

DECLARATION

**THE OBEDIENCE OF THE CHURCH AS A PRELUDE TO
THE PAROUSIA:
ECCLESIAL AND TEMPORAL FACTORS IN NEW TESTAMENT
ESCHATOLOGY**

by

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**submitted in fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree**

PHILOSOPHIAE DOCTOR

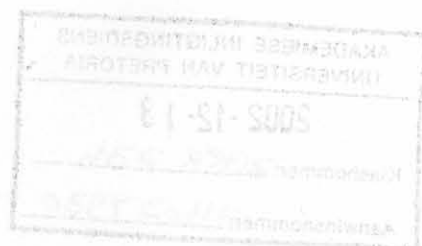
in the

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DECLARATION

"I declare that the dissertation/thesis, which I hereby submit for the degree PHILOSOPHIAE DOCTOR at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at another university."

SIGNED



(by Paul Hartwig)

DATE

24th May 2002.

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KEY TERMS

Eschatology; Ecclesiology; Parousia; Amillennialism; Premillennialism; Postmillennialism; Darby; Latter-Day Glory; Church Perfection; Obedience; Typology; *Naherwartung*; *Fernerwartung*; Last-Days; Salvation-history; Preterist; Historicist; Futurist; Apocalyptic; Theophany.

SUMMARY

This thesis investigates the possibility, nature and implications of a pre-parousial ecclesial maturity within the context of New Testament eschatology. It is a biblical presentation of the hope for the completion of the church's internal and external mission prior to the Parousia, arguing that the obedience of the church in its accomplishment of its mission both expedites and precipitates the terminal apocalyptic events. This subject of ecclesial obedience and maturity is diametrically opposed to the temporal ecclesial factors evinced in the dispensational theology of the 19th century figure John Nelson Darby. The thesis is an attempt to marry the historical nature of the church mission with both the eschatological and apocalyptic program of the New Testament, rather than positing her removal from this earth as the event to precipitate the end-time program. Through a study of the nature of the Parousia and its temporal aspects, we are introduced to the problems of the temporal nature of the interadventual period, specifically the relationship between the *Naherwartung* and *Fernerwartung* in the New Testament. It is argued that this problem is mitigated once it is shown that the degree of imminency is determined by the actualisation of ecclesial obedience in both internal and external forms. The extensive and intensive upbuilding of the church is thus determinative for the duration of the interadventual period.

Of primary importance is the New Testament motif of the expectation of a latter-day glory of the church. Once this has been biblically established, and the actuality of a definitive and temporal maturity of the church prior to the Parousia is posited, it is argued that this epochal event is the primary factor for understanding the timing of the apocalyptic events of the terminal generation.

Lastly, the thesis also provides a synoptic model of an eclectic integration of the traditional issues of New Testament temporal eschatology, namely, amillennialism, postmillennialism, premillennialism, as well as the preterist, historicist and futurist schools of interpretation. It is argued that these views can be integrated in a coherent manner once the factors of globalisation and intensification (effected by the church) are introduced into the inaugurated aspects of New Testament eschatology.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title page	i
Declaration	ii
Key terms	iii
Abstract	iv
Acknowledgments	v
Table of contents	vi
Chapter one: Introduction: The eclipse of the church in eschatology	1
1.1 Background to Darby	2
1.2 Darby's views on the church	7
1.3 Darby and the maturity of the church	13
Chapter two: The Parousia and apostolic church	15
2.1 The nature of the Parousia	16
2.1.1 Optical (glorious)	16
2.1.1.1 The New Testament and apocalyptic	17
2.1.1.2 Theophany and Parousia	19
2.1.1.3 The synoptic accounts	22
2.1.2 Spatial (bodily, temporal)	23
2.1.3 Personal	27
2.1.4 Social	31
2.1.5 Universal	33
2.2 The time of the Parousia	39
2.2.1 <i>Naherwartung</i>	39
2.2.2 <i>Naherwartung</i> and Jesus	40
2.2.2.1 Jesus and the kingdom of God	40
2.2.2.2 Did Jesus expect the consummate mode of the kingdom to arrive in his generation?	44
a) Matthew 16:28	45

b) Mark 13:30	47
c) Apocalyptic tradition	53
2.2.3 <i>Naherwartung</i> in the early church	55
2.2.3.1 Biblical evidence of sustained <i>Naherwartung</i>	56
2.2.4 Grounds for <i>Naherwartung</i>	59
2.2.4.1 The presence of the kingdom in Jesus	59
2.2.4.2 Apocalyptic tradition	61
2.2.4.3 National renewal	62
2.2.4.4 The Christian mission	63
2.2.5 <i>Fernerwartung</i>	65
2.2.5.1 Scriptures of <i>Fernerwartung</i>	67
2.2.6 Grounds for <i>Fernerwartung</i>	69
2.2.7 Salvation-history	71
2.2.8 Salvation-history and the church period	73
2.3 The contingency of the Parousia	77
2.3.1 Explicit Scriptures of expeditious periods within the New Testament	77
2.3.2 Explicit Scriptures of expeditious conditions	79
2.3.2.1 The repentance of Israel	79
2.3.2.2 The condition of the church	82
2.3.3 Implicit theological factors	84
 Chapter three: Ecclesial fulfillment within history	 89
3.1 Millennial views and the church	89
3.1.1 Premillennialism and the church	91
3.1.1.1 Historic premillennialism	91
3.1.1.2 Dispensational premillennialism	92
3.1.2 Postmillennialism and the church	93

3.1.3	Amillennialism and the church	97
3.1.4	Hope for eschatological ecclesial renewal	99
3.2	A mature church within history	105
3.2.1	The Christological expectation of a mature church	105
3.2.1.1	Parables of the kingdom of God	106
a)	The parable of the wheat and the tares	106
b)	The parable of the dragnet	107
c)	The parables of the mustard seed and the yeast	108
d)	The parable of the seed and the soil	110
3.2.1.2	Building the church	111
3.2.1.3	The coming Elijah	112
3.2.1.4	Expected persecution	115
3.2.1.5	The missionary mandate	115
3.2.1.6	The Johannine upper-room discourse	117
3.2.2	The Pauline expectation of a mature church	122
3.2.2.1	Paul's desire to present the church as a pure virgin to Christ	122
a)	2 Corinthians 11:1-2	123
b)	Colossians 1:28	124
c)	1 & 2 Thessalonians	125
d)	Philippians 1:3-11	127
e)	1 Corinthians 1:4-9	130
3.2.2.2	Paul's theological explication: Ephesians 4:1-16	132
3.2.2.3	'Maturity' of Christians?	138
3.2.2.4	Obedient churches - the goal of the Pauline mission	140
3.2.2.5	Paul and salvation-history	143
3.2.3	The expectation of a mature church in other New Testament writings	149
3.2.3.1	Hebrews and Psalm 110	149
3.2.3.2	James	152
3.2.3.3	1 & 2 Peter	153
3.2.3.4	Jude	154
3.2.3.5	1 & 2 & 3 John	155
3.2.3.6	Revelation	155

a) The churches	159
b) The 144 thousand	160
c) The two witnesses	161
d) The dragon and the church	162
e) The virgins	163
f) The prepared bride	164
3.3 The anatomy of a mature church	167
3.3.1 Ecclesial obedience and discipline	168
3.3.2 Ecclesial love and unity	171
3.3.3 Ecclesial witness	172
Chapter four: Ecclesial fulfillment and historical consequences	177
4.1 Globalisation	179
4.1.1 The necessity of global witness	179
4.1.2 Periods of intransigence	187
4.2 The apocalyptic scenario	191
4.2.1 Terminal tribulation	192
4.2.2 The rebellion and the apostasy	194
4.2.3 The Antichrist	197
4.2.4 The parousial consummation	199
4.3 Typological structures	201
4.3.1 Defining typology	202
4.3.2 Characteristics of typological structures	203
4.3.2.1 Historical recurrence	203
4.3.2.2 Theological correspondence	204
4.3.2.3 Antitype's intensification	205
4.3.2.4 Evidence of the theological intention of a type	206
4.3.3 The midpoint as type	206
4.3.4 Typological examples of ecclesial themes	209
4.3.4.1 Some Old Testament types	209
4.3.4.2 Christological paradigm	211

CHAPTER ONE

4.3.4.3	Apostolic anticipation	211
Conclusion		213
Addendum 1	Prophecy and apocalyptic in the Old Testament	215
Addendum 2	Wright's understanding of Mark 13	219
Diagram 1	Midpoint extension	224
Diagram 2	A synoptic model for integrating the temporal factors of New Testament eschatology	225
Select bibliography		226

Having now begun, it must be noted that this thesis is primarily a biblical-theological polemic for the final obedience of the church and the crucial function of this occurrence in relation to NT apocalyptic. It will seek to show that this eschatological aspect is rooted in the Scriptures and that it has been articulated at various times throughout the history of the Christian church. For this reason, chapter three contains the heart of the thesis, focusing on the biblical grounds for such an eschatological hope.

The focus of this work is thus on the more horizontal and temporal aspects of eschatology, rather than on those "vertical" eschatological dimensions in NT theology. We believe that a reemphasis of these aspects in NT eschatology will provide the church with a sense of historical destiny and world-wide mission.

Lastly, due to the scope of the topic and the diversity of opinion, footnotes have been used. These will hopefully provide the reader with important explanation and help in further study.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: THE ECLIPSE OF THE CHURCH IN ESCHATOLOGY

As we approach our subject of the church's historical destiny, the dispensational theology of John Nelson Darby [1800-1882] will be discussed, providing an introduction and backdrop for the entire study. In his writings, and in the dark shadow he cast over huge segments of Christendom, we have a crystallised instance of ecclesio-eschatological pessimism. He is representative of the fusion of ecclesial and eschatological views that spawned a distinct theological system, commonly known as Dispensationalism. One of the primary axioms in his theology was his denigration of the historical identity and mission of the church – a tenet which has directly and indirectly affected the thinking of many Christians. This thesis can therefore be seen as a proposed answer to the ecclesial pessimism of Darby and Dispensationalism. It will be shown that the church's presence in the world (not its absence) and its successful accomplishment of the missionary mandate is the crucial factor in understanding the apocalyptic events of the terminal period.

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1.1 Background to Darby

The eschatological views of John Nelson Darby were not wholly unique.¹ The matrix for his eschatology was the period of eschatological ferment that arose as a consequence of the volcanic French Revolution in the late 1700's and early 1800's (cf. Froom 1946:265-533). Prophetic conferences in England at the estates of the Anglican Henry Drummond (Albury) in 1827 and 1828 and the Irishwoman Lady Powerscourt from 1831-1833, crystallised and popularised, respectively, the prevailing historicist and futurist interpretations of Daniel and Revelation (Bass 1960:146; Murray 1991:185-206; Sandeen 1978:18-19, 34-39). 'The Albury conferences...gave structure to the British millenarian revival, consolidating both the theology and the group of men who were to defend it' (Sandeen:18-19). According to Sandeen (:38), at the Powerscourt session in 1833 'Darby introduced into discussion...the ideas of a secret rapture of the church and of a parenthesis in prophetic fulfillment'.²

It was a period in which futurism came to full bloom, with the tectonic affects of the French Revolution, industrialisation, religious romanticism, modernism and the like, portending the imminent fulfillment of prophetic expectations. The violent uprooting of both political and social institutions occasioned apocalyptic fervor. The Revolution was a 'cataclysm [that] undermined the progressive and rationalist cosmology of the eighteenth century' (Sandeen 1978:7) and provided the necessary fillip for an ardent millenarian movement.³ This era was the zenith of the historicist school of eschatological interpretation, and interestingly, according to Nelson

¹ Kromminga (1945:204-206) calls Cocceius [d. 1669] the father of dispensationalism. According to Williams, the genius of dispensationalism is that it 'understands the ways of God in our world in an historical framework' (1989:179).

² Sandeen (:64) believed that 'neither Irving nor any member of the Albury group advocated any doctrine resembling the secret rapture', whilst others (Rennie 1992:197) credit Edward Irving as being the generator of this novel doctrine. Rennie's views seem to have the majority of scholarly consensus. Either way, the resilience of this 'doctrine' is seen in the contemporary best-selling series *Left-Behind*, authored by La Haye and Jenkins (1995). Interestingly, La Haye and Ice (1999) formed the Pre-Trib Research Center in 1992 in order to 'communicate the rapture to the present generation' (Ice:12).

³ 'The modern revival of millenarianism originated in the era of the French Revolution...The French Revolution was directly responsible for the revival of prophetic concern' (Sandeen:xxii, 5; also Nelson 1981). Also, the American Millerite adventist movement can be seen as the volcanic release of much of this apocalyptic fervour [1843]. 'William Miller began to teach a similar kind of eschatology at nearly the same time as the British millenarians were creating excitement by their second advent proclamations' (Sandeen:42). Cf. Froom 1946:429-854 for an exhaustive narration of this Adventist movement.

(1981:205), 'no events of the decade of revolution were interpreted as more clearly confirmatory of the correctness of the historicist schema of prophecy with its preoccupation with the conclusion of 1260 prophetic years than those that transpired in Rome in 1789'. This (Eurocentric) historicist interpretation and its year-day key was the 'Rosetta stone' of prophetic interpretation that spawned this theological 'riot' in eschatology.¹ Coad (1968:108) paints the picture:

Many believed that the prophetic sections of the Bible were intended to provide a divine summary of future human history, from which it would be possible for the enlightened of later ages to draw firm information on the course of current historical events. Such studies reached a point of great excitement in the years following the French Revolution, largely because, about a century before, several expositors had made prophecies on the basis of biblical statements, which were taken to have foretold the French Revolution and its aftermath.

The end result of all of these factors was a return to the premillennial framework in place of the optimistic Whitbyian postmillennial world view that had dominated the eighteenth century eschatological outlook. Many now believed that 'society and the church were on the downgrade until the parousia, although this might be interrupted by a brief "latter rain" of the Spirit's power' (Rennie 1992:197). Sandeen (1978:13) has noted how converts to premillennialism in the 1800's brought with them a sense of ecclesial disillusionment, generated particularly from the social and religious upheaval of the French Revolution: 'Converts to premillennialism abandoned man's ability to bring about significant and lasting social progress and in the church's ability to stem the tide of evil, convert mankind to Christianity, or even prevent its own corruption'. The situation could only be rectified by the personal presence of Jesus Christ.²

Sandeen's book *Roots of Fundamentalism* (1978) effectively showed how this new eschatological emphasis was introduced by the theological creativity of the early 1800's. Many of these leaders 'reached their theological conclusions without the benefit of the influence of their most immediate millenarian predecessors' (Sandeen:xxii). Novel doctrines matched the unique times. Darby is the prime

¹ The Albury group (Drummond, Irving *et al*) stated that: 'The 1260 years of Daniel 7 and Revelation 13 ought to be measured from the reign of Justinian to the French Revolution' (Sandeen 1978:21-22).

² Froom (1946:263-282) traces the resurgence of the futurist interpretation back to the Catholic priest Lacunza [1731-1801], a man whose writings Irving translated into English. See Gundry (1977:53-54) on the historical *Zeitgeist* during the premillennial rise.

example of this truth. Although Darby was, like all of us, a child of his day, he however came into his own by taking those prevalent eschatological views and integrating them into his convictions as to the state of the church in the 1800's.¹ Therefore Bass (1960) understood the essential issue with Darby as not with him being the originator of a distinctive dispensational hermeneutic but his attempts to integrate key dispensational tenets into a basic pattern of interpretation, and to systematise it in a prophetic doctrine which he promulgated (:47). His Brethren affiliations and convictions generated his own distinct interpretation and application of the new prophetic viewpoint. His first piece of theological writing in 1828, *The Nature and Unity of the Church of Christ*, reveals him as firstly an ecclesiologist and then an eschatologist. Thus Neatby (1902:76) proffered that 'all his actions subserved ecclesiological ends'. Right from the beginning, his eschatology seems to have been fueled by a radical ecclesiology, and *visa versa*. 'His doctrine of the church seems to have acted as the catalytic agent for the rest of his beliefs' (Sandeen 1978:66-67). In order to cursorily view his ecclesiology and resultant eschatology, we must briefly note the salience of the 19th century Brethren Movement.

Brethrenism was primarily an ecclesiastical reaction to the prevalent state of the Anglican church in early 1800's. It began as an attempt 'to secure a spiritual fellowship where all men might gather under the theme "The Blood of the Lamb and the Union of the Saints"' (Bass 1960:142). Small groups of Christians in many different parts of the British Isles were becoming disillusioned with the spiritual condition of the regular churches, and were breaking off to form independent congregations of their own. Many of the well educated National Church believers (United Church of England and Ireland) who were recently revived, were drawn to the class and educated high culture of early Brethrenism. These 'evangelical' Anglicans, known as Recordites, were characterised by their upper class Romanticism, ecclesial idealism and antipathy toward continental rationalism (Rennie 1992:191). Concerns of a rejuvenated Roman Catholic peasantry, aided and abetted by political liberation,

¹ Much to the credit of Darby, he broke somewhat free from the regnant historicist interpretation of Revelation and favoured a more futurist model. However, historicist tendencies still seem to have affected his 'eschatologising' of his contemporary generation. Thus Sandeen (1978:39): 'The divergence between the historicists and futurists remained the only serious source of dissent among the millenarians during the first generation of the movement'. Cf. Sandeen (:36-38) who mentions the attack on the 'year-day' principle at the first Powerscourt conference, so essential for the move from a historicist to a futurist interpretation of Daniel and Revelation (also Rennie 1992:199).

became a socio-religious threat to many Anglo-Irish land-owning aristocratic Anglicans – a fact fuelling the uncertainty of the times and resulting in disaffection over the response of the Anglican Church (Rennie:191).¹ Many defected to the Brethren sodalities. The Dublin, Plymouth and Bristol congregations became prototypical.

Being mainly of Anglican stock, the disaffected were suspicious of the non-conformist churches and many, including Darby, never considered joining them or any other institutionalised bodies. Joining these bodies would imply another separation from one party to join another. The non-conformists were seen as examples of 'Gentile apostasy', being fraught with the liberalism that follows from the defection from the Calvinistic heritage (Rennie 1992:197). Neatby (1902) posits the source of Darby's ecclesiology as that of a mixture of High Churchmanship, evangelicalism and Puseyite Romanticism. This idealism prejudiced him against many otherwise virulent forms of Christianity of his day:

He felt the outward failed to maintain a correspondence with the inward. But Dissent mended nothing. It was an attempt to repair the irreparable. They could not restore the glory of the Church, for they could not restore its unity, nor gather together the scattered children of God. The only thing to do was to own at once the ruin, and the impotence to remedy it; and in Darby's view, this was his great and distinctive witness (Neatby:90).

With the crisis of ecclesial identity, many met informally, without formally seceding from the Anglican Church. Yet later more and more people seceded and these informal 'nameless' groups developed distinct identities. Many overcame their initial disillusionment toward other church bodies and reached out the right hand of fellowship with other believers. Others smarted and never adopted a positive outlook toward any others. The latter became reactionary, pessimistic and libelous in their words and writings, holding on to ecclesiastical shibboleths and party interpretations. This tendency crystallised in the Exclusive Brethren, whilst the other current of Brethrenism joined the ranks of the conservative evangelicals, albeit with their own distinct flavour.²

¹ Preskett (1997:310) mentions the following factors that contributed to the rise of Brethrenism and the switch to futurism: the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts in 1828 extended civil rights to non-conformists; George the 4th signed the Emancipation Act, emancipating Catholics in 1829; the Great Reform Bill of 1832 was followed by a cholera outbreak; and the education of Irish children on a non-Protestant basis.

² 'The epoch of Excelsivism really derives its whole character, and its therefore sovereign explanation, from the personality of Darby' (Neatby 1902:192). Bass (1960:143) considered Darby vital to the organic growth and intellectual articulation of Brethrenism: 'Darby was also undoubtedly the maker

Early Brethrenism championed Scriptural sincerity and liberty in worship. Their Romanticism accounted for their penchants of philosophical history, literal Scriptural interpretations and the confession of the verbal inspiration of Scripture (Rennie 1992:195-197). Yet they were first and foremost an ecclesiastical renewal, and many who looked for a more simple and 'apostolic' church practice swelled their ranks. Their genius was their emphasis on the *oneness of the church* as the body of Christ, and they welcomed all true believers, in contrast to 'sectarian' Protestantism and Anglicanism's 'special membership' for the Lord's table. Breaking of bread was a weekly occurrence for *all* sincere believers. The Table, not the Pulpit, was central to their meetings. This fraternal focus accounted for their antipathy toward the clerical caste and the unscriptural nature of 'man-ordained ministry'. Yet the roots of many were still in Anglican soil. Regarding this residue of Anglicanism in Brethrenism, Neatby (1902:194) provides further elaboration on the nature of Darby's ecclesial practice and of early Brethrenism: 'Fundamentally, the conception to which Darby devoted his enormous energies for more than fifty years was a High Churchism that should disdain the common accompaniment of Ritualism, and borrow from Protestantism an intensely Biblical element'. The movement could not fully extricate itself from the heritage of the Anglican communion.

In sum, McDowell (1983:211) characterised the Brethren as 'fundamentalistic, evangelical, Calvinistic, baptist, objectivist, congregational, non-clerical, futurist and separatist'. Yet while their association with certain prophetic views was a later outgrowth, their remnant mentality provided the fertile ground for the then contemporary eschatological views to take firm root. Their reactionary nature set many on a path that became narrower and narrower, eventually resulting in a perverted form of Christianity (the 'Exclusive Brethren'). Others fortunately joined with other movements on the evangelical highway, although they retained their Brethren distinctives (the 'Open Brethren').

of Brethrenism as a theological system, and he gave it the impetus it needed for expansion. He systematized its doctrine, and through his own dynamic personality, intellectual capabilities, and social position, popularized the movement.

1.2 Darby's views of the church

Darby was a 'mystic', a linguist (he translated the Bible or portions thereof into French, German, Dutch, and Italian), an indefatigable traveler, an impassioned preacher and a prolific writer (40 volumes remain of his collected writings, which Sandeen (1978:23) considers as 'almost uniformly unintelligible').¹ He was deeply dismayed over the present state of the church - a fact which dominated his thinking and ecclesiastical labours. He had a 'pervasiveness of dissatisfaction with the church, [an] interest in prophecy and the second advent, and [a] desire to break through apathy and tradition to the heart of the apostolic faith' (Sandeen:32). To his credit, he sought to turn into reality the principles which others merely confessed with their lips. His pain over the state of the church was eased with his separation of the 'church' into two distinct groups, reflecting a *dual character of the church*: the visible Christendom and the invisible Bride of Christ, the human institution and the true people of God. This resulted in a defamatory stance toward the visible and empirical church, and alienated him from the mainstream of Christianity. The *ruin of the church* became axiomatic for him and coloured much of his eschatology (Neatby 1902:87-95). Startlingly, 'it was of the ruin of the Church as the company of the elect that Darby predicated the ruin' (Neatby:88).

Darby and many others were disenchanted with the church and 'man-ordained-ministry', opting rather to meet together with others of like mind. Together with this ecclesial disappointment and his dichotomy between the professing church and the authentic church, he was entrenched further into a disaffected separatist mentality. McLaren (1995), surveying the origins of the Open Brethren, characterises Darby as a religious purist who called for a positive separation from all established and dissenting churches. The root of such a reaction to both the established church and the nonconformist bodies is found in Neatby's statement that 'he [Darby] made all the characteristic testimony of the Church...to depend on the preservation of external unity' (1902:89). Darby was disgusted at the evasive justification of the distinction between the visible Church and the invisible Church - the church was not to be an

¹ Cf. Sandeen pp 30-41, 59-80 for further information on Darby and the millenarian movement in Britain in 1800's. For a letter crystallising Darby's personal experience in seceding from the Anglicans, see pp 32-34 in Sandeen. See also Neatby 1902:192-198, who wrote of Darby's monumental enthusiasm as a gigantic failure.

invisible light of the world. He thus traced a dim and perilous way, between the Scylla of acquiescing with the 'mixed multitude' established church and the Charybdis of the 're-building' spirit of the dissenters. He eventually settled for a modified form of congregationalism that avoided 'independency' by having a federation of new meetings (Neatby:91). Yet he was certainly 'rebuilding what he had once destroyed', and 'in condemning every existing conception, he had in fact excluded all possible alternatives' (Neatby:91).

Subsequent to the third Powerscourt conference in September 1833, 'Darby attacked openly what he considered the apostate institutional church and stressed the need for all believers to be gathered only unto the name of Jesus' (Neatby 1902:78). This divisive tendency ripened in 1848, in the vitriolic debates over the autonomy of the local assembly. The protagonist calling for division was Darby, 'the man who had led in the division between the two main groups of Brethren' (McLaren 1995:175). The Darbyite group came to be known as the Exclusive Brethren, seeing themselves as representing the classical affirmation of the *one church* of Jesus Christ. They 'stressed that there is only one body and all assemblies were members of it, so that to act in independence was to deny the truth of that one body' (McLaren:192).

Darby's separation of the church into the 'professing and possessing' groups, fueled his pessimism and eschatological hopes. His writings are racked with this theme. We notice how this controlling idea steers his interpretation of Revelation 2-3. He interprets this section as a message to the *professing* church, to Christendom. Here the church is looked upon in its earthly condition, not its heavenly one. He sees Christ's relationship with this body as different to that of the true church:

Mark again, here, the character that Christ takes in connection with the seven churches, as well as with the world. It is not as Head of the body, as the source of grace to His members, but as one working in the midst of something outside Himself, and pronouncing His judgment on their external state...*None of the seven churches consequently is viewed as the work of God in itself* [italics mine]. What takes place is a judicial investigation, and God is not judging His own work, but man, on the ground of responsibility, according to which he has received through that work (Darby 1962, 2:266-269 *passim*).

This pessimistic view of the 'earthly responsible church' was buttressed by his interpretation of the seven churches. In typical (to be anachronistic) dispensational form, he reads these chapters as a 'successional picture of the condition of the church upon the earth, as responsible to God from the beginning to the end of this

dispensation, in a prophetic way' (Darby 1962, 2:278). Revelation 2-3 is therefore programmatic for church history - the classical dispensational approach. Thus the final church, Laodicea, is portrayed as lukewarm, a condition precipitating its separation from Christ. The possibility of God divesting himself of the established church is foreseen in the history of Israel. Darby writes: 'Yet we all know as a plain fact that God has cast off Israel as a visible witness to bear His name to the world. And He will, in the same way, cast off the church, if it fails in its responsibility on the earth' (2:279). Thus *the Laodicean church becomes a prophetic prediction of the apostasy of the visible church of Christ*, for, 'though the professing church still subsists in form, yet it is utterly rejected, and Christ declares unconditionally that he will spew it out of his mouth. The judgment is not accomplished, but it is certain and assumed as much' (2:365). This interpretation of the Laodicean church is the watershed in Darby's interpretation of the book of Revelation:

In its general character, notwithstanding the special working of grace in detail, the professing church gets worse and worse, till it comes to that condition that it has to be spewed out of Christ's mouth; and then 'a door is opened in heaven' and John is caught up there; Revelation 4. Then the judgment of the world comes, and the introduction of the Only Begotten to His earthly inheritance....God has done with the church as a testimony....*The church has failed to put its Amen to the promises of God* [italics mine] (2:368).

Darby's dismay over the empirical church of his day, affirmed his suspicion. He saw the professing pseudo 'church' fraught with *the leaven of heresy*, a cancer in the body he fought continually. Coad's comments (1968:111) are consistent with the tenor of Darby's writings: 'Darby early developed a theory of the workings of heresy which coloured his actions for the whole of his life. Heresy was to him a real and evil thing, working secretly and deviously beneath the surface, until it broke out in its full development, to the ruin of churches'. The leaven in Matthew 13:33 was seen as the sin of heresy; the patent heresy of the professing churches driving his interpretive wedge home. The result was a sectarian separatism that created a culture of suspicion amongst its followers.

Thus the church is in ruins and without remedy. It is no longer capable of being a testimony on earth, for it is dominated by men and manipulated for earthly purposes. Bass (1960:102) penetrates further into the nature of this 'perversion': 'This ruin in which the church finds itself is not merely one of denominational division; *it is*

one in which the entire nature and purpose of the church has become so perverted that it is diametrically opposed to the fundamental reason for which it was instituted'. Theologically, the later NT epistles were referred to as bearing evidence of an incipient ecclesial apostasy, a downward church spiral, seen particularly in 1 Timothy and Jude. This culminated in the deduction, noted by McLaren (1995:182), that as Malachi testified to the ruin of Judaism, so Jude was supposedly testimony to the ruin of Christendom. There is thus no hope of restoration, for the true church is a Christian remnant in the midst of Christendom's ruins.¹ The church dispensation, like all others, ends in judgment and ruin.

Contiguous to the ruin of the church was Darby's distinct beliefs *vis-à-vis* the nature of the church. To him the true church belonged to a heavenly, transcendent sphere.² It was the antithesis of earthly Israel and the nations of the world. He had an extreme idealism of the Christian church, and, speaking of the relation between the true church and Israel, wrote: 'The heavenly and the earthly people...the habitation and scene of glory of the one being the heavens, of the other, the earth. Christ shall display His glory in the one according to that which is celestial; in the other, according to that which is terrestrial' (1962, 1:123). Due to her nature, the true church thus has no part in this historical age; that is reserved for the OT people of God, the Israelites. This thinking flows in Darby's affirmation that once a Jewish remnant accept the Messiah after the rapture (Christ coming *for* his saints), they (the 144000 of Revelation 7) will fulfill the great commission.³ The true church has no future in this present world. Her home and identity are found in heaven and her ardent longing is to

¹ Sandeen (1978:21) delineates six conclusions that Drummond published on behalf of those attending the Albury conferences (1827-1828). The third states: 'The judgment to come [which cataclysmically ends this dispensation] will fall *principally* upon Christendom' [italics mine]. This axiom is understandable if we also remember that 'millenarians without exception were staunchly anti-Catholic' (Sandeen:17).

² 'In opposition to the worldliness of the church, Darby advocated a church so spiritual that it existed outside of history' (Sandeen 1978:67). See particularly Williams 1989:170-171.

³ Travis (1997:154-155) notes the absurdity of this theological statement: 'It thus expects the Lord to achieve after his coming the work which he has in fact committed to the church now, and for which he has promised the Holy Spirit's power'. Thus the church has, *effectively*, no part in salvation-history in Darby's system (!). According to Bock & Blaising (1993:23-24), classical dispensationalism's central dualism was the line between the heavenly humanity (church) and the earthly humanity (Israel). The church was considered as ahistorical and Christendom a human attempt to 'terrestrialise' an exclusively heavenly phenomenon. For this reason, 'the distinction between God's program for Israel and His program for the church' is the key variable in dispensationalism (Lighter 1986:34. Also Lewis & Demarest 1996: 312-326).

be caught up to be with her Groom.¹ Initially, this heavenly emphasis was the rationale for Darby's earlier emphasis on remaining in the established churches, for the ideal of unity was primarily a *spiritual* one. Any formal union of professing bodies was seen as a Romanish illusion. Mutual co-operation was insufficient. This spiritual identity became a key tenet of Brethrenism as a whole. For them, this truth of the church's unity meant that any meeting which was not framed to embrace all the children of God in the full basis of the kingdom of the Son can find no blessing. Later however, this tenet came to be interpreted in narrowly exclusivistic terms, as Coad (1968:120) pertinently observes: 'Darby's teaching left a vacuum which could only be filled, at a later date, by his own bodies arrogating to themselves the position, if not title, of the only valid churches'. This denunciation of the institutional church created a profound psychological climate for Darby to present his views, and 'by the suppression of every form of organisation, his system gave all the more play to the ascendancy of his powerful individuality' (Neatby 1902:83). Bass (1960:145) clarifies this point further: 'By maintaining staunchly that the existing church organizations were forsaken by God in favor of "heavenly assemblies", which in turn included only those who receive the truth as he conceived it, Darby put himself in a position to advance his own program'. Neatby (:59), who wrote a putatively equable history of early Brethrenism, writes of the sad outcome of Darby's noble ideals:

In his evolutions, Darby ended at a point exactly opposite to that from which he started. He began...with universal communion, and ended with universal excommunication. He began with the declaration that it would be presumption and impiety to attempt to build up the 'ruined Church', or to restore 'the administration of the Body'; and he ended by doing both things strenuously, if there is meaning in words.

This spiritual nature of the church had a dark gloomy backdrop - the present and eventual demise of the world. In reading Darby's works, one notices how his pessimism is all pervasive and consistently developed. To him, the present dispensation is under man's control and is inexorably destined for destruction. There is no glory for the church in this world:

Instead of permitting ourselves to hope for a continued progress of good, we must expect a progress of evil; and that the hope of the earth being filled with the knowledge

¹ Williams (1989) chastises dispensationalism for propagating a 'fully spiritualised notion of the church as the body of Christ', whereas in the NT it is 'the one great, tangible, observable truth of the Christian religion' (:170-171). For a notable study on how Darby depreciated the expected latter-day-glory of the church, see Murray 1991:185-206.

of the Lord before the exercise of His judgment, and the consummation of this judgment on earth, is delusive. We are to expect evil, until it becomes so flagrant that it will be necessary for the Lord to judge it (Darby 1962, 1:311).

One cannot be more far removed from postmillennialism. He even went so far as to aver: 'We have no reason to expect, in the ordinary given meaning to it, the progress of the gospel; there may be and will be, as much as is necessary for the gathering together of the children of God (1962, 1:312). Surrounded by such regnant evil and darkness, any effort to reform the 'church' was pointless and presumptuous. Such aspirations were not congruent with the present dispensation, which was fallen, and any who tried to remedy this state had failed to grasp the Divine will (thus his antipathy for dissenters). For this reason, Darby viewed with suspicion any tendency to set up elders or organisations within the church. The only governing principle was to be the Spirit of God. Also, advances in technology and worldwide efficiency were viewed with suspicion, being seen as a human glory that would only further serve the purposes of Satan.

Adventism was another tenet of Brethrenism. The return of Christ, whether secret or visible, was in the offing. Neatby (1902:339) accents this eschatological aspect and its effect:

Brethrenism is the child of unfulfilled prophecy, and of the expectation of the immediate return of the Saviour....Brethrenism took shape in part under the influence of a delusion, and that delusion left its traces, more or less deeply, on most of the distinctive features of the system.

Yet this ingredient fitted in with the salient features of Darby's system, being axiomatic within it. Given Darby's pessimism, both terrestrially and ecclesiastically, is it little wonder that the doctrine of the *secret rapture* fitted so comfortably into the following pessimistic outlook?: 'Truly Christendom has become completely corrupted; the dispensation of the Gentiles has been found unfaithful; can it be restored? no; impossible. As the Jewish dispensation was cut off, the Christian will be also' (Darby 1962, 1:320-321). Darby thus posited two comings: Christ would come secretly *for* his saints, and he would come (seven years later) manifestly *with* his saints. Bass (1960:39) rightly links his emphasis on evil and heresy with this secret rapture and concludes: 'The idea of the rapture does not arise from exegesis, even for dispensationalism, but from its concept of the church'. For Darby, 'the character of the

church required that the coming be secret and mystical' (Sandeen 1978:63).¹ To excise this rapture theory would be like pulling at a loose thread of a garment. It would deny the whole system of interpretation and undermine the movement that Darby came to be associated with.

In conclusion, we can sum up certain of Bass' (1960) and McLaren's (1995) distinctive features of Darby's position which will be pertinent to this thesis:

- A dichotomy between Israel and the church.
- The church exists in parenthesis. She is not a continuation of salvation-history.
- Each dispensation, existing as a test for man, ends with apostasy.
- In all dispensations, a remnant is preserved.
- God never restores a fallen situation but makes a new dispensation.
- The pre-tribulation rapture is the next great ecclesial expectation.
- The purpose of the great tribulation has only to do with the Jewish kingdom.
- The apostate nature of Christendom is axiomatic for an assessment of the church.

1.3 Darby and the maturity of the church

The reason for choosing to begin the thesis with this analysis of Darby is that he consistently crystallised and publicised the pessimistic trend in eschatology and ecclesiology that saw *the future of this age as a church-less future*. He is the arch representative of that eccentric thinking that sees the evacuation of the church as the precipitating factor in initiating the final events of God's eschatological program. This thesis is diametrically opposed to that theological trend and will argue for *the presence of a mature church as the precipitating factor* in the said program. We will show that the '*ruin of the church*' is an oxymoron.

Darby fed the self-consciousness of the church with a sense of its spiritual and heavenly nature and destination, something rightly needed in a period which tended to simplistically associate the church with an empirical denomination. Yet instead of augmenting that truth with a healthy historical sense of destiny, he truncated the church's future, looking *only* upwards and not forwards. His 'church' had no self-

¹ Sandeen (:63) quotes Darby's 'stunning' words: 'The Christian's hope is not a prophetic subject at all'. Darby attempted a resolution of his exegetical dilemma [on the rapture] by distinguishing between Scriptures intended for the church and Scriptures intended for Israel (Sandein:66). 'Darby's distinctive beliefs were...the doctrine of the secret rapture and the subsequent necessity to divide the NT into Jewish and churchly texts' (:69-70).

conscious historical mission or destiny - it had a glorious verticality but a withered horizontality. To him, the road of church history had a precipitous terminal point, and *the rapture* - where the believers would be scooped out from the final calamitous days of history - *became the blessed hope of the church*. The church needed to escape to better things. For many, this 'evacuation theory' has blighted the salvation-historical perspective of the church and eclipsed the days of her greatest glory and triumph. For this reason, we can heartily affirm with Bass (1960:148) that 'belief in a pre-tribulation rapture tends to alter one's concept of the *purpose* of the church in the world'.¹

More than a church-less future, Darby saw the plenary apostasy of the church as a requisite precursor to the coming of Christ. An apostate church was to precipitate the return of Christ. Classical Dispensationalism has its matrix during this period, and is a theological system that has had far reaching effect, effectively eclipsing the church's future glory.² The key aspects of Darby's theology, namely, ecclesiastical dualism, heresy and apostasy, the nature and identity of the church and an imminent global demise, have been requisite ingredients in spawning the dispensationalist doctrine of the pre-tribulation rapture.³ Darby was consistent with his systematising of ecclesiology and eschatology, and showed that what one believes about the church is determinative for any forecasts as to her future glory in this world. In contradistinction to Darby, it is particularly *through* the contemporary reality of the church that this thesis will view the events that precipitate the second coming of Christ into this world. The plenary renewal of the church rather than a pessimistic ruin, will forecast the glorious return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

¹ Williams' pertinent monograph *Where is the Church? The Church as the unfinished business of Dispensational Theology* (1989) accused dispensationalism's view on the visible church as at best 'a mere convenience for the individual believer during his earthly sojourn, and at worst...a theologically impotent human construction' (:167). Though extreme, the statement nuances the deficiencies. For the most comprehensive refutation of the entire Darbyite pretribulation theory, see Reese [s a].

² Progressive dispensationalism, though a modified and corrected version of its mother, still identifies with a pre-tribulation rapture (see Bock & Blaising 1993 and Saucy 1993). If this tenet was dropped, it would probably have to drop the 'dispensational' epithet.

³ Cf. Ryrie 1973 and Sandeen 1978:59-80 for a concise study of Dispensationalism.

CHAPTER TWO

THE PAROUSIA AND THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH

We will now seek to construct an essential framework within which ecclesial and temporal matters will be viewed. Three issues relative to the Parousia will receive our attention: the *nature* of the Parousia, the *proximity* of the Parousia and the *contingency* of the Parousia. The Parousia event will anchor, moderate and direct the paper, also delimiting the aspects to be discussed in the ecclesial section of part 3. Firstly, the biblical character of this event will be analysed. Then it will be argued that the early church expected the Parousia of the Lord Jesus Christ to occur within a few decades or so – her ardent *Naherwartung* (German = near-expectation). Without modulating the frequency of the *Naherwartung*, we then look at those elements of *Fernerwartung* (German = distant-expectation) – factors which relativised the *Naherwartung*. These two dynamics provide us with a 'problem' that is synchronised in a salvation-historical approach. Lastly, the issue of the flexibility and contingency of the Parousia will be dealt with, providing a bridge into the role of the ecclesia with regards the Parousia.

Regarding the hermeneutical process, all effort will focus on what the narrative discourses affirm, i e, on the canonical and literary status of the text; details on the relevant issues of textual criticism, form criticism and the like are not warranted by the trajectory of this thesis. We will also be constantly interacting with the three traditional millennial views throughout the thesis.

2.1 The nature of the Parousia

The noun *parousia* generally denotes *presence* and *arrival* of a person (Braumann 1976:900). This Greek term keys in on the two aspects of 'presence' and 'appearing' of a person (Oepke 1977:859). Wright (1996:341) says the word 'denotes the "arrival" of someone not at the moment present; and it is especially used in relation to the visit of a royal or official personage'. This spatial term is more accurately translated 'arrival' than 'coming', for *parousia* accents more the personal presence of the visitor than his traversing movement. (The connotation 'coming' has also been unjustly spiritualised). Relative to Jesus Christ, the NT describes this event as the expected *presence* of his *person in power*. There are five fundamental aspects to the Parousial hope of the NT: it is optical, spatial, personal, social and universal.

2.1.1 Optical (glorious)

'...when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire...when he comes to be glorified [in] his saints and to be marvelled at on that day among all who have believed....' (2 Th 1:7-10. Most quotes are from the New Revised Standard Version).

From the above Scripture - probably from one of the earliest Christian letters - we have emphatic evidence of the apocalyptic nature of the faith of the early church. The Thessalonian correspondence reveals that 'the earliest NT documents are distinctly (though not entirely) apocalyptic in tone and content' (Dunn 1977:325).¹ This expectation of an imminent parousia, so axiomatic for apocalypticism (Oepke 1977:863), was integral to the foundational teaching Paul gave to his Thessalonian converts.² Jesus Christ was expected to return shortly, in a ubiquitous and visible display of glory, defeating the Antichrist and saving his saints from his tyrannical reign. This parousial hope was a Christological modification of the theophanic and

¹ However long Paul was in Thessalonica - Acts 17:2 mentions 'three sabbaths', which Wanamaker (1990:7) deems hardly sufficient for Paul to establish himself in his trade - it was certainly a period not long enough for Paul to establish his converts in the faith (1 Th 3:1-10). All this accentuates the importance of apocalyptic teaching in early Christian communities, which was part of the *foundational teaching* of Paul at this time.

² Hanson (1979:431) helpfully differentiates between *an apocalypse* (a literary genre), *apocalypticism* (a socio-religious movement) and *apocalyptic eschatology* (a religious perspective). The 'imminency' ingredient seems particularly acute in apocalypticism.

Messianic anticipations found in the OT canon and the apocalyptic writings of second-temple Judaism; which reached axiomatic status in the NT period.¹

2.1.1.1 The New Testament and apocalyptic

'Christianity began as an apocalyptic sect within Judaism, a sect which in its apocalypticism was in substantial continuity with the messages both of John the Baptist and of Jesus' (Dunn 1977:325). How true is this statement? Is there apocalyptic in the NT? Some scholars see Christianity as a child of apocalyptic (Käsemann 1969:137), whilst others are more cautious (Allison 1992:19: 'significant continuity beside significant discontinuity'). In broad terms, the Nazarenes could be denoted as an apocalyptic movement relative to first century Judaism. Yet narrowly defined, the *novum* of the NT revelation disallows imposing any pre-existing comparative-religious category onto the form of the new revelation. The answer seems therefore Yes and No.

The following factors identify Jesus and the early church as apocalyptic in theology and experience: imminent expectation (Mk 1:15; Lk 21:34-36)²; the hope for a new coming age (the temporal axis, Mk 10:30); dualism (the spatial axis, Mk 4:15); the wicked verses the righteous (the anthropological axis, Lk 14:14); pessimism (Mt 23:36)³; determinism (Mt 24)⁴, the resurrection emphasis (Mt 28); and the Messianic woes in the Olivet discourse (Mk 13:5-13).⁵ These elements characterise the content of Christ's teaching and experience and are not limited to his Olivet discourse. Yet a moderating factor enters if we acknowledge the reality of 'aberrant apocalyptic' and

¹ Oepke (1977:866) states: 'the whole thinking of Jesus is permeated by ideas of parousia'. Cf. Beasley-Murray 1986; Kreitzer 1997b; Niehaus 1995; and Oepke 1977.

² Beker (1990:21) mentions imminency as a characteristic of apocalyptic. Yet this is not always so for apocalyptic's schematisation is often given to portend a temporal duration between the present events and the future eschaton (as in Daniel and Revelation). De Vries (1975:342) thus says of apocalyptic: 'The future has become increasingly abstracted from the present. It is no longer an extension of the present but an epoch of its own, detached from the present and irrelevant to it'. For our purposes, the imminency factor is important for apocalypticism but not apocalyptic or an apocalypse (see p 16 fn 2).

³ Rowley (1944:163) prefers to see this pessimism as a realism that places its hope in God alone.

⁴ Here we notice that Jesus spoke of predetermined events to precede his parousia. So, according to Rowley (1944:152), apocalyptic is 'faith in the divine initiative in history for the attainment of its final goal'.

⁵ The three axes (temporal, spatial and anthropological) are taken from the article of Kreitzer (1997a:55-68). Cf. Kvanvig 1989.

'canonical apocalyptic', with Jesus being in line with canonical apocalyptic and his movement its child. Canonical apocalyptic disavows sign seeking (Lk 17:20-21), date setting (Mk 13:32), and modifies the pessimistic tenor with the presence of the kingdom in history prior to the end (Allison so 1992:18-19). Dunn (1977:335-336) mentions the elements of Christ-centeredness, the already/not yet tension and the cautionary note, as features that marked off earliest Christianity from extra-canonical apocalyptic.

The importance of apocalyptic in the Pauline world-view has been accented by Käsemann (1969:108-137) and Beker (1990). Beker sees apocalyptic as no mere husk to be 'cracked open' but the very center and periphery of Paul's gospel: 'Paul's coherent center is marked not only by an apocalyptic matrix and pattern but also by a future orientation which gives his thought its driving force' (:xii). For Beker, the primary coherence of the gospel is the apocalyptic interpretation of the death and resurrection of Christ (:20). The essential place of the resurrection of Jesus in Paul's theology stamps the Pauline *Weltanschauung* with an apocalyptic flavour. Paul's churches are thus sociologically definable as apocalyptic movements (Beker:34).¹

Although early Christianity can correctly be identified as apocalyptic, sharing the basic axioms of all apocalyptic thought, it is not *merely* apocalyptic. It brought a new theological reality that was not reducible to prior theological concepts and frameworks. If apocalyptic is seen as a mode of revelation relative to the domination by pagan powers, social alienation and religious apostasy, then the NT was written within an apocalyptic framework - though not specifically the child of two apocalyptic 'parents' (Käseman) but rather from parents of 'apocalyptic' and 'prophetic' stock (Hanson, *mutatis mutandis*) (see Addendum 1). The theological content of the NT does seem more in line with those, traditionally defined, apocalyptic elements rather than the classical prophetic forms. We agree with Ladd (1958:81) that 'the basic apocalyptic structure is fundamental to NT religion', being 'intrinsic to biblical religion'. - If apocalyptic elements are the extension of the prophetic in a more universal, transcendent, dualistic, Messianic, and angelic direction, then NT faith was inextricably apocalyptic. It was particularly in their expectation of the Parousia that

¹ Beker (:21) saw four elements of apocalyptic permeating Paul's thought world: the vindication of God; the universal salvation; the dualistic structure; and the imminent coming of God. Cf. Kreitzer 1993:254 and Aune 1993:25-35.

the early church offered a crystallisation of all these elements of the apocalyptists' symbolic universe.¹

Christianity can thus be described as an apocalyptic movement. If we accept these conclusions, then one is provided with a conceptual framework that helps to integrate the diverse strains of NT eschatology. In this way one begins to appreciate the crucial role that the Parousia played in the early church, and how they eagerly anticipated an impending Christological reality that would break into their present space-time universe and inaugurate the long awaited kingdom of God.²

Finally, the reasons for preferring the term 'apocalyptic' above 'eschatology' are shared by Beker (1980:14), who writes regarding the apocalyptic in Paul:

My reasons for using 'apocalyptic' are twofold: first of all, the term 'apocalyptic' guards against the multivalent and often chaotic use of the concept 'eschatology' in modern times. Eschatology refers to 'last things', but in modern use the 'last things' often refer not to things that come at the end of a series but to things that are final and ultimate. In other words, the use of the term apocalyptic clarifies the future-temporal character of Paul's gospel. Secondly, apocalyptic denotes an end-time occurrence that is both cosmic-universal and definitive. Paul expects the future to be an apocalyptic closure-event in time and space embracing the whole of God's created order. Thus the term 'apocalyptic' refers more clearly than the general term 'eschatology' to the specificity and extent of the end-time occurrence.

2.1.1.2 Theophany and Parousia

Having realised the apocalyptic nature of apostolic Christianity, we need to investigate the primary historical and conceptual antecedent to the NT Parousia: the OT theophany. This optical and glorious appearing of God in the OT is integrally linked to the apocalyptic elements of the OT. It might even be the historical and conceptual root for OT apocalyptic. Here, the dualistic, cosmic and transcendent elements of apocalyptic, break through with vivid cogency. In this action of Yahweh, the 'other world' breaks through in a visible, cosmic and glorious manner. This element is seen throughout the OT, reaching its zenith in the prophetic writings of Isaiah 64:1-4 and Zechariah 14:1-9. The 'conviction grew that as the Lord had come down at the

¹ Hanson (1979:432) defines 'symbolic universe' as, 'the system of concepts and symbols in which an apocalyptic movement codifies its identity and gives expression to its interpretation of reality'.

² Highlighting the apocalyptic nature of the Christian faith shows up the insufficiencies of the absolute preterist understanding of Mark 13 held by France (1971) and Wright (1996).

beginning of Israel's history, so he would come down at the end (Mi 1:3; Zch 14; Ps 96:13)' (Glasson 1988:259).

The theological matrix for these apocalyptic events of Yahweh is found in the Sinai theophany.¹ Niehaus (1995), after comprehensively treating the theophanic concept in his book *God at Sinai*, takes the Sinai theophany as crucial for understanding the theophanies in the OT: 'The Sinai theophany is taken as a touchstone for prior and subsequent glory theophanies in the Bible because the Sinai event was constitutive in Israel's history and crucial in salvation history' (:16). In these disclosures of God, the visible appearing of God is the *sine-qua-non* of a theophany. With the 'materialising' of God, nature is often dislocated and convulsed. Certain descriptions of nature's disruption at God's appearing may be more literary or poetic (Jdg 5:4-5; Ps 18). Beasley-Murray (1986:9) views much of the accompanying phenomena as parabolic. But many passages, such as 1 Kings 19:11-13 (cf. Gn 3:8; Ex 19:16-19 *et al*), 'portray stormy atmospheric disruptions attendant upon actual theophany' (Beasley-Murray:28). These 'natural' elements are 'calculated to enhance the supernatural power of the great Judge, whose appearance thus has implications even over the natural order' (:28). 'Nature is in convulsions at the appearance of the divine warrior. His power and his might are so great that creation withers in his fearful presence' (Longman & Reid 1995:43). Fertility ceases (Is 24:1-13; Hab 3:6) and the seas dry up (Nah 1:2-6; Hab 3:8). Although the Psalmists and prophets embellished their theophanies in hyperbolic fashion, the historical link with Sinai prevents the interpreter from dissolving the content signified in the power of the form and style of its signifier. The symbol must never lose its historical control. We can thus view such descriptions as dramatic portrayals of the theophanic irruption of Yahweh into history, expressing in hyperbolic fashion the majesty and unprecedented nature of the actual event. *How* it is described might not be literal, but *what* it describes points to a literal event: the entrance of Yahweh into history and nature.

At bottom, the actuality of such events is ultimately an assumption of faith grounded in one's doctrine of God *vis-à-vis* the preternatural. Those who do not

¹ Niehaus (1995:155-160) might be stretching his case somewhat in citing Genesis 1:2 as an 'avian' theophany and Genesis 3:8 as a storm theophany. Also, whatever the validity of ascribing the appearances of the angel of the Lord prior to Sinai as theophanies, it is clear that at Sinai we have a defining moment. Interestingly, Beasley-Murray (1993:424), in his definitive study on Mark 13, reasons that the modern revulsion over the cosmic dimensions of the Parousia is due to a neglect of the notion of theophany in the OT.

believe that God can 'inject himself theophanically into history' (Niehaus 1995:49-50) will have to reinterpret the Parousia of Christ, poetically or naturalistically. Von Rad (1975:119-125) has positively linked the concept of the Day-of-the-Lord with the theophanic wars of Joshua, also helping us ground the theophany concept in history. Apparently it was a part of Israel's tradition that 'Jahweh [came] specifically to wage war, with its accompaniment of miraculous phenomena' (:123).¹ These war theophanies were often linked to the *malak Yahweh* who went before Israel in the Exodus and Conquest (Ex 23:20-33; Jdg 2:1-5). The 'angel' manifested his power in the conquest through all manner of natural phenomenon, but typically in a thunderstorm, which, clogged the wheels of Sisera's chariots (Jdg 4:15; 5:19-23), hailed down on Adoni-zedek (Jos 10:11; Ps 68:7-10), 'thundered' at the Philistines (1 Sm 7:10) and assisted David in battle (2 Sm 5:24 (?); Ps 18:7-15, 144:5-7).² The Warrior God was employing nature as weapons in his battles (so Longman & Reid 1995:42-43).

In conclusion, the Christological Parousia can be seen as the apical Sinai theophany of God, thus continuing the salvation-historical line of God's acts in history.³ It is also the manifestation of the Divine Warrior, with attendant cosmic disturbances, in tune with its rich OT tradition (thus Longman & Reid 1995:124-135). When we add the eschatological ingredient to the theophany concept, 'the theophany concept stands for the coming of God into the world for the revelation of his glory and the accomplishment of his purpose for the world he has made' (Beasley-Murray 1986:10). When we speak of the theophanic Parousia, we refer to the expected arrival of Christ within history in a cataclysmic and cosmically 'disruptive' manner effecting global redemption. This does not necessarily mean the destruction of the elements, but the unprecedented personal entry of the Creator into his creation, announced with all manner of atmospheric and awe-inspiring effects. This event was proleptically experienced by the Israelites as they stood at the foot of Mount Sinai:

¹ Cf. Longman & Reid (1995:19-26) for this holy-war motif and OT scholarship. Zechariah 9:14 is a salient example of this Warrior God.

² Niehaus (1995:301) includes Psalm 18 within his description of 'ahistorical, imaginative theophanic portrayals'. There is undoubtedly hyperbolic and poetic colour used here, but was there not a historical event behind this Psalm *that demanded such vivid colour?*

³ 'God's self-disclosure in the Old Testament implies *Heilsgeschichte*, and *Heilsgeschichte* entails theophany' (Niehaus 1995:21).

On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, as well as a thick cloud on the mountain, and a blast of the trumpet so loud that all the people who were in the camp trembled....Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke, because the LORD had descended upon it in fire; the smoke went up like the smoke of a kiln, while the whole mountain shook violently. As the blast of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses would speak and God would answer him in thunder. When the LORD descended upon Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain, the LORD summoned Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up (Ex 19:16-20).

2.1.1.3 The synoptic accounts

Having dealt with the issues of apocalyptic and theophany, we now turn to the synoptic accounts. It will be assumed that this visible, theophanic and public appearance of Christ is integral to the theology of the synoptic gospels (as Oepke 1977:866). It is certainly not the heart of the gospel message - being more a 'creational' and 'covenantal' reality rooted in OT faith (Niehaus 1995) - yet it is an essential part of the tapestry of the world-view of Jesus Christ.

Within the synoptic tradition, Mark 8:38 speaks of this public day of Christ. Here Jesus expects to 'come in the glory of the Father with the holy angels'. This theophanic language might allude to Deuteronomy 33:2, Zechariah 14:5, as well as 1 Enoch 1, and designates the visible and glorious 'arrival' of the 'son of man'. In Mark 14:62 we have the statement of Jesus denoting a future glorious manifestation (see Beasley-Murray 1986:296-304). Beasley-Murray sees this statement as,

the ultimate confession of Jesus as to his identity and the goal of his mission....From a position of utter humiliation before his foes he claims God's vindication for himself in a coming revelation of his right to rule. The saying therefore brings to completion his instruction relating to the sufferings and the exaltation of the Son of Man in the predictions of his sufferings (:297).

This verse 'feeds into Mark's portraying Jesus as a figure who shares the power and glory of God himself, the appearance of a crucifixion to the contrary notwithstanding' (Gundry 1993:886). Gundry says that 'Jesus' prediction refers to a single, literal seeing of the Son of man at the last day' (:886) when Jesus will be seen sitting and then coming, a twofold movement visibly occurring to those on earth (also Lane 1982:537). This verse is often used by many to infer that Jesus would return within the lifetime of some alive in the Sanhedrin (favouring the preterist interpretation of Mark 13). However, Jesus could be speaking representatively (rulers = nation) or theologically, i

e, to the generation who rejects him, now and in the future.¹ Matthew 23:37-39 could be a link to Mark 14:62, which seems to be speaking of an expectation of the Jewish people to return to God along with multitudes from the nations.² To interpret the saying of Mark with less strength than a future Parousia 'is to diminish unrealistically the eschatological language employed and the significance of the situation out of which it proceeded' (Beasley-Murray 1986:302).

The theme of the optical and theophanic Parousia is continued throughout the rest of the NT (2 Th 1:7-8; 2:8; 2 Tm 4:1; Tt 2:13; Heb 9:28; 1 Pt 1:7; 5:1-4; 1 Jn 3:2 and Rv 1:7).³ The cumulative effect of these texts points to an ardent expectation of a future manifestation of Jesus Christ far beyond what had been or was experienced in the present. 'As things are, people do not see Christ, but at the Parousia He will become manifest to all and be manifest as a supreme, glorious being' (Morris 1986:664). The only analogous event within the NT period is the quasi-parousial transfiguration (2 Pt 1:16-18); an optical experience which certainly drove the early apostolic expectation (see sec 2.2.2.2.a).

2.1.2 Spatial (bodily, temporal)

In the light of a salvation-historical interpretation of the theophany concept, it would seem that theophany and historical termination are conceptually incompatible (*pace* Bauckham & Hart 1999:118).⁴ Yahweh needs a historical context to 'enter'. A 'melt-down' experience would be inconsistent with the salvation-history of the theophany, where, on all other occasions, God comes to enter our world, not destroy it. Beasley-Murray (1986:424-425) concludes that 'none of the descriptions of theophany in the

¹ In Matthew 26:64 Jesus speaks of his exaltation as receiving visible fulfillment 'from now on'. Gundry (1982:545, *et al*) sees a 'mental seeing of the Son of Man' that begins immediately as a result of the events of 27:51b-53, continuing in the church-age. Rather, Jesus could have seen his suffering as the inclusive introduction to his exaltation and therefore one of a piece with it.

² Cf. Beasley-Murray 1986:307 and note the sense of restoration in Psalm 118 from which Jesus quotes.

³ Stock apocalyptic terminology such as *apokalypsis* and *epiphaneia* signifies the unveiling and public visibility of the heavenly reality within the present world. The symbolic universe of the apocalypticist revolved around the axis of a spatial dualism, with the transcendent realities responsible for present disclosures and for the final inbreaking of the 'other world' into this world.

⁴ Bauckham & Hart (:18): 'It [Parousia] is the event which brings the temporal history of the world to an end....It cannot be an event in time and space like the other events of history, since it is the event that happens to all time and space and transforms them into eternity'. Also Oepke 1977:870.

OT envisage the destruction of the universe at the coming of God. The same applies to NT descriptions of theophany at the end of the age'. Here the Creator enters his creation and reveals his glory within our space-time framework.

The parousial foretastes of the transfiguration and resurrection all occurred *within our history* and showed the compatibility of the resurrection body with time. The resurrection of Christ occurred within our space-time continuum. It was not inconsistent with it. If we understand a theophany as an appearing of God in history (as seen in the OT precedents), then we must be careful to avoid philosophical assumptions that blur the historical reality of the impending Parousia. This is a point which is stressed by premillennialists in their avoidance of an amillennial historical termination, and is an interpretation more suited to the majority of OT texts on the parousial hope (e.g. Zch 14, the most explicit portrayal of the Parousia concept in the whole bible). What is expected in Zechariah 14 and in Matthew 19:28 and 25:31, is not a spiritual or cosmically diffused future revelation, but a specific, physical and 'local' appearance of Christ on this earth. Matthew, the most 'Jewish' of the gospels, links this future Parousia (ch 24) with the judgment of the nations (ch 25), which describes an assize occurring on our earth *after* the Parousia (ch 24). The premillennial interpretation seems most consistent with a Jewish reading of this text.¹

This brings us once again into the debate between prophetic and apocalyptic eschatology (see Addendum 1).² As intimated before, even within classical apocalyptic texts within the canon (Daniel and Zechariah) there is no mention of a cosmic dissolution. Many of the other texts that suggest such eventualities have been reinterpreted by scholars in terms of evocative poetical exaggeration or hyperbole. Although certain texts do seem to speak of such a dissolution (Is 24; 65:17), the predominant note of OT eschatology is that of future *historical* events. Even within canonical-apocalyptic, the final nuance is more on historical continuity than discontinuity. This is because, according to Freedman (1960:142), '[t]he God of the Bible is identified by his participation in human history' (also Freedman 1967). Modern scholarship has noticed that the prophetic 'typological' mindset, cast the future events in terms of past historical events. Carroll (1982) can assert that 'the

¹ Thus the millennium in the premillennial school, is seen 'on a level with other historical periods, such as the antediluvian, the postdeluvian, and the present Christian period of human history' (Kromminga 1945:17).

² For an excellent summation of the issues and approaches, see Le Roux [s a].

belief in the future arose in ancient Israel out of the belief in the past...Eschatological visions reflect a world constructed in terms of the first creation' (:48). De Vries (1975:341), nuancing the primacy of 'today' in Israel's consciousness, says that eschatology is 'an analogical projection of the past and present into the future, positing Yahweh's coming action on his action already experienced'. Further, Ladd (1958:142) affirms that 'the ultimate destiny of man in the OT remains earth-centered'. Wright (1996:202-209) has trenchantly shown that second temple Judaism did not expect an end of their space-time universe with the coming of the kingdom of God. He attributes the rise of this aberrant apocalyptic element to the popularity of Schweitzer's thesis (:207). Moltmann, in his book *The coming of God* (1996) favors a pre-millennial historical perspective, something consistent with his world-affirming and ecological concerns. Although he recognises the 'end-of-the-world' notes in Scripture, he correctly observes that 'the ideas about the end of the world appear on the fringes of the OT' (:227), and that 'apocalyptic ideas about the end of the world in the NT are clearly subordinated to the expectation of Christ's parousia, and therefore to the completion of his salvific work' (:231). Lindblom's following words are clearly one sided, yet nevertheless substantial: 'If eschatology is a doctrine of the end of the world and the history of mankind, there is no eschatology at all in the Old Testament prophets' (1978:360). He also reminds us that 'in Old Testament thought, what we call the normal historical process is the setting of supernatural actions' (:361).

Further, in OT theology, the transcendent and imminent, the 'supernatural' and natural are not mutually incompatible.¹ Von Rad has helpfully reminded us that 'the western concept of absolute time, independent of events...[was] unknown to Israel' (1975:99). He also interpreted the prophetic as describing events that would take place within history, though 'the new age would not be simply a continuation of what went before (:115). We may define this perspective as one of quantitative continuity (historical horizon) and qualitative discontinuity (the 'vertical' *novum* of the 'horizontal' event). The 'rupture', which Jacob (1958) saw as essential to an OT view of eschatology, need not be terminal, for Israel's hope was expected to occur within the arena of history, being analogous to all prior events of Yahweh in his history. Rowland (1985:135) sums up for us what many OT scholars would concur with:

¹ Besides the transcendent and imminent 'fusion' in OT theophany, is not the resurrection of Christ the ultimate *Gestalt* and conceptual story to reveal the unity of this biblical dynamic?

