

## DID PAUL'S VIEW OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD UNDERGO DEVELOPMENT?

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IS IT not a remarkable thing that you should have started the idea—and the word—Development, as the key to the history of church doctrine, and since then it has gradually become the dominant idea of all history, biology, physics, and in short has metamorphosed our view of every science, and of all knowledge?" So wrote Mark Pattison to John Henry Newman in 1878,<sup>1</sup> 33 years after the publication of Newman's *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*.<sup>2</sup> Rarely had a single idea so rapidly and thoroughly transformed a whole culture's field of vision. This implies, to be sure, that Newman had had predecessors and allies of sorts as well as kindred and alien successors.

Among the predecessors was G. W. F. Hegel, whose triad of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis impinged on biblical history and exegesis especially through the work of Ferdinand Christian Baur.<sup>3</sup> By the end of the century "development" had established itself in biblical studies as an indispensable heuristic resource. Likewise, by century's end Richard Kabisch and Johannes Weiss had discovered "eschatology" as the very form of early Christian consciousness, aspiration, and reflection.<sup>4</sup> Soon Albert Schweitzer would so effectively thematize the issue of eschatology as to make it foundational for the exegesis of the New Testament, the history of religions (Judeo-Christian sector), and New Testament theology. Moreover, these two thought-forms, "development" and "eschatol-

<sup>1</sup> See Owen Chadwick, *From Bossuet to Newman: The Idea of Doctrinal Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1957) x.

<sup>2</sup> John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1960). The *Essay* first appeared in 1845; a revised edition appeared in 1878.

<sup>3</sup> This is not to say that Baur was above all and nothing but a Hegelian, nor that the Hegelianism of Baur was pure Hegel. It is to say that the pattern of Hegelian evolutionism had an impact on studies of early Christianity and that this was more through Baur than through any other single 19th-century biblical scholar (e.g., D. F. Strauss, Bruno Bauer, et al.).

<sup>4</sup> Richard Kabisch, *Die Eschatologie des Paulus in ihren Zusammenhängen mit dem Gesamtbegriff des Paulinismus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1893); Johannes Weiss, *Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971 [German original, 1892; revised and expanded version, 1900]).

ogy," inevitably intersected. Kabisch was the first to bring development to bear on eschatology grasped as a controlling principle, and Schweitzer offered the first real appreciation of this effort as well as the sharpest critique of its shortcomings.<sup>5</sup>

It soon became clear that eschatology—pervasive in the texts, but for long centuries overlooked by their readers—and development—buried in the texts, but highly conscious among 19th-century scholars after Baur—were not only great but intoxicating discoveries. Just because the eschatological consciousness had been a vital experience in earliest Christianity, but lay outside the experience of modernity, and just because the consciousness of development had been a stunning advance since the mid-19th century, but was by and large alien to the whole of late antiquity, the combination of the two generated the most uninhibited hypotheses and far-ranging, free-wheeling reconstructions of early Christian thought.

Here I propose, first, to recall the main lines of the discussion of development in one sphere of Pauline eschatology, namely, the theme of the coming resurrection of the dead; second, to question whether the Pauline texts (1 Thess 4; 1 Cor 15; 2 Cor 5; Phil 1) support the maximalists or the minimalists in the debate on the "development" of Paul's view. Maximalists argue that he moved from a relatively crude, conventional affirmation of resurrection to a more refined conception of survival, and often enough they have characterized this as a transition from Jewish to Greek categories. Minimalists doubt or deny a change of categories, but often enough have acknowledged the appearance of new, if minor, doctrinal elements in the later texts, or at least some variation in Paul's personal attitude toward the prospect of death and resurrection. Third, I propose to reflect on the context in which this debate has a significance beyond antiquarian, or even historical, curiosity. Therefore, Part 1 is history; Part 2 is exegesis; Part 3 is hermeneutics.

## I

It was Baur who initiated this kind of investigation, and Otto Pflieger who, prior to the realization that eschatology was not only an aspect but the very horizon of early Christian consciousness, framed the first influential hypothesis of development in Paul's eschatological thought.<sup>6</sup> The pattern of Pflieger's view of Paul went well with the dominant weave

<sup>5</sup> Albert Schweitzer, *Paul and His Interpreters: A Critical History* (London: Black, 1912 [German original, 1911]) 58–63.

<sup>6</sup> Otto Pflieger, *Paulinism: A Contribution to the History of Primitive Christian Theology* (2 vols.; London: Williams and Norgate, 1877 [German original, 1873]).

of Liberal theology. Tutored like many Liberals first by Baur, then by Hermann Lüdemann's study of Pauline anthropology, Pfleiderer saw distinct "branches," Jewish and Hellenistic, in the Pauline "doctrinal system."<sup>7</sup> Paul, moreover, had shifted from the one to the other. If the first branch grew out of the expiatory death of Jesus and formed "the negative part of the Pauline Gospel in opposition to the Jews or the Jewish Christians," the second branch grew out of Christ's risen life in the radiant element of *pneuma*, far beyond "transitory and unclean *sarx*."<sup>8</sup> "Life" here was eschatological, but "the *transcendent eschatological idea* became of necessity an *immanent ethical one*," for the Christian's future share in "resurrection life" depended on his having died with Christ in baptism and so on his having already participated in Christ's "*pneuma* life." Baptism, accordingly, marked the moment of entry "into mystical communion with Christ and of the reception of his *pneuma*."<sup>9</sup>

The great development in Paul was, then, away from the sphere of the eschatological into that of the mystical. The messianic *zōē* was thus "stripped of its one-sided, supernatural, apocalyptic character" and became ethical and spiritual. This transition followed "one of the deepest laws of development of the history of religion": profound mysteries are concealed and protected in the calyx of apocalyptic imagery "until they are capable of flourishing alone . . ."<sup>10</sup>

Let this sketch suffice to suggest the tenor and style of Pfleiderer's thinking about Paulinism. Though differing in detail from Baur and Lüdemann, Pfleiderer reflected ideas from both and specifically reflected the tendency to reduce a many-faceted faith to a fairly breezy history of ideas—a besetting defect of the Liberal movement.<sup>11</sup> The sketch may also serve to provide some measure of context for Pfleiderer's retrieval of Pauline eschatology.

"Development" in Pfleiderer's view did not exclude inconsistencies and unresolved antinomies. Rather, it hinged on them. All through "the Apostle's dogmatic teaching" there ran a duality reflecting the trajectory of Paul's own career: "from a Pharisee and a zealous upholder of the law," he had become "a chosen instrument of the gospel of the favour of God in Christ."<sup>12</sup> To the two phases divided by this turnabout belonged

<sup>7</sup> Hermann Lüdemann, *Die Anthropologie des Apostels Paulus und ihre Stellung innerhalb seiner Heilslehre* (Kiel: Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1872); Pfleiderer, *Paulinism* 1, 18.

<sup>8</sup> Pfleiderer, *Paulinism* 1, 18.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* 1, 19.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* 1, 20.

<sup>11</sup> See Franz Schnabel, *Deutsche Geschichte im neunzehnten Jahrhundert 4: Die religiöse Kräfte* (Freiburg: Herder, 1936, <sup>3</sup>1955).

