Christian Thought and the Problem of Evil part IV

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Résumé of the preceding article

Evil, spontaneously apprehended as the unjustifiable reality, shameful, scandalous, is the object involving the most poignant 'why?' Christian thought has recognized the failure of pagan explanations of evil, but has often slipped into related illusions of its own—when it pretends it has reasonably taken account of evil; when it believes it has resolved the enigma of evil's origin by considering it the ransom of order or the risk of freedom or the motor of the dialectic it separates itself from the teaching of Scripture and begins to excuse the inexcusable. The scriptural teaching demands the confession of three associated truths: the hateful *reality* of evil, which produces destruction and calls for condemnation; the complete *sovereignty* of God, who determines every event, including the free act and the evil act; and the *goodness* of God and of his work, perfectly free of any trace of complacency towards evil. In all logical rigour the three affirmations are not mutually contradictory, yet the mystery they highlight remains 'opaque', the thorn in the flesh of reason! Is this a weakness in the biblical doctrine? At first it seems so, but on reflection the matter is reversed. *One can understand that one cannot understand.* It is only in this way that one recognizes the horrible singularity of evil. Only in this way can a response be given to the question concerning the end of evil, 'until when?' Hope has something by which it sets itself off from dreams and escapism, something on which to found itself. The cross of Christ is the real crime, supremely hateful, which God has placed at the centre of his plan and through which he reveals his pure goodness—the cross of Christ is the foundation for hope.

Evil and the kingdom[1]

Is our obscure question still obscured? Is there a new knot tied to the enigma? The absence of a theoretical solution to the problem of the origin of evil is like the reverse side, in Scripture, of the practical solution—it permits hope for the elimination of evil. The biblical expression of this hope is the *expectation of the reign*, or kingdom, of God—'Thy kingdom come!' Isn't the good news which the heralds of Christianity bear the fact that *the kingdom has come*? The Church

preaches the establishment of the kingdom through the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus. And yet *evil*, from that time, *has not disappeared*, in fact, many would say it has proliferated more than ever ... We are forced once again to face this difficulty, this offshoot growing at the foot of the problem of evil, the difficulty not of evil's existence through the sovereign permission of the good God, but of its persistence after the victory of Christ and his entering into his kingdom.

We will first call upon the apparent supports of the given affirmations, between which the tension seems a live one. If it were possible right off to take exception to any single one among them, the difficulty would vanish. But if all three must be taken seriously, and if all three must be affirmed initially (given the benefit of an inventory following this initial glance at the problem), then the theologian cannot sidestep the task of getting to the bottom of the matter.

Belonging also to the coming of the reign or kingdom[2] is the elimination of evil, a point hardly contested nowadays. George Eldon Ladd, who devoted his career to studying this theme, concludes quite naturally with this comment his review of evangelical texts: 'The coming of the kingdom of God will see God's creation completely purged of evil'.[3] In this manner one distinguishes between the reign or kingdom which the Gospel announces and which is at the heart of Christian preaching (Acts 20:25) and the permanent empire of the *Pantocratôr*, unalterable for all time and eternity. And so the reign which *is coming* is distinguished from the reign which *is*. The latter mysteriously *encompasses* evil while the former *expels* it. The latter assures the execution of the *decretive* will of God while the former coincides with the fulfilment of his will of *desire* and of *commandment* 'on earth as it is in heaven'. Evil is biblically defined by its non-conformity to the vows and precepts of the Lord—the realization of this will, baffled by the rebellious choice of the creature and bruised by the consequences of the rebellion, is by definition the end of evil.

The prophets, who raised up this hope, understood it in this way. When they proclaim the eschatological reign of YHWH or that of the expected Son of David—which amounts to the same thing since the prince in his filial relation to God serves as his lieutenant (II Sam. 7:14; Ps. 2:7)—they associate it with the triumph of justice and peace. Hosea holds out hope for the symphony of universal harmony (2:18–23), for this 'sequence of time' wherein the Israelites will be converted to YHWH, their God, and to (the new) David, their king (3:5). For Amos, paradise-like prosperity and security will accompany the raising up of the 'booth of David that is fallen', the coming of the Messiah whom the rabbis, in keeping with this oracle, named 'son of decadence' (9:11–15; *Sanhédrin* 966). Micah links healing and peace to the reign of YHWH, king and shepherd (4:6f., cf. 4:3f. and

2:12f.), in such a way that it would be out of place to separate it from the reign of the infant of Bethlehem who feeds his flock 'in the majesty of the name of YHWH' and who is in his own person *shâlôm* (5:1,3f.). The eyes of Isaiah have seen the King (6:5) and he contemplates the future reign in his beauty (33:17ff.)—that YHWH is King (and saviour) coincides with the healing of all sickness and the absolution of all faults (33:22, 24). To the shame of the haughty powers (24:23) this will be the time of the feast of God where 'he will swallow up death forever ... (and) wipe away tears from all faces' and will slay with his great sword the Adversary, Leviathan, the fleeing and twisting serpent (25:6–8; 27:1). The promised child, the Davidic prince of peace, so united with YHWH that he bears the divine name 'Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father' (9:6), will be invested in the sovereignty of this reign (9:6) and under his government 'they shall not hurt or destroy' in all the holy mountain, the traditional enemies shall be perfectly reconciled, and the earth 'shall be as full of the knowledge of YHWH as the waters cover the sea' (11:6–9). Using the two elements of this last prophecy gives some approximation to the vision of the new heavens and the new earth, of Jerusalem re-created—there all past distress will be forgotten, one will no longer hear weeping and wailing nor run the risk of frustration, and the sentence pronounced on the Serpent (Gen. 3:14) will be fully executed (Is. 65:16–25).[4] Many interpreters consider the theme of Isaiah 40:66 to be the kingdom of YHWH, from Mount Zion to the extremities of the earth, whose triumphal coming is imminent.[5] With the phrase 'Your God reigns' in 52:7 we have the key to the entire message: 'It is not the *potentia absoluta* which is first implied in this, but the relation of the covenant and the kingdom of grace, of love, of justice, and of divine power in serving to bring about this ultimate objective'[6]—'sorrowing and sighing shall flee away' (51:11; cf. 35:10). The other prophetic books confirm this message. Zephaniah echoes the promises of Micah in celebrating the presence of YHWH, King of Israel, mighty saviour, in the midst of his people (3:15ff.). Ezekiel describes the covenant of peace wherein YHWH will make himself the unique king-shepherd of Israel and his servant, (the new) David, will be this unique shepherd (34:11ff., 23ff; 37:21ff.—the apparent contradiction of the duality of David *himself*/ David is resolved only in Jesus). Zachariah is perhaps the most eloquent. He associates the marvellous day wherein YHWH will be King over all the earth with the disappearance of every curse (v.11), then with the holiness of the most ordinary objects, of the house pots and the horse bells (v.20). This will be, identically, the reign of the Messiah—YHWH will cause to spring forth living waters of purification and will achieve his ends (13:1, 9) due to the passion of an 'associate', a 'Shepherd' one with him who must, according to Zachariah's strict plan,[7] be identified with the new, 'humiliated'

(*'âni*, and not simply *'ânâw*) Solomon, the 'bearer of salvation' (*nôshâ*; 9:9f.). Certainly the kingdom according to the prophets, a major reference for the New Testament, includes the *victory over evil*, over error and war, sin and penalty, sickness and death.

