

Concordia Theological Monthly



D E C E M B E R ♦ 1 9 5 3



ARCHIVES

Concordia Theological Monthly

VOL. XXIV

DECEMBER, 1953

No. 12

Christ, the Hope of Glory

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EDITORIAL NOTE: This is one of the papers presented by members of the Missouri Synod delegation at the Free Conferences in Paris and Bad Boll in the summer of 1953. The fact that it was one of two eschatological essays given on the same day (the other being "Christ the Judge of the World") accounts for the fact that the Judgment is not treated here.

“AND the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory forever and ever.” 2 Tim. 4:18.

These words of St. Paul, even though individual in form and a personal confession of the Apostle, contain practically all the characteristics of the eschatological hope of the Church of Jesus Christ. For that hope is (1) a Christ-centered hope; it is (2) a hope that looks for a divine act of deliverance; it is (3) a hope for a *total* consummation; it is (4) a “practical” hope; and (5) it is doxological. These words are the Church’s echo and answer to the words of Him who builds His Church and has promised: “The gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

I

THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH IS A CHRIST-CENTERED HOPE

“The *Lord* shall deliver me from every evil work and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom.” Eschatology, too, is Christology. The Church in its hope confesses its *kyrios* (Christ is meant here, as the intimate connection with Paul’s Apostolate, vv. 16, 17, shows; the doxology of 18b does not compel us to take *kyrios* here of God Himself). In this word *kyrios*, this “compendium of all New Testament Christology” (Stauffer), there is comprehended the fullness of all that Jesus is and signifies for His own.

The fixing of the hope on the *kyrios* connects the Church's hope for resurrection and consummation with the days of His flesh, when Jesus in the power of the Spirit (Luke 4:14) went about doing good and healing all those oppressed by the devil, since God was with Him (Acts 10:38). It connects the hope with those days when His disciples addressed Him as "Lord," as their Rabbi, and infinitely more than Rabbi, for here was One that spoke with incomparable, with divine, authority and had the words of eternal life (John 6:68). It connects the hope with those days when men in their need and grief called out to Him, "Kyrie, eleeson!," and Jesus in response to the petition of faith wrought the works of the Christ (Matt. 11:2), and the blind received their sight, the lame walked, the lepers were cleansed, the deaf heard, the dead were raised up, and the poor had the Gospel preached to them — they heard the proclamation of the year of the ultimate jubilee, "the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:19), which began when Jesus proclaimed it and because He as the Messiah proclaimed it: "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:21). This word *kyrios* connects the Church's hope with all those *paradigmata* of the consummation, the forgiving words and redeeming acts of Jesus, the "Thy sins be forgiven thee" and the "Rise up and walk" that marked the redeeming presence of God among men.

This word *kyrios* connects the Church's hope with the death of our Lord, with that *Lord* Jesus who on the night in which He was betrayed took bread and wine and gave Himself, His body and His blood, in all their redemptive significance, to His own (1 Cor. 11:23); with that *Lord* of glory whom the princes of this world crucified (1 Cor. 2:8). It grounds and builds our hope on the ministering life and death of Him who gave His life a ransom for many (Matt. 20:28).

But it connects our hope not only with the death of Him who died for our sins and was buried, according to the Scriptures, but also, and above all, with the resurrection of Him whom God by raising Him from the dead "made" both Lord and Christ, with Him before whom Thomas knelt and said, "My *Lord* and my God" (John 20:28). In Him our hope is fixed; God's promise

of life, the promise to which we cling amid the sin and death of the world we live in and amid the sin and death of our own not-yet-transfigured existence, the promise we cling to in hope against hope, that promise is the promise of life *in Christ Jesus* (2 Tim. 1:1). *He* has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel (2 Tim. 1:10), which proclaims and gives that hope to every man.

He is the resurrection and the life; His resurrection is told by Paul in the present perfect tense, after aorists of death and burial; this once-for-all resurrection is open toward the present and toward the future; this fact in history that once was, *is*, and continues to be with undiminished and unending force forever. For Christ is the First Fruits of them that slept (1 Cor. 15:20); the First-born of the dead (Col. 1:18), who shall have many brethren because God has so willed it and foreordained it (Rom. 8:29). His resurrection is the resurrection of the dead, absolutely; St. Paul so speaks of it at the beginning of his *Epistle to the Romans* (Rom. 1:4).

