of Miller and other lectures preaching the approaching advent.
10. The most detailed study of Himes to date is that of D. T. Arthur, "Joshua V. Himes and the Cause of Adventism, 1839-1845", M.A. Thesis, University of Chicago, June 1961. Of the published material, that contained in Nichol's The Midnight Cry is probably the most extensive. Note particularly 174-176.
11. Arthur calls Himes "a man in search of a cause", "Joshua V. Himes" Thesis, 45.
12. The Millerites were not intent on founding a new religious denomination. Their purpose, as they saw it, was to arouse the different churches to an awareness of the approach of the parousia. Their rationale is given in the report of the first general meeting of adventist believers: The First Report of the General Conference of Christians Expecting the Advent of the Lord Jesus Christ. Held in Boston, Oct. 14, 15, 1840 (Boston: J. V. Himes, 1841), 20-21. Part of the text is given by P. G. Damsteegt, Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 49. Himes makes this policy quite clear in his review of Millerite activity: J. V. Himes letter in MC, Sep. 12, 1844, 80.
13. For a listing of Millerite papers see Nichol, The Midnight Cry, 526-528, also the long bibliographical article at the end of E. Gaustad, ed., The Rise of Adventism (New York etc.: Harper and Row, 1974).
14. Miller accepted the Oct. 22 date in a letter to Himes published in

MC, Oct 12, 1844, 121.

15. With the increased rejection of the Millerites came a call from some of the leaders to separate from the churches, to "Come out of Babylon." Note the important article by Charles Fitch in The Second Advent of Christ, July 26, 1843, 2f; reprinted in the MC, Sep. 21, 1843, 33-36. Other leaders came to a reluctant acceptance of such a call only at a much later date -- see the editorial by Himes in the Advent Herald, Sep. 18, 1844, 53.

16. Letter from Abraham Flavell published in the MC Sep. 19, 1844, 86.

17. Article "Are We Ready?" by C.S.M. [Clorinda S. Minor?] in MC, Sep. 26, 1844, 93.

18. Letter from George Needham, MC, Oct. 3, 1844, 103.

19. L. Boutelle, Sketch of the Life and Religious Experience of Elder Luther Boutelle, written by himself. (Boston, 1891), 67-68. Cited in Dick, "Adventist Crisis" thesis, 217; part also in Nichol, The Midnight Cry, 248-249.

20. Hiram Edson, MS "Life and Experience." Cited in E. K. Vande Vere, Windows (Nashville: Southern Publishing Assn., 1975), 25-26.

21. Washington Morse, "Remembrances of Former Days", in The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, May 7, 1901, 291. Quoted by Nichol, The Midnight Cry, 248.

22. See the "Defense" published in MC, Nov. 21, 1844, 162f.

23. Quoted in Bliss, Memoirs of William Miller, 367.

24. Miller's lectures were full of gospel based appeals: "Be warned! Repent!... Believe and you shall live. Obey his word, his spirit, his calls, his invitations. There is no time for delay." Sermon Report in Zion's Herald, reprinted in ST, Apr. 15, 1840, 12. Note also the close of his Tenth Lecture, printed in MC, Feb. 8, 1844, 228.

25. Letter from Miller, Jan. 27, 1854, in the Boston Investigator, Feb. 12, 1845. Cited by Nichol, The Midnight Cry, 43.

26. Provided the parousia is understood in the context of a returning Saviour whose past activity is indissolubly linked with the present and the future.

27. The work by Clark falls into such a category. While the date 1844 is identified as significant for many crusades/movements/reforms, there is little expansion of their causes, interrelations or implications. J. L. Clark, 1844 3 Vols. (Nashville: Southern Publishing Assn., 1968).

28. For a factual review of contemporary trends, refer to Clark, 1844, all volumes.

29. D. M. Ludlum, Social Ferment in Vermont, 1791-1850 (New York: AMS

Press, 1966), 251.

30. W. R. Cross, The Burned-over District (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1950), 319.

31. See Arthur, "Joshua V. Himes" Thesis, 10-20.

32. Ibid., 20.

33. J. M. Butler, "Adventism and the American Experience" in Gaustad, ed., Adventism, 176.

34. Cross, Burned-over District, 317. Harrison remarks that "In considering the functional role of Millerism it is also pertinent that a number of its leaders were associated with reform causes. How many of Miller's followers were 'ultraists' it is impossible to say; but it is clear from evidence such as the Hale case that Millerism was associated in the public mind with the general reform ethos.... The appeal of Millerism was to men who already favoured social change, and who were happy to see their former causes subsumed under one great and final movement." J. F. C. Harrison, The Second Coming (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1979), 192. Not all Millerites had sympathies with the reformers, however. Indeed Miller privately expressed his feeling that "these fire-skulled, visionary, fanatical, treasonable, suicidal, demoralizing, hot-headed set of abolitionists are worse, if possible, than Anti-masonry, and if they go on in this way they will set our world on fire, before the time." Miller, letter to Truman Hendryx, quoted in Nichol, The Midnight Cry, 54. It seems that Miller later modified his views and was willing to "cooperate" with those same abolitionists: see Arthur, "Joshua V. Himes" Thesis, 21.

35. Cp. R. E. E. Harkness, "The Social Origins of the Millerite Movement," Ph.D Thesis, University of Chicago, June, 1927, 25.

36. Refer Clark, 1844, Vol. 2, chapter 2: "Socialist Dreams of Utopia."

37. Smith, "Social Reform", 18.

38. Harkness, "Social Origins" Thesis, 46.

39. E. T. Clark, The Small Sects in America, (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1949), 25. Others of a sociological bent have tended to agree: "A movement which is distinctly adventist wins to it always those who have strong antipathies to the wider society, who exult in the prospect of its overturn." B. R. Wilson, Religion in a Secular Society (London: C. A. Watts and Co., 1966), 205. However Wilson does qualify this assertion: "Adventism had a long pedigree in Europe, especially among artisans and peasant classes, but in America its attraction in the early nineteenth century was not specifically as a vehicle of class contention. The military revolutionism that had often affected millennial hopes in continental Europe was absent. Millennial hopes had more to do with the destiny of the American people who had a self-conscious sense of themselves as engaged in a great pilgrimage, than with a class struggle in which adventism was unwittingly used as a weapon by some of the dispossessed." B. R. Wilson, Religious Sects (New York and Toronto: World University

Library [McGraw-Hill], 1970), 96. Note also the conclusion of Cross: "The Millerites cannot be dismissed as ignorant farmers, libertarian frontiersmen, impoverished victims of economic change, or hypnotized followers of a maniac, thrown into prominence merely by freak coincidences, when the whole of American Protestantism came so very close to the same beliefs." Cross, Burned-over District, 320.

40. Miller was a Justice of the Peace from 1821 to at least 1834. See Nichol, The Midnight Cry, 38.

41. R. Graybill, "Millennarians and Money: Adventist Wealth and Adventist Beliefs," Spectrum, 10,2 (1979), 31-41.

42. For an account of the more violent opposition to Millerism see Nichol, The Midnight Cry, 220-225.

43. Cross, Burned-over District, 317, see also 74.

44. Harkness, "Social Origins," 105-111.

45. Ibid., 109.

46. Ibid., 135-137.

47. Ibid., 140.

48. Sandeen, Roots of Fundamentalism, 58. "The outbreak of millenarian excitement during the years 1828-32, for example, is usually explained in British history as a symptom of reaction against the political developments of the day -- Roman Catholic emancipation and the Reform Act. In American history, Miller's simultaneous success is usually attributed to the great revival of the 1830s and described within the context of the panic of 1837, to say nothing of imprecise references to the frontier and relative backwardness of American clergymen. If the same kind of movement developed in the two countries during the same years, some broader and more comprehensive explanation seems to be necessary. This study has not provided adequate data for constructing such an explanation." The question of similarities and differences in the religious expression of America and Britain is also developed in R. Carwadin's Transatlantic Revivalism (Westport, CN.: Greenwood Press, 1978). Any "explanation" of Millerism from an "environmental" viewpoint must also consider the reasons for the failure of the Advent movement in Britain, and its very different consequences. See also Harrison, Second Coming, 203-206.

49. Cross, Burned-over District, 320; Harkness, "Social Origins" Thesis, 100-101; "The French Revolution was directly responsible for the revival of prophetic concern," Sandeen, Roots, 5. There is an extended discussion of this point in J. W. Davidson, The Logic of Millennial Thought (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 286-297. Note particularly 294-295: "When the study of millennial chronologies fostered a sense of imminence, and the application of a conversion psychology polarized perceptions of the social situation, the temptation grew to bring down judgment future and apply it to the present."

"Hence prophetic interpretations of the French Revolution led men to conclude that Armageddon was begun; that the righteous were finally ready for the battle when the forces of evil would not win."

50. For a factual account of "Nativism" see Clark, 1844, Vol. 1, 203-280. As for the Millerites themselves, various anti-Catholic news appears in their papers. As an example see the article "Catholic Schemes" in MC, Nov. 25, 1842, 1. This was allied with the prophetic identification of the Roman Catholic church with the "beast" -- the persecuting power of Daniel and Revelation, common interpretation of the time in Protestant circles.

51. W. R. Martin, The Kingdom of the Cults (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1965), 360-361; see also Damsteegt, Foundations, 30.

52. Cross, Burned-over District, 320-321; see also Harkness, "Social Origins" Thesis, 96-97. Note also the contemporary comment of J. H. Noyes (founder of the Oneida community): "The Millerites have since met with unbounded ridicule; but it should be remembered that all that portion of the churches that were spiritual, who believed in revivals, and who were zealous and successful in labouring for them had a fit of expectation as enthusiastic and almost as fanatical as the Millerites." Cited by Sandeen, Roots, 49. For a good review of the religious backgrounds, see Damsteegt, Foundations, 3-16.

53. The whole argument over "Jacksonian democracy" is relevant here. Certainly Jackson's accession reflects the turbulent involvement of an increasingly large proportion of society in the selection of government, if not in the governing process itself. Let the historians argue over it, though it is clear that a much wider freedom of thought and practice accompanies this portion of American history. See: J. L. Bugg, Jr. Jacksonian Democracy: Myth or Reality? (New York, London etc.: Holt, Rinehart and Wilson, 1962); C. G. Bowers, Making Democracy a Reality (Memphis: Memphis State College Press, 1954); A. A. Cave, Jacksonian Democracy and the Historians (Westport, CN.: Greenwood Press, 1964).

54. American Home Missionary Society, founded 1826. This can be coupled with the resurgence of interest in missions generally: the foundation of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (1810) that paralleled various British societies (English Baptist Missionary Society, 1792; London Missionary Society, 1795 etc.). Note also the origins and work of the Bible Societies. Miller himself was very much aware of this evangelistic activity and saw in it the preparations for Christ's coming. See Miller's exposition on the parable of the Ten Virgins, quoted at length in From, Prophetic Faith Vol. 4, 694-698.

55. This was identified as the Second Angel's message of Rev. 14. For an account of this separatist development see Nichol, The Midnight Cry, 146-149, 163-168; also D. T. Arthur, "Millerism," in Gaustad, ed., Adventism, 154-172.

56. The Millerites themselves were aware of the difficulty of assigning "causes" to their experience. "Every one must admit, that amid a variety of causes operating simultaneously, human reason is very liable to err in attempting to point out the true order of



sequence, and perhaps there is no moral cause the results of which will receive their full and impartial development till the judgment of the great day. All that I shall attempt therefore is a simple statement of some facts connected with his [Miller's] labors here which will enable you to judge for yourself." Letter from R. Medbury, ST, June 1, 1840, 37.

57. A.F. Crowe, "The Balance of Fear and Joy in the Millerite Movement," unpublished term paper, Andrews University Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Fall 1979. Heritage Room ref.: Tp. C7683.B34.

58. Ibid., 23, 28. Two other brief analyses of the Millerite movement are: W. Stolpmann, "The Real Character of the Millerite Movement," unpublished term paper, Andrews University SDA Theological Seminary, c.1975. Heritage Room ref.: Tp. S755.R43; and R. Bell, "Was God Leading the Millerite Movement," unpublished term paper, A.U. SDA T.S., Fall 1974. Heritage Room ref.: Tp. B455.W37. The best full-scale review is Dick's "Adventist Crisis" Thesis.

59. William Miller, letter to J.V. Himes in ST, Mar. 20, 1840, 8.

60. Refer, for examples, to Smith, Revivalism, 45-62.

61. Unsigned article entitled, "The Closing Up of the Day of Grace," in ST, July 15, 1840, 69. Note also the question in an article on "The Safe Delusion": "Which is safest, to be led, by the consideration that Christ may come to judgment next year, to prepare now for that solemn event, or, by listening to the syren [sic] song of 'all's well', find, when too late, that the delusion rests with the opponents of the Second Advent? Reader, which is the safe delusion?" MC, Nov. 25, 1842, 2.

62. ST, Apr. 15, 1840, 14.

63. S. Hawley in ST, May 15, 1840, 31.

64. Letter from R. Medbury, ST, June 1, 1840, 37.

65. Letter from William Miller, while ill, ST, Nov. 1, 1840, 118. It also appears that Miller, before his conversion, had a great fear of death. The comfort of the "blessed hope" to his anxiety may well be a factor in his belief, but not such a significant one as Harkness suggests (Harkness, "Social Origins" Thesis).

66. MC, Dec. 5, 1842, 1. No author given.

67. "H.R.N." in MC, Nov. 28, 1842, 3; and "A.B.H." in MC, Dec. 16, 1842, 1.

68. The Millemial Harp (Boston: J.V. Himes, 1843). Some examples of the titles are: New Jerusalem, Heavenly Rest, Eden of Love, Heavenly Home, Pilgrim's Farewell, Escape For Thy Life, Canaan, Lift Your Heads, The Promise, I Will Return, The Last Call, I Want to Wear the Crown, Advent Welcome Home, Jesus Is There.

69. To take an analogy: the "logic" of the non-smoking argument seems obvious to most, yet a large proportion of those "convinced" continue to smoke.
70. It would even seem that the Thessalonian church had a similar problem of delimiting the time of the parousia. The parallels with Millerism are many. (See 2 Thess.).
71. MC, Dec. 7, 1842, 1.
72. MC, July 18, 1844, 5.
73. ST, July 13, 1842, 128.
74. "We, who are living on the eve of time, and who believe the earth to be waxing old and will soon be folded up as a garment, and laid away, ought to declare to our fellow men our belief..." John Ewen in ST, June 1, 1840, 38. See also John Hooper in ST, Aug. 15, 1840, 75. W. W. Stevenson gives a classic understatement in ST, June 8, 1842, 79: "The belief is awfully important. To think that the earth with all its works is to be burned up in less than twelve months is an important belief...."
75. Two unpublished works have examined the attitudes of some of Millerism's opponents. The larger of the two deals exclusively with the attitudes of Southern Baptists: R. W. Olson, "Southern Baptists' Reactions to Millerism," Th.D Thesis, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, 1972. The other is a brief term paper: R. D. Roethler, "A View of the Opposition to the Early Millerite Movement as Found in the Midnight Cry," Andrews University SDA Theological Seminary, Fall 1977. Heritage Room ref.: Tp. R6345.V53. A contemporary comment comes from the Millerite H.V. Teal: "Every time I look at the arguments of the opposition, and compare them with the word of God, the more I am confirmed in the belief that Christ will come next year." MC, Dec. 6, 1842.
76. ST, July 15, 1840, 64.
77. Reprinted from the Olive Branch in ST, Apr. 27, 1842, 8.
78. ST, May 15, 1840; ST, June 1, 1840, 36; ST, May 1, 1840, 23.
79. As one example, the Lynn Record (reprinted in ST, Mar. 15, 1841, 188) stated: "We have reason to believe that the preaching of Mr. Miller has been productive of great and extensive good. Revivals have followed in his train."
80. For example, ST, Jan. 11, 1843, 133. The subject is disposed of by Nichol in his The Midnight Cry, chapter 23: "Did Millerism Cause Insanity, Suicide and Murder?"
81. ST, Sep. 21, 1842, 8. Article reprinted from the Springfield Democrat under the heading of "Liar's Department"!
82. Thus Sandeen: "The early success and ultimate collapse of his [Miller's] movement prejudiced the country against all millennialist doctrines and forced every later millennialist advocate to take a stand against "Millerism" as virtually the first sentence in every speech

and the first paragraph in every treatise. William Miller, like Edward Irving in the British movement, became a theological leper whose ceremonial denunciation was a part of the litany of millennarianism for the next century." Sandeen, Roots, 42. Smith in his Revivalism, 228, comments similarly: "The chief effect of the reaction from Millerism was to speed the adoption of a fervent postmillennialism, attuned to the prevailing optimism of the age."

83. ST, Oct. 30, 1844, 96.

SECTION FOUR

THE PAROUSIA BELIEF AS EXPERIENCE: THE ADVENT WITHIN ADVENTISM

0 Introduction

This section examining the parousia belief within Adventism and the preceding section concerned with the Millerite phenomenon have a greater organic connection than any other sections of this thesis. The experience of the Adventists is directly related to that of the Millerites in that certain of the latter movement retained their parousia beliefs and "became" Adventists, and in the fact that the emphasis on a proximate parousia is common to both groups. Thus at the level of personalities and belief structures these two religious communities have much in common.

The reasons for the study of these groups are twofold. Firstly they provide concrete historical evidence for the outworking of the parousia belief in a specific form. An understanding of the Millerites and Adventists is, to some degree, an understanding of the role played by the parousia concept in belief and consequent activity. These historical examples are necessary that a reasonable and meaningful answer may be given to the very basic question of "Why

"the parousia?"

Secondly the inclusion of these "historical case-studies" means that the relative importance and impact of the parousia belief may be judged, along with some analysis of the intrinsic validity of the parousia belief. Its relevance and importance is illustrated in the lives of these believers, but the question of divergent interpretation of the parousia -- the setting of dates, for example -- must be faced, which is part of the whole problem of how the parousia is understood and presented by such believers. The old question, "What is truth?" has considerable impact when applied to the parousia belief.

The foregoing analysis of the Millerite movement illustrated some of the factors influencing the parousia belief and its adoption, along with a demonstration of some of the positive and negative aspects of such a belief. The current section seeks to extend the data that has been presented so that some meaningful conclusions may be drawn as to the significance and effects of the parousia belief when it is made a determinant part of experience and understanding.

The significance of the second advent belief in the Adventist [1] experience can hardly be underrated. It was, first and foremost, the cause of separation from other churches in the 1843-44 movement and the fundamental affirmation of the Millerite revival. After the date of the expected parousia had passed, all that these believers were left with was an expectation of the imminent return of Christ. [2]. So many differences of opinion and doctrine arose among the ranks of these "ex-Millerites" that the only common denominator was that they

were "Adventists." Most had been unable to maintain their affiliation with an existing denomination, and now that Miller's interpretation had proved mistaken they could no longer consider themselves part of the movement that owed so much to him. Their basic, and often their only, point of contact with each other was that they had all expected Christ's return and had been disappointed. Now there existed a plethora of groups, each claiming a particular understanding of the Adventist position. As a result, numerous "types" of Adventist congregations came into being: First-day, Sabbatarian, Age-to-Come, Spiritual, Evangelical, and many more, each proclaiming their own views and attempting to explain the apparent failure of the 1844 expectation.

Disagreement over the nature of the explanation, coupled with a wide variation in doctrinal views caused the fragmentation of the body of Advent believers. Despite the importance of such interpretations in understanding the causes behind the resultant divisions and their relationship to future developments, they are not really relevant here. Most Adventist groups continued to consider the second coming imminent, and ordered their lives accordingly. For this reason, while the following analysis is primarily dependent upon material from the largest present day Adventist group, the Seventh-day Adventists, most of what is discussed is also applicable to other groups possessing a strong parousia emphasis.

The purpose of this section is to examine how such a parousia belief was lived out, how it affected the thought and practice of the individual and the larger, corporate church group. To achieve this, various Adventists and their writings will be examined in order to understand how their belief expressed itself, to what situations was it regarded as relevant (both positive and negative), and how it was considered as a source of motivation and a determinant of action -- in short, how Adventists related to the Advent. A more complete review would consider the whole of the life of such Advent believers -- how their belief was translated into action in all that they did. However, this is totally impossible here and the reader is referred to the biographies of such exponents of the Second Coming. No attempt will be made to consider doctrinal expositions, controversial or apologetic material connected with this subject. The way in which the parousia belief is understood and its position as a determinant of attitude and action is the major concern of this case-study.

Following on from such a consideration of Adventist understanding is an examination of how Adventists interacted with their environment. For example, how did their advent beliefs affect their social programme, missionary activity, organization, and institutions? How could Adventists believe in and anticipate the coming of their Lord from heaven yet still plan their earthly work? Was their concept of an imminent parousia a help or a hindrance, were its effects of a positive or a negative character, did it encourage an attitude of joyful anticipation or fearful dread? These types of questions are relevant, and the stress (or lack of it) on the Second Coming is of

particular significance. Varying degrees of emphasis on the parousia are evident in the history of Seventh-day Adventists (abbreviated SDAs) and have been the subject of particular concern within the church, more especially as time continues. This survey concludes with a review of contemporary trends in parousia belief within Adventism and also includes a brief look at how such a belief is regarded by those outside the SDA church.

This investigation into the basic question of "Why the parousia?" therefore involves the role of such a belief framework in practical Christianity, as manifested in the individuals and corporate structure of the Seventh-day Adventist church.



## 1 The Personal Response

### 1.1 Early Adventist Attitudes to the Parousia

The intensity of their parousia belief is exemplified in the lives and experiences of many early Adventists, a few of which are considered here. This provides some background, some evidence of the very real effects of the parousia expectation and its importance in the lives of specific individuals.

One such individual was Annie Smith. [3]. Her brief life typifies the dedication and resolution consequent on the adoption of the Adventist expectation. She had passed through the disappointment of 1844, had drifted away from religious matters for a while, and had then associated herself with the small group of Sabbatarian Adventists. She assisted with the publication of Adventist pamphlets and papers, and preferred to continue in this mundane and poorly paid employment despite an offer of a well-paid teaching post. She had, it seems, a sad experience in her love life, and soon after contracted tuberculosis from which she died at the age of twenty-seven.

Despite this rather unfortunate background, Annie Smith held to her parousia hope with great vigour, and expressed her belief in many of the poems and hymns she wrote. Many of the hymns remain standards within the present-day SDA church, and are a testimony to the

intensity and expressiveness of her convictions. Only a few examples can be given here; however they are sufficient to demonstrate her attitude and her creative talent:

From the hymn, "The Blessed Hope":

While pilgrims here we journey on  
In this dark vale of sin and gloom,  
Through tribulation, hate and scorn,  
Or through the portals of the tomb,  
Till our returning King shall come  
To take his exile captives home,  
O! what can buoy the spirits up?  
'Tis this alone, the blessed hope. [4].

Note also these few lines from her epic poem, "Home Here, and Home in Heaven":

When at the restitution, long foretold,  
The glorious King of Kings shall come to reign.

In all his Father's glory he'll descend,  
His saints to gather home in endless day.

Hail blessed day! The end of care and pain,  
When earthly tumults and sorrows cease... [5].

Such brief references can hardly provide much of an introduction to the dynamic belief in the parousia that is illustrated in the life of Annie Smith. Her compositions include many references to the parousia hope, and in her "biography" issued much later by her mother, Rebekah Smith, it is made very clear that the parousia expectation continued to provide comfort, consolation and hope in the difficult time of her illness and death. Just two days before she died she wrote her own epitaph:

Oh! shed not a tear o'er the spot where I sleep,  
For the living and not for the dead ye may weep;  
Why mourn for the weary who so sweetly repose,  
Free in the grave from life's burden of woes?

I long now to rest in the lone, quiet tomb;  
For the footsteps of Jesus have lightened its gloom.  
I die in the hope of soon meeting again  
The friends that I love, with Him ever to reign. [6].

There can be no doubt that the parousia hope played a large part in the experience of this Adventist believer, and that its effects were of an uplifting and spiritual nature. The urgent desire is very plain, the hope is crystal clear:

How far from home? I asked, as on  
I bent my steps -- the watchman spake:

The long, dark night is almost gone,  
The morning soon will break... [7].

Annie Smith's brother, Uriah, also illustrates the subjective response to the parousia belief. While his life was not so tragic or dramatic, he too expressed his hope in the soon parousia of Christ. [8]. In particular his hymns illustrate his firm belief and his ultimate objective. [9]. In the hymn "O Brother be Faithful" he communicates his unwavering expectation along with the absolute necessity of retaining such an outlook:

O brother, be faithful! soon Jesus will come,  
For whom we have waited so long;  
O, soon we shall enter our glorious home,  
And join in the conqueror's song. [10].

Uriah Smith spent the greater part of his life as editor of the Adventist paper, the Review and Herald. In this capacity, he often wrote on various aspects of the Second Coming, with the occasional description of his own expectations. His personal convictions and attitudes are evident in an article, "Thoughts on the Advent":

As we toil on in "this wilderness state," feeling the ills of mortality pressing heavily upon us, we console ourselves with the thought that the Life-giver is soon to appear, when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall be clothed with immortality. And when poverty and oppression, persecution and peril are sore upon us, we look away, as our only hope, to the unfading crown, the enduring treasure, the victory and the rest, to which the righteous Judge shall introduce us, in the day of his coming and his kingdom. [11].

Smith's usual concerns were more of a doctrinal and interpretative nature -- explaining the "delay", identifying the signs of the times, defining the nature and events of the Second Coming. A number of his editorials in Adventist papers [12] deal with the effects and outworkings of a strong parousia belief -- in particular as to how church-related institutions should plan and operate in view of an imminent coming (of which more later). But the central point to note is the absolute personal certitude expressed, and the understanding of the Advent belief's dominant function as a major determinant of action and purpose in life. Added to this is a form of rejection of the present world, and a feeling of transience in the present when compared with the permanence of eternity.

A similar negation of the contemporary situation and a denial of all ideas of earthly progress are given by another important leader of the early Adventists, James White [13]. Referring to his acceptance of the "Advent message" he declared:

I had no confidence in the boasted progress of the world.... I therefore saw the necessity, in the very nature of things, for some great change, and the Second Coming of Christ seemed to be the event which would most probably bring about the change in man, and in the earth, to remove the curse and its results, and restore all to its Eden perfection and glory. [14].

This dissatisfaction with present conditions and earthly hopes is well illustrated by a chance meeting between James White and a former acquaintance, a Congregational minister. James White records the incident in his autobiography. The minister asked:

"Why Mr. White, are you yet in the land of the living?"

"No, sir," came the reply. "I am in the land of the dying, but at the soon coming of the Lord I expect to go to the land of the living."

He concludes the story by saying, "We each went our way."  
[15].

The vital nature of his parousia expectation underlies much of his activity and writing. One example is his appeal to the parousia belief for some hope and comfort in times of distress and sorrow. This attitude is well expressed in a letter to a friend whose wife had just died:

What can I say to cheer your mind and bind up your wounded spirit? I can point you to the Kingdom of immortal glory when Jesus shall come to raise your dear companion, and change you and your children, if you are all faithful till Jesus comes. To that bright prospect I invite, I beseech you to look. [16].

Such statements witness the practical reality with which the imminent parousia was viewed. The event was sure and certain, Christ's coming was near. The result was a dedication to practical Christianity and a lack of interest in much of this world's activities. The most important work was preparation for the coming of the Lord, permitting the Advent belief to mould life itself. [17].

His wife, Ellen White [18], expressed a similar anticipation of the advent that was evidently a dominant factor in her outlook and behaviour. As the spiritual "mentor" of the church, she wrote extensively on this subject, and on its practical implications. The motivational force of the parousia is most prominent, and is subordinate only to the basic message of the salvation provided by Christ at his first "parousia." Her attitude was:

The Lord is soon to come, and we must be prepared to meet Him in peace.... We are not to be sad, but cheerful, and we are to keep the Lord Jesus ever before us. He is soon coming, and we must be ready and waiting for his appearing.... [19].

"The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteneth greatly." Jesus says: "Behold, I come quickly." We should keep these words ever in mind, and act as though we do indeed believe that the coming of the Lord is nigh, and that we are pilgrims and strangers upon the earth. [20].

Thus according to the Adventist understanding, the parousia belief must, by its very nature, bring a change in the world-outlook of the believer. Ellen White emphasised this need to "internalise" this doctrine, to make it a determinant part of attitude and action. Her "slogan" was: "The Lord is soon coming. Talk it, pray it, believe it. Make it a part of the life." [21]. She showed particular concern in her later life that this key belief was waning in significance and practical effect, and she called for a renewal of faith and hope in the imminent coming of Christ:

The reason why there is no deeper religious fervor, and no more earnest love for one another in the church is, the missionary spirit has been dying out. Little is now said concerning Christ's coming, which was once the theme of thought and conversation. [22].



Faith in the soon coming of Christ is waning. "My Lord delayeth his coming" is not said in the heart, but expressed in words and most decidedly in works.... [23].

In view of this declining interest in the parousia belief, Ellen White urged that the soon coming of Jesus be frequently studied and made the subject of repeated presentations, so that the soon coming of Christ might remain at the centre of the Adventist weltanschauung:

The blessed hope of the second appearing of Christ with its solemn realities, needs to be often presented to the people. Looking for the soon appearing of our Lord will lead us to regard earthly things as emptiness and nothingness. [24].

Again the questioning of contemporary values and attitudes is apparent here. The Adventist stance was to be upward-looking, not centred on the hopes and aspirations of man and his present situation. As both mediator and modifier of the Adventist experience, belief in the Second Coming was absolutely essential:

One of the most solemn and yet most glorious truths revealed in the Bible is that of Christ's second coming, to complete the great work of redemption. To God's pilgrim people, so long left to sojourn in "the region of shadow and death," a precious joy-inspiring hope is given in the promise of His appearing, who is "the resurrection and the

life" to "bring home again His banished." The doctrine of the second advent is the very key-note of the Sacred Scripture. [25].

So far, only the attitudes of early SDAs have been reviewed. In order to establish a continuing emphasis on the importance of a personal response to the concept of the parousia, expositions and comments of later Adventists must briefly be considered.

## 1.2 Later Adventist Writers

The many variations on the parousia theme do not need to be elaborated here. A few brief examples from some more modern Adventist publications are sufficient to demonstrate that the parousia belief remained an integral part of the Adventist experience, and that it continued to provide hope, consolation, motivation and so on in the personal lives of these advent believers.

The words of H.L. Hastings are typical of the continuing Adventist attitude:

I long to contemplate the coming day of joy and glory that awaits the servants of God. That day when death shall be destroyed, when sin shall have an end, when sorrow and sighing shall flee away, and God shall be all in all.  
[26].

This theme is also taken up by a later writer in the Review and Herald, John M. Hopkins:

We are glad that our Lord, in whom we believe and trust, will soon return to earth for his waiting people; that then we shall be forever with him, our loving Redeemer; that then there will no longer be sin to separate from God; that then we shall meet the dear loved and lost ones, never again to say, "Farewell." An eternal life, an eternal home,

in the kingdom of our God! Blessed hope!

Oh, we long to be there! We are tired of the sins, and temptations, and weariness, the painful disappointments, the separations, and the tears, of this sin-burdened earth. We want to go home to our Father's house. [27].

The parousia is seen as the final and all-inclusive resolution of present problems and dissatisfactions. As F.D. Nichol remarks of his outlook, "All depends in the return of our Saviour." [28]. This is not made into a totally future consideration, however. Most writers also make it very clear that the present is the important time: "I wish to affirm the fact that it is faith in the second coming of Christ and belief in a future life which makes Christian people able to live better lives here and now." [29].

Neither is the parousia portrayed primarily as a time of doom and disaster. The positive aspects of the coming are strongly emphasized, along with the directing influence that the parousia belief undeniably provides:

So will it be with the Christian in his relationship with Christ. His focus will be fixed on the return of his Lord, and every act of his life will be governed and regulated accordingly. "Jesus is coming again" will be... a standard by which every value in life is measured. It will put purpose and meaning into everything he does." [30].

A positive relationship to the Second Advent belief is much in evidence here. The parousia is not to be regarded with dread, but with joyful anticipation:

Nothing but the second advent of the Lord can usher in the era of complete and eternal joy. Only in Christ's presence "is fulness of joy" (Ps. 16:11).

That joy may begin even now. We may now savor the thrill and joy of awaiting his arrival.... That day is worth praying for, working for, and preparing for. This is the great joy of the Advent. [31].

Such expressions of happiness and expectation are obviously very personal. That the soon coming of Christ is still very much an important personal consideration cannot be made more explicit. Sufficient examples of the very many expressions of personal conviction have been given so that the fundamental significance of the Advent within personal Adventism is fully established. Yet it is in the context of the ultimate, the final and the absolute that the belief's implications for the individual are most clearly seen. In times of sorrow, pain and death, the hope in Christ's return is the comfort and the "eternal consolation," the objective realization of hope, the highest-level answer to all the questions of "why?" The Adventist perspective is that now "we see darkly", but then "face to face"; now is the trial, then the joy; now is the reign of sin, but "yet a little while" the eternal ruler will come as redeemer, restorer

and re-creator. For these Advent believers, their parousia hope is the summation of all hope.

The second advent belief as an answer to the problems and questions of emptiness, futility, separation and death is the most pressing aspect in personal conviction. So many express their longing and keen desire for the soon realization of their hopes. [32]. Not for these believers the anarchistic breakdown of the universe where:

Turning and turning in the widening gyre  
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;  
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,...

and the Second Coming is never identified with some horrendous, prophetic monster:

And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,  
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born? [33].

The Adventist portrayal of the Second Advent is very different. The description of the expected event is given in superlative terms by those who wait:

Someday, and soon, the skies will disclose their glorious Maker. Someday we who often watch the sky will see a cloud such as we have never seen before.... A cloud will one day be seen that will be the chariot of heaven's King of glory when He comes to refresh His saints.

What a sight it will be! How it enraptures the faithful ones who "love His appearing," and who have hoped to the end "for the grace that is to be brought unto" them "at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Of a sudden the blazing light of day will take on a new brightness, above all the glory of the sun, and grow still more light, more bright, and more dazzling, until there is revealed to us the advancing glory of the King of Kings. And on a glory cloud of myriads of angels the all-conquering Christ will come again to earth.

[34].

## 2 The Church's Response

### 2.1 The Historical Base

The documentation of a historical movement expecting its imminent end is not easily accomplished. Adventists expected no history; in fact their whole existence revolved around the key concept that human history was about to be terminated at the coming of their Lord. There was little in the way of contemporary record-keeping, and even less self-analysis. Living on the edge of eternity, such paltry and transient affairs as the historical documentation of the Adventist experience hardly seemed to matter. Except for those records that would better serve the work of warning the world or aid in increasing spiritual growth, nothing was set down for posterity. Personal responses aside, there is in early Adventism virtually no examination of the motivation or effects engendered by their strong parousia belief. Such analysis is only possible in retrospect; in the formative years of the Adventist church the prospect of the soon-coming Saviour was far more important than such minutiae. Similar attitudes to record-keeping still occur within Adventism, and the emphasis on the practical work of the church often curtails in-depth analysis of the implications of Advent beliefs.



The early Adventists reacted directly to their central parousia belief -- time was short; there was much to be done; spreading the message was all-important. No time could be wasted in the formulation of their theological and practical interpretations of the parousia belief. Christ was coming, and the record is in their resultant activities. [35].

In attempting to draw some conclusions from what is known, great care must be taken not to re-interpret events in the light of later history. The assessment of the exact impact of the parousia belief upon the church is fraught with difficulty. To take just one example, it would be easy to say that belief in an imminent advent gave great impetus to the initial evangelistic mission of the Adventist church. While this was certainly the case within the Millerite movement, the failure of the 1844 date and subsequent hostility to the parousia message made the advent belief somewhat of a liability. In the first few years of the SDA church, it was the seventh-day Sabbath message that gave renewed drive towards mission and which, when coupled with the concept of the imminent end, provided the force for effective evangelistic efforts. The approaching advent alone did not provide the key to outreach in this period. Added to this observation is the fact that many of the post-1844 Adventists did not plan for any future whatsoever. They were in the "waiting time," and had a type of any-moment expectation of the parousia which paralysed any mission activity. The advent was considered to be so near that nothing further could be done.

Within this complex matrix of ideas and attitudes, it is not surprising that there is a paucity of information covering the community's response to the approaching advent. Many Adventists did not know what to believe or expect, they were scattered and disorganized, and they had no long-range plans except to continue to wait and retain their parousia hope. To speak of a combined, "church" response to the parousia concept in this period is an anachronism; it was only as a way forward was found and the community developed that a unified reaction arose.

The formulation of a more uniform attitude therefore represents something of a retreat from imminent expectancy to an awareness of a soon-coming that permitted the continued and effective work of the church. [36]. The advent believers are gathered together by means of papers and itinerant preachers; churches are founded, and work for the salvation of sinners is resumed. The parousia belief remains a dominant factor in this activity [37], but the church is more aware of "occupying" itself in the Lord's work "till He come."

With the realization of the need for continued activity comes increasing cooperation and organization. In 1848 the first attempts were made at establishing doctrinal foundations for a separate SDA church structure, although the organizational aspects were not effected until 1863. Even at this latter date considerable flexibility is apparent within the organization, and doctrinal developments also continued on past this date. [38].

The problem of increased structuralization was that it implied, at least superficially, some definite anticipation of a time period during which the church would work -- a further extension in time. [39]. The setting up of presses, churches, and training schools appeared to many to deny the imminence of the parousia they so ardently affirmed. Just as some Millerites left their crops unharvested in the fields as proof of their conviction in their Lord's imminent return, many Adventists also wanted to testify through their works that they anticipated no earthly future. Such attitudes have been a recurrent phenomenon within Adventism and are probably unavoidable, given the nature of the event expected. The parousia belief, as interpreted by some, was thus a deterrent to church organization since they felt that the belief demanded a commitment to a future wholly in the hands of God, an immediate future in heaven, not on earth.

The opposite reaction to the parousia belief is, however, more frequent. With the steady passage of time, expectations wane and hopes grow dim. The question "Where is the promise of his coming?" may not be actually asked by the Adventist, but it may subconsciously underlie his basic attitude to the future. The tension developed by an increasingly organized and mission-centred church, and the non-fulfilment of its aspirations, has produced the most extensive problem within Adventism as it relates to the advent. The maintaining of a continuing, vital response to the parousia belief is the primary concern of much that has been written on the subject in Adventist literature. [40].

