The Markan Apocalypse: The Core of the Christian Message in The Light of its Background in Daniel

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The dictum of Timothy Colani that Mark 13 contains the eschatology of Jewish Christians and that "Jesus could not have shared their opinions,"[1] continues to receive support even where the judgment is made more obliquely. Colani's major contention that there is no connection between Jewish Messianism and the Gospel of Jesus is advocated, consciously or unconsciously, by large sections of the Bible-reading population. Many would be happy to dismiss the apocalyptic discourse, not necessarily by "blaming" it on the disciples but by seeing no possible relevance in it for us. It might be tolerated as a prediction of the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70 or even as a mistaken forecast of a dramatic *parousia* which did not take place as Jesus expected within the prescribed generation (Mark 13:30). Jesus, after all, was a product of his own limited age; and certainly we must divorce ourselves from the crudely naive world-view presented by the apocalypticists.

It is fair to ask the question whether the common antipathy to the Markan apocalyptic discourse does not arise mainly from the "fatal thing" in exegesis, that "there is no such thing as research without presupposition. The more emancipated a scholar thinks he is, the less he is in actual fact."[2] Just as in the work of Baur "his whole great structure

[1] *Jésus-Christ et les Croyances Messianiques de son Temps*, Strasbourg: Treutel et Wurtz, 1864, 202-203.

[2] H. Riesenfeld, *The Gospel Tradition*, Oxford: University Press, 1970, 51.

came to grief"[3] because of his presuppositions, so it may be that the rejection of apocalyptic not only in Mark 13 but in the New Testament as a whole can be traced to "the pressure of evolutionistic materialism and the whole secular climate of thought, . . . the pressure of secular philosophy behind the reinterpretation of eschatology in terms of existentialism."[4]

The presence of prejudice in the evaluation of Mark 13 is shown by the extraordinary contrasts presented by scholarly treatment of this chapter. C. H. Weisse speaks of "an utterance constructed out of the most narrow and superstitious belief in the symbolic sayings of a fantastic book [Daniel] which ignorance or conceit attributed to a renowned old prophet and out of the most extravagant, half-insane imagination."[5] T. F. Glasson sums up the Markan apocalypse as "this picture of a mistaken fanatic"[6] and J. A. T. Robinson more moderately describes it as "a secondary compilation reflecting the expectation of the early church."[7] D. Schenkel, on the other hand, finds Mark 13 "the most impressive and powerful utterance that Jesus made."[8]

Our purpose is to suggest that hostile criticism of Mark 13 stems from a deep-seated antipathy to Jesus' Good News about the Kingdom of God which is itself a thoroughly Jewish and apocalyptic concept, based on the all-important book of Daniel and other Old Testament prophecy read as prediction of the end-times. If we tear the Gospel proclaimed by Jesus from its apocalyptic setting there is no story to tell. Mark 13 is the natural climax to the account of the Messiah's conquest of the kingdom of Satan during his brief ministry in Palestine. However, Messiah's work was preliminary and preparatory. In keeping with what the prophets had foreseen, the Messiah must yet triumph in a renewed earth following the time of distress destined to precede the ultimate resolution of the conflict between the powers of evil and the faithful few. Is it intrinsically more difficult to believe that Jesus should return admidst scenes of glory to

[3] Stephen Neill, *The Interpretation of the New Testament*, Oxford: University Press, London, 1966, 27.

[4] A. L. Moore, *The Parousia in the New Testament*, Supplements to the N.T., Vol XIII, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966, 2.

[5] *Die evangelische Geschichte kritisch and philosophisch bearbeitet*, 1838, cited by Desmond Ford in *The Abomination of Desolation in Biblical Eschatology*, University Press of America, 1979, 8.

[6] *His Appearing and His Kingdom, the Christian Hope in the Light of Its History*, London: Epworth Press, 1953, 3.

[7] *Jesus and His Coming*, London: SCM Press, 1957, 118-119.

