EARLY CHRISTIAN ESCHATOLOGY

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By

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EARLY CHRISTIAN ESCHATOLOGY

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1. Introduction

“We believe in one God the Father All-Sovereign...; And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God...[who] came down from the heavens,... became man, and was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried, and rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures, and ascended into the heavens, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father, and cometh again with glory to judge living and dead, of whose kingdom there shall have no end.”

Billions of Christians today profess adherence to the above Nicene Creed. It is part of the expression of their faith. It all began two thousand years ago when an itinerant preacher by the name of Paul of Tarsus started his world-changing ministry by going around the Mediterranean Sea preaching a message of a new faith. The central tenet of his religion consisted of a belief in Jesus of Nazareth who came down from heaven and was crucified to save mankind from his sins, died and was buried, but rose again from the dead and ascended into Heaven. He nevertheless will be coming back to judge all mankind, wherein the righteous will enjoy eternal life in Heaven and the wicked will suffer eternal damnation in Hell. Paul preached all of this, but with one very important exception: he never expected anyone of us to be alive today reading this thesis. He preached the Lord Jesus Christ will be coming back, soon:

For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will by no means precede those who have died. For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel’s call and with the sound of God’s trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds

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together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord for ever.\(^2\) (Emphasis is mine).

The second coming was going to usher in the end of the world, and the end of time, to be replaced by a completely new timeless kingdom of God, and, most importantly, it was going to occur within the lifetime of Paul and his followers.

The eschatological message of Paul, the man from Tarsus, was initially propagated with hardly a modification by subsequent writers; but over time the theme changed to a future, *but not imminent*, second coming of Jesus.\(^3\) The new message circulated among the early churches for more than two hundred years, until finally, in the year 325, the Roman Emperor Constantine called the first ecumenical council at Nicaea that codified the future undetermined *eschaton* (also called *parousia*) as orthodox belief in the above mentioned Creed.\(^4\) That official statement of a coming but date-uncertain second advent, so totally unlike Paul’s message, has stayed basically the same from then on amongst most mainline Christian churches.

There were, nevertheless, other groups during the first centuries of the Christian era who clung to the idea of an imminent end of the world, like the “Johannine”\(^5\) group

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\(^3\) Paul alleged that his eschatological beliefs were not his own, but came from Jesus. The same claim was made by the evangelists, as well as others, like the author of Revelation for example. Since Jesus’ message on the *eschaton* changed from author to author, as will be detailed in the subsequent chapters, it is important to qualify Jesus’ proclamations on the last days with the name of the author.


\(^5\) “The *Johannine community* originated as a group of Jews who came to believe that Jesus was the messiah and who nonetheless continued to maintain their Jewish identity and to worship in their Jewish *synagogue*,” (Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*, 5th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 192). Later on they were excluded from the synagogue: “It is impossible to say how long the Jews of this community remained in their synagogue without causing a major disturbance. What does become clear from several of the stories of the Fourth Gospel is that a significant disruption eventually took place in which the Jews who believed in Jesus were excluded from
for example, for whom the Revelation of John was written towards the end of the first century. The world was going to end shortly in unimaginable cataclysms, according to this author. Eschatological groups like John's have continued to appear all throughout the ages, the Council of Nicaea notwithstanding. A recent example is David Koresh and the Branch Davidian sect of Waco infamy, whose many members met fiery deaths in the storming of their compound. Factions like these are typically relegated to the status of doomsday cults.

This thesis is a study of Paul’s eschatological message, and how it changed over time, and, in addition, it will attempt to explain why the message changed. Early Christianity's view of the end of the world, as far as we can ascertain from the written records, started with Paul, the first Christian writer, and subsequently changed as time passed by and other authors wrote their pieces. The reasons for this change are varied. The church was getting to be more Gentile, and less Jewish. The ardent hope of the Israelites for a Redeemer had no place in the minds and hearts of the Greco-Roman inhabitants of the Empire. At the same time, Christianity was settling down to a more permanent stay here on earth. And the most important reason for the change was simply the fact that Jesus did not show up as promised.

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the synagogue.” (Ibid., 192) As more time passed by, “The synagogue ... became the enemy and took on a demonic hue in their eyes.... In the view of the Johannine Christians,... [the Jews] must have been ... alienated from the truth and could not understand it even if they heard it.... Jesus was from above, and those who recognized only the things of this earth could not perceive him.” (Ibid., 194). See also John Painter, “John and Johannine Literature,” in Early Christian Encyclopedia, eds. Everett Ferguson, Michael P. McHugh and Frederick W. Norris (New York: Taylor & Francis Group), 617, where reference is made of “Johannine Christians.” This community was the target audience of the Gospel of John, the Johannine epistles, (i.e., 1 John, 2 John and 3 John), and Revelation. For our purposes, we will not discuss 2 John and 3 John, as both did not touch on the eschaton.

My study is concerned with who said what on the topic of eschatology, and why they said it, and, within the first century, the reasons for the variation in the eschatological themes between Paul and the other evangelists. Somewhere around the end of the first century and the start of the second, the trend in eschatology was away from Paul’s original beliefs, and into a more general day of judgment coming at a who-knows-when date in the future. The discussion will then still be on who said what and why, but in addition, if the author still clung to the pristine message of Paul on the forthcoming last days, then my study will try to explain why the writer went against the flow.

Throughout all of this analysis, my observations and conclusions will be based principally on translations of primary sources written by Christians. Secondary sources will be brought in to support and buttress my statements, or to show the different sides of an issue whenever my statements are debatable, as well as to add depth and breadth to my study. In short, secondary sources will not be used as the basis for my deductions and inferences, except when primary materials prove unsuitable for the purpose, such as ascertaining the dates when the books were written, or the authorship of said books for example.

This thesis will examine all the literature touching on the end days from the beginning of the Christian era up to the First Council of Nicaea in 325, as listed in the Tables below:

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7 There are Jewish books, for example, that also touched on the eschaton. They are not included in this thesis, except for the Apocryphal book Ezra, which is discussed in Chapter 3, duly titled: “Hebraic response to the destruction of Jerusalem.”
8 1 John, for example, is included in the list, but not 2 John and 3 John, which did not reference the *parousia*. 
Table 1
Paul and the Gospels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>WRITTEN</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 THESALONIANS</td>
<td>50-51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 CORINTHIANS</td>
<td>53-54</td>
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<tr>
<td>PHILIPPIANS</td>
<td>55-56</td>
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<tr>
<td>ROMANS</td>
<td>58-59</td>
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<tr>
<td>MARK</td>
<td>70-75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MATTHEW</td>
<td>80-90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LUKE &amp; ACTS OF THE APOSTLES</td>
<td>90-110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOHN</td>
<td>95-120</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 2
New Testament and Apocrypha with no mention of an imminent end

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>WRITTEN</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 THESALONIANS</td>
<td>End of First Century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COLOSSIANS</td>
<td>85-95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JUDE</td>
<td>90-110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIDACHE</td>
<td>100-140</td>
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<tr>
<td>SHEPHERD OF HERMAS</td>
<td>100/110 – 140</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 PETER</td>
<td>120-130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PASTORAL EPistles:</td>
<td>120-130</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 TIMOTHY</td>
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<td>2 TIMOTHY</td>
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<td>TITUS</td>
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</table>

9 Other scholars may have dates different than what are posted here. The dates for each piece will be discussed more thoroughly as each comes up for analysis. It must be stressed, however, that what is more important for my study is the chronology, rather than the exact dates. For example, Mark was written after Paul, but before Matthew, which in turn was penned before Luke, and then John followed, etc.
11 See Ibid., 172.
12 See Ibid., 172.
13 See Ibid., 172.
14 See Ibid., 233.
15 See Ibid., 244.
16 See Ibid., 252.
17 See Ibid., 310.
19 See White, From Jesus to Christianity, 262.
20 See Ibid., 423.
21 See Ibid., 332.
22 See Ibid., 343.
23 See Ibid., 425.
24 See Ibid., 430.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ante-Nicene Fathers who did not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>believe in the imminent end</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>DATE</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>LIVED</strong></td>
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<td>JUSTIN MARTYR</td>
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<tr>
<td>IRENAEUS</td>
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<td>TERTULLIAN</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIPPOLYTUS</td>
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<td>ORIGEN</td>
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<td>LACTANTIUS</td>
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<tr>
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<td>COMMODIANUS</td>
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<td>VICTORINUS</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Testament and Apocrypha containing an imminent end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DATE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WRITTEN</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>JAMES</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 PETER</td>
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<tr>
<td>HEBREWS</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

\(^{25}\) See Everett Ferguson, “Epistle of Barnabas,” in Ferguson, 168.

\(^{26}\) See White, *From Jesus to Christianity*, 412.

\(^{27}\) See Everett Ferguson, “Ascension of Isaiah,” in Ferguson, 126.


\(^{29}\) See Mary T. Clark, “Irenaeus,” in Ferguson, 587.


\(^{31}\) See Ibid., Vol. 5, 7.

\(^{32}\) See Robert J. Daly, SJ., “Origen,” in Ferguson, 835.


\(^{34}\) See Ibid., Vol. 6, 699.

\(^{35}\) See Michael P. McHugh, “Commodian,” in Ferguson, 271.


\(^{37}\) See White, *From Jesus to Christianity*, 278.

\(^{38}\) See Ibid., 274.
Robert W. Funk, for example, has the epistles of Paul written between 50 to 60, and the Gospel of Mark written between 70 to 80.\textsuperscript{46} A.N. Wilson has the Gospels of Mark written around 60, and of Matthew around 85, and Luke's sometime 80.\textsuperscript{47} In Ridge's account, Mark's Gospel was written around 65-70, while the Gospel of John was not finished until 110.\textsuperscript{48} Ehrman, on the other hand, has Mark written between 60s and 70s, Matthew and Luke between 80 and 85, John between 90 and 95.\textsuperscript{49} Christian Hauer has the dates for Paul’s letter off by a year or two from what is published here. For example, he thinks

\textsuperscript{39} See Ibid., 320.
\textsuperscript{40} See Ibid., 282.
\textsuperscript{41} See Ibid., 316.
\textsuperscript{42} See Ehrman, The New Testament, 482.
\textsuperscript{43} See Bart Ehrman, Lost Christianities: The Battles for Scripture and the Faiths We Never Knew (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 236.
\textsuperscript{46} See Robert W. Funk, Honest to Jesus: Jesus for a New Millennium (New York: HarperCollins Publishers), 38.
\textsuperscript{47} See A.N. Wilson, Jesus: A Life (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1992), 47.
\textsuperscript{49} See Bart Ehrman, Jesus: Apocalyptic Prophet of the New Millennium (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 48. In addition, he claims dates “are necessarily rough estimates, but almost all scholars agree within a few years.” (Ibid., 48).
Paul wrote the letter to the Romans around 56-57, rather than my dates of 58 to 59. Will Durant has the epistles of Paul written before 64, and the Gospels written between 60 and 120. Selby dated the New Testament pieces as follows:

Paul’s letters... were written between A.D. 48 and A.D. 64. Some would place them all in the decade between A.D. 50 and A.D. 60. The Gospels are usually placed between A.D. 65 and A.D. 110, with Mark the earliest and John the last of the four. The Pastoral Epistles were probably written at the end of the first century or early in the second. Hebrews and the Catholic Epistles belong to a period perhaps beginning as early as A.D. 65 and extending to the middle of the second century, with Hebrews, James, and 1 Peter appearing in the early part of this period and 2 Peter and Jude near the end. Revelation was probably written in the time of Domitian at the end of the first century.

Except for Durant, the difference between the dates used in the above Tables as compared to that of the others cited here is not that significant as to substantially deviate from my chronological narration of early Christian eschatology.

Most scholars today subscribe to basically the same thesis I have regarding early Christian expectations of the soon-to-come *eschaton*. There are others, however, who have studied the same subject matter but have arrived at different conclusions regarding various aspects of this thesis. Some hold the same view that I have, that the first Christians believed deeply in the imminent last days, but deny the existence of any delay.

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51 See Durant, *Caesar and Christ*, 555.
53 It is important to note that his book was written in 1944, and since then more scholarly studies have been done on the matter of New Testament dates such as the other works I have cited.
54 Paul’s letters, for example, were written earlier than the rest of the books of the New Testament. And then followed Mark, followed by Matthew, and then Luke and then John, etc..
55 “The view that Jesus was an apocalypticist has been dominant among scholars for most of this century.” (Bart Ehrman, *The Historical Jesus* [Chantilly, Virginia: The Great Courses, 2000], 214). See also White, *From Jesus to Christianity*, 73, and Howard Clark Kee, *Understanding the New Testament* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1993), 270.
in the Second Advent, however, by claiming Jesus never predicted his forthcoming return at the end of the world. Robert W. Funk, for example, the founder of the Jesus Seminar, believes that Jesus never uttered the eschatological statements attributed to him in the gospels.\textsuperscript{56} He attributes all of Jesus’ eschatological statements to the expectations of early Christians fostered on them incorrectly by the man from Tarsus.\textsuperscript{57} R. H. Charles assumes, just like Funk, that the \textit{eschaton} predicted by Jesus in Mark’s Gospel was false. He differs from Funk, however, in that he does not blame Paul, the earliest Christian writer, for the statements of Jesus regarding the end of the world. Instead, he claims that the belief in the impending endtimes was “not derived from Christ, but is a Christian adaptation of an originally Jewish work, written 67-68 A.D. during the trouble preceding the fall of Jerusalem.”\textsuperscript{58} He further elaborates that the “identification of the coming destruction of Jerusalem with the \textit{parousia} is contrary to the universal practice of Christ elsewhere.”\textsuperscript{59} Marcus Borg, more or less, agrees with Robert Funk that the eschatological enunciations of Jesus were inauthentic; Jesus never really uttered those words.\textsuperscript{60}


\textsuperscript{57} See Funk, \textit{Honest to Jesus}, 40-43. Ehrman, however, disagrees with this assessment coming from Funk. Although what the latter proclaims may be possible, the former asserts that based on the evidence as presented in the New Testament, such as Jesus associating with the apocalypticist John the Baptist, the undeniable nature of Paul's epistles as eschatological in nature, the unmistakable tone of many of Christ's parables as referring to the end times, it will be hard to claim that Jesus was not an apocalyptic prophet. (See Ehrman, \textit{The New Testament}, 284)


\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 383.