One frequent identification is the church as the bride. Constant preparation and readiness characterise the response to the approach of the bridegroom, the practical result of which is a stress on personal religion, an aspect that infuses the corporate consciousness as all make ready for the coming King. In this the church responds positively to the parousia message by actively working towards the Coming, being in harmony with the divine objective, and in "preparing" God's people. The result is that an appreciation of the imminent Advent moulds the attitudes to world events, social programmes, interpersonal relationships, contemporary values, present goals, and ultimate objectives.

The outcome of the parousia belief in the Adventist experience is a strange mix of apparently contradictory ideas. "Earthly" future is short, yet plans are made for the betterment of Man; God alone can save this world, yet Adventist medical, welfare and social programmes provide help in the present; life has to be lived with the prospect of Christ's soon return, yet also with the possibility that his coming might not be "just yet."

Many have sought to resolve this difficult dichotomy of waiting and working, of expectation and planning, of preaching the imminent Advent and building a world-wide organization. Such paradoxical situations have been with the Christian church since its inception, yet are especially significant and evident within Adventism. The causative effect of the parousia belief, its meaning and motivation, cannot be discussed in the abstract. Only as it affects behaviour and

attitudes can any belief be properly evaluated. If it is so important, it should make an obvious difference in outlook and activity. [41]. Is the cumulative effect of the parousia positive or negative? Is it constructive or destructive? Does it focus attention on other-worldly things at the expense of the earthly? Has it a beneficial or a detrimental effect on evangelism? On the church's social or health programme? Is it a belief that is assented to, and then ignored; or is it firmly believed and put into practical effect? The following review is an attempt to answer in specific form some of these questions, to assess the validity and results of professing the belief that Christ is coming soon.

## 2.2 Early Attitudes to the Parousia within Adventism

In the aftermath of the 1844 disappointment, many who retained their Advent hope waited with bated breath for an imminent parousia. This situation led to the suspension of "normal" attitudes and practices. Various interpretations of the parousia belief's necessary effects, and the evident failure of their specific expectation, led many into unusual and untoward activities such as giving away all possessions since the year of jubilee had arrived; refusing to cultivate the land; or crawling around on hands and knees in fulfilment of the supposed requirement, "Except ye ... become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Mt. 18:3). [42].

These aberrant practices were generally condemned by the majority of Adventists, most of whom did however, acknowledge the "any-moment" aspect of the parousia. The date had passed, all they could do was to maintain their hope, watching every hour. In view of this disturbed situation, and with such sharp expectancy, it is not surprising that many Adventists involved themselves in mundane, earthly matters only to the extent of ensuring that they would not starve. Since they expected no more time -- Christ would come at any minute -- they did not plan for the future or engage in any type of long-term work. Evangelism was halted since they felt they had done all they could [43], and because Christ was coming "now" to judge the world then probation must have closed for unrepentant sinners. Anything that implied an expectation of future time on earth was to be avoided.

Such an attitude to the parousia disrupted the normal course of events. A striking example is in the planning of future relationships and family life. Marriage implied that time was expected to continue, at least long enough to establish a new family/home unit. To plan marriage was regarded by Adventists of the time as a lack of conviction, a disavowal of hope. James White wrote of two Adventists that had "denied their faith; in being published for marriage. We all look upon it as a wile of the Devil. The firm brethren in Maine who are waiting for Christ to come have no fellowship with such a move. We are looking for redemption in the morning. Watch." [44].

The imminent aspect of the parousia belief in this disturbed context led some to unorthodox attitudes. These rather extreme conditions and the Adventist response to them did not last long, however. As time continued, the over-emphasis on imminence faded away, especially as newer understanding of the present work of the church dawned on the Advent believers. More reasonable attitudes prevailed in the area of personal relationships and responsibilities. James White was himself married the year following his strong statement against it, primarily for practical and pragmatic reasons. He was travelling in the company of Ellen Harmon, encouraging the scattered Adventist groups; so in order to prevent accusations of social and ethical impropriety (and, no doubt, having much affection for one another), they were married. [45].

Although Adventists did not in any way give up their expectant attitude, the conclusion of the majority was that they were not called to sit idly by in their "waiting time." They were to encourage one another, to go about their daily work, and, eventually, to evangelize their neighbours. In a few years this less extreme, more balanced position was developed. Christ's coming was ever-near, but the command to spread the gospel had not been revoked; and when Christ did come, he would expect his servants to have used the time wisely, having occupied themselves until he came.

### 2.3 Parousia: Spreading the Word

The reassertion of the gospel command is an excellent example of how a change in interpretation of the parousia belief eventuates in different actions. [46]. When the Advent was expected very shortly, evangelism was paralysed. There was no time to tell others. All that was left was for each believer to maintain his hope and to encourage others who likewise believed. Such was the situation just after 1844, to which must be added the belief of many Adventists that God's sealing work had been accomplished and that no conversions were now possible. Their eschatological expectations and understanding prevented any attempt at preaching to the unconverted.

The restudy of doctrinal bases that went on in the early years of the SDA church, and the development of a "special message" concept brought the necessity of evangelism into sharp focus. In this the parousia belief played a strong and controlling part -- it gave impetus to the "spreading of the Word" and maintained the all-embracing objective of hope. Instead of freezing the work for the salvation of men, it gave added vitality to the great commission:

Living power must attend the message of Christ's second coming in the clouds of heaven. We must not rest until we see many souls converted to the blessed hope of the Lord's appearing. The message [up to 1844] wrought a real work that turned souls from idols to serve the living God. The work to be done today is just as real, and the truth is just



as much truth; only we are to give the message with much more earnestness as the coming of the Lord is nearer. The message for this time is positive, simple, and of the deepest importance. We must act like men and women who believe. We are not half awake to the perils and dangers we must be prepared to meet. Waiting, watching, praying, warning the world, -- this is our work. [47].

The concept of imminence can be used as an excuse for inactivity rather than as a true representation of an avid expectancy. In this case, the response to the parousia belief becomes self-defeating, a rationale for not engaging in the total response of the community to the approach of the parousia. Such an attitude was strongly condemned since it struck at the heart of the Adventist witness. Ellen White writes to the point:

A great work must be done all through the world, and let no one conclude that, because the end is near, there is no need of special effort to build up the institutions as the cause shall demand. You are not to know the day or the hour of the Lord's appearing, for this has not been revealed, and let none speculate on that which has not been given to him to understand. Let everyone work upon that which has been placed in his hands, doing the daily duties that God requires.

When the Lord shall bid us make no further effort to build meetinghouses and establish schools, sanitariums and publishing institutions, it will be time for us to fold our hands and let the Lord close up the work; but now is our opportunity to show our zeal for God and our love for humanity. [48].

The parousia belief is clearly at the centre of motivation, and is not to be used as a disincentive to the work of the church. Over and over again the belief in Christ's return is shown to be the incentive to renewed activity, a message of witness and warning. [49].

The preaching of the parousia is a primary emphasis within the Adventist tradition, and owes its position not only to its intrinsic importance, but also since this preaching is seen as directly influencing the nearness of the coming (the gospel to all the world, then shall the end come, and so on). [50]. The call to service was based on the twin motivators: the implications of both the First Advent and the Second Advent. The evangelistic activity of the SDA church found its drive in these two events, and as the parousia is soon expected, a strong sense of urgency entered in:

"The day of the Lord draweth nigh".... Oh, that there might be a great awakening and that every soul might repent and turn to the Lord while there is time. It is the burden of my heart to press this knowledge home to the hearts of

men. [51].

This is not to say that Adventists were encouraging an extreme position of frantic activity in view of the approaching end. Fervour there certainly was, but not fanaticism: "Remember that the nearer we approach Christ's coming the more earnestly and firmly we are to work.... We do not need feverish excitement, but that faith and courage which is borne of genuine faith." [52]. However, the central position of the parousia was emphasised very strongly. This remains the Adventist position.[53].

The direct relationship between the parousia belief and evangelism needs no further elaboration. If Christ is coming again soon, then spreading the good tidings becomes part of the response.

## 2.4 Social/Medical Concerns

In contrast to the church's evangelistic activity, the belief in the proximate parousia may have ambiguous results in the area of social concern. If the parousia is envisaged as the final and only solution to the very real problems of this world, the only real hope for man, [54], then what is the point of the church undertaking medical work, attempting to correct social problems (divorce, drinking, destitution etc.), or speaking out on moral or ethical questions? If Christ is soon to come, he will accomplish far more than man ever could, and will remove the very basic causes of pain and suffering.

The Millerites faced the same dilemma. [55]. Before adopting Miller's views, many of the movement's leaders had espoused reform programmes -- antislavery, temperance, education, and the like. Yet their belief that the parousia would occur in 1843-44 forced most of them to suspend their reform activities and concentrate on what they saw as the more important work.

While Adventists have never proposed such a delimitation of time, similar questions have been raised as to the validity of social and medical aid programmes in view of the proximate parousia. If, as Adventists have consistently believed, they could not in the long-run solve the problems, then why have they attempted to do so? And if Christ was to accomplish everything at his return, why concern the church in such activities?

The Adventist reply is again based on the command to be "faithful stewards." The simplistic notion that belief in the soon coming of Christ must result in passive awaiting or a total pessimism as to the possibility of helping mankind fails to understand the extensive implications of such a belief. Expectation of the Lord's return is not seen as evacuating Christian love of its meaning. On the contrary, the parousia becomes part of its re-emphasis. The resultant increase in matters of present concern has been noted by various observers of Adventism and is well documented. [56].

Not only is there general humanitarian concern, but the second advent is specifically identified as a direct incentive to social and welfare involvement [57]:

It is the Lord's design that we shall constantly improve the talents He has given us. We cannot do this unless we use them. The prospect of Christ's soon coming should not lead us to idleness. Instead, it should lead us to do all we possibly can to bless and benefit humanity.

The impact of the parousia hope is clear and direct here. It is presented and encouraged as a reason for social and altruistic concern, a concern that emphasises the humanity of man by reference to a spiritual hope. This hope is to make a difference to life in the present -- not only to the believer, but also to those with whom he comes into contact.

## 2.5 Moral and Ethical Concerns

The Adventist understanding of the Advent also includes a strong moral and ethical component. Following the New Testament concept of "knowing the time" and consequently living "sober lives," the community response to the parousia involves a similar "value-awareness." In Adventist literature there exists a strong differentiation theme, a concept of separateness that shows itself not just in holding a different set of beliefs but in a distinctive form of behaviour:

The Lord has positively enjoined upon his people to be distinct from the world, in spirit, in pursuits, in practice.... And this distinction will be more marked, more decided, as we near the close of time. [58].

The primary reason for this distinctiveness in the activity of an Adventist is evidently his belief in the soon-coming of Christ. A loss of conviction on this point seems to blur the church/world boundaries as perceived by Adventists, and is the cause of considerable concern within Adventism. [59].

As for the more practical, ethical implications, it is plain that the Second Advent provides a strong motivation for correct dealings with others. The imminence of the end, the prospect of judgment, and the need to be more like Christ and to act in harmony with him are frequent themes that are used to exalt right thought and behaviour. [60].

Right living is a significant response to the prospect of the parousia, and is further emphasized by the question of activity at the time of the parousia. Questionable practices are suppressed by the concept of Christ's coming interrupting this world's affairs at a time unknown to man, but possibly soon.

The implications of such a position must not be overstressed, however. Adventists do not hold an "any moment" view of the parousia, and have not deliberately utilised the aspect of anxiety or guilt to enforce correct behaviour to any great extent. [61]. The other extreme response, of being over-expectant and disregarding earthly affairs is also discouraged. [62].

Although Adventist beliefs encourage the concept of separateness and distinctiveness, they are not in any way subversive of moral and ethical standards. As a "revolutionary" sect [63] they are surprisingly law-abiding, and their emphasis on the approaching parousia is nowhere made a reason for the abandonment of Christian principles of conduct and practice.

## 2.6 The Nature of the Church

The belief in the approaching parousia has also a variety of such implications for the church. Not only in its evangelistic and social/medical work, but also in relation to the very nature of the church itself. The parousia has not only implications for moral and ethical values in the dealings of the church and its members, but an eschatological implication for the spiritual state of the body of Christ.

An early address to the "Dear Saints Scattered Abroad" makes this ecclesiological self-understanding explicit:

We fully believe that the great and notable day of the Lord is at hand, and that he is now spreading the last message of mercy, which is designed "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" that he may "present to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing -- holy and without blemish." Such we believe the church of God must be. [64].



The concept of the "remnant" is a frequent motif used by SDAs as a self-description. The remnant (Rev. 12:17 etc.) are understood as referring particularly to those who await the Lord's return, and who consequently act in harmony with their convictions by preparing spiritually and working physically for the Coming. Adventists have also identified with the Loadicean church of Rev. 3:14f. The last church in the historical scene, and the one counselled to prepare herself, is the model taken to represent the Adventist church. The soon-approach of the Coming is a stimulus to self-commitment, and a drive to a community response of dedication. [65].

This ecclesiological response is the summation of community reactions to the Advent. In this, the parousia is (to mix languages), the raison d'être, the modus operandi, and the telos of the church. The parousia belief provides both the baseline and the objectives:

The coming of the Lord is nearer than when we first believed.... Let us not forget that ... God will bring his purposes to pass. He will gather from the world a people who will serve him in righteousness. [66].

The parousia doctrine within the Adventist church provides a definite self-understanding, and a major basis for existence and distinctiveness. The stress on the importance of the approaching parousia results in a strong sense of identity and purpose, without which the specifically Adventist beliefs are hardly tenable. Thus the belief in the near advent is a fundamental basis for the structure and

content of the Adventist message and mission.

### '3 The Parousia Hope in Adventism: Some Problems

#### 3.1 Overreaction to the Parousia Promise

On occasions throughout the Adventist experience, over-emphasis on the imminent Advent has adversely affected the church and its mission. Some of the more unusual reactions have been mentioned earlier. The extension of time has brought some embarrassment to certain past decisions [67], such as the decision to build the new college at Berrien Springs in wood rather than in brick. The imminence of the Advent was given as the reason, but this may have been (at least partially) an excuse, since reducing costs may have been a more relevant factor.

The leasing of land for church building was a commonly used cost-saving device employed in expectation of the imminent Advent. That the parousia would not come within the span of a ninety-nine year lease was unthinkable to many Adventists. Time has continued on and the subsequent expense of purchasing leased land has been considerably higher. Over-enthusiasm brought somewhat misguided action, although undoubtedly understandable and arising from genuine motives.

One congregation took their Advent expectations even further by censuring one of its members for building a house. Apparently the other members felt that by planning a home of his own he was denying his faith in an imminent Coming! Such actions are obviously out of the ordinary and reflect varying degrees of misconception as to the nature and requirements of faith in view of the approaching parousia.

### 3.2 Adventism and the "Delay"

A far more prevalent response within Adventism has been a lack of response, a failure to react to the implications of the "blessed hope." Consequently a significant church-related response has been to try to maintain the vitality and motivational force of the parousia belief. With the continuation of time, expectancy always has a tendency to fade, and the proclivity of some to make their aspirations more specific by a form of time delimitation ("within twenty years" and so on) has had the same effect as the boy crying "Wolf!" Maintaining an unspecific time of expectation has always proved difficult as James White well understood:

The position of suspense is not the most happy one. Those who wait for the return of the Lord in uncertainty as to the definite period of his second advent, are in danger of becoming restless....

In such a position, how natural the often-repeated inquiry, "How long before the Lord will come?" But no definite answer can be given to this inquiry. And it is best that this question cannot be definitely answered.... The only safe position is to keep the coming of Christ ever before us. [68].

Living in this "position of suspense" has over the years caused a frequent re-examination of the validity of imminent expectation. The encouragement to "watch always" occurs repeatedly in Adventist literature, as a brief search through the long-running Review and Herald shows. The prominent editor of the last century, Uriah Smith, frequently takes up the subject of continuing time. The completion of many volumes and the passing of various anniversaries (of significant dates within the Adventist experience) in particular called out his surprise that the time should last so long. [69]. Towards the end of his life, the death of so many long-time friends added to his conviction that time was being extended. [70].

His response was to encourage faithfulness and watchfulness in relation to the apparent delay. His frequent messages were a call back to personal conviction and total dedication. [71].

The lapse of years is no evidence of the error in our position, nor cause for distrust in reference to any of the great truths we hold. Our danger here lies in the strange anomaly of the human mind, that the longer an event is delayed, the further off a person is inclined to put it.... Shall we say in our hearts, My Lord delayeth his coming?... No, let us keep it ever before us; for it is right at hand; lest it come and find us unprepared." [72].

In response to a suggestion that Adventists should dispense with their belief in a near parousia because of the extension in time, Smith pointed to the consequences of such a course of action:

When a love for the Saviour's appearing begins to grow weak, and the attractions of this present life begin to grow stronger, it becomes easy to imagine that the time is to be prolonged, and that there are so many things to be fulfilled, that the coming of Christ cannot be very near. This is the sophistry of unbelief. Beware of it. [73].

The problem of non-fulfilment of the church's expectations has continued throughout Adventist history, and can only be resolved either by a denial of hope and expectation, or by the realization -- the actual occurrence -- of the parousia. Explanations of various types have been advanced as reasons for the delay, but the primary goal has been to maintain an active, positive response to the parousia belief. [74].

In recent years, an acknowledgement of the delay has been particularly apparent within the Adventist church. This has led to a re-affirmation of faith and hope, a renewed attempt at ensuring a dynamic corporate response to the parousia promise, since "Belief in the precious promise of Christ's soon return is the cornerstone of the Seventh-day message." [75].

The Adventist writer A.S. Maxwell remarks:

We are tied to an event.... Of all people we must not, dare not, permit ourselves to become careless or indifferent toward this sublime event that is now of such supreme importance to us and to the world. And of all people we should be making the most thorough spiritual preparation to meet Him face to face. [76].

It would seem therefore that the problem of maintaining the parousia hope in view of what appears to be a continuing delay remains a persistent problem for those who adopt a position of a near parousia. The tension within Adventist thought makes this particularly clear, and the aspect of waiting yet occupying also continues to be the attitude required.



4 Modern Adventism and the Advent

The most thoroughgoing analysis of current Adventist understanding of and emphasis on the Second Coming is the in-depth survey entitled "Trends in Second-Coming Emphasis and Interpretation Among Seventh-day Adventists." [77]. This study, carried out by Dr. C.M. Maxwell of Andrews University in the late sixties, "sought to discover then-and-now attitudes to second-coming texts, signs, and the event itself among Adventist workers and laymen." A long questionnaire was sent out to a cross-section of the Adventist community in the U.S. A total of 1052 replies were received.

This survey is unparalleled as a source for contemporary Adventist attitudes to the parousia. It provides practically the only quantitative analysis of such questions as the relative importance given to the parousia in preaching/teaching compared with thirty years previously (15% "more", 25% "the same", 44% "less"), concepts of nearness (32% "anytime", 36% "1-5 years needed", 21% "not over five years", 35% "my lifetime", 11% "don't know") and so on.

A complex picture emerges in which the SDA church is seen as slackening its expectancy to some degree, but in contrast those questioned felt they were emphasizing the second coming more. In such a subjective type of analysis, it is difficult to state unequivocally whether perceived changes are actual or imagined. Perhaps all that can be said is that there appears to be some decline in urgency among certain sections of the church [78], that this decline has been noted

by many and that present activities are aimed at reversing such a trend.

The survey does show a very strong uniformity of opinion among the various levels and occupations of Adventists. The "normative" concept of a literal, visible, personal etc., coming of Christ is reaffirmed and all groups believe that the parousia seems nearer now than in the past. Such conclusions are further confirmed by a brief review of recent Adventist activity and literature.

The seventies have seen a resurgence of the Second Advent as a motivator and determinant of activity. The perception of a "delay" brought forth the "Earnest Appeals" of the SDA Annual Council Meetings of both 1973 and 1974. [79]. The call was to a re-commitment to the parousia both as the central objective and a primary incentive to positive Christian living. The decline in expectancy was seen as a prime reason for inefficiency, complacency, and spiritual degeneration; and thus the reestablishment of a vital response to the return of Jesus was vigorously pursued.

In the same period a number of articles appeared in various Adventist publications examining the same subject -- the nature and implications of the Coming, the understanding of a delay etc. The major thrust of the arguments produced were the need of a rededication to the life-modifying factors of an appreciation of the parousia, [80], and a reaffirmation of the central role of the parousia within Adventism:

From the beginning of their history, Seventh-day Adventists have made the truth about the Second Coming central in all their work and teaching.... This message has also played a most important role in Seventh-day Adventist vision as a world-wide movement, and it has been a driving force in all Adventist life as well as doctrine. [81].

A shift towards the individualistic, experiential aspects of the Second Advent is also apparent. Various fictional accounts of "Last Day Events" have appeared [82] which treat the parousia and the time immediately preceding it more as a hope-objective, goal-completion time rather than following a line of strict Biblical exposition. The purpose of such books is evidently to "re-personalize" the Second Advent, to show its present impact in the life of the believer. Such a trend highlights the attempt to maintain conviction and assurance in the parousia, a rekindling of the fires of hope.

Such participatory response to the parousia is very much part of the parousia belief and has been the subject of a short survey carried out at an Adventist college. [83]. Despite the small sample (121 responses), a high degree of internal correlation was apparent. Eight "reasons" were suggested as contributory factors to the personal importance of the Second Coming. A large percentage of replies gave an identical order of reasons (from most to least important), and many similar scores were accorded to the various reasons. [84]. Thus the most frequent reason was given the highest rating on 72% of the papers received. The responses are significant in that as far as personal

significance is concerned, future joy in the presence of Jesus is perceived as the primary aspiration, coupled with the end of this present experience of evil, pain and death. The negative aspects such as the destruction of the wicked were not perceived as very important for the individual's hope. The rather self-justifying "as an Adventist I ought to believe in the Second Coming" received the lowest score, again a rather comforting note for those who suspect that tradition or inertia have now taken over as the basis for Christian hope. The personal commitment and involvement in the coming parousia are evidently still potent forces within Adventism.

The non-fulfilment of the parousia continues to be the single most discussed question in regard to the advent. A plethora of articles [85], especially recently, attests the continuing concern that despite all hopes, Christ still has not come. There is now an awareness that to identify every new development in the modern world as a "sign of the times" eventually becomes self-defeating as the passing of time gives the lie to the prediction of "in a few years." Yet the parousia still remains as a strongly-held belief, and it is increasingly realised that the "advent hope" cannot be annulled by the mistaken views of some of its former exponents.

One Adventist writer has explained their continuing aspiration and witness that is coupled with a strong sense of self-awareness:

The message Adventists proclaim is not one of despair, it is one of hope and courage. It says that no matter how dark may be the world, or one's personal situation, there is light ahead. Jesus is coming again as he promised (Jn. 14:1-3).... Adventists have a tremendous sense of destiny. Every moment of their lives is filled with meaning. [86].

Such an attitude cannot really be quantified and analysed. At the basis of the reasons for belief all that can be done is to record. The passing of value judgments is irrelevant in respect to the influence of the parousia on the attitude of Adventists. What is clear is that belief has made a considerable difference, it has had an immense impact on life and thought for this Christian community. The parousia hope is very much part of their experience, and a clear interrelationship between proposition and resultant response is evident in this paradigm of the blessed hope. Adventists provide one of the best subject groups for a study of the impact of parousia hope. While within SDA theology there is much else beside the Second Coming, it remains a fundamental "given," part of the theological a priori. The specificity of this hope, seen both as means and objective, is the basis of Adventism.

5 The Interpretation of Adventism

Adventism is the typical cult of the disinherited and suffering poor. Its peculiar world view reflects the psychology of a distressed class in despair of obtaining the benefits it seeks through the present social order and seeking escape through divine intervention and a cosmic cataclysm, which will destroy the world and the "worldly" classes and elevate "the saints" to the position they could not attain through social processes. [87].

Outside analysts are just as convinced of the central significance of the parousia concept within Adventism. Despite all the other doctrinal differences which have tended to obscure the issue in controversial works, the parousia belief lies at the heart of the matter.

The imminent second coming of Christ is the earliest characteristic doctrine of the Adventists, and the one after which they have received their denominational name. It has influenced ... much if not all of Seventh-day Adventist theology.... [88].

In order to account for this parousia emphasis, most modern, non-controversial explanations follow the same type of "relative deprivation" theory as quoted above -- Adventism is the result of socio-economic causes, and the eschatological hope is adopted by those

for whom this-worldly hopes have failed to provide adequate consolation. As such, these interpretations follow the same line of reasoning that was applied to the Millerites (see Section Three), in that "Adventists" are linked with a particular social group or groups that were unable to attain their socio-economic aspirations, or were fearful that they were about to lose their present social status. The hope of a soon-to-be-realized Second Advent of Christ is seen as a substitute for earthly hopes, indeed a negation and denial of them.

There can be no doubt that the Second Advent hope is a basic component of the Adventist belief-system, that it provides an objective, a goal, a purpose; and that it is an answer to certain present conditions; and that it assures the believer the reality of God's ultimate saving activity. Yet, as was the case in Millerism, Adventism cannot be strictly identified with social and economic conditions, or with aberrant psychological factors. As one recent study shows, even from its outset, the Adventist movement was composed of members who in many instances were not particularly poor by the standards of the time, nor were they socially "disinherited." [89]. In fact, the group studied lay very much at the median in terms of wealth and social status, perhaps even somewhat higher than "average." And in the present, Adventists are certainly not made up of a large proportion of the poor. Various studies show that socially, Adventism is composed of a mixture of "classes" with the lower middle class predominating. [90]. In addition, other studies have demonstrated that Adventism is correlated with upward social mobility -- a strange result of the denial of the world's future. [91].

Strictly socio-economic explanations are unable to account adequately for the adoption of Adventist beliefs. More modern sociological treatments have admitted the far greater complexity of reasons present in becoming part of an Adventist (or any other) religious group:

Whilst it is here suggested that the religious beliefs and moral attitudes of deviant minorities are necessarily related to social conditions, it is recognized that these conditions are insufficient to explain fully the nature of each religious expression. That other factors are involved is at once evident in that not all among, say, the disinherited seek a particular religious expression appropriate to their economic and social circumstances. A rigorous economic determinism is insufficiently subtle to explain religious phenomena; other factors are involved in the genesis and pullulation of religious sects. [92].

Thus the hope in the return of Christ as the great "transformative" event may make Adventists "transformative" [93] as a particular social group, even a "revolutionist" body that seeks the overturning of present conditions as a response to the world [94], but such sociological identifications are unable to account for the theological manifestations that make such an "ideology" possible. (As an aside, one might also point out that identification of attitudes, and the labelling of them, is not the same as explaining or interpreting these same attitudes). An explanation that does not



include some analysis of the religious motivations and aspirations of mankind cannot fully encompass the phenomenon of religious belief.

That said, it is of course evident to all but the most obscurantist enquirer that environmental and socio-economic factors do play a part in perceptions of the present and aspirations for the future. Adventists are part of society and relate to it in various ways since they are "in the world, but not of it." It may also be partially true that belief in the parousia hope finds increasing relevance during times of adversity. The Millerites found a ready reception among the slaves when they made brief forays southwards. [95]. The Adventist church has in some areas experienced a higher growth rate in times of war, and in recent years their teachings have found considerable acceptance in certain Third World countries. Certainly the parousia hope has played a part in all of this. Yet many other factors also affect the issue. The Adventists' relative lack of success in Britain may be partially due to the contemporary society with its lack of serious economic deprivation, but other influences such as traditional religious conservatism and widespread secularist thinking are probably also just as significant. The "attraction" of the parousia hope can only be related to the individual's response to the world and the very fundamental "causes" of religious belief.

Since religious convictions are so heavily involved with the individual, psychological theories have also been advanced as explanations for the attractiveness of certain beliefs. For example, it is quite conceivable that the second advent may well provide a

"resolution" of anxiety for the future. The concept of future bliss may answer the problem of present pain and suffering. Indeed within Adventist teaching such beneficial "effects" of the parousia belief are frequently mentioned. Yet the question must be asked as to whether such a belief necessarily implies some sort of psychological maladjustment that has to be solved in this "unorthodox" way? Or is such a belief pattern viewed as "deviant" simply because it is not the most common response to a particular situation, given all the negative associations that such a term suggests? A recent psycho-social study that included millennialian thinking concluded that it was part of a psychological outlook that had its roots in the "father figure": "Chiliasm ... forcefully reintroduces the father image, at once procreator, castrator, judge and avenger." [96]. Although it is not specifically stated in the study, such a conclusion supposes that millennialian philosophy is an aberrant response to social conditions, a deviant activity with its roots in psychological problems.

Again it must be admitted that to believe in the return of Christ does involve the resolving of problems and the answering of questions. One hardly believes in any concept without it making some contribution to the believer's present condition. Belief implies some resultant attitude and activity, as opposed to factual knowledge which may be accepted as true yet does not necessarily have an impact upon one's present life. The knowledge that the sun will destroy this world some millions of years hence has hardly the same effect as believing in the imminent return of the divine Son of Man. What is really at the heart of the psychological explanation of the parousia belief is a value judgment of the validity of such an outlook. If the

hope in the Second Coming resolves internal questions and situational problems in what is perceived as a legitimate manner, then this would be accepted as a valid, if partial, "explanation" by those holding the belief. If on the other hand, this hope is viewed as providing a normally unnecessary "crutch" or resolving certain mental difficulties or maladjustments then the "explanation" is no longer acceptable to the believer, the Adventist. In the ultimate analysis, the hope in the parousia (like all beliefs) demands a response. It is impossible for the outside observer to remain neutral since even this position passes judgment upon the integral value of a particular belief.

So far, the Adventist parousia belief has been evaluated by others as a religious response to certain environmental factors, whether social, economic, or psychological; and has not been considered except in a way that attempts to be dispassionate and scientific. Adventist belief structures are seen as a fact within society and are not normally judged as to their religious truth.

These are not the only judgments however. More frequent and often more hostile, analyses of the Advent within Adventism come from those who themselves possess a definite (and inescapably antithetical) belief framework. In these studies much is at stake -- the question of truth and right. Beliefs are clearly seen as demanding a particular course of action, and so religious analysts of Adventism cannot afford to adopt a neutral status.

In evaluating the Adventist parousia belief certain problems arise for other Christians. Generally speaking, most Christian groups accept the validity of some sort of parousia concept and thus have to differentiate their views from the Adventist understanding. Most criticisms of the place of the Advent in Adventism focus on the emphasis given to the belief, its nature, and the question of imminence. The varied interpretations given to these facets of belief do indeed determine present behaviour and future goals. Thus many writers of other religious persuasions are at pains to distance themselves from the Adventist interpretation. [97].

Others take issue with the imminence of the Adventist parousia concept:

Seventh-day Adventism says that it believes Christ's return is imminent. By "imminent" Adventists have always meant "in this generation," according to another of their publications. Yet we read on p.207 [of SDAs Answer Questions on Doctrine, see fn.], in italics, "we set no date." Surely to say that Christ is coming in this generation, while not setting a specific date, is setting some sort of date. [98].

Some criticisms reflect the times in which they were written. In the latter quarter of the nineteenth century, the concept of progress towards a future utopia resulting from the work of man was very prominent. One critic of the Adventist expectation wrote that

"Nothing can be more absurd than their interpretation of current events [in relation to the Second Coming]." [99]. However, present-day conditions are not so out of harmony with Adventist eschatological expectations. Referring to the apocalyptic logo of the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists (a clock face showing a few minutes to twelve), one non-Adventist commentator notes in rather laudatory terms the Adventist commitment to the future: -

To the preaching of the nearness of that day [Second Coming] and the universality of God's offer of salvation, Adventists have dedicated their lives. Theirs is not the defeatist dirge "Minutes to Midnight." Rather, they say, the time is now Minutes to Morning -- the glorious morning of the Advent! [100].

Another sympathetic comment comes from a Catholic investigator:

It would be easy to dismiss this notion of an imminent second advent as naive and visionary, but it should be remembered that this is essentially a New Testament emphasis and a strong motivation in the early church.

This emphasis on the imminence of the Lord's coming has given a sense of urgency and a strong impetus to the Seventh-day Adventist missionary spirit. It is an emphasis which has to some extent to be restored to the proclamation of the total Christian message. [101].

The widely-varying reactions to the Adventist emphasis on the Advent need no further documentation. Inevitably it is impossible to view the parousia belief dispassionately. For those holding different doctrinal views it is either heterodox or heresy; for the psychologist or social scientist it is viewed as an interesting product of the human mind. Belief by definition requires some response, and the concept of a soon return of Christ is very obviously a highly determinant and influential belief. Yet whatever axes may appear to need grinding, it is important that the implications and effects of such a belief be evaluated with care and caution, and that some greater understanding of the determinant function of the parousia belief, especially within Adventism, may ensue.

The final word on the subject here comes from a non-Adventist writer who, while not accepting the Adventist belief framework per se, perceives the importance and relevance of the parousia within Adventism:

To Adventists, belief in Bible prophecy and in the First and Second Advents of Christ are inseparable. Christ's First Advent, to establish the kingdom of Saving Grace, they affirm, would be incomplete without His Second Advent to establish His kingdom of glory upon a redeemed earth.... They believe that this final Second Advent is the literal, crowning, climactic event toward which all creation moves. They regret that many Christians have allowed themselves to be persuaded that the Second Advent of Christ

is merely a figurative coming or wishful thinking. Adventists look for a real and literal return of their Lord.... In this doctrine of the returning Christ, the Adventist has a redemptive hope that alleviates the despair of human frustrations. [102].

## 6. Conclusion

This and the preceding section provide the historical and practical illustrations of the effects that a strong emphasis on the Second Coming can produce. As sources of material for an examination of the meaning and implications of the parousia belief, analyses of both the Millerite movement and the Adventist church are invaluable. They document in a vivid and tangible way the consequences of their beliefs -- ideas transformed into action.

Millerism and Adventism, like any historical phenomena, need to be seen against the background of geographical location, historical period, social conditions and concepts, prevailing philosophy, culture, and all the other factors that contribute to and have an influence on why particular events happened as they did. Neither alone nor in combination do such influences fully explain the fundamental reasons for the rise of Millerism or the existence of Adventism.

The basic reasons lie deep in the minds of men as they relate to God; as they hope, pray, and work towards the future. In the end (eschatology again), there is no explanation for the parousia-hope in the observable, physical world. No scientific theory can objectively explain its existence, even though it does have so many identifiable effects and implications when translated into practice as a living principle. Spiritual hope cannot be reduced to modified human aspirations, a substitute for present reality, an escapist concept



that provides comfort to those who have no earthly hope.

That said, the practical and very pragmatic use of the parousia concept is much in evidence in both the Millerite and the Adventist experience. It provides purpose, direction, and objectivity to hope in the future; it has very obvious and immediate effects in the present. Coupled with the basic message of the risen Christ, the parousia hope is integrated into a Christian perspective and determines the believer's response to the world; it stimulates the evangelistic mission of the church and provides assurance of ultimate success and completed salvation. However, these philosophical presuppositions and consequences are left to the concluding section of this thesis, a synthesis of the whole range of thought and experience involved in Christian hope.

Yet without the historical bases on which to construct such a synthesis it would be little more than an interesting intellectual exercise. Only as the belief in the Second Coming is put into practice does it become relevant; only as hope intrudes into present experience does it become significant. The contribution of William Miller, the reformist/progressive movement of his time, the activities of the host of Millerite preachers, the consequences of their beliefs, the shattering effect of the Disappointment -- all this is the matter and substance of just one group who took this and lived in anticipation of the parousia. So too the early Adventists -- the Smiths, the Whites, Bates, Hastings, Andrews and the others -- their very lives illustrate their "blessed hope," a hope transformed into the everyday incidents of pain and joy, of separation and love. The

reaction of the church is an interpretation of the parousia, its consequences seen in terms of meeting-houses, schools and printing presses. The extremism is there too, the over-emphasis on the soon coming; as well as the muted, feeble response, the waning of hope and the feeling of a "delay."

The continuing vitality of the parousia hope is visible in the brief study of modern Adventism, one specific example (among many) of the dynamism of the parousia hope that still exists in parts of the Christian community. The spectre of delay still haunts the waiting ones, yet the reality and soon realization of the desired event is maintained as the basis of hope.

Adventism seen from the viewpoint of outsiders also provides a fuller comprehension of the impact caused by the Advent hope. Leaving aside the doctrinal differences and the rather anthropocentric conclusions of the scientific studies, the fundamental role that can be played by this determinant of religious belief is unquestionably established. Different perceptions of the parousia are also found to be highly significant in terms of practical consequences and philosophical outlook -- concepts of the future are most important in the understanding of and the responses to the present. The variation in the expectation that results from different concepts of the future is part of the subsequent section which seeks to analyse present theological understandings of the parousia message and the consequent relationship of the believer to his contemporary and future surroundings.

Whether believed or not, the parousia hope has in a variety of ways and in numerous instances directly affected human experience. From this perspective, its veracity is not necessarily the most significant factor. That it has been believed, and has been denied, these are the contributions and the importance of the parousia hope to the past and present; while its still continuing influence directly affects the perception of the future. The reality of the parousia hope lies in its power to move and to convict.

Notes to Section Four.

1. The generic term "Adventist" covers all those groups that retained a parousia expectation after the 1844 Millerite disappointment. However, since this section is primarily concerned with a particular group, the Seventh-day Adventists, and since "Adventist" is a common abbreviation for this body, the term has been employed primarily in this latter sense. As the text makes plain, most of what is said concerning Seventh-day Adventists in their relationship to the basic parousia doctrine can also be applied to other Adventist groups. The context will make it clear when "Adventist" is used in a sense other than the relationship of SDAs to the parousia belief.

2. A contemporary (1850) analysis of the past experience of Adventists (mainly in the Millerite and Sabbatarian sense) concludes with a reassertion of their Advent belief and of God's activity within the movement:

"In every crisis God's people have been shut up to faith, as we now are. My heart and flesh cry out "believe." My reason and religion echo BELIEVE!! Maintain your consecration of God. Wait on Him. He has not, cannot FAIL his trusting ones. He so interposed in '43 and '44, as to compel the confession tht a crisis was just impending. Shall we now doubt, because God has been fulfilling scripture in our disappointment, and setting the "snare" for the world by the delay? Hold on!!

"Our blessed Lord Jesus is coming. It is made more certain to us by our having witnessed the evident truth of the Bible doctrine of the Divine interposition to fulfill scripture. Amen!" J. B. Cook, "The Necessity and Certainty of Divine Guidance," Advent Review, 1,3 (Sep. 1850), 41.