It is obvious that Paul refers to the resurrection of Christ as an accomplished fact. . . . The resurrection is the frontier over which Christ passed to the status of the Son of God in power. But, just as he says, Paul also means "the resurrection of the dead" in the usual sense of those words. But how can he mean both of these things? The explanation lies in the fact that for him the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of the dead are not two totally different things. In the final analysis they are one and the same truth. *For Paul the resurrection of Christ is the beginning of the resurrection of the dead.* Through Christ the resurrection age has burst upon mankind. He who believes in the Son of God "has passed from death to life" (John 5:24). Paul, too, could say that. . . . The resurrection is the turning point in the existence of the Son of God. Before that He was the Son of God in weakness and lowliness. Through the resurrection He became the Son of God in power. But the resurrection is also the turning point in humanity's existence. Before this the whole race was under the sovereign sway of death; but in the resurrection of Christ, life burst forth victoriously, and a new aeon began, the aeon of the resurrection and life.¹

¹ A. Nygren, *Commentary on Romans*, p. 48 f.

In Him, in our Lord, we have entered upon life; that is as certain, as sure, in a sense as "binding," as a law. St. Paul so speaks of it. Through His incarnation, death, and resurrection we have come under a law, the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, a law as potent and effective now as the law of sin and death was heretofore (Rom. 8:2).

All that we need know of the *fact* of our resurrection we know in His resurrection. With His resurrection the resurrection of His Church stands or falls, and vice versa (1 Cor. 15:12 ff.). The witnessed and attested fact of His resurrection puts the resurrection of the dead, for faith, beyond dispute. For the God who has called us into communion with His Son, our Lord (1 Cor. 1:9) has called unto total communion with Him. And all that we can know of the *mode*, the how, of our resurrection, we can know only by the resurrection of Jesus Christ—it is God's sole deed—"Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father" (Rom. 6:4)—and it is a resurrection of the body—a new, transfigured body, "spiritual" as being the perfect instrument of the Spirit of the new, divine life; but a real body nevertheless: "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see Me have" (Luke 24:39).

This word *kyrios* also connects our hope with, and grounds it upon, the exaltation of our Lord, His sitting at the right hand of the Father; we know that nothing can separate us from the Love of God which is in Christ Jesus, *our Lord*; for this Lord is the Christ who died, yea rather, who is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us (Rom. 8:34; cf. 35 a).

The fact that our hope is a *kyrios* hope gives our hope for resurrection and consummation its full and positive content; if it be a *kyrios* hope, a Christ hope, it has as its object no mere neutral removal from death, no cool immortality—it is the hope of *glory* (Col. 1:27). If God has chosen us from eternity in Christ (Eph. 1:4), has called us in Christ, and has justified us in Christ, then surely He has also glorified us in Him (Rom. 8:30). Through Christ we become participants in the glory of God; we are henceforth colonists on earth, for heaven has be-

come our home city, and from thence we await "the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself" (Phil. 3:20, 21).

This word *kyrios*, therefore, makes our hope a certainty, for the hope has been in part (and that a most decisive part) already fulfilled. Paul Althaus sees the decisive difference between Christian eschatology and Jewish eschatology in the fact

that early Christian eschatology proclaimed as fulfilled a portion of that which Jewish expectation expected from the future: the great struggle between the powers of the last days has in its central issue already been decided. And this feeling of victory, this temper of triumph, asserts itself not only in the faith of the disciples, who can look back upon the manifested Messiah; it is already present in the consciousness of Jesus Himself. The eschatological drama, which is in its essence a struggle between divine and demonic powers, is beginning to run its course *now*: the demonic powers are being expelled and deposed from their dominion now. . . . For with the appearance of the Messiah, who overthrows the demonic powers and their lord, their fall is begun and the kingdom of God begins, even though the definitive destruction of Satan and his servant is still to come (Luke 1:17 ff.; Matt. 12: 25-28; Luke 11:14-20). . . . And now the disciples, and with them the oldest churches, look so confidently to the end of all things just because they can already look back upon a portion of the course of divine action which had been foretold for the turning point of the world's history.²

The Church believes in, and follows in the footsteps of, a Lord who is *archegos tes zoes*, the pioneer of life (Acts 3:15), one who has gone the way before us into life and draws His own thither, inevitably; for He is the Head, and they are His body; thus it is that the great events of our future glorification can be spoken of as already past: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, *hath* quickened us together with Christ . . . and *hath* raised us up together, and *made* us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:5-7).

² *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, II, Sp. 341.

