

The Eschatology of Jesus

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WHAT JESUS BELIEVED ABOUT THE LAST THINGS IS A CONTROVERSIAL topic. Throughout most of church history Christian readers of the New Testament have related Jesus' prophecies primarily to three things—to Pentecost and the life of the church, to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. and God's supposed abandonment of the Jewish people, and to the resurrection of the dead and final judgment at the distant end of the world. Many modern scholars, however, now believe that Jesus had little if anything to say about the church, that he anticipated not God's abandonment of Israel but Israel's eschatological restoration, and that he spoke of the end not as distant but as near to hand. Indeed, many are convinced that much of Jesus' message can be fairly characterized as apocalyptic eschatology. This chapter will clarify just why this is the case and why other interpretations of the evidence are unlikely to be correct.

THE OLD CONSENSUS

The modern discussion of Jesus and eschatology began with the first edition of Johannes Weiss's *Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes*, which appeared in 1892. In this Weiss argued that Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom, rightly

understood, was consistent with neither traditional Christian piety nor the nineteenth century's liberal lives of Jesus. When Jesus spoke of the kingdom, he was not referring to the church, that is, the body of dead and living saints, nor was he speaking of God's rule in the human heart. He was, rather, announcing the imminent advent of an eschatological reality that would transform the physical world. That reality would be ushered in by the final judgment, which would mean punishment or annihilation for the condemned and reward in paradise for the righteous. According to Weiss, although Jesus originally thought the end to be very near, later, after his call for repentance went widely unheeded, he came to believe that the kingdom would not come before he had died as a ransom for the people.

In 1906 Albert Schweitzer, when surveying the nineteenth century's quest for Jesus, wrote that Weiss's little book "seems to break a spell. It closes one epoch and begins another" (1961, 239). Schweitzer had independently come to the same conclusion as Weiss: Jesus was an apocalyptic preacher. Schweitzer, however, believed that Weiss "showed a certain timidity" (1961, 351 n. 1), for he failed to see that Jesus' conduct in its entirety was ruled by an eschatological scenario. This was the significance of Schweitzer's famous term "thoroughgoing eschatology" (*konsequente Eschatologie*). More so than Weiss, Schweitzer explained every aspect of what Jesus said and did by reference to eschatology. Schweitzer indeed went on to contend that we must choose between two alternatives, between thoroughgoing eschatology and thoroughgoing skepticism. By this he meant that either Jesus lived in the same imaginative world as those responsible for the old Jewish apocalypses, or the Gospels are so unreliable that we know next to nothing about him.

Since Schweitzer, many have accepted his dichotomy and embraced the eschatological option. Even when disagreeing with Schweitzer about this or that, they have believed that Jesus expected God to put an end to the normal course of things by raising the dead, judging the world, undoing evil, and transforming the earth into a perfect reflection of the will of God. They have also thought that for Jesus this eschatological metamorphosis was near to hand. The generalization includes Rudolf Bultmann, who affirmed that "Jesus' message is connected with the hope . . . primarily documented by the *apocalyptic* literature, a hope which awaits salvation not from a miraculous change in historical (i.e. political and social) conditions, but from a cosmic catastrophe which will do away with all conditions of the present world as it is" (1951, 4). The generalization also includes the more conservative Joachim Jeremias, who attributed a whole series of very concrete eschatological expect-

tations to Jesus—that eschatological suffering would soon fall upon the saints, that Satan would soon be defeated, that angels would soon separate the living righteous from the wicked, that the dead would soon be raised, that Gentiles would soon stream in from east and west to the mountain of God (1971, 122–41, 241–49). More recently, E. P. Sanders has argued that Jesus was an eschatological prophet who prophesied the eschatological destruction and rebuilding of the temple and looked forward to the restoration of the twelve tribes of Israel.

REJECTION OF THE CONSENSUS

Schweitzer's interpretation of Jesus as an apocalyptic preacher has always had its opponents. One suspects that in this matter theological sentiment has unduly interfered with intellectual history. However that may be, perhaps the foremost among Schweitzer's opponents in the first half of the twentieth century was the British scholar C. H. Dodd. In *The Parables of Jesus*, first published in 1935, he sought to counter the seemingly humiliating discovery that Jesus was, in effect, a false prophet. (In the 1960 Preface he states candidly that, "my work began by being orientated to the problem as Schweitzer had stated it.") Dodd urged that "Jesus conceived His ministry as moving rapidly to a crisis, which would bring about His own death, the acute persecution of His disciples, and a general upheaval in which the power of Rome would make an end of the Jewish nation, its city and temple" (1935, 50–51). But all this trouble was not to be followed by a supernatural age of bliss. For the sayings that can be so understood (e.g., Matt. 19:28; Mark 14:58) point rather to "the transcendent order beyond history" (1935, 53). Dodd believed that on the historical or mundane plane the kingdom had already arrived, or was already, so to speak, accessible. Jesus proclaimed the kingdom as "a present fact" (1935, 29). As Matt. 12:28 has it, "the kingdom of God has come upon you."¹ What the prophets foretold was for Jesus a matter of present experience.

Although most have judged Dodd to be unpersuasive in much of his exegesis and appraised his work a failed attempt to find the eschatology of John's Gospel in the sayings of the historical Jesus, his rejection of a Jesus who expected the natural course of things to be interrupted by God's supernatural intervention is shared by many. Perhaps the most prominent exponent of a noneschatological Jesus today is John Dominic Crossan. As early as 1973 he wrote that the scholarly consensus that Jesus' message was "apocalyptic eschatology" had become "extremely problematic." For Jesus "was not announcing

that God was about to end the world (i.e., for us, the planet), but he was proclaiming God as the One who shatters the world repeatedly and always. If, for instance, he forbade calculations of the signs of the end, it was not calculations nor signs he was opposed to, but end" (Crossan 1973, 109).

Crossan has continued to forward this view in recent books. While Jesus, as a follower of John the Baptist, began as an apocalyptic believer, he did not, for Crossan, so continue. Jesus broke with the Baptist and developed his own program.

Crossan's method of developing a Jesus dissimilar from Schweitzer's is different from that of Dodd. Although Dodd believed the eschatological discourse in Mark 13 to be "a secondary composition," so that it cannot stand as evidence of Jesus' "own forecast of the future" (1935, 36–37), Dodd took the Synoptics to be very reliable. So his dismissal of Schweitzer was based primarily on a reinterpretation of pertinent passages. Crossan, unlike Dodd, freely confesses that a great many sayings in the Jesus tradition state and presuppose eschatological expectations that contradict his reconstruction; he simply regards these as not authentic. In this Crossan carries forward the project of Norman Perrin, who, although he did not go as far as Crossan in eliminating eschatological elements from the tradition, ousted so-called apocalyptic items as secondary, that is, argued that they were not from Jesus himself.

It has recently been claimed that the position staked out by Crossan has become the new consensus. While this is debatable, many do now reject Schweitzer's old dichotomy. Although denying that Jesus thought something like a millennial kingdom or the rabbinic world-to-come to be just around the corner, they do this without giving up the quest for the historical Jesus. They contend rather that earlier scholars made at least two big mistakes. First, they attributed to Jesus eschatological texts that should instead be attributed to the early church. Second, they misinterpreted other texts that Jesus did compose.

As illustration of the first error, many now doubt that Jesus uttered any of the sayings that feature "the Son of Man" and the last judgment. Mark 8:38 ("Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels") and related texts are thought to have been created by Christians. There is said to be no convincing evidence that "the Son of Man" was a recognizable title for a messianic figure among Jesus' Jewish contemporaries, so Jesus could not have used it. The appellation was rather created by Jesus' followers and applied to him on the basis of a Christian interpretation of Dan 7:13–14. On this view of things, if Jesus ever

used "son of man" (as most think he did on at least a few occasions) he was only using a common Aramaic idiom for speaking about oneself in a round-about fashion.² The expression had nothing to do with the last things (see Vermes 1973).

As illustration of the second supposed error, some now say that Jesus' sayings about the kingdom or rule of God have been roundly misunderstood, because it has been assumed that the kingdom—the central theme of Jesus' proclamation—was imminent and eschatological. The common conviction may seem an obvious inference from Mark 14:25 ("I shall not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God"). But the authenticity of these words is now disputed, and there are other texts that clearly indicate that Jesus spoke of the kingdom as present. Matt 12:28 = Luke 11:20, for instance, declares that "the kingdom has [already] come to you," and Luke 17:20–21 says that "the kingdom of God is not coming with things that can be observed; nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There it is!' For, in fact, the kingdom of God is among you." Crossan and others have urged that Jesus proclaimed a "sapiential" kingdom, one having to do with living under God's power and rule in the here and now.

Two catalysts in particular have disturbed the old consensus regarding Jesus and eschatology and have encouraged the new position. The first was the discovery of the *Gospel of Thomas*, part of the Nag Hammadi library, a corpus of Gnostic texts discovered in 1945 in Egypt. This extracanonical collection of sayings of Jesus, which seems in part independent of the canonical Gospels, was, according to many, composed sometime between the middle of the first century C.E. and the middle of the second century C.E. So it is relatively early. It moreover contains not a word about the eschatological Son of Man. Nor is there any sense that the world is about to undergo an eschatological transformation. Several scholars have proposed that *Thomas* reflects a very early stage of the Jesus tradition, one that had not yet been touched by the apocalyptic expectation of the Son of Man. For them, *Thomas* is reason to suppose that the sayings in the Jesus tradition which promote an apocalyptic eschatology are secondary.