[8] *Das Charakterbild Jesu*, Wiesbaden, 1866, 183ff.

reign on the earth than that he returned from death to talk to his disciples? Why should the Markan apocalyptic discourse be thought a thing incredible and worthy of any less attention, and acceptance as true, than the sermon on the mount?

I. A Mistaken Prediction?

G. R. Beasley-Murray does well to remind us that behind the whole controversy over eschatology lay a reaction to the attacks on Jesus by agnostics and that "the chain of emotional reaction . . . has worked continuously in the history of exegesis and abides in measure today."[9] At the heart of the problem was the observation of 19th-century rationalists that Jesus expected to return *immediately following* the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70:

> It is impossible to evade the acknowledgment in this discourse [Mark 13], if we do not mutilate it to suit our own views, that Jesus at first speaks of the destruction of Jerusalem and farther on, and until the close, of His return and the end of all things, and that *He places the two events in immediate connexion*.[10]

In the same vein David Schenkel wrote:

> All attempts to deny the connection [between the fall of Jerusalem and the end of the age] in apologetic interests are mere sophistry and merit no refutation.[11]

Colani's objection was likewise that:

> Jesus, in the discourses which are attributed to him, announces that he will come back immediately after Jerusalem has been defiled. If the words which are placed in his mouth have any sense, they have this sense; and if they do not have it, it is because for theologians black means white and white means black. But for everyone who is not a sophist this dilemma poses itself categorically: either Jesus is mistaken or these discourses are not from him. The Christian church cannot without disloyalty escape this dilemma.[12]

The challenge is clear: Jesus is reported as predicting the end of the age

[9]*Jesus and the Future*, London: MacMillan & Co., 1954, 20-21.
[10]*Life of Jesus*, Vol. III, 95, cited by Beasley-Murray in *Jesus and the Future*.
[11]*Das Charakterbild Jesu*, cited by Beasley-Murray in *Jesus and the Future*, 13, 14.
[12]T. Colani, *Croyances Messianiques*, 252.

in connection with the fall of Jerusalem. Moreover his use of apocalyptic material places him within traditional Jewish apocalypticism. We must as believers work with these facts. We simply dare not dismiss the material as unworthy of Jesus. As F. G. Burkitt wrote:

> Without the belief in the Good Time Coming I do not see how we can be Christians at all. The belief in the Good Time Coming as the most important thing in the world and therewith the duty of preparing ourselves and our fellow-men to be ready as the first duty and privilege of humanity—*this is the foundation of the Gospel*.[13]

II. The Roots of Mark 13 in Daniel

There is no good reason for perplexity either at Jesus' use of apocalyptic material or his intertwining of events concerning Jerusalem with the end of the age, once it is recognized that the eschatological discourse is simply a coherent exposition of and meditation upon the book of Daniel, especially chapters 7, 8, 9, 11, and 12. A. C. Sundberg has noted that:

> Daniel alone among all the Old Testament books is quoted [in Mark] from every chapter; it is of the highest level of significance for the New Testament as a whole as a result of Daniel's overwhelming importance for Mark. Not only in the synoptic apocalypse of Mark 13, but also in his portrayal of the career of Jesus, beginning—as Daniel does—with miracle stories, and moving through the issue of martyrdom (Mark 8:31ff) to personal (Mark 9:2 ff.; cp. Dan. 10) and cosmic revelations (Mark 13 = Dan. 7:9), Mark has been influenced directly by Daniel and his representation of the career and intention of Jesus.[14]

Mark's debt to Daniel reflects Jesus' own preoccupation with apocalyptic which provides the major categories of his teaching: Kingdom of God (Dan. 2:44; 7:14), Son of Man (Dan. 7:13), cosmic conflict (Dan. 10), revelation of the secret of God's purpose in history (Dan. 2:28, the *raz* [mystery] revealed to the initiated—Mark 4:11). It is clear that Jesus' patterns of thought, indeed his whole conceptual framework, owe much to his Jewish apocalyptic world-view. The structure of the whole of New Testament Christianity is built upon this distinctively Jewish/Old Testament weltanschauung. To understand Jesus' mission apart from its native

[13]*The Gospel History and Its Transmission*, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1906, 209-210.
[14]On Testimonies, *Novum Testamentum*, 3, 1959, 272.