God's rule and authority were ultimately to be manifested in the physical world. Salvation for a Jew was not primarily some mystical deliverance for the spirit to enter a private communion with God in the world beyond, but the manifestation on earth of God's authority over the universe and the setting right of all that was wrong.

This bodily, spatial and temporal concept is the background to the apocalyptic phrase, 'the return of Christ'. It is the historical arrival of the Messiah into *our* world, *our* earth. The OT expectation of the coming of God (Beasley-Murray 1986:3-35) received significant Christological modification and motivation through the resurrection of Christ. The hope of certain Israelites (apostles) had materialised 'before their very eyes' and had departed in theophanic glory (Ac 1:9). They were convinced that the resurrected Christ, now inhabiting a quasi-physical body, would return in a local and focused manner, analogous to his departure (Ac 1:11). This spatial sense is also referred to in Thessalonians 4:17. Here in classic apocalyptic description and 'Sinaitic' allusion ('when the LORD descended upon Mount Sinai', Ex 19:20), Paul narrates the future 'rapture' hope of the church. His concern in this letter is pastoral, aiming to provide pastoral consolation regarding the future relations between the believers in Thessalonica who were alive and their deceased family or friends. 'His goal was to reassure the Thessalonians that their fellow Christians who had died would participate on equal terms with them in the salvation experience accompanying the parousia of the Lord' (Wanamaker 1990:176). He does not concern himself with details after this joyous reunion. We need to look elsewhere for that.¹ Whatever the nature of the Thessalonian concern over their dead, Paul's words reenforce the historicity of the Parousia. They appear to have expected to be assumed at the Parousia and were worried about their departed dead *who where not apparently in that space-time continuum* and who therefore would miss out on the event. Their worry stemmed from the thinking that only those alive at the imminent Parousia would participate in that historical event.² Paul assures them that Christ will bring them back with him when he returns to the earth. Behind Paul's theology lies the

¹ Wanamaker (1990) speaks of 'an assumption to heaven of the people who belong to Christ' (:175). Yet Longman & Reid (1995:173-174) note the spatial imagery and comment: 'Like those who welcome the arrival of a deliverer to a city held under siege, the saints are taken up, not to depart to heaven, but – it seems – to meet him and escort him on his victorious "march" to earth'.

² Walvoord (1999:141) calls this 'the central passage on the rapture of the church'. This is true. Yet the dispensational interpretation of a 'secret' rapture flies in the face of the theophanic nature of the described event, where Christ descends 'with a cry of command, with the archangel's call and with the sound of God's trumpet' (1 Th 4:16). The clear allusion to Exodus 19 connotes a 'public' and 'audible' event.

reality that the transcendent and the imminent, the 'spiritual' and the physical, the departed and the living, time and eternity, all cohere and find their true identity in the theanthropic Person of Jesus Christ.

2.1.3 Personal

Beasley-Murray (1986:3) opens his section on theophany in the OT with the affirmation of Pidoux: 'The faith of the OT rests on two certainties, equally profound and indissolubly bound together. The first is that God has come in the past, and that he has intervened in favour of his people. The other... is the hope that God will come anew in the future'. This 'coming of God' is for Beasley-Murray the center of gravity for understanding NT eschatology (also Moore 1966:13). Relative to the Parousia, believers await that 'supreme moment of revelation of Jesus Christ as Lord for all created order to see' (Kreitzer 1997b:856; also Berkhouwer 1981:162-169).¹

Taking this as our point of departure, we can further see a development of this hope in the NT, as it grounds the Parousia in the resurrection of Christ.² This resurrection event is the emphatic unveiling of all that is essential to Christianity, being the universal vindication of the Son of Man.³ In Paul's eschatology, 'the impending return of Christ is made necessary by the central significance that Paul assigns to the resurrection of Christ' (Beker 1990:32). The Parousia event celebrates the 'reappearance' of Jesus Christ within the framework of this present space-time continuum, albeit in a different form. Sources of this apostolic hope are certainly grounded in the self-consciousness of Jesus (with his obvious theophanic

¹ Understanding the nature of the 'return' of Christ assists the apologetic for the deity of Christ in the NT. In the OT we have clear anticipations of the coming of *Yahweh*, far exceeding any anticipations of a 'Messianic' coming. Psalms 96, 97, 98 focus on the coming of *Yahweh*, as does Isaiah 35:4, 40:10, 66:15-16, the prayer of Isaiah 64:1-3 and Zechariah 14:5. Thus the Creator (Ps 96-98) was expected to return to his creation (in theophanic glory) and judge and deliver his covenant people. All this furthers our understanding of why this event is couched in such cosmic, atmospheric and 'warlike' terminology. Together with this coming of *Yahweh*, the traditions of the 'angel' of the Lord, the Divine Warrior, the Son of David, and the Son of Man, all seem to coalesce in the parousial hope of the NT.

² Filson (1948) showed how the resurrection event was the organising principle for the whole of the NT church and writings, the one presupposition and starting point that under-girds them all.

³ The fluidity and ambiguity of the term 'Son of Man' (taken as an authentic self-designation by Jesus), employed in a first person circumlocutionary fashion or in a third person form, was appropriate for Jesus: it encapsulated his humility, glory, secrecy and authority, being also conducive to both rhetorical conditioning and the theological nature of the present kingdom. For scholarly and conservative studies, see Beasley-Murray 1986:219-229 and Marshall 1990b *et al.*

expectations) and their own experience of the resurrected Christ. In the *logia* of Jesus we have clear indication that he expected to have a future glorious manifestation after his sufferings (Mt 24:27). This public appearing of the Son of Man was organically related to the full and final manifestation of the kingdom of God, a hope clearly articulated in the OT. If we take Jewish apocalyptic as the point of departure for understanding the message and ministry of Jesus, then this expectation of future glory was a 'fixed' event in the thought world Jesus inherited. This seems to be the case and is evinced by Jesus' apocalyptic discourse in Mark 13. He does not radically reinterpret, reject or merely accommodate himself to Jewish apocalyptic. He rather modifies it in light of who he is as the 'Son of man'.

Jesus' relation to this future coming kingdom is presupposed in the gospels (Lk 17:20-18:8); he is indissolubly linked to the concept of the kingdom of God. This makes explicit what was more implicit in the OT, where the Messiah was not directly related to the coming of God (Wright 1996:615-624). Jesus 'thought of the coming of YHWH as an event which was bound up with his own career and its forthcoming climax' (Wright:632). He saw himself as one who shared the throne of God, as one who would give ultimate expression to the future eschatological event of judgment and salvation in the kingdom of God. Messianic hopes during the second-temple period were quite diffuse (Wright 1992:307-320; 1996:624-629); yet the cumulative force of the OT, the Jewish apocalyptic writings and the NT witness, point to *the expectation of a reigning king who would act as God's vicegerent, restore Israel, vindicate God's people and usher in a new era*. This explains the facility with which the disciples expected a future parousia of Jesus to end this age (Mt 24:3).

In the NT the focus is clearly on the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not on the manner or attendant circumstances but on the expectation of the One who is the center and circumference of the church's life and faith. Paul therefore characterised the Parousia as 'the day of our Lord Jesus Christ' (1 Cor 1:8; 4:5; 5:5; 15:23; Phlp 1:6; 10; 3:20; 1 Th 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:16-17; 2 Th 1:7; 2:8; 1 Tm 6:14-15; 2 Tm 4:1; Tt 2:13). 'Here again we have proof of the extent to which the great future is in the epistles of Paul entirely concentrated about Christ, even though the terminology is not originally Messianic, but theological' (Ridderbos 1997a:530).

The saying in Matthew 10:23 rose to prominence in scholarly circles with Schweitzer's claim that Jesus here expected his apocalyptic appearing to occur during

his own lifetime and the mission of the disciples, and that he was not expecting the disciples back (1922:357). A mitigation on Schweitzer's claim, is the position of those who note a delimitation of Jesus' words, supporting the view that Jesus expected to return *within his generation*: '[T]he coming of the kingdom of God is transferred here also to the lifetime of Jesus' disciples, and moreover it is presumed as well that this coming may happen at anytime and suddenly within this period' (Kümmel 1957:63).¹ It seems preferable to maintain the apocalyptic overtones of the phrase 'the Son of man comes', paraphrasing it as Kümmel has done: 'in your flight you will not reach all the cities of Israel before the Son of Man appears in glory' (:61-62; also Beasley-Murray 1986:286 and Gundry 1983:194-195). Both Witherington (1992) and Beasley-Murray credit Matthew for the saying's present contextual position rather than Jesus. The immediate context is persecution arising from mission, and this context probably motivated Matthew to insert this *logion* there as he 'expatiated' upon the words of Jesus. The apocalyptic nature of the persecution (v 22, 'you will be hated by all on account of my name') would then naturally include a deliverance at the Parousia (Dn 12:1).

Yet the problem raised by Schweitzer is not solved, for Jesus addressed these words to the early disciples. If we accept the prophetic tendency to interpret coming historical events against an eschatological backdrop (Ladd 1981a:64-70) - and note the tendency of prophets to address their contemporary generation with the full weight of eschatology - then we can follow the salvation-historical line from the disciples through the early church (Matthew) and the contemporary church, to the climax of the terminal generation. Jesus could then be comprehending the whole line of salvation-history synchronically through the imminent historical mission of the twelve. His theological 'spectacles' viewed events synoptically, seeing the period between his earthly mission and the final Parousia in a qualitative fashion, rather than in a strict time-quantity and temporal fashion.² Because the present is eschatological, it characterises the whole interadventual age and particularly the latter period of that age. In this way Jesus can speak of present events in a foreshortened prophetic

¹ Beasley-Murray (1986:283-291) has provided a cogent scholarly response to both Schweitzer and Kümmel.

² As to be noted later, the understanding of Jesus' *logion* of 'this generation' provides a clue to synoptic eschatology. It is the essential correlation between the generation that rejected Jesus and the generation that will persecute his followers in the terminal generation that accounts for the foreshortening in Jesus' words.

manner.¹ This supports a contemporary reading of the words of Jesus which takes the disciples as typical and analogous of the church in every generation - something which Matthew himself was day.² This thus allows for an preterist, historicist and futurist interpretation, three views which have always vied for position in any prophetic/futurist interpretation, and which all have a contribution to make (see Diagram 2). We conclude with the interpretation of Witherington (1992:41) who lessens the temporal tension and heightens the indicativeness in Jesus' affirmation: 'it is possible that this verse simply means that the disciples [non-specific] shall not have completed the missionary work in Israel that the earthly Jesus sent them out to do before he returns again' (also Gundry 1983). He would personally return to a generation that would be characterised by mission (in Israel) and ecclesial persecution (analogous to his own persecution), a reality affirmed in this *logion*. Thus this degree of ambivalence in understanding Jesus' words is required not only by a retrospective analysis, but also by the prophetic nature of his sayings and the foreshortened eschatological tension.

Finally, if we understand Jesus and his ministry as the midpoint (sec 2.2.8), he and his generation together *comprehend the whole salvation-historical sequence of salvation and judgment*. The past, present and future are re-enacted, 'actualised' and anticipated in the events of his life and generation. He introduces all eschatological events, although their temporal sequence and specificity is foreshortened and undelimited. As Koenig (1989) reminded us, he himself is 'the Last', the *eschaton*, the One who has come, is coming and is yet to come.

¹ Berkhof (1966:44): 'Penetration of events to the great End are essential to the prophetic experience of history....[The] historical framework of the prophet changes into an eschatological event of the end time'. Also Hoekema 1994:119.

² Giles (1995:47): 'Each of the evangelists tells the stories about the disciples gathered around Jesus in such a way that they speak to the church community addressed'. A mild redaction criticism affirms that the evangelists keep to the historical setting of Jesus' lifetime, but at the same time they each reflect to some degree individual interests, concerns, problems and beliefs of the Christian community for whom they wrote.

2.1.4 Social

Christ is not portrayed as descending from heaven in isolation. He comes with the accompaniment of innumerable angels in resplendent glory (Mk 8:38; 13:27; 2 Th 1:7). Following on from our theophany theme, we notice a congruence between these NT references and texts such as Deuteronomy 33:2-3 and Daniel 7:10. The Deuteronomy reference is clearly linked to the Sinai theophany (Craigie 1976:392; Merrill 1994:434) and narrates the angelic presence at the Sinai 'parousia'.¹ Here Yahweh is seen as 'the Divine warrior marching at the head of his armies [angelic?] on behalf of those whom he had chosen for protection and blessing' (Merrill:433).² This link between the divine warfare and angelic assisting 'forces' accounts for the title 'Lord of hosts', an appellation that implies the appearance of the Lord as a warrior with his divine 'host' (Noll 1998:156). Another narrative that has the Yahweh-warrior motif is Judges 5:20. Here Deborah and Barak mention 'stars fighting from heaven' in the theophanic battle of Yahweh (5:4-5). This correlation between the angels and the stars is an understandably primitive idea and has a retained meaning in the apocalyptic symbolic universe, featuring in the book of Revelation (9:1 *et al*).

The conceptual derivation for the portrayal of angelic presence in Israel, as in the ANE in general, was that of the angelic court (Newson 1992:249). The angels are often cast in the 'role' of divine administrators who: render account of ('present evidence', Job 1:6; Rv 12:20 *et al*) and administer earthly affairs (Dn 4:13,17: 'watchers who decree'; Mt 18:10 *et al*); are sent as emissaries to do the divine will (Ps 103:20) and implement the judgment and decisions of God (Gn 19; Ez 9-10). They are the heavenly administrators of God's kingdom who 'function as a kind of heavenly police force, arresting offenders, presenting evidence and executing punishment' (Davidson 1992:8). This execution of justice is displayed in Daniel 7 where the

¹ Merrill (1994:434-435) deals with the textual issues, favouring 'myriads of Kadesh', meaning God's people who have come from Kadesh. The LXX reading is angelic, supported by Newson (1992:249) and Reid (1993:22, who also links this angelic accompaniment of the Divine warrior with Zch 14:5, 1 En 1:9 and Jude 14). Support for this 'angelic' reading (NRSV) is drawn from the verbal features of the text: Yahweh 'came', 'dawned' and 'shone forth'. If these are activities of God *for* his people, then 'the holy ones' cannot be included in this 'coming' action.

² Merrill mentions the related accounts of Ex 15:1-18, Jdg 5:2-5, Ps 68 and Hab 3:2-15 -'they all share in common...an explicit or implicit (as here in Dt 33) polemic against all hostile forces that seek to frustrate the Lord's purposes for creation and especially for his people Israel....The stylised or formulaic nature of such historical resumé allows them to depart from normal patterns of narration in which strict adherence to chronological and geographical sequence is expected' (:434).

angelic attendants destroy the beast and prepare the world for the 'son of man' to reign. Generically, they ensure that 'God's presence is mediated through unseen creaturely reality' (Noll 1998:172).¹ Noll (:154) distils all these various angelic activities down to four foundational functions of the angels in the OT: they reveal God's presence, accompany God's people, execute judgment and announce good news.² In general, they are messengers and militants (Noll:154).³ Reid (1993:20) provides a cogent summary of the OT 'job description' of angels:

Angels in the OT appear as messengers or representatives of the heavenly world, frequently sent by Yahweh himself. They are part of the created order and serve God's purposes, assisting and carrying out important transactions between God and humans, primarily between God and Israel.

Jesus' world view is in direct continuity with the angelology of OT apocalyptic. Mark 8:38 pictures a heavenly court room, a tribunal of angels in the apocalyptic Day of Judgment. They participate in the judgment, handing out what men deserve. They come with the Son of man to implement the decisions of the heavenly throne-room. Daniel 7 is once again crucial to understand this reference to the parousial event and its angelic character. The Christological modification casts the Son of man in the position of divine judge, in the role of the Ancient of days (note Mt 24:31: '*his* angels'). In Daniel 'the enthronement of the son of man is accomplished only by the coming of God himself to earth in the form of the ancient of days' (Noll 1998:66). Jesus then modifies this slightly and speaks of his coming and sitting on his glorious throne (Mt 25:31). This is another clear indication of the transcendent nature of NT Christology, being consistent with Zechariah 14:5 and the expectation of *Yahweh* to come in theophanic glory.⁴ At this event the angels will separate the righteous and the

¹ The ITP witnessed a surge in angelic literary stories. 'It is in the late second temple period...that the most developed speculation occurred' (Newson 1992:249). The angelic appearances in Ezekiel, Daniel and Zechariah could have been the taproot of ITP apocalyptic angelology. Angels often feature in apocalyptic literature, their presence being a corollary to God's qualitative transcendence, spatial dualism and temporal administration.

² The visions of angels in Ezekiel, Daniel and Zechariah 'serve as a counterbalance to misunderstanding of the firmament as utterly closed to anything genuinely new in history. Apocalyptic descriptions of an open heaven destabilise normal life and wisdom. They remind the Israelites of another side of the brazen firmament - a world of possibility and strangeness' (Noll 1998:67).

³ Noll (1998:154) refers to Karl Barth's two-fold identification of angels as *ambassadors of God* and *representatives of God*.

⁴ Noll (1998:162) notes the harder reading - 'and all the holy ones with *you*' - in Zechariah 14:5. This feminine pronoun could then refer to the daughter of Zion, i.e., to the coming of the holy ones who are with Israel in their exilic trials.

wicked (Mt 13:36-42), gather the elect (Mt 24:31) and assist in punishing the evil doers (Mt 13:41-43) (Davidson 1992:8).

Together with the angels, Paul expected 'holy ones' to return with Jesus, that is glorified believers (1 Th 4:13-18 and 2 Th 1:10).¹ The apocalyptic scene that 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 prefigures for us is that of believers alive at the Parousia receiving an Enoch/Elijah type transportation in their transformed bodies, and angelic (Mk 13:27) elevation to meet the arriving King ('in the air') where the departed believers will have already been gathered in new resurrection bodies. Bruce (1982:101) unpacks Paul's particular application of this reality:

That the dead would rise was known already; what was now divulged was that the dead in Christ would rise first...that far from suffering any disadvantage at the Parousia, the faithful departed would actually have precedence over those still alive. *Their* resurrection would be the first result of the coming of the Lord; only after that would those still alive enter into their heritage.

Thus the comprehensive picture put together from these Scriptures is that of a global *theophany of Christ* coming in divine glory, being attended by a vast array of angelic hosts, and surrounded by the resurrected believing dead and believing living. Conceiving of such a reality is beyond the present capacity of the human mind and requires a new symbolic redrawing of reality - something which is attempted in apocalyptic literature.

2.1.5 Universal

The NT hope of the Parousia of Christ is placed within the framework of the whole of the creation. Certain texts speak of an astronomical and terrestrial shaking and dislocation (Is 13, 24; Zph 1; Mk 13:25; Heb 12:26), whilst others (though fewer) appear to suggest a total dissolution (Is 34:4; 2 Pt 3:10). The amillennialist focuses on the total annihilation, whilst the premillennialist looks for first a partial and then an ultimate fulfillment beyond the Parousia, i e, after the millennium. Attempts to solve this 'history verses eschatology' tension are controlled by wider theological issues.

¹ Bruce (1982:73-74) comments on the fluidity of 'holy ones'. In 1 Thessalonians 3:13 it seems to refer to angels (cf. Zch 14:5; 1 Enoch 1:6-7; Rv 19:14) whilst here in 2 Thessalonians 1:10 Paul intends that we interpret the term as 'saints', i e, believers. The context is the final arbiter in each case.

However, all are agreed that the Parousia of Christ will be a cosmic event in which the universe *as we now know it* will be qualitatively and irrevocably changed. It will be an 'earth shaking' event, but how far one must press home the literal 'surface meanings' of the 'cosmic' literary material is debated. The question is one of degree. The premillennialist interpretation seems the most comprehensive and provides space for both the 'literal' and the 'metaphorical' to be given full justice.

Once again, the theophany of Sinai will be used as a 'paradigm' for interpretation. Niehaus (1995) has documented the role that the Sinai-theophany played in the prophetic tradition (:280-332), observing that 'both the Psalms and the Prophets cast God's greatest possible act of salvation, his eschatological invasion of history and judgment of all nations, in terms of Sinai-like theophany' (:281). That 'primitive' experience was both intensified and universalised and came to express the reality of the coming apocalyptic day. Judges 5, Micah 1:2-4, Habakkuk 3:6 and Nahum 1:5 all use stock theophanic phraseology, allusive to Sinai *where the earth did quake and the heavens did display the glory of God*. That experience provided the conceptual framework for interpreting, directing and describing the hope of the future coming of Yahweh into history. The Sinai-event was indelibly incorporated into the *heilsgeschichte* of the OT, forming 'the basis of appeal to Yahweh' (Niehaus:288). It was the root of all future eschatological 'comings' of Yahweh. Both Isaiah 64:1-4 and Hebrews 12:18-29 correlate the Sinai theophany with the eschatological theophany, showing the integral relation between the two. If salvation-history progresses with an analogy/typology application of repetition, heightening and consummation (Cullmann 1967:127-135), then the future Parousia need not necessarily include the annihilation of the cosmos, as much as Mount Sinai was not destroyed at the 'parousia' of Yahweh. Historical-grammatical exegesis has also shown how the OT prophets described imminent historical events (e.g. Is 13) in hyperbolic and dramatic colour with 'eschatological' intensity. If those prophecies were exhausted by those historical events, then the literal interpretation of total global annihilation is untenable. If however, the historical events did not exhaust the meaning of those predictions, then the door is left open for a future 'literal' interpretation. Yet because the NT antitype always fulfills the OT prototype 'at a higher level' (Goppelt 1982:12), the degree of heightening in this case is ambiguous. The amillennial interpretation is possible, but may not be probable.

In order to interpret such cosmic language, it is essential to retain the core semantic content whilst recognising the presence of hyperbole as well as figurative and poetic language.¹ All these Scriptures of both OT and NT refer to a future event that is discontinuous with any past experience, thus resulting in the use of rich descriptive language. They describe global events that are awesome in their nature, thus straining the language stock of the prophet. Beasley-Murray (1993:425-426) states that,

the function of this ancient mythological language is purely to highlight the glory of that event and set it in its proper category: it represents the divine intervention for judgment and salvation....Denial of the pictorial nature of biblical descriptions of the climax of the ages overlooks that in the OT theophanic language is used of historic events of the past, in a manner that cannot possibly be interpreted literally.

The prophets employ cosmological metaphors which elaborately describe a theological core, often with a historical referent (Is 13 and 536 BCE). Greenspoon (1981:263) comments on these 'cosmic dimensions' found in Judges 5:

The term 'cosmic', as we use it, refers to the introduction of descriptive language which not only affirms God's role at this particular moment, but connects it with the totality of God's action – both past and future – through which He manifests Himself. Thus, the imagery of Judges 5:4ff links this event with the theophany and revelation at Sinai.

A realistic interpretation will want to identify the presence of hyperbole and metaphor ('wrapping', framework, form) and yet still hold to the historicity and reality of the predicted event(s). The path between crass literalism (amillennialism?) and mere poetic symbolism (preterism?) needs to be cautiously trod (premillennialism?). The key might be a salvation-historical recognition that allows the Sinai theophany and the historicity of the OT prophets to control our interpretation of the future eschatological events, whilst also allowing for new events, *sui generis*, to enter into the line.

What Niehaus (1995) has done for the concept of theophany in eschatology, Von Rad (1975) did for the Day-of-the-Lord in eschatology. He has shown (:119-125) the *typical* connection between the conquest wars of Yahweh and the subsequent theophanies, culminating in the concept of the Day-of-the-Lord:

Yahweh's final uprising against foes would take the same form as it had done in the days of old....The prophetic vision of the concept of Jahweh's intervention in war became greatly intensified; war to effect all nations, even the fixed orders of creation, and even

¹ This hyperbole and rich inclusive language could be a result of the prophet speaking *sub specie aeternitatis*.

Israel herself. The event has been expanded into a phenomenon of cosmic significance. Thus, under the influence of this traditional element, the prophetic concept of the eschaton was also to some extent systematized (:124).

This Day-of-the-Lord and Sinai-theophany terminology is clearly alluded to in Mark 13:24-25. Here the sun, moon and stars are thrown into convulsion at the return of Christ. Beasley-Murray (1993:423) unpacks the OT allusions in these verses:

- 'the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light' = Is 13:10.
- 'and the stars will be falling from heaven' = Is 34:4.
- 'and the powers of the heavens will be shaken' = Is 34:4, Jl 2:10, 3:15-16.

These words in Mark contain no intimations of dissolution, and the semantic content can be found in the words 'the powers of the heavens will be shaken'. It could reasonably imply a global/universal disruption at the entrance of the Son of man and the new age. There would surely not be a need for such language if all was merely to be 'deleted' at the Parousia. Rather, it is the convulsion of the old order making way for the new order.¹

The equivocation in the language of Mark 13 lies in the observation that it can fit *both* historical and 'terminal' occasions, being drawn from prophetic sections that speak of an imminent historical event. Such language can describe an historic event (Is 13) as well as a more terminal event (Is 34). Both Joel 2:10 and Isaiah 13 refer to an invading army, helping anchor interpretation within history. Thus the preterist school interprets Mark 13:24-25 in terms of these past historical clues, that is, the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. France (1971:227-239) and Wright (1996:220-268) have helped popularise this preterist interpretation. To them, these words of Jesus predict a *natural disaster* as much as Isaiah 13 (concerning Babylon), Ezekiel 32:7 (concerning Egypt), Amos 8:9 (concerning the Northern Kingdom of Israel) and Joel 2:10 (concerning Judah) predicted God's judgment on unbelieving nations (France:233). Here in Mark 'Jesus is not predicting that strange astronomical events will occur; he is predicting the judgment of God on the Jewish nation' (France:234). He is speaking of the events of 70 CE in terms of 'theological rhetoric', and is not intending a crass literal meaning. We believe that this school of interpretation is right in what it affirms but wrong in what it denies. It rightly identifies the historical nature of these events yet wrongly precludes any theophanic or

¹ This premillennial interpretation relegates the 'dissolution texts' (2 Pt 3:7,10) to the final destruction of the heavens and the earth at the end of the interregnum.

eschatological interpretation. The prophets have theologically interwoven both history and eschatology into one poetic masterpiece, making the interpretation more difficult.¹ However, the clue to interpretation can be found in the prophetic interplay between history and eschatology.

Ladd (1981a) has given constructive analysis to this historical-eschatological dynamic (:64-70, 320-326). He notices how the prophets directly related the ultimate eschatological hope to the immediate historical future (:64), showing that the prophets had a single hope which encompassed both the immediate historical and the ultimate eschatological future (:65). The immediate future was interpreted in terms of God's ultimate purpose. The historical day of the Lord was painted against the backdrop of the eschatological Day of the Lord - the two being seen as one visitation of God without a detailed chronology of the future. Ladd seems to be noticing the theological thematic approach to the interpretation of prophecy, which allows the prophet's mind to easily move from historically differentiated events along the line of a 'controlling theological idea'. It is often the idea of judgment that inspires the prophetic consciousness, allowing a correspondence and 'transparency' between imminent, future, and eschatological events. They are all tied together thematically not chronologically. The prophets 'viewed the future as a great canvas of God's redemptive working in terms of height and breath but lacking the clear dimension of depth' (Ladd:64-65). He perceptively comments on this tension:

The prophets usually saw in the background the final eschatological visitation of God; but since they primarily concerned themselves with God's will for his people in the present, they viewed the immediate future in terms of the ultimate future without strict chronological differentiation and thus proclaimed the ultimate will of God for his people here and now (:65).

Because the prophet's main job was to interpret the present in the light of the future, the near and the far are not differentiated in time but often blend together. Ladd sees this 'tension between the imminent historical and the indeterminate eschatological

¹ Thus Beasley-Murray (1948:221-229) mentions four 'canons of interpretation' for prophetic texts: (1) a prophet always sees the Day as close at hand, impinging on his generation; (2) all descriptions of the Day of the Lord and the age it initiates are given in terms of the prophet's circumstances and environment; (3) the Day of the Lord is certain, but its effects, both for judgment and blessing, depend on the attitude adopted by the subjects of prophecy, whether it be repentance or hardening of heart; and (4) descriptions of the Day of the Lord and its issues are subject to modification by fuller revelation given to subsequent generations.

event' as the genius of the prophetic perspective (:322). This 'two-eyed' focus renders 'it difficult to say where the historical leaves off and the eschatological begins' (:323).

If the salvation-historical line places all events 'in a continual forward movement toward a temporal end' (Cullmann 1967:167), then each historical prediction is orientated from the initial historical event to the future eschatological event, only reaching a point of rest once the terminal/eschatological point is reached. To ignore these wider referents or to delimit the prophecy to a narrow historical event, is in danger of muting the full impact of the prophetic message and of dissolving the apocalyptic elements in the historical solution. France (1971) and Wright (1996) tend only to see the historical but not the larger eschatological backdrop that encompasses and drives the prophetic prediction, whether of Isaiah or Jesus. They lose the tension so essential to the prophetic mind.¹ Our interpretation of Mark 13 (sec 2.2.2.2.b) can thus include a historicity (France) and an eschatology (Beasley-Murray) which predicts a future theophanic and cosmological disruption to attend the inbreaking of the glorious Son of Man into history - without necessitating universal annihilation. The Parousia will be an event accompanied by universal *disruption* yet it need not be associated with universal *dissolution*.

We believe that the apostolic church looked forward to such a glorious historical reappearing of Christ. He would come again, yet at that time optically, gloriously, socially and globally. However, right from the start, Christ organically linked his future coming to his first coming. His very appearance in such a veiled and mysterious form suggests that God desires to accomplish certain ends before this terminal theophanic event. We now look at this temporal relation between these two comings, being essential to understand the role of the church in NT eschatology.

¹ Ladd (1981a:320) notes that the apocalyptists also lost this tension. For them eschatology stood in the future, unrelated to present historical events, which contributed to their flight from history. Both France and Wright seem to have moved it the opposite direction, seeing the present as unrelated to the eschatological future.

2.2 The time of the Parousia

2.2.1 *Naherwartung*

It is clear from the NT documents that the apostolic church lived with an acute sense of the nearness of the Parousia, and that this aspect of their eschatology was an integral component of their proclamation. We believe that this imminent hope belongs to the very fabric and substance of the NT in all its parts, being rooted in Jesus' own thought and consciousness. From the words of Jesus to his Galilean disciples to be ready for his return (Lk 12:40), to his words to his church in Roman Asia Minor (Rv 22:12), we can fittingly see that the whole of the NT proclamation is enveloped within a sense of the temporal nearness of the consummation of the kingdom of God.¹

Within the twentieth century, the debate has climaxed over the nature of this *Naherwartung*. Did Jesus expect the End within his own life time (as Schweitzer 1922), within his own generation (Kümmel 1957; Cullmann 1956b), or the not-too-distant future (Moore 1966)? Although there is this diversity, nearly all are in agreement that 'in the early Church...no one reckoned on the period between the ascension and the return of the Master [as] lasting for centuries' (Cullmann 1956b:152; also Ridderbos 1997a:489). Moore's moderate approach speaks for many:

Jesus and the early church as a whole, based their future expectation upon the conviction that the End in its manifest, unambiguous, universal form could not be far off. But they persistently refused to allow the sense of nearness to be turned into a belief that the End would definitely come within a certain number of years (:207-208).

In this section, we will briefly analyse the nature of this expectation in two parts: (1) in the historic Jesus as found in the synoptics; and (2) in the early apostolic church as recorded in the material outside the gospels.²

¹ See Berkouwer 1981:83-84; Dunn 1977:325-334; König 1989:193-202; Kreitzer 1997b:869; Moore 1966:4-51, 160-164.

² The writer is aware of all the critical synoptic issues regarding the authenticity or non-authenticity of the words of Jesus, aligning himself with the traditional position that the reports in the gospels represent the substance of the words of Jesus (although sensitively redacted to meet contemporary concerns). A literary and canonical approach is followed which argues for the necessity of taking the canon and writings of the Bible *as they now stand*, obviating the need for the textual meaning to be located in its pre-history. The traditional/conservative position of the authenticity of the Pauline

2.2.2 *Naherwartung* and Jesus

2.2.2.1. Jesus and the kingdom of God

Of vital significance for the understanding of the nature of Jesus' expectation is an understanding of the kaleidoscopic term *kingdom of God* as found within the synoptic tradition. Scholarship has pointed us to at least five dynamics requisite for unpacking what Jesus meant by 'the kingdom of God':

- (1) The idiom 'kingdom of God' has a Jewish background, being the hope of Israel. Most Jesus scholars appear to accept that the primary context for appreciating the earthly mission of Jesus is that of first century Judaism, and that this Judaism, despite its variety, also bore the imprint and influence of Jewish apocalyptic' (Aarendse 1988:251).¹ Jesus' proclamation therefore had 'theo-political' connotations (Beasley-Murray 1986:19). The term 'kingdom' would thus 'raised high hopes in Israel of blessing and prosperity in a national sense' (Vriezen 1970:439).² The sense of 'fulfillment' in the preaching of Jesus (Mk 1:15) carries the idea of the actual arrival of these long-awaited promises.³
- (2) The kingdom is eschatological, in that it was linked with the Day-of-the-Lord, the public kingship of Yahweh (Vriezen 1970:439), the final and unambiguous manifestation of God's kingship (Moore 1966:15). This consummate expectation, as delineated throughout the OT, was intensely comprehensive and eclectic. In the NT, this composite hope was carried in one cipher, a term which carried a central unitive idea: the kingship of God. God's eschatological rule was to be national and international, spiritual and physical, individual and communal, ethical and

authorship of 2 Thessalonians, Ephesians, Colossians and the Pastorals is assumed, together with the Petrine authorship of 2 Peter.

¹ Cf. Meyer 1979; Ramsey Michaels 1987; Saucy 1993:83-90; Wright 1992:280-338.

² Saucy (1993:83) recites the words of Buchanan: 'Scholars have internalised, de-temporalised, de-historicised, cosmologised, spiritualised, allegorised, criticised, psychologised, philosophised, and sociologised, the concept of the kingdom of God. This has all been done for the purpose of denationalising it'.

³ Most modern scholars have distanced themselves from Schweitzer's radical interpretation of the non-arrival of the kingdom of God (1922), acknowledging a tension between the kingdom sayings, which oscillate between the 'now' *logia* and the 'not-yet' *logia*. For a recent return to consistent eschatology, see Allison 1994.

universal, geographical and ecological - and whatever else was vital to the hope of Israel (cf. Kaiser 1991; Ramsey Michaels 1987). Further, this term had nothing to do with the end of the world *per se* (so Wright 1992:285) nor did it imply a radical dualism (*pace* Schweitzer).¹ These were to be the *final* acts of God, characteristic of the age to come, in which all natural phenomenon would witness a 'future inbreaking of God into history in an unmistakable manner' (Moore 1966:17).

- (3) Quintessentially and generically, the kingdom of God has an abstract dynamic meaning of rule, sovereignty, kingship, or dominion (Ladd 1989:63). It is a 'state of affairs' (France 1990), a comprehensive term that could include a broad range of nuances. When expected or hoped for, the term connotes the active exertion of the kingship of the Lord. Yet in the OT it is inclusive of both God's *de jure* rule and his *de facto* rule. It can refer to his sovereign overarching kingship (Ps 145:13), and to that state of affairs directly brought about by that rule of God (Ps 72:8). It is the 'hidden', equivocal, and provisional nature of this *de jure* rule that demands a more public *de facto* vindication (so Moore 1966:15). Seemingly, it is particularly in this latter sense (*de facto*) that the sayings of Jesus receive their most common application: 'The emphasis falls upon God who *is* doing something and who will do something that radically affects men in their alienation and rebellion against God' (Lane 1982:64). Thus, standing in isolation, the word is polysemous and one needs to judge from the co-text the nature or *mode* of this rule of God. Because Jesus proclaimed the kingdom of God *comprehensively*, it is difficult to identify which salvific nuances of this one picture are to be fulfilled. The *ordor salutis* comes only with hindsight.

The above three ideas seem to be inextricably related to most of the *logia* regarding the kingdom. Yet from a temporal perspective, so integral to this thesis, the saying denotes either the present fulfillment of this 'Israelite' eschatology or its future apical fulfillment.

¹ If we take Schweitzer's radical end-of-the-world apocalyptic view, then 'we at once create a distance between them [2nd Temple Judaism] and ourselves far greater than that of mere chronology. We know that they were crucially wrong about something they put at the center of their world-view, and must therefore either abandon any attempt to take them seriously, or must construct a hermeneutic which will somehow enable us to salvage something from the wreckage' (Wright 1992:285).

(4) The kingdom sayings are essentially linked to the presence of the ministry of Jesus. 'The divine reign is God's triumphant consummation of his lordship over events in Jesus' own ministry' (Dumbrell 1994:188-189). It is operative *spatially* in Jesus' person and ministry, and in this sense inaugurated. Because Jesus is *Autobasileia* (Ireneaus), we can thus say that the kingdom is present in his earthly ministry in a narrowly temporal sense. Cullmann (1951), Kümmel (1957) and Ladd (1981a) went far to popularise the 'now' and 'not-yet' tension characteristic of Jesus' kingdom sayings. This approach has been termed 'inaugurated eschatology'.¹ The gospels speak of two movements or modes of the kingdom: its presence displayed in the Son of Man prior to his glorification (the 'now'), and the kingdom displayed in the Son of Man expected in his future glorious manifestation (the 'not-yet'). However, these two modes are organically linked, for with the presence of the kingdom in Jesus, 'an anticipation of the end already exists, [for] when Jesus is present the end irrupts into the very heart of the present' (Cullmann 1956b:154). The End has come *in a hidden manner* (Moore 1966:207). For understanding NT eschatology, it is therefore vital to correlate the presence of the kingdom in Jesus Christ with the future presence of the kingdom. Indeed, *it is the presence of the eschaton in Jesus which brings the future into sharp focus*. 'The eschatological consummation of the Kingdom is inseparable from and dependant upon what God is doing in the historical person and mission of Jesus' (Ladd 1981a:324). There is thus an essential and organic relation between the two, and, as to be shown later, it is primarily the presence of the kingdom in the life and ministry of Jesus that accounts for the *Naherwartung* in the NT.

(5) Finally, the term on the lips of Jesus carries a strong future-temporal sense. Caragounis (1992:425) sums up the general thrust of this future orientation in Jesus' sayings regarding the kingdom:

By way of conclusion it may be said that during Jesus' ministry, the kingdom of God is spoken of always as a future event. It is expected, hoped for and prayed for. But it is never said explicitly to have arrived, not even at the Last Supper. What is present is the agent of the kingdom of God, Jesus. But because the agent of the kingdom of God is present and active through his teaching and mighty works, the kingdom of God may

¹ An important aspect of this 'school' is the emphasis that *no more of the kingdom of God is present in history than that which was seen in the historical life of Jesus Christ*.

also be said to be potentially present. However, the decisive event for its coming, that is, for the release of the powers in salvific blessings, still lies ahead.

It is most often used in this broader temporal sense in the gospels. Due to the overemphasis of realised eschatology, Buzzard (1992) has re-emphasised this future sense of the kingdom in Jesus' teaching, believing that the gospel of the kingdom is essentially an adventist message summoning us to take with utmost seriousness not only that which God has done in Christ but what he is going to do by sending his Son back to earth.¹ Although what was future to Jesus' earthly ministry certainly received a fulfillment consequent to his death and resurrection (Wright), much of his words imply a fulfillment concordant with Jewish expectation, which looked for a new age beyond the present experience of history.² Essential to note is that for Jesus, these events were not for some 'far removed' period, but were 'at hand' and pressing in on the present. The many warnings to be vigilant in Matthew 24-25, Mark 13 and Luke 21 are conclusive proof of a spirit of *Naherwartung* in Jesus. Yet if we observe the many 'consistent' eschatological sayings in the synoptics and do *not* interpret the death, resurrection and Spirit-baptism events as fulfilling vital aspects of Jesus' anticipated kingdom, then we are bedfellows with Schweitzer who said that Jesus proclaimed a reality that never materialised. It seems preferable therefore to see the fulfillment of Jesus' future sayings as 'touching down' in those great Easter/post-Easter events *and* in the expected coming future kingdom. The cross and post-cross 'downpayment' therefore adds an inaugural element to some of Jesus' future kingdom sayings. We conclude that the future *logion* of Mark 1:15 is inclusive of both the Easter/post-Easter and Parousial period.³

¹ We believe with Buzzard that an *integral part* (though not the primary part) of the meaning of the kingdom acquires its significance from the future determinative event of the global apocalyptic kingdom. Thus Guelich (1989:43) states that this first declaration [Mark 1:15] is set against a prophetic-apocalyptic background that corresponds to the expectation of Daniel 7:22 and Ezekiel 7:12 *et al.* Yet for us, the *primary* aspect of the kingdom is that which is seen in Jesus in his earthly and Easter ministry period and is not seen in the final public manifestation.

² Cf. Mt 5:5; 8:11; 19:28; 20:21; 25:34; Lk 12:32; 13:29; 14:14-15; 19:11; 21:31; 22:29; 23:51 *et al.* See Beasley-Murray 1986:147-218 and Ladd 1981a:307-328.

³ Kümmel's interpretation of *eggus* in Mk 1:15 is followed here (1957:20): 'The New Testament usage is...completely uniform as regards the temporal use of *eggus*: it denotes that an event will happen soon, by which it is meant or presumed that there will not be a long time to wait before it happens'. Also Lane 1982:65.

For this thesis, it is those irreducibly future elements that warrant our concern. Although the referents to many of his kingdom *logia* are found in his pre- and post-Easter experiences, there is a residue of future referents which are still unfulfilled. The question is: when did Jesus expect this future theophanic Parousia to take place?

2. 2. 2. 2 Did Jesus expect the consummate mode of the kingdom to arrive in his generation?

In answering the question of when Jesus expected the consummate mode of the kingdom to arrive, there have been three basic answers since Schweitzer. Firstly, there are those who believed that Jesus expected the apocalyptic kingdom to arrive within his own lifetime (Schweitzer). This has always been an eccentric position and has never entered into the mainstream of scholarship. Secondly, there are those who believed that Jesus expected the Parousia within the lifetime of his own generation (Kümmel, Dunn, Cullmann – a narrow delimitation). Thirdly, there are those who maintain an imminent expectation but credit the NT with no delimiting factors (Moore, Witherington *et al*). The middle group reckons on the reality that Jesus was mistaken in his expectation, yet not however with the severity of Schweitzer. Others in this middle group (Wright, France, and many preterists) have modified the futurism of Jesus and bifurcated that hope into two streams: the events of 70 CE as the *terminus ad quem* of much of Jesus' future *logia* (determinate) as well as a final End of history (indeterminate) as a termination for some of his sayings. We believe though that there are only four viable views: those of a *narrow delimitation* (Kümmel *et al*), a *modified delimitation* (Wright), an *undelimited* view (Moore) and that of this thesis, being a *conditional delimitation*. The view taken in this thesis is in substantial agreement with Moore and Witherington, yet with the added emphasis of key *conditional-delimiting factors* relative to the timing of his return.

We must now look at the two Scriptures that ostensibly support a narrow delimitation.

a) **Matthew 16:28**

- 'Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom' (Mt 16:28).
- 'Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God has come with power' (Mk 9:1).
- 'But truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God' (Lk 9:27).

This is a (if not *the*) *crux interpretum* of NT eschatology. J S Russell, seen by many as the father of radical preterism, regarded the interpretation of this verse as *the* key to a right interpretation of the NT doctrine of the Parousia (quoted in Sproul 1998:55).

The diversity of the above synoptic nuances reflect its referential equivocacy. It is particularly the Matthean account that links the words of Jesus with the Parousia (Cullmann 1956b; Kümmel 1957; Gundry 1983:340-341). These commentators rightly nuance the prediction of a visible revelation of Jesus in his kingdom. Yet if this saying can *only* refer to the Parousia, then the affirmative and solemn force of Jesus' words (*amen*) radically undermine the veracity of Christ's words: for the Parousia did not come within the lifetime of some of those standing there.¹

In order to exonerate Jesus, scholars have offered various exegetical solutions.² Moore (1966:125-131), on contextual grounds, understands Jesus' words as pointing to *his transfiguration*: 'If the context is taken fully into account, it suggests that the early church, so far as its views are reflected in the Synoptic tradition, did *not* regard this saying as a community-formulation sustaining it in its crisis, but as a promise fulfilled in some sense in the Transfiguration' (:127).³ This is supported by the tight contextual placing and redaction of Jesus' words, particularly noticeable in Luke. Also, 2 Peter 1:16 speaks of the transfiguration of Jesus as a *parousia*, and later (3:4,12) uses the

¹ Sproul (1998:11-26) has shown how these words and others of Jesus have contributed to the entire modern controversy over the inspiration of Scripture and the deity Jesus.

² For a list of expositors in antiquity up to the early part of the 1900's, see Biederwolf 1972:320-322. For more recent views, see France 1990:69 and Sproul 1998:27-90.

³ For a more detailed analysis of the correspondence between Mark 9:1 and 9:2-8, see Beasley-Murray 1986:188. Green (1997:376) interprets the Lukan account as transfigurational (yet proleptic of the Parousia) as does Lane (1982:312-314) in regards to Mark 9:1. Marshall (1989:377-379), in regards to Luke, points to the events of the resurrection and Pentecost. The problem with Marshall is that the discourse constraints strongly favour an optical seeing of Jesus in power by only *some* of the twelve. France (1990:64-74) understands the fulfillment as a process, inclusive of the transfiguration, of the powerful implementation of the divine government over time.

same term to refer to the 'second-coming' of Jesus (Morris 1986:664). This shows the early church's theological correlation between the transfiguration and the future final Parousia.¹ However, according to Beasley-Murray (1986:188), 'the scholar who supports this view regarding the *intent* of the saying is the exception rather than the rule'. The vitiating point is that the transfiguration is too proximate for the words 'shall not taste death', being 'hardly compatible with the strange statement that some would live to see it' (Hagner 1995:486).

Some therefore posit 70 CE as the *terminus ad quem* (as Hagner and Wright *et al*):

Because the coming of the kingdom by definition means not only blessing but judgment and because the destruction of Jerusalem can be conceived of as the judgment of God upon national Israel for her unbelief, this event can be thought of itself as a form of the coming of the kingdom of the Son of Man in power (Hagner:487).

Thus, Jesus did not speak here of his parousial appearance, but his coming to judge Israel for her rejection of his gospel. This is a most attractive solution, and harmonises with the lapse of time inherent in Jesus' words. Yet there are still some tenacious problems, the foremost of which is again raised by Beasley-Murray (1986:189-190): 'it is one thing to acknowledge that the tribulation of Israel and the destruction of Jerusalem are set in an eschatological context...; it is another thing to *identify* the judgment on the Jews and their city and temple with the coming of the kingdom of God'. Compounding this, the words of Jesus in Matthew's account - 'see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom' - are suggestive of a more personal and glorious manifestation of Jesus, something which did not occur with the destruction of the temple. These aspects lessen the force of this preterist interpretation.

In conclusion, we could say that in this saying Jesus expects the kingdom to come in visible power - in a manner analogous to the Parousia - within the lifetime of some of his listeners. He was not mistaken, for a 'parousia' did appear. However, it is not so much the pin-pointing of the event than its certainty and nature - a glorious *seeing* of the Son of Man by *some* of his followers - that occupies the mind of Jesus. In following the emphasis of the synoptic gospels, we therefore take it to refer to the

¹ The transfiguration 'is probably presented [as] a foreshadowing of the parousia, not the resurrection' (Witherington 1992:38). The link with the Parousia is also maintained by noting the theophanic nature of the transfiguration (Niehaus 1995:336-339), having clear overtones suggestive of parousial manifestation, such as 'cloud', 'voice' and dazzling power (Moore 1966:128).

transfiguration (Mk and Lk's account) *and* to the future Parousia of the Son of man (Matthew's inclusive account).¹ It is a theological prediction with a dual application – for Jesus is speaking *sub specie aeternitatis*. A salvation-historical interpretation makes room for both referents. Here Jesus looks *through* the transfiguration to the ultimate analogical and teleological reference: the reality that some of Jesus' disciples would be alive at a theophanic Parousia (cf. Mk 13:13; Lk 21:36 *et al*). To hold to both interpretations (the historical and eschatological, preterist and futurist) seems consistent with the non-specific and descriptive nature of the prophetic consciousness. Once again, 'Jesus' saying cannot be reduced to a simple calendric statement' (Ladd 1981a:323), and, as with most prophetic discourse, the imminent historical and indeterminate eschatological are fused together in one comprehensive picture.

So this *logion* of Jesus tells us little of the temporal placing of his Parousia, only the affirmation that it *will* come in power and that *certain* of his followers will be alive to witness it once they have withstood persecution.

b) Mark 13:30

'Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place'

The words of Christ in the Olivet Discourse crystallise all prior mention of his anticipated global vindication. All the synoptics contain this discourse and it is the *sine qua non* for understanding Jesus' perspective on his own Parousia.² Here Jesus foretells and forearms his disciples, in typical prophetic perspective, of the looming destruction of Jerusalem. Whereas both Mark and Matthew organically synchronise the Parousia with a future *religious* defilement of the holy place, Luke disengages the pending political invasion of the *city* (21:20-24) from the more distant Parousia (vv 25-33).³ For Luke, 'it is only *after* these events [in Jerusalem] that the final,

¹ This seems consonant with Luke's redaction of the tradition (cf. Hiers 1974:147-148). He redacts Jesus' words of prediction to the phrase to 'see the kingdom of God', and then mentions how the disciples 'saw' the glory of Jesus (Lk 9:27-32).

² For the most comprehensive and exhaustive treatment of this discourse, see Beasley-Murray 1993. For a credible treatment of Mark 13's authenticity, see Wright 1996:339-343. In France (1971:228-231) there is a good synopsis of the proposed solutions to the problems in this discourse.

³ This synchronising is seen in the specific temporal indicators of Mark 13:24, 'but *in those days*, after *that suffering*' and Matthew 24:29 '*immediately* after the suffering of those days'. France (1971:229) speaks of a 'very definite temporal link which Jesus made between the events of verses 5-22 [Mark] and those of verses 24-27...verses 24a and 30...leave no room for a time-lag of 2,000 years'.

unmistakable cosmic phenomenon that heralds the Parousia will occur' (Hiers 1974:151-152; also Conzelmann 1960:126). This synoptic diversity of presentation has engendered a plethora of interpretations and accusations. For those who hold to the integrity of both the Markan and the Matthean accounts, some integration is necessary.

Since the time of Strauss in the mid 1800's, many NT scholars have correctly noted that in both Matthew and Mark Jesus implies that his public and cosmic vindication will occur simultaneously with the defilement and destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. Strauss' words are conclusive:

It is impossible to evade the acknowledgement that in this discourse, if we do not mutilate it to suit our own views, Jesus at first speaks of the destruction of Jerusalem and farther on, and until the close, of his return at the end of all things, *and that He places the two events in an immediate connection* [italics mine] (quoted in Beasley-Murray 1993:3).

Beasley-Murray (:110) further highlights this sticking point: 'The chief cause of perplexity in the eschatological discourse lies in the fact that statements concerning the end of the age are apparently intertwined with an event that for us has been removed to the distant past'. This factor is crucial to note for a correct interpretation of the above verse.¹ Thus in the Matthean and Markan discourses, *the events surrounding the temple constitute the horizon and boundary for Jesus* (cf. France 1971:227). The preterist answer to the problem, which directly answers the preceding crux, lies in collapsing *all* of this material into the historical events of 70 CE – effectively joining the 'coming' of the Son of Man with the destruction of Jerusalem. Yet, if the material is seen as parousial, then the debate focuses either on the non-fulfillment of the Parousia in 70 CE or the 'error' of prophetic perspective or the futurist solution to the problem.

The preterist view is a radical departure from the traditional understanding but has gained currency in certain theological circles. It is trenchantly represented by

¹ Many scholars take the words of Mark 13:24 as having an ambiguous and 'more distant' chronological connection. The events beyond the 'abomination' are telescoped together, and for this reason *seem* proximate (cf. Hurtado 1998:222). This interpretation has been refuted by France (1971) and others. Gedert (1992:22) sees neither 'a conjunction or disjunction of the two great events predicted (the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the age)'. To him 'it rather teaches that the relationship between them is unknowable'. He concludes: 'The overall message of Mark 13 seems to be that since no one knows when the end will come, vigilance is required at every moment'. Such an agnostic stance is needed for those who avoid the apocalyptic nature of Jesus' Olivet discourse.

France (1971), Lane (1982) and Wright (1996), originally being proffered by J S Russell in 1878 (according to France:229-230 and Sproul 1998:24-26). However, as has already been said, the terminology used by Jesus is clearly apocalyptic and it cannot be reduced to *mere* 'this-worldly' historical events, no matter how calamitous. The 'mediating position' and modification of this apparent fusion credits Jesus with an 'error of parallax' resulting in an optical illusion – common in the prophetic perspective. Jesus thus sees the events of 70 CE against the backdrop of the terminal ('temple-less') pre-parousial tribulation.¹ Yet this view drives a wedge into what Jesus joined, effectively divorcing the destruction of Jerusalem from the Parousia.² The futurist view ('terminal-generation') sees these events as wholly future and related to the destruction of the Jewish rebuilt temple immediately prior to the Parousia. Although it has much to support it, it fails to relate these predicted events with the generation contemporary to Jesus (Mt 23:36). The disciples clearly took their point of departure from Jesus' clear prediction that the Herodian temple was soon to be destroyed (Mk 13:2). Strict futurism forgets this historical rootage. (Due to the importance of this debate and the writer's belief that *only the preterist and futurist views are viable options*, a summary of Wright's salient features is given in Addendum 2).

Futurism's validity is in its identification of the 'all these things' of Mark 13:30 as being inclusive of the Parousia of vv 24-27.³ Although this discourse has an obvious relevancy to the destruction of the temple in 70 CE (the proto-fulfillment of Luke's account), these words of Jesus in Mark 13:30 are placed in a co-text containing a strict

¹ According to Beasley-Murray (1993:127-128) this view was launched by Bengel. See Ladd (1981a:307-328) for comment on prophetic perspective.

² Beasley-Murray (1993:422) displays some evasive and sophisticated exegesis. He avoids the chain textual sequence of Mark 13:24 and v 30 with what precedes, by arguing from a redactional position that views the sayings as fragments that do not necessarily flow into each other in their present form - concluding on v 24: 'whereas the *text leaves the impression* [italics mine] that the parousia is expected to occur "in those days" of tribulation, Mark's redaction had a quite different purpose'. This brings into question the whole textual meaning of Mark 13. Who decides when and where the Markan form-critical 'pericopes' end and whether their introductory words are related to the Markan context or rather to some prior textual pre-history? We strongly affirm that a text-literary reading of Mark 13 is to be the exegete's point of departure.

³ Gedert (1992:22) comments: 'Mark 13:30 does not indicate what is included in "all these things" which must happen within one generation' (also Gundry 1983:490-491). Such scholars seem to be avoiding the clear meaning of the text. A contextual reading of 'all these things' must include both the destruction of Jerusalem and the 'coming' of the Son of man, as all preterists argue. To preclude the 'coming' in the phrase 'all these things' - especially in its co-textual position immediately prior to this saying - reveals a logical reticence that seems to be intimidated by the apparent reading of the text.

imminency of the Parousia, suggesting an ultimate reference to the terminal generation. The emphasis in Jesus' words on *seeing* certain events (v 29) links v 30 both linguistically and textually with v 14, the *seeing* of the 'desolating sacrilege'. That the Son of Man is 'right at the door' (v 29) is linked to v 24, 'in those days, after that suffering'. Thus vv 28-29 do not introduce us with any new information. They merely reinforce what Jesus has just said. The same can be said for v 30 (also Lane 1982:479-480). Thus, *the Son of Man will come within the lifetime of the generation that sees the desecrating sacrilege*. Jesus refers here to the generation of the desecrating sacrilege and of its certain experience in seeing the Son of man coming on the clouds. This is consistent with v 32, which says that Jesus does not know the *day* or *hour* of the coming of the Son of Man *within the existence of that generation*.¹ Within the co-text of vv 28-32 and the context of Mark 13, the saying of Jesus makes full sense when referring particularly to the generation alive at his Parousia.

Now to the meaning of 'this generation will not pass away until all these things take place' (Mk 13:30). The following are considered to be axiomatic for any solution: the veracity of Jesus' words; the setting up of the 'desolating sacrilege' fused with the Parousia of vv 24-26; the Herodian temple's destruction (v 2); the traditional meaning of *genea* as 'generation' (Beasley-Murray 1993:444); and the words 'all these things' including vv 24-27. With these as a given, we are faced with only two options. The first option is the preterist position – the 'Jesus-generation'. Here the events of Mk 13 do not refer to some future Parousia but exclusively to the historic events of 70 CE and a spiritual 'coming' of Christ. The statement then comes to mean: within the lifetime of this present generation, all these things will take place. This 'narrow' interpretation is quite acceptable syntactically and historically but not theologically (see Addendum 2). The second option is a modified 'inclusive' futurism which incorporates the events of the 'Jesus-generation' into its largely futurist purview of the 'terminal generation'. The phrase then refers to *both* the generation of Jesus and to the terminal generation alive at the Parousia, in classic prophetic fashion – a 'broad' interpretation (so Alford 1958a). We believe that this dual reference interpretation does justice to all the indicators in the text.

¹ Jesus knows the 'when' but not the specific day or hour, i e, the calendar day within that generation. Alford (1958b:449) in commenting on Romans 13:11-14 adds: 'the *day and hour* formed no part of their [church] inspiration: - the *details of the event did*'. The same can be said in this instance.

Nelson (1996) has incisively picked up on the 'generation' theme and shown how it provides the link between the 'historical' and 'eschatological'. He takes Jesus' word about 'this generation' (Mk 13:30) to point more to a *quality of generation* than to a specific generation:

The kind of people referred to are characterised as those who reject Jesus and his messengers and the salvific message they preach, who remain unbelieving and unrepentant, who actively oppose Jesus and his messengers through testing and persecution, and who will face eschatological judgment...."This generation" that opposes the coming of the kingdom in Jesus' ministry stands in solidarity with those who reject and oppose God and his judgment to the end (:375-383 *passim*).

Nelson's conclusions are strengthened once the literary connection between Matthew 23 and 24 is noted, where the term 'generation' appears in both chapters (also Kidder 1983:203). Garland (1979:32) expands this context to include chs 21 to 25, with ch 23's verdict of 'guilty' against Israel providing the literary center of gravity. Jesus announces the 'sentence' in ch 23 and the execution of that sentence in ch 24.¹ Garland's comments on 'this generation' are helpful: '[It] represents Israel at the point when its guilt had finally reached the full mark with the rejection of God's last messengers and when God's judgment finally descended, as concretely manifest in the destruction of Jerusalem (:187). Thus, the type/quality of generation that rejects the gospel of Jesus is doomed to receive the judgment of God. This judgment is *eschatological*, for 'the judgment Jesus announces for Israel as a whole and for every individual is closely related to himself and his message' (Reiser 1997:310).

In the light of the above, Jesus' prophetic words in Mark 13 and Matthew 24 can thus partially 'touchdown' on both the events of 70 CE and on events beyond that initial and immediate historical horizon (cf. D Turner 1989; Ladd 1981a:64-70; 320-326). 'The prophetic words of Christ pertain both to the present *and* the future' (Berkouwer 1981:88). His words comprehend the whole of the salvation-history line of the interadventual period; thus he speaks as if his Parousia is imminent and is part of his purpose in the Incarnation (Lk 12:49). The two horizons are indissolubly presented, and because of the theological correspondences, were announced as one composite imminent event. Yet the two are not exactly symmetrical and the

¹ The imprecationary 'woe' of Jesus 'connotes a powerful and denunciatory judgment akin to a curse. This denunciation was more than a prophetic warning of imminent calamity; it was a pronouncement of judgment by the Son of God...a woe which promoted and affirmed their destruction' (Garland 1979:87).

provisional nature of the one portends the ultimate fulfillment of the other. Many biblical prophecies were not exhausted by their imminent historical events and they remained in force, awaiting similar events in the future to consummate and exhaust the prophecies (Dunn 1996b:152-153). Thus the 'abominating sacrilege' in Daniel can 'touch down' in 167 BCE, in 70 CE and in a final terminal event. The Olivet discourse is a case in point. Here both generations seem to be in view, though only the terminal-generation completely fulfills Jesus' words. The present (Jesus-generation) is thus theologically transparent and 'prophecies' of the future (terminal-generation) by being its prototype.

Lastly we note that, because the discourse is more descriptive than prescriptive, Jesus' words paint a scene rather than mark a calendar. This accounts for the historical equivocity. However, when historic (calendar) times do correspond to the scenario painted by Jesus, then we have the particular generation referred to by Jesus. Thus *the nature of the generation spoken of* allows Jesus' words a full application inclusive of, yet beyond, his own generation (Nelson 1996). It is the generation that rejects his gospel (cf. Green 1997:742; Hoekema 1994:115) and witnesses the placing of the 'desolating sacrilege' in the temple, that will not pass away until *all* these events take place. This inclusive approach allows the events of 70 CE to receive a substantial yet partial application in Jesus words, which also proleptically fulfills the ultimate and plenary eschatological event referred to. Thus Jesus' words in Mark 13:30 answer the question of the three disciples (v 3) as to when all these things will be fulfilled: they will all be fulfilled during the lifetime of the generation that witnesses the placing of the desolating sacrilege in the temple.¹ Given this dual generation view, it will be argued that the *Zwischenzeit* and interadventual church-age is bracketed with the reality of such a generation, one in Jesus' time and the other in the 'terminal' time. Jesus, standing in the midpoint, comprehends both in his statement.

¹ This predominant futurism of Mark 13:30 is reinforced by the Lukan account, where this saying of Jesus is divorced from the defilement of the temple and linked to the generation which will experience the Messianic Woes (21:25-28) and observe the signs (vv 29-31) in the last time.

c) Apocalyptic tradition

Understanding the nature of apocalyptic provides us with further hermeneutical keys. If Jesus spoke within the framework of the Danielic apocalyptic field of meaning (which seems probable), then we gain further insight into the nature and sequence of events of Mark 13.¹ Jesus was expecting the kingdom to be fully manifested amidst the 'Messianic woes' of this age, which were inaugurated by his coming and ministry. Speaking of the 'desolating sacrilege' in Mark 13:14, Daniel 9 and 11:31 are clearly in his mind. He thus anticipated a 'double' fulfillment of Daniel's words.

Here in Daniel we have the classic periodisation and forecasting that epitomises the apocalyptic mindset. The event of the 'abomination that desolates' would occur simultaneously with the destruction of the 'prince who is to come' and the full restoration of Israel (9:24) and thus the end of this age (so Mt 24:3).² Taking our clues from the context of the whole book of Daniel, the events of Daniel 9:27 would occur together with: 'the coming of the son of man' (7:13); the destruction of the fourth kingdom (2:44); the 'tribulation' (7:21; 8:24; 11:35; 12:1); and the 'resurrection' (12:2) (cf. Hagner 1995:699). All these events clustered around what would happen 'at the end of the days' (2:28) and probably provided the structural material for Jesus' discourse in Mark 13. Jesus places himself within the magnetic field of those truths, inaugurating the 'end of the days' (Dn 2:28). It seems most plausible then to take these events of Mark 13 as referring to the pre-eschatological 'pains' that the Jews expected to occur prior to the glorious new age. To modulate the tone of these words (Wright 1996) or to simply limit Daniel's words to the Maccabean period, seems to do injustice to the apocalyptic nature of these truths. Thus with Daniel as the conceptual precedent, the apocalypse of Jesus is set within a framework of the final consummative events of this age.³

¹ Cf. Hagner 1995:691 for sources of apocalyptic imagery and thought. Moltmann (1967:320) believed that the apocalyptic interpretation of time was the context for the early Christian sense of mission.