A second catalyst toward the new picture of Jesus has been discussion of the compositional history of Q, the hypothetical document supposedly used by both Matthew and Luke. Several recent scholars have decided that the earliest, or at least an early, version of Q contained no future Son of Man sayings, and that the eschatological pathos present in Q as it was known to Matthew and Luke was a secondary development (so Kloppenborg 1987). If accepted, this result would be consistent with the theory that the Christian tradition,

without help from Jesus, was responsible for the eschatological character of so much in the Gospels.

DEFENSE OF THE OLD CONSENSUS

But there are problems. Some would hesitate to put much confidence in the hypothetical compositional history of the hypothetical document Q. Others would offer alternative histories of Q that do not eliminate a strong eschatological element from the earliest stratum.

For the sake of argument, however, what follows if one grants that the first level of Q was indeed empty of eschatological feeling? Probably very little. One can readily imagine that the initial compiler of Q had interests different from the compiler of some later, expanded edition. But why those first interests, as opposed to later interests, would alone favor the preservation of authentic sayings is unclear to many of us. If we were envisaging a documentary history that spanned generations, then an earlier contributor would certainly be in a privileged position. Q, however, was opened and closed within, at most, a thirty- or forty-year period. One might accordingly even suppose that the enlarged Q, by virtue of additional, authentic material, resulted in a fuller and less distorted impression of the historical Jesus. Is arguing that the first stratum of Q alone gives us an accurate picture of what Jesus did or did not say about eschatological matters really any more persuasive than urging that the first biography written about, let us say, John F. Kennedy, must be more reliable than all of those that have come later? Should we, because we learn of Jesus' crucifixion not from Q but from other sources, perhaps entertain the notion that Jesus was not crucified? Obviously Q leaves much out of account, even much of importance, which it must have known.

As for the *Gospel of Thomas*, whatever its compositional history may be, there is every reason to believe that its final redactor had no fondness for sayings promoting an apocalyptic eschatology. The truth is that *Thomas* both knows and disparages an eschatological understanding of Jesus. This being so, *Thomas* shows only that competing interpretations existed at an early period. It does not tell us which of those interpretations was congruent with Jesus himself.

There is, however, yet another reason for questioning the old consensus. Contemporary work on the Jesus tradition has plausibly urged that Jesus was a teacher of subversive wisdom, an aphorist, a creator of sapiential sayings. This matters for us because wisdom is about coping with the present whereas

apocalypticism seemingly rejects the present in the hope of a better future. We appear to have here two different ways of looking at the world. If so, and if Jesus saw things through the wisdom tradition, is it not natural to intuit that he did not also see them through the apocalyptic tradition? Many have discerned a tension between sayings that assume the continuing flow of the natural order and others that prophesy the end of that order.

Although one sees the point, surely Jesus the eschatological prophet could have uttered provocative one-liners and lived partly out of the wisdom tradition. As historians of Second Temple Judaism are well aware, significant connections run between wisdom literature and the apocalypses. Further, an imminent expectation or strong eschatological interest is combined with wisdom materials in Daniel, the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, the Synoptics, and Paul. So why not also with Jesus? One needs only a little knowledge of contemporary American fundamentalism to realize that fervent attention to practical social questions can go hand in hand with authentic belief in a near end. In any case both the subversive and often unconventional wisdom of the Jesus tradition and its expectation of a quick end to things as they now are function similarly, namely, to undo the status quo.

Those who reconstruct a noneschatological Jesus sometimes defend their position with the claim that Jesus' message was misunderstood or misinterpreted within a generation. As Robert Funk has affirmed,

We can understand the intrusion of the standard apocalyptic hope back into his [Jesus'] gospel at the hands of his disciples, some of whom had formerly been followers of the Baptist: they had not understood the subtleties of Jesus' position, they had not captured the intensity of his vision, and so reverted to the standard, orthodox scenario once Jesus had departed from the scene. (Funk 1996, 164)

This strategy is not new. C. H. Dodd, in trying to save Jesus from Schweitzer's brand of eschatology, wrote that Jesus' reporters, "understandably anxious to find his words relevant to their own urgent preoccupations, have given them a twist away from their original intention" (1970, 123).

This sort of apology against eschatological error indeed has a very long and ancient pedigree. For it already appears in the New Testament itself. Luke tells us that as Jesus went up to Jerusalem he told his disciples a parable, "because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately" (Luke 19:11). Luke, like Dodd, is telling us that while the disciples got it wrong, Jesus got it right. He made no mistake. He was just misunderstood.

Now, of course, great figures who stand above their times can be mis-

understood. But this is too easy a way out. Rabbinic texts tendentiously explain sectarianism by positing that the disciples of Antigonus of Socho and Shammai and Hillel inadequately understood their masters' teaching. Is not Luke 19:11 equally tendentious? If the early Christians really failed to comprehend Jesus' pronouncements about the kingdom, then is it realistic to think that we, who have access to him only through their erroneous memory, can ever understand him aright? Would it not be more realistic just to give up the quest for Jesus?

More worthy of our attention is the proposition that the presence of the kingdom in certain sayings is incompatible with a Jesus who believed in a yet-to-come eschatological kingdom. One way around this—more plausible than is often imagined—is simply to assert that the sayings so often taken to mean that the kingdom was in some sense present mean no such thing. But even if one thinks this a desperate strategy, one still would not have sufficient reason for attributing one idea to Jesus, another to his followers. Rudolf Otto, observing that although Muhammad announced the day of Allah to be near, the prophet nonetheless gave himself to long-term political and military projects, stressed what he called the “essential irrationality” of eschatological thinking (63). He had a point; and when we remember how often people have found tensions and outright contradictions within the authentic letters of Paul, we should perhaps hesitate to apply with any confidence criteria that demand consistency from Jesus.

In this particular, however, there seems to be a natural resolution. First, Jesus' Bible itself exhibits a similar tension. Dan. 2:44 announces that “in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed.” Here the kingdom is eschatological and yet to come. But in 4:34 we read that God's “kingdom endures from generation to generation.” Here the kingdom is somehow already present.

Second, Judaism was familiar with the notion that the eschatological transition would be a protracted process, a series of events taking place over a period of time; and this notion appears in texts for which the process has already begun, for which eschatological blessings have entered the present.

The author of *Jubilees*, for example, writing around the middle of the second century B.C.E., believed that the eschatological era had already begun. This is evident above all in chapter 23, which first describes the Maccabean revolt and then apparently moves on to allude to the author's present as a time when “people will begin to study the law and the commandments anew and to return to righteousness” (v. 26; trans. Wintermute, in Charlesworth 1983). The text, then, draws no sharp line between the happy present and the days of

eschatological redemption when people will live to be a thousand years old and “there will be no Satan or evil creature” (v. 29). The one time will gradually become the other: “And the days will begin to increase and grow longer” (v. 27). Evidently the eschatological tribulation is past. The kingdom of God has begun to arrive.

The so-called Apocalypse of Weeks (= 1 *Enoch* 93 + 91:12–17) offers a similar eschatology. Here history is divided into ten weeks. The first six weeks run from Adam to the destruction of the Temple. The seventh week then introduces eschatological time. There is first a period of great wickedness, after which the elect become manifest and receive knowledge. There follow three weeks of eschatological judgment. The author clearly belongs to the end of the seventh week, when eschatological tribulation ceases and eschatological knowledge enters the world. So although God's kingdom has not yet come in its fullness, God is already bestowing the blessings of the new age.

One can take Jesus' statements about the presence of the kingdom to imply that he thought himself to be in the middle of the unfolding of the eschatological scenario. The term “inaugurated eschatology” has often been used to refer to this sort of idea.

A point regularly missed by those who give us a noneschatological Jesus is that, among sayings thought to declare the kingdom present, we find the language of advent, not reference to a changeless reality. Luke 10:9 says that the kingdom has come or has come near. Similar is Luke 11:20: “upon you has come the kingdom of God.” Whatever else these statements mean, they give a temporal character to the kingdom. Presumably there was a time when the kingdom of God had not come upon people. Does this make sense if Jesus had in view an “always available divine dominion”? (Crossan 1991, 292). Does not the use of temporal verbs with the kingdom reflect Jesus' belief that something new and unprecedented had happened? Are we not impelled to think in terms of an eschatological scenario?

Given the inconclusive nature of the arguments so far considered, it is no surprise that the old consensus still has its vigorous supporters. Declarations of its demise or of its replacement by a new consensus are premature. In addition to Sanders, John P. Meier has recently written a major work in which Jesus looks much more like Schweitzer's Jesus than the nonapocalyptic, Cynic-like sage of Crossan. Many in fact remain confident that the eschatological Jesus must be the historical Jesus. Among their reasons are the following.