Jewish environment is simply to alter his message beyond recognition. The mistaken attempt to do this results in the confusion over eschatology, indeed over the Gospel itself, which is characteristic of the history of exegesis and apparent everywhere in contemporary Christendom.

It is basic to the thinking of Jesus that Daniel provides a comprehensive view of history and that God is guiding the course of history towards the goal which he has determined—the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth ("under the whole heaven," Dan. 7:27), consequent upon the destruction of hostile forces concentrated in a final antichrist. The elect may look forward to a bright future in the New Age of the Kingdom which will be inaugurated by the arrival of the Son of Man. This teleological, linear view of history, so antithetical to a cyclical view found in Hellenism, is the basis of the Markan apocalypse as well as Jesus' whole preaching of the Gospel. History is moving towards an identifiable *telos*, the Restoration of all things which the prophets have promised (Acts 3:21). Endurance by the faithful in the face of a hostile world is meaningful only because God has promised to vindicate their cause by intervening to send the Messiah to inaugurate the Kingdom of God and take them to rule with him (Matt. 19:28; cp. 1 Cor. 6:2; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 2:26; 3:21; 5:10; 20:1-6).

This view of history, which has its roots in the Old Testament and nowhere more clearly than in Daniel, expects an increase in the intensity of the struggle between God and the powers of evil. As the end approaches, false teachers will proliferate and a final Abomination of Desolation will signal the ultimate in apostasy (Mark 13:14). Eventually, amidst cosmic disturbance, the Messiah will arrive in glory to set up his Kingdom (Mark 13:24-27; cp. Luke 21:31).

It is not difficult to see that this is the theme underlying the Markan apocalypse. It will be revealing to point to the connections between Mark 13 and Daniel (as well as some other O.T. prophets) to show that Mark 13 is a carefully developed "midrash" on a well- established base provided by Daniel.

When Mark introduces the apocalypse, Peter, James, John, and Andrew present their question: "Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign when all these things are to be accomplished" (*mellei tauta sunteleisthai panta*.)? As Lars Hartman points out,[15] the question is

[15]*Prophecy Interpreted*, Conectiana Biblica, N.T. Series 1, Gleerup, Lund, Sweden, 1966, 145.

strongly reminiscent of the phrase in Daniel 12:7. In this passage the angel replies to Daniel's question about how long it will be until the end: "When the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end, all these things will be accomplished" (LXX, *suntelestheisetai tauta panta*). No doubt Mark, and Jesus whom he records, took seriously the Danielic material which had long been seen as a revelation of the events of the end-time. In every chapter containing a dream or revelation the end is reached after much conflict and the Kingdom of God is set up. Of particular interest would have been the activity of a final "horn" (chs. 7; 8) who wages war with the saints and is equated with the evil "king of the North" of chapter 11. The interpreting angel speaks of attacks on the people of God, the establishment of an "Abominable Desolator" in the Temple and the final deliverance of the saints (Dan. 11:21–12:13).

