

THE THEOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF APOSTLE PAUL'S VIEW ON ESCHATOLOGY

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Abstract: It is in the mind of the author of this publication to let people understand that any analysis of Paul's eschatology must account for the hope of sharing in the parousia of Christ. The author also wants to express the idea of the hope of the resurrection and the expectation of being with Christ immediately upon death. Paul also explained that there is often claim that there is a shift in his theology and a progression from one expectation to another. The author also expresses this view about the concept of the last things.

Keywords: Parousia, Eschatology, apostle, depiction, resurrection interpretation, assumption, Transformation and comparison.

Introduction

Paul's notion of the parousia, or the coming of Christ, appear most clearly in I Thessalonians, commonly regarded as the earliest of the extant Pauline epistle. The entire letter breathes a lively expectation of this coming, when the faithful would gather around the Lord to be with him forever. It is evident that this expectation was transmitted in the apostle's message when he first came to Thessalonica, and it is a fair assumption that he held this hope ever since he had turned to Christ. His passing references here to this future climactic completion indicate that, for the Thessalonians faithful, the notion needed no introduction or explanation.

In fact, Paul gives thanks to God for what the Thessalonians already possess, their steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ' (1:3). In 1:10 he refers to the talk of the countryside about how they have turned to God to 'wait for his (God's) Son, Jesus,... who delivers us from the wrath to come.' As these texts indicate, this hope is part and parcel of an authentic Christian existence. The apostle's own hope for himself and for the community is also expressed in terms of the Lord's parousia. He states: 'For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before the Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? For you are our glory and joy' (2:19-20). In 4:18 and 5:11 he exhorts the faithful to comfort one another in this respect. He himself prays that the Lord may establish the community 'unblameable in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints' (3:14; cf. 5:23).

The most extensive and revealing section dealing with the parousia of Christ is 4:15-5:11. In the first part, 4:13-18, Paul affirms that the deceased faithful will share in the Lord's coming, while in the second part, 5:1-11, he takes up the question of the date of the day of the Lord. As the conclusions of these parts indicate, both are meant to encourage and comfort the faithful.

In 4:13, the apostle addresses a problem which had come up since his absence from Thessalonica. Some of the faithful there, who had shared this lively hope, have died, and this shattered the community's hope that they could still participate in the Lord's coming. The Thessalonians thought that death made this sharing impossible. In his response, Paul first reassures them that the promise of the Easter event holds for the dead in Christ (v. 14), then he depicts an apocalyptic scene to show how dead will be enabled to share with the living community in the Lord's coming (v. 16-17).

In 4:14, the apostle states: 'For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep united with him.'¹ The wording here shows several shifts, although the main thought is clear enough. It is isomorphic with other inferences from the Easter event.² Paul states that the sharing of the faithful in the Lord's coming is part of the purpose of the Easter event which they have come to know through faith. Death does not destroy the purpose of

God's raising his Son from the dead. The apostle resumes this reassurance in the more comprehensive affirmation of 5:9-11, involving the living and the dead. There he states: '*God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we wake or sleep we might live with him.*' Paul's argument in I Thessalonians 4:14 is a basic theological statement which occurs with variations elsewhere in his letters.

The argument is valid, within the framework of faith, of the particular understanding of the Christ event opened to the believer. The ultimate completion here is the entry into the presence of God through the coming of Christ in the end-time. It is God who will bring this about, just as it was God who raised Jesus from the dead. This act of God in the past includes the promise of this eschatological completion. The closest parallel to our text is 2 Corinthians 4:14, where the apostle states: '*We..... believe, and so we speak, knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence*'. It is surprising that scholars have not seen this parallel. The difference in respect to 1 Thessalonians 4:14 are due to Paul's particular concern here to show that his own dying will in no way put him at a disadvantage with respect to attaining the ultimate completion. God will raise him with Jesus and bring him, together with the Corinthians, into his presence. In 1 Thessalonians 4:14, however, the apostle does not mention the resurrection, but only that the deceased faithful will participate in the Lord's parousia. That, alone, was the issue. The God who had raised Jesus from the dead will bring them with Jesus into his presence. The deceased in question here are the *koimethentes dia tou*, those who have died united with Christ.³

