Prolegomena to reconstructing the eschatological teaching of Jesus

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ABSTRACT
The aim of this study is to identify the issues which need to be addressed if scholarship is to recover the eschatological teaching of Jesus. Eight areas are distinguished: (1) definition of terms used in the academic study of apocalyptic and eschatology; (2) the cultural presuppositions and orientation of the scholar; (3) evaluation of the sources; (4) the kingdom of God and Son of man sayings; (5) the relationship between Judaism and its hellenistic environment; (6) the wisdom and apocalyptic traditions; (7) the impact of the destruction of Jerusalem on the transmission of the Gospel traditions; (8) the notion of human partnership with God in Second Temple Judaism. While it is not possible at present to resolve these issues, this study aims to identify some of the outstanding issues behind the wider problem of the eschatological teaching of Jesus.

Since the publication of Schweitzer's *Quest of the Historical Jesus* in 1906 (ET 1910), New Testament scholarship has overwhelmingly recognised eschatology as the conceptual framework of Jesus' teaching. Schweitzer had his predecessors in Reimarus (1778), Strauss (1835/6), and Weiss (1892), but, to employ the terminology made famous in the natural sciences by Kuhn (1962), the revolution came about, or was perceived to come about, not so much with the cumulative efforts of his predecessors as with the paradigm shift introduced by Schweitzer. More recent scholarship, particularly in North America, has challenged the legacy of Schweitzer, located Jesus in a different milieu, and posited a significantly different interpretation of his teaching. The recent treatment of the historical Jesus by Crossan (1991), and the work of Mack on Mark (1988) and Q (1993) are perhaps the most graphic representatives of this tendency. This process has been documented by Borg (1986) and Patterson (1995), who identify areas in which scholarly consensus has turned against the premises on which Schweitzer's notion of eschatology in the teaching of Jesus was founded. While Patterson speaks of a new consensus superceding that inaugurated by Schweitzer (1995:35-41), it is clear that a plethora of unresolved issues makes any consensus in the foreseeable future unlikely. The aim of this study is to identify these outstanding questions, and to indicate their implications for scholarly understanding of the teaching of Jesus.

Many of the outstanding issues are precisely those claimed for the new consensus implicitly by org (1986) and explicitly by Patterson (1995). These include the
authenticity of, and relationship between, the Son of Man and Kingdom of God sayings in the synoptic tradition (Borg 1986:525–528), and reevaluation of the foundation documents of the synoptic Gospels, particularly in the light of the rediscovery of the Coptic Gospel of Thomas (Patterson 1995:35–41). More fundamental than these is the nature and definition of eschatology and its relationship with apocalyptic (cf. Borg 1986:521; Kloppenborg 1987b; Patterson 1995), and the impact of the social environment on scholarly perceptions (cf. Patterson 1995:29–32). Further issues, the importance of which these scholars do not discuss, include the relationship between Judaism and the surrounding hellenistic world in the first century, particularly in Galilee, the relationship between the wisdom and apocalyptic traditions in Judaism, and the significance of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 CE on the transmission of the Gospel traditions. Also of importance to understanding eschatology is the conceptualisation of human partnership with God in realising the divine purpose on earth. These issues, and their relevance to understanding the eschatological teaching of Jesus, will be discussed in turn.

1 APOCALYPTIC AND ESCHATOLOGY

The definition of terms is in many ways a prerequisite to academic discourse, despite the dangers of anachronism and abstraction in modern academic vocabulary (cf. Jacobson 1992a:413). Some scholars maintain a distinction between eschatology and apocalyptic, and argue that, while apocalyptic is absent from the authentic Jesus traditions in the Gospels, there is nonetheless an element of eschatology (Jacobson 1992a; Kloppenborg 1987b; 1996; Patterson 1995; cf. Borg 1986). The viability of such a distinction has been questioned by Tuckett (1996:161–63), while conceding many of the points which previous scholars have made. While it is clear that apocalyptic derives its meaning from the notion of revelation, and eschatology from that of the last in a sequence of events (cf. Kittel 1972:697), it is equally clear that these refer to an overlapping range of events and conceptions. Some degree of fluidity needs therefore to be recognised, and Borg’s redefinition of eschatology in exclusively cataclysmic terms (1986:521) akin to that envisaged in such passages as Revelation 21 is unhelpful. Any conception of a sequence of events culminating in divine intervention in history and the establishment of a new dispensation must be recognised as eschatological, whether it envisages a new creation or simply the inauguration of a new age in the present creation. It is possible to debate whether or not such conceptions are informed by apocalyptic thought, but they are nonetheless eschatological.