1. The apocalyptic writings put us in touch with a type of eschatology that was well known in the Judaism that nurtured Jesus. Not only did the sacred collection itself contain apocalyptic materials—Isaiah 24–27, Daniel,

Zechariah 9–14—but portions of 1 *Enoch*, some of the Jewish *Sibylline Oracles*, and the *Testament of Moses* were in circulation in Jesus' day; and the decades after Jesus saw the appearance of 4 *Ezra*, 2 *Baruch*, and the *Apocalypse of Abraham*. His time was also when the Dead Sea Scrolls, so many of which are charged with eschatological expectation, were presumably being composed or copied and studied. The point, reinforced by Josephus's remarks on the general popularity of Daniel (*Antiquities* 10.268), is simply that the sort of eschatology Schweitzer attributed to Jesus was indeed flourishing in Jesus' day. The sense of an imminent transformation appears to have been shared by many. So to propose that Jesus thought likewise is just to say that he believed what many others in his time and place believed.

2. The apocalyptic view of things was not just held by many Jews in general; it was also held by many of the first Christians in particular. Passages from a wide variety of sources leave little doubt that many early followers of Jesus thought that the eschatological climax was approaching. Examples include Acts 3:19–20; Rom. 13:11; 1 Cor. 16:22; 1 Thess. 5:1–11; Heb. 10:37; Jas. 5:8; 1 Pet. 4:17; 1 John 2:8; Rev. 22:20; and *Didache* 16.

If in the post-Easter period there were Jesus people who believed that "the ends of the ages have come" (1 Cor. 10:11), in the pre-Easter period Jesus was associated with John the Baptist, whose public speech, if the Synoptics are any guide at all, featured frequent allusion to the eschatological judgment, conceived of as imminent.³ According to Q (as preserved in Matthew 3 and Luke 3), John warned people "to flee from the wrath to come," asserted that "even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees," prophesied a baptism "with fire," affirmed that the winnowing fan of judgment was about to clear the threshing floor, and spoke of him "who is coming after me."

The direction of all this is unambiguous. For Jesus himself was baptized by John. Further, we should not doubt that Jesus had positive things to say about his baptizer (see, e.g., Mark 11:30; Luke 7:24–28 [Q], 31–35 [Q]). Obviously then there must have been significant ideological continuity between the two men. So, as many have observed over and over again, to reconstruct a Jesus who did not have a strong eschatological orientation entails unexpected discontinuity not only between him and people who took themselves to be furthering his cause but also between him and the Baptist, that is, discontinuity with the movement out of which he came as well as with the movement that came out of him. Presumption is against this. Certainly the Synoptic evangelists seem to have been unaware of major discrepancy between John and Jesus, for they tended to assimilate the two figures.

Crossan resists the inference from Jesus' relationship to John by citing *Gos. Thom.* 46 ("whoever among you becomes a child will know the kingdom and shall become higher than John"; trans. Guillaumont et al.) and its parallel in Luke 7:28 (Q) ("the least in the kingdom of God is greater than he"). This tradition supposedly shows that if—as Crossan admits—Jesus once shared and "even defended" John's "apocalyptic" vision, he must later have "changed his mind" (1991, 237). But Crossan's interpretation of *Gos. Thom.* 46 and Luke 7:28, which sets Jesus at odds with John, is far from obvious. So one can hardly be chided for preferring the plain and unqualified endorsement of John's message ascribed to Jesus in Luke 7:26 (Q): "What did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet." One also wants to ask Crossan why, if Jesus abandoned John's apocalyptic vision, the contributors to Q thought it fit to preface their collection of Jesus' sayings with John's sayings about eschatology. Did they not understand that Jesus had "changed his mind" and gone far beyond John? Did they fail to see what Crossan sees?

Marcus Borg for his part resists the natural implication of the expectation of the early churches by crediting that expectation "to a deduction based upon the Easter event itself. . . . To some within the church, the fact that a resurrection had occurred was an indicator that the general resurrection must be near; Christ was the 'first fruits' of those to be raised from the dead" (1986, 95–96). This seemingly sensible suggestion, however, leaves the big question unanswered: Why did anyone proclaim a resurrection in the first place? "The fact that a resurrection had occurred" is an infelicitous formulation. How can one here speak of a "fact"? The declaration of Jesus' resurrection was not the recording of a clear observation but an act of interpretation. So what made that particular interpretation the favored one among certain people?

Borg himself observes that "'resurrection' (as distinct from resuscitation) in Judaism was an event expected at the end of time" (1986, 96). Given this and the observations already made, does not the post-Easter, eschatological interpretation of Jesus' vindication—God has already raised Jesus from the dead—imply a closely related pre-Easter eschatological expectation?

3. The Synoptics contain statements that almost certainly regard the eschatological kingdom of God as temporally near:

Truly, I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God has come with power. (Mark 9:1)

Truly, I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. (Mark 13:30)

When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next; for truly, I tell you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes. (Matt. 10:23)

The Synoptics also contain parables admonishing people to watch for the coming of the Lord or of the Son of Man (e.g., Luke 12:39–40 [Q]; Luke 12:35–38 [Q?]; Matt. 25:1–13), pronouncements of eschatological woes on contemporaries (e.g., Mark 13:17; Luke 6:24–26; 10:12–15 [Q]), and miscellaneous traditions that either announce or presuppose that the final fulfillment of God's saving work is nigh (e.g., Mark 1:15; 13:28–29, 33, 37; Luke 18:1–8; 21:34–36).

If Jesus uttered just one of these sayings, then Schweitzer was probably close to the truth. But even in the unlikely event that they were all created by the early church, that is still no sound reason to deny an apocalyptic outlook to Jesus. That some Christians believed one thing is no strong reason to hold that Jesus believed something else. It is theoretically possible that the Jesus tradition was so amorphous or devoid of character that it could not resist the wholesale importation of foreign ideas into it. But it is more likely that people felt free to compose eschatological sayings and add them to the tradition because they thought them in accord with Jesus' message.

4. In ancient Jewish literature "kingdom (of God)" is associated with both imminence and eschatology proper. Consider the following texts:

Then his [God's] kingdom will appear throughout his whole creation. Then the devil will have an end. Yea, sorrow will be led away with him. (*Testament of Moses* 10:1; Priest, in Charlesworth 1983)⁴

But when Rome will also rule over Egypt . . . then indeed the most great kingdom of the immortal king will become manifest. (*Sibylline Oracles* 3.46–48; Collins, in Charlesworth)

And then, indeed, he will raise up a kingdom for all ages. (*Sib. Or.* 3.767–68; Collins in Charlesworth)

Their kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom and all their path will be truth. They will jud[ge] the earth in truth and all will make peace. The sword will cease from the earth, and all provinces will pay homage to them. (4Q246)⁵

He will glorify the pious on the throne of the eternal kingdom. . . . (4Q521 frag. 2, col. 2)

May you attend upon the service in the Temple of the kingdom and decree destiny in company with the Angels of the Presence. . . . (1QSb 4:25–26)

May he establish his kingdom in your lifetime and in your days, and in the lifetime of the whole house of Israel, speedily and at a near time. (Kaddish prayer)

No one would dispute that many first-century Jews were indeed "looking forward to the consolation of Israel" (Luke 2:25), nor that this consolation was often conceived of as an eschatological transformation of the world, nor that this transformation was sometimes spoken of as "the kingdom (of God)." So when we find that the Jesus tradition links "the kingdom (of God)" with eschatological imagery in sayings that are not obvious creations of the community, it is natural to suppose that for Jesus himself the kingdom had strong eschatological associations. One thinks, for example, of the following sayings, which make the kingdom something to be experienced in the future:

How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God. (Mark 10:23)

I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God. (Mark 14:25)

Then people will come from east and west, and north and south and will eat in the kingdom of God. (Luke 13:29 [Q])

Your kingdom come. (Luke 11:2 [Q])

5. A common Jewish conviction about the latter days was that God would finally defeat Satan and the forces of evil. As it says in *Jub.* 23:29, then, "there will be no Satan and no evil (one) who will destroy" (Wintermute, in Charlesworth 1983; compare *1 Enoch* 10:4–6; 54:4–6; *Testament of Zebulon* 9:8; Rev. 20:1–15). This matters because the Jesus tradition contains sayings which refer to Satan's downfall:

I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning. (Luke 10:18)

But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out the demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you. (Luke 11:20 [Q])

No one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered. (Mark 3:27)

Three things may be said about these sayings. First, at least the last two are widely thought to come from Jesus himself. Second, the tradition associates these same two sayings with Jesus' ministry of exorcism. Third, the three sayings naturally reflect the conviction that Satan has already begun to be defeated. The devil has fallen from heaven. He has been cast out. He has been tied up and plundered. These are very strong statements. It is not just that the

devil is meeting opposition but rather that he is being routed—as people expected him to be in the latter days. So are we not invited to believe that Jesus was a successful exorcist who, given his eschatological convictions, associated the defeat of Satan in his ministry with Satan's expected defeat before the eschatological coming of the kingdom?

6. Despite its moral focus, the Jesus tradition fails to supply guidance for changing political or social realities. This very strongly implies that if Jesus hoped for better circumstances he must have assumed that they would be brought about by God himself. In other words, Jesus' imperatives are not akin to the *Analects* of Confucius: they do not offer human solutions to concrete problems but rather look forward to God himself, through a miracle, setting all things right.

