

PAUL AND LATE-JEWISH ESCHATOLOGY—A Case Study,

I Thessalonians 4:13-18 and II Thessalonians 2:1-12

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Paul's correspondence with both the Thessalonians and the Corinthians contain significant eschatological sections. When these passages are studied either independently or in comparison with each other a number of questions are raised. These include such issues as (and this list is not complete) (1) the nature and sequence of events Paul expected to transpire at the end of the age, (2) the relationship—the degree of originality-independency or of dependency—of Paul's eschatological thought with that of contemporary Judaism or other groups, (3) the proper hermeneutical methods and approaches to use in interpreting these passages, and (4) the possibility and nature of changes and/or developments which may have taken place in Paul's thought between his earlier and later writings on eschatological subjects.¹

This investigation is concerned only with the nature and intensity of the Late-Jewish² forms, concepts, and categories used in I Thessalonians 4:13-18 and II Thessalonians 2:1-12. In particular it is concerned to test the validity of the often-held assumption that Paul, especially in these passages simply took over notions about the "End Time" held by his Jewish contemporaries, (particularly those who held some apocalyptic outlook) and added a Christian flavor to it.

Of course I recognize that the Jewish influences found here, includ-

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1. Many scholars assume that Thessalonians (esp. I Thess. 4:13 ff.) represents an early stage of Paul's thinking in which he was heavily influenced by the Jewish speculations of his day. The chronologically later passages, I Cor. 15 and II Cor. 5, then represent successive stages through which his thought passed. In Corinthians, it is claimed, Paul is more Greek in his presentation and probably offers a more mature, distinctively Christian view.

There is indeed a difference between some of the external features and emphases of the Corinthian passages on the one hand and Thessalonians on the other. However, I am not convinced that there is a fundamental difference in the basic content of Paul's eschatology in these writings. For a helpful study of "The Structure of Pauline Eschatology (II Corinthians v. 1-10)" see E. Earle Ellis, *Paul and His Recent Interpreters* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1961), pp. 35 ff.

2. "Late Judaism" is here used as a technical term to describe that form of Jewish religion and culture which developed and flourished from 586 B.C. to A.D. 70/90. I assume that the Judaism of this period was distinct from both the earlier pre-exilic Classical OT Hebrew tradition and the Rabbinic Judaism of the post-NT era.

ing such features as references to the resurrection of the dead, the beginnings of the apocalyptic movement, and general concern with eschatological phenomena is rooted in the Old Testament. However, chronologically, the Old Testament is not the immediate historical and cultural background for the New Testament. Furthermore, it was only during the Inter-testamental period that eschatology became an area of prominent and even popular concern. During this time Old Testament concepts underwent interpretation and development. Therefore, my primary concern will be to enumerate the general emphases, interests, and traditions within these passages which reflect this Late-Jewish background. Also, some notice will be taken of some of the verbal and conceptual parallels between some of the more important parts of these portions of Paul's correspondence and some of the literature of Late-Judaism. Then, on the basis of this survey, general observations may be made on the question of whether Paul's eschatological thought here is distinctively Christian or merely a traditional Jewish scheme to which a Christian veneer has been added.

I. METHODOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

Any approach to the thought and literature of Late Judaism must proceed on an awareness of the complexities and problems inherent within current attempts to understand this period of Jewish history. Late Judaism was not a unified whole. There was a cohesiveness among Jews stemming from their common racial and socio-religious heritage. But this was never able to completely override divisions originating in different geographical locations and cultural, political, and religious outlooks. Furthermore, throughout Hebrew history concern for proper conduct (orthopraxy) has generally taken precedence over any desire for theological conformity (orthodoxy). This was especially true in the period of Late Judaism. Thus, in the face of this demonstrable disunity and the lack of concerted interest in or effort toward formulating standardized doctrinal patterns, it is virtually impossible to state unequivocally "the pre-Christian Jewish view" of almost anything.