² The patent reason why the Jewish people did not see Antiochus as exhausting the meaning of Daniel's words is because after 167 BCE, Daniel 9:24 still remained unfulfilled.

³ Zechariah 14 is also essential for our interpretation of Mark 13. Here the theophanic coming of God (v 5) is set within the framework of a Jerusalem that is being destroyed by its enemies (vv 1-3). Here we have biblical precedent for Jesus' inextricable connection of the destruction of Jerusalem with his theophanic return.

Lastly, even understanding the apocalyptic framework within which Jesus spoke does not furnish us with clues as to *when* Jesus is returning. It rather characterises and sets the scene for us, allowing the calendar time and the temporal factors to unfold in their own time. This framework is not rigidly determined, but rather (in Mk 13) affected by other factors, primarily that of ecclesial mission (Mt 24:14). The described scenario and anticipated promises await the accomplishment of a certain task.

In conclusion, we have then in Jesus both the prophetic and the apocalyptic perspective. He expected certain events to transpire before the event and for his Parousia to occur within a 'predetermined' framework. Yet he did not slip into a fatalistic inertia but instructed his disciples to go out and preach the gospel to all the nations. The preaching of the gospel must precede those apocalyptic events, showing its priority and determinativeness. It will be argued later, that those apocalyptic events are directly related to the intensive and extensive spread of the gospel through all the earth. The extension of the kingdom's presence in Jesus could precipitate the final events prior to the arrival of the future kingdom of God and bring with it terminal and apocalyptic occurrences - just as his ministry precipitated the 'final' events of 70 CE. If our understanding of 'this generation' is correct, that it refers to a *quality of generation* that will experience eschatological judgment, then this insight helps us to notice a correlation and analogy between the 'Jesus-generation' and the 'terminal-generation'. They are generations that are characterised by a rejection of the gospel of Christ and consequently receive the judgment of God before it passes away. The midpoint period (Jesus' baptism to 70 CE) of history will once again 'replay' itself in the terminal-generation, a veritable goal for the whole of the church-age - a concept that helpfully provides us with a hermeneutical paradigm for more effectively interpreting and applying the message of the NT.

We have seen that in Matthew 24 and Mark 13, Jesus clearly deals with the question of 'when' by linking it to that optical spectacle that is to occur in the temple in Jerusalem. Yet this event *would not occur* prior to the preaching of the gospel amidst an age that was fraught with natural calamities and antichristian persecution (Mk 13:7-13). He predicted the globalisation of the gospel as the necessary event prior to the terminal woes; *the apocalyptic framework being subject to the missionary task of the church*. The disciples were not to be duped into believing that the natural

calamities were portents of the end, for they characterised the entire period within which their mission must take place. There may be an intensification (Mk 13:8) of these calamities - something concomitant with apocalyptic thought - yet it is not the calamities that *must occur*, but the preaching of the gospel to all nations that is the key event. We can conclude by saying that Jesus expected the end to occur consequent to the preaching of the gospel to all nations and to a generation arising that would witness the desolating sacrilege in Jerusalem. We do not see any verses that demand that Jesus predicted that his Parousia would occur within his lifetime or generation. He expected the Parousia to arrive in response to the terminal woes and persecution of his saints, at the sunset of this age. Yet this period was not the distant 'background' of the horizon but in the proximate 'foreground', close enough to warrant constant vigilance. We believe that he had a moderate *Naherwartung*.

2.2.3 *Naherwartung* in the early church

The modern eschatological debate has been preoccupied with the apparent non-arrival of the kingdom and its subsequent vacuum. The impending kingdom, according to Schweitzer, was to irrupt within the life time of Jesus. It did not. Schweitzer's famous statement in his *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (1922:369) crystallised the consequences of this non-event:

The whole history of 'Christianity' down to the present day, that is to say, the real inner history of it, is based on the delay of the Parousia, the non-occurrence of the Parousia, the abandonment of eschatology, the progress and completion of the 'deeschatologising' of religion which has been connected therewith. It should be noted that the non-fulfillment of Matt. 10:23 is the first postponement of the Parousia. We have therefore there the first significant date in the 'history of Christianity'; it gives to the work of Jesus a new direction, otherwise inexplicable.¹

¹ Torrance (1953a:51-52) criticises Schweitzer for overstating his case and giving a very one-sided view of the NT. He accuses him of misunderstanding the nature of eschatology itself, which Schweitzer thinks of only in a 'narrow apocalyptic sense' (:52). Thus Schweitzer 'rejects eschatology almost *in toto* as primitive mythology'. Torrance believes that his uneschatological views were founded on Harnack's views, 'which prevented him from apprehending the inner eschatological form of faith, apart from which apocalypse can only appear rather crude' (:52). Although Schweitzer was 'one-sided', he did effectively reawaken the concept of Jesus as a prophet preaching an *imminent irruption of the kingdom of God*, whatever its form might be.

Some modern theologians, correctly perceiving the radical nature of this *Naherwartung*, have sought to attribute any *Fernerwartung* elements to an early Catholic tendency to 'cover up' the authentic immediacy of Jesus ministry (*pace* Cullmann 1967:28-32; 40-47). Luke is blamed for introducing a lengthy interim of salvation-history into a simple and radical immediacy - a solution which filled the vacuum. In response, Cullmann's whole book (1967) is a justification of this Lukan perspective and effectively shows how a period of salvation-history was implicit even within the preaching of Jesus - albeit only initially limited to the generation of Jesus' contemporaries. Rather than seeing salvation-history as a 'catholicising tendency', we can see a continuity between the hope of Jesus and the hope of the early church (Cullmann 1956b:154), characterised by a intense expectation of the proximate return of Christ. There is no 'early Catholic' modification but rather an organic relation between Jesus and the church in their eschatological hope.¹ It is thus now axiomatic for NT scholars to speak of both a fulfillment and an anticipation of the OT hope within the New.²

2.2.3.1 Biblical evidence of sustained *Naherwartung*

It will be shown that the early church had an imminent expectancy. This expectancy was undelimited (Moore 1966:108-174) in that it did not require that Jesus *had to* return in either their generation or the next. There were elements of *Fernerwartung* that 'de-immediatised' their hope, but we believe did not deflate their ardour. We will briefly analyse this expectancy according to Luke, Paul, John, and the General Letters.

Taking Luke-Acts as presenting one harmonious thought pattern, we have the following texts to consider: Luke 1-3; 3:3-18; 10:1-24; 12:1-13:35; 17:20-18:8; 21:5-36; Acts 1:6-11; 2:17-21; 3:19-26; 14:22 and 17:31.³ It is not so much in the individual texts but in the overarching scheme that we have a presentation of Luke's

¹ Cullmann (1956b) has shown that even if one accepts a delimitation of the Parousia in the expectation of Jesus (*pace* Moore 1966), the early church did not experience any turmoil at its non-arrival, for 'the essential element in the nearness of the kingdom is...not the final date but the certainty that the expiatory work of Christ on the cross constitutes the decisive stage in the coming of the Kingdom of God' (:153-154). Because the midpoint of salvation-history *has occurred* in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus (Cullmann 1951), the non-arrival of the kingdom presented no problem for the early church.

² For summaries of the modern eschatological debate, see Brown 1976, Ladd 1974:3-42 and Torrance 1953.

³ For a review of certain salient issues in Lukan eschatological, see Brown 1976:917-921.

eschatology. Since Conzelmann's epochal study of Lukan theology (1960) there has been a recognition of the salvation-historical framework within which Luke wrote. Thus an apparent *Fernerwartung* has come to characterise Lukan studies, ostensibly de-eschatologising the initial apocalyptic ardour. Franklin (1975:9-47), Mattill (1979:41-112), Hiers (1974) and Nolland (1998:65-67), *et al*, have all challenged this assumption, believing that 'there is no evidence that Luke meant his contemporaries to understand that the Parousia would occur only in the remote future' (Hiers:152).¹ According to Nolland, 'as in the Gospels, so in Acts, Luke continued to expect the parousia within his own generation' (:65), a case he constructs from Luke's gospel. Mattill (:6) characterises Luke's gospel as 'the most apocalyptic of all four gospels'.² It seems likely though that Luke did not limit his expectation to the Jesus-generation but could well have expected the gospel mission to the 'known world' *to have been completed in a relatively short period*. His very mention of the visitors to Jerusalem in Acts 2:9-11 reveals the reality of the explosive extension of the gospel within the first decades of the church's existence. His account ends with Paul preaching in the capital of the empire - an event which could be interpreted as an epochal phase in the fanning out of the gospel of Jesus Christ (so Bauckham 1995a). To Luke, all nations were closer than ever to hearing the good news – a fact which suffused his theology with a relative imminent eschatological expectation.³

All of Paul's epistles were written under the conviction that the return of Christ was 'just around the corner'.⁴ 'One will thus be allowed to conclude that living to see

¹ 'If there is a consensus it would be that Conzelmann has rightly emphasised the role of salvation-history in Luke's thought, but that he was wrong to identify it as a distinctive of Lukan thought, and that, though he was right to note a delay, he has overplayed the role of delay of the parousia in Lukan thought' (Nolland 1998:64).

² Mattill's exegetical discussion on the adverb *mello* results in the conclusion that it should be translated in the sense of '*to be on the point of doing or suffering something*'. Of the 108 times of *mello*'s occurrence in the NT, 85% of the times it is used in the eschatological sense of 'soon' (:43-49). Thus the NRSV's translation of Lk 21:36 ('things that will take place') differs from the NASB and NIV ('things which are about to take place').

³ Mattill (1972:136-145), Hegler (1993) and Buzzard (1994) convincingly argue for a reading of Luke-Acts within the framework of the hope for a national restoration (*pace* France 1975 and Dumbrell 1994:207-225). Lk 24:21 and Ac 1:6 (even after Jesus had 'opened their minds to understand the Scripture') imply the resilience and compatibility of this hope during the earthly ministry of Christ.

⁴ Dunn 1998:310-315; Beker 1995; Kümmel 1978; Towner 1986,1989; Mounce 2000; Plevnik 1997; Ridderbos 1997a:487-497; Witherington 1992. This 'near expectation' is found in Gl 6:9-10; 1 Cor 1:7-9; 4:9; 7:25; 10:11; 11:26; 15:50-58; 2 Cor 1:13; 4:14; 5:2-5, 10; 10:6; 11:2; Rm 8:16-25; 11:32; 13:11-14; 16:20; Eph 5:16; Col 1:5, 28; 3:4; 4:5; Phlp 1:6, 9-11; 3:20; 4:5; 1 Tm 4:1; 6:14-15; 2 Tm 3:1; 4:1-3, 8 and Titus 2:13.

the parousia was for Paul indeed a real possibility...but that both for his own faith and for his paraenesis this expectation was in no way a *conditio sine qua non*' (Ridderbos 1997a:492). Although Paul thought that Jesus' return within his lifetime would be probable, he never affirmed that it would be a certainty. In the final analysis, a sense of imminency is sustained throughout his letters, although with varying degrees of intensity (so Dunn 1998:312-313).¹

The Johannine corpus holds the realised and futurist eschatological aspects in tension, although there is a foregrounding of the vertical, realised elements (Beasley-Murray 1946:99 and Pamment 1982:85). Focus on the Parousia is implied in John 14:3, 16:20-22 (?), 21:22 and 1 John 2:18, 28; 3:2-3.² That this gospel does not contain explicit detail documenting a *Naherwartung* does not imply that it was written as an alternative to an imminent parousial expectation. Its distinct theological focus can account for certain theological 'omissions'.

In the general letters the following Scriptures witness to a *Naherwartung*, showing once again the prevalence of this temporal eschatological hope: Hebrews 1:2; 9:26-28; 10:19-12:29; James 5:3-11; 1 Peter 1:3-9, 13; 2:12; 3:20; 4:5-7, 17-18; 5:10; 2 Peter 3:3-14 and Jude 14-25. The whole book of Revelation is enveloped in and charged with the reality of *Naherwartung* (1:1-3 and 22:12), and 'in no other writing in the New Testament is the imminence of the Advent more clearly marked' (Beasley-Murray 1951:40).³ It fittingly ends the canon with a note of imminence (21:20).

In the light of the above, 'the assumption of a marked difference between the eschatology of Luke, Acts and John and that of Paul and Mark, due to the delay of the Parousia, is open to question and not an assured result' (Cranfield 1982:502). There does seem to be 'an insistency on the nearness of the end, on the shortness of the time which remains, [that] is characteristic of the NT as a whole' (:510). A non-specific,

¹ Mearns' contention (1980) that Paul's eschatological outlook went under substantial modification (from a thoroughly realised to an imminent Christian apocalyptic to a final Christian apocalyptic scheme of signs) is novel. Remembering the occasional nature of Paul's letters accounts for his diverse eschatological landscape. Cf. Plevnik 1997:272-276 for a response to Mearns.

² Curiously, dispensationalists have cited John 14:3 as proof of a secret rapture. Jesus, they say, takes the church to heaven, whilst at the Parousia, the clear movement of Christ is *from heaven to earth* (cf. Brindle 2001). However, the 'place' where Jesus is, is not necessarily situated cosmo-topographically but spiritually – it is the place in the Father's bosom (1:18) where we can see the glory given him by the Father (17:24). Cranfield (1982:501) believed that John 16:20-22 was 'evidence that the fourth evangelist shared the near expectation of those who had gone before him'.

³ Thus Beasley-Murray sees the term 'shortly' (1:1) made meaningless if the 1000 years is interposed between the time of the revelation and the Advent (:40). This is an aspect seemingly incompatible with postmillennialism.

undelimited *Naherwartung*, always implicit and often explicit, is woven into the warp and woof of the whole NT canon.

2.2.4 Grounds for *Naherwartung*

Granted that there is an imminent expectation in the early church, we now want to find out *why* the church had such an ardent hope. We mention here six interrelated factors that fuelled this hope.

2.2.4.1 The presence of the kingdom in Jesus

The reality of the presence of the kingdom in Jesus is the 'first factor upon which the NT insistence upon the nearness of the End is based. It is a specific understanding of the past phase of salvation-history as these have been brought to a head in Christ' (Moore 1966:168). It is this reality which accounts for all the points below. The midpoint (Cullmann) of the whole sweep of God's temporal redemptive purposes, was attained in the life, death and resurrection of Christ. The NT is therefore replete with a substantial realisation of the OT hope and emphatic that the last-days have begun (König 1989:2-6; Beale 1997).

The words of Christ discussed above (Mk 8:38 and Mk 13:30) were no doubt a kerygmatic root in effecting the tone and frequency of the early church's understanding of the *Naherwartung*. The degree to which these and other words of Jesus could have been misconstrued to imply a return within their generation is seen in John 21:23, for 'late in the first century it was still expected that at least *one* venerable apostle would live to see the Parousia' (Hiers 1974:153). As much as contemporary scholarship differs over the exact interpretation of Jesus' words (and other NT sayings) so the early church probably shared similar misunderstandings (also Cranfield 1982:510). From the preaching of John the Baptist to the words of Christ, the church inherited a *Naherwartung* consciousness.

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead announced the inauguration of the kingdom of God. We might say that the optical experience of the disciples of the *first-fruits* of the kingdom expedited their expectancy of the *full harvest*. The first

swing of the sickle began, and the rest of the crop was expected to quickly follow (Dunn 1975:159). This event caused time to 'strain toward its actualisation' (Beker 1995:32), for 'the resurrection of Christ is...not so much an event *in the midst* of history as an event that inaugurates the *end* of history' (Beker:73). Christ was raised from the dead in order to judge the world (Ac 17:31); the purpose of the resurrection was for a Parousial event – once again implying an imminent execution of this task. Their experience of *adventus* was the taproot of the *futurum*.

The gift of the Spirit also acutely accelerated the sense of being the terminal community. The promises were being fulfilled. 'The Spirit is the "already"...He is the element of the end time' (Cullmann 1967:305). This is what seems to have fired the lifestyle and consciousness of the early church (Fee 1994:803-806; Moore 1966:168-172). The Spirit also focuses on the second coming of Christ and the presence of the kingdom in its consummate form (Moore:168). 'This forward look arises from the conviction that the presence of the Spirit is a sign of the End and an assurance that the present is already somehow *an anticipation of the Last Age* [italics mine]' (Moore:169). The 'all embracing turning point' of the ages had occurred (Ridderbos 1997:493), time would never be the same again. Cranfield (1982:504-505) sums up the cumulative effect of the past three points:

Naherwartung...is the expression of the recognition that history's most significant events have already taken place in the ministry, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, so that all that remains between the ascension and his parousia can only be a sort of epilogue, during the whole of which, whether the actual length of time involved is short or long, the end presses upon the life and concerns of the believer as something urgently relevant to the present.

Besides the NT teaching, Christ's appearance, ministry, death, resurrection and gift of the Spirit, were together the genesis of this NT *Naherwartung*. Because the End has come in Christ, the End is soon to come for the world.

2.2.4.2 Apocalyptic tradition

The first century Judaism was a period of cognitive dissonance.¹ Israel was chafing under the Roman yolk. This condition engendered a sense of imminency and an ardent expectation that God was soon to throw off the Roman oppression and liberate his people. Godet, quoted in Biederwolf (1972:330), characterised the pre-70 CE apostolic period thus:

The time which preceded the Destruction of Jerusalem was signalized in the east by many calamities, a dreadful famine which took place under Claudius, and by the earthquake which destroyed Laodicea and other cities in A.D. 68. At Caesarea 20,000 Jews were massacred in a fight with the Gentiles, and 30,000 died in Rome of a pestilence.

Famines and earthquakes were all portents, though occurring intermittently.² The presence of Rome provoked the possibility of another 'abomination of desolation', and another Antiochus the 4th. The Caligula crisis (40 CE) 'was the first potentially cataclysmic situation to confront the Palestinian Christians since their Easter experience, and it would have seemed to them precisely the crisis which would bring their eschatological hopes to fulfillment' (Taylor 1999:39).³

The empirical condition of the churches also expedited the eschatological expectation. Timothy, 2 Peter and Jude witness to the presence of apostasy and heresy

¹ Cognitive dissonance is a (corporate or individual) psychological condition that arises from a contradiction(s) between deeply held beliefs and expectations and the actual state of affairs. Thus Beker: 'The church eagerly waits the coming of Christ because there is a contradiction between its empirical existence in the world and the promise epitomised in the resurrection of Christ' (1995:33). Taylor (1999:36) reminds us that in the agrarian society of the first century, there was a much shorter life expectancy - something which fed apocalyptic hope. Also, the socio-economic experience of the early believers no doubt added to their longing for a better world to come.

² Winter (1994) chronicles the affect of the drought during the reign of Claudius and the Judean famine (46-47 CE) as well as the economic affects of grain shortages (Ac 11:28). Pliny recorded the flooding of the Nile in the mid forties. 'At present what we do know from extant Graeco-Roman evidence of the period is that it was a shortage of an uneven intensity spread over a number of years' (:68). Winter sees a linkage between Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 7:26 and a grain shortage/famine (:65). Winter mentions the earthquakes during the reign of Tacitus in 51 CE; 'an ominous year' (:71). 'Tacitus gives us a narrative full of earthquakes, wars and crimes, and describes the period [prior to 70 CE] as one "rich in calamities, horrible battles, rent with seditions, and even savage in peace itself"' (Biederwolf 1972:330).

³ Taylor (1996, 1999) has suggested that the Caligula crisis of 39/40 CE initially reinforced the imminency of the early church, yet also was the first event that 'disconfirmed' the early church's ardent eschatology. Bruce (1982:180) comments that the words of Mark 'let the reader understand' could have been a reference to this period. Mearns (1980:148-147) suggests that this event stimulated NT apocalyptic, and particularly affected Paul prior to writing 2 Thessalonians. Against Taylor, we might rather consider the possibility that this event intensified and confirmed the expectation of a literal defilement of the temple rather than weakened it.

within the churches, something also connected with a temporal expectation of living in the latter end of history.¹ If apocalyptic eschatology is an answer to the cognitive dissonance often experienced by God's people - a 'problem' caused by the disparity between what was believed and what was experienced - then the early church certainly had empirical grounds for its *Naherwartung*; for 'Christian hope occurs wherever there is a gap between a state of affairs as it is, and God's declared will for his people' (Thiselton 1976:51).

2.2.4.3 National renewal

The concept of a glorious national renewal prior to the Day of Yahweh (Mt 4:5-6; Jl 2:28-32) was integral to the eschatological hope of Israel. The call for national repentance was summoned by John the Baptist, Jesus and the apostolic church. The book of Acts witnesses to a substantial number of Jewish people becoming obedient to the faith.² Acts 15 gives us an insight into the self-consciousness of the early Jewish church. Although they recognised the validity of the Gentile mission, the Jew and Gentile distinction was still present in their experience. God was restoring his (Jewish) people, and the Gentile mission was a corollary of it. Bauckham (1995a) has shown how the centrality of the Jerusalem church must have had an incredible theological, psychological and geographical affect on the early Christian movement (:425). Yet after 70 CE, 'the centrality of Jerusalem lost much of its meaning for most Christians' (:426).

If we argue for an approach to the gospels through the OT and second temple Judaism (Wright 1997), it seems consistent to deduce that the dawn of the new age was interpreted as a consequence of the nation's repentance. This had been the whole of the OT hope: a redeemer coming to repentant Zion (Is 59:20) to bring in everlasting peace and righteousness. Joel 2:12-27 pictures the blessings the nation would receive if they had then returned to God. The same 'offer' of the kingdom was presented to Israel by John, Jesus and apostles. This call for *national* repentance was continued by

¹ 2 Timothy 4:3 speaks of a 'coming time' in which people will be led astray from the truth. This expectation of 'apostasy' was linked to the seeds that were present (1 Tm 4:1-4). Is the 'latter times' speaking of the present or future, or both? It could be referring to a future time, the dawn of which was being experienced in Ephesus (cf. Towner 1989:73). Daniel 11:29-35 could have been influential in this apocalyptic expectation.

² Acts 2:41, '3000'; 4:4, '4000'; 5:13, 'but the people held them in high esteem'; 9:31, 'the church...increased in numbers'; 21:20, 'how many thousands of believers there are among the Jews'.

the apostles, the twelve Jewish Christian leaders - Acts 3:17-26 clearly articulates this fact. Here Peter expected a national restoration - on a larger scale than he was experiencing - prior to the Parousia, an event that would trigger the Parousia (see Alford 1958b:36-39; Hegler 1993 and sec 2.3.2.1). Does not then the fact of the obduracy of Israel furnish us with a clue as to the reason for the delay of the Parousia in the NT period? (cf. Barrett 1988:72; Rabali 1992:183-186).

2.2.4.4 The Christian mission

A last reason for the *Naherwartung* was the preaching of the gospel to all the nations. The missionary task was seen as part of the final fulfillment of this age and a sign of the process of eschatological realisation. 'The incorporation of the Gentiles in the Kingdom of God promised by the prophets, was expected and announced by Jesus as God's eschatological act of power, as the great final manifestation of God's free grace' (Jeremias 1967:70). The aspect of discontinuity however, was the change from the OT's centripetal Gentile movement to the NT centrifugal emphasis. This missionary movement was carried out within the purposes of God and the end-time ingathering of Gentiles promised by the OT (Köstenberger and O'Brien 2001:164-173, Aus 1979; Barrett 1988). Within the NT period, the progress of the gospel from Jerusalem to Rome witnessed thousands of inter-national conversions, testifying to the dramatic power in Christianity: Acts 2:5, 41; 4:4; 5:14; 9:35, 42; 11:24-26; 17:4; 18:8, 10; 19:18, 26 (so Gentry 1999:47). The end-time mission to the Gentiles had begun and had spread rapidly into the known Gentile world. This was itself to be a last-days event (Is 66:18-21).

There are also texts in the NT that indicate that *all nations had already heard*, albeit only representatively (Rm 10:18; 16:26 and Col 1:6, 23). Thus Bilezikian (1993:327) can write: 'Paul makes several statements indicating that the early church considered this condition to have been sufficiently fulfilled to justify the imminent expectancy of the Parousia'.¹ Thus linking Acts 2:5 with Colossians 1:6 and 1:23 could witness to the accomplishment of the completion of the gospel coming to all

¹ Bruce (1985:197) sees Romans 16:26 as 'representative universalism' in that most of the nations in the Mediterranean where Jews were had heard. Thus these verses point to the already 'universal' sweep of the gospel, something clear from Col 1:6.

nations in the Mediterranean in a representative fashion.¹ A salvation-historical point was reached and all nations 'representatively' present in the Mediterranean heard the gospel (so Bruce 1985:197 and Aus 1979:234). This can also be seen as a proleptic event (O'Brien 1987:13), foreshadowing the quantitative correspondence in the terminal generation (see Diagram 1 and 2). This accomplishment (prior to 70 CE) must certainly have contributed to the apostolic church's *Naherwartung*.

The above factors show that there were warranted grounds for an ardent, imminent (though indeterminate) near-expectation. Because some of these factors have reoccurred over the entire church-age, at times stronger than others, the age has frequently witnessed similar periods of imminency. Hoekema (1994:130) has gone so far as to say that 'all the signs of the times described in the NT characterise the entire period between Christ's first coming and second coming, and every decade of that period' (also Cullmann 1956b:157). These words of Hoekema need regulating (what of the 'abomination', and other more cosmic apocalyptic signs (Lk 21:25-26)?), yet he and others have successfully showed why we can characterise the entire interadventual age as 'the last-days' (also König 1989 *et al*).

This *Naherwartung* has certain implications. Firstly, it inclines the NT scholar more in the direction of dispensational 'any-momentism' than a protracted postmillennialism. The believer is more in tune with the NT if he or she lives with a *Naherwartung* consciousness. Also, the NT contains an imminency that makes its contents and theology *directly applicable to the terminal generation in a unique way*. Although the imminency characterises the *Zwischenzeit* and charges it with a fervent forward look, *yet it finds a particular relevancy to the generation that is to experience the return of Christ*. We can say that a *Naherwartung* brackets and characterises the church-age, although uniquely in the former sense. Besides this, and important for this thesis, we note that the *Naherwartung* also affects ecclesiology. It brings a focus onto the terrestrial church and its condition relative to the pending Parousia - the horizontal horizon of the church's mission and condition is foregrounded. Lastly, the *Naherwartung* provides us with a hermeneutical control for interpreting the NT. All of the books of the NT, and especially those portions of futuristic anticipations, need to be rooted and understood in this light. Realising this, invalidates the historicist

¹ Preterists such as Chilton (1987:90-91) use these verses to point to the fulfillment of Mt 24:14 prior to 70 CE.

school of interpreting Revelation, for that hermeneutic is an effective denial of the *Naherwartung*. However, a typological and prophetic interpretation of NT eschatology helpfully retains the preterist control and futurist horizon without sacrificing this ardent *Naherwartung*.

Finally, we conclude that the NT writers did not expect their present to extend indefinitely into the future, climaxing in a 1000 years of terrestrial prosperity (postmillennialism), nor that she would be removed from tribulation prior to the end (dispensationalism). As Robinson Gregory has noted:

Amplly sufficient evidence remains to warrant the statement that the NT teaches us to regard the return of our Lord as always near, and to be ever looking and longing for it. The argument is irresistible, that you cannot watch and hope for an event which you *know* to be at least a thousand years distant (1887:331).

Christ was returning very soon - for the end-time birth pains had arrived. The Parousia was on the near side of the horizon and not in the unobservable distance.

2.2.5 *Fernerwartung*

Although *Naherwartung* and *Fernerwartung* are terms that appear to be mutually exclusive, we believe that the NT sustains a *Fernerwartung* within a *Naherwartung*. The *Fernerwartung* factors help explain the non-fulfillment of the Parousia within the NT period and mitigate the intensity of the *Naherwartung*. These factors in no way lessen the reality of the *Naherwartung* (König 1989:198), but they do modulate and condition the degree of imminence. The theological expedients of the *Zwischenzeit* that account for non-arrival of the Parousia now receive our attention.

Some scholars have taken the 'non-arrival' of the kingdom as 'the single most important factor for the transformation of early Christian eschatology from an emphasis on the *imminent* expectation of the end to a vague expectation set in the more distant future' (Aune 1992:606). They have thus taken the intense imminency as characteristic of authentic 'Christianity', and have ascribed all elements of *Fernerwartung* to a Catholic tendency to reinterpret Jesus' mistaken expectation. To

them, salvation-history is not a part of authentic primitive Christianity (Conzelmann 1960).¹ As we noted, Schweitzer (1922:369) saw the whole of the church-age as a rationalisation for the non-fulfillment of the expected end. Others have lived with the tension, noting that both primitive *and* catholic diversities inhere within the unity of the NT (Dunn 1977). The most satisfying theological interpretation, *mutatis mutandis*, has come from Cullmann (1951, 1967) who has effectively shown that the 'already/not-yet' tension in the ministry of Jesus incorporated eschatology into redemptive history. He has argued that the work of Christ was the midpoint of the whole process of biblical time and the center of redemptive history (1951).² Because the midpoint now lies in the past, the future is merely the unfolding and consummation of that which is already accomplished. D-day has occurred and we await V-day. In the early church there were naturally some hasty calculations of the imminence of the 'end of the war' - a foreshortened perspective was characteristic of primitive Christianity - yet this tendency is merely a slight aberration of an otherwise healthy perspective. That the End has already occurred within time and history, charges the present with eschatological significance (incorporating the time-process of salvation-history into our present age), qualifying the 'church-age' as one of a 'now' and 'not yet' overlap. What has arrived in Christ acted not merely as a counterpoise to the expectation of the 'not yet' elements, but rather *integrated the 'delay elements' into the very nature of primitive Christianity*. Cullmann has helpfully shown that a relativising of the imminency of the Parousia is not inconsistent with classical Christianity but integral to it. He combats his existentialist critics by showing that even if Jesus expected the imminent end of the world, there was still an irreducible 'present of salvation' in Jesus' ministry:

If the expectation of the imminent end is accompanied by the idea of a brief present indicating precisely the same essential characteristics as the prolonged interval of the

¹ Besides Cullmann's magisterial refutation of Conzelmann (1967), see Moore (1966:84-88) who suggests that 'Luke's emphases are only emphases and not the result of a quite different or new standpoint'.

² Moltmann (1996:10-13) has characterised this outlook as 'a *transposition of eschatology into time*'. His three objections to Cullmann are: (1) If the time now is too long, has D-day really occurred?; (2) Linear time is modern science and not biblical; (3) Salvation-history is Enlightenment theology, historical deism that offers no freedom to God. For Moltmann, 'Christ does not come "in time"; he comes to transform time' (:13). These are pertinent observations, yet they seem to arise from the tendency to qualitatively separate God and man, so that there is no correlation between the two. Did Christ enter *our* time or did he bring about a totally 'new time', *his* time? Cullmann's thesis seems more realistic, rooting the incarnation and eschatology within *our* time and history (which is itself God's time).

later salvation-historical conception, then we have a starting point for incorporating the present into salvation-history. That is where the continuity between Jesus and Luke lies (1967:181).

Finally, we note that this 'delay' presented no crisis to the apostolic church; for 'in the light of this Primitive outlook, the entire complex of questions concerning the expectation of the imminent end and the delay of the Parousia has lost its importance in Primitive Christianity' (Cullmann 1951:90). Besides their enjoyment of a spiritual presence of Christ, 'the lack of specificity with regard to the exact date of the Parousia made it impossible for its non-occurrence to become a critical problem at any point in the subsequent history of early Christianity' (Aune 1975:98; also Berkhof 1966:77 and Berkouwer 1981:129). Bauckham (1980:3) believed that, because early Christianity was both continuous and discontinuous with first century Judaism, the 'problem of the delay of the parousia was the same problem of eschatological delay which had long confronted Jewish apocalyptic eschatology'. For Bauckham, eschatological delay in Jewish apocalyptic (:4-10) was the salient issue which spawned Jewish apocalyptic. There was a continual conjugation of the theological factors which promoted imminent expectation (apocalypticist's intense perception of the sheer contradiction of present historical facts with the righteousness of God (:9)) with those that accounted for the fact of delay (mere existence of the present facts *et al*). Yet this dialectic was not harmonised to produce a compromise, it rather remained a feature of Christian theology (:9). Bauckham observes that 'the characteristic tension of imminency and delay in Jewish apocalyptic seems to be, if anything, sharpened by the "already" of Christian faith, since it contributes to *both* sides of the tension' (:29). Given the presence of this tension, it seems likely that the elements of eschatological realisation in the NT (crystallised in Johannine theology) provided the early church with a foundation of truth and experience, on which they could stand and wait the eagerly anticipated King. What *had happened* had a primacy over *what had to happen*.

2.2.5.1 Scriptures of *Fernerwartung*

Here follows some of the pertinent Scriptures relative to the expectation of an 'extended' period prior to the Parousia. Even in those letters which carry the most intense *Naherwartung*, we notice elements which help explain the Parousia's non-

occurrence. In a certain sense *the whole of the NT* is an implicit reason for *Fernerwartung*. The letters were written to churches and believers in order to facilitate and direct them into the maturity of Christ. The following are explicit texts which provide patent clues as to why the expected Parousia was held at bay.

In the synoptics and Lukan material, we have support for Cullmann's thesis that 'not yet' elements coexist with the 'now' elements. Kümmel (1957:65-72) lists Mark 2:18-20, 14:25, Luke 18:1-8 and Matthew 23:37-39 as intimating an interadventual period of delay. To these we can add the following key references: the parables (Mt 13); the gospel mandate (Mt 24:14); the warnings for vigilance (Mt 24:36-25:30; Lk 12:38);¹ Jesus' words that the end is not yet (Mk 13:7) and his deflating of imminency (Lk 17:22-18:8); Luke 19:11-27; and the Olivet discourse which, particularly in Luke, anticipates a period of time before the Parousia.² His words on prayer in Luke 12:41-48 also relate directly to the *Fernerwartung* (cf. Hoekema 1994:120). To these we can add the famous missionary farewell discourses (Mt 28:16-20, Lk 24:44-49 and Ac 1:1-11), as well as the mission charge of Matthew 10 - which all imply an intervening activity and task to occur prior to his return.

In the Pauline corpus, the following Scriptures all speak of factors which must occur prior to the Parousia: Romans 1:5; 5:12-21; 11:11-32; 15:8-13; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21; Ephesians 1:10; 4:1-16; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12; 1 Timothy 1:15; 2:1-7; 4:1; and 2 Timothy 4:3. It is particularly in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 that Paul seeks to 'inject a note of eschatological reserve into a group of Christians with some form of over-realised eschatology' (Witherington 1992:162). In the Johannine gospel, 10:16, 11:52, 12:32, 16:8-11, 17 and 20:21 mention certain salvation-historical events which are to transpire before the manifestation of Jesus Christ. *Fernerwartung* in the general letters includes Hebrews 10:12-13, 1 Peter 4:17 and 2 Peter 3:9.³ The Revelation narrates events 'that must soon take place' (1:1). The whole book contains the tension of *Naherwartung* and *Fernerwartung*. In true apocalyptic fashion, it gives

¹ 'It was the error of the foolish virgins to expect the imminent coming of the bridegroom', Bahnsen 1976:60.

² The classical section of Lk 19:11-27 need not imply *Ferherwartung*. Cf. Nolland (1998:66) who dismisses this verse as one which slackens imminency. This verse merely tells us that 'the consummation of the kingdom of God will not come as the culmination of Jesus' ministry, but must first be preceded by Jesus' journey through death and resurrection to enthronement at the right hand of God'.

³ Bauckham (1983:310) rightly comments that 2 Peter 3:8-13 does not 'imply that Christians should discard the imminent expectation so characteristic of primitive Christianity...The author in fact continues to speak as though his readers will be alive at the Parousia (1:19; 3:14).

the suffering believers insight into the events which are to transpire throughout the church-age and particularly at the end of history as we now know it. Besides Revelation 6:11 (see Bauckham 1980:15), 11:1-13 speaks of the church mission to the world which in turn justifies the delay of the Parousia (Bauckham:32-33). The book also suggests that it is in the purpose of God to allow his people to share in sufferings that accounts for a 'delay': 'God delays the *parousia* not simply in spite of his peoples suffering, but actually so that his people may suffer that positive, creative suffering which comes to the followers of the cross of Christ' (:36).

The rest of this thesis will be an attempt to relate all the above to the Parousia of Christ.

2.2.6 Grounds for *Fernerwartung*

We now look at three theological factors that account for the *Fernerwartung* in the NT (cf. Moore 1966:208-218 and Berkouwer 1981:96-139). They are: (1) apocalyptic events; (2) missiological events; and (3) ecclesial events.

(1) Certain events were expected to occur before the End (thus 2 Th 2:1-12 'that day *will not come unless...*'). This includes factors such as the Antichrist, the apostasy, the temple desecration, persecution and the events predicted in Revelation. Berkhof (1996:696-703) enumerated five great events expected prior to the Parousia, factors which 'de-imminentised' the Parousia: the calling of the Gentiles, the conversion of the *pleroma* of Israel, the great apostasy and great tribulation, the revelation of Antichrist and false signs and wonders. Luke portends great cosmic signs (21:25-28). We might call these factors the 'apocalyptic structurization of the eschatological promise' (Berkouwer 1981:453), a framework providing a more rigid/deterministic setting within which the contingent salvation-history line flows.

(2) Jesus expected the grace of God to reach out to all nations (Berkouwer 1981:129-133). This factor of the extensive upbuilding of the church has received the most attention, and rightfully so. The end is held back 'in the interests of grace, allowing opportunity to be given to men to repent and believe (Moore 1966:207). The delay is a time to facilitate repentance and faith, an age of grace that is eschatologically charged, for 'it is man's *final* chance, because the End *is* held

back...the End delays not naturally' (Moore:209). God has allowed for a period of divine waiting that reveals and manifests his compassion (Berkouwer:123 on 1 Pt 3:9). This mission is grounded in the eschatological framework of the NT: *the theological reality, reason and character of the 'now' in the 'now-not-yet' tension contains the rationale for missiology*. The kingdom is present in a veiled manner, creating the space for human volition and response. This 'now' reality runs from Christ into the church, and finds its finest articulation in the midpoint - the ministry of Christ. This eschatological tension, seen in Christ's earthly ministry, continues in the church and her preaching to the world. It is thus this character of the ministry of Christ that accounts for the delay. The whole reason for God bringing in the kingdom in such an incipient and hidden form - giving room for response - accounts for the delay. Thus 'it might be said that the meaning of the present dispensation becomes visible in the church' (Berkouwer 1981:132). The present is thus the era of the church, 'the community specially established to further the purpose of grace by participating in furthering the occasion of repentance and faith through constant witness' (:209). If therefore this post-cross pre-parousia period is specifically *salvific time*, then this period is subservient to the outworking of God's divine purpose. Its end will come when this purpose is achieved (see Robert Nelson 1964:226). Mission does not subserviently take place between two fixed periods; it rather takes place filling, characterising, legitimising and determining this particular period. Once the *raison d'être* for this period is achieved, then the End will come.

(3) The last reason is the ecclesial factor of the intensive upbuilding of the church. Whilst the apocalyptic aspects and missiological aspects have received most attention, this ecclesial aspect has been neglected. This thesis will attempt to show how this aspect is essential in understanding the nature of the interim period. It will be argued that *the obedience of the church is crucial for understanding the temporal delay of the Parousia of Christ*.

2.2.7 Salvation-history

Salvation-history is an important conceptual framework for understanding the timing of the Parousia.¹ For many this 'divine program' provides a, if not *the*, hermeneutic for interpreting the whole Bible (Hughes 1976:80-81). It is a biblical-theological methodology to comprehend the whole sweep of the purposes of God in history, and to identify patterns within it that often work toward a teleological consummation. In synoptically viewing the whole bible, theorists note that 'each event has its roots in the past, its meaning in the present, and portends a further development in the future' (Hughes:80). Salvation-history stresses the 'horizontal' aspects of the acts of God in history, integrating each temporal period along a divine line that *embraces the biblical movement of protology to eschatology in sequential order*.² It connects events 'according to a divine plan...stretch[ing] back to the beginning and forward to consummation' (Peter 1970:8). This organic, linear and temporal path of divine saving history has received the technical German term *Heilsgeschichte*, which has been translated as 'salvation-history' or 'economy of salvation' (cf. Cullmann 1967:74-78). Its theological rise can be traced back to Cocceius in the 17th century, Bengel in the 18th and people such as Von Hofmann in the 19th century. Although accused of being a 'biblicist systematisation' by some, their aim was to grasp the totality of the organic flow of salvation as it was temporarily mediated, 'as the whole which is disclosed from its conclusion as a unity' (Sauter 1988:511). Their efforts were aimed at constructing a context for universal history (Sauter:511).

This movement of salvation has its primary purpose in the salvation of mankind, following the biblical path and principle of election and representation: of World > Israel > Remnant > Jesus Christ > Church > World (Cullmann 1951:115-118; Davies 1979:362). Although salvation-history culminates in the NT in Jesus Christ (the 'midpoint' or 'plan compressed in one event', Cullmann 1951:100), it does not stop there but unfolds further until it reaches its *terminus ad quem* in the kingdom of God. From a hermeneutical perspective, this approach does justice to the historical

¹ Cf. Moore 1966:80-91; Cullmann 1951, 1963:315-328, 1967; Maier 1994:195-202; Hughes 1976:79-89; Piper 1958; Peter 1970; Davidson 1981:388-397.

² Salvation-history is thus 'the extreme opposite position to existential interpretation' (Maier 1994:197) which accents the more 'vertical' aspect of eschatology. It is thus organically related to biblical theology. Cf. Vos 1980:3-24 for a classic understanding of biblical theology.

structure of revelation as well as embracing the fullness of that revelation; it is most suited to express the unity of revelation in all its complexity (Maier 1994:195-202). A key aspect in this interrelationship between the various parts of Scripture is found in typology. Maier (:198) highlights the essential connection between salvation-history and typology: '[The] connection of the stages of God's action concretises itself in the phenomenon of "types" ... Because God gives history a purpose, each individual event and its respective form lie in a more or less direct connection to that purpose'. Also, according to Cullmann (1967:130), 'typology is embedded in a total salvation-historical understanding'.¹

Thus the NT continues the temporal-historical line of God's working in history, which reaches its center in Jesus Christ, running 'backward through the covenant to creation and beyond, and forwards through the church and its mission to the Parousia and beyond' (Moore 1966:90). Cullmann's greatest contribution has been his emphasis on the *present existence of salvation-history through the church and its mission*. 'The New Testament man was certain that he was continuing the work of God that began with the election of the people of Israel for the salvation of mankind, which God fulfilled in Christ, which he unfolds in the present, and which he will complete in the end' (Cullmann 1967:13).² Taking this ecclesial factor into account, Cullmann has also noted that 'within the divine plan a place is left for historical contingency, for human resistance, sin and the mysterious "detours" taken because of this resistance and sin' (1967:78). The salvation-history line is therefore a fluctuating line.

Relative to the Parousia, most of the scholars above underscore the importance of the *temporal mission of the church*. They see this occurrence as consistent with God's overall purpose in history, being interpreted as the organic extension of the kingdom of God in time. The 'delay' of the Parousia is comprehended as the elongation of a period of salvation for all mankind, and is in no way an embarrassment for Christianity.

¹ This aspect is vital for this thesis and important for correcting the dispensationalist divide of Israel's mission and the church's mission in eschatology.

² On the theme of how the church in the post-biblical period continues the mission of Christ, see Cullmann 1967:292-338, 1953; Köstenberger 1998 and Hartwig 2000.

2.2.8 Salvation-history and the church period

This thesis is in substantial agreement with the direction of the thesis of Cullmann and the salvation-historical school. This salvation-history hermeneutic provides us with the key for the non-arrival of the kingdom - the temporal extension of the midpoint through history. This also allows the early church to be 'exonerated' for their ardent expectation, causing no alienation between them and us. Being situated in the midpoint, they *rightly* grounded their expectation in certain events, events which were to characterise the last-days and the terminal generation. *What was lacking was only the quantitative extension of the gospel and the corresponding events, and not the qualitative events themselves.* The fact of the End being imminent was warranted, but the needed global 'depth' and extension of those events was not yet fully revealed.

Cullmann (1951) correctly notices the temporal centrality of Christ's earthly ministry, death and resurrection. For him, those events constituted the midpoint period. Yet might we not slightly extend the midpoint period up to at least 70 CE, including the period of the apostles, the writing of the NT letters and Paul's unique ministry? (see Diagram 2). Matthew 23:34-36 understands the period of the apostolic church and the apostolic ministry to Israel after Pentecost as being inclusive of the generation that rejected Jesus' historic ministry. We can call this the 'midpoint-generation'. Garland (1979:172) correctly notes: 'Matthew...makes it most clear that it is the generation of Jesus and of the early church immediately thereafter which has incurred the wrath of God beyond the point of redemption'. If this is so, we can have three main periods of salvation-history (all rooted in and qualified by the midpoint period) which correspond to the preterist, historicist and futurist schools of interpretation: We have one midpoint period (Christ's ministry and apostolic church), followed by a general period of the *diffusion, radiation, unfurling or fanning out* of the midpoint throughout the church-age (to a greater or lesser degree), and *the apical climax of an essential qualitative 'repetition' or 'echo' of the midpoint on a universal level in the terminal generation* (see Diagram 1 and 2). The midpoint is thus programmatic for the canon and the interadventual age.¹

¹ Beale (1997:50) speaks of Christ as 'a formative microcosmic model which determines the nature and destiny of people, and the rest of creation, on a macrocosmic scale'. Christ is the launch of God's new creation, which includes 'the entire network of ideas that belong to the renewal of the whole world, of Israel, and of the individual' (:49).

Berkouwer (1981) speaks of a movement from the particular (Israel) to the universal (all nations) in which we find the great secret of the history of salvation (:130-131). This particular/universal movement is all one of a piece and is the organic continuation of the history of salvation. Thus we can understand the church dispensation and the *Zwischenzeit* as a period that makes room for the universalising of the particular. There needs to be a ubiquitous and universal realisation of what was locally realised in the first century.¹ The Christ-Event (*Gestalt*) needs to be analogously realised throughout the world, ensuring that the history of the kingdom in this age is analogous to what happened at the time of Christ (so Berkhof 1966:79). The interadventual period can so be seen as a period which is 'bookended' and bracketed by two generations that apocalyptically affect their respective contexts. We call these two generations, the 'Jesus-generation' (midpoint) and the 'terminal-generation'.

Further, we suggest that *the extensive and intensive outreach of the midpoint period* - the 'Christ-process' (Cullmann 1951:21) - *accelerates the timing of the Parousia*. If 'what has happened in Christ must [now] unfold in the direction of the consummation' (Cullmann 1967:293), then this process can progress or regress along with all the zigzags, bends, detours and gaps that have been characteristic of the contingency of salvation-history.² Consequently, we maintain that the process toward the Parousia and the duration of the *Zwischenzeit* can be lengthened by the retention of 'midpoint activity' and shortened by the expansion of 'midpoint activity'. Thus the timing of the Parousia can be accelerated when the church's mission occurs expeditiously and decelerated when that mission slackens or hibernates. Also, it will be argued that when the 'now' and 'not-yet' tension again reaches its fullest stretch - this time in global history analogous to the 'local' apex of the midpoint period - we can then expect to be in the terminal generation. This 'universal' zenith of salvation-history needs to be attained prior to the End - a fact dependent upon the obedience of the church.

¹ Thus Alford (1958a:235), in commenting on Matthew 24, brings out a helpful insight: 'the Jewish Church and its fortunes...represent the Christian Church and its history'.

² Cullmann (1967:158): 'In salvation-history we are in fact dealing with *the amalgamation of a constant*, namely, the divine plan, *with a contingency* [italics mine], that is, the development of...individual events, unforeseen by this plan itself (above all the opposition to God's plan)'.

Thus the missionary enterprise can be understood as the great precondition for the consummation of the ages. The early church's aggressive missionary enterprise fuelled the *Naherwartung*, making it potentially possible (at least in their eyes) that the 'great commission' could be (or was?) fulfilled within their generation. It is possible that the midpoint of Christ's ministry reached a high-point or rather a sufficient 'echo' within the first century and that this dynamic was (as we have seen in 2.2.4.4) partially responsible for the reality of the *Naherwartung* in the early church. In order to sustain this thesis, we plausibly deduce that the apostolic church deemed it quite possible that the salvation-historical mission of the church *could well have been completed in their time*.¹

As we have observed, Christ did not delimit the intervening period with a *date* but with a *task*: 'And this good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world, as a testimony to all the nations; and then the end will come' (Mt 24:14). He expected a replication of his ministry through the church to the world, 'for Jesus was... undoubtedly convinced that his message concerning the kingdom of God was of decisive importance for the Gentiles also' (Kümmel 1957:85). It was his awareness of the future mission of the disciples that caused him to anticipate a period between his resurrection and Parousia. The coming kingdom was therefore to be contingent upon the proclamation of the gospel in all nations (so Hagner 1995:696).

Mark 13:10 mentions the requisite preaching of the gospel in all nations, adding the sequential time indicator '*first*'. For those who do not hold to a *heilsgeschichte* sequence, this verse is an embarrassment (if taken as authentic). It unequivocally states that certain events must transpire before the Parousia. Jesus was focused on the globalisation of the gospel and expected all nations to be evangelised prior to his return. Matthew adds the demonstrative pronoun '*this*' to identify the nature of the gospel. All this implies that Jesus expected *the gospel preached and demonstrated by him* (midpoint) to radiate out into all nations *before* the End was to come. The agenda of the church has for this reason been set in the parameters given by Jesus.² *What was*

¹ So Hagner (1995:696) comments: 'But "the end" *could* already have come in the first century. The required conditions were all present. All the sufferings in [Mt 24] vv 5-12 were experienced in the years prior to A.D. 70 and the fall of Jerusalem, and in varying degree they have been signs experienced by the church down to the present era. The signs of the end have been present to every Christian generation'.

² 'The fourth evangelist conceived of the mission of the Christian community as ultimately the mission of the *exalted Jesus* carried out through his followers' (Köstenberger 1998:210). The mission of the church is to be the mission of Jesus as historically began and 'toned' in his ministry in Israel. O'Toole

done in Israel by Jesus and the apostles must be done by the church in the world; and as the Israeli period terminated with eschatological judgment on Jerusalem in 70 CE, so the 'world period' will terminate with eschatological judgment. Not until the church's task is completed will the Son of man return in judgment. The obedience of the church can thus justly be seen as a necessary prelude to the Parousia.

(1983) shows how Luke-Acts is one of a piece in ministry relative to Jesus and the church. 'Luke predicates the same action...places, words, descriptions, and ill-treatment...of Jesus and two or more of his followers' (:196), all to show that 'what God began in Jesus he continues in Jesus' followers' (:211). Also Kingsbury (1973) notes how Matthew has a 'formal coalescence of the time of Jesus and the time of the church' (:471), dividing the history of salvation into only two epochs: the time of Israel and the time of Jesus. This continuity is grounded in the fact that the earthly Messiah is the exalted Lord.

2.3 The contingency of the Parousia

We will now look at the contingency of the timing of the Parousia. If we take the *Naherwartung* Scriptures seriously and not just as revealing a quixotic or misdirected hope of the early church, then the reality of the 'delay' of the Parousia takes on a new meaning. *The Parousia can be seen as a flexible event with certain events bringing that day closer than at other times.* All the factors discussed in the grounds for *Naherwartung* had a magnetic affect upon the return of Christ, bringing that Day nearer in the first century than maybe any other time in the interadventual period – bar the terminal period. It is our conviction that the events of the first century 'pulled forward' and expedited the Parousia of Christ *in a way unparalleled throughout the church-age.* The possibility of other *kairoi* throughout the church-age can similarly affect the nearness of the Parousia. These expeditious dynamics will now be explored.

2.3.1 Explicit Scriptures of expeditious periods within the New Testament

The relative flexibility and intensity of the Parousia is seen in various Scriptures. In Romans 13:11 Paul states that 'salvation is now nearer than when we first believed'. Here Paul speaks of the Parousia being *more imminent now* than a decade or so ago. It was closer then than a few years prior.¹ Alford (1958b:449) proffered that 'a fair exegesis of this passage can hardly fail to recognise the fact that the apostle here as well as elsewhere (1 Th 4:17; 1 Cor 15:51) speaks of the coming of the Lord *as rapidly approaching*'. Godet (1979:449) observes that the apostle speaks of the

¹ Curiously, most modern exegetes seem to avoid commenting on the clear meaning of the text. Moo (1996:819-822) makes no mention of the 'movement', Dunn (1988b:786) merely speaks of an 'overtone of heightened imminence', Fitzmyer (1992:682) disarms the verse by saying 'every step the Christians take brings them closer to "the day of the Lord"'. The immediate sense of urgency - *not necessary when they first believed* - precludes the saying as referring to the passage of time that inevitably brings one closer to the End. The nearness had not always been equidistant, for it was *now* shorter. Also, the individualistic and spiritual interpretation of this verse that understands these words as referring to the believer's approaching death is untenable, for Paul goes on to unpack the meaning of 'salvation' as 'the day', the coming new age. For the various interpretations, see Biederwolf 1972:425-426.

interval separating us from the Parousia as being 'sensibly diminished since he [Paul] and his readers were brought to faith'. The reasons for Paul's contraction of the time *then* are not specified, yet Godet (:450) offers some solution:

The apostle, looking back on his career, and seeing in a sense the whole known world evangelised by his efforts (Col 1:6), might well say without exaggeration that the history of the kingdom of God had made a step in advance during the course of his ministry.

A unique *kairos* had occurred that was not present when Paul first believed. This once again reinforces the degree to which the particular elements responsible for the *Naherwartung* affected their understanding of the Parousia. They expected certain events to transpire and signify the nearness of Christ. When those particular *kairoi* occurred, salvation was then nearer than before. It was not that this proximity was a mere mirage of an apparently imminent Parousia – the event of the Parousia itself was actually closer than before

1 Corinthians 7:25-35 contains another instance of temporal shortening due to increased imminency. Here the 'present crisis' has 'limited' and 'compressed' the *kairos*.¹ Some interpret this as the quality rather than the quantity of interadventual time.² However, Paul implies that the 'church-age' time had been shortened by the 'present crisis', and not by the Christ-event or time in general. This seems consistent with the words in v 29 'from *now* on' – a state of affairs having arrived that was not present when they first believed. The duration of time left up until the expected Parousia had been shortened through certain events in Corinth or in the wider Mediterranean world. Once again, certain *Naherwartung* factors were occurring (persecution?) that forecasted the imminent return of Christ. Thus singleness was encouraged *at that peculiar period*. We conclude that here we have a period where there is again a *temporal intensification of the Naherwartung* due to certain undisclosed factors.

¹ Fee (1989:329) points out that both words – 'present' and 'distress' – are employed elsewhere in the NT to speak of the great eschatological woes that precede the Parousia'. Luke 21:23 is the only other mention of *anagke* in the NT.

² Witherington (1997:173) thinks that Paul has in mind an eschatological process already set in motion by the Christ-event. This Christ-event has 'relativised the *schema* of this world and the significance of all worldly relationships'. Also Fee (1989:339): 'Paul's concern...is not with the *amount* of time they have left, but with the radical new perspective the "foreshortened future" gives one with regard to the *present* age'.

Lastly, in Hebrews 10:25 the writer exhorts his readers not to neglect meeting together but to do so with greater frequency '*as you see the Day approaching*'. The writer: (1) expected his readers to determine the degree of imminency through objective criteria, thus: '*as you see*' (apocalyptic indicators?); and (2) reckoned that those events were expeditious, thus: '*the day approaching*'. Here we have the twin factors of *observation* and *acceleration* that charged that epoch of the interadventual period with apocalyptic urgency. Through observable criteria, the writer calculated that the Parousia was closer then than it was previously.¹ The time of the *Zwischenzeit* had been shortened.

2.3.2 Explicit Scriptures of expeditious conditions

Scripture not only contains verses that mention expeditious epochs, it also mentions certain conditions that act directly upon the timing of the Parousia. To these we now turn.

2.3.2.1 The repentance of Israel

Together with the above, we analyse the account of Peter's second sermon in Acts 3:17-21 and Stephen's vision in 7:55, for we believe that they speak of the potential possibility of the return of Christ in that period, yet dependent upon the repentance of Israel.

Acts 3 speaks of the promised coming of the Messiah consequent upon the repentance of Peter's hearers. Peter grounded his statement in his belief that Christ will only return once all things have been restored (thus Mt 17:11). Firstly, the text speaks of the *apokatastasis* ('restoration', 'establishment' or 'fulfillment', Bruce 1988a:85) as the condition which triggers the return of Christ. The text implies that it

¹ Ellingworth (1993:530) suggests the observable signs may be related to the persecution suffered by his readers. Lane (1991) makes no comment. Alford (1958d:198) refers to the signs of the times, for 'these Hebrews lived actually close upon one of those great types and foretastes of it, the destruction of the Holy City'. Wescott (1974:326): 'The beginning of the Jewish war was already visible to the Hebrews'. Whatever the referents, the objectivity implied in the phrase '*see drawing near*' implies such apocalyptic indicators.

is a condition to occur immediately prior to the Parousia, and not a consequence of the Parousia (as the NIV implies). The phrase 'until the times of restoration' 'has in view a return of Jesus after the completion of the times of restoration' (Carroll 1988:124). We can paraphrase Peter's affirmation as: 'Him heaven must receive until after the times of restoration' (Carroll:145).¹ Peter's exhortation for the representatives of Israel to repent and the times of refreshing to ensue (Ac 2) are not necessarily simultaneous with the Parousia, but preparatory to it (vv 19-20) – for the 'Jewish church' was already experiencing this refreshing (so Bayer 1994:246). Also, vv 22-26 speaks of the *present time* as the beginning of that restoration, for God had *already* raised up a prophet, and judgment in the community (v 23) had been inaugurated (Ac 5:1-11; cf. Ac 2:35). It is clear that the periods of restoration 'that God announced long ago through his holy prophets' (v 21) is the inaugurated post-Pentecost period, for v 22-26 appear to be epexegetical of the restoration of v 21 (thus Ac 15:13-18 speaks of the inaugurated restoration of the Jewish). God is now restoring all things (Jew and Gentile) and will consummate this work to precipitate the Parousia of Christ, 'a consummation which is being gradually accomplished now, and shall be quickly brought about at some future time' (Bengel 1877b:546) (cf. Mt 17:11; Ac 2:35; Rm 11:11-27; Heb 10:13; Rv 11:3-13; 14:14-20; 19:7).² The last-days, which include the days of restoration of Israel (Jl 2:28; Ml 4:5-6), have begun and the process will reach a fulfillment prior to the Parousia.³ Bayer (1994:248) unpacks the full impact of this verse in the light of its co-text:

The sequence of events leading to the parousia can thus be identified as events commencing with the present healing of the lame man and the proclamation of repentance

¹ Bruce (1988a:85) writes: 'If Jesus must remain in heaven until this consummation, this is in line with Paul's exposition of Ps. 110:1: Christ must reign (at the right hand of God) until all hostile powers are overthrown....the gospel blessings destined to flow from Jesus' death and resurrection must spread throughout the world; then, and not till then, will he return from the right hand of power' (also Bengel 1877b:545-546). The sense of the adverb 'until' in this verse is thus: 'Mandela was in prison *until* De Klerk made his radical reforms'. He came out once all things were made ready for his release. Bayer (1994:248) writes that 'it is probable that it [the restoration] includes events prior to the parousia', then paraphrasing v 21: He must be received into heaven until all will have been restored of which God spoke through his holy prophets from the beginning of the world. So also Meyer 1879b:115, Charles 1913:432-433 and particularly Carroll 1988:137-154.

² Thus Meyer (1879): 'Christ stays in heaven until the moral corruption of the people of God is removed, and the thorough moral renovation of all their relations shall have ensued. Then and only then is the exalted Christ sent from heaven to the people' (quoted in Biederwolf 1972: 410).

³ The nature of this 'restoration' lies in the inaugurated aspects of the kingdom of God, just as John the Baptist was to 'restore' Israel prior to Christ's ministry. It will be shown that these 'midpoint' aspects are to be fully internationalised and affected before the Parousia by the church's 'Elijah' mission.

leading up to repentance with remission of sins. This will lead to times of divine relief from suppressing burdens and refreshing....Prior to the parousia, restoration of Israel (as well as the Gentiles) to God and to its land will take place.

In conclusion, this pericope 'goes to show that the question of time-frames is clearly secondary. Rather, repentance as the igniting factor for the future deeds of Christ is the real concern' (Bayer1994:244). Acts 3:19-21 implies that 'the repentance of the hearers will hasten on the process of the conversion of the nations which must precede the return of Jesus' (Marshall 1992:200). When 'the fullness of Israel comes in', and experiences times of national refreshing, the Messiah will be close at hand.

In Acts 7:55-56, the martyr Stephen sees Jesus standing at the right hand of God. Mattill (1979:148-150) understands the rising of Christ as preparation for his parousia, something which can be expedited by Israel's repentance' (:62). Owen's study on the nature of the 'standing Son of Man' (1954:224-226) produced a literary analysis of the various temporal movements of Christ in Luke-Acts ('departure', 'entered glory', 'received up', 'to sit' at the right hand, 'standing' and 'coming to judge') and concluded that here in Acts the physical posture of Jesus conveys the following sense: 'Christ rises in preparation for his Parousia. The Son of Man in Stephen's vision is the Christ who is about to return' (:225). Some however understand the vision in non-parousial terms; thus Loader (1978:204): 'The standing seems best understood as belonging to court procedure and would mean that Jesus stands before God speaking on Stephen's behalf'. The most common interpretation being that Jesus is 'rising up from the throne of God to greet his proto-martyr' (Bruce 1988a:156). In support of Mattill and Owen is the co-textual reference of Acts 3:19-21 and the link between the Parousia and Israelite repentance – all nuanced with the fact that Stephen is standing before the Sanhedrin, the national representatives. Also, it seems superfluous and overly indulgent for Stephen, brimming over with mercy toward his persecutors, to have declared to all around his own heavenly vindication. Lastly, the public nature of Stephen's declaration of 'the Son of Man standing' seems more significant for Stephen's earthly persecutors than for his own heavenly sanction.

Lastly, we note that Mattill (1979) believed that Luke wrote his two-volumed work to promote mission, believing that 'the Son of Man could not return in fiery glory (Lk 12:49a) until that mission had been completed' (:233). Along with prayer (18:1-8), world mission, and his own literary contribution, Luke believed these

elements could expedite the Parousia. According to Mattill, Luke's two-volume work is thus an eschatological phenomenon. He even goes as far as to say that 'it may even be that Luke had hopes of bringing about the day of the Lord ahead of schedule - Acts 3:19....Peter implies that repentance would speed up the coming of the end' (:233-234).

In the light of the above, it is not unreasonable to conclude that these two texts imply that the Parousia is speeded by Israel's acceptance of Jesus. If this is so (as we believe) then it is in direct harmony with what is stated in Romans 11: all Israel will be saved after the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. This is a scenario which motivated the apostle in his apostolic labors amid the Gentiles (see sec 3.2.2.5).

2.3.2.2 The condition of the church

Understanding the nature of the contingency of the Parousia results in a more flexible interpretation of the issue of the timing of the Parousia. This approach ('conditional delimitation') attributes the reason for the delay to human factors, specifically the condition of Christian church. We believe that the empirical condition of the church is an integral ingredient in understanding the delay of the Parousia.