Has the reign or kingdom already arrived according to Scripture? This second thesis is broadly supported, in forms of varying purity. It is gloriously inscribed on the standard of the school of 'realized eschatology' in the field of New Testament studies. Stimulated by the observations of Rudolf Otto, Charles Harold Dodd successfully championed this idea with his *Parables of the Kingdom* (1935; at his death in 1973 the work had gone through sixteen editions). In this book he argued that for Jesus the kingdom is not simply near but actually present—the crisis coming as a thief in the night coincides with his ministry of the moment he speaks; this is the time of the final harvest (the sowing took place in the Old Testament). Well-known scholars, particularly British ones, remain in the tradition established by Dodd—one could cite the famous John A.T. Robinson as well as the numerous less-radical authors influenced by him.[8] According to this reading, the apocalyptic costume of the message ought not to deceive us—it is easy to imagine Jesus and the Fourth Evangelist playing with the imagery without tying it to any literal sense. Among dogmaticians, Karl Barth in certain respects is linked to realized eschatology through the effect of his Christological concentration—he strongly affirms the already accomplished aspect of reconciliation, of the justification and sanctification of all men, of the abolition of evil, and of the establishment of the kingdom. The fact of the sanctification of man in Jesus Christ 'is the ground on which we are placed, the horizon which surrounds us, the air which we breathe'.[9] The man of sin, who 'has been liquidated, conquered, and slain in Christ' is now nothing but 'a phantom evoked by caprice' and this truth 'is like the fixed stars of heaven shining invariably above all the clouds produced by man'.[10] 'Every tear has already been wiped from our eyes (Rev. 21:4) and, to tell the truth, there can no longer be found among us either mourning or weeping or sorrow'. It *has been revealed*, 'the kingdom of God (this *ring* inserted in the chain of history) coming with power—not in a restrained or reserved manner, but *completely* with power.'[11]

These triumphant accents do not lack scriptural encouragement. Of course, the translation of the perfect *'êggiken*' ('the kingdom of God *êggiken*', Mk. 1:15, etc.) by 'has arrived' is a bit tendentious—the verb probably limits its reference to proximity, a notion quite at home in eschatological discourse (Mk. 13:29—'near, right at the door').[12] But the imminence dramatically proclaimed *at the start* of Jesus' ministry, and even dating from John the Baptist's ministry of preparation, suggests the coming of the kingdom in the months which followed, months full of the works of Christ, or at least in the years

leading up to the unimaginable, the crucifixion of the Son of God, and the first man to conquer death! Jesus confirms this now by saying that certain people listening to him would not taste death before they see that the kingdom of God *has come* (perfect participle) with power (Mk. 9:1). Before the Sanhedrin he declares: '*henceforth* you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven' (Mt. 26:64). He is even more explicit when he unveils the meaning of his exorcisms: 'the kingdom of God has come upon you' (Mt. 12:28; Luke 11:20), implying the defeat of the 'strong man', the Devil, henceforth in chains. Satan falls from heaven 'like lightning' (Luke 10:18)! And Jesus adds once more: 'the kingdom of God *is* in your midst' (Luke 17:21), a word which cannot be reduced to the sense of imminence.[13] We understand the enigmatic logion of Matthew 11:12 in a related sense by considering *biazetai* a middle-voice verb—from the days of John the Baptist until now 'the kingdom of heaven forges the way with (liberating) violence and those who gain *this* violence lay hold of it'.[14] The Passion narratives place the accent on the royalty of the Crucified One and the promise made to the penitent thief suggests that the entering of Jesus into his reign is that very day (Luke 23:42f.—is the veiled paradox already found in the dialogue of Mark 10:37f.?). These are rather weighty givens, preparing the way for the Johannine insistence on the judgment already passed, on the passage from death to life already accomplished, on the prince of this world's being cast out (3:17f., 5:24f., 12:31 ...). This accords with Paul's usage of the expression 'kingdom of God' to signify the reality which Christians experience (Rom. 14:17; 1 Cor. 4:20; Col. 1:13), and with the teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews on the 'unshakeable kingdom' received by the grateful hearers of the word of the new covenant (12:28). Sin has finally been effectively condemned, something impossible for the law to accomplish (Rom. 8:3). The Christ has triumphed over the hostile forces (Col. 2:15). He has abolished the works of the Devil (1 John 3:5, 8). He has triumphed over evil. The kingdom has already arrived!

Who would not like to be able to refute the third point, that of the affirmation of the persistence of evil? No one can shut his eyes to all the atrocities committed and all the horrors endured *since* the time of Jesus Christ. One hardly dares argue that the influence of Christianity continuously improves the state of the world. The optimism of progress seems to have died with the Great War and the Depression—in Europe dialectical theology read its graveside eulogy as did the so-called 'realist' theology of Reinhold Niebuhr in America, and the images of Auschwitz and the Gulag, of the boat-people and Beirut discourage its reappearance. The tendency among our contemporaries is rather to accuse Christianity and blame it for its historical effects—the myth of the 'noble savage' (or 'happy savage') has enjoyed a recent rejuvenation and one hears the sighing

of nostalgia for the traditional cultures, for the old pre-Christian equilibriums, when man was not yet an individual and was not yet divorced from nature; others more radically overturn the affirmation of the world and of time characteristic of the West and instead search for peace in the void of the East. As the most sarcastic would insinuate: have the Churches contributed to the repression of evil or to the repression of man? The Christian resists the temptation to impute to the scriptural message the evils which afflict civilization, but he cannot fail to note their prevalence nor the languor of the Churches, their errors and dissensions, nor above all the pain caused by the evil he, the one living for the kingdom, continually commits! After having trumpeted the triumphal proclamation which we have already cited, Karl Barth hastens to add: 'But are we in dreamland?'[15] As he declares: 'Be it an aspect of the reality of the world or of the reality of our own existence, virtually all that we see stands in opposition to our Easter confession as if totally, universally, and definitively determined.'[16] Faced with the continued, devastating flow of evil, faith wants nothing to do with any pious schizophrenia!

The believer, in recognizing the present reality of evil after the institution of God's reign, finds scriptural support for this fact as well. More reliably than experience, scripture defines the 'evil' of the present age and does not depict the 'last days' in very pleasant colours (cf. II Tim. 3:1ff. and the parallel texts). Jesus foresees the progress of iniquity and the cooling of charity which would come after him (Mt. 24:12), and even wonders whether upon his return he will still find faith on the earth (Luke 18:8). And how could we forget the Beasts and the Great Prostitute depicted in Revelation? These givens do not resolve the difficulty but rather sharpen it. They show that it is present within Scripture itself and call upon us to dig even deeper in our biblical studies.

An unforeseen postponement?

Two doctrines now solicit our attention. Both attack the central thesis we have provisionally admitted, that is, that the reign or kingdom of God has already come. For both, the traditional teaching on this subject rests upon a major *error*, that is, that one has not taken into account the *unforeseen postponement* of the hoped-for event. The similarities between the two analyses are rather surprising since the first, called 'dispensationalist', comes out of a reputedly hard-line tendency in fundamentalism while the second, called 'consistent eschatology', depends on the most corrosive liberalism. For the former it is only the *readers* of the Bible who are mistaken and it is only for the prophets of the Old Testament that, due to the structure of history, the postponement was 'unforeseen'. For the latter it is Jesus, the master, who led his disciples into error and was himself deceived in his expectation! But no matter which of the two is right,

in both positions the status of the central problem has been overturned.