Bart Ehrman discusses the contrarian point of view of John Dominic Crossan, whom he calls a “witty and indomitable” historian. The latter denies Jesus was ever an apocalypticist. Crossan claims, according to Ehrman, that the earliest sources we have regarding Jesus are not really our earliest sources. The former claims that “‘Egerton Gospel,’ a fragmentary text from the second century that contains four stories about Jesus; the Gospel of the Hebrews, which... no longer survives, but is quoted a bit by some church fathers in the late second [century;] and parts of the Gospel of Peter, which survives again only in fragments... provide more reliable access to Jesus than the New Testament Gospels.” These pieces do not portray Jesus as an eschatological prophet. Ehrman, however, refutes the claims by Crossan, asserting that “giving yet earlier dates to noncanonical Gospels that are, in most cases, not quoted or even mentioned by early Christian writers until many, many, decades later seems to be overly speculative and driven by an ultimate objective of claiming that Jesus was not an apocalypticist even though our earliest sources indicate that he was.”

The various materials in this paper will be arranged and discussed chronologically, as listed in the various Tables above, on pages 4 to 6. The first chapter, which is this chapter the Introduction, is a summary. It includes, among others, a statement of the purpose of this thesis, which is to study how the eschatological message of Paul, the first Christian writer, changed through time, up to the Council of Nicaea in 325, and to determine the reasons for the change.

62 Ibid., 277.
63 Ibid., 277.
The second chapter gives the historical, cultural, and socioeconomic context under which Paul and the other first century Christian writers operated under. Sub-chapter 2.1 discusses the context in which Paul, in particular, was working from, and then proceeds to discuss his epistles as they relate to the unfolding eschatological saga. The following sub-chapter, 2.2, examines the context under which Mark operated, particularly the Jewish rebellion as it had a profound effect on his story of the second coming, and then Jesus' eschatological message according to Mark. As will be seen in this sub-chapter, the eschatological message of Paul underwent revisions at the hands of Mark, influenced to a great extent by the Jewish rebellion. Since Matthew's eschatological story is, in general, the same as Mark's, the next sub-chapter, 2.3, details the particular differences between the two. After discussing the various factors that led Luke to diverge from the previous three writers regarding the eschaton, sub-chapter 2.4 lists the passages where Luke's story differed from the other three. The last sub-chapter shows how John's concept of the last days deviated from the earlier writers.

If the sack of Jerusalem shocked Christians, it should have horrified Jews all the more. The house of God was not supposed to be destroyed, especially not by infidel forces. Chapter 3 discusses the Jewish reaction to the destruction of their beloved capital.

The next chapter (4.0) describes, in general, the eschatological landscape after the Gospels were written, starting around the beginning of the second century. The trend was to distance the faith from Paul’s eschatological moorings, although there were some who still clung to the forlorn hope of the second coming in spite of unrealized expectations.
Sub-chapter 4.1 analyzes all the different literature, in the New Testament and Apocrypha written after the Gospels were penned, that do not contain any reference to the impending doom, showing the different approaches each book took regarding the distant end of days. The next sub-chapter, 4.2, inspects the works written by the Church Fathers before the promulgation of the Nicene Creed in 325 that did not proclaim the soon-to-come last days. The last sub-chapter 4.3 examines the opposite of 4.1 and 4.2: it pores over the remaining pieces of the New Testament and Apocrypha written after the Gospels were created, as well as the works of the Ante-Nicene Fathers, that still held on to the promise of the imminent second coming. It shows the various works of authors who still followed the original clarion call of Paul's *eschaton*, some of whom ended their lives as martyrs.

Lastly, a note regarding dates. All of the dates used here are CE. Any exceptions, and there are some, will be duly marked as BCE.
2. The Beginning of the End.

When Paul proclaimed the gospel of Jesus, that Jesus was the Messiah who was coming back shortly to redeem the saints and punish the evil doers, he was basically conforming to the tenets of his Jewish faith, and, more particularly, his Pharisaic upbringing. Moreover, his world was affected to a great extent by the various stresses Palestine was experiencing during the first century that enabled the emergence of Christianity: religious, economic, natural, as well as cultural. Foremost was the ardent expectation by the Jewish population of a Messiah who was going to improve their lot here on earth by eliminating their Roman and native oppressors who were all exploiting them. The inhabitants were also praying for relief from calamities, such as a famine, that they were enduring. At the same time, to add to their miseries, their feeling of victimhood was aggravated by cultural clashes they had with their pagan rulers that could sometimes turn bloody. Thus, like proverbial moths attracted to a flame, they followed anyone who promised them redemption, Jesus for example, but others as well, even at the expense of their lives.

The hope of the Hebrews for a Redeemer can be traced back many centuries before Paul, when, for example, Zephaniah, an Old Testament prophet of the seventh century BCE, proclaimed a *Dies Irae* upon the nation of Judah when it was polytheistic:

“The great day of the LORD is near, near and hastening fast.... That day will be a day of

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wrath, a day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation, a day of darkness and
gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of trumpet blast and battle cry.”[66] But
after the end came, it was going to be all bliss and peace for God’s elect, leading Isaiah to
pacifistically proclaim: “They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears
into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn
war anymore.”[67]

A century after Zephaniah’s time, after the Jews had returned to their homeland in
the late sixth century BCE from their Babylonian exile, their prophets still proclaimed
that the end of the world was fast approaching. Joel, for example, predicted the final
battle before the end of the world, and, reversing Isaiah’s predictions as a consequence,
wrote: “Proclaim this among the nations: Prepare war, stir up the warriors. Let all the
soldiers draw near, let them come up. Beat your ploughshares into swords, and your
pruning-hooks into spears.”[68] (Emphasis is mine). Because, he cried: “The day of the
Lord is near.”[69] Others, in addition, predicted retribution for the enemies of Yahweh,
such as Malachi.[70] Some others envisioned the end days as the time when the gentile
nations would be paying homage to Israel. If in case they did not, they would be
punished.

[69] Ibid., 3:14.
[70] “See, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble; the
day that comes shall burn them up, says the LORD of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor
The aspiration for a Redeemer endured among the Jews for as long as the “The nations rode by in state and glory, while Israel bent its captive neck to the yoke.” As Fredriksen writes: “Happy people do not write apocalypses. The apocalyptic description of the joyful future that awaits -- that is in fact imminent -- is the mirror image of the perception of present times, which are seen as uniquely, indeed terminally, terrible. Small wonder then that apocalyptic literature flourished in this troubled period between the Maccabees and Bar Kochba.”

As such, Paul and his contemporary Jews, living in the first century under the dominion of the Romans, were infected by this messianic yearning. Moreover, like Isaiah of yore, they were optimistic for the future as God was going to right the wrongs inflicted on the faithful. All they had to do was to wait for it patiently. In short, the “groundwork of Paul’s eschatology [was] largely the fundamental religious conception of Judaism, only modified so far as necessary by the belief that Jesus was the Messiah.” However, unlike the prophets of old, they believed salvation was guaranteed for the followers of Jesus only, and not necessarily for the nation of Israel. But whatever the

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72 Ehrman argues that both Jesus and Paul “expected the imminent appearance of a cosmic judge from heaven, for Jesus this divine figure was to be the Son of Man anticipated by the prophet Daniel; for Paul, it was to be Jesus himself.” (Ehrman, The New Testament, 390).
73 Wood defined the various characteristics of Jewish apocalypticism, in addition to the basic longing for a Savior, as such: “The second element is an abiding optimism. When evil becomes so strong that it will seem almost to have won the battle, God will suddenly overthrow it. The right will finally triumph, not by the power of man, but by the might of the omnipotent God.” (Wood, “Paul’s Eschatology,” 83-84).
74 The third element was patience according to Wood. One must “not despair, for evil is only temporary; nor must he attempt to force the overthrow of evil, for God himself will overthrow it in his own time.” (Ibid., 84).
75 Ibid., 85.
76 Isaiah, for example, believed that Jews will reign supreme during the last days: “In days to come the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it. Many... shall come and say, ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may
end was, Paul and the apostles believed, as pious Jews, that God controlled destiny and history. Whenever things were not right, Jehovah would intervene like clockwork and relieve them from their agonies. And the direr the circumstances, the more steadfastly they would hold on to that hope, even to the point of martyrdom.

Paul also believed that the Jewish Messiah was going to come from the line of David: “Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,... the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be Son of God.” The reason was because it was written so in the Scriptures, as Isaiah described the Messiah: “A shoot shall come out from the stock of Jesse, [who is the father of David,] and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.” As a matter of fact, Paul was heavily influenced by his reading of the Jewish Scriptures, which shaped what he wrote in his letters. In Wisdom, for example, God created Adam “incorruptible, and to the image of his own likeness he made him.” Paul used the same imagery, more or less, to describe Jesus Christ. Daniel, to use another example, proclaimed that the kingdom of God will last forever. That concept permeated all of the Pauline letters from start to finish.

walk in his paths.’ For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.” ( Isa. 2:2-3 NRSV http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Isaiah+2 (accessed May 12, 2013). 
80 See 1 Cor. 15:45-49 NRSV. 
81 See Daniel 6:26 NRSV.
Paul also believed, as a Pharisee, in the resurrection of the dead, a doctrine which harked back to the times of Isaiah\(^{82}\) and Daniel.\(^{83}\) It was a sectarian belief rejected by the Sadducees.\(^{84}\) Paul attested to this Pharisaic belief, when, during his trial in Jerusalem towards the end of his life, he “noticed that some [of the judges] were Sadducees and others were Pharisees, he called out in the council, ‘Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees. I am on trial concerning the hope of the resurrection of the dead.’”\(^{85}\)

Kee writes about the Pharisees in general:

[Oral tradition] enabled the Pharisees to incorporate into their thinking the apocalyptic and eschatological insights which became increasingly important during the second century B.C.E. and later. Such expectations as the victorious coming of God’s kingdom, the coming of the messiah, and the resurrection of the dead assumed an important place in Pharisaic thought. They were accustomed to thinking of the history of Israel and all humanity in terms of the ‘two ages’: ‘this age’ and the ‘age to come.’ By ‘this age’ they referred to the then present world situation, wherein evil power and lawless men sought to frustrate God’s purposes and God’s will.... In God’s own time he would bring the ‘age to come,’ in which his final victory over sin and evil would be disclosed to mankind and a new order of existence would characterize human life.\(^{86}\)

Furthermore, he adds:

Another type of Jewish mysticism with which Paul had clear kinship was that of contemplating the throne of God.... They believed themselves to be taken up to the divine throne, to have become aglow with reflected radiance from the divine

\(^{82}\) Isaiah predicted: “Your dead shall live, their corpses shall rise. O dwellers in the dust, awake and sing for joy!” (Isa. 26:19 NRSV [http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Isaiah+26](http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Isaiah+26) [accessed May 12, 2013]).

\(^{83}\) Daniel wrote: “Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Daniel 12:2 NRSV [http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Daniel+12](http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Daniel+12) [accessed May 12, 2013]). Painter comments thus: “Daniel 12:2 speaks of the resurrection of the righteous and the wicked in a way that foreshadows later Christian depictions of the last judgment. That text might not assert universal resurrection; although the word ‘many’ in biblical language can mean ‘all,’ it need not. Postexilic descriptions of God’s judgment adopted apocalyptic features that emphasized the punishment of God’s enemies.” (John Painter, “Judgment,” in Ferguson, 639).

\(^{84}\) See Pheme Perkins, “Resurrection,” in Ferguson, 978.


presence, and thereby to have received assurance that enabled them to accept suffering and hostility. Daniel reports this kind of divine vision in Daniel 10.\textsuperscript{87}

Paul held the same views listed above by Kee prior to his epiphany and eventual conversion to Christianity. These beliefs served him well later on in his ministry. Surely, he did not have any animosity towards his erstwhile fellow co-believers, unlike the evangelists later. Except for his belief that Jesus was the Redeemer, he could have written these lines while still a Pharisee: “And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you to determine what is best, so that on the day of... [judgment] you may be pure and blameless.”\textsuperscript{88}

When Paul claimed that Jesus was the Messiah, and that he was coming back soon to retrieve his followers, he was not doing any violence to the beliefs of his audience, both Jewish and pro-Jewish Gentiles:

The messianic idea has been central to the development of postbiblical Judaism in all its various forms. Generally speaking, the concept envisions the eventual coming of a redeemer, a descendant of David, who will bring about major changes to the world, leading to world peace, prosperity, and the end of evil and misfortune.\textsuperscript{89}

The Jewish Messiah could either be restorative or utopian. The former was supposed to restore the ancient glories of its Davidic past to Israel, while the latter was going to attempt to deliver the best possible world to the Jews, surpassing any they had known prior. At the same time, the utopian was apocalyptic, a view that envisaged the

\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., 234-235. For Paul’s description of the same feeling of being lifted up to heaven to behold God in all his glory, see 2 Cor. 12 NRSV.