2 Peter 3:3-13 'contains the most explicit treatment of the delay of the *parousia* in the NT' (Bauckhman 1980:19).¹ In v 8, Peter informs us that the 'delay' has nothing to do with the temporal factors of clock or calendar. Rather, *God has a theological interpretation of time, seen here as a merciful intent to obviate the destruction of many*. Verse 9 deals with the key factors which are responsible for the reason of the present temporal duration: repentance and God's mercy. Thus, for a proper understanding of NT eschatology it is vitally important to recognise the connection between the contingency of the end-time and the patience of God (so Cranfield 1982:511). Interestingly, the repentance of the Christian community is addressed here: 'God's tolerance...with His own people, delaying the final judgment to give them opportunity to repent, provides at least a partial answer to the problem of eschatological delay' (Bauckham 1993:310).

¹ Bauckham believed that 2 Peter 'met the problem of delay as posed by the "scoffers" from the perspective of the Jewish apocalyptic tradition' (1980:27).

Rabali's salient monograph (1992) dealt specifically with the role of the church in the timing of the Parousia. One of his conclusions is that the reason for the delay lies in the need for the repentance of 2 Peter's Christian readers.¹ Rabali (1992:147) observes:

The longsuffering which 2 Peter associates with the parousia 'delay' concerns the Christian community and not everybody...2 Peter seems to be pointing out to the believing community being addressed that their attitudes and conducts would have implied their being adversely affected by the Day of Judgment if it had occurred earlier and that they...should be grateful for God's patience towards them in this connection.

This patience of God is not a general unending patience directed to all but is rather specifically ecclesial in orientation. Rabali believed that the patience of God is purposeful, and that, because God has a *purpose* in delaying the Parousia, *he will achieve his goal*: vv 8-9 speak of an 'implicit involvement of God in the execution of the parousia's precedents' (:149).² God will ensure that these essentials are met by holding back his wrath. Rabali continues:

The text seems clearly to teach that the Judgment Day...comes when divine patience has achieved its objectives [italics mine]....This implies that the repentance and service which are essential precedents of that day will be achieved. The flood analogy is again helpful here because Noah and those associated with him did get saved and they certainly completed what had to be achieved by the day when the Flood came (:149).

God is ensuring that the pre-parousial precedents are being met, by holding back the End. Thus lack of repentance can defer the parousia, whilst repentance can hasten it (also Bauckham 1993:313).

2 Peter 3:12 includes the renowned 'hastening motif' (Bauckham 1980:1983:325; Rabali 1992:120-159). Rabali's singular study of the 'hastening motif' in 2 Peter 3:12 supports the traditional interpretation of 'speeding up' the Parousia.³ Commenting on v 12, he writes:

The meaning of the words seem to be that of drawing the attention of the readers to the fact that their duty is not just that of awaiting the future but also of doing something which will speed up its arrival and which because of it being primarily in the sphere of obedience to God may lead to their being spotless and blameless (:117).

¹ Bauckham (1983:313) lists Hermas Sim. 9; 2 Clement 8:1-3; 12:6; 13:1; 16:1 and 17:1 as other primitive Christian literary sources that place the reason for delay in the state of the Christians.

² He also mentions 1 Peter 3:20, where 'the patience [of God] was primarily *directed towards Noah* who had to complete the ark (1993:147). God delays his wrath for the salvation of those who will repent.

³ He deals with the alternative reading 'wait eagerly' on p 118.

He masterfully links 2 Peter 3:12 with 1 Peter 3:20, providing a typological understanding of the former reference. His conclusions are worth quoting in full:

The Day of God is hastened by the Christian community's diligence in connection with the tasks and responsibilities which God has given. Like Noah, the Christian community would 'delay' that Day if what needs to be done is not undertaken with utmost seriousness and diligence; and like Noah, the Christian community 'hastens' that Day when what needs to be done is undertaken with diligence. This would include self-discipline as well as ecclesiastical discipline... (:148).

Rabali (:182-211) also mentions the following texts which contain the hastening motif: Mt 6:10; 24:14; 28:19-20; Mk 13:10, 20; Ac 3:19-20; 1 Cor 16:22; 1 Pt 2:12; Rv 8:4; and 22:20. The uniqueness of 2 Peter's hastening motif seems to lie in the fact of it being an explicit statement of an implicit theme seen elsewhere in the NT.

Finally, we can also relate the contingency of the Parousia to the mission of the church. In Matthew 24:14 we see that the kingdom will not come in its fullness until *all peoples* have had the opportunity to embrace or reject the King.¹ The rest of the thesis will be substantiating this requisite responsibility of the church to be the fulcrum that determines the relative timing of the Parousia.

2.3.3 Implicit theological factors

A way to understand the dynamic of how human repentance can effect the arrival or non-arrival of prophecies is found in the analogous event of Jonah and his preaching in Nineveh (also Dunn 1996b:158; Kümmel 1957:65). Here Jonah announces the *imminent* judgment ('in forty days') on Nineveh - imminent by virtue of the human condition. But we see that the very announcement brought an opportunity to respond, a 'space' that affected the predicted imminent event. Judgment was temporally *imminent* when Jonah first preached, *yet it was delayed because the moral conditions subsequently changed*.² God 'repented' because the Ninevites repented. Jonah and other prophets thus reveal to us a God who is 'unpredictable in terms of human schematization' resulting in a 'biblical hope [that] is not rigid or fixed' (Dunn

¹ Thus Keener (1997:346-347) can say: 'Perhaps...the Lord's return has been delayed and the world's suffering prolonged by the church's disobedience to the Great Commission'.

² 'Such prophecy was given in order that it might not be fulfilled' (Beasley-Murray 1948:224).

1996b:158).¹ Further analysis into the workings of the OT promises can also provide us with keys for understanding how the ultimate Day of the Lord is correlated to the human condition.

If we inquire into the timing of the fulfillment of the promises of the OT, the *when* question, Odendaal (1970:60) correctly answers for the prophets: 'It is at hand, pressing in on the present reality for fulfillment and realization'. The events predicted by the prophets are presented as imminent events, though a drastic foreshortening can be identified only with hindsight. God was about to act – even if it was in the indeterminate future. Their program did not however provide a static futurology but rather a dynamic eschatology. They did not simply predict; they rather *preached* the proclamation of impending judgment and nuanced that message for present salvific effect. *The relation of Yahweh to his people was revealed to be the primary variant in the unfolding of the predicted events.* Consequently, God can either 'slow down' or 'speed up' his purposes according to the human moral condition (so Jr 18:1-12). So in the prophets we see less of a deterministic view (which may be an apocalyptic aberration) than a flexible and highly nuanced forecast of events. Certain things will happen - for he is Lord of History and knows the true condition of the people addressed - yet their pace of approach is far from uniform and has all the contingencies of history and humanity build into it.² God's mercy not only delays but even changes his own predicted judgments. The intercessions of Moses (Ex 32:11-14), Joel (2:12-13) and Amos (7:1-9) bear this aspect out well.

Although the prophets preached of impending doom, they all contained the '*yet even now*' ingredient that would arrest the march of judgment. Certainty of coming judgment is matched by a contingency that obviates the immediacy of the judgment. The future thus never evacuates the present of meaning. Rather, *God's future predictions are a just response to the present; and if that present situation changed (the situation that precipitated the prophetic Word), then that Word will no longer be applicable under these new conditions.* Similarly, we believe that *the future Parousia event will be suited to the historical nature of the terminal generation.* It is the Day of

¹ Even in Daniel, with its highly 'schematised' predictions, there is evidence that if the moral conditions change, God would 'defer' or change his pre-announced 'predictions' (e.g. Dn 4:27).

² Thus Cullmann has repeatedly urged for a 'fluctuating' salvation-historical line that allows historical progress to unfold through all the vicissitudes caused by sin and unbelief.

the Lord and will come when the conditions are right.¹ If the conditions are not right, the Parousia will not come. The *adventus* (that which grows out of the past) will dovetail with the *futurum* (what comes from the other side) (Moltmann 1996:25). The *futurum* is not some 'inevitable' and static event, but conditional and flexible, for the theological reciprocity between the Parousia judgment and the condition of the world requires a contingency and conditioning. In the light of OT eschatology, the Parousia is not a rigidly predetermined isolated event, but *a flexible and assured future event that will arrive as the response of God to the condition of the world at that time*. Understanding how all the previous days-of-the-Lord worked, helps us understand this great Day-of-the-Lord.

Theological justification for the non-fulfillment of anticipated prophecies is a part of the biblical tradition. A paradoxical tension is prevalent in both testaments, with a 'theodicy' developing concurrently with the experience of Israel. According to Bauckham (1980:5) and Dunn (1996b:154), Habakkuk 2:3 was the *locus classicus* in this theodicy during the ITP. There it is noted that God has a sovereign 'appointed time' and that the ultimate fulfillment of the prophecies 'will not be late according to the timescale which God has determined' (Bauckham:6). The Apocalypse of Baruch draws on this (Bauckham:14-19) and ascribes the imminence to the righteousness of God and the delay to the long-suffering of God. The classical Rabbinic debate between Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus and Rabbi Joshua ben Hanachiah (Cullmann 1961:47; Bauckham 1980:10-14; Rabali 1992:222-230) was a debate over these very issues: whether Israel's sins were responsible for the delay (Eliezer) or whether it was due to the sovereign purpose of God (Joshua).² In a certain sense, this debate is the Rabbinic equivalent of the Calvinistic and Arminian debate, where the debaters are struggling to integrate both human responsibility and divine sovereignty into the workings out of God's purposes.³

¹ Cullmann (1963:157-158) has shown how the 'Son of Man' *logia* reveal that the primary eschatological function of the coming of the Son of Man is that of judgment. Christ comes to a world ripe for judgment.

² Rabali, noting its provenance at Jamnia, stated that the issue revolved around the question of whether eschatological redemption had to be merited or not.

³ These issues impinge on one's theological stance. Yet even though God certainly knows the 'calendar date', these texts and the other salvation-historical factors (mission) imply a contingency of timing. A mediating position believes that 'God's sovereign determination takes human affairs into account' (Bauckham 1993:325).

Jeremias (1971) has given attention to this *plasticity* with regard to the temporal aspects of the Parousia in the NT. After noting that Jesus mentioned that God could *shorten* the future time of distress for the sake of the elect (:139-140), that God could hear the request 'let it alone this year also' (Lk 13:6-9) and *lengthen* the period of grace, he concludes that,

Jesus takes into account the possibility that God may rescind his own holy will...[for] God's will is not unalterable...He is not a God to whom it is pointless to pray...Jesus sets God's grace above his holiness. It [prayer] can shorten the time of distress for his people and lengthen the opportunity for the unbelievers to repent (:140).

Dunn (1996b:158) also uses this Lukan text to show that God can repent and change his mind. Further, the focus on prayer for the kingdom to come - Matthew 6:9, Mark 13:18, Luke 11:2 and 18:1-8 - implies that *God can regulate the 'date' of the final Parousia in answer to his people's prayer*.¹ The Paternoster prayer 'bring[s] out the role of the church in the fulfillment of these hopes. God and His people become partakers in bringing these hopes...into full realisation' (Rabali:189). Rabali includes the prayers of 1 Corinthians 16:22, Revelation 8:4 and 22:20 under the same theme.²

Finally, and most essentially, we believe that the NT understanding of the temporal extension and contraction in regards to the period of grace prior to the Day of the Lord is grounded in the theological relationship between the present aspect of the kingdom and its future manifestation. What is already-realised is organically linked to the *when* and the *what* of the yet-to-be-realised kingdom. *The 'not-yet' is determined by the 'now'*. The temporal relation between the two comings of Christ is grounded in the interaction between the present mode and nature of the kingdom and its future nature and mode. Thus Oepke (1977:870) sees the Parousia as 'the definitive manifestation of what has been affected already as an eschatological reality'. To Küng (1968:68), the future Parousia is 'a consummation of something that already exists'. Berkouwer (1981:157) states that 'the last judgment will not appear as another, a second judgment, but will reveal the reality of the crisis of this present existence – *vis-à-vis* Jesus Christ – and raise this reality above all ambiguity and

¹ For the link between the Parousia and the Paternoster, see Rabali 1992:186-190; Nolland 1993a:620; Conzelmann 1960:123-124; Berkouwer 1981:450-453 and Beasley-Murray 1986:142-157. The reality of prayer implies the active, contingent, response of God in answer to the specifics of prayer. If he is not affected by his people's prayers in regards to the coming kingdom, then these Scriptures are meaningless.

² This theme of prayer for the Parousia is also seen in the OT: Is 62:1-9, 63:15-64:12 *et al.*

doubt'. As the present kingdom works its way fully in the church and the world, so it inevitably conditions them; for in the gospel, people are confronted with the kingdom of heaven, the *eschaton*, with God himself.

Torrance (1953) has also expanded upon this correlation between the present form of the kingdom and the future consummative form. According to him, the genius of these two modes is that the breaking in of the kingdom in veiled oblique form is 'to bring men face to face with the last things in crucial decision and yet to leave them room for decision, which could not be if the *eschaton* were wholly realized' (:168). He concludes that the consummation of the workings of the present kingdom 'will therefore at one and the same time mark the end of this world and be the fulfillment and justification of it' (:174). What we have called the extension of the midpoint period, he calls the 'eschatological repetition of the Incarnation' (which he sees enshrined in the sacrament of holy communion (:175)).

These contingency factors are ultimately grounded in the nature of the first form and mode of the kingdom. The present kingdom can 'suffer violence' (Mt 11:12), is equivocal (Mt 11:2-6), veiled (Lk 17:20-21), nondescript (Mt 13), temporally 'frustrated' (Lk 7:30; 19:42) and even 'defeated' (the crucifixion of Christ). Yet once the world is given sufficient exposure to the kingdom in its primary nature, then the final manifestation of the kingdom will occur - being a just response to a world *already exposed and decided in regard to God and his kingdom*. Kümmel (1957), who has also given significant treatment to this theme, brings us to the conclusion of this section with the following words:

The eschatological Day of judgment [the 'not-yet'] will judge a man according to the attitude he has taken up towards Jesus in his present guise [the 'now'], and it is the same Jesus, with whom a man has to establish a relationship in the present, before whom he will have to justify himself in the future (:39).

By God's grace, he has not come first in judgment or with overbearing power. He has come in humility, 'seated on a donkey'. But once this tender grace of God has been extended to all, God will come again, but that time, 'seated on a white horse' and in heavenly splendor.

CHAPTER THREE

ECCLESIAL FULFILLMENT WITHIN HISTORY

3.1 Millennial views and the church

This thesis is integrally related to the millennial debate. Although it is not a millennial issue *per se*, cherished ecclesial anticipations are a corollary of an implicit or explicit millennial position. Due to the nature of this thesis, these millennial issues receive their significance from the expected world condition they project relative to the pre-parousial period. Although the views are chiefly characterised by their stance over the occurrence or non-occurrence of a post-parousial reign, they all impinge directly on issues this side of the Parousia.

The classic millennial views tend to represent three different philosophies of history which terminate in the new heaven and new earth. All three positions converge in agreeing that 'the final reality, the ultimate fulfillment of the promise, is the dwelling of God with humankind in the new heavens and new earth, which thereby brings to completion God's ultimate design for creation' (Grenz 1992:28).¹ *Yet they differ regarding the expected degree to which the kingdom of God will be established in the 'old' heaven and 'old' earth.* Both postmillennialism and premillennialism posit a terrestrially manifested kingdom of Christ prior to the consummation, whilst amillennialism relegates such promises to the future age of the new creation. Thus 'the most fundamental and telling question in distinguishing the unique mark of each position has to do with the *course of history prior to Christ's return*' (Bahnsen 1976:65). Relative to the church, the premillennialist position has, in the main, downplayed the crucial role of the church in this eschatological process,

¹ Millennialism in all forms has 'an historical optimism in which God is the primary and dramatic agent who ushers in a new era of well-being which encompasses earthly political life....[It is] big picture eschatology, seeking through its particular outlook to unite all reality into one dynamic theological panorama' (Doyle 2000:224). For a comprehensive theological survey of the three views, see Erikson 1987 and Grenz 1992. For an excellent historical survey of these eschatological views, see Kyle 1998.

whilst the postmillennialist has accentuated the church's role in the program.¹ The amillennialist posits a more moderate and 'realistic' agenda for the church in the pre-parousial age. At bottom, and requisite for this thesis, the essential issue of each position 'embodies a response to the practical question as to the attitude that ought to characterise the church of Jesus Christ as it seeks to fulfill its mandate in the world' (Grenz 1994a:803).²

The issue of the millennium has served as a hermeneutical diagnostic for one's eschatological convictions. Unfortunately, millennial issues have become 'the tail that wags the dog' in eschatology (Gentry 1999:50). Yet the interpretation of a single portion of Scripture (Rv 20) is not determinative for one's eschatological position. Rather, these three views rest on a theological position relative to understanding: (1) the promises of the OT; (2) the nature of the rule of Christ (*regnum Christi*); and (3) the nature of the mission of the church.³ The position taken on these issues is the prism through which the biblically expected future is seen and interpreted. Revelation 20:1-10 is then merely a mirror to reflect the pre-understandings of the reader.

In the main, the postmillennialist expects many of the OT promises to be realised on earth through the church without a cataclysmic parousial irruption. The amillennialist modifies (spiritualises) the pre-consummative promises through the Christ-event, whilst the premillennialist anticipates the future fulfillment of the majority of the OT promises through the post-parousial rule of the Messiah.⁴ Therefore, such interpretations directly determine what the church may expect in the interadventual age.

We can tentatively (avoiding reductionism and typecasting) link postmillennialism with a sanguine ecclesial optimism, amillennialism with a phlegmatic ecclesial realism, and premillennialism with a melancholic ecclesial

¹ Interestingly, in one of the latest books on the millennial debate (Bock 1999), the premillennial presentation (the longest in the book) *conspicuously ignores any ecclesial issues whilst the postmillennial position is replete with ecclesial texts.*

² Grenz (1994a:803-806) classifies these 'deeper issues' as: postmillennial optimism, premillennial pessimism and amillennial realism - all having a measure of truth. Grenz' work helpfully cuts through the party characterising that has plagued the three schools. See also Bock 1999:305-308.

³ 'The differences arise, not because of any conscious or intended disloyalty to Scripture, but primarily because of the *distinctive method employed by each system in its interpretation of Scripture*, and they relate primarily to the time and purpose of Christ's coming and to the kind of kingdom that is to be set up at His coming' (Boetner 1957:3; cf. p 82).

⁴ 'Spiritualise' is a pejorative hermeneutic to the premillennialist, but if we interpret 'spiritual' as referring to literal realities of a different order, then we do find the NT 'spiritualising' most of the OT symbols and historical realities (see Strimple 1999:84-100).

pessimism.¹ It might be noted that premillennialism is potentially the most extensive and inclusive view, for it can potentially include both postmillennial optimism and amillennial realism. One can even be premillennialist and hold to the affirmations of the others without siding with what they deny.

In this section the relevant aspects of each millennial view will be related to the thesis of an earthly maturity of the church in history.

3.1.1 Premillennialism and the church

Since the beginning of the 19th century, the 'modern' premillennial perspective has been wedded with a pessimistic view of the world condition.² 'Millenarians [19c] were...convinced of the irreversible downgrade tendencies at work in human society and the utter futility of attempts to ameliorate the effects of sin' (Sandeen 1978:xxi). This dark 'external' condition tailored the degree to which the church expected to influence society at large. The demise of the world (inclusive of the wider Christian body) fuelled the escapist mentality of 'any-momentism'. Dispensational premillennialism, with its particularly acute form of ecclesial pessimism, came to be representative of premillennial thought. However, dispensationalism's mother, historic or classical premillennialism, did not build upon a pessimistic ecclesiology, even though it did not expect a powerful prevalence of Christianity in society (for the view was often prevalent in times of persecution). Yet, as Blaising noted, 'the idea that premillennialism *per se* is pessimistic is a stereotype' (1999:74).

3.1.1.1 Historic premillennialism

It is an established axiom that the post-apostolic church was widely premillennial (Daley 1993; Fromm 1950; Kromminga 1945; Lea 1986). With the change in the status of Christianity after Constantine, the eschatological landscape changed

¹ Gundry (1977) wrote of the correlation between these various positions and the church's perception of itself within its historical horizon. For example, he notes how the decline of postmillennialism and the rise of premillennialism was co-ordinated with the apocalyptic *Zeitgeist* of the late 1700's.

² Cf. Sandeen (1978:5-9) and his excellent diagnosis of the influence of the French Revolution on premillennial thought.

accordingly. Although held by many throughout the intervening periods, it again rose to prominence in the late 1700's, though unfortunately becoming linked with certain idiosyncratic views (see ch 1).¹ For this reason, 'classic' or 'historic' premillennialists identify with the post-apostolic church's species of premillennialism and not that of the dispensational strain.

Premillennialism, due to its apocalyptic cast, has tended to focus on the future aspects of the rule of Christ, sustaining a 'discontinuity between the current age and the thousand years' (Grenz 1994a:801). The paradoxical nature of Christ's present rule has transferred all hope onto a future period when it will be more manifestly revealed. Christ does reign now, but only for certain redemptive purposes and not 'manifestly'. This 'manifest' kingdom is understood to be consequent upon the destruction of regnant world powers, who are often persecuting the church. For the premillennialist, the OT promises refer to a literal future state, yet because they are fulfilled in Christ, some of them are now proleptically experienced in the inaugurated kingdom of God.² Suffering and persecution are seen as the horizon of the church's relationship with the world, thus colouring most of the believer's relationship with society. Historic premillennialism is posttribulational and thus expects the final relationship between the church and the wider community to be one of open antagonism.³ The concept of a latter-day glory of the church is often eclipsed either by the encompassing darkness or the empirical state of Christendom. The primary stance of the church in premillennialism relative to the world is therefore primarily one of evangelistic witness and not social engagement.

3.1.1.2 Dispensational premillennialism

One of the key tenets of dispensational premillennialism that sets it off from the other views is its belief that the Parousia can occur at any moment. This 'immediatism', the

¹ One of the reasons for the absorbing of historic premillennialism into dispensationalism during the 1800's was the need for all conservative evangelicals to stand together to combat theological liberalism (Weber 1979:24-25).

² For theologians who identify with this position; in the 19th century: Delitzsch, Godet, Meyer, West, Duffield; in the twentieth: Bass (1960), Blaising (1999), Erikson (1987), Kromminga (1948), Ladd (1972), Beasley-Murray (1983), Blaising & Bock (1992) *et al.*

³ According to Reese [s a:18] until the second quarter of the 19th century, 'the general agreement among the pre-millennial interpreters was that Christians of the last generation will be exposed to the final affliction under Antichrist'.

taproot of dispensationalism, has patently robbed the church of any real sense of historic mission. Due to an extreme dualism, in which the church was related to heaven and Israel to the earth (Blaising 1999:182-183), the church's temporal and penultimate glorious historical destiny is hidden under the glory of her ultimate heavenly destination and condition.¹ The any-momentism also effected the church's missionary self-consciousness. Regarding the mission of the church (Mt 24:14), Sandeen's words are revealing:

[It was a] basic tenet of the millenarian creed in the 1800's...[that] the gospel was not intended nor was it going to accomplish the salvation of the world, but that, instead, the world was growing increasingly corrupt and rushing toward imminent judgment....Almost every British millenarian of the early 19th century would have given ready consent to these statement (1978:39).

Although this ardent sense of *Naherwartung* 'caused the growth of separate evangelical missions and their supporting institutions in the late 19th century and early 20th century' (Robert 1990:31), such emphasis on a temporal mission was actually incompatible with early 19th century premillennial any-momentism (cf. Weber 1979:65-81). With all the attention on the rise of evil in the world and in the church, as well as their urgent evangelistic zeal to save souls for the imminent rapture and from the impending reign of Antichrist, thoughts of the renewal of the church and her qualitative upbuilding did not feature at all. Her glory lay in the imminent heavenly rapture experience and nowhere else. (For more detail on dispensationalism and the church, see ch 1).

3.1.2 Postmillennialism and the church

Must the church merely stand by the Jericho road and hand out tracts? This type of question raises the primary issue that many have had with most strains of premillennialism - its ostensible fatalism and pessimism. To many, eschatological hope is to be a stimulant and not a narcotic. Some accused adventist premillennialism with advocating a resignation which 'is compatible with neither...Scripture's view of the whole of man, both in his total need and in his total deliverance, nor with the

¹ Classic dispensationalists posited 'two coexisting forms of ultimate salvation - one eternal in heaven and for the church and one eternal on the new earth for Israel' (Blaising 1999:183).

profession of Christ's lordship over all of history' (De Jong 1970:228). Comparatively, the postmillennial model has the most terrestrially optimistic ecclesial hope. The heart of historic postmillennialism is a hope for the glorious fullness of the Church of Christ - a condition that will spill over into and condition the world. The OT promises of a reign of world peace and righteousness are expected to be fulfilled through the church in human society. A Scripture which has charged this school has been Habakkuk 2:14: 'But the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea' (see Stanley 2000:103). Beyond proof-texting, this theory confesses to be in tune with the overall spirit of the Scriptures (Robinson Gregory 1887:337; Bahnsen 1976).¹ In this school, the rule of Christ in the present is nuanced, being the theological warrant for looking to a distinct period of heightened and universal peace under Christ's rule. Gentry (1999:13-14) provides us with a cogent and generic description of postmillennialism:

Postmillennialism expects the proclaiming of the Spirit-blessed gospel of Jesus Christ to win the vast majority of human beings to salvation in the present age. Increasing gospel success will gradually produce a time in history prior to Christ's return in which faith, righteousness, peace, and prosperity will prevail in the affairs of people and nations. After an extensive era of such conditions the Lord will return visibly, bodily, and in great glory, ending history with the general resurrection and the great judgment of all humankind.

In Western Christian thought, postmillennialism was popular from the 1600's to the 1800's, reaching its heyday in the mid 1800's (Moorhead 1984:61).² Daniel Whitby [1638-1726] has been credited by Fromm (1948:649-655) as the populariser of this millennial school. Whitby preached that the world could expect mass conversions under large effusions of the Spirit, the national establishment of the Jews and the overthrow of the Pope and Turk (Fromm:651). The first resurrection was commonly seen as the renewal of the church which followed after the fall of the papal Antichrist.

¹ 'Tell me what your eschatology is and I will tell you what your attitude is in relation to the Church, state, and society', Visser 't Hooft (1947:186). For a list of theologians of this school, see Bube 1972:217-218; Gentry 1999:14-22 and Mathison 1999:23-53. Bahnsen's monograph (1976) is an excellent introduction to postmillennialism and Mathison's book a recent defence of this position.

² Moorehead (1984:61-62) posits that the 'hard residue of apocalypticism that survived postmillennial thought' made the philosophy of postmillennialism inherently unstable, with the result that during the American civil war, 'it slowly decomposed'. Further, the hope for future revival and ecclesial revitalisation waned under the 18th century erosion of supernaturalism and the consequent principle of natural continuity (:76), where such hopes were seen as belonging to a pre-critical biblicism and antiquated supernaturalism. The theory then became too liberal for the conservatives and too conservative for the liberals, and was soon rendered implausible (:77). Gundry (1977:52) believed that 'the civil war in America [1861] crushed postmillennial hope'. According to De Jong (1970:229), postmillennialism became somewhat polarised after the 1800's.

The common hermeneutical key was the historicist axiom of the 'year-day' principle, with the 1260 days of Revelation equalling 1260 years (Froom's own view). Once this prophetic axiom is accepted, the Gordian knot was in identifying the correct starting date from which the times could be calculated. Also, the papacy and the Mohammedans were seen as the key protagonists in Revelation's description of the Protestant church and its ultimate terrestrial triumph (cf. Howson 1998:333-334); an interpretation that went hand in glove with the then common historicist attempt to squeeze most of modern European history into the pictorial-historical sequence of Revelation. Such provincialism of interpretation would have been easily unmasked by a wider historical perspective (so Nelson 1981:195). Yet with the European horizons and 'new worlds' continually being discovered, postmillennialism was an eschatology that was suited to the times.¹

Jonathan Edwards is well known for his postmillennialism and seen by some as the master-mind behind a new direction in eschatological thought (Goen 1959; Withrow 2001). Others, such as Murray (1991) and (De Jong 1970), have mitigated the view of Edwards' strategic position in postmillennialism by showing that he was in line with prior Puritan eschatological thought.² Both Murray and De Jong have shown that the Puritan attitude toward both history and the church fuelled their hope for a latter-day glory of the church, the *ecclesiologia gloriae*. As the dispensational view surprisingly motivated mission (yet was more individualistic), the postmillennial mission was driven by its hope for ecclesial glory and fullness (De Jong 1979:2). For this reason the 19th century surge in missionary activity was partially a result of this earlier period (1670 onwards) of ideals and hopes. Murray (1991) has well shown how many Puritans believed that if the church was all it could be, it would create the future and expedite the return of the Messiah. He also demonstrated that there was a rectilinear line between the Reformation emphasis on the purity of the true church and the Puritan eschatological hope.³ Yet the Puritans went beyond the Reformers and sought to establish for Protestants a commonly accepted view of the unfulfilled

¹ Gundry (1977:51), commenting on the correlation between *Zeitgeist* and millennial views, linked the theological postmillennialism of the 15th and 16th century with 'the optimistic views of mankind's potential and opportunities with an expanding geographical horizon and an ever-growing confidence in the powers of man's reason'. The times, positively and negatively, abetted the theological vision of the future.

² Withrow (2001) has shown how Edwards was influenced by the six day theory of the millennial ages.

³ Howson's study (1998) showed how eschatological views and all manner of Adventist expectations ensued after the Reformation. He sees the 17thc as the root period of the 19thc millennial revival.

prophecies which were to precede the coming of Christ (Murray:40). Due to the Puritan concern over the political face of the church, their theology 'was introduced in sermons before Parliament in the 1600's (Murray:44), giving their hope a political spin. Murray also credits them with the view that saw the Jewish conversion as part of a new and brighter era in our history and not a boundary event as some others (including Puritans) held (:45). Further, the postmillennial theory 'postponed history's cataclysmic end until after the millennium and thereby allowed the temporal interval necessary for the gradual evangelical conquest of the world and the triumph of secular progress (Moorhead 1984:61).¹

Certain currents of modern postmillennialism echo the theme of the Puritans. Davis (1986:12) posits a spiritually revitalised church that will have 'an increasing positive impact on the surrounding world and its structures through preaching, social ministry and the example of its own inner life'. Christianity will be dominant as a world religion, a moral power and intellectual example. In modern postmillennial thought the fudging of postmillennialism and nationalism has been rightly separated, 'because it [was] erroneously linked to the older liberalism, which focused primarily on societal transformation rather than personal conversion' (Grenz 1992:68).² Whilst for some - particularly those who attempt to re-pristiniate postmillennialism in theonomistic and cultural terms - the cultural and political aspects are foregrounded (see Chilton 1987; Gentry 1999:19), for others 'the central aspect of postmillennialism...lies not in societal transformation *per se*, but in the spread of the gospel and the conversion of a great number of persons' (Grenz 1992:68). Interestingly, modern cultural postmillennialism and its comprehensive application of biblical law on all global and political matters, has absorbed into the church the responsibilities that historic postmillennialists were happy to leave to the state. Yet both groups are united in expecting the present kingdom of Christ to encompass every aspect of life.

¹ Because the postmillennial interpretation of Revelation 20 is compatible with the theme of the glory of the church – though their interpretation of Revelation 20 may not be correct – the theme of the latter-day glory became wedded to millennialism and unfortunately was seen as incongruent with premillennialism. However, we believe that because the spirit of postmillennialism is not a millennial issue *per se*, one can be premillennial in eschatology and postmillennial in ecclesiology.

² 'There can be no liberal postmillennialism....What liberal theologian believes in the return of Christ to end history?' (Gentry 1999:47).

The theological building blocks for postmillennialism are drawn from a historical optimism in the triumph of the gospel in this world, a reality congenial to the basic theology of Scripture. It is rooted in the conviction that God has not abandoned history. Therefore before the final apostasy, the deceiving of the nations and the ensuing apocalyptic conflagration, we can expect God to fulfill his earthly purposes to bless the nations through the seed of Abraham (Gn 12:3). On *this* earth, God is expected to extend the rule of Christ from sea to sea until the whole world is filled with the glory of God (Ps 72). For the accomplishment of such a vision, the church can look to the power of God to fulfill his plans and the church's ample equipment in Christ (Strimple 1999); postmillennialism is thus rooted in a victorious Christology (Davis 1986:45) and an optimism over the success of the missionary enterprise.¹

Before we leave postmillennialism, we note that the Achilles heel of this eschatological school is the fact of NT *Naherwartung* (ch 2.2.1-2.2.4). It is clear that the apostolic church did not expect a glorious future period of many years to lie between them and the Parousia. To them, the Parousia was around the corner. Therefore, in order to handle such a criticism, many postmillennialists have taken a preterist view of the apocalyptic events of the NT, seeing the events of the first century (especially 70 CE) as fulfilling much of the NT futurist eschatology. In this way space is made for a pre-parousial epoch in which there is a reversal of the fortunes of the apostolic church.

3.1.3 Amillennialism and the church

In its theological forecasts, amillennialism tends to be more ambivalent, anticipating 'a parallel and contemporaneous development of good and evil - God's kingdom and Satan's kingdom - in this world, which will continue until the second coming of Christ' (Boetner 1957:4).² This 'checkerboard approach' conceives of the present NT age, with its fluctuating ecclesial and global conditions, as 'running straight into the final judgment' (Kromminga 1945:17). It agrees with postmillennialism that the kingdom

¹ For the link between eschatology and mission, see Stanley 2000; Robert 1990; Weber 1979; De Jong 1970; Rooy 1965; Lovelace 1979b; Bube 1972 and Preskett 1997.

² For a recent and scholarly study of the amillennial eschatological synthesis of both Augustine and Calvin, see Doyle 2000.

of God is spiritual and presently manifested in the church, yet it does not look for a distinct future pre-parousial epoch of exceptional grace and triumph. *The whole interadventual period* is coextensive with the rule of Christ and is characterised by the extension of the gospel in the midst of recalcitrant evil. 'Jesus nowhere predicts a glorious future on earth before the end of the world...on the contrary, the things he himself experienced are the things his church will experience....Christ's church today remains in the desert, and the gradual worldwide dominion does not occur in the desert' (Strimple 1999:63). Amillennialists side with premillennialists when they affirm that the kingdom of God 'cannot be expected from missionary effort alone; it requires the eschatological interposition of God' (Strimple:65).¹ The rule of Christ is seen as coextensive with the church and applicable on a universal level relative to the mission of the church. Grenz (1992:182) underscores the amillennialist's primary hermeneutical approach to the OT prophecies: 'Prophecies couched in physical, earthly terms and given to the old people of God, national Israel, may find their fulfillment in spiritual realities connected with the new people of God, the church of Jesus Christ'.

A latter-day glory for the church is not incompatible with amillennialism, yet it is not a prevalent motif in this theology. The reason may lie in its phlegmatic caution over suggestions of the church attaining any unique status; for history reveals the resilience of sin and the fragility of earthly hopes. Many are reticent to predict a latter-day-glory, probably due to a humble sense of church history, an intimate knowledge of human depravity, and a reaction to the vagaries of apocalyptic fringe groups who have made pronouncements that went far beyond the actual data of the Scriptures. In conclusion, they believe that although the success of the church and the world may fluctuate during the interadventual period, the theological 'success line' running from Pentecost to Parousia remains ultimately the same.

¹ Such an attitude, according to postmillennialists, 'dissuades the church from participating and laboring for wide scale success in influencing the world for Christ during this age' (Gentry 1999:132). For the modern debate between neo-postmillennialism and amillennialism, see Fowler White 2000.

3.1.4 Hope for eschatological ecclesial renewal

The genius of Protestantism is the call to doctrinal and ecclesiastical purity. The Protestant movement was born with the will to reform the church of Jesus Christ and to prove the *ecclesiologia gloriae*. De Jong affirms that 'rooted deeply in the Reformation tradition were expectations of greater, more glorious days for the church on earth', and that 'undoubtedly, the spread of the Reformation itself enlivened such corporate, historical hopes' (1970:7). What was on the horizon for many Protestants in the 1500's-1700's was the prophesied 'fall' of the Roman Catholic church, the conversion of the Jews, the preaching of the gospel to all nations and the prestige of the Protestant powers (De Jong:7; Howson 1998). All of which were to serve the glorious latter-day triumph of the gospel in the Christian church (see Glasson 1953:156-168).

De Jong (1970:8-34), Dallison (1986) and Murray (1991) catalogued many mainline Protestants and Puritans who cast this latter-day glory of the church in chiliastic terms.¹ Prior to 1640, Bucer, Beza, Alsted, Fox, Thomas, Brightman, Mede, Perkins, Sibbes and Goodwin, articulated the triumph of the church in millennial categories.² Their optimism was primarily based on their Christology, especially that of Ephesians 1:21-23 (Dallison:55, 65). The *regnum patientia* was to become the *regnum potentia*. Some (Alsted, Mede) interpreted the first resurrection of Revelation 20 in literal terms, inaugurating a postmillennial period over which resurrected martyred saints would rule with the 'unresurrected' church. However, these and other eschatological anticipations were often fused with Elizabethan expectations, with the spread of the gospel, colonisation and civilization being spoken of in one breath.³

¹ Kromminga defines chiliasm as a Christian belief in 'the conception of the Kingdom Age as a transitional period between this world and eternity, in which a reorganised human society will submit to the rule of Christ' (1945:21). 'Chiliasm's first and controlling interest lies specifically in the social-historical sphere' (:20), in the 'social-historical link or transition between time and eternity' (:21). Therefore, 'millenarianism draws eschatology into history' (Moltmann 1996:5).

² Dallison shows how the Anglo independent churches during the 17th century were interpreted by Thomas Goodwin as part of the purifying of the church in preparation for the millennium. Such hopes for an imminent ecclesial millennium also fired the congregational churches: 'these views provided not only a doctrine which supplied the churches of the Congregational way with a powerful motive for reformation and a glorious hope for the future, but also a framework for a distinct Christology and a theocratic view of history' (:64). For a description of the glorious time of the church in the millennium, see Dallison:62-63.

³ Through her sea power, 'Englishmen felt mandated to guide history to her appointed ends in these matters' (De Jong 1970:77). Van Den Berg (1956:190) wisely notes that 'the history of missions shows that theocratic ideals easily deteriorate into a secular imperialism'.

Such ecclesial-millennial hopes continued in the years 1640-1675, the 'years of the keenest and most widespread millennial expectation of any in England and America until perhaps the 1800's' (De Jong 1970:37). In England, John Owen articulated the future glory, whilst in America, John Cotton expressed the Puritan hope of a theocracy bound up with a pre-millennial expectation. The New England missions were driven by the hope for a glorious (national) church. Daniel Whitby, Cotton Mather and Jonathan Edwards drove forward this hope, each with their own spin. Thus the revivals during Edwards' period [1735-1776] seemed to confirm and perpetuate this hope, with the continued need to universalise the knowledge of Christ. William Carey (1792) was influenced by Edwards, and was motivated by a vision of universal proportions: the certain worldwide dominion of Christ (De Jong 1970:178; Van Den Berg 1956:161).

For many, the significant events of the late 1700's galvanised their expectations.¹ To some, this period portended the imminent end (Adventists) but others, 'excited by the prospects of the fall of Babylon during the French Revolution...established agencies for spreading the kingdom for which they had been praying' (De Jong 1970:198). For them, the French Revolution and the fall of Antichrist, 'were a major cause for optimism' (De Jong:197).

Back in time, the Italian Cistercian monk, Joachim of Floris [1135-1202] has often caught the attention of writers on millennial or historical eschatological matters (Froom 1950:683-701; Kromminga 1945:125-137; Glasson 1953:130-144; Kyle 1998:47-49). He broke with the prevailing Tychonian eschatological interpretation and affected a far-reaching influence upon future eschatological expectation.² He also had a major impact on the Franciscans after his death. Joachim's novelty was that he looked at the course of events in the world and the church and predicted a time of radical change for the church prior to the Parousia. According to Glasson's study on Joachim, 'the main emphasis of his teaching gave rise to the hope of a revival of the spiritual life of the Church' (:133). Thus it might not be too much of an exaggeration

Tychonian
+ 30

¹ De Jong (1970:159) mentions the following: the French Revolution, the American independence war, industrialisation, squalor of urban slums, urbanisation, and continental democratisation. The Lisbon earthquake of 1755 (Froom 1946:187) also affected the eschatological temperature.

² Froom (1950:686) credits him with influencing to some degree Dante, Wycliff, Cusa, Hus and some of the Reformers.

to say that 'Joachim was the turning point marking the return of the historical view of prophecy as opposed to the Tichonius-Augustine view' (Froom:690).¹ Joachim's view's could be labeled as idiosyncratic, for he subsumed the whole course of history under a trinitarian pattern of 42 generations and anticipated the imminent arrival of the age of the Spirit, which would overlap with the age of the Son for a period. In this age – which was already being anticipated by St. Benedict - revelation would be given to all. The movement of the celibates and the clerics would peak in this era, when many would be monastics in a heightened epoch of spiritual worship and experience. He expected the age of the Son to end shortly, that is, before 1260 CE (Froom:714). For this thesis, it is important to note that 'the ideas of Joachim had opened the vision of many to expect a new and better state to come' (Froom:729), a reality which relativised the prevailing Roman church and prepared many for a future reformation.

In Bohemia in late 1300's, Matthias of Janow [d. 1394] (Neander 1890:276-338) believed, on the basis of Scripture, that: 'before the end of the world the church of Christ shall be reformed, renovated, and more widely extended; that she shall be restored to her pristine dignity, and that still, in her old age, her fruitfulness shall increase' (Neander:289). Neander believed that Matthias was the 'incipient genius of those Christian principles which at a later period were unfolded, in Germany, by Luther, although the latter never came directly under the influence of Matthias of Janow' (:276-277). Matthias was influenced by Miltiz of Bohemiah 'who foresaw a renovation of the church by which it was to be prepared for the second advent of Christ' (Neander:256). Like Darby, he portrayed the utter corruption of the church in all her parts – the foil for his ecclesial hope. He saw the harlot of Revelation 17 as the corrupt church and the Antichrist as a religious ecclesial figure whom Christ would 'spiritually' slay prior to this glorious period. Elijah would come 'spiritually' to restore the church, who, by virtue of the magnitude of such a task, was not to be a future individual but was rather the spirit of the reform movements and their reformers. During this glorious period, the parables of the leaven and the mustard seed would be fulfilled.

¹ Froom (1950:691) blames the Augustinian view for dehistoricising the faith, removing horizontal eschatology, and for placing the church in the foreground as the sole arbiter in all transitory matters. Joachim however reactivated the horizontal sense of eschatological development. With him we have a return to God's revelation in the process of history, returning to a sense of the future 'chronological' expectation beyond what is known in the present.

Amongst others, Boston's Cotton Mather [1663-1727], the first major ecumenist in American church history (so Lovelace 1979a:62), expected a glorious church to arise prior to the final advent.¹ Lovelace saw the brilliance of Mather in his synthesis of German Pietism and American Puritanism, 'with its component parts of spiritual renewal, cultural transformation through voluntary societies, ecumenical union among thinkers, and a concern for world mission' (:35). He was,

dedicated to the goal of ecumenical union among every Protestant and worked all his life to establish a climate and a doctrinal basis within which reunion might be possible, since for him it was an indispensable prerequisite for the parousia. Another such prerequisite, in his understanding, was the vigorous extension of the church's mission among those peoples not yet fully reached by the gospel (Lovelace:8).

He was a premillennial optimist who believed in better times for the church - an *evangelium aeternum* - when God would 'grant us the Spirit again just as once His Spirit illuminated the first Christian Church and propagated and established the Christian religion in the world' (Benz 1951:46).² According to Froom (1948:153) Mather expected the gifts of the Spirit to be restored to the church. However, toward the end of his life, his conviction that the church had to be revived before the end of time suffered attenuation (:70-72). He also came to reject any hope for a Jewish national conversion.

A contemporary of Mather, Boehm, the influential London chaplain from Halle, also articulated a 'vision of the true church as being the final aim of the history of redemption, an image to illumine the path of all missionary and ecumenical endeavors (Benz 1951:41).

Protestants, Anabaptists, Puritans, Methodists, Pietists, Baptists, 19thc frontier movements, Holiness churches, Pentecostalism, the charismatic movement and many others, can be identified as renewal movements that believe(d) in the necessity and the possibility of a pure restored church of Christ - even if they did not theologically articulate or hold to a distinct latter-day period of ecclesial glory. The Pentecostal and Charismatic renewal movements of the twentieth century arose within the context of a 'neo-postmillennial' ecclesiology (see Synan 1997). The Pentecostal movement saw

¹ Cf. Lovelace 1979a:64-72; Benz 1951:42-56; De Jong 1970:79-115; Rooy 1965:242-284.

² Lovelace (1979a) mentions the following who antedate Mather and held out similar hopes for the church: Theodor Bibliander, Heinrich Bullinger, Martin Bucer, Peter Martyr Vermigli, John Foxe and John Jewel (:69). Among Mather's contemporaries, Boehm, Franke, Ziegenbalg and Plütschaw all held to the Pietist ecumenical vision of a restored and revived church.

itself as a return to a literal biblical Christianity as it was practiced in the NT church (Smith 1992:41), resulting in the renewal of hopes for a new outpouring or latter-day glory of the church. In Britain in the 1960's, 'the emerging Restoration movement was seen [by some] in eschatological terms as the emergence of a spotless bride fit to welcome the returning king' (Wright 1991:4). According to Wright, a key tenet of Restorationism was,

a decisive rejection of pessimistic premillennialism in favor of a form of postmillennialism which expects the restoring of the church to its NT pattern to be accompanied by a massive and final revival as the immediate prelude to the coming of Christ (:7).

Interestingly, and directly in line with this thesis, is the emphasis of Ephesians 4 in the charismatic British House Church movement mentioned by M Turner (1989:93). These Restorationists believed that the church would reach a glorious state in history and that Christ would then return for a pure bride. John 17 evinced their expectation for a visible ecclesial unity prior to the end.

Smith (1992) labels John Wimber and the charismatic Vineyard movement [1970's-] as equally restorationist. According to Smith 'the whole thrust of Wimber's teaching is that of preparing the church for Christ's return, making it purified and holy' (:237). Smith also mentions 20th century restoration movements that were premillennial and posttribulational (:41).¹

In the light of all the above, we believe that the hope for the *ecclesiologia gloriae* is not at the fringe in the history of theology but rather crucial to many ecclesial groups. This thesis is in one sense a re-articulation of the Puritan hope, yet without the cultural or national connotations (a Baptist nuance). We believe that the world will be 'Christianised' or 'leavened' by the gospel and that the church of Jesus Christ will attain to an unprecedented unity and glory prior to the Parousia of Christ.

As far as our millennial position is concerned, we believe that an eclectic position (that holds to the good in each) is preferable. The theology of this thesis could be called a 'neopostmillennial-historic-premillennialist-eschatology' ! (see p 95 footnote

¹ The reason why Smith sees such a hope as incompatible with NT theology is in his understanding of the imminency of the Parousia in the NT. However, as we will show in the next section, such an ecclesial hope is directly compatible with the *Naherwartung* of the NT and not undermined by it. Smith went on to add that 'Wimber seems to be espousing the ancient heresy, namely, that Christ will not return until the church is spotless and the apostolic ministry is reclaimed' (:237). This pejorative labeling of Wimber's views as *heresy* has implications for the whole Protestant movement - for ecclesial restoration is the genius of Protestantism.

1). We believe that the hope for a latter-day glory is not connected to Revelation 20 but rather to the *nature of the restoration of all things that characterises the present mode of the kingdom*. Yet in the end labels matter little, what counts is fidelity to Scripture. The next section therefore explores the biblical basis for such a hope.

3.2.1.1. The Christological expectation of a mature church
 We seek here to answer our question: Did Jesus anticipate the success of his disciples in this world prior to his return? Much of the evidence in support of our affirmative answer has been mentioned in our biblical grounds for perseverance, where we cited those reports that required a substantial period between Christ's ministry and his Parousia. We now look at those elements that indicate the success of the work he began.

4. The mature church
 The mature church is a final 'mature' church known to the people of God with his people, a final reference analogous to the growth of a person. This underscores the process of spiritual maturation and the goal of a final mode of the church toward which the ultimate activity of this eschatological process moves. Essentially, the mature church is the church that the theological world is in agreement of finality.

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3.2 A mature church within history

In this section an attempt will be made to foreground those aspects of the inspired record that anticipate an *optimistic hope for the church of Jesus Christ within this present age*. Belief in a final 'mature' church focuses on the process of God with his people, a telic orientation analogous to the growth of a person. This underscores the process of mutual attainment and the goal of a final mode of the church, toward which the divine activity of this interadventual age is moving. Essentially, this section will be an enquiry into the theological grounds for an optimistic ecclesial hope.

As the millennial views split into three temporal views, so the ecclesial 'millennium' could also be seen in three ways: 'postmillennial' ecclesiology would emphasise the maturity of the church prior to the Parousia; 'premillennial' ecclesiology would see no fulfillment of the church mission and nature this side of heaven, and 'amillennial' ecclesiology would see the whole church-age as more or less carrying the maturity of the church, with no special pre-parousia glory but rather a final parousial glorification. The following section will argue for a 'postmillennial' ecclesiology. It is believed that such a pre-parousial glory and destiny of the church is not a speculation, but a theological hope revealed in the NT.

3.2.1 The Christological expectation of a mature church.

We seek here to answer our question: Did Jesus anticipate the success of his disciples in this world prior to his return? Much of the evidence in support of the affirmative answer have been mentioned in our biblical grounds for *Fernerwartung*, where we cited those factors that required a substantial period between Christ's ministry and his Parousia. We now look at those elements that indicate the success of the work he began.

3.2.1.1 Parables of the kingdom of God

Here we have the most patent expositions of the expected advance and future hope of Jesus' redemptive mission.

a) The parable of the wheat and the tares

In the parable of the wheat and the tares (Mt 13:24-30, 36-43) we have a glimpse into Jesus' expectation of the opposition to and future of the good seed he was sowing. Although modern interpreters have highlighted *one* kernel truth of each parable, this parable is allegorically and apocalyptically interpreted by Jesus (cf. Blomberg 1990:163).¹ If the purpose of the parables is to 'deal with the paradoxical nature of the presently dawning kingdom of God' (Hagner 1993:382), then this parable adds the element of intentional and prominent Satanic opposition to the present kingdom's manifestation.² The presence of contrary elements, juxtaposed *with* the 'sons of the kingdom' (yet not '*in* the kingdom') in its world-wide reach, are to remain until the consummation of the age. This parable is polemical in nature (explaining a mystery) and reaches its final dénouement and solution in the pictured harvest. This apical future provides insight into the present anomaly of opposition to Jesus' ministry and the nature of the present kingdom.³

For our purposes we note that the end of the age is the *harvest* of the wheat. Once the seed has reached full potential and fulfilled its purpose for being sowed, it is then harvested. *Certainty of this harvest* explains the farmer's apparent lack of concern over the situation and his toleration of the pseudo-wheat until the harvest. Correspondingly, the 'sons of the kingdom' (disciples/church) are expected to reach a

¹ Jesus' apocalyptic interpretation corresponds with Matthew 25:31-46 and the predicted removal of the goats from out of the kingdom of God at the Parousial judgment. In light of this intertextual reference, it seems best to take the field as the world not yet under the dominion of Christ. The kingdom in this parable thus comes later (thus Ladd 1981a:233, *pace* Blomberg 1990:199-200, 301 and Hagner 1993:393). Cf. McIver 1995:644-648 for further interpretations.

² 'Jesus never likens the kingdom just to an individual subject or object in a given parable but to the situation described by the entire narrative. Every facet of the parables' plot may thus potentially illuminate Jesus' conception of the kingdom' (Blomberg 1990:296).

³ This parable does not predict that Christ's followers will always be accompanied by false brethren (so Gundry 1982:261-265) or that the church is to always consist of true and false believers (Augustine). 'This parable deals with a situation in the ministry of Jesus. It does not have in view the problem of the mixed church of later years' (Beasley-Murray 1986:198).

maturity and fulfill their purpose before the end of this age. *The time of the end of the age occurs only when the seeds have reached a harvestable ripeness.* The end of this age is pictured as coterminous with the maturity of the wheat and is contingent upon that expected event. Thus v 39 identifies the harvest, not *with*, but *as* the end of this age. The 'end' of the age (*sunteleia*) might better be translated as 'completion', nuancing the element of the *culmination of a process or execution* and not the terminal point itself.¹

b) The parable of the dragnet

Another indicator of Jesus' salvation-historical outlook is his parable of the dragnet (Mt 13:47-50). Here Jesus seems to expect his kingdom to collect incongruent elements in its anticipated broad global sweep. In this sweep, good and bad are collected. Ladd comments: 'Even the community created by the working of the Kingdom in the world is not to be a pure community until the eschatological separation....The perfect, holy community must await the last day' (1981a:241-242). Yet does this parable point to the reality of the church as a *corpus permixtum*? The parable seems limited in application, dealing only with the world-wide sweep of the gospel to all nations (so Gundry 1982:279), and the inevitable association of pseudo-believers in it. It does not deal with the nature of the church community or imply the necessity of unbelievers in the church.² Significant for our thesis though, is the temporal indicator in v 48 'when' ('*hote*'). The movement of the kingdom must reach an *optimum capacity* before the completion of the end of the age occurs - *then* the separation will occur. Only *once* the net is full, is it dragged ashore. 'The clause..."when it was full", corresponds to..."at the end of the age" (v 49) and thus

¹ Zodhiates (1992:1345) unpacks the semantic meaning of *sunteleia* for us: 'A culmination or completion, the bringing together of an intended purpose. In the NT, [it is] used only in the expressions *sunteleia tou aionos*, "the completion of the age", the consummation or accomplishment of its purposes'.

² Blomberg (1990:21-23) and France (1985:230) limit the period referred to in this story to only the end of the age. Yet most of the parables elucidate on the mysterious working of the present form of the kingdom and its future outworkings. Although this story has a strong future accent, the sweep of the net can describe an activity begun by Christ. Beasley-Murray (1986:200) also differs from Blomberg: 'this parable is likening the kingdom of heaven to the *whole* process of catching fish, not merely the separation'. The parable thus denotes an eschatological present and an eschatological future. 'It would be difficult to bind more closely the two aspects of the kingdom of God, present and future, grace and judgment, than they are in this parable' (Beasley-Murray:200). Church history is probably the best interpreter here.

hints at eschatological fulfillment' (Hagner 1993:399). This phrase ('when it was filled') is thus equivalent to Jesus' later saying in Matthew 24:14.

Given the apocalyptic interpretation, it is expected that the gospel of the kingdom is to extend to and affect all nations prior to the end (cf. Dan 7:14). Thus here we have a story of the optimum capacity of the kingdom of God.

c) The parables of the mustard seed and the yeast

The two parables of the mustard seed (Mt 13:31-32; Mk 4:30-32; Lk 13:18-19) and the yeast (Mt 13:33; Lk 13:20-21) have been favourites of the postmillennial school (Gentry 1999:38-41; Davis 1986:51-52). Both these stories picture the expected growth of the present kingdom of God from its humble and insignificant beginnings to its disproportionately glorious and global maturity. They are 'contrast parables' *par excellence* (Beasley-Murray 1986:194). These two stories revolve around the idea that 'remarkably small beginnings produce amazingly large results', thus informing us that 'the kingdom will eventually attain to significant proportions despite its entirely inauspicious outset' (Blomberg 1990:284). They each foreground a slightly different aspect of this expected growth: the mustard seed connotes the extent of the kingdom growth, whilst the leaven nuances the nature and means of the kingdom growth (so Bailey 1999:70).

The mustard seed parable speaks of the gradual extension of the kingdom influence until it reaches global dimensions. The *extensive* aspect is conveyed by this story. With the explicit reference to Ezekiel 17:23, 31:6 and Daniel 4:12, Jesus refers to the international extent of the kingdom of God. Beasley-Murray (1986:194-195) comments that 'the mustard plant has become the tree of apocalyptic prophecy, which exemplifies the universality of a reign embracing all peoples'. In this parable one must be careful to avoid squeezing out what is not in these words (e.g. the rule of the church over the world), yet this kingdom narrative can plausibly refer to the nations receiving a blessing through the kingdom influence having reached full stretch.¹

¹ Blomberg (1990:286) states: 'There is no promise here that the kingdom will come in such grandeur that Jesus' followers will dominate the earth. But it does appear that the end result will be far greater than what anyone observing Jesus and his band of disciples would have imagined'. True, but the parable is suggestive of providing *blessing to the nations* (noting the intercanonical allusions). This is supported by Beasley-Murray (1986:195) who comments on the allusion to Ezekiel 31 and Daniel 4: 'it is used to represent the dominion of pagan rulers over the nations, which in each case was brought to an abrupt end by the judgment of God. It is not inconceivable that Jesus may have linked

Dispensationalists have nuanced the 'world-wide fulfillment of God's kingdom blessing' (Bailey 1998b:455), although for them this full-stretch of the kingdom has a particular Israelite determination and is only attained after the Parousia. Some commentators (Blomberg 1990:284-287; Hagner 1993:385-390) are reticent to exegete these parables in the global postmillennial fashion of ideas of growth, preferring rather to merely accentuate the truth that the kingdom 'will have an effect out of all proportions with that beginning' (Hagner:389-390). Although this is true, the OT allusions demand a more global and national interpretation. The idea of growth seems intrinsic to both pictures, *yet the resulting condition receives the focus*.

Debate also clusters around the *terminus ad quem* of the parable. Is it prior to or after the Parousia? It is more consistent to take it as continuous with the inaugurated kingdom of God, following on from its gradual growth. The parable tracks the growth of the *present mode of the kingdom*. Any parousial element needs to be cautiously inferred since the parable's center of gravity lies in the *presence* of the kingdom in Jesus and not in its futuristic elements. Although the final analogy of the birds in the tree could refer to the millennial rule (premillennialism) or the future final state (amillennialism), the point is that there is *a long process of growth and increase of what was sown*, thus favouring the postmillennial interpretation.¹ In this story we have the optimum extension of the kingdom.

The yeast parable accents the *intensive* aspects of the anticipated growth of the kingdom ('until it was *all* leavened').² The purpose of the present kingdom is to affect the whole world, as leaven affects the dough: secretly, intensively yet eventually transformationally. Incremental and continuous growth reaches a climax when the whole has been affected. Here the semantic sense communicated is one of contrast: Jesus clearly expected his local Galilean movement to ultimately affect the whole world. Allis (1947:271) linked this global sense with the world wide proclamation given by Jesus to the disciples in Matthew 24:14 and 28:19-20, concluding that 'the

these examples with his use of leaven as an image of rapid growth'.

¹ Note however that it only entertains birds *when* it becomes fully grown, something only capable at the final stage of its growth and in line with a chiliastic interpretation.

² Allis (1947) convincingly debunked the old Darbyite and Morgan Campbell view that the leaven stood for the evil principle at work in the church, recapturing a sense of ecclesial optimism. Darby's view ended up as affirming that 'the end of the kingdom of heaven on earth is total apostasy!' (:269). The optimistic ecclesial connotations were avoided by Darby who divorced these texts from the ecclesial application and married them only to a future restored Israel.

whole world is to be leavened in this way with the gospel' (:271). In this story we thus have the optimum penetration of the kingdom of God.

Beasley-Murray (1986:195) crystallises the future global anticipations of both of these growth stories:

Such associations of the two symbols have the effect of emphasising the beginning and the end of the divine sovereignty in the parables as sheer miracle: its beginning is so small, so dubious, so questionable in the eyes of men that it seems impossible to identify it with the marvellous event depicted in the prophets; yet God is in that beginning, making the first momentous moves toward the fulfillment of his purpose for the world, which will be the revelation of his dominion in power and glory, beneath which all mankind may securely and forever rest.

d) The parable of the seed and the soil

The uniquely Markan parable of the seed and the soil (Mk 4:26-29) is somewhat analogous to the Matthean tares and wheat parable, yet tellingly focuses on the autonomous and fructitious ability of the soil as well as on the genetic capacity of the wheat seed. Beasley-Murray (1986:195) calls this the 'incomprehensible but effective operation of the creative process that produces a harvest out of the seed sown'. Jesus is probably informing his disciples of the inherent capacity of the word of the kingdom as it takes root and 'performs its work in [them] that believe' (1 Th 2:13). The message of the kingdom is seen to have self-sustaining power, thus 'the center of the parable focuses on the guaranteed but unpredictable growth of the seed' (Blomberg 1990:264). The terminal action of the farmer (Parousia?) is synchronised with the ripening of the harvest, no sooner and no later.¹ He waits inactive *until* the harvesting action is urgently warranted, once the 'full corn in the ear' and 'crop' appear all together. Through this narrative, Jesus reassures believers that '*at the end of the age the kingdom will have grown into all its fullness, after which Judgment Day will immediately follow* [italics mine]' (Blomberg 1990:266). It evinces the expected optimum production of the present kingdom of God.

In conclusion, we see that the parables embrace both present and future aspects of the kingdom. They confirm what we saw at the end of our section on the

¹ 'The harvest most naturally stands for the final judgment. The reference to putting in the sickle when the grain is ripe harks back to Joel 3:13, which there refers to the coming of the great Day of the Lord' (Blomberg 1990:264).

contingency of the Parousia and the relation between the present and future modes of the kingdom. All of the present activity of the kingdom 'has significance for the future Day of the Lord, when the kingdom will be consummated in all its fullness. Then all who have ever lived will be judged on the basis of their response to Jesus' person and message' (Blomberg 1990:298) - those not building on Christ's words will perish (Mt 7:24-27).¹ The parables delineate various aspects of the kingdom, most often providing theological comment on the relation between the present and future aspects. They unfold the 'eschatological drama' (Hagner 1993:361) and 'the paradoxical nature of the present kingdom of God' (Hagner:382). As with the parables of the leaven and the mustard seed 'the unity of the beginning and the end of God's sovereign intervention is axiomatic; it is a single saving, judging rule that is at work in Jesus and that will be powerfully revealed at the end of the age' (Beasley-Murray 1986:195). Yet all the above parables reveal Christ's fundamentally optimistic view over the future of what he came to inaugurate: *the world will be 'Christianised' with his gospel*. Although he anticipated intrusive elements into his movement, he was confident that his true followers would grow upward and outward, until they reached the zenith of their mission, thereby precipitating the the end of the age. As he predicted, the gospel was to be given to a nation that would produce its fruits (Mt 21:43).

3.2.1.2 Building the church

In Matthew 16:18 we have direct insight into the inner dynamic that is to work in the disciples and the church. Christ promises to build his community on Peter and his confession of faith, optimistically speaking of the invincibility of the church, even in the light of the dark machinations of the evil powers (v 18) and the shortcomings of his own followers (v 22).² This glowing hope is grounded in the fact that it is Christ himself who will be building *his* church and no one else (cf. 18:20 and 28:20). The

¹ Therefore, this threat of judgment in this portion of scripture had *initially* a preterist interpretation. In the 'Jesus generation' (preterist) the storm came on those who rejected *the words of Christ* (70 CE) and in the 'terminal generation' the storm will come on those who reject his word again.

² Flew (1951:93) cogently concludes that the rock is Peter himself and that 'Peter is not merely one stone among many; he is a rock on which many stones will be placed. In this passage Peter is to be as it were the forefather of the New Israel, as Abraham was the forefather of the old'. For an excellent study, see Cullmann [s a]:158-238, who underscores the nature of Peter's function as that of a unique foundation that is in no way perpetual.

future indicative ('I will build') conveys the sense of certainty of ongoing activity reaching its intended goal (beginning at Pentecost and climaxing in the Parousia). Although we cannot make metaphors walk on all fours, it seems consistent to imply that the metaphor Jesus used contained the connotations of foundation, process and completion. What Christ has begun, he will complete. For as he himself said:

For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it will begin to ridicule him, saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish' (Lk 14:28-30).