Again, the extant sources provide sufficient information for a definitive description of hardly a single point of Late Judaism, much less for the whole. Much information has been lost or suppressed. Surviving documents often come to us in only fragmentary form, frequently in late translations. Some Jewish writings have been edited and altered by Christians in the interests of Christian theology (e.g., *The Ascension of Isaiah* and parts of the *Testaments of the XII Patriarchs*). Rabbinic materials contain some authentic information from the Late Jewish period. However, this is intertwined with traditions which developed much later. Consequently, in using such sources as the Talmud and Midrashim care must be taken lest the thought and customs of late Rabbinic Judaism be read back into Late Judaism.

On the brighter side scholarly research is continuing to clarify first

one and then another facet of Late Jewish life and thought. Certain features and tendencies have been clearly discernible for some time. Fresh discoveries and re-evaluation of old data are shedding more light upon this phase of Jewish history. As a result it is possible to speak in general terms with reasonable confidence regarding the distinctive emphases and practices of the major and many of the less significant interests and groups of the period.

II. PARALLEL EMPHASES AND FORMS

A. *The Apocalyptic*

The apocalyptic element is associated with all possible points of contact between our Thessalonian passages and distinctive Late Jewish elements. This is not to say that the apocalyptic is a necessary part of all these elements nor that they are the exclusive property of the apocalyptic movement. Rather, while such matters as the end of the age, the resurrection, and the conflict between good and evil were a part of the interests and speculations of the apocalyptists, they were also discussed by other Jewish groups.

The apocalyptic is difficult to define. It was both a literary genre and a world-view which seems to have influenced several areas of Late Judaism. This world-view was centered upon the events of another world (the spiritual spheres) in which, it was believed, a conflict rages between good and evil (God and Satan). The events of this other world were thought to control those of this material world. The apocalyptic was preoccupied with the end of the world and human history and with the events which will surround this consumation. Apocalyptic literature makes frequent reference to angelic and other spiritual beings, employs an extensive use of symbolism, bizarre figures, numerology, astrology, and other devices to create an atmosphere of transcendental mystery.

Eschatological schemes vary among different writers and groups but may be generally described as follows: In the end of history the invisible world which lies behind and controls the present order will be revealed. Either God himself or His appointed representative(s) will appear to direct the consumation of the plan of God for the universe and the realization of history's appointed goals. This will be accomplished through a series of cataclysmic events, including a final cosmic struggle, which will radically alter the existing natural, physical, and spiritual order. As a result the physical and spiritual world will yield to the absolute rule of God. Resurrected individuals will be judged and assigned to their several destinies.

Paul's eschatological thought in these Thessalonian passages follows this general eschatological scheme. However, his is far from a thoroughgoing apocalypticism. In fact, were it not for such concepts as the rapture, sound of the divine trumpet, man of lawlessness, and conflict with Satan it might be questioned whether these passages actually partake of the apocalyptic spirit. But these elements of which some Jewish apoca-

lypticists were fond are present. Furthermore, the atmosphere of mystery created by Paul's handling of the rebellion-man of lawlessness material in II Thessalonians 2:3ff strongly suggests at least a subconscious influence from the apocalyptic movement.

B. Eschatological Events

I Thessalonians 4:13ff presupposes a future coming of the heavenly cosmic Lord (Jesus Christ) and that this event would bring a desirable state for living believers. The Old Testament, Late Jewish, and New Testament sources supply ample references to the coming of "the end" and of God's agent (if not God himself).³ There is little doubt the early Jewish Church and Paul himself believed that "The Final (The Messianic) Age," "The Kingdom of God" had begun with the ministry of Jesus. They looked for a future *parousia* in which Jesus would bring a time of consummation and the inauguration of yet another age. This is parallel to the belief in some Late Jewish circles that "The Messianic Age" would eventually give way to "The World (or Age) to Come."⁴

Paul supplements the Thessalonian's eschatological knowledge with teachings concerning the resurrection of dead believers at the *parousia*. Although some Greek mystery religions showed an interest in immortality, it was in some Late Jewish circles that the subject was most stressed.