In verses 16-18, Paul the unrolls an apocalyptic scenario, showing how the deceased faithful will participate in the Lord's coming. In verse 15 he anticipates this with the reassurance, given in his own words, but based on the word of the Lord, that '*we, who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord shall not precede those who have fallen asleep.*' The statement is made in the expectation that the Lord will come soon, and that the apostle and the community will live to see the coming. This is an evident implication of the words '*we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord*'.

The first part of verse 16 contains a depiction of the coming of the Lord large with implications. His descent from heaven occurs amid a tremendous symphony of voices, cries and sounds from heaven that herald the purpose of his coming. There is a command call, an archangel's cry and the sound of the trumpet of God. These motifs, as I had tried to show,⁴ bring out the power and the glory of the Lord's coming. *Keleusma*, in particular, corresponds to the Hebrew *ga ar*, usually translated by *epitiman*, and refers to the commanding power of the Lord himself.⁵

Yet the emphasis in this depiction is not on this arresting sight, but on the sequence of events that follow upon it... above all on what happens to the deceased faithful. For Paul is here answering the particular question of the Thessalonians. Two events occur: the resurrection of the deceased faithful, and the taking up of the faithful. The apostle insists that the taking up *follows* the resurrection of the faithful. *First* is the resurrection, then the taking up in the clouds. '*First, the dead in Christ will rise; then we, who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.*' The concluding statement '*and thus we shall always be with the Lord*'; indicates the object of hope, which is being with the Lord for ever. It implies an eternal life in paradise, hence a transformation in the mode of existence.

This sequence of events thus assures the presence of the deceased faithful at the taking up. The presentation has several unique features which call for an explanation. One is that, unlike in the synoptic depictions, the Lord does not come on the clouds; clouds are not mentioned here until the taking up. Another is that the dead are restored to this life. Still another is the taking up of all the faithful. In the past, scholars have not paid much attention to these peculiarities. They have usually interpreted the Lord's coming as the coming of the Son of Man on the clouds of heaven, depicted in Daniel 7 and in the synoptic gospel. The resurrection of the dead they interpreted as what was affirmed in I Cor. 15, and the taking up they explained as part of the pattern of imperial parousia upon which Paul modelled his presentation here. The faithful come out of their earthy city to meet the approaching Lord and then to conduct him joyfully into their city.⁶

However, J. Dupont⁷ has cast serious doubts on the latter interpretation and listed equal, if not better, parallels in the Bible for the imagery involved here. I myself have tried to show that the restoration to life and the taking up are related to the pattern common to the descriptions of assumptions in the Bible and in pagan antiquity. According to this presentation, chosen

individuals are spared death by being transported directly from this life to life in the beyond. Biblical instances of this are the assumption of Enoch and Elijah (and Moses, in a certain branch of tradition) into heaven. We find this structure also in Revelation 11:11-12. It is, as well, part of Luke's presentation of the Lord's ascension.

The essential feature – and here is the whole point of the Thessalonians' concern – is that one has to be *alive* to be taken up.⁸ If the apostle had talked earlier to the Thessalonians in these terms about their sharing in the Lord's coming, we can then understand their consternation when some of the faithful have died – for death, according to this presentation, made the participation of the deceased in the taking up impossible. The dead are not taken up! This also explains why Paul here talks of the return to this life, for this is enough: it qualifies the risen faithful for the taking. They are made equal, in this respect, with living faithful. After this, the apostle only insists that all of them- the ones who were brought back to life and those still alive – will be taken up together. He thus shows that, at the parousia, the living will have no advantage over the dead.