3. The major source of biographical information is a short "Sketch" of her life by her mother, published in a selection of poems from the Smith household (both her brother and mother wrote poetry). Mrs. Rebekah Smith, Poems: With a Sketch of the Life and Experience of Annie R. Smith (Manchester, N.H.: John B. Clarke, Printer, 1871). A modern and more easily accessible account that draws heavily on the "Sketch" is that by R. Graybill, "The Life and Love of Annie Smith," Adventist Heritage, 2,1 (1975), 14-23.

4. The [Seventh-day Adventist] Church Hymnal (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1941), 371.

5. A. R. Smith, Home Here, and Home in Heaven (Rochester, N.Y.: Advent Review Office, 1855), 16, 26, 27. The excitement she felt at the prospect of the imminent return of Jesus is clearly evident in the blank verse of the poem, "The Blessed Hope." The first stanza exemplifies her "breathless hope," being a full 28 lines long. Ibid., 29.

6. A. R. Smith, "Lines," published in her obituary by U. Smith, Review and Herald, Aug. 21, 1855, 21; and in R. Smith, Poems, 130.

7. A. R. Smith, in [SDA] Church Hymnal, 550.

8. The only major published biography is E. F. Durand, Yours in the Blessed Hope, Uriah Smith (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1980). A large quantity of unpublished material on Uriah Smith (and many other early Adventists) is on file in the Heritage Room, Andrews University, Michigan.

9. Some of U. Smith's hymns are contained in R. Smith, Poems, 149, 145, 139, 133.

10. U. Smith, in R. Smith, Poems, 133.

11. Review and Herald, Jan. 8, 1861, 60.

12. As examples see Review and Herald [RH], Nov. 18, 1858, 204; June 8, 1869, 188; Aug. 31, 1897, 550.

13. For biographical information see James White, Life Sketches (Battle Creek, MI.: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., 1888); V. E. Robinson, James White (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1976).

14. James White, Sketches, 18.

15. Ibid., 83.

16. James White, unpublished letter to Bro. Hastings, Mar. 18, 1850.

17. Thus his exhortation to parents: "Parents, I entreat of you, live out the precious Advent faith before your children. Lead them to Jesus, and teach them by your faith and works to secure a preparation for his coming." J. White, Life Incidents (Battle Creek, MI.: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., 1868), 342. (My emphasis).

18. The following are a brief selection of the wide range of material relating to Ellen G. White: L. H. Christian, The Fruitage of Spiritual Gifts: The Influence and Guidance of Ellen G. White in the Advent Movement (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., c.1947); A. G. Daniells, The Abiding Gift of Prophecy (Mountain View, CA.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., c.1936); D. A. Delafield, Ellen G. White and the Seventh-day Adventist Church (Mountain View, CA.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., c.1963); D. A. Delafield, Ellen G. White in Europe (Grantham: Stanborough Press, 1975); C. B. Haynes, The Gift of Prophecy (Nashville, TN.: Southern Publishing Assn., c.1946); F. D. Nichol, Ellen White and her Critics (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., c.1957); R. Noorbergen, Prophet of Destiny (New Canaan, CN.: Keats Publishing, 1974); R. L. Numbers, Prophetess of Health (New York: Harper and Row, c.1976); D.E. Rebok, Believe His Prophets (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., c.1956); P. B. Ricchiuti, Ellen (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., c.1977); A. L. White, Ellen G. White -- The Human Interest Story (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., c.1972); A. L. White, The Ellen G. White Writings (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., c.1973); E. G. White, A Brief Sketch of the Life and Teachings of Ellen G. White (Mountain View, CA.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., c.1933); E. G. White, Life Sketches (Battle Creek, MI.: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., 1880).

19. E. G. White, Testimonies to the Church 9 Vols. (Mountain View, CA.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., c.1948), Vol. 8, 253.
20. White, Testimonies, Vol. 5, 266.
21. White, Testimonies, Vol. 7, 237.
22. White, Testimonies, Vol. 5, 387.
23. White, Testimonies, Vol. 3, 255-256.
24. White, Testimonies, Vol. 6, 406.
25. E. G. White, Great Controversy (Mountain View, CA.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1st copyright 1888), 299.
26. H. L. Hastings, "An Earnest Word," Present Truth, 5, 72 (1923), 4.
27. J. M. Hopkins, "That Blessed Hope," Review and Herald, May 13, 1920, 9-10.
28. F. D. Nichol, "Christ's Glorious Coming: The Christian's Hope," Present Truth, 5, 73 (1923), 1.
29. W. A. Fagal, "Why I Believe in a Future Life," Present Truth, 24, 7 (1949), 1-2.
30. T. R. Torkelson, "I am Waiting for My Friend," Sentinel, 2 (Jan. 1978), 9.
31. V. Q. Tigno, Jr., "The Joy of the Advent," Review and Herald, Sep. 19, 1974, 7.

32. It is perhaps worth noting a few such comments here:

"But the whole work is the Lord's and will soon be over. It will soon be all past and the time of gathering of the Saints from all parts and countries will soon come..." S. N. Haskell, addendum to unpublished letter to Sister Harris, Sep. 14, 1892.

"I shall long for the time when the war is over and the saints are at home, As ever in hope..." S. N. Haskell, unpublished letter to E. G. White, Sep. 24, 1893.

"Yes, thank God for the Advent hope, the 'blessed hope.' The night cometh, but see, beyond the hills, the day is breaking... T. E. Hirst, "The Blessed Hope," Review and Herald, Apr. 2, 1931, 8.

"I look forward to the coming of Christ, when, if we are faithful, we shall be united no more to be separated... Surely all this will have an end. Jesus is coming. I long to hear the trumpet sound and the dead come forth from the grave."

"Oh, how glad shall I be to see Jesus, our Deliverer, come and this terrible misery come to an end."

"Oh, I long for Jesus to come. I long for that home in the kingdom of

glory where there will be no sickness, no sorrow, no pain, no death."

E. G. White, in unpublished letters to: Son Edson, Mar. 22, 1879 (W-19-1879); Daughter Addie, July 21, 1886 (W-101-1886); My Dear Children, July 25, 1886 (W-1102-1886).

33. W. B. Yeats, poem "The Second Coming," in The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1966), 184-185.

34. C. B. Haynes, "Are We Nearing the Focal Point of Human History?" Present Truth, 15, 6 (1940), 3.

35. For various historical accounts see: L. E. Froom, Movement of Destiny (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1971); I. Linden, The Last Trump (Frankfurt Am Main etc.: Peter Lang, 1978); J. N. Loughborough, The Great Second Advent Movement (Mountain View, CA.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1905); M. E. Olsen, A History of the Origin and Progress of Seventh-day Adventists (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1925); A. W. Spalding, Origin and History of Seventh-day Adventists, 4 Vols. (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1961-62); C. M. Maxwell, Tell it to the World (Mountain View, CA.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1976).

36. A participant in this process remarks that "The change from the strong expectation of the immediate appearing of the Lord, to the 'waiting', 'waiting' position they [Adventists] later occupied was very great..." G. I. Butler, "Advent Experience No.5," Review and Herald [abbreviated RH], Mar. 10, 1885, 153. Damsteegt, Foundations, 292, comments that "1850-70 ... was a period of transition from the idea of an imminent Second Advent to a realization that before Christ could return the third angel's message had to be proclaimed world-wide." (The third angel's message was SDA jargon taken from Rev. 14, meaning the teaching/preaching of SDA beliefs).

37. The practical effect of the parousia belief's controlling influence is seen in the work of many itinerant preachers. The wife of one such preacher wrote out her life's experience in verse, mentioning that she often only saw her husband once every six months, and then only for a few days. The importance of the Advent belief is clear in the following:

My husband was granted a license to preach  
The last closing message. To the world go and teach  
That Jesus to this earth very soon, will come again  
And all must prepare, if they with him would reign.

The metre may be uneven, but the sentiments are not. A complete commitment is seen throughout the (long) poem. Mary A. Farrar Ells, "My Wanderings," Andrews University Heritage Room File VFM 1425.

38. For historical details refer to Spalding, Origins, Vol. 1, 291-311 and C. C. Crisler, Organization (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1938).

39. The Adventists' adverse experiences with church organizations in the Millerite period led some to strongly oppose the organization of the SDA church. In this, unfortunate associations created during a

phase of strong parousia emphasis were coupled with the concept of imminence to deny the need or the advisability of church organization. Uriah Smith comments on this opposition:

"Some of those who embraced the faith had come from other churches. From those churches they had been expelled, not on scriptural grounds, but by the creed power, for cherishing the blessed hope of the second coming of Christ. There came into their minds, therefore, so strong a reaction against all church organization, that they were willing to cast the whole aside, -- the good as well as the bad." Uriah Smith, "History and Future Work of Seventh-day Adventists," General Conference Bulletin, 3, 10, Oct. 29, 1889, 102.

40. For further details on "encouragement" see later on aspects of the delay. The present relevance and application of the parousia hope are clearly appreciated:

"The 'blessed hope' of the second coming of Christ is not a fringe doctrine. It is the very fabric that holds the Christian faith together. Hope is the warp and woof of human experience. the hope of the second coming of Christ is an experience that keeps Christians looking up. The apostle Peter calls it a 'lively hope'. It gives vitality to the Christian experience. The life of those having this hope is shaped and governed by it.

"Those who have a firm hope of heaven, those who believe that Christ is coming again, will be better citizens in the here and now. Those who have a genuine hope for a new earth will seek to live its principles here on the old earth. Those who sing about the 'fair and happy land by and by' and 'the evergreen shores over there,' <sup>will do their part to keep the shores green over here.</sup> Those who talk about the streets of gold 'over there' will also pay their taxes over here so that the streets can be kept in good repair. Parents who believe in the new earth where all will be 'bliss and joy', will also build a little heaven here on earth by loving each other and their children.... The Second Advent is not a theory, but should touch every facet of our life's experience here and now." R. R. Bietz, "The Second Advent -- The One Hope of the World Today," RH, (1961) centenary issue (Vol. 138, No. 23), 6.

41. The impact of the Second Advent belief in the life of the Christian is discussed in some detail in the following. It is quoted at some length since it well illustrates the variety of attitudes possible, both positive and negative, and emphasizes the necessary differences ensuing from the belief.

"The second coming of Christ is the supreme and blessed hope of the church, the glorious and triumphant end toward which we live and labor. Yet this thrilling event evokes a mixed response of joy, disappointment or dread among Christians. There are those who eagerly await the return of Jesus. They have invested very little of their means in this world, choosing instead to work to advance the gospel, alleviate human suffering, and heal the sick.

"Others view Christ's coming as an intrusion into their lives, bringing an abrupt end to their joys and aspirations. Sermons on the Second Coming only add stress to their lives. Under the belief that the end is just around the corner, they make decisions about marriage, family, and work that they later regret. Some are not quite sure about their



status with God. Consequently, the Second Advent is a day of darkness, not light, and the mere mention of this event awakens uncomfortable feelings. These uncomfortable feelings in turn create a sense of guilt, because those holding them recognize that the concept of Christ's return should awaken joy and not dread...

"If the second coming of Christ is indeed the supreme and blessed hope of the church, then should not this fact be demonstrated in our individual lives? Should not there be an inseparable connection between our religious beliefs and our ethical behaviour, between the doctrines we prescribe and the deeds we perform? I believe there must be a relation between the profession of faith and the fruit of faith." J. J. Battistone, "The Return of Jesus," Adventist Review, July 5, 1979, 4.

On this latter point of behavioural differences resulting from a strong parousia emphasis, note the criticisms made by James Snowden about the Dispensationalists:

"What do they do that is different from what other Christians ... do on this subject? If their theory is true, it must lead them to do something that is distinctive of them, that corresponds with and grows out of and fulfills their doctrine, something that other Christians, such as postmillennialists, do not do. As far as we can make out, they do not differ in their practice from other Christians, unless it be that they hold 'prophetic conferences' and carry on a propaganda to convert other Christians to their views. They do not engage in any distinctive or special kind of Christian service that fulfills their doctrine.... On pragmatic principles, if this doctrine is true, it should 'make a difference.'" J. H. Snowden, The Coming of the Lord: Will it be Premillennial? (New York: Macmillan, 1919).

42. Wilcox describes the highly confused post-1844 situation:

"Following the disappointment in 1844 the advent believers were thrown into great confusion. This resulted in the development of more or less fanaticism. Some professed sanctification, holding to the theory that they could not sin. Others claimed that they were in the jubilee, that the land should rest, and the poor should be supported without labor. Their principal message was, 'Sell all ye have, and give alms'. There were some who professed great humility, and felt that this humility should be manifested in their physical attitude, like creeping on the floor as children, creeping around their houses, on the street, over bridges, and in the church itself." F. M. Wilcox, The Faith of the Pioneers (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., n.d.), 7.

43. Damsteegt gives as one reason for the lack of mission activity "the incompatibility of future mission with the idea of an imminent Second Advent." Damsteegt, Foundations, 158. Other reasons were also operative at the same time, however.

44. James White, letter to Bro. Jacobs, Day Star, Oct. 11, 1845.

45. For an account of their courtship and marriage see R. Graybill, "The Courtship of Ellen Harmon," Insight, Jan. 23, 1973, 4-7.

Some other Adventists were against their marriage. James White

mentions that some of his friends were very concerned: "They have no objections now to our marriage. But it tried them at first." James White, unpublished letter to Brother Collins, Aug. 26, 1846. Ellen White recalled the occasion of her marriage: "It was not over a year, before James White talked it over with me. He said something had come up, and he should have to go away and leave me to go with whomsoever I would, or we must be married. He said something had got to be done. So we were married..." She also mentions that she never expected to be married, presumably in view of the imminence of the Advent. See Ellen G. White Estate Document Release No. 310, Interview with Mrs. E.G. White, Re Early Experiences.

46. Damsteegt, Foundations, 270: "The urgency of the imminent parousia changed into a view which expected the Second Advent in the near future, creating in turn a climate in which missionary consciousness could gradually develop to a concept of a world-wide mission responsibility."

47. E. G. White, letter to Prof. C. W. Irwin, Sep. 22, 1902. Note also her comments on this subject elsewhere:

"Is Christ soon to come in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory? Is the end of all things at hand? If so, those who claim to be followers of Christ must work in proportion to their faith. Our part is not to wait in idle expectancy, but to act in accordance with our faith in the word of God.... Heart-work reveals itself in actions.... We are not in a dreamland of inaction." "Waiting and Working for Christ", RH, Apr. 12, 1898, 1-2.

48. E. G. White, Testimonies, Vol. 6, 440.

49. As the following illustrates:

"Seventh-day Adventists profess to believe that the day of this world's history is far spent, and that the night is at hand. Should we then, as the end draws nigh, manifest greater earnestness and zeal in the service of God, or may we now relax our energies, and participate in the pursuits and pleasures of the world?" E. G. White, "Preparing for Christ's Return," RH, Nov. 12, 1914, 21. See also E. G. White, "Our Privilege in Service," RH, May 15, 1903, 7.

50. The consequent attitude is clearly expressed when evangelism was discussed (in this instance, among the Pacific Islanders):

"The herald notes of the coming Kingdom must be sounded in those far-off dots in the sea. It is impossible for this great work to close until those islanders shall have had the opportunity of hearing the message of truth for this generation..."

"With the Scriptures in our hands, it seems almost useless to preach to the world that the Lord is about to come, while we in listless activity enjoy the abundance of this world's goods. Those with whom we associate know full well the position we occupy, and measure our faith, not so much by our words, as by our actions. Could we but exert ourselves in behalf of these long neglected Islanders, the sacrifice made in that direction would prove a more powerful argument in favor of our position in prophecy than the greatest array of empty words." RH extra. Daily Bulletin of the General Conference, Oct. 24,

1889, 70.

51. Daily Bulletin of the General Conference, Nov. 10, 1891, 56. Cp. also S. N. Haskell in the Daily Bulletin, Oct. 22, 1888, 4: "Hundreds of canvassers could be used in foreign lands, and we could find many precious souls in the fruitful field. God will search the honest souls out and save them at the coming of the Lord."

"May the Lord grant his blessing, enlarge our hearts and save us with an everlasting salvation when the Lord Shall appear in His glory." (My emphasis).

The urgency of the task is also emphasised in the following:

"While much has been accomplished in pushing our work into new fields, much remains to be done ... this is the time for labor ...

"Now is the time to work; now is the time to step into the openings created by God's special providence to be filled at this present hour...

"This is the critical moment. The golden opportunity, if let pass, may never come again. It is this year, not next; to-day, not to-morrow...

"Soon will the time of labor be ended. Soon will the harvest be overpast...

"Already the hilltops are glimmering with the light of dawning day. Already the earth is trembling with the tread of the coming Conqueror. Let none look back now ...

"Now is God's time, and let his time be your time...

"Our all is what God asks of us at this time."

General Conference Bulletin, Fourth Quarter, 1896, 772-774.

52. E. G. White, unpublished MS 26, 1901, 4-5. (My emphasis).

53. N. C. Wilson, "The Exciting Future," Adventist Review, Feb. 1, 1979, 3: "As Adventists, we have no choice but to keep preparing people for the Advent. This should have preeminence in all we do and say and in everything for which we expend money and human energy."

Others outside of Adventism have noted the importance of the proximate parousia within the Adventist witness:

"In order for a non-Adventist to understand the missionary impetus of their Church, he must realize the importance given in their preaching and missionary witness to the imminence of the second coming. The belief that men are living in the climactic period of this world's history gives urgency to the proclamation of their message and accounts in part for the expansion and growth of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church all over the world." L. Vischer, "Seventh-day Adventists," Ecumenical Review, 19,1 (1967), 25.

54. Much has been written by Adventists in this vein. As an example of

this "final solution" approach, see K. J. Holland, "The Second Coming Solves Your Problems," These Times, July 1, 1975, 23:

"Total moral and spiritual freedom does not exist in the human enterprise until Jesus ends the reign of sin by his return in glory.... It means freedom from tiredness, freedom from fear, freedom from hunger, freedom from want, freedom from growing old, freedom from a guilty conscience, freedom from separation, and freedom from death."

55. See Section 3 of this thesis for details of Millerite views.

56. In view of what has already been said it hardly seems necessary to belabour the point. As just one example note the following:

"Seventh-day Adventists are Christians in a hurry. They believe that the coming of Christ is imminent. So they feel a strong sense of urgency about getting on with the Lord's work -- particularly in fulfilling His command to preach the gospel in every nation....

"Although their hopes are vividly fixed on another world, Adventists take very seriously Jesus's example of ministering to human suffering in this one. In addition to their globe-girdling network of medical institutions; they carry on one of the largest welfare programs ever undertaken by a private agency." South Bend Tribune, Mar: 30, 1969, 49. As of June 1980 the SDA church has 3,383,055 members and is working in 190 countries. Its welfare programme includes the distribution of food to the value of \$10M and medical supplies to the value of \$2M. For further details refer to the Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 1981 (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1981).

57. E. G. White, Medical Ministry (Mountain View, CA.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1932), 268. (My emphasis).

58. E. G. White, "Preparing for Christ's Return," RH, Nov. 12, 1914, 21.

59. Thus R. H. Pierson, past leader of the SDA's:

"Until this work is finished and we behold the King in His glory, this generation of Seventh-day Adventists cannot, dare not, must not -- and with God's help, will not -- lose the zeal of its forefathers!...

"This is no time for compromise. My heart aches as I see too much evidence of compromise and worldliness as a people. Do we, deep down in our hearts, truly believe that Jesus is coming, and coming soon?"

R. H. Pierson, "Another Generation Which Know Not the Lord?" RH, May 23, 1974, 11. Cp. E. G. White: "Even some who profess to be looking for His [Christ's] appearing are no more prepared for that event than Satan himself.... They have so long served their lust that it is natural for their thoughts to be impure and their imaginings corrupt." Testimonies, Vol. 2, 346.

60. See, as one instance, E. G. White, Selected Messages 3 Vols. (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958-), Vol. 1, 113.

61. The use of an "any moment" parousia as a motivation to correct

behaviour based on guilt is more prevalent among other religious groups. Weber remarks of one such group that "In order to use their doctrine as a deterrent to questionable behaviour and as a means of social control, premillennialists only had to ask a single question: Would you want to be doing that when Jesus comes?" T. P. Weber, Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 58. Not all premillennialists would agree with such "imminent" views. Adventists did employ this type of corrective to present behaviour: "Are we ready for his appearing?... Would we want Christ to come and find us in disunion, in strife with one another? Would we want Christ to come and find us in frivolous amusements?... We want to be found waiting and watching..." E. G. White, unpublished letter to Brother W. H. Edwards, June 14, 1882 (E-29-1882).

62. So E. G. White in Testimonies, Vol.4, 309: "Belief in the near coming of the Son of Man in the clouds of heaven will not cause the true Christian to become neglectful and careless of the ordinary business of life. The waiting ones who look for the soon appearing of Christ will not be idle, but diligent in business. Their work will not be done carelessly and dishonestly, but with fidelity, promptness and thoroughness. Those who flatter themselves that careless inattention to the things of this life is an evidence of their spirituality and separation from the world are under a great deception."

63. The term is that of Wilson: B. R. Wilson, Religious Sects (New York, etc.: McGraw-Hill, 1970).

64. J. Bates, J. H. Waggoner, M. E. Cornell; RH, Dec. 4, 1855, 78. Note also Uriah Smith: "Admonitions and exhortations have enough been given to produce, if heeded, a living church, with loins girded and lamps burning, waiting for the coming of the Lord." "The Close," RH, Nov. 18, 1858, 204. E. G. White comments similarly: "The church of Christ is to be clean, pure and sanctified unto God. Its members ... are embarked, so long as time shall last, upon an enterprise of mercy." MS 57, 1907. (My emphasis).

65. Damsteegt has a good summary of Adventist self-description. See Foundations, 243-248; 147.

66. E. G. White, "Our Privilege of Service," RH, May 15, 1903, 7. Note also R. R. Figuhr: "The Seventh-day Adventist Church was born in anticipation of the glorious soon return of our Lord. The Adventist Church continues to cherish it." "On to Victory", RH, July 29, 1962, 20.

67. For a history of some such decisions see Durand, Uriah Smith, 95-97. When the question was raised "if the Lord is soon to come, why do you urge our builders to put the best material into the buildings they erect?" E. G. White responded that at least God's house should be able to withstand a storm, and that only the best materials were good enough to be used in the service of God. Evangelism, (Washington. D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1946), 378.

68. J. White, Life Incidents, Vol. 1 (Battle Creek, MI.: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., 1868), 337-338.

69. As examples of this: RH, Nov. 17, 1859, 204; RH, Jan. 8, 1861, 60; RH, June 8, 1869, 188; RH, Aug. 18, 1874, 68; RH, Jan. 15, 1884, 40.

70. RH, Jan. 26, 1897, 64.

71. "Is the revelation of Jesus Christ in flaming fire the great waymark for you? Or are you putting far away the evil day? Are you becoming somewhat attached to this wilderness state, tarrying in your pilgrimage, and building your hopes in a region like this? Or are you laying up treasure above, centering your affections on things around the throne, and pressing onward to enjoy them there?" U. Smith, "The Close," RH, Nov. 18, 1858, 204.

72. U. Smith, "Valedictory," RH, June 8, 1869, 188.

73. U. Smith, "Watchman, What of the Night?" RH, Aug. 31, 1897, 550.

74. As examples of this note:

"The thrilling truth that has been sounding in our ears for many years, 'The Lord is at hand; be ye also ready,' is no less the truth today than when we first heard the message."

"There are those who say, not only in their hearts, but in all their works, 'My Lord delayeth his coming'.... Because Christ's coming has been long foretold, they conclude that there is a mistake in regard to this doctrine. But the Lord says, 'If the vision tarry, wait for it; for it will surely come'.... Shall we be found among the number who cease to cooperate with God, and who are found saying, My Lord delays His coming?" E. G. White, Testimonies, Vol. 5, 14. E. G. White, Letter 131, 1900.

75. C. D. Brooks, "The Second Advent of Christ," RH, Nov. 13, 1875, 28.

76. A. S. Maxwell, "The Imminence of Christ's Second Coming" in his Our Firm Foundation Vol. 2 (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1953), 195.

77. C. M. Maxwell, "Trends in Second-Coming Emphasis and Interpretation Among Seventh-day Adventists." Unpublished paper, produced in the early 70's. Andrews University, Dept. of Church History.

78. One frequently given reason for the declining emphasis on the Second Coming was "The church is losing sight of its objectives." Maxwell, Trends, 15.

79. RH, Dec. 6, 1973 and RH, Nov. 4, 1974.

80. "We have been preaching for more than 125 years that Jesus will come soon, and he hasn't yet come.

"Some have become discouraged waiting. Others, even though they are still in the church, have lost that first love for the blessed hope. They are not sure that Jesus will ever return.

"What is your attitude? How is your faith? Are you tired of waiting?"

"We need to maintain the faith and confidence of our pioneers in this blessed hope." M. S. Nigri, "How Far and How Near?" RH, Feb. 20, 1975, 8.

81. W. J. Harris, "The Assurance of Our Lord's Return," RH, Jan. 29, 1970, 5; see also R. H. Pierson, "A New Year's Message," Adventist Review, Jan. 12, 1978, 3; and L. Neff, "People Who Have Hope and Security," Adventist Review, May 4, 1978, 5.

82. As examples see: P. E. Wheeler, The Appearing (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Assn., 1979); J. Strong, Project Sunlight (Nashville, TN: Southern Pub. Assn., 1980); M. McLeod, Now! (n.p., n.d.).

83. Unpublished material from a questionnaire survey carried out in Britain in 1978. (J. Gallagher).

84. The following was the order of reasons. The score beside each reason is the average for all replies, and is based on an evaluation of importance on a scale of 0-5 (0=no importance, 5=highest importance):

Those saved will be forever with Jesus (4.5)  
There will be an end to sin, pain and sadness: (4.4)  
It gives me hope for the future: (4.2)  
It gives force to the Gospel message now: (3.5)  
God's people will be proved right: (2.3)  
I will be rewarded if I stay faithful: (2.2)  
The wicked will be destroyed: (1.9)  
As an Adventist I ought to believe in it: (1.4).

85. Including a recent article in Ministry which specifically deals with this problem: J. Gallagher, "The Delay of the Advent," Ministry, 56,4 (1981), 4-6.

86. K. H. Wood in RH, May 4, 1978, 5.

87. E. T. Clark, The Small Sects in America (New York and Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1949), 25.

88. C. Rubencamp, "Immortality and Seventh-day Adventist Eschatology," Ph.D Thesis, Catholic University of America, 1968, 77.

89. R. Graybill, "Millenarians and Money: Adventist Wealth and Adventist Beliefs," Spectrum, 10, 2 (1979), 31-41.

90. See R. H. Ward, "Some Aspects of Religious Life in an Immigrant Area in Manchester," A Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain, 3 (1970), 12-29; R. Theobald, "Seventh-day Adventists and the Millennium," A Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain, 7 (1974), 111-131.

91. G. Schwartz, Sect Ideologies and Social Status (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 180-210.

92. B. R. Wilson, Sects and Society (London: Heinemann, 1961), 5.

93. Schwartz, Ideologies, 216-223.

94. See B. R. Wilson, Religious Sects (New York/Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1970), 38.

95. J. Bates, The Autobiography of Joseph Bates (Steam Press of the SDA Pub. Assn., 1868), 291f.

96. L. Debarge, "Utopie et Chiliasme," Melanges de Science Religieuse, 37 (1980), 102.

97. A few examples make the point:

"It is from their peculiar tenets concerning the atonement that this sect is named Adventists [sic]. Their deviation is in reference to the second coming or advent of our Lord." J. K. van Baalen, The Chaos of Cults, 7th. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 168.

"Seventh-day Adventists, though they place much stress upon their supposed complete understanding of the [Second Advent] teaching; and while, as a movement, they are among the most aggressive of its rapidly-multiplying latter-day heralds, are themselves in complete darkness with regard to much that is of the greatest consequence."

"The doctrine of the return of the Lord has ever constituted one of Adventism's principal 'truths.' And yet, as clear as is this teaching as found in the Bible, the interpretation placed upon it by the erstwhile followers of Miller has ever been, just as was his interpretation, contrary to the Word of God. Both theories found their source in the faulty judgment of misguided men..." E. B. Jones, The Soon Coming of Christ (Minneapolis, Minn.: by the author, n.d.), 9, 6.

"Adventism is characterised by delusion. It was born of it, reared in it and has been nourished by it. We have seen ... that it was born of the general delusion that Christ would return by the 1840's." N. F. Douty, Another Look at Seventh-Day Adventists (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1962), 182.

98. Douty, Adventism, 130, 135, quoting Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine (Washington: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1957), 207.

99. T. Nelson in his introduction to D. M. Canright, Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced (New York etc.: F. H. Revell, 1889), 22.

100. B. Herndon, The Seventh Day (New York/Toronto/London: McGraw-Hill, 1960), 267.

101. Rubencamp, "Eschatology" Ph.D thesis, 78-79.

102. D. Mitchell, Seventh Day Adventists (New York etc.: Vantage Press, 1958), 126.



SECTION FIVE

ASPECTS OF THE PAROUSIA BELIEF IN MODERN THEOLOGY

0 Introduction

Much has been written on the "End-things" since Weiss and Schweitzer pointed out the importance of eschatology [1] in the gospel kerygma. Indeed it would seem that eschatology has been one of the major contemporary emphases, resulting in a wide discussion of the End, time, eternity, the future, objectives and so on. Eschatological concepts are frequently used as points of departure in a number of modern theologies. [2]. Hope too plays an important functional role, not only in the Theologies of Hope but also in other systems. [3]. Yet when the parousia is specifically identified within an eschatological framework, or when hope is limited to the parousia hope, then there is relatively little discussion. Thus this analysis of the parousia belief within contemporary theologies cannot avoid being rather unsatisfactory insofar as there has not been much written on this aspect of eschatology and hope.

Since hope as expressed in the specific formulation of the parousia is the main concern of this thesis, the following discussion occupies itself with this point, and not with an extensive review of the various interpretations of Christian eschatology. [4]. The review begins with Schweitzer.

# 1 The Parousia Belief in Modern Theology: A Review

## 1.1 Schweitzer (Werner, Buri)

In the "consequent eschatology" of Schweitzer there is hardly room for a future parousia of Christ. The parousia hope as expressed by Jesus is considered a rather misguided expectation that was coupled with his mistaken belief that the Kingdom of God was about to be ushered in. The failure of both predictions is supposed to have caused Jesus to attempt to force the coming of the future kingdom through his death on the cross. The direction of the church from then on is considered to be one of "de-eschatologization," that is, the removal of future hopes and their replacement by present ethical motivations. Schweitzer writes of Christ: "Instead of bringing in the eschatological conditions, He destroyed them. The wheel rolls onward, and the mangled body of the one immeasurably great Man, who was strong enough to think of Himself as the spiritual ruler of mankind and to bend history to His purpose, is hanging upon it still." [5].

Jesus is therefore tragic, misguided, mistaken. The future parousia of the Son of God can hardly be incorporated into such a picture, and becomes part of Jesus' misconceived ideas about the things to come. The parousia expectation becomes in Schweitzer's hands the trigger for the disastrous denouement, the death of the man Jesus. [6]. The concept of the delay and its consequences both for

Christ and the Church is relevant here and will be of interest later in this section.

Schweitzer's views have had an immense impact in the area of eschatological understanding of the New Testament. Of those who have accepted some of Schweitzer's thesis, Werner and Buri have become two of the more prominent exponents. [7]. Utilizing the concept of the delayed parousia as a key to understanding, a full-fledged interpretation of Christian doctrine has been developed. For both Werner and Buri, the parousia remains a mistaken hope, to which can be added the misunderstandings and adjustments of the subsequent Christian community. [8]. Even the term "delay" has become rather inappropriate since the parousia is now no longer expected.

In this interpretation the parousia hope has little importance. It is primarily associated with a mistaken expectation, and consequently cannot be seen of any present relevance, nor can the parousia have any future realization. The parousia belief may have been laudable, but it was wrong.

## 1.2 Dodd (Glasson, Robinson)

Reacting strongly to Schweitzer's theory of a future (though mistaken) eschatology, C. H. Dodd proposed an eschatology emphatically located in the present -- "realized eschatology." Making much of the phrase "the Kingdom of God has come," Dodd contended that in the

person and work of Christ the predicted Kingdom of God had become a present reality. "The eschaton has moved from the future to the present, from the sphere of expectation into that of realized experience." "The eschaton, the divinely ordained climax of history, is here." [9].

Those parts of the New Testament that specifically refer to a future parousia are, in Dodd's view, re-interpretations of Jesus' announcement of the present rule of God, later additions and editorial changes of the early Christian community that sought to provide a concrete hope for the future by a return to apocalypticism. According to Dodd the parousia hope distorts and eventually runs counter to the great spiritual message that in Christ the Kingdom had definitively come. [10]. Nolan comments in reference to this conclusion, (also shared by Robinson), "the Spirit and grace at work here and now have edged out any future parousia or coming of Christ in glory." [11]. Though there may be some "winding up" of history, Dodd concludes that "it is unlikely that any such intervention [by God] will be at all spectacular." As to his understanding of the parousia itself, he writes, "This God meets us at the frontier, where the life of our race reaches its term: God in Christ." "Unlike His first coming, it [the final coming of the Son of Man] is not an event in history. It is the point at which all history is taken up into the larger whole of God's eternal purpose." [12].

Both T. F. Glasson and J. A. T. Robinson have been much influenced by Dodd's realized eschatology and have amassed considerable exegetical material to demonstrate their central point: that in the coming and presence of Jesus, the End was fulfilled. Jesus, says Glasson, "did not expect a literal descent from the sky in glory, either in the near future or later." [13]. Robinson's conclusion regarding the parousia promise is: "That the heart of the Christian hope was now, once more, to 'wait for God's Son from heaven', for a second and final coming which would complete and crown the first, is a belief for which we have found no firm foundation in the words of Jesus 'himself.'" The central thesis is that "There is but one coming begun at Christmas, perfected on the Cross, and continuing till all are included in it." [14].

The parousia becomes identical with the First Advent -- there is "but one coming." This coming is translated into an eternal coming: "He is not only the One who has come; He is always the coming One. He came back to His own at Easter; He came in a new and more intimate way at Pentecost. He came in the early triumphs of the Gospel, and He still comes in the judgements and revivals of history. He comes into the hearts of those who receive Him, and to the dying bed of His people." [15].

The parousia illustrates "what must happen, and is happening already, whenever the Christ comes in love and comes in power, whenever are to be traced the signs of His presence, whenever to be seen the marks of His Cross. Judgment Day is a dramatized, idealized

picture of every day." [16].

In contrast then to Schweitzer who maintained the parousia hope to be a mistake of Jesus, Dodd and those who follow his realized eschatology hold that Jesus never promised to return in a glorious event at the end of time. On the contrary, this expectation was read back into the words of Jesus by the early Church to produce an unfounded hope very much related to Jewish apocalypticism.

If the parousia concept in such a scheme means anything at all, it is simply the ongoing spiritual relationship to God, and a symbol of the "coming" of Christ at conversion, meditation, baptism, and death. "Christ comes to us in our immediate situation." [17]. Any future component is ruled out as a later accretion to the announcement by Jesus of the present Kingdom.

### 1.3 Barth

Barth acknowledges the significant place of eschatology in theological interpretation. "If Christianity be not altogether through-going eschatology, there remains in it no relationship whatsoever with Christ." [18]. Yet his concept of eschatology appears somewhat removed from that of early Christianity: rather than being concerned with future events, eschatology for Barth is an expression of the eternally-present in which God is forever coming to meet man. Such existential concepts reflect a vertical relationship rather than

a horizontal one; a picture in which God's "eschatological" Kingdom stands above man and his time, rather than ahead in the future. "Barth's thought at this <sup>[early]</sup> period is sometimes characterized as 'timeless' eschatology which sees the parousia as nothing but a timeless symbol of the endless seriousness of eternity in every existential situation." [19].

Barth himself describes this situation in dramatic terms:

Standing on the boundary of time, men are confronted by the overhanging, precipitous wall of God, by which all time and everything that is in time are dissolved. There it is that they await the Last Hour, the Parousia of Jesus Christ....

Will there never be an end of all our ceaseless talk about the delay of the Parousia? How can the coming of that which doth not enter in ever be delayed? The End of which the New Testament speaks is no temporal event." [20].

In all of this the parousia hope is reduced, becoming a picture of the divine-human moment, a "timeless symbol." Although the present aspect of the parousia hope should not be disregarded, surely its reality and ultimate meaning lie in the future. While being proleptically present to some degree, if the real occurrence of the parousia in the future is denied, then there can be no reaction to it in the present.



Barth later modified his strict insistence on the completely present aspects of eschatology to include some progression towards an "End." [21]. However, the parousia hope still receives little mention, and the present outweighs the future.

#### 1.4 Bultmann

Bultmann's emphasis on the eschatological "now," coupled with an insistent call to de-mythologise the New Testament message means that for Bultmann the hope of a future parousia must be dismissed: "We can no longer look for the return of the Son of Man on the clouds of heaven or hope that the faithful will meet him in the air (1 Thess. 4:15f)." [22]. The concept of a future glorious coming of the Son of Man is to be understood as reflecting the world-view in which it was formulated, an apocalyptic phrasing of hope in terms of Christ's parousia. Since this is part of ancient thought ("mythology"), it is, according to Bultmann, out of line with contemporary understanding and must be re-interpreted.

For Bultmann the parousia hope becomes just an expression of an existential relationship to God, a symbol of the moment of decision: being "open to God's future which is really imminent for every one of us," since "in every moment slumbers the possibility of being the eschatological moment." [23]. The parousia is part of the existential "now," the decision point in relating to God. In this there is little

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capacity for hope since outside of that "moment" there can be nothing to hope for. [24]. Indeed Bultmann himself remarks that "the Christian hope knows that it hopes but it does not know what it hopes for." [25]. If it is true that "Hope without an object cannot live," [26], then there is no hope for hope. Faith remains, but it is exclusively moulded by the existential present. [27]. Such a radical re-interpretation makes the parousia belief an expression of one's "openness to God," and has no real future component. While Bultmann does provide an internally-consistent scheme, the parousia does not play any significant part and is primarily an ancient concept that has to be re-expressed in more acceptable terms. [28].