It is important to note that anyone who reflected upon the material in Daniel would see that a common theme unites the various visions. All concentrate on a single subject; all are complementary and form a coherent whole; all have the same horizon. Lars Hartman[16] points out what is readily seen by any student of Daniel, that a last king acts blasphemously and "speaks great words" against God (Dan. 7; 8; 11). He interferes with the Temple-cult (chs. 7; 8; 9; 11), and persecutes the chosen people (chs. 7; 8; 9; 11). He will be supernaturally destroyed (chs. 2; 7; 8; 9; 11). This event will mark the end-time and the resurrection of the dead (12:2). (See chs. 8; 9; 11; 12.) Thereupon the Kingdom will appear. Hartman is right to point out that:

> . . . it would be most unnatural if these pericopes, which from the beginning were so closely associated with each other, were not readily kept together in the exposition.[17]

He refers to this manner of uniting the texts in a composite picture as the basic rule of rabbinic exposition, both halakic and haggadic.[18]

From Daniel it would be well known by Jesus and his contemporaries that from a fourth empire (Dan. 2) a warlike ruler would appear, attack Palestine, persecute the faithful and seduce God's people into a terrible apostasy and, as the Abomination of Desolation, desecrate the temple. Exactly the same themes, elaborated with further detail, appear in Mark 13.

[16]*Ibid*., 146.
[17]*Ibid*., 146.
[18]*Ibid*., 146, fn. 10.

Mark 13:7 speaks of wars and rumors of wars. The link with Daniel is clear. The whole of Daniel 11 speaks of war between the King of the North and the South. In Daniel 11:21 a final king of the North, "a contemptible person," exercises dominion and from verse 25 struggles with his opponent, the King of the South. In addition, Daniel 9:26 announces that "to the end there will be war"—the end in this case being the end of 70 heptads, or "weeks" of years allotted for the completion of desolations and the final restoration of the sanctuary. There are further echoes of Daniel in Mark 13:7—"these things must take place." This is the language of predetermination in the divine plan which we find also in Daniel 8:19: "I shall make known to you what shall be," and in Daniel 2:28: "what will take place."

The Markan phrase "but the end is not yet" is reminiscent of Daniel 11:27, where it is said that "the end is yet to be at the appointed time." "The words '*oupo to telos*' in Mark 13:7 must be said to be very closely related to this sentence."[19] The dependence of the remainder of the Markan apocalypse on Old Testament material may be demonstrated by listing its more obvious connections with Daniel and other Old Testament passages.

Mark		Based on
13:5	"Be not led astray; Many will say, 'I am [he].' "	The blasphemy of Babylon in Isa. 14:13; 47:8; cp. Dan. 7; 8; 11; 8:10ff., 25; 11:36
13:7	"Wars and rumors of wars"	The blasphemy and war sequence in Dan. 7:20ff; Dan. 7:21; 9:26; 8:23ff; 11:25
13:7	Nation against nation	Isa. 19:2 in connection with Egypt; cp. King of the South, Dan. 11
13:12	Delivering up to authorities	Dan. 7:25 "given into his hand"
13:13	He who endures to the end	Dan. 11:32, 35, endurance to the end
13:14	"Abomination of Desolation"	Dan. 9:27; 11:31; 12:11, Abomination of Desolation in the Temple for 1290 days
13:19	Great Tribulation	Dan. 12:1, unprecedented trouble followed by resurrection, v. 2
13:24	Darkening of the Sun	The Day of Yahweh, Joel 2:10; Isa. 34:4
13:26	Son of Man appears	Dan. 7:13, 14; cp. Mark 14:62
13:27	Angels gather elect	Zech. 2:10

[19]*Ibid*., 149.

III. The Fall of the Temple and the End of the Age

Our survey does not exhaust the links between Mark 13 and the Old Testament, but it is sufficient to show the dependence of Jesus' final discourse on well-established apocalyptic themes. There is no reason to doubt that the New Testament writers shared with their contemporaries the conviction that the end had been foreseen by Daniel, together with a coherent picture of the events leading up to the consummation. The paraenetic element in Mark 13 is, as Hartman has shown, also not unconnected with Daniel. The warning not to be led astray (Mark 13:5) arises naturally from Daniel 8:25 where the evil tyrant "corrupts many while they are at ease." The hiphil of *shachat* may mean "destroy in a moral or religious sense." Furthermore it is his cunning which deceives the unwary and, as Hartman points out,[20] the Hebrew *mirmah* (cunning) is rendered by the LXX as *planei* (Prov. 14:8).