The presentation of the parousia here corresponds to the earliest expectation that everybody will live to see the Lord's coming. The completion of salvation focused on the sharing in the Lord's parousia. In his response Paul does not change the scenic imagery, but merely points out this will still be made possible, even though some of the faithful have died. God will raise the dead to life again. To the Almighty, death is no obstacle. The promise of God in the Easter event still holds.

Times and Seasons

I Thessalonians 5:1-11 was supposed to answer the question: When will the Lord come? It was natural enough to ask this out of curiosity, but, for Paul, this particular desire to know does not arise of insufficient information on the faith. His first reaction was to warn against the dangers of succumbing to a false security. He tells Thessalonians that, on this point, they had already received all the information they needed. No written instructions were necessary, for they know perfectly well that *'the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. When people say, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as travail comes to a woman with child, and there will be no escape'* (vv. 2-3).

The apostle's statement here is startling and disconcerting, coming as it does close on the heels of the encouragement in 4:13-18. Abruptly, the parousia of the Lord, referred to here as the day of the Lord, is presented as a sudden and unforeseen disaster from which there is no escape.

In view of this, G. Friedrich has suggested that the passage is a later interpolation. In support of this, he states that the language here is non-Pauline.⁹ However, the language here is non-Pauline only in sections where it draws on a tradition, or contains traditional motifs, as in verse 2-3. But why should this make 5:1-11 an interpolation, while 4:13-18, containing at least as many non-Pauline expressions, is accepted as genuine?¹⁰

Moreover, an interpolator would scarcely have first threatened and then, in the remainder of the section, tried to undo the damage created by the insertion. All the tensions here are best ascribed to Paul himself who, after his statement was written down, suddenly realized that the community might take this as a reproach and a threat- the community toward which Paul's heart went out. The threat of disaster, he now explain, holds only for those who do not belongs to the light and to the day – to those who live recklessly, wantonly, irresponsibly. To such, indeed, the day will come like a thief in the night, like a sudden disaster.

The apostle then makes it clear that this is not what community is like. The faithful belong to the light and to the day (vv. 4-5). They have been given God's irrevocable promise in Jesus Christ (vv. 9-11). Still, they must shape their Christian existence in agreement with faith, love and hope which constitute vigilance and preparedness for the Lord's coming. Those who so live have a well-founded hope of attaining completion.

In this course of his argument Paul gives six reassurances:

But you are in darkness, brethren, for that day to surprise you like a thief (v. 4)

You are all sons of light and sons of the day (v 5a);

We are not of the night or darkness (v 5b);

But since we belong to the day (v 8a);
For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we wake or sleep we might live with (vv. 9-10);
Encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing (v. 11)

The phrases '*sons of light*' and '*sons of the day*' in (2) are Semitic expressions which are rephrased in Greek idiom in (3) and (4) – first in a negative form as '*we are not of the night or of the darkness*', then in a positive form as '*since we belong to the day*'. There is sustained play on the word '*night*' referred to the mode of the *thief's* coming, to the coming under the cover of darkness provided by the night. The apostle now makes the word refer to the *victim's* life in darkness, which then become a metaphor for a sinful life. In this meaning, the end-time disaster comes to those who lead a sinful life. At this point, Paul reassures the Thessalonians, says: '*You are not in darkness*', '*we are not of the night or of darkness*,' '*you are all sons of the night and sons of the day*' and '*we belong to the day*.'¹¹ The change from '*you*' to '*we*' indicates that he associates himself with their existence and hope. There is also a play on the words '*light*' and '*day*'. These words are now used metaphorically for a life opposed to the life in darkness. The word '*day*' may also allude to the day of the Lord, since that expression has been mentioned in verse 2 above.

Yet, while Paul thus assures the Thessalonians that they are on the road to salvation, he still urges them to live a life of faith, love and hope. These are their necessary and sufficient preparation for salvation. But God has already assured them of his love and faithfulness to the end. '*God has not destined them for wrath, but to obtain salvation through Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we wake or sleep we might live with him*' (vv. 9-10).