7. Many early Christian texts associate the death and resurrection of Jesus with what appear to be eschatological events. According to Matt. 27:51–53, when Jesus died there was strange darkness (cf. Amos 8:9–10), a strong earthquake (cf. Zech. 14:5), and a resurrection of the dead (cf. Ezekiel 37; Zech. 14:4–5). According to John's Gospel, Jesus' death was "the judgment of the world" (12:31) and brought down the reign of Satan (16:11). And according to Paul, Jesus is "the first fruits of those who have died" (1 Cor. 15:20)—a metaphor which assumes that the eschatological harvest (see below) is under way, that the resurrection of Jesus is only the beginning of the general resurrection of the dead.

Given its attestation in Paul, the Synoptics, and John, the habit of associating the end of Jesus with eschatological motifs must go back to very early times. What explains it? The most natural answer is that, while Jesus was yet with them, his followers—as Luke 19:11 plainly tells us—"supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately." That is to say, they foresaw eschatological suffering followed by eschatological vindication, tribulation followed by resurrection. So when Jesus was, in the event, crucified and seen alive again, his followers, instead of abandoning their eschatological hopes, did what one would expect them to do: they sought to correlate expectations with circumstances. This is why they believed that in Jesus' end the eschaton had begun to unfold.

☞ JESUS' EXPECTATIONS

It seems more likely than not, despite recent arguments to the contrary, that Jesus and those around him held strong eschatological hopes, which they thought would soon be realized. But beyond that, what details can we offer?

The Eschatological Judgment

To begin with what we can know with assurance: the theme of eschatological reversal runs throughout the sayings of Jesus, and this theme presupposes that the eschatological judgment is just around the corner. Consider the following:

Blessed are you who are hungry now,
for you will be filled. (Luke 6:21 [Q])

For all who exalt themselves
will be humbled,
and those who humble themselves
will be exalted. (Luke 14:11 [Q])

Those who try to make their life secure
will lose it,
but those who lose their life
will keep it. (Luke 17:33 [Q])

Many who are first
will be last
and the last
will be first. (Mark 10:31)

Regarding authenticity, perhaps no words in the tradition are more often reckoned authentic than the beatitudes in Luke 6:20–21; and Rudolf Bultmann spoke for many when he included Luke 14:11; 17:33 (cf. Mark 8:35); and Mark 10:31 among those sayings of which he said, "here if anywhere we can find what is characteristic of the preaching of Jesus" (1963, 105).

As for interpretation, these pithy sayings are neither secular proverbs begotten of experience, akin to "pride goes before destruction" (Prov. 16:18), nor expressions of hope for a world reformed by better people. The first half of each declaration picks out a circumstance in the mundane present, while the second half declares its reversal in the surprising future. What conviction underlies the certainty with which it is announced that unhappy present circumstances will be undone? One supposes that it was only his firm belief in God's near judgment that allowed Jesus to prophesy the reversal of present circumstances. One recalls the story in the Talmud, in which Rabbi Joseph ben Joshua ben Levi catches a glimpse of the next world, which is "topsy-turvy," because "those who are on top here are at the bottom there, and those who are at the bottom here are on the top there" (Babylonian Talmud *Pesah* 50a). This is not secular wisdom but an affirmation, based upon revelation, about what God will do. One may compare Isa. 60:22:

The least of them
 shall become a clan,
 and the smallest one
 a mighty nation;
 I am the Lord;
 in its time I will accomplish it quickly.

Also closely related are the promises of reversal in *Testament of Judah* 25:4:

And those who died in sorrow
 will be raised in joy;
 and those who died in poverty for the Lord's sake
 shall be made rich;
 those who died on account of the Lord
 shall be awakened to life.

If the Synoptic sayings quoted above presuppose, as do Isa. 60:22 and *T. Jud.* 25:4, a coming judgment that will overthrow the current state of things, other sayings often ascribed to Jesus plainly refer to God's judgment. Consider the following three sayings, all from Q:

Do not judge, and you will not be judged. (Luke 6:37)

I tell you, on that day it will be more tolerable for Sodom than for that town. (Luke 10:12)

The queen of the South will rise at the last judgment with the people of this generation and condemn them. . . . The people of Nineveh will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it. (Luke 11:31–32)

Sayings about the judgment appear throughout the Synoptic tradition. While this in itself does not guarantee that Jesus himself spoke of the judgment, surely the sayings offer some reason for supposing that he did.

The interesting question is not whether Jesus believed in or spoke of eschatological judgment but whether he gave that belief definite shape, whether he offered a picture of it. Was Norman Perrin right to affirm that Jesus expressed confidence in divine vindication but said "nothing about its form" and that, when this result is compared with the ancient sources, Jewish and Christian, the difference is "spectacular" (1967, 203)?

The Synoptics contain only one detailed picture of the last judgment. In Matt. 25:31–46 the Son of Man, accompanied by angels, comes in glory, sits on a throne, and, like a shepherd who separates sheep from goats, divides humanity into two groups, one for the kingdom, one for exclusion from the

kingdom. This scene, however, appears only in Matthew, and it seems to owe as much to the evangelist and to the Similitudes of *1 Enoch*, where the Son of Man also sits on his glorious throne in judgment, as it owes to Jesus.

We have no good evidence then that Jesus ever painted a picture of the last judgment, but the implications of this are not large. We have here only a difference in emphasis or style from the apocalypses, not a difference in conviction. If Jesus did not depict the last judgment in detail, the explanation is not that he thought such depiction inappropriate but that he could take such detail for granted. That is, his tradition already supplied his audience with pictures of the last judgment, so Jesus could simply assume them. Certainly there is no evidence that he rejected traditional images or sought to correct them. To go by the extant evidence, Jesus' focus was not on depicting the judgment but on drawing out its ramifications for behavior in the present. When he warned that one would be taken, another left (Luke 17:34–35 [Q]), he did not elaborate on how that would happen. The point was instead to get people to change their behavior. Christianity began as a sectarian movement precisely because Jesus, following John the Baptist, denied that membership in Israel—that is, physical descent from Abraham—would place one well in the afterlife. Jesus, like his first followers, believed that the verdicts of heaven and hell corresponded to acceptance and rejection of Jesus and his cause.

The Resurrection of the Dead

Soon after his crucifixion, several of Jesus' pre-Easter followers declared, "God raised Jesus from the dead." Upon this fact the canonical Gospels, traditions in Acts, and the letters of Paul all concur.

To proclaim a man's vindication by "the resurrection of the dead" (Acts 4:2) was to proclaim the occurrence of an eschatological event. There is no evidence that Christians ever understood Jesus' resurrection to be (like Lazarus's experience) a return to earthly life. It was, rather, always conceived of as an entrance into heavenly glory. But to say this, to say that God had raised somebody from the dead, was to claim that God had already begun to do what he had formerly been expected to do only at history's culmination.

Why do we have texts that associate Jesus' postmortem vindication with the language of resurrection? Why not texts announcing the heavenly vindication of Jesus' spirit, or declaring his *future* resurrection from the dead, or interpreting Jesus as an angel who only appeared to die before he returned to heaven, or using terms linked with the assumptions to heaven of earlier Jewish heroes such as Enoch and Elijah?

The best answer is that several influential individuals came to their Easter

experiences—whatever they were—with certain categories and expectations already fixed, that they already envisaged the general resurrection to be imminent. This would explain why Jesus' vindication was interpreted not as an isolated event but as the onset of the consummation. As anyone familiar with the sociology of messianic movements knows, every effort is usually made to clothe the unfolding of events with material already to hand. In the year 1666, the so-called Old Believers in Russia declared that the end would come shortly. When it did not, they did not throw away their expectation but rather decided that the Antichrist ruled in the Russian Orthodox Church.

That Jesus expected the general resurrection is not just an inference. Mark 12:18–27 has Jesus, in debate with Sadducees, arguing that God can raise the dead. The unit has often been reckoned to rest on a pre-Easter encounter. The early church, as far as we know, did not engage Sadducees in debate,⁶ and to judge from the New Testament, the early church argued for the resurrection and speculated on its nature by reference to Jesus' resurrection, not scripture. But Jesus' resurrection is not part of Mark 12:18–27. We seemingly have here an inner-Jewish debate, which makes sense on the level of the historical Jesus.

There is also a pertinent Q saying, Luke 11:31–32 par. According to this, "the queen of the south will be raised at the judgment with this generation and will condemn it," and "the people of Nineveh will be raised at the judgment with this generation and will condemn it." Although these words do not offer details, the universal judgment is presupposed, and it is natural, in view of the future tenses, to give "will be raised" its literal sense.⁷

The general resurrection is further presupposed in Mark 9:43–47, where Jesus says it is better to enter life maimed or lame or with one eye than to be thrown into hell whole. The language, like that of some rabbinic texts, implies that the body is raised exactly as it was buried. If a limb has been cut off, then it is missing at the resurrection. The language may, to be sure, be hyperbolic and so intended to startle. Still, Mark 9:43–47 presupposes that speaker and audience expect the dead to come forth from their graves.