The Church's hope and the Church's faith are therefore entities that can be separated in thought only, not in fact and in act. Hope is faith turned forward; hope is organically and intimately connected with that faith which has already tasted the powers of the world to come (Heb. 6:5), those powers that have broken into the old aeon of sin and death in Christ, in Christ alone but decisively in Him; it is connected with the faith that receives the Spirit as the Spirit of Sonship — which sonship is at the same time the object of its earnest hope (Rom. 8:15, 23), that faith which now knows itself justified, but yet looks forward to the hope of righteousness (Rom. 5:1 and Gal. 5:5), that faith which has in the possession of the Spirit the *arrabon*, the beginning and guarantee, of its future inheritance (Eph. 1:14). Faith in the Cross, faith in Him who loved us while we were yet His enemies, sinners, weak and godless, is the indispensable counterpart and the necessary foundation of the hope of the glory of God; only so is that hope a hope which does not make ashamed (Rom. 5:5). "He who has no hope is not a Christian believer — but whoso does not take his stand in the present reality of the Christ has no grounds for hoping either."³

The fact that the Christian hope is a hope centered in the *kyrios* makes it an intensely personal hope, a hope in One who even here and even now stands with us and strengthens us and delivers us from the lion's mouth (2 Tim. 4:17). This hope brushes away with one swift stroke all those frosty popular misconceptions of the Christian heaven which make "heaven" a vague place where quasi-disembodied spirits float about on fleecy clouds, joined with pink-cheeked angels, in an eternal monotony of harp concerts that have no prospect of ever ending. This fixes our hope on Him who has said: "I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"; it fixes our hope on the living Son of the living God, who loved us and gave Himself for our sins (Gal. 2:20), that He might deliver us from this present evil world (Gal. 1:4). It makes our hope a hope for a world which, for all its total and inconceivable otherness, is not, after all, an alien world, but a world we know because we know its Lord: "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have

³ Dellings, quoted by Staehlin in *Theologisches Wörterbuch*, IV, 1117.

committed unto Him against that day" (2 Tim. 1:12). The Christian hope, the Church's hope, is at its heart and core the hope that we "shall ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:17), and so it speaks sweetly and peacefully to the Christian heart; it "comforts" and it "edifies"; it strengthens and builds the new man.

Being thus a hope fixed on a person, the Church's hope is completely realistic; it is a hope related to One descended from a Jewish King and born of the seed of David (2 Tim. 2:8), to One who was crucified under Pontius Pilate. That means:

This suffering of Jesus Christ, this revelation of man's revolt and of God's wrath, but also of God's mercy, did not take place in heaven, nor on any distant planet, nor in some world of ideas; this took place in our time, in the midst of that history of the world in which our human life takes its course. . . . The fact that the Word became flesh signifies that the Word entered time and entered history.⁴

The hope which the New Testament knows is not and cannot be made to be a "dialectical relationship between time and eternity" that calls for no committal, no decisions, and therefore involves no battle.⁵ It is grounded in a reality and hopes for a reality as real as Pontius Pilate, as real as the calendar. Our hope is fixed on no mystical experience, no "spiritual" reality that is present always and everywhere, no immanent principle, constantly active and form-giving; we look for the advent of One who is "*palam* rediturus" at the close of history, for its consummation, One who will "so come in like manner" as His disciples saw Him go into heaven (Acts 1:11). The *skandalon* of eschatology is exactly the same as the *skandalon* of Christ; we have to do, not with an idea or a principle, but with a bare, once-for-all fact.

II

THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH IS A HOPE DIRECTED TOWARD AN ACT OF DIVINE DELIVERANCE

When St. Paul writes: "The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work and will preserve me unto His heavenly Kingdom," his situation is exactly that of the hoping Church on earth. All

⁴ K. Barth, *Dogmatik im Grundriss*, 126.

⁵ K. Heim, *Jesus der Weltvollender*, p. 216.

men have left him, and he stands alone; he faces certain death, alone and comfortless; he can reckon with no human possibilities of help. He hopes as Abraham believed, "against hope in hope," in that desperation when man is at dead end, sees no possibilities in himself or anywhere save in God, and clings with the hold of desperation to God's "promise of life in Christ Jesus," simply because it is God's promise. His hope is fixed on something strictly and exclusively transcendent, upon an *act of rescue* at the hand of the *Lord*.

At the hand of the *Lord* — this marks the transcendence of the hope. The hallowed name of Jahveh had entered into "Lord" of the New Testament; the day of Jahveh had become the day of the Lord Jesus Christ. And all that Israel of old had looked to, and hoped for, in Jahveh, the new Israel now looks to, and hopes for, in the Lord Jesus Christ. Jahveh, Lord, is a proper name, a condescension and a revelation, the name by which God is known to Israel alone. It marks Him as the one God, not to be confused syncretistically with other gods nor to be depersonalized into an abstraction or a power to be magically caught and controlled; it marks Him as the living God and the God at hand, a very present Help in trouble. It marks Him as the Shaper and Ruler of Israel's history: "He is the ἐν τούτῳ νίκα of this history, its content and its power" (Proksch). The word spoken through Zechariah might be spoken over all of Israel's history: "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts" (Zech. 4:6). He is Israel's true God and sole God; Israel is to look to Him, and to Him alone, for deliverance, even as He is the sole Creator of the world (Is. 45:18; cf. v. 6). Deliverance is His sole act; above all, deliverance from death: "And ye shall know that I am the Lord when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up out of your graves, and shall put My Spirit in you, and ye shall live; and I shall place you in your own land. Then shall ye know that I, the Lord, have spoken it and performed it, saith the Lord" (Ezek. 37:13, 14). In their Lord shall their hope be; for He is the Lord of Hosts, the Almighty."⁶