The Parousia and the Resurrection

In 1 Thessalonians the focus has been on the Lord's coming, with the resurrection being, in that context, a return to this life as a means of participating in the parousia. In 1 Corinthians 15 however, the focus is on the resurrection itself, which is understood as a transformation and a salvific event in the end-time. The parousia is here the event which resurrection will take place. Thus in verse 23, Paul states that first Christ is raised from dead, then, '*at his coming*' (*en te parousia autou*), '*those who belong to Christ will be raised*.'¹² In verse 52 he asserts the reality of the parousia, saying: '*For the trumpet will sound*'. In both cases, the resurrection is linked to the parousia of Christ.

The Lord's coming, with which the resurrection coincides, serves to bring out the future of the resurrection. However, the resurrection here is not a return to this life – as it was in 1 Thessalonians 4:16 – but salvific event in its own right. It involves endowment with the glory proper to the risen life, the bearing of '*the image of the heavenly man*', immortality and incorruptibility constitutive of a corporeal existence (vv. 35-55). It is the attire proper for entering the kingdom of God (v. 50).

Having affirmed the resurrection of Christ in verses 3-11, and linked it with the resurrection in the end-time (vv. 12-19), the apostle discloses the full magnitude and efficacy of Christ's resurrection (vv. 20-23). Christ was raised for all, so that all can be raised – at least all who belong to Christ. However there is the resurrection of Christ in the past, and there is the resurrection of the faithful in the future. The latter coincides with the *coming* of Christ: '*Then at his coming, those who belong to Christ {will be raised}*.'

Verses 24-28 are a parenthesis on the completion – on what is needed in order that the kingdom of God be fully established. According to Paul, several things have to be done first.

Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom of God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For God has put all things under his feet.... Then the Son himself will be subjected to him, who has put all things under him, that God may be everything to everyone.

The reign or the kingdom of Christ is thus a limited period which began at Easter (cf. Phil. 2:9-11; Rom. 1:4). Its end or completion is when the Son hands over the kingdom, which he had received, to the Father. The commission given to the Son is to subjugate all powers, including the power of death. Then the cosmos will again be peaceful and attuned to God.

The destruction of death is here seen as part of the risen Christ's lordship. It belongs to his mandate and his authority and power which God – the Father – has bestowed on him. *'He must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet'* – an allusion to Psalm 110:1. This is then explained in verse 27 with the quotation of Psalm 8:6: *'for God has put all things in subjection under his feet.'*¹³

Christ's rule is presents here in antagonistic terms as a conquest – above all as the conquest of death.¹⁴ This statement adds to that in verse 22 a note of combat. Total annihilation of death forever implies that risen life will not be subject to death. As verses 53-54 indicate, it is a transformed life, in which corruptibility and mortality no longer play a role. Here, again, the apostle talks of the victory over death. Quoting Isaiah 25:8 and Hosea 13:14, he exclaims: *'Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy victory? O death where is thy sting?'* (vv. 54-55).

If any proof is still needed, this text provides it – that the annihilation of death concerns the resurrection/transformation. The quotation speaks of the events as a victory over death. In agreement with the language in verses 24-27.¹⁵ Paul sees in it the completion and the culmination of Christ's royal rule.¹⁶

The Prussia and the Transformation in 1 Corinthians 15

Whereas I Corinthians 15:24-28 makes the point that the completion will not take place until the annihilation of death, verses 50-56 spell out how the victory over death will be achieved. Immediately after the assurances in verse 35-49 that the future, heavenly body will be different from the present one; that it will be imperishable (v. 42), glorious (v. 43), endowed with power (v. 43) and spiritual (v.44),¹⁷ the apostle, in verses 48-49, twice asserts our sharing in the earthly person's nature as well as in the heavenly person's nature. In the assurance in verse 49, in connection with the bearing of the image of the Second Adam, he shifts to the future tense as he states: *'Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, so we shall bear the image of the man of heaven.'* The resurrection, involving as it does a bodily existence that is glorious, immortal and spiritual, means above all a sharing in the identity of the Second Adam, bearing his image. In a solemn tone Paul states in verse 50: *'I tell you this, brethren: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.'* Accordingly, the present human condition is incompatible with the requirements for entry into the kingdom of God.¹⁸ It gives reason for the shift to the future tense in verse 59, and it associates the fulfilment, the bearing of the image of the man of heaven, with entry into the kingdom of God.