The astonishing genius of John Nelson Darby gave rise to dispensationalism; the talent of law writer-popularizer Cyrus Ingerson Scofield as manifested in the explanatory notes to 'his' Bible widely diffused it; and Dallas Theological Seminary, founded by the systematician Lewis Sperry Chafer and renowned for the teaching of Charles C. Ryrie and John F. Walvoord, is its major academic citadel. According to their doctrine, to preach 'the kingdom of heaven is near' to their compatriots was for John the Baptist and Jesus to *offer* it to the nation. If the people had welcomed it, then the reign of the Davidic Messiah, his political and religious reign of justice and peace and the hegemony of Israel over the pagans would have been established all in one shot.[17] But the Jews spurned the offer and rejected the kingdom: 'We do not want this man to reign over us' (Luke 19:14) and so the Lord withdrew the offer; but since he couldn't fail to keep his promises made in the Old Testament he postponed their realization until later. 'Postponed' is the word ordinarily used to express the situation[18] but a recent spokesman for dispensationalism also used the terms 'delay' and 'suspension'.[19] The kingdom will instead be established on earth after the Parousia for its thousand-year reign (the millenium). The entire schema is buttressed by two major doctrines of dispensationalism: on the one side by the insistence on *literal* interpretation,[20] the principle according to which Israel has only terrestrial promises,[21] for example, that 'a real king will sit on a material throne (Is. 33:17)';[22] and on the other by the strict *separation* between Israel and the Church with respect to the heavenly promises, the Church being a stranger to the Old Testament and 'sandwiched in' like a 'parenthesis' unforeseen by the prophets.[23] This separation is the 'touchstone', 'the essence of dispensationalism'.[24] It is clear that as the dispensationalists conceive of it the kingdom of heaven has not yet been established and so they presume its postponement. The Church, which would not have been born had the Jews accepted the offer,[25] fills up the vacuum; it does not become the heir of Israel. Dispensationalism could adopt Alfred Loisy's famous saying: 'Jesus announced the Kingdom and it is the Church which has come'.

Our critical examination of dispensationalism must concentrate on the theory of the postponement or suspension of the kingdom, leaving the connected doctrines to one side.[26] What this examination turns up is not favourable to the dispensationalist cause. Its formal declarations can only be accommodated with the aid of a rather astounding distinction, that is, one made between the 'kingdom of heaven' and the 'kingdom of God', despite their seeming equivalency as attested to by synoptic parallelisms and in such passages as Matthew 19:23–24.[27] Only an impassioned *a priori* position could

keep one from recognizing in the substitution of 'heaven' for 'God' a euphemism of respect quite in keeping with Jewish practice of the day.[28] Even in distinguishing the two kingdoms the dispensationalists have difficulty accounting for the attribution of all authority to Christ starting from the Ascension (Mt. 28:18).[29] They are obliged by the parables in Matthew 13 to speak of 'the kingdom (of heaven) in mystery' or in its 'mysterious form' for *the present time*, this pure 'parenthesis' (according to them), and without any connection to the Davidic kingdom![30] They are hardly in agreement over the reiteration of the offer to Israel in the book of Acts.[31] But where above all, is the support for their major affirmations? Where does one find Jesus *offering* the kingdom to the Israelites? John the Baptist and Jesus announce its imminent coming as an event depending on God alone. As Donald Guthrie expresses it, 'Man is not even invited to comment on the matter. The kingdom is simply announced as a *fait accompli*. God has acted in history.'[32] A *metanoia* sort of decision is demanded since the coming of the kingdom initiates the great sorting process predicted by the prophets, but that is not to say that the coming of the kingdom itself depends on this decision! The kingdom forges the way through its own power and man will be either the chaff carried away by the Breath of judgment (that is, the carnal part of the people will be as represented in Romans 11 by the branches cut off from the Olive Tree) or, if he repents, the grain gathered in the granaries of God (the believing Remnant, heirs to the promises). But, the dispensationalist suggests, 'at the moment of the first announcement of the kingdom Christ knew it was contingent. The offer of the kingdom was authentic but so too was the human contingency (Mt. 10:5–7, 15:24). 'If you care to accept it, he himself is Elijah, who was to come' (Mt. 11:13–15, 17:10–13).'[33] Really? In reading back through the cited texts one does not find the slightest trace of the idea of contingency with respect to the coming of the kingdom or to this Elijah, of whom Jesus elsewhere affirms, 'But I say to you that Elijah has already come'! Does it depend upon the good will of his hearers for what he says to be true? Does the axe ask advice of the roots of the tree it is attacking (Mt. 3:10)?!

Similarly, where does one find that the reign or kingdom has been 'postponed' due to Jewish unbelief (that of the masses and the authorities)? Of course many of the Israelites rejected this kingdom so different from the image they had formed of it in their minds.[34] They nullified the plan of God, but only 'for themselves' (Luke 7:30). As to the establishment of the kingdom, their hostility had no more effect than did the Jewish embassy to Rome against Archelaus (alluded to in Luke 19:14). Ascended to the right hand of the Father, the Ancient of Days, the Son of Man has been invested in royalty, and forty years later his enemies received their punishment. Jesus made no mystery of the immediate consequences of the

people's rejection nor of its effect on the disposition of the kingdom: the carnal Israelites (natural heirs to the kingdom by birth) are cast out and perish (Mt. 8:12) and the kingdom is taken away from Judaism, not *deferred* with respect to some fixed time but *transferred* to another nation, the Israel of the spirit, which bears the fruit of faith (Mt. 21:43).[35] There is nothing about some supposed postponement! Luke 10:11 even seems to teach the exactly opposite principle, that is, whatever the welcome, the reign is instituted with the same majestic certitude: 'know that the kingdom of God has come near'. The zeal and cleverness of dispensationalist interpreters ought not to render palatable theses too foreign to the texts.

For Loisy and 'consistent eschatology', if the Church has come instead of the kingdom it is because Jesus himself was badly mistaken. Following the route opened up by Johannes Weiss (*Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes*, Göttingen, 1892), Albert Schweitzer is the one who firmly set the decisive bond and took over the title as head of the school (*Vom Reimarus zu Wrede: Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*, Tübingen, 1906, as well as his subsequent works). One could cite Martin Werner and Fritz Buri among his successors, but suffice it to say that the idea of the error committed by Jesus as well as the formative role played in primitive Christianity by the (poorly admitted) disappointment in the Parousia put-off *sine die*, he infiltrated into most of the thinking in New Testament criticism. The 'consistent' eschatologists clearly see that Jesus borrows from the apocalyptic tradition of his era ... and more than just the outer garment of images. If one is not to sink into a self-destructive scepticism regarding the historical testimony of the Gospels, one must admit that Jesus expected, for sometime in the very near future, the grand cosmic revolution involving the royal glorification of the Son of Man. According to Schweitzer, he first believed he could release this revolution by sending out his disciples into the towns and villages of Israel (Mt. 10:23). But then he had to revise his conception. Thinking he understood that his death and torture would constitute the 'messianic sufferings' necessary to the birth of the reign, he delivered himself up, sure that the end of the world would promptly follow (Mk. 9:1, 14:62, and the synoptic parallels). The disciples, intoxicated by the spiritual experiences, once again hung on to the illusion—they enthusiastically expected this glorious advent during their generation (Mk. 13:30 and parallels; I Thess. 4:15, 17—Paul pulls an entire new mysticism out of this brief interim). It became necessary, of course, to sing a different tune, to adapt to the hard evidence (again the reality principle!), settle down in the world, and be content with the sacramental presence, *ersatz* of the promised one ('protocatholicism'). This schema thus welcomes the givens of 'realized' eschatology, that is, it interprets them in the only sense of immanence possible (imaginary immanence!), as in

Luke 17:21, or rather it denounces the additions to and retouchings of the story performed by the Church when the delay started to become embarrassing. There is no hope of us reviving the literal sense of the naive original message, especially if we want to be 'consistent'. There is no recuperation possible except *via* hermeneutics, be it mystical, ethical, existential, political ...