The use of symbolic language in Scripture has long been recognised, but there seems to be a need to clarify the academic categorisation of such language regarding eschatology. The distinction drawn in recent scholarship between apocalyptic and what Borg calls ‘mythical’ (1986:129) and Kloppenborg ‘symbolic’ eschatology (1987b:306) is inadequate if not entirely invalid. Myth and symbolism are inherent in
religious discourse, and eschatological discourse is no exception (cf Cumpsty 1991). Apocalyptic eschatology is no more or less literal than any other expression of eschatological conceptions. No conceptualisation of eschatological expectations can be reduced to spatio-temporal parameters (cf Wilder 1950; Crossan 1973), and none has any meaning apart from the conviction that the God of Israel is the creator of the world, and that he had in the past and would again in the future intervene decisively in human history to bring about his will upon earth (cf Rowland 1982; Collins 1984; Sanders 1992:279–303). Prophecy and apocalyptic alike derive their mythology and ideology from this fundamental understanding of God and the world (cf Hanson 1975; Cook 1995). Whether they expect cataclysmic destruction and new creation or the inauguration of a new age in the present world is of secondary importance. Anticipation of historically tangible decisive divine action is integral to the eschatology of the Gospels, and no redefinition or exclusion of apocalyptic can alter this. This is not to say that apocalyptic eschatology, insofar as it is a literary exercise in lurid speculation (cf Collins 1984), fashioned the thought world of all Jews of the period. Nevertheless there is a well-attested hope for liberation and divine justice, not necessarily on a cosmic scale, nor even necessarily with absolute finality. This must be given its due weight both in interpretation of the gospels and in scholarly reconstructions of the teaching of Jesus.

2 SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT AND SCHOLARLY INSIGHT

Patterson raises the issue of the influence of the environment in which the scholar operates on both the formation of his/her ideas and their reception in the academic community. Patterson makes his point in criticism of Schweitzer and the reception of his insights in European scholarship in the early twentieth century (1995:28–32), arguing that a climate of ‘cultural pessimism’ in the Europe of the time made scholarship sympathetic to apocalyptic ideas, in contrast to the optimism which pertained when Weiss published his findings to a less receptive readership a decade and more earlier (1995:32). While Patterson may be unduly reductionist, he nevertheless makes a valid point. There is a need for scholars to show more critical self-awareness. However, Patterson’s presentation of his argument is seriously inadequate, for at least two reasons. Firstly, he tends to overstate the correlation between the cultural context of the scholar and his/her academic findings. He overlooks the triumphalism and historical romanticism which pervaded parts of Europe during the nineteenth century, which could have been just as receptive to eschatology, if not to apocalypticism, as the supposed pessimism of the early twentieth century. More seriously, Patterson would seem to have been a bit slow in applying his point to his own context, and in recognising corresponding factors in North America which may have influenced scholarship of the Cold War era and subsequently. To what extent has Crossan’s depiction of Jesus as a ‘counter-cultural social critic’ (Patterson 1995:34) in the Roman Empire of the first century CE
(1991), and its reception in intellectual circles opposed to the dominant ideology of United States during the Reagan-Bush era, been influenced by the context in which it was written? The interrelationship between ideological conviction and scholarly insight is even more explicit in the writings of Mack (1988; 1993), which attribute the proverbial American dream and the imperialism of the Cold War precisely to the eschatology which Mark has supposedly introduced to the teaching of Jesus, thereby corrupting it beyond recognition. Scholars need to be critically aware of their own ideological preconceptions, and of the social and political influences which have shaped their cultural context and the consciousness of the societies in which they live and work. If the reception of Schweitzer's notion of eschatology was influenced by the cultural pessimism of Europe in the early twentieth century, then the current trend against eschatology in the teaching of Jesus is the product of a North America traumatised by the failure of its imperialism in Vietnam, and of academic communities hostile to the apocalypticism manifested in Cold War propaganda and the Reagan 'Star Wars' programme.