If it be granted with many commentators that the basic perspective of Mark 13 is drawn from Daniel and that his view of the future climax in history is built upon a collation of apocalyptic material from the O.T., it is fair to ask how the discourse is to be understood as a forecast of the future. At this point we must remember the fundamental objection of the critics that Jesus saw the end as a single complex of events involving the destruction of Jerusalem. Since it is impossible to introduce a long time-lag between the description of Jerusalem's fall and the arrival of the Son of Man, how is the problem of nonfulfillment to be resolved? We note that attempts to divide the Jerusalem crisis from the end of the age cannot succeed. In Mark 13 some have selected verse 24 as the point of division, but it is obviously tied to the previous verse by the clear chronological connection "in those days, after that tribulation." Others attempt to separate verse 20 from verse 19, but they are clearly joined by the reference to "those days." Likewise the "then" of verse 21 cannot but refer to the verses which precede.

The severity of the problem is shown by Feuillet's exegetical wrestling:

> Alors en effet on se trouve réduit à cette alternative. Ou bien il faut soutenir que Jésus s'est trompé en faisant coincider dans sa réponse les deux évènements . . . ou bien il faut chercher dans le présent discours certains traits qui permettent de distinguer les deux évènements et de montrer que le Christ ne les a pas confondus. Mais cette entreprise des commentateurs

[20]*Ibid*., 161.

> paraît une véritable gageure. . . . Les documents qui nous rapporte son discours ne permettent de faire aucune discrimination nette entre les deux évènements.[21] [So then we are faced with two alternatives. Either we must maintain that Jesus was wrong in his reply when he stated that the two events would coincide; or else we must look for certain features in the discourse which will permit us to distinguish the two events, and show that Christ did not confuse them. But this undertaking by commentators appears to run into insuperable difficulty. The documents which relate Jesus' discourse will not allow any clear distinction between the two events.]

Feuillet's "désespoir de cause" is the result of two presuppositions, the second of which must be challenged in the light of the antecedent material in Daniel. 1. Jesus and the disciples who questioned Him associate the fall of Jerusalem with the *parousia*. 2. The fall of Jerusalem to which Jesus referred was the event of AD 70. The conclusion based on these premises must be that Jesus was mistaken about his return. It was the apparent logic of this position that forced Henry Sedgwick to become an agnostic. Christ had foretold things which did not happen.[22] The problem is only compounded by Jesus' assertion that "all these things" would take place within "this generation" (Mark 13:30).

Since it cannot be argued that Mark makes room for any dissociation of the two crises (1, above) and since a mistaken judgment about the time of the Second Coming would render Jesus a false prophet, Desmond Ford[23] maintains that the prediction of Mark 13 was contingent upon certain events, just as Jonah's announcement of the fall of Nineveh depended on the continuing sin of the city (Jonah 3:4, 10). This solution is original but hardly plausible. There is no hint in Mark 13 or in its source in Daniel that the events may not happen, given certain circumstances. The prophecy reads as a straightforward account of what must surely come to pass in the divine plan.

There is another, simple solution to our dilemma. Jesus and the disciples did indeed expect the *parousia* to occur *immediately* after the desolation of Jerusalem,[24] but the time of distress for Jerusalem in question was *not that of AD 70, but one lying yet in the future just before*

[21]"Le discours de Jésus sur la ruine du temple d'après Marc 13 et Luc 21, 5-36," *RB* (1948), 486-489.

[22]*Jesus and the Future*, ix.

[23]*The Abomination of Desolation in Biblical Eschatology*, 75.

[24]Cp. Matthew's clear chronological transition in Matthew 24:29: "immediately after the tribulation of those days. . . ."

the parousia. Not only does our Markan apocalypse describe distress in Jerusalem *just before* the Messiah comes, but this is exactly what we find also in Daniel (11:21ff; 12). The same fact is reflected by the disciples' original question. They expected a desolation of the Temple in Jerusalem in connection with the end (Mark 13:4; Matt. 24:3).