Regarding the debate of the specialists surrounding the idea of 'consistent' eschatology, a single glance will have to be enough for us—necessity makes law.[36] One would hope that believers knew right off how to react to any such hypothesis implying the self-deception of their Master! Is the Lord only Lord of us in certain respects, not including the intellectual domain? Are we anything else besides being disciples? But since it is a following and serving of the Lord to demonstrate, if one can, the frailness of adverse argumentation, we must take our glance at the issue!

Despite the treasures of erudition handed out, what is the profit from the works of 'consistent' eschatology? They have nicely evidenced the future expectation found in the New Testament, an expectation impossible to absorb completely into the 'realized' past. They have also shown the impossibility of explaining the imminence of the royal advent solely in terms of the metaphysical pressure of eternity: 'There is not a trace of some concept of a vertically suspended eternity which would absorb the eschaton into a permanent, un-temporal relationship and leave neither place nor meaning to the continuity of history as such'.[37] Yet imminence, not to deny the chronological element, does not imply a definitely defined delay—a thunderstorm, for example, can be 'menacing' on the horizon for quite a long time (note that 'immanent' and 'menacing' have the same etymological root). One must not exaggerate the eschatological fever of the first community: 'the very archaic discourses at the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles in no way give the impression of a feverish and anxious expectation of the end; they insist more on what the disciples have already received than on what they do not yet possess.'[38] Paul expresses himself by saying 'we the living' (I Thess. 4) just as every Christian in each generation naturally does. The procedure which consists of excising or excluding *a priori* those textual facts contrary to the thesis is inadmissible—it is too easy to simply eliminate as inauthentic the gestures and words of Jesus implying that time is going to continue to pass before the end of which no one knows the day or the hour. Luke is distinguished less from the other Evangelists in this respect than is usually maintained;[39] and without prejudging the issue, there is no sufficient reason for denying Jesus' paternity of the parables where growth demands a time interval or where the Master, the Bridegroom delays in coming.[40] The affirmations of 'realized' eschatology merit greater consideration, especially the event of Easter, which so-called

'consistent' theology simply sweeps out along with other temporal illusions! Karl Barth, on the other hand, actually uses this event as a primary support in affirming a single return (Wiederkunf) of Jesus who descended into death, but under three interdependent forms—at Easter, at the Parousia of the Last Day and as the Paraclete in between the two.[41] As Heinrich Off observes, this move is not due to circumstantial apologetics, but is simply 'the product of his fundamental theological discovery,'[42] a Barthian discovery we have no reason to scorn. As for the signs of the kingdom and of the end, 'realized' eschatology suggests that a delay could elapse without contradicting the notions of imminence and suddenness—they are signs, in effect, and not simply signals; wars, famines, earthquakes, anarchy, immorality, apostasy do not have as their primary function the signalling of the precise moment of the ultimate phase, but rather the signifying of the decrepitude of the old world, hanging in precarious suspension.[43] 'Consistent' eschatology subjects the rich complexity of the New Testament to disastrous mutilation—Dr. Schweitzer and his assistants in this case do not wield a very well-aimed scalpel.

Can the several verses continually cited be explained in another way besides that of the supposed error of Jesus? And is it still possible to believe in this 'imminence' after nineteen hundred years? Matthew 10:23, without doubt, does not merely signify the simplistic solution that Jesus himself is going to visit the towns of Israel shortly after sending out the disciples to scout things out.[44] Or could Jesus have in mind the specific judgment of Israel in the year 70?[45] Moore himself sees in it a warning against excessive optimism of the thirst for martyrdom—the mission to the Jews will fail; you will not have succeeded in convincing them before the Parousia![46] We prefer to understand either that, with Barth, Jesus is thinking of the resurrection, starting from which the mission of the Twelve will increase from the towns of Israel to the extremities of the earth,[47] or else that, with Guthrie, Jesus is reassuring the disciples being menaced by persecution.[48] Regarding a second passage, the intention of the Evangelists is hardly in doubt—they refer the declaration of Mark 9:1 to the Transfiguration directly following, the revelation in anticipation of the resurrection of the Parousia glory of Jesus; why would we want to balk at receiving their illumination of the issue?[49] Jesus' response to the high priest (Mk. 14:62 and parallels) combines two citations clear to him, Daniel 17:13 and Psalm 110:1, because they refute the idea of the kingdom and of the Messiah held by official Judaism. In neither of these two citations is there anything about a return to earth—the scene in Daniel 7, where the Son of Man advances *toward God* on a theophanic cloud, describes his coronation.[50] After being accused, Jesus proclaims his subsequent rehabilitation and justification by God, a sequence in which, with

R.T. France, one can distinguish three principal stages: the paschal resurrection, the judgment of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, and the final parousia.[51] There remains the difficult discourse on the Mount of Olives with its affirmation that 'this generation will not pass away until all those things take place' (Mk. 13:30 and parallels). We can indicate the orientation of the interpretive choices on this passage. Despite the attraction of R.T. France's brilliant interpretation, where he shows that the first thirty-one verses of the chapter *could* concern the destruction of Jerusalem (in A.D. 70),[52] we remain inclined to attribute to the chapter a mixture or a superimposition of the two ends 'clearly' evoked by the two-fold introductory question (in Mt. 24:3), that is, the end of the Jewish 'world' and the end of the world in general—this association is rich in meaning and it reflects the function of Israel as representative of humanity (in terms of grace and judgment); one also should not underestimate the theological importance of the destruction of the Temple and city. In any case, it is not Jesus' intention to set up some definite timetable! The *blepete* which mark the progress of the passage permit Dom Jacques Point to approve:

> ... A discourse which first announces itself as an apocalyptical revelation becomes finally what one could call an 'anti-apocalyptical discourse'. In place of the curiosity with which apocalypses usually seek to know what the future will be, it substitutes a Christian attitude born of defiance towards overly well-informed people and of constant vigilance regarding a coming of the Lord which may occur at any moment.[53]

In this perspective Mark 13:30 reads quite well provided that one takes the aorist *genêtai* as ingressive—Jesus refers 'to the entire complex of events which one could call "signs of the end" and which the contemporaneous generation will experience without necessarily outlasting'.[54] Watch therefore! All of this will begin to happen by your time, but it will be merely the beginning of the birth-pangs. (Mk. 13:7, 8)! Having explained these various passages in this way one is tempted to endorse Karl Barth's unmerciful comment regarding 'consistent' eschatology: 'the largest triviality, in its genre, of all time'.[55]