⁶ Cf. Proksch, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, p. 436 ff.

This accent of the Old Testament is clear and distinct in the hope of the New Testament also. The new world is God's world, not constructed by the dreams and desires of man, not shaped by his political ambitions nor by his sensuous strivings; man is silent and passive and receives it at God's hand; God's kingdom comes when He in judgment and in deliverance has asserted *His* will, when He in judgment and deliverance has hallowed *His* name so that God is known, recognized, loved, adored, and glorified as Lord (Matt. 6:10) and the whole earth is full of the glory of His grace.

When "Lord" is applied to Jesus, it retains its transcendent-exclusive association. When Thomas says, "My Lord and my God," all other lords and all other gods are thereby excluded; no *kyrios*, human, human-divine, or divine, can come between him and this Lord: "For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there be gods many and lords many), but to us there is but one God the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, of whom are all things, and we by Him" (1 Cor. 8:5, 6). When God took the stone which the builders had rejected and made it the head of the corner (Acts 4:11), when He made Jesus both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36) by raising Him from the dead, He made Him the sole and only Lord: "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven . . . whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). In the *Apocalypse* it is the Lamb that was slain who opens the seals of the Book in the right hand of Him who sitteth (Apoc. 4 and 5); all history, all judgment, and all deliverance, comes by the hand of the exalted Lord Jesus Christ. And all demonic victories, all triumphs of Satan and his forces notwithstanding, God and the Lamb are governing and guiding history to a triumphant close. The anticipatory doxologies of the *Apocalypse* cry out that "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of our Lord and *His Christ*; and He shall reign forever and ever" (11:15). "Now is come salvation and strength and the kingdom of our God and the power of *His Christ*" (12:10). But all this is solely the Lord's doing and all His triumph; man, the Church, remains the suffering and persecuted and defeated

Church until the end. The cry of the disciples in the boat, the cry of crisis, "Lord, save us, we perish," remains the cry of the Church until the end.

Hope is transcendent; it awaits an action from without, from above. This is God's act, and it is a radical act of deliverance, deliverance from "every evil work." Both ideas are implied in the very word "save." Salvation, deliverance, is a distinctively divine accomplishment — "salvation belongeth unto the Lord" (Ps. 3:8). God alone is the Savior: "I, even I, am the Lord; and besides Me there is no Savior" (Is. 43:11). As surely as He is the sole God, He is the only Savior. "There is no God else beside Me; a just God and a Savior. There is none beside Me" (Is. 45:21). In Him, and in Him alone, "Israel shall be saved with an everlasting salvation" (Is. 45:17). Chariots and horses and the legs of a man are of no avail; only the name of the Lord avails (Psalm 20). Especially in the face of death is God seen in the uniqueness of His Saviorhood. No man "can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him . . . that he should still live forever and not see corruption. . . . But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave" (Ps. 49:7, 9, 15). When men are described as "saviors," it is God who saves through them; they are the instruments and vehicles of His salvation: "And when the Lord raised them up judges, then the Lord was with the judge and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge" (Judg. 2:18). The Lord says to Gideon: "Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. *Have not I sent thee?*" (Judg. 6:14). So in the New Testament also Paul can speak of himself as "saving" men (1 Cor. 9:22) simply because he is the bearer and vehicle of the power of *God* unto salvation; and Timothy can save those that hear him because, in giving heed to the doctrine, he is bringing to men the living God, who is the Savior of all men (1 Tim. 4:16 and 10).

When Jesus, then, describes His mission thus: "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10), He is laying claim to a divinely Messianic task; He is echoing the words of the Lord in Ezekiel: "Thus saith the Lord God: Behold, I, even I, will both search My sheep and seek them out. . . . I will

seek that which was lost. . . ." (Ezek. 34:11, 16.) What Jesus promises is divine deliverance.

And He promises radical deliverance. "Save" . . . pronounces a judgment on man, his sin, his estrangement, his lostness. Deliverance is deliverance from every evil work, deliverance out of human desperation — a solely divine possibility.