The basis for the single crisis involving Jerusalem and the *parousia* is derived from many O.T. passages as well as from other Jewish apocalypses. Moreover Daniel 11, from which, as we have seen, Mark 13 draws much of its information, specifically limits the time-span from the appearance of the final Abomination (Dan. 11:31) until the end to a period just over 3 1/2 years. The point is stated twice in the epilogue of the vision of chapter 11 given in Daniel 12:7, 11. The latter text reads: "And from the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished and the abomination of desolation is set up there will be 1290 days." Similarly in verse 7, the end-time apocalyptic drama will be completed after "a time, times, and half a time."[25]

Daniel 11:31 had foreseen the appearance of the Abomination of Desolation in the Temple as a result of the activity of the wicked king of the North. Mark's significant grammatical anomaly—a masculine participle, *esteikota* (13:14), modifying a neuter abomination—shows that he thought of the latter as a human person rather than an inanimate idol. This, of course, brings his material into harmony with the Pauline description of antichrist in the Temple (2 Thes. 2:1-12) and with the later elaborate description of a final tyrant in Revelation (chs. 13 and 17). The source of all these New Testament presentations is the Book of Daniel in addition to material from Isaiah.

IV. "This Generation"

If Jesus, following the well-established scheme laid out by Daniel, expected the *parousia* to follow a desolation of Jerusalem, what of the problematic "generation" in which "all these things" are to be completed? Since Jesus goes on to say that not even the Son of Man knows the time of the end (Mark 13:32), it would be most odd for him to have fixed the time of the end so specifically within the life-time of his audience. It is much more probable that the term *genea* should not be read as a period

[25]A "time" appears to be the equivalent of a year in Daniel 4:25, 32. (Cp. Rev. 11:2, 3; 12:6, 14; 13:5.)

of forty or seventy years but as the equivalent of "age," inclusive of unregenerate society in its present form in opposition to God—what Paul calls "the present evil age" *(aion)* which will last until the *parousia*.[26] Such a meaning for *genea* can be traced to the LXX where it regularly translates the Hebrew *dor* (age). Jesus elsewhere contrasted the present "generation" (*genea*) with the era to be initiated by his return (Mark 8:38). The remarks of C.E.B. Cranfield are helpful:

> In Mark 8:38 "genea" is probably best taken in the sense "age," "period of time," which is the primary meaning of the Hebrew "dor," the word it most often represents in the LXX and a possible meaning of "genea." The whole phrase "this generation" is contrasted with "when the Son of Man comes in the glory of His Father" and so is roughly equivalent to "in this time" (10:30) which is contrasted with "in the coming age." The time meant is the time before the *parousia*.[27]

This probable meaning of *genea* is confirmed by the *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*:[28]

> That "genea" (rendered "generation") does express "the current age of the world period" is obvious in the gospels: Luke 16:8, "the sons of this age are more shrewd in relation to their own kind ('genea') than the 'sons of light.' " Matt. 24:34: "This generation will not pass until all these things have happened" and less clearly Matt. 23:36, "all these things shall come upon this generation"; also the *people* of that age (Matt. 12:39; 16:4; Mark 8:12; Luke 11:29).

The wicked "generation" guilty of murdering the prophets extended beyond the limits of Jesus' contemporaries (Matt. 23:35, 36). Peter calls on Christians to save themselves from more than just the contemporary generation (Acts 2:40); and Christians are to shine amidst a crooked "generation," or evil society (Phil. 2:15).[29]

It may be asked why it is that Jesus responded to a question about an existing temple (Mark 13:2) by giving a description of the fall of Jerusalem beyond that of AD 70. The answer may be found in the peculiarly Hebrew way of incorporating the idea of two or more temples on the same site as one temple. Thus in Haggai 2:3, "*this temple* in its

[26]Gal. 1:4.