3.2.1.3 The coming Elijah

In Matthew 17:11-12 and Mark 9:12 Jesus confirms the disciples' query over the coming of Elijah by saying 'Elijah is indeed coming and will restore all things'.¹ Jesus here anticipates a future Elijah analogous to John the Baptist (Gundry 1982:347; Hagner 1995:499; Alford 1958a:180). This *logion* of Jesus has been variously interpreted. Alford anticipates a personal figure:

Our Lord speaks here plainly *in the future*, and uses the very word of the prophecy of Mal. 4:6. The *double* allusion is only the assertion that the Elias (in spirit and power) who foreran our Lord's first coming, was a partial fulfillment of the great prophecy which announces the *real Elias* (the words of Malachi will hardly have any other than a personal meaning), who is to forerun His greater and second coming (:180).

Hagner, on the other hand, sees the anticipation lying not in a person but a task:

The restoration of 'everything'...must here refer not to the eschatological renewal of the present order itself (which would make Elijah the Messiah himself, rather than the forerunner of the Messiah), as, for example, apparently in Acts 1:6....but to a preparatory work of repentance and renewal (:499).

Others see Jesus' saying in terms of a 'didactic timeless present' (so A Bruce [1951]:231) where there is no note of time, but only of the order of coming as between Elijah and Christ (countered by Gundry:437). France (1985:265) sees the future tense as that of the scribal hope, not Jesus' prediction of a still future coming of Elijah. Yet the text patently speaks of events in Jesus' future, although he links such expectations to the past ministry of John. If we follow France, we must ask: how has John the

¹ For comment and sources dealing with the eschatological Elijah in Jewish tradition, cf. Vena 1999:39-44.

Baptist restored *all things*? The context shows that the disciples obviously expected a restoration far more glorious than what had occurred under John's ministry – thus the mystery (of the Baptist's identification with Elijah). The interpretive phrase of Jesus (*all things*) seems to heighten the Malachi prophecy to a level surpassing the accomplishments of the Baptist.¹ The disciples must then have been surprised to hear Jesus correlate the scribal expectation with the Baptist who had suffered such a fate.²

Significant is Jesus' mention of both the future and past fulfillment of Malachi in one breath. He tends towards (what we would call) a typological and salvation-historical interpretation of this concept. The prophecy of Malachi was not exhausted in John who came 'in the spirit and power of Elijah' (Gundry 1974:94), as much as the abominating sacrilege was not fully fulfilled by Antiochus in 167 BCE. The Malachi prophecy does not terminate with John, but continues its forward momentum. Thus Jesus here expects a future Elijah to come to *restore all things before the end* in a way exceeding all that John did in preparing the nation for the first coming of Jesus (so also Bruce 1988a:85).

Who will effect such a restoration and what will he restore? These questions are answered variously yet they can be reduced to three: (1) An individual (Elijah *redivivus* or a John type figure) to restore Israel prior to the End; or (2) the Christian church in her mission to the world;³ or (3) the expected advent of Jesus causing a restoration. The last suggestion is incompatible with Elijah as a precursor. Given the spiritual application of Elijah with John, and the fact that the early church did not apparently look for an individual Elijah to come, there is good reason to support the ecclesial application (cf. Rv 11). The church's ministry, inaugurated in the NT period, is expected to be restorative in quality and is here expected to be globally successful in quantity.⁴ The restoration of all things begun in Christ, will be completed prior to his return. This also matches our interpretation of the parables and Jesus' own optimistic expectation of the spread of his kingdom message.

¹ Oehler (1999:15) believes that 'all things' is 'an expansion of Elijah's work which we find already in the earlier tradition. The *panta* in Jesus' answer combine[s] the inner restitution from Mt 3:24 and the restitution of Israel from Sir 48:10'.

² If Oehler (1999) is correct, that neither the OT nor any Jewish literary tradition linked Elijah with the Messiah but only as the ultimate precursor of God, then the disciples' confusion is understandable.

³ For a combination of the two, see Ladd 1974:154.

⁴ For a recent exposition of Revelation 11 dealing with the expected success of the church in converting the nations, see Bauckham 1993:238-337.

What the Baptist did (Lk 1:16-17; 3:4-6) the church can expect to do prior to the Parousia - the 'midpoint' preparer (John) can be correlated to the ecclesial preparer (Diagram 2). The Elijah prophecy predicts a restoration prior to 'the great and terrible day of the Lord', an occurrence to occur in the last-days in preparation for the End. If the church-age is coextensive with the 'last-days' (as most now rightly believe), then the Elijah-restoration must have been inaugurated and already be 'up and running' in Jesus' time.¹ The concept of 'restoration' need not imply that all are to be saved but that there is to be a harmonious ordering of events and full moral flowering in anticipation of the arrival of the Messiah, encompassing both salvation and judgment. Terrestrial and heavenly personalities and activities will be fittingly configured in preparation for the climactic return of Christ. This is analogous to John's restoration of a large number of Jews to the Messiah and his confirmation of others in their need for judgment ('axe laid at root of the tree'). Meyer (1879b:115) has provided us with a helpful understanding of the nature of this restoration in his exegesis of Acts 3:21, nuancing its moral aspect:

[The *apokatastasis* is the] restoration of all moral relations to their original normal condition. Christ's reception in heaven...continues until the moral corruption of the people of God is removed, and the thorough moral renovation, the ethical *restitutio in integrum*, of all their relations shall have ensued. Then only is the exalted Christ sent from heaven to the people....The mode in which the moral restitution must take place is, according to ver. 22, beyond doubt, - namely, by rendering obedience in all points to what the Messiah has during his earthly ministry spoken.

This 'restoration' is the full moral effect of the proper working of the present mode of the kingdom – the present kingdom at full stretch, at optimum effect.

Therefore we believe that a thematic and typological interpretation that observes lines of development which characteristically replay themselves throughout salvation-history is the most fruitful tool in understanding the futurist eschatology of the NT.

¹ It must be remembered that the phrase 'last-days' is an OT concept and not a NT one. Remembering this places the NT *within* the framework of the OT, whilst also accentuating the restoration which was to be characteristic of the last-days (Is 2:1-4; Jl 2:28-32; Mt 4:5-6 *et al*). This was the source of the apocalyptic belief that a temporary kingdom (Messianic Kingdom) would precede the age to come (see Russell 1964:291-297).

3.2.1.4 Expected persecution

Matthew 10:16-42 is an extended commentary on the expected persecution of the disciples (cf. Mt 24:9; Lk 21:17). The expected persecution of the church - throughout the church-age and particularly in the terminal period - can be interpreted, not as a sign of the failure of the gospel in the world, but rather as the consequence and reflex of the world to a gospel that has triumphed and permeated society. Matthew 24:14 and Mark 13:10 link the fulfillment of the missionary task with persecution. These texts 'primarily seem to focus on the church's responsibility to endure in spreading the Gospel. The hope for complete respite from all forms of persecution is tied up with the fulfillment of that task by Christ's followers' (Rabbali 1992:199). That Jesus affirms the completion of the missionary task (Mt 24:14), can imply the perseverance of the church through these tough periods.

In the light of the Christological nature of the persecution - 'in my name' - the church's suppression could be seen in continuity with the pattern of Christ. He was first received in a more popular fashion (multitudes) but later rejected once his mission became clearer. Thus, based on the typological principle of analogy, it is not inconsistent to expect the church to have a similar period of global popularity and success followed by a reflexive period of persecution, once the ultimate demand of the gospel becomes clear.

3.2.1.5 The missionary mandate

Christ's missionary mandate is found in Matthew 24:14, 28:16-20 and Mark 13:10. We believe that Matthew 28:16-20 is epexegetical of Matthew 24:14 and Mark 13:10 (further comment on Mt 24:14 is found in 4.1.1). Both texts are mutually interpreting. Cullmann (1961:50) similarly asserts that in these verses (Mt 28:16-20) we have the 'eschatological character of the missionary enterprise, which must take place precisely in this form, before the end of the age'. What Jesus meant by 'this gospel shall be preached in all nations' is interpreted for us in Matthew 28:19-20. Thus the 'witness' that all nations must be exposed to is 'the recounting of the events that constitute the gospel' (Hagner 1995:695) by disciples who are living out all that Jesus had taught. 'This gospel' that Jesus preached and lived was to be communicated, through his

disciples to the whole world. Only when once this has occurred will the completion of the age occur. Once *his* gospel is presented to the world, the *raison d'être* for the interadventual age would have been accomplished, for the midpoint revelation would then have successfully been fleshed out in all the nations of the world. The above Scriptures thus point to the realisation of the Abrahamic covenant within history, which is promised by God to reach and bless all nations (see Köstenberger & O'Brien 2001:28-32; 101-106).

In these verses Jesus expects an accomplishment of this preaching and the possibility of 'discipling the nations'.¹ The *scope* of his command here is national and not ecclesial. The concept of 'disciplined nations' is not incongruent with the words of Jesus, and the sense of 'disciples-out-of-all-nations' seems too narrow for his expansive words. The words 'baptising them...teaching them' does though narrow this down to those who believe as individuals, thus regulating our understanding of the words 'disciple all the nations'. Thus the common translation 'make disciples of all nations' entails a broad objective with a narrow application. The promise of Christ to be with the disciples 'all the days' (Mt 28:20) until the completion of the age, provides directive force to Christ's presence with disciples in their mission. He is with them with a view to completing the gospel mandate. The connection between the authority of Jesus and the fulfilling of the tasks is made plain by the connective *ouv* in v 19. 'Jesus' authority (v 18) and his presence (v 20) will empower his disciples to fulfill the commission he now gives them' (Hagner 1995:886). Christ's authority backs the mission of the disciples (thus Eph 1:22).

Finally, noting the command to teach 'all that I have commanded you', 'makes clear that mission entails the nurturing of converts into the full obedience of faith, not merely the proclamation of the gospel' (Köstenberger & O'Brien 2001:105). Hagner (1995:887) writes:

The emphasis in the commission thus falls not on the initial proclamation of the gospel but more on the arduous task of nurturing into the experience of discipleship, an emphasis that is strengthened and explained by the instruction 'teaching them to keep all that I have commanded them' in v 20a.

¹ 'Christ's command to the church is not merely that the gospel be preached within nation-states, but that all people groups of the earth be disciplined through his teachings and divine authority' (Davis 1986:53). The debate centers around the nature of the mandate. Is it a more national/cultural commission (a broad view) or an ecclesial/individual commission (a narrow view)? The answer lies somewhere between the two.

In conclusion, we paraphrase this magnificent and comprehensive commission: the cosmic Lord who has been given comprehensive authority over all the created order is commissioning his disciples to bring all nations into the knowledge and practice of his gospel. The disciples are to initiate *all ethnic groupings* ('all nations') into *all the fullness of God* ('Father, Son, Holy Spirit) and teach them to faithfully live out ('to obey') *all the teachings of Christ* ('all that I have commanded you'). The cosmic Lord will be with them in this mission '*all the days*' until accomplished at the fulfillment of the age.

3.2.1.6 The Johannine upper-room discourse

It is particularly in the so-called 'upper-room discourse' (Jn 13-17) that Jesus reveals his theological expectations and hopes for this followers. Here he reveals the future objectives and *modus operandi* of the disciples.

Firstly, Jesus' prayer for the unity of his disciples is important for this thesis (17:20-26). It is reasonable to presume that Jesus anticipated this unity to occur in (pre-parousial) history, for the objective of the unity is that 'the world may believe' and 'may know' the truth (vv 21-23). Although his words might be considered as merely conative, the desired objective function of this unity heightens the necessity for actualisation: *the unity is crucial for the purposes of God in salvation-history and therefore requisite for God's purposes to be achieved in this world*. Its non-fulfillment would constitute a truncation of God's world-wide mission.¹

Secondly, Jesus' sayings, 'by this all men will know that you are my disciples', 'that the world may believe' and 'that the world may know that you sent me', imply a global and universal knowledge of the gospel and the nature of Christ.² As we shall see in the final chapter, such universalising of witness and mission is the *terminus ad quem* of salvation-history and therefore we believe associated with NT apocalyptic. Here in John, it is through the church that all are to know that Christ's love for God drove him to the cross (14:31). This is certainly not just hearing *about* Jesus but

¹ The primary ground for such an attainment lies in the *already provided* provision for the anticipated unity (v 22). His disciples are to reify the already given unity that is theirs in Christ and the Spirit.

² Such believing does not necessitate salvation (cf. Jn 8:31ff where 'those who believed' were of their father the devil). The above verses, together with John 13:32, can 'easily' be misinterpreted in terms of *apocatastasis*. Yet intertextual constraints (particularly 15:18-16:11) cannot be harmonised with universal salvation (see Berkouwer 1981:387-423 for further detail on *apocatastasis*).

rather implies that his life is to be *demonstrated* through the church to the world in a vivid manner.

The indwelling of the disciples (the new temple) in 14:15-24 is crucial to understand how the disciples will activate Jesus' anticipations. Jesus will disclose himself to the disciples and then in turn through them to the world. In this discourse, a quasi Johannine Olivet discourse (see Beasley-Murray 1946:98), the Parousia is not pending and Jesus is not about to reveal himself to the world (14:22); rather, he will reveal himself to the disciples who in turn will witness to the world. 'That the world may know that I love the Father' (14:31) is the statement of the cross, needed to be carried to all. Whatever the nature of the world's anticipated 'belief' and 'knowledge', the necessity of such an accomplishment is there placed in the hands of the church, requiring ecclesial obedience.

The true vine image (15:1-11) is also replete with optimistic ecclesial overtones. The metaphor of the vine carries with it the fruitfulness of the vine. Explicit in Jesus' words are the work of the vinegrower (i.e. the Father), *who ensures that the vine is growing and healthy, producing the purpose for which he planted it*. Here Christ fulfills the destiny of Israel. Yet as Israel failed, so he will succeed. Thus the vinegrower tends the vine and ensures that the branches are either fruit-bearing or removed. The vine is continually cleansed and pruned to ensure a good healthy vine and crop.

Finally, John 16:7-11 needs some attention. The context here is one of persecution, an implicit motif remains central to the pericope (Ridderbos 1997b:523). These words could have been spoken to fortify the believers in awareness of the greater purpose of their mission as it encountered implacable opposition. 'Over against this refusal to acknowledge him, Jesus now posits as the great counterweight that will vindicate him against the world, the coming and work of the Paraclete, the Spirit of truth' (Ridderbos:525). Here the Paraclete's ministry is directed to the world, using the disciples' proclamation as the instrument (so Beasley-Murray 1991:280-281). In the context of 15:18-16:11, the Spirit is expected to do to the world what Jesus did to Israel (15:21-25), and the world is expected to do to the church what it did to Jesus. The context of 16:7-11 is therefore one of preparation for implacable opposition not of hopeful repentance.

The church is here commissioned to be the bearer of the Spirit's mission of convicting the world of sin, righteousness and judgment (15:18-16:11). Interestingly, in the larger context of the Upper Room discourse, Jesus does not suggest that the mission or witness of the church will result in the conversion of the world or individuals. The discourse context is one in which Jesus is about to face the full hatred of the world; a reality which his salvific ministry has extruded. In this way we see that the Johannine dualism is sustained throughout the book and is not collapsed in of hope world conversion.¹

The fundamental concept of 16:8-11 'is that of a trial of the world before God' (Beasley-Murray 1991:281), with the Paraclete acting 'as council for the prosecution' (Bruce 1984b:318). What Jesus expects is the judicial presentation of the truth to the world that will expose and condemn them for their unbelief, thus providing legal justification for their ultimate condemnation. The Spirit (through the church) is responsible to be the prosecutor, bringing evidence to bear upon the world's latent unbelief, surfacing, *exposing* and therefore condemning it. The true condition of the world manifested in the ministry of Jesus (*vis-à-vis* sin, righteousness and judgment) is once again to be exposed due to the church mission. What happened at the midpoint period in the manifestation of the present kingdom of God is once again to be radiated out, bringing the whole world to account.

Many interpret these verses as implying that the Holy Spirit will 'bring the world to the place where it is convinced of its sin, for instance, [he] is to bring it to self-conscious "conviction" of sin, to self-conscious recognition of guilt' (Carson 1979:558). The Paraclete's ministry is seen by some as a gracious positive ministry (Carson 1979, Trites 1977:113-124). Yet the word *eleggo*, a judicial activity, implies that the Spirit will prove the world guilty with respect to sin, righteousness and judgment. Wescott (1903:228) comments on the complex semantic of the term:

¹ Bauckham has argued persuasively for the conversion of the Gentiles in the final apocalyptic period (1993:238-337; 1995b:99-103). This motif of the conversion of the nations is 'at the center of the prophetic message of Revelation' (1993:238); a reality which results from the witness of the church (:258). The OT prophets had foreseen a period when all the nations would finally worship Yahweh and acknowledge his rule (1993:274). Now, in the book of the climax of prophecy, the mystery (10:7) of how God achieves this is revealed. Through the witness of the church 'all nations will come and worship before him' (Rv 15:4). The well-spring of his rationale is found in Rv 11:13; 14:14-16, 15:3-4 and 21:24. Beasley-Murray (1983) also affirms such an interpretation of Revelation (:187, 236), but Beale (1999:602-608; 776-780) denies such a conversion. See also Köstenberger & O'Brien 2001:244-247. Either way, the world is characterised as being effectively presented with a revelation of Jesus through the church.

It involves the conceptions of authoritative examination, of unquestioned proof, of decisive judgment, of punitive power. Whatever the final issue may be, he who 'convicts' another places the truth of the case in dispute in a clear light before him, so that it must be seen and acknowledged as truth. He who then rejects the conclusion which this exposition involves, rejects it with his eyes open and at his peril. Truth seen as truth carries with it condemnation to all who refuse to welcome it.

Convince is therefore too weak a word. 'The reference here is rather to the world being objectively proved wrong in its inexcusable unbelief' (Ridderbos 1997b:531). The contextual metaphor is that of a forensic setting in which Paraclete as the advocate pleads Christ's case (so Ridderbos:531). The Paraclete's legal role therefore is 'to establish the guilt and sin of the world' (Brown 1970:698). Here,

God incarnate has a lawsuit with the world. His witnesses include John the Baptist, the Scriptures, the words and works of Christ, and later the witness of the apostles and the Holy Spirit. They are opposed by the world, represented by the unbelieving Jews (Trites 1977:79).

Most expositors however believe that this judicial activity is not to be interpreted solely in terms of condemnation, for 'in the Gospel of John the *kosmos*, when it refers to the world of mankind, is the object both of salvation and of condemnation' (Holwerda 1959:55). Beasley-Murray (1991:275-276) supports this view and criticises Becker, who is quoted as saying that here 'the chance of changing is taken from the world, it can only reproduce itself over against Jesus and the Church'. Beasley-Murray notes those occasions in John where the 'world' is the recipient of the gospel positively, concluding with Barrett's comment that, 'the mission of the Church will result in the same twofold response as the work of Jesus himself' (cf.12:44-50). 'There is a dialectical tension in the concept of the "world" in the gospel of John, causing it to be seen on the one hand as needing to be and capable of being saved and, on the other, as hardened, without faith and full of hatred' (Schnackenburg 1982:115). Wescott (1903:228) cautiously notes that 'the effect of the conviction of the world by the Spirit is left undecided so far as the world is concerned'.

Although we agree that there is a 'twofold' (polarising) quality to the world, yet *in this context* Beker's words (quoted above) seem apposite in the light of the characterisation of the world in 15:18-19. This sense is supported from 16:9, where the *exposure reveals the unbelief* not the latent belief of the world. The context favours a more negative concept, where the believers stand over against a world that

hates them; for in 15:18-25 'the concept "world" is given its most emphatic dualist emphasis' (Schnackenburg 1982:113; also Travis 1986:163). Thus Brown (1970:711) does not see that this 'convicting'/'condemning' of the Spirit necessitates the reform of the guilty party, and, 'moreover, the idea that the world is to be convinced by the Paraclete contradicts the statement of 14:17 that the world cannot accept the Paraclete' (:711). He understands the convicting 'of sin' as meaning that the world is entirely culpable of sin and represents a permanent choice of evil (9:41) which merits God's enduring wrath (11:36; so also Bruce 1984b:318-320). The strong realised eschatology of John also favours such a view, for in John people are to be judged *then* based on how they respond *now* to the word of Jesus: 'on the last day the word that I have spoken will serve as judge' (Jn 12:48). We must remember that John writes of ultimate eschatological realities and decision in his gospel. The church through the Spirit now continues Christ's mission of both salvific proclamation and eschatological judgment.

These verses highlight the judicial task of the church to bring the world into a manifest and public state of guilt. Although we have argued that this verse does not favour a positive response to that 'conviction', the emphasis and primary focus is on the necessity of such a task. The world as a whole is to be legally indicted for its sin and unbelief, a function of the Advocate (Spirit) of the truth as the believers bear witness to the present mode of the kingdom. We believe that as Christ's ministry exposed and consequently condemned the world in the midpoint period, so analogously, the entire church carries out a similar mission to the world. The obedience of the church is necessitated if it is to continue this mission and prepare the world for the day of Judgment.

We conclude this Christological section convinced that Christ expected his followers to succeed in their mission in proclaiming the whole gospel to the whole world. All of Christ's future ecclesial expectations are in harmony with our thesis that a mature and obedient church is expected to greet Christ at his eagerly awaited Parousia. We now seek to show that the apostle Paul had a similar expectation in the offering on his ecclesial horizon.

3.2.2 The Pauline expectation of a mature church

We continue our exegetical analysis of those Scriptures which reflect the hope of a completion of the church task, internally and externally, before the return of Christ. Realising the eschatological climate (*Naherwartung*) and context in which Paul ministered and wrote (2.2.3.1), we will discover that a crucial motivation and hope for Paul in his evangelistic mission and pastoral labours was his desire to present to God a church fully representative of all the nations and corporately obedient to Christ. We will now attempt to show that for Paul, the height, length, breath, depth and all the other dimensions of the interadventual period were determined by these matters of ecclesial mission.

3.2.2.1 Paul's desire to present the church as a pure virgin to Christ

In the image of the church presented to Christ as a spotless bride we have a controlling metaphor that provides direction and motivation for Paul's apostolic and pastoral labours. If we accept the conclusions of NT *Naherwartung*, then the place of such a concept is accentuated: Christ's return is pending and the churches must prepare themselves for this event. The *Naherwartung* provided the immediacy to this motif and most of the Scriptures that will be exegeted reveal Paul's expectation that the church and believers would probably be alive at the Parousia. It will be shown that the eschatological consummation of the church was associated with the metaphor of a pure and spotless virgin being presented to her husband.¹ However, it is on the antecedent preparation and 'grooming' that Paul focused, seeking to ensure that the church would be fit to meet Christ. Besides the individual aspect of this eschatological presentation (Travis 1986:90-101), our thesis will focus on the corporate dimensions of this motif. In this section we will seek to show that a key tenet in Paul's mission was *his desire for his churches to be in an empirical state of*

¹ Batey (1971:67-68) concludes his study on *New Testament Nuptial Imagery* with five interesting observations: (1) the nuptial imagery of Jesus was informed by apocalyptic; (2) the delay of the Parousia prompted the early church to reinterpret Jesus' figure of present joy into a metaphor of hope for the future - as the church was envisioned to be a Bride awaiting her future wedding; (3) the nuptial image in the NT is predominantly a symbol of the Lordship of Christ over the church; (4) the identity of the early church was defined and clarified primarily by reference to her loyalty to Jesus as the Christ; and (5) the Bride image unfolds with special clarity the nature of the unity between Christ and the Church. See Best 1955:169-183 for further insight into what Paul understood by this image.

holiness compatible with the pending Parousia. We will now look at how this motif is spoken of throughout the Pauline corpus and finally observing how it attains a mature articulation in the letter to the Ephesians.

a) 2 Corinthians 11:1-2

The pastoral motif of presenting (*paristemi*) believers holy before Christ at the Parousia is explicitly mentioned in this text.¹ Here we observe that 'to reach the parousia unblemished [was] the goal of the community as well as the intention of God' (Plevnik 1997:240). This verse is programmatic for understanding the internal motivation for Paul's Gentile mission and is a sentence which 'points to what underlies Paul's concern for this church as for all the churches (11:28)' (Martin 1991:332). Sampley (1971) links the above idea with a common tradition, one which he considers much more pervasive than the extant early Christian literature indicates:

Colossians, second Corinthians and Ephesians manifest a configuration of terminology associated with the verb *paristemi* that portrays an eschatological presentation of Christians to Christ. Consistently the terminology associated with *paristemi* describes these Christians as pure and holy. The possibility arises that the early church had a widespread convention in which the verb *paristemi* functioned in a *heiros-gamios* of Christ and the church. The similarities in each of the three letters are clear enough to indicate that the common tradition is shared by all three and that the differences in these traditions may be accounted for by the divergent purposes made clear in the context of each letter (:137).

Under this theme, Paul's ministry is viewed here as preparatory and grooming in nature.² His apostolic grooming includes evangelistic conversion (initial engagement) and pastoral nurture (intermediate prenuptial purity), for the time between the betrothal and the wedding 'is not only a time for preparation but an opportunity to sustain devotion against the impairments of time and evil' (Batey 1971:14). Important

¹ Sampley (1971:132-137) lists six meanings of *paristemi*: (1) place beside or put at disposal; (2) present or represent; (3) make or render; (4) offer, bring, present (sacrifice); (5) legal/technical (judge); and (6) prove, demonstrate. Most of these aspects inhere within Paul's frequent usage of the term.

² Cf. Batey (1971:16-17) for Paul's role as an agent who negotiates the marriage of the community to the Lord and its conceptual background. Furnish (1984:499) casts Paul in the role of the father 'who has pledged his virgin daughter to her future husband and is therefore responsible that she be presented to him pure and undefiled....The father of the bride-to-be is responsible for safeguarding his daughter's virginity between the time of her betrothal and the time when he actually leads her into the bridegroom's house' (also Carson 1984:85). Bruce (1971:234) mentions the possibility of a conceptual background in the Jewish conception of Moses as the *parangumphios* who presented Israel as a bride to Yahweh.

to note is that this purity is not of a future eschatological nature, but of a present ecclesial goal, requisite for presentation at the Parousia (see Martin 1991:333 and Furnish 1984:486). Further, Sampley (1971:82) interprets the word *paristemi* with the nuance of 'make' or 'render', thus, 'Paul would be understood as saying to the Corinthians that he betrothed them to Christ in order to make or render them a pure bride to their husband'. Present present ecclesial holiness among the Corinthians was considered as the *pre-condition for a pure presentation at the eschaton*. Into a context in which the church was being tempted by Satan (11:3) to follow other grooms (11:4) and thus to be led into spiritual adultery, Paul writes this letter out of jealous concern for the bride of Christ aiming to bring the church to obedient purity and to sustain it there (13:11).¹

b) Colossians 1:28

Following on from the above, Colossians 1:28 speaks about Paul's aim to present every man perfect (*teleios*) in Christ. This text lies in the middle of 1:24-2:5 which speaks of Paul's mission and pastoral concern (O'Brien 1987:73). This pastoral concern is linked to v 22, where our motif is once again found. In an earlier work of Bruce (1980:220), he identified v 23 and v 28 as events occurring at the Parousia (also Dunn 1996a:110). He understood the perfection of v 28 as an *effect of the Parousia* rather than a *prerequisite for the Parousia* (:220). Preferable is O'Brien's interpretation who prefers the 'maturity' semantic: 'As a true pastor Paul will not be satisfied with anything less than the full Christian maturity of every believer. There are to be no exceptions, since his aim is that each one should reach perfection' (O'Brien 1987:90; also later Bruce 1984a:87).² Unfortunately, O'Brien (:90) concludes that 'this [maturity] will be fully realised only on the last day, for only then will they, like the Thessalonian Christians, be completely sanctified (1 Th 5:23; cf. 3:13)'. If however we identify this 'perfection' as referring to the believer 'who inwardly and in the manifestation of his life has appropriated the content of the Christian faith in the right

¹ Batey (1971:13) highlights the binding nature of betrothal and the *realised* nature of the church's relation with Christ. This accents the need to remain pure in the pre-nuptial period.

² On a larger scale, Bowers (1987:194-195) concludes from this verse that 'attending to the mature establishment of believing communities...Paul declares to be integral to his assigned role in the divine economy'.

way' (Ridderbos 1997a:87), we can realistically understand such a spiritual condition as being pre-parousial. This is only possible because the power behind such an immense task, at work in Paul, was 'Christ in you, the hope of glory'.¹

Finally, it seems more plausible to take the maturity as the precondition and not the effect of the Parousia. Paul's concern is not with what will happen at the Parousia but *in what condition every man is to be at the Parousia*. Here Paul wants to bring 'every man' (context = saints, v 26, 4:12; *pace* Du Plessis 1959:198-200) to Christ in an acceptable spiritual state (v 22). Whether we call this acceptable state 'perfection' or 'maturity', the reality is the index to the word. Paul wants to bring the believers near to Christ at the Parousia in a state of perfection, as a priest would bring near the offerer's spotless victim - the terminal point in his apostolic and pastoral labours.

c) 1 & 2 Thessalonians

It is in the Thessalonian correspondence that we have a wealth of prayers and thought that point to an expected ecclesial maturity for the Parousia. Here, in light of the pending Parousia, we have the most emphatic presentation of Paul's desired holiness for his churches. In 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13, 5:23-24 and 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12 we have references that speak of a mature condition expected to precede the Parousia. In fact, the whole of 1 Thessalonians seems to be an extended appeal for the believers to 'complete what is lacking in [their] faith', i e, to be made ready for the Parousia.

In 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13 Paul prays that God may 'so strengthen' the hearts of the Thessalonian believers 'in holiness that [they] would be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints'. Verse 13 introduces the contemplated result of the Lord's present action resulting in an 'establishment in the present that will be disclosed in the future judgment' (Blight 1989:111). The concern of Paul is for his converts' condition in view of the impending assize. The sense is that an 'establishment' can take place in the present that will ensure their approbation on that Day.² In this Thessalonian passage 'blameless' appears to have little to do with 'imputed' or 'alien righteousness' but refers to the ethical and faithful condition of the

¹ For more on the nature of maturity in Paul, see Ridderbos 1977a:270-272. Du Plessis (1959:198-200) argues for a reading of 'every man' as every creature on earth, and 'perfect in Christ' as a reference to the realm of redemption in Christ and not as subsequent spiritual growth. However, the context of 1:21-2:7 requires an individual sanctification interpretation. Also, the *missiological focus* is more ecclesial here, with the v 23c mitigating the evangelistic sense.

believer in the day of the Parousia; this is supported by the judicial connotations of 'before our God and Father' (so Marshall 1990a:101-102). Lastly, as we shall see later, this pericope reveals that such a hope is grounded in the ability of *God* ('may the Lord make you increase' and 'may he so strengthen you') to ensure such a situation will occur.

The same thought is reformulated and heightened in 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24. As with the previous section, here the thought is that they are to be kept through all that period before the moment he comes and so implies that they are to be kept blameless *until* he comes (so Bruce 1982:130-131, Ridderbos 1997a:266; see Blight 1989:193 for corroborating commentators). Paul here prays for the continuation and completion of the sanctifying process (so Marshall 1990a:161). This text clearly shows the correlation between *Naherwartung* and corresponding moral requirements. 'Since Paul believed that the parousia could occur within the lifetime of his readers, he also believed that they could be finally prepared for it at any time' (Marshall 1990a:162). There seems no avoiding the conclusion that Paul desired God to 'sanctify entirely' the believers in the present - body and soul - and that he would keep them in this condition of completeness up until the Parousia.¹ Paul's prayer is that they may be preserved entirely without fault *until* the Parousia and be so found *at* the Parousia. Although the many translations translate the Greek *en* preposition of 5:23 as 'at the coming of the Lord' – suggesting a future condition - it can also be interpreted 'in the presence of the Lord'. Lenski (1946:365) comments: 'The *en* [v 23] phrase does not state the date of this being preserved, for the preservation occurs in this life and not "at the Parousia of our Lord Jesus"'. This brings out the exigent need for a present moral condition ('blameless') that will withstand the approaching judicial inspection: 'for we will all stand before the judgment seat of God' (Rm 14:10).²

² 'Styridzo' has the meaning of 'putting in a buttress, a support' (Morris 1982:100). That Paul prays for the establishing of their hearts in holiness suggests his desire for a work of God in the present *that will effectively produce a condition of holiness that will endure up until the Parousia*. 'Paul is not thinking of a sanctification that may last but a little time here on earth, but of one which continues at the Parousia' (Morris 1982:182). This same motif of 'establishing' in the faith is present in the prayer of Paul in Romans 16:25.

¹ 'Paul's language certainly implies that he prays for believers to be completely holy in preparation for the parousia (Phlp 1:10ff; 1 Cor 1:7ff). The same thought is present in 3:13 and it should be taken seriously' (Marshall 1990a:161). Sadly, Marshall calls this 'an ideal that may not be fully realised' (:162).

² Paul himself is the model for the holiness he desired to see mirrored in his converts (1 Th 2:10: 'You are witnesses, and God also, how pure, upright, and blameless our conduct was toward you believers'). For the motif of Paul as model, see O'Brien 1995:104-109.

Finally, Paul confidently states (v 24) that this prayer of his *will occur*. 'He is supremely confident that what he has asked will be done' (Morris 1983:182). *God* ('he himself = emphatic position) will present his people blameless on that day because: (1) the One who has called/chosen these believers will accomplish his ends ('who calls you'; also 1 Th 2:13); and (2) he is faithful to his purposes. Paul thus grounds his ecclesial hope in the elective nature of the purposes of God and the consequent faithfulness of God to fulfill his original intentions. 'It is faith in the power and faithfulness of God, not the moral result reached in the church, that makes him [Paul] hold up blamelessness and spotlessness before the church as mandate and final goal, in the midst of all the present temptations and imperfections' (Ridderbos 1997a:272).

Lastly, in 2 Thessalonians 1:11 Paul prays that God would 'make/consider' the believers worthy of God's call. 'Even though this means to "consider" worthy it is implied by the prayer that Paul wants God to "make" them worthy. This prayer implies that Paul 'wants the Thessalonians to so live that God will be able to pronounce them worthy' (Blight 1989:223, see 1 Th 2:12).¹ Paul considers the suffering of the church to be part of this process (1:5) and asks God to continue the preparation for the coming kingdom inaugurated at the Parousia. Once again, Paul hopes for a congruency between the empirical condition of the church and the holy character of the revelation of the Lord and his kingdom on that Day.² God's work *now* is to ensure approbation *then*.

d) Philippians 1:3-11

It is often in Paul's epistolary introductory thanksgivings that we have evidence of 'the apostle's deep pastoral and apostolic concern for the addressees' (O'Brien 1977:13). His introductions have a didactic function whereby he either implicitly or explicitly instructs them in what is important *vis-à-vis* the church condition. O'Brien accents the element of maturity found in these sections: 'The manifold requests of the apostle are primarily concerned with the growth in Christian maturity of the addressees....The apostle will not be satisfied with anything less than their full Christian maturity' (:270). Since Paul's introductory thanksgivings anticipate many of

¹ See O'Brien 1977: 179 on the choice for 'make worthy'.

² The requirement for empirical righteousness qualifying one for entry into the kingdom is seen in Mt 5:20. A similar thought is found in Exodus 19:10-15 and Hebrews 12:14.

the concerns of the letter (like a musical overture), the content of the thanksgivings often provide a context through which the whole letter can be read (cf. Roberts 1986). In our case, this shows how requisite our motif is for Pauline thought.

In Philippians 1:3-11 we have a classical preparatory prayer introduction. The Parousia (vv 6 and 10) is the proximate event that has a dual function in this pericope: (1) it provides the ultimate goal of Paul's ecclesial hope;¹ and (2) it provides the present incentive for corporate holiness. Paul spurs the church on to righteousness in light of the pending Parousia. Preparation for the Parousia can hereby be seen as an apostolic and pastoral concern, the ultimate goal of Paul's prayers. This concern permeates the rest of the contents; thus Travis (1986:96) links 1:9-11 with 2:14-16, which both 'refer to qualities which Paul expects to see in his converts in this life, in preparation for (*eis*) the parousia';² and Fee (1995:87) links the 'good work' - 'the ethical dimension of salvation in Christ' - of 1:6 with the call to work out their 'salvation' in 2:12-13.

More controversially, yet integral to this thesis, Paul's words once again evince an expected corporate maturity and blamelessness *prior to* and *in preparation for* the Parousia.³ The sense of his words in 1:6 unfolds his pastoral hope (and certainty) that God will keep this church in this state of corporate perfection/completion (= obedience) up until the Parousia.⁴ Taking vv 5 and 6 together, we see that Paul's 'confidence is that their participation in the gospel "from the beginning until now," will continue until the day of Christ' (Fee 1995:86). He rejoices over the obedience of this church which was from the beginning (1:5; 2:12), and, whilst exhorting them to ongoing obedience, confidently expects God to sustain the church in that obedience up until the Parousia.

¹ Fee (1995:86) comments on Paul's confident hope: 'But this confidence has very little to do with them and everything to do with God, who both "began" a good work in them and will "bring it to completion at the day of Christ"'. O'Brien (1977:27) relates Paul's confidence to Isaiah 40-66 and the revelation of Yahweh who is the First and the Last, the One who will bring to completion what he has birthed.

² 'Pure and blameless' for Travis are more qualities of the character of overflowing love rather than calculating sinlessness (:96).

³ 'Paul's prayer...was that the Philippians would not only *reach* the final day, but also that they might *be pleasing* to God on the occasion of the great assize' (O'Brien 1977:35).

⁴ 'Completion' unfortunately carries a sense of static termination, yet the word should be understood in the sense of 'maturity' and spiritual completeness that fits one for service. It does not mean 'to have arrived' but rather a desired 'point of departure', characterised as ongoing obedience in 2:12. In vv 8-11 Paul qualifies the nature of this 'completion' and 'maturity' as that which will receive the 'well done' on that Day.

Of import is the impression that *from their* inception the Philippian church lived in a spiritual condition that was appropriate to the Parousia revelation. How the Philippians could remain in that obedience is articulated in the whole letter. Some, as mentioned, see the experience of the condition of 'perfection' as only occurring simultaneously with the Parousia (O'Brien 1977:28). However, the relative temporal preposition *achri* (1:6) implies an abiding state up to certain point, at which those prior conditions will reach termination or fulfillment. If Paul wanted to stress *at* or *on* the Day, he would have used the locative or instrumental 'en' for this nuance (see Fee 1995:86). Also, Paul clearly states that God had only *begun* the good work, and he is confident that God would go on perfecting it – for the Greek verb *epitelesei* is a progressive future and refers to 'an action in progress in the future' (O'Brien 1991:78). This implies that 'perfection' here is not a static attainment but a growing and dynamic condition (v 9) *to continue up until the End*.¹

Our interpretation of v 6 is buttressed by co-textual constraints, especially if we correlate v 10 with v 6. What Paul has expected God to do in the church (v 6) he now, characteristically, prays into being: 'he now proceeds to give content to his prayer, indicating some specifics regarding the "good work" begun in them which he repeatedly prays that God will bring to completion on the day of Christ' (Fee 1995:96). In vv 9-11 we have a prayer that cumulatively results in a condition of holiness before God.² Here 'the concern is with present life in Christ; the orientation is toward its consummation - that they live for Christ now, and do so in light of his coming Day' (Fee:97). Here Paul is 'directly concerned with the Philippian's progress in Christian love and maturity during the remainder of this present age' (O'Brien 1977:38). This desired condition of holiness in v 10 is expressed elsewhere in the epistle (1:27; 2:1-6;

¹ Du Plessis (1959:36-45) shows that *telos* does not mean cessation or discontinuation when reached but rather fulfillment: 'fundamentally the term is...qualified as expressing culmination but not ultimatum, i e, a point beyond which no further action is conceived' (:37-38). *Telos* often expresses the idea of a 'turning point as opposed to ultimate finality'; nevertheless, underscoring the idea of *completion* in that attainment of this point 'marks the consummation of a particular period, stage, achievement, event or process, but admitting the suggestion of a new beginning' (:45). If the Philippians reach this point, it does not mean static perfection but rather ongoing functioning as a mature church ready for the Parousia.

² See Fee 1995:102-103 who brings out the communal and interpersonal nature of 'pure and blameless'. Ridderbos (1997a:270) rightly guards us against 'an exclusively moral interpretation...[of] the idea of a quantitative state of moral perfection flawless in all its parts'. Regarding the need for 'perfection', Ridderbos deals with the issue of 'the working out of this totalitarian imperative and the possibility of its realisation in this life' (:266) in his section entitled: 'The totalitarian point of view. Perfection' (265-272).

2:12-15) and especially in chapter 3 which contains an explicit call to emulate Paul and thus exemplify the nature of 'perfection' or 'maturity' (v 15).

Ridderbos (1997a:265-266), who has written about 'the totalitarian character of the relationship in which the church is placed...[which] pertains to the most essential and characteristic feature of the Pauline paraenesis', fittingly writes of Paul's desired holiness:

[T]his sanctification for Paul denotes a condition of moral blamelessness that comes about in the way of purification. As such it is defined further as that which is 'blameless', 'without spot or wrinkle', 'in which no fault is found'...It is precisely the intention that the church may rise in this life to such a position of holiness that at the appearing of Christ it may go to meet its Lord without blame (:266).

Such a condition of obedience is evidence of the *power of Christ* in his people (2:13) – a reality incarnated in the apostle (3:7-11), diffused throughout the body in Philippi and growing in both (1:6; 3:8-14) until the End.

e) 1 Corinthians 1:4-9

Similar 'parousial ethics' and eschatological climax can be found in 1 Corinthians 1:4-9. Here Paul praises God that despite the problems in Corinth God will complete his work in this church. This section highlights the theological nature of Paul's ecclesial hope. Even to a church racked with problems (unlike the Philippians), Paul opens with a theological conviction that God will present *this* church 'blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ'. Such an anomalous juxtaposition accounts for the confessional nature of this statement in v 8 (so Soards 1999:26). Thus Orr & Walther (1976:146) speak of this verse as,

the most difficult of all expressions of hope in this letter....Paul is writing to people who have been already engaged in quarrels, nourished scandalous conduct, doubted some of the basic elements of the gospel, questioned the authority of the apostle...yet here he states unconditionally that they will be blameless in the final evaluation.

Here the words 'will confirm you' of v 8 'express not a mere wish but rather a promise which God is going to fulfill' (Kistemaker 1993:41).¹ As in 1 Thessalonians 3:11 'the

¹ Fee (1989:43) notices how Paul uses the same word 'confirm' as in v 6: 'Paul says that in the same way that God first "guaranteed" our testimony to Christ while we were with you, he will *also* "guarantee" or "confirm" you "to the end"'. What God began he will finish, for he is faithful (v 9). 'Confidence and certainty for the future were based on the past action of God...As God had confirmed the *testimony* in them, so now He would confirm the *Corinthians* themselves' (O'Brien

outcome of the Corinthians "being kept strong" is that they would be blameless on the day of the Lord Jesus Christ' (Soards:27). As in Philippians, Paul expects God to confirm them until the end, i e, to sustain them in a state of 'maturity' up until the Parousia.

Du Plessis (1959:160-161) unpacks the relation of the historical and eschatological dimensions of this pericope:

The context of 1 Cor 1:4-9 is...not concerned only with exoneration on the day of judgment but includes the maintenance of believers until that day. The spiritual gifts of grace have this very purpose in view, that Christians would be secured in their religious and moral make-up by Christ to the extent of being exculpated on that day of decision. Dissociation of these various motifs means violation of the cogent representation. Fellowship with Jesus Christ (1 Cor 1:9) proclaims the present reality of this sustenance, and confirms to the readers that Christ's office is not a temporary or momentary one. What is done in history is entered on the account of eternity, for the day of judgment. He will sustain all the faithful until that day when He will secure them complete freedom from the censure of God.

The remarkable nature of this section is Paul's overwhelming confidence in God's relationship and work in this aberrant yet Spirit-inspired church (cf. Fee 1989:43-45). 'Paul's unswerving confidence in the Corinthian church's future is remarkable...God had begun and was continuing a work among the Corinthians that had an assured outcome because of God's own character' (Soards 1999:27). Such a hope is grounded in the fact that the Corinthian church was the church *of God* (1:2);¹ God's purpose in the church will be accomplished and we can thus confess that the ecclesial future is not the church's future, it is *God's future* (cf. Plevnik 1997:241). The building will be completed and the harvest will be gathered (1 Cor 3:6-9).

Before we leave these texts, we must ask the question: did these churches, toward which Paul was convinced God would 'perfect' and procure blamelessness before God at the Parousia, actually attain such a state? Our response is two-fold. Firstly, the Parousia did not occur and therefore the event of the churches entering such a state for the Parousia might not have occurred. Secondly, as with Jesus' statements as noted in 2.2.2.2, Paul could be understood as speaking prophetically and thus trans-ecclesially: his sense of God completing the work in the local churches was grounded in his conviction of God's general and total work in the trans-local church as a whole. The ultimate ecclesial hope (3.2.2.2) appears interwoven into the local and specific

1977:126.127).

¹ 1 Corinthians 1:8-9 parallels 1 Thessalonians 5:24.

context where Paul ministered. The broader hope produced and fed the narrow hope, thus allowing the motif to survive even if its articulation at the narrow local level did not materialise. It is the grand ecclesial HOPE of which every 'local' church participates in. Such a conclusion seems justified in the light of the fact that the motif featured prominently in Paul's introductory thanksgivings and prayers and was brought to bear on all manner of churches.

We have seen the strong concern in Paul's writings for his churches to be found blameless before Christ at the Parousia. Although there will be unprecedented ecclesial glory at the Parousia, such texts provide further evidence of an anticipated pre-parousial glorification of the church. Over emphasis on a post-historical realisation of the church's potential beyond the horizon of our times can lead to ecclesial doceticism. Yet developing this NT historical hope reveals the degree to which God enters into the fallen history of humanity and gloriously transforms a community of people - even against all odds.

3.2.2.2 Paul's theological explication: Ephesians 4:1-16

In Ephesians Paul crystallises all his prior 'occasional' theology, especially those elements that relate to the maturity and expected goal of the church of Jesus Christ.¹ It is particularly in chapter 4:1-16 that we have the crowning text that unpack this expected ecclesial perfection and hope, being arguably programmatic for Paul's evangelistic and pastoral ministry.

Firstly, we must touch on the question of the referent of *ekklesia* in Ephesians. Some commentators posit the 'universal Church, the Christian community seen in its totality' (Lincoln 1990:xciv, 67, also Giles 1995:145 *et al*). Others understand *ekklesia* as the 'heavenly gathering centered on Christ' who are corporately and representatively present before the throne in heaven (O'Brien 1999:26; 1987), 'a heavenly church which is permanently in session' (Banks 1988:47) of which the local churches participate in and represent.² Fee (1994:689) argues for a local gathered community that is the expression of the so-called universal church. It seems best

¹ For arguments in retaining the traditional view on authorship, see Barth 1974a: 3-61.

² A factor which mitigates the 'heavenly body' identity is the difficulty in correlating that concept with the suffering and growing metaphors in Ephesians, along with the ethical imperatives and the appeals

however to hold to a dynamic inclusive view that incorporates both vertical (heavenly) and horizontal (earthly) aspects of the *ekklesia*. The heavenly and earthly 'bodies' are all inclusive of the body of Christ, incorporating both the more static aspects and the dynamic aspects of the letter - one body in two modes.¹ Yet it is true that the letter's primary referent of the term *ekklesia* is the earthly, terrestrial church. The process of the upbuilding of the church is centered in the earthly church whilst the backdrop and extent of the *ekklesia* is ultimately broader.

Secondly, as far as the eschatology of the letter is concerned, the book is commonly credited with a more 'vertical' and realised eschatology (Lincoln 1990:lxxxix-xc; Smalley 1956). Regarding a more future, forward-looking eschatological perspective, a helpful observation is mentioned by Hort, quoted in Smalley. Hort identified a dual eschatological action in Ephesians, an eschatological movement that develops in two interrelated directions: a perfecting of the Christian community and an ingathering of humanity into that community (:154). Smalley himself identifies three main stages of eschatology of Ephesians: the mystery of the Gentile inclusion, the growth of the Body, and the all important end of the summing up of all things in Christ in 1:10 (:154). This temporal ecclesio-eschatological nuance of Ephesians is also brought out by Lincoln (:261):

While Ephesians makes reference to an end of history (e.g., 4:30; 5:5; 6:13), the imminence of that end is not in view in the same way as it is in some of Paul's letters. These notions of movement toward a goal [2:20, 21; 4:13; 6:13, 14], of progress, of maturing, and of growth may well function as Ephesians' equivalent to some of the future elements in Paul's eschatology. They certainly suggest that the Church's future in history is being taken seriously.

In chapter 4:1-16 we have a discourse on the unity, diversity and maturity of the Body of Christ, presenting us with realities that underlie the rest of the letter's contents (O'Brien 1999:280). It is a Christological exhortation to the believers to live worthily of their calling and to actualise the reason for the ministerial gifting of the church. The emphasis on the gifting suggests a strong earthly mode of the church as the referent of *ekklesia*. Here Paul provides us with the grand ecclesial goal that

for unity. It is more plausible thus to identify these dynamic aspects with an identifiable group of people on earth (cf. Giles 1995:145).

¹ This inclusive view is warranted by 2:19-22 where the whole structure of the church is compared to a building that includes the foundation elements (apostle and prophets) and the superstructure. Also, to limit 5:22-33 to the earthly body seems unwarranted by the theological content of those verses – unless Paul is speaking representatively throughout.

obviously fired his own pastoral heart. The theological content of this section 'constitutes an indirect appeal to the readers to play their part in enabling the Church to become what it should be' (Lincoln 1990:224-225). In these verses we have the apostle's 'lucid understanding of what God wants to accomplish in the body of Christ and in the lives of its members' (Strauss 1986:260).

The temporal clause of v 13 ('until all of us...') provides us with the pinnacle of Paul's rationale for the diversity in the church, introducing us to the objective of the forward movement of the church's growth. In v 12 we have the functional job-description of the ministers and in v 13 the ultimate desired goal of that process. The two verses are thus not synonymous but climactic. The job-description of the ministers ('apostle', 'prophet', 'evangelist', 'pastor and teacher') is to 'equip/perfect the saints'.¹ This word *katartismos* (a *hapax legomenon*) is variously translated (see Graham 1997:31-311). Barth (1974a:439) describes it as a 'dynamic act by which persons and things are properly conditioned'. Lincoln (1990:254) states: 'It is the notion of making complete, which can include making complete by restoring or training, that best fits the context, where, in the next verse, different images for the Church's completion will be used'. Thus the primary objective and ultimate purpose of the ministers is to bring the saints to a state of completion, i e, to condition the saints, to actualise their spiritual identity. As they serve and build up the body, so they bring it to its desired goal, to the completion and complexion that is seen in Christ. So, whether we prefer a 'ministerial' interpretation of the 3 clauses (co-ordinate) or an emphasis on the ministry of the saints (as O'Brien 1999), the objective of both remains the same: the upbuilding of the body of Christ.

This upbuilding, says O'Brien,

has both an extensive and intensive dimension to it. Growth in size is implied in the mention of the gifts of apostles and evangelists, while the introduction of the body metaphor implies the notion of development of the church as an organism from within, by means of its own God-given life (1999:305).

¹ Are the three prepositional phrases in v 12 co-ordinate (i e, these three phrases relate only to the ministers, thus Lincoln 1990:252-253) or are the last two phrases related to the saints and their job-description once 'equipped' (i e, the focus here is on the saints' ministry not the ministers', thus Barth 1974 a:479-481)? The context seems to favour Lincoln's argument: 'the primary context here in v 12 is the function and role of Christ's specific gifts, the ministers, not that of all the saints' (Lincoln 1990:253). Yet the syntactic variation of the prepositions *pros* and *eis* favours Barth. Those favouring the former view tend to interpret *katartismos* with the telic nuance of 'completion', whilst the latter view favours the more 'preparation' translation of 'equip'. The other solution is to take the the first clause as ministerial, the second as 'ecclesial' and the third ministerial. Cf. Graham (1997:310-313) for an exegetical history of these verses.

Ridderbos (1997a:432-438) has written extensively on the Pauline theme of the extensive and intensive upbuilding of the body of Christ. Relative to the growth of the body, he speaks of a 'continuing and consummating work consist[ing] both in the bringing in of those who till now have been without (cf. Rm 15:20ff) and in the inner strengthening and perfecting of all who in Christ now belong to it (1 Cor 14:3; 1 Th 5:11, *et al*)'. He goes on to add that this process 'works toward the *pleroma*, the full number intended by God both of Jews and gentiles (Rom 11:12, 25), a perspective with which for Paul also the end of history coincides (Rm 11:25-26)' (:433). The ultimate goal lies in the unity of the body when 'it reaches perfection, i e, brings to revelation the fullness it possess in Christ' (:438). Although the upbuilding in Ephesians here includes both aspects, the subsequent intensive work receives a certain primacy and ultimate concern: 'It is thus the intensive "fullness", the adulthood and maturity of the church, toward which the entire process of upbuilding is directed' (Ridderbos:435). Thus the process reaches a pinnacle when all those in Christ are brought in and when all those who have been brought in fully actualise the fullness that is theirs in Christ.

These verses in Ephesians are exclusively ecclesial, and even evangelism is seen as extensive upbuilding.¹ This *process* (a building) occurring within the body of Christ has a definite *goal*: a mature man, 'the adult age of the church' (Meyer 1879b:224). This is now expatiated upon in vv 13-16. Here we move to the ultimate goal of the ministry gifts, which were first mentioned because of their essential role in the attainment of this goal (beginning in v 11 ('he gave') and ending in v 12a). In v 13 we have a strong 'teleological accent' (Barth 1974b:478), containing 'the goal of the Church's existence' (Lincoln 1990:255). 'The ministers are to carry out their task both until the whole Church reaches this goal and in order that it might reach this goal' (Lincoln:255). The relative conjunction 'until' suggests that 'the ministerial nature of these offices will continue until the Church reaches its goal' (Graham 1997:315). Here we have the eventual, expected and contemplated result of v 11, that is, the arriving of the church at the stature of a mature man, to the condition of corporate spiritual maturity.² *All* believers - which Du Plessis (1959:189) sees as the most

¹ Bowers (1987:188) described Paul's mission as one that 'embraced evangelism within an ecclesiological intention'.

² Lincoln (1990:256): 'The emphasis is on the mature adulthood of this person in contrast with the children to be mentioned in the next verse. The Church, which has already been depicted as one new person in Christ (2:15), is to attain to what in principle it already has in him - maturity and

emphatic assertion of the theme of maturity - are expected to arrive at a clearly defined measure of attainment. The church must *actualise* its given unity and appropriate its given knowledge of Jesus. The key motif here is on the corporate attainment, something which is therefore seen as the ultimate destiny of the church (so Schnackenburg 1994:185).

This condition is further described as the church actualising the fullness of Christ (v 15), of becoming all that she essentially is (cf. 1:23). 'The thought of the full unfolding and appropriation of what has been given in Christ and thereby of adulthood and maturity emerges very clearly in Ephesians 4:13' (Ridderbos 1997a:271). Linking this with Paul's prayer in 3:19 for the attaining of the fullness of God, we see that 'the standard for believers' attainment is the mature proportions that befit the Church as the fullness of Christ' (Lincoln 1990:257). Best (1955:141-142) affirms that,

the Church is to attain to the measure of the maturity of the pleroma of Christ; it is to attain to the measure of the maturity of the attributes and powers of Christ, that maturity which comes when the attributes and powers of Christ completely fill it and it is in actual fact the pleroma of Christ.

Meyer (1879b:225) speaks of 'the fullness of the Divinity manifest in Christ and through Him also embodied in the church'. This is theological language for the church being all she was made to be, the process of 'an increasing approximation of believers to Christ' (Lincoln:261). This objective is the driving topic of the whole pericope and the *raison d'être* for the gifts of Christ.¹

Of primary importance for the thesis is the answer to the question: is the church expected to attain to this maturity in her historical pilgrimage or is it only realisable at the Parousia?² O'Brien (1999:306), Bruce (1980:87-88) and Turner (1995:150) favour the view that such maturity will only finally occur at Christ's coming. Graham

completeness'. Du Plessis (1959:188) correctly understands the idea/metaphor of 'maturity' here in physiological terms: 'There can be no doubt that the image of a physical body is an intentionally literal presentation to elaborate accurately on the idea of unity, and growth within that unity'. Cf. Ridderbos 1997a:271-272 for the Pauline summons for every individual Christian to be perfect and mature.

¹ Strauss (1986:264) understands this 'fullness of the stature of Christ' in historical terms: 'The stature He attained in His incarnation, the spiritual maturity level He possessed, is the measure toward which every believer should be progressing'. That is certainly valid, yet in the context of Ephesians and especially 1:23 and 3:19, the term is best understood in terms of the organic 'body of Christ' concept.

² Robert Nelson (1964:211-324) looks at this issue relative to the kingdom of God: 'For there is a great difference of thought among theologians today with regard to the problem of whether the Kingdom in its fullness is to be within historical time or in the realm of eternity. And upon one's decision respecting this problem depends his understanding and evaluation of the Christian life and the history of the Church' (:225).

(1997:323) lists other such expositors who believe it will only be obtained outside the present continuum, and also those who believe it may be obtained while on earth. Those of the latter include Eadie, Barry, Salmond, Ellicott, Abbott, Lenski, Meyer, Mitton and Carter. Meyer believed that the church would reach this state in a period of time just preceding the Parousia of Christ: 'But vv 14, 15 show most distinctly that Paul thought of the goal in v 13 as setting in even *before the Parousia*' (1879b:226).¹ Meyer (:225) lists other scholars who held to this temporal 'this-worldly' ecclesial hope: Chrysostom, Jerome, Ambrosiaster, Thomas and Luther, *et al.* Recently, Snodgrass (1996:205-206) has commented:

While the first part of v 13 may have implications for the end times, this passage makes more sense if understood as an attainable, expected goal for Christians in the present. Otherwise the focus on Christian maturity in v 14-16 makes no sense. Paul's concern is that his readers will not be blown about like babies now, not after the parousia.

In favour of this interpretation is Paul's explanation of this corporate maturity in vv 14-16. It is a maturity not to succumb to false doctrines, as is characteristic of infantile behaviour. If such a maturity was only attainable 'in heaven', it is not understandable why Paul defined the maturity as the ability to stand amidst false teaching. Du Plessis (1959:193), who has argued for a vision of an anatomical constitution as to the meaning of *teleion* in v 13, concurs:

The contents of 4:14 seem to suggest that the ideal will be realized in the present life: [v 14 is] hardly an intelligible addition if Paul had eschatological consummation in mind. On the other hand, can a correspondent identity between the stature of Christ and the Church as His body fall within the boundaries of the present *ek merous* order of affairs? Bearing in mind the objective character of the quality called for, the thought is not incongruous.

Also, if these verses only reach consummation at the Parousia (which is not implied here at all, so Schnackenburg 1994:251), then it implies that the goal of maturity is reached by Christ *then* and not by the ministerial gifts given to the church *now*. Such a conclusion would subvert the intent of the entire pericope. This section declares that the ministerial gifts (or the saints) will accomplish that maturity, not the Parousia. Also, the Parousia view posits that Christ accomplishes instantly what is actually the

¹ Interestingly, he links the mention of the false doctrine with the 'apocalyptically' expected Antichristian principle preceding the Parousia. In these verses he sees Paul as pointing to the state of unity of faith and knowledge, 'which sets in after the last storms...and then is at once followed by the consummation of the kingdom of Christ by the Parousia (1879b:226).

whole process of history.¹ But if 'the Church's final state of completion...occupies the future horizon', and we acknowledge that 'the writer is constrained to show that the exalted Christ has in fact supplied what is necessary for the Church to become what it is meant to be', then Paul's 'vision of the Church and of its calling in the world is not to be thought of as a totally impossible ideal' (Lincoln 1990:269). We believe that this goal can be related to the Parousia in a distinct way so that both events are sensitively compatible with each other.

Here in Ephesians we have a predicted attainable historical goal for the church. She has a historical goal and destiny, and these verses expect it to happen in history amidst the insidious influences of false doctrine and malicious intent. When she attains to her goal, then these verses imply that the ministerial gifts will be diffused within the whole body to such an extent that the particular gifting of those of v 11 will probably no longer be necessary. This is because *all* will have arrived at the state that the *few* were given to accomplish (e g, when your leg is healed you no longer need crutches). The particular ministerial gifts are 'given...*until* we all attain to...maturity'.² Such an ecclesial state would have profound affect upon the world and for the whole *raison d'être* of the interadventual age, suggesting its association with the terminal generation and the Parousia. We believe that this is the grand ecclesial hope of the NT.

3.2.2.3 'Maturity' of Christians?

Numerous texts in the Pauline corpus touch on the aspects of individual Christian maturity or perfection (1 Cor 2:6; Phlp 3:15; Col 1:28; 4:12). The contemporary tendency has moved away from the 'two classes' model, i e, the nominal Christians and mature/spiritual Christians. The Wesleyan concept of a state of sinless perfection has given way (at least theologically) to a concept of relative actualisation (Klein

¹ At risk of being reductionist, to transpose the fulfillment of the church to the post-temporal eschaton smacks of Platonism and Docetism and loses the pastoral actuality of this Pauline pericope.

² Thus Hodge (1960:801) writes on Ephesians 4:11-13 in light of his postmillennial views: 'The duties of the ministry...are to continue until all, that is, all believers, the whole church, or as our Lord says, all the elect, are gathered in and brought to the stature of perfection of Christ'.

1993:699-701).¹ This concept understands *teleios* (perfection, maturity, wholeness etc) as indicating a person or thing that has fulfilled its intended goal/destiny or function/purpose (Du Plessis 1959:124-129). Most would concur with Schippers (1976:65) that, in many incidences, the anthropological sense of the term in the NT,

does not speak of an ideal of ethical perfection which is to be realised by degrees. Rather...*teleios* signifies the undivided wholeness of a person in his behaviour...[It does not] denote the quantitative endpoint of human endeavour, but the anticipation in time of the eschatological wholeness in actual present-day living. Christian life in the New Testament is not projected idealistically as a struggle for perfection, but eschatologically as the wholeness which a person is given and promised.

As is characteristic of most of Paul's ethical injunctions, the meaning of *teleios* swivels between the indicative and the imperative. In some instances (1 Cor 2:6, Phlp 3:15) the meaning seems to be more 'forensic' indicating 'the perfection...of the absolute *redemption which is in Christ*' (Du Plessis 1959:199; also Fee 1989:101-102; 1995:355-356). In these cases we can justly translate this term 'perfect'. In other cases (Col 1:28, 4:12) the maturity of the believer is in focus (Peterson 2000). In these cases, those who are *teleios* are actualising their true identity in Christ and are walking as true Christians. They are not something more than a normal Christian but rather a 'normal Christian'.² Maturity here is therefore not a result of a long process of sanctification, but the essential state of devotion and volition that is consistent with the nature of being in Christ. Thus Peterson (2000:193) comments on Colossians 1:28:

What is implied by *teleios* in the context of 1:28 is not some vague notion of 'spiritual growth' or 'moral progress', but actualization of redemption in Christ in personal and corporate Christian living. Paul's idea of maturity or perfection is to be understood in the light of his inaugurated eschatology.

The translation 'maturity' is good if it is understood in a qualitative and characterising sense not in a quantitative or progressive sense.³ Thus Delling (1977b:77) concludes:

¹ Cf. Du Plessis 1959:11-12. His book discountenances the notion that perfection is an individual attainment. This is a necessary corrective - but he leans too far into the wind.