Imminence is no longer primarily a matter of fixed date. It translates rather the essential relation of our present to this future which is the next act of salvation and which proceeds, as its first corollary, from the past work of Christ.' The Parousia is near not because it must necessarily come before a certain number of years but because it remains, in keeping with the suspension involving God's patience and his plan of grace, that which necessarily belongs to the things already accomplished in Christ, the unveiling of the mystery of the Incarnation and the revealing of the glory of Christ.'[56] Moreover,

in the same way the Old Testament knows the 'days of YHWH' in order with partiality to decide, in order to judge or save such-and-such a people at such-and-such a moment in history, in the same way it can then speak of the 'coming' of YHWH, indeed *on a cloud* (Is. 19:1), so also the New Testament can, with the last coming of the Lord, aim at other intermediate 'comings', the 'small change' of the Last Day. It is currently allowed that the judgment of the year 70 prefigures the end of the world—the letters to the seven Churches also evoke a localized coming, in judgment, of the glorious Christ (Rev. 2:5, 16).[57] It is necessary to bear this in mind with respect to imminence and the necessity of maintaining watchfulness—the end is already encroaching on the present in the form of these personal or collective 'denouements' of which the Father alone knows the day and the hour. Over against the dogmatism of the school of 'consistent' eschatology, it is given to us to be always on the watch, knowing in which fashion 'the Lord is near'. John Henry Newman saw and wrote of the image in this way:

> ... Until the coming of Christ in the flesh the course of things ran straight on towards this goal, moving closer with each step. Now, however, under the Gospel the direction has changed (if I may say so) and as for the second coming the movement is no longer towards the end but along the end, at the edge of the end. It is near at all times to this great event and will reach it just as soon as it turns in that direction. Christ, then, is always at our door, as near 1800 years ago as today and not any nearer now than then, nor will he be any nearer when he comes than he is today.[58]

The deployment of time

The examination of the theories of postponement shows that we can still maintain that the reign or kingdom *has come*, but that we must also bring out the other half of the biblical teaching, equally veracious and non-illusory, that the kingdom is also still *to come*—'Thy kingdom come!' remains the prayer of the Church. This two-fold structure can perhaps throw some light on the phenomenon of evil's persistence.

The duality of the present and future aspects of the kingdom, of the 'already' and the 'not yet', is a widely-accepted truth *via media aurea* between 'realized' eschatology and 'consistent' eschatology. Joachim Jeremias and Werner-Georg Kümmel lean slightly towards the 'already' side; Oscar Cullman maintains the balance, as do the evangelical specialists Herman Ridderbos, G.E. Ladd, I.H. Marshall ... Richard Longenecker brings to light the regularity of the attestation to both stages: Acts 2:16ff. is complemented, after 3:18, by 3:20f.; Hebrews 1:1 by 2:5; Hebrews 9:26 by 9:28b; I Peter 1:20 by 1:5 ...[59] We willingly add to this the parallel and distinction of the two resurrections, the first present and spiritual and the second corporeal

and general, as it is found in John 5:25 and 28 and in the clear testimony of I John 3:2. C.H. Dodd himself loosened up his position a bit[60] and accepted the formula of Jeremias: *sich relisierende Eschatologie*, eschatology in the process of realizing itself or in the course of realization.[61] We still prefer Georges Florovsky's formula: *inaugurated* eschatology.[62] It seems to us to best fit the biblical image of the *first fruits* employed with respect to the resurrected Christ (I Cor. 15:23) and with respect to the gifts of the Spirit (Rom. 8:23; the metaphor of the down payment is found in II Cor. 1:22, 5:5, and Eph. 1:14). There is more to 'first fruits' than 'anticipation' or 'prolepsis' (*prolêpsis*), the notion which retains the favour of Wolfhart Pannenberg[63] and Jürgen Moltmann.[64] The idea of anticipation lends itself to the conceptual games and jugglery at which both authors excel—its foundations are unstable in Pannenberg[65] and in Moltmann it promotes a bizarre *spatial* treatment of the future and of time,[66] giving privileged place to the *future* pole as evidenced in Moltmann's reticence to come clean with respect to the idea of the accomplishment already realized[67] even though the biblical 'first fruits' themselves have *preeminence* of quality over the future harvest! Regarding this last point, our reproach is exactly the opposite of that which one could make of Karl Barth, for whom the 'fulfilled time' of the Resurrection (*plêrôma tôn kairôn*) shines with such brilliance that it eclipses the consummation still to come.[68] We propose calling the introduction of the kingdom beginning with John the Baptist, when it is forging the way with force (*biazetai*, Mt. 11:12), 'anticipated' eschatology while calling the active role since Easter and Pentecost 'inaugurated' eschatology. In this way 'the times and the moments' are distinguished.

One characteristic precisely and clearly renders the distinction of the 'times' of the reign or kingdom in the New Testament, a characteristic too many authors leave in the background. The presence of the kingdom, discrete as a seed, *is experienced only in the Spirit*, a fact the Apostle Paul, who most has the anthropological side of things in mind, correlates with the 'plans' of human life. The Spirit enlivens the 'inner' man, while the future aspect of the kingdom is only for the external order of the world, to which we through our bodies are united. Jean Héring previously noted on the subject of the kingdom 'that it is presently realized [for the gospels] as spiritual in the heart of those who accept the Message in Faith and who repent', adding that this 'partial' realization 'abides even in the moral realm'.[69] Without this elucidation, the *already* and the *not yet* confusingly mix and clash in the same plan. One oscillates from one to the other, baptizing this instability 'dialectical' without coming to any clear and well-defined conclusion. When it is necessary to deduce directives for the behaviour and mission of the Christian, arbitrariness cannot be avoided (who is to say what the proper dosage of 'already'

and 'not yet' is?). Of course, one recognizes that the kingdom has been instituted in a concealed fashion, perceptible by faith and not by sight, but one should not push this insight too far. Anthropological monism (the refusal to distinguish soul and body as constituents of humanity), so agreeable to the modern mentality and between 1930 and 1960 clothed in the prestige of being the supposed Hebraic mentality, looms in the way. One wants to avoid at all costs being accused of promoting a 'Platonism for the people' or even idealism, but all this does is produce a reverse idealism! Such excesses must be avoided.[70] Unity does not exclude duality—man is his body, but he also *has* it (such is the mystery of his incarnation); he *has* this piece of the earth, a solidarity with it as a part of his distinct being and intimate me by which he expresses himself and suffers, receives and gives, a part he must keep in check. Despite the constant interaction, the two plans do not become confused. The New Testament never says that the regeneration of the *world* has already been accomplished nor has the liberation of the body (the miraculous healings are only the signs of a kingdom one does not yet see). Nor does the New Testament ever say to the believer that he has still to await the resurrection of the *inner* man or to await participation in the life eternal and in the life of the kingdom. The kingdom of God is justice, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, the one who is life in close union with the spirit of man itself and who renews the inner man day by day (Rom. 8:10, 16; II Cor. 4:16). And since the face of this world is passing, the body, in solidarity with the entire groaning creation, still awaits its redemption; the outer man wastes away with the thread of time. Here as well we discern the *kairoi*!