#### 1.5 "Evolutionary" Systems -- Process, Teilhard de Chardin, Paul Tillich

In the foregoing analysis, "traditional" Christian eschatology is still asserted, even though it may require considerable re-interpretation. Other theologies also relate to the future, yet they hardly can be said to emphasize "traditional" eschatological constructs. These formulations have been termed for convenience "evolutionary systems," primarily because they share an underlying concept of ongoing change and process, a developmental philosophy.

Process thought is much involved with a perception of the future since the prime motif here is that of becoming, a dynamic process of change that is in opposition to the static understanding of being. In such a system previous eschatological concepts are somewhat

inapplicable and alternative formulations of future expectations are developed. [29].

Above all, the concern is with the whole and the universal rather than with the specific and individual. [30]. The reconciliation of man, God and cosmos is thus a very dominant theme within the writings of Process theologians. In a paper that is particularly relevant ("The Meaning of Christian Hope"), Schubert Ogden attempts a complete re-analysis of Christian hope and its implications. [31]. He admits that "if we ask of the New Testament what it is that Christians hope for, the answer at first glance appears clear enough. Christians hope for 'the day of the Lord Jesus Christ,' that is, for the 'coming' or appearance of Christ..." However, he continues, "there can be no question that these terms in which Christian hope is classically attested are thoroughly mythological and must be interpreted accordingly," which he does. Denying both resurrection and individual immortality, he defines the Christian hope as "hope in God's love as the ultimate significance both of the world and mankind" and that the "final destiny" of Christians "is to be embraced everlastingly by God's love for them" -- the redeemed are no more, "Save in that their lives are everlastingly loved by God." [32]. It is clear that such a position leaves no place for the parousia event, or hope for it. As such, very little relationship to the parousia hope can be detected, aside from the negative relation of dismissal and insignificance. One point is of some interest, however. In contrast to many of the previous systems, process thought does emphasize the dynamic and active nature of God. For some theologians, including those of a more "conservative" school, the parousia is the final End, the termination

of events, the Last Act in the divine drama. Yet the parousia must be seen as part of a continuing process -- indeed the End is also the beginning ushering in the new heaven and the new earth. The parousia is not the onset of an eternity of nothingness, a point that is well to be remembered.

The evolutionary thought of Teilhard de Chardin is also much directed toward the future. His concept of the parousia is developed particularly in the epilogue to Le Milieu Divin, entitled, "In Expectation of the Parousia." [33]. In Teilhard's eyes, "the universe is being transformed and is maturing all around us," [34] an evolutionary process which is moving towards what he terms the Omega point, the point of unification and consummation. Using very dramatic imagery, he describes this critical point:

One day, the Gospel tells us, the tension gradually accumulating between humanity and God will touch the limits prescribed by the possibilities of the world. And then will come the end. Then the presence of Christ, which has been silently accruing in things, will suddenly be revealed -- like a flash of light from pole to pole.... Such will be the consummation of the divine milieu.

"We must prepare and work for this end," Teilhard continues. But ultimately, "to desire the Parousia, all we have to do is to let the very heart of the earth, as we christianise it, beat within us." [35].

Following this hypothesis, an extensive re-structuring of traditional formulations of the parousia hope is necessary. While Teilhard's work contains some useful insights, [36] there are many points of disagreement with the biblical account of hope. In particular, his apparent universalism that involves man becoming some kind of "trans-human," [37] combined with his progressive evolutionary approach and the ambiguous place afforded human activity and response, all raise many problems as to how they may be reconciled to the New Testament record of the Christian hope.

As Thiselton points out, the parousia appears rather extraneous to this scheme, "for it would not be the parousia that would fully establish the reign of Christ, but the immanent processes of God at work in the world." [38]. The parousia is certainly not the initiator of the End, merely concomitant with it. This obviously detracts from the impact and effectiveness of the parousia belief.

Similar criticisms can be levelled at Paul Tillich and his theological system. Here the parousia plays no real part since it is reduced to the level of pure symbolism. While Tillich admits that there is to be some end, some consummation to the historical process, there is really no place in his scheme for the intrusive parousia. As primarily a "catastrophic" event, the parousia runs counter to such concepts of evolution and progression, and can be maintained only as a picture of the moment of decision. Not being something that will ever really happen, it is just "the symbolic expression of the relation of

the temporal to the eternal," "an expression of our standing in every moment in face of the eternal." [39].

In his analysis of Tillich's relationship to the parousia hope, Thiselton concludes that: "Tillich has almost no place for the parousia, even as a symbol." [40]. While there is much regarding the completion and resolution of man, the fulfilment of the "positive aspects" of existence, and the exciting possibilities of a continued life (however defined) that seem to be among the more useful concepts of a process-type theory, the charge of ignoring the basic "blessed hope" remains valid. The parousia hope continues to be unused and unexplored.

#### 1.6 Cullmann, Kuemmel

In contrast to many of the foregoing analyses, the intrinsic validity of the parousia hope is accepted by Cullmann and Kuemmel. In an extensive article, Cullmann documents the reasons for his belief in the return of Christ, and also vigorously defends the parousia as the hope of the New Testament. [41]. In accordance with his salvation history scheme, Cullmann takes Creation to be the starting point and the parousia the terminator of the "time line." The mid-point is reached in Christ's life, death and resurrection, the verifier of both past and future: "The future promise and the past fulfilment depend on each other," and "In the central event of Christ the Incarnate One, an event that constitutes the mid-point of that [time] line, not only is

all that goes before fulfilled but also all that is future is decided." [42].

However much the future may remain in tension with the past and present "achievement" of Christ, [43] the future must be the parousia since this is the only valid conclusion to salvation history -- consummation. [44].

For Cullmann the parousia is a genuinely future event that forms part of God's dealings with man, an occurrence that possesses a real, a "concrete" sense. As various commentators have observed, Cullmann's analysis is basically a re-exposition of the traditional New Testament view of the future. Certainly in Cullmann's scheme, the parousia is essential. [45].

Problems remain, even so. While the parousia concept is affirmed as a real future event, Cullmann nowhere expounds on this in terms of an analysis of its purpose, meaning, and consequences. It may be thought that he adopts the New Testament scheme in toto, but this is not so. Travis asks of Cullmann, "How does he think the New Testament writers envisaged the parousia? How does he envisage it? These are questions which he seems content not to ask. But do they not have to be asked?" [46].

Surely the whole concept of the parousia must be investigated and examined. Its implications are vast, and the direction that they take results primarily from an understanding of the nature and purpose of the event. Cullmann spends little time developing such themes, even

in the article previously mentioned that deals particularly with the return of Christ. [47].

Other reservations may also be entertained over the question of the "delay" of the parousia. Cullmann accepts the argument (going back to Schweitzer) that Christ and those who followed him expected a very soon coming, a proximate parousia, although there might be a short interim period. That this proved to be a mistaken hope is seemingly unimportant to Cullmann: "Certainly Jesus did not reckon on the period of waiting lasting more than a few decades: but this does not affect the essence of the hope of the gospel." [48]. Such a contention is open to dispute since it raises the question of the accuracy and trustworthiness of the parousia belief. Though Cullmann may be right to condemn the "time-setting" of both sectarians and theologians, if as he himself asserts, "eschatology is, in fact, an absolutely chronological concept," [49] then more attention must be given to the implications of such a long extension in the "waiting time." [50].

Kuempel also accepts that Jesus expected an imminent coming, but explains it as being merely a contemporary way of expressing the definite and certain nature of the parousia. [51]. Kuempel's understanding of the parousia is somewhat in doubt, since he does not define his understanding of the term, nor does he elaborate on its significance. Kuempel seems content to leave it wholly in the unplanned future, the only proviso is that its future fulfilment must be affirmed. [52]. Other queries might also be raised over such assertions as: "Jesus accepted the conceptions of late Jewish



apocalyptic," "Jesus ... claimed to replace the Old Testament revelation by the perfect revelation," and "Jesus saw the Kingdom of God to be present before the parousia, which he thought to be imminent, only in his own person and his works; he knew no other realization of the eschatological consummation," [53] and so on.

To sum up: although Cullmann and Kuemmel (and others of similar viewpoints) attempt to invest the parousia with real meaning, doubt still surrounds the understanding and implications of this return of Christ. The almost dramatic non-use of the parousia hope in their theological formulations (even though they are much concerned with time and the future) creates considerable concern. Indeed a cynic might ask what is the parousia in such a system other than the necessary last act of the drama, the required terminus of history? Is it only there because some end of the salvation-history time line is necessary? Obviously there is more than this, but such concepts need to be more fully developed.

## 2 Hope Theology and the Theology of Hope

Hope is, as was mentioned at the beginning of this section, a very prominent contemporary theme. For various reasons, hope increasingly occupies the thoughts of many writers and has been the subject of a number of theological studies. This has been especially true since the meetings of the WCC in Evanston in 1954 which took as their theme "Christ -- the Hope of the World," a theme that has generated considerable interest in the subject of Christian hope. Aside from the actual documents presented to and formulated at those meetings, a number of theologians were stimulated to articulate their understanding of Christian hope. [54].

Emil Brunner responded to the theme with his book, Eternal Hope, in which he develops various hope-related concepts of which the section "The Future Advent of Jesus Christ as the Meaning of History" is of special interest here. In his analysis of this future coming of Christ he concludes:

From all these considerations it is clear that this thought of the future coming is anything but a piece of mythology which can be dispensed with. Whatever the form of that event may be, the whole point lies in the fact that it will happen. To try to boggle at it means to try to boggle at the foundation of faith; to smash the corner-stone by which all coheres and apart from which all falls to pieces. Faith in Jesus Christ without the expectation of His

Parousia is a voucher that is never redeemed, a promise that is not seriously meant. A Christian faith without expectation of the Parousia is like a ladder which leads nowhere but ends in the void. What Paul says of the resurrection applies exactly to the Parousia: "If Christ be not risen" -- if there is to be no future consummation -- "then your faith is vain and you are yet in your sins." [55].

Brunner appears to be giving a clear and impressive witness to the reality of a future parousia and the essential need to retain this hope. However, he continues: "But if we turn to the question in what form the event of the Parousia will take place, then we come upon pronouncements of the New Testament which are clearly mythical, in the sense that they are in fact unacceptable to us who have no longer the world-picture of the ancients and the apostles." [56].

For Brunner, as for so many others, the parousia becomes an idea to be "re-interpreted," its content changed, its meaning altered. Although Brunner is one of the few theologians to actively emphasize the concept of the parousia, he also is very concerned to avoid the "mythical," and this appears to involve the concept of a real and literal coming.

Paul Minear, writing on "The Time of Hope in the New Testament," refers to the considerable interest generated in the concept of hope by the Evanston theme. Yet even though Minear is very interested in both the biblical expressions and the present-day implications of

Christian hope, he has very little to say about the parousia. [57]. So too the opening addresses to the Evanston Assembly. Robert Calhoun makes no mention of a future coming whatsoever, while Edmund Schlink (though identifying an "end of the world") appears reluctant to envisage a literal future coming of Christ. He speaks of Christ "coming again into the world as its judge and as its redeemer" and that "then shall the world pass away and then shall the new creation appear as if emerging from a hiding place." [58]. This suggests some sort of "secret" coming and the achievement of the kingdom by the immanent working of God in the present, hardly the dramatic, all-embracing entrance of the Son of Man in power and glory that is so much a part of the New Testament conception.

Analysing hope while disregarding the parousia is a common feature of recent theological writing. Even in such titles as "Man's Future on Earth and Beyond -- The Christian Hope Today," "The Christian Hope for Man," "Hope," "The Biblical Hope," "Christ Today: Hope for the Future," no mention is made of the Second Coming. [59]. One such article, "The Christian Hope and the Modern World," although concerned with New Testament expectations, concluded that "Since God made us human beings, the good life can be none other than the enjoyment of those palpable and earthly goods which make for a decent life. The eschata we hope for can be none other than the creature's knowledge of God and his good in a common life under God." [60]. This type of quasi-hedonistic outlook is linked with a socio-political programme that has its primary base in humanism. The parousia hope -- both in its present and in its future consequences -- is annulled.

The retention of hope yet the dismissal of the parousia hope also characterizes the thought of John Macquarrie, as set out in his Christian Hope. He sees hope as an absolutely indispensable ingredient in religious life, but cannot admit to the validity of the parousia expectation, of which he says, "Talk of Christ's second coming is so laden<sup>with</sup>/mythological connotations that perhaps we should begin by stripping some of these away," [61] which he proceeds to do. Yet he does not end up with an absolutely present eschatology; hope in the future is to be maintained. His concept of the Christian's objective of hope is rather ill-defined, but centres round a belief in God caring for his creation and some form of absorption into himself. Macquarrie sees the parousia hope as a mistake (very much in the tradition of the British school following Dodd -- Glasson and Robinson et. al. [62].) "So it may have been a misunderstanding of the words of Jesus or a mistaken application of them that first led to the expectation of his return." [63].

Whatever the reason, it seems there is little place in Christian hope for the parousia hope per se. Most appear to envisage some alternative form of hope, and to allow the parousia hope to lapse.

Some have directly denied the parousia hope: "The expectation of a last day, when Jesus the Lord will return, must be abandoned." "The Kingdom of God does not come in one dramatic event sometime in the future." "It is impossible ever to revive the belief that the Lord would in literal truth arrive to judgment upon the clouds of heaven." [64].

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In contrast to such rather negative reactions to the parousia hope, some theologians express a much more positive attitude. Bouman and Franzman, both writing in the context of the WCC meetings, [65], both strongly affirm the necessity of such a hope, and illustrate its beneficial results. Bouman identifies the "final phase of the Christian's hoped-for goal" and the "return of Christ in glory," and concludes that this goal "is overwhelmingly eschatological, otherworldly, winged, and soaring far above the capacity of the most inspired poet." [66].

Yet all this has left out one very significant emphasis on hope: the modern expression of a "Theology of Hope." Having recognized various aspects of hope in contemporary theology, a study of the notion of the parousia hope in the writings of certain "Theologians of Hope" is now imperative. [67].

## 2.1 Juergen Moltmann

The "Theology of Hope" has its main foundation in Moltmann's book of the same name, subtitled "On the Ground and Implications of a Christian Eschatology." [68]. Moltmann utilizes some of the neo-Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch's concepts of hope and applies them to the Christian tradition and to the understanding of God.

He is highly critical of the lack of attention afforded eschatological concepts by the Christian church: "These teachings about the end led a peculiarly barren existence at the end of Christian dogmatics. They were like a loosely attached appendix that wandered off into obscure irrelevancies." [69].

Moltmann's strongly asserted position is that "From first to last and not merely in the epilogue, Christianity is eschatology, is hope, forward looking and forward moving, and therefore also revolutionizing and transforming the present." [70].

This is the foundation thesis of the Theology of Hope. Hope is absolutely essential to the Christian and this hope is to be the force to radically change present existence -- both in the individual and in society: "Hope's statements of promise anticipate the future," so that "the Christian life ... is engaged in an attack upon the world." [71].

Moltmann is certainly quite justified in emphasising God's future and the implications of that future in the present. As he remarks, "There is therefore only one real problem in Christian theology ...: the problem of the future." In the past, very little attention has been given to the future component of God and his activity. Moltmann illustrates his concept of a "coming God" by reference to the New Testament description of the God who is, was, and is to come (rather than "will be"). "Our hope," he says, "is hope in the coming of the faithfulness of God ... it expects the promised future from the

coming of God himself and not apart from him." [72].

However, when Moltmann is asked what exactly this coming of God is, he becomes rather vague and inconclusive. Even while discussing the future of Christ [73] in the Theology of Hope, he makes no mention of his understanding of the parousia hope. Indeed for Moltmann, "Christian hope is resurrection hope," [74], not just as the basis for hope but the content and the objective also. In this way, his concept of hope becomes rather backward-looking, a historical hope that has both its beginning and its end within the process of the world. Above all, the goal of hope as seen by Moltmann is more centred in a socio-political transformation of the present world situation than in a literal coming of Christ to change, restore and renew the world. In Moltmann's view the new heaven and the new earth; God wiping away all tears; ending death, sorrow, and crying, are all, even the resurrection body, "representations and pictures." [75].

Such an understanding suggests doubts as to the validity and reality of the God who comes. [76]. It cannot be denied that Moltmann (in one place at least) does appear to affirm a traditional parousia hope. In his Experiences of God, a more personal account of his belief and hope than some of his more scholarly writings, he remarks: [77]

Christ is our hope because Christ is our future. That means that we are waiting and longing for his second coming, praying, "Come, Lord Jesus, come to the world, come to us." Just as the resurrection faith is hope's foundation, so



Christ's second coming defines hope's horizon. Without the expectation of Christ's second coming there is no Christian hope; for without it hope is not putting its trust in a radical alternative to this world's present condition.

But when questions are raised, such as "What exactly is Moltmann's conception of the Second Coming?" or "Is it a literal occurrence, a real event?" the answers are at the very least, ambiguous. For example he continues the above exposition on the future of Christ by remarking that "we can expect nothing less, and nothing other, of his [Christ's] future than the fulfilment of justification and a kingdom of freedom which will also include the whole "groaning creation." [78]. The keynote in Moltmann's future is evidently not the coming in glory of the Son of Man. [79]. Similarly, in the context of the delayed parousia, his conclusion is: "The only answer is a real transformation and new creation of the reality of evil and death ...." [80].

Since Moltmann's references to the parousia are very much open to question, and since he never (apparently) affirms a belief in a life after death, [81], the central problem is how in fact does God come? -- what is the meaning of such a statement? [82]. Though such statements as "the appearances of the risen Lord were recognized as the promise and anticipation of a really outstanding future" are incontestable, what is this "really outstanding future?" [83].

The main consequence of this Hope theology is seen in the final chapter of Moltmann's Theology of Hope entitled the "Exodus Church." He states categorically: "The Christian Church has not to serve mankind in order that this world may remain what it is, or may be preserved in the state in which it is, but in order that it may transform itself and become what it is promised to be." [84]. While not belittling the necessity of Christian involvement in the world, it seems that Moltmann has a tendency to make this activity into the ultimate goal of the church.

Hope may therefore<sup>be</sup> transformed into a type of pseudo-political ideology of change and revolution. "The Christian certainty of hope becomes practical in the transformation of the present. In the expectation of divine transformation we transform ourselves and the conditions around us into the likeness of the new creation." "We are compelled to take responsibility for man's future in a revolutionary way." [85]. Whatever God's part in all this is, it does not appear that the parousia has much significance. Only in the immanent divine working is the eschaton (however that is defined) to be achieved. [86]. Even violent revolution may be justified since "any means may be appropriate," and "the use of revolutionary violence must be justified by the human goals of the revolution and the existing power structures unmasked in their inhumanity as "naked violence." [87].

So the parousia, even in Moltmann's Theology of Hope, is a rather redundant concept. Hope alone is important, although a hope that has little specific content aside from the transformation of the present world into a better society. When Moltmann says "The anticipation of the coming God through Jesus and in Jesus is comprehended in the symbol of the resurrection of Jesus -- 'ahead of us,'" [88] one is entitled to ask whether this really means anything. Nowhere does Moltmann define what he means by "resurrection," and if it is a symbol, does it have any historical or conceptual validity? [89]. And if there is no "real" future resurrection of those in Jesus, what is the purpose of his resurrection -- Christ, the firstfruits of the dead? And so, what is there to anticipate? Hope is lost without an objective in which to hope. Hope itself becomes purely symbolic, a designate that attempts to keep the future positive and open.

## 2.2 Carl Braaten

Carl Braaten has developed more particularly the revolutionary concepts of hope. His purpose as set out in The Future of God is to "explore the revolutionary potential of the Christian idea of the future." [90]. Moltmann's influence is clearly apparent: note especially such attitudes as "We look to the future for the source of power to change things as they are," and "The past and present are illuminated by the light that dawns in the morning of God's future." [91]. He is more concerned however, to evaluate and expand the

present implications of the theology of hope: "Talk about changing the world implies that we assume responsibility for the future. Revolutionary change is the responsibility of eschatological hope." [92].

For Braaten the hope for an "open future" becomes the slogan of active revolution. Christian revolution is to be the response of hope since "Christians who are conscious of their eschatological calling will pursue a politics of hope to keep the fires of criticism hot until the messianic kingdom comes in final judgment and in all its glory." [93]. A highly-politicised engineering of the future is obviously Braaten's objective of hope, and while there is some concept of end and finality, it is the kingdom that comes in the place of Christ -- the parousia of Jesus in all his glory has been transformed into a socio-political kingdom of human well-being. Such revolutionary ideology places much of the responsibility for its fulfilment in the hands of men: "The Christian revolutionary is pulled forward by the vision of the coming kingdom of God .... The Christian believes that a qualitatively different future can be created." [94].

While not attempting to make a strict identity, it is clear that rather similar revolutionary arguments have been used in the past to justify other agencies for violent political change: the Taborites and their social and military activity; the Anabaptists and their rule at Muenster; and the actions of the rebel German peasants under Thomas Muenzer being just a few examples. Indeed Braaten refers specifically to Muenzer, who "despaired of reforming the old church structures. Nothing less than a new form of the church is needed." [95].

Muenzer's call for a "revolution of society" is echoed by Braaten who concludes, "Christians are to form a peace corps of God's kingdom in the world, an army of salvation signaling 'the way' to a future in which violence will be no more and 'there shall be an end to death, and to mourning and crying and pain.' That is the final goal of the revolutionary existence of Christians in the world." [96]. How much Braaten agrees with the use of physical violence in all this is not clear. Whether he does or not hardly affects the conclusion that the initiative of hope and change appears to come from man, not God.

Braaten's contribution to an understanding of the parousia is minimal since firstly he does not even mention it, and secondly such an event lies in direct contradiction to his man-centred revolutionary hope. The parousia is indeed a revolutionary event, but hardly in the same sense as used by Braaten.

### 2.3 Wolfhart Pannenberg

Wolfhart Pannenberg has provided the most extensive basis for a theology of hope, a wide-ranging re-evaluation of the implications of God's future. His primary thesis is that "God in his very being is the future of the world." [97]. Future is not just one of God's spheres of activity, it is understood as his primary locus. Pannenberg emphasizes eschatology very much as Moltmann does: "Eschatology is no longer a marginal problem of theology ... but the basis upon which everything in Christian tradition is built." [98].

The future is the key, above all the future that is God: "In every present we confront the infinite future, and in welcoming the particular finite events which spring from that future, we anticipate the coming of God," [99] a central/<sup>tenet</sup>of the theology of hope that one analyst has described as "its intensively eschatological ontology of not-yet-being!" [100].

This thesis has major implications for the theory and practice of Christian hope. Since God acts out of the future on the present (and on the past that was once present), then all understanding is only partial and temporary: "The essence of a man, of a situation, or even of the world in general is not yet to be perceived from what is now visible. Only the future will decide it. It is still to be shown what will become of man and of the world's situation in the future." [101].

The end is the determinant of all that precedes it, says Pannenberg. "Only at the eschaton will what is created out of God's eternity be consummated in the accomplishment of its own temporal beginnings." [102]. Pannenberg makes Jesus' resurrection the basic premise, the starting-point of an understanding of Christ and of theology. Yet even over that divine event the future holds its uncertain hand: "Only the eschaton will ultimately disclose what really happened in Jesus' resurrection from the dead." [103]. But if the future is so decisive and so open, can hope have a definite and objective content? Can hope, which must be based to some degree on the past and present, still be hope if all is temporary and subject to change with the oncoming future? [104]. And so what ultimately is

this eschaton of which Pannenberg speaks? This is what Galloway calls "the deepest problem in Pannenberg's theology." He continues, "How are we to understand this concept of the eschatological end-time of God's final judgment and the manifestation of his glory?" [105]. Pannenberg provides no real answer; on the contrary he writes of the "completely unknown destiny expected for the dead." [106]. The same criticism applied to Moltmann is also relevant here -- what does Pannenberg understand by "resurrection?" Nowhere is this made clear, and the term lies at the heart of Pannenberg's theology. [107]. If Christ's resurrection is proleptic, the entrance of the eschaton "before its time," if "in the fate of Jesus Christ the end is not only seen ahead of time, but is experienced by means of foretaste," [108] then what is the final conclusion? What is the fulfilment?

Under the heading of "The God of Hope," Pannenberg writes: "The unity of the promising God with his promise itself is consummated in the fulfilment of what was promised; for the fulfilment brings about the glorification of man and of the world, and thus their participation in the glory of God." [109]. Yet there is no answer to questions of "How?" and "What is the process or the event of fulfilment?" or even "What was promised?" Pannenberg comes back full circle and replies that "The salvation that God promises is himself," [110] a rather cryptic statement, which although in complete harmony with his assertion that God is future and future is God, [111] does not provide any clarification of Pannenberg's own expectations for the future.

In relation to the actual parousia and its implications, Pannenberg's scheme of God as being future means that even the future parousia cannot be the coming-to-presence that the parousia means. According to Pannenberg "Only in the future of his Kingdom come will the statement 'God exists' prove to be definitely true." [112]. But can the Kingdom come, arrive, in a definitive sense if God is still to be "future?" There really can be no possibility of fulfilment since completion, consummation, achievement, arrival, and all the other concepts allied to the parousia event, cannot occur. If God is "the ultimate future" [113] then, even though we can respond to him in the present we can never "be" with him, and the coming of God to man in the parousia can never definitively take place.

So even though "the future wills to become present, it tends toward its arrival in a permanent present," [114] the future never can become present (without totally destroying all semantics), and however much the future does tend to become present, the probability tends to zero as the two approach each other. [115]. Above all, the future End remains always future since no End (with any real meaning) can become present if the personality of that End [Christ] lies "out of the course of time, out of the power of God's eternity." [116]. Certainly there is no room for an elucidation of the meaning and implications of the parousia hope. God is the future, the future remains open -- no definition or delimitation can be given to any expectation without limiting the future. We hope, and we may have a basis without limiting the future. Hope may remain, and the basis for hope may lie in Christ. But the "how" of this hope remains diffuse



and inexplicable. [117].

### · 3 Conservative Interpretations of the Parousia Belief

In the preceding analyses the parousia belief has not been a major emphasis, and consequently there has been little discussion of the impact and implications of the belief. In the discussion that follows, the parousia hope receives greater attention, and can therefore be discussed in more detail. [118]. While the terms "conventional" or "traditional" have unfortunate overtones they are perhaps useful in characterizing this type of interpretation that takes the parousia promise more literally as a valid expression of the Christian hope.

#### 3.1 G. C. Berkouwer

Berkouwer is one of the few leading modern theologians who deals specifically with the parousia doctrine in some detail. Through his book The Return of Christ he gives the parousia belief a prominence in his dogmatics that very few others have emulated. Berkouwer's conviction is: "On the basis of the gospel one can say that the expression 'the return of Christ' denotes the central theme of the expectation of salvation .... Throughout the New Testament the parousia is referred to as a coming in glory. It is an indubitable and manifest coming." [119].

Certainly he is prepared to make a very positive affirmation of the parousia hope and also its implications for theology and for Christian life. While The Return of Christ covers other aspects such as the Millennium, the role of Israel, and the Antichrist, it is particularly significant in that the Second Advent is discussed under the title of "The Reality of the Parousia," [120], a key phrase in Berkouwer's understanding of this event. In this chapter he faces some of the questions that result from a belief in a real parousia, in particular the question of presence and absence of the Lord. (If Christ is always present with us, why does he need to come again in order to be present? And if he will come again at some future date, how can we understand his other promise of present aid and presence?) [121]. The chief motif used by Berkouwer is one of "revelation," of "unveiling," the means by which God's plans, purposes and intentions are fully revealed. This, he says, is the reason for the parousia's importance: "In the parousia everything will be made known: the meaning, depth, richness, and above all the reality of life in Him who is the Resurrection and the Life." [122].

The parousia is in Berkouwer's eyes the means of explaining and of understanding God: "The return of Christ will make it clear what His prior coming in the flesh and His departure really meant." [123]. In fact the parousia is the arrival of a totally different scheme, something wholly other: "The unveiling of the parousia coincides with a new reality. The coming of this new reality is what the parousia is all about." [124].

The Second Advent is both similar to and different from the First. The parousia is firstly the arrival of the Jesus who departed: "The reason for the church's speaking of the return or second coming of Christ is not to blur the difference of meaning between the first and second coming; but to stress that it is He who has come who will come again at the end of time." [125]. This coming is, however, to be qualitatively distinct from Christ's first coming: "As a 'second coming,' then, the parousia is not a mere repetition of His original coming, but the unchallenged revelation and irreversible fulfilment of the meaning and force of reconciliation. The meaning is revealed in the fulfilled reality." [126].

Such philosophical and theoretical consequences are clearly described by Berkouwer. He also notes some of the more practical considerations linked with this belief in the reality of the parousia, such as the expansion of life that the parousia brings; the unveiling of the mystery and power of God; the fulfilment of the promise of eternal life; the complete revelation and identification of good and evil; the judgment. "The hour and day of the parousia is not an event unrelated to life on earth: it is the hour of giving account (1 Pet. 4:5)." "One's whole life and its central direction will be laid bare in the parousia." [127]. The parousia is taken as a valid expression of belief and hope, a concrete objective of the Christian and the Church.

3.2 G. E. Ladd

In a number of his books Ladd adopts a very strong position on the reality and validity of the parousia teaching. It is, he says, a major part of the salvation message, without which God's plan remains incomplete:

At the heart of Biblical redemptive truth is the Blessed Hope of the personal, glorious second advent of Jesus Christ.... This salvation will be realized only by the personal second coming of Christ.

The second coming of Jesus Christ is an absolutely indispensable doctrine in the Biblical teaching of redemption. Apart from His glorious return, God's work will forever be incomplete. At the center of redemptive past is Christ on the cross; at the center of redemption future is Christ's returning in glory. [128].

Although Ladd is mainly concerned in such works on eschatology to refute the Darbyist "pretribulation rapture" position, he does also give some indications of the consequences of holding a strong parousia belief. As he points out, "Jesus' eschatological teaching ... is fundamentally ethical in its character and purpose," concerned primarily to demonstrate the impact of the future on the present. [129]. The parousia becomes an incentive to mission activity, for personal preparation; and the presence of Christ in his fullness the

great object of the Christian's desire: "It is the Lord who is the object of our hope; and whether His coming be near or far, the glorious fact of His person and the certainty of our union with Him is the ground and incentive for our holy walk." [130]. The second coming becomes part of the reason for the true Christian life -- by providing a certain future of Christ's presence; motivation for present response and obedience is maintained: "It is our love for Him and the joy of the anticipated consummation of perfect fellowship which impels us to a pure life." [131].

To all this can be added the very real hope of a dramatic transformation of the present situation -- both of man and the world. "Citizenship in the world means weak, corruptible bodies; but the perfection of heavenly citizenship means the transformation of the body when humiliation is exchanged for glory. Thus we long for the return of Christ." [132]. This active understanding of the parousia hope lies at the heart of Ladd's proposition that "both the prophets and Jesus taught that the final perfect realization of God's rule would be accomplished only by a supernatural, world-transforming act of God ... the 'Second Coming of Christ.' The consummation as Jews viewed it would not be a 'historical' event like other events but would be the inbreaking of God into history." [133].

The parousia in Ladd's scheme is absolutely necessary. Without it his highly-objective hope for the future is destroyed and even his understanding of the present activity of God is rendered mistaken since all is pointless: "The eschatological consummation of the Kingdom is inseparable from and dependent upon what God is doing in

the historical person and mission of Jesus." [134]. Yet this is the very reason "why the Second Coming of Christ is essential to a biblical theology: apart from his victorious return, there will be no final victory over sin, Satan, and death." [135].

Even though Ladd does not develop the "essential" nature of the parousia to any great degree, it is this concept that dominates his description of the importance and consequences of this belief. It provides an interesting vantage point from which to view both the New Testament and history, a means of comprehending the process and direction of Christian hope.

### 3.3 S. H. Travis

Travis is also clearly convinced of the indispensability of the parousia for Christian hope and practice. "The parousia as a future event is an integral part of salvation history." [136]. Indeed, after reviewing various modern conceptions of the future hope he writes:

It seems important to me to assert the following. God, who has acted in history in Jesus and has thereby demonstrated his loving, saving purpose, will at the end of history bring his saving purpose to completion by the parousia of Christ. Christ will reveal himself as judge and Saviour to all men, past, present and future. He will welcome all who are "in Christ" into his presence, in an

eternal kingdom that will transcend space and time as we at present experience them. The parousia will thus be an event marking the climax of our present historical order, but will itself be beyond history in that it will introduce a new order discontinuous with the present course of history. It is a genuinely future event, a real meeting between a real Christ and a real community of persons. It will be the public and triumphant manifestation of the hitherto hidden presence of God's rule in Jesus, the ultimate vindication of God's purposes in him. [137].

From this there can be no doubt as to Travis' belief in a real coming of the Son of Man. What is also clear is that such a belief is seen as the supreme telos, the final goal, God's "ultimate vindication." Yet as Travis points out, the actual event of the coming, despite its tremendous importance, is overshadowed in the New Testament by the call to personalize this hope. After all, it is quite possible to affirm one's belief in the parousia as an actual future event, and to state that this demonstrates God's supreme authority and the certainty of his vindication without allowing the belief to mould and shape one's current attitude and experience. Comments Travis: "Jesus and the New Testament writers are always less concerned to speak of how the parousia will take place than they are to assert the reasons for it and the meaning for faith." [138].



This perception of the parousia's importance -- the present implications for life and hope -- is Travis' great theme that is expanded in a more "popular" work entitled The Jesus Hope. Particularly in Chapter Eight, "Living Between the Times," he looks at "some of the ways in which our hope should affect our lives." [139]. Hope for the future of God, not a longing for some previous "Golden Age," this is Travis' understanding of the parousia promise. "God leads us forward, not back. The Christian life means looking forward to the coming of Christ, like runners straining for the finishing tape." [140]. This in turn makes the church a band of pilgrims on the way to the future, yet also involved in the daily routines of present living: "The hope that Jesus is soon coming does not mean that we give up our normal pattern of life.... There is nothing wrong with planning for the future. Yet we must plan as though our future on earth were the only future there is." [141]. The emphasis in The Jesus Hope is on confidence: "The best is yet to come." [142]. Travis sees the purpose of Christ's coming in various forms, but primarily as the demonstration of God's complete control and his fulfilment: completion of God's plan; history brought to a climax, by God the kingdom is established by God; the coming is that of the divine Christ [143] -- aspects which all refer to the totally God-centred act that is the parousia.

The consequences of the parousia are clearly spelled out. The universe will be transformed; death, suffering, evil, insecurity -- all will be ended; the saved will be in the presence of God and his Son Jesus Christ; and they shall all be united together as God's

people. Man is to be transformed himself and to experience the totality of the love of God. [144].

So while much needs to be done here, the ultimate objective is the future of Christ -- the parousia. The Christian is to<sup>be</sup> involved in working for good in the present, but "there will be no ultimate peace until Jesus comes again." [145].

### 3.4 Other "Conservative" Writers

Other modern theologians argue for a positive attitude to the parousia promise and for a realistic assessment of the widespread evidence in the New Testament for such a hope. J. F. Walvoord is especially prominent in calling attention to the parousia proclamations: "Many Scriptures testify to the fact that the present age will culminate in the coming of the Lord for his church." [146]. His fervour in presenting the parousia is outstanding; perhaps some might not be so enchanted with his assertions of the correctness of the Rapture theory. The importance of the parousia in the New Testament is also asserted by W. J. Grier: "The New Testament recognized indeed that Christ had already arrived, but the arrival, the epochal coming, the one fully worthy of the name, belonged to the future. They had an intensively prospective outlook -- for them the momentous event is the coming of the Lord." [147]. So too H. Hoeksema: "Throughout the New Testament the hope of the Church in the world is fixed upon the return of her Lord in glory." [148].

A. A. Hoekema goes so far as to say that "The expectation of Christ's Second Advent is a most important aspect of New Testament eschatology -- so much so, in fact, that the faith of the New Testament church is dominated by this expectation." [149].

This centrality of the parousia hope is also identified as the distinctive attitude of the Christian. For example, F.S. Parnham asks the question, "What Is the Christian's Expectation?" and goes on to answer it: "Our expectation is ... focused upon His glorious unveiling. So important is this fact that it <sup>not</sup> only colours our outlook but conditions our blessing, since all our hopes are centred in Christ and flow from His saving power." [150]. This "present impact" aspect of the parousia expectation is a theme taken up by many.

J. E. Eagles asserts that "By far the most important aspect of the [parousia] doctrine is its theological and spiritual significance." [151]. Present attitudes and actions are also emphasized by A. A. Hoekema: "Our expectation of the Lord's return, therefore, should be a constant incentive to live for Christ and for his kingdom, and to seek the things that are above, not the things that are on earth. But the best way to seek the things above is to be busy for the Lord here and now..." [152].

But in all such affirmations the question of impact and motivation remains open. As A. L. Moore remarks, "The parousia hope, was, we believe, one of the driving forces behind the early church's life and obedience and behind its missionary zeal. Perhaps by probing these questions and problems again, some light may be shed on the

· motive which should drive the church to the same primary tasks with urgency and responsibility, and yet with freedom and confidence." [153]. This is the objective of Section Six of this study.

Yet whatever the deficiencies, the confidence is still there. As R. H. Mounce puts it, "God is faithful to his promises and will in due time vindicate the faith of all who place their confidence in him." [154]. H. Ridderbos considers that "the great orientation-point given us in Jesus' speeches about the coming epoch is before all else to be found in the yet unfulfilled parousia of the Son of Man." He is also convinced that "the proximity of the parousia [in the teaching of Jesus] is in a certain sense only another expression of its absolute certainty." [155]. Such a contention points ahead to the next subject for discussion, the whole area of time, the parousia, and the "delay."

The examples of strong conviction in the parousia as the only and the absolute hope, the determinant of present and future thought and activity, could be multiplied, but with little benefit. Enough has been said to make the point. The essential subject of the so-called "delay" must now be treated, not only since it reflects past and present attitudes to the parousia promise, but because such a concept also illustrates something of the nature and meaning of the parousia event itself.

4 The Delay of the Parousia in Modern Theology: Analysis and Critique

The hypothesis of a delayed parousia is arguably the most influential theme in modern analyses of the man Jesus and his message. [156]. Its rapid and rather uncritical acceptance [157] has determined much of the contemporary discussion of the meaning and implications of the Kingdom that Christ announced, while the concept of delay has undoubtedly adversely affected the acceptability of the parousia hope itself.