Now, "save" applies to all of Jesus' mission, including the consummation; for the word "save" is also — indeed it is pre-eminently — eschatological; it spells especially deliverance from man's last great enemy, death. When the Church confesses a *Lord who saves*, it is dealing the death blow to all human *securitas*, to that complacent sense of having arrived, of having obtained, upon which Paul heaps some of his bitterest irony: "Now ye are full, now ye are rich. Ye have reigned as kings without us; and I would to God ye did reign that we also might reign with you" (1 Cor. 4:8). For this is the extreme opposite both of the actual condition of St. Paul's apostolate (1 Cor. 4:9 ff.) and of the forward tension of his faith (Phil. 3:12-15), that "perfectness" of constant imperfection.

This eschatological word "save" excludes also any thought of the consummation as an automatic development, any thought that we, the Church, are in our newness of life gradually ripening toward eternal life. All that we have of eternal life now — the Spirit as the earnest of our inheritance, the Spirit of sonship, the present reconciliation, the present righteousness before God — all that does not *as our possession* begin or guarantee eternal life; it does so only as *an act of God*; the triumphant certainty of a doxology like Eph. 1:3-14 or 1 Peter 1:3-12 derives, not from any security based on our Christian possessions and on Christian attainments, but from the fact that God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has from eternity blessed us, is now blessing us, and will to all eternity bless us, the fact that we "are kept by the *power of God* through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter. 1:5). And Paul in his intercession for his readers turns them not upon themselves, but upon God. He prays that they may know "what is the exceeding greatness of *His* power to usward who believe." (Eph. 1:18, 19.) "Paul sees his

readers not as finished men but as men in the process of being shaped and formed by God.”⁷ We never, in this life, get beyond the constant becoming of that process; we have as men made free from sin and made servants to God our fruit “unto sanctification,” but the end, eternal life, remains the free gift of God’s grace (Rom. 6:22, 23); reconciled by the death of God’s Son, we shall be saved *by His life* (Rom. 5:10); through *Him* we shall be saved from the wrath to come (Rom. 5:9). Without *Him* we can do nothing — to the end. W. Elert has expressed it with his customary felicity:⁸ “What we receive in time as the beginning of eternal life does not become the possession of our subjectivity. . . . And yet something of us remains which outlasts death. There remains God’s judgment upon us. In His Law that judgment strikes us as condemnation. But it strikes us in the acquitting verdict of justification also. . . . This judgment of God *remains*. ‘The names are inscribed in the Book of Life’ (Luke 10:20; Phil. 4:3; Rev. 3:5). That is the presence of eternal life in our present life as seen from the vantage point of God Himself. Those who are justified have entered into God’s eternal remembrance. This eternal life, in which our name has obtained the right of domicile, no death can threaten or endanger.”

St. Paul speaks of a rescue by the Lord “into His kingdom.” This again emphasizes the divine exclusively transcendent character of the consummation for which the Church hopes. For if there is anything certain about the Kingdom — the *basileia* — of God or of Christ, it is the fact that it is the sole activity of God or Christ. When the fullness of time, the turning point of the ages, the coming of the *basileia*, is proclaimed, the imperative call which goes with that proclamation is

not the call to perform a work in history but the call: “. . . Turn, repent, and believe the Good News” (Mark 1:15). Man is to receive the *kairos* of God into his heart, will, and life; he is to submit to the decision which God has made and be obedient to it alone. To turn, to repent, means drawing all the inferences from the deed which God has done for men; it means saying Yea to the

⁷ H. Rendtorff, in *Neues Testament Deutsch ad Eph.* 1:15.

⁸ *Der Christliche Glaube*, p. 631.

kairos of God, means entering upon the way which God wills to go from the now of decision on to the end. . . . This repentance, this turning, became the essential root of the first Church's sense of history and of its self-consciousness as Church. The Church felt that through the call of God it had been given part in God's redemptive deed, had been invited into the royal reign of God. . . . This historical consciousness is . . . the consciousness that it, the Church, is of itself nothing, that it has become something by God's action; the Church is conscious of God's deed and of God's decision, which come upon man from God in the liberty of His power and put man into a new situation.⁹

This "Not unto us, O Lord," which makes the initial response of the Church to the good news of God's reign, remains the signature of the Church's response until the end. The Church knows that God is at work and is reigning through all history; but it knows that that reign remains a hidden reign until it is God's good pleasure to make it manifest, that the Church remains the Church under the cross until the end, that its greatness is the paradoxical greatness of the Church of beggars, mourners, hungerers and thirsters, and the persecuted, of those who died—and behold we live. The Church, therefore, takes sober cognizance of the fact that

as the Kingdom develops in history, there is a parallel development of the Kingdom of Darkness, that for the future . . . and for the end particularly, we are to expect, not composition and compromise, but an intensification and a radicalization of the antithesis; that the lie will use the weapons of truth in order to assert and maintain itself. The thought of the Antichrist therefore contains the sharpest conceivable protest against every shallow belief in progress and every attempt to create heaven here and now; the thought of the Antichrist is the strongest possible incitement to sobriety and vigilance.¹⁰

