

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 means 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 envisaged, the church's responsibility to preach the gospel 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 final period is completed, the final apocalyptic scenario will occur.

In this regard, Jesus appears as he speaking about destruction and his second coming. 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 message will have been sufficiently preached to all nations, strategically encompassing 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 period has effectively spread through the whole world, over the last period will occur.

In the context, the word of Jesus 'then' is related to the destruction of the temple and the destruction of the church. We believe that the church will have a long history, this time, when the destroying message is not yet in the temple (Mt 24:14; 2 Th 2:14). We take the word 'then' to be determined by the decisive message as to when the temple would be destroyed and the end of this age occur; the word seems synonymous with 'filled' in Mark 13:8. Boyd (1997) interprets 'then' as a progressive message (i.e. when the judgment occurs). Thus Jesus anticipates the world's acceptance of the gospel message as its ending in the life of the church. For him, the message toward this end is witnessed when the nation the parabolic way of the Godhead. However, the occurrence of the church's death is not 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 one's 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 a half years, 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 year 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).¹ This line of interpretation is continued by church disengagement 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.² At the other end of the spectrum (but never really) 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 extensive note of 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:252).³ Beckwith avoided any literal reference, as well as any possible, physical occurrence. 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' (Hatchman 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. Irenaeus [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