Not only is the perceived delay of great significance in biblical and doctrinal interpretation, it also has tremendous influence on the experience and attitude of the Christian. The question "Why the delay?" is asked from all sides, and is answered with a bewildering variety of supposed reasons.

The need to include this topic in this study arises primarily from the implications that a delay concept has on the parousia hope, and it is from this perspective that the question will be viewed. The exegetical and philosophical reasons for postulating a delay lie outside the scope of such a study. For whatever reasons, Christ's coming is viewed as being postponed in time, a factor that is of tremendous importance in relation to the parousia. [158].

The wide agreement on the delay makes an unbiased assessment of the concept rather difficult. On top of this the term is used in very different ways depending on the point of view of the writer, thus causing even more confusion. This means that the delay becomes a type of universal hermeneutic used to establish all sorts of theological positions. [159]. For Schweitzer it is the key to the disastrous failure of the mistaken Jesus who sought in misguided fashion to bring about the coming of the kingdom. The delay provides an understanding of why the Christian religion came into being, but ultimately denies its validity. This in the hands of others becomes a way of explaining the development of Christian doctrine -- a response to the unrealized hope in a soon-coming Saviour.

Others would absolve Jesus and make the parousia expectation and its non-fulfilment a fundamental mistake of the early Christian community, who misunderstood the words of Jesus. Thus the delay is a real phenomenon, but the result of an expectation that Jesus never promised. The delay can therefore be resolved by denying the expectation: Christ never promised to return, how can there be any delay?

Still others would admit both the parousia and the delay, but would in different ways deny that such a delay was significant or relevant to contemporary Christians. Some in this group would seek to "de-temporize" the parousia hope, to make it into an existential or a hope in the indefinite future of God, a hope in the beyond. Many would identify both terms as symbols of a higher reality that cannot

be understood literally.

All of this is overlaid with the rather deficient meaning of the word delay itself. In fact the concept of a delayed parousia results in more problems than it solves since no one seem to be agreed on the correct definition. [160]. This question of meaning is worthy of further discussion.

#### 4.1 Delay -- The Semantic Problem

The use of the term "delay" in connection with the still to be fulfilled parousia raises several problems, not the least being the modern concept of delay as the exceeding of a specified time period and the accompanying ideas of error, fallibility and imperfection. These latter associations make the delay of the parousia far more than a chronological term; rather the impression is given that a mistake has been made, an alteration of plans has occurred -- an altogether rather negative impression of the work and purposes of God.

Such ideas that imbue the modern concept of delay are primarily derived from human experience: an appointment is missed because of a delay; a technical hitch causes a delay; someone's error results in a delay, and so on. Yet is this a valid way of describing the action and will of God? If this is the meaning of delay which is to be applied, then it causes a major rethinking of the notion of a wholly omnipotent and transcendent God, and calls into question the

trustworthiness of the parousia belief itself. For, to carry the argument further, it can quite honestly be doubted whether the parousia will ever occur since God may have annulled his promise, or on the other hand the delay may well be of infinite proportions -- which is only another way of denying its fulfilment.

Not only are the plans and activities of God questioned by these associations of the term delay. [161]. Some other unfortunate overtones also raise doubts as to the very character of God and his relationship to man. Delay in human terms often means some reluctance to act. Can God be envisaged as hesitant to fulfil his promise? Once again the very use of the word delay involves considerable questioning of the actual nature and purpose of God, the coming One. Does God have to adjust his plans? Does he make errors? Can he be blamed for the delay? The term delay seems rather inappropriate when used in connection with a divine being who is considered perfect, inerrant, omnipotent, omniscient etc. Even though the negative associations of the term may be vigorously denied, man's perception of delay is so often conditioned by mistakes and mismanagement that it is hard to avoid one's understanding of the term being coloured by these unfortunate connotations.

Following on from the above problem of associated ideas is the whole question of time delimitation. [162]. Delay is usually defined as the exceeding of a stated period of time, beyond which the event can be designated as delayed, late, postponed and so on. In the New Testament the time of the parousia is not stated, nor is the length of time before the coming defined. In fact it is made very clear that



the time is not known to any except the Father, and while the New Testament writers were ever expectant, they set no limits to their expectation. Thus in a technical sense there can be no delay since no specified time period or point has been exceeded.

#### 4.2 Problems of Previous Usage

Added difficulties in the use of the delayed parousia arise from the various meanings given to the phrase by different writers. As has been noted previously, the delay motif has been utilized by proponents of various theological schools: consequent eschatology, realized eschatology, inaugurated eschatology; salvation history and the rest. For this reason it is totally impossible to use this type of terminology without the various ideas associated with such theological schemes being in some way implied. The very fact that the idea originated with a view of a totally mistaken man Jesus and his false prediction of the end means that the delay theme cannot be considered apart from such connotations.

Subsequent use of the phrase to identify the mistaken concepts of the early church has a similar effect in attributing concepts of error and inaccuracy to both the beliefs of the Christian community and to the New Testament writings. To this may be added the common view that an evolutionary development can be detected within the New Testament. In response to an increasing awareness of the non-rapid fulfilment of the parousia hope, so the theory goes, [163] certain of

the writers altered, reinterpreted and explained the church's position so that the embarrassment and despondency (that was supposed to have resulted) could be avoided. According to this type of theory, Luke and 2 Peter are examples of the shift from parousia imminency to a more "delayed" advent, with the corresponding "reasons" for this apparent delay also being included. [164].

The concept of a delay is consequently heavily loaded with interpretative baggage -- it provides support for a number of theories, and for this reason can only be used with extreme caution. This is also one major reason why the "delay" concept is so ardently defended: it is essential to the viability of many theological formulations.

Much more could be said in relation to this theory that is now under strong attack from various quarters. At this point it is sufficient to note its existence and history, for it is its consequences rather than its intrinsic accuracy and validity that are important for this study.

The idea of a delay has other effects too. If God is God, can he delay? The relationship of God and time is fundamental here, and also involves the question of how the parousia fits in to such a relationship. Is the parousia as so many theologians want to ask, in time or outside of it? Many of such questions are unanswerable, being shrouded in the mystery of God. A brief look at the interrelation illustrates another difficulty in describing the parousia as delayed.

4.3 God and Time

The question of how God relates to time is the main function of the delay concept when considered from the Godward side. God, as part of his definition, is understood to be outside our restrictions in time, the One who "inhabits eternity." If this is the case, how can God be portrayed as delaying since he is not subject to time? From such a standpoint the concept of delay is meaningless. Yet although the eternity of God places him above time and in control of it, God still acts in time as he relates to man. [165]. Only by the fact that God deliberately utilises the historical process (time) in order that he might respond directly to man can there be any meaning to the word "delay."

God is certainly not limited by our temporal restrictions and our imperfect understanding of the various factors of our existence: God, time, the universe, and so on. To speak of God delaying must therefore mean something other than the missing of an appointment or the mistaken identification of a specified time. God, existing out of time, can only be understood as delaying by reference to his will and purpose. God's delay is an expression of his will, and his willingness to relate to and to express himself in human time, even though for him "A thousand years is as one day, and one day is as a thousand years" (Ps. 90:4). This view of God and time is the very argument used by Peter (2 Pet. 3:8) to explain the reasons for what some in his day were calling "the delay of the parousia."

Since the parousia is a divine event, and since God himself can experience no delay, it is perhaps more correct to speak of an "apparent" delay since it is only from man's viewpoint that more time has seemed to elapse than might have been expected. After all, God is said to know the day and the hour of the parousia (Mt. 24:36). A fuller exposition of God's relationship to time and to the parousia is possible using the biblical terms, but would only unnecessarily extend this examination. The fundamental point is that man is the creator of the delay, not God, and that God can only be described as delaying only as he relates to man's time and with all negative aspects that delay implies being totally excluded.

#### 4.4 Imminent?

Central to the current theological debate over the supposed delay of the parousia is the assertion that both Jesus and the New Testament writers considered that he would return within a very short time of his resurrection and ascension, at least within the lifetime of those who had heard the preaching of Jesus. [166]. This presupposition is the foundation of the theory of the delayed parousia, and if this assumption is called into question then the whole structure of the "delay explaining" hypothesis falls apart. If Jesus or the early church did not emphasize the imminence of his coming then there very obviously can be no delay.

Again the semantic problem intrudes here. How imminent is imminent, how soon is soon, how near is near? If it is to be a question of time, what is the time-scale that should be used? An event that was to occur the following day would be considered imminent according to a human time-frame. But the same time period would hardly be imminent to a may-fly with an existence of only a few hours. Such a parallel also exists between man and God, although to an even greater extent. An event that is imminent as far as God is concerned (indeed it may be said that for God all events are imminent) may not be so viewed from man's perspective.

Be that as it may (and little can be deduced from such an analysis aside from a realization that God does not operate as we do), other factors that question the stress on imminence are also significant. [167].

The stress on absolute imminence (the parousia to take place almost immediately upon Christ's death and resurrection) by many modern theologians is perhaps due more to the need to retain the "delay explanation" that is so useful to their theological schemes rather than any inherent demands of the texts. On the contrary, the absolute imminence propounded by some scholars cannot be maintained when the New Testament evidence is examined in its totality.

The sayings that appear to suggest Jesus expected an imminent parousia, such as Mt. 10:23 (the parousia to occur before the disciples' mission was completed) and the remark that some would not see death before they saw the coming of the kingdom (Mk. 9:1 and parallels) are capable of interpretation without forcing the words into the straight-jacket of an imminently expected fulfilment of the parousia promise. (The first can refer to the total gospel mission that was given to the disciples in Mt. 28:19, 20, while the second is directly linked in the text with the manifestation of the parousia kingdom in the Transfiguration experience.) Similarly the apparent delimitation to "this generation" (Mk. 13:30 and pars.) does not need to refer to the literal generation that Jesus was addressing, especially since genea is used in a much broader sense in other New Testament passages. [168]. To state that Jesus delimits the time of the parousia is to go far beyond the evidence.

#### 4.5 The "Time Lapse" Expectation

In direct opposition to the statements on the nearness of the parousia are others that quite definitely speak of an expected time period before the parousia. In all the stress on imminence, these passages are often forgotten. [169]. Right in the middle of Christ's eschatological message comes the remark that the gospel "news" must first go to all nations (Mk. 13:10), a definite expectation of a time of witness. In his preview of the future, Jesus warns that even with

all the "Messianic woes" of wars and pretended messiahs, "the end is not yet" (Mk. 13:10).

Above all the pictographs of the parables give a clear expectation of some time that must elapse before the parousia. [See sect. one]. Especially relevant are the parousia parables included in Matthew's account of Jesus' eschatological predictions (Mt. 25). The bridegroom came later than expected -- the ones who awaited his coming all went to sleep. In Mt. 25:14 the master of the servants travels away to a far country. It was not until "after a long time" (Mt. 25:19) that the Lord returned. In Luke, Jesus speaks this or a similar parable in response to the belief of some "that the Kingdom of God should immediately appear" (19:11).

The main stress is on the unexpected time of the parousia: "for ye know not when the time is" (Mt. 13:33), "in an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh" (Mt. 24:44), "ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh" (Mt. 25:13), and so on. The consequent attitude therefore is "Watch!" and this must be set against the expectation of a coming within a specific time period. The command to watch indicates an outlook that is ever prepared, ever expectant.

A similar outlook is demonstrated in the rest of the New Testament. The Thessalonians are told to wait for the parousia of the Son (1 Thess. 1:10). In response to their over-eagerness and perhaps also some "calculation" of the parousia date, they are further informed by Paul that this coming will not be immediate, but will only

occur after certain events have taken place (2 Thess. 2). James tells his brethren to "be patient ... unto the coming of the Lord" (5:7), while John writes of Christ's revelation and his command to "hold fast till I come" (Rev. 2:25). The unexpected nature of the parousia is given in terms of nearness and of the approach (Heb. 10:37; Jas. 5:8; Rev. 3:11 are all examples of this).

A tension thus exists between the statements of a time period to precede the parousia and the concept of its nearness. To describe the parousia in terms of imminence is to misunderstand the biblical data. The parousia is considered to be proximate, not immediate. This being so, to attribute a crisis of delay and its subsequent resolution to the early church can only be done at the expense of dismissing some of the evidence. The parousia as understood by the New Testament writers is an ever-present reality that no believer can ignore, but its fulfilment cannot be (and never was) quantified in terms of time. Perhaps it is more correct to speak of an immanent rather than an imminent parousia.

This factor of non-chronological nearness has also been pointed out by others [170]; the parousia has always been near since Christ's first advent made his second advent possible. It is hard for western minds to accept the concept of nearness in time not being quantifiable, but that is the very message of the gospels. Indeed it may be more correct to see such statements as "Behold, I come quickly" as expressing the will and purpose of God [171] rather than being an indication of his foreknowledge.



Where does all this leave the parousia hope? With our modern preference for an "either-or" situation most interpreters have adopted a position that regards the parousia as being expected imminently. This brings in its train various ideas of error, doubt and uncertainty as to the actual fulfilment. Yet as is so often the case, the New Testament evidence in its entirety presents us with a paradox. In the same way as the nature of Christ is inexplicable in any mutually exclusive terms: God, man, spirit, etc., so is the parousia: an ever-present reality whose fulfilment is both near and yet unknown, at the end of time and yet also timeless.

The idea of delay itself interprets the meaning and truth of the parousia. Its consequences are far-reaching, its implications diverse. As has been said before, the historical reasons for postulating a delay and the individual theologians are not significant here. What is important is the impact of the delay terminology on the parousia belief and the way in which it is perceived.

#### 4.6 Impact of the Delay Theory on the Understanding of the Parousia

The perception of the parousia has undoubtedly been marred by the overemphasis on the delay. The insistence on the delay rather than on the parousia has resulted in many wondering whether the delay might not be extended indefinitely -- in other words, the parousia belief is eventually denied. On top of this some have rightly queried the

nature and role of God, since the "responsibility" for the delay is seen as his. Much of this confusion and doubt can be traced to the unfortunate ideas associated with the idea of a delay that have been discussed previously. The re-interpretation of the parousia hope by the various theological schools has also been the subject of the survey with which this Section began.

The results of the delay theory on the parousia are many, generally unfavourable. Only a few of the major effects will be examined here, but they will illustrate the detrimental consequences of an overemphasis on the delay.

The first and perhaps most obvious consequence is that associated with the consistent eschatologists -- the equation of the delay with the cancellation of the prediction. The parousia hope was a mistake and therefore cannot be taken as a realistic attitude to the future. The term delay and not annulment is retained only because it illustrates the position of Christians in history who have continued to entertain the parousia hope.

The opposite extreme is to deny the delay by rejecting the promise. Following this hypothesis, Christ never promised to return and therefore the delay is purely a product of the church's misunderstanding. It hardly needs to be pointed out that this position is equally disastrous to the parousia hope. There may be no problem of delay, but then there is no expectation either.

A third attitude accepts the concept of a delay but then refuses to admit that it was at all significant in the history of the church. Jesus may have been wrong to predict his soon coming, but that was just a small error and does not invalidate his promise. Such a position also damages the parousia hope since it firstly raises considerable doubts as to the veracity of such a hope, and secondly does not take seriously the implications of the "interim" period. A fourth attitude may be included here, which also admits the delay but considers it unimportant -- Jesus' proclamation of imminence only being contemporary imagery used to express the certainty of the predicted event. Yet the same type of damage is done to the parousia hope, since if the nearness was imagery then why not the parousia event also?

This illustrates the greatest problem with the delay concept. By stressing the delay, the expectation of the parousia is dimmed, its effectiveness drastically reduced. The hope recedes into the background of questionable beliefs and ceases to play any part in moulding and determining the life and outlook of the Christian. [172]. The eventual fulfilment may not be doubted, it may be seen as the "one far-off event, to which the whole creation moves." But the accent is on extended delay, on the "far off" nature of the event, and thus the parousia belief no longer has any real impact, it is no longer relevant.

The only way of linking the parousia and the delay is that of Peter. Only by understanding the "problem" in terms of the mercy and patience of God can the two opposing concepts be harmonised. And even so, the delay is far from endless. "For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness" (Rom. 9:28). "He that shall come will come, and will not tarry" (Heb. 10:37). "He is faithful that promised" (Heb. 10:23). The one that promised was Christ. He also is the one who is to return. This is the promise. This is the parousia.

5 Conclusion -- Modern Interpretations of the Parousia

Several conclusions can be drawn from this overview of the parousia in modern theology. One very obvious result is that the parousia is often dealt with in rather negative or dismissive terms. The strange fact is that despite contemporary interest in eschatology and the future, the parousia hope remains one of the most neglected aspects of belief. While many have accepted the great importance attached to the belief in Christ's return by the writers of the New Testament, few have agreed with such an emphasis and even fewer have attempted to understand it.

Another clear conclusion to be drawn is the very diverse and contradictory opinions of the various "schools." Very little consensus exists as to what the future has in store or how we are to relate to the New Testament predictions. Yet it is apparent that very few theologians are prepared to accept the parousia as a genuine, real, future event that is of importance to the believer now.

Among the more "conservative" scholars the parousia hope has greater acceptance. Due to its obvious importance in the New Testament and also because of its place in many creeds, some attempts are made to<sup>do</sup> justice to the parousia belief. But it may be concluded that even here the parousia has not received its full attention, and has not been examined as to its exact meaning and implication. Many writers are far more concerned to affirm the belief against all the many denials or to argue for one particular interpretation over

another. Since there are so many doubts as to the reality and validity of the actual concept of a future parousia it is perhaps not too surprising that most writers have had little time to examine and evaluate the implications of their belief.

Hope is evidently a major/<sup>factor</sup>in modern life and thought. Within theology many have used hope as motif for their system of interpretation, but so often the object of Christian hope is something other than the parousia. While the Christian can and must have a variety of specific hopes and objectives, if the parousia hope is ignored or dismissed then much has been lost, and the "promise of his coming" is washed up on the shores of time.

One of the very few aspects of the Christian message that most theologians would assent to is the supposed "delay" of the parousia. While interpreting it in a number of ways, the delay hypothesis is generally accepted as a fundamental factor in the rise and development of early Christianity. But as was noted in the section on this subject, the attitude of delay has had the most unfortunate consequences for the belief in a real parousia. Ranging from out and out dismissal to various modifications of the parousia hope, the results have been generally quite negative in relation to an affirmation of or an openness to the concept of Christ's return. Above all, the stress on the delay makes the parousia belief, even if retained, an insignificant part of the whole faith structure on a par with the expectation of the destruction of the solar system millions of years from now. Certainly the concept of delay removes the parousia from its place as a decisive determinant of activity and

prevents it exercising any function as the objective and ultimate reason for Christian hope.

Yet in the end it is the evil servant who dismissed his outlook of faith and expectancy by saying "My Lord is delaying his coming." In sum, the parousia hope is a relatively unimportant hope in much of modern theology. It is variously regarded as mistaken, outmoded, incredible, and incompatible with man's new hopes. A sad end to the "living hope."

Notes to Section Five.

1. Note the comments of I. H. Marshall, "Slippery Words. 1. Eschatology," Expository Times, 89 (1977-78), 264-269.

2. See later on Dodd, Moltmann etc.

3. See for example: H. Schwartz, On the Way to the Future (Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub. Ho., 1979), 140-161; T. Peters, Futures -- Human and Divine (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1978), noting especially the footnote material to chapter one; H. A. Koops, "Secular Eschatology," Reformed World, 35,3 (1978), 119-125. See also H. Desroche, The Sociology of Hope, tr. C. Martin-Sperry (London/Boston/Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), Cp. S. H. Travis, The Jesus Hope (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1980), 7: "In days when hope is in short supply, I am persuaded that belief in the Return of Jesus Christ is the only realistic way to face the future." Note also the introduction to G. F. Thomas' article "The Christian Hope," Anglican Theological Review, 36 (1954), 169.

4. Many analyses of the various eschatological interpretations already exist. Some of the more recent surveys are: A. Hoekema, The Bible and the Future (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 288-316; S. H. Travis, Christian Hope and the Future of Man (London: IVP, 1980), 63-92; N. Perrin, The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus (London: SCM Press, 1975); G. E. Ladd, The Presence of the Future (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 3-42; G. R. Beasley-Murray, "A Century of Eschatological Discussion," Expository Times, 64 (1952-53), 312-316; Schwartz, Future, 75-116.

For those that specifically relate to the parousia see: A. L. Moore, The Parousia in the New Testament (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966); C. Brown, "The Parousia and Eschatology in the New Testament," in C. Brown, ed., The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Vol. 2 (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1976), 901-935; A. C. Thiselton, "The Parousia in Modern Theology: Some Questions and Comments," Tyndale Bulletin, 27 (1976), 27-53.

5. A. Schweitzer, The Quest of the Historical Jesus, 3rd. ed. (London: A. and C. Black, 1954), 369.

6. For some discussion of Schweitzer and his eschatological concepts see: C. McCown, "The Eschatology of Jesus Reconsidered," Journal of Religion, 16 (1936), 30-46; J. W. Bowman, "From Schweitzer to Bultmann," Theology Today, 11 (1954-55), 160-178; Hoekema, Bible and Future, 291-293; Thiselton, "Parousia," 32-35.

7. F. Buri, Die Bedeutung der neutestamentlichen Eschatologie für die neuere protestantische Theologie (Zürich 1935).

8. See Travis, Christian Hope, 19-20; also G. C. Berkouwer, The Return of Christ (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 67, 69-73. The best exposition of the delay theory as a determinant of Christian doctrine is M. Werner, The Formation of Christian Dogma, (London: A. and C. Black, 1957). Brown summarizes Buri's position as follows: "For us the ultimate concern must not be the programme of future world events but the will for life fulfilment in the present." Brown, Dictionary, 2: 903.

9. C. H. Dodd, The Parables of the Kingdom (London: Nisbet and Co.,



1935), 50, 156. For a comprehensive analysis refer to: E. E. Wolfzorn, "Realized Eschatology: an Exposition of Charles H. Dodd's Thesis," Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses, 28 (1962), 44-70; note also the rather early review: C. T. Craig, "Realized Eschatology," Journal of Biblical Literature, 56 (1937), 17-26.

10. See C. H. Dodd, The Apostolic Preaching and Its Development (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1936), 240. For a contrary view, refer to R. Dunkerley, "Unrealized Eschatology," London Quarterly and Holborn Review, 186 (1961), 51-54.

11. B. M. Nolan, "Some Observations on the Parousia in New Testament Eschatology," Irish Theological Quarterly, 36 (1969), 285.

12. C. H. Dodd, The Coming of Christ (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954), 35, 24.

13. T. F. Glasson, His Appearing and His Kingdom (London: Epworth Press, 1953), 6. For a fuller discussion see T. F. Glasson, The Second Advent (London: Epworth Press, 1963), 63-105. Note particularly the comment by Glasson that "The whole conception of a descent of Christ from heaven was based upon a belief in a three-storey universe." T. F. Glasson, "The Advent Message Today," Modern Churchman, n.s. 11 (1967), 37.

14. J. A. T. Robinson, Jesus and His Coming (London: SCM Press, 1957), 83, 185.

15. Glasson, Appearing, 201.

16. J. A. T. Robinson, In the End, God (London: Fontana Books, 1968), 69.

17. Dodd, Coming, 38. Cp. also his Parables, 164-165: "The church prays, 'Thy Kingdom come,' 'Come, Lord Jesus!' As it prays, it remembers that the Lord did come, and with Him came the Kingdom of God. Uniting memory with aspiration, it discovers that He comes in His Cross and Passion. He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

18. K. Barth, The Epistle to the Romans (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 314.

19. Berkouwer, Return, 27, using the words of Holmstroem.

20. Barth, Romans, 500. Note also O'Collins' conclusion regarding Barth's interpretation of the parousia: "The parousia ceases to be something for which we must hope, and becomes a timeless symbol for an immediate, actual relationship to God which is always possible." G. O'Collins, Man and His New Hopes (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 55.

21. See Hoekema, Bible and Future, 308. Refer to K. Barth, Dogmatics in Outline (London: SCM Press, 1966), 129-136; entitled "The Coming of Jesus Christ the Judge." It is clear that no literal parousia is envisaged.

22. R. Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," in H. W. Bartsch

(ed.), Kerygma and Myth, 1 (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), 4.

23. R. Bultmann, Jesus Christ and Mythology (New York: C. Scribners' Sons, 1958), 31; and R. Bultmann, History and Eschatology (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1957), 155 and note.

24. See J. Macquarrie's comments in his Christian Hope (New York: Seabury Press, 100-101).

25. Quoted by Travis, Christian Hope, 69.

26. S. T. Coleridge, Work Without Hope, cited in The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations (London/New York/Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1941), 102.

27. H. Ott, quoted by Thiselton, "Parousia," 40.

28. Note the following dogmatic statement: "the mythical eschatology is untenable for the simple reason that the parousia of Christ never took place as the New Testament expected. History did not come to an end, and, as every schoolboy knows, it will continue to run its course." Bultmann, Kerygma and Myth, 5.

29. Consider for example the very hypothetical and speculative suggestions of J. B. Cobb, "What is the Future? A Process Perspective," in E. H. Cousins ed., Hope and the Future of Man (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 10-14. In addition see N. Pittenger "The Last Things" in a Process Perspective (London: Epworth Press, 1970), who says nothing about the parousia even when referring to the traditional scheme which he gives as "Christian Eschatology: Death, Judgment, The Intermediate State, Heaven, and Hell." (Ibid., 2.)

30. See Thiselton, "Parousia," 28.

31. S. Ogden, "The Meaning of Christian Hope," Union Seminary Quarterly Review, 30 (1975), 153-164. Of a similar genre is E. Benz, Evolution and Christian Hope (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1967).

32. Ogden, "Hope," 156, 157, 160.

33. P. Teilhard de Chardin, Le Milieu Divin (London: Fontana Books, 1972), 150-154. For an interpretation of the future understandings of this school see P. Hefner, "The Future as Our Future: A Teilhardian Perspective," in Cousins ed., Hope, 15-39.

34. Ibid., 150.

35. Ibid., 150, 151, 154.

36. See J. S. Wright, "The Theology of Teilhard de Chardin," The Churchman, 89 (1975), 37-38.

37. G. H. Baudry provides an overview of Teilhard's eschatology: "Les Grands Axes de l'Eschatologie Teilhardienne," Melange de Science Religieuse, 34 (1977), 213-235.

38. Thiselton, "Parousia," 30.

39. Ibid. Note also the expressions of "our personal participation in the eternal," etc. in P. Tillich, "The Right to Hope," Neue Zeitschrift fuer Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie, 7 (1965), 371-377; also found in P. Tillich, "Hope in Eternal Life," Christianity and Crisis, 26 (1966), 57-58.

40. Thiselton, "Parousia," 43.

41. O. Cullmann, The Early Church, ed. by A. J. B. Higgins (London: SCM Press, 1956), 141-162.

42. O. Cullmann, Christ and Time, (London: SCM Press, 1971), 72.

43. Cullmann refers to the "already" outweighing the "not-yet." O. Cullmann, Salvation in History (New York: Harper and Row), 183ff.

44. Cullmann, Early Church, 147-148.

45. Travis, Christian Hope, 85, 88; Schwartz, Future, 94.

46. Travis, Christian Hope, 90.

47. Cullmann, Early Church, 141-162.

48. Ibid., 152.

49. Ibid., 141-142, 144.

50. See section six, and the discussion of delay in this section.

51. W. G. Kuemmel, Promise and Fulfilment, (London: SCM Press, 1957), 152-153, 54-87. Note particularly his understanding of Jesus being mistaken in his emphasis on imminence: 149. Owen has similar views: "If we ask whether Christ miscalculated the time of His Parousia the answer is quite simply 'Yes'." H. P. Owen, "The Parousia of Christ in the Synoptic Gospels," Scottish Journal of Theology, 12 (1959), 188.

52. Note the positive but very unspecific description of "the traditional eschatological hope into a joyful expectation of completed salvation." W. G. Kuemmel, "Futuristic and Realized Eschatology in the Earliest Stages of Christianity," Journal of Religion, 43 (1963), 303-314.

53. Kuemmel, Promise, 88, 124, 140.

54. For a brief bibliography refer to Moore, Parousia, 3n.

55. E. Brunner, Eternal Hope (London: Lutterworth Press, 1954), 138-139.

56. Ibid., 139.

57. P. S. Minear, "The Time of Hope in the New Testament," Scottish Journal of Theology, 6 (1953), 337-361.

58. R. L. Calhoun; E. Schlink: "Christ -- The Hope of the World," Christian Century, 71,34 (1954), 1002-1011 (not consec.).

59. H. C. Snape, "Man's Future on Earth and Beyond -- The Christian Hope Today," Modern Churchman, n.s. 7 (1963), 84-92; J. S. Bezzant, "The Christian Hope for Man," Modern Churchman, 45 (1955), 281-295; D. E. Roberts, "Hope," Christianity and Crisis, 13 (1953), 154-157; F. J. Denbeaux, "The Biblical Hope," Interpretation, 5 (1951), 285-303; F.-W. Marquardt, "Christ Today: Hope for the Future," Lutheran World, 10 (1963), 246-256. Even the otherwise excellent book by Moule is deficient in this regard: C. F. D. Moule, The Meaning of Hope (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963).

60. J. Haroutunian, "The Christian Hope and the Modern World," Theology Today, 10 (1953-54), 325.

61. J. Macquarrie, Christian Hope (New York: Seabury Press, 1978), 81.

62. See part 1.2 of this section.

63. Macquarrie, Christian Hope, 81.

64. A. R. C. Leaney, The Letters of Peter and Jude, Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 142; P. Tillich, "The Right to Hope," Neue Zeitschrift fuer Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie, 7 (1965), 376; G. E. Ladd, The Blessed Hope (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), 138, quoting the "realized eschatology" position of some British theologians.

65. H. J. A. Bouman, "The Christian Hope," Concordia Theological Monthly, 26 (1955), 241-255; M. H. Franzmann, "The Christian Hope and Our Fellow Man," Concordia Theological Monthly, 26 (1955), 764-771.

66. Bouman, "Christian Hope," 249.

67. This survey (for brevity) only includes three theologians connected with the Theology of Hope: Moltmann, Braaten, and Pannenberg.

68. J. Moltmann, Theology of Hope (London: SCM Press, 1967). For an introduction to the historical origins of the Theology of Hope see M. D. Meeks, Origins of the Theology of Hope (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974).

69. Moltmann, Theology of Hope, 15.

70. Ibid., 16.

71. Ibid., 17-18; 331.

72. Ibid., 119. Cp. also the following: "In the modern conflict between a theism that affirms 'God is' and an atheism that negates God, saying, 'God is not,' eschatological theology can say, 'God's being, the Kingdom of his full identity, is coming.' God is present in the way in which his future takes control over the present in real anticipations and prefigurations. But God is not as yet present in the form of his eternal presence. The dialectic between his being and his being-not-yet is the pain and power of history." J. Moltmann, Religion, Revolution, and the Future (New York: Scribners, 1969),

208-209.

73. Moltmann, Theology of Hope, 139-229.

74. Ibid., 18.

75. Ibid., 215.

76. Cp. the passage in Moltmann, Revolution, 214ff, entitled "The God of Hope."

77. J. Moltmann, Experiences of God (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 33.

78. Ibid., 34.

79. See also J. Moltmann, The Future of Creation (London: SCM Press, 1979), 168-171.

80. Ibid., 39-40.

81. Thus Travis, Christian Hope, 58, 94.

82. Porteous understands Moltmann to mean that "The parousia of Christ cannot be restricted to be a particular point in the near or distant future, but it must be seen as the constantly moving horizon of new possibilities already latent in the Christ event..." A. C. Porteous, "Theology of Hope," Foundations, 12 (1970), 9.

83. Moltmann, Theology of Hope, 87. Note also the following from page 227: "The eschaton of the parousia of Christ, as a result of its eschatological promise, causes the present that can be experienced at any given moment to become historic by breaking away from the past and breaking out towards the things that are to come." But what does all this mean? Moltmann himself asks the question "But how have we to understand the future of Christ?" (ibid.), but never seems to answer it! He only talks of "unveiling," and of "future fulfilment." Porteous, "Theology of Hope," 16, comments that the Theology of Hope "has tended to provide a Christian rhetoric for revolutionary change but few concrete guidelines for decision making with respect to social issues." Also, "it may be questioned as to whether the exclusively futuristic reference of the theology of hope does not tempt it into becoming a doctrinaire theology of revolution..." (Ibid., 17). Moltmann expresses rather ill-defined future perspectives. As an example note: "The living source of hope lies in a future from which new time, new potentiality and new freedom continually advance to meet us. We find this future in Jesus Christ; he is our future -- he is our hope. In the new beginning which faith makes possible we find Christ, who is our future and our hope." Moltmann, Experiences, 28.

84. Moltmann, Theology of Hope, 327. (My emphasis). Note also his definition in Experiment Hope, 59: Hope is "renewal of the heart; practical transformation of social circumstances around us, by anticipating the future God, we emigrate out of the past into the future." N. L. Erskine speaks of Moltmann calling for "an eschatological faith that does not flee the world but struggles to bring the world into conformity with the new future of God." T. Runyon (ed. and tr.), Hope for the Church (Nashville: Abingdon,

1979), 112.

85. Moltmann, Revolution, 139, 131. In addition consider Moltmann in T. Runyon, Hope for the Church, 135: "Eschatological hope becomes concrete today in the actual freeing of the poor and oppressed of the Third World."

86. Moltmann, Theology of Hope, 165.

87. Moltmann, Revolution, 145, 143.

88. Ibid., 214.

89. Note Macquarrie's comment in his Christian Hope, 102: "It must be accounted one of the most serious weaknesses of their [Moltmann and Pannenberg's] position that they are unable to attach any clear meaning to 'resurrection,' though this is one of the key terms in their theologies."

90. C. E. Braaten, The Future of God (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), 17.

91. Ibid., 24-25, 18. Also: "What we mean by the future is what we mean by God. For God is our Future, the fulfilling power of the future of all things." C. E. Braaten, "The Significance of the Future: An Eschatological Perspective," Cousins ed., Hope, 53.

92. Braaten, Future, 26. On the whole area of revolutionary ideologies see Desroche, Sociology of Hope, 115-144.

93. Braaten, Future, 160.

94. Ibid., 157. One wonders whether this future is to be created solely by the activity of such "Christian revolutionaries". That this future is envisaged as a very much this-worldly transformation, also refer to Braaten, "Significance of the Future," 53-54: "If the symbolism of the future which holds the hope for a radical transformation of this world and its people into a new world and a new humanity is eliminated from the consciousness of mankind, then the medium of God-language is also destroyed." (My emphasis.)

95. Braaten, Future, 154.

96. Ibid., 166.

97. W. Pannenberg, Theology and the Kingdom of God (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977), 61.

98. W. Pannenberg, "Can Christianity Do Without an Eschatology?" in G. B. Caird ed., Christian Hope (London: SPCK, 1970), 31.

99. Pannenberg, Kingdom, 59.

100. H. Obayashi, "Future and Responsibility: A Critique of Pannenberg's Eschatology," Science Religieuse/Studies in Religion, 1 (1971), 191.

101. W. Pannenberg, Jesus -- God and Man (London: SCM Press 1968),

136.

102. Ibid., 391.

103. Ibid., 397.

104. Thiselton, "Parousia," 50, comments: "The impression is given that even Christian revelation may yet be called in question by the future."

105. A. D. Galloway, Wolfhart Pannenberg (London: Allen and Unwin, 1973), 136.

106. Pannenberg, Jesus, 74.

107. Cp. Galloway, Pannenberg, 134. Galloway also remarks (Ibid., 70) that "Pannenberg stakes everything on the resurrection." The lack of definition of the term is pointed out by Macquarrie, Christian Hope, 101.

108. W. Pannenberg, Revelation as History (London: SCM Press, 1969), 141.

109. W. Pannenberg, Basic Questions in Theology, Vol. 2 (London: SCM Press, 1971), 248.

110. Ibid.

111. See also L. Gilkey's criticism in his "Pannenberg's Basic Questions in Theology: A Review Article," Perspective, 14 (1973), 52-54.

112. Pannenberg, Kingdom, 62.

113. Ibid., 63.

114. Ibid., 143.

115. As Ford comments, this would be an "impossible moment" since "the infinite futurity of God would become merged with the finite actualities of the present." L. J. Ford, "God as the Subjectivity of the Future," Encounter, 41 (1980), 291-292.

116. Pannenberg, Jesus, 368.

117. It has not been possible to include here anything relating to Liberation Theology. For some comments see: Travis, Christian Hope, 139n. Also: W. D. Roberts, "Where Has Liberation Theology Gone Wrong?" Christianity Today, Oct. 19, 1979; 26-28. For some discussion of liberation themes in relation to the "future of Christ," see: J. P. Miranda, Being and Messiah (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1977). Also: R. A. Alves, A Theology of Human Hopes (St. Meinrad, IN: Abbey Press, 1975).

118. Further implications are discussed in section six.

119. Berkouwer, Return, 153.

120. Ibid., 140-169.

121. This can be eliminated by avoiding the "either/or" fallacy that is involved here. Christ is both present and absent, his presence is already active in the world but its fulness is yet to be revealed.

122. Berkouwer, Return, 162.

123. Ibid., 154.

124. Ibid., 155.

125. Ibid., 141-142.

126. Ibid., 155.

127. Ibid., 156, 161. See the whole passage 159-162.

128. G. E. Ladd, The Blessed Hope (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), 5,6. Similarly in G.E.Ladd, The Last Things (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 47-48. 129. G.E.Ladd, The Presence of the Future (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 327.

130. Ladd, Blessed Hope, 151, 145-146.

131. Ibid., 145.

132. Ibid., 143.

133. Ladd, Presence, 335.

134. Ibid., 324.

135. Ladd, Last Things, 108.

136. Travis, Christian Hope, 137.

137. Ibid., 90-91.

138. Ibid., 90.

139. S.H.Travis, The Jesus Hope (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1974), 92.

140. Ibid., 93.

141. Ibid., 95.

142. Ibid., 31.

143. Ibid., 54-55.

144. Ibid., 74-77.

145. Ibid., 125.

146. J. F. Walvoord, "The Coming of Christ for His Church," Bibliotheca Sacra, 123 (1966), 3.



147. W. J. Grier, The Momentous Event (Belfast: The Evangelical Bookshop, 1945), 10-11.

148. H. Hoeksema, The Lord of Glory, Vol. 4 of The Heidelberg Catechism, An Exposition, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1947), 119.