² The *teleioi* in 1 Corinthians 2:6 'are correlative with the *pneumatikoi* as characterised in the subsequent verses; and the word must therefore be regarded as a universal Christian epithet' (Du Plessis 1959:180). Thus Paul says that he is 'revealing wisdom among people who are perfect'. These are those who do not live in a state of immaturity or without *telos* but are now complete and perfect *in Christ*.

³ Colossians 4:12 'implies that they are already *teleio* and need to be kept that way, not that they need to make progress here and now' (Peterson 2000:194; Cf. Du Plessis 1959:203-204; Travis 1986:97-101).

'One does not find in the NT any understanding of the adjective [*teleios*] in terms of a gradual advance of the Christian to moral perfection nor in terms of a two-graded ideal of ethical perfection'. As we will note later, this 'perfection' finds subjective expression in 'the obedience of faith'.

When corporately considered, the sense of 'maturity' as a quantitative and qualitative process analogous to natural human development is found in Ephesians 4:13. This can be seen as the corporate attainment of individual maturity by the believers. It is the corporate equivalent to Paul's desire to present every individual mature in Christ (Col 1:28). Understanding the subjective side of this term as 'obedience' allows for a relative fluctuation along the line of authentic Christian experience – for there are some Christians and churches which are more authentic than others, some thus more obedient than others. Paul's desire, relative to church maturity, was that his converts 'move forward towards the ultimate encounter with Christ, when the perfection of Christ himself would be fully experienced by his people together' (Peterson 2000:200). It must be noted that Ephesians 4 is at pains to press home the fact that ultimate maturity is only attainable corporately. It is not a matter of individualism or even the aggregate of individuals living in obedience. There is a 'horizontal' dynamic that is intrinsically related to the nature of the Christian and the church and which communicates the grace of God to each member (Eph 4:16; Col 2:19).

When the historical church actualises its given perfection in Christ in yielded obedience, and attains to a mature man, then we believe she will be prepared for the Parousia of Christ.

3.2.2.4. Obedient churches – the goal of the Pauline mission

Recent research into the nature of the Pauline mission has shown that Paul's mission had three foci: (1) evangelism, (2) church planting, and (3) the nurturing of emerging churches. It is especially the last dynamic that is receiving renewed emphasis (Bowers 1987, 1991; Köstenberger & O'Brien 2001:161-201; Peterson 2000). According to Bowers (1987:193), Paul had,

one task, a task proceeding through preaching and converting to the founding of churches and through the founding of churches to their firm establishment. Circumstances permitting, the completion of such a task in one area took precedence for him over begetting such a task in a new area.

Paul's task was only complete once he had established mature believing communities, a goal integral to his role in the divine economy. Bowers (1987:197) believed that Paul understood his mission not simply as a broadcasting of seed but also a cultivating of seedlings into sturdy plants. All such endeavour is done within a salvation-historical context of mission (O'Brien 1995:38).

Recent study has also brought out the importance of the empirical obedience of the churches as an objective in the Pauline mission (Du Toit 1991; Garlington 1990, 1991; Peterson 2000:186-188; Köstenberger & O'Brien 2001:176-177). The Pauline term 'the obedience of faith' is the idiom mostly used by Paul to encapsulate this obedience. Yet his genitival construction has been variously interpreted. O'Brien (1995:59) interprets the phrase as 'faith's obedience' or 'believing obedience', and Fee (1995:233) as 'obedience that characterises true faith'.¹ According to Moo (1996:52), the two terms mutually interpret one another, although obedience seems to be the term that is more foregrounded, being the direct correlate to the Lordship of Christ. Peterson (:187) sees this phrase as Paul speaking in 'a shorthand way' having in view 'their conversion and the obedient lifestyle that flows from faith in Christ'. Moo (:53) proffers that 'the phrase captures the full dimension of Paul's apostolic task, a task that was not confined to initial evangelism but that included also the building up and firm establishment of churches'. Furnish's 'faith as obedience' (1968:185) tends to undifferentiate the two. Fee (:233) interprets the meaning of this Pauline idiom in terms of his whole letter of Romans:

For Paul *faith in Christ* is ultimately expressed as *obedience to Christ*, not in the sense of following rules, but of coming totally under his lordship, of being devoted completely to him. This is the only 'obedience' to his own words that Paul cares anything about.

Du Toit (:69) trenchantly notes that the,

collocation of faith and obedience...points unequivocally to the fact that, for Paul, the indicative and imperative belong together from the very beginning of the Christian life. The promise of the gospel and its demand coincide. In the gospel God gives us everything while at the same time, through this gift, He claims everything.

¹ Fee further notes the almost interchangeable way Paul uses 'faith' and 'obedience' in Romans. See 1:8, 'your faith is proclaimed all over the world' and 16:19 'your obedience is known to all'.

Garlington's seminal work on the Pauline motif of 'obedience of faith' (1990, 1991) showed how the concept 'gives voice to the design of the apostle's missionary gospel' (1990:201). In this small phrase lies a world of thought. He understands this term as an 'expression of the design of Paul's apostleship [and] also a delineation of the eschatological purpose of God: it is through Paul's preaching that Jesus, the king of Israel, takes the nations in captive obedience to himself (cf. Gen 49:10, Ps 2:8ff)' (1990:203). Thus Paul believed that *now* God was bringing his purposes to pass in salvation-history, with the result that 'Paul's commissioning...is to be viewed as nothing less than the eschatological activity of the eternal plan to create faith's obedience among the nations' (1990:205). As far as the meaning of this ambiguous term is concerned, he sees it as revealing the obedient character of faith (Rm 10:3). He sympathises with the genitive of apposition interpretation ('obedience which consists in faith', as Furnish) yet wants a more inclusive meaning that calls for the inseparability of doctrine and ethics, for: 'the obedience which consists in faith cannot be abstracted from the (ethical) obedience demanded by the gospel' (1990:208). He thus settles for an adjectival genitive: 'faith's obedience' (:222; cf. Du Toit 1991).

Garlington sees that in the OT, faith and obedience are one action (1990:210); and Paul in Romans wants to secure Christian obedience to the gospel in all its diversity (:212). This is a characteristic ethical attitude of Paul: Rm 2:8; 5:19; 6:12; 16:17; 1 Cor 14:34; 2 Cor 2:9; 7:15; 10:5, 6; Eph 6:1, 5; Col 3:18, 20, 22; Phlp 2:12; Phlmn 21 and Tt 2:5, 9; 3:1. All this once again shows that the gospel has a 'more comprehensive design than the conversion of non-Christians to the faith' (:212), being inclusive of ethical demands. In sum, the term 'obedience of faith' is an 'ambiguous phrase expressing two ideas at the same time: the obedience which consists in faith and the obedience which is the product of faith' (:222).¹

Thus the obedience Paul looked for is not just related to the initial salvific act but is qualitatively related to an acceptable state of obedience, on a par with the idea of discipleship in Matthew 28:19-20.² It is most likely that Paul would only be totally

¹ Du Toit (1991:67) nuances the polemical undertones in the term. For him, the term underscores the integral role of obedience in the faith event, which includes cognitive, reactive and submissive diagnostic features.

² Detwiler (1995), influenced by Bowers, outlines Paul's ambition of seeking to establish a community of disciples from Acts 14:21-23. Köstenberger & O'Brien (2001:180) have also shown that Paul's idea of conversion to Christ meant incorporation into Christ and thus membership within a Christian community.

satisfied once all his churches were exemplifying the character of obedience and faith that was at work within the Philippian church. The grace of God at work in that church was publicised by Paul (2 Cor 8:1-5) and was hopefully to be mirrored in the other churches. To this end Paul laboured, until Christ was fully formed in his churches.

3.2.2.5 Paul and salvation-history

At the time of writing Romans, Paul had a firm sense of having satisfactorily completed one stage of his ministry to the Gentile world (Rm 15:17-19, 23a). The work had been brought to completion and a local and strategic 'obedience of the Gentiles' *had been secured* (15:18), a harvest having been gathered (1:13d) (cf. Bowers 1987; Moo 1996:892-896). Paul now feels released to venture into new fields.¹ He had 'fulfilled the gospel' from Jerusalem to Illyricum.²

On this strategic Pauline missiological term, Bowers offers a most cogent study, concluding:

When therefore Paul states that from Jerusalem to Illyricum he has 'fulfilled the gospel of Christ', it is a formulary equivalent of an affirmation that, within the range of territories specified, churches have been brought into being and firmly set on their way in 'in the gospel' (1987:198).

To understand this strategic salvation-historical point is crucial for this thesis, *for it provides an example and specimen of the actual possibility of the accomplishment of the mandate of Christ to preach and teach the gospel in all nations*. As noted, Paul's completion of his task in this region was attained once a satisfactory status of ecclesial obedience was evinced in his churches – i e, once they were mature churches. Taking

¹ Bowers (1987:192) comments, relative to 2 Corinthians 10:13-16: 'The possibility of a new Pauline missionary thrust in the future is tied directly to a prior development of faith in the existing Corinthian community...his concern over an already existing church takes direct precedence over his interest in initiating a new work'.

² In this article, Bowers provides a wide interpretation to Romans 15:19's 'fully proclaimed the good news of Christ', inclusive of ecclesial maturity. His thesis seems justifiable since Paul even 'preached the gospel' to an established church (Rm 1:15 and 16:25) (cf. Garlington 1990:212; Moo 1996:896; Peterson 2000:185; Köstenberger & O'Brien 2001:184). O'Brien (1995:36-43) has dealt exhaustively with this issue, concluding with thought similar to Bowers: Paul 'has in mind the whole range of evangelistic and teaching ministry - from the initial proclamation of the gospel to the building up of the believers and grounding them firmly in the faith (:64). Thus, Paul's ministry was both evangelistic and pastoral, conceiving and maturing Gentiles in the faith. By doing this, Paul 'fulfilled the word of God' (Col 1:25).

into account the studies of Bowers (1987, 1981), and our analysis of Romans 15:18-19, 2 Corinthians 10:1-6, and Philippians 1:3-11, it is reasonable to suggest that Paul believed his task was complete because his churches were brought to a mature and obedient state. He could now (at last) look to other fields. We believe that what Paul accomplished in the Mediterranean region will be analogously accomplished by the church on a global level. The church will 'fulfill the gospel of Christ' globally, prior to the End.

Given the *Naherwartung*, some scholars have shown how this accomplishment of Paul was crucial for the final ingathering of the Gentiles (Aus 1979; Munck 1959; Vena 1999). They have shown how Paul's local missionary work played a crucial part in the larger salvation-historical purposes of God, and how he saw himself expediting the imminent End through his Gentile mission. He was the end-time Elijah (Vena, *pace* Aus:326) who's work was to 'restore all things' before the Parousia. It is particularly in Romans 11:11-25 that Paul unfolds this process of the divine economy and his crucial role in it.

Munck (1959:42-55) has helped us understand the 'eschatological significance of Paul's apostleship to the Gentiles' (:41). According to Munck, Paul regarded himself as the one on whom the arrival of the Messiah depended and who was responsible for bringing in the 'fullness of the Gentiles' (:41, 43). Munck read Romans 11 with chapter 15, coming to significant conclusions. Paul had now finished his task in the East and was looking to more distant fields. His aim was to ensure a sufficient Gentile offering (Rm 15:16) that would be the crown of his work among the Gentiles (:51). This consummate offering is equivalent to the event of the 'fullness of the Gentiles' and is identical to 'the obedience of faith' in 15:18 (:51). Yet the complete obedience of the Gentiles had not been achieved and Paul aimed at Spain in hope that a further ingathering might precipitate the End. In the light of this concept of the offering of the Gentiles as a historic event anticipated in the days of Paul, Munck dislikes the traditional 'numerical' understanding of the term 'fullness of the Gentiles' (:47-49). For him, this is not a technical number for the elect but a term referring to the representative complement of the Gentiles. Paul's aim,

consists, not in the saving of a given number of people, but in the hearing of the Gospel by the Gentile world as a whole - in a representative form certainly; that means that it consists both in the preaching of the Gospel to them, and in their hearing and believing it. This fullness, which in the Synoptic Gospels (Mt 24:14; Mk 13:10) precedes the last

phase of eschatological events and the manifestation of the Antichrist, is here conceived as what precedes the final salvation of the Jews.

The term *pleroma* is also found in Romans 11:12 in relation to Israel, acting as guide in our interpretation (:48). Linking the term with Paul's desire to 'fulfill the word of God' in Colossians 1:25 and 2 Timothy 4:17 ('so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it'), we see how in three contexts, *plerow* is used of the completion of the spreading of the Gospel among the Gentiles (:48). Paul had a distinct mission to 'fulfill' the word of God among all the Gentiles representatively. Once he had accomplished this, and the harvest of obedient Gentiles was offered to God, the end would come.

Aus' study (1979), follows in the direction of Munck. Also linking Romans 15:16 with 11:25, and believing that Paul expected the end in his own life-time, Aus believed that Paul brought representatives from the Gentile world to Jerusalem as an end-time event to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah 66:19-20. He identifies Tarshish with Spain (:242-246), which was in those days seen as the 'ends of the earth', with the Straits of Gibraltar being the *non plus ultra* for ships. Paul thus believed that 'only when the most distant of all the nations mentioned in Isaiah 66:19...also sends its representatives to Jerusalem, will [his] collection enterprise...be truly complete' (:242).¹ Paul did all this in 'hope that his fellow Jews would thus become jealous enough of the Gentile's acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah to accept him also' (:235).²

Important for understanding the term 'fullness of the Gentiles', Aus directs us to the OT and Jewish tradition of 'Gentiles of all nations coming in the end-time to Jerusalem with their gifts' (1979:234).³ Consequently, 'the "full number of Gentiles" in Rm 11:25 will only "come in" when Paul has brought Christian representatives from *Spain* to Jerusalem as part of his collection enterprise' (:234). Crucial for Aus is the concept of 'representative universalism' found in Jeremiah 3:14 (:257-260). For

¹ Hiers (1974:155) comments on Colossians 1:23: 'There is no evidence to suggest that Luke or the Church of the first century as yet suspected the existence of Gentiles living beyond the lands to the east and north of the Mediterranean. For Luke, the *oikodemene* was the Roman world: Lk 2:1; Acts 24:5 etc.' Thus the arrival of Paul in Rome is not inconsistent with *Naherwartung*.

² Aus (:251) parallels Isaiah 59:20-21 with Romans 11:26 and Isaiah 60:5 with Romans 11:25. He draws on Isaiah 66 for 'Isaiah 56-66...deals with the question of why God's final theophany promised in 40-55 did not take place' (:253). He noted the reversing of the OT picture, for there the Gentiles bring the Jews to Jerusalem, and here Paul (a Jew) is bringing the Gentiles to Jerusalem (:236-237).

³ He understands the term 'the fullness of the Gentiles' in terms of its OT background and tradition (:233): 2 Apoc. Bar 234; 2 Esdr 2:38-41; Rv 6:11; 7:4; 14:1; Lk 21:24; Tob 14:5; Is 60:5. Cf. his bibliography on p 233.

him, this concept does not necessitate numerical sufficiency as much as sufficient numerical representation. This understanding is supported by Romans 11:25-26 where the 'full number' of the Gentiles is parallel to the 'fulness' of Israel (11:12c) and 'all Israel' of v 26 (:234). Therefore, the 'coming in' of the Gentiles (v 25) is interpreted by Aus (:251-252) in terms of,

the eschatological motif of the wealth (or a 'large number') of nations/Gentiles, who are to 'come in' to the city of Jerusalem. It is possible that the exalted Lord Jesus at his parousia may be thought to come from heavenly Zion in [Rm] 11:26, yet the full number of Gentiles for Paul are in fact to enter Zion at the time the Apostle accompanies the Gentile representatives of the churches founded by him, and the gifts they bring, to Jerusalem.

This is the reason for Paul's mission plans to Spain. 'It was the Apostle's hope that when this collection was complete, when representatives from *all* the nations mentioned in OT eschatological prophecy had been brought to Jerusalem, the Messiah would return, at which time *both* Gentiles and Jews would become worshippers of the Lord' (:242).

Munk and Aus have taken seriously the influence of *Naherwartung* on Paul's mission, 'eschatologising' the missionary activity of Paul (also Barrett 1988). They have helped us move away from the traditional numerical understanding of 'the fullness of the Gentiles' to one of 'corporate representation', and 'representative universalism'. This concept helps us understand the epochal significance of Paul's mission and how he spoke of the gospel as having been preached to *all the nations* during his lifetime (Rm 10:18; 15:26; Col 1:6, 23; 2 Tim 4:17). They have also ground the term ('fullness of the Gentiles') in a historical event, albeit in terms of a future epochal event in Paul's own historical mission. It seems preferable to presume that Paul's mission was a significant contribution towards securing the offering of 'the fullness of the Gentiles'. Although Paul sees his work as precipitating the End and epochal in terms of salvation-history, he never affirms that he will accomplish it all himself or that it will happen in his time. Paul's words in Romans 11:13-14 imply that he saw his ministry as *a part* of the renewal of Israel and not totally *the* event to trigger their fullness (*pace* Munk and Aus). Paul did know of other fields (= Spain) that were not within his sphere (cf. 2 Cor 10:13-18); thus the circle of 'all nations' is surely wider than Aus believes (cf. Motyer 1989:160). Moo (1996:692) deduces from 11:14 that Paul only seeks to win 'some of them' and not the whole *pleroma*;

suggesting that Paul does not see himself as the figure who will bring in Israel's fullness. Also, Romans 15:16 need not solely apply to Paul's ministry, but could be a generic statement of the gospel's affect upon all nations, both in the first century, throughout history, and particularly at the final climactic offering in the final generation. If so, this 'terminal offering' would have already had a 'first-fruits' and proleptic anticipation in Paul's local 'offering' of Gentiles in his Mediterranean mission (Rm 15:19; Ac 20:4; 21:17-19).

If we follow Munck and Aus and link the 'fullness of the Gentiles' with the agricultural image in 15:16, then Paul anticipated a *full Gentile harvest* to come in prior to the End.¹ Thus, taking the term as the Gentile equivalent of the term 'all Israel', Paul anticipates a period in history when the whole Gentile mission will reach a satisfactory state of completion, on a par with his own local mission (Rm 15:16-19). This state of completion will represent the whole Gentile world both through its broad numerical cross-section and its quality of obedient faith (thus qualitative and quantitative) (so Ridderbos 1997a:511). *It implies a sufficient representative number and quality of Gentiles from all nations.* In this way, 'all the Gentiles will be saved'. The cumulative numerical interpretation of 'the fullness of the Gentiles' (cf. Moo 1996:718-719) is mitigated by the Israelite correspondent 'all Israel' – for most believe that 'all Israel' (v 25) and the 'fullness of Israel' (v 12) connotes a corporate representation of her total historical identity (cf. Wagner 1988). It is not all Israel cumulatively being saved, but the turning to God in time of a sufficient complement of Jews. The sense is of a synchronic attainment (quantity and quality) rather than a diachronic numerical sense. The translation 'fullness' and 'full measure' carries the meaning well (so Delling 1977a:302; Dunn 1988b:655).

The term 'fullness of the Gentiles' is pregnant with positive connotations for the Gentile mission. In the context, the term refers to a 'critical mass' to be reached among the Gentiles which will have salvation-historical consequences for Israel. Paul anticipates a time when there will be a sufficient harvest of the Gentiles in its fullest sense. Once this historical event transpires (it is an *event* that triggers), it will provoke Israel and trigger 'life from the dead'.²

¹ Thus Bruce (1985:209): 'The bringing in of "the fullness of the Gentiles" is referred to by Paul later on as his "offering of the Gentiles".'

² The term 'life from the dead' is taken as approximating the resurrection from the dead at the Parousia. Contextually, Paul has in mind here something that: (1) precedes the 'fullness of the Gentiles'; (2) is a blessing beyond 'the reconciliation of the world'; and (3) and is also a blessing beyond the gradual

It does therefore not seem too far off the mark to see the term 'fullness of the Gentiles' in a rich and broad sense. The Greek image of 'fullness' connotes that of a ship loaded with its full complement of men and goods (Delling 1977a:283-311 *passim*). It suggests a completeness, both numerically and consummatory. The semantic connotations (see Dunn 1988b:655) could allow us to understand Paul's usage in Romans 11 as that of an *eventual* presentation to God of the 'fulfillment', 'restoration' and 'completion' of the Gentiles and the Jews in the sweep of salvation-history. We have here a qualitative and quantitative optimal realisation and completion of God's salvation of among the Gentiles.¹ Paul here uses the term '*pleroma*' to describe the Gentiles and Israel as *corporately representative entities as they exist at a particular point in time* (synchronic) (so Moo 1996:723). God's Gentile mission throughout the entire interadventual period (diachronic) will come to a glorious culmination point (synchronic). Thus in the context of Romans 11 there is an order of 'fulfillment' and 'restoration': first the *pleroma* of the Gentiles (v 25) and then the *pleroma* of the Jews (v 12). There is the reconciliation of the world on the one hand (11:15), and the salvation of all Israel on the other (11:25). *We link this fact to the Elijah mission of the church to restore all things before the coming of Christ.*² Thus we affirm with Ridderbos (1997a:511) that 'history cannot meet its end before this fullness has been reached'. The Gentiles will be presented to God as an offering, sanctified by the Holy Spirit and living in the obedience of faith.

Finally, our theme of a glorious church in history is enriched through Romans 11. Here, as we have seen, 'Paul apparently thinks that the Jews, as they see the Gentiles enjoying the messianic blessings promised first of all to them, will want those blessings for themselves' (Moo 1996:688). Something glorious is to transpire in and

conversion of the Gentiles through the Gospel. For a good case of this reading, see Moo 1996:694-696 and Wagner 1988:103-104. Also, Wagner (1998:95) seems right in emphasising that the mystery of v 25 has to do with the *manner* of Israel's salvation, the ways in which it will come about – which Paul startlingly links to the success of the *Gentile* mission.

¹ A simple numerical understanding of 'fullness' is incompatible with the idea of making Israel jealous and with the event-centeredness of Paul's salvation-historical thought.

² Vena (1999) interestingly casts Paul in the salvation-historical role of the expected Elijah tradition of Malachi 3:11 and 4:5-6. The typological similarities (rapture theme, persecution, zeal, restoration, Gentiles and remnant parallels) are suggestive of their connection. 'Just as Elijah's mission was to produce the reconciliation and restoration of Israel as the people of God before the day of the Lord, so also Paul understood his mission in similar terms: to achieve the conversion of the Gentiles and through it that of Israel before the Parousia'. This identification has been questioned by Aus (1979:236). Although many of Vena's assumptions *vis-à-vis* the Elijah tradition in the church are questionable, he/she helpfully links the Elijah tradition with Paul's mission.

through the Gentile church. Thus we also have here the Pauline equivalent to Matthew 28:18-20, where Jesus commands the disciples to make all nations (Gentiles) his followers. Once this has happened (i.e., the 'fullness of the Gentiles has come in') and a representative number is living in the maturity of discipleship, then we can expect the End to come (and Israel to be saved).

In conclusion of our Pauline study, we have observed how Paul saw his mission as that of founding and nurturing mature churches that would be acceptable to Christ at the Parousia. He laboured to keep his churches in a pure condition, intending to bring them into the maturity of the faith, that ultimate destiny of the whole church. He did this with an awareness of God's promise to ensure a blameless presentation of the believers on that Day. The apostolic endeavour was accomplished under the aegis of the promised end-time mission that was to characterise the last-days period and ensure salvation for the Gentiles. The Gentiles would be reached, and a representative number would be presented obedient to God on the Day of Christ's return.

3.2.3 The expectation of a mature church in other New Testament writings

3.2.3.1 Hebrews and Psalm 110

The letter of Hebrews is a 'word of exhortation' designed to fortify the believers in their pilgrimage of faith, encouraging them to hold on to their initial confidence firm to the end (3:14; 5:11; 10:23). The writer holds out the goal of personal maturity (5:14; 6:1) as the object to be obtained, exemplified in the perfection seen in Jesus' earthly life (5:9). The *Naherwartung* is reason for persevering and meeting together (10:25), with the impending judgment providing an incentive for godly living (10:26-31). Due to the spiritual condition of the recipients, the writer does not hold forth any glorious ecclesial hope. Rather, he provides a key future salvation-historical anticipation relative to the world and the church: the submission of all Christ's enemies under his feet (1:13; 2:8; 10:12-13). In 10:12-13 we have a major element in the *Fernerwartung* and a rationale for the delay of the Parousia.

Psalm 110 was a favourite of the early church. It is alluded to or quoted some 33 times in the NT (Hay 1973:15), being 'an unusually apt vehicle for expressing the ultimacy of Jesus' (Hay:17). In the NT it has a multivalent application with no uniform meaning (see Hay 1973; Loader 1978).¹ The Psalm's popularity could be found in its representation of a priest-king showing 'how Jesus could be the Messiah although so different from the expected one' (Callon 1982:626). Besides the thorny issues of NT interpretation, the Psalm is used (though not predominantly) in the NT in a polemical way to substantiate eschatological delay (Hay 1973:36). When this is the case, the sitting implies a passive role of the king. The implication here in Hebrews 10 is that the period of waiting anticipates the completion of the Father's activity to submit all the Son's enemies to him. The present session of the inactive waiting of the priest/king is presented as the opposite of what will occur at the Parousia, where the Son (the appointed heir of all things (1:2)), will again resume the activity of reigning (1:6-2:18). Yet 10:13 clearly implies that *the Son-Priest will only assume his rule once all his enemies are put in the place of submission to him.*² As Priest, he does not engage in the warfare as yet nor submit the enemies to himself. Rather, he waits until they are presented to him as a gift by God, in fulfillment of God's promise 'to place all things in subjection under his feet' (2:8). Then will the Son receive his inheritance of 'all things' (1:2), and will come to rule 'the inhabited earth to come' (2:5). For this the High Priest eagerly waits, as do the believers for the return of the High Priest from the Holy Place (9:28) (= Parousia). Once the Father has accomplished his task, the waiting of both parties will be over.

Here then, we have the preparation of the world by the Father for the reign of the Son. Thus Justin Martyr, in his first apology (1979:178) comments on Ps 110:

¹ According to Hay, 'the early Christians chiefly employed the psalm to articulate the supreme glory, the divine transcendence of Jesus, through whom salvation was mediated. It was primarily used as a symbol not of his saving work but his ultimate status' (Hay:155). Hay sees references to a 'ruling activity' as extraneous to the common NT usage of the Psalm. Loader's study narrates the development in apostolic interpretation of this Psalm from an early understanding of Jesus' enthronement and an end-time pending Messianic judgment (sitting = no activity) to a fuller interpretation, built on the delay of the Parousia, where 'his being enthroned was linked with activities on behalf of his own' (:205). Loader gives more credit to the implications of Christ's active rule and present reign than Hay, although he puts this motif at the end of a process of interpretive development in the early church.

² *Pace* Berkouwer (1981:434) who interprets this Psalm as implying that 'Christ is portrayed as at the right hand "forever"'. Yet in both the contexts of Hebrews which mention this Psalm, the Parousia is the background idea (1:2, 6, 13; 9:28, 10:11-13). The temporal force of the verse also provides a rationale for the duration of the interadventual age (cf. Berkhof 1966:68).

And that God the Father of all would bring Christ to heaven after He had raised Him from the dead, and would keep Him there until He has subdued His enemies the devils, and until the number of those who are foreknown by Him as good and virtuous is complete, on whose account He has still delayed the consummation.

It is preferable to understand the whole era after the king's enthronement as coextensive with the process of the submission of all things under his feet, rather than it being something to happen immediately prior to the Parousia. However, the subjection of all his enemies does not happen *at* the Parousia (i e, *once* the Son rises to judge the world), for Psalm 110 and Hebrews 10:12-13 speak of the session of the king/priest *as inaugurating (or anticipating) a process to reach culmination at a certain point*. *Once* that objective has been accomplished, *then* the king/priest can take up his rule.

In Psalm 110, the thrust of the declaration in v 1 deals with the justification for the temporal and limited sitting of the king at God's right hand.¹ The Hebrew word *ad* ('until') denotes the reason for and temporal condition of the sitting.² It also 'marks the final subjugation of the enemies as a turning point with which something else comes about (Ac 3:21; 1 Cor 15:28)' (Delitzsch 1982:190). Verse 2 can be seen as the consequent action of the king once his enemies are subject, i e, action not simultaneous with the sitting but to occur on the king's active day of wrath (v 5).³ The 'staff being stretched forth by Yahweh, is nevertheless in the hand of the ruler, who is surrounded by enemies and has to maintain his dominion forcibly' (Booij 1991:397). Hill (1988:315) also understands v 5 and the 'shattering of kings' not as occurring on the coronation day "but on some future "day of his wrath".⁴ Here we have *first* a passive coronation and *later* an activity of holy war; for the 'until I make' implies an

¹ For a detailed summary of OT scholarship on this Psalm, see Bateman 1992; Hill 1988:313-316; Johnson 1992:430.

² Booij (1991:407) prefers: 'Sit at my right hand *while* I make your enemies a footstool for your feet'. This underscores the present activity of Yahweh during the duration of the sitting rather than the termination point of that action. 'Until' still seems to capture the full sense of the Psalm's message.

³ Thus Allen (1987:79) translates v 2 as future, 'your strong sceptre will Yahweh extend from Zion so that you rule over your enemies'. He then sees most of the action of Yahweh in vv 2-7 as action of Yahweh on the king's behalf as he sits serene and secure (:86). However, it seems more plausible to interpret this as action of the king who acts as God's representative in the holy war. In salvation-history, this latter action of the king (vv 2-7) could be theophanic and linked typologically to the Parousia. If so, this could explain the lack of use of this section of the Psalm in the NT.

⁴ Hill (:315) interprets the action of the king here in two stages, one temporal, the other ultimate. He sees in Ps 110:2 'an exercise of regal power amid existing foes for a duration prior to their final crushing-under-foot'. But the focus appears to be on the final 'crushing' event and not a protracted period of war. Throughout, 'Yahweh is portrayed as a divine warrior who, as a helper at the sovereign's right hand, crushes his enemies' (Booij:403).

interval between enthronement and assumption of full authority' (thus Bateman 1992:450; Callon 1982:633; *pace* Delitzsch 1982).¹ Thus Johnson (1992) understands the genius of the Psalm to lie in a picture of a priest-king who is seated in a position of honour in spite of the continuing presence of his enemies, whom he will completely conquer at some time in the future. Thus the Psalm's three main features - the honour of the king (v 1a), the submission of his enemies (v 1b) and his active dominion over them (v 2) - are quite consistent with our interpretation of Hebrews 10:12-13. These dynamics also made it a vehicle helpful in understanding the nature of Christ's lordship at the right hand of God.

This Psalm, as used here in Hebrews, implies that Jesus will only return once all his enemies are under his feet, i e., until all things are restored and fulfilled (cf. Acts 3:21) (also Bruce 1988a:85; Davis 1986:32-33; Wescott 1974:315). D Turner (1989:93) quotes Thompson, who, based on 1 Corinthians 15:24-27, concluded similarly that the Parousia would come only when Jesus had subjugated all his enemies. Thompson expected Christ to execute such a state of affairs through his triumphant earthly church, in line with Revelation 12:10-123. For us, this submission need not imply the elimination of the enemies or their compliant behaviour, but their conditioning and configuring in preparation for the direct implementation of the judgment of God (so Psalm 110) (see sec 3.2.1.3). The historical and typological analogue to such a period of rule upon 'prepared enemies' is seen in the conquests of Joshua (Gn 15:16; Jos 1-12). Only once the iniquity of the Amorites was full, was Joshua able to 'rule over his enemies'. Likewise, a plausible reading of Hebrews 10:12-13 can imply that Christ will return to a world (and church) that has been prepared by God for his reign.

3.2.3.2 James

James opens with an appeal to individual maturity of faith (1:2-18). Here in chapter 1 the difficulties of the believers are interpreted as beneficially producing a 'full-blown character of stable righteousness' (Davids 1983:70). The impending Parousia critiques the lifestyle of the rich (5:1-6) and induces patience in the righteous (5:7-11). With the strong *Naherwartung*, the community is urged to be found pure and spotless on

¹ Cf. Callon:633-634 for Rabbinic interpretation in this regard.

that Day (Penner 1996:212).¹ No agenda for salvation-history is present, yet the imminent Parousia radically affects the nature of life for the community.

3.2.3.3 1 & 2 Peter

In 1 Peter the apocalyptic suffering of the believers aids us in our understanding of the expected nature of the church prior to the Parousia. Here we see that the trials of suffering reveal the genuine nature of the faith of the community (1:7 and 4:12). The difficulties experienced by the church extrude what is ultimately valuable and praiseworthy on that Day. Suffering in the flesh results in 'finishing with sin' (4:1), and a guarantee of a future participation in Christ's glory (4:13). In this way, judgment begins first with the household of God (4:17), for God intends to prepare his people for the coming kingdom. This preparation by God of the church can be linked to God's making all things ready for the return of the now seated Son. The end result of the suffering is articulated in 5:10, which summarises the intention of the entire letter (Goppelt 1993:364): 'And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace...will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you'. This could be eschatological but probably speaks of the positive result of suffering that God brings about. 'All four verbs must belong to acts of God on them *in this life*, while these sufferings would be still going on' (Alford 1958d:386; also Clowney 1988:218-219; Goppelt 1993:365). What supports this interpretation is that the Parousia is not directly mentioned, and here it is the metered sufferings themselves that have redemptive affect. Also, a parallel thought is found in 4:1-3, which clearly speaks of the blessings (in this world) once one has suffered. Suffering matures the believer and prepares him for the eschaton. The certainty of Peter's statement (like Paul's) is grounded in God's calling of the believers and his certain purifying and preparatory process. Given the *Naherwartung* and the emphasis on our 'calling to his eternal glory in Christ', the purifying process could also be seen as preparatory for a mature presentation at the Parousia.

In 2 Peter we have the classical diffusing of the earlier intense *Naherwartung*. The apocalyptic horizon seems postponed (Beker 1980:160) or rather subject to other

¹ Cf. Bauckham (1993:326) for biblical and extra-biblical sources for the paraenetic tradition of the moral condition of believers and the Parousia.

factors ('that none might perish'). As in James, the letter opens with an elaborate appeal to maturity of character (1:2-11). Such character is consistent with the coming kingdom. Then the author responds to the 'delay' question by stating that God's time schematic is determined by his universal salvific intent (3:9). For the writer, the delay has a positive assessment, for it is 'an opportunity to secure, through repentance, the salvation which they might have missed if the Parousia had come sooner' (Bauckham 1983:327). This portion of Scripture (3:8-178) seems to explain the delay of the Parousia as rooted in God's desire for the mockers in the community to come to salvation. Rabali (1992:152) speaks of 3:3-13 as implying 'the need for holiness concerning the Christian community's whole life'. God delays the end so that the church could evince 'ethically clean actions which will be able to emerge through the fire of that Day' (:151-152); he is having mercy now so that such a scenario will happen (:149). Rabali nuances the upbuilding of the church as a prelude to the Parousia, and arrives at conclusions remarkably similar to that of this thesis:

The implication that when this task of being holy in every sphere is undertaken with diligence by the Christian community it thereby also will be shortening the period which divine patience has granted before and thus hastening the parousia, does not seem farfetched....The Christian community 'hastens' the Day of the Lord when it is diligently concerned for both *quantity* and *quality* with regard to all the tasks assigned to it. This underscores the primary importance of obedience to the instruction of the Lord; for obedience lies at the core of holiness (:154).

The Reality of the coming conflagration must induce holiness (3:11) and the desire to be found blameless on that Day (3:14-15). That God does delay the Parousia, reveals his creative will to ensure that such a condition will be attained.

3.2.3.4 Jude

Jude 24-25 evinces the familiar aspects of parousial-preparation. God is able to make the believers mature ('kept from stumbling', 'blameless') *now*, with the result that they would be able to stand acceptable to God in the pending Parousia (cf. Bauckham 1983:122).¹ As with Paul and Peter, it is God who is able to ensure such an eventuality. If he is able to do it, he most assuredly will act to accomplish such an end.

¹ Bauckham (:122) links v 24 with a common background tradition, found in 1 Th 3:13, Col 1:22, Eph 1:4 and 5:27.

3.2.3.5 1 & 2 & 3 John

1 John is written so that the reader may not sin (2:1 and 3:5). The writer has confidence in the 'automatic' sufficiency of the anointing and the 'genetic' identity of the child of God, to ensure that they will not sin but will rather be led into all the truth. He thus desires that his readers be found 'abiding in Him' at the Parousia (2:28), resulting in a boldness (*parresia*) in the presence of the Lord (4:17). Looking to the Parousia and its transformational effects, focuses the believer and purifies his life as Christ is pure (3:2-3). Given the nature of John's theological confidence in the dynamics operative in the child of God, it would be entirely consistent for John to expect true believers to be 'abiding in him' on that Day.

3.2.3.6 Revelation

The book of Revelation begins and ends with ecclesial concerns. It presents us with a consummate symbolic representation of the church and her enemies. Although the Revelation's primary purpose is to symbolise 'a theocratic vision of the coming of God's universal kingdom, contextualised in the late first-century' (Bauckham 1995b:1), the vision given of the church is cast in a strategic manner as the means and manner of the establishing of that kingdom of God on the earth. God's eschatological purpose in the nations is achieved through the instrumentality of the sacrificed Lamb and his obedient followers. The book provides us with a victorious vision of the church, although the first three chapters warn the churches of the danger of spiritual, economic and political compromise. In chapters 21:9-22:5, we have the climax and one of the central motifs of the book: a glorious vision of the church of Jesus Christ, 'the bride, the wife of the Lamb' (v 9). This ecclesial focus can plausibly be seen as an, if not *the*, organising idea within the book, even though it is framed within a larger theological context.¹ Dispensational teaching effectively removed any ultimate historical function for the church (see ch 1). Many believed that the rapture had occurred in chapter four or at least prior to it (see Walvoord 1966:101-112 and Svigel 2001:28-29) and from then on the obvious references to God's people referred to Israel

¹ Mathers (1944:13) sums up the theological essence of the book in the two verses: 'the Lord God Almighty reigns' (19:6) and 'be faithful to death and I will give you the crown of life' (2:10).

and not to the church.¹ Svigel (:25-53) mentions 3:10, 4:1-2, 7:9-17, 11:11-19, 14:14-16 and 19:11-20:6 as proposals for the rapture of the church in the book. He trenchantly notes that 'without first proving the pretribulation rapture, pretribulationists cannot legitimately appeal to the absence of the church in Revelation 4-18 as implying the rapture' (:33). It is clearly an assumption in the light of which the Scriptures are read.²

One's interpretation of the symbols and overall structure is crucial for understanding the message of the book and the way that these relate to the books ecclesiology. Svigel provides us with an equitable hermeneutic for understanding Revelation:

John does not see the actual events themselves, nor does he see a chronological, real-time unfolding of symbolic representations. Rather, like the OT apocalyptic literature (Zch and Dn etc) he sees episodes, one after another, arranged in a heavenly-designed order, with interludes, parentheses, reviews, and previews, through various forms of media. Thus a strict chronological approach to Revelation is not easily maintained; neither is the notion that John is seeing the future as it will actually be. Rather, he is viewing a symbolic representation of that future.

If we consistently hold to a symbolic interpretation of the book's images and words, then we notice the pivotal role the church plays in the ultimate historical destiny of the world. The Revelation's 'multi-media' images and apocalyptic features of audition and vision do not present the future reality directly and although they predict literal events, the descriptions do not portray the events literally.³ Stressing the referential level of symbolism, Charles (1920) emphasises that 'the Apocalypse is not to be treated as an allegory, but to be interpreted in reference to definite concrete kingdoms, powers, events, and expectations' (:cxxxiii). The 'analogical skill' in interpreting

¹ Interestingly, this is the exact opposite of the Tyconium interpretation of Revelation that understood most of Revelation in relation to the Church (cf. Daley 1993:127-131).

² Gundry's book (1974) is a polemic for the posttribulationist view. The key 'rapture' Scripture used by dispensationists is Rv 3:10. In response Gundry (:57) wisely concludes: 'It would be sheer sophistry to say that the Church will be removed immediately upon entrance into the hour, for then the keeping will last only for an instant and the promise becomes devoid of real meaning'. Also Beale 1999:289-292.

³ Beale (1999:53) helpfully enumerates the seven levels of communication in Revelation's symbolic genre: the linguistic level; the visionary level; the referential level; and the symbolic level. The referential level consists of the particular historical identification of the objects seen in the vision. The Achilles heel of Beale's book (and the idealist school) is his neglect of the historical-referential denotation of the book's symbolism. Thus he says 'no specific prophesied historical events are discerned in the book, except for the final coming of Christ' (:48). His flaw is surfaced in this fact: he would be consistent with his interpretation of the book if he interpreted the Parousia also ahistorically, as he does in 1:7.

metaphorical language is to draw the line between the univocal elements and equivocal/discontinuous elements of the figurative representations. Because of this difficulty, modern interpreters tend to play down a detailed exegesis and emphasise the *Gestalt* of the revelatory images. Yet to avoid historicity is to forget that the Revelation narrates events that must yet take place relative to the first century (1:1) – a point nuanced by the most preterist, historicist and futurist schools of interpretation.

There are basically five ways of reading Revelation: contemporary-historical (preterist); tradition-historical (literary approach); historicist; futurist; and idealist (Kromminga 1945:293-294; Kvanvig 1989; Beale 1999:44-49). The structure and plan of John's apocalypse taken in this thesis will be substantially that of Aune (1997), Charles (1920:clxxxiii-clxxxvii), Ladd (1983) and Mounce (1998:24-30).¹ With Aune (:xciii) and Charles (1920:xxii) we see the visions of the book 'constitut[ing] a single chronological narrative of the eschatological events that will soon begin to unfold'.¹ We follow the (Semitic) consecutive view of Gundry (1974:73-77), who understands the seventh announcement of the seals, trumpets and bowls to proleptically introduce us to the End, the contents of which are the course of the following sequence. This viewpoint disputes the recapitulationist approach (Beale 1999, Victorinus of Pettau 270 CE), both on literary (Aune:xciii) and theological grounds (Charles:1:xxii). We believe that the contents of Revelation thus deal predominantly with an impending crisis that will overtake the world, involving a traditional program of apocalyptic events (as in Daniel).

We consider the preterist and futurist hermeneutic as furnishing us with interpretive keys that do justice to both the *sitz im leben* of the churches in chapter 2-3 and the fuller eschatological dimensions (the 'unfulfilled eschatological excess', Bauckham 1995b:152). This approach is in keeping with the genius of biblical prophecy, which often has a dual referent in each composite prophecy: the imminent historical and the distant eschatological (Ladd 1981a:320-236; see also sec 2.1.5). Bauckham (:152) reminds us that,

¹ Beale calls this 'modified futurism' (1999:47). Beasley-Murray (1983) has a close affinity with the above, yet believes that the seals, trumpets and bowls represent similar successive time periods of the expected future tribulation. For an exhaustive review of the issues, see Beale 1999:108-151. In this work the seals are interpreted as parallel to Matthew 24:4-8, i e, events of the interadventual period preceding the final terminal epoch (thus Ladd and Mounce).

² Interestingly, Charles (:xxiv) understands chapters 2-3 as posing the problem of the book, i e, how to reconcile God's righteousness and Christ's redemption with the condition of His servants on earth.

biblical prophecy always *both* addressed the prophets' contemporaries about their own present and the future immediately impending for them *and* raised hopes which proved able to transcend their immediate relevance to the prophets' contemporaries and to continue to direct later readers to God's purpose for their future.

We concur with Charles (1920) that the visions 'relate to contemporary events and to future events so far as they arise out of them' (:clxxxiii). Yet because of the redemptive-historical nature of the NT eschatology (its *inauguration* of the end-times), the historicist school and the idealist school all contribute important aspects. The church-age *is* the end-time age and is for this reason characterised by eschatological events (Beale 1999). We can thus partially agree with Beale (:48) who says that 'the majority of the symbols in the book are trans-temporal in the sense that they are applicable to events throughout the "church-age"'. (For an integration of the interpretive viewpoints - an 'eclecticism' (Beale:48) - see Diagram 2). Depending on the position taken, the interpretation of the apocalyptic numbers of 1260 days, 42 months and 3.5 years will reflect prior hermeneutical commitments. We will take them as *primarily* referring to the final generation and the last-days of that period immediately prior to the Parousia (see 4.2). They are not coextensive with the church-age (as Beale) but refer to a unique apocalyptic period in history that will witness the intensification and condensation of the characteristic elements of the entire church-age period. The number is 'the conventional period in apocalyptic literature for the temporary triumph of evil before the end of the age' (Mounce 1998:215, quoting Bratcher and Hatton).

The main historical focus of the book appears to relate to future events of world history, events that crystallise and intensify forces at work throughout the entire church-age and particularly in the first century. If this is so, Revelation presents, in pictorial and imaginative form, the following: *a symbolic representation of the apocalyptic judgment of God on the Satanic kingdom of this world and the triumph of the saints of the Lamb (during that period) who are rewarded with the inheritance of the kingdom of this world*. During this time of apocalyptic wrath (6:17) - 'the hour of testing which is to come on the entire world' (3:10) - the redeemed are represented as being part of a victorious group (14:1-5) who conquer through their suffering as they maintain the witness of Jesus in the face of the lie of the Antichrist. The message of Revelation is thus essential to this thesis, *for it presents the most patent affirmation of*

a glorious church that will be ready for the return of Christ at the end of the age. Through the suffering and tribulation, the church will be purified and prepared to meet the bride-groom.¹ We will now look at the major sections and images that portend the church's glorious future.

a) The churches

In chapters 2-3 we have the risen Christ addressing his church prior to the coming world conflagration. Chapter 1 records the 'ecclesial' Christophany of the Son of Man, who comes to judge and restore his church. Beale (1999:181-222) has shown that this theophany of Christ is directly related to the prophetic vocation of his bond-servants. He notes that the believers have been constituted kings together with him and share in his priestly vocation (1:6) by virtue of their identification with his death and resurrection (:192). They have been called to spiritually fulfill these offices by being faithful witnesses through mediating Christ's priestly and royal authority to the world (:193). But in this particular mode of the kingdom, the exercise begins and continues only as one faithfully endures tribulation (:201). So, in the theophany, Christ appears in a form allusive to Daniel 7, a figure who was a corporate representative of the saints with respect to both suffering and ruling (:201). He is presented to the churches as a judge, whose kingship primarily concerns his rule over the church (:205-206). 'If the churches do not maintain their role as priestly kings by faithfully witnessing to "the testimony of Jesus" in the face of suffering, then they will be judged by Christ' (:206). Beale also highlights that, as priest Christ comes to tend the temple lampstands (lamps = synecdoche = temple = church). He 'tends the ecclesial lampstands by commending, correcting, exhorting, and warning...in order to secure

¹ The pretribulation rapture view is untenable for the book of Revelation. Besides a questionable exegesis of 3:10, there is no intimation that the churches addressed in ch 2-3 are to be absent throughout the proceeding events. No mention is made of a rapture or aerial levitation of the church prior to the final period. It would also be superfluous to send this letter to the churches if they were not expected to go through the narrated events - it is far more than mere 'academic' interest for the church. Why bother to 'calculate the number of the beast' if it is irrelevant to the church, the audience addressed; 'the book of Revelation becomes an anachronism under pretribulationists' (Gundry 1974:69). The rapture *has to be read into the book by pretribulationists*, for without it, the whole doctrine of 'any-momentism' falls under the futuristic weight of the events pre-recorded. Finally, is not the rapture view directly opposed to Jn 17:15: 'I do not ask you to take them out of the world...?'

the churches' fitness for service as lightbearers in a dark world' (:209). So here we have the principle that judgment begins with the house of God.

Looking at the nature of the judgment of Christ on his churches (2:23), we see that he is promising to act on each church in judgment or deliverance, all to ensure the faithful witness of his communities. Christ accomplishes his purifying of the church through individual 'comings' (3:20) and ecclesiastical 'comings' (2:5,16; 3:3) (Beasley-Murray 1951:40). In the light of these 'comings' of Christ in pre-parousial judgment, the cleansing action is best interpreted as occurring prior to the impending judgment. By tracking the work of Christ on his church in the book, we can notice the transformation the church undergoes throughout the book. 'The book opens with the Church in all the empirical mixture of good and evil which her history exhibits; it closes with the Church in her eternal perfection and glory' (Kromminga 1945:338). In light of the bridal motif, encompassing the beginning and end of the letter, Bauckham (1993:167) notes that 'the general unpreparedness for the Lord's coming at Ephesus, Pergamum and Sardis, contrasts with the Bride's ardent prayer for the Bridegroom's coming (22:17)'. The Son of Man will first accomplish an 'internal work' in his church before he accomplishes the 'external' work in the world. He prepares his people to ensure a faithful presentation to himself on that Day.

b) The 144 thousand

Prior to the wrath of God (trumpets and bowls), John is allowed a glimpse of the 144 thousand in chapter 7 (see Beale 1999:416-423 for various views). The number symbolises the 'completeness and magnitude' of the church (Aune 1966:143), where the 'Christians are portrayed...under the OT guise of the true people of God, the true Israel' (Beale:418; also Beasley-Murray 1983:140).¹ It symbolises the church of God in its final comprehensiveness. As far as their temporal identification is concerned, we side with Mounce (1998) who views them as 'the entire company of faithful believers who have just come through the final period of testing' (Mounce:164). 'It is not a timeless picture of the church which is here given [so Beale:412-413], but a

¹ That this chapter refers to the church is corroborated by 21:12 where the gates of the new Jerusalem are named after the twelve tribes of Israel. Bauckham (1995b:76) nuances the aspects of military mustering, casting the 144 000 as an army of martyrs under the leadership of the Lion of Judah. This 'image of the Messianic war describes the whole process of the establishing of God's kingdom as Revelation depicts it' (:70). See also Longman & Reid 1995:185.

representation of the Church in the climax of history' (Beasley-Murray:140). Here John shows the protection of the church from the wrath of God (vv 1-3), standing on the threshold of the dawn of the divine wrath. This posttribulation/futurist view interprets this chapter in terms of the protection of all the people of God of the last generation during the terminal *kairos* of divine wrath (thus Gundry 1974:80, *mutatis mutandis*). Although protected so that the wind of God's wrath should not fall on them, they still suffer during this period (7:14, 16-17; see Gundry 1974:49-51). This whole process of going through the tribulation results in the washing of their robes in the blood of the Lamb (7:14), which points to an identification of the saints' endurance with that of Jesus' own suffering (Beale:436). Those who compromise soil their garments (3:4) but those who endure the suffering are given white robes (6:9-11). These 'garments represent preparedness and acceptability' (Batey 1971:57), and suggest the pre-nuptial preparation of the bride. 'The tribulation has refined their faith. It has tested them, and their perseverance through trial has proven their faith as genuine' (Beale:436).

c) The two witnesses

In chapter 11 we have the image of the two witnesses.¹ As chapter 7 provided us with an ecclesial interlude and proleptic preview, so 11:1-13 does something similar. In vv 1-2 we have the topic theme: the church (holy city, new Jerusalem) will be the object of suffering and persecution during this period. Yet during this period of suffering God will grant invincible authority and power to his two witnesses, to believers who are 'measured' and protected. Even though some are martyred during this period (as Jezebel had killed many prophets of the Lord (1 Ki 18:4)), the Lord will ensure that a remnant of his people is preserved to witness to the truth (as Elijah was spared) (see 13:10).

Here in vv 1-2, the outer court is 'the physical expression of the true, spiritual Israel which is susceptible to harm' (Beale 1999:558). That the two witnesses

¹ For a good survey of the issues, see Beale 1999:557-609 and Aune 1998:577-632.

represent the *church* during this final period of world history, is evinced by their identification as the lampstands (11:4 = 1:20) (so Bauckham 1993:285; 1995b:85).² Moses and Elijah were prophets who confronted the world of pagan idolatry, thus setting the precedent for the church's prophetic witness to the world (Bauckham 1995b:85). As *two* witnesses, the validity of their testimony is guaranteed. They are given great authority and immunity from death (vv 5-7). 'Verse 7 shows that the "measuring" in vv 1-2 guarantees the successful completion of the church's witnessing task' (Beale:587). The picture of the church is of a victorious, witnessing community endowed with the power of God for her task. Once this witness is complete, the church will experience the wrath of the Antichrist in his final attempted pogrom (11:7). With this terminal suffering, the church, like Christ (Lk 22:96, 'from now on' and Jn 13:31, 'now is the Son of Man glorified'), begins her most glorious hour and her climb to the throne.

d) The dragon and the church

The identity of the woman in chapter 12 is best taken as an image of the ethnic community Israel.¹ The dragon persecutes both her (Israel), her son (Christ) and the brothers of the child (church). Yet they overcome the dragon (v 11), the beast, the mark of his name and the false prophet.

In 12:9 we have the casting down of the dragon which is predicated upon the overcoming of the saints in v 11. His ejection from heaven seems linked to his prosecutorial function. The one who 'accuses them before God day and night' is no longer employed. We believe that the reason is found in the empirical state of the church at that time. His role of accuser becomes redundant due to the spiritual

² Wong (1997) identifies three interpretive approaches regarding the identification of the witnesses: symbolic, corporate and literal. He favours the literal (with Walvoord 1966; Ladd 1983; Svigel 2001:38); 'two persons, presently unknown, who will minister in the spirit and power of Moses and Elijah in the future tribulation period' (:347). However, the clear association of the measuring in vv 1-2 and the identification of the two witnesses as 'the two olive trees and two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth' (v 4), emphatically denotes their figurative and non-literal representation. The burden of proof rather lies with the literalists (*pace* Svigel).

¹ This interpretation seems to fit best (cf. Svigel 2001:53-74) with the unity of the narrative context. Contextually, we observe that the dragon turns *from* persecuting the woman in vv 13-17 *to* persecute the rest of her children. He thus cannot touch the woman but he can touch her children. If they are the same entity merely narrated under different theological images, the logical and narrative sense is undermined. Also, if the woman was the church, the imagery suggests that the church gives birth to the Messiah.

condition of the church. This interpretation is supported by the fact that: (1) the dragon is referred to in terms that describe his relationship to the believers ('adversery', 'slanderer'); (2) for the entire church-age to be without the accuser of the brothers is contrary to the parallel sense of vv 10 and 11 (here the 'brothers' are NT believers who have undergone a change in judicial status); (3) the condition of the church in v 11 is consistent with the presentation of the church in Revelation 6-19; and (5) to characterise the entire church of all ages in the description of v 11 is problematical. We thus identify with some futurists who believe Satan's expulsion occurs at the beginning of the final tribulation preceding Christ's second coming (Walvoord 1966:192; Glasson, quoted in Beale 1999:658). If this casting down of Satan is an event in salvation-history in the latter part of the interadventual age, then that event could well be synchronised with the ultimate obedience of the church.

e) The virgins

The purity and victory of the church in the final period is also graphically depicted in chapter 14:1-5. This is juxtaposed with the spiritual predicament of the churches found in chapters 2-3. Within the narrative, we are in a future time when mankind is divided under two allegiances, signified by the seals (cf. Beasley-Murray 1983:140). The virgins' spiritual purity and fidelity mitigates against a broad interpretation (all in the church-age), for the church here is 'ethically blameless' (Mounce 1998:268). These are the ones who 'have kept themselves pure from all defiling relationships with the pagan world system. They have resisted the seductions of the great harlot Rome with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication (17:2)' (Mounce:267). Most commentators understand this body to be the entire body of the redeemed (Mounce; Beasley-Murray; Beale). Bauckham (1993:229-232) identifies this body as an army of martyrs who in the end-period are faithful witnesses to the point of death. We take this as a portrayal of the 'bond-servants' of the Lamb, the church, during a future epoch, *who will consummately actuate the nature of the one Christian church*. It is the church corporately and spiritually considered in the final terminal period. That this body is the *church*, enables all saints to identify with these people; that this body is the *terminal* church, introduces the ideal condition of this body to be realised in the last epoch.

f) The prepared bride

The church in 19:7 and 21:2 is described as a bride who has made herself ready. Bauckham (1993:167-168) shows how this eschatological image contrasts with the empirical ecclesial reality in chapters 2-3. The bride, as an eschatological reality, calls the churches to identify with Christ 'if they are to take their place at the eschatological nuptial banquet' (:167).¹ All the churches are thus called to become the bride as portrayed in Revelation, the bride that will be pure and ready at the Parousia. She is as the church will be at the Parousia, 'ready for his marriage, arrayed in the fine linen of righteous deeds. The Bride is thus the church seen from the perspective of the *parousia*' (Bauckham:167).

The words of 19:7-8 presage the imminent Parousia of Christ, and announce the meeting and wedding between a pure bride and a victorious groom (cf. Ps 45). The church has come through the world's travail with success and is now prepared to rule for a 1000 years. If we take a sequential view of Revelation (Charles, Aune, Ladd, Mounce) and not one of continuous recapitulation (Beale), then this angelic statement is announced immediately prior to the Parousia (19:11-16). The church is hereby announced ready for the wedding and banquet; her prenuptial preparation having been completed. This occurs within time and history prior to the consummation, at which time she is portrayed in antithetical comparison with the harlot Babylon and her immorality.² Her personal beauty is added to with the linen clothing, described as the 'righteous acts of the saints' (v 8). The reward of white clothes 'convey[s] the idea of *purity resulting from a test of persevering faith*' (Beale 1999:936). Fekkes (1990) understands the fine linen of the bride as a metaphor for the righteous deeds and her bridal adornments as 'collectively emblematic of the spiritual fidelity and holy conduct of those in the churches who overcame...for everything that the bride could do to prepare herself had to be done before the parousia, as the exhortations of the

¹ 'The Bride is the church in her eschatological splendour arrayed in the righteous deeds of the saints and ready to be joined to her Lord' (Batey 1971:64). Batey sees the bride theme, as found in both Revelation and Paul, as an apocalyptic image (:64). Such 'nuptial imagery' is also 'used as a means of inspiring loyalty and devotion' (:64). Further, according to Fekkes (1990:283) 'nuptial imagery is at the heart of John's evocation of the New Jerusalem'.

² Cf. Fekkes (1990) for a good comparison between these two *dramatis personae*. According to Miller (1998:302), as Babylon rules over the earth, so the picture of the bride of the Lamb 'depicts a church that, as the Lamb's eschatological bride, is united with the Lamb in exercising God's rule, and that this union begins with the struggles of the churches of this age for victory over evil'. It is therefore a nuptial reign.

seven letters make clear' (:287).¹ Thus 'when in 19:7 John announces that the bride "has prepared herself" it is logical to suppose that included in that preparation is not only the fine linen wedding gown of 19:8 but also the bridal trappings of 21:18-21' (Fekkes:285). Also, the eternal beauty of the city, depicted in 21:10-22:5, 'reach[es] back from the future into the present and serve[s] as a symbolic testimony to the faithfulness of the earthly community' (Fekkes:286-287). Fekkes thus helpfully links chapters 2-3 with the presentation of the church in 19:6-22:4:

The eschatological union of the bride (19:7-9, 14, 21-22) and bridegroom (19:11-12; 20:4-6) consummates the relationship between Christ and his church first portrayed in Rev 1-3, which begins with a vision of Christ adorned (1:12-20), followed by his admonitions to the church to prepare herself for his appearing (chapters 2-3). Her *successful preparation* [italics mine] ends the difficult period of engagement and occasions the joyous announcement: the marriage of the Lamb has come (Rev 19:7b) (:287).

Beale (:934) relates the preparation of the bride to the Babylonian dominion on earth: 'Babylon's oppression and temptation was the fire that was ultimately used by God to refine the saints' faith to prepare them to enter the heavenly city'. Thus the theme of ecclesial preparation is consummated in this book, the climax of prophecy, for here in 19:7-8 the time of the marriage is synchronised with the preparation of the bride. Christ the Groom comes for a bride who is finally ready to meet him.

If one understands the book of Revelation through a modified futurism, the book presents us with the ultimate picture of a glorious church prior to the Parousia. In the final period, she will successfully endure as she follows the Lamb and resists the allurements of the global world-system. In this way she adorns herself with her eschatological glory and prepares herself for the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Although not all the NT writings explicitly mention the end-time completion of the church's internal and external mission, they all present us with a substantially optimistic and hopeful ecclesial picture. As the early church gazed at the horizon of their future, they saw the Parousia as the limit of their 'immediate' horizon, also expecting certain events to transpire between their 'now' and that 'then'. Yet they were assured by various letter writers that the sufferings they were already experiencing were spiritually beneficial and were tailored by God to prepared them for the coming

¹ The preparation of the bride, the formal wedding announcement, the marriage supper, the guest invitation, as well as her clothing and ornamentation in Rv 19, all reflect contemporary wedding customs among the royalty and affluent (Fekkes 1990:284). For parallels between Joseph and Aseneth, see Fekkes:284-286.

kingdom. Their sovereign God was lord of history and was using all things, including their sufferings and enemies, for the grand cosmic purpose of presenting the church as a spotless bride to his beloved Son.

... crucial issue of the nature and completeness of the
 ... church. Firstly, certain temporal factors need to be pointed out. It has been argued
 ... that the church will corporately attain to a mature status prior to the Parousia. This
 ... ecclesial obedience may be both cumulative and instantaneous; both process and periodic.
 ... We believe that the whole process of ecclesial maturity will climax prior to the
 ... Parousia and inaugurate the final days of world history. We believe that at some time
 ... in the future, the various and complementary ecclesial processes will culminate in a
 ... spotless bride, ready to be presented.

... What is expected to be collectively attained may depend on a number of factors, such
 ... as the degree to which churches during the course of church history... We find that Paul
 ... wrote to the churches (singular) in completion, those churches were already
 ... ecclesially attained at various times. The seven churches of Revelation, however, are
 ... churches that are more pure and others are less pure (cf. Graham, 1974: 170-171). Some
 ... churches receive approbation (Smyrna and Philadelphia), whilst others receive
 ... rebuke (Ephesus, Laodicea, etc.). Their ecclesial advancement depends on the ongoing
 ... activity of the Head of the church in bringing all the churches into the perfection of
 ... a church by presenting to Christ in their circumstances. Also, although each church
 ... receives a unique word and Christ's love itself each in diverse ways, we believe that
 ... the singular church as a whole is ecclesially pure and presents the bride. This is
 ... at the return (in Revelation who sees it) our hope is what the Spirit says to the
 ... church, and also in the symbolic number of seven churches which speak of Christ's
 ... witness to the church as a whole. Although there are processes in the world (the
 ... world who has no ear, whoever supplants) the Son of Man is seated on the throne with
 ... the state of the corporate identity.

... We have seen already that Paul had more joy over some churches than others
 ... (Corinthians and Philippians). Each church Paul wrote to was in a different temporal
 ... spiritual condition and he tailored his pastoral and apostolic response accordingly.
 ... Some required strong medicine (Corinthians), whilst others needed encouragement
 ... (Philippians). Yet the goal of each was the same: obedience to God's effective witness
 ... to Christ, surfacing in the church (Ladd, 1970). Toward this end, Paul's
 ... apostolic authority was given (2 Cor 10-13) and by this reason all his actions were

3.3 The anatomy of a mature church

Here we must briefly deal with the crucial issue of the nature and complexion of the mature church. Firstly, certain temporal factors need to be posited. It has been argued that the church will corporately attain to a mature stature prior to the Parousia. This collective obedience can be both cumulative and climactic, both process and periodic. We believe that the whole process of ecclesial maturity will climax prior to the Parousia and inaugurate the final days of world history. We believe that at some time in the future, *the various and fragmentary diachronic process will culminate in a collective synchronic attainment.*

What is expected to be collectively attained may have, to a relative degree, been attained by some churches during the course of church history. Within that process of Christ bringing his church (singular) to completion, there have been degrees of maturity attained at various times. The seven churches in Revelation show that some churches are more pure and others are less pure (cf. Grudem 1994:873-887). Some churches receive approbation (Smyrna and Philadelphia) whilst others censure (Ephesus, Laodicea *et al*). These ecclesial admonitions witness to the ongoing activity of the Head of the church in bringing all the churches into the condition of faithfully witnessing to Christ in their communities. Also, although each church is at a different stage and Christ acts upon each in diverse ways, yet he does so *according to his singular mutual intent to maintain, purify and prepare the whole.* This is seen in the refrain, 'let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches', and also in the symbolic number of seven churches which speaks of Christ's work in the church as a whole. Although there are promises to individuals ('let anyone who has an ear', 'whoever conquers') the Son of Man is clearly concerned with the state of the corporate identity.