Such a Church knows, too, that it cannot make Revelation 20 the center of its theology and reinterpret the sober and heroic eschatology of the N. T. from there out; it has no delusion about a

⁹ H. D. Wendland, *Geschichtsanschauung und Geschichtsbewusstsein im Neuen Testament*, p. 12.

¹⁰ Oepke, in *NTD*, 8, p. 147.

consummation before the consummation, before the enemy is at last and forever overcome — it knows that it must go the *via crucis* to the end, the gates of death. The Church's hope knows neither the enthusiasm which is ever seeking to prescribe or to anticipate God's time nor the cynical despair which doubts that there will ever be a time of God.

The Church is both sober and vigilant; its faith and hope are fixed in God (1 Peter 1:21), and the Church therefore reckons quite soberly with both facts: the fact that according to God's good pleasure His reign, though real, is now hidden and the fact that it may at any moment in His good pleasure become manifest.

III

THE CHURCH'S HOPE IS A HOPE FOR TOTAL CONSUMMATION WHICH INCLUDES THE BODY AND THE WORLD

St. Paul expresses the confident hope that the Lord will deliver "me" from "every evil work." He hopes for a total deliverance, a complete consummation; his "I" shall be saved and preserved unto the heavenly kingdom of Christ, and the "I" in all Biblical anthropology is an "I" of body and soul. That which St. Paul has committed to the Lord, of which he is confident that the Lord is able to keep it "against that day" (2 Tim. 1:12) is his whole self, "his life which has been already in God's keeping and which will remain safe there even through death" (cf. Luke 23:46; 1 Peter 4:19), as Locke says.¹¹ St. Paul in view of death hopes and desires for himself that which he had implored for the Thessalonians in view of the coming of Christ: "I pray God your whole spirit and soul *and body* be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:23).¹²

That the resurrection of the dead is a bodily resurrection, that eternal life is a bodily life, is the consentient testimony of Scripture. St. Paul has pronounced anathema (1 Tim. 1:20) upon

¹¹ International Critical Commentary, *ad loc.*, p. 88; cf. Additional Note, p. 90.

¹² That St. Paul expects a continued existence of the (transfigured) body for the time of the *parousia*, too, is clear even from 4:17 (1 Cor. 15:42 f.); Paul regards the body as the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19). Von Dobschütz *ad* 1 Thess. 5:23.

those who spiritualized the resurrection into an already present fact; their word eats as a canker, they have erred concerning the truth, and they overthrow the faith of some (2 Tim. 2:17 f.). The bodily nature of the resurrection is given with the Incarnation; the Lord to whom we look for deliverance and consummation is the incarnate Lord, who entered into our physical world, our bodily life, our flesh; who gave His human body and blood redemptively for us, a ransom for many; who rose again for our justification, not as a disembodied spirit, but with hands and feet and side that could be known and touched; who shall return in a "body of glory" to transfigure us bodily (Phil. 3:21). To deny the bodiliness of this Lord in the whole compass of His mission is the mark of Antichrist (1 John 4:2, 3).

The *basileia* of which this Lord was the Bringer and the Embodiment was no rarefied "spiritual" entity to occupy man's thoughts; it was God's gracious dealing with the whole man. The "repentance" for which the approach of the Kingdom calls involves the whole man, his mind, his will, his bodily action (Luke 3:10 f.). Jesus goes about, again and again we hear it in the Gospel of Matthew, proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom and *healing* all manner of sickness and disease in the people (e. g., Matt. 4:23). He casts out demons that bind and bend and rack and rend men's *bodies* (Luke 13:11, 16; Mark 9:26). As the Bible sees sin as total, it also sees the forgiveness of sin, redemption, and the eschatological consummation as total. There is a small but telling indication of this in the nature of the *means* by which God brings His redemption home to us; it comes to us, not by books fallen from heaven nor by spiritual angel voices, but by the physical pens and the bodily tongues of men. And in the Sacraments this fact is even more apparent:

The bodiliness of both actions, of washing and of eating and drinking, surely signifies not merely the drastic offering of the Word of God to the soul, not only *verbum visibile*. The physical, bodily actions are actions that affect the body; as such they are surely only a sign, but still the sign and seal of a redemptive action of God that involves soul *and* body. It is not a promise for the soul merely that is presented in bodily similitude and thereby guaranteed but a promise for body *and* soul. God gives

a promise to our corporeality, too, and lays claim to our corporeality.¹³

And if it be a hope for the body, it is also a hope for creation, for the world. We hope, with St. Paul, for deliverance "from every evil work," and if that includes deliverance for the body, it must include deliverance for the world. For

With our confession to the resurrection of the *body* the hope of a new world is necessarily given. If we are essentially body, we are also essentially in the world. The corporeality and the "worldliness" of our existence are indissolubly connected. . . . The hope of a new body and the hope of a new world support one another *mutually*.¹⁴

As man was created for the world and the world for him, the two cannot be separated either under God's judgment or under His grace. As Creation was involved in man's fall and was subjected to vanity for man's sake (Rom. 8:20), so also it shall participate in his redemption (Rom. 8:19, 21); for Christ has reconciled an exceptionless "all things" (Col. 1:20) to God, and it is God's will to sum up "all things" in Christ (Eph. 1:10). The "Very Good" of Creation must resound once more and become true once more; through fire and destruction (2 Peter 3) God will save and transfigure His world; God's will shall then be done *on earth* as it is in heaven, for there shall be an eschatologically new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, where man and God can commune familiarly once more, as once upon the paths of Paradise.

This dispels our secret fear of "heaven," that fear born of our inability to conceive of any mode of existence different from our present mode. C. S. Lewis has said that it is as impossible to explain the joys of the eternal life to men now as it is to explain the joys of marriage to a small boy, who loses interest and grows distrustful as soon as he hears that the joys of marriage are totally unrelated

¹³ P. Althaus, *Die Letzten Dinge*, p. 127; cf. Luther, Large Catechism, Baptism, section 44: "Now since both, the water and the Word, are one Baptism, therefore body and soul must be saved and live forever: the soul through the word which it believes, but the body because it is united with the soul and also apprehends Baptism as it is able to apprehend it."

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 341 f.

to the consumption of chocolate. The consummation of the world, of Creation, lifts us above such fear and distrust; however different, however totally "other" that new life may be, this much is certain: we shall be bodily men in a bodily world; we shall be real men, home at last in our real and eternal home.

IV

THE CHURCH'S HOPE IS A "PRACTICAL" HOPE

The Church does not hope with its hands folded and lying in its lap. The Church *in action* hopes, and its hope forms and shapes its action. The New Testament has no informative eschatology, none for our contemplation; there is nothing to satisfy an unchaste and calculating curiosity, nothing to cure the eschatological itch of the inquiring flesh. The Church's hope is "practical" throughout; every aspect of the Church's life and work is given shape and color by its hope; the eschatology of Christian worship, for instance, as P. Brunner has portrayed it so beautifully in his *Zur Lehre vom Gottesdienst*, is a large and fruitful topic; and to discuss all the "practical" ramifications of the Church's hope would be to write a book *De ecclesia*. We shall confine ourselves to a few examples suggested by the words of St. Paul with which we began.

St. Paul hopes in the living and active context of his Apostolic labors and sufferings. His situation is that of the Church; he is the bearer of God's good news to the world, in collision with the world and doomed by it because he is the bearer of that good news; his eschatology is a missionary eschatology. He sees in his previous deliverance from the lion's mouth a release for continued missionary work (2 Tim. 4:17), just as the Church is to see in all the time between now and the *parousia* a space filled with the "must" of missionary proclamation: "And the Gospel *must* first be published among all nations" (Mark 13:10), "And then shall the end come" (Matt. 24:14). In this missionary hope St. Paul can rejoice, though imprisoned; for the Word of God, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, is not bound, and he can endure all things for the elect's sake, to whom that Gospel brings salvation in Christ Jesus with *eternal glory* (2 Tim. 2:8 ff.). He adjures Timothy by the Church's hope of the returning Lord to

proclaim the Word in season and out (2 Tim. 4:1 f.) and looks forward with joy and confidence to the crown of righteousness which the Lord shall give him and all that love His appearing on that day (2 Tim. 4:8). The "must" and the resilient energy of the Church's missionary activity are bound up with the Church's hope.

What is true of missionary proclamation holds true essentially for all the Church's proclamation. It is an eschatological act, and all preaching lies under the bright shadow of eschatological injunction: "I charge thee . . . before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom, preach the Word" (2 Tim. 4:1, 2). And what holds of the Church's preaching, holds (and that is more often forgotten) of the considered substance of that preaching, of *theology*. The Christian hope, with its sober recognition of the evilness of this world's last days (2 Tim. 3:1), makes the Church's theology a practical theology (2 Tim. 2:14 f.); makes it a theology impatient of theological chatter and religious persiflage (2 Tim. 2:16, 23); makes it, in short, a responsible theology of vigor and decision; in view of the coming of his Lord, it behooves the theologian to cut a straight and rigorous course in his handling of the Word of Truth (2 Tim. 2:15).