\textsuperscript{88} Phil. 1:9-10 NRSV \url{http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Philippians+1} [accessed May 8, 2013]).

utter destruction of the immoral age and its replacement by the heavenly kingdom of the Messiah. “The perfect world of the future can be built only upon the ruins of this world, after the annihilation of its widespread evil and transgression.”

Most Jews expected their Messiah to restore Israel to its glorious and Davidic past. This was one reason why they rejected Jesus, who was not, in any way, going to return Israel to its ancient preeminence among the nations. Moreover, a messiah who was executed by the Romans could not be a Jewish savior; a martyr perhaps for Jewish freedom, but not the anointed one. A messiah had to be, in Jewish eyes, a conquering messiah who will vanquish all the nations and let Israel reign supreme on earth as the Jews were the chosen people of God.

The Acts of the Apostles testified to the longing of the Jews for a Messianic redemption: “For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him; but he was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and disappeared.” Josephus Flavius, a first-century Hebrew historian and a contemporary of Jesus, also mentioned this same Theudas who proclaimed himself a prophet and led an unsuccessful revolt against the Romans where

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90 Ibid., 317. Paul, when he was writing of the last days, averred that “For the present form of this world is passing away.” (1 Cor. 7:31 NRSV [http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=1Corinthians+7](http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=1Corinthians+7) [accessed January 23, 2013]). John's Revelation is, of course, the “Mother of all apocalypses,” where the world was going to be destroyed via numerous catastrophes.

91 “The expected Messiah was seen as an annihilator of the mighty upon the earth, who would himself rule in Jerusalem and make Israel a dominant power.” (Michael Grant, *Jesus: An Historian's Review of the Gospels* [New York: Collier Books, 1977], 97).

92 “And the house of Israel will possess the nations as male and female slaves in the LORD’s land; they will take captive those who were their captors, and rule over those who oppressed them.” (Isaiah 14:2 NRSV, [http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Isaiah+14](http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Isaiah+14) [accessed January 22, 2013]).

93 See Acts 5:36 NRSV.
many, including Theudas himself, had to pay with their lives. The Acts of the Apostles and Josephus corroborated each other in the retelling of a story of a certain Judas and his followers who revolted against the Romans, paying the ultimate price in the end.

Josephus further attested to the messianic inclinations of the Jews when, during their revolt against the Romans, they mistakenly interpreted the prediction of a supreme ruler as applicable to them; that is, that the messiah would be coming from their ranks rather than elsewhere. A sage predicted had that: “one from their country... [was going to] become governor of the habitable earth. The Jews took this prediction to belong to themselves in particular and many of the wise men were thereby deceived in the determination. Now, this oracle certainly denoted the government of Vespasian, who was appointed emperor in Judea.” Even Tacitus confirmed the observation by Josephus:

There was a firm persuasion, that in the ancient records of their priests was contained a prediction of how at this very time the East was to grow powerful, and rulers, coming from Judaea, were to acquire universal empire. These mysterious prophecies had pointed to Vespasian and Titus, but the common people, with the usual blindness of ambition, had interpreted these mighty destinies of themselves, and could not be brought even by disasters to believe the truth.

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96 Josephus, The Wars of the Jews, Book 6, 5.4.312-313. Bruce further comments: “One of the factors which precipitated the outbreak of war against the Romans in A.D. 66..., was the currency of an ancient oracle which declared that at that very time world sovereignty would be exercised from Judaea. The writers who report this concluded, in the light of the sequel, that the oracle pointed to Vespasian..., who became Roman Emperor in A.D. 69. But the Jewish insurgents thought that it pointed to the downfall of the Roman Empire and the inauguration of the reign of the saints.” (F. F. Bruce, “A Reappraisal of Jewish Apocalyptic Literature,” Review and Expositor 72 (1975), 313, http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/re/jewish-apocalyptic_bruce.pdf [accessed November 26, 2012]).
The bloody rebellion was so useless in terms of lives lost and bodies enslaved, that, combined with the widespread agony and pain of the survivors, it drove Josephus to lament: “God takes care of mankind..., but... men perish by those miseries which they madly and voluntarily bring upon themselves.”

To add more miseries to their doleful lot, the inhabitants of Israel did not enjoy any respite even from their own kind. Josephus gave more than a hint of the internal tensions Judea was under when he asserted that Herod, their king, exacted heavy tribute from the people to finance his extravagant lifestyle and grandiose projects. He rebuilt the Jerusalem Temple, and constructed an impressive maritime port, called Caesarea Maritima, in the coast of Judea in honor of his Roman benefactor, all in order to garner the honor of being esteemed a great king of the Jews and great friend of the Caesars: “for being a man ambitious of honor, and quite overcome by that passion, he [i.e., Herod] was induced to be magnificent, wherever there appeared any hopes of a future memorial, or of reputation at present; and as his expenses were beyond his abilities, he was necessitated to be harsh to his subjects.” (Emphasis is mine).

There was also a famine raging in the Jewish homeland before the start of Paul's ministry: “At that time prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them named Agabus stood up and predicted by the Spirit that there would be a severe famine over all the world; and this took place during the reign of Claudius [41-54].”

Contemporary papyri records show the famine hitting Judea sometime 45 to 46.\textsuperscript{101} It seemed Jerusalem was particularly hard hit.\textsuperscript{102} Even priests of the Temple, who had grain reserves in the countryside, went hungry during this time.\textsuperscript{103} In addition, Josephus, speaking of a visit to Jerusalem by a certain Queen Helena of Adiabene, a city now in Iraqi Kurdistan, commented that “her coming was of great help to the people in Jerusalem; for whereas a famine did oppress them at that time, and many people died for want of what was necessary to procure food withal, queen Helena sent some of her servants to Alexandria... [and] Cyprus... [to procure relief goods.]”\textsuperscript{104} Paulus Orosius, a fifth century historian, noted the same relief efforts by Helena: “In the same year of this emperor's reign [i.e. Claudius’], as the prophets had foretold, there was a terrible famine throughout Syria. The needs of the Christians at Jerusalem, however, were bountifully supplied with grain that Helena, the queen of Adiabeni and a convert to the faith of Christ, had imported from Egypt.”\textsuperscript{105}

\textsuperscript{102} “Accounts of the famine under Claudius show that Jerusalem suffered special hardships at such times.” (Joachim Jeremias, \textit{Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus: An Investigation into Economic and Social Conditions during the New Testament Period}, trans. F. H. and C. H. Cave [Chatham, Great Britain: W & J Mackay & Co. Ltd., 1969], 121). This may have been a reason why the apostles in Jerusalem asked Paul to collect some financial aid from the Gentile Christians outside Judea. (See Galatians 2:10 NRSV)
\textsuperscript{103} “When Claudius was emperor of the Romans,... and when so great a famine was come upon us,... when no less than seventy cori of flour were brought into the temple, at the feast of the unleavened bread,... not one of the priests were so hardy as to eat one crumb of it.” (Josephus, \textit{The Antiquities of the Jews}, Book 3, 15.3.320).
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., Book 20, 2.5.51.
\textsuperscript{105} Orosius, \textit{A History, against the Pagans}, 7.6
\texttt{https://sites.google.com/site/demontortoise2000/orosius_book7} (accessed November 12, 2012). His assertion that the Christians in Jerusalem were well-fed seems contrary to the fact that Paul had to collect aid from his churches for them.
The time of bare subsistence lasted sometime 46 to 48. Tacitus also spoke of a certain famine occurring during the reign of Emperor Claudius. An accused, in his story, was charged for having a disturbing vision: “He had, it was alleged, beheld Claudius crowned with a garland of wheat, the ears of which were turned downwards, and, from this appearance, he foretold scanty harvests.” Eusebius, a church historian of the fourth century, wrote of the same turbulent period: “Under him [i.e., Claudius] the world was visited with a famine, which writers that are entire strangers to our religion have recorded in their histories. And thus the prediction of Agabus recorded in the Acts of the Apostles... received its fulfillment.” In addition to a famine, there were also epidemics and earthquakes troubling Asia Minor.

There were other misfortunes that befall Palestine around the time of the apostle from Tarsus, but more of the human kind. During the reign of Tiberius, who ruled when Jesus was alive, Judea had requested exemption from tribute presumably because taxes were so onerous and could not be borne by the province. Philo, a Jewish writer from Alexandria and a contemporary of Jesus too, wrote that Pontius Pilate was “a man of most ferocious passions.” Some Roman procurators assigned to Judea prior to the Jewish revolt of 65 were particularly vicious. Tacitus, no Judeophile, admitted that much:

106 See Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 20, 2.5.53.
109 “In A.D. 44, there was a widespread and terrible famine, with resultant epidemics.... In 53, disastrous earthquakes occurred in Phrygia, and in 61 another earthquake destroyed the famous city of Laodicea.” (Marcello Craveri, *The Life of Jesus*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann [New York: The Ecco Press, 1967], 343).
“Claudius entrusted the province of Judaea to the Roman Knights or to his own freedmen, one of whom, Antonius Felix, indulging in every kind of barbarity and lust, exercised the power of a king in the spirit of a slave.”

In addition, even low-level functionaries such as tax-collectors and soldiers took advantage of the people. They were admonished by John the Baptist, for example, not to collect too much taxes and not to exploit people needlessly if they wanted to enter the kingdom of Heaven.

Although Augustus had exempted Jews from the duty of emperor worship, this tolerant attitude did not always hold sway out there in distant Palestine where the Romans and Jews interacted daily. The Roman authorities must have felt Jews were bizarre. Unlike their temples where they had statues of gods prominently displayed, for example, the Jewish house of worship was empty. The practice of circumcision was an act of barbarism from the pagan point of view. Dietary customs were also different between Jews and Greeks. Differences such as these created a clash between two cultures, two religions, and two different philosophies of the world, leading to oppression and cruelties by the superior force of arms over the weaker house of Israel.

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113 See Luke 3:12-14 NRSV.
114 Instead, Augustus “ordered the Jews... to pay special taxes and to sacrifice two lambs and a bull every day in their temple in Jerusalem and to offer these with prayers to their god for the emperor's welfare.” (Elaine Pagels, *Revelations: Visions, Prophecy, & Politics in the Book of Revelation* [New York: Viking 2012], 109). They were also recipient of other special favors from Augustus. Josephus listed a decree they received, for example, from Augustus: “Caesar Augustus, high priest and tribune of the people, ordains thus:- Since the nation of the Jews have been found grateful to the Roman people... it seemed good to me and my counsellors... that the Jews have liberty to make use of their own customs, according to the law of their forefathers, as they made use of them under Hyrcanus, the high priest of Almighty God.” (Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 16, 6.2.162).
Jews, on the other hand, could be stubborn too when faced with Roman opposition, and willing to play for high stakes to defend what they believed was their God-given rights and their God. When Pontius Pilate, for example, dared to bring Roman banners topped by medallions portraying the image of Tiberius into Jerusalem, notwithstanding the practice by previous procurators of refraining from doing so in the interest of keeping the peace, the Jews countered by sending a massive deputation to him in the provincial capital of Caesarea Maritima where he had retired after visiting the Jewish capital. They refused to leave the place, even under pain of death, laying bare their necks in fact to challenge Pilate when he gave orders to his soldiers to slaughter them. Pilate, facing the adamant determination of Jews to defy him, finally relented.

Other times, though, his opponents were not so lucky, and the clash could turn very deadly. When a throng of Israelites protested sometime later against one of his public works in Jerusalem, refusing again to leave his presence unless he conceded to their demands, it was then Pilate's turn to stand his ground. He ordered his men to butcher them.115

In this seething maelstrom Jesus, and thus Christianity, was born. In the end, however, Jesus, no matter how good his intentions were of relieving the sufferings of his people, had to exchange his life for his beliefs. The biggest difference, however, between him and the other rabble-rousers was that Jesus did not advocate violence in order to usher in the Kingdom of God. He predicted relief and salvation will come not from human hands, but from the power of Divine Providence. All the faithful had to do was to

await patiently the coming of the Almighty. The coming cataclysm will right the wrongs endured by his people and lead them to paradise, where there would be no pain, no suffering, no twisted faces.

By the time Paul started his missionary journeys, the landscape for converts was changing as compared to the time of Jesus. Paul’s prospects, both Jewish and Gentile, were urban dwellers, unlike Jesus’ followers who were mostly rural people. Paul went to cities to seek out proselytes; all his letters were addressed to urbanites. City dwellers were more educated than their brethren in the countryside. Thus, the competition for ideas was more acute in the cities, enhancing the probability for Paul’s converts, for example, to change their minds regarding the coming day of doom: from unbelievers to believers, as well as vice-versa if they got disappointed.

116 “Christianity... found its market in the burgeoning cities of the Roman Empire... But it found the largest number of recruits among the urban masses of the gentile cities.” (Hauer, An Introduction to the Bible, 270).
117 “Jesus’ ministry was probably restricted to rural areas.... He is always in the small towns and villages and in the fields outside.” (Ehrman, The Historical Jesus, 263). Moreover, he adds: “Throughout our earliest surviving sources, it is quite clear that Jesus spend most of his ministry, if not virtually all of it, in the towns, villages, and rural areas of Galilee.” (Bart Ehrman, Jesus: Apocalyptic Prophet of the New Millennium [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999], 191).
2.1 Paul and his Epistles.

Early Christian eschatology started when Paul travelled throughout the Mediterranean region preaching that Jesus had come down from heaven to save mankind from their sins, and who was going to return shortly to judge the living and the dead. He proclaimed to all and sundry that they had to turn away from their sins and accept Jesus as their Savior in order to be ready for forthcoming cataclysm. In the course of his ministry, he wrote various letters attesting to his eschatological expectations for an early relief from life’s vicissitudes.