The disagreement between the Sadducees and Pharisees on the resurrection is documented by both Josephus (*Ant.* 1:3 [14]; *Wars* II:8, 14 [162 ff]) and the New Testament (Acts 23:8; cf. Mark 12:18 ff and parallels). It was, of course, the Pharisees, from whose ranks Paul entered Christianity, who accepted the concept. Several writings which reflect the Pharisaic point of view at this point have survived.⁵ Furthermore,

3. For a sample of references see A. Oepke, "Parousia," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Gerhard Kittel, ed. Trans. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1967, Vol. V, pp. 862 ff.

4. Cf. II Baruch 44:15; IV Ezra 7:12 ff.; J. Klausner, *From Jesus to Paul*. Trans. by W. F. Stinespring (1943; reprinted, Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), pp. 537 ff.

5. E.g. (and the list could be expanded), II Macc. 7:9, 11, 14, 23, 29, 36, where the seven martyr-brothers affirm belief in the resurrection.

II Macc. 12:43-44, where, after recording Judas Maccabeus' taking a collection for dead soldiers, the author observes that he did so "taking account of the resurrection. For if he were not expecting that those who had fallen would rise again, it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead."

I Enoch 51:1, "And in those days shall the earth also give back that which has been entrusted to it, and Sheol also shall give back that which it has received, and hell shall give back that which it owes."

Ps. Sol. 3:16, "But they that fear the Lord shall rise to eternal life, and their life [shall be] in the light of the Lord, and shall come to an end no more."

Ps. Sol. 14:2, "To them that walk in the righteousness of his commands, in the law which He commanded us that we might live; the pious of the Lord shall live by it forever. . . ."

IV Ezra 7:32, "And the earth shall give up those who are asleep in it, and the dust those who dwell silently in it; and the chambers shall give up the souls which have been committed to them."

Test. of the XII Patr., Judah 25:4, "And they who have died in grief shall arise in joy. . . . And they who are put to death for the Lord's sake shall awake to life." See also Test. of Benjamin 10:6 ff.

Note also the detailed discourse on the resurrection of the body in II Baruch 50:1-51:6.

although the relevant passages are vague and their meaning debated, there seems to have been some sort of a belief in the resurrection at Qumran.⁶

The resurrection of the unrighteous was probably not a part of the issue to which Paul addresses himself in I Thessalonians 4. His silence on this point probably is to be accounted for on these grounds. However it is worth noting that some Jewish groups appear to have held that only the righteous would be resurrected.⁷

The question implied in I Thessalonians 4:13ff concerns the relative advantage or disadvantage of dead believers as compared with the living believers at the *parousia*. Paul affirms that both the living and dead have equal advantage. This seems also to be the conclusion of IV Ezra 5:41-42.

And I said, 'Yet behold, O Lord, thou dost have charge of those who are alive at the end, but what will those do who were before us, or we, or those who come after us?' He said to me, 'I shall liken my judgment to a circle; but as for those who are last there is no slowness, so for those who are first there is no haste.'

Elsewhere IV Ezra again deal with a similar, although not identical question, as does II Baruch. Each supplies a different answer. IV Ezra 13:16-20 affirms that it will be better for "the survivors" but II Baruch 11:6 f pronounces the dead better off than the living.

I Thessalonians 4:14 says that God will bring the believing dead with Jesus at the *parousia*. This is paralleled by II Baruch 30:1, "After these things, when the time of the advent of the Messiah is fulfilled... he shall return in glory," and IV Ezra 7:28, "For my son the Messiah shall be revealed with those who are with him, and those who remain shall rejoice four hundred years." A similar concept is found in the Ascension of Isaiah but this probably represents a late 1st or early 2nd century A.D. Christian writing.