Belief in the resurrection of dead appears not only in Mark 9:43–47; 12:18–27; and Luke 11:31–32 but also in the explicit passion predictions (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33–34). These are often dismissed, perhaps rightly, as obviously composed after the event. But Jesus probably did anticipate an untimely death, and it would hardly be surprising to learn that he hoped that God would, notwithstanding all opposition, vindicate his cause. So it is at least possible that, in accord with his eschatological outlook, Jesus foretold tribulation and death for the saints, including himself, and their and his sub-

sequent vindication at the general resurrection. The passion predictions as they now stand would then supply an example of what is so common in the history of broken eschatological expectations, namely, the reinterpretation of a prediction in order to align it with its fulfillment.

Whatever one makes of the passion predictions, there is reason enough to believe that Jesus looked forward to a general resurrection. The implications of this are considerable. Jesus' eschatological future was not mundane but was rather some sort of new, supernaturally wrought state. Whether he thought of something like a millennial kingdom, or a transformed world in which the boundaries between heaven and earth would begin to disappear, or something like the supramundane rabbinic "world to come," he expected its inauguration to be marked by extraordinary events, including the resurrection of the dead. We are not here in the world of preexilic prophecy but in that of Daniel and the apocalypses.

The Restoration of Israel

Turning now to things that are less certain but still probable, it seems likely enough that Jesus, despite his focus on individuals, expected the eschatological restoration of Israel. The hope was common. It appears in the First Testament as well as intertestamental literature.⁸

The widespread expectation is found in the earliest Jesus tradition. In Luke 22:28–30 (Q) Jesus promises his disciples that they will sit on thrones "judging the twelve tribes of Israel." "Judging" here almost certainly means not "condemning" but "ruling," and the saying presupposes the belief that the gathering of the lost and scattered twelve tribes belongs to the eschatological events.

But can we attribute this conviction to Jesus himself? Whether Luke 22:28–30 goes back to Jesus is unfortunately an open question that cannot be definitively answered. But surely it is suggestive that Jesus associated himself with a special group of twelve disciples. Did he not thereby indicate his belief in the eschatological restoration of the twelve tribes?

There is another Q saying, one whose authenticity is usually accepted, in which Jesus speaks of many coming from east and west and reclining with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God (Luke 13:28–29; cf. Matt. 8:11–12). Most exegetes have assumed that the "many" should be identified with Gentiles. But a minority of interpreters have entertained the possibility that Jesus had in mind the eschatological ingathering of Israel (e.g., Sanders 1985, 119–20). The minority is probably right. For the Q context (see Luke 13:24–30) says nothing about Gentiles, and the phrase "east and west" occurs

in Jewish texts in connection with the return of Jews to the land promised to Abraham.⁹ On the other hand, there does not appear to be a single text in which "east and west" refers to an eschatological ingathering of Gentiles. Further, there is otherwise little or no evidence that Jesus spoke of the eschatological coming of the Gentiles. So Luke 13:28–29 appears to tell us that Jesus drew a stark contrast not between unbelieving Jews and believing Gentiles but between saved and unsaved Jews. In this case he made a prophetic threat that while Jews scattered abroad who had not had the benefit of encountering him or his message would find eschatological salvation, those in the land who had heard him would not. The meaning would then be close to Jer. 24:1–10, where the good figs are identified with the exiles from Judah, whom God will return to the land and make his own, while the bad figs are identified with Zedekiah, his princes, the remnant of Jerusalem in the land and those in Egypt, who will be condemned. One may also compare Ezekiel 11, which promises return to Palestine for those in exile but foretells terrible punishment for those who have remained in the land.

One final point about Luke 13:28–29 is that it assumes that the land of Israel will be the geographical center of the eschatological scenario. This accords with traditional expectations. At the same time, the saying seemingly negates any advantages that might accrue from dwelling in Palestine. We have here the rejection of the sort of thinking found in 2 Bar. 29:2; 71:1; 4 Ezra 9:7–8; and Babylonian Talmud *Ketub.* 111a. In these and other texts it is prophesied that the land will protect its own from the dangers of the latter days. In Jesus' proclamation, however, inhabitants of the land will be cast out. Their living in Palestine will not bring them merit. Quite the contrary. It is precisely those inside the borders of Israel, those who have been blessed with the presence of God's eschatological herald, who will face the more dire consequences. Of those to whom much is given, will much be required.

Eschatological Tribulation

Jewish apocalypticism is by nature catastrophic; that is, it stresses the difficulties that lie between the painful present and the ideal future; and ancient Jewish sources regularly depict the birth of a better world as accompanied by terrible labor pains (Allison 1985, 5–25). The rabbis spoke of the "birth throes of the Messiah," and the sorts of disasters catalogued in Mark 13 can be found in many documents, Jewish and Christian. As Dan. 12:1 says, "there shall be a time of anguish, such as has never occurred since the nations first came into existence."

Some have, with good reason, supposed that when Jesus looked into the future he saw what so many others did—not just a new world coming but its attendant birth pangs—and further, that he, like other ancient Jews (Allison 1985, 6–22), interpreted his own work in terms of those pangs. Schweitzer suggested that Jesus originally anticipated, in a generalized fashion, suffering for himself and his followers before the coming of the kingdom; but later, as this expectation went unfulfilled, he conceived the notion that he would die in Jerusalem and take unto himself alone the tribulation of the latter days. According to Joachim Jeremias, Jesus believed instead that his death would be "the prelude to the time of the sword," that the eschatological time of distress would commence with his passion and cover the period of his subsequent absence (1971, 241–44).

What is the evidence that Jesus took up and used to his own ends the traditional motif of the messianic woes? Jesus saw difficulties all around him. He used the image of lambs in the midst of wolves (Luke 10:3 [Q]). He said he had no place to lay his head (Luke 9:58 [Q]). He spoke to people who were poor and hungry and in mourning (Luke 6:20–21 [Q]). He said that those who were not against him and his cause were for him (Mark 9:40)—implying that some were against him (Luke 11:23 [Q]). He told a story in which the invitations to a banquet were roundly rejected—a fictional circumstance surely mirroring his own experience (Luke 14:15–24 [Q]). He spoke of disciples hating their parents (Luke 14:26 [Q]). He may also have enjoined people to take up a cross (Mark 8:34), and he may have composed a parable in which the workers of a vineyard shamefully treat the owner's messengers, a parable that perhaps climaxed with a murder (Mark 12:1–9).

To all this one may add that Jesus' self-conception and experience together pointed to difficulties ahead. For (a) Jesus considered himself a prophet (see below), and Jewish tradition had many tales about the persecution of prophets;¹⁰ (b) Jesus came out of the Baptist movement, and the Baptist was arrested and killed; and (c) Jesus was a controversial figure, and his activities put him into conflict with some Jewish authorities. Certainly someone put him to death, and we may doubt that he was blind to the fact that his provocations might lead to trouble. Now because the Jewish prophetic and apocalyptic traditions foresaw a time of tribulation for the saints before God's final victory, and because Jesus spoke of that victory as near, one wonders whether he might not have spoken of his own present and expected suffering as belonging to that time.

It is possible that the Lord's Prayer alludes to the eschatological woes. In

Luke 11:4 (Q) the disciples are to pray that they not be brought to the time of trial. Whether or not the rest of the Our Father is given an eschatological interpretation, its concluding line probably envisions not the trials or temptations of everyday life but the final time of trouble which precedes the renewal. Here, as in Rev 3:10, the Greek word *peirasmos* can stand for the messianic woes, from which one prays to be delivered (Jeremias 1971, 202).

Whatever one makes of the Lord's Prayer, that Jesus interpreted his own difficult time as the eschatological trouble appears from the Q text behind Luke 12:51–53 and Matt. 10:34–36. It included something close to the following: "Do you think that I came to give peace on the earth? I did not come to give peace but a sword. For I came to divide a man against father and daughter against mother and a daughter-in-law against mother-in-law." This passage depends on Mic. 7:6: "For the son treats the father with contempt, the daughter rises up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; your enemies are members of your own household." In *Mishnah Soṭa* 9:15 this biblical text is drawn upon to characterize the discord of the time right before the Messiah's coming: "Children shall shame the elders, and the elders shall rise up before the children, for the son dishonors the father, the daughter rises up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house." Similar statements appear in other texts.¹¹ The conviction that the eschatological trial would turn those of the same household against each other was common. That Q's adaptation of Mic. 7:6 should be given an eschatological sense is confirmed by the statement about the sword. For talk of the sword within prophecies of eschatological affliction and judgment was also widespread.¹² For Jesus, then, the eschatological time of affliction had come or was near.

Possible confirmation appears in Luke 16:16, which is usually assigned to the historical Jesus and which in Q was close to the following: "The Law and the prophets were until John; from then the kingdom of God has suffered violence and violent men take it by force." Norman Perrin strongly argued that here "the use of the kingdom of Heaven . . . evokes the myth of the eschatological war between God and the powers of evil and interprets the fate of John the Baptist, and the potential fate of Jesus and his disciples, as a manifestation of that conflict" (1976, 46). In other words, Jesus linked opposition to the Baptist's cause with opposition to his own cause and saw both as part and parcel of the eschatological tribulation. This may very well be the correct interpretation.