In verses 51-56 the apostle again takes up the subject of the resurrection, this time in the light of verse 50, He reveals a mystery that, at the last trumpet, there will be a change for all, the dead and the living. He states: *'The dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall all be changed'* (verse 52). This is the eschatological change that will make possible entry into the kingdom of God and the bearing of the image of the last Adam. In verses 53-55, Paul then identifies this change with victory over death. Full conformity with the heavenly man takes place only when corruptibility and mortality give way to incorruptibility and immortality. In the present, however, human beings bear the image of the man of dust, be it in life or death. This, however, is not the kingdom of God, the ultimate reality.

In verse 51-57, the apostle affirms the mystery of transformation in the end-time and associates it with the resurrection and the establishment of the kingdom of God, announced by the last trumpet. The wonder, the mystery and the finality of this event are brought out by the threefold statement: *'In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet'* (v. 52). At the blessed moment of God's promise, *'the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.'* This statement apparently still presupposes that, at the last trumpet, counts on being alive then.¹⁹

In verse 53 we find another 'must' (*dei gar*), as in verse 25. This necessity is grounded in the divine plan for the kingdom of God in which there is no room for death. For this reason: *'This perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and this*

mortal nature must put on immortality' (v. 53). This, as verses 54-57 indicate. Is God's victory over death in Jesus Christ. As verses 24-28 indicate, Jesus himself will change our present existence.

An affirmation of the end-time bodily existence in a transformed condition also occurs in 2 Corinthians 5:1-10. Here the apostle expresses his confidence that, if this body is destroyed, there is another habitation prepared for us in heaven, '*a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*' (2 Cor. 5:1). These images assert the transcendent, heavenly reality of life in the beyond, made possible by the hands of God. That the apostle here is still thinking of the resurrection is clear from 2 Corinthians 4:14, a text which provides the near context for our text²⁰ Here, as well, the apostle expects the change to take place at the resurrection in the end-time. His deepest desire is to put on the '*heavenly dwelling*' (2 Cor. 5:2) in order to be at home with the Lord. He cannot be happy apart from the Lord.

Being with Christ Immediately upon Death

While in all these texts Paul talked about the end-time events, in Philippians 1:12-24 he affirms togetherness with Christ immediately upon the death. He states there: '*To me to live is Christ and to die is gain. If it is to be life in the flesh, that means fruitful labour for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart be with Christ, for this is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account.*'

The apostle, writing from prison, expresses his 'eager hope' that he will not be put to shame – shame would be his failure to glorify Christ – but that Christ will be honoured in him 'whether by life or death' (v. 20). As he takes up the two possibilities, he voices his preference to depart, stating that, for him, '*to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*' These two seemingly antithetical sentences state that Christ is the whole meaning of his life, both here and in the beyond. Paul's preference is to be with the Lord. Death to him is not so much the end of something good as the beginning of something far better, closeness with the Lord for whom he lives and labours. Yet present existence is not disparaged by the apostle, but is, in fact, given a positive value as an opportunity to glorify Christ through missionary labours.

Scholars almost universally see in this passage a shift in Paul's eschatology. Whereas in the texts examined earlier the focus was on the parousia and the resurrection in the end time, here it is on personal union with Christ immediately upon death.

However, this need not mean that, in this letter, the apostle has abandoned expectation of the resurrection and the parousia. Philippians 3:20-21 should still all doubts about this. Nor does it mean that he began to think that the Lord's coming would be postponed indefinitely, for in 4:4 he states that the Lord is near. But the possibility of his own death before the parousia has been raised to a new level of awareness in the threat to his life in prison.