149. Hoekema, Bible and the Future, 104.

150. F. S. Parnham, "What is the Christian's Expectation?" Evangelical Quarterly, 41 (1969), 113-114.

151. J. E. Eagles, The Final Coming of Christ (London: Epworth Press, 1951), 22.

152. Hoekema, Bible and the Future, 128.

153. Moore, Parousia, 5-6.

154. R. H. Mounce, The Book of Revelation, New London Commentary (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1977), 344. One expression of passionate conviction is by Pink: "The ONLY hope of the Church is the personal Return of the Redeemer to remove His people from these scenes of misery and bloodshed to be forever with Himself; and the ONLY hope for this poor sin-cursed and Satan-dominated world is the Second Advent of the Son of Man to rule and reign over the earth in righteousness and peace. This is the world's LAST hope, for every other hope has failed it!" A. W. Pink, The Redeemer's Return (Ashland, KY: Calvary Baptist Church Store, n.d.), 48.

155. H. Ridderbos, The Coming of the Kingdom (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1962), 468, 521.

156. For a readable review see Berkouwer, Return, chapter 3 entitled "Crisis of Delay?" As Snyder comments, "It has become commonplace in discussions of the history of the New Testament period to say that the theology, ecclesiastical structure, traditionalism, and sacramentalism of the late first and second centuries resulted primarily from the failure of the parousia." G. F. Snyder, "Sayings on the Delay of the End," Biblical Research, 20 (1975), 19. Perhaps the most extensive use of the delay motif is by E. Graesser in his Das Problem der Parusieverzögerung in den Synoptischen Evangelien und in der Apostelgeschichte (Berlin: Verlag Alfred Toepelmann, 1957).

157. Some have of course reacted against the crisis of delay hypothesis. In his review entitled "The Significance of the Delay on the Parousia for Early Christianity," D. E. Aune sums up: "The purpose of the foregoing article has been to question the theory that the awareness of the delay of the Parousia in early Christianity was a necessary factor in the radical reformulation of early Christian life and thought. We found no evidence to suggest that the so-called problem of the delay of the Parousia was in fact perceived as a problem by early Christians." G. F. Hawthorne ed., Current Issues in Biblical and Patristic Interpretation (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 109. A similar conclusion is reached by Talbert in reviewing the classic text used by the delay theorists, 2 Peter. He begins: "II Peter is almost universally regarded as evidence that the early church was seriously disturbed by the delay of the Parousia." His conclusion

is that "the delay of the Parousia is not here a major crisis leading to a denial of the early Christian eschatological scheme. II Peter cannot be used as evidence for the thesis that the delay of the Parousia caused a crisis of major proportions in the life and thought of early Christianity." C. H. Talbert, "II Peter and the Delay of the Parousia," Vigilae Christianae, 20 (1966), 137, 145. Cp. also Nolan, "Parousia," 300-301.

158. See the discussion on this point in section six.

159. The following is simply a brief review of the consequences of certain theological positions. For more detail on these outlooks see the survey with which this Section began.

160. The comments of Berkouwer are appropriate here: Berkouwer, Return, 91.

161. As Berkouwer notes: "It must be kept in mind that the concept of delay can also result from an incorrect interpretation of God's dealings in history." Ibid., 76.

162. For a discussion of the possible delimitation of the time of the parousia by Jesus or the early church see Moore, Parousia, 175-190, 108-159.

163. Especially due to the exposition by H. Conzelmann, The Theology of St. Luke (New York: Harper and Row, 1960). Also significant is his article "Present and Future in the Synoptic Tradition," Journal for Theology and the Church, 5 (1968), 26-44. R. H. Hiers discusses the question in "The Problem of the Delay of the Parousia in Luke-Acts," New Testament Studies, 20 (1973-74), 145-155; also S. G. Wilson, "Lukan Eschatology," New Testament Studies, 16 (1969-70), 330-347. Dissenting views are exemplified by R. B. Ward, "Eschatology in Luke-Acts," Restoration Quarterly, 5 (1961), 147-156; and F. O. Francis, "Eschatology and History in Luke-Acts," Journal of the American Academy of Religion, 37 (1969), 49-63.

164. Paul is also supposed to have expressed this change in outlook from vivid expectancy to a more "realized" attitude. For a review of this thesis see E. E. Ellis, Paul and His Recent Interpreters (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961). Note also M. J. Harris, "2 Corinthians 5:1-10: Watershed in Paul's Eschatology?" Tyndale Bulletin, 22 (1971), 32-57; J. J. Scott, "Paul and Late-Jewish Eschatology -- A Case Study," Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society, 15 (1972), 133-143; C. K. Barrett, "New Testament Eschatology. 1. Jewish and Pauline Eschatology," Scottish Journal of Theology, 6 (1953), 136-155. Others disagree, for example: Nolan, "Parousia," 300-303; S. S. Smalley, "The Delay of the Parousia," Journal of Biblical Literature, 83 (1964), 47-54; P. Ware, "The Coming of the Lord: Eschatology and 1 Thessalonians," Restoration Quarterly, 22 (1979), 109-120.

165. God is therefore "supra-temporal" rather than "extra-temporal." Such a concept is no longer so difficult to entertain in the present scientific age in which relativity theory has become so dominant. If time is meaningful only when defined according to the observer then for the Creator God to be the definer of time and yet be independent of it is not so ridiculous now as might have been the case even a

hundred years ago. Torrance has developed some of these scientific impacts on theological thought: T. F. Torrance, Space, Time and Resurrection (Edinburgh: Hansel Press, 1976).

166. As one example see the article by C. L. Holman, "The Idea of an Imminent Parousia in the Synoptic Gospels," Studia Biblica et Theologica, 3 (1973), 15-31.

167. Note one effect of the way in which stress on imminence affects understanding: "It is clear that the expectation of an imminent Parousia was one factor that prevented the primitive Church from hoping for any transformation of the existing order." H. P. Owen, "Eschatology and Ethics in the New Testament," Scottish Journal of Theology, 15 (1962), 379.

168. See Berkouwer, Return, 88; Ridderbos, Kingdom, 499-503.

169. As one writer remarks, "The theme of the indefinite time of the Parousia was stronger in the early Church than many students have realized." Art. "Parousia," in J.L. McKenzie, Dictionary of the Bible (London and Dublin: Geoffrey Chapman, 1965), 640. Also note D. Flusser, "Salvation Present and Future," in R. J. Zwi Werblowsky and C. Jouko Bleeker, eds. Types of Redemption: Studies in the History of Religions 18 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970), 60: "The decisive importance attributed to the delay of the Second Coming as a formative element in Christian faith is at least greatly exaggerated."

170. Note the perceptive comment by Hoekema: "For the New Testament writers, the nearness of the Parousia is not so much a chronological nearness as a 'salvation-history' nearness. ... Because the return of Christ is so certain, it is in a sense always near." Hoekema, Bible and the Future, 126. Similarly the comments of B. Reicke in The Anchor Bible: The Epistles of James, Peter and Jude (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., 1964), 178-179.

171. A very perceptive remark by Kaye relates to this question. In discussing 1 Thess. 5:1-11, he states that "This passage is helpful in showing that the parousia, and the situation it will introduce is of such a character and is in such a relationship to the present situation, that it implies not disorderly behaviour, but behaviour which is consistent with the purposes of God." B. N. Kaye, "Eschatology and Ethics in 1 and 2 Thessalonians," Novum Testamentum, 17 (1975), 52.

172. One writer has attempted to define the parousia in a way acceptable to the majority of scholars. His consensus view well illustrates the dismissive attitude to the parousia's perceived (and very ephemeral) significance, while at the same time also demonstrating the capacity to avoid any definition of the parousia's meaning: "It may be assumed, however, that the main line of the Christian tradition will interpret the Parousia to mean, at least, that God will bring to completion the work begun through Christ, and that the same Christ who stands at the center of Christian faith will also stand at the final boundary of human experience in time, in space, and in eternity." H. K. McArthur, art. "Parousia," in The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 661.

SECTION SIX

THE DYNAMIC ELEMENTS OF THE PAROUSIA HOPE: IMPLICATIONS AND SUMMATIONS

0 Introduction

This concluding section examines some of the more interesting aspects of an actively held parousia belief and suggests contributing influences and effects that are more associated with mental processes and aspirations than with direct environmental conditions. In asking the question "Why the parousia?" some possibility of explanation of the belief is presupposed, along with an understanding that beliefs derive from prior "causes" and that they have some purposive nature. Some of the presumed causes and effects of the parousia belief have been outlined in previous sections and range from socio-economic factors to divine intervention, from historical tradition to personal interpretation. To take just one example -- the "explanation" of the Millerite parousia belief must take into account the primary cause in the discovery and preaching of an imminent parousia by William Miller, the religious and social background to this message, personal circumstances of the believer and his perception of the world, the traditional expression of the belief in the Christian tradition, and the foundation of the belief in the Biblical material. Other

important factors may also be present, such as the means and methods of dissemination of the belief, but the question why is beginning to be answered. Here some of the more "abstract motives" -- teleological aspirations, desires for personal salvation etc., will be considered. This section is therefore both a summary and conclusion as well as an analytical part of the thesis.

The very nature of belief requires it to interact with its surroundings to provide understanding and interpretation of experience and purpose. The title of this thesis implies that belief is a phenomenon associated with change. The "Dynamics of Christian Hope" indicates that the parousia belief is not static, but rather a belief that continually alters as it interacts with other beliefs and attitudes, a process which eventuates in a directing influence on thought and behaviour. Anything that is dynamic is a time-related concept, and must be treated as such. Beliefs that have no present relevance are relatively unimportant and do not directly affect behaviour.

The fact that belief has a strong dynamic component also affects the perception of the parousia belief from another angle. Time becomes a highly-significant factor when related to the belief in a returning Christ. Within time or outside of time? What does imminent mean? Has there been a delay? And so the questions could be multiplied. The parousia raises a whole set of queries as to the relationship of God, Man, Time, and Eternity, a field that is quite evidently far beyond the scope of this present work. It is inescapable that this section will raise far more questions than it

answers, and so an attempt has been made to utilise this fact. Perhaps this section deserves a subtitle such as "Towards an Understanding of the Complex Question of the Parousia Belief." Certainly the material that follows is more of a trial exploration than a definitive summary.

Such an exercise is far more abstract and conceptual than most of the previous sections. It is concerned with ideas rather than with historical events or biblical material; it is an essay on possible implications, not theological dogma. For this reason it is rather tentative and very open to discussion. The subsection that deals with the more evident aspects of the parousia belief -- the inspiration of hope, a concept of validation and vindication, a consummative goal etc., uses many concepts and symbols derived from the biblical witness as examples of the factors discussed. This in no way is meant as a defence of the parousia doctrine itself, but rather an interpretative analysis of the implications of the parousia belief. The biblical material is used in an illustrative sense, and it is not the object of this section to justify one or other interpretation of a particular text. The symbols are there in the witness of the early church, and provide convenient delimiters and illustrations of the various aspects of the parousia belief.

One further point. Certain psychological factors have already been noted in the discussion of the parousia belief. While no review is possible within the confines of this section, such factors are clearly important, and influence the adoption of specific beliefs. They are also involved in such attitudes as the desire for a future

existence, concepts of end and finality, justification and judgment, and so on, attitudes that will be considered later. For this reason and in order to utilise certain recent insights into the ordering and formation of beliefs this section will begin with a brief summary of psychological theory of belief as it can be related to the parousia expectation.

The ultimate impossibility of answering the question why must be faced. While there may be many factors that affect the adoption of belief, belief itself is not inherently an absolutely rational process. Thus to decide why anyone believes in a certain way involves assumptions that are not really justified. Beliefs may be rationalised, that is, explanations may be found for the reasons why after the believing process has occurred. But this is not the same as identifying the actual causes or reasons. And in many cases, the real reasons may be very different to the reasons suggested, and may even be unknown to the believer himself.

Despite such an unattractive conclusion, it remains possible to examine some of the probable factors involved in believing the parousia, along with some of the concomitant results. Indeed certain of the results may well be viewed as contributory reasons, since the adoption of the parousia belief may well provide results that are also sought after -- for example, believing the parousia may result in the validation of a particular view of God and the world, of the assurance of salvation, and thus provide an increase in contentment and a reduction in anxiety. In this case, the need to believe in some future existence -- in salvation into another life -- becomes part of

the motive for holding the parousia belief. In this way the parousia can be seen not as a single belief but as one important and influential belief in a whole belief structure that integrates perceptions and aspirations into an active mechanism. The dynamics of this belief structure and its impact on understanding are the main subjects of this final section.



1 Believing the Parousia: Psychological Factors

Certain psychological aspects have already become apparent in previous sections -- for example charges of lunacy and mental deficiency against the Millerites; personal motivations among the Adventists and so on. The identification of the parousia belief as an aberrant response to contemporary conditions will not be discussed here, and such concepts as motivation are better evaluated in a later discussion of hope, vindication, consummation, etc.

What is of considerable interest here are the results of psychological theory concerning beliefs. [1]. In particular, the way in which beliefs are ordered, their relative importance or "centrality," the effects of belief change, and the relationship of beliefs to behaviour are all of considerable relevance to the discussion of the implications of the parousia belief.

The way in which beliefs are held in relation to one another is supposed to consist of a highly structured system in which central or primitive beliefs are surrounded by consequent and less-significant beliefs. Various schemes have been proposed for the categorisation of beliefs, most of which follow a similar framework of basic beliefs coupled with other less central beliefs. Primitive or zero-order beliefs are those which are "non-conscious axioms" of existence, "basic truths" about the way things are and which are taken for granted. [2]. One example is the belief that one's senses are reliable and tell the truth about physical reality. Those primitive

beliefs which are universally recognised as true are not normally ever brought into question. However, it is possible to hold primitive beliefs without this same consensus of opinion -- a belief based on a particular experience that is regarded as absolute and incontrovertible. Basic religious belief may often fall into this category of primitive or zero-order belief.

The next, less-central group of beliefs are those which may be termed authority or first-order beliefs. These beliefs are subsidiary beliefs in that they are contingent on some primitive belief. Belief in some authority as trustworthy and true thus engenders other higher-order beliefs in the statements that they make. The differentiation of beliefs into higher and lower order beliefs is evidently not clear cut, since what may be a higher order belief based on various authority beliefs may be seen as almost axiomatic by another.

First-order beliefs based on a zero-order belief in the credibility of an external authority, then, are functionally no different from first-order beliefs based upon an axiomatic belief in the credibility of our senses. [3].

While the above description is very brief, the fundamental aspects of such a supposed belief structure are clear. When applied to the role played by the parousia belief in a person's belief structure, the theory suggests that such a belief would be a derived belief, since it is based on knowledge imparted by an external authority -- the Church, the Bible, Faith, and has its basis and

validity in the primitive beliefs in God, the person's environment, and in the self. From this perspective, the parousia belief would not necessarily be viewed as an important belief, since it is a higher-order derived belief, and such beliefs are generally concluded to be less "central" (and therefore less significant) than the basic, primitive beliefs. Yet this does not appear to be the case.

However, there is more. In the complex structuring of belief, there is both a vertical and a horizontal structure. The vertical structure has already been mentioned -- the derivation of beliefs from authorities, the development of these beliefs by "reason" into other higher order beliefs and so on. This may be seen as a continuing process, in which basic premises are developed in a syllogistic way. Thus higher order beliefs are "building upon premises which are themselves conclusions of prior syllogisms." [4]. Yet "a particular higher-order belief is often the conclusion to more than one syllogistic chain of reasoning." [5]. Consequently this "horizontal" structuring by which beliefs are supported by many vertical belief structures provides a broad base for the support of any particular belief.

How does all this apply to the parousia belief, which (as has been demonstrated in previous sections), can play so dominant a role in determining outlook and behaviour? The parousia belief can in fact be held at almost any level in a belief structure. Its importance is related to this position, but position alone is not the only key to relevance. Often what is far more important is to what extent it affects other beliefs, or in other words, how many chains of reasoning

lead out of the parousia belief. If they are few, then the parousia belief will only have a limited impact on the whole belief structure. If many, then its effects will be marked. But to return to the question of position, and some illustrations.

The parousia belief may be held at a very basic level, a first-order belief:

The parousia is part of my faith.

I believe in the parousia.

In this simple case, the belief in the trustworthiness of personal faith is axiomatic. Then a related higher-order belief can be envisaged in which an authority belief is directly identified:

The Bible says Christ will return.

Many people (whom I trust) tell me this is true.

Therefore I believe in the parousia.

Internal authority may be exemplified as follows:

Jesus promised to return.

I have had a spiritual experience which encourages me to have faith in Jesus.

Therefore I believe in the parousia.

These examples are obviously rather simplistic. They also indicate that belief can be based on many aspects of authority, external as well as internal, and on an axiomatic belief in the actual statement of promise. Generally speaking however, the parousia belief will be held for a number of reasons, i.e. the result of a variety of syllogisms that may include authority beliefs, other derived beliefs, as well as almost primitive beliefs based on personal experience, for example:

The Bible contains the promise of the parousia.

I believe the Bible to be reliable. So do many others,  
both in the past and in the present.

Without the second coming, the first coming (in which I believe)  
appears incomplete.

If there is no parousia then the resurrection (in which I believe)  
does not seem possible.

My belief in Jesus as Saviour demands that I accept his parousia.

My church/my minister/my parents believe in the parousia.

World conditions provide no adequate reasons for belief. The parousia  
seems to be the only hope.

Etc., etc.

Therefore I believe in the parousia.

In such a hypothetical scheme the parousia belief is seen as being based on a number of other beliefs, as well as possessing the character of a low-order belief itself. Thus the belief gains in importance because it has both increasingly primitive significance, as

well as having considerable effect on other beliefs.

How can a belief have "increasingly" primitive character? The answer to this question illustrates the dynamic aspects of belief. The structure of belief is never static, it is constantly changing in format and relationship, even if actual beliefs do not change:

In the course of time, the vertical and horizontal structures of a higher-order belief can change without disturbing the belief itself. We believe as we did before, but our reasons for believing have altered.... all the evidence upon which we once based our trust ... may have faded from our memory until now our devotion is a blind article of faith, a zero-order belief. Alternatively, additional support may have been obtained for beliefs that were once primitive beliefs or otherwise lacking in respectable justification. [6].

On top of this, the perception of a belief's importance can radically affect its effects upon the belief structure. If religious beliefs are seen as "regnant beliefs" then they will of course play a major part in the structuring of belief and in actual behaviour. Thus the parousia belief may well become an essential part of a particular belief structure, while the reasons for belief may be very varied.

Having established some sort of system for examining beliefs in an integrated way, the implications of belief may now be further considered. Inevitably this must be an area of considerable dispute, since even the believer may not identify the true causative factors for or the consequences of his belief, and the conclusions of an outside observer may reflect aspects of his own belief system.

One thing in this discussion is agreed on by all: beliefs are not necessarily the result of logic. The term "psycho-logic" has been coined to explain what appears on the outside to be illogical, but which to the believer seems a perfectly adequate reason or explanation for his belief. This gives rise to doubts as to whether a valid explanation for belief can really be established. Note the following rather contradictory statements of one psychologist:

Attitudes of belief and unbelief are never reached by processes of reason alone.

Beliefs and attitudes cannot be explained in terms of reason alone. Reason plays a part, but it is not a primary part. The ultimate determining factor is to be found in the way the instinctive drives become organized in the given individual.

It is too simple to say that a man is the product of the interaction of his drives and the world, for he has to play a part in shaping what he becomes. [7].

If "reason ... is not a primary part" in belief, then there are obviously considerable difficulties in assigning any specific belief to a cause or set of causes. [8]. Since it is so difficult to establish exactly why anything is believed, it is perhaps easier to examine change in the belief structure, and this is what most psychologists have concentrated on. Of particular interest to the discussion of the parousia belief is the principle of cognitive consistency, that is, attempts are continually being made to ensure that the belief structure is consistent in itself and in its relationship to factors influencing it from outside. Thus if any experience occurs which appears to contradict a specific belief or group of beliefs, then some change must occur so that the experience may be harmoniously accommodated.

Cognitive dissonance, a discrepancy between what is perceived and what is believed, is a frequent hypothesis in the modification of belief and the relationship of belief to reality. [9]. In regard to the parousia, a clear example of such dissonance is that of the Millerites in October 1844. Their belief, their expectation, was that Christ would return. He did not. Therefore they experienced a major conflict between what they experienced (no parousia) and what they anticipated (parousia). The resolution of this conflict in a number of ways -- denial of the parousia belief, reinterpretation of the



. dating and so on. [10].

Yet the assumption of rationality in regard to the belief structure is not necessarily always valid. As has already been mentioned, what may appear logical to one in his particular situation may not seem logical to an outside observer. So while a belief system may perhaps be internally consistent, "To say that a man is consistent is not necessarily to say that he is logical or rational." [11]. Some would also argue that even consistency is not the major aspect of a belief system: "My own suspicion is that inconsistency is probably our most enduring cognitive commonplace." [12]. In attempting to apply "rational" theories to belief this is one factor that cannot be ignored, along with the fact that "Different individuals in the same situation and the same individual in different situations will react to cues by behavior directed towards different goals." [13]. It thus becomes very difficult to generalise as to the actual "cues," stimuli, or motivation behind the formulation of any given belief. When a very complex and potentially determinant belief such as the parousia is under consideration, the actual factors behind the adoption of the belief are difficult to disentangle. Yet the opposite aspect must also be examined. If a belief is to be important, it must have some readily identifiable implications and effects, otherwise the belief cannot really be termed significant. In other words, as was mentioned in a previous section, the parousia belief must, if it is really important, "make some difference."

With this in mind, the following material is an attempt to apply some of the points noted above to the parousia belief. No absolute reasons can be given, no definitive or overriding implications. But implications there are, and some of them will be considered in some detail. These "parousia factors" influencing both the adoption of the belief and its consequences have been separated rather arbitrarily and do of course have considerable overlap. They are more in the nature of response patterns and acceptance factors that may be present to varying degrees in the holding of the parousia belief. They also illustrate the consequent effects of the parousia belief on world-outlook, concepts of meaning and purpose, and on the very basis for existence.

This of course entails a foray into the philosophical aspects of the parousia belief, for which no apology is offered. If any belief is truly to be understood, it must be seen as functioning in part as an answer to the fundamental questions facing man -- the "why" of it all. For this reason, having considered some of the more obvious factors that influence and are influenced by the parousia belief, consideration will then be given to rather deeper aspects such as the meaning of the parousia as a Coming, and what relationship exists between time and the parousia. For it is here that the parousia really becomes determinative: if Christ is really believed to come "at the End," then in a sense the parousia is on a par with the very Beginning, a primary event not only in the life of the believer but in the whole future of this world and even for time itself.

. 2 Aspects of the Parousia: Belief as Implication and Consequence

The parousia belief is composed of many parts -- hope for salvation, identification of God's purpose, termination of history, validation of religious experience, judgment, vindication, and so on. Here some of these aspects of belief which are of course not exclusive to the parousia belief are examined in more detail to illustrate their combined function in supporting this belief. In order to avoid repeated qualification of statements about such elements of the parousia belief, this section assumes the parousia belief as a valid religious phenomenon, i.e. the question is "why?" not "if."

The object is to identify some of the various components of the parousia and to understand the meaning and implications of this belief as an active principle. A number of aspects of the parousia belief are proposed in order to examine in some detail the interaction between this specific belief and other facets of belief and attitude.

## 2.1 The Parousia as Hope

Hope is by far the most significant element of the parousia belief, the all-encompassing aspect of the future objective. [14]. Inevitably it must be from the point of hope that any analysis of the components of the parousia must begin since hope is the dynamic response to the promise, and the primary function of the belief in Christ's return [15]. Some discussion of hope occurred in the analysis of the Theology of Hope in Section Five. Here the more "philosophical" aspects of hope as it relates to the parousia will be considered. A brief glance at the word "hope" in a concordance provides sufficient evidence that the desire of the early Christian community was for God's future intervention in the affairs of man, a coming that was to be in some way related to his coming in the past. The Christ had come. This was the basis of belief. Yet this belief was also directed toward the future as hope in the return of "this same Jesus" (Acts 1:11).

The Christian hope as expressed by the parousia belief is thus a hope with a very definite objective, and is thus considerably different to other less objective concepts of hope. To be effective, hope cannot be isolated from the object or person of hope. Hope involves hoping for and hoping in and hoping to. Hope without an objective is not really hope at all since hope is necessarily directional. The hope of the Christian is summed up in Christ.

One difficulty with the word "hope" is that its modern meaning often implies some uncertainty. The phrase "I hope so" often implies considerable doubt -- "it would be pleasant if this happened ( and I 'hope' it will), but unfortunately it probably will not." The contrast with the New Testament concept of a sure and certain hope is very marked. [16]. Hope is here based on Christ's previous coming, and because of this first advent, the second coming is in no doubt -- an "authenticated" hope. [17]. This positive hope -- a "living" hope (1 Pet. 1:3) -- is the major source of conviction that works toward the end with confidence and assurance that is very different from the negative ideas of a dubious and unsure hope that characterizes much of the modern concern for the future. [18].

The beginning of hope is an awareness of the present. The experience of "now," if totally satisfying, surely eliminates the need for hope. The future can bring nothing that is not already part of the present, and so becomes merely the succession of "presents" yet to come.

This complete acquiescence with the present is not the predominant human attitude. It may occur in the short term, but it is never experienced as a continuing state. Thus some idea of hope is common to all; there is always some desire for change from the present, the coming of a "new day." Such consciousness of the present and some dissatisfaction (however expressed) with the contemporary scene brings either hope or despair. Hope is initiated through the desire for a change "for the better," often expressed as the

antithesis of present problems and imperfections.

A graphic illustration of such consciousness coupled with the desire for an improvement of the undesired and deficient present is given by Gilkey. He describes his experience in an internment camp during the last world war:

Theologically speaking, we were an eschatological, and apocalyptic society. The todays of our life were gray and lifeless: only the tomorrows were crystal bright. We knew little of a present Providence or meaning. But we all understood the hope that this dreary time would come to an end...

Still, however distant the Great Day seemed to become as the years wore on, its luster never dimmed. We lived literally by our faith in it. Then everything that made our present life grim would be removed, and every good that we so sorely missed would be returned. Above all, we would be free to do what we wanted, to go where we wished. No biblical prophets strained toward the day of salvation more eagerly than we did, waiting for the end of the war when all joys would begin anew and all tears be dried. We did not know the time or the hour, but inwardly we were more than ready. [19].

Here is hope in a dramatic form. It has a clearly defined "cause" -- present internment -- and the desire to be free from this imposition. It also has a most specific "objective" -- release, which would be effected by the End, the end of the war. From this it is also clear that "real hope" must be differentiated from a vague desire for something different. The basis for hope was the fervent yearning for freedom.

Similarly the Christian hope must be focussed on something or someone if it is to have any relevance. "The Christian hope is Christ" is a facile phrase which emphasizes the nature of hope while at the same time obscuring its meaning in a grammatical impossibility. Yet this is the reality: "Christ in you, the hope of glory," "the Lord Jesus Christ which is our hope" (Col.1:27; 1 Tim.1:1). The hope is for a future that is in Christ, with Christ, and fulfilled by Christ at his return. [20].

So it is the Son of God that is believed as the cause of hope and the reason for hope. Jesus Christ is both definer and definition of hope, he is the "I" of "Behold, I come quickly" (Rev.22:7). He is the giver and bringer of life, and the future is with him: "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear" (Col.3:4).

The use of the technical term "parousia" tends to mask the personality of the event and its highly inter-personal nature. To the waiting ones, the great hope was that "this same Jesus...shall so come" (Acts 1:11). For those first believers, the present was a time

spent under protest. It was not satisfactory, it was incomplete, partial, defective, and lacking in that which was ultimately real. The present was a transient time, a temporary existence that could never be compared with the glorious future. In this they were present pessimists but future optimists. The day would come when all things "evil" would be destroyed, when the "good" would be complete and perfect.

Hope was a major part of their belief; a belief founded on the past revelation of Jesus [21] and that looked through his words with hope and trust towards his future revelation in power and great glory. The ultimate base of the Christian's hope, its very essence, is in the person and words of Jesus set against the "fallen" nature of present experience. Consequently, "We are saved by hope." (Rom. 8:24). But hope must have some prospect of eventual completion. It cannot be a speculative possibility, it must have some firm ground, an evidential quality that to some degree verifies the placing of hope in this particular objective. "If hope is to be genuine hope, it must be founded on something which affords reasonable grounds for confidence in its fulfilment. It must have a basis." [22]. Hope must have some other belief element from which to operate. The validation of the Christian hope is both the resurrection of Jesus ("Because I live, ye shall live also," Jn.14:19), and the whole life, death and revelation that forms the total evidence for the believed saving ability of Jesus. This latter point is often forgotten in view of the dramatic nature of the resurrection [23] but is of some importance in assessing the validity of the hope in Jesus.



The acceptability of a promise is dependent on what is being promised and by whom. In terms of the psychological theories of belief, the particular higher-order belief is dependent on the underlying authority belief. The New Testament writers give their reasons for hope in terms of the person of Christ: "Surely I come quickly" is said by "he which testifieth these things," namely the glorified Christ, (Rev.20:22). The assurance is that "He is faithful that promised." (Heb.10:23). The certitude is "according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus." (2 Tim.1:1). The past events are the basis for future hope, the hope of resurrection and eternal life. [24]. ("This is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life." 1 Jn. 2:25). The hope is defined in terms of the words of the one trusted above all others: "I will come again," (Jn.14:3). The person of Jesus and his saving death and resurrection authenticates hope, while the content of the promise -- his return -- is then seen as providing a specifically Christian means of understanding the future.

The assurance of hope is therefore based on, in, and through the person Jesus Christ. Above all it is his ability to carry out his promises that provides conviction of the truth of this hope. The clear evidence of his power and supremacy while on earth -- the theophanies, the miracles, the resurrection, the ascension -- are all pointers to his "power to save" ("He is also able to save to the uttermost," Heb.7:25). [25]. "The hope of eternal life rests rather on the conviction that the man Jesus enjoyed so close a relationship to God that death could not be more than a brief interruption of it;

and on the confidence that, because he has established a similarly close relationship with men, he has opened up to them the possibility of sharing his life in God's presence." [26].

Hope is consequently qualified by knowledge. The knowledge of the person of Jesus extends experience and belief from the past and present towards the future that is known through this same person. [27]. The certainty of this hope lies in the assurance that comes from Jesus; confidence is in the one "known." [28]. Both the definition of hope and the conviction of its validity and ultimate realization come from the Son of God, who ensures the final victory and the present certitude, "realizing the full assurance of hope until the end." (Heb.6:11).

At the coming of the Son of man the objective is reached and hope is replaced by sight. The firm conviction of Christ's return is the "blessed hope, the glorious appearing of the great God and Saviour Jesus Christ," the precious "possession," the good and living hope (Tit.2:13; 1 Cor.13:7; 2 Cor.3:12; 2 Thess.2:16; 1 Pet.1:13). This is the hope that continues "to the end" (1 Pet.1:3; Heb.3:6, 6:11), the hope of eternal life (Tit.1:2, 3:7). The parousia as consequent hope and specific assurance is regarded as a major component of belief, the starting point from which other meanings and implications of hope develop. [29].

The future result of this hope is the expected entrance into complete communion with God and the receiving of eternal life in its fulness. The present result of hope is the new direction to this life: the motivation for good, the desire to spread this "good news," [30] an attitude of readiness and watchfulness in awaiting the coming kingdom, and so on. This hope destroys the finality of death and the absolute depth of sorrow and despair. There is something more. "Hope means the presence of the future," [31], a future that is in God's complete control.

This conviction and hope provides some solution and consolation to the existence and influence of evil, sadness, imperfection and so on. The parousia ushers in the glorious kingdom and God's justice is made plain. Some of these elements provide considerable material for reflection, and will be expanded to some degree later.

The result of hope is seen in the directing influence on activity and attitudes. In this religious context, hope is located in God, in "the power of God unto salvation" (1 Pet. 1:5). Consequently, "The Christian ... has the power and person of Christ as his life-center. He can say, 'I hope for salvation' in ways that expand and ultimately shatter the worldly use of hope." [32].

## 2.2 Teleological Aspects of the Parousia Belief: Aim/Goal/Purpose

Aim, goal, purpose: such constructs illustrate the direction of Christian hope as well as defining its process. The parousia belief identifies the telos of hope, the return of the Christ. [33]. Man has always sought for meaning and purpose in his life and in the world, for something or someone of transcendent value in order to make sense of and to minimise the ills and the limiting effects of present existence. The purpose that is summed up in the parousia is a conjunction of man's hopes, and yet infinitely more than that since it is based on divine assurance, not human hope, the definite hope of God that is sure and certain, never possessing the possibility of being an unfulfilled or misguided hope. The parousia is very clearly an ordering factor, a definer of the future and of man's position in the universe, both describing and illuminating man's relationship to God. [34]. It is this role as the ultimate goal and the provider of purpose that is the subject of this particular approach to the parousia.

In this is the motivation for and the explanation of the Christian's situation. In the world, but not of the world, having a supremely important task to do in the present, but primarily actuated by the vision of the future. The combined beliefs that Christ had come, and that he would come again provide highly-effective means for the ordering of behaviour and outlook. The urgency of the message was not only dictated by the past provisions of Christ, it was significantly influenced by the future hope and goal. [35]. The

gospel could not be left at the level of salvation in the present, the attitude of love and forgiveness in the contemporary situation. The overwhelming impact was of the intervention of God -- both as the past event of resurrection, and also as the future return in glory of this Saviour to redeem his promise, to save his people. [36].

This highly-directional objective provided the motivation and the goal by which and to which the Christians worked. The parousia of Christ was the ultimate goal. The key point, the final destination, was the hope to "meet the Lord in the air" and enter into the fulness of eternal life.

Because this aim and resolute purpose is so dominant it is hardly surprising that the parousia becomes a strong determinant of Christian attitudes and behaviour, an ethical stimulant in the present as well as a future reward. Instead of diminishing concern with present problems and relationships, the great objective that the parousia represents emphasizes the need to be fully motivated towards others, to act for their benefit, to deal rightly and lovingly, "so much the more as ye see the day approaching" (Heb. 10:25). The future prospect moulds the present ethic. [37].

The perceived goal of a parousia and consequent judgment coupled with the prospect of accountability to the Saviour, were effective in enforcing and encouraging a high moral and ethical base. The present implications of the parousia made it impossible for the believers to recede into apocalyptic imaginings and unproductive dreams. The consequences of the parousia aim were such that the necessity was to

work towards the kingdom and to be found faithful at the Lord's return. The future goal became the present purpose, the motivator and moderator of action, experience and belief.

In this way the parousia becomes not only the objective event of the future but the subjective event of the present. In providing a clearly defined purpose to life, the parousia overcomes the feelings of despair, pointlessness, and insignificance that may overwhelm man. The parousia provides assurance in a number of ways -- that eventually there will be an end to the present state of affairs, that each individual is of specific concern to God, that participation in the gathering of the righteous at the parousia is a real possibility, that there is to be a definite time when eternal life will be possessed in its completeness. Above all, the parousia emphasizes the omnipotence and supremacy of God, and that this parousia is also the great aim of God. His purpose is to save and restore, and he is the one to fulfil the promises.

At the last trump, in the twinkling of an eye, the desire of God is made reality, the purpose completed, the aim met, the goal achieved. The active expression, the substance, and the event of this is expressed through the glorious coming of the Son of man, the parousia. When the goal, the telos is reached, "in the dispensation of the fulness of times," then are gathered "together in one all things in Christ" (Eph. 1:10). Here is the divine purpose and the human intent, the objective that is the parousia of Christ.

### 2.3 Concepts of the End: The Parousia as Termination and Consummation

"Then cometh the end." [38]. The previous examination of the parousia as the aim and the telos was primarily concerned to unfold the dynamic element of the process, the aiming toward the objective. The parousia was seen as the active determinant of Christian purpose and the goal towards which the community worked. In all of this the parousia is the non-realized controller of man and his activity, the unachieved point towards which the historical process moves. Any aim, goal, or purpose is seen from this perspective -- it is the not-yet, the about-to-be, the coming-to-presence, the pressing "toward the mark." The aim may have a full content, but its position in the future is the important point.

Now this process is considered from the perspective of the final end. The actual consummation of the purpose is the element under study, the terminal achievement of the will and desire of God. For this is what the parousia can be viewed as -- the absolute and supreme End, not primarily as cessation but as perfection, completion, consummation, culmination, ... [39].

Here is the last act, the definitive end to human existence as we now know it. All the images of the end of the world cannot hope to encompass the totality of finality that the parousia means. Yet amid all these terms of absoluteness there is much to be gained. The following is an approach to the varied concepts that make up the idea of the End. [40].

The parousia is the end, both as the "last" event and the ultimate aim. While there is much beyond this for mankind, history and the world, the parousia is the eschatos, the end. [41].

Both Old and New Testaments are full of statements about the end, understood in either of the senses of objective or termination. The overall understanding of the end within Christianity is always that God will bring things to completion, [42], that "in the end" he will judge, restore, vindicate, and all the rest. The end may therefore <sup>be</sup> envisaged as a theophany, an appearing of God as supreme ruler and adjudicator of man and his world. The day of the Lord is the last day, the day of judgment.

All of this can be applied to the glorious revelation of the divine Christ at the end; the parousia of the Saviour at the last day. Indeed in 1 Cor. 1:7-8 the three concepts of appearing, end, and eschatological day are brought together and the last day is now defined as "the day of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The arrival of this last day is seen as the completion of all processes, both good and evil. While the early church writers correctly understood Christ's first advent to be the last days and the time of the end of the world (1 Pet. 1:20; Heb. 1:2; 9:26; etc.), it should be reaffirmed that the last day, the real end, was quite evidently regarded as still in the future. The end may be seen as sure and certain by the virtue of the first coming, but the end has not yet been reached, the second coming is still future. [43]. The



encouragement is to endure to the end -- whether personal or universal (Mt. 10:22; 24:13). The future perspective is very strongly emphasized, indeed the "end of the world" might almost appear to be a preoccupation of these early Christians. The end so ardently desired is not the apocalyptic destruction of the world but the coming of Christ to save his own (see 1 Cor. 15:23,24).

The End, unlike so much of human experience of ending, is not the dread annihilation of this world, nor the terrifying onset of universal death. The End is the parousia, the bringing of life. Far from being a day of gloom and disaster, the day of Christ is seen as the achievement of his promised end, the conclusion that brings redemption. For this reason the parousia is to be the object of joy, not fear, the achievement of the salvation of the people of God.