There are fourteen epistles in the New Testament that have been traditionally ascribed to the first Christian writer. Scholars have debated the accuracy of this attribution throughout the ages. Most of them agree today, by and large, that only seven can be traced indisputably to Paul: 1 Thessalonians, 1 Corinthians, Philippians, Romans, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, and Philemon.\(^{118}\) From this selection, only the first four carried the unmistakable message of the imminent second coming.

\(^{118}\) “Fourteen of the twenty-seven writings comprising the New Testament are ascribed to Paul. Modern scholarship accepts as definitely Pauline only half that number: 1 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Philippians, Philemon, Galatians, and Romans.” (Paula Fredriksen, *From Jesus to Christ: The Origins of the New Testament Images of Jesus* [New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1988], 53). Both White and Ehrman concur with Fredriksen (See White, *From Jesus to Christianity* 283, and Ehrman, *The New Testament*, 308). Both Jewett and Kee, include 2 Thessalonians as part of the genuine Pauline letters (See Robert Jewett, “Paul,” in Ferguson, 881, and Kee, *Understanding the New Testament*, 283, respectively). The latter, however, admits others disagree with his assessment mainly because the parousia is presented differently in 1 and 2 Thessalonians (See Kee, *Understanding the New Testament*, 283), the same reason I give when I assert in sub-chapter 4.1 that 2 Thessalonians could not have been written by Paul. Hauer also takes 2 Thessalonians to be part of the Pauline epistles, but admits it is a matter of dispute among scholars (See Hauer, *An Introduction to the Bible*, 282). Selby claims that 2 Thessalonians, and in addition, Colossians, and Ephesians, are genuine letters coming from Paul, but concedes that it is a bone of contention among scholars (See Selby, *Introduction to the Bible*, N.T. 381-386).
Paul was a native of Tarsus, a city in what is now southeastern Turkey. It was a place well acquainted with invaders coming from distant lands, for just north of it lay the world-renown Cilician gates, a narrow mountain pass used by invading armies going to or coming from the West. One such conqueror was Alexander the Great, who, more than three hundred years before the Christian era, came “down from central Anatolia to Tarsus through the Cilician Gates, a deep and narrow defile which pierced through the Taurus mountains carrying the ancient route from Anatolia to Syria - one of the great routes of history.” It was also in this city, by the river Cydnus, where the love affair of Anthony and Cleopatra first blossomed a century before the start of Paul's missionary journeys. In his case, though, success was going to be the other way around. He, coming from the East, was going to conquer the western world.

Paul and his family were members of what is called the Jewish Diaspora. These were the Jews living outside Israel. They left the Jewish homeland to avoid natural disasters, wars, famines, and for better economic conditions, for mostly the same reasons modern immigrants leave their native countries today. He was a Hellenized Jew (i.e. Greek-speaking Jew), in the same manner as his relatives who carried Greek names, as

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121 “Among the heterogeneous peoples in the cities throughout the Empire were Jewish communities known as the Diaspora.... From the time of the Babylonian Exile significant communities of Jews were to be found outside Palestine.” (Selby, *Introduction to the Bible*, N.T. 274) Ehrman concurs, more or less, with Selby’s definition (See Ehrman, *The New Testament*, 51). Selby adds that the Diaspora was fertile ground for the advancement of Christianity: “The Diaspora in the first century has been estimated to be far larger than the Jewish population of Palestine. Since many of these were more than likely proselytes, they call out attention to a factor of importance for the spread of Christianity in the gentile world, namely, the prior influence of Judaism upon the gentiles which helped immeasurably to prepare the way for the Church.” (Selby, *Introduction to the Bible*, N.T. 275-276).
can be seen from his letter to the Romans: “Timothy, my co-worker, greets you; so do... Jason and Sosipater, my relatives.”

An important literary product of the mix between Jewish and Greek culture was the Septuagint, the Greek Bible created for Hellenized Jews in the late third century BCE.

As a Hebrew growing up in a Hellenic world, Paul was comfortable living together with non-Jews, unlike others who lived their entire lives inside Israel. When the man from Tarsus converted into Christianity, it was mostly a Jewish sect adhering closely to Jewish customs, except for the belief in Jesus as the Messiah. Acts of the Apostles depicted the faithful meeting every day in the temple courts, and the apostles going to the temple to pray. The Acts of the Apostles and Paul's epistles showed he was a champion of accepting Greeks into the nascent Jesus movement without any need to follow Jewish customs such as circumcision and observance of Mosaic dietary laws.

123 Cox claims that the “origin [of the Septuagint] is explained in the Letter of Aristeas..., which claims that the translation was made by seventy-two Jewish elders (hence the name `Septuagint,' which means seventy) at the request of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (283-246 B.C.), who desired a copy for his immense library at Alexandria. Only two facts can be determined from the legend: that the Septuagint is Alexandrian in origin and that the translation of the Pentateuch dates from the third century B.C. The rest of the Septuagint is later, the work of individual translators, although the whole was completed by 132 B.C.” (Claude Cox, “Septuagint,” in Ferguson, 1048). Selby explains further: “Many Diaspora Jews probably had little if any knowledge of Hebrew and Aramaic. For them, the Septuagint was the Scripture.” (Selby, Introduction to the Bible, N.T. 275) Kee and Jewett concur with Selby’s observation that the Septuagint was the Bible for Jews of the Diaspora. (See Kee, Understanding the New Testament, 21, and Jewett “Paul,” in Ferguson, 881).

124 It is possible his Christian relatives, whom he named in his various letters such as the aforementioned Romans, may have played a part in his conversion, in addition to his now famous epiphany on the way to Damascus. Or it may not be, as he may have converted his own kin after his spiritual rebirth.

125 Ehrman attests to this, as follows: “The earliest Christians were Jews who believed that they were living at the end of the age... Jesus' ministry ended with the establishment of the Christian church, a community of apocalyptic Jews who believed in him. “ (Ehrman, The New Testament, 272). Other scholars are of the same opinion, such as Selby (See Selby, Introduction to the Bible, N.T 275), and Trepp (See Leo Trepp, Judaism: Development and Life [Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1982], 30), and Davies (See W. D. Davies, “The Apostolic Age and the Life of Paul,” in Peake’s Commentary on the Bible, ed. Matthew Black and H. H. Rowley [London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, 1962], 877).

126 See Acts 2:46 NRSV.
127 See Acts 3:1 NRSV.
was entirely possible his own personal background made him more favorable towards non-Jews as compared to the apostles, who were life-long Jews from the rural areas of Galilee, north of the Jewish homeland of Judea.

Paul was an ardent believer in the open door policy towards Gentiles so much so that he had a serious confrontation with Cephas (aka the apostle Peter) in Antioch regarding this matter. He accused the latter of being a hypocrite, for he commingled with pagans only until he was rebuked by emissaries coming from James, the brother of Jesus, who was also the bishop of Jesus-followers in Jerusalem.

There are two issues involved in the story of the disagreement between Paul and Peter. First, is Cephas, the name of the person who had an altercation with Paul, is he the same person as Peter? Second, if Cephas is indeed Peter, then why is it that in the Acts of the Apostles Peter defended Paul’s mission to the Gentiles, the implication of which is that Peter was an ally of Paul?

Regarding the first issue, my assumption here is that Peter and Cephas are one and the same person. This, however, is a matter of dispute. The Catholic Bible, which is

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128 “Tarsus was a highly cosmopolitan place, and the Judaism of its Jews was sophisticated and Hellenized... Proselytizing was common... There was something genial and expansive about the Jewish world into which the cosmopolitan Paul was born.” (Wilson, Jesus, 24) (Emphasis is mine).
129 “But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood self-condemned; for until certain people came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But after they came, he drew back and kept himself separate for fear of the circumcision faction.” (Gal. 2:11-12 NRSV, [http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Galatians+2](http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Galatians+2) (accessed December 15, 2012).
131 “Then James, whom the ancients surnamed the Just on account of the excellence of his virtue, is recorded to have been the first to be made bishop of the church of Jerusalem. This James was called the brother of the Lord because he was known as a son of Joseph, and Joseph was supposed to be the father of Christ.” (Eusebius, Church History, Book II, 1:2 [http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250102.htm](http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250102.htm) [accessed June 10, 2012]).
132 See Acts 15:7-11 NSRV.
based on the Latin Vulgate, treats Cephas and Peter as different names for the same person. In the Gospel of John, Cephas is explicitly referred to as Peter: “He [i.e., Andrew] found first his brother Simon and said to him: we have found the Messias, (which interpreted is Christ). And he led him to Jesus. But Jesus, looking upon him, said ‘Thou art Simon, the son of John, thou shalt be called Cephas (which interpreted is Peter).’” But the King James version, which is based on the Greek version of the Scriptures, holds that Cephas is not Peter. In John's Gospel, the corresponding passage is written as: “He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, a stone.” (Emphasis is mine). Unlike the Catholic Bible, there is no relationship between Peter and Cephas in the King James version.

Most scholars, however, seem to be of the same opinion I have, that Cephas and Paul are one and the same person. Fredriksen posits that Paul and Cephas are but different names for the same person, for she wrote that Paul disparaged ‘Peter as a liar whom he opposed ‘to his face,’” when commenting on the quotation from Galatians, (Gal. 2:11-12 NRSV), found on the previous page. Ehrman seems to agree with Fredriksen, as can be seen from his comments on the above cited John 1:42: “The author [of John] explains the terms he uses; he interprets... “Cephas’ as ‘ Peter’ (v42).” Moreover, he labels Cephas as “the chief apostle in Jerusalem,” which can only mean to

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133 John 1:41-42 DV.
134 John 1:41-42 AV.
135 Fredriksen, *From Jesus to Christ*, 55
be Peter.\textsuperscript{137} White concurs with the two previous authors, for he opines that Paul stressed “his clear and resolute sense of divine calling in his confrontation with Peter,” when commenting on the same lines from Galatians.\textsuperscript{138} Grant is also of the same opinion, writing that “At Antioch, according to the same letter [to the Galatians], Paul has a vigorous difference of opinion with Peter, of which Acts says nothing at all.”\textsuperscript{139} Fox also believes Cephas is Peter in his comments regarding the same cited passage in Galatians: “Peter, who denied Christ, became a leading Apostle, although he was less than a rock in his early attitude to those Gentile Christians who ignored the law (Galatians 2:11).”\textsuperscript{140} Senior too believes Cephas and Peter are one and the same person: “Paul... provides evidence that Peter’s role was more extensive than merely heading a mission to the circumcised. In Galatians 2:11-14, he excoriates Cephas for withdrawing from table fellowship with Gentiles under pressure from Jewish Christians sent by James.”\textsuperscript{141}

Regarding the second issue, the disparity between the accounts in the Acts of the Apostles and Paul’s letter to the Galatians regarding the Gentile mission, an important distinction that has to be made between Luke’s and Paul’s accounts is that the former was written after the latter. So, as the Church was settling down for a long stay here on earth, (to be discussed in more detail later in sub-chapter 2.4), rather than for a short while as Paul had envisioned, Luke therefore had good reasons to paper over this dispute between Paul and Peter, an attitude that can be deduced from an examination of the Acts of the

\textsuperscript{137} See ibid., 358.
\textsuperscript{138} White, \textit{From Jesus to Christ}, 201.
\textsuperscript{140} Fox, \textit{The Unauthorized Version}, 208.
\textsuperscript{141} Donald P. Senior, C.P., and Frederic W. Norris, “Peter,” in Ferguson, 903.
Apostles. Luke painted the church of his time in hagiographic colors, where everything marched merrily along a teleological path guided by the protecting hands of the Almighty. Ehrman confirms my reservation regarding Luke’s attitude, for he writes that “Even though some sources, such as the book of Acts, portray the early Christian church as internally harmonious over major points of belief and practice, there were in fact widespread disagreements within the Christian communities.”

Furthermore, and to the point at hand, Ehrman adds: “In the book of Acts Paul’s words and deeds have been modified in accordance with Luke’s own perspective. Thus, Acts can tell us a great deal about how Luke understood Paul, but less about what Paul himself actually said and did.” Paul was fulfilling his destiny as he saw it: to convert the Gentiles in order to save them from the coming cataclysm. If, then, along the way Peter was wrong, Paul had no reason to lie about it, lest his future life in heaven be imperiled too. Selby seems sympathetic to my position, for he claims that Luke “exercised editorial license” when he compares the conflicting narratives of Luke and Paul regarding the convening of the church council in Jerusalem to resolve the issue of circumcision for the Gentiles. Fredriksen too, appears to have the same opinion as I have: “Luke may be more reliable on the course of the mission in the Diaspora than he is about Paul’s life or the early situation in Jerusalem.”

143 Ibid., 308.
144 See Selby, Introduction to the Bible, N.T. 299.
145 Fredriksen, From Jesus to Christ, 53, note 25.
Kee also appears to favor my point of view: “In Acts, however, the ‘apostles’ are the church leaders based in Jerusalem, with whom Paul checks periodically, who approve his work in advance, and with whom he is reported by Acts to have worked out a compromise on the issue of gentile Christian responsibility toward Jewish law (Acts 15:29). It is impossible to imagine the Paul of the letters agreeing to such a concession.”146 (Emphasis is mine). He further insists on the primacy of Paul’s version of events, in a roundabout way: “Some scholars have adopted the policy of using Acts as a historical source where it is not in conflict with the letters of Paul.”147 (Emphasis is mine). Ehrman agrees with Kee’s assessment. When commenting on the conflict between Paul’s and Luke’s narration of the former’s actions after his conversion, Ehrman writes:

Paul is quite emphatic in the epistle to the Galatians that after he had his... [conversion], he did not go to Jerusalem.... The book of Acts... provides its own narrative of Paul’s conversion. In this account,... he goes directly to Jerusalem and meets with the apostles.... More likely the discrepancy derives from Luke, whose own agenda affected the way he told the tale. For him,... it was important to show that Paul stood in close continuity with the views of the original followers of Jesus, because all the apostles were unified in their perspectives.