Luke 12:49–50, which may have stood in Q even though it has no Matthean parallel, makes Perrin's reading all the more plausible. Here Jesus declares, "I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already

kindled! I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how I am constrained until it is accomplished!" Throughout the Jesus tradition fire is associated with eschatological judgment. Moreover, Jewish tradition commonly uses water and flood as symbols of calamity (e.g., Ps. 18:16; Isa. 43:2; Amos 5:8). Jewish tradition also links fire and water together as symbols of judgment, as in Isa. 43:2: "When you pass through the waters I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you" (compare Ps. 66:10–12; Isa. 30:27–28; *Sib. Or.* 3.689–91). Jewish tradition, presumably under the influence of Iranian eschatology, where a flood of molten metal burns up sinners but refines saints at the end of time, also combines fire and water into one eschatological symbol. In Dan. 7:10 there is a stream of fire; in Rev. 19:20 a lake of fire (compare *1 Enoch* 14:19; *Sib. Or.* 3:54; 4 Ezra 13:10–11). In view of all this, one can make a very good case that in Luke 12:49–50 Jesus is relating his own fate to the end of the eschatological trial, when flood and fire will come upon all. As Mark 9:49 says, "every one will be salted with fire." In Luke 12:49–50, however, Jesus shrinks from this prospect; he is torn between conflicting attitudes toward the fearful expectation. One is reminded of the words attributed to both Ulla and Rab in Babylonian Talmud *Sanhedrin* 98b concerning the terror of the latter days: "Let him [the Messiah] come, but let me not see him!"

One final point should be made about the messianic woes. Schweitzer observed that certain traditions seem to join Jesus' fate with the fate of his disciples, yet others focus entirely on Jesus and his solitary passion. Schweitzer eliminated the tension between these two traditions by positing a change within Jesus' thought. At an early time Jesus expected the tribulation to encompass all; later he anticipated taking it up in himself alone. If, however, one takes account of the post-Easter reinterpretation of the Jesus tradition, there is no need to postulate development in Jesus' thinking here. Jesus expected to suffer in the final drama. This accounts for the traditions that link his fate with the fate of his followers (see, e.g., Mark 10:35–45). The church then interpreted and modified his words in the light of what actually happened. This accounts for the texts that focus on Jesus' fate alone. On this view it becomes possible that even the so-called passion predictions are, as already suggested, reinterpretations and specifications of more general prophecies. Any prediction of death and resurrection would originally have meant this: suffering lies ahead for the saints, but afterwards God will vindicate us. Such a pre-Easter forecast, if Jesus gave one, would naturally have been revised, after the fact, to correspond to his isolated suffering and belief in his isolated resurrection.

JESUS' SELF-CONCEPTION

Anointed Prophet

According to Mark 6:15 and 8:27–28, some of Jesus' contemporaries thought him a prophet (see also Matt. 21:11, 46; Luke 7:39; 24:19). There is no reason to reject this testimony, and every reason to suppose that Jesus himself shared this evaluation. In Mark 6:4 he says that a prophet is without honor except in his own hometown. The implication is that Jesus understood his own ministry in prophetic terms. Again, in Luke 13:33 (whose authenticity is less assured) Jesus says that he must be on his way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.

Given that Jesus apparently considered himself a prophet, and given that he thought himself to belong to the latter days, did he associate his ministry with any particular eschatological prophecies? Q's beatitudes, now found in Luke 6:20–23, suggest that he did. The beatitudes draw upon Isaiah 61, which opens thus:

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me;
he has sent me to bring good news to the poor,
to bind up the broken-hearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and release to the prisoners;
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn.

Q's "Blessed are those who mourn, for you will be comforted" borrows from Isa. 61:2.¹³ "Blessed are the poor, for yours is the kingdom of God" alludes to Isa. 61:1. One may also observe that "Rejoice and be glad" recalls Isa. 61:10. What follows?

The Dead Sea Scrolls (11QMelchizedek and the fragmentary 4Q521) use Isa. 61:1–3 to portray the eschatological liberation of Israel's captives, and an eschatological interpretation of these verses also appears in the targum on Isaiah. Moreover, another Q text, Luke 7:22, takes up Isaiah 61 to demonstrate that Jesus is to be identified with the eschatological figure of John's proclamation. When John the Baptist asks whether Jesus is the Coming One, Jesus says, among other things, that the poor have good news preached to them—a clear reference to Isa. 61:1.

Unfortunately, the authenticity of Luke 7:22 is controverted; there is no

consensus that it goes back to Jesus. But the beatitudes by themselves tell us that Jesus linked his work with Isaiah 61. And, given that we have other reasons for believing that he took himself to be a prophet, the inference that Jesus identified himself with the eschatological prophet of Isaiah commends itself.

Jesus' interpretation of his own ministry in terms of Isaiah 61 may also help explain why early Christians came to confess him as Messiah. The indications that Jesus associated himself with Davidic hopes are, as scholars have long recognized, few and far between. The two scenes that must bear the burden of proof—Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi (Mark 8:27–30) and Jesus' confession before the Sanhedrin (Mark 14:61–62)—are often dismissed, rightly or not, as post-Easter products. At the same time, no persuasive explanation for the post-Easter confession of Jesus as the Messiah has been forthcoming. But if Jesus was already, in his own lifetime, thought to be an eschatological figure "anointed" by God (Isa. 61:1), then the step to confession of him as "the Messiah," that is, "the Anointed One," would perhaps not have been such a large one. Particularly suggestive in this connection is 4Q521 (4QMessianic Apocalypse). This says that "[the hea]vens and the earth will listen to His Messiah," then goes on to list miraculous healings reminiscent of Luke 7:22 (see below), and finally cites Isa. 61:1 ("He will heal the wounded, and revive the dead, and bring good news to the poor"). The case has been made that "His Messiah" not only preaches good news to the poor but performs the miracles listed (Collins 1994). We seem to have here an example in Judaism of how one who was thought to fulfill the oracle in Isaiah 61 could be identified as "Messiah."

Son of Man

Several Synoptic sayings refer to the eschatological coming of "the Son of Man" (e.g., Matt. 10:23; Mark 13:26; 14:62; Luke 12:40; 18:8). But many now suppose that the church created all these sayings. Jesus may have used the Aramaic idiom "the son of man" to speak about himself in a roundabout fashion, but he could not, it is said, have used this circumlocution to prophesy his own coming on the clouds of heaven. The church, with its belief in the *parousia*, or second coming of Jesus Christ, used Daniel 7, where one like a son of man comes on the clouds of heaven, to depict Jesus as the judge of the last day.

This solution to the puzzle of the Son of Man sayings has become popular of late (Vermees 1973), and it could be correct. But some remain troubled by the fact that outside the Gospels "the Son of Man" rarely appears. The point has all the more force because we know that although Lord and Christ

were all-important titles in the early church, they have left scarcely a trace in the sayings of Jesus. One may doubt that the church freely introduced christological titles into the Jesus tradition.

Another approach to the Son of Man sayings holds that Jesus did in fact refer to the coming of the Son of Man, but he was not speaking about himself. This position was held by Bultmann and was once very popular; its adherents are fewer today. The parables of *1 Enoch* as well as *4 Ezra* show us that even if "the Son of Man" was not a recognizable title in Jesus' day, there was at least an exegetical tradition that identified Daniel's humanlike figure with a preexistent Messiah. This makes it reasonable, for those who recognize Jesus' kinship with Jewish apocalypticism, to suppose that he looked forward to the heavenly appearance of the Son of Man. On this view of things, the formal distinction between Jesus and the Son of Man in Luke 12:8–9 makes sense: those who confess Jesus will be confessed by the Son of Man; those who deny Jesus will be denied by the Son of Man.

One objection to this viewpoint is that outside the Son of Man sayings there is no evidence that Jesus looked for or spoke of eschatological figures other than the Baptist and himself. It has been replied, however, that the church would hardly have been anxious to preserve references to such a figure, and also that, after the resurrection, Jesus' followers would have identified him with the figure of Dan 7:13. Still, why could they not have been content to proclaim Jesus' resurrection and simultaneously look forward to the coming of another figure, the Son of Man?

Another objection to the proposal that Jesus did not think of himself as the Son of Man is that he may well have believed himself to be Israel's messianic king. That he was crucified as a messianic pretender, that his first followers confessed him to be the Messiah, and that he associated his own work with that of the anointed herald of Isaiah 61 may tell us, when taken together, that he took himself to be not just an important prophet but Israel's eschatological king. This conclusion is consistent with the fact that he apparently placed himself outside of the symbolic group of twelve that he assembled: he stood above them as their leader and so, perhaps, implicitly made himself out to be the leader of regathered Israel.

All this matters because those who believe that Jesus took himself to be Israel's king might also believe that he spoke of himself as the Son of Man coming on the clouds. Both the Similitudes of *Enoch* and *4 Ezra*, which are literarily independent, identify Daniel's "one like a son of man" as the Messiah; so if Jesus took himself to be the latter, he could have made himself out

to be the former. It can be retorted that the identification of Jesus with Daniel's "one like a son of man" would not have made sense before the crucifixion, when Jesus was on earth. But this protest is not decisive if Jesus interpreted his own time in terms of the eschatological tribulation, for he then could have thought of vindication on the far side of suffering and death. Certainly Judaism was familiar with the notion that God's chief agent in the final judgment might be a character from the past who was now waiting in heaven.¹⁴

Given the current lack of scholarly consensus about the Son of Man problem, this is not the place to put forward my own conclusions on this matter. But two final observations may be offered. First, even if Jesus took himself to be the messianic king in Jerusalem, he might still have expected the coming Son of Man to be someone else. Jewish messianism was quite variegated, and if some of the Dead Sea Scrolls speak of two Messiahs, or two Anointed Ones, Jesus could have done something similar. If he believed in two eschatological prophets—the Baptist and himself—he could, at least in theory, have also believed in two Messiahs or messianic deliverers.