We have seen already that Paul had more joy over some churches than others (Corinthians and Philippians). Each church Paul wrote to was in a different empirical spiritual condition and he framed his pastoral and apostolic relation accordingly. Some required strong medicine (Galatians) whilst others cordial exhortation (Philippians). Yet the goal of each was the same: obedience to and effective contact with Christ, surfacing in 'live orthodoxy' (Lovelace 1979b). Toward this end, Paul's apostolic authority was given (2 Cor 10-13) and for this reason all his actions were

inclined toward the efficacious accomplishment of this goal. Therefore in the light of Paul's letters and Revelation 2-3, it is plausible to deduce that throughout church history, certain ecclesial groups have been more faithful in actuating the true nature of the church than others.

The ecclesial hope of this thesis is the collective attainment of what has been partially experienced by various church bodies through church history. Yet *all of God's people in a mutual state of maturity, is the ecclesial hope of the NT*. Ultimately, this accomplishment is grounded in the work of the Triune God and in the church's genetic nature; the maturity is potentially present by virtue of *who* sustains the church and *what* her given identity is. For this reason, Paul qualifies the church as *being subject* (present indicative) to Christ (Eph 5:24), thus guaranteeing the completion of the process. This submissive nature of the church is so axiomatic that Paul uses this fact as the spiritual example of how wives should be toward their husbands. Given this axiom and the power of the love of Christ, it is logical to expect a completion of this work of Christ relative to its historical unfolding. We now turn to those primary features that characterise a mature church.

3.3.1 Ecclesial obedience and discipline

The collective obedience of the church is the objective of the majority of the ecclesial letters.¹ The purpose of the NT is primarily ecclesial in focus and salvific in intent (cf. Wimbush 1995:43-45). The NT can be seen as an extended exhortation for the church to actualise its given identity in Christ (see Peterson 2000; Bowers 1987).

This obedience of the church - that subjective ecclesial mode of being - is spelled out in all the injunctions and exhortations of the NT. It was historically demonstrated in the life of Jesus, Paul and many others. In Revelation, the idiom 'the faith of Jesus' occurs frequently, primarily meaning 'the witness which Jesus bore to God during his life on earth and to his faithfulness in maintaining his witness even at cost of his life' (Bauckham 1995b:72). The apostle Paul also exhorted his churches to emulate his own faith and life. The obedience needed for ecclesial maturity is seen in particular in Ephesians 5:21-33. Here, 'the dominant characteristic of the church...is her

¹ For example: Rm 1:5; 15:18; 16:26; 1 Cor 1:10; 2 Cor 2:9; 7:15; 10:1-6; Eph 5:24; Phlp 2:12.

submission to her Lord, Christ. She is consistently portrayed as being subject to him and the recipient of his actions on her behalf' (Sampley 1971:153). This obedience is the corollary of the headship of Christ, which Batey (1971:25) interprets in terms of the sovereign lordship of Christ over his body. As we have seen, the phrase 'the obedience of faith' is Paul's 'shorthand way' of speaking of his converts' conversion and the obedient lifestyle that flows from faith in Christ.¹ It is particularly in 2 Corinthians 10:1-6 that we have a clear witness of the appeal for obedience in the church (cf. Furnish 1984:499) and a hint at its consequence.

The purpose of Paul's gospel was the risen Christ's rule over the new people of God (Rm 1:5) (cf. Köstenberger & O'Brien 2001:176-177). Christ, the lord of the world, was now taking the nations captive to obedience to himself. Wright (1997) has brought out the radical nature of the lordship of Christ for salvation, even stating that the gospel itself is 'not a system of how people get saved... "the gospel", strictly speaking, is the narrative proclamation of King Jesus' (:45). The gospel of Paul was a royal announcement (:57).² The corollary of the Lordship of Christ is the obedience of the *ekklesia*. Yet, the NT qualifies this obedience by presenting the primary motivation for obedience as nuptial in nature. It is a response to divine love and not a cold or forced obedience: 'When the church completely surrenders herself unto her Lord and accepts the unsearchable riches of his preparatory love, then she may anticipate the joy of a bride found blameless in the house of her father-in-law' (Batey 1971:29). All the dynamics of the relations between Christ and the church are summed up in the nuptial imagery. It is in such a loving response that the intentions of Christ as the divine Groom in Ephesians 5:22-33 are actualised. His love is thus the constitutive power of the church, and her submission the medium through which it is perfected. Such obedience (defined by Christ's lordship and love) is the taproot of the full function of the body in power and mutual service (Col 2:19).

This obedience and maturity of the church is directly linked to the practice of church discipline. *The whole concept of church discipline presupposes the controlling idea of the necessity of the empirical purity of the church* (1 Cor 5:7) and *the authority of the church in maintaining that purity* (Mt 16:19; 18:18-20; Gl 6:1, 1

¹ At bottom, 'human obedience is the acceptance of one's identity as the image of God and the consequent obligation of creaturely service' (Garlington 1993:296).

² Cf. Reymond 2000:85 on the confrontational proclamation of Christ as lord in a Roman context.

Cor 5:1-13, 3 Jn 9-10, Rm 16:17, Tt 1:9-16 *et al*).¹ For Paul, 'the key to the apostle's approach to church discipline is his concept of obedience' (Hall 1969:24). If the church did not maintain the orthopraxy and orthodoxy of obedience and did not heed any 'gentle and meek' exhortations of Christ, Paul stepped in to effect it. He expected the church to 'judge those within' (1 Cor 5:12) and to preserve its identity as 'church', ensuring its disassociation from the world's condemnation.

In 2 Corinthians 10-13 we have the dynamics of Paul's apostolic authority laid bare. This authority is not something extraneous to the church, but representative of the authority that Christ's presence gives to his people (Mt 18:18-20; 2 Cor 13:3-5). In 10:1-6, Paul expresses his Christ-given authority which he threatened to implement in the church. Speaking of 2 Corinthians 10-13 Garland notes:

Paul says that he is prepared to carry through on his threats to come to Corinth with guns blazing (13:2); but he begs the Corinthians not to force such a showdown (10:2). If they fail to heed his warnings, however, he will resolutely confront them. He draws on the imagery of an army that is able to overcome every opposing fortress through siegeworks and then take captive and punish resistance (1989:373).

If complete ecclesial obedience (10:6; 13:9) does not occur, Paul will come 'with a rod' (1 Cor 4:21); he will come in the authority of Christ and punish every disobedience in the church, throwing down the stronghold of human reason and ensuring cognitive obedience to Christ. *Christ* will speak and act through Paul in his next visit (13:3). Some (Munck 1959:190) believe Paul is speaking of a miraculous punishment as in Acts 5:1-11 and 1 Corinthians 5:4. Best (1988) sees 2 Corinthians 10:1-10 as referring to a curse on the enemies of Paul (:89). Meyer (1879c:397) sees this as authority consistent with the gift of the apostle and mentions both excommunication and miraculous apostolic power as the efficacious vehicle. Garland (1989:373) speaks of Paul's 'divinely potent weapons in his arsenal to use against the disobedient'. All this is evidence that Paul had authority yet sought to express it in a correct and Christ-like way (Garland 1989:383; Best 1988:73-95).

Of interest for us is the fact that Paul had the authority to effect ecclesial purity. Carson (1984:50) speaks of the efficacy of Paul's authority in 2 Corinthians 10:5:

The picture is of a military expedition into enemy territory, an expedition so effective that every plan of the enemy is thwarted, every scheme failed, every counter-offence beaten. More: these designs and schemes of sinful men are captured by Christ and

¹ See Laney 1986; Kitchens 1991; Travis 1986 and Hall 1969.

brought under a new authority...their mental structures, their plans and schemes, are taken over and transformed as they come into a new allegiance.

Paul will exercise the authority which he had for building up (v 8). 'To build up then is to assist the church to mature in its faith and practice so that it will grow closer to the Lord. To destroy must be the opposite: to remove from the church and the hope of salvation those who have erred from their faith and closeness to Christ...disciplined but not destroyed' (Best 1988:89). Once he has secured the obedience of the church, all disobedience would be punished.¹ All this leads us to the following conclusion: if Paul's apostolic authority is founded on the power of Christ himself, it is not inconceivable to deduce that such a condition of corporate obedience could be affected in every Spirit-filled church. It would be tragic for such an essential condition to be entirely dependant upon the unique ministry of the apostle Paul. Rather, the gift can be seen as latent in the Spirit and could be activated by corporate discipline and obedience. The letters of 1 and 2 Corinthians are an appeal for the full obedience of the church, revealing that what Paul would come and enforce, *could be achieved by the church without him* (2 Cor 2:9; 5:20; 13:5-11). The church had all it needed to ensure the purity and obedience of its witness.

3.3.2 Ecclesial love & unity

The quality of the interpersonal relationships between Christians is integrally linked to the goal and perfection of the church. This ethical character is the primary feature and the very stuff of a mature church (Eph 4:16, 'for the building of itself up in love'). 'Love is the lifeblood of this body, and, therefore, the ultimate criterion for the assessment of the Church's growth will be how far it is characterised by love' (Lincoln 1990:264). In Colossians 3:14 Paul calls love 'the bond of perfection' which can be read as an objective genitive, i e, 'the bond which produces perfection' (so O'Brien 1987:204). As noticed, this focus on love is directly linked to the prayers of Paul and his preparation of his churches for the Parousia (Phlp 1:9-11; 1 Th 3:11-13). By

¹ Whatever such 'extra-ecclesial' punishment is is uncertain. It could be the 'alien intruders' at Corinth (Martin 1991:306; Carson 1984:54-55), and could also imply - if we take the 'all' in a broad sense and remember the *Naherwartung* - some eschatological judgment executed by Paul and others (1 Cor 6:3).

building themselves up in love the churches would evince the ecclesial perfection that will ensure that the community is found blameless on the Day of the Lord Jesus Christ.¹

An expression of this love is found in the empirical unity of the churches. The churches are properly conditioned when there is a unity of mind and spirit (1 Cor 1:10; Phlp 1:27; 2:1-11). Ephesians 4:1-6 unpacks the nature of this unity of the one Christian church. For this reason, 'Christians remain committed by their very faith to be always making efforts to promote unity and reconciliation between believers' (Roy 1997:4). As we have seen (sec 3.2.1.6), Christ anticipated his church to attain to a degree of unity in this world that would itself be a witness to the truth that is in Jesus. We believe that obedience of this intra- and inter-ecclesial dimension is requisite for the witness the church must give to the world prior to the Parousia. We thus agree with the words of Perkins (1927:91) who stated that 'the goal of the Church cannot be reached until there is a manifest unity'.

3.3.3 Ecclesial witness

In her relationship to the world, the church is a witness and sign of the kingdom of God manifested in Jesus. Her mission (Mt 24:14) is to present the world with the gospel preached by Jesus, irradiating out what was given in the midpoint period. The witness the world requires is the nature of Christ's ministry replicated through the church to the world; thus, 'the period of the Church is the prolongation of the central point' (Cullmann 1956a:77). Here we comment on the nature of this ecclesial witness that the world must receive prior to the end.

It seems clear from Matthew 24:14 that the nature of the ecclesial witness is directly related to the gospel of the kingdom which Jesus preached. Although it is inclusive of the future coming kingdom, the emphasis appears to be on that which was inaugurated by Jesus (cf. Mt 4:23; 9:35). The witness is to the salvific rule of God,

¹ The forging and community-making effect of persecution is important to note. As the church goes through persecution, especially in the terminal period, she will be brought into a greater degree of community and solidarity. It is to be observed that individualism and disinterested personal ambition are negative social products of times of external peace and social stability. In times of social upheaval, people rely more on each other.

localised and demonstrated in Jesus' life and given to the church through his death, resurrection and Spirit-baptism. Thus Jesus anticipates the kingdom which was present in him (Lk 17:21) to be effectively presented to all nations. This is the ubiquitousness of the midpoint revelation through the church, the salvation-historical continuation of what began in the ministry of Jesus (cf. 1 John 2:6). When the church truly reflects in word and deed the nature of the kingdom as done by Christ, then we can expect a similar effect and consequence in the world. *Thus the standard, form, nature and power of the kingdom that was spelled out in the life and teaching of Jesus, is programmatic for the church.*

The degree to which the church can transform the world or redeem it prior to the Parousia is still a live issue.¹ Many postmillennialists were driven by the Puritan vision for the religious grounding of all aspects of life in a *corpus christianum*. The Puritans, according to Rooy (1965:325), had a threefold divine mission: the redemption of the soul, the perfection of society, and the accomplishment of history. Society was to be Christianised and brought under the universal lordship of Christ, resulting in a Christocratic society. This emphasis was often,

a protest at a narrowing of the message to the territory of the soul [and] a resistance against a Hellenistic spirituality on the ground of the Israelite-realistic character of biblical revelation. The OT knows no salvation of the soul only *the earth filled with the knowledge of the glory of God* (Van Den Berg 1956:191).

Thus all the OT Scriptures of a terrestrial rule of Christ in society were celebrated in many of the Puritan societies. Van Den Berg (1956) brought out the equivocal character of the *corpus*: its negative side was the temptation to adapt the life of the church to the forms of the world; the positive was the totalitarian dominion of Christ, for God is the God of the whole of life (:190).² It is easy to forget the brokenness of this world and the ineradicableness of the fall, and that the church 'only has a place in this world under the shadow of the cross' (:192). Thus,

when it [the church] ignores this fundamental brokenness and tries to overcome it by anticipating upon a form of life that cannot be realised within the dimensions of the world of to-day, the anticipation of the coming realm of God turns into the reverse and leads to a secularisation of the idea of the kingdom (Van Den Berg:190-191).

¹ Cf. Colson 1999:296-297; Rooy 1965:242-284; Van Den Berg 1956:110-112;180-193; Lovelace 1979b:184-200; 401-435.

² Thus the words of William Law: 'The world by its favours has destroyed more Christians than it ever did by its most violent persecutors'.

Van Den Berg appeals rightly for a 'modest aim', a 'relative theocracy', whereby the church does not attempt to anticipate the future state of salvation but realistically brings life in all its fullness under the healing dominion of Christ (:192-193). This still provides the church with a world-affirming and comprehensive goal: it needs to be soteriological (Christ's rule starts in the heart); ascetic (rejects fashions of the world); eschatological ('anticipatory' status of work); and comprehensive, where she, as a sign of the future full realisation aims to bring life *now* to a new integrative unity under Christ (so Van Den Berg:193). More recently Colson (1999) has effectively argued for a transformation of culture through Christian values and a Christian world-view: 'We are to bring "all things" under the lordship of Christ, in the home and the school, in the workshop and the corporate boardroom, on the movie screen and the concert stage, in the city council and the legislative council' (:296-297). He foregrounds the cultural mandate to build societies, create culture and once again return to our original purpose to reclaim that entire created order for the present dominion of Christ (:298). His popular book *How Now Shall We Live* provides a comprehensive world-view that integrates all aspects of life within the kingdom of Christ.

Yet Colson and others have to reconcile themselves with the reality that 'there is not even a hint in the NT that Christians are called to change the secular order by the application of their moral principles' (Owen 1962:378) – a fact linked to the *Naherwartung* (Owen:377). For this reason, believers walk the line between leaving the world as it is and forcing change in it (Owen:381). Moreover, the ultimate aspect that reduces the primacy of the 'cultural mandate' is that the gospel Jesus himself preached did not contain within it the command or mission to transform society. The disciples were clearly commanded to penetrate communities, yet they were not commanded to effect comprehensive community transformation. It may be a consequence of the gospel transformations but is not the primary mandate of the church.

We believe that the church must be a vital and credible sign of the kingdom in all nations before the end, in a way related to community transformation; for 'the eschatological vision of a world full of the knowledge of God and peace and righteousness is to be foreshadowed through the Christian church's endeavours' (Rabali 1992:245). The degree however to which society will be changed due to the

effect of the gospel, is clearly secondary and consequential. The priority of the church is its 'kingdom mission', which does not include cultural, national, or terrestrial transformation. It is primarily spiritual.

Beyond the individual transformation, the NT expects the kingdom of God to create *a community of faith*. Giles (1997:195) reminds us that the 'goal of Christian mission [in the NT] was not to save individuals...but to call out a people for God's name'.¹ This emphasis on the community of believers, however, has received less attention in Protestant circles than in Catholic ones.² The witness of Matthew 24:14 is not merely of personal salvation through repentance and faith but the *very communal nature of God displayed in the community of faith*. The nature of God implies that love and unity are foundational for the mission of the disciples, a reality nuanced in the Johannine writings (cf. Köstenberger 1998:189-190). In John, 'the disciples' internal relationships are...presented as foundational for their potential impact on the world and for the possible belief resulting from their proclamation of the message about the Messiah' (Köstenberger:189). These factors demonstrate that the ecclesial witness is to be that of the kingdom of God not only preached but practiced in community. Lofink (1985) has also stressed these social dimensions of the Christian faith and mission. To him, 'the decisive task of the church is...to build itself up as a society in contrast to the world, as the realm of Christ's rule in which fraternal love is the law of life. It is precisely through the church's doing this that pagan society will grasp God's plan for the world' (:145). This 'divine contrast-society' is seen in John 13-17 (:128). The church is thus to be the effective sign of the kingdom of God and God's salvation in the world. Heyns (1988) writes with a corresponding emphasis on the communal dimension: 'The innermost core of genuine biblical faith is something that is communal' (:1). He also expands on the significance of the church as the *sign* of the kingdom by stating that 'the Church is able to tell the world that it has seen and understood the world's significance and destination: *the Kingdom of God*...The Church is summoned to be the militant vanguard of God's kingdom in an

¹ Neglecting this essential communal responsibility, one forgets that if interpersonal transformation cannot be achieved in the community of faith *first*, then there is little hope of achieving it elsewhere.

² See also Tate (1994) and Grenz (1994a, 1994b) for writings by some who have underscored this communal dimension. Grenz (1994b) sees communities as mediating a new cognitive framework, a new identity, a new value system and a new allegiance. Of interest to Baptists, is the comment of Andrews (1957:519) that the 'initial Baptist intent [was] that the corporate hope of the Kingdom be constitutive of Church life'.

ecclesiastical way' (Heyns:26-27 *passim*). Due to the eschatological nature of the church mission, 'when the church obscures this sign, it impedes the work of salvation and disfigures the true nature of God. If, on the contrary, the church lives by the truth of the gospel, then the name of God is glorified among the nations, and God's plan for the world progresses' (Lofink:178-179).¹ There was a profound communalism in the early church which was itself a sign of the kingdom of God and a message to the world of the truth (Ac 4:32-35). Mere verbal witness is insufficient.

The anatomy of the church described above mentions certain characteristics and Christological lineaments that will be seen in the church as her 'true colours' come to the fore. As she is obedient and faithful to her internal and external mission, so she will confront those not in her community with the true nature of God's kingdom and rule. As she does this, she will (as a reflex) characterise the world and extrude either latent faith or hatred for that kingdom, affecting a global condition. It is in this light that we now link the final terminal apocalyptic events of the NT to the mission of the church - for it is the mission of the church that is to determine the timing of the final terminal period of world history. *Her witness to the kingdom in mission and obedience precipitates and determines the nature and timing of the final apocalyptic period.*

¹ Lofink underscores the importance of this communal witness, when he answers the Jewish polemic – 'how can the Messiah have come if nothing in the world has changed?' - by pointing to the existence of the social reality in the church (:176). Also, see his catalogue of key features of the post-apostolic church's distinct social/communal witness, pp 149-180.

CHAPTER FOUR

ECCLESIAL FULFILLMENT AND HISTORICAL CONSEQUENCES

In chapter three we gave theological legitimation for the potential and the necessity of the consummate obedience of the church within pre-parousial historical horizons. We looked at the fact and nature of ecclesial fulfillment. We now move on to the broader salvation-historical issues as we place this expected event within a larger context, specifically, the apocalyptic scenario or schemata delineated for us in the Scripture. We believe that the obedience of the church eventuates the apocalyptic scenario and plays a crucial role in determining the duration of the interadventual age. The maturity of the church is seen as the primary catalyst for the eschatological consummation. Thus throughout the entire thesis our metanarrative has been the concept that the proximity of the inevitable return of Christ is determined by his church. Alternatively, we can say that the historical hope of the church culminates and coincides with a particular series of global events. In sum, *the Parousia is seen as the answer from heaven to the condition of the world produced by the earthly church*. The Parousia is the revelation of Christ to justly requite a world that has already rejected him. Here we therefore look at this bilateral relation between ecclesiology and apocalyptic eschatology.

There is a salvation-historical sequence that we have been emphasising: as Jesus and the apostolic church precipitated the apocalyptic events of 70 CE (midpoint period), so the apocalyptic events of the world will be preceded and precipitated by the church's ministry. The success of the gospel in the world through the church will present a final 'eschatological' choice to the world; if the choice is to reject it (and the Scriptures anticipates such), then final apocalyptic judgment is theologically necessary. The obedience of the church as a witness is thus organically linked to the wider conception of salvation-history and necessarily correlated to the apocalyptic judgment of Christ. In this section we deal with this and the wider issues of the relation between the obedience and the eschatological scenario of the NT. An organising idea for this section is that for the final generation to be qualified as

'terminal' or 'final', the church must have acted upon it in a specific way. Conversely, we believe that there is *a requisite condition of the church for the terminal generation*. This final chapter deals with this relationship between ecclesiology to apocalyptic.

11.1 The necessity of global witness

According to Mark 13:10 and Matthew 24:14, before the final apocalyptic events of the last period, the world must be confronted with the gospel. In the sequence of temporal eschatological events, this is the final proclamation. The proclamation of the gospel to all men is an integral priority in the divine plan of salvation, and is a key biblical criterion for God's eschatological purpose (Lamb 1987:403). That is, it is that every man should have an opportunity of hearing the Christian message (Lamb 1987:44). If the church is responsible for the preaching of the gospel, then it is theologically expedient for the church to have been obedient before the final period. When such a task is entrusted, the church's responsibility is explicit. The mission of the church to all nations is presented as an attainable goal for church members to fulfil. In the context of both Matthew 24 and Mark 13, Jesus implies that, once the church has completed the final apocalyptic warning with regard to the last period,

In this regard, Jesus appears as he speaking about discontinuity and discontinuity. He is looking through the tunnel of the future which leads to the final period eschatological period. Although the preaching of the gospel is to continue in the future second-period age, Jesus anticipates a time when this covenant will have been universally proclaimed to all nations, eschatologically condemning the whole world. During the entire last-days period (end church-age), the preaching of the gospel will be accompanied by pseudo-Messiahs, wars, persecutions, famines and the like (Mt 24:4-14). All these will happen and must continue until the gospel is preached to all. The end of the period lies effectively spread through the whole world, over the last period will come.

In the context, the word of Jesus 'gospel' is related to the destruction of the temple and the destruction of the world. We believe that the church will know a time (before the end) when the destroying angels of Mt 24:31 will destroy the temple (Mt 24:14; 2 Th 2:14). We take the word 'gospel' to be determined by the decisive criterion as to when the temple would be destroyed and the end of the age come; the word seems synonymous with 'fulfill' in Mark 13:4. Boyd (1997) interprets this as a prophetic warning (i.e. when the judgment comes). Thus Jesus anticipates the world's acceptance of the gospel message as its ending in the life of the church. For him, the means toward this end is witnessed when the nation the parabolic way of the Godhead. However, the occurrence of the events clearly calls for an apocalyptic terminal interpretation.

4.1 Globalization

4.1.1 The necessity of global witness

According to Mark 13:10 and Matthew 24:14, before the final apocalyptic events of the End occur, the world must be confronted with the gospel. In the sequence of temporal eschatological events, this is the *signa praecursoria*. 'The proclamation of the gospel to all men is an integral priority in the divine plan of salvation, and as such is an integral element in God's eschatological purpose' (Lane 1982:462). 'God intends that everyone should have an opportunity of hearing the Christian message' (Cullmann 1961:46). If the church is responsible for the execution of this task, then it is theologically expedient for the church to have been obedient before the Parousia. However such a task is conceived, the church's responsibility to extend the message of Christ to all nations is presented as an attainable goal and closure event by Christ. Within the context of both Matthew 24 and Mark 13, Jesus implies that once such a task is completed, the final apocalyptic scenario will begin.¹

In this *logion*, Jesus appears to be speaking both diachronically and synchronically. He is looking through the tunnel of the future which finally terminates in a specific end-time period. Although the preaching of the gospel is to characterise the entire interadventual age, Jesus anticipates a time when this message will have been sufficiently presented to all nations, strategically conditioning the whole world. During the entire last-days period (the church-age), the preaching of the gospel will be accompanied by pseudo-Messiah's, wars, persecutions famines and the like (Mt 24:4-14). All these will happen and must continue until the gospel is preached to all. Yet *once* the gospel has effectively spread through the whole world, *then* the end period will come.

¹ In the context, the word of Jesus '*first*' is related to the destruction of the temple and the desolating sacrilege. We believe that the church will know it has finished this task when the desolating sacrilege is set up in the temple (Mk 13:14; 2 Th 2:4). We take the word *telos* to be determined by the disciples' question as to when the temple would be destroyed and the end of this age arrive; the word seems synonymous with 'fulfilled' in Mark 13:4. Boyd (1997) interprets *telos* in a purposive manner (i.e., 'then the fulfillment come'). Thus Jesus anticipates the world's acceptance of the good news and its sharing in the life of the trinity. For him, the means toward this end is ecumenical unity that mirrors the perichoretic unity of the Godhead. However, the constraints of the context clearly favour an apocalyptic terminal interpretation.

One must naturally ask, to what extent is the gospel to be preached in all the nations? It seems reasonable to say that all nations need a sufficient presentation of the gospel in their life and culture that constitutes credible evidence for them. A comprehensive understanding of the 'witness' – as against a minimalist interpretation – seems more in keeping with the mandate of Christ. The extent of this preaching to all nations is brought out by Hoekema (1994:138) who believed that the 'gospel must become a force to be reckoned with by the nations of the world...the gospel will become so much a part of the life of every nation that it cannot be ignored'. Similarly, Berkhof (1996:698) also expects the gospel to 'become a power in the life of the people, a sign that calls for decision. It must be preached to them *for a testimony*, so that it can be said that an opportunity was given them to choose for or against Christ and His Kingdom'. He expects that 'at the end of time it will be possible to say that all nations were made acquainted with the gospel, and the gospel will testify against the nations that did not accept it' (:698). He links the accomplishing of such a reality to the fullness of the Gentiles mentioned in Romans 11. Braaten (1969), commenting on the future of Christian mission, also sees a need for a much broader understanding of the kingdom witness: 'The gospel of the kingdom represents a total claim by preaching the lordship of Christ in relation to the totality of life, individually and socially' (:139). Davis (quoted in Hesselgrave 1988) expects that 'before the end of history there will in fact be an indigenous church established in every ethnic group on the face of the earth' (:73). All these writers stress the need for a comprehensively sufficient witness to Christ as being the determinative factor for all nations. We believe that *obedience to this mandate necessitates both an intensive expression ('this gospel') and an extensive extension ('shall be preached in all nations')*. The midpoint must comprehensively irradiate out. *In this way, the whole world is to receive the ministry of Christ.* Once affected by the gospel in such a way, that generation that coincides with the accomplishment of this mission will be the 'terminal-generation'.

This *logion* (Mk 13:10; Mt 24:14) anticipates a final global scenario in which the world will have been sufficiently 'missioned' (Christianised) and conditioned. Therefore, *a particular synchronic scenario will characterise the final terminal generation.* During this period, all the nations of the interadventual period will be

corporately represented by those in the terminal period, and the whole church similarly represented by the 'terminal church'.¹ It is believed that in this final period, there will be an intensification and 'eschatological heightening' of the 'signs' (Mt 24:4-13), the Christian mission (v 14), and the ecclesial stature.

Many Scriptures suggest that the terminal generation will have been comprehensively exposed to the gospel of the kingdom. It is particularly in the apocalyptic portions of the NT that we have the clearest description of the anticipated global condition at the Parousia. This universalising tenor is a common feature of apocalyptic, due to the apocalyptist 'tendency to apply to the world what the OT applied only to Israel or to other entities' (Beale 1999:91). The apocalyptist paints on a larger canvas than the national prophet or specified letter-writer (see Addendum 1). The world is his backdrop. For this reason 'part of the genius of the Revelation is the universalisation of the Old Testament' (Beale 1998:100-111).

One of the key texts that glimpses at the extent of the gospel mission is the narrative of the sheep and the goats (Mt 25:31-46). Here the nations are judged by how they treated the church.² *This Scripture supposes the effective presence of the church among all the nations prior to the End.* In the apocalyptic context of Matthew 23-25, it seems reasonable to presume that his elect (24:31) are 'physically' with the Son of man in exercising judgment and not the objects of judgment; they are the third party in the scene. Moreover, the mention of the hardships of 'the least of these my brothers' (v 40) is consistent with the expected persecution and 'tribulation of those days' (24:9, 21, 29; see Hill 1972:330). Some premillennialists understand 'all the nations' here as the terminal generation, those who will be alive at the Parousia and not all nations in general (*pace* Gundry 1983:511 and Hagner 1995:742). This is the great judgment of all peoples at the beginning of the millennium, of those then living

¹ The theme of a pure presentation of the church to Christ at the Parousia is particularly linked to the *terrestrial church* and the completion in history of the ecclesial process. This theme of the terrestrial church being found pure is consistent with the *Naherwartung*, for the apostolic church, by and large, expected *their* church generation to experience the Parousia. The thought of how the whole interadventual church, the 'glorified saints', and other aspects enter into this terrestrial ecclesial hope is a problem for us. We suggest Aus' (1979) and Munck's (1959) concept of corporate representation or representative universalism as a solution.

² Oudersluys (1973) poses the common question as to the identity of the 'least of these my brothers': if they are 'the world', then how are they to be distinguished from 'all nations' who are subject to the final judgment?; if they are the Christian community, then who are the 'sheep'? (:152). He concludes that they are suffering 'messengers of the kingdom', imaged off the *shaliach* OT concept of a man's representative as being as himself (Mt 10:40-42). This ecclesial interpretation seems the most contextually and theologically harmonious.

and surviving the catastrophic events of Matthew 24:15-41 (so Sauer 1977:141-142; see also Biederwolf 1972:357-358). This is in line with the prophetic hope of the OT (Gn 49:10; Ps 50; 98:9; Is 11; Mi 4:3; Zph 3:8 *et al*) and is harmonious with this Matthean scenario. However, the primary motivation for such an exegesis is the nature of the judgment: *the peoples are judged for how they treated the church during a time of tribulation*. If this was the criteria for judging all peoples of all time, the contextual constraints would have to be ignored or radically mitigated. Our interpretation seems particularly suited to the apocalyptic events of the last generation and the scenario of Matthew 24-25. Oudersluys (1973:156), although not taking a premillennial view, underlines the universal scope of the gospel implied in this section:

What is more plausible than to conclude that the phrase [all nations] means all those to whom the gospel will have been proclaimed before the *parousia*, and who will be judged on the basis of their response to the message and the messengers. Their response will become visible in action, the action of unashamed welcome or ashamed rejection. And it is this response that sways the balances of destiny at the last judgment.

Further, this narrative reveals that people are to be judged not on any basis but on how they have stood in respect to the kingdom of God as witnessed to by the disciples:

The verdict is not based on whether or not men lived a good moral life or even used their checkbooks compassionately. It is based on how men have stood with respect to the Kingdom of God. Were they on the side of the kingdom or against it? *For this determination, the Son of Man will come again* [italics mine] and then as judge and king of all the world (Oudersluys:158).

Clearly, in order for this to take place, gospel evidence must have been sufficiently given to that generation.

In many of the synoptic discourses, Jesus anticipates the world's rejection of his followers. Even at the Parousia, his followers will be fleeing from city to city (Mt 10:23). Because this persecution is *a response to the gospel proclamation*, this could intimate that the church will have accomplished a global mission prior to the end. The persecution of the end can plausibly be seen as *the world's ungodly reflex to the gospel* (Mt 10:16-42; 24:9-14; Lk 18:1-8 *et al*). For this reason, the Parousia is often spoken of in tribulation contexts (Lk 9:18-27). In 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10 and 2:10-12, both apocalyptic discourses, we have a global scenario *speaking of the Parousia in the context of a world that is persecuting the church and that has rejected the truth of the*

gospel (cf. Morris 1982:232-235). Thus Travis (1986:48) says that here 'God's destructive judgment comes because of a negative response to the gospel'. Man's destiny is thus self-imposed (so Travis:50).¹

Also, a futurist view of Revelation 11:3-13 posits an ecclesial witness in the last-days which will reach a point of completion (*after 1260 days*) (thus Mounce 1998; Beasley-Murray 1983; Bauckham 1993, 1995b). For this reason, looking at the understanding of *martus* in Revelation, we can conclude that 'rejection of that "testimony" of Jesus and of Christians by the world and its courts becomes the basis for the judgment of the world in the heavenly court' (Beale 1999:202). The world is to be judged for rejecting the gospel. Also, the period of Revelation 13 is a period of intransigence, when the world will be divided in allegiances, a period when all will worship the beast. Beasley-Murray (1948:278) expatiates:

John's prophecy can only be fulfilled when the spirit of Antichrist completely dominates the worldpower, so that men and women range themselves for Christ or against Him, and that power becomes broken by the iron rod of the Returning Lord.

For this to happen, it seems plausible that prior to this terminal period, the gospel will have already been witnessed to before all nations.

As we have shown in part 2, this last generation is in parallel to the 'Jesus-generation' of the mid-point period. Prior to 70 CE, the gospel had been preached 'to all nations', causing apocalyptic persecution and the like. This 'Jesus-generation' is a quality of generation that foreshadows a similar future apocalyptic period when once again the gospel will have 'been preached to all nations' (i e, globalised) (see 2.2.2.2 b). The generation that rejected the gospel in Jerusalem prior to 70 CE (Mt 23-24) - 'filling up the measure of their guilt' - is typical of the terminal generation which will 'fill up the measure of its guilt' by persecuting the followers of Jesus in that period. It is a typological motif that judgment often follows a period of prior prophetic warning. Thus, *the diachronic process of church history will reach a synchronic attainment, conditioning the world and preparing it for the Parousia*. This thesis argues that it is the ecclesial mission and maturity that will be primarily responsible for such an apocalyptic conditioning.

¹ Travis is reticent to speak of retribution, favouring a more relational understanding of 'punishment', a non-retributational model. However, it seems difficult to believe that here in chapter 2 the '*talionis*' idea extends only as far as the *vocabulary*. It does not determine the *content* of the judgment' (:47).

We must also note that the saying of Mark 13:10 and Matthew 24:14 is cast in the judicial context of God's controversy with the nations. The preaching of the gospel is the medium through which God establishes or puts forward the evidence of his case. The emphasis here is not so much on the effect of the gospel but the necessity of the gospel's exposure/presentation to all nations for juridical purposes. All nations must be given evidence of the message in the gospel, and when this occurs God is justified in ending the age. Trites (1977:45) backgrounds this idea in the sustained law court imagery of Isaiah 40-55, where God's controversy with the nations and Israel is presented (Brunner (1990:857) mentions Isaiah 49:6). Here God seeks to establish the final 'proof' of his nature and salvation to all the nations. Trites (:69) then mentions three major aspects of *martus* in the NT. It is used: (1) as a dative of an indirect object (simply to introduce); (2) as a dative of advantage; or (3) as a dative of disadvantage (see Jm 5:3, 'incriminating evidence'). Yet to determine the exact semantic sense the phrase requires careful grammatical study of each passage to see whether the dative is 1, 2, or 3 (:77). He interprets Matthew 24:14 in the first sense (:70), 'as a testimony to them', giving it a neutral meaning. This neutral presentation of the good news can consequently have a positive or negative affect. Both the positive and negative are contained within the same word; for the word of mercy, when rejected, becomes the word of condemnation. Some people will believe God's evidence, others will reject God's evidence and thus judge themselves unworthy of eternal life. Wenham (1984:277-278) links this concept with Mark 6:11, coming to similar conclusions as Trites:

The thought is that they will be a testimony to the gospel both in their persons and especially in what they say. Whether this testimony is a blessing or a curse to those who hear will depend on their response: *autois* may be taken neutrally, not as meaning 'to their advantage' or 'to their disadvantage'. If this is the correct understanding of the saying, then the thought is not at all far-removed from that of Mk 13:10, since the preaching of the gospel too leads to salvation or judgment.

The only place where the negative aspect of the *martus* (*against*) is most patent, is in Matthew 23:34-36. Here there is there a crowning of the unbelief of Jesus' generation through the prophetic witness of the 'Jewish church'.¹ In Mark 13:10 however, the declaratory juridical statement tends to put the emphasis on the neutral meaning. The

¹ We believe that such a 'witness against' concept, as predicted by Jesus in Matthew 23:32-36, will be the final marturological task of the church in the last years of the terminal generation (Rv 11).

gospel itself, regardless of its acceptance or rejection, needs to be presented as a witness to all nations. The stress is on the 'legal' concept of the *necessity* of the gospel to be evidence before the nations in the divine lawsuit. Jesus is providing the large objective that must occur during this period: the proclamation of the gospel. In Matthew particularly the saying's legal-imperative sense comes out clearly, for it is placed in the context of opposition to the church mission. The church must and will press on through the opposition to complete her interadventual mandate. Evidence of God's salvation in the preaching of the kingdom of God must reach all people, for it is the 'plan of God that all nations shall have an opportunity of hearing the Gospel before the end' (Hill 1972:320-321). The accomplishment of this task is the church's historical *raison d'être* (De Dietrich 1954).

As mentioned, in Revelation 11 we have a composite image of the witnessing church and her suffering in the final period of world history (Bauckham 1993:266-283). The lampstand metaphor is used earlier in the book for the 'local church in its capacity as a witnessing community' (Aune 1966:143). There is a clear link between the church (lampstands) of chapter 11 and the Asian churches of chapters 2-3. We concur with Bauckham (1993:273) that the 'two individual prophets represent the prophetic witness to which the whole church is called in the final period of world history, the 1260 days (11:3)'. The personalities of Moses (plagues in Egypt) and Elijah (Jezebel and three and a half years), who represent 'the two great OT contests between the prophets of Yahweh and pagan power and religion' (Bauckham:277), suggest the church's persistent witness through this period of flagrant evil (ch 13). This is nuanced by the fact that in Revelation, the world is 'a kind of court-room in which the issue of who is the true God is being decided' (Bauckham:73). Here, the prophetic witness of the church is 'to confront the idolatry of Rome in prophetic conflict' (Bauckham 1995b:120). During this final period, the believers (though not all) have an immunity from attack in order to fulfill their witnessing responsibilities. Bauckham (1993:277) reminds us that in Revelation, the witness motif 'refers primarily to the witness which Jesus bore to God during his life on earth and to his faithfulness in maintaining his witness even at cost of his life'. This is the clue to the ambiguous term, 'the witness of Jesus'. As Christ accomplished his witness to the 'world' in Israel (Jn 12: 44-50; 15:22-25; 17:4), so we expect the church to fulfill her mission to the world. And, as Revelation 11 reveals, the time the church has 'as long

as – but no longer – they need to complete their testimony' (Bauckham 1993:277). Once this testimony is complete, the End will come.

This global conditioning is also seen in John 13-17. As the synoptics contain the apocalyptic discourse prior to the passion of Jesus, so John 'replaces' that discourse with the upper room discourses where Christ now focuses in on the disciples after he has borne witness to the world (1-12) (so Beasley-Murray 1946:98). Here we find an 'eschatological tone of suffering' (Beasley-Murray:99). From out of Jesus' anticipated suffering, he tells the disciples that they can expect similar treatment from the world. John 13:35, 14:31, 15:18-16:11 and 17:21, 23 speak of *a certain presentation of truth before the world to be accomplished through Jesus' disciples*.¹ The disciples are expected to disclose Christ to the world, something which Judas (not Iscariot) thought Jesus would directly do himself (14:22). Jesus anticipates that *all men* (world) will know that the disciples are followers of the Son of God (13:35), that he loves the Father (14:31), and that they will believe and know that the Father sent Jesus. These verses point to the ultimate universalisation of the truth of Jesus Christ, whether considered diachronically or synchronically. The medium for such an attainment is the Holy Spirit who indwells the disciples (16:7-11). As with the above texts, such activity will be accompanied by intense persecution (15:18-16:4).

The accomplishment of such an expectation presupposes the obedience of the church prior to the Parousia. It also fits with the judgment theme prevalent in the Parousia event, where the world will be judged based on its response to the church. Thus the church must fulfill its calling to faithfully present evidence to the world that will offer it opportunity for salvation and simultaneously indict it if she refuses to accept. 'The response to the divine demand will determine the course and conclusion of history' (Freedman 1967:48). The world must be conditioned prior to the Parousia. We conclude this section with the words of Charles (1913:438-439), who commented on the spiritual *Zeitgeist* expected by Paul at the Parousia:

The moment for such intervention is thus not arbitrarily determined, but conditioned by the development and final consummation of the forces of good and evil at work in the world. In the course of this development the separation of those susceptible of salvation and the unsusceptible is realized gradually but inevitably.

¹ For the judicial nature of the witness theme in these portions, see Trites 1977:78-127.

4.1.2 Periods of intransigence

It is our contention that in the final apocalyptic period (*viz*, Revelation 8 to 19), moral lines will harden and the witness of the church will be more prophetic than evangelistic. The moral *non plus ultra* will have arrived in the world. Scripture narrates periods of moral intransigence and the flowering of evil, often preceding the requisite judgment. During these periods, the words of the angel in Revelation 22:11 come to light: 'Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy'.¹ These imperatives are a call to continue in the course of ones character, and are not applicable in any period of history. Ladd (1983:292) quotes the words of Swete:

It is not only true that the troubles of the last days will tend to fix the character of each individual according to the habits which he has already formed, but there will come a time when change will be impossible – when no further opportunity will be given for repentance on the one hand or for apostasy on the other.

Mathers' description of the unique period of Revelation is also suggestive of such an intransigent period:

The book was written for a time of crisis. It is important to keep this fact always in view. He was recommending an interim faith and an interim ethic for a time when Christians must have felt themselves utterly powerless in the presence of overwhelming powers of evil (1944:18).

For this reason Scott (quoted by Mathers:18-19) described the Christianity the book offered as being of a dimension suited for an abnormal time. This is the consummate apocalyptic period. Moreover, some believe that in this book there is no call to evangelism or moral repentance, because 'those given over to the powers of evil seem to be fixed in their ways, past repentance' (Mathers:18).² Osborne (1993) speaks of a stubborn refusal to repent as 'the heart of the Apocalypse' (Osborne:69). The Revelation therefore vindicates God, for 'it is clear that total depravity has occasioned the judgment inflicted here and the final judgment to come' (:69). God here 'causes

¹ So in Daniel 12:10: 'Many will be purified, cleansed and refined, but the wicked shall continue to act wickedly'. For this reason Isaiah says: 'Come, my people, enter your chambers, and shut the doors behind you: hide yourself for a little while until wrath is past' (26:20).

² Cf. Satake, quoted by Beasley-Murray (1983:179). Besides 11:13 (see pp 117 footnote 1), there is no evidence of any moral change in the unbelieving world in the Revelation.

sin to turn full circle and consume itself (:70).¹ The world is given her just deserts – a key function of apocalyptic literature.

Although there will certainly be a degree of qualitative growth in the church during this period, a climate unfavorable for the gospel will prevail. As far as salvation-history is concerned, these apocalyptic periods are ones in which God's people sustain a particular relation to the world – they are the object of persecution.² Under these conditions (the opposite to 1 Timothy 2:1-7) antecedent evangelism ceases and the church's responsibility is to be a *prophetic witness*. Their fidelity to the truth amidst the seductive lie of 'Babylon' is their witness, which in turn becomes the foundation for the world's judgment. Thus the primary ethic for the believer in these times is to 'bear the witness of Jesus' and, like Jesus in his last hours, be faithful unto death. As mentioned, the Revelation's focus is on the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth through the effecting of the wrath of God (3:10; 6:10, 17; 7:1-3; 11:18; 14:14-20; 15:1 and 16:1) and the witness of the church. Given the nature of the ecclesial witness as being more prophetic than salvific – experienced more as faithful endurance as Jesus before his hostile accusers (1 Tm 6:13) - then it is consistent to view this period as a unique eschatological period when the saints' mission is transmuted into an uncompromised witness to the truth of Jesus in the face of hostile opposition. Perseverance, not evangelistic mission, is the watchword of the overcoming believer (13:10 and 14:12). Moral opportunity has run its course in the apocalyptic period and persecution rather than conversion is expected and portrayed. This is the hour of the power of darkness (Lk 22:53), a period when no one can work (Jn 9:4).

Such a 'static' period of opposition is in harmony with the presupposition of an obedience of the church in global mission, moral witness and communal love. It is particularly because the world is rejecting the kingdom reality already clearly displayed in the church that she reveals her adulterous heart, defining and

¹ For this reason, the just recompense of God on such a nuanced generation of people is spoken of in terms of the traditional doctrine of hell (Mt 25:31-46, 2 Th 1:5-10, Rv 14:9-11). It is not a doctrine to be divorced from salvation-history. Rather, *the historical character* of such a people requires the moral judge of the universe to act (Parousia) and to requite (Hell). They judge themselves worthy of such a punishment.

² The affect of this period on the believer/church can be considered as a test/trial of their faith (Rv 2:10); they will be approved by their perseverance. This does not necessarily mean that no conversions take place during these periods but rather that the believer has to deal with a world that has reached a specific level of entrenched spiritual opposition. Yet there might still be a Rahab in doomed Jericho.

personifying the true nature of sin and disobedience. This sets the world as a whole at the zenith of evil (Rv 14:14-20).¹ It is particularly in the images of the two Beasts (Rv 13) and the Babylonian empire that this evil takes on institutional form. Yet this motif is also consistently developed throughout the Bible. Some of the more salient types and foreshadowings are seen in those periods immediately prior to judgment or destruction: Sodom, Egypt, Canaan (Gn 16:15), Samaria in 722 BCE and Jerusalem in 587 BCE and 70 CE.² In the NT, such an allocated period(s) is mentioned in Matthew 12:43-45, 23:32-36, 24:15-22, Luke 11:48-51, 13:6-9, 17:22-37, 21:36, 22:53, John 9:4, 12:35, 1 Thessalonians 2:15-16, 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 and 2 Timothy 4:3-4. Garland (1979:168) identifies one of these periods in Matthew 23. Here Jesus dooms his generation with a defiant and ironical challenge ('woe'):

The challenge assumes a prevalent doctrine in Judaism that when guilt or sins (of Gentiles) reach a certain level, the longanimity of God will be exhausted, the time for repentance finally squandered, and certain judgment will ensue. It is clear from v 32 that this is applied to Israel; and the point of inundation has not yet been reached by the murder of prophets in former generations, but is left to 'this generation' to complete the measure of overflowing.

This Scripture shows how people who oppress God's messengers 'will continue with their sin until they are ripe for judgment; at which time, there will be a reckoning of accounts' (Garland:168).³

If Jesus spoke of 'the end' in Matthew 24:14 as being inclusive of the terminal pre-parousial events, then this period will not itself be characterised by the preaching of the gospel – for the end occurs *after* the completion of the mission mandate. This would have already happened throughout the preceding period. During this terminal period, the present mode of the kingdom will have reached optimum extension and intensification, *extruding and then crystalising both faith and unbelief*. This counter-movement of the gospel will thus also have (as reflex) reached optimum stretch. In this way 'all things' will be 'restored' to their true character. Once this condition has been reached, the judgment of God will begin in the earth, with the church being

¹ Thus Sauer (1977:117) says: 'It is not because the world is not Christian enough that Christ has not yet come but He has not yet come because the world is not unbelieving enough'.

² Jeremiah's ministry, as with many of the prophets, was to a generation that was at the zenith of its evil and intransigently unrepentant (thus 1:18-19). Also Isaiah 6:9-13. Garland (1979:168) identifies these 'times of nations' in the OT as a course of time in which they lay foundations for judgment (Dn 2:21): Gn 15:16, Job 14:16, Dn 4:34; 8:23, En 50:2, 2 Mac 6:12-14.

³ We also have here in Matthew 23 the principle of corporate representation: 'the fate of the leaders is the fate of the people, for they are the embodiment of an apostate Israel (Garland 1979:186).

called a unique prophetic witness – the witness borne by Jesus as he was 'delivered up' during the last dark hours of his life.

Thus these offers a first way of understanding the traditional events of the 'secrets' generation. The anticipated world unification, the Antichrist, the tribulation, and the final tribulation, can be seen in a new light once the obedience of the church is noted. We believe that these are all part of a chain reaction which will be triggered by ecclesial maturity and prayer.

By way of introduction, we will discuss the nature of the characteristic number of Revelation 17:12, three and half a time, three and a half years, 1260 days (or months). The conclusions here are determinative for the whole of the 'secrets' generation. Eusebius (100 CE) understood that number as a literal time and a half year (the last week of Dan 9:27) during which the Antichrist would reign over the earth, an event upon the dissolution of the Roman Empire (17:16-18). This line of interpretation is continued in church dissonantist thinking. In particular, there is evidence to suggest that the strange formula of Daniel 7:25 and 12:7 was understood to mean a literal three and a half years.¹ At the later end of the 'secrets' generation (see below) Beale (1999:636-647) identifies the period as the final tribulation revealed by Daniel 7, 9 and 12 which commences at Christ's return and continues until his return. Beckwith (1989:233-235) also took extensively with this number. Proceeding from Daniel 7:25 and 12:7 where Daniel uses the number typically of the indefinite but short period which he pictures as preceding the end, Daniel understood it to denote the last period of the triumph of evil and the oppression of God's people, as accomplished in the rule of Antiochus, after which should come the Great Day of Jehovah, with the destruction of the enemy and the giving of the kingdom to the saints of the Most High (Beckwith:233). Beckwith avoided any literal reference, as well as any possible, physical meanings. To him, it was rather a typical number, specific of the suffering of the final period, with an alternative reference in the book of Revelation (6:6). From (1946-1954), of the historical school, takes this number as a 'year day' index of 1260 years. A modified futurism sees this as 'the "short" period before the end, the final onslaught against God's people' (Hatchbach: 1993b:150), a symbolic number for a limited eschatological

¹ For the development of the number in Jewish apocalyptic, see Thibaut 1987. In this NT period, the number was linked to the throne of Israel (Ex. 25:1, 26:17).

4.2 The apocalyptic scenario

This thesis offers a fresh way of understanding the traditional events of the terminal generation. The anticipated world unification, the Antichrist, the 'rebellion/apostasy', and the final tribulation, can be seen in a new light once the obedience of the church is noted. We believe that these are all part of a chain reaction which will be triggered by ecclesial maturity and mission.

By way of introduction, we will discuss the nature of the characteristic number of Revelation (i e, 'time, times and half a time', three and a half years, 1260 days, 42 months). The conclusions here are determinative for the whole of this future expectation. Iranaeus [180 CE] understood this number as a literal three and a half years (the half-week of Dn 9:27) during which the Antichrist would reign over the earth; all consequent upon the dissolution of the Roman Empire (1979:554-556). This line of interpretation is continued in much dispensational thinking. In early Judaism there is evidence to suggest that the strange formula of Daniel 7:25 and 12:7 was understood to mean a literal three and a half years.¹ At the other end of the spectrum (and more recently) Beale (1999:646-647) identifies the period 'as the time of tribulation predicted by Daniel 7, 9 and 12 which commences at Christ's ascension and continues until his return'. Beckwith (1967:250-255) also dealt extensively with this number. Proceeding from Daniel 7:25 and 12:7 where Daniel 'uses the number typically of the indefinite but short period which he pictures as preceding the End', Daniel understood it to 'denote the last period of the triumph of evil and the opposition of God's people, as accomplished in the rule of Antiochus, after which should come the Great Day of Jehovah, with the destruction of the enemy and the giving of the kingdom to the saints of the Most High' (Beckwith:252). Beckwith avoided any literal referent, as well as any recondite, mystical meanings. To him, it was rather a typical number, specific of the suffering of the final period, with no determinative reference in the book of Revelation (:606). Froom (1946-1954), of the historicist school, takes this number as a 'year-day' index of 1260 years. A modified futurism sees this as 'the "short" period before the end...the final onslaught against God's people' (Bauckham 1995b:150), a symbolic number for a limited eschatological

¹ For the development of the number in Jewish apocalyptic, see Thiering 1981. In the NT period, the number was linked to the famine of Elijah (Lk 4:25; Jm 5:17)

period (Aune 1998:596, 606; so Beasley-Murray 1983; Mounce 1998). Nonetheless, it is clearly drawn from Daniel and could well be linked with the half a week of Daniel 9. It is possible that the number has a symbolic meaning in the book, yet a future 'literal' reference fits with the overall aspects of the book of Revelation. Our conclusion is that the apocalypticist 'looked for the end of the world to be preceded by a time of unprecedented suffering, and by the domination of evil' (Rowley 1944:155). This is a distinct period before the End, crucially linked to the schemata of Daniel. This time is linked with the intensification of the evil of these last-days, with all the preterist and historicist temporal manifestations of the idealist principles culminating in one final future terminal epoch. We believe that Revelation continues with the Danielic 'timetable', though it has gone through a Christological and ecclesiological transformation. To these final end-time events we now turn.

4.2.1 Terminal tribulation

The legitimation for the expectancy of a final tribulation before the Parousia is found in the following: (1) Jewish apocalyptic literature; (2) Scriptural witness; and (3) typological correspondence.¹

Firstly, Daniel 12:1 is acknowledged by many as the likely origin of the 'great tribulation' motif (Beale 1999:433; Allison 1985:5-25). The 'Messianic travail of one week (7 years) was expected toward the end' (Allison:22). Secondly, with the *Naherwartung*, the early church believed that they were living in the last-days and experiencing the final eschatological period (sec 2.2.3). Yet even within this inaugurated framework, *they still anticipated a final terminal tribulation immediately prior to the Parousia*. Such an organic connection of the present with the future mitigates the intensity of the inaugurated concepts (Mt 10:22-23; 24:15-31; 25:31-46; Mk 13:14-27; 2 Th 1:3-10; Rv 3:10; 6:17-20:3).² Lastly, as with most of these concepts, the model of Christ (midpoint) is the matrix and type of what the church can

¹ The standard premillennial posttribulation book is still Gundry 1974.

² Once again, the 'modified futurism' hermeneutic (inaugurated and climactic) allows for both aspects. Yet in Revelation, the future aspect is predominant. The internal evidence points to a situation of relative peace and selective persecution with an imminent expectation of intensifying persecution on a widening and programmatic scale (see Beale 1999:28-33).

expect. What they did to the teacher they will do to the disciples (Mt 10:24-25). As Christ made his exodus through the cross in Jerusalem, so the church will make her exodus through the cross in the 'Jerusalem' of this world (Rv 11:7-12). The other motif of the 'Jesus-generation' is helpful in this regard. Garland (1979:172), commenting on Matthew 23, picks up the theme of innocent blood crying out for vengeance. He notices that the generation that bore witness in Jerusalem prior to CE 70 was characterised by martyrdom (Mt 23:34), which conditioned and condemned that generation. The blood of the saints then cried out for vengeance; it came in 70 CE. Similarly, Revelation reveals that Babylon is punished by God, for 'in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who have been slaughtered on earth' (Rv 18:24). Thus a major theme of Revelation is 'the vengeance of God upon the enemies of his people for their unjust suffering and death' (Svigel 2001:43). Both generations are guilty by virtue of the righteous blood of the slain messengers of Christ. Once again, the symmetry of the two generations is helpful in our theological anticipations. Also, if we take the reference to Abel and Zechariah as 'intending to span the entire history of Israel's disobedience as the first and last martyrs of the Hebrew Scriptures' (Garland:181-182), we can link this to the apocalyptic terminal generation which will complete the number of martyrs (Rv 6) and incur corresponding judgment. As with the Jesus-period, the judgment and rhetoric of Hell is to be linked to the rejection of the gospel of Christ.

The final tribulation is organically related to the obedience and purity of the church. The church, through her obedience to the great commission in being a witness to the whole world, will provoke such a response, precipitating this ungodly reflex. The narrative of Matthew 10 clearly implies that as the church is faithful to her witness (vv 1-15), so she will encounter severe opposition (vv 16-42); for the gospel aggravates sin. For this reason Jesus came to bring a sword (Mt 10:34): the presence of the light that surfaces unbelief and hatred for the light (Jn 15:18-25). Yet not only does such a final period depend upon the obedience of the church, this period itself acts positively on the church, establishing her obedience and qualifying her for the coming kingdom. It acts extrusively and spawns the necessary condition for the parousial wedding. As neo-postmillennialist Gentry affirms, 'a fully biblical inaugurated eschatology must recognise that perseverance in faith despite persecution *is* victory for the church in history' (quoted in Fowler White 2000:168).

4.2.2 The rebellion and the apostasy

Toward the end, the demonic countermovement will reach a peak in certain crystallised events (see Stauffer 1955:213). The distinct historic nature of the 'apostasy'/'rebellion' and the Man of lawlessness is denoted in 2 Thessalonians 2. Even though the seeds of such events are always present in the entire last-days period (2 Th 2:7; 1 Jn 2:18), a historic personification and crystallisation of these factors was the historic expectation of the apostolic church.

In 2 Thessalonians 2, Paul clearly expected a sequence of future events to transpire (i.e., it was not happening during his time) which would be patently clear to the believers when it occurred.¹ The importance of this sequence of certain apocalyptic events 'was essential to meet an erroneous view which had led to a misdirected hope and to ethical disorder' (La Rondelle 1983:61). Here in v 2 Paul asserts that the 'rebellion comes first'.² What is commonly known as 'the apostasy' is, literally conceived, 'an abandoning or moving away from a position held' (Martin 1995:232). It is used of both a rebellion considered politically (LXX – Gn 14:4; 2 Chron 21:8) and religiously.³ Thus Bruce (1982) favours the political sense in 2 Thessalonians, whilst Wanamaker (1990) the religious. Both have literary and traditional support. Both senses are found in the theocratic context of Daniel 11:30-32, where religious defection carries political implications (thus Vos 1994:111; La Rondelle 1983:65 refers to Ez 28). This Danielic context was probably the key benchmark for later antitypes. Yet what was originally an expectation of a Jewish apostasy from the holy covenant, is Christianised and globalised in the New Covenant period.⁴ Wanamaker (:244) understands the reference to the temple in v 4 as suggesting that Paul 'is working with a traditional apocalyptic understanding in which

¹ Thus 'the text never calls upon us to identify the Antichrist' (Nichols 2001:75), for his historical manifestation is a plagiarised parousia (2 Th 2:9).

² 'Rebellion' NRSV, NIV; 'apostasy' NASB, Wemouth, The Message; 'the falling away' ASB, NKJV; KJV; 'great revolt' NJB; 'a revolt takes place' God's Word; 'great rebellion' New Living Translation; 'a definite rejection of God' Phillips Translation. For a recent defense of the dispensational interpretation 'departure' (i.e., the rapture) see Lewis and Demarest 1996: 419-421 and House 1999. Besides the linguistic issues, the context cannot support a theory which sees the church raptured prior to the events of chapter 2, for how will she then see the signs enumerated by Paul, which he avowed were to be observed to occur before the Parousia?

³ Martin mentions, *et al*, Lk 8:13, 1Tm 4:1, Heb 3:12, Acts 5:37 and 21:21 as implicit and explicit references to a religious fallout (1995:232).

⁴ Cf. Jubilees 23:14-23; 1 Enoch 91:3-10; 1QHab 1:5; 12-13; 2:1-8; Mk 13; 5-6. Cf. Mounce 2000:234 for apostasy in Jewish literature.

it was maintained that many of the people of God, that is Jews, would rebel against God at the hour of the time of the end'.¹ Martin (1995:233) follows the religious sense in saying that the 'church also expected an unusually difficult time near the end of the age when false teachers would entice many of its members to desert the apostolic faith for more palatable but false teachings'. He cites Matthew 24:11-13, 1 Timothy 4:1-5, 2 Timothy 3:1-9 and Jude 17-18 in support. Bruce (1982:167) says, rather, that 'it appears more probable from the context that a general abandonment on the basis of civil order is envisaged'. A large scale revolt against public order ushers in the Antichrist who is the personification of those rebellious principles (a common ante-Nicene belief, Lea 1986). However, the laconic nature of Paul's words mitigate against any dogmatic certainty. We believe that although Paul was working with a fundamentally Jewish eschatological concept, the other biblical anticipations of a defection from out of the church adds an ecclesial Christianising to that tradition. Thus what happened in the Johannine churches ('they went out from us but they did not belong to us', 1 Jn 2:19) could happen on a larger universal scale prior to the end. Once again, the midpoint prototype is helpful here. It is not unreasonable to expect that as Judas Iscariot (for political reasons - Messianic hopes?) 'rebelled' and handed Jesus over, so some might arise from within the church and 'hand over' the believers for political reason. The 'rebellion' in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 could well be an ecclesial-related defection to side with the political powers of the day (Antichrist?), which could then in turn persecute the church.

Expected ecclesial defection in the NT is spoken of as an end-time phenomenon. Once again it has both inaugurated and futuristic elements; for the apostolic church experienced apostasy and yet anticipated matters to increase toward the end.² It is particularly in the Pastorals that we have an anticipation of *future* ecclesial apostasy: 'for the time is coming...' (2 Tm 4:3-4). The last-days experience of Timothy will escalate in a future period. Mounce (2000:488) states that 'although the verse [2 Tm 4:3] is not stated as a prophecy of the increase of evil as the final day approaches, it is within that context that it should be understood, as 3:1-9 and 1 Tim 4:1-5'. We can

¹ Most commentators understand the 'temple of God' (in v 4) as presenting a picture of a material shrine (so Bruce 1982:168; *pace* La Rondelle 1983:67-68).

² The topic of persons arising from within the church who turn against it can be found in: Mt 13:24-30; 36-43; 47-50; 24:10-13; Lk 12:41-48; Jn 6:60-71; 13:21-30; 16:2; Ac 20:28-20; Rm 16:17-20; 1 Cor 10:1-13; 2 Cor 6:14-7:1; 11:1-33; 1 Tm 4:1-5; 2 Tm 1:15; 3:1-9, 13; 4:3-4, 14-16; Heb 6:4-8; 10:26-31; 12:15-17; 2 Pt 2:1-22; 3:3-4; 1 Jn 2:18-19; 2 Jn 7-11; 3 Jn 9-10; Jude 1-16; Rv 2:20-23.

concur with Towner (1989:73), who expands on the relation between the 'last-days' and the *Naherwartung*:

The author's sense of living 'in the last days' (1 Tm 4:1; 2 Tm 3:1) is in keeping with an expectant attitude towards the parousia. With the rest of the early church, he held that this era was marked by an intensification of evil which pointed forward to the final culmination before the End. Finding himself in the midst of just such an outbreak, he would hardly have viewed 'the last days' as stretching interminably onwards.

As Paul says earlier, 'wicked people and impostors will go from bad to worse' (2 Tm 3:13). The first fruits were being experienced (inauguration), yet the full-harvest would come at a distinct end-time period (futuristic).