A Comparison of Pauline Statement

P.Hoffman has observed²¹ that, common to all Pauline statements in these texts, there is an underlying dualism between the present and the coming age,²² and the conviction that, with the Easter event, the coming age in which sin and death have lost their hold is already fully present in Christ (1 Cor. 15:20, 23; Rom. 6:9-10) and at work in believers. The faithful are, in their inner selves, being 'renewed every day' (2 Cor. 4:7, 16; Rom. 5:1-21; 6:12-14; 8:9-17), sharing in the death of Christ (Rom. 6:1-11; Phil. 3:10-11, 17) and belonging to the dominion of Christ (1 Cor. 15:24-27; Rom. 6:15-23; 7:4-6; 14:17-9).

The texts examined above, even Philippians 1:21-26, presuppose that the whole person is involved. Salvation is not restricted to the spirit. What is done 'in the body' is very much a matter for the final judgment (1 Thess. 5:6-8; 1 Cor. 3:12-17; 4:1-7; 2 Cor. 5:9-10; Rom. 2:3-11; 16; 14:10-12; Phil. 3:17-19), a matter of salvation or condemnation. Moreover, the eschatological existence involves the resurrected body, as 1 Cor. 15:19, 35-34 indicates. This expectation is not based on anthropology so much as on theology on the gift of God, on God's affirmation and transformation of his creation. For Paul, an eschatological existence apart from the body is nakedness (2 Cor. 5:3). *Athanasia* and *aphtharsia* are affirmed of the transformed body, not of the human spirit. They are not inherent qualities of a spirit, but an eschatological gift of God constitutive of a fully human existence in solidarity with creation, in imitation of the risen Christ and acceptable for the kingdom of God.

The expectation is that the entry into the ultimate reality takes place at the coming of Christ, although Philippians 1:21 places it at one's death. This is the only clear statement containing the hope of union with Christ immediately upon death.

This raises the question of the relationship between the hope of being with Christ after death and the hope of sharing in Christ's parousia and resurrection in the end-time. Does this constitute a shift and development in the apostle's eschatology? Against this speaks the evidence that, throughout his writings, Paul not only maintained an expectation of the end-time parousia and resurrection, but also of the closeness of the day of the Lord.²³ According to Hoffmann, the awaiting of the near parousia became, if anything, more acute in the later epistles.²⁴ In Romans 13:11-12 the apostle states that more time has now passed and we are therefore closer to the day of the Lord.²⁵ The delay of the parousia does not seem to be an issue in his epistles.

Neither, is the interim existence of those who have died before the resurrection an issue for Paul. It just barely possible that he presumed such an existence.²⁶ It is, however, never the explicit focus of a Pauline statement.

What did change by the time he wrote 2 Corinthians and Philippians is Paul's expectation of his own death before the parousia of the Lord. Thus in 2 Corinthians 4:14, coming on the heels of his admission that death is at work in him (4:12), the apostle asserts that, after all, he will be raised from the dead. In Philippians 1:20 he expresses his desire to die and be with Lord.

In connection with this, many scholars have pointed to the event mentioned in 2 Corinthians 1:8 to Paul's having faced death in Asia – as the turning point. According to them, from that point on, the apostle expected to die before the Lord's coming and began to think of immediate union with Christ upon death.

However, there are serious reservations regarding this opinion. For one thing, Paul had faced death on several occasions earlier. The most telling evidence of this is the listing in 2 Corinthians 11:13-33 of the dangers of death he had encountered during his missionary travels.²⁷ Besides, he was aware that, in the meantime, some Christians had died. And, for another, 2 Cor. 1:9-10 indicates that, at the time of writing the letter, the apostle had recovered his hope that he would remain alive. The God who had rescued him from such a danger would deliver him again. He states: '*On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again.*' In fact, even in Philippians 1:25 he is convinced that he will remain alive. Thus, while his own death became a possibility, he did not think it was imminent.