<sup>12</sup> Pfleiderer 1, 276.

the two categories of Pauline thought: "remnants from Judaism" and "Christian gospel." Ranged under the rubric of Jewish remnants were the ideas of final judgment eternally distinguishing the saved and the lost on the basis of "just due"; the Parousia as the decisive moment of the resurrection and redemption of the body; the messianic reign, beginning with the Parousia and the resurrection of those in Christ and ending with the reduction to impotence of the last enemy, death (=the resurrection of all) and the handing over of the reign to the Father (1 Cor 15:24-26). Ranged under the specifically Christian gospel were salvation by the pure *charis* of God, the indwelling *pneuma*, shaping in the believer the image of Christ's death and resurrection, and for those in Christ the unhindered union with the Lord—clothed with a heavenly body—immediately upon death (2 Cor 5:1-10; Phil 1:23). Pfleiderer abstained from all effort to reconcile these two quite "incompatible" sets of ideas; for that, he thought, could only be done by recourse to "arbitrary criteria."<sup>13</sup>

Pfleiderer was undeterred by the flat impossibility of finding significant Greek analogies for (to say nothing of Greek attestation of) any part or aspect of the specifically Christian gospel, be it the pure gift of righteousness by faith, or the indwelling, energizing, patterning *pneuma* of God/Christ, or entry into immortality with a radiant *doxa*-body prepared in heaven. In 1887, 14 years after his two-volume work on Paulinism, he returned to the theme of Paul's Hellenized eschatology in *Primitive Christianity*.<sup>14</sup> Here Paul's development away from Jewish thinking into Alexandrian Platonizing was attested by 2 Cor 5:1-10, supplemented by Phil 1:21 f. and 3:8 f. Paul, in a word, drew on Hellenistic resources to spiritualize the Christian hope of salvation and, incidentally, to provide a neat exit out of the dilemma of the delayed Parousia. As Albert Schweitzer remarked of this confident, comprehensive view,

Pfleiderer believes also that he can show the course of the development by which the new conception was arrived at. In 1 Thessalonians, he thinks, the Apostle still rested unquestioningly in that notion of a corporeal resurrection which primitive Christianity shared with Judaism. But in the explanations of I Cor. XV the influence of the Greek ideas becomes observable, while in 2 Corinthians and Philippians it becomes dominant.<sup>15</sup>

Pfleiderer's Paul—who moved back and forth between Judaic resurrection and Greek immortality, without being conscious of the divergence

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* 1, 259; see also 260-71.

<sup>14</sup> Otto Pfleiderer, *Das Urchristentum, seine Schriften und Lehren in geschichtlichem Zusammenhang* (Berlin: Reimer, 1887).

<sup>15</sup> Schweitzer, *Paul and His Interpreters* 71.

between the two sets of ideas, yet without ever mingling them—was unmasked as an exegetical illusion by the superior (if still quite fallible) synthesis of Richard Kabisch.<sup>16</sup> In opposition to Kabisch, Ernst Teichmann in 1896 produced a monograph in the form of twin essays on the Pauline conceptions of resurrection and judgment.<sup>17</sup>

According to Teichmann's reconstruction, Paul's thought on the resurrection of the dead registered a movement from Jewish apocalyptic spirituality to Hellenistic Wisdom spirituality. Like Pfeleiderer, Teichmann argued that this evolution could be traced through three stages. In the first stage (1 Thess 4:13–17) Paul affirmed a resurrection of the dead in the sense of a resuscitation of the corpses of the faithful, an event to take place at the Parousia. In a second, mediating stage (1 Cor 15:50 ff.) he affirmed the annihilation of everything earthly, including the earthly body, and the appropriation of a new, spiritual body—still, however, to take place at the Parousia. In a third and final phase, represented by 2 Cor 5:1 ff. and, still better, by Phil 1:21 ff., resurrection has been abandoned, or abandoned in all but name, in favor of the bestowal of a new body at the moment of death.<sup>18</sup>

This scheme of development drew attention to the intermediate stage represented by 1 Cor 15:50 ff. In this passage Paul introduced the notion of transformation. In 1 Thess 4 resurrection had no more implied "transformation" than had, for example, the story of Elijah swept up to heaven in a fiery chariot. But now transformation must make its appearance as a consequence of the Pauline antithesis of *sarx* and *pneuma*. Moreover, for Teichmann "transformation" really meant "total annihilation."<sup>19</sup> *Sarx* would be annihilated and man created anew. Hence Paul's maintenance of the idea of *resurrection* was incoherent with the real character of his thought. By the time of 2 Cor 5 it had been dropped; for here the new *sōma*, which had existed in heaven since the creation, has "replaced" the earthly body.<sup>20</sup>

On the text of 2 Cor 5:1–10 Teichmann made five points: (1) the earthly body, destined for decay, is an obstacle to our union with the Lord; (2) but for every individual believer God has prepared a heavenly body to clothe him at the moment of his death; (3) "nakedness" images the *pneuma* stripped of its earthly body and separated from Christ; (4) this fate, however, will not befall the believer; (5) the subject of old and

<sup>16</sup> See n. 4 above. For a summary see Schweitzer, *Paul and His Interpreters* 58–63.

<sup>17</sup> Ernst Teichmann, *Die paulinische Vorstellungen von Auferstehung und Gericht und ihre Beziehungen zur jüdischen Apokalypik* (Freiburg-Leipzig: Mohr, 1896).

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* 33–62.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* ("die völlige Vernichtung") 53.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* 62.

new life is the *pneuma*, which appears before the tribunal of Christ immediately after death. We accordingly have here a sharp change from the Parousia-oriented thought of 1 Cor 15. Resurrection, as Teichmann observes, has now become "entirely unnecessary."<sup>21</sup> Still, he finds it "interesting" that, despite this stunning development, Paul hangs on to the traditional term (2 Cor 1:9; 4:14; Phil 3:11).<sup>22</sup>

The basic idea in Teichmann's account was derivative from Pfleiderer: the "Spirit" of God bestowed in baptism was the seed of personal survival. At one time the Apostle's eschatological thought had been well represented in the image of the glorious return of Christ to earth; but, without ever abandoning this now empty image, Paul arrived finally at an eschatology better represented as the believer's ascent into the heavenly world. True, Paul never managed to shake off the hope of being united to Christ without having to die. But that merely betokened the inescapability of biographical limits: Jewish-Greek syncretism was the Apostle's daily bread.<sup>23</sup>

The Pfleiderer-Teichmann line has had unlikely success in England. R. H. Charles, in his 1899 study of "future life" according to Israel, Judaism, and Christianity,<sup>24</sup> maintained that 1 Cor 15 argued incoherently (a) for corporeal continuity between the dead and the risen, and (b) for the postponement of the resurrection to the Parousia. When writing 1 Cor 15, Paul "does not seem conscious" of the contradiction, but by the time he wrote 2 Cor 5 he had "become conscious of the inherent inconsistencies of his former view" and abandoned it in favor of the resurrection of the righteous following immediately on death.<sup>25</sup>

H. A. A. Kennedy in 1904<sup>26</sup> observed that Paul's eschatological conceptions, though by no means worked into a systematic account *de novissimis*, had

a far greater mutual congruity than some recent investigators have been willing to recognize. But *in an age when the notion of development is regarded as the key to all problems*, it is perhaps natural that scholars should use it in explaining certain phenomena which look like antinomies in the Pauline Epistles. This view has been worked out to its furthest limit by Sabatier, Pfleiderer, Teichmann, and

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. 65-67.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. 67.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. 74.

<sup>24</sup> R. H. Charles, *A Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life in Israel, in Judaism, and in Christianity* (London: Black, 1899).

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. 394 f.

<sup>26</sup> H. A. A. Kennedy, *St. Paul's Conceptions of the Last Things* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1904).

others.<sup>27</sup>

Kennedy resisted it. First, he offered an account of 1 Cor 15 that was remarkable for the treatment given to vv. 50 ff. Here he formulated the question to which the text was an answer, as follows: now that his readers could form some conception of the experience of their deceased friends, what of themselves? How were the survivors, the living, to pass into the final kingdom of God?<sup>28</sup> The answer was, "we shall all be transformed" (51b). That is, "the dead shall rise incorruptible, and we [the living] shall be transformed?" (52bc). Second, he turned to 2 Cor 4–5. In the first verses of chapter 5 Kennedy interpreted the issue as that of survival to the Parousia (*stenazomen* in vv. 2 and 4 had a striking parallel in Rom 8:23). But his recoil from the opinion that between 1 Cor and 2 Cor Paul had changed his mind about resurrection did not allow him to acknowledge that Paul might have meant what he said about dying and being "at home with the Lord" (vv. 6–9). Kennedy concluded at most to a negative result: for Paul death could not bring the believer into separation from his Lord.<sup>29</sup> Paul's yearning (vv. 2–8) was, as before, "for the immortality of the *sōma pneumatikon*" at the Parousia.<sup>30</sup> Kennedy accordingly referred the two states contrasted in 2 Cor 5:6–9—"being at home in the body and absent from the Lord"/"being absent from the body and at home with the Lord"—to life in the natural or fleshly body and life at the Parousia in the spiritual body.