If scholarship is to move beyond culturally determined interpretations of the teaching of Jesus, then there needs to be a recognition that Jesus lived in a world in which the Jewish people had a clear understanding of creation as the work of God, and of divine activity in the course of human history (cf Allison 1994). An ultimate act of divine intervention, inaugurating a new epoch in world history or even creating a new world, would therefore not have been inconceivable. In contrast, the modern western world has no clear understanding of creation, but only a vague understanding of cosmological theories which speak of temporal and spatial infinity, quantum theory, relativity, and the 'big bang'. The nuclear age has, at the same time, generated an environment in which the end of the world has become inconceivable apart from the spectre of a nuclear holocaust or cosmic disaster. There needs to be self-critical awareness of these preconceptions if scholarship is to rediscover the eschatological ideas which pertained in the Judaism addressed by Jesus of Nazareth.

The problem of contemporary experience shaping scholarly perceptions uncritically or inappropriately can be illustrated further in the conceptualisation of Jesus' socio-cultural context. The broader issues of the relationship between Judaism and its hellenistic environment will be considered shortly (§5 below). Here I shall refer specifically to portrayals of Jesus and his context which assume that Judaism was indistinguishable in the hellenistic world, and that the cosmopolitan character of Galilee can appropriately be conceptualised in terms of the mythical North American melting pot, with its notion of ethnic and cultural coalescence (Mack 1988; 1993). The American dream, with its romanticisation of immigration symbolised by Ellis Island (and conspicuous silence about the slave trade and the fate of the indigenous population) can provide no model for understanding Galilee in the first century. It is particularly ironic that a scholar who has reacted against the American dream and American imperialism as strongly as has Mack should appear to conceive of Galilee
in terms of the melting pot, which has little reality in the North American context either. It may be that a more realistic appraisal of the formation of North American society might provide a more appropriate model for understanding first century Galilee.

3 THE SOURCES: Q, MARK, AND THE COPTIC GOSPEL OF THOMAS

The appraisal of the sources of our knowledge of Jesus’ teaching has become crucial to reconstructing the content. Whereas Schweitzer maintained the priority of Matthew, as did many of his contemporaries, the majority of subsequent scholarship has adopted markan priority and a source theory derived from those of early twentieth century scholars such as Streeter (1930). Notwithstanding the continuing assent to the Griesbach hypothesis by a minority of scholars (e.g. Farmer 1964), the issue of priority did not substantially affect interpretation of Jesus’ eschatological teaching until markan priority was abandoned and Q came to be regarded as the definitive source for authentic and reliable Jesus traditions (Kloppenborg 1987a; Jacobson 1992b; Mack 1993; Vaage 1994). This position, with its correlative relativisation of eschatology, has been strongly reinforced through appeal to the Coptic Gospel of Thomas, and sustained through the identification of distinct strata within Q, with the eschatological passages relegated to the later period. Patterson has, perhaps prematurely, identified this reconstruction as a new consensus (1995:35–41). However, the theory and the premises upon which it is based rest on fairly tenuous assumptions, and require rigorous critical scrutiny.

The dichotomy posited between Mark and Q, and the elevation of the latter at the expense of the former, assumes a correlation between the authenticity or otherwise of dominical sayings and their relative dating. Due account needs to be taken of the oral processes of transmission, as well as the commitment of these traditions to writing, before such conclusions can be reached (cf. Kelber 1983; Boring 1991).

The separation of distinct traditions or strata within Q is a further development of the dichotomy posited between that document and Mark. Those passages reflecting an overtly eschatological orientation are relegated to a later date and called Q² (Kloppenborg 1987a), while the remaining passages, assigned to what is known as Q¹, have their eschatological overtones redefined as ‘symbolic’ (Kloppenborg 1987b:306), or are interpreted exclusively in terms of the wisdom tradition or hellenistic, and particularly Cynic, philosophy (Mack 1993). There is no textual support for such a reconstruction (Tuckett 1992; 1996:75–82), and the dependence of this reconstruction on evaluation of the eschatological passages (Kloppenborg 1987a) creates a degree of circularity in the argument. One can recognise that, with the breadth of teaching material contained in Q, eschatology is not uniformly prominent throughout the hypothetical document. A substantial body of scholarship nonetheless recognises eschatology as an important conceptual framework of Jesus’ teaching.