If the kingdom or reign which is victorious over evil comes in several stages, and if it is present only *in Spiritu Sancto*, then the persistence of evil after its institution is no longer such a threatening scandal since not everyone has the Spirit and since the old world, rotten with sin, does endure. Death, though conquered in the One who is the Pioneer of life and in the spiritual resurrection of his own, has not yet been 'put under his feet' (I Cor. 15:20–28). The Adversary, cast out and bound in such a way that he cannot stop the evangelization of the world, strews his rage over the earth in the little time he has left (Rev. 12:12). Indeed, many Old Testament prophecies of the kingdom let it be understood that the elimination of evil will not occur in an instant, following the typology of the royal history—David the warrior before Solomon the peaceful! The Messiah, in his reign, will make use of valour as well as retributive justice (Micah 5:4f.; Is. 11:2, 4; cf. the use of this latter verse in noting the final end of our way of life in II Thess. 2:8). YHWH installs him on his throne, commanding him to subdue his enemies (Ps. 110:1f.)—this initial *militant* or conquering phase of the kingdom is stressed by the apostle against those who deny the resurrection as

implying victory over death, the final enemy: 'For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under his feet, thus until the resurrection of his own (I Cor. 15:25f.). Could it be suggested that a certain amount of time is necessary for the 'small stone' of the kingdom of God to grow and fill the earth while the statue crumbles (Dan. 2:34f., 44; cf. the enigmatic 'prolongation of life' left to the first three beasts in the parallel vision of 7:11)? This is just a suggestion, yet Ezekiel himself announces without equivocation that *after* the coming of the prince—King David, sole shepherd of the sole flock, and after the covenant of peace and the fulfilment of the promises of restoration and security (37:24, 26; 38:8, 11f., 14), the innumerable horde of Gog will manifest itself against the people of God! In its first phase, *in Spiritu Sancto*, the kingdom of God is not instituted in the form awaited by most people—it does not suppress evil all at once, but deploys its liberating re-conquest over a period of time; thus for this period of time, evil will persist.

The virulence of the riposte

The temporal structure of the establishment of the reign soothes the keenly felt tension between the two affirmations—'the kingdom has come' and 'evil has not disappeared'. But how is one to explain the growing virulence of evil? If only we could see the enemies of Christ gradually being beaten back and rendered harmless as a footstool! Yet what we have is the spreading out and intensification of evil's enterprises as other prophecies indeed predict!

The de facto question is not so easily decided. Has evil, since Christ, actually progressed in the world? This is what we commonly preach, but one ought not to overlook the strong psychological pressure at work in this sense of pessimism—one naturally suspects optimism of indulgence, for evils it denies are becoming worse and it thinks it better to mobilize the energies by sounding the alarm. Among Christians, one is afraid of looking less spiritual, of being suspected of sympathizing with the world if one does not blacken the picture (the true prophet must condemn ...). It is not only the farmers who never affirm that it has been a fine year! In such conditions one needs the courage of the Reformed theologian Loraine Boettner to affirm the 'marvellous progress' made in the material and spiritual realms during the last nineteen centuries.[71] One tends to forget the abominable tares found in the old pagan world and to minimize the advantages, in all areas, which our generation enjoys. There are not many detractors of our society who would not ask to be returned as quickly as possible if they were in a machine which shipped them back in time! But to conclude from this some 'positive global balance' ... one only need recall the extent of the horrors of this century! On the scale of universal history who can measure the quantity and quality of additional evils? One would need a competency of infinite proportion!

The sole judge having this infinite competency leaves us to figure out, in his revelation, a nuanced verdict. After the Son of Man's sowing, the tares come up along with the wheat (Mt. 13:24–30, 36–43), evil and good grow alongside each other, the reign of God advances and the edification of the Church also profits the world while simultaneously the rebellion heads towards its paroxysm, gaining in virulence and malignancy. The riposte of the enemy (Mt. 13:28)! It struggles on despite defeat and limitation—in order to make a retort to this defeat and limitation (Rev. 12:12). This thought might aid us in interpreting the augmentation of iniquity and suffering in the 'present age' *after* Jesus Christ.

In the book of Revelation the secret of this riposte is uncovered. It resides in a diabolical monkey-cage—a false trinity, Dragon, Beast, and False Prophet, comes to be worshipped on earth. It is associated with Babylon, the prostitute, odious caricature of the Bride, Jerusalem. The Beast, synthesis of the beasts of Daniel, apes Christ—it establishes its reign through a quasi-immolation and substitute resurrection (Rev. 13:3); it also receives an imitation of the divine Name (it was, and is not, and is to come—Rev. 17:8), which implies a sort of parousia (*parestai*). This Beast, the Messiah of Satan, is identified for us with the Antichrist of whom the first Epistle of John speaks and with the 'son of perdition' announced by Paul to the Thessalonians. One sees, in effect, in the three passages the same schema—a present influence and a future paroxysm or outburst.[72] For the paradox of the Beast is that it 'is' the eighth of its own heads (to come) and also one of the seven (Rev. 17:11).[73] The Antichrist of I John 2:18, at once the one opposed to Christ and the one wanting to substitute for Christ (according to the two senses of the preposition *anti*), the one represented by the apostate doctors of Proto-Gnosticism, seems nevertheless a personage to come.[74] Likewise, the present activity of the mystery of iniquity and its future unleashing will be followed by the 'parousia' of the man of *anomia* (II Thess. 2:9). This man brings the Adamic pretension of being equal with God to its culmination by imitating Christ—man become god, he apes the God become man, not simply a sinner but an apostate, not simply pagan but Antichrist! These teachings draw out Jesus' warning against the false christs and false prophets (Mk. 13:22)—a duality maintained in Revelation and also traceable in the mention of the spirit of the antichrist in I John 4:3 (v. 1—false prophets) and of the power of Satan, who will be associated with the parousia of the Lawless One (II Thess. 2:9). Such is evil after Christ.

In the mimetic subtlety of the satanic riposte lies the virus of its virulence. We ought not to be too surprised by evil's becoming more wicked in the 'post-Christian' world. As in the adage we have already cited: *corruptio optimi pessima*! The Devil, incapable of creating himself, produces instead the most beautiful model, the most

seductive and thus most poisonous imitation.

This understanding aids us in discerning the evil of our age. We are present, of course, at the *return of Dionysus*, as Jean Brun has brilliantly shown[75]—for the eighth king is already the sixth; it is the Beast of paganism who is resuscitated at the end; and the Antichrist realizes the project of original sin. But the specific trait of contemporary evil is that it is post-Christian. Humanism secularizes the biblical privilege of man; historicism secularizes the biblical accent on history; and 'politism' secularizes the message of the kingdom of God. Secularization itself imitates Christianity's work of 'un-deifying' the world. The arrogance of man in making himself god and so destroying the earth (Rev. 11:18) would not have been possible without the awakening (outside of the pagan engulfing by the world, outside of the servitude of the *stoicheia*) provoked by the biblical vision of the world. Paul Schütz passionately demonstrates this by insisting on two types of man—the savant and the politician. He develops from several perspectives the paradox formulated by C.F. von Weizsacker: 'Christus ermöglicht den Anti-Christ'.[76] He explains how the subject-object model characteristic of humanist thought is rooted in the consciousness of sin introduced by Christianity—the confession of sin radicalizes the duality implied by reflection; man destabilizes himself and takes himself for an object. The theme of the new creation is secularized in the revolutionary thought that it is man who will make 'all things new'. Even the theology of the Wholly-Other is a disguised form of anti-Christian thought.[77]

This last remark can be generalized. Post-Christian evil, in its most pernicious form, is *apostasy*. The evil of evil, after Jesus Christ, is this false Christianity, what Karl Barth called *Mimikri-Kirche*,[78] an evil which begins with the adulteration of Christian truth in the Church. This is just what John's Epistles would have us understand by qualifying the antichrists as false doctors. When one is scandalized by the many evils imputed to 'Christianity' in history, has one closely examined what lies beneath those titles claiming to be Christian? Has one truly identified the 'little flock' to whom it has pleased the Father to give the kingdom (Luke 12:32)? In the field of the world, while awaiting the Son of Man to expel all scandals from his intermediately conquered kingdom (Mt. 13:41), the tares and the wheat are difficult to distinguish. Only the existential directive is easy to draw: 'Be on your guard; I have told you all things beforehand'; 'And what I say to you I say to all: Watch' (Mk. 13:23, 37).