Now, there is no argument over the sense of the first limb in this contrast: but, whereas there appears to be no visible support for Kennedy's reading of the second limb ("being absent from the body and at home with the Lord" = Parousia), the parallel of Phil 1:23 positively militates against it. Respecting the latter text, Kennedy cited Paul Wernle's interpretation without making it any more cogent: "[Paul's] yearning overleaps all between death and resurrection, and hurries to its goal for reunion with Jesus."<sup>31</sup>

Albert Schweitzer's survey, *Paul and His Interpreters* (1911, ET 1912), traced the views of Paul especially from F. C. Baur to Schweitzer's own time. On the issue of development he noted that Auguste Sabatier had been the first to differentiate phases in Paul's development,<sup>32</sup> that Pflie-

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. 24; my emphasis.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. 261.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. 269.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. 270.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. 272.

<sup>32</sup> Auguste Sabatier, *L'Apôtre Paul, esquisse d'une histoire de sa pensée* (Paris: Fischbacher, 1870).

derer, inspired perhaps by Lüdemann's study of Paul's use of *sarx*, had fixed on Pauline eschatology as the privileged sphere of development;<sup>33</sup> that what Teichmann added to Pfleiderer was merely an overconfident extremism.

Not one of [Teichmann's] "results" can be proved from the Apostle's letters . . . . He asserts, for instance, that in Thessalonians those who arise from the dead enter the kingdom of God in their earthly bodies. But from the Jewish Apocalyptic and from the teaching of Jesus it clearly appears that the resurrection included within itself a transformation of this creaturely corporeity into a glorified corporeity.<sup>34</sup>

Several factors have combined to keep Schweitzer's straightforward, devastating critique from delivering the *coup de grâce* to the Pfleiderer-Teichmann line. First, Schweitzer was unable to match his critique with a plausible positive retrieval of Pauline eschatology.<sup>35</sup> Second, the modern hankering to convert variations into "developments" meshed with the modern recoil from apocalyptic eschatology. As scholars yielded to both impulses, Paul became ever more dynamic and rational.

In C. H. Dodd's account of "the mind of Paul" the dynamism and rationality were attested by a many-sided evolution of attitudes.<sup>36</sup> The mature Paul—the Paul that matured between First and Second Corinthians—"has become reconciled to experience."<sup>37</sup> He has found a new value in human institutions, particularly the state and its magistrates, and, correlatively, a new distance from apocalypticism and its parousias. In Dodd's view, apocalypticism was "a form of compensation in fantasy for the sense of futility and defeat,"<sup>38</sup> its hallmark "a radical devaluation of the present world-order in all its aspects."<sup>39</sup> The newly mature Paul has broken with this. Whereas he had earlier thought of the saved as a tiny remnant,<sup>40</sup> he now foresaw the winning over of "all Israel" and, indeed, the redemption of the whole human race<sup>41</sup> and the whole material

<sup>33</sup> See Pfleiderer, *Paulinism* 1, 259, 265 f.; Schweitzer, *Paul and His Interpreters* 69–72.

<sup>34</sup> Schweitzer, *Paul and His Interpreters* 76.

<sup>35</sup> For his attribution to Paul of an elaborately detailed eschatology, see Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (New York: Holt, 1931) esp. 65–68. The main lines of this solution appear as a heuristic scheme in *Paul and His Interpreters* 240–45.

<sup>36</sup> C. H. Dodd, "The Mind of Paul: I" (1933) and "The Mind of Paul: II" (1934), in C. H. Dodd, *New Testament Studies* (Manchester: Manchester University, 1953, repr. 1967) 67–82, 83–128.

<sup>37</sup> "The Mind of Paul: II" 108.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* 126.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* 113.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* 121.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.* 123 f.

creation.<sup>42</sup> What brought about the "decisive change"<sup>43</sup> by which Paul suddenly "outgrew" his "harsh dualism"?<sup>44</sup> Apart from naming it a "second conversion," in which "the traces of fanaticism and intolerance disappear,"<sup>45</sup> Dodd did not say. This left room for others to come up with an answer.

To Wilfred L. Knox the answer lay not in a second conversion but in Paul's missionary strategy of accommodation to Hellenistic culture.<sup>46</sup> Knox observed that "the conception of a new age which had already begun and was shortly to be completed by the appearance of the Lord was fairly prominent in Christian preaching."<sup>47</sup> Paul kept to this in 1 Cor 15, but he did so in a spirit of accommodation to his Hellenistic readership. For example, the resurrection of the dead was no longer to a material but to a spiritual body.<sup>48</sup> This, however, was not enough to meet the difficulties of the Corinthians, rooted in their acceptance of popular Hellenistic philosophy. So, in 2 Cor 5 Paul took missionary accommodation to Greek categories further, to the "complete revision" of his eschatology.<sup>49</sup> He made the body the garment that the soul "was anxious to cast aside, the burden from which it longed to be delivered."<sup>50</sup> Present possession of the Spirit (2 Cor 5:5) could be equated with "the divine afflatus of Hellenistic belief."<sup>51</sup> Paul adopted the conception that the soul did not simply lay aside the body, but put on a new and glorious one. In imagery drawn from Babylon but at home in the mysteries and

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. 124.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. 125.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. 126.

<sup>45</sup> "The Mind of Paul: I" 81.

<sup>46</sup> Wilfred L. Knox, *St Paul and the Church of the Gentiles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1939) 1-26. Hereafter, *Paul and Gentiles*.

<sup>47</sup> *Paul and Gentiles* 126. Knox's phrase "fairly prominent" understates the matter. The concrete form of realized eschatology in early Christianity was the kerygma of Christ's resurrection, to which the supposition of "imminent Parousia" long remained firmly attached. C. H. Dodd, in chapters 2 and 3 of his *Parables of the Kingdom* (London: Nisbet, 1935), presented a brilliant piece of detective work in explanation of the origins of this scheme. A deftly corrected version of Dodd's hypothesis appeared in a review essay by Joachim Jeremias, "Eine neue Schau der Zukunftsaussagen Jesu," *Theologische Blätter* 20 (1941) 216-22. This recovery of Jesus' own eschatology and its transformation in early Christianity had been presaged by Wilhelm Weiffenbach, *Der Wiederkunftsgedanke Jesu nach den Synoptikern kritisch untersucht und dargestellt* (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1873). For a summary of the whole, see B. F. Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1979) 202-9.