The Coptic Gospel of Thomas has become an important factor in reconstructing a substantially non-apocalyptic historical Jesus (Koester 1990; Robinson 1992). Crossan's more elaborate, and methodologically controversial, use of extracanonical writings in his portrayal of Jesus (1991) leads him to conclusions similar to those of Mack (1988; 1993). This appeal to the Gospel of Thomas in particular is undoubtedly justified in principle, but due consideration must be given to the nature and reliability of the testimony available from such sources.

The origins of the Gospel of Thomas are widely debated in scholarship. Koester (1990:77–78) and Cameron (1982:23–25) date the work to the second half of the first century CE, contemporary with if not earlier than the synoptic gospels. The majority of scholars, however, tend to prefer a second century date (Blatz 1991:113; Layton 1987:377). The extant text is derived from sources, at least one of which has some affinity or a common source with Q (Cameron 1982:24; Koester 1990:86–95; Blatz 1991:114). However, scholarship is dependent on a single manuscript in Coptic translation, to which the Greek papyri provide little meaningful control so far as transmission history is concerned. This would seem to indicate a need for rather more caution than has been exercised thus far in use of this document to reconstruct the teaching of Jesus. The extant Gospel of Thomas has no uniformity of theological orientation, and while it may have been congenial to Gnosticism, and its transmission may have come under gnosticising influence, Thomas is not itself a gnostic text (Blatz 1991:112–14; Tuckett 1988; cf Koester 1990:75–85). Gnosticising tendencies are more likely to have entered the tradition in the course of transmission than to be original to the gospel or its sources. It is important for our present purpose to recognise that a gnosticising tendency would involve a move away from cosmic eschatology to what one might call an individual eschatology, with its emphasis on the redemption of the enlightened soul. Nevertheless, a number of logia within the Gospel of Thomas clearly presuppose cosmic eschatological conceptions. Logion 11 speaks of heaven passing away, arguably the most cataclysmic notion in apocalyptic eschatology, found also in Mark 13:31 and in Revelation 21 (cf also DialSav 56–57). The same eschatological unfolding is presupposed in GThom 111, a tradition deriving ultimately from Isa 34:4. The harvest, an eschatological image in Q (Mt 9:37; Lk...
10:2) and also in John (4:35), features similarly in logion 73. In *GThom* 103, the unexpected burglar is a metaphor of the sudden coming of God's kingdom, as also in the synoptic gospels (Mk 13:34–36; Lk 12:35–39; Mt 24:43) and in apocalyptic and apocalyptic-inspired literature of early Christianity (1 Thess 5:2,4; 2 Pet 3:10; Rev 3:3; 16:15; *Did* 16:1). The reference to fire on earth in logion 10 would seem also to recall apocalyptic imagery (cf Lk 3:9,18; 12:48–49). The references to the kingdom as hidden (logion 113) and as within (logion 3) correspond with the Q saying in Lk 17:20–23 and Mt 24:23–26 (cf also *Dial* 15,16,30), and do not alter the eschatological conception of the kingdom to which the *Gospel of Thomas* also testifies. Therefore, even if the *Gospel of Thomas* is as ancient as the synoptic gospels, and preserves Jesus traditions as ancient and authentic as those found in the canonical gospels, this gospel provides no grounds for repudiating the eschatological framework of Mark and Q as authentically representing the teaching of Jesus.

The sources of information about Jesus, their relative dating and inter-relationships, remains a matter of contention. The reconstruction characteristic of the so-called new consensus is far from proven, and many of its premises need reconsideration. There remain sound arguments in favour of a more traditional reconstruction of the Jesus tradition (cf Taylor 1997), and any claim to a new consensus at the current stage in the scholarly debate is premature.