Second, it has occasionally been asserted that without the authenticity of the coming Son of Man sayings, there is little reason to suppose that Jesus' teaching about the kingdom had anything to do with an imminent end. This is untrue. Neither Johannes Weiss's nor Albert Schweitzer's account of things rested solely or even mainly on the Son of Man sayings; nor did Rudolf Bultmann's, nor E. P. Sanders's. The truth is that even if Jesus never said anything about "the Son of Man," one could still construct a solid case for an apocalyptic Jesus. The popularity of apocalyptic eschatology in Jesus' day, Jesus' close relationship to John the Baptist (attested in Q, Mark, and John's tradition), the selection of a symbolic body of twelve men, the eschatological expectations of so many in the early church, the primitive proclamation of Jesus' resurrection, and Jesus' execution as "king of the Jews," a would-be deliverer, all cohere with the view that Jesus' words were from the beginning linked with a strong eschatological expectation.

THEMES AND MOTIFS RELATED TO ESCHATOLOGY

When Schweitzer spoke of "thoroughgoing eschatology" he was urging not just that Jesus promoted a certain sort of eschatology but that Jesus' entire ministry, including just about everything he said, could be directly related to

it. In what follows it will be argued that, in accord with Schweitzer's contention, many different themes in the authentic Jesus tradition, over and above those already introduced, can and indeed should be closely linked with Jesus' imminent apocalyptic eschatology.

Revelation

Consider the following sayings:

I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. (Luke 10:21 [Q])

Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it. (Luke 10:23 [Q])

To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside, everything is in parables. (Mark 4:11)

These three sayings, which depict the present as a time of unprecedented divine disclosure, are easily associated with the conviction that the eschatological consummation will bring special knowledge to the elect. Already Jer. 31:34 says, "No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord." Hab. 2:14 puts it this way: "The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." The commentary on Habakkuk from the Dead Sea Scrolls, when commenting on this line, similarly declares that "afterwards knowledge will be revealed" in "abundance" (1QpHab 11:1). The author of this commentary probably connected his own ability to fathom Habakkuk's prophecies with this sort of eschatological expectation. Certainly this conviction lies behind the composition of the apocalypses, in which eschatological revelations are made known. In Daniel the seer explicitly announces that his book will be sealed until "the time of the end," when "the wise will understand" (compare *1 Enoch* 104:12–13; *Testament of Judah* 18:3, 5).

Particularly interesting in this regard is the Apocalypse of Weeks (= *1 Enoch* 93 + 91:12–17). As already observed, in this work the present is already eschatological time, and it is characterized by the entrance of eschatological knowledge into the world: in the latter days the righteous will be given "sevenfold instruction." Do we not have something similar in the Jesus tradition? And do we not have it precisely because Jesus himself interpreted his

own teaching not just as revelation but precisely as eschatological revelation? Is this not how we should account for Luke 10:21, 24 and Mark 4:11? One remembers that, in the Dead Sea Scrolls, God has "made known all the mysteries of the words of his servants the prophets" to the so-called Teacher of Righteousness, who belongs to "the last generation" (1QpHab 7:1–5). One also recalls that *1 Enoch* 51:3 prophesies that God's Elect One will sit on the divine throne and pour forth all the secrets of wisdom, and that in the Animal Apocalypse in *1 Enoch* the final events commence with snow-white sheep beginning to open their eyes and see (90:6)—an allegorical way of saying that near the end special revelation will be given to the righteous (compare also CD 3:13–14).

Harvest

The tradition assigns three parables of harvest to Jesus: the parable of the sower (Mark 4:2–9), the parable of the scattered seed (Mark 4:26–29), and the parable of the tares (Matt. 13:24–30). It also has Jesus say that "the harvest is plentiful" (Luke 10:2 [Q]; compare John 4:35–38). Crossan (1991) accepts the authenticity of this saying and the three parables, but he does not seem to recognize that they speak against his nonapocalyptic Jesus. For the Jewish Bible uses the images of threshing, winnowing, and harvesting in prophecies of judgment,¹⁵ and in apocalyptic literature the same images are associated with the eschatological consummation. In Rev. 14:14–16 the judgment comes when a man seated on a cloud puts forth his sickle and reaps the fruit of the eschatological harvest. In 4 Ezra the end can be called without explanation "the time of threshing" (4:30, 39). In 2 Bar. 70:2 we read that the last days will come when "the time of the world has ripened and the harvest of the seed of the evil ones and the good ones has come." We evidently have here a common way of speaking into which Jesus' talk of harvesting, if given an eschatological sense, fits nicely. One may cite as a parallel a saying that Q assigns to the Baptist: "His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire" (Luke 3:17). This, whether or not it goes back to John, shows us how those steeped in Jewish tradition naturally construed language about harvesting.

That Jesus' use of such language should turn our thoughts to eschatology is strongly suggested by the yields in the parable of the sower: the good soil offers yields of thirty- and sixty- and a hundredfold. Recent study has seemingly demonstrated that these yields would be truly miraculous in Jesus' time and place. This matters so much because the theme of supernatural fertility or

yield was strongly associated with God's eschatological restoration of the land.¹⁶ Once again, then, the Jesus tradition moves one to think of eschatology.

Periodization of History

The Jesus tradition reflects the conviction that the present is a time of unprecedented significance:

When you see a cloud rising in the west, you immediately say, "It is going to rain"; and so it happens. And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, "There will be scorching heat"; and it happens. You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time? (Luke 12:54–56 [Q])

These words are readily given eschatological sense: even though the consummation is near, people fail to recognize the fact and to take it into account. That this is the correct interpretation appears from another Q saying, that behind Matt. 11:12 (compare Luke 16:16):

The law and the prophets were until John. From then the kingdom of God has suffered violence and the violent take it by force.

We have already looked at these enigmatic words in connection with the subject of eschatological tribulation. Here it may be remarked that John the Baptist marks a division within history. After him, or with his appearance, the kingdom of God suffers violence. Now it is a characteristic of several Jewish apocalypses that they divide history into segments. Daniel 7 offers a vision of four beasts, which are four consecutive kingdoms. Daniel 9 tells us about the seventy weeks of years. The *Testament of Moses* divides the time between Moses and God's eschatological advent into 250 units. The Apocalypse of Weeks teaches that seven weeks of world history are past and three weeks are yet ahead. Compared to these detailed schemes Matt. 11:12 is relatively rudimentary. Nonetheless, the division of times it offers reminds one of nothing so much as the systematization of history one finds in apocalypses.

Dualism

Jesus was undoubtedly known as an exorcist, and it is perhaps this above all else which, in his lifetime, made him so popular with so many. It has already been observed that Jesus probably associated the defeat of Satan in his exorcisms with Satan's defeat before the eschatological coming of the kingdom.

That is, Jesus seems to have interpreted his own work within the context of the great battle between good and evil.

This cosmic dualism has its natural correlate in the tendency of the Jesus tradition to see things in black and white, to divide people into two groups or types. There are those who build their houses on the sand and those who build their houses on the rock (Luke 6:47–49 [Q]). There is Lazarus and there is the rich man (Luke 16:19–31). There are the two sons, one who speaks well but does wrong, one who speaks wrongly but does rightly (Matt. 21:28–32). There are those who use the money entrusted to them to gain wealth for their master, and there is one who fails to do so (Luke 19:11–27 [Q]). There are the wise and intelligent from whom things are hidden, and there are the infants who possess revelation (Luke 10:21 [Q]). There are those who are for Jesus and those who are against him, and seemingly no one in between (Luke 11:23 [Q]; but note Mark 9:40).

These traditions, some of which surely go back to Jesus, reflect more than the excessive clarity of the moral visionary. For in some of these units those who do the wrong thing are punished. Floods sweep away the house without a foundation. The rich man who does not feed Lazarus is tormented in Hades. The man who buries the talent has everything taken away from him. Throughout church history these images have most often been taken to stand for the final judgment of God, for the sentence of judgment that is to be passed upon the wicked. Here, it seems, the church has got it right. Jesus' division of his hearers into two groups carries forward the old biblical prophecies of salvation for the righteous and disaster for the wicked, and it presupposes that at the eschatological judgment only two sentences will be passed.