<sup>48</sup> *Paul and Gentiles* 127.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. 128.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. 137.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. 140.

indeed everywhere in Hellenistic syncretism, Paul converted eschatology into "an accepted Hellenistic view of the life to come" (2 Cor 5:1-5).<sup>52</sup> Though he had substituted the immortality of the soul for the resurrection of the body and the gradual spiritualization of the soul for the great assize at the end of time, he strangely failed to abandon all talk of judgment (2 Cor 5:10), despite its having "ceased to possess any real significance . . . ."<sup>53</sup>

W. D. Davies has offered a detailed analysis of Knox's treatment of 2 Cor 5, but, though he accepted the view urged since Pfeleiderer that Pauline eschatology underwent notable development between 1 Cor 15 and 2 Cor 5, he refused to accept Knox's answer to the question of what the change consisted in and what brought it about.<sup>54</sup>

Davies focused on three factors. First, the change consisted in rescheduling the acquisition of a heavenly body from the Parousia to the death of the individual believer. Second, the occasion of this doctrinal development was partly psychological ("he himself had been at the gates of death"<sup>55</sup>) and partly pastoral ("the problem of Christians who died was becoming a pressing one"<sup>56</sup>). Third, the condition of the possibility of the change lay in the early Christian and Pauline consciousness of realized eschatology: the "conception of the Age to Come as having already dawned."<sup>57</sup> In 1 Cor 15 Paul's mind had been "centred on the 'ôlâm habbâ' as the End of all history." In 2 Cor 5:1 f., however, "it is not resurrection as characteristic of 'the End' that concerns him;" his mind turns, rather, to what lies immediately beyond death.<sup>58</sup> In short, 1 Cor 15 corresponded to the Judaic notion of the age to come as reserved for the eschatological resurrection of the dead following the messianic age; 2 Cor 5 corresponded to the Judaic notion of the age to come as eternally existent: "it always IS in the heavens and we awake to it at death."<sup>59</sup>

In 1955 Joachim Jeremias espoused and developed an undeveloped indication in Adolf Schlatter's exegesis of 1 Cor 15:50.<sup>60</sup> Neither the living (*sarx kai haima*) nor the dead (*hē phthora*) could inherit the reign

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. 136.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. 141.

<sup>54</sup> W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1948, 1980) 311-20.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. 311.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. 314.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. 317.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. 316.

<sup>60</sup> Joachim Jeremias, "Flesh and Blood Cannot Inherit the Kingdom of God' (1 Cor. XV. 50)," in *Abba: Studien zur neutestamentlichen Theologie und Zeitgeschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966) 298-307.

of God (that is, the existence proper to salvation in the age to come) as they were; rather, the condition of entry into the age to come, whether for the living or for the dead, was a divinely wrought transformation to take place at the Parousia: "we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed."<sup>61</sup>

Jeremias not only championed this exegesis against the interpretation that took 1 Cor 15:50 to signify the flat incompatibility of the earthly or bodily with final salvation; he also explicitly related his reading of the text to Teichmann's reconstruction of Paul's thought on the resurrection of the dead. If in this reconstruction 1 Cor 15:50 ff. was the link in an alleged transition from Jewish apocalyptic notions to Greek sapiential notions, Jeremias could argue that with the loss of this link the whole construct collapsed.

Jeremias' interpretation has been not only influential but decisive in its main point. Joachim Gnilka reported some years ago that the Teichmann reconstruction, setting immortality in opposition to resurrection, "is nowadays rightly without supporters."<sup>62</sup> Nevertheless, Gerd Luedemann has recently reasserted the views of Teichmann at three points. First, at the time Paul founded the Christian community of Thessalonica, he conceived of salvation at the Parousia without reference to the resurrection of dead Christians. Second, when Paul did integrate the resurrection of the dead with the salvation of the living at the Parousia (1 Thess 4), he conceived of resurrection as a mere revivification of corpses. Third, Pauline dualism (spirit versus flesh) grounded Paul's view that the sphere of "flesh and blood" will be "destroyed" at the Parousia.<sup>63</sup> From this it would seem that for some few, at least, the question of Paul's view of the resurrection of the dead is back to square one, i.e., to where it was roughly a hundred years ago.

Meantime, the opening lines of 2 Cor 5:1-10 continue to be a *crux interpretum*. Whereas Jacques Dupont found clues to the hope of the Parousia in these first lines, Paul Hoffmann offered a detailed counterpart to Rudolf Bultmann's exegesis; that is, he deciphered the text as

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. 298-302.

<sup>62</sup> Joachim Gnilka, "Contemporary Exegetical Understanding of the Resurrection of the Body," in *Immortality and Resurrection*, ed. Pierre Benoit and Roland Murphy (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970) 129-41; see 131 on Teichmann's thesis that hope of immortality undermined belief in resurrection.

<sup>63</sup> On the first agreement with Teichmann, see Gerd Luedemann, *Paul Apostle to the Gentiles: Studies in Chronology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984) 212; on all three agreements, see G. Luedemann, "The Hope of the Early Paul: From the Foundation-Preaching at Thessalonika to 1 Cor 15:51-57," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 7 (1980) 195-201; cf. 195 f. on the first point, 197 on the second, 200 on the third.

mirror writing, on the supposition that it reflected, by opposition, the eschatology of Gnostic opponents.<sup>64</sup> Friedrich Lang has surveyed the variety of recent scholarship on 2 Cor 5:1-10.<sup>65</sup>

If Gnlika's assurance that the Teichmann line "is nowadays . . . without supporters" is no longer quite exact, still that particular line is a dead letter for the vast majority today. The influence of kerygma theology, however, is not quite so passé. Though it is notoriously difficult to say what will finally prove to have been going forward in our own time, it is nonetheless tempting to hazard a comment on the rich harvest of works dealing with 1 Cor 15 since 1970, namely, that special importance attaches to the analysis of parallels to 1 Cor 15 in ancient Jewish texts on the resurrection of the dead. The quest of such parallel material was of distinctly secondary interest to Barth, Bultmann, Schniewind, and their generation. Yet no small part of the scholarly literature designed to consolidate or resolve issues framed by these thinkers and exegetes has now been rendered all but obsolete by just such analytic work. An example of the latter is in the series of articles, reflecting a Strasbourg dissertation, that Rodolphe Morissette published in 1972.<sup>66</sup>

Current opinion on the relevant texts resists consensus. Still, it seems to me possible that a contribution to greater order might well lie in locating and addressing the strategic exegetical issues that generate diverse opinion on "development" in Paul's eschatology.

## II

For present purposes there is no need to offer (indeed, within the limits of a single essay there would be no excuse for offering) a fully detailed exegesis of the Pauline texts. I shall allow the main forms of the hypothesis of development to define the crucial points and shall limit my interpretative efforts to them. The hypothesis may be set out in three

<sup>64</sup> Jacques Dupont, *SYN CHRISTŌI: L'Union avec le Christ selon saint Paul* (Louvain: Nauwelaerts; Paris: Desclée, 1952) 135-53; Rudolf Bultmann, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians*, ed. E. Dinkler (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985); Paul Hoffmann, *Die Toten in Christus* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1966, <sup>3</sup>1978).

<sup>65</sup> Friedrich Lang, *2 Korinther 5,1-10 in der neueren Forschung* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1973).

<sup>66</sup> Rodolphe Morissette, "L'Expression SOMA en 1 Cor 15 et dans la littérature paulinienne," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 56 (1972) 223-39; "La condition de ressuscité, 1 Corinthiens 15:35-49: Structure littéraire de la péricope," *Biblica* 53 (1972) 208-28; "L'Antithèse entre le 'psychique' et le 'pneumatique' en 1 Corinthiens, XV, 44 à 46," *Revue des sciences religieuses* 46 (1972) 97-143; "Un midrash sur la mort (I Cor., XV, 54c à 57)," *Revue biblique* 79 (1972) 161-88. Perhaps the most striking exploitation of ancient Jewish parallels is found in the article published in *Biblica*. One result is the improbability that Paul's opponents in Corinth argued for a resurrection as having already taken place.

main propositions.

1. In 1 Thess 4 Paul affirmed salvation, at the Parousia, of not only the living but the dead. Here he conceived of salvation in primitive Judaic terms: the dead return to the conditions of this life; then the living "will be swept up together with them on clouds into the air to meet the Lord" (Pfleiderer, Teichmann, Jeremias, G. Luedemann, et al.). Crucial question: Does Paul understand the dead to return by resurrection to the conditions of the present life?

2. In 1 Cor 15 Paul affirmed salvation at the Parousia of both the living and the dead, but by now he had arrived at the insight that

*sarx kai haima basileian theou klēronomēsai ou dynatai,  
oude hē phthora tēn aphtharsian klēronomei* (v. 50).