4 THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE SON OF MAN

Scholarship has identified two key expressions in the synoptic accounts of the eschatological teaching of Jesus, namely ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ and ὁ υἱός τοῦ άνθρωπού. The critical problems surrounding both these phrases are beyond the scope of this study (for which see Perrin 1963; 1967; 1976; Casey 1979; Fitzmyer 1979; Horbury 1985; Donahue 1986; A Y Collins 1987; Chilton 1992; J J Collins 1992; Slater 1995). What has been important for understanding of the teaching of Jesus has been the recognition that these two expressions derive from different traditions, and that the authenticity and eschatological meaning of the former category are disputed (Vielhauer 1957; Conzelmann 1957; Käsemann 1969:111–24; Perrin 1967; Borg 1986:526–28; Patterson 1995). The corollary of this is that ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ should not be understood in terms of the apocalyptic eschatology associated with the Son of Man sayings. That the establishment of the kingdom or reign of God does not necessarily imply the end of the world (Borg 1986:525) can readily be conceded, but this does not mean that it has no eschatological significance in an historical and, however subjectively understood, literal sense. The question is the degree to which the notion of God's kingdom and its establishment on earth presupposes the same conception of divine power and activity to which apocalyptic eschatology testifies.
The meaning of ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου and its possible Hebrew (נִסְתָּר לָּשׁוֹן) and/or Aramaic (םִינָשׁ רָב, תְּשַׁר הָרֶץ) antecedents has been a matter of contention for some time. We cannot now rehearse the debates between Vermes (1973; 1978) on the one hand and Fitzmyer (1979) and Chilton (1992) on the other, and the conclusions of such a debate may not be as significant for our present purpose as may at first sight appear to be the case. That ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου was not the formal title of an eschatological figure, either in the Gospels (Persin 1963; 1967; Vermes 1973; 1978; Casey 1979; Lindars 1983) or in the Similitudes of Enoch (Casey 1979:100–102; Nickelsburg 1981:215; Collins 1984:112), is now generally recognised. The phrase is clearly circumlocutory, though not for the first person singular pronoun as Vermes argued (1978; cf Fitzmyer 1979; Chilton 1992). Rather, the reference is contextually determined, and serves as an esoteric designation of a figure whose identity and functions are mutually understood and recognised between author and reader (cf Colpe 1972:423; Sjöberg 1946:59). Even if the occurrences of ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου in the eschatological passages in Mark and Q are not authentic to the teaching of Jesus (Vielhauer 1957; Conzelmann 1957; Küsemann 1969:111–24; pace, Tödt 1965), this does not in itself mean they are incompatible with his teaching on the Kingdom of God. The issue is when these sayings, and the ideological and theological orientation they reflect, entered the Jesus tradition, at what point the expression Son of Man came to be understood as referring to Jesus himself, and to what extent these sayings represent any fundamental alteration in the Jesus tradition. There remain outstanding questions before clarity and consensus on the issues will be possible.