Paul must have lost the argument with Peter,149 for his closest associate, another Jew by the name of Barnabas, refused to associate with him any further.150 He left...

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147 Ibid., 223.
149 While Paul may have had good reasons to confront Peter, it must be noted that this is based solely on Paul’s side of the story. We do not have Peter’s account. He himself may have been furious, harboring intense negative feelings against Paul. Peter was a lifelong follower of Jesus, the founder and leader of the faith from whom he got his instructions. Suddenly, here comes this neophyte telling him how to run his affairs. The nerve!
150 “But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood self-condemned; for until certain people came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But after they came, he drew back and kept himself separate for fear of the circumcision faction. And the other Jews joined him in this hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.” (Gal. 2:11-14 NRSV http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Galatians+2 [accessed July 20, 2012]). What Paul wrote here may have
Antioch, and never again did he mention this city of his tribulations in his letters.\(^{151}\)

Neither did he mention Barnabas again in his letters, except by informing his readers that one his companions, Mark, was a cousin of Barnabas, in his letter to the Colossians.\(^{152}\)

But little did he know that by taking one small step away from Jewish Christianity, he was taking a giant leap for Christians of all ages.\(^{153}\)

Paul was not the only Jew who sought exemption from Jewish laws for his proselytes. Josephus related the story of a conversion in the first century of a certain Izates, son of the said Queen Helena mentioned earlier:

> [the Jewish instructor Ananias] said that he [i.e. Izates] might worship God without being circumcised, even though he did resolve to follow the Jewish law entirely, which worship of God was of a superior nature to circumcision. He [i.e. Ananias] added, that God would forgive him, though he did not perform the operation, while it was omitted out of necessity, and for fear of his subjects.\(^{154}\)

The first Christian writer went much farther, of course, than Ananias. The former did not merely seek a suspension from the requirement of cutting the foreskin, but wanted to abolish it entirely.

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\(^{151}\) “The blowup with Peter was a total failure of political bravado, and Paul soon left Antioch as persona non grata, never again to return.” (White, *From Jesus to Christianity*, 170). The Acts of the Apostles, though, mentioned him as still passing by Antioch one more time, although it may have been Pisidian Antioch in Asia Minor, and not the city in Syria where he had his confrontation with Peter. (See Acts 18:22 NRSV).

\(^{152}\) See Colossians 4:10 NRSV. Incidentally, the authorship of this letter is in dispute. So, the first part of my statement regarding Barnabas may have been completely accurate: Paul never mentioned Barnabas again in his epistles.

\(^{153}\) “His [i.e. Paul’s] conversion to follow Jesus played a significant role for the fate of Christianity, as Paul’s ideas and teaching about Jesus affected the beliefs of Christians for all time.” (Ehrman, *The New Testament*, 306).

Paul journeyed through the Aegean in his monumental peregrinations, and wrote the first four epistles listed in Table 1 around the years 50 to 60, roughly between the last years of the reign of Emperor Claudius and the early years of Nero. The Empire was settling down on its centuries long *Pax Romana*. Augustus, the first Roman emperor and founder of the Roman peace, had set the Empire on a solid footing in terms of governance and commerce. Origen, a later Ante-Nicene Christian Father writing around the middle of the third century, affirmed and praised the conditions Rome offered to the first Christians when they started fanning out throughout the Empire seeking converts:

There is abundance of peace, which took its commencement at His [i.e. Jesus] birth, God preparing the nations for His teaching, that they might be under one prince, the king of the Romans, and that it might not, owing to the want of union among the nations caused by the existence of many kingdoms, be more difficult for the apostles of Jesus to accomplish the task enjoined upon them by their Master, when He said, Go and teach all nations. Moreover it is certain that Jesus was born in the reign of Augustus, who, so to speak, fused together into one monarchy the many populations of the earth. Now the existence of many kingdoms would have been a hindrance to the spread of the doctrine of Jesus throughout the entire world.

Paul’s first audience was mostly Jews and God-fearing Gentiles who were familiar with Jewish customs and beliefs from their association with Jews in their places of worship. These kind of Gentiles were found in synagogues, for Jews were active in

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155 “The Roman Empire brought a general improvement everywhere in the material conditions of the living.” (J. P. V. D. Balsdon, “The Roman Empire in the First Century,” in Black, 702).
156 Origen, *Against Celsus*, Book II, Chapter XXX. Paul, in all his journeys, always went West of the Israelites’ homeland. A reason perhaps why Paul never ventured East was because he chose the path of least resistance: the Roman world was west of Judea.
157 “We know from numerous sources that Gentiles frequented synagogues throughout the Greco-Roman world. In this case, we may presume that Paul preached to Gentiles in synagogues because he knew that they would already be somewhat attuned to the biblical language and content of his message as he conceived it. Furthermore, this practice would help to explain the hostility exhibited toward Paul... by various Jewish communities, who were surely not happy to see an apocalyptic ex-Pharisee poaching...”
seeking converts from among their non-Jewish neighbors. Paul went straight to a synagogue when first visiting a city to seek converts, and not the Agora, nor the amphitheatres and theaters. The only time he dared to do so, when he attempted to convert the heathen in Athens in the usual places where they congregated, ended as a failure to a large extent. This may have led him to concentrate his efforts on the synagogues outside of Judea, for the Jews he encountered there were of his kind: Hellenized Jews. In addition, and probably most importantly, Greeks he met there were low-hanging fruits, ripe for his picking.

Gentiles from their well-established synagogues.” (John G. Gager, Reinventing Paul, [New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2000], 51). Ehrman, however, disagrees with Gager, and myself consequently. He claims that in his epistle to the Thessalonians, Paul “indicates that the Christians that he brought to the faith were former pagans, whom he himself converted from worshipping ‘dead idols to serve the living and true God’ (…1:9). These converts, in other words, were neither Jews nor God-fearers.” (Ehrman, The New Testament, 325). Selby implies, however, that many converts were God-fearing Greeks: “Not all of those attracted to Judaism, however, were willing to undergo circumcision. As a result there was on the fringes of the synagogues of the Diaspora a number of people known as God-fearers (Acts 10:2). Attending the synagogue and obeying the so-called Noachian Laws, they provided a fertile soil for the seed of the Christian Gospel.” (Selby, Introduction to the Bible, 276). So does Hauer. (See Hauer, An Introduction to the Bible, 203, and 270).

158 “They [i.e. Jews] also made proselytes of a great many of the Greeks perpetually, and thereby, after sort, brought them to be a portion of their own body.” (Josephus, The Wars of the Jews, Book 7, 3.3.45) Harnack also attested to the proselytizing efforts of Judaism. (See Adolf Harnack, The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries, trans. and ed. James Mofatt [New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961], 17). Fredriksen has an interesting perspective regarding Jewish conversion activities: “Jews by birth, such as Philo and later the rabbis, saw in Judaism’s openness to sympathetic pagans, and especially in the successful proselytism of the synagogue, the answer to the question of Israel’s continuing dispersion. God, by means of the Diaspora, was making good his promise to Abraham that ‘through him all the nations... of the earth will be blessed’ (Gn18:18). Israel was in exile in order to turn Gentiles to God.” (Fredriksen, From Jesus to Christ, 17). In addition, it can be inferred that Jews were active in seeking converts from the way Jews reacted when Paul came into their communities fishing for proselytes: they retaliated by flogging him, as Paul complained to the Corinthians: “Five times I have received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one.” (2 Cor.11:24 NRSV, http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=2Corinthians+11 [accessed February 13, 2013]). Note that the 39 lashes mentioned by Paul is the legal maximum allowed by Jewish law. (See Fredriksen, From Jesus to Christ, 145).

159 See, for example, Acts 13:15 NRSV; or see Acts 14:1 NRSV or Acts 17:1-2 NRSV.

160 The riot in Ephesus, where some pagan businessmen were incensed at Paul for threatening their livelihood, occurred in the vicinity of a theatre. (See Acts 19:28-31 NRSV). In addition, if Paul wanted to reach the biggest audience possible for the least amount of time in order to maximize his time, he had to go to where people congregated. Theaters and amphitheatres were good choices.

161 See Acts 17:16-32 NRSV.
Paul started his ministry towards the start of the fifth decade of the Christian era, roughly twenty years after Jesus had passed away. Two to three years after he left Antioch, around 50-51, he wrote his first epistle while in Athens, addressed to the faithful in the city of Thessalonica, the capital of the Roman province of Macedonia, where the Roman governor resided. “It was a free city, ruled by a popular assembly.” His letter was the first piece of the New Testament ever to be written, at least as far as the extant records show. He had visited another city earlier, Philippi, where he was imprisoned and whipped after a complaint was lodged against him for turning the inhabitants away from their customary pagan rituals.

He mentioned this tribulation to his followers as a way of encouraging them to remain steadfast in their faith in Christ as they themselves were undergoing persecution at the hands of their fellow city-dwellers. He himself had predicted these trials while he was amongst them. Most probably because they all stood out like a sore thumb among their fellow citizens as they were members of a mystery cult, a doomsday cult at that. In the face of mutually shared oppression, the group may have become more cohesive and unified.

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162 See 1Thess. 3:1 NRSV.
164 There may have been earlier works written down before the letter to the Thessalonians, like the original source for the Synoptic Gospels, called Q. Unfortunately, nothing of that piece survives, if ever it was in written form.
165 See Acts 16:16-24 NRSV. He was to stop by this place again, which will be discussed later in conjunction with his letter to the Philippians.
166 See 1 Thess. 2:2 NRSV.
167 “A shared experience of suffering can help to consolidate a social group that is already unified by a common set of beliefs and commitments. That is to say, suffering for the cause can function to emphasize
Paul also reminded the faithful that he and his fellow missionaries toiled day and night as tent-makers so as not to be a burden to them financially while he was busy with his evangelizing efforts.\textsuperscript{168} Most of his converts were probably not members of the moneyed class, although a few souls may have been. Most of them were Gentiles, as he averred that they “turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God.”\textsuperscript{169} They were also meeting together periodically, in houses rather than a building dedicated solely to worship services,\textsuperscript{170} to commemorate the Lord's supper, a practice that was quite common as evidenced in his other letters.\textsuperscript{171} There also seemed to be present some men, and women too, who rose to become leaders among them, who supported the congregation, and assisted others in their religious faith, an aspect common to voluntary associations during Roman times when wealthier patrons underwrote the expenses of the community. He urged them to honor and respect these persons.

Paul also reminded them that Jesus' death and resurrection were harbingers of their future life in Christ, and immediately pivoted to answer the various grumblings and questions coming from them regarding the promised second coming of the Lord.\textsuperscript{172} Their loved ones had passed away and still the Master had not come as he had predicted. He

\textsuperscript{168} See 1 Thess. 2:9 NRSV and Acts 18:3 NRSV.
\textsuperscript{169} 1 Thess. 1:9 NRSV, \url{http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=1Thessalonians+1} (accessed June 20, 2012).
\textsuperscript{170} “Until the latter part of the second century, Christians continued to meet in the homes of individual members. (White, \textit{From Jesus to Christianity}, 440) Ehrman also has the same opinion. (See Ehrman, \textit{The New Testament}, 206, and 331) The earliest archeological example we have of a formal church is around 250 CE, at Dura in Eastern Syria, mentioned by both White and Ehrman in their cited books.
\textsuperscript{171} “For, to begin with, \textit{when you come together as a church}, I hear that there are divisions among you; and to some extent I believe it.” (1 Cor. 11:17-21 NRSV, \url{http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=1Corinthians+11} [accessed July 23, 2012]). (Emphasis is mine).
\textsuperscript{172} These grumblings came from the frustration and deep disappointment that the Thessalonians must have felt for their loved ones who had passed away and still Jesus had not returned as promised (See Ehrman \textit{The New Testament}, 335).
needed to allay their anxieties. He thus comforted them with the pledge that Jesus will definitely be coming down soon to meet with all the living (“we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord”\(^\text{173}\)) together with their departed kith and kin newly resurrected from the grave (“the dead in Christ will rise first”\(^\text{174}\)). Then all of them, both living as well as the newly resurrected dead, will meet with the Lord half-way up in the clouds above.\(^\text{175}\) Moreover, he assured them there was no reason to doubt the promise of the second advent, because it originated not from him but from the Savior himself, and he was just the messenger. The eschaton was going to happen, without fail, within their lifetime.

As Paul was ending his letter, he reminded his followers that the end may come unexpectedly, and swiftly: “Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. When they say, ‘There is peace and security’, then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labour pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape!”\(^\text{176}\) Who were these people who said “There is peace and security?” Perhaps Paul was referring to those who did not believe the end was at hand,\(^\text{177}\) that is why they were going to be visited with terrible

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\(^\text{175}\) “Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them [i.e., those recently risen from the dead] to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord for ever.” (1 Thess. 4:17 NRSV, http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=1Thessalonians+4 [accessed December 5, 2012]).
\(^\text{177}\) Probably the non-believers were persons who were jaded already with all these promises and predictions of a looming catastrophe. Jesus had promised the same thing twenty or more years ago and yet nothing had
carnage when the day of reckoning did come. He was so confident that time was running out, that nowhere in his wildest dreams did he envision a future, two thousand years later, when others would still continue to be reading, let alone parsing and analyzing his words. As far as he was concerned, time was going to come to a sudden halt shortly.