The necessity of faith

There remains one final, obscure question: why did God choose to delay the manifestation of his reign? Why did he institute it only in a concealed form and in the Spirit? How is it possible that the future

which became a present *then* did not invade the *entire* world like a tidal wave? ...[79] Why did God not remove evil from the world in one shot? Why did he leave the Devil time to riposte with all the seductions of a false Christianity? We are not party to God's counsel enough to explain all of his ways. If the answer is part of the concealed things he reserves for himself (Dt. 29:29), we will peacefully bow to his wisdom. But if the things he has revealed throw some glimmer of light on the question, it is incumbent on us to take this into account.

Karl Barth, preacher of the 'all-accomplished', takes the difficulty by the throat. After having taken into account other correct but insufficient responses (the invisible nature of the transformation, the 'not yet' aspect, the importance of the progress of the Church), Barth comes to the essential response: God wanted to give time to his creatures 'so that they might not be merely spectators at the harvest following the sowing of reconciliation, but might actively participate in it.'[80] It is necessary that we not be 'merely objects for him, but rather responsible, active, free subjects ...'[81] He did not want to bring things about 'by passing ... over our heads'.[82] Without our response of faith, the reconciliation would have been 'dictatorial', 'a majestic constraint imposed on humanity'.[83] Without the suspension willed by God, 'his grace would have been an act of *brutality*';[84] the decision 'would have been a favour imposed by force', like those the Europeans brought to the colonialized peoples.[85] This implies that 'power and freedom are still left to the attacked [the sinner] to entrap himself in his own fateful resistance',[86] from whence comes the persistence of evil—Jesus Christ 'is the first one to be surprised and frightened that he be not yet set apart'.[87] Despite this last strange (isolated enough) affirmation, Barth goes to great pains to show that everything comes from Christ, who does not undergo this combat, but allows it to proceed from his plenitude, of the perfection of the reconciliation.[88] Otherwise, he explains:

> God would have had to reserve himself for himself, depriving us of his presence and action in the form of his last promise but one, the one valid for the time in which we live. He would have had to renounce demonstrating his power precisely in our present time, under its conditions, limits and problems, in the fragility of our existence at the heart of this imperfect world. He would have had to save himself the pain of being our God and of wanting us to be his people in the situation which is our own.[89]

There we have the response: freedom has been left to evil that man might respond freely—the glory of the God of grace demands it.

How ought one to take this Barthian conception? Berkouwer, hardly an amateur when it comes to rational transparency, concludes that the explanation fails.[90] Barth's last reason, in any case, has an air of theological indiscretion about it—it seems presumptuous to say

what God would have 'had' to do and painful to suppose the concession of a suspension for evil ('Abhor what is evil!') to the sole end that it serve as a foil or backdrop for grace. With the reference to man's free response we seem to be on firmer ground, for it is clear that God demands this response from us in our time and that the immediate manifestation of the kingdom would have precluded the possibility of this. One can then appreciate Barth's not falling into the Arminian or Pelagian errors concerning freedom and his not making of freedom some factor independent of God. But other objections spring out of a reading of other Barthian passages. Isn't it Barth who resolutely includes all of the subjective in the objective? Isn't he the one who reduces the role of faith to the awareness of the fact which already encompasses all humans? Didn't he qualify it as an *epiphenomenon*?[91] If every man is in Christ without faith, justified and sanctified, isn't grace nonetheless 'dictatorial', a 'majestic constraint', indeed (*horribile dictu*) a 'brutality'? In the same discussion, Barth excludes the possibility of the dyke of incredulity holding against the 'much too powerful' tide of grace and can only envisage an 'irresistible invasion'.[92] The image makes one think of some physical constraint, and it is not by chance that Barth has a sort of predilection for such language: 'the event ... exercises a physical power'.[93] That which in another would be stylistic licence in his work corresponds to propositions of ontology. What then is the weight of freedom, swept away like a straw by the rising tide?

If the doctrine of faith is modified, could the Barthian effort bear fruit? Scripture seems to support this. To martyrs who would like to shorten the delay, it responds that the number of their co-workers must first be complete (Rev. 6:11). God consents, in his patience, to appear a bit negligent in keeping his promises, to endure the raillery over the postponement of the Parousia in order that all might have access to salvation (II Pet. 3:9). Before the end comes, the Good News must first be proclaimed to all nations (Mk. 13:10).[94] This economy is the proper (*idios*) time for testimony (I Tim. 2:6), established by the God who desires all people to be saved. We can understand that God wishes no other entry into his kingdom than that of faith—not some automatic incorporation, but by the faith which responds to the Word and receives the Spirit, the faith born of the Word and raised up by the Spirit. Time is necessary for faith, and thus there is this suspension of the old world during which the Word will be diffused, that power of God ridiculously weak in the eyes of the world: 'Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says YHWH *Tsebaôt*' (Zech. 4:6).

The way of the kingdom

It does not seem we can proceed any further with our explanation. We maintain simply that the *times* of the kingdom, the *mode* of its

establishment, and its nature cannot be dissociated. The way of faith—way of love and not of constraint (John 14:23)—is the same one followed by God in establishing his reign. Does the kingdom come in a fashion concealed from man's view? It is concealed in the Cross. It is *essential* to it that it come via the Cross; it was necessary that it come via the Cross, not simply to fulfil the Scriptures, but that evil might truly be conquered.

Only in this way is evil as evil vanquished. Herein lies the mysterious and hidden wisdom, revealed by the Spirit, of the words taught by the Spirit (I Cor. 2:7; 12f.). The power of the Evil One over us is the power of accusation (as his name *Satan* indicates) and only the shedding of blood wiping away sin can disarm him (Rev. 12:10ff., Col. 2:14f.). If evil had been conquered through superior power, it would have been conquered as if it were some created might. But evil as evil is not some created might; it is, rather, only *corruption*. If evil had been countered by an opposite form of behaviour, a simple example of perfect love perhaps, it would not have been conquered, but simply driven back. In turning the supreme crime, the assassination of the Righteous One, into the voluntary expiation of sin, God triumphs over evil as evil. God turns evil back against itself and destroys it, both as negative and as positive: God refutes every optimistic theodicy and every tragic philosophy. God establishes his victorious reign over evil. The way of the kingdom has been marked ever since, the way of the Cross which obliges us to be patient in hope until that moment when all the elect will have entered into the kingdom through faith and the victory will be manifested—the victory, the Conqueror!