In Philippians 1:21-25 we have the first documented statement of the hope of being with Christ upon death; but this need not be the rise of this idea.²⁸ In Philippians 1:20-21 Paul speaks about this as something known.²⁹ Nor does the presence of this notion mean that, in the face of danger of death, the apostle gave up hope of the resurrection. As 2 Corinthians 4:14, 16-18; Philippians 3:10-11, 20-21; Romans 8:17-18 indicate, the resurrection remains his hope to the end.

Thus a gradual development in Paul's thinking in this regard cannot be established with any degree of certainty. It is possible, as Hoffman surmises that the two notions had existed side for some time, and that both are drawn from the apostle's Jewish background and transformed by his understanding of the Christ event.³⁰

There is no development in regard to the central place of Christ in this hope. The characteristic separates Pauline expectation from Jewish or Hellenistic ones. Whereas in Judaism, the eschatological union with the Messiah or with the fathers was only meant to express the attainment of salvation, for Paul, union with Christ is constitutive of salvation.³¹ For the apostle, to live is Christ. Christ is the whole meaning of his life, both in the present and in the beyond. Christ determines even the life of the deceased faithful. '*Christ died for us so that whether we wake or sleep, we might live him*' (1 Thess. 5:10). Only those who are in Christ now will be with him in the end-time.

What the apostle ultimately bases his hope on is the faithfulness, the power and the love of God, evident above all in the death of Christ for us and in God's raising up of Christ. This action of God embraces the whole of mankind (Rom. 3:21-26; 5:6-10; 8:31-32; 2 Cor. 5:14-15, 18-21; 1 Cor. 20-23, 57). Hence, in 1 Thess. 4:14 and 2 Cor. 4:14 Paul appeals to God's action in the Easter event as the guarantee of the granting of completion. Yet, without contradiction, he can also appeal to

Christ's love for us. He knows that nothing in creation can separate a believer from the love of Christ and from the love of God in his Son. And he knows that God has placed everything under the feet of Christ (1 Cor. 15:25, 27; Phil. 3:21) and that Christ will change our lowly body into the likeness of his own body. All this gives him the courage, confidence and hope necessary to carry on his work as an apostle. And all this he presents to the faithful as the basis of their hope.