[27]*Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary on Mark*, Cambridge: University Press, 1972, 284.

[28]Vol. I, 639, 640, art. "genea."

[29]See also Ludwig Albrecht's *Neue Testament* , Brunnen-Verlag, 1957, with commentary on Matt. 24:34, where he renders *genea* as *Weltzeit*.

former glory" is not the existing building and "*this house*" which will be "filled with glory" (v. 7) will be a new building altogether. The latter glory of "this house" (v. 9) involves a brand new edifice, for the house standing at the time has long since been destroyed. By seeing a near and a distant destruction as a single event we may recognize the destruction of AD 70 as precursive of the final eschatological calamities foreseen by Daniel. It may also be that Jesus did not know whether the temple existing in this day would be the one whose destruction would signal the end of the age. What he did know, based on Daniel, was that a temple would be the center of a terrible apostasy just prior to his return in glory. He was thus not mistaken in his prediction, which has not yet been fulfilled.

This appears to be a satisfactory way of resolving the otherwise impossible difficulty presented by Jesus' prophecy which encompasses in a single disaster the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and the *parousia*. The chronological connecting adverbs of the Markan discourse (and the parallels in Matthew, particularly 24:29, "immediately") simply do not allow for a chasm of time to be inserted between the placing of the Abomination in the temple, the unparalleled tribulation, and the return of Christ. Nor does the source material in Daniel envisage such a thing. The events of Daniel 11:31ff., cited by Mark in 13:14, are to reach their completion within a span of 1290 days (Dan. 12:7, 11), a period of time ending with the resurrection of the dead (Dan. 12:2).

V. Conclusion

It appears to this writer that A. M. Hunter's designation of Mark 13 as "the biggest problem in the Gospel"[30] is unwarranted. Holscher may reflect the opinion of many when he says that Mark 13 "lacks any specifically Christian element."[31] But he has not grasped the enormous significance of apocalyptic for the entire Christian message. He adds that "the whole of Mark 13 derives from Daniel," but does not realize that it is no less at the heart of the New Testament Christianity because of its origins in Daniel.

The "problem" is not the apocalypse. It is the "received" idea of what Jesus ought or ought not to say. The New Testament, and Jesus whom it

[30]*The Gospel According to St. Mark*, Torch Bible Commentaries, London: SCM Press, 1948, 122.

[31]*Der Ursprung der Apokalypse Mark 13*, Th. B. I, XII, 193-202, cited by Desmond Ford in *Abomination*, 9.

portrays, is indeed inescapably and unashamedly apocalyptic in its basic concepts.[32] Apocalyptic eschatology is no mere appendix to the New Testament. It is "the very fibre of the living strand."[33] The hesitancy of modern commentators to react in sympathy with Mark 13 reflects not the difficulty of the material but the nonsense we have made of the Jewish Jesus by trying to domesticate Him in our western culture which is so heavily influenced by Greek, unbiblical ways of thinking. "Can we really believe that Jesus thought in this bizarre, fantastic way about the future?" asks C.F.D. Moule. "Did He really expect signs and portents in the sky and the sudden winding-up of history by some single, instantaneous supernatural event?"[34]

The answer is: Why not? And why in view of the wickedness of man and his potential to destroy himself and the earth should we not expect just such a judgment followed by the promised Kingdom on earth described by all the prophets and Jesus himself?