This means that Paul's affirmation of "resurrection"—which supposed some continuity between, on the one hand, "flesh and blood/the perishable" and, on the other, "the kingdom of God/imperishability"—was incoherent with his deepest soteriological thought (Pfleiderer, Teichmann, Charles, Dodd, W. L. Knox, et al.). Crucial questions: (a) Does 1 Cor 15:50 rule out corporeal participation in final salvation? (b) What does the *mystērion* (secret) of 1 Cor 15:51 refer to?

3. In 2 Cor 5:2–4 Paul reduced this incoherence by affirming that a foreordained heavenly body would be bestowed on the believer immediately upon death. This was an adoption of Greek categories (Pfleiderer, Teichmann, Knox, et al.) or a deployment of Judaic categories (W. D. Davies). Finally, in Phil 1:21–23 he supported this revision, establishing a certain primacy of the Greek theme of immortality (Pfleiderer, Teichmann, Knox, et al.). Crucial questions: (a) Does 2 Cor 5:2–4 refer to the Parousia or to the acquisition of a resurrection-body immediately upon death? (b) Is 2 Cor 5:6–9 concerned with the Parousia, or with an intermediate state after death? (c) What light, if any, does Phil 1:23 throw on the matter?

Jeremias' 1955 essay all but put an end to the idea that "flesh and blood" (interpreted as the corporeal principle itself) had no part in final salvation. After 1955 that particular reading of the text of 1 Cor 15:50 was largely abandoned, few today being ready to follow Teichmann in suppressing the prima-facie sense of "change" ("we shall all be changed") in favor of making it mean annihilation and new creation.<sup>67</sup> With the loss of 1 Cor 15:50, the full-blown hypothesis of "development"—a complete trajectory with visible point of departure (1 Thess 4), apogee (1 Cor 15), and arrival at a new eschatology (2 Cor 5)—did indeed collapse.

<sup>67</sup> Luedemann, as we have noted (see n. 63 above), is among the exceptions.

Still, lesser developments could be maintained. Jeremias himself maintained a forward move from 1 Thess 4 to the mature Paul of the later correspondence. In 1 Thess 4, according to Jeremias, something was missing: the idea of transformation. In this one particular he agreed with Teichmann and, in common with Teichmann, argued from . . . silence.<sup>68</sup>

But the notion that transformation from earthly to heavenly corporeity was in no way supposed by the resurrection theme in 1 Thess 4 is burdened with improbable consequences. First, this would not accord with the evidence of late Old Testament texts and Jewish noncanonical literature. Dan 2:2 f. is a keynote passage actualizing the destiny of the Servant in Isa 52–53 as the resurrection of the righteous (v. 3) and assimilating the resurrected righteous to the angels (cf. the equation of “stars” and angels in Dan 8:10). See also Isa 26:19; 1QH 11:10–14; *Pss. Sol.* 3:16; 2 *Bar.* 49–51, 61–63. Transformation belonged to resurrection even when, as in 2 *Bar.* 50:1–3, transparent apologetic considerations motivated a brief temporal dissociation of the two. Second, this view would not cohere with the indissoluble connection between transformation and resurrection in the tradition of Jesus’ words (Mk 12:24 f.; parr. Mt 22:29 f.; Lk 20:34–36) as well as in the Resurrection narratives (e.g., Lk 24:31, 36–53; Jn 20:19–23; Mk 16:12). Third, it is difficult to believe that Paul or any other early Christian could conceive of the resurrection of the dead in total abstraction from the resurrection of Jesus, which in the light of all available evidence was itself invariably conceived in terms of utter uniqueness respecting the past and prototypal status respecting the future (cf. pre-Pauline formulas correlating Jesus’ resurrection with the exaltation of the Isaian Servant, such as 1 Cor 15:3–5; Rom 4:25; 8:34; Pauline and para-Pauline formulations such as 1 Cor 15:20, 45; Rom 8:29 f.; Acts 26:23). All the material on Jesus’ resurrection, early and late, quite unambiguously supposed a transformed corporeity from

<sup>68</sup> Jeremias, “Flesh and Blood” 307. This *faux pas* was occasioned, it seems clear to me, by Jeremias’ defective specification of the referent of “secret” in 1 Cor 15:51 f. Having drawn a sharp conceptual distinction between “resurrection” and “transformation,” Jeremias referred the “secret” to the timing of the latter. But, as we shall see, there is no evidence that Paul himself ever differentiated resurrection and the transformation that was part and parcel of resurrection. If in 1 Cor 15:35–49 he had already thematized resurrection precisely as transformative, Paul must have referred the “secret” of v. 51, not (as Jeremias maintained) to the idea that the change of the living and the dead is to take place immediately at the Parousia (rather than after the judgment, as in 2 *Bar.* 51), but simply to the transformation of the living at the Parousia (as the counterpart of the transformative resurrection of the dead). Günther Bornkamm, “*mystērion, myeō,*” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 4, 802–28, at 823: the secret in question is “what Paul tells the Corinthians about the change which will overtake Christians still alive at the parousia.” This I take to be exact.

which, for example, the prospect of death was definitively banished. In short, nothing positively favors the view that in 1 Thess 4 resurrection signified merely the reconstitution of the earthly body, whereas several considerations tell decisively against it.

We return, then, to 1 Cor 15, the keystone in the hypothesis of development. The first part of the text is organized as follows: vv. 1-11, kerygmatic foundation; vv. 12-34 respond to the assertion *anastasis nekron ouk estin* (there is no raising of dead men). The question of how the rest of the text is organized has been diversely answered. Johannes Weiss proposed that vv. 35-57 were ranged under the rubric of the question *pōs?* (how?).<sup>69</sup> Jeremias modified this by attributing a chiasmic design to the text.<sup>70</sup> He first differentiated two questions in v. 35. *Pōs egeirontai hoi nekroi?* (How are the dead raised?) inquired after the event of resurrection; *poiō de sōmati erchontai?* (with what kind of body do they come [from the tomb]?) inquired after the new corporeity of the risen. In Jeremias' reading, the questions were answered in inverse order. Vv. 36-49 offered an answer to "with what kind of body?" and vv. 50-57 answered the "how?"

This beguiling view might well impose itself, if in vv. 50-57 we were to find some verifying particular, however slight, showing that the text had been consciously conceived in relation to the *pōs?* (how?) of v. 35. But no such verifying particular occurs in the text. Moreover, the *pōs* of v. 35 is explicitly concerned with "the dead," whereas the passage opening in v. 50 is concerned with the living and the dead; indeed, it highlights the living ("we shall not all fall asleep, but we shall all be changed"). Again, the phrase in v. 50, *touto de phēmi, adelphoi* (this I tell you, brothers), seems to open a new, if related, topic (cf. 1 Cor 7:29). It would seem likely, then, that in v. 35 the words *poiō de sōmati?* (with what kind of body?) do not pose a question distinct from *pōs*, but simply specify the intended thrust of *pōs*. (This, in fact, is how the great majority of interpreters take it.) With v. 49, Paul's answer to *pōs* and to *poiō de sōmati* is concluded. But this generates a new question: How are vv. 50-57 related to what precedes them?

In quest of an answer, we might ask what the *mystērion* (secret) of v. 51 refers to. The text furnishes an immediate answer: we shall not all fall asleep, but we shall all be changed. Fair enough; but what is it in these words that up to this point is still secret, i.e., but has not hitherto been dealt with by Paul? I shall proceed by a process of elimination.

<sup>69</sup> Johannes Weiss, *Der erste Korintherbrief* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1910) 345, 353, 380.

<sup>70</sup> "Flesh and Blood" 304 f.