5 JUDAISM IN THE HELLENISTIC WORLD

Scholarship this century has seen a fundamental reconception of its understanding of late Second Temple Judaism, very largely through the contribution of Neusner (1971; 1983 etc). The insights of this development have been brought to bear upon New Testament scholarship largely under the influence of Sanders (1992 etc). While work clearly still needs to be done in this area, recent North American scholarship has tended to move away from seeing Judaism as the appropriate context for understanding Jesus' ministry in favour of a broader hellenistic matrix. While the earlier notion of a dichotomy between Judaism and Hellenism has been moderated in scholarship largely through the influence of Hengel (1974), some recent scholars have all but collapsed it entirely in their reconstructions of Jesus and his followers in terms of a promiscuous syncretism devoid of distinctively Jewish characteristics (Guenther 1992; Mack 1988:65–73; 1993:51–68). The underlying assumption seems to be that the ethnic diversity of the population of Galilee deprived individual communities of their distinctive identities and cultures, and dissipated their religious beliefs. Due account needs to be taken of the evidence that local communities were
homogenous, and maintained their distinctive identity and traditions (Brown 1983:362; Edwards 1992:55; Freyne 1980; 1992:84–85; Kee 1992). The ethnic and cultural diversity of first century Galilee implied no erosion of the national and religious identities of the various communities, or their dissolution into a new collective identity. There was no distinctive cult, or any institution which could form the basis of collective religious and cultural identity in Galilee. Jesus was undoubtedly a Galilean, but he was none the less self-consciously Jewish, and shared in the heritage and identity of the community whose centre, however remote, was the Temple in Jerusalem (Freyne 1988; Sanders 1985:133–56; 1994; Vermes 1973; 1993; pace, Guenther 1992; Mack 1993:51–68). The Jewishness of Jesus can be corroborated from the letters of Paul, who was well aware not merely of Jesus’ Jewish identity (Rom 1:3), but also of his observance of the Law (Gal 4:4). In the course of his long struggle for equal access for Gentiles to fellowship with Christian Jews, Paul was unable to cite the example of Jesus in support of his position. This is particularly significant, given that Paul was on occasion in conflict on this point with members of Jesus’ original circle of disciples and his family, and with elements in the Church who claimed to act on their authority (cf Taylor 1992). Therefore, even if Jesus in some respects appropriated or emulated the counter-cultural lifestyle and mode of discourse associated with the Cynics (Crossan 1991; Mack 1993:43–47; 105–30; Vaage 1995; cf Kloppenborg 1987a:240–41; pace, Freyne 1992:88; Tuckett 1996:355–91), he remained an eschatologically oriented Jewish prophet whose message derived from and interpreted Hebrew Scripture and the experience of Israel (cf Allison 1994:663; Carlston 1982:102; Jacobson 1992b:72–76; Sato 1995). Attempts to portray Jesus as operating outside a Jewish milieu encounter serious obstacles. While the diversity of first century Judaism and its relationship with the wider hellenistic cultural context remain to be fully explored, the grounds for locating Jesus outside Judaism have not been substantiated.

6 WISDOM AND APOCALYPTIC

The dichotomy between the eschatological and non-eschatological passages in Q is founded upon a series of underlying assumptions. A disjunction is posited between the wisdom and prophetic-apocalyptic traditions in Israel (Mack 1993:152). The essential continuity between Hebrew wisdom and prophecy has been demonstrated by Von Rad (1972) and Smith (1975), and applied to the study of Q by Carlston (1982) and Sato (1995). The point has also been made in wider-ranging studies by Allison (1994) and Horsley (1994:1140–43). The presence of wisdom motifs in Q, and of sapiential expressions among the sayings of Jesus, therefore, does not justify, still less require, any radical disjunction between Jesus and his Jewish heritage. Nor does wisdom imply any denial of the expectation of divine action in history, even if different language and imagery are used in its conceptualisation. Progress on
understanding the teaching of Jesus will become possible when the essential complementarity between wisdom and apocalyptic are more fully appreciated.

7 THE FALL OF JERUSALEM AND THE TRANSMISSION OF THE GOSPEL TRADITIONS

It is commonly supposed that the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 CE fundamentally reshaped Christian eschatology, as the early Church responded to the failure of its parousia hopes (Brandon 1957; Kelber 1974; Mack 1988:166; 1993:2–3, 176). The problem of the delayed parousia is deemed to have loomed large towards the end of the first century, and to have reshaped the transmission of the Jesus traditions, particularly those relating the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple to the last judgement. This set of assumptions needs reconsideration. The gospels of Matthew and Luke, while undoubtedly concerned with eschatology, do not reflect any sense of crisis at the delayed parousia, but rather a sense that some have come to take the continuance of that delay for granted; a perception which Jacobson finds rooted in Q itself (1992b:232). The late first century and early second century Christian writings, the Pastoral, Catholic, and Ignatian Letters, and the Didache, likewise do not reflect a crisis in eschatological hopes, but continue to await the imminent parousia. The exception to this is 2 Pet 3:1–10, which alludes to doubts about the parousia of Christ, interprets these as an eschatological sign, and reaffirms an imminent if indeterminate expectation. This was not a new problem, and deaths in the church have given rise to concerns about the parousia and resurrection very much earlier, as reflected in 1 Thess 4:13–18. The delayed parousia therefore should be seen as a problem which occurred repetitively, at different times and in different places in the history of the early Church. It was a recurring issue which did not go away rather than as one which came to any particular prominence during the last quarter of the first century. The first generation of Christians would have died out by 70 CE, even if newer communities experienced death for the first time at a later period. Death in Christian communities expecting the parousia of Christ would have been a known phenomenon by 70 CE. Furthermore, any crisis occasioned by the association of the destruction of the Temple with the return of Christ failed to leave any impact on the surviving Christian documents of the post-70 period. It may be precisely that communities which cherished such expectations perished in Jerusalem or elsewhere in Palestine without leaving any record, but I would suggest that this association between the demise of the Temple and the parousia of Christ had already dissipated by 70 CE, even if it may have been momentarily revived during the latter stages of the Jewish War.