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Those who have a part in the kingdom hate evil, the enemy. They know its reality and can no longer sink into idealism and dreams of Utopia. They see through its strategy and attack the cleverly refined evil of the end times (that is, the adulteration of Christianity). They have already tasted its defeat *in Spiritu Sancto* and the imminence of God's reign gives them wings, renewing in them the energy of grace. The law of combat, however, remains the way of the kingdom: 'We must do battle under the banner of the Cross'.[95]

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Concluded

NOTES

1 Parts of this study have been published in German, in K. Runia and J. Stott edd, *Das Himmelreich hat schon begonnen* (Wuppertal 1977), pp.96–114.
2 The Kingdom is both the *exercise* and the *extent* of power, as many exegetes have insisted, cf. D. Guthrie, *New Testament Theology* (Leicester 1981), p.409.
3 In C. Armerding and W.W. Gasque edd., *Dreams, Visions and Oracles* (Grand Rapids 1977), p.135.
4 V.20 does not mean that death, sin and the curse will continue in spite of everything! Its purpose is to remind us, in the context of prophecy, how different the coming age will be from our own.
5 D.H. Odendaal, *The Eschatological Expectation of Isaiah 40–66 with Special Reference to Israel and the Nations* (Philadelphia 1970), p.61 et passim.
6 Ibid., p.92.
7 Cf. P. Lamarche, *Zacharie IX–XIV, Structure littéraire et messianisme* (Paris 1961), p.168.
8 See C. Brown, Parousia and Eschatology in the New Testament, in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids 1982).
9 *Dogmatics*, II, 2.
10 Ibid., IV, 3.
11 Ibid., II, 3.
12 On Dodd, see F.F. Bruce's article in P. Hughes ed., *Creative Minds in Contemporary Theology* (Grand Rapids 1969), p.247.
13 Jesus said: *entos humōn*, which most translate as 'among you'. It conveys the idea of something present in the situation, but concealed.
14 Thus the NIV.
15 *Dogmatics*, IV, 3.
16 Ibid.
17 L.S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Dallas 1947), p.340.
18 Ibid., p.347.
19 H.A. Hoyt, Dispensational Premillenialism, in R.G. Clouse ed., *The Meaning of the Millenium. Four Views* (Leicester 1977).
20 C.C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today* (Chicago 1965), pp.86–109.
21 L. Chafer, op. cit., p.xix.
22 H. Hoyt, op. cit., p.78.
23 L. Chafer, op. cit., passim.
24 C. Ryrie, op. cit., p.45.
25 Ibid., p.163.
26 Hermeneutical literalism is untenable because it goes against the universal interpretation of the OT in the NT. In particular, the separation which occurred between Israel and the Church is against the literal meaning of any number of texts.
27 L. Chafer, op. cit. IV, p.26.
28 Cf. O.T. Allis, *Prophecy and the Church* (Philadelphia 1945), pp.300ff.
29 Cf. C. Ryrie, op. cit., p.172.
30 These unbiblical expressions can be found all the way from Chafer (I, p.45) to Hoyt op.cit., (p.86). See Allis' critique (pp.84ff.).
32 *Theology of the New Testament*, p.419.
33 Hoyt, op. cit., pp.85–6.
34 Jesus points out the difference (Mt. 11:2ff.; Luke 17:20–1). In Jn. 6:14f. he actually rejects the kind of kingdom described by the dispensationalists!
35 In the light of this passage we can understand the meaning of Acts 1:6, which must be speaking about the kingdom of God.
36 See C. Brown, op. cit., pp.901–31; D. Guthrie, op. cit., pp.409–31, 790–818, 868–74.
37 G.C. Berkouwer, *The Return of Christ* (Grand Rapids 1972), p.83.

38 *Dictionnaire de la Bible VI*, col.1411.
39 Cf. C. Brown, op. cit., pp.917ff.
40 Cf. I.H. Marshall, *Eschatology and the Parables* (London 1983).
41 *Dogmatics*, IV, 3.
42 *Eschatologie: Versuch eines dogmatischen Grundrisses* (Zollikon 1958), p.24.
43 Cf. P. Maury, *L'eschatologie* (Genève 1959), p.62.
44 J.S. Wright, Times and Seasons, in *Dreams, Visions and Oracles*, op. cit., p.168.
45 *Dictionnaire de la Bible VI*, col.1341.
46 D. Guthrie, op. cit., p.797.
47 *Dogmatics*, III, 2.
48 Op. cit., p.797.
49 *Dogmatics*, III, 2.
50 R.T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament* (London 1971), pp.139ff.
51 Ibid., pp.145, 235.
52 Ibid., pp.227–39.
53 La ruine du temple et la fin des temps dans le discourse de Marc 13, in *Apocalypses et Théologie de l'Espérance* (Paris 1977), p.257.
54 C. Brown, op. cit., p.912.
55 *Dogmatics*, IV, 3.
56 A.L. Moore, The Delay of the Parousia in the New Testament, *TSF Bulletin* 52, 1968, p.15.
57 See *Dictionnaire de la Bible VI*, col.1397.
58 Quoted with approval by F.F. Bruce, *Dreams, Visions and Oracles*, op. cit., p.9.
59 Ibid., p.145.
60 F.F. Bruce on C.H. Dodd, loc. cit., pp.248ff.
61 C.H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge 1953), p.447.
62 Ibid.
63 *Offenbarung als Geschichte* (Göttingen 1961), pp.98, 105.
64 Cf. *Théologie de l'Espérance II: Débats* (Paris 1973), pp.269–74.
65 If the meaning, and God's self-revelation, are the totality of history, how will it be anticipated? The statement makes no sense as it stands.
66 The arguments hinges on the future as something which exists in reality—which is not true.
67 Moltmann rejects the idea of a fulfilment of the promise, and speaks instead of its confirmation and 'validation'.
68 In this picture, creation is like a shadow thrust forward, and the second coming is like a subsequent reverberation.
69 *Le Royaume de Dieu et sa venue* (Neuchâtel-Paris 1959), p.48.
70 J. Barr, *Old and New in Interpretation* (London 1966), p.52.
71 Postmillenialism, in R. Clouse, op. cit., p.125.
72 Cf. Rev. 20:1–3, 7–10.
73 The Beast is obviously Rome, but the rest is open to conjecture!
74 J. Stott, *The Epistles of John* (London 1964), pp.103–9.
75 *Le retour de Dionysos* (Paris 1976).
76 *Parusia: Hoffnung und Prophetie* (Heidelberg 1960), p.601.
77 Ibid., p.602.
78 *Dogmatics*, IV, 2.
79 Ibid.
80 Ibid.
81 Ibid.
82 Ibid, IV, 1.
83 Ibid.
84 Ibid.
85 Ibid., IV, 3.
86 Ibid.
87 Ibid.

88 Ibid.
89 Ibid.
90 *The Return of Christ*, p.137.
91 *Dogmatics*, IV, 1.
92 Ibid., IV, 3.
93 Ibid., IV, 1.
94 O. Cullmann, *Christ and Time* (London 1951), p.116ff.
95 J. Calvin, *Inst. chr.*, II, 15, 4.