First, it was hardly a secret among Paul's Christian contemporaries (for it was no secret in the eschatological instructions whether of Paul or of other early Christian teachers<sup>71</sup>) that not all would die. Though some had already died and others, including Paul himself, might still die, nevertheless the Christian faithful (and Paul hoped to be among them) would live to see the Parousia. The secret, accordingly, was not future preservation of Christians from death, nor was it a differentiation of two classes at the Parousia, the living and the dead.<sup>72</sup>

Was the secret, then, the fact of the transformation of those risen from the dead? Hardly. Earlier, Paul had already said:

*speiretai en phthora, egeiretai en aphtharsia;*  
*speiretai en atimia, egeiretai en doxē;*  
*speiretai en astheneia, egeiretai en dynamei;*  
*speiretai sōma psychikon, egeiretai sōma pneumatikon.*

The sowing takes place in decay, the raising in immunity to decay;  
 the sowing in humiliation, the raising in glory;  
 the sowing in weakness, the raising in power;  
 a natural body is sown, a spiritual body is raised.

(1 Cor 15:42b-44a)

Was the secret, then, that (unlike 2 Bar. 50:1-3) the transformation of the newly risen would take place simultaneously with their resurrection, namely, at the Parousia? Not likely. For Paul resurrection was always transformative resurrection (vv. 42-49), and it had already been ascribed to that moment, in v. 23 (*en tē parousia autou*, at his coming).

The secret, then, must be this: *although those still living at the Parousia would not die, they too—like those raised from the dead—would at that same moment be transformed.*

The sense of the passage as a whole is clarified in the light of this interpretative option. The living would indeed not pass through death, but, like the dead and at the same moment as the dead, they would be "changed." Christ's victory over the last enemy, death, would be effected by the transformation of all. Neither *sarx kai haima* nor *hē phthora* could

<sup>71</sup> Regularly assumed in Matthew, Mark, and Luke is an apocalyptic thesis according to which the Son of man will come to gather his own before they are exterminated in the eschatological ordeal. Two examples out of many: "But when they persecute you in one town, flee to the next; for truly I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of man comes" (Mt 10:23); "there are some standing here who will not taste death before the Son of man comes" (Mk 9:1; parr. Mt 16:28; Lk 9:27).

<sup>72</sup> It should be remembered that in writing to the Thessalonians Paul's point was not that those still living would not die (that was taken as settled), but that the dead would not fail to join them in salvation at the Parousia.

enter into life without being changed.

Here we should emphasize that Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer,<sup>73</sup> Adolf Schlatter,<sup>74</sup> and Joachim Jeremias<sup>75</sup> were completely right in observing that *hē phthora* in the second line of the distich of v. 50 is not synonymous with *sarx kai haima*; for, contrary to the RSV and the NEB, *hē phthora* does not mean "the perishable";<sup>76</sup> it means "corruption" (NAB) or "decay" (Goodspeed). In context this must be an *abstractum pro concreto* referring to "the dead." The distich, then, states a predicament: neither the living nor the dead can enter the reign of God as they are. But with the triumphant announcement "we shall all be changed," the "secret" following the distich addresses and disposes of this predicament. The living as well as the dead will be transformed. Verses 53 f. accordingly celebrate the entry into the reign of God respectively of the dead (*to phtharton*, this being of decay) and the living (*to thnēton*, this mortal being).

The whole passage (50–57) was occasioned (as H. A. A. Kennedy had said as long ago as 1904<sup>77</sup>) by an implicit response and final question of the addressee: "We can now form some conception of the resurrection of our dead friends, but what of ourselves? How are those to enter into life who will live to see the Parousia?" Just as Paul had insisted (in 1 Cor 15:35–49) that the dead would not return from the grave in earthly bodies, so he now taught (1 Cor 15:50–57) that those living at the Parousia would not remain in their earthly bodies either. "We shall all be changed." Thus the duality of the living and the dead at the Parousia commands the triumphant conclusion of 1 Cor 15, just as it had commanded the text of 1 Thess 4. Indeed, this duality is also a key to 2 Cor 5.

Of this passage W. D. Davies has asserted that "there is nothing in the text to suggest Paul's hope of surviving to the parousia."<sup>78</sup> However, there are two classes of specific indices in the text to just that hope.

The first is a class of linguistic indices which connect 2 Cor 5:2–5 with two passages on final salvation at the Parousia, namely, Rom 8:18–27 and 1 Cor 15:50–55. (a) The *stenazein* ("sighing" or "groaning") motif of

<sup>73</sup> Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1914) 375 f.

<sup>74</sup> Adolf Schlatter, *Paulus der Bote Jesu: Eine Deutung seiner Briefe an die Korinther* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1934) 441 f.

<sup>75</sup> "Flesh and Blood" 299–301.

<sup>76</sup> In Paul the sense of *phthora* as decay/corruption is usually quite clear; where a sense approximating "perishability" is required, it is expressed by combining *phthora* with some other term; see, e.g., Rom 8:21, "bondage to decay" (*hē douleia tēs phthoras*).

<sup>77</sup> *Last Things* 259

<sup>78</sup> *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* 311.

2 Cor 5:2–4 is paralleled by the sighing or groaning of Rom 8:22 f., which bears on “the redemption of our bodies” at the Parousia; (b) the *pneuma-arrabōn* (Spirit-pledge) motif of 2 Cor 5:5 is paralleled by the *pneuma-arrabōn* passage of Rom 8:23 (cf. Rom 8:26 f.). In the passage in Romans the presence of the Spirit as foretaste or first installment looks ahead to final bodily redemption and the consummation of sonship at the Parousia; 2 Cor 5:5 is structurally similar. (c) The combined motifs of *thnēton*, *endysasthai*, and *katapothēnai* in 2 Cor 5:4 are paralleled by the Parousia passage of 1 Cor 15:53 f.:

this being of decay [the dead] must put on (*endysasthai*) immunity to decay  
 and this mortal being (*thnēton*: the living) must put on (*endysasthai*) immortality;  
 and when this being of decay puts on immunity to decay  
 and this mortal being puts on immortality,  
 then the word of Scripture will come true:  
 “Death has been swallowed up (*katapothē*) in victory . . . .”

Is there indeed nothing in the text to suggest Paul’s hope of surviving to the Parousia? In 2 Cor 5:4abc Paul expresses recoil from being stripped (of his earthly body) and desire of being able to “put on (his heavenly body) over” (*ependysasthai*) his earthly body. This “putting on over” evokes the secret of 1 Cor 15:51; we shall not all die but we shall all—the living as well as the dead—be changed at the Parousia. The transformation of the living, that is, will not involve disembodiment. In 2 Cor 5:4d, moreover, Paul follows this with phrases inescapably reminiscent of 1 Cor 15:53 f., “so that this mortal being [ *to thnēton*: the expression is applied, in 1 Cor 15:53 f., to the class of those still living at the Parousia] may be swallowed up (*katapothē*) by life.”

The second class of indices to hope of survival to the Parousia in 2 Cor 5:2–5 is not linguistic so much as conceptual. The key ideas are antithetical: being “clothed” (=embodied) versus being “naked” (=disembodied), these two states corresponding respectively to the living and to the dead; at the Parousia those still living will “put on” a heavenly embodiment “over” their earthly embodiment. This was substantially established by J. N. Sevenster in a 1953 essay which, though sometimes unidiomatic and infelicitous, was a remarkable exegetical achievement.<sup>79</sup> Sevenster not only established the probable sense of *gymnos* (naked=disembodied); he went further, to trace the way in which the text, supposing three states (this life, the disembodied state of the dead, and

<sup>79</sup> J. N. Sevenster, “Some Remarks on the GYMNOS in II Cor. V 3,” in *Studia Paulina in honorem Johannis de Zwaan septuagenarii*, ed. J. N. Sevenster and W. C. van Unnik (Haarlem: Bohn, 1953) 202–14.

the consummation-event of resurrection/transformation at the Parousia), gave expression to two comparisons. In 2 Cor 5:1-4 the prospect of the third state is far more desirable than the prospect of the second; in 2 Cor 5:6-9 the second state, insofar as it means "being with the Lord," is simply superior to the first. The second state, when set against the third, is far from desirable (vv. 2-4); but, when compared with the first, it is objectively and subjectively preferable (vv. 6-9).