Perileipomenos is used of lone "survivor" among the seven Maccabean martyr brothers in IV Macc. 12:6 (cf. 13:8). The plural of the same participle is used to describe those who remain alive at the coming of Jesus in I Thessalonians 4:15-17. The concept, "those who are left" or "the survivors," is noted in the IV Ezra 13 passage quoted above.

The sudden appearance of the Lord from heaven (I Thess. 4:16) is, of course, also predicted in the Synoptic apocalyptic sections (Mark 13 and parallels) as well as Revelation. The clearest parallel of which I am aware in Inter-testamental literature is found in II Baruch 30.

6. IQH (The Psalm Scroll) 10, "Hoist a banner, O you who lie in the dust! O bodies gnawed by worms raise up an ensign." For other references and discussion of scholarly opinions see Millar Burrows, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, (London: 1956), 270 ff. and *More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (London: 1958), 344 ff.
7. Ps. Sol. 3:16 and IV Ezra 13:16-20 (quoted elsewhere in this paper), Josephus, *Wars* II:8:14 [163], The Pharisees believe "the soul of the good alone pass into another body, while the souls of the wicked suffer eternal punishment." Cf. II Macc. 7:14; Ps. 7:14; Ps. Sol. 14:2 ff. Comp. Rev. 20:5.

Then shall all who have fallen asleep in hope of him rise again. And it shall come to pass at that time that the treasures shall be opened in which is preserved the number of the souls of the righteous, and they shall come forth, and a multitude of souls shall be seen together in one assemblage of one thought and the first shall rejoice and the last shall not be grieved. For they shall know that the time hath come of which it is said, that it is the consummation of the times. But the souls of the wicked, when they behold all these things, shall know that their torment hath come and their perdition hath arrived.⁸

The term "archangel" is used in the Bible only in I Thessalonians 4:16 and Jude 9, where Michael is so identified. In addition to references in Daniel (10:13, 21; 12:1) and Revelation (12:7), Michael is also mentioned among the other seven "holy angels who watch" in I Enoch 9:1ff and 20:6ff.

The "sound of the trumpet" (I Thess. 4:16) is a part of the eschatological drama elsewhere in the New Testament (I Cor. 15:25; Rev. 8:2-11:15). It is also a herald of the Messiah and/or of the End in the literature of both Late Judaism (IV Ezra 6:26; Sib. Or. IV, 173-174; Ps. Sol. 11:1; Apocalypse of Abraham 31) and the Talmudic scholars. In the Apocalypse of Abraham God himself blows the trumpet but more often, especially in the Rabbinic writings, Elijah is the trumpeter.⁹ Ginzberg notes one reference to Michael's blowing the trumpet.

The Rapture-concept, "being snatched away into heaven" (I Thess. 4:17) is found in the Old Testament of both temporary and permanent removals (cf. cases of Enoch, Elijah, Ezekiel). A parallel may be found II Enoch (Slovonic or The Secrets of Enoch) 3.

It came to pass when I had spoken to my sons, these men summoned me and took me on their wings and placed me on the clouds. And lo! the clouds moved. And I again (going) higher I saw the air and (going still) higher I saw the ether, and they placed me in the first heaven.

Speaking of Israel, the 1st century A.D. Jewish apocalypse, The Assumption of Moses 10:9f says

And God shall exalt thee, and bring thee to the heaven of the stars, the place of his habitation.

And thou shalt look from on high, and behold thy adversaries upon the earth.

Episunagoges ("assembling"), II Thess. 2:1, is elsewhere used to refer to the eschatological gathering only in II Macc. 2:7, "This place

8. cf. also I Baruch 4:24.

9. Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*. Trans. by Henrietta Szold (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1909). Vol. IV, p. 234. Vol. VI, p. 341, note 116. Cf. G. H. Box, *The Ezra-Apocalypse* (London: Isaac Pitman and Sons, 1912), pp. 75-76.

shall be unknown until God gathers his people together again." However, the word reflects the often expressed hope that in the Last Age scattered Jews would be gathered together in Palestine. Ps. of Sol. 17:28, 50, specifically describes this gathering under the agency of the Messiah. The latter verse reads

Blessed be they that shall be in those days, in that they shall see the good fortune of Israel which God shall bring to pass in the gathering together of the tribes.