The primitive Church would have had to confront the failure of their parousia hopes thirty years before the destruction of Jerusalem. In 40 CE Caligula’s intended appropriation of the Temple as a shrine to his own divinity, and the popular mass movements which arose in resistance to the scheme, confronted Palestine with
imminent catastrophe in which the Christians were alienated from their kinship groups and marginalised in Palestinian Jewish society (Taylor 1996). This was the first potentially cataclysmic episode in Palestine since the death of Jesus, and posed for his disciples not merely an occasion on which to expect fulfilment of their expectations, but a crisis requiring immediate eschatological delivery. However, by a perverse turn of events, it was the Roman governor Petronius and the herodian king Agrippa who defused the crisis and delivered the Jewish people from catastrophe. Christian hopes and expectations were dashed, both that Jesus' prophecy of the destruction of the Temple would be fulfilled, and that this would lead to his eschatological return and the establishment of a new order. The failed parousia accordingly gave birth to the notion of the delayed parousia in the early 40's CE, not the 70's, and at the same time effected the separation of the continuing expectation of the destruction of the Temple from expectation of Jesus' return (cf Conzelmann 1959:214–15; Donahue 1973:129–31; Kelber 1974; Pesch 1968:118). This reorientation of Christian eschatology was well-established long before 70 CE (pace, Mack 1988:166–67), and is represented in Mark 13, where the antecedent desecration of the Temple is semi-detached from the destruction predicted by Jesus in his demonstration in the Temple court (Taylor 1996; pace, Mack 1988:243, 291–97). Subsequent developments in the synoptic tradition in Matthew 24 and Luke 21 consolidate this process, but represent no substantial reorientation of eschatological expectations in the light of the destruction of Jerusalem. Therefore, even if Mark 13 is located in the late sixties CE rather than the early 40's (Hengel 1985; A Y Collins 1992), it represents a dissociation of the parousia of Christ from the destruction of the Temple before the latter event took place. If, however, Mark dates from after 70 CE (Hooker 1991), this would account for the essential unanimity of the synoptic Gospels in relating their eschatological hopes and the fall of Jerusalem.

The year 70 CE may therefore not have been as decisive in the development of Christian eschatology as has been supposed. The destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple would certainly have affected any Christians who persisted in the expectation that these events would be linked to the parousia of Christ. However, the separation of these episodes was already well-established in those trajectories of Christian thought which survived, and any crisis experienced in Palestinian Christianity would have been occasioned by the socio-economic consequences of the War for a marginal group among the defeated nation. This is not to deny that the Jewish war and the impending destruction of Jerusalem may have occasioned heightened eschatological expectations among the Jewish people, or that a christocentric version of these expectations was perceived among Christians. However, the Palestinian Christians had survived an earlier crisis of failed eschatological hopes, and any crisis occasioned by the War would have been transitory. The whole notion of eschatological crisis in early Christianity, and its impact on the transmission of the Jesus traditions, needs further consideration.
8 HUMAN PARTNERSHIP WITH GOD IN LATE SECOND TEMPLE JUDAISM