From this viewpoint, termination is the best, the desired occurrence. Within human experience, ending is frequently associated with concepts of death, unwelcome change, sadness, and oblivion. But the End here is the glorious return, the making good of consummation, not the evil of senseless destruction.

What then is to be terminated? From the Biblical evidence, it is the negative and destructive elements of man and his environment. The object is an end to pain, sorrow, and all the associated miseries of present existence -- the picture is of God wiping away all tears, and of sorrow and sighing fleeing away (Rev. 21:3; Is. 35:10).

The end is also a response to the problem of evil and of sin. If ever restoration is to be made, if perfection is to be achieved, the Fall must be reversed and the disobedience that this event involved must be eradicated. The destruction of the wicked is accomplished by their own actions and desires (calling for rocks to fall on them, destroyed by the brightness of Christ's coming, Rev. 6:16; 2 Thess.2:8; etc.). [44].

To this can be added the end of human history in the present scheme. The parousia is the beginning of God's rule in its fulness, and consequently human power and rebellion must be overthrown: "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign ..." (1 Cor. 15:24-25); "For the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev. 11:5). The parousia is the end of this world and its power, it is the beginning of the next world and the reign of God.

The parousia is the absolute ending of death. The victory already accomplished by Christ is to be made conclusive, the termination that is death is removed by the gift of eternal life. This massive change in earthly affairs is perhaps the greatest effect of the parousia in human terms, the actual possession of immortality. Of all the elements of the parousia hope, this transformation to life everlasting and the destruction of death itself is one of the most unimaginable elements of the parousia. This drastic change necessitates a total

re-assessment of physical realities -- almost a whole new structure of physical theory, not to mention metaphysics. But the parousia is the mechanism of change, and the death of death: "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (1 Cor. 15:26; also 15:52-57). [45].

Understanding the parousia as the End adds a completely new aspect. End as termination demonstrates the interruption and conclusion of a dynamic process -- including the dynamic process with which this thesis has been especially concerned: hope. End does not necessarily have negative connotations. But the opposite tendency must also be avoided. End as termination must not be evacuated of its meaning. The parousia cannot be seen as something other than the decisive end of the world, its termination expressed in dramatic and physical concepts: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Pet. 3:10).

Yet, in the paradox that the parousia comprises, the End is not the terminus in all things. There is more beyond. The parousia is the definitive and absolute end only in some senses -- the end of the present order, the end of pain and death, the end of evil and sin. A useful illustration of the paradox is the biblical image of the harvest: "The harvest is the end of the world" (Mt. 13:39; cp. also Rev. 14:14-20).

In many ways the harvest parallels the parousia. [46]. The gathering out of the world is there. The separation of good and bad, the harvester(s), the time of growth and the certainty of a final and decisive act. Consider the "end" that is the harvest. It is evidently the last act of the process that began when the ground was prepared and the seed sown. So too is it the clear and absolute end of the tares that are burnt up. But is it the end of the harvester? Or of the wheat? The harvest is the end of a particular phase, the completion of a specific period of activity. It is not, except as the fate of the negative elements, annihilation. The harvest is the foreseen objective, the very raison d'etre for both wheat and for the sowing/caring activities of the farmer. The parousia is the similar end, end as objective and not exclusively as terminator. The harvest, the end, the parousia, is the necessary event that gives purpose and makes complete. To that consummative nature of the parousia attention must be given.

The fulfilment of the parousia promise is the other "End" to which hope is directed. [47]. In this concept, very rich in terminology, the parousia is seen as the culmination of the plans and purposes of God, the actualization of the word of God, and the specific event that responds to the desires of man for the decisive intervention of God.

The achievement of this is not to be seen in the successive processes at work in the world, nor in the successive striving for good, or in the evolution of man into something (or someone) better. The parousia is a culminative event of cataclysmic order, not the high point of some progressive climb towards improvement. The parousia is consummative in that God "invades" the present order and revolutionizes -- transforms -- it into the heavenly, the divine order.

As such, the parousia, the second coming of Christ becomes very much a necessity -- a counterpart to the first coming. The fact that the term a "second" coming is lacking in the New Testament (apart from the near approximation of Heb. 9:28) has caused some to conclude that such a coming was not part of the original gospel. But it would seem quite the opposite. [48]. The "second" coming in the New Testament is seen as being such a necessary part of the initial coming that the two are viewed as different aspects of the same coming. Each coming by itself is hopelessly incomplete and only makes sense when considered together. As naturally as an object requires a predicate (and vice versa), these two comings relate to and define each other, inseparable components of the coming of God to man.

These two events (as seen from the perspective of man) can be compared to the two foci of an ellipse, an ellipse which encompasses both Christian history and personal belief. [49]. They are both essential -- the first is the provision, the second the completion. Salvation is begun and ended in Christ, and the parousia is this

future focus.

What then does this future coming mean in terms of completion and consummation? The key word in this connection is "glory," the final unveiling of the might and majesty of God, the revelation of the glorious Son of man, and the glorification and transformation of the saints. In Romans 8, Paul expands the theme of future consummation, noting that those who suffer with Christ "may also share in his glory" (8:17 NIV). "I consider," he continues, "that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed" (8:18,19 NIV). [50]. And this consummation is not limited to just the faithful, but is extended to include the world: "In the hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God" (8:20,21 NIV). [51].

This aspect of glorious fulfilment is a very frequent picture in the descriptions of the parousia and of the promised participation: Christ comes in glory (Rom. 5:2, Col. 1:27, 3:4), he comes to be glorified in his saints (2 Thess. 1:10), they are partakers of glory (1 Pet. 5:1), have a crown of glory (1 Pet. 5:4), are called unto his eternal glory (1 Pet. 5:10, 2 Pet. 1:3). And in the closing scene of total culmination, the New Jerusalem is seen with the glory of God, the glory of God as a light (Rev. 21:11,23).

The parousia is Christ's coming to complete his promise, to make good his claims, to "perfect" the saints and the world. The parousia is at the "times of restitution of all things" (Acts 3:21). The parousia is the other side of the Incarnation. Christ came "to seek and to save that which was lost" (Lk. 19:10). God lost at the Fall, as well as man. The parousia is a restoration of man to God, as well as God to man. The parousia is the way in which God re-integrates his universe, his redemption of his creation. In this way the parousia becomes the consummation of all God's work: the saving of man; of the world; the removal of evil, sin, and death; the re-establishment of the harmony of his creation. [52].

But more than this -- the parousia is not a return to beginnings. The cycle is not to begin again. The parousia-consummation restores perfect communion between man and God, and the requirement of that consummation was the Cross. The new order is a "new creation," but just as those resurrected are still "themselves," so too is the new age indebted to the past. That past is the Son of God dying on the Cross, and man's response to this salvation. The fulfilment is only possible through that provision: the resurrection of the saints is dependent on Christ, the firstfruits from the dead (1 Cor. 15:20, also 1 Pet. 1:3). [53].

#### 2.4 The Parousia as Validation/Verification/Vindication

The parousia is the ultimate verification of the promise of salvation -- Christ will be proved unutterably right: "he is faithful that promised" (Heb. 10:23). It is the conclusive demonstration of the correctness of Christ's claims, and in a sense the retroactive evidence for his divinity and mission. Without the parousia the very truth and reality of the promises of God through Christ remain intangible and inconclusive. While the victory has been won, the evidence of that victory must be manifested. [54].

The acknowledgment by all of the righteous and just character of God is an essential part of the parousia event. Without such an assent to the absolute justice and mercy of God there can be no real end, no judgment. The parousia is the final evidence of the ability and worth of God, and is the summation and beginning of his righteous reign (Thus Rev. 5:12,13; Rev. 4:11; 5:9 etc.).

Christ's proclaimed mission was to reveal the Father, to do the will of God (Lk. 10:22, Jn. 6:38). The revelation of God was begun in Jesus Christ and made effective in the Cross. But the ultimate verification, the "trueness" of all this is only accomplished when the revelation is made complete, when faith becomes sight at the eschaton. The events of the parousia of Christ are a validation and confirmation of the accuracy and unchallengeable nature of God's eternal justice.



The parousia event becomes God's answer to the question: "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge...?" (Rev. 6:10). At that day of revelation and clarification, God is shown to be the just and merciful God, who rules in majesty and truth.

The justification of God is not the only part of the parousia experience. The glorious return of the Saviour is just as much a verification of the hope of the Christian community, and a confirmation of their faith and works. If the parousia is the aim and incentive of the Christian, then it is also the final arbiter, the verification of the right. At the parousia when all is revealed is the time of demonstration of the fundamental validity of Christian belief and experience, which is ultimately a trust in the power and the desire of God to save and to justify. This trust in the ultimately decisive validation of God's people and their experience is a major strand of Biblical thought. In the prophecies of the Old Testament, and in the writings (especially the Psalms), the decisive act of God on behalf of his covenant people and the righteous individual is eagerly expected, the anticipated final overcoming of evil by good. Such an expectation of deliverance and justification is closely allied to the anticipation of the day of the Lord and judgment.

A similar situation exists in the Christian writings. While the present conditions may be troubled and painful, there is to be the completion and ultimate validation of experience in the future -- the coming of the Lord. A summary of this future justificatory expectation is found in 1 Peter 1:3-7. [55].

The truth inherent in the Christian message is part of the unveiling, [56], when all is made plain, "for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known" (Mt. 10:26). The approval and approbation accorded the faithful is symbolised by the "seal of God," the declaration of justification by God. This picture of the "stamp of divine approval" is used as an important motif in the Book of Revelation, where it is contrasted against the opposite identification, the "mark of the beast." Before the parousia occurs, God's people are sealed (Rev. 7:2,3 etc.) and his acceptance of them is confirmed. The parousia is the climax of that sealing process when the consequences and validity of God's approval are made fully manifest.

In this context, it is the revelatory and justificatory aspects of the parousia that are significant. The parousia is the unquestionable demonstration of the truly right, and the correctness of following this absolute principle in the face of ridicule and scorn, doubt and disbelief. Ultimately it is the justification of the crucified One, and the realisation of his claim: "I have overcome the world." (Jn. 16:33). The parousia is the confirmation and illumination of that victory, the achievement of salvation in the

blinding light of the coming of the Lord.

Vindication also implies judgment, another strong component of the parousia belief -- the coming of God to judge. In the Old Testament the day of the Lord is synonymous with judgment and the execution of justice, so too the coming of the Son of man, expressed in the strong words of Mark 8:38: "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." The execution of judgment is therefore a primary function of the parousia. The parousia is to be like the dramatic judgment on the towns of Sodom and Gomorrah (Lk. 17:27,30), "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God" (2 Thess. 1:7; cp. also Heb. 10:27; 2 Pet. 3:7).

The parousia is the ultimate crisis of man and his world, the krisis of judgment. [57]. Despite the lurid language of destruction, the parousia is not portrayed in negative terms. For those that believe it is the day long-expected, and while the disastrous effects of unbelief are made very clear, these do not predominate.

The judgment of the parousia is an unveiling of motives and thoughts, the examination of "the secrets of men" (Rom. 2:16), that is again a vindication of the rectitude of God's actions in the theatre of the universe. When the Lord comes, he "will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of

the hearts" (1 Cor. 4:5).

The very serious nature of the parousia, and its compelling implications for all, is located in this concept of the impending judgment and the arrival of the Creator Lord: "Behold, the Lord cometh ... to execute judgment upon all" (Jude 14-15). The most solemn requirement, challenge, and conviction is this parousia-judgment: "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom ..." (2 Tim. 4:1). [58].

The parousia becomes charged with eternal implications, with decisions of the utmost urgency. While judgment is still located primarily in the future, "the hour of his judgment is come" (Rev. 14:) and this by virtue of the Cross, and by the present consequences of the future parousia. [59]. The coming of the Son of man in Daniel is a coming to dominion, the receiving of a kingdom. The parousia of the Son of man is the establishment of that kingdom, established in judgment by the King whose judgment is just and true (Jn. 5:30, 8:16), and whose word is the standard of judgment (Jn. 12:48).

If the Saviour is also the Judge, then the coming of Christ is the event of the future, the Judgment (for the believer) an eagerly anticipated event. The parousia is the entrance into blessedness of the saints, the judgment the demonstration of eligibility. Parousia and judgment cannot be separated, they both represent the vindication of God and of his people, adjudged righteous. [60].

The two main themes of vindication (of God and his people) and of judgment are summed up in the "tableau" depicting the parousia and its consequences in Matthew 25:31-46. [61]. The imagery used is particularly potent, and is effective in combining the decisions of judgment and its basis, and the final revelation of the truth of right-doing. The parousia setting is firmly attested: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory" (v.31). The magnificence of this coming is stressed by the references to glory, a concept that extracts its full meaning from the very frequent descriptions of the glory of God. The enthronement is a confirmation of position and power, the right and the ability of the Son of man to judge. In passing it may be noted that this is no parabolic description, and the form contains no suggestion that the parousia is not to be taken as a very real and concrete event. Metaphor and parabolic style are evident, yet this is no parable. Rather it is of a form that goes beyond its various literary antecedents: apocalyptic, parabolic, didactical, allegorical, ethical.

The separation of sheep and goats is again a vivid picture, and from the context it is clear which group is represented by each symbol. Judgment is seen as being in the process of being effected: the mixed group is separated into its constituent parts. The basis of separation is a vindication not of theoretical religious beliefs or of philosophical/doctrinal teachings, but of practical Christianity, defined as aid to the needy and the attitude of self-giving. The parousia-judgment is therefore a vindication of action rather than of

mental assent to specific religious formulas, a decision based on the outworking of belief. The vindication of the righteous is pronounced and demonstrated: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (v.34).

The opposite "vindication" is also enforced, the vindication of the wrongness of the opposite course of action; a double vindication that identifies the evils of the guilty as well as the righteousness of the saints: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (v.41).

Judgment is executed, the parousia has demonstrated the validity of Christian service and witness, and the truth of God's extended mercy to the wicked. In this picture of the parousia events, the glory of God and the righteousness of his eternal decisions are made plain, the coming of God to man is seen to be replete with responsibilities now and with everlasting consequences for the future. [62]. The final scene is of the perfection, and the absolute restoration of the God-man relationship in the eternal kingdom. The final victory -- the parousia -- has enabled the vision of blessedness to be made reality.

## 2.5 The Parousia as Salvation/Redemption

"Christ... will appear a second time ... to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him." (Heb 9:28 NIV.)

The objective of Christ's return is clearly defined as the bringing of salvation, the basic reason for the parousia. It is a salvation out of the present sinful and imperfect situation, a salvation of man from himself and from the world. The parousia is also a salvation of the world, of the existing space-time continuum, by its transformation into the eternal order of divine presence. [63].

The appeal here is undeniable. Other aspects such as the desire for an End, for the demonstration of the victory over evil etc. may be open to some debate. But one general attribute of man is the wish to live, and to avoid the void of non-existence. As an answer to the fear of death, the assurance of future life, and the continuity and betterment of existence, the parousia belief is surely significant, and such factors obviously influence its acceptance.

The provision of salvation in Christ is central to the Christian message. But if that was all, then there would be no hope, for it is the parousia that determines the achievement of salvation. Salvation is now a present possession, but only on the basis of Christ's work which includes not only his vicarious sacrifice but his consummative activity at parousia. Salvation in the present is only real in

potential and in promise, since all are still very much subject to sin and the problems of this life, and ultimately subject to death. It is the will and desire of God that is accepted by man, the God "who will have all men to be saved" (1 Tim 2:4.) Salvation is God reaching out and taking those who accept the gift back to be with him - which is exactly what the parousia means. To accomplish this, the parousia means resurrection. [64].

The picture of this transforming event is well described in 1 Thessalonians 4. At the shout of the Lord, at the voice of the archangel, at the trump of God, Christ descends and the dead in Christ are raised, and along with the living Christians meet the Lord in the air, a reunion that begins eternal communion. This communal salvation is the glory of the parousia - individual response to the words and promises of God, but a salvation together (see v. 17) from the world and into the presence of Christ. [65]. While salvation begins at the point of departure -- the present -- its final achievement, consummation and completion occurs only at the parousia.

For this reason the Biblical evidence points to the present salvation in Christ that has its beginnings in the acceptance of his message and provisions, and to the future accomplishment of God's salvation. For these believers, the parousia is the future tense of salvation. The one that endures to the end shall be saved (Mt 10:22, 24:14), whether the end be the believer's death or the final End. Present justification and reconciliation provided by the death and life of Christ as the guarantee of future salvation is also a frequent theme in the Old Testament: "Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold his



reward is with him, and his work before him." (Is. 62:11); "God ... will come and save you" Is. 35:4); "I will wait for the God of my Salvation" (Micah 7:7); "Wait on the Lord and he shall save you" (Prov. 20:22). Salvation by God is hoped for and longed for (Ps. 119:166,174). [66].

All these previous aspects of salvation are summed up in the salvation brought by Christ at his parousia. Christ is the Saviour that returns, the one looked for (Phil 3:20) since he is able "to save ... to the uttermost them that come to God by him" (Heb 5:9).

Yet all of this is salvation with respect to the disassociation and condemnation of the present. Salvation is not only from something. Salvation is to eternal life, to God, to his presence. As man views himself and his world he understands something of beauty and love, yes, but it is an understanding that is marred by the defects and imperfections now so obvious. This carries with it a self-analysis that results in the recognition of limitation, suppression, error and sin, a recognition that only the infusion of the power of God can alter Man and his environment in a way that is radical enough to permit the full realization of all the inherent potentialities. Salvation is the provision by God of the capacity to achieve these positive potentialities and is expressed through the "resurrection to incorruption." By the recognition of his insignificance and powerlessness, of his disintegration and despondency, man understands the omnipotence, supremacy and eternal nature of God. It is this something of this nature that man is invited to partake of (2 Pet 1:4), the achievement of which is

conferred at the parousia.

The promise is of being partakers of God, of Christ, of the Holy Ghost (2 Pet 1:4, Heb 3:14, 6:4); otherwise expressed as the salvation encompassed by being the real children of God. The power to become the sons of God is already given by Christ, but the realization of their inheritance is at the parousia. The status of being sons of God and joint heirs of Christ ensures participation in the saving event of the parousia. For the reality of this relationship is what is expected: "we wait for the adoption as sons" (Rom. 8:23). This is what the salvation is to, and consequently because this relationship to God and this inheritance is anticipated, its fulfilment at the parousia is of paramount importance. The adoption by God is already in effect, but the two parties of this family are still separated. The adoption is only made a reality when the Father ensures that his adopted children are there with him. This is God's salvation and is what the parousia teaches, what the parousia contributes, and what the parousia completes. The absolute reality of salvation is not achieved in the Cross because it is only there in the form of promise and prolepsis; a salvation that is sure and certain through the provision made by Christ, but which needs the parousia in order to make it an eternal possession and a consummated achievement. The parousia is an indispensable necessity of salvation. The parousia is the time of redemption in the outward sense, the occurrence and final transformation by God that makes salvation a total reality.

From the perspective of salvation - of the believer's and eventually of the physical world - the parousia is awaited: "Lift up your heads: for your redemption draweth nigh." (Lk. 21:28.) The ultimate achievement brought by the parousia is the salvation of God-man relationship, the restoration to communion of those who have been parted, and the re-creation of the world. A perfection more perfect than the original creation, a demonstrated salvation and an undying knowledge of the absolute nature of God's love -- this is the completion of Salvation of which the parousia is the consummating part: "And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation" (Is. 25:9.)

### 3 Parousia as Movement: The Concept of "Coming"

The verb erchomai is a frequent synonym for the parousia in the New Testament. The idea of coming, of movement, of "spatial displacement", strongly emphasized by erchomai, is also present in parousia which has as one meaning "arrival," thus implying a factor of movement prior to arrival. But what does it mean for Christ to come?

John 14 makes much of this idea of movement and locational difference. "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." There is here a strong differentiation: here and there, where I am going to and where you must (for the moment) remain, heaven and earth. Christ is to move in one direction (the ascension) and to move back in the opposite direction (his coming again, the parousia). [67].

There are similar remarks to the Jews of going away to an unattainable place (in John 7:34 and 8:21), the repetition of which is the occasion of Peter's question, "Where are you going?" The "going away" statement of 8:21 is of further interest since the Jews' query about possible suicide on Jesus' part brings the elaboration that "Ye are from beneath; I am from above: Ye are of this world; I am not of this world." The concept of Christ who "came down from heaven" runs through the gospel of John. The one who comes, the one who comes again, these are major motifs in the Johannine thesis. Similarly, the

"coming one" idea is repeated in much of the rest of the New Testament. The synoptic gospels also contain "I am come / not come" or "I came" statements, which complement those of John. In addition a great many of the Son of man sayings are unmistakably linked to the aspect of coming, a fact not too surprising in view of the original Danielic context. The view is of Jesus the Christ who came down into the world, who is come in the flesh, and who is the fulfilment of the Jewish Messianic hopes of a coming one.

The corollary of the fact of the one who has come is the future coming, the parousia. His going away is coupled with the promise of return. [68]. The Christian consciousness is one of maintaining the faith "till he come," "until the Lord come." Christ, the one sent by God, is to be the one sent again by God. [69]. The final promise is "I come."

In view of this centrality of the coming teaching in the New Testament, the actual meaning of this concept must be further elaborated. Why is the idea of movement from God to man so important? Why is there a coming of God? Why is the concept of presence insufficient?

One answer lies in the concept of confrontation. The approach of another person is a significant and highly-effective stimulus, a very "personal" one. The movement of one to another is the approach to meeting, to communication, to decision. It requires activity and response. It provokes. It results in action. Such an encounter is the result of coming. Jesus can do nothing until he comes to us and

we come to him. ("Come unto me." "Come ye blessed of my Father." Come take up the cross and follow me.") [70]

So the very fact of God coming confronts us and requires decision and action -- now. There is the evidence, the witness of Christ who came "and dwelt among us." There is the assurance "I will come again." Coming is the approach of one to stand before another, a meeting a confrontation that must be resolved. [71].

A second reply to why is there a coming of God is that there has to be. The description of movement implies distance. Coming is translational motion, moving from and approaching to. There is spatial separation, there is intervening space; separation of both personalities and of nature: [72]. Christ had to come down out of heaven, to empty himself (Phil. 2:6,7) before he could "be" with man. The concept of God coming down gives meaning to his transcendence, his absolute power and reign. If there is no need of movement, no coming, then God is here in the same place and in the same situation as us. There is no difference. Yet Christ is "from above," and so, in order that he may be with us, he has to come. He has to cross the vast distance that separates man from God. He comes to restore the togetherness that God and man shared at the beginning, the togetherness in which God's transcendence does not need to be shown in distance, where there is no longer separation because the barrier of sin has been broken down by Christ. The culmination of the parousia coming is "being with the Lord."

All of which leads through to the final answer to the coming of God question: Redemption. He comes in order to save. Coming, stretching out his arm to save, carrying the lost sheep to safety -- all these actions require movement. God initiates salvation and the Christ who came and comes is the means of salvation. [73]. He is the bringer of salvation -- movement once more.

But it is not just the awarding of a prize, the coming to offer a gift. The One who comes returns with the express purpose of taking his "own" home. It is a journey with a clearly defined aim and objective: a gathering, a movement down so that many may move up. This rescue feature is surely the primary aspect of the parousia coming. God comes to meet man, to judge, and to retake his absolute rule. He also comes in a glorious display of power and majesty, the revelation of divine transcendence. But above all it is a coming of God for his people so that they may be with him. Distance and movement are finally removed and absorbed in God's presence in all its fulness. [74].

Thus for the parousia to be movement is of the very essence. Christ is the one who comes in, who "re-enters." The total establishment of his kingdom completes the eschatological prayer, "Thy kingdom come." [75]. And in order to have such a concrete result, the parousia has to have strong objective reality. [76]. The encounter must be a real encounter, and consummation of all previous God-man encounters. The final coming is the climactic movement -- God coming to man in his glory and majesty.

One cannot deny, of course, that there are problems here -- "up" and "down", "here" and "out there" -- all concepts that need some careful reevaluation in the light of modern cosmology. Yet the postulate that God exists outside of man's time/space continuum surely makes God greater. Simply because man cannot conceive of the process of the parousia does not make it impossible.

The movement into the sphere of man's existence is the key to the attitude of God. After the holy city has descended (movement again), then "the tabernacle of God is with men and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God" (Rev. 21:3). That is the great objective of divine movement, of "coming," since the parousia is also a homecoming. [77].

Like the reuniting of parted lovers, [78], like the meeting of Father and lost son, like the encounter of two true friends, the separation is over, the goal is reached, the journey ended. The two are one, together; and absence is lost in eternal presence.



#### 4 Aspects of Time and the Parousia

The conviction that time and the parousia are highly interrelated lies at the heart of this thesis. In attempting to answer the question "Why the parousia?" it is the relationship of the parousia to time that repeatedly occurs, even if such a relationship is not always made explicit. To take just a few examples: in its origins, the belief has as its background a strong sense of chronological nearness -- soon, at the doors etc., while the decline in the parousia belief described in Section Two is very much associated with the passing of time and the concept of a "delay." The Millerites deliberately identified the parousia with a specific time, while the section on the Adventist experience demonstrated the problems of a continuing parousia belief in relation to an unexpected extension in the time of waiting. Problems that arise in the supposed "delay" have been partially responsible for the desire of some theologians to avoid the "temporality" of the parousia and to move in the direction of a "timeless" parousia -- as an existential symbol, or as a coming outside of time and so on.

Over and above such aspects of time in relation to the parousia are the direct impact such concepts have on each other. Thus if there is to be a real parousia, an "End" to the present scheme, what happens to time? If the parousia is the beginning of eternity, what does this mean? Conversely, what effects does time have on the parousia? Is the parousia to occur at a specific "time"? Does continued time remove the parousia? Is there a difference in how man perceives time, and how God

does, since it seems that the parousia is in part subject to God's operation in time?

The relationship between time and the parousia is the final aspect of the parousia implications to be considered in this section. It is undoubtedly the most complex, and yet the analysis must of necessity be brief. In many ways this final section is the focus of the whole thesis, since it is the point at which the parousia as a dynamic hope can be seen operating both within a time-framework and also as a rather metaphysical principle in the understanding of the relationship of God and man, time and eternity. Having made such cryptic statements, it is now necessary to examine some of the many relationships that exist between time and the parousia.

#### 4.1 The Effect of the Parousia on Time

##### 4.1.1 Parousia and the End of Time

The parousia as the ultimate end has suggested to some that this event also involves the end of time. While in the New Testament the parousia is definitely understood as the "end of the age," this is not equivalent to the termination of time. [79]. As Lillie notes, [80] the actual phrase "the end of time" is unbiblical, and to understand the parousia in this sense is to rather distort the New Testament understanding. The parousia is not specifically identified as the termination of time, nor is time seen as something to be destroyed. As Cullmann rightly points out, "Time is not a thing opposed to God, but is rather the means of which God makes use..." [81]. Nor is the parousia considered as saving mankind from time per se, unlike the Stoics whose "Salvation required extraction from this meaningless flux of recurring episodes into a timeless realm." [82].

Yet the parousia is in some way the end of time. If an eternal existence is the future state beyond the parousia, then time has been transformed into eternity. Time has been "ended." As is readily apparent, much depends on the definition and content given to the words time and eternity. [83]. If however these two terms are not seen as contrasting opposites, as two completely different modes of existence, then the understanding of the "end" of time becomes

somewhat easier. It is also important to bear in mind that eternity does not begin at the parousia. God is described as already "inhabiting eternity," and this state is very much tied up with the sovereignty and power of God. Yet this eternity does not mean that God is not related to time. In his God and Timelessness, Pike asks a number of pertinent questions about this assumption of God's timelessness. [84]. As he points out, if Schleiermacher is followed and timelessness means that God is not in contact at all with time, then God is presumably unable to act or think -- in fact God is so totally removed from man's existence that he cannot have any impact whatsoever. [85].

It is however unnecessary to assume that timelessness means that God is not in contact with time. If God is outside of time, (and that appears to be the understanding of both Old and New Testaments) it is also very clear that he is very active within time on man's behalf. He is simply not time-dependent. So although God himself may be located outside of time as humanly understood, there is no reason to suppose that God cannot relate to man's time. Indeed the central feature of the Christian gospel is that God has definitively acted within time -- the coming of Christ.

But this still leaves unresolved the relationship of parousia to the "end." What happens to time? Torrance writes that "the eschatological acts of God run throughout time to their end at the consummation of time,... acts that gather up time in the fulfilling of the divine purpose." [86]. The parousia may be seen as this climactic taking up of time, the consummation of this present

history. In the times of God's activity, the content-filled kairoi, the objective is being worked out. The parousia is the "filling full" of this kairos time, [87], the final and absolute redemption of time (Eph. 5:16, Col. 4:5). The parousia of Christ does not end time by termination, but fulfils time by extending it to eternity.

Yet "eternal time" cannot be of the same nature as time now, as has been noted by Brunner. [88]. The relation of time and eternity is evidently far more complex than either the concept of timelessness or endless time. Perhaps it would be more correct to say that God is supra-temporal (above time) rather than extra-temporal (outside of time). The time that is continued in eternity (successive events require the concept of time) is of a different quality to that which prevails now, or so it would seem. Alternatively one might understand that what is changed at the parousia is the limiting of man by time, with all its negative aspects. Whatever the case, it is the model of time's consummation rather than its termination that is better fitted to the function of the parousia.

#### 4.1.2 The Directing of Time by the Parousia

At first sight it may appear difficult to understand the parousia as an influence that directs time, since it lies in the time that is for the moment still future. Yet time is apparently directed by the parousia, not just in the constant unravelling of time as the parousia is approached, but more importantly in that the parousia is the

ultimate time, the last time, the end time which is the primary locus of God's fulfilling activity. Thus the content-time, the kairos is exemplified in the parousia. Bauer gives as one of the meanings of ho kairos "one of the chief eschatological terms. ho kairos, the time of crisis, the last times." [89]. The parousia is the ultimate kairos, the most evident aspect of God's direct saving activity. Brunner calls the parousia "the meaning and goal of cosmic history," and speaks of "the cosmic teleology of the New Testament." [88]. Christ is himself the "aim" of time -- he initiates, directs, completes. The parousia is the "end marker" of the divine event that begins as promise in the Old Testament, that is demonstrated in the coming of Christ detailed in the New Testament, and which has its point of final impact at the parousia. The singularity, the "oneness" of this event may be part of the reason for the lack of differentiation between what may appear to be separate events as far as man is concerned: the first and second comings of Christ. For Christ they are one. The purpose, the provision of opportunity for salvation, the objective, they are all the same. That the two comings are separated in time is not the significant factor. The importance lies in the "time of realization," the content which these events give to time:

A prophetic word, which is, we might say, a verbal event, may be identical with an actual occasion, which is an historical event; and even though the two be separated in time, they are the same event.... This is why Jesus could not talk about his "coming again" or his "second coming"; but always and only about his "coming," even though that coming were, as we should say, future. [90].

The parousia, if believed, directly influences the appreciation of time. Time becomes at once the medium of preparation for the parousia, and eventually the locus in which God's promises are fulfilled. In this sense the parousia is the point of convergence of time, the "time-point" at which all human time, human history is taken up and the point at which the kairos time is completely fulfilled. The objective is reached, and the directing influence which God has given to time is completed in the coming of God himself.

#### 4.1.3 The Parousia and the Interpretation of Time

It is hardly necessary to point out that one's beliefs influence the way in which time is perceived, nor to reiterate that the parousia belief has a strong effect on the interpretation of time. The parousia as the point of conclusion, judgment, vindication, consummation -- indeed all the factors previously mentioned -- directly influences the understanding and relationship of the believer to time. Time is thus related to the grace of God: the time of preparation, the time of waiting, the time of mercy. [91]. Time is also an instrument of divine activity, and is seen as God's provision of opportunity. Salvation is offered within time, Christ came in time, God acts in time. [92]. Yet time as it is presently constituted must necessarily be changed. The coming of Christ, the parousia, is the arrival of the God of time, the eternal one. The parousia is the point of change: mortal to immortal, corruptible to

incorruptible, the new heavens and the new earth. Confining, limiting, oppressive time is to be transformed into the new age, the beginning of the habitation of God -- eternity.

If all this is so, then it is not surprising that the understanding of time past, present, and future is conditioned by the belief in the parousia. Transience and imperfection are to be removed, therefore this present time is not the primary objective. The "time" of the future is the hope, the new existence initiated by the parousia. Yet this does not denigrate time present. This is the time of opportunity, the time in which decisions are made and beliefs adopted. On the contrary, the parousia may well increase the significance with which present time is viewed, since the necessity of anticipating and preparing for this coming is paramount (see Section One). Time past also enters the parousia's sphere of influence. This past time provides the basis for the belief (the incarnation, the first coming of Christ, the making of the promise). It is also the record of belief, personal and communal, and thus reflects the consequences of past belief and action.

Time therefore is transformed from a relentless and perhaps rather objectiveless phenomenon to one in which a definite end is viewed, an end which directs and influences present activity and attitudes. Time becomes a means towards this end -- the parousia comes "in the end," (and time progresses towards this); and is also the sphere of waiting, working, preparing, the provision of the one



who promised so that the parousia might include those who do believe.

#### 4.2 The Effect of Time on the Parousia

This aspect of the time-parousia relation is the one that has attracted the greatest interest, both historically and theologically. It involves the whole question of "timing" the parousia, a common occurrence as the historical data of Section Two demonstrate. It also includes the aspect of perceived delay, and the effect of this on the validity and viability of the parousia belief. Other time-related factors must also be included in this. What is meant by imminent, soon, proximate, near and so on? When is the parousia to occur? Do the "signs" give any way of marking out the passing of time and the approach of the parousia? Such questions could be multiplied, but they give a fair idea of the tremendous impact that time has on this particular belief. Indeed, the parousia is far more "time-sensitive" than almost any other belief, because it is future and directly related to the concept of time. One commentator has even observed that "eschatological consciousness" is a "response to temporality," [93], illustrating how much factors related to the perception and understanding of time do affect the formulation of "future" belief, in particular the parousia of Christ. In attempting to unravel some of these implications that time has for the parousia belief, a major distinction will be made. Firstly time seen as kairos, the time of God's activity, content-filled time. This is related to the question of whether the parousia occurs "in" time or "outside" of time. Secondly the more directly chronological aspects are considered, time as chronos. This is the basic meaning of the question "when?" and of the identification of a "delay." It is also the primary sense of

"timing" the parousia -- the setting of dates and the identification of definite signs.

#### 4.2.1 Time as Kairos: Parousia "In" Time?

The kind of time suggested by the identification kairos is that which is not defined by measurement or extent but rather a specific time which is identified by the activity occurring within this time. While the differentiation of kairos and chronos may be overstressed, a qualitative difference does exist. In New Testament terms, the kairos is the content-filled time, the real time of God's activity rather than the indeterminate extension of time marked out by hours, months, years and so on. From such a perspective the parousia must be seen as a primary event that itself determines the kairos of the End. This time is important because of the occurrence of the parousia: Christ is revealed "in his time," "in the last time." (2 Thess. 2:6; 1 Pet. 1:5).

Such statements indicate that the parousia is to occur within time. Indeed many commentators readily admit that the parousia must come "in" time, a breaking in of the divine. Yet the very nature of the parousia as an ending of the present scheme and the beginning of the future "age" provides considerable room for doubt. If the parousia really is the entrance of the divine into the present limited scheme, if the parousia is a transformative event, if "timelessness" is one attribute of divinity, then how can the parousia occur within

time? Thus the conclusions of one theologian: "The End of which the New Testament speaks is no temporal event." [94].

Such a statement is open to considerable discussion. How is a temporal event defined? If it is an event that is in some way conditioned by time -- the coming of a new year for example, then obviously the parousia is not a temporal event. It is not dependent on the completion of chronological time. But if the parousia does not occur as a real event within the constructs of the present scheme, can it really be of any importance? If Christ's first coming was in time, then why should the second coming not be? There may be valid answers to such questions, but they do illustrate some of the dilemmas posed in attempting to answer the question of a parousia inside or outside time.

Since the parousia is a boundary event between the present age and that of the future then it may be viewed as possessing qualities of both. Perhaps the best answer to the question of within/outside time is to understand the parousia as both. The parousia's impact and meaning derives primarily from an understanding of its future occurrence within the present time/space parameters. The God-man Jesus Christ has already entered as the determinant of kairos, the eternal has entered the historical and temporal. The future coming is not therefore disallowed because of such time/eternal considerations. Indeed one major aspect of the Christian kerygma is the coming of God in time, the intervention of the incarnation. The parousia can be linked with this temporal event, and may well be "of essentially the same texture as that of the historical Jesus." [95]. Above all, "The

new testament says that historic time was once triumphantly intersected, and in minor ways can still be intersected, by another kind of time which, for want of a better word, we call eternity." [96].

On the other hand the parousia is not of the same order as any other temporal event. The parousia is the part of a beginning, an eternity of existence that is qualitatively different from the present. Time as it is presently experienced does not continue. The parousia is the point of ending, and this includes time: "Time then has a beginning and an end.... The end of time, however, is the end of this world and the beginning of eternity." [97]. That being so, the parousia must also be "outside" of time, or at least the transformation of time. Completion, fulfilment, consummation -- whatever term is used does indicate an end, the end of one form or state: time changing to eternity. The parousia is this consummation, and the kairos of God's purpose is complete. "God's appointment of times becomes a promise implying fulfilment," [98], and when the promise is completed then the necessity for the kairoi is ended.

The parousia is also not "temporal" since it is the "End": "the eschaton, properly so-called, would be the final term of a temporal series." [99]. Something that occurs at the End, and is itself the event that transforms cannot be located as being within time. The parousia is the interface, and therefore can only be understood in this sense as a boundary, the point of interaction between the limited time of this world (ho kairos houtos) and the fulfilled "time" (eternity) of the next (ho kairos mellon).

The argument serves to illustrate the difficulties associated in attempting to relate the parousia to time. Much depends on the definition of time and eternity. And as Pike remarks concerning the latter, eternity has a "controlling effect on... [the interpreter's] broad theological view about the nature of God." [100]. The above discussion does however provide the basis for some attempt at a synthesis that preserves the "reality" of a parousia that occurs in time -- a temporal event, and a parousia that is part of the divine transformation of the present scheme into the eternal, a phenomenon that cannot be related to the human perception of limited and restrictive time.