What of the common Protestant interpretation of the harlot of Revelation 17-18 as denoting an apostate church? (as Froom 1948). Should one have a political reading of the image or a religious reading? Mounce prefers the political sense, for Babylon is Rome: 'she stands for a dominant world system based on seduction for personal gain over against the righteous demands of a persecuted minority' (1998:308). Beale (1999:850) understands Babylon as 'the prevailing economic-religious system in alliance with the state and its related authorities'. That she is cast as a 'whore' does not necessitate her religious unfaithfulness, but rather 'connotes her alluring and seductive nature in attempting to draw people away from Christ' (Beale:848). Taking our bearings from the preterist horizon of Rome, and the controlling sense of the Babylonian/Tyrian literary tradition, it seems unlikely that this image carries a religious connotation (although, relative to God, this is a very 'religious' image). To identify it as an 'apostate church' of sorts is incompatible with the preterist *sitz im leben*, which helps ground our interpretation of Revelation. What it *means* must grow out of what it *meant* - and it seems very unlikely that an 'apostate church' was in existence in Paul's day. We understand the woman as pictorially representing institutionised untruth and the personification of 'the world'.

Such an expectation of a religious and political apostasy is entirely compatible with the maturity of the church. We believe that as the church becomes more the church – walking in obedience in both life and doctrine – then that manifestation of truth and momentum will have an affect on those in the church who are not of the truth: 'for everything exposed by the light becomes visible' (Eph 5:13). The true manifestation of the identity of the church will have a corollary: the true manifestation

of the identity of the world. The lines will thus become more drawn. The wheat and the tares ripen together.¹ So, for example, if the Corinthian church was brought to full obedience, then the interlopers troubling her would find no grounds for operation, and, being exposed, might seek other opportunities. *The 'rebellion' of 2 Thessalonians can therefore be seen as a religious defection consequent upon the complete obedience of the church.* As the church reaches a period of maturity, it is quite consistent to see a consequent exodus from her of those 'who are not of her'. The 'rebellion' could be precipitated by the obedience of the church, whilst also filtering the church of all those extrinsic elements within it. This itself will purify and prepare her to meet her Groom in a pure condition.

4.2.3 The Antichrist

In this section, we seek to relate our understanding of a mature church in history to the rise of the figure known as the Antichrist. It is presupposed that although many Antichrists have arisen throughout the last-days period (either persecuting the church or perverting the truth), in the final terminal period there will be a distinct personage who will successfully arrogate to himself the glory and position due to Christ.² His personality is thoroughly assumed by Paul [and] the whole tenor of the passage [2 Th 2] implies that a visible historically conditioned episode, playing in clear light of human history, is thought of' (Vos 1994:112). It is in his lifetime that the Parousia will occur, for Christ will 'annihilate him by the manifestation of his coming' (2 Th 2:8; see Stauffer 1955:217).

2 Thessalonians 2 anticipates such a figure to arise in a certain context. If we follow the Tertullian (and Bruce 1982:188) interpretation of 'the restrainer' as being a cryptic (= to avoid sedition) reference to the Roman State (as in Fromm 1950:257), as well as Bruce's political interpretation of these verses, then Antichrist arises during a

¹ We can compare it to trench warfare: as the lines come closer and closer, so the no-man's-land area becomes narrower. As the church becomes more the church, so the room for compromise decreases accordingly.

² See Bruce 1982:179-188 and Nichols 2001:78-83 for an succinct summary of the issues relating to Antichrist. See also Sauer 1977:117-130 for a valuable dispensational presentation of the person.

time of political anarchy (i.e., lawlessness).¹ He arises amidst a period when men have rejected the truth (of the gospel; 2 Th 1:8), preferring to believe what is false. His parousia is correlated with the consummation of evil and the rejection of the truth by men (so Charles 1913:439). He comes in the context of an antecedent 'postmillennial' spread and success of the gospel, being in direct opposition to its truth and reality. Berkhof (1966) correlates the Antichrist with Christ, showing how the first Advent of Christ extruded a counter, antithetical movement, which was to culminate in a personal Antichrist who will be 'the ripe fruit of the movement which is already in progress' (:99). His evil advent will be the full manifestation of the two-sided nature of history, for he is the shadow of Christ (:115), the counterforce that arrives wherever Christ arises (:112). In postmillennial style, Berkhof refers to this future figure as the 'organic end-product of a becoming Christian de-Christianised world' (:115). Because he is of this antithetical nature, John speaks of heretical Antichrists as the forerunners of the end person (cf. Nichols 2001).

On a typological level, Daniel 8:23 places the rise of Antiochus in a context when 'transgressions have reached their full measure'. Similarly, Antichrist may come riding on the crest of the world's rebellion against the truth of God. In Revelation 13, the two beasts (integrally related to the period of Antichrist) appear as part of the dragon's attempt to destroy the truth of God in the church (12:17-13:1). 'It is in this chapter that the mythical portrayal of the Antichrist reaches its fullest development in the NT' (Yates 1974:45). Here the demonic parody subverts the truth and corrupts those who dwell on the earth, 'that so deluded they might become part of the avalanche of evil that brings them to their inevitable destruction' (Yates:45). If we interpret the first beast of Revelation 13 as representing Antichrist and his kingdom (so Beasley-Murray 1983:206-208; Bruce 1982:181-182), then his pseudo Messianic character is patently seen, eventually instigating a pogrom against the church.

If the church is responsible for witnessing to all nations - which in turn confronts men with a decision - and if the rise of Antichrist is dependent upon peculiar spiritual and moral world conditions, *then the church mission is organically related to the time and occurrence of Antichrist's rise*. He represents the collective opposition of

¹ For Charles (1913:440), Paul's Antichrist does not come from Rome, 'for the power and person who restrains the Antichristian revolution are none other than the Roman empire and its imperial head. These, as the representatives of order and justice, repress the outbreak of evil, and delay the coming of...Antichrist'. Note also how the power of Rome had repeatedly protected Paul from the attacks of the Jews (also Rm 13:1).

humanity that has been extruded by the rejection of the gospel of the kingdom of God. As the church faithfully witnesses to the midpoint revelation, so we believe that she can speed up the parousia of the pseudo Christ, which must come before the Parousia of the Christ.

4.2.4 The parousial consummation

Although we have already dealt with the nature of the Parousia (sec 2.1), a few final comments are apposite in this context. Once the church has completed her mission and been purified through the final terminal sufferings, Christ will come to embrace a terrestrial church that has made herself ready.

It is best to categorise the Parousia along the line of the holy war traditions (Zch 14:3; Rv 19:11-16 *et al*). The setting for the Parousia is therefore one in which a universal annihilation is taking place (Mt 24:22), with the events of 70 CE providing us with a pattern of what is to come globally. This holy war theme has been explored by Longman & Reid (1995). They fittingly describe the general picture of the Parousia:

Just prior to the Day of the Lord, rebellion and hostility to God will dominate and oppress the faithful. On the Day of the Lord's appearing, he will descend from heaven as an approaching deliverer. The people of God – both the dead and the living – will rush forth to meet him and escort him to earth, where in awesome power and splendour, the divine warrior will conquer his enemy and retake his temple throne. The parousia of the enemy will be shortened by the Parousia of Christ (:176).

Towner's study on *epiphaneia* in the Pastorals (1989) stressed that the term, as against *parousia*, 'reflects more specifically the element of divine assistance and intervention in the event' (:67). The linguistic background of this term is Hellenistic/religious, connoting 'helping intervention' (e g 2 Th 2:8) in historical and datable categories (:66). Such parousial deliverance is vividly described in Psalm 18, a Psalm describing the theophanic deliverance of the righteous servant of God (see Niehaus 1995:365). Just as David was rescued from his enemies by the 'storm-theophany' of Yahweh, so in the terminal period some believers will live and not taste death, being rescued and caught up with Christ in the air - Enoch and Elijah style (Mt 16:28; 1 Th 4:17).

Finally, the Scriptures reveal that before Christ implements his wrath and judgment, the church that has been the object of persecution, will be raptured up to meet him in the air (Mt 24:31; 1 Th 4:13-17). Then Christ, with the church, will judge the Antichrist and all those who were assembled to persecute the church of God (Zch 14:2). The people of God will thus share in the judgment of Christ, judging those who judged them, and, as Isaiah 26:5-6 says, the 'feet of the poor, the steps of the needy, will cast down the unholy lofty city'.¹ We close this section with Psalm 45:12b-15, which speaks of the groomed virgin being brought to her king, a type of the church being brought before Christ at the Parousia:

The princess is decked in her chamber with gold-woven robes; in many-colored robes she is led to her king; behind her the virgins, her companions, follow. With joy and gladness they are led along as they enter the palace of the king.

¹ Cf. Ps 149:9; Is 14:3-4; Dn 7:22-23; Zch 12:6-8; Mt 19:28; 25:31-46; Lk 22:30; Rm 16:20; 1 Cor 6:3; 2 Cor 10:6; 1 Th 4:13-17; 2 Th 1:7-10; Rv 2:26-27; 3:9, 21; 17:14; 19:14.

4.3 Typological structures

When speaking explicitly of the future eschatological events, the NT writers most often spoke typologically. Anticipated future historical events were paralleled to their antecedent historical events. The typological approach is the most prevalent hermeneutic of the NT church (Goppelt 1988:198, 200). Here in the biblical use of typology, we have one of the most fruitful and promising sources for developing a biblical scheme of futuristic eschatology.

There has been a renewed interest in the study of typology in the last half of the 20th century, a fact concomitant with the rise of biblical theology and its distantiation from allegory (Foulkes 1994:342). This modern typological rise has been called 'post-critical neo-typology' (Davidson 1981:3), with many discovering that biblical typology is not an unstructured intuitive/pneumatic approach to Scripture but rather a systematic hermeneutical method (Davidson:5).¹ Through a study of the comprehensive interrelationship between the OT types and NT antitypes, futurist eschatology can be more *realistically* conceived and represented. This thesis has a salvation-history methodology, which is a requisite structure in the typological approach. Salvation-history adds a temporal thrust and accounts for the escalation in the antitype, whilst typology sets the 'DNA' and pattern of that historical process. Typology is important for this thesis for it is integral for the rationale and legitimation for our midpoint paradigm and its radiation and replication in the interadventual and terminal periods. Also, our understanding of the integration of preterist, historicist and futurist elements in eschatology (Diagram 2) is built upon a typological understanding.

¹ For a study of typology, see the extensive book list of Baker (1991:173-176) and his concise monograph (1994:145-176). The following have been consulted: Davidson (1981) Goppelt (1982), Foulkes (1994), Ellison (1953), Buchanan (1987:1-39), Currid (1994), Cahill (1982), Karlberg (1988), Gundry (1969), Glenn (1997), La Rondelle (1983:35-55), and Drane (1978). Goppelt's and Davidson's studies are two of the most significant studies in typology. All however have attempted to provide some hermeneutical controls for typology, obviating the degree of caprice and arbitrariness.

4.3.1 Defining typology

Davidson (1981) asks the fundamental questions in this 'post-critical neo-typological' debate:

Does this hermeneutical approach involve the interpretation of specific, divinely-designed, predictive prefigurations, as in the traditional understanding? Or is it part of a common human way of analogical thinking which in Scripture involves the recognition of the 'recurring rhythm' or 'structural analogies' within God's saving activity, as maintained in recent studies?...The older conception (most represented by authors before the 1950s) views typology in terms of divinely preordained and predictive prefigurations. The more recent consensus describes typology in terms of historical correspondences retrospectively recognised within the consistent redemptive activity of God....Is the typical element [therefore] already to be found within the context of the historical root event, or is an event, person, or institution only seen to be typical in retrospect after the appearance of the antitype? (:5, 94-97 *passim*).

Virkler (1981:184) provides us with a traditional definition: typology is 'a preordained representative relationship which certain persons, events, and institutions bear to corresponding persons, events, and institutions occurring at a later time in salvation-history'. Cahill (1982:274) provides the more 'modern' philosophical definition: it is 'an imaginative vision of history and historical process ultimately grounded on the conviction of the creative power of a God who speaks and acts'. Davidson (1981:421) provides us with an inaugurated eschatological definition: typology is 'the study of the OT salvation historical realities (persons, events, or institutions) which God has specifically designed to correspond to, be prospective-predictive prefigurations of, their eluctable (*devoir-etre*) and absolutely escalated eschatological fulfillment aspects (inaugurated/appropriated/consummated) within NT salvation history'. Davidson's study has made a renewed plea for the divine intent of the pre-presentations of NT eschatological realities, also helpfully linking the NT antitypes in their three periods of escalated fulfillment.¹ Summing up, we can say that typology studies the theological interrelationship between historical biblical realities occurring between their protological and eschatological horizons, seeking to understand the organic connection, as well as the methodology and nature of the unfolding process.

¹ Of importance for understanding typology is the distinction between typology and allegory: 'In typology the literal, historical meaning of the passage is taken seriously, and the typological correspondence is *built upon* – not unrelated or opposed to – the original meaning. Allegory, on the other hand, is not primarily concerned about the literal meaning, but assigns to the words and phrases of the text meanings that are foreign to the original meaning' (Davidson 1981:20).

Understanding *how* a biblical type works guards against excess and arbitrariness, and allows us to infer even more types that are not explicitly mentioned in the NT writings.

4.3.2 Characteristics of typological structures

4.3.2.1 Historical recurrence

The historical aspect is requisite for typology, for 'only historical facts are material for typological interpretation' (Goppelt 1982:17-18). Typologists insist that both the type and the antitype must be actual historical events, persons or institutions, providing an 'intrinsic historical connection' (Cahill 1982:273). These historical events are eventuated by the Lord of all history, who acts in a consistent manner. Thus 'the fundamental conviction which underlies typology is that God is consistently active in the history of this world (especially in the history of his chosen people) and that as a consequence the events in the history tend to follow a consistent pattern' (Baker 1991:237).¹ According to Woolcombe, at the heart of biblical typology is 'the recapitulative nature of the saving acts of God in Christ' (quoted in Davidson 1981:69; also Foulkes 1994:356). This feature results in typology's characteristic linear or horizontal relation of development.²

Typological exegesis also assumes a divine sovereignty over history (Goppelt 1982:xv), also a key axiom in salvation-history. This is why a distinct eschatological use of typology was used exclusively in the Jewish environment, being unknown in non-biblical Hellenistic environments (so Goppelt:23-41, 225). Salvation-history, with its teleological emphasis, was apparently unique to the OT religion.

¹ Much Reformed theology contains a tendency to downplay the historicity of the antitype, stressing a more 'vertical' antitype. Calvin (1989, Book 2:387-399) foregrounds the primacy of the *heavenly* hopes (mediated in the OT by earthly things) against the OT terrestrial historical situation. Darby reacted to this devaluation of the OT's corporeal materiality yet continued to hold to the primacy of the heavenly, especially in relation to the church. Both these tendencies have obscured the ecclesial antitypes that anticipated the historical destiny of the church, preferring to nuance her heavenly verticality.

² Hebrews demonstrates the vertical (earth/heaven) aspect of biblical typology.

4.3.2.2 Theological correspondence

The historical antitypical recurrence is not mere repetition but a reenactment of God's consistent salvific activity. It is the consistent nature of both God and man that furnishes us with the root for the analogy of faith and the 'typical' nature of his acts in history. Typology's language and grammar therefore lies in the nature of God's relationship with man (cf. Goppelt 1982:105). Given this vertical theological constant, and adding to it the salvation-historical horizontal forward momentum, we have the two axioms that are crucial for understanding typology.

Typology therefore underscores the sovereignty, immutability and consistency of God, and in doing so, points to the unity of Scripture (thus Baker 1991:320; Currid 1994:128; Freedman 1967). This results in the typological assumption that 'the history of God's people and of his dealings with them is a single continuous process in which a uniform pattern may be discovered' (Lampe, quote in Baker 1994:321).¹ This theological factor is the source of the bible's 'self-constituted unity' (Ellison 1953:161; also Drane 1978:201). Foulkes (1994) has shown how the acts of God in Israel were expected to be repeated throughout her history, being rooted in the covenant and God's theological relationship with Israel. Each generation was held responsible for making these acts known to each succeeding generation, and, given corresponding situations, they could expect God to act in analogous ways (:353).

Further, within this unity there is a horizontal forward movement (salvation-history) which is aligned with the original design of Genesis: *endzeit gleich urzeit*, protology is the basis for eschatology (cf. Dumbrell 1985, 1994 and Van Gemeren 1995; Thomas 1997). 'The foundation for the knowledge of the last things is in the knowledge of the first things' (Doyle 2000:26). Typology is often controlled by the idea that eschatology is a recapitulation of protology. In many cases, this feature reveals an implicit salvation-historical hermeneutic of a biblio-theological rationale that runs from creation (protology) to new creation (eschatology). This overarching structure is responsible for the particular genius of biblical prophecy in the

¹ Davidson (1981:95) thus notes that 'most recent scholars discuss typology in terms of a consistent, divine activity in historical events so that earlier events "anticipate" later ones in salvation history'. This tends to downplay the sense of a type being a divinely ordained prefiguration.

processional nature of its fulfillments. Such a process produces large typological structures which manifest in biblical particulars.¹

4.3.2.3 Antitype's intensification

Many scholars affirm that an antitype introduces a heightening of salvific action (Cahill 1982; Goppelt 1982). This *steigerung* is grounded on the OT's hope 'for a repetition in an unprecedented manner' (Foulkes 1994:356-365).² There is a repetition of prior events but in a different key, often in an eschatological one (Folkes:356). Here there is not always a *mere* reoccurrence or repetition, because the linear development often includes contrasts, heightening and often even cancellation (so Goppelt:130). The escalation also indicates that something new is breaking in, mitigating the perception that typological reoccurrence engenders a cyclical nature of time (cf. Buchanan 1987:13; Davidson 1981:59-68). In the NT, this intensification occurs due to the inauguration of the eschatological last-days period (so Davidson:282). This redemptive-historical factor thus creates a new *Vorbild*, a new model and pattern, becoming the new standard and center for the entire salvation-historical process (so Cullmann 1951). However, this commonly held axiom of intensification is not a *sine qua non* for typology. For example, Jeremiah 31:15 compared with Matthew 2:17-18 runs contrary to the *steigerung*. There does not always have to be an intensification (quantitatively or qualitatively) in typology, yet it is a common NT characteristic (so Baker 1991:179-202).³

¹ Cahill's article (1982) penetrates beneath the surface of these specifics to this macro hermeneutical perspective. He sees typology as rooted in the hermeneutical nature of the biblical books (:267). There, authors are not implementing typology but are rather discovering a pattern that is inexorably present in history by the creative will of God (:269). Cahill, influenced by Frye, focussed on the implicit typological patterns/impulses within Scripture, containing a 'large typological structure', a 'single archetypal structure extending from creation to apocalypse' (:270). In keeping with the neo-typical emphasis, he mitigates the divine-predictive element in favour of these larger overarching rhythmic structures.

² 'As long as the inheritance that God had for his people was not fully possessed, as long as they suffered defeat or were confined by their enemies and failed to enjoy peace and security and prosperity, they could feel that the promises were not completely fulfilled' (Foulkes 1994:356). Wescott (quoted by Baker 1991:47) says: 'each promise fulfilled brings the sense of a larger promise'.

³ There is often an anti-chilastic metanarrative that functions in certain definitions of typology. It is asserted that with the NT antitype, the OT types are often nullified and surpassed. Such generalisations are the result of theological reductionism (see Davidson (1981:55) who criticises Goppelt for having a predetermined *a priori* definition of typology). We can say that intensification is a common feature, and although many OT realities are elevated to new 'spiritual' levels (verticality) by the NT antitype, the OT type's significance is not necessarily exhausted by its more spiritual intensification and application.

4.3.2.4 Evidence of the theological intention of a type

In order to identify an historical person, institution or event as a type, there must be evidence for such an identification. Davidson (1981:223), following Martelet, calls this the *devoir-etre*, the 'must needs be' prophetic and predictive quality of foreshadowing. This 'ineluctable' sense is the prospective anticipation of the OT type seen once the new age realities are inaugurated in Christ. For this reason Gundry (1969:237) understands the essence of a type as being its predictive element. The type often 'demands' a fuller actualisation of its theological 'vertical' axiom, often nascently anticipating its deeper, more ubiquitous application. Something of the type must 'cry out' for a fuller actualisation. Thus the local 'Israelitish' manifestations of God's universal salvation seem to 'demand' a larger, fuller and more effective realisation.¹ The protological motifs (e g, God's universal salvation) often 'demand' a more universal (eschatological) and wider fulfillment than is seen in many aspects in the flow of biblical history. Genesis and Revelation therefore fittingly envelop the canon.

4.3.3 The midpoint as type

Can the NT events and the apostolic church be considered prototypical for the entire church era? Can the ecclesial age be reckoned as the antitype and the midpoint period the type? Is there only a quantitative intensification of the midpoint period? Given the understanding of typology from a NT inaugurated eschatological standpoint (Davidson 1981), we can answer in the affirmative. The preterist, historicist and futurist schools of NT eschatology are all one of a piece within the escalated nature of NT typological fulfillments. They are all progressive *Nachbild's* of the Christological *Vorbild*.²

There is a tendency to interpret the Christ-event as the terminus and focus of all types. Yet Davidson (1981) has shown that there is fulfillment 'beyond' yet within

¹ We believe that the midpoint revelation has a primacy and new quality about it. Once this *novum* has been revealed, only then do we recognise the OT anticipations and types (cf. Baker 1991 for debates). Therefore Fritsch, quoted by Davidson (1981:58), asserts that 'that which makes the institution, event or person typical is the redemptive truth which it teaches and prefigures'.

² *Vorbild* is a German term, used by Davidson (1981), for the matrix which creates the impression (that which forms) and *Nachbild* as that form created by the matrix impress (that which is formed).

Christ in the ecclesiological period. Such an approach to the ecclesial period can be affirmed if we understand ecclesiology to be inclusive of Christology, the church-age as being qualitatively coextensive with the Messianic age (see Kingsbury 1973). Jesus can be seen as the new type (midpoint period) because he represents the essential and absolute manifestation of the kingdom of God in history prior to consummation. This revelation then extends into the apostolic period, which is witnessed to by the NT letters and is a benchmark for all church history. Goppelt (1982:12) can therefore say that 'the NT stands on the same level of redemptive history as the Christian interpreter....The church of the NT, which awaits glorification, already prefigures the glorified church'. The life of Christ thus demonstrates the destiny of the church (Goppelt:201). This allows us to say that Jesus is the type and the disciples the antitype (so Buchanan 1987:7-8). This unique period of Christ is thus both an antitypical fulfillment of many OT types and also a typical and normative *Vorbild* for the latter ecclesial *Nachbild*.¹

Kermonde, quoted in Cahill (1982:279) asks a crucial question: If the OT could be interpreted as prefiguring Christianity, then might not the New be read in the same way? We believe it can and affirm that the NT period anticipates the dynamics of the entire ecclesiastical and interadventual period. We can see typical events in the apostolic church as foreshadowing later events of the interadventual period and specifically the terminal generation. We believe that there is a quantitative application and extension of NT types, but not a qualitative dimension, for all has already been inaugurated in the midpoint period (Diagram 2). Thus, eschatologically, types reveal 'characteristics of divine action which the church of the last-days could anticipate' (Goppelt 1982:220). We can anticipate, along with the apocalyptic tendency, a quantitative intensification and universalisation of prior theological realities prior to the consummation (cf. Goppelt:33-37). We affirm a qualitative continuity of the church mission and a quantitative escalation of the initial midpoint revelation. Christ's period is the original prototype and form of the gospel that is to find its corresponding 'strike' or 'blow' (semantic of *tupos*, Davidson 1981:117) in the ecclesial period. Christ is the mold into which the church is molded.

¹ After an exhaustive lexical study of *tupos*, Davidson (1981:131) concludes with three basic categories of meaning: (1) the matrix or *Vorbild*, i e, what leaves its impress; (2) the impression or *Nachbild*, i e, the result of the impress or blow, or what is produced by the matrix; and (3) the matrix or *Vorbild* which is at the same time an impression or *Nachbild*.

Davidson's book (1981) is an attempt to understand typology by allowing 'all structures of typology to emerge from within Scripture by means of a thorough analysis of key biblical themes and passages' (:73). From his semasiological study of key passages (1 Cor 10:1-3; Rm 5:12-21; 1 Pt 3:18-22; Heb 8-9) he discovered five *tupos* structures: the historical, the eschatological, the Christological-soteriological, the ecclesiological and the prophetic structures. From this he concluded that many OT *tupoi* referred to one or more of the three temporal aspects of the kingdom of God in its eschatological fulfillment as found in the NT (i e, inaugurated/Christological eschatology, appropriated/ecclesiological eschatology, or consummated/apocalyptic eschatology) (:388-408). He thus posits a tentative structural relationship between typology and eschatology, for,

salvation history appears to present the historical, eschatological, Christological-soteriological framework for typology. This framework seems to provide a threefold temporal 'substructure' that indicates the modality of the eschatological fulfillment of the OT types (:396).

Key though is the fact that 'the OT *tupoi* find their fulfillment in the soteriological work of Christ and/or in the new covenant soteriological realities issuing from Christ' (:283) – what we call the midpoint revelation. This midpoint concept – inclusive of the events of Christ's ministry, apostolic church and secular events – can provide us with *tupoi* and structures that are echoed in the OT and are to be paralleled and escalated in the forthcoming generations. His study helps us note the salvation-historical unfolding of OT types in the NT period. They unfold along the lines of NT eschatology: realised in Christ; inaugurated, appropriated and actualised in the church; and consummated in the coming kingdom. Thus beside the inauguration in Christ, we have an ecclesiological 'eschatology-in-process-of-fulfillment', an aspect not highlighted in previous typologies. Davidson's contribution to understanding the NT *tupoi* reveals how Christ can be both the antitypical *Nachbild* (of OT types), the midpoint *Urbild* (new prototype), as well as the typical *Vorbild* for the entire church-age.

We thus believe that the midpoint period provides a prophetic structural *tupoi* for the entire interadventual age, and particularly for the terminal period. That 'center of history' period, in both its Christological, soteriological, ecclesial and temporal aspects, can provide us with types and structures that are echoed in the OT and are

also anticipations of what is to come. This advance presentation symbolises what the entire church-age is to 'recapitulate' and what the final generation will globally and ultimately attain.¹

4.3.4 Typological examples of ecclesial themes

Since we believe that most Christological-soteriological aspects and their associated realities are typically foreshadowed in OT persons, institutions and realities, we should find anticipations of our NT motif in the OT. The anticipation of the consummate triumph of God's people in history and the divine completion of the church is variously prefigured in the OT, giving them typical status. We now list some of these OT types (or antitypes of the Christological/ecclesiological *Vorbild* (!)), as well as the midpoint historical experiences that provided a type for the future church period. In the light of all the types and antitypes, the paradigms found in the life and experiences of Christ have a certain primacy, for 'Christ must be seen as the ultimate orientation point of the *tupoi* and their NT fulfillments' (Davidson 1981:283).

4.3.4.1 Some Old Testament Types

- The presentation of Eve to Adam (Gn 2:22-23) || the presentation of the church to Christ (Eph 5:27).
- Enoch's favor with God and his translation (Gn 5:21-24; Heb 11:5) || the church's favor with God and its translation (1 Th 4:17).
- A wicked/intransigent generation, Noah's righteousness, witness and preservation (Gn 6-8) || terminal church generation (Lk 17:26).
- Growth of Israelites and persecution before deliverance (Ex 1:1-14) || Persecution as a reflex of the world to church success before deliverance (Rv 11:7).

¹ If the apostolic church believed that they were living in the final epoch of the last-days, not expecting a quantitative new epoch to occur before the end (see chapter 2), then all the personalities, institutions and events of the NT can be seen as the final eschatological antitypes. Yet also, adding a quantitative dimension, they can themselves be typical of the interadventual period and terminal period.

- Moses as witness in Egypt's judgment-generation || Church as witness in judgment-generation (Rv 11:3-7).
- Protection of Israelites from plagues of wrath (Ex 8:22) || Sealing of church (Rv 7:1-3).
- Victorious exodus from Egypt after 'apocalyptic' plagues (Ex 12:36; 13:18) || Victory of the church through terminal period (Rv 7:9-17).
- Amalek opposition prior to Theophany (Ex 17:8-16) || Satanic outburst prior to Theophany (Rv 11:7).
- Obedient Israel at Theophany (Dt 5:28) || Obedient church at Christophany.
- The tabernacle was set up *before* the arrival of the holy objects (Nu 10:21) || The completion of the church mission prior to the Parousia of God.
- Moses' completion of the Tabernacle and the Glory of God (Ex 40:17-38) || Christ's completion of the church and the Glory of God (Mt 16:18; Eph 2:19-22).
- Once Solomon completed building the temple, God came to dwell in it (2 Chr 5) || Completion of the church and Parousia.
- The glory and fame of Solomon's temple prepared at cost by David (1 Chr 22:5) || Glory of the church prepared at cost by Jesus.
- Elijah witness for three and a half years and subsequent translation (1 Ki 17-1 Ki 2:11 ; Ja 5:17) || Church witness for three and a half years and subsequent translation (Rv 11:3-12).
- Protection of Daniel in the lions den, and Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego in the furnace (Dn 3,6) || Physical protection of the some believers during final tribulation (Rv 11:1-2).
- Religio-political apostasy by some and faithfulness/purification by others during the persecution period of Antiochus Epiphanes (Dn 11:29-35) || Apostasy and endurance/purification of church during last period (2 Th 2:1-12; Rv 7:13-17).
- Nehemiah's opposition and completion of the walls of Jerusalem (Neh 1-7) || Opposition and completion of church.
- Chronological judgments upon disobedient churches (Rv 2-4) || Preparation and purification of church.
- The Nicomidian persecution and Paul's completion of the gospel witness (2 Th 2:1-12) || Completion of church witness through persecution of Antichrist (Mt 24:14)

4.3.4.2 Christological Paradigm

- 'Three-year' pattern of success/ popularity > defection/unpopularity > persecution > death > glorification || 'Three-year' pattern of the church in preterist, historicist, and – specifically - futurist aspects.
- Jesus' 'perfection' and preparation (through sufferings) for his heavenly ministry (Heb 5:5-10) || Church's 'perfection' and preparation for Parousia.
- Intransigent period of darkness at the end of his ministry (Lk 22:53) || Terminal period (Rv 11:7).
- Judas' apostasy (Jn 13:21-30) || The apostasy at the End (2 Th 2:3).
- His faithfull confession before Pilate (1 Tm 6:12) || Church holding to 'the faith of Jesus' (Rv 14:12).

4.3.4.3 Apostolic Anticipation

- Period of growth and power and consequent persecution (Ac 2-8:1) || Church paradigm.
- The 'revival' and persecution at Ephesus (Ac19) || Church pattern.
- Relative (preterist) completion of gospel mandate in first century (Rm 15:18-19, 16:26; Col 1:6, 23) || Final (futurist) completion of mandate in 'last century' (Mt 24:14).
- Obedient Gentile churches as types (2 Cor 10:1-6; Phlp 1:3-11; 1 Th 1:5-7) || Obedient church (Eph 4:1-16).a mature Christian (1 Cor 11:1; Phlp 3:17; 4:9) || Corporate ecclesial maturity (Eph 4:1-16).
- Apostasy in the early church (1 Tm 4:1-4; 1 Jn 2:18-18 *et al*) || Apostasy in the terminal church (2 Th 2:3).
- Persecution/preparation in the context of NT *Naherwartung* (1 Peter (4:17)) || Persecution/preparation in context of the terminal church *Naherwartung* (Mt 24-25).
- Christological judgments upon disobedient churches (Rv 2-3) || Preparation and purification of church.
- The Neronian persecution and Paul's completion of the gospel witness (2 Tm 4:16-18) || Completion of church witness through persecution of Antichrist (Mt 24:14).

- Jerusalem 70 CE as a type of apocalyptic judgment after 'Christianised' generation (Mt 23-24) || Apocalyptic judgment on the Earth (year X) after the 'Christianised' generation.

Noting these typological examples provides further biblical rationale for the *historical nature* of the expected terminal events and the completion of the church mission. We believe that typology provides us with an essential hermeneutic for understanding those future events and the church's latter-day glory. These types and others in the Scriptures all unite to provide cogent witness (either explicit or implicit) to a theme which is not contained in a few isolated 'proof texts' but carried within the wider purpose of God seen in Scripture. We believe that as our theme of a mature and obedient church is further debated and pondered, so other types will surface and corroborate our motif.

In this section we have sought to demonstrate how the final obedience of the church relates to the apocalyptic aspects of NT eschatology. Our belief that this obedience expedites and extrudes these events is not explicitly stated in the NT, yet we have attempted to show that such an understanding is entirely consistent with the dynamics of the apocalyptic portions of Scripture. In this way, we have hopefully shed some further light on the ongoing debate between the millennial views, showing how one can hold to a modified form of both postmillennialism and premillennialism. Although this will not please everybody, we believe that only such an eclectic position does justice to the full range of all the temporal aspects of NT eschatology.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis we have attempted to demonstrate the determinative role of the ecclesial mission in understanding the nature and duration of the interadventual period, either expediting the Parousia or alternatively impeding it. With the Darbyite teaching as backdrop, we have alternatively shown that the church's glorious historical destiny is a major motif of the NT, one that provided the apostle Paul with inspiration for his Gentile mission. Tracking this anticipated ecclesial hope, we discovered a key for integrating the preterist, historicist and futurist aspects of NT eschatology into a synoptic and comprehensive picture. There we saw that the first century was witness to an actualisation of the 'great commission' (preterist), that the church was responsible for the process of universalising this gospel further (historicist), and that there was an anticipated final future period which would witness the optimum intensification and actualisation of all the features characteristic of the entire interadventual period (futurist). All this is contained in an understanding of the last-days epoch, the hermeneutics of typology, and of how the church mission is determinative for the period's nature and duration.

We have attempted to demonstrate that the church's mission is not undefined or uncertain, but has been predetermined through the witness of Christ in the midpoint period. The church is to take *that gospel* and bear witness to it in all the nations before the end. As she does this, the church is build up both extensively and intensively. Although the Scripture reveals that God's purposes through the church will be accomplished, the variable of human contingency is built into this picture. God has sovereignly set the parameters of the interadventual period, yet the church has latitude within that framework to either obediently hasten or disobediently retard that inevitable Day. Taking both these aspects into account provides us with a balanced approach in understanding the duration of the interadventual period.

As the church is obedient to its mandate, so she will effect and fulfill what is predicted of her in the NT. These promises are not fulfilled automatically but are contingent upon the active faith and obedience of believers. As each part of the body grows up into the fullness of Christ, so the church will progressively attain to her ultimate destiny. Yet as we have stressed, such an attainment is not grounded in any

human factor but only in the power of Christ in his people, who is the only 'hope of glory', the one who will complete the good work he began.

It is our prayer that the persistent and gracious Holy Spirit, who is lord in the church, grant and diffuse in all his servants that obedience that comes from knowing the love of Christ, so that 'we all may attain to the maturity of the measure of the full stature of Christ', thus hastening the glorious day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Looking closely, we must briefly look at the difference between these two OT

genres. In the OT hope, scholars observe two streams: the prophetic and apocalyptic. Hanson (1979) labels the two streams 'apocalyptic eschatology and prophetic eschatology' (94). For him, the eschatology of the prophetic stream is 'linear' (112). This deity in the OT was 'transcendent' and 'immanent' and 'unconquerable'. Prophecy leads to 'with the promise of a new world' (112).

The structure of prophetic eschatology is 'linear' and 'unconquerable' (Hanson 1978:30). Apocalyptic eschatology is 'cyclical' and 'unconquerable'. It is not as the fulfilment of prophecy, but as 'a new world' (Hanson 1978:30). The new famous definition of apocalyptic eschatology is 'a new world' (Hanson 1978:30). The new famous definition of apocalyptic eschatology is 'a new world' (Hanson 1978:30).

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* See Hanson 1979:1-12 and 1978:30-47, for an overview of Hanson's important contributions to the study of apocalyptic eschatology.

* Hanson must be credited with the move to find the genesis of apocalyptic in the prophetic, not to look to separate the two into one eschatic picture, keeping the divide. Although he makes the two

Addendum 1: Prophecy and apocalyptic in the Old Testament

In noting the organic relation between the hope of the NT and the OT, we inevitably enter the debate between prophecy and apocalyptic. The degree to which Jesus and the early church shared the world view of both apocalyptic and prophetic second-temple traditions is a determining factor in handling the sources that witness to their teaching. Firstly, we must briefly look at the differences between these two OT streams.

In characterising the OT hope, scholars observe two streams: the prophetic and the apocalyptic.¹ Hanson (1979) labels the two streams: apocalyptic eschatology and prophetic eschatology (:10). For him, the continuity resides in their 'essential vision of restoration' (:12). This duality in the OT has traditionally been divided along historical and transcendent lines. Prophecy tends to view the future as being affected within the structures of mundane reality, having a tendency toward integration (Hanson 1976:30). Apocalyptic, on the other hand, conceives of God's final saving acts, 'not as the fulfillment of promises within political structures and historical events, but as deliverance out of the present order into a new transformed order' (Hanson 1976:30). The now famous definition of apocalyptic genre also defines apocalyptic in terms of this transcendence:

An apocalypse is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a *transcendent reality* [italics mine] which is temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial, insofar as it involves another, supernatural world (Collins 1984:4).

Hanson's bifurcation is a helpful descriptive contribution to OT eschatology. It seems unwise though to view these two aspects as two stereotyped independent aspects of the OT hope, for there are sections which approximate to apocalyptic in prophetic books which cannot be interpreted as extrinsic material. Even if we say that apocalyptic evolved out of the prophetic (Collins 2000:42; Hanson 1979), there remains a tendency to segregate related elements of one eclectic and comprehensive picture.² This tendency to compartmentalise has developed from a history-of-

¹ See Hanson 1979:1-12 and Aune 2000:47. For an overview of Hanson's important contribution, see 1979: 429-444.

² Hanson must be credited with the move to find the genesis of apocalyptic in the prophetic, yet he fails to integrate the two into one eclectic picture, keeping the divide. Although he unites the two in

religions approach to the OT study, where the hope of Israel evolved from a simple tribal religion to an eclectic and accreted national hope. Apocalyptic is then seen to be extrinsic and alien to the original faith of Israel, an aberration which needs to be 'demythologised'. Von Rad (1975:301-308), divorcing apocalyptic from authentic OT faith on the grounds of its a-historicity, represents the one end of the extreme - apocalyptic is not classical Yahwehism. However, the primary problem with this bifurcation is that one still excludes prophetic elements from apocalyptic and *visa versa*.¹ One ends up playing havoc with the text, attributing any apocalyptic elements as later additions to the text. Hanson (1979:10) himself attempts to avoid a 'cleft stick' approach, noting that apocalyptic is 'the mode assumed by the prophetic tradition once it had been transferred to a new and radically altered setting in the post-exilic community'. One wonders then what prophetic content that mode has. The end result of such an approach is seen in Hanson (:440), who plays off different eschatological views within the history of Israel. Accordingly, in the post-exilic period we have the theology of the Chronicler which is vastly different from the eschatological theology of 'Trito-Isaiah', Zechariah 9-14 and Malachi. This tendency to polarise the OT picture is the result of isolating various aspects of the one eclectic picture.

The desire to categorise has been grounded on the correct observation that there is a development within OT eschatology whereby the 'apocalyptic tradition' has become more self-conscious. Collins affirms that 'it is possible to trace the evolution of some literary forms from prophecy to apocalypticism (2000:42; also Aune 2000:47). He is correct. There is a patent intensifying of those native and incipient apocalyptic elements, manifesting itself in such acute forms that it can legitimately be called apocalyptic eschatology (e g Daniel 7-12). Thus Beale (1999:37) calls apocalyptic 'an intensification of prophecy'. Dumbrell (1997:395) correctly notices that 'apocalyptic systematised what the Israelite prophets had only glimpsed - the totality of history and history yet to be unfolded...to which faithful Israel was the key.' He also perceptively observes that 'what was implicit in the earlier biblical reviews of history, namely, that there is a hidden meaning in history, is made explicit in apocalyptic writings' (1994:141). Dunn helps clarify these salient characteristics of apocalyptic:

their 'essential vision of restoration' (:12), he views them as two separate perspectives.

¹ See Hanson's definitions of the two (1979:11) and note the inevitable compartmentalising (also p 431).

But in apocalyptic the picture is painted on a larger canvas, with bolder, more sweeping brush strokes. At each characteristic point of apocalyptic there is a radical heightening of the eschatology which leaves prophecy behind. The discontinuity...is much sharper....The utter pessimism...more radical....The end-time suffering more terrible, the judgments and salvation are final, the End much closer, the reliance on divine intervention by a divine agent more absolute....These can all be seen as extensions of prophecy, but also mark the boundary between prophecy and apocalyptic (1977:315-316).

Dunn avoids the descriptive tendency of inserting a cleavage between apocalyptic and the more 'prophetic' perspective. He also seems to support the idea that apocalyptic can be seen as intrinsic to the faith of Israel (as Ladd 1958a:81), an ingredient that was potentially present from Israel's earliest periods. Yet most concur that apocalyptic is an intensification of those traditional elements due to peculiar historical, theological and sociological factors.¹

It seems advisable, in categorising, to have an inclusive picture of the OT hope, incorporating diverse streams that were more prominent at one or another period. The accenting of those apocalyptic elements was probably conditioned by socio-political circumstances, a fact helpfully brought out by Hanson (1979). Religious apostasy, social anomie and Gentile political domination were the historical conditions that extruded the 'new look' of Israelite faith. If 'apocalyptic is an attempt to overcome the discrepancy between the harsh realities of everyday life and the promises of God' (Beker 1990:21), then we can understand how this imagery reached its acme in the exilic and post-exilic period.² This theology is conditional and suited to the times, thus tending to be more transcendent, deterministic, dualistic and essentially optimistic (Rowley 1948:408).³ Rowland (1982:14) identifies the salient theme in

¹ The 'Zion theology' of the Davidic and Solomonic periods (Krause 1986:78-82; Strong 1996:1314-1321) saw a flowering of the salient apocalyptic elements, which intensified in the first temple Isaian period and reached a zenith in the Danielic and post-exilic period. This particular period, with its national glory and 'non-apocalyptic' social conditions, supports our thesis that prophetic and apocalyptic are mutually inclusive.

² Scholars seem too quick to unite canonical and extra-canonical apocalyptic, not observing the transfiguration and aberration that is a salient feature of the latter. In this thesis, we are primarily concerned with canonical apocalyptic, which was the matrix and benchmark for all later apocalyptic writings. The area of greatest difference is in the latter extra-canonical apocalyptic writings and their foregrounding of the termination of this world, pseudonymity, numerology, cosmic travel and heightened angelic dialogue. These writings are often mystical apocalypses of world-weary visionaries - an element alien to canonical apocalyptic (see Collins 2000:41). Although later extra-canonical apocalyptic posited a terminal and universal conflagration and destruction, this cosmic element of destruction is less clear in canonical apocalyptic. It is noticeably absent from Daniel or Zechariah and need not be read into many of the other OT texts of ostensible 'cosmic conflagration'. This latter emphasis can be seen as an extrapolation from certain Scriptures that contain hints of such an event (e.g. Is 65:17).

³ For a scholarly introduction to the nature of apocalyptic, plus a detailed bibliography, see Collins 1984:2-24.

apocalyptic as an interest in that which is secret - 'the theme of the direct communication of the heavenly mysteries in all their diversity'. In these writings, 'truths which are beyond man's capacity to deduce from his circumstances are revealed by means of the manifestation of the divine counsels' (:17). Being a more heavenly 'downloading' of information, the apocalyptic universe is thus highly nuanced as pessimistic, symbolic, periodised, and villainised. Also, 'the apocalyptists were interested in the total course of history, as opposed to the strictly national-Israel interest of the prophets' (Dumbrell 1994:140), their language being primarily in the 'idiom of the cosmic realm' (Hanson 1979:12). Important to note is the fact that their envisioned future does rise out of the present historical situation but is disjunctive with it – thus information is given less personally (the prophet's personality was often part of the message) than directly (angels, visions, dreams). The apocalyptic medium tended to be primarily 'direct', something probably necessitated by sociological, theological, political (Daniel, Zechariah) and ethical factors.

We offer the following definition of apocalyptic: Apocalyptic is concerned with that aspect of the faith of Israel that views Yahweh's relationship to this world in cosmic, dualistic and deterministic terms, coming to a particular focus in his ultimate and final acts which are his response to the present demise of both Israel and the world.

...and 'coming or arrival' in the sense of his actual presence, etc. In the Old Testament and David had an initial period of apostasy, so the duration covering Jesus' visible period is shortly brief. Thus, when they speak of the 'end of the age', they do not mean the end of our present-day world, but rather the end of the present evil age of Israel's unfulfilled promise and of the new age of Messianic glory and Israel's vindication. Thus in these narratives, we hear of the *destruction of Israel's sin*, the *fall, completion and arrival of his kingdom*.

In this portion of Scripture, according to Wright, we have a combination of the warnings and promises which we have seen to characterize Jesus' ministry all through. His words had warned of a judgment on impudent Israel, and a vindication for his followers. If we understand both Jesus' and John's writings regarding a coming judgment (Lk 21: 26-28; Mt 24:26) to refer to a coming national disaster involving the destruction of the nation by Rome, the story makes for far better reading and is more

This thesis is based on my doctoral B. Theology of the University of Pretoria, 1997, and *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 103-116.

Addendum 2: Wright's understanding of Mark 13

Wright's impressive grasp of the issues in NT theology and his systemic appraisals have become standard reading for understanding contemporary NT scholarship. His preterist view of Mark 13 has been articulated in his book *Jesus and the Victory of God* (1996).¹ Below follows a précis of his theological understanding of Mark 13.

According to Wright, most popular Christian readings of the text in question have certainly shared Schweitzer's understand that Jesus predicted the end of the world. It is thus commonplace to think that the 'parousia' in Mark 13 means 'second coming', and/or Jesus' downward travel on the clouds. On the contrary, instead of entering into an alien world of future cosmic apocalyptic events, what we find in Mark 13 and its parallels is (according to Wright), essentially, a well-known Jewish story retold. Jesus as a prophet is taking up his place along with Isaiah, Jeremiah and the other prophets, and is foretelling a future historical military invasion of Jerusalem. What the Babylonians did to Jerusalem in 587 BCE, an invading army will do to Jerusalem again. This will certainly occur within the generation of Jesus' contemporaries. If we read Matthew, Mark and Luke within their first century Jewish context, the disciples' initial question (Mt 24:3) is thus not a question about the 'Parousia', but a question about Jesus' 'coming' or 'arrival' in the sense of his actual enthronement as king. As Josiah and David had an initial period of humility, so the disciples expected Jesus' humble period to shortly end. Thus, when they spoke of the 'end of the age', they did not mean the end of our space-time universe, but rather the end of the present evil age of Israel's unfulfilled promises and of the new age of Messianic glory and Israelite vindication. Thus in these narratives, we hear of the *denouement* of Jesus' story, the full completion and arrival of his kingdom.

In this portion of Scripture, according to Wright, we have a combination of the warnings and promises which we have seen to characterise Jesus' ministry all through. His words had warned of a judgment on impenitent *Israel*, and a vindication for his followers. If we understand both Jesus' and John's warnings regarding a coming judgment (Lk 3:7; Mt 23:36) to refer to *a coming national disaster* involving the destruction of the nation by Rome, the story makes for far better reading and is more

¹ This précis is taken from chapter 8: Stories of the Kingdom (3): Judgment and Vindication, 320-368 *passim*.

consonant with the OT portrayals of national judgment. The brooding presence of Rome is typologically seen as the new 'Babylon', ready to implement God's judgment on an impenitent nation. Thus Jesus' warnings belong perfectly within the context of a Palestine under threatening and heavy-handed Roman rule *and could, in principle, have been articulated at any time in Israel's history*. These warnings to his present generation cast Jesus in a classic prophetic profile; even passages that traditional scholars have taken to refer to 'hell', can be seen as metaphorical references to the historical events of 70 CE. What has commonly been seen as 'apocalyptic' can now be reinterpreted to be an embellished and reconfigured prophetic element.

This predicted event is drawn with three primary OT colours: those texts that speak of the destruction of God's people; the 2nd century Maccabean crisis; and (as shocking as it is) from those texts which deal with the judgment of God *on Babylon* (Is 13, 14; Ezk 32 and Jl 2, *et al*). This shows the shocking direction in which the imagery in Mark 13:14-23 is moving - texts taken from the OT where they had to do with the divine judgment *on pagan nations*. If we interpret Jesus' words through the lens of these OT accounts, Wright says, we can then begin to understand the nature of this metaphoric and hyperbolic language. The prophets employed cosmic imagery (sun, moon, stars) to bring out the full theological significance of cataclysmic socio-political events. As we might say of a stormy day 'all heaven broke lose', so the prophets spoke hyperbolically. They used categories of cosmic disaster in order to invest the coming of the socio-political disaster with its full theological significance. However, this is not a 'mere metaphor' of colourful apocalyptic language - metaphors have teeth, though they do not walk on all fours! So, Mark 13:24 is spoken in a similar way to Isaiah 13:6-9, where the prophet is effectively saying, 'Babylon will fall - and what an earth-shattering event that will be!'. We must avoid all crass literalism and not unjustly take these verses to refer to the literal end of the world. This is patently seen in Luke's account, where he cashed out the apocalyptic imagery in Mark for the sake of his predominantly Gentile readers.

As for the words about the 'coming of the son of man with the clouds of heaven' (Daniel 7), Wright interprets them metaphorically to be a retelling of Israel's national story, which would climax in the judgment of her true enemies and the vindication of her true representative(s). We must avoid all thought of the end of the space-time world. *It is rather a symbol for a mighty reversal of fortunes within history and at a*

national level. This 'coming' vindication of the Son of Man would occur at the temple's destruction, where Jesus would 'come' to *Jerusalem as the vindicated, rightful king*, not physically though, but metaphorically through the public destruction of Jerusalem and the consequent public vindication of his disciples as the true Israel (who will be spared the judgment). That this 'coming' has to do with Jesus' vindication is clearly seen in Daniel 7, where the Danielic figure comes *from earth to heaven*, thus receiving his vindication after suffering. This is the obvious way of reading the chapter and has been ignored for so long.

Finally, all the above helps us to interpret Mark 13:24-27 and Matthew 24:27-28 as events occurring within the present world order of 70 CE. They will certainly be felt and perceived as 'cosmic' and 'earth-shattering', but will not be literally true. As lightening flashes from east to west, so the destruction of Jerusalem will be dramatic and visible. The Romans, like vultures (or better 'eagles') will gather around the carcass of Jerusalem and pick it clean. The angels (or better 'messengers') will then call the elect, who are spread out over the globe, to believe in the heavenly vindicated Son of man.

What are some of the promises of Wright's proposal? Firstly, he integrates and focuses all the elements of the discourse on one event - the simultaneous destruction and vindication. The organising idea for the whole discourse, including the verses on the 'Son of man', is the *destruction of Jerusalem*. This avoids the unnecessary prevarication of a 'lack of temporal depth' in Jesus' discourse. Wright thus retains the insoluble tie within the narrative between the destruction of the temple and the 'coming of the son of man'. Secondly, his whole emphasis on a prophetic rather than an apocalyptic understanding balances much 'meltdown' mentality, for, 'the kingdom of god [sic] has nothing to do with the world itself coming to an end' (1992:285).¹ 'Wright's work does a great service in reminding us of the historical nature of the so-called apocalyptic hope in ancient Israel' (Saucy 1997:121). His whole undertaking repeatedly underscores this point, and it is a valuable contribution to NT eschatology. This prophetic recasting of Mark 13 insightfully links the previous *logia* of the coming wrath with the destruction of Jerusalem. Jerusalem and her unrepentant are certainly heading for eschatological judgment. This provides a helpful backdrop for

¹ The disciples' question as to 'the end of the age' (Mt 24:3) can be understood in temporal terms inclusive of this historical age (see Lindblom 1978:361, Von Rad 1975:114 and Wright 1996:345-346).

the whole of Jesus' ministry and his urgent appeal to accept the grace of God dawning in him.

What are some of his pitfalls? Firstly, the Lukan modifications of Matthew and Mark (Conzelmann 1960:95-136) are not compatible with Wright's overall thesis. Luke clearly divorces the destruction of the temple from the latter Parousia *whilst maintaining the same Marcan terminology* (Lk 17:22-37; 21:25-36).¹ To then say that the same words are used in two different senses is self-defeating. Secondly, the nature of Wright's 'parousia' is esoteric and even more theologically ambivalent than the 'mysterious' nature of Christ's historical ministry. He notably struggles to bring out the significance of this patently 'private' vindication. His reinterpretation is not congruent with Jesus' former statements of his apocalyptic (not prophetic) future coming and public glorious vindication (Mk 8:38; Mt 7:22, etc). Matthew 25:31-46 is clearly correlated with Matthew 24, and speaks of a public 'apocalyptic' unveiling of the Son of man. Wright's proposal thus lacks contextual continuity. It seems most likely that Mark 13:24-27 is a 'depiction of the parousia as a theophany of the Son of man' (Beasley-Murray 1993:167). To reduce the meaning of Matthew 24:27 ('like lightning') and v 30 ('the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky') down to the level of mere historical events, strains at the natural meaning of patently apocalyptic language. Important to note in this discourse is that 'it is in the openness of Christ's coming to universal observation as contrasted with the secrecy and deception that the words of this verse [Mt 24:26] and the next find their real force' (Biederwolf 1972:337). We also note Bruce's response to this preterist identification of the abomination with the Roman standards in the temple court while the holy place was going up in flames: 'the temple court was not "the holy place", and there was no demand that the Jews should join in the worship of the Roman standards: Besides, by the time that this act of sacrilege took place, it was too late for those in Judea to "flee to the mountains"' (1982:181). Thirdly, Wright's understanding of metaphorical language and how the OT is used by Jesus is questionable.² His exegesis raises the question of the literary status of the cosmic *logia* and the degree of substance in each

¹ Nolland (1993b:105) views these verses as describing events *after* the destruction of Jerusalem.

² Casey (1998:97) accuses Wright of misunderstanding apocalyptic and eschatological language as mere metaphor. To him Wright provides 'a completely unsatisfactory replacement of what the text says with something more convenient'. Also Saucy 1997:119-124 and Allison 1994 for criticisms of Wright.

metaphor.¹ Any supernatural or 'extra-ordinary' event can probably be interpreted as *mere* hyperbole, yet to do so is to severely downplay their semantic force. If one presupposes the impossibility of a cosmic disruption or conflagration, then one will downplay the univocal tones and trump up the equivocal ones. Apocalyptic imagery cannot be reinterpreted to refer to continuous historical events but should rightly be viewed as an attempt to articulate the spatial dualism (vertical axis) of God's creation. To exhaust the apocalyptic imagery of Mark 13 by reconfiguring the language to mean merely the hyperbolic presentation of the historical destruction of Jerusalem evacuates the literary referent. Finally, this preterist interpretation of Mark 13 dehistoricises the personal elements of the Parousia by interpreting these words as the 'going' of the Son of man to the Father in heaven, collapsing this Christological event into the event of 70 CE.² Although Wright does see a future return of Christ (1992:459-464), his reinterpretation of Mark 13 opens the door for a radical 'reconfiguring' of the Parousia – it could refer to another theologically significant event that has no necessity for the personal presence of Christ. He effectively interprets the discourse as a unit yet 'de-apocalypticises' the return of Christ by his prophetic reading of the text.

¹ Van Hoozer (1998:130) reminds us that 'metaphors, like texts, are determinate enough to convey stable meaning without being exhaustively specifiable...[they] are neither wholly univocal nor wholly equivocal'.

² Was Jesus only vindicated in 70 CE?; did the new age begin then? The answer is no. His vindication was in his resurrection. The preterist interpretation of Mark 13:27 as meaning evangelism is a desperate attempt to avoid the natural meaning of these apocalyptic words. Also, this school has to interpret Mark 13:5-13 solely in terms of the evangelism of the church prior to 70 CE. This is possible but not probable, given Jesus words 'but the end is still to come' in verse 7.

Diagram 1. Midpoint extension

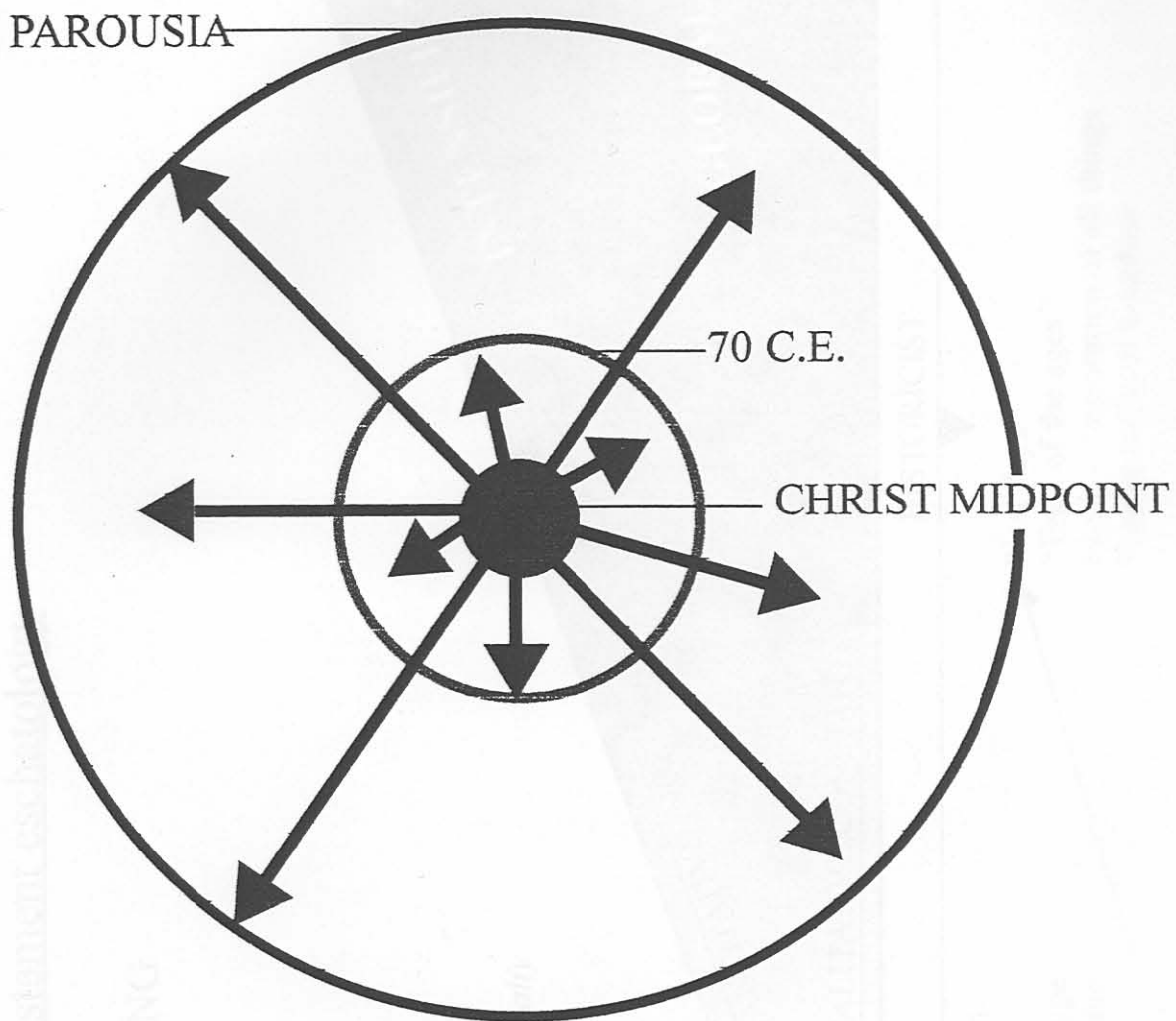
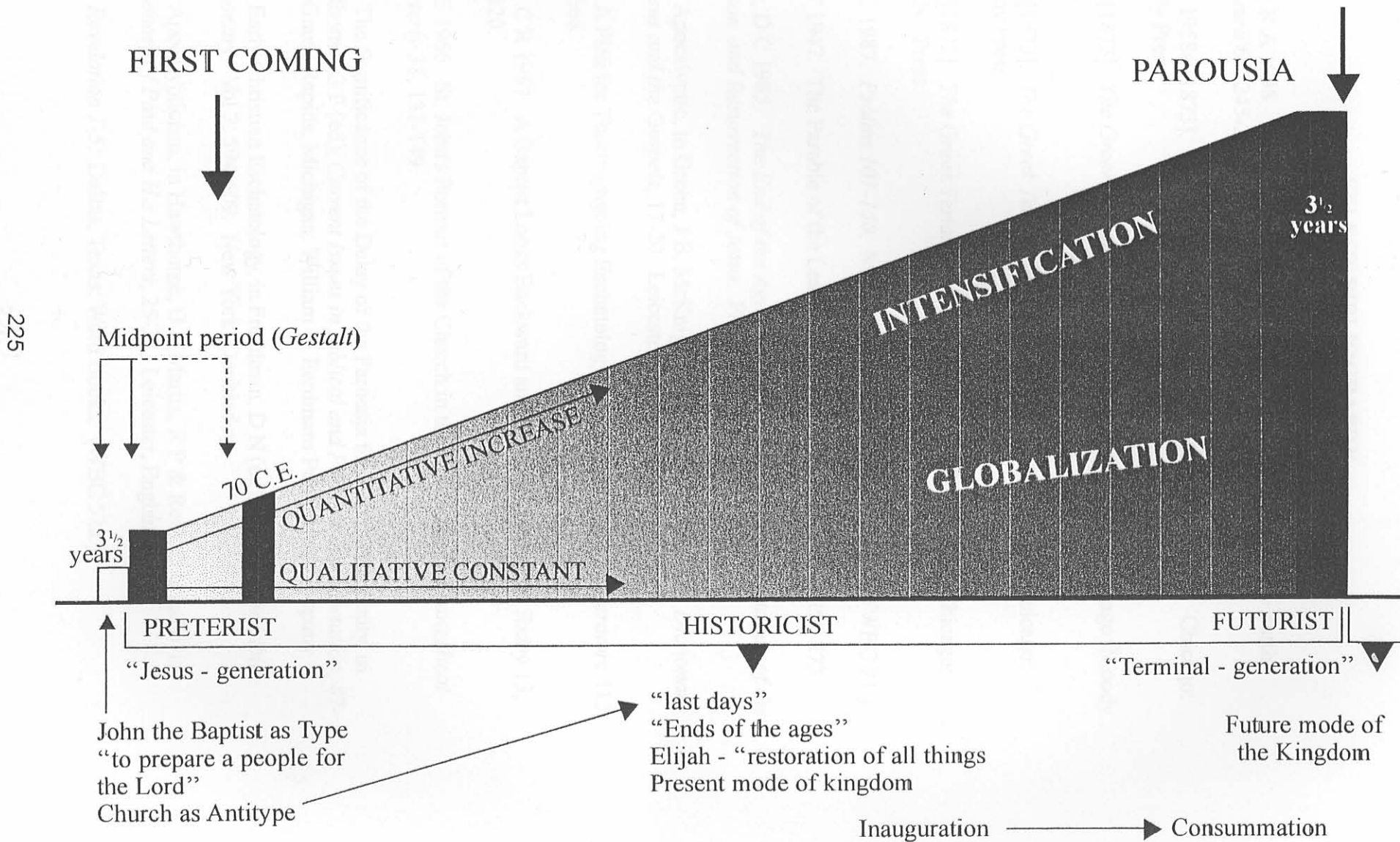


Diagram 2. A synoptic model for integrating the temporal factors of New Testament eschatology



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