A question then arises: after Paul had written the abovementioned epistle to the Thessalonians, why was it that some persons living later on, after Paul had died and Jesus had not yet returned, deny that the man from Tarsus proclaimed the end of all things was at hand? The soon-to-come eschaton clearly leaps out from his letter to the Thessalonians. Tertullian, who was born in the second century and who will be discussed later in sub-chapter 4.2, could not accept the notion that Paul believed the end was at hand, even after the former had read the same eschatological lines in the first letter to the Thessalonians. Tertullian reasoned that Paul’s words in 2 Thessalonians predicted the end will come only after Rome had first fallen: “‘Let no man deceive you by any means. For that day shall not come, unless indeed there first come a falling away,’ he [i.e. Paul, the supposed author of 2 Thessalonians] means indeed of this present empire.”

(Emphasis is mine). Apparently, Tertullian seemed to be the first Christian writer to suggest Paul understood that the “falling away” referred to the Roman Empire.

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178 Tradition has it that Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians. However, most modern scholars deny Paul’s authorship. This letter and its authorship will be discussed in sub-chapter 4.1.
179 Tertullian, “Other Passages Quoted from Paul, which Categorically Assert the Resurrection of the Flesh at the Final Judgment,” On the Resurrection of the Flesh, 41.
Many reasons can surely be devised to explain this seeming anomaly, but it all boils down to one remarkable quality of the human mind when it tries to understand the outside world: perception is always reality. The same Tertullian believed the words of the man from Tarsus were, so to speak, bible-truth, for the latter's words were inspired by God. Since God cannot be wrong, Paul cannot be wrong. It was pretty obvious then, in his thinking, that Paul could never have meant the world was ending during his lifetime because it never happened.

A good example of the above approach of asserting Paul never believed in the impending *eschaton* because of the Bible's inerrancy can be seen today from how the Catholic Encyclopedia treats the eschatology of the apostle from Tarsus. It admits that “Non-Catholics... generally admit that the earliest Christian writer predicted the second coming would be within his own lifetime,” while contending that “Catholics insist that Paul cannot have said the Parousia would be during his lifetime. Had he said so he would have erred; the inspired word of God would err; the error would be that of the Holy Spirit more than of Paul.”\(^{181}\) Craveri flatly declares that “Catholic theology has renounced any attempt to set a date for the Parousia.”\(^{182}\)

The Catholic Encyclopedia furthermore concedes that the Vulgate and the Douay Bibles, versions of the Scriptures in Latin and English respectively, which were duly approved by the Catholic hierarchy for Roman Catholics, seem to confirm that the apostle from Tarsus believed in the impending doom. In fact, it even quotes the Vulgate version


\(^{182}\) Craveri, *The Life of Jesus*, 346.
of the words from the man from Tarsus, concerning the persons alive on earth who will be raptured up to heaven on the day of reckoning: “Nos, qui vivimus, qui residui sumus.” Translated, it means “we, who are alive, who remain [on earth when the Lord comes].” Yet, the Encyclopedia still insists that Paul was never an eschatological prophet. As proof, it cites an original Greek version of the same words of Paul just quoted above in Latin: “hemeis oi zontes oi paraleipomenoi, ama syn autois arpagesometha,” and converts it into English as: “We if we be alive - if we be left [on earth when the Lord comes.]” This translation changes entirely the meaning of Paul’s words, creating a conditional clause where there was none before, at least not in the Latin version, which, ironically, is the basis for the Catholic bible.

Yet, there are other Greek Bibles that, when translated, do not carry any conditional clause as the Encyclopedia does. The “Greek Interlinear Bible” for example, translates the first three Greek words quoted by the Encyclopedia, “hemeis hoi zontes” as: “We the living.” It is a declarative phrase, not a conditional “We if we be alive.” Moreover, the Codex Sinaiticus, the oldest complete Bible of the fourth century, which was written in Greek, translates the same three words as: “We the living.” In addition, other early authorities of the Church, such as the third century bishop Hippolytus, who was “the last prominent writer of the Roman church to use Greek,” and who will be

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187 Everett Ferguson, “Hippolytus,” in Ferguson, 531.
discussed right after Tertullian in sub-chapter 4.2, read the same line in 1 Thessalonians, in Greek most probably, and referenced the line as: “We which are alive (and) remain unto the coming of the Lord.”\(^{188}\) Again, there is no condition here.

The fact then is that the same Greek words are translated by some experts without the “if” condition, while the Catholic Encyclopedia, using their own scholars in the Greek language presumably, translates it as being conditional. While I cannot ascertain which of the Greek translations is the correct one as it is beyond my ken, my argument here is that the assessment of Paul as a non-eschatological prophet by persons from the Encyclopedia mandates that their interpretation of the said three Greek words to be: “We, if we be alive.” In other words, their perception determines their reality.

Summarizing therefore, it seems some people will believe just what they want to believe. But perhaps the most important reason why Tertullian maintained that Paul was not an eschatological prophet was because most of the former’s peers thought the same way, which reinforced and strengthened their collective psyche.\(^{189}\) This is also what is called the “herd” mentality, where individuals band together in a group, believing in the same things and acting the same way.

Paul did not stay long in Thessalonica for a group of disgruntled Jews, acting together as a group, ran him out of town. Paul proceeded thus, via the city of Berea (near

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\(^{188}\) Hippolytus, *Treatise on Christ and Antichrist*, 66.

\(^{189}\) Of course, the fact that Jesus did not come back played an important part too, but not a crucial part by itself. Ignatius of Antioch, for example, who lived in the late first century and who will be discussed in sub-chapter 4.3, knew Jesus had not returned within Paul’s lifetime as the latter had preached, but still believed the last days were forthcoming.
Mount Olympus), to Athens where he had an unsuccessful stint as noted earlier. From thence he walked to Corinth, a city destroyed in 144 BCE when the inhabitants revolted against Roman rule. It was rebuilt and made the capital by Julius Caesar of the southern part of Greece, called Achaia, about a century later. It was a prosperous city by the time the apostle from Tarsus visited, although a bit dissolute.

He stayed here for quite some time, about a year and a half as attested by the Acts of the Apostles, concentrating his efforts on God-fearing pagans with whom he was getting to be more successful rather than with his own countrymen, a pattern that most probably did not escape his notice. Another year or so later he was in Ephesus, where he remained for about two years due to the success he experienced there in spite of local opposition. While staying in this city, he wrote his followers in Corinth, sometime around 53 or 54, to resolve some highly irritating problems, to be discussed shortly. For after he had departed that city, bedlam arose in his church from the machinations of

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190 See Acts 17:5-10 NRSV.
191 See Acts 17:15 NRSV.
192 See Acts 18:1 NRSV.
193 See Acts 18:11 NRSV.
194 See Acts 19:1-10 NRSV.
195 “I do not want to see you [i.e., the Corinthian converts] now just in passing, for I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.” (1 Cor. 16:7-8 NRSV, http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=1Corinthians+16 [accessed December 5, 2012]).
196 See Introduction, Table 1. Kee, however, thinks 1 Corinthians was written one year later, sometime 54 or 55. (See Kee, Understanding the New Testament, 422). As for Williams, he claims “Paul’s letter [to the Corinthians] may be dated c. A.D. 55-6, its place of origin being Ephesus.” (Williams, ‘I and II Corinthians,’ in Black, 954). Early Christian Writings has the date as 50-60. (See Early Christian Writings http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/ [accessed January 9, 2013]).
As a result, most probably he was not just irritated, he was furious. After sarcastically mocking the Corinthians, that they were “wise in Christ,” while he and the other missionaries were “fools for the sake of Christ,” Paul continued: “We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honour, but we in disrepute.” He then proceeded to recount to them the travails that the apostles underwent trying to convert them; he then concluded his tales of woe by self-deprecatingly claiming that “We have become like the rubbish of the world, the dregs of all things, to this very day. I am not writing this to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children.”

He then warned the malcontents: “But some of you, thinking that I am not coming to you, have become arrogant. But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I will find out not the talk of these arrogant people but their power. For the kingdom of God depends not on talk but on power.” He then threw down the gauntlet: “What would you prefer? Am I to come to you with a stick, or with love in a spirit of gentleness?” But gentle he was not, not at that moment. Rather, he was mad.

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197 “I [i.e., Paul] am writing to you [i.e., the Corinthians] not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother or sister who is sexually immoral or greedy, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or robber. Do not even eat with such a one.” (1 Cor. 5:11 NRSV, http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=1Corinthians+5 (accessed December 5, 2012)) In the words of Ehrman: “The congregation that Paul addresses appears to have been riddled with problems involving interpersonal conflicts and ethical improprieties.” (Ehrman, The New Testament, 340)

198 Paul must at first have been proud of his accomplishment at having successfully led some person away from iniquity and into salvation while in Corinth. Then later on, after he left for another city in order to continue toiling for men’s souls, he must have been frustrated and irritated, or worse off, highly agitated and furious, after learning that his labors in Corinth were actually exercises in futility, for reasons that will be described shortly.


Just as with the Thessalonians, most of Paul's converts in Corinth were of the lower class, the uneducated. Immorality had broken out among some of them. It was not surprising as the place was known for its loose reputation. Prostitution was a thriving business. Some of the flock, who the man from Tarsus thought were safely ensconced within his walls of saving grace, were leaving the reservation and visiting houses of ill-repute. Another was sleeping with his stepmother, and, moreover, others were wondering what the controversy was all about. Paul urged his followers to expel

203 We can infer their lowly status from the fact that Paul urged them to “Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth.” (1 Cor. 1:26 NRSV, [http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=1Corinthians+6](http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=1Corinthians+6) [accessed December 5, 2012]). Ehrman insists that “it appears that most Christians, especially early on in the movement, came for the most part from the lower, uneducated classes.” (Bart Ehrman, Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why. [San Francisco: HarperCollins Publishers, 2005], 39).

204 “Shun fornication!” (1 Cor. 6:18 NRSV, [http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=1Corinthians+6](http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=1Corinthians+6) [accessed December 5, 2012]) It is not hard to imagine why this could be happening. Some simpletons professed, as Paul had preached, that Jesus was their Master whom God had raised him from the dead; they will thus participate in his resurrection and be saved. (See Rom. 10:9 NRSV). So, they could do whatever pleased them. As a matter of fact, Paul claimed that they were of the attitude that “All things are lawful for me.” (1 Cor. 6:12 NRSV, [http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=1Corinthians+6](http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=1Corinthians+6) [accessed December 5, 2012]). This meant they could do whatever they pleased while they tarried here on earth as their salvation was already guaranteed. This attitude is not uncommon among followers of doomsday cults.

205 “By the time of Paul Corinth had regained its political importance by becoming the seat of the Roman provincial government for Achaia.... It had also regained, unfortunately, much of its reputation for licentiousness.” (Selby, Introduction to the Bible, N.T. 351)

206 As Ehrman notes: “It was an Athenian, the comic poet Aristophanes who invented the verb 'Corinthianize,' which meant to engage in sexually promiscuous activities.” (Ehrman, The New Testament, 340). He, however, opines that Corinth did not really deserve the loose reputation it had garnered. Some historians, he alleged, have suggested “that its image was intentionally tarnished by the citizens of Athens, one of its nearby rivals and the intellectual center of ancient Greece.” (Ibid., 340)

207 “The personal conduct of community members was not at all what Paul had in mind when he led them away from what he viewed as their degenerate pasts into the church of Christ.” (Ibid., 340)

208 “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Should I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that whoever is united to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For it is said, 'The two shall be one flesh.'” (1 Cor. 6:15-16 NRSV, [http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=1Corinthians+6](http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=1Corinthians+6) [accessed December 6, 2012]). Perhaps Christianity, in general, frowned upon promiscuous behavior because “Lacking the clear ritual boundaries provided in Judaism by circumcision and dietary laws, Christians tended to make their exceptional sexual discipline bear the full burden of expressing the difference between themselves and the pagan world.” (Paul Veyne, ed., and Arthur Goldhammer trans., A History of Private Life: From Pagan Rome to Byzantium [Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987], 263).

209 “It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not found even among pagans; for a man is living with his father’s wife. And you are arrogant!” (1 Corinthians 5:1-2 NRSV,)
this person from the congregation, and turn him over to Satan.\textsuperscript{210} Some were jockeying furiously for prestige and position,\textsuperscript{211} claiming superiority over others because of their spiritual visions. Others went even further. They claimed to be speaking in tongues while rapt in a trance, spewing gibberish more than anything.\textsuperscript{212} Nobody could understand them, not even they themselves.\textsuperscript{213} Continuing, he urged them to channel their energies to improving their congregation, instead of fighting among themselves.\textsuperscript{214} And this was the group he addressed at the very beginning of his letter as belonging to “the church of God that is in Corinth!”\textsuperscript{215}

After having given the mischief-makers a severe piece of his mind, Paul asserted that the same Holy Spirit bestowed on his followers the needed skills to run the

\textsuperscript{210} See 1 Cor. 5:1-5 NRSV.
\textsuperscript{211} “Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you should be in agreement and that there should be no divisions among you, but that you should be united in the same mind and the same purpose. For it has been reported to me by Chloe’s people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters.” (1 Cor. 1:10-11 NRSV, [accessed December 6, 2012]).
\textsuperscript{212} “The most serious problem in the Corinthian worship has to do with ‘spiritual gifts,’ more specifically, glossolalia (ecstatic gibberish).” (Selby, Introduction to the Bible, N.T. 366)
\textsuperscript{213} Paul scolded them for speaking in tongues which nobody else could understand: “For those who speak in a tongue do not speak to other people but to God; for nobody understands them, since they are speaking mysteries in the Spirit.... Now, brothers and sisters, if I come to you speaking in tongues, how will I benefit you unless I speak to you in some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or teaching? ... If in a tongue you utter speech that is not intelligible, how will anyone know what is being said? For you will be speaking into the air.... If then I do not know the meaning of a sound, I will be a foreigner to the speaker and the speaker a foreigner to me.” (1 Cor. 14:2-11 NRSV, [accessed December 6, 2012]). (Emphasis is mine).
\textsuperscript{214} “Since you are eager for spiritual gifts, strive to excel in them for building up the church.” (1 Cor. 14:12 NRSV, [accessed December 6, 2012]). Ehrman described the same situation as: “Different members of the community would speak prophecies and make proclamations in languages that no one else (including themselves) knew, trying to surpass one another in demonstrating their abilities to speak in divinely inspired tongues.” (Ehrman, The New Testament, 340)
\textsuperscript{215} 1 Cor. 1:2 NRSV, [accessed June 20, 2012].
community, without need for formal leadership. His was a charismatic church, where only God appointed the principals of the church, for he provided the faithful the needed spiritual tools to keep the congregation running until his second coming. To some he gave the gift of: “wisdom, and to another... knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.” Only God ruled the church, and he would appoint the necessary leaders to lead the congregation harmoniously to salvation.