References

1. The phrase *dai tou lesou* most likely refers to *koimethentas*, rather than to *axei*.
2. 2Cor. 4:14 is the closest parallel to this sentences(1974)
3. For a different view on this, see P.Hoffmann, *Die Toten in Christus. Eine regionsgeschichtliche und exegetische Untersuchung Zur paulinischen Eschatologie* (NA 2;Munster: Aschendorff,(1966) , pp. 213-215
4. 'The Parousia as 'The Parousia as Implication of Christ's Resurrection (An Exegesis of 1 Thess. 4:13-18)' in *word and Spirit. Essays in Honor of David Michael Stanley on his 60th Birthday* (ed. J.Plevnik; Toronto: regis College Press 1975), pp. 199-277
5. In 1Cor. 15:27 Paul states that 'God's has put all things in subjection under his (Christ's) feet'. According to Phil. 3:21, the Lord Jesus will come from heaven 'by the power which enables him to subject all things to himself,' the power to transform our lowly bodies into the likeness of his own body. In Mark 1 Jesus states that the Son of Man will be seen coming 'with great power and glory.' In Jewish apocalyptic, angelic accompaniment at theophany – the Lord coming with his heavenly army – means power and glory. In 1 Cor. 15:52 we find 'the last trumpet.' In Rev. 11:15 the seventh (the last) trumpet signals the assumption of power by Christ at his coming in the end time.(1990)
6. E. Peterson, 'Die Einholung des kyrios,' ZST 7 (1929/30), pp. 58₂-702; L. Cerfaux, *Christ in the Theology of St. Paul* (New York: Herder & Herder, 19967), pp.32-49
7. *Syn Christo. L'Union avec le Christ suivant Saint Paul* (Louvain: Nauwelaets; Paris: Desclee de Brouwer, 1956), pp. 38-79
8. Also G. Lohfink, *Die Himmelfahrt Jesu: Untersuchungen zu den Himmelfahrts-und Erholungstexten bei Lukas* (SANT 26; Munich: Kosel, 1971), pp. 32-78.
9. 'Der erste Brief and die Thessalonicher,' *Die Briefe an die Galater, Epheser, Philipper, Kolosser, Thessalonicher and Philemon* (ed. J. Becker, H. Conzelmann and G. Friedrich; NTD 8; Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976), pp. 203-51, esp. pp. 206-208.
10. J. Plevnik, '1 Thess. 5, 1-11: Its Authenticity, Intention and Message', *Bib* 60 (1978), pp. 71-90.
11. The language 'sons of light' and 'sons of darkness' reflects the language of the Qumran community. There, members of the community were called 'sons of light, while 'sons of darkness' were outsiders, those under influence of an evil spirit.1975
12. This statement scarcely implies that, after this parousia, Christ will reign and eventually annihilate death. See on this H.A. Wilckle, *Das problem eines messianischem Zwischenreiches bei paulus* (ATANT 51,Zurich: Zwingli, 1967); against U. Luz
13. Neither quotation corresponds fully to the text in the LXX
14. Peace, liberation and long (if not eternal) life are, in Enochic literature, the goods of the end-time(1970).
15. Paul talks in Rom. 5:14, 17, 21 about death's unchecked rule ever since Adam.
16. An explanation which regards the parousia at the beginning of Christ's rule would make the resurrection, the focus in 1 Cor. 15, anticlimactic.Evangelical report from Lusaka churches(1978)
17. Paul asserts in 1 Cor. 15:46 that the spiritual man did not exist before the physical man, thus affirming the order of creation as presented in the Bible: God create man from dust.EFAC Nigeria(2003).
18. Usually, the apostle asserts that a *sinful* existence excludes the person from inheriting the kingdom of God.From The Apostolic Faith Movement conference 1995.
19. That the apostle at this time thought of the closeness of the end is attested to in 1 Cor. 7:26, 29, 31, From Christian council of Nigeria annual retreat 2017.
20. See on this Hoffmann, *Toten*, pp. 253-85
21. *Ibid.*, p. 282.
22. Note Rom. 12:2, 1Cor. 1:20; 2:6, 8; 3:18; 2 Cor. 4:4; Gal. 1:4

23. References to the awaiting of the parousia occur in 1 Thess. 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13-15; 11; 5:23; 1 Cor. 1:8; 3:13; 4:3; 5:5; 15:23; 52; 2Cor. 1:14; 5:10; Gal. 5:21; 6:8-9; Rom. 2:5, 16; 8:36; 13:12; 14;10-12; Phil. 1:6; 10; 2:16; 3:20-21; 4:5. References to the resurrection are found in 1 Thess. 4:16; 2 Cor. 15; 2 Cor. 4:14; Rom. 6:5; 8; 8:11; 21-24; Phil. 3:21. The closeness of the parousia or of the day of the Lord is implied or asserted in 1 Thess.; 1 Cor. 7; 1 Cor. 15; Rom. 13:11 and Phil. 4:5.
24. Hoffmann, *Toten*, p. 328.
- A. Vogtle, 'Rom. 13, 11-14 und die "Nah" Erwartung', *Rechtfertigung. Festschrift für Ernst Kasemann zum 70. Geburtsag* (ed. J. Friedrich, W. Pohlmann and P. Stuhlmacher; Tübingen: Mohr; Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976), pp. 556-573.
25. Hoffmann suspects that the apostle presumed such an existence. According to him, existence in the sheol would seem to be implied in the phrase *ek nekron*, made in connection with the resurrection of the dead (*Toten*, p. 323).
26. See also 1Cor. 4:9-13; 15:30-32' 2Cor. 4:7-9; 6:4-10
27. Hoffmann, *Toten*, p. 327.
28. Ibid. p.329
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid., p. 318.