I would add two observations to those of Sevenster. First, the object of the *stenazein* (and *baroumenos*) motif is twofold: recoil from nakedness and longing for the Parousia; but the second of these objects must not be overlooked, for it may be the more fundamental of the two (cf. Rom 8:22 f.). Second, the three states are successive, but not in fixed universal fashion, for those living at the Parousia will miss the second. From Paul's personal standpoint the best possibility of all would accordingly be immediate Parousia (2 Cor 5:1-4), bringing the state that outstrips all others.

On the face of it, the text of Phil 1:23 simply confirms that Paul entertained the conception of an intermediate state between the present life and the Parousia, entered into by death and aptly characterized as being "with the Lord." Those who deny that Paul harbored any such conception generally find themselves constrained to discover the Parousia motif here. But in this text, at least, there really is not so much as a hint that the Parousia is intended.<sup>80</sup>

Let me summarize our results by repeating and responding to the "crucial questions." Apropos of 1 Thess 4, did Paul understand resurrection as the return of the dead to the conditions of the present life? No; nothing in text or context supports this reading, whereas numerous considerations tell against and exclude it.

Apropos of 1 Cor 15:50-57, does v. 50 rule out the notion of corporeal participation in final salvation? No; the issue is not "body versus spirit" but "body in the present age—be it the flesh and blood of the living or the decayed body of the dead—versus body transfigured and immortal in the reign of God." Second, what does the *mystērion* (secret) of vv. 51 f. refer to? It refers to the destiny of the living at the Parousia: they, too, like those risen from the dead, will be transformed at the Parousia.

Apropos of 2 Cor 5, do vv. 2-4 refer to the Parousia or to the acquisition of a resurrection-body immediately upon death? Linguistic and conceptual indices point to the Parousia. Are vv. 6-9 concerned with the Parousia or with an intermediate state after death? They bear on an intermediate state, just as Phil 1:23 does.

<sup>80</sup> See the treatment of Dupont, *SYN CHRISTŌI* (note 64 above) 171-84.

Final result: there is a total lack of persuasive evidence that Paul's teaching on the resurrection of the dead underwent significant development either between 1 Thess 4 and 1 Cor 15, or between 1 Cor 15 and 2 Cor 5. Allusion to "the intermediate state" occurs at least in 2 Cor 5 and Phil 1, apparently without entailing any change in Paul's conception of resurrection of the dead and transformation of the living at the Parousia.

### III

"Anyone who treats the charged expressions encountered in cultural history exclusively from the 'historical standpoint' is in that very measure incapable of genuine interpretation."

Josef Pieper.<sup>81</sup>

I have offered above a swift survey of the generations-long debate between maximalists and minimalists on whether Paul's view of the resurrection of the dead underwent significant development. I have concluded that the case of the minimalists is much stronger than that of their adversaries from Pfleiderer to the present day. But what is the significance of the debate itself and of the admittedly swiftly-sketched resolution thereof that I have just presented?

The debate has hermeneutical significance, and can perhaps be made to yield a hermeneutical lesson.

Hermeneutics bears on the understanding of texts. A basic feature of such understanding is the triangular structure of reader, text, and referent.<sup>82</sup> The reader understands the text by understanding what it is about, and he understands what the text is about by understanding the text. If in form this circle is vicious, in fact it is broken open by acts of insight which, alternating between text and referent, spiral toward an ever clearer and firmer understanding of both.

Hans-Georg Gadamer recalled Luther's statement of the issue: "Whoever does not understand the things cannot draw the sense from the words" (*qui non intelligit res non potest ex verbis sensum elicere*).<sup>83</sup> There are more positive formulations of essentially the same principle: (a) "preunderstanding" of the text is given in independent access to its referent (*die Sache*: not "the subject matter," but the referent in its integral relevant reality), and (b) an appreciative understanding of the

<sup>81</sup> Josef Pieper, *Was heisst Interpretation?* Rheinisch-Westfälische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Vorträge G 234 (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1979) 21.

<sup>82</sup> See Emerich Coreth, *Grundfragen der Hermeneutik: Ein philosophischer Beitrag* (Freiburg: Herder, 1969) 64 f., 116 f., 123-27.

<sup>83</sup> See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Seabury, 1975) 151.

text supposes a "life-relationship" to the referent and hence to the text.<sup>84</sup> It follows that there is nothing so futile as positivistic objectivism, with its "principle of the empty head,"<sup>85</sup> according to which the less the interpreter has in his head, the more likely he is to avoid "reading into the text" his own opinions and prejudices. To understand a lecture on color, it is no advantage to be free of prejudices by having been born blind. On the contrary, the blind man finds discussion of color obscure precisely because he lacks independent access to the referent, i.e., to color.

It may be worth our while, then, to pause over the referent or *die Sache*. And in the present instance this is—what? The resurrection of the dead, an event conceived as belonging to a climactic future, when the risen and glorified Christ will destroy the last enemy, death.

What can be our access to an as yet nonexistent event? It is not empirical in the sense that our access to the everyday events of our lives is. Nor is it well exemplified by access to history, though history, too, intends events nonexistent in our own present. The access to history is through a reconstructive activity of intelligence working on data variously mediated to us, but we cannot construct the future as we reconstruct the past. The past, however, is not irrelevant here, for in the texts on the resurrection of the dead the past event of the resurrection of Jesus grounds the eschatological future:

Now the truth is that God has raised Christ from the dead,  
the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep;

for, just as through a man there came death,  
so the more surely through a man there shall come the resurrection of the dead;

... just as we have borne the image of the man of dust,  
so the more surely shall we bear the image of the heavenly man as well.

(1 Cor 15:20 f., 49)

What is the carrier of meaning here, if not the correlatives, promise and hope? In the light of the election-historical mission of Jesus, the promise is fused with his victory over death; he is accordingly the ground of hope. So the texts are expressions of hope, suffused with hope, an intelligent

<sup>84</sup> In biblical scholarship the widespread use of the term "preunderstanding" is attributable to the influence of Rudolf Bultmann, "The Problem of Hermeneutics," in *Essays Philosophical and Theological* (London: SCM, 1958) 234–61, at 239. On the sense of *die Sache*, cf. Coreth, *Grundfragen* (page references as above, n. 82); on "life-relation" see Bultmann, "The Problem of Hermeneutics" 241–43, 252 f., 255 f.

<sup>85</sup> See the analysis of Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1972) 157.

hope that insists on coherent claims to truth (1 Cor 15:12-34).

Now, the ancients observed that interpretation belongs to the arts that do not impart wisdom, for the object of interpretation is not what is true but only what is said.<sup>86</sup> Formally, no doubt, this is true, but it is an ambiguous truth and can turn into a trap. For if the interpreter who wrestles with the truth of the text may easily find himself wringing from it just what he himself takes to be true, the interpreter who stands aside from the struggle over truth may just as easily, and perhaps more fatefully, trivialize the text, missing the drama of its depths.

This is the point of the above epigraph taken from Josef Pieper. The deadliest evasion of all, Pieper seems to be saying, is the assumption of a closed, impermeable "observer viewpoint," from which one may spend one's whole interpretative effort busily tracing "influences" and "derivations," "developments" in the writer and his record of subsequent impact (*Wirkungsgeschichte*).<sup>87</sup>

Here, it seems to me, lies the hermeneutical lesson of the last hundred years of disconcertingly shallow interpretation of Paul on the resurrection of the dead. In dealing with the Pauline texts, Teichmann, Dodd, and Knox (for example) practiced trajectory criticism. Each posited a distinctive sort of trajectory, but behind all three hypotheses lay a common repugnance toward apocalypticism as intrinsically perverse and illusory. None of the three pushed through this self-imposed barrier to *die Sache*. The upshot in each case was casual dismissal of the scenario which Paul presented as the central message of Christian hope.