Selby describes the “charismatic” situation of the early church a bit differently than Ehrman: “In the earliest period charismatic leaders under the direction of the apostles arose to assume, as the lists we have observed in Paul’s letters show, a variety of functions in the local churches. Although they sometimes got out of hand,... so that Paul found it necessary at times to defend his authority over the churches founded under his leadership.” (Emphasis is mine). While this may be interpreted as somehow that Paul

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216 “To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.” (1 Cor. 12:7 NRSV, http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=1Corinthians+12 [accessed June 20, 2012])
217 “Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. (1 Cor. 12:27-28 NRSV, http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=1Corinthians+12 [accessed June 20, 2012]).
218 “Paul's churches were ‘charismatic communities’, that is, congregations of people who believed they had been endowed with God's Spirit and so been given 'gifts' (Greek charismata) to enable them to minister to one another as teachers, prophets, evangelists..., and so on. There was nobody ultimately in charge.” (Ehrman, The New Testament, 416) (Emphasis is mine). Kee concurs. (See Kee, Understanding the New Testament, 256-257). Presumably the institution of a hierarchy was done either after Paul had passed away or in contravention of Paul’s instructions.
220 Selby, Introduction to the Bible, N.T. 408.
appointed the leaders implicitly because he directed them, nevertheless, Selby does not make that claim explicitly.

Even Paul himself proclaimed it was God who appointed the leaders of the church. These charismatic leaders were, therefore, persons chosen by God to be, for example, interpreters, or prophets, or teachers, and who were all under the guidance, or direction, of Paul. Since Jesus was coming back soon, maybe tomorrow, maybe the next day, or even maybe even later tonight, there was no need for a formal hierarchy.

Yet, for all of Paul’s good intentions, his efforts proved almost nil due to human frailty. Paul had to chastise them for being devotees of personality cults, riven by dueling factions. He could not imagine his followers were so naive as to succumb to the call of competing rivals. Various factions claimed their leader was Peter, or Apollos, or even himself. Did they not know all of them belonged to one leader only, and that is Christ? He must have been besides himself, all frustrated and fuming, for: “The voice heard at his conversion on the Damascus road convinced Paul that in attacking the

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222 “I could not speak to you as spiritual people, but rather as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food, for... you are still of the flesh. For as long as there is jealousy and quarrelling among you, are you not... behaving according to human inclinations? For when one says, ‘I belong to Paul’, and another, ‘I belong to Apollos’, are you not merely human?” (1 Cor. 3:1-4 NRSV, [http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=1Corinthians+3](http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=1Corinthians+3) [accessed February 14, 2013]).

223 Apollos is mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles as an erudite person: “Now there came to Ephesus a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria. He was an eloquent man, well-versed in the scriptures. He had been instructed in the Way of the Lord; and he spoke with burning enthusiasm and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus.” (Acts 18:24-25 NRSV, [http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Acts+18](http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Acts+18) [accessed February 14, 2013]).

224 See Acts 18:22 NRSV.

225 “So let no one boast about human leaders. For all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all belong to you, and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.” (1 Cor. 3:21-23 NRSV, [http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=1Corinthians+3](http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=1Corinthians+3) [accessed February 14, 2013]). Notice that he is stressing here that there is no need for human leaders, for they are all one in Christ.
Church, he was attacking Christ. It is unthinkable to him that Christ’s body should be split into sections.”

Paul then expounded more formally and more forcefully on the theme of an imminent *parousia*, using basically the same topic of immortality he had provided the Thessalonians earlier, but adding transmutation into the mix:

Listen to this sacred truth: *we shall not all die,* but when the last trumpet sounds, *we shall all be changed in an instant,* as quickly as the blinking of an eye. For when the trumpet sounds, the dead will be raised, never to die again, and we shall be changed. For what is mortal must be changed into what is immortal; what will die must be changed into what cannot die. (Emphasis is mine).

His words could not have been any clearer: the *parousia* will happen soon, without doubt, while they were still alive. Their bodies will be transformed into immortal forms in preparation for entry into everlasting paradise. As he was ending his letter, he issued a plaintive cry, to be copied and used later by others: “*Marana tha* - Our Lord, come!” No other words could best epitomize the intensity of his longing; his soul ached for nothing more than to be united with his life-giving Master, the sooner the better.

Paul’s proselytizing efforts seemed to have flourished in Ephesus, so much so that some of the city's businessmen who were losing their means of livelihood decided to incite a town riot to stop the upstart Jew in his tracks before he converted more of their

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226 Williams, “I and II Corinthians,” in Black, 954.
fellow city-dwellers. It was in this city where the commotion happened around a theater. Under pressure from them, he was forced to sail away to the northern Roman province of Macedonia, where he stayed fishing for converts for some months, and finally leaving the area via Philippi.

Luke described the metropolis correctly as “a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony” Augustus conferred on the city the status of *jus Italicum*, giving the inhabitants of the city the full rights of Roman citizenship, such as the right to appeal to the emperor, among others. By Paul's time, the place was populated by ethnic Romans, Macedonians, Greeks and Jews; but the inhabitants of the city considered themselves Romans. The city was ruled by two collegiate magistrates, whose official attendants (i.e., bodyguards in modern language) were called lictors. They beat Paul and Silas, his travelling companion at the time, most probably with the

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229 “When they [i.e. the rioting pagans] heard this, they were enraged and shouted, ‘Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!’ The city was filled with the confusion; and people rushed together to the theatre, dragging with them Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians who were Paul’s travelling-companions. Paul wished to go into the crowd, but the disciples would not let him; even some officials of the province of Asia, who were friendly to him, sent him a message urging him not to venture into the theatre. (Acts 19:28-31 NRSV, http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Acts+19 [accessed December 6, 2012]).

230 See Acts 20:1-6 NRSV.


234 See Acts 16:21 NRSV.

235 The lictors acted as bodyguards for their superiors: “The consuls kept... their coercive, administrative and policing power - they therefore retained their armed bodyguards, or lictors, who implemented their right of arrest and summons.” (Marcel Le Glay et al., *A History of Rome*, 4th ed. trans. Antonia Nevill [Chichester, West Sussex: John Wiley and Sons, Ltd., 2009], 48).
rod of their *fasces*, the first time they visited the place a few years back.\textsuperscript{236} He was accused, at that time, of the same crime he was charged with while in Ephesus: he was leading the citizens astray, away from Roman customs. The charge did not deter him, though, from visiting the place one more time. He could not take no for an answer.

This time, on his second visit to Philippi, Paul had better luck: no unwelcome blows awaited him. This northern city became his place of refuge after disaffected Jews made things too hot for him in Southern Greece.\textsuperscript{237} In addition, his efforts were rewarded with success here, for he succeeded in establishing a thriving community of believers by the time he left the place. In fact, the next epistle he wrote was to his band of followers in Philippi, around 55 or 56.\textsuperscript{238} He expected to share with them the second coming of Jesus: “I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.”\textsuperscript{239} Towards the end of his letter, at the last chapter, he of course did not fail to mention to them that the end of all things was fast approaching: “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near.”\textsuperscript{240} He inked his letter while he was in jail, the location of which he did not mention. Nor did he explain why he was imprisoned, except that it had something to do with “the defence and confirmation of the gospel.”\textsuperscript{241} Neither does the Acts of the Apostles shed any light on it. He must have been used to this routine

\textsuperscript{236} See Acts 16:22-23 NRSV.
\textsuperscript{237} See Acts 20:3 NRSV.
\textsuperscript{238} Most probably Paul wrote his letter to the Philippians after his second visit, when he was more successful than the first time. For the dates, see Introduction, Table 1.
\textsuperscript{239} Phil. 1:6 NRSV, \url{http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Philippians+1} (accessed June 22, 2012).
\textsuperscript{240} Phil. 4:4-5 NRSV, \url{http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Philippians+4} (accessed February 22, 2013).
\textsuperscript{241} Phil. 1:7 NRSV, \url{http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Philippians+1} (accessed June 22, 2012).
by this time. As a matter of fact, he boasted of his imprisonment to his readers. He proudly proclaimed that, as a result of his incarceration, other missionaries were emboldened to spread the words of God more forcefully.242

There is one feature, however, of Paul's correspondence with the Philippians that seemingly poses a problem for this thesis. Right at the beginning, he addressed his letter “To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.”243 (Emphasis is mine). But the fact is he never appointed any formal leader over his flock, not even deacons, the subordinates. Only God appointed leaders as he saw fit, and not Paul. It is true he had the help of his fellow ministers most of the time, but none of them occupied any formal rank within the community. He expected the end to come soon, so there was no need for any kind of official governing body.244 The only supreme leader he and his followers acknowledged was Jesus. The question, therefore, is who appointed the leaders of the church if it was not him?245

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242 See Phil. 1:12-14 NSRV.
244 Luke's Acts of the Apostles had Paul calling, however, the elders of Ephesus for a meeting. Paul, however, never mentioned he appointed overseers to supervise the flock; there was no need if he was going to establish a charismatic congregation guided by the Holy Spirit which was going to join Jesus in a short while. Needless to say, Luke had changed some of the aspects of Paul's missions when the former penned his version of Early Christianity about thirty to fifty years after Paul had written his letters. Luke, for example, did not mention the fight between Paul and Peter in Antioch regarding hobnobbing with Greeks, where Barnabas, the former's companion, sided with the latter and left the company of Paul. Luke attributed the parting of ways between Paul and Barnabas merely to a disagreement over one follower by the name of John, something Paul never mentioned in any of his letters. For reasons I have described earlier, if there is a conflict between Luke’s and Paul’s accounts, I rather believe the latter’s narrative than the former.
245 The other question is, if others assigned the leaders for the community, who established the congregation at Philippi? The record is unclear. Paul's letter to the Philippians does not throw light on the matter, nor the Acts of the Apostles. It may have been Paul who first founded the church here, and then others came later to proselytize further, and then chose the leaders. Or it may have been others who were the first to come over and appoint the overseers, and Paul arrived later.
Paul later in Philippians alluded to others who “proclaim Christ from envy and rivalry,” and who “proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but intending to increase my suffering in my imprisonment.” Paul, however, avers that it does not matter really who preached Christ to them, since “Christ is proclaimed in every way, whether out of false motives or true; and in that I rejoice.” Later on, he again called them names, such as “dogs,” “evil workers,” who were “mutilators of the flesh,” and “enemies of the cross of Christ,” whose “end is destruction!” He boasted he himself was a Hebrew just like his opponents, belonging to the tribe of Benjamin, circumcised on the eight day according to the Law; but, unlike his detractors, his righteousness came not from observance of Mosaic precepts, but from his faith in Christ. He was willing to suffer like his Master and join him in his soon-to-come heavenly kingdom. As such, he did not fail to repeat his belief in the imminent parousia, instructing recipients of his letter to “Show a gentle attitude. The Lord is coming soon.”

In an earlier letter to the Galatians, he accused his enemies of being appeasers of Jews, because they were afraid of getting whipped by Jewish authorities, totally unlike him who stood up to the Temple leaders. In the same letter also, he claimed his

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248 See Phil. 3:2 NRSV. The appellation of “mutilators of the flesh” seems to be a dead giveaway to his perennial enemies: the pro-circumcision group of James, the brother of Jesus and the leader of the Jerusalem Christians. This will be further discussed in the next paragraph.
249 See Phil. 3:18-19 NRSV.
250 See Phil. 3:2-21 NRSV.
252 See Gal. 6:12-17 NRSV.
opponents were sent by James, the first bishop of Jerusalem and brother of Jesus, as
mentioned earlier in the ugly incident with Peter the apostle.253

Selby, though, is of the opinion that Paul’s enemies in his letter to the Galatians
were not the Jewish faction coming from Jerusalem, but some other persons.254 He cites a
number of reasons justifying his point of view, but this line from Galatians: “Whoever it
is that is confusing you will pay the penalty,” 255 is one he uses to prove his argument. His
line of reasoning is this: if Paul’s opponents were the pro-circumcision group from
Jerusalem, why did he not state so, rather than claiming them to be unknown (“Whoever
it is that is confusing you.”) But if he did not know who his enemies were, why did he not
state that his opponents were unknown to him? Instead, he blamed the confrontation in
Antioch between himself and Peter on the Jerusalem faction.256

One other scholar, though, disagrees with me, sort of. He claims that not all of the
group from Jerusalem opposed Paul. James, and Peter too, were not really his
adversaries, but rather a small sub-group of Jewish Christians in Jerusalem, who “insisted
on circumcision; they were Paul’s chief opponents-- at Galatia, Corinth, Antioch these
appeared or their emissaries.... The Judaisers [i.e., Paul’s antagonists] were probably
Pharisaic Christians.”257 Davies does not define who the Pharisaic Christians were, but

253 See Gal. 2:11-12 NRSV.
254 See Selby, Introduction to the Bible, N.T. 330-332
256 See Gal 2:11-21 NRSV.
presumably these were Jews who were Pharisees before they were Christians; hence they were sticklers for the Law.\textsuperscript{258}

Since the preachers at Philippi who he was insulting were clearly his opponents, and since he called them “mutilators of the flesh,” they were most probably members of the pro-circumcision group from the Judean branch of Christianity, under James.\textsuperscript{259} It was the group of James that he cursed, calling them names such as “dogs,” or “enemies of Christ.”\textsuperscript{260} Most probably then, the leaders of the church Paul encountered in Philippi were appointed by the apostles coming from Jerusalem, and not from him.\textsuperscript{261} In short

\textsuperscript{258} It appears, though, that Davies is relying on Luke’s version of the story that Peter and Paul were amiable friends.