Any interpretation of the teaching of Jesus which ignores the belief of the Jewish people that God acts in and through human history, however the divine presence and action may be discerned in human events, will be incomplete. One aspect of this which seems to have been neglected in scholarship, but which may prove crucial to reaching an adequate understanding of Jesus' eschatological teaching, is how he conceived human responses to his teaching in relation to the realisation of the divine purpose. In other words, in what ways could human actions contribute to the process, and followers of Jesus become partners of God in effecting their and Israel or the world's eschatological deliverance? The cluster of sayings regarding self-denial and discipleship (Mk 8:34–35; Mt 10:38–39; 16:24–25; Lk 9:23–24; 14:27; 17:33; Jn 12:25; GThom 55:2) may be crucial to this question. The authenticity of this tradition is disputed, on the grounds that the reference to the instrument of Jesus' crucifixion is clearly anachronistic, and reflects a conception and image of discipleship proper to the early Church rather than the ministry of Jesus (Nineham 1963:230; Schweizer 1970:176; Fitzmyer 1981:785; Beare 1987:250; cf Hooker 1991:208). Other scholars, however, postulate a known idiom in the Graeco-Roman world which Jesus could have adapted (Nolland 1993:476, citing Epictetus Diat 2.3.20 and Cicero Fin 5.84). Others appeal to the image of Isaac carrying the wood which Abraham intended to ignite when sacrificing him (Marshall 1978:373, citing GenR 56 (36c); pace, Fitzmyer 1981:787). In addition, some scholars argue that Jesus was able to predict the circumstances of his death and describe discipleship accordingly (C A Evans 1990:153; cf C F Evans 1990:409). Whatever the precise origins and original wording of these sayings, there can be no doubt that Jesus issued a call to radical discipleship. Quite what this entailed, and what role such disciples would play in realising the divine purpose, is crucial to understanding Jesus' eschatological teaching. It would seem that there was a martyr theology in the teaching of Jesus, which was almost certainly established in the tradition as a prerequisite to eschatological deliverance before the gentile mission acquired such a significance (Mk 13:10; Rm 11:1–26; cf Mt 28:16–20). While martyr theology can embrace a notion of human partnership in the saving work of God, the definitive action is reserved to God, and extant primitive Christian traditions are unanimous in expecting the return of Christ in glory (Mk 13:26; I Thess 4:15–17). Notwithstanding Borg's caution about assuming continuity between the teaching of Jesus and the beliefs of the early Church (1986:532), it does seem clear that the teaching of Jesus provided no basis for any notion that human action on its own could realise the reign of God, however conceived. Nevertheless, the nature of the human partnership envisaged by Jesus needs to be more fully examined. The Jewish literature of the period interprets a variety of human actions, from prayer and righteousness (Tobit; TMsg 12; PsSo/3:8; cf Q 7:3b-9; AJ 18:116–19 [John the Baptist]), the maintenance of ritual purity (Qumran scrolls
esp) to martyrdom (4 Maccabees; TMos 9:6; cf BJ 2:169–74 [popular response to Pilate on issue of standards]; AJ 18:261–78 [popular reaction to Caligula on issue of Temple]; BJ 7:323; 418 [Sicarii at Masada]) and military action (1 Maccabees, esp 4:8–11; cf AJ 18:3–10,23–25; BJ 2:117–18 [Fourth Philosophy]; AJ 18:23; BJ 2:118 [Judas of Galilee]; AJ 20:169–72; BJ 2:261–63 [the 'Egyptian']; BJ 2:651; 4:160–6:148; 7:268 [Zealots]) as contributing to the realisation of the divine purpose on earth, but never in isolation from the decisive intervention of God. Rather, human behaviour is conceived in terms of preparation for divine action, or of creating the circumstances in which God would act. This is an area which needs to be more fully explored, and brought to bear upon our understanding of the eschatological teaching of Jesus.

9 PROVISIONAL WORKING CONCLUSIONS

In this study I have identified a number of outstanding issues, without taking account of which our understanding of Jesus' eschatological teaching will be inadequate and incomplete. Some of these issues concern scholarly methods and presuppositions, others concern areas where new discoveries and insights have broken the consensus which characterised much of New Testament scholarship under the influence of Schweitzer. While many of these developments have found wide support in scholarship, and none can be ignored, I have argued that it is premature to see any new consensus emerging, except within very specific academic contexts. I have also identified areas where the impact of recent developments in scholarship seem not to have been fully brought to bear upon the debates regarding the eschatological teaching of Jesus. It is probably not realistic to expect any unanimity to emerge in scholarship in the foreseeable future, but it is nonetheless important to identify areas in which further questions need to be addressed, and in which the findings of previous scholarship need to be reevaluated. The aim of this study has been to do precisely this, and it is to be hoped that some of the outstanding issues will be taken up, and that progress will be made towards reconstructing the ever-elusive teaching of Jesus on eschatological questions.

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