The error common to the line that started with Pfleiderer did not lie simply in the assumption of an "observer viewpoint" and of an exclusively historical conception of the interpreter's task, nor did it lie simply in a too facile appeal to the category of "development." The main seeds of error were sown in estrangement from particularities of the text and, above all, from the referent itself (*die Sache*). This controlling estrangement—the chronic vice of one great wing of biblical scholarship since Spinoza—converted the observer viewpoint into an alienated viewpoint and the historical task into the construction of chimerical trajectories, from supernatural Judaic fantasies to a reasonable Hellenistic wisdom (Teichmann), from harsh and fanatic dualism to maturity of experience (Dodd), from fumbling efforts to fairly effective efforts of accommodation

<sup>86</sup> *Epinomis* 975c (Platonic dialogue of doubtful authenticity).

<sup>87</sup> Pieper, *Was heisst Interpretation?* 21 f. Pieper refers to C. S. Lewis' brilliant evocation of the theme in *The Screwtape Letters*. See *The Screwtape Letters and Screwtape Proposes a Toast* (London: Bles, <sup>24</sup>1966) 121: "The Historical Point of View, put briefly, means that when a learned man is presented with any statement in an ancient author, the one question he never asks is whether it is true."

to the Gentile mind (Knox). As *die Sache* disappeared from view, "development" dominated interpretation. Moving in a diametrically opposite direction, let me conclude with some positive considerations bearing on recovery of *die Sache*.

Peter Stuhlmacher has made the point that, as a pre-Christian theme, the resurrection of the dead was far more firmly rooted in the life of postexilic and postbiblical Israel than has generally been acknowledged.<sup>88</sup> With the Christian gospel, however, a new and unique hope was born in the world. It lay at the heart of the Christian movement, indissolubly bound to the risen Jesus, a fundamental facet of the Christ-event.

"Every historical event," wrote Heinrich Schlier in one of his later essays, "presses toward its text and has its text. Otherwise, it is not an 'event' in the full sense of the word. The complete text of the event we are considering—the resurrection of Jesus—is the New Testament."<sup>89</sup> If the text corresponding to the resurrection of Jesus is the New Testament, this text has peak passages, where hope founded on the risen Christ finds powerful and eloquent expression. Among them is chapter 15 of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. Though the past few generations have shown intense interest in the retrieval of Christian eschatology, this particular text has repeatedly proved to be among the most vexatious and opaque, for subjective reasons such as I have just evoked.<sup>90</sup> On the other hand, since the Second World War the West has witnessed the flowering of a rich if extremely diverse literature—psychological, phenomenological, philosophic, and theological—on human hope: its role in the establishment of personality, in effecting the transition from absorption with "having" to communion with "being," its reference to personal fulfilment, its irreducibility to the this-worldly, its finally transcendent reference.<sup>91</sup> This literature is a resource for finding access to *die Sache*,

<sup>88</sup> Peter Stuhlmacher, "Das Bekenntnis zur Auferstehung Jesu von den Toten und die biblische Theologie," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 70 (1973) 365–403; see 383–89.

<sup>89</sup> Heinrich Schlier, *Über die Auferstehung Jesu Christi* (Einsiedeln: Johannesverlag, 1968, 41975) 6.

<sup>90</sup> For evidence of the acute discomfort that this chapter caused Rudolf Bultmann, see the citations in James M. Robinson, "Hermeneutic since Barth," in *The New Hermeneutic*, ed. James M. Robinson and J. B. Cobb Jr. (New York: Harper and Row, 1964) 1–77, esp. 31–33.

<sup>91</sup> A few representative works in which these themes have come to expression: Josef Pieper, *Über die Hoffnung* (Leipzig: Hegner, 1935; Munich: Kösel, 51949); Gabriel Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysics of Hope* (Chicago: Regnery, 1951); Ernst Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1959, rev. 1970); Herbert Plügge, *Wohlbefinden und Missbefinden: Beiträge zu einer medizinischen Anthropologie* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1962); Robert O. Johann, "The Meaning of Hope," *The Theologian* 8 (1952) 21–30; Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Future of Man* (London: Collins [Fontana], 1959); Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology* (London: SCM, 1967).

the referent of the great hope-passages of the New Testament, pre-eminently including those on the resurrection of the dead.

Among the striking ascertainments to emerge from contemporary explorations of hope is the linguistic distinction between "to hope to" or "to hope that" and "to hope" simply.<sup>92</sup> Paul, for example, tells the Corinthians: "I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits" (1 Cor 16:7). Here is hope that belongs to the vast category of human hopes (*espoirs*); it is not hope simply and absolutely (*espérance*), as in the words "if we have hoped in Christ for this life only, we are the most pitiable people of all" (1 Cor 15:19).

In one of his penetrating treatments of hope, Pieper alluded to the phenomenological studies of Herbert Plügge, a clinical physician who observed among his patients that these two classes of hope—everyday hope and fundamental hope—stood in paradoxical relationship to one another. Fundamental hope—not directed toward anything that one could "have," but bent on "being" and "selfness," on "salvation of the person"—emerged at the very moment that everyday hopes collapsed. "Out of the loss of common, everyday hope true hope arises."<sup>93</sup>

In Pieper's view, the test case was the situation of the martyr, for whom the last wisp of human hope was gone. "We can hardly speak of hope, if none exists for the martyr."<sup>94</sup> Indeed, this is precisely the level at which Paul pitched his passionate expositions and expressions of hope. He dealt with fundamental hope, having to do with being, with salvation of the person. What Paul added to the mysterious human phenomenon of such hope was reference to the gospel, that is, to the news of God's act on behalf of every human being in the death and resurrection of Jesus, made Christ and Lord. This gave a unique grounding to "fundamental hope" and, by adding certain dimensions to it through reference to Jesus' own resurrection, it gave this hope the profound and permanent form that it has in the Pauline letters.

I asked above why recognition of *die Sache* (which we may now characterize, shorthand-fashion, as fundamental hope transvalued by the gospel) was so fitful and dim in the tradition that began with Otto Pflieger's gratuitous guesswork. I first answered that hardly anything undermines interpretation more grievously than strict limitation to the stance of the outside observer. In the instance that we have been considering, this invited a too facile recourse to the heuristic category "development." I added that a deeper, more potent factor had been

<sup>92</sup> See, e.g., Josef Pieper, *Hope and History* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969) 21–25.

<sup>93</sup> See the account in Pieper, *Hope and History* 24–26; the last citation is from 26.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.* 32.

alienation vis-à-vis aspects of the text and its referent. Finally, I should remark that the fundamental hope of 1 Thess 4, 1 Cor 15, and 2 Cor 5 is among those "things of God" that according to Paul no one understands except by the Spirit of God (1 Cor 2:11; cf. Mk 4:11; parr. Mt 13:11; Lk 8:10; Mt 16:17; 11:25-27; par. Lk 10:21 f.; John 6:44; 15:5 etc.). This is more than a home truth repeatedly verified by experience. It is sheer hermeneutical realism, founded on a requisite proportion between the knower and the known.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>95</sup> Proportion in this context signifies, first, a broad isomorphism of structures of knowing and structures of being: see Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (New York: Longmans, 1958) 115, 499-502; second, a narrower correlation of knowing and being, which evokes the related themes of horizons, conversions, connaturality: see Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 235-93. As the break with cognitional myth (or, in other words, intellectual conversion) is requisite to an adequate account of cognition, so "moral knowledge is the proper possession only of morally good men" (*Method* 240) and real grasp of "the things of God" supposes religious conversion. As Pieper put it in *Was heisst Interpretation?* 29: "So wenig ein amüsiccher Mensch ein Gedicht zu verstehen und zu interpretieren vermag, so wenig kann es einen ungläubigen Theologen geben—wofern man ... unter Theologie den Versuch versteht, Offenbarung gültig zu interpretieren."