See also Ecclesiasticus 36:11 and II Macc. 2:18.

"The Day of the Lord" (II Thess. 2:2) was first used in the Old Testament to speak of any day of judgment from God (cf. Amos 5:18). During the Inter-testamental period it came to refer to that period when God would again take an active role in the affairs of Israel. As such it was virtually synonymous with "The Last (or Messianic) Age" and/or "The Kingdom of God." Paul reinterpretes it to refer to the *parousia* and the consummation of the Messianic Age inaugurated by Christ.

Most students agree that the phenomenon described by the terms "The Rebellion, or The Rebellious One" (or "The Apostasy"), "The Man of Lawlessness" and "The Son of Perdition" (II Thess. 2:3) is the same as that called "antichrist" in the Johannine literature and "Beliar," "The Last Leader," or some other title denoting opposition in the apocryphal and pseudepigraphal writings. Surveys of and comments on the development and use of this concept are readily available¹⁰ and need not be duplicated here. We simply note that the motif occurs in Sibylline Oracles III; IV Ezra 5:1ff (esp. vv. 4 and 6), and II Baruch 40. A fairly close Christian parallel to this whole section is found in the Ascension of Isaiah 4. The phrase "Son of Perdition" found in II Thessalonians 2:3 also occurs in Jubilees 10:3.

Noah prayed, 'God of the spirits of all flesh, who hast shown mercy to men, and hast saved me and my sons from the waters of the flood, and has not caused me to perish as Thou didst the sons of perdition. . .

The idea of an evil spiritual oppressor who would appear in The Last Age was emphasized in the face of Jewish experience with evil human oppressors such as Antiochus Epiphanes, 2nd century B.C. (whose activities are described as "the apostacy," in II Macc. 2:15) and the Roman Emperor Gaius (Caligula), 1st century A.D. The increase of evil, including apostacy, is viewed as one of the fearful signs leading up to the coming of the Lord in I Enoch 91:5-8.

10. Cf. M. R. James, "Man of Sin and Antichrist," *Hastings Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. III, p. 226 ff.; R. H. Charles, "The Antichrist, Beliar, and Neronic Myths and their Subsequent Fusion," *The Ascension of Isaiah*. Translated, edited with introduction and notes by R. H. Charles (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1900), pp. ii-Ixxiii.

For I know that violence must increase on the earth,
 And a great chastisement be executed on the earth,
 And all unrighteousness come to an end;
 Yea, it shall be cut off from its roots,
 And its whole structure be destroyed.

And righteousness shall be consumated on the earth,
 And all the deeds of unrighteousness and of violence
 And transgression shall prevail in a twofold degree.

And when sin and unrighteousness and blasphemy
 And violence in all kinds of deeds increase,
 And apostasy and transgression and uncleanness increase,
 A great chastisement shall come from heaven upon all these,
 And the holy Lord will come forth with wrath and chastisement
 To execute judgment on earth.

In those days violence shall be cut off from its roots,
 And the roots of unrighteousness together with deceit,
 And they shall be destroyed from under heaven.

The prediction that the coming evil one will "take his seat in the temple of God," may borrow imagery from the Isaianic "Lucifer passage" (14:12ff) or Ezekiel's lament over the king of Tyre (28:12ff). However, to 1st century Jews this type of language might have easily recalled the activities of Antiochus Epiphanes whose representatives "erected a desolating sacrilege (or Abomination of Desolation) on the altar of burnt offering" in the Temple of Jerusalem, I Macc. 1:54. However, in the even more recent past, as Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, it had been a scant 10 years since Gaius had ordered the desecration of the Jerusalem Temple. Philo (The Embassy to Gaius, XIX [188]), describing the messenger from whom he first received the news and the reaction of his party, conveys something of the feeling of the Jews in the face of this threat.