Time does seem to continue in some form. If, past the parousia, events occur, then they imply the existence of a temporal dimension. It may well be that all aspects of time become potentially present -- the ultimate in time travel. Whatever the case, the parousia is the achievement of this state, and:

What is essential is that the negative aspects of linear time will be removed and replaced by a time in which all is continually being recreated, rejuvenated, renewed. [101].

#### 4.2.2 Time as Chronos: The "When" of the Parousia

Just as the parousia was not determined by its kairos, so too time as chronos does not fix the point of the parousia's occurrence. The extent of chronological time has no role in determining the "time" of the parousia, the "when" of the End. No indication is given that the parousia will occur after a given period of time, despite the many efforts to identify such a time period and to date the parousia. The coming of the Son of man is surely not dependent on the elapse of time, Christ is surely not waiting for the "parousia hour" to strike. Yet the "day and the hour" is apparently known (Mt. 24:36), and has already been identified. However "it is not for you to know the times and the seasons." (Acts 1:7).

Yet the question of when remains the most frequent question related to the parousia. This question has many component parts. It can apply to the attempt to date the parousia, the time period expected before the parousia (and hence such concepts as imminent and soon), and to the situation in which the parousia occurs.

The Sections of this thesis that deal with the historical material provide many examples of the attempt to date the parousia. Believers were trying to identify the chronological timing of the parousia as far back as the first century. The date AD 120 appears to be the first known time prediction for the parousia, and these attempts have continued ever since. [102]. At the time of writing (May 1982) the latest date set for the parousia is "next week." Such

chronological determinations are clearly not in harmony with the explicit New Testament instructions, and are self-defeating in that after the date set has passed, the validity of such a prediction is annulled. Why then the prediliction to set dates? Various reasons may be given. The need to make the parousia concretely imminent may be one factor, the concept of imminence breaking into a defining of the time remaining. Added to this is a general tendency to want to know with some precision the actual time of any event. The answer "soon" appears, in some cases at least, to be a disturbing and unsettling one.

Dating also provides a very clear objective. It delimits the time available for activity, and defines the actual time of the End so that believers may prepare. This may be likened to the desire to know the time of death so that preparation may be made.

Whatever the reasons, this answer to the question "when?" makes the parousia a chronologically determined event. God has to act because this is the time. The parousia occurs because the date set has arrived. And perhaps more than any other factor, this disposition to set dates has actively discouraged belief in the parousia. The New Testament makes it clear that no attempt to set a date for the parousia will be successful: the parousia occurs "at an hour that ye think not."



The aspect of chronological time is not the major concern of the New Testament. It is a mistake both to over-emphasise the concept of imminence and to suggest that the Church is concerned to explain away the non-occurrence of the parousia. [103]. The extent and identification of the time period before the parousia is of no importance when compared to the event. As Marsh comments: "Chronological time is recognized, but the distinctly religious apprehension is of realistic time." [104]. To know the date of the parousia was "to forget the all-important content of the kairos for the sake of knowledge of the merely formal elements of when and where." [105].

If chronological time is not the important aspect, then what is to be made of the other responses to the questions of when: "When shall these things be?" Such responses do not identify a "time," but indicate that the parousia is "near," "close," it will occur "soon," it is "imminent." Almost automatically such identifiers are taken as temporal in the chronological sense. Yet it must also be admitted that the question when can be answered with reference to future conditions as well as future time. Defining the parousia in this way seems to parallel the gospel accounts, in which the question when is answered by indicating the state of the world rather than the time.

Such considerations do not of course eliminate the temporal aspects of such qualifiers of the parousia. As a chronological parameter, can "soon" mean two thousand years? Obviously that is not true in normal experience which is related to our human lifespans and

experience of time. On the other hand, such a time period can be understood as soon if compared to a much longer expanse of time, or if related to a different standard -- " a thousand years as one day." And if "I am coming soon" is an expression of the will and purpose of God rather than an example of his foreknowledge, then the temporally conditioned problems are obviated. Some discussion of the concept of imminence is found in Section Five and does not need to be duplicated here. Whatever the meaning, it is also clear that the New Testament does contain an indication of imminence that has been interpreted temporally. Why was the parousia so regarded if there was to be such a long time before its realization?

One primary answer obviously lies in the need for preparation and continued watchfulness. The parousia was not in the far distant future, nor can it ever be for man whose life is very much limited by time. The threat of death makes the parousia "imminent" for all men. Another point is the impact of the parousia in the present as a reason for action and a modifier of belief. Its present influence cannot be obscured by viewing it as a future belief without consequences in the now. As Lillie states: "The truths which Paul wished to impress on his readers about the parousia were, I believe, its imminence and its finality. It was natural for a teacher to express the importance and urgency of a future happening by declaring its proximity." [106]. That is not to say that Paul was incorrect in so viewing the parousia, or that he deliberately withheld the truth, or that the parousia was not proximate. Thus Marsh:

It is not untrue to say that in the modern situation war is permanently "near," i.e. the conditions for an outbreak of war are constantly with us. The early church knew, as the modern church must needs recognize, that once history has been fulfilled in the Cross and Resurrection, the conditions for its end were unceasingly established."

[107].

This concept of "non-chronological nearness" is difficult, yet seems to provide a clear answer to the problems of imminence. [108]. To this may be added some degree of conditionality in the parousia prophecy: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise... wishing that ... all should come to repentance." (2 Pet. 3:9). Once again the question of "When shall the parousia occur" is answered by referring to the state of things -- the fulness of time is determined by conditions and events, not by the ticking away of time. This has led some to suggest that the reason for the apparent "delay" of the parousia is due to a lack of response and preparation by men. This is not the final answer, however. It appears that at a certain point God chooses to act, and "he that cometh will come, and will not tarry" (Heb. 10:37).

The stress on the near and soon nature of the parousia has been the main cause of the identification of a "delay." This aspect has also been dealt with in Section Five, and so will only be briefly mentioned here. [109]. The solutions to the perceived problem are many, but follow three main lines. One is to deny that a parousia was

ever promised. That at least avoids the idea of a delay, but it also destroys the belief in the parousia. The second is<sup>to</sup> suppose that there was no delay, that Christ did return within a few years of his death or that he comes in another way to his believers. Thus some have suggested the parousia occurred at Pentecost as the manifestation of the Holy Spirit, that Christ came in Judgement on Jerusalem in AD 70 [110], or that he comes at baptism, conversion, death, or in any other divine-human communication (prayer etc.).

Alternatively, one may see the parousia as having no delay since "How can the coming of that which doth not enter in be delayed?" [111]. Thus there is no delay because the parousia is not a temporal event.

The third view identifies a delay but sees it as relatively unimportant. The stress on imminence was a natural mistake, a slight error of judgment:

The error is explained on a psychological basis in the same way that we explain the hasty determinations of the date of the end of the war when the conviction is present that the decisive battle has already taken place. [112].

The delay is not really important. The parousia was seen as so important that it was also judged to be near in temporal terms. While this latter point may have some weight, it rather avoids the concept of a delay, and also introduces further problems as to the validity of the belief as formulated in the New Testament. As was noted in

Section Five, "delay" is a most unfortunate term from both the viewpoint of implied error and previous usage by Schweitzer and others. If however, the parousia is not so much chronos as kairos-related then to speak of a delay is hardly relevant. A delay presupposes some sort of dating, or that "imminence" must be taken in an absolutely chronological sense. That is not the New Testament position. [113]. It is most interesting to note that chronos is never used in connection with the parousia event. The time-related concept is that of kairos, and the determinant of this kairos is the parousia event itself -- which leads to the rather cyclic situation in which the parousia occurs in time at the time of the parousia.

But one problem still remains. It was noted above that the aspect of imminence was a part of the proclamation of the parousia, and that this was taken as a reason for urgent preparation. But if the parousia is not chronos-related, then how can the "soon" second coming be of any relevance to men who live in a chronos dominated time? Then if it is the state of preparedness and expectation that is the important consideration, and not the chronology, then is there any necessity for an actual parousia?

Answers to troubling questions like these need to be found in an understanding of God and Time. Once again, some discussion of this point occurs in Section Five. Peter illustrates the solution in terms of God's relationship to human time: which is both "shortened" and "lengthened" depending on the divine attitude (see 1 Peter 3). Man can only wait in his time of counting, until the parousia event which fills its kairos breaks in to what we count as chronos. For the ones

that are counting the time, the parousia is always soon. It can by nature be nothing else. As Berkouwer remarks on this passage in Peter:

But if one now raises the question whether this profound contrast between God and man does not exclude all perspective on nearness, he is forgetting that Peter was merely addressing himself to the skeptics, attempting to destroy their simplistic rationale of history. He was not explaining the human concept and experience of time as a meaningless accommodation, and it is incorrect to say that he postponed the fulfilment of the Christian hope to an undetermined time. [114].

He goes on to examine the New Testament record and explains:

In order to comprehend the meaning of the nearness concept, we should make it clear that again and again the New Testament stresses the fact that the time of the Lord's return remains unknown to us. This unknown aspect is not introduced in a context of secrecy, but in order to extend an urgent call to watchfulness. [115].

This is the reason. It is not so much a question of "soon" but of an "unknown time." These ideas are not identical. The call is "Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time (kairos) is." (Mark 13:33). This urgent call is not primarily concerned with the problems of a lack of a definite time, but with the need to be

ready in the time now. Knowing the chronological time that would elapse before the kairos of the parousia would have removed any need to watch and pray, and preparation could (apparently) be left until just before the designated chronological point.

This leads on to the last influence of chronos on the parousia that will be considered, the significance of the "signs of the times." [116]. The New Testament records a number of signs that supposedly indicate the approach of the parousia. They range from natural phenomena (earthquakes, darkening of the sun, falling stars etc.) to human disasters (famines, plagues) and social conditions (As it was in the days of Noah, etc.). From a superficial reading of these signs it would seem that they provide chronological markers on the time road to the parousia. Yet if they are examined closely it becomes clear that this is not the real purpose. They are not unambiguous, and are capable of varied interpretation. They primarily concern the conditions prevailing as the parousia approaches rather than identifying any particular time point. If they were definite, then the same problem of delaying preparation noted above (waiting until the signs were fulfilled) would also apply. Such signs would also tend to date the parousia. The signs given act as confirmers of an already established position -- when you see these signs, know...

The signs of the times are not chronological markers. They are related to the fulfilling of the kairos, the content of "realistic" time. Indeed they can be viewed as part of the same kairos, the time of the end. They are not bells chiming the hours to midnight.

The relationship of chronological time to the parousia, the asking of the question "when?" will probably remain a primary concern. Yet as has been pointed out, chronos is only really important in providing the facility for a response to the parousia message. In the end, the question "when?" is really unimportant, it is the present attitude that is determinative in the New Testament view. In all the argument over dates, signs, delay and so on, it is easy to lose sight of the fundamentals of the parousia belief, which are not determined by man's preoccupation with chronological time.



#### 4.3 Conclusion

Time and parousia are both complex concepts. The addition of eternity, God, and man makes the discussion very difficult. As Minear remarks of time, it is "a complex reality with many components: succession, duration, simultaneity, speed, measurability, irreversibility." [117]. As many have remarked, it is impossible to define "time." Even its measurement is complicated by Relativity Theory in which time can only be defined relative to an observer. Time can mean many things, and even within this brief survey differing aspects of time are considered.

The parousia may be even more complex -- transforming time, composed of many components (of which a few are described in this section), having incomprehensible consequences.

The basis of Christian hope is in its dynamic component, in the way in which the attitude of hope relates to time. The concept of the parousia is inseparably linked with time, and belief in the parousia provides some of the answers to the problems time poses.

Eschatology will never be adequately treated apart from recognizing that it is inseparable from man's temporality, i.e. from his experience of and relation to time. [118].

It is in time that the parousia belief has its impact. Time is so often connected with the parousia belief, as much of this thesis shows. The promise was made "in time," the belief was the object of hope during time, the event would occur at the "end of time," the end of the age. Throughout the history, the time, of the Church, the parousia belief has existed as a way of viewing time and as a response to time, a means of making time "relevant." Timing the parousia was obviously a significant aspect of Millerism, a defined imminence that eventually damaged the dynamic of hope expressed by the parousia. Within Adventism a similar attitude to time can be detected: no dating, but a sense of urgency that requires time to be used profitably in response to the belief in a soon coming. Time also plays some part in the understanding of modern theologians as they relate to the parousia. The many works involving time illustrate the contemporary interest in the subject, and the understanding of what time is surely influences the way in which the parousia is viewed. And in the more philosophical field of the parousia's implications, it is as the "end" of time and the "beginning" of eternity that the parousia makes its most direct impact in "present" time. Even if "the Christian hope is outside of time, but any description of it is inside time," [119], it is still apparent that not only is the description of this hope in time, but its experience and significance as well. The dynamics of Christian hope are only real in time present, it is there that the action occurs. Past promise and future fulfilment are still absolutely necessary, but it is in time present that the parousia is believed.

Notes to Section Six

1. For some examples of work in this field see P. W. Pruyser, Between Belief and Unbelief (London: Sheldon Press, 1974); M. Rokeach, Beliefs, Attitudes, and Values (San Francisco, Washington, London: Jossey-Bass, 1976); D. J. Bem, Beliefs, Attitudes, and Human Affairs (Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole Pub. Co., 1970).

2. Bem, Beliefs, 6; Rokeach, Beliefs, 6.

3. Bem, Beliefs, 7.

4. Ibid., 11.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid., 12.

7. R. S. Lee, in Pruyser, Unbelief, vii, viii, ix.

8. As a result of this, the "causes" that will be considered later are only possible factors and are not to be taken as determinative. It is however relatively clear that the desire for a future life (for example) can directly affect the adoption of the parousia belief, even though it is also clear that this belief is by no means the only response to such a desire.

9. Much work on this subject has been done by L. Festinger (see Bem, Belief, 54.)

10. See Section Five. The resolution of the problem of the non-fulfilled date is a good example of a specific belief in conflict with observed reality. The "psycho-logic" of resolution in this case was very varied.

11. Bem, Beliefs, 13.

12. Ibid., 34.

13. J. B. Rotter, "The Role of the Psychological Situation in Determining the Direction of Human Behavior," in R. C. Teevan and R. C. Birney, eds. Theories of Motivation in Personality and Social Psychology (London, etc.: Van Nostrand, 1964), 164.

14. The subject "hope" could of course provide enough material for another thesis. Here the subject is that of parousia-related hope.

15. J. Ellul, Hope in Time of Abandonment. New York: Seabury Press, 1973, v-vi, comments: "I had written for quite some time on the subject of hope, as in an article of 1954 for the Cahiers de Villemetrie. In all this I stressed certain things which today are fully recognized, for example, the decisive importance of the promise, the approach of the Second Coming, the eschaton which comes, further stressed the fact that it is from the standpoint of the fulfillment of the promise that the whole is to be understood."

16. McNicol remarks: "The New Testament grace of hope rests upon the

coming of the Lord. This word is emptied today of much of the meaning it had among the early Christians. It has come to be a vague and misty thing, the general habit of expecting things somehow to turn out well. Their hope was no shallow optimism." J. McNicol, "The Hope of the Church," in The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Church. Vol. 6. (Chicago: Testimony Pub. Co., 1910), 120. Moule makes similar comments: "Now, one of the things which a study of the biblical use of the words for hope makes plain is that this atmosphere of doubt and uncertainty is precisely what does not attach to them, as a general rule, in the Bible." C. F. D. Moule, The Meaning of Hope (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), 1.

17. A. J. Tambasco, "Past, Present and Future Dimensions of Christian Hope," The Bible Today, 79 (1975), 444.

18. Just one comment may be given as an example here: Ellul, Hope, 17: "The absence of hope is the key which makes it possible to subsume under a single aspect the moods and behavior of modern man in general."

19. L. Gilkey, Shantung Compound (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), 201-202.

20. The centrality of Christ and the personifying of hope lies at the centre of the gospel message. The substance, the reality is that "we have set our hope on the living God, who is the Saviour of all men," "he on whom our hope is fixed." (1 Tim. 4:10, 2 Cor. 1:10 NEB). This God is the originator and the founder of hope, the "God of hope." (Rom. 15:13).

21. See G. B. Caird, "The Christological Basis of Christian Hope," in G. B. Caird, ed. The Christian Hope (London: SPCK, 1970), 9-24, for a good exposition of the bases for hope.

22. Ibid, 9.

23. For example in J. Moltmann, "Resurrection as Hope," Harvard Theological Review, 61 (1968), 129-147.

24. Thus Meitzen: "The expectancy of resurrection seasons life with hope." M. O. Meitzen, "Some Reflections on the Resurrection and Eternal Life," Lutheran Quarterly, 24 (1972), 260.

25. It is the accumulation of events that is important. The resurrection on its own is not enough -- see the argument in Caird, "Christological Basis." After all, the circumstances of a "disappeared body" and "apparitions" are hardly completely convincing evidences. The whole picture is essential.

26. Caird, "Christological Basis," 21.

27. As Moltmann puts it: "From first to last, and not merely in the epilogue, Christianity is eschatology, is hope, forward looking and forward moving, and therefore also revolutionizing and transforming the present." J. Moltmann, Theology of Hope. (London: SCM Press, 1967), 16. This emphasis on hope is an essential part of understanding the gospel. Yet the known person of Jesus must not be forgotten since he is the basis for hope. This is the basis for

Scaer's criticism of Moltmann: "God's deliverance of Israel, which looks for its hope in the future, is based upon the deliverance out of Egypt. The word of promise can be accepted sincerely because God has acted in history and has shown himself to be reliable." D. P. Scaer, "Juergen Moltmann and His Theology of Hope," Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society, 13 (1970), 73-74.

28. Hence the affirmation: "You, who by him [Jesus] do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and your hope might be in God." 1 Pet. 1:21.

29. Paul makes a distinction between Christians and non-Christians on the basis of hope. Once "ye were without Christ ... having no hope." (Eph. 2:12). Now hope has entered, has become a determinant part of existence, and sorrow is only for others "who have no hope," (1 Thess. 4:13), because "if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." (1 Thess. 4:14).

30. As Schlink puts it: "The first act of hope is the preaching of the Gospel to the whole world." E. Schlink, The Coming Christ and the Coming Church. Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1967), 261.

31. E. Brunner, Eternal Hope (London: Lutterworth Press, 1954), 7. One might also add the words of O'Collins here: "Hope is not hope unless it is related to the future." G. O'Collins, Man and His New Hopes, (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 97.

32. Tambasco, "Dimensions," 443.

33. "First and foremost is the eschatological function of telos. The dynamic, goal-directed character of the noun is further underlined by the frequent use of the vb. teleo. This aspect stands out with particular clarity in those passages which are concerned with the future consummation... The important point here is that the end is not understood simply as the mechanical cessation of movement. It is the consummating conclusion of a dynamic process, the goal of which manifests the realization of its meanings and its intentions." R. Schippers, art. "telos," in C. Brown, The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Vol. 2. (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1976), 65. Note also Brunner's comment: "The whole content of the Christian faith is oriented toward the telos, the end." Brunner, Hope, 28.

34. The concept of expectant watching runs through the literature of the early church. In eager anticipation the realization of their objective was looked for; an active awaiting of the parousia. The assertion is very plain: "we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." (Titus 2: 12,13). Their aim is clear: "looking for and hasting unto the coming day of God." (2 Pet. 3:12).

35. Althaus expresses this well: "The primitive Christian preaching from which the Church came into being was an eschatological message of judgment and salvation. Christianity entered the world as the hope of the parousia of Jesus Christ the Lord and the inauguration by him of the kingdom of God." P. Althaus, "Christian Eschatology and the

History of Doctrine," in J. Pelikan, ed. Twentieth Century Theology in the Making, Vol. 1. (London: Collins/Fontana Books, 1969), 260. Note also Filson: "Eschatology was central and pervasive in the original gospel." F. V. Filson, A New Testament History (London: SCM Press, 1965), 336.

36. Once again it is clear that the importance of the parousia is in direct divine intervention: "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." (Phil. 3:20). The heavenly location as objective and aim is also found elsewhere: "The hope laid up for you is in heaven," "wait for his Son from heaven" (Col. 1:5; 1 Thess. 1:10) etc.

37. Note the remarks made by S. Travis in his exposition of the parousia: The Jesus Hope (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1974), esp. 93-96.

38. "The Christian teaching as derived from the Bible, maintains that as human history had a beginning, so it will have an end. As that beginning was God's act, so that end shall be also. In the beginning, God...in the end, God." S. B. Frost, "Visions of the End," Canadian Journal of Theology, 5 (1959), 161.

39. Many of these points could be extended. However, space prevents here, and there are some other works that deal with the more specific "word study" aspects, e.g. Brown, ed., Dictionary, e.g. Vindication (3:352-377), Salvation (3:177-221), End (2:52-66).

40. An interesting exercise in the development of eschatological themes is that of P. Brunner, "Eschata," Dialog, 15 (1976), 131-140. e.g.: "But even the apocalyptic occurrences at which we have hinted are not yet the last fulfillment. Christ's return is the breakthrough; but a breakthrough to the telos of 1 Cor. 15:22-28." Ibid., 140.

41. Note the remark by Link: "The term eschatos does not, however, serve merely to denote the new time which has begun with the coming of Jesus. It also refers to the final, consummative action of God that is still to come." In addition, the definition of Christ as ho protos kai ho eschatos "means the ascription to him of a rank equal with God's with the attribution of the functions of Creator and Perfecter." H.-G. Link, art. "eschatos," in Brown, ed., Dictionary, 58,59. Thus Christ both comes at the end through his parousia, and is the end.

42. Manson comments that "Christianity is determined by its own nature to reach forward to the consummation of the life in Christ." W. Manson, "Eschatology in the New Testament," Scottish Journal of Theology Occasional Papers Number Two (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1957), 15.

43. Berkouwer affirms: "On the basis of the gospel one can say that the expression 'the return of Christ' denotes the central theme of the expectation of salvation.... Throughout the New Testament the parousia is referred to as a coming in glory. It is an indubitable and manifest coming." Berkouwer, Return, 153. Note also Travis: "God leads us forward, not back. The Christian life means looking forward to the coming of Christ, like runners straining for the finishing tape." Travis, Hope, 93.

44. Berkouwer discusses this: Return, 157-158.

45. Not only is the parousia the end of death, it is also the end of life as presently experienced. Beyond the parousia in the resurrected state, man has eternal life. This is no transient life, but consummated life, life in all its fulness. The quality and character of this new life is so different to that which was before that the discontinuity is perhaps more obvious than the connection with previous earthly life. This invites speculation as to the nature of such eternal life, but there are no definite answers. Yet the promise remains, founded on the nature of God himself.

46. See the discussion of this theme in Section One.

47. "At the center of our consideration of 'cosmic eschatology' is the Second Coming of Christ. Christ has come to inaugurate his kingdom, but he is coming again to usher in the consummation of that kingdom.... Hoekema, Future, 109.

48. See Berkouwer, Return, 140-1.

49. Thus Manson: "What is realized in Christ in the present era is the character of the Eschaton, not its complete substance.... Christianity, therefore, from the beginning exhibits an essential bi-polarity. The End has come! The End has not come!" Manson, "Eschatology," 7.

50. An interesting development of the "tragedy" theme is that by D. D. Williams, "Tragedy and Christian Eschatology," Encounter, 24 (1963), 61-76.

51. Refer to L. Scheffczyk, "The Meaning of Christ's Parousia for the Salvation of Man and the Cosmos," The Christian and the World (New York: P. J. Kennedy and Sons, 1965), 130-157.

52. See H. Schwartz, On the Way to the Future (Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub. Ho., 1979), 256ff.

53. On the relation of this to the parousia see chapter IX of J. Bonsirven, Theology of the New Testament (London: Burns and Oates, 1963), 140-152. On the fulfilment theme in general refer to C. F. D. Moule, "The Fulfilment Theme in the New Testament," Journal of Theology for Southern Africa, 14 (1976), 6-16.

54. See Berkouwer, Return, 162. Note Pannenberg here: "Only because in Jesus' resurrection the end of all things, which for us has not yet happened, has already occurred can it be said of Jesus that the ultimate is already present in him..." This is what Pannenberg calls "the beginning of the end in Jesus' resurrection." W. Pannenberg, Jesus -- God and Man (London: SCM Press, 1968), 69,70.

55. "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade -- kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by 'God's power until the coming salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly

rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith -- of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire -- may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed." 1 Pet. 1:3-7.

56. Note Berkouwer's comments, Return, 155, 160.

57. K. Rahner, art. "Parousia," in Sacramentum Mundi, Vol. 4 (London: Burns and Oates, 1969), 345: "Judgment, therefore, this final judgment, must be seen as one with the consummation of the world and history as a whole: as an intrinsic moment of the parousia of Christ and of the resurrection of the flesh."

58. A wide-ranging review of God and the Messiah as judges is that of P. Bilde, "Gud og Messias som eschatologisk dommer i nytestamentlige og senjoedische tekster," Dansk Teologisk Tidsskrift, 40 (1977), 159-180.

59. Thus Russell: the motives for ethics "include the eschatological 'not-yet.'" R. Russell, "Eschatology and Ethics in 1 Peter," Evangelical Quarterly, 47 (1975), 84. See also B. N. Kaye, "Eschatology and Ethics in 1 and 2 Thessalonians," Novum Testamentum, 17 (1975), 47-57; and H. P. Owen, "Eschatology and Ethics in the New Testament," Scottish Journal of Theology, 15 (1962), 369-382.

60. Berkouwer comments: "This judgment is just; it corresponds to the way things are in this present reality. It will be a true unveiling, an unveiling of what was already seen by the eyes of God during the present, earthly existence." Return, 157-158.

61. Some recent articles are: G. E. Ladd, "The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats in Recent Interpretation," in R. N. Longenecker and M. C. Tenney, eds., New Dimensions in New Testament Study (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 191-199; P. S. Minear, "The Coming of the Son of Man (An Exegesis of Matthew 25:31-46)," Theology Today, 9 (1952-53), 489-493; R. C. Oudersluys, "The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats (Matthew 25:31-46): Eschatology and Mission, Then and Now," Reformed Review, 26 (1973), 151-161; R. Maddox, "Who are the 'Sheep' and the 'Goats'?" Australian Biblical Review, 13 (1965), 19-28.

62. Berkouwer, Return, 162: "In the parousia everything will be made known: the meaning, depth, richness, and above all the reality of life in Him who is the Resurrection and the Life." Note also Chapters 54-59 of E. Stauffer, New Testament Theology (London: SCM Press, 1955), 216-219; which make the triumphal imagery of the parousia very clear. E.g. (229): "But the revelation of God's glory in the advent of Christ is doxophany in a world that has no room for the full revelation of divine glory.... When doxophany comes at last into unlimited display -- then the doxology will also come into unlimited activity. When God unveils his face and pours out the fulness over heaven, earth and hell, then at last will every creature prostrate itself before his glory and exalt his name."

63. Ridderbos describes the parousia in terms of "The Great Future as Orientation Point," and notes that: "The announcement of the parousia of the Son of Man is even provisionally fulfilled in his resurrection. But this must not detract from the fact that in Jesus'



eschatological speeches all the attention is directed to the ultimate and definitive coming of the kingdom of heaven.... At the end of the synoptic kerygma everything is again focused upon the future." H. Ridderbos, The Coming of the Kingdom (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1962), 468.

64. On this very important point, see J. Plevnik, "The Parousia as Implication of Christ's Resurrection," in his Word and Spirit (Willowdale, ON: Regis College Press, 1975), 199-277; and M. Goguel, "Parousie et Resurrection," Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses, 10 (1930), 371-409.

65. Note here W. Strawson, "The Second Coming of Christ and the Future Life," London Quarterly and Holborn Review, 185 (1960), 176-181.

66. "God is the subject and the end of the resurrection." M. Bouttier, "Resurrection, Exaltation," Etudes Theologiques et Religieuses, 48 (1973), 516.

67. See Berkouwer, Return, 154: "This is not a matter of a play on words that places Christ's going, coming, and coming again all on one level; on the contrary, the return of Christ will make it clear what His prior coming in the flesh and His departure really meant."

68. The "first" and "second" comings are not repeat performances, however. Thus Berkouwer, Return, 155: "As a 'second coming,' then, the parousia is not a mere repetition of His original coming, but the unchallenged revelation and irreversible fulfilment of the meaning and force of reconciliation. The meaning is revealed in the fulfilled reality."

69. Refer to J. Provonsha, God is With Us, (Washington: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1974), esp. chapter entitled "The God Who Comes to Man," 136-147.

70. In another context, Moltmann emphasises the "coming-ness" of God. He points out that God describes himself as the one "who is and was and is to come," not the one who will be. There is, says Moltmann, a great difference between what "will be" and what "is coming." "God's future is not that he will be as he is and was, but that he comes. The future is, therefore, not a dimension of his eternity but is his movement in which he comes to us." J. Moltmann, The Experiment Hope (London: SCM Press, 1975), 52. This eschatological coming is vastly different to the inexorable process by which the future that "will be" is arrived at, the "is" becoming the "was," and the "will be" becoming the "is." Moltmann again: "If we speak of the 'coming God,' his future becomes the source of our times," and "we do not extrapolate the future out of the present; rather we anticipate the future in the present." Ibid., 53, 52. The future is not replaced by the present.

71. Note the comments by Fison on confrontation: J. E. Fison, The Christian Hope (London etc.: Longmans, Green and Co., 1954), 205.

72. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heaven are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Is. 55:8,9.

73. See Provonsha, God is With Us, 143.

74. And parousia does mean "presence." There is no space to discuss the question of Christ's presence and absence, the internal and the external Christ, the "I am with you always" and the "I will come again." Berkouwer carefully discusses this point in relation to the parousia, (see his Return, 140ff.). Fison also refers to the subject in his Christian Hope, 221: "It is the peril of the church either to believe in an eschatology which in fact if not in theory offers a presence one day in the future to make up for an absence to-day in the present, or else to believe in a mysticism which in fact if not in theory offers a presence to-day in the present which leaves no room for any further significant reality on any future date. But when in love eschatology and mysticism come together, then there is room for a real present presence and a real future parousia."

75. Thus Ladd: "[The God of the Christian gospel] is the Lord of history who acts in history and who will surely establish his Kingdom at the end of history." G. E. Ladd, The Presence of the Future (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 333.

76. See Berkouwer, Return, 140ff. Note also the words of Brunner: "From all these considerations it is clear that this thought of the future coming is anything but a piece of mythology which can be dispensed with. Whatever the form of the event may be, the whole point lies in the fact that it will happen. To try to boggle at it means to try to boggle at the foundation of the faith; to smash the corner-stone by which all coheres and apart from which all falls to pieces. Faith in Jesus Christ without the expectation of His Parousia is a voucher that is never redeemed, a promise that is not seriously meant. A Christian faith without expectation of the Parousia is like a ladder which leads nowhere but ends in the void." Brunner, Hope, 138-139.

77. The promise of the parousia is just that. In so many ways the parousia is indeed a homecoming. Christ comes for his own so that separation may be terminated and that the believer may come to his true and eternal home. The parousia is the coming into the presence of God, the restoration of that interpersonal communion. The essence of the promise of Jesus was that those who believed in him would one day be present with him: "I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (Jn. 14:3). The achievement of togetherness with Christ and presence in his home is the essential hope of the believer and the ultimate purpose of Christ: "I will that they also ... may be with me where I am." (Jn. 17:24).

78. Fison expresses this thought well: "... the eschatological prospect of Christian hope would not be envisaged as either a long-drawn-out or a magically speeded-up process in calendar time. It would be seen in its mystical context as the imminent hope of lovers' meeting in lovers' time, which is the best description that we have of how all journeys end." Fison, Christian Hope, 258.

79. Berkouwer notes the identification of the end as "the coming to rest of the stream of time in the sea of eternity," but then comments that "the biblical view of time is altogether different," and appears to agree with Cullmann that "time and eternity have temporality in common." Berkouwer, Return, 41, 42 and note. See also E. Brunner,

"The Christian Understanding of Time," Scottish Journal of Theology, 4 (1951), 8: "That time has an end, does not mean that all which is and was in time will be annihilated. Eternity is not meant to be a mere negation of temporality but its fulfilment."

80. W. Lillie, "An Approach to 2 Corinthians 5:1-10," Scottish Journal of Theology, 30 (1977), 60.

81. O. Cullmann, Christ and Time (London: SCM Press, 1971), 51.

82. A. R. Gualtieri, "Time, Eternity and Contemporaneity with Christ," Scottish Journal of Theology, 17 (1964), 401.

83. As examples of the controversy in this field see J. Marsh, The Fulness of Time (London: Nisbet and Co., 1952), 29, who indicates that eternity (aion) is simply an indefinite time period (which may be short or long) and has no fixed boundary at least in one direction. Cullmann disagrees and states that aion can "designate both an exactly defined period of time and an undefined and incalculable duration." Cullmann, Time, 45. On "time" see: J. Barr, Biblical Words for Time, (London: SCM Press, 1962); A. L. Burns, "Two Words for 'Time' in the New Testament," Australian Biblical Review, 3 (1953), 7-22; on time and eternity refer to E. Rust, "Time and Eternity in Biblical Thought," Theology Today, 10 (1953-54), 327-349; W. L. Craig, "God, Time, and Eternity," Religious Studies, 14 (1978), 497-503; C. Stinson, "On the Time-Eternity 'Link': Some Aspects of Recent Christian Eschatology," Religious Studies, 13 (1977), 49-62. Pannenberg's words sum it up: "It is evident that the question<sup>of the relation</sup> of time to eternity has a great deal to do with that of the particular reality to be ascribed to the statements of eschatological hope." W. Pannenberg, "Can Christianity do Without an Eschatology?" in C. B. Caird, ed. The Christian Hope (London: SPCK, 1970), 33.

84. N. Pike, God and Timelessness (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970).

85. Ibid., 8, 27.

86. T. F. Torrance, Space, Time and Resurrection (Edinburgh: Hansard Press, 1976), 151.

87. Cullmann, Time, 39, identifies the kairos with "a point in time that has a special place in the execution of God's plan of salvation," "a definite point in time which has fixed content." See also the discussion on time in S. J. DeVries, Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow (London: SPCK, 1975), 343ff.

88. Brunner, Hope, 53: "The qualitative difference between time and eternity would be denied" if an identity of nature is assumed.

89. W. Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 396.

90. Marsh, Fulness, 130-131. Note also Barth: "As the One He has shown Himself to be He must appear again in confirmation of the fulfilment of time, in a glory which is no longer particular and transitory, but universal and permanent, embracing the whole of creation both in heaven and in earth. The unity of His glory and our glorification

already achieved in His resurrection has again become the future, His future, for us. For us, therefore, the resurrection and the parousia are two separate events. But for Him they are a single event. The resurrection is the anticipation of His parousia as His parousia is the completion and fulfilment of the resurrection." K. Barth, Church Dogmatics, III, 2 (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1960), 490.

91. J. S. Whale, "Christians and Time," Canadian Journal of Theology, 4 (1958), 88, 90: "The inescapable content of time is decision and action. Time without content, empty time, is inconceivable. If nothing 'happened' time would not be empty but non-existent. Without events of will and act to give it content, time would have no conceivable form." "In the Bible, therefore, goal and end, telos and finis, are equated. It is the end of history rather than a timeless eternity beyond history which expresses the complete and perfect will of God. Therefore, to see in history the hands of the Eternal is to see there the mark of the eschaton."

92. As Marsh suggests, time may be "the ultimate reality." Marsh, Fulness, 1.

93. J. B. Wiggins, "Eschatological Consciousness: Response to Temporality," Journal of the American Academy of Religion, 43 (1975), 27-38.

94. K. Barth, The Epistle to the Romans (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), 500.

95. Torrance, Resurrection, 144.

96. D. Eccles, "The Christian View of Time," Frontier, 13 (1976), 152-156.

97. Brunner, Hope, 6.

98. M. E. Glasswell, "The New Testament View of Time," Communio Viatorum, 16 (1973), 253.

99. G. D. Yarnold, "Eschatology and the Idea of Eternity," Studia Evangelica, 5 (1965, ed. 1968), 159.

100. Pike, Timelessness, ix.

101. D. K. Erlandson, "Timelessness, Immutability, and Eschatology," International Journal for Philosophy of Religion, 9 (1978), 143.

102. D. Flusser, "Salvation Present and Future," in R. J. Zwi Werblowsky and C. Jouko Bleeker, eds. Types of Redemption: Studies in the History of Religions 18 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970), 57.

103. "The Parousia was never described by Jesus as an event which was in the remote future; and to be altogether accurate the attitude of the early Church should be described as a hope and an expectation that the Parousia was near rather than a firm conviction that it was near." "The theme of the indefinite time of the Parousia was stronger in the early Church than many students have realized." Art. "Parousia," in J. L. McKenzie, Dictionary of the Bible (London and Dublin: Geoffrey

Chapman, 1965), 639, 640. Flusser, "Salvation," 60, concludes: "The decisive importance attributed to the delay of the Second Coming as a formative element in Christian faith is at least greatly exaggerated." See also the whole discussion of the "delay" in Section Five of this thesis.

104. Marsh, Fulness, 25.

105. Ibid., 120.

106. Lillie, "2 Corinthians 5:1-10," 60.

107. Marsh, Fulness, 136. Note also: "Because the return of Christ is so certain, it is in a sense always near." A. Hoekema, The Bible and the Future (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 126.

108. Note the discussion of this in Section Five, especially the criticism of the word "imminence." As Hoekema (Future, 136) comments, perhaps a better word is "impending."

109. See the discussion of this in Hoekema, Future, 111ff.

110. See as one example E. Hampden-Cook, The Christ Has Come (London: Simpkins, Hamilton, Kent and Co., 1894).

111. Barth, Romans, 500.

112. Cullmann, Time, 87-88.

113. Hoekema, Future, 126: "For the New Testament writers, the nearness of the Parousia is not so much a chronological nearness as a 'salvation-history' nearness."

114. Berkouwer, Return, 80.

115. Ibid., 84.

116. Refer to Hoekema, Future, 130ff. for a discussion of the signs.

117. P. S. Minear, "The Time of Hope in the New Testament," Scottish Journal of Theology, 6 (1953), 345.

118. Wiggins, "Eschatological Consciousness," 28.

119. Eccles, "Time," 154. Ladd makes a similar assertion: "The goal of history is beyond history." Ladd, Future, 377. See also J. Moltmann, "Hope Beyond Time," Duke Divinity School Review, 33 (1968), 109-114.

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