Ethics

Jesus' ethical teaching—his demand to love enemies, to hate father and mother, to lose one's life, to forgive seventy times seven—has often been thought to be at odds with a fervent eschatological orientation. C. H. Dodd urged that the ethical teaching of Jesus "appears to contemplate the indefinite continuance of life under historical conditions" (1935, 79). But the objection is misguided. For one thing, Jesus' prohibition of divorce, according to which the monogamy of creation overrides Moses' permission (Mark 10:2–9), may well presuppose that the end will match the beginning (a common belief): the coming of the kingdom will bring the restoration of paradise, when Adam and Eve were united as man and wife (Sanders 1985, 256–60). For another

thing, the Dead Sea Scrolls show us that people expecting a near end could also draw up detailed institutional rules, while *2 Baruch* combines the conviction that "the youth of the world has passed away" (85:10, trans. Klijn, in Charlesworth 1983) with conventional exhortations to keep the Torah (32:1; 46:3; etc.). The situation is similar in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*: the ethics and the eschatology are not logically linked, but they nonetheless appear side by side. So it would be unwise to set eschatology over against imperatives that seem to us to envisage "the indefinite continuance of life under historical conditions." When Mark summarizes Jesus' proclamation by combining the nearness of the end with a call to repent (1:15), the evangelist probably catches the spirit of Jesus' exhortations. It is just common sense, confirmed by the experience of those who are told that they have little time to live, that the present takes on added seriousness if the end is near. Even if most of Jesus' imperatives have parallels in noneschatological texts, that is no reason to deny that, on his lips, imminence lent them an added earnestness.

Healing

The tradition has Jesus healing the blind, curing the lame, and raising the dead. It also has him interpreting these remarkable events as eschatological signs: "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news brought to them" (Luke 7:22 [Q]). This list is offered as evidence that Jesus is an eschatological figure, John's "coming one." Whether or not Bultmann was right to suppose that the words just cited go back to Jesus, they do plainly connect healing miracles with eschatology. This connection is now illuminated by a fragmentary Dead Sea Scroll, 4Q521, which includes the following:

[the hea]vens and the earth will listen to his Messiah, and none therein will stray from the commandments of the holy ones. . . . The Lord will consider the pious and call the righteous by name. Over the poor his Spirit will hover and will renew the faithful with his power. And he will glorify the pious on the throne of the eternal kingdom, he who liberates the captives, restores sight to the blind, straightens the b[ent]. . . . He will heal the wounded, and revive the dead and bring good news to the poor. . . .

Whether or not the miracles which the Lord performs in this text are done through his Messiah, we have here evidence that at least some pre-Christian Jews expected miracles of the sort Jesus worked to belong to the eschatological

scenario. The point is that even Jesus' healing ministry can, if one is so inclined, be associated with eschatological expectation.

To conclude this section: if the nonapocalyptic Jesus were the historical Jesus, it is peculiar that so much in the tradition, even so much that is regarded as authentic by those who offer us such a Jesus, can be so easily related to apocalyptic eschatology.

FINAL REMARKS

In most respects the eschatology of Jesus must be regarded as conventional. The nearness of the consummation, the coming of judgment, and belief in the general resurrection were all things handed to him by his tradition. What was new was the connection he made with his own time and place. He probably interpreted John the Baptist as an eschatological prophet who suffered during the messianic woes. He interpreted his own ministry as a fulfillment of the prophecies of Isaiah 61. He foresaw judgment upon those who rejected his proclamation, and he associated his own teaching with the special revelation expected to be made known to the righteous in the latter days. In other words, Jesus, like the sectarians of Qumran, construed what he saw around him in terms of certain eschatological expectations.

Focus on matters eschatological and hope for a near end often arise out of suffering or dissatisfaction with the present. It was almost surely the same with Jesus. Not only was Judea under the Roman thumb, but his words, as observed above, have much to say about difficult times. Moreover, the many polemical barbs against scribes and Pharisees and the stories of conflict with them tell us that Jesus was disillusioned with and alienated from many religious authorities. Beyond this, however, it may be impossible to go. There may have been some particular political or social crisis that fostered his eschatological enthusiasm and gave him a receptive audience, but, if so, the details sadly appear to be lost to history.

NOTES

1. Biblical quotations are from the NRSV, although the author has occasionally made minor revisions.
2. E.g., Mark 2:28 ("the Son of man is lord even of the sabbath") has been taken to mean that human beings in general (including therefore Jesus in particular) stand above the sabbath.

3. It might be argued that one should follow not the Gospels but Josephus, whose John is not an apocalyptic prophet but a social reformer (*Ant.* 18:116–19). Josephus, however, sought to underplay the eschatological fervor of Judaism. It is telling that his portrait of the Essenes includes nothing about the restoration of Israel, cosmic dualism, or messianic hope. Only from the Dead Sea Scrolls—presumably written by Essenes—do we learn these things.

4. The context encourages the reader to hope that this kingdom will come soon.

5. All translations of the Dead Sea Scrolls are from Vermes 1995.

6. There is no evidence of real Christian debate with Sadducees in Q or any of the four Gospels (with the possible but unlikely exception of Matthew), and Sadducees are missing entirely from the New Testament epistles. They are only marginal in Acts (4:1–2; 5:17–18; 23:6–10).

7. Jewish sources vary as to who will be raised. Most refer only to the righteous being resurrected; see, e.g., *Psalms of Solomon* 3; *1 Enoch* 83–90; and Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.163 (compare Ps. 1:5 LXX?). Luke 11:32–33 par. seems to indicate that Jesus on the contrary believed that all the dead would be raised. His belief in this matter may explain why a universal resurrection appears in some early Christian sources (e.g., John 5:28–29). But a universal resurrection also appears in *Sib. Or.* 4.179–90; *Testament of Benjamin* 10:8; and perhaps Dan. 12:1–3, which says that “many” (= “all”?) will be raised, some to life, some to shame.

8. E.g., Isa. 27:12–13; 43:5–6; Hos. 11:11; 2 Macc. 1:27; 2:18; Bar. 4:37; 5:5; *Psalms of Solomon* 8:28; 11:2–3; *1 Enoch* 57:1; 11QT^a 57:5–6; 4 Ezra 13:32–50; 2 Bar. 78:1–7; *Sib. Or.* 2.170–73; *Testament of Joseph* 19:3–8 (Armenian); *Mishnah Sanhedrin* 10:3.

9. E.g., Deut. 30:4 LXX; Zech. 8:7–8; Bar. 4:4; 5:5; *Pss. Sol.* 11:2; *1 Enoch* 57:1. While Matt. 8:11–12 uses “east and west,” Luke 13:28–29 uses the longer expression “from east and west and north and south.” This phrase too was traditionally associated with Israel’s return: Ps. 107:2–3; Isa. 43:5–6; Zech. 2:6 LXX; *Pss. Sol.* 11:2–3.

10. See, e.g., 1 Kgs. 18:4, 13; 19:10; Neh. 9:26; Jer. 2:30; 26:20–24; *Jub.* 1:12; Josephus, *Ant.* 10.38; *Ascension of Isaiah* 5:1–16; Letter of Jeremiah 9:21–32.

11. E.g., *Jub.* 23:16, 19; *1 Enoch* 56:7; 99:5; 100:1–2; 4 Ezra 5:9; 6:24; 2 Bar. 70:3.

12. E.g., Isa. 66:16; *Jub.* 9:15; *1 Enoch* 63:11; 90:19; 91:11–12; *Pss. Sol.* 15:7; *Sib. Or.* 3.796–99; 4.174; Rev. 6:4; 2 Bar. 27:6.

13. Matthew’s form is here original.

14. See, e.g., 11QM^a Melchizedek; *1 Enoch* 71 (if v. 14 identifies Enoch with the earlier “one like a son of man”); and *Testament of Abraham* A 12–13. Also relevant are 1 Cor. 6:2 and Rev. 20:4. One might protest that Daniel’s “one like a son of man” is an angel, maybe Michael, but in any case not a man (a plausible interpretation). But Jewish eschatology (including the teaching of Jesus) could erase the line between

humans and angels. The Dead Sea Scrolls turn Melchizedek into an angelic figure (11QM^a Melchizedek) and perhaps even identify him with the archangel Michael (see 4Q401 frag. 11).

15. E.g., Isa. 41:14–16; Jer. 15:7; 51:33; Hos. 6:11; Joel 3:13; Mic. 4:12–13.

16. Cf. Isa. 51:3; Ezek. 36:35; 47:7–12; Rev. 22:2; *1 Enoch* 10:19; 2 Bar. 29:4–8; Papias in Irenaeus *Against Heresies* 5.33.3–4; Babylonian Talmud *Ketubot* 111b–112a; *Šabbat* 30b.

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9

The Kingdom of God and the Renewal of Israel: Synoptic Gospels, Jesus Movements, and Apocalypticism

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SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, JESUS and the Gospels have been interpreted as "apocalyptic," even as direct expressions of Jewish apocalypticism. In reaction to the "apocalyptic" or "eschatological" Jesus emphasized by Albert Schweitzer and others has arisen a more recent movement to rescue a Jesus more compatible with modern rational sensibilities from the "enthusiasm" of Jewish apocalypticism. The apocalyptic elements in the Gospel traditions of Jesus are therefore ascribed to the Gospels themselves or the traditions they used as a way of isolating a non-apocalyptic Jesus. Debates rage regarding the degree to which and ways in which a given Gospel or gospel tradition is "apocalyptic" (e.g., Beasley-Murray 1993; Mack 1988).

Ironically, many of those debates may have more to do with modern theology than with ancient Jewish and Christian literature and movements. The concept of apocalyptic(ism) that dominates many of these discussions was developed over a century ago, when many of the documents of Jewish apocalyptic literature were (re-)discovered. It is a synthetic construct of typical elements or features abstracted from a variety of Jewish "revelatory" literature ranging over several centuries from the third century B.C.E. to late antiquity. This concept was developed, moreover, during a time when scholars read the

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