He [the messenger] managed with difficulty while sobbing and breathing spasmodically to say, "Our Temple is lost, Gaius has ordered a colossal statue to be set up within the inner sanctuary dedicated to himself under the name of Zeus." As we marvelled at his words and, petrified by consternation, could not get any further, since we stood there speechless and powerless in a state of collapse with our hearts turned to water, others appeared bringing the same woeful tale. Then gathered altogether in seclusion we bewailed the disaster personal to each and common to all and such thoughts as the mind suggested we discussed at length. For nothing is more ready of tongue than a man in misfortune. "Let us struggle," we said, "to save us from delivering ourselves altogether to fatal acts of lawlessness."

The fact that eventually Gaius was assassinated before his order was carried out was little comfort to those Jews who interpreted the event as desolating sacrilege of Antiochus Epiphanes come again.

In II Thessalonians Paul may have used a well established apocalyptic device by describing coming spiritual events with language drawn from remote and immediate past human history. Again, we may note that later Christian wrote "Beliar . . . will set up his image in every city.", Ascen. of Isaiah 4:11.

The claim of the Man of Lawlessness to be God (II Thessalonians 2:4) is similar to the divine claims of both Antiochus Epiphanes (Epiphanes means "an appearance of god") and Gaius. In the Apocalypse of Elijah 31:40¹¹ the evil one claims, "I am the anointed one." Divinity is actually claimed by Beliar in Ascen. of Isaiah 4:6.

Interpreters would be most happy to discover any background information which might throw light on the identity of "The Restraining Thing" (to *katechon*—neuter), II Thess. 4:6 and "The Restraining Man" (*ho katechon*—masculine), v. 7. Unfortunately this type of assistance is virtually unavailable. The Old Testament imagery of individuals who held back plagues (e.g., Aaron, Num. 16:46ff; Phinehas, Num. 25:7ff) and of those who exerted a protective influence (Ezek. 22:30; this is also probably the meaning of the mysterious "you are Israel's chariots and its horsemen!" II Kings 2:12; 13:14) was developed in some Late Jewish circles into a line of thought in which the Righteous Remnant was regarded as a restainer against evil and unrighteousness (the Qumran community may have so regarded itself).¹² But these parallels are remote and general. At any rate, Paul's reference here is to something he had personally told the Thessalonians (nb. II Thess. 2:5ff) not to some cryptic symbol which they, or anyone else, should have been able to recognize because of its possible reference to a historical or literary background.

III. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, two questions remain to be asked. What was the nature of the influence of Inter-testamental thought and literature upon I Thessalonians 4:13ff and II Thessalonians 2:1ff? Secondly, what practical significance can be drawn from this investigation of the background and parallels to these passages?

Parallels of literary form, doctrinal content, as well as verbal and conceptual similarities exist between these sections of the Thessalonian correspondence and the literature of Late Judaism. However, in general the relation between them appears to be superficial. Take, for an example, Paul's use of the apocalyptic form. Although it is a prominent literary feature in our passages it is not used in such a way as to suggest that Paul was deeply committed to or profoundly influenced by the distinctive world-view of the apocalyptic movement. Actually there is nothing

11. Quoted by E. Stauffer, *New Testament Theology*. Trans. by John Marsh. (London: SCM, 1955), p. 215.

12. For possible Rabbinic parallels see Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*. (Munchen: C. H. Beck, 1926 ff.), Vol. III, p. 640 f.

in his writings to indicate that Paul had more than a casual acquaintance with the apocalyptic. This is the type of familiarity he might have gained from contacts with apocalypics in Jewish communities both Palestine and in the Dispersion. However, there is a more important potential source of Paul's Christian apocalyptic forms.