The future of the Christian hope projects into the present in the form of love, in the form of that *agape* which shall never fail (1 Cor. 13:8). St. Paul in the strength of his hope can pray for those that forsook him: "I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge!" (2 Tim. 4:16), just as Stephen could pray, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge" (Acts 7:60), because he saw "the glory of God and Jesus, standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:55), and because it was given him to pray, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts 7:59). The Church in the strength of its hope is capable of that large charity that seeketh not its own; the Church can pay continually the immortal debt of love, for the Church knows (with the total involvement of Biblical "knowing") what time it is: "Now is our salvation nearer than when we [first] believed. . . . The night is far spent, the day is at hand" (Rom. 13:8, 11). This knowledge gives the Church the power and the incentive not merely to endure but to rejoice and *act*.

"Therefore," St. Paul says, because Death is swallowed up in victory, "my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the *work* of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your *labor* is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58).

V

THE CHURCH'S HOPE IS DOXOLOGICAL

This truth is implicit in much of what has been said, but it may be well to stress it once more at the close. The doxology in 2 Tim. 4:18 refers to Christ, to be sure, but Christ has His full glory when God the Father is glorified; that is the end and goal of His way, as it is a mark of His whole way.¹⁵ At His birth angels sang glory to God in the highest, and His ministry from beginning to end sought the glory of the Father, who sent Him (John 8:50; 7:18; cf. also John 5:30; 4:34). The voice of the divine good pleasure fell upon Him when He humbled Himself and took upon Himself the Baptism of sinners (Matt. 3:17), and henceforth there is over His life the "must" of the divine will that He is sent to actualize among men, that God may have His glory.¹⁶ When Satan tempts Him to use His divine Sonship for obtaining independent glory, He meets that temptation with a triumphant "It is written" that thrice affirms the sole glory of the only God (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10). When He called men to repentance, He called upon them to turn from the self-assertion and self-insistence of their sin, their wild and rebellious dreams of self-glory, and to take seriously in mind, heart, will, and deed the glory of the reign of God that was come to them in His Person. He taught His disciples to pray for the hallowing of God's name, that is, for the definitive and unambiguous breaking forth in judgment and grace of God's glory (Matt. 6:10). He will not seek or accept fame as a worker of wonders; He commands silence when His wondrous deed is done, for He is the quietly working Servant of Jahweh, who will not strive nor cry aloud (Matt. 12:16 f.). His miracles are *semeia* of God's kingdom and call for repentance (Matt. 11:20 f.). In Him the glory of God is to be made manifest (John 11:4, 40;

¹⁵ Cf. E. Stauffer, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, p. 13 f.

¹⁶ Cf. Matt. 8:31; Luke 4:43; 19:5; 22:37; Matt. 14:21.

9:3). They are works which His Father hath given Him (John 5:36). When the nine go their thankless ways, He cries: "Where are the nine? There are not found that returned *to give glory to God*, save this stranger" (Luke 17:17 b, 18). At the moment in which He makes His highest claim as Son, as the only One who knows the Father and is known by Him, He gives thanks to the Father that He has hidden these things from the wise and revealed them to the simple (Matt. 11:25-27), "for so the whole greatness of God's grace is manifested. He comes down to those who have nothing but their need. Thus it becomes clear that God's grace is not bound to, or conditioned by, anything that man has, but with its own riches exalts those who are in the depths" (Schlatter). On the eve of His Passion, Jesus prays: "Father, glorify Thy name" (John 12:28), and here, too, He sees His own glory in His Father's glorification (John 17:16). When He goes to the cross, He is "savoring" the things of God (Matt. 16:23); He humbles Himself and becomes obedient unto death in order that at the end of all, when God by His glory has raised Him from the dead (Rom. 6:4) and has highly exalted Him and given Him the name above every name and all the universe bows before Him and acclaims Him Lord, it may all be "to the glory of God, the Father" (Phil. 2:6 f.). For when the end comes, Christ "shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father . . . and when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be All in all" (1 Cor. 15:24, 28). Then Christ shall have His glory full and whole when God is All in all; the close and conclusion of all eschatology, the end of the end of all things, in the Son's act of adoration, His "subjection" to the Father, that intra-Trinitarian liturgy to which a redeemed mankind and a redeemed creation do all speak their loud and eternal "Amen."

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