According to so many commentators who appear to resist the New Testament's expectation of a future catastrophe in history, we may save Jesus from the mistakes of his followers by maintaining that an original, "purely spiritual" concept of the Kingdom has been

> deformed and altered owing to the incomprehension of people who were imbued with the apocalyptic messianism. . . . Beneath the apocalyptic messianism and the traditional eschatology the living experience remained the capital thing. . . . The Jewish colours have faded out; but the Kingdom of God remains as a reality of today, tomorrow and the eternal future, as a state of the soul. . . . We no longer feel the need of casting this Kingdom in precise material and temporal forms. It suffices for us to conceive it on the prolonged lines of an experience that has already been lived.[35]

Insofar as this sort of view has prevailed, the historical Jesus has been suppressed and the wisdom of man has been substituted for the wisdom of the Master. The process by which the apocalyptic framework of the New Testament was lost is not difficult to trace. Under the influence of Hellenism:

[32]Desmond Ford, *Abomination*, 308.

[33]H. R. Mackintosh, source not given, cited by Desmond Ford in *Abomination*, 308.

[34]*Gospel According to St. Mark*, Cambridge: University Press, 1965, 101, 102.

[35]George Berguer, *Some Aspects of the Life of Jesus from the Psychological and Psychoanalytical Point of View*, London: Williams and Norgate, 1923, 197, 199.

> The corporate element in the Christian Hope, which is central in the New Testament, soon suffered eclipse, although it was still retained as part of the Christian creed. . . . Interest was transferred to the fate of the individual after death, and the vision of a transfigured universe which would be the scene of a fellowship reflecting the eternal purpose of God was sadly obscured. . . . Preoccupation with the moment of death as it affected the future of the individual induced a blindness to the activity of God in history, and to the cosmic as well as the social aspects of the redemption. Eschatology was thus concerned not with the restitution of all things but with an individualistic concern about death, judgment, heaven and hell. . . ."[36]

The outline of events foreseen in Mark 13 follows the pattern of predictions given earlier to Daniel. Neither Daniel nor Jesus envisaged the crisis in Jerusalem as separated by millennia from the *parousia*. When we limit the invasion of Jerusalem by hostile forces to an event in AD 70, we create a problem of nonfulfillment, since Jesus clearly expected his arrival in power and glory to occur in close connection with the appearance of the Abomination of Desolation. However, if we follow the chronological data of Daniel 11:31ff., we shall expect a final interference with the Temple in Jerusalem followed by the arrival of the Son of Man. Attempts to fit the Markan discourse into already fulfilled events fail because the *parousia* did not follow immediately upon the attack on Jerusalem as Jesus and Daniel predicted. The fact remains that:

> It is exegetically certain that Jesus spoke of the destruction of Jerusalem as an event that was to take place immediately before His second coming . . . . The attempts to twist the word "immediately" [Matt. 24:29] from its proper meaning are inconsistent with the laws of purely objective exegesis.[37]

It must follow that a destruction of Jerusalem *not* followed immediately by the *parousia* does not match the outline of events given by Christ. We may expect, therefore, a final crisis in Israel just before the arrival of Jesus in glory.

Mark 13, read in the light of its background in Daniel, can help us to recover the vital faith of the New Testament from the devastating criticism of 19th-century rationalism which tried to eliminate the

[36]Harold Roberts, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, London: Epworth Press, 1954, 111.

[37]H.A.W. Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, New York: Funk and Wagnell, 1884, 430, 434.

apocalyptic from the teaching of Jesus. The Christianity of the New Testament can be understood only in its own setting: the existing order, however prolonged, is destined to crumble amid scenes of unprecedented calamities. With the dissolution of this system the Kingdom of God will be ushered in by the returning Son of Man. In view of the *telos* the believers must insist on ethical obedience, summed up by love inspired by the spirit.[38] Their hope is to enter the Kingdom expected by Mark 13. We dare not tear the teaching of Jesus from its apocalyptic framework. "Apart from that setting there is no story to tell. And it is the triumph of the eschatologists to have recovered that atmosphere."[39]

[38]Such an ethic certainly cannot allow them to kill each other. The failure of churches to transcend national interests points to the inability of mainstream demessianized Christianity to carry out the radical demands of the Kingdom.

[39]F. R. Barry, *The Relevance of Christianity*, Nisbet & Co., London, 1931, 98.