A. M. Hunter¹³ has shown that Paul's eschatology is essentially the same as those who were Christians before him (i.e., the early Jewish Christians). The Synoptics, II Peter, Jude, and Revelation, show that apocalyptic forms were used by Jesus and by New Testament writers other than Paul. Indeed it was probably difficult for early Jewish Christians to discuss eschatology without using some apocalyptic forms. Consequently, this mode of expression may have become virtually traditional in Christian eschatological discussions (Paul, among the New Testament writers, probably comes the closest to dissociating Christian eschatology from the apocalyptic in II Corinthians 5:1-10).¹⁴ Thus, Paul may well have usually employed apocalyptic structures and imagery in dealing with eschatological simply from force of habit.

Furthermore, the order of events portrayed in these passages generally conforms to the order of events of the last days suggested in several Late-Jewish sources—II Baruch and some parts of I Enoch are probably the closest. However, there are variations in details and Paul's portrayal does not exactly parallel a single extant document. Also, the parallels are of the sort which suggest that Paul's language probably originated from a general pool of 1st century Jewish eschatological ideas and expressions. It cannot be proved that a single Inter-testamental source exerted a direct influence upon Paul in these passages. Careful students in this field must always beware lest they convert parallels into influences and influences into sources. Our study may have clarified a part of the thought and literary world in which Paul lived, but nothing more.

Of even more significance than the similarities of Paul with Late-Jewish eschatological thought and expression is his difference with it. For him the central figure in the final event is not some vague "Elect One," "messiah," some future leader or influence but the historical person, Jesus, who already had fulfilled this role. Paul regarded the "New Age" as a present reality which had been inaugurated by the ministry of Jesus, not as the future vision of the Late-Jewish hope. Paul's confidence in the resurrection is based on a premise which was unacceptable to the majority of Jewish writers of his day. For Paul the resurrection and the whole eschatological drama is possible "since we are believing that Jesus died and rose again" (I Thess. 4:14).

Although Paul may, possibly subconsciously, have organized his description of the *parousia* and related events around some contemporary Jewish structures and expressed it with some Jewish forms, his thought

13. *Paul and His Predecessors*. Rev. ed.; (London: SCM, 1961), pp. 98 ff., 147 ff.

14. cf. above, pg. 1, note 1.

is thoroughly Christian. In fact, he himself claims a distinctively Christian origin for it, "this" he says, "we declare to you *by the word of the Lord*," I Thess. 4:15.

If this conclusion is correct, then our second question must be answered in the light of it. Paul regarded himself as God's spokesman, yet our survey has indicated that he expressed what he believed to be God's message in the terms, framework, and images with which he, Paul, was familiar. These were the same literary features which were in current use among some Jewish, both Christian and non-Christian, groups in the 1st century world. The modern Christian should carefully note the implications of these facts. Paul's words must be interpreted within the historical-intellectual-literary framework and context within which they were first written.

Take, for example, the use of the apocalyptic by Paul and other New Testament writers. The modern interpreter must take into consideration the fact and implications of the apocalyptic's being a distinct literary genre which demands its own special kind of handling. The Christian who is serious about the task of interpreting the Bible in its historical and literary context must be willing to acquaint himself with the apocalyptic to a degree sufficient to enable him to handle it with the interpretive tools which are appropriate to its unique character.

Furthermore, Paul spoke God's message in the terms of his day. It is the task of succeeding generations of Christians to proclaim *that same message* in the language, thought-forms, and figures that are most readily understandable by their contemporaries. Where traditional forms and terms cannot be exchanged without doing violence to the content of the message, they must be carefully explained. Paul seems to have explained some Jewish apocalyptic terms to the predominantly Gentile Thessalonians; but, I Corinthians 15 and II Corinthians 5:1-10 demonstrate that Paul was not always bound by these categories when dealing with the resurrection and related (eschatological) subjects.¹⁵

15. I gratefully acknowledge the helpful comments made on this paper by my colleague, Dr. John T. Stahl.