\textsuperscript{259} “The ‘Christianity’ of James, Jesus’ brother, and of the Jerusalem ‘Church’ has...failed to survive. Clearly, to begin with, it was regarded as the mainstream. James and his followers were adamantly opposed to Paul’s abandonment of the Jewish Torah.” (Wilson, \textit{Jesus}, 248)

\textsuperscript{260} It must have been James then who Paul alleged was the Satan that was going around and deceiving others, feigning to be an angel of light. He had pretty strong feelings and used pretty strong words definitely, and something that Luke would later pretend to be non-existent in the Acts of the Apostles. As far as Luke was concerned, the relationship between Paul and the other apostles, notably Peter and James, was just peachy.

\textsuperscript{261} It is also possible that the persons who appointed the administrators of the church in Philippi belonged to another group apart from the apostles of the Jerusalem church. In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul identified other followers of Jesus who were not the apostles, nor himself, when he wrote about the appearance of the resurrected Christ to the faithful: “Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. \textit{Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive}, though some have died. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to someone untimely born, he appeared also to me” (1 Cor. 15:3-8 NRSV, \texttt{http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=1Corinthians+15} [accessed December 7, 2012]). (Emphasis is mine). Selby avers that the reason why variant groups may have existed even in the earliest days of Christianity was that “Innumerable possibilities for syncretistic combinations from ubiquitous Eastern religions were brought into the Church almost from the very beginning by gentile converts.... Pleas for unity in Ephesians and John, for example, show that the heretical divisions... were already, during the last half of the first century, in the making.” (Selby, \textit{Introduction to the Bible}, N.T. 407-408) Some of these other groups may have also proclaimed that Gentiles had to be circumcised first before becoming Christians. So, the term “mutilators of the flesh,” which Paul used to define his enemies, may have been applicable to them. Or the word may have been appropriate for the apostles \textit{and} the other group from the said five hundred. However, based only on the record, the mutilators could only be the Jerusalem faction with whom he had tangled previously. The “other groups” are just possibilities.
then, the letter to the Philippians does not do violence to my point that Paul never
appointed a formal hierarchy.

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\(^{263}\) Selby, *Introduction to the Bible*, N.T. 407-408
based only on the record, the mutilators could only be the Jerusalem faction with whom he had tangled previously. The “other groups” are just possibilities.

Almost everywhere Paul went fishing for converts, his opponents followed him to contradict him, to make his life harder. He probably thought they had nothing better else to do than to cause him grief, for their precept was Gentiles must first become Jews before they could be Christians. His position was always in the negative: Christians did not need to be subject to the Law of Moses, because, as he kept repeating over and over in his epistles, salvation was through faith, and not through works of the Mosaic Law. As he dictated to a scribe in his letter to the Romans: “The one who is righteous will live by faith.”

Rome eventually became the last stop in Paul's missionary journeys. This was not because he planned it, but because he was forced to. There was a riot in Jerusalem that involved him, and he almost got lynched by a mob, except for the timely intervention of Roman soldiers. To escape getting flogged by the guards, he invoked his right to appeal to the emperor at Rome. Thus off to Rome he went.

Towards the end of his ministry, he sent a missive to the Romans sometime 58-59, which was the last of the letters he penned. He usually wrote his epistles to the

266 For the dates, see Introduction, Table 1. Other scholars have it earlier, i.e., 57 or 58 CE. See, for example, Ehrman, The New Testament, 374. Kee thinks the letter was written around 56-57. (Kee, Understanding the New Testament, 241). Manson claims that “Paul composed [Romans] during his stay in Greece, probably at Corinth.... The date of this visit cannot be fixed with certainty; but it took place in winter sometime between late 54 and early 59.” (Manson, “Romans,” in Black, 940). Early Christian
various churches in order to resolve some problems that had arisen after he had departed, but this was not the case for the Christians in Rome as he had not visited the place yet. It was ironic, in fact, that he proclaimed to them that he intended to preach the gospel only where no one else had done so, but somebody else, other than him, must have gotten to the eternal city first. Tradition ascribes to the apostle Peter the honor of being the founding father of the Christian church in the capital city of the Empire. Evidently, the wish from the apostle from Tarsus was not fulfilled, either from poor planning on his part, or from just plain bad luck, which is just another term for the vagaries of history.

It is interesting, though, that Paul sent his greetings to twenty-eight persons he explicitly named, but not one of them was Peter! While this may mean Peter was absent from Rome when Paul wrote his letter, or that Peter was in Rome but Paul ignored him because of their differences, it may also be one written proof to show Peter was never in Rome. Ehrman mentions the omission also, but further elaborates: “The earliest books to be written by members of the Roman church, however, 1 Clement and The Shepherd of Hermas, say nothing about Peter starting the church there, or being its first bishop.”

Grant also takes notice of the exclusion, but makes this observation: “Certainly there were Christians at Rome who were in close contact with Paul, but that does not deny that there may have been others who followed Peter.” Furthermore, he makes

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Writings has the date as 50-60. (See Early Christian Writings [http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/][accessed January 9, 2013]).
267 See Rom. 15:20 NRSV.
269 Grant, *Saint Peter*, 149.
these comments: “The Epistle 1 Clement (c.ad 96)... records Peter's noble past, but has nothing whatever to say about his having been at Rome.”\(^{270}\) He also adds:

In support of the opposite argument (that Peter was in Rome and died there) it has been supposed that when Ignatius... said to the Romans: 'I did not request you, as Peter and Paul did,' he was implying that Peter, as well as Paul, had preached to their community in the city. However, Justin Martyr,... [writing years later,] does not make any mention of Peter having been there. About the activities of Simon Magus in the city he has a good deal to say. But on Simon's supposed confrontation with Peter in Rome, ... Justin remains entirely silent.\(^{271}\)

He lists other arguments that further disproves Peter was in Rome, but admits that all these points “do not add up to anything like a demonstration Peter *never* went to Rome.”\(^{272}\) (Emphasis is mine). In addition, he posits that there may have been a different Christian group in Rome with whom Paul was not in contact, but Peter was.\(^{273}\)

As to who really was the founder of the Christian church in Rome, Ehrman opines that “Most scholars, realizing that we can never know for certain [who first established Christianity in Rome], simply assume that Christianity was brought to the imperial capital either by travelers who had converted to the faith while abroad..., or by Christians who decided for one reason or another to relocate there, or by another missionary.”\(^{274}\)

Selby, though, denies that the greeting to all those personages in Rome was written by Paul: “The sixteenth chapter of Romans [containing the salutations] both by the evidence of the text and contents cannot be a part of that letter.”\(^{275}\) The reasons he gives are: “The brief exhortations in verses 17-20 is completely out of keeping with the content of

\(^{270}\) Ibid., 148.

\(^{271}\) Ibid.

\(^{272}\) Ibid., 149.

\(^{273}\) Ibid., 150.


\(^{275}\) Selby, *Introduction to the Bible*, N.T. 390
Romans, but more important, the extensive list of greeting, including twenty-six names along with references to relatives, is inexplicable in a letter to a church which Paul had never visited and for which neither he nor his co-workers had any responsibility.”

Furthermore, Selby claims that based on empirical evidence from various papyri and manuscripts, “Chapter 16 was a separate letter which became attached later to Romans.” He elaborates further that Chapter 16 was actually a letter of recommendation from Paul for a certain Phoebe, who was going from Cenchrea (the port of Corinth) to Ephesus. In all probability, Paul wrote the two letters (i.e. to the Romans and for Phoebe) while he was in Corinth.

Paul addressed the Romans to ask them for assistance, financial most probably, although he did not say so explicitly. He wanted to travel ultimately to Spain, using Rome as a springboard, perhaps to comply with the commandment of Jesus to spread the word to all nations in order to hasten the second coming as the evangelists later testified. Spain represented his last frontier for the conversion of the heathen. He also had to get there because he believed his fellow Jews will be saved only after he had finished

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276 Ibid., N.T. 390
277 Ibid., N.T. 391-392
278 See ibid., N.T. 392
279 Ehrman thinks that one reason for Paul's letter was to ask for financial support. “It appears that Paul is interested in more than simply meeting with the Roman Christians. He evidently wants them to provide support, moral and financial, for his westward mission.” (Ehrman, The New Testament, 373). White, though, thinks the purpose of his letter to the Romans was twofold, namely: “A letter of introduction for Paul... sent to prepare for Paul's visit to Rome and to secure financial support for an intended new mission to Spain.” (White, From Jesus to Christianity, 212). Hauer agrees, more or less, with White's assessment. (See Hauer, An Introduction to the Bible, 287).
280 It is interesting to note that Paul never visited the African continent, or at the least Roman part of Africa. His travels were always north or northwest of his native Judea. Did he ever entertain the idea of going south or southwest of the Jewish homeland? We really do not know, as he never wrote about Africa in his letters. But from his itinerary as we know it, it seems he did not have that intention.
converting as many Gentiles as he could. Hidden in those words may have been a clue that he himself was getting a bit troubled by the deferment of the *eschaton*. By the time of his letter to the Romans, he believed the second advent could only come after he had converted all the pagans that could possibly be saved, and following that, the conversion of the erstwhile chosen people. That may have been the reason then why Jesus was postponing his arrival: the magic number was not yet at hand. Or so he probably believed. But his message was still the same: the *eschaton* was still coming soon. But the path to victory still had some hurdles to be overcome: the conversion of the correct number of Gentiles, then the Jews, and then, finally, he will be rewarded with the much-anticipated coming of his Lord and Saviour, within his lifetime.

Paul hoped to visit Rome after he finished bringing to Jerusalem all the aid he had been collecting from his churches outside Judea. Although at first glance his plan to
aid his co-religionists in the Jewish homeland may have been laudatory, his intentions may not have been completely altruistic. He may have planned to offer his donations to the authorities in Jerusalem as something of a bribe to soften his foes' opposition to him. Other scholars opine differently, though. They think his letter to the Romans, which contained a good dissertation of his views, was a means for him to concretize his thoughts prior to defending them in Jerusalem.284 This may have been true; but whatever his motives, he did confess he was apprehensive about his forthcoming trip to the Jewish capital.285

The target audience for Paul's letter was, in addition to Greek proselytes, Jewish converts too, for there was a large Jewish community in the Roman capital.286 The Israelites' immigration came from the significant interaction that was going on between Jerusalem and Rome. The Acts of the Apostles mentioned some of the traffic going on between these two capital cities when it recorded a conversation between the apostle from Tarsus and the Hebrews in Rome: “They [i.e. the Jews] replied, ‘We have received no letters from Judea about you [i.e. Paul,] and none of the brothers coming here has complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food.’” (Acts 6:1 NRSV, [http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Acts+6](http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Acts+6) [accessed January 2, 2013]).

284 “Some scholars have suspected that his letter to the Romans is a kind of trial run for presenting his views, an attempt to get his thoughts organized on paper before having to present them to a hostile audience in Judea. (Ehrman, *The New Testament*, 374) Ehrman does not name who these experts are, unfortunately. Selby, however, disagrees with Ehrman, for he claims that “The modern reader needs to keep in mind, nevertheless, that Paul’s interest was not theological, nor is Romans a considered summary of his thought. *Too many of his basic ideas, important to his other letters, are missing or are alluded to in passing.*” (Selby, *Introduction to the Bible*, N.T. 394) (Emphasis is mine).

285 See Rom. 15:30-32 NRSV. See also Acts 20:22 NRSV.

286 “As the Roman Empire expanded, important centers of Jewish life arose all over the area, but none could compare in size or importance with the Jewish community in Rome. Some estimate its size at 50,000 persons.” (Abba Eban, *Heritage, Civilization and the Jews* [New York: Summit Books, 1984], 80).
reported or spoken anything evil about you.” It must have been the “brothers” who started the Christianization of the Hebrews and heathens before he got there.

Paul's letter was rather long and its theology quite complex. A prominent Biblical scholar calls it “The Gospel According to Paul.” He went into a lengthy discourse describing salvation for the house of Israel and Gentiles, a subject near and dear to his heart, and recounted countless times in his other letters. The reason he still repeated it here was probably because the topic was still a hot one among Christians in Rome, Jewish or non-Jewish. His point was always the same: redemption was possible only through faith in God; the Mosaic laws of the Old Testament did not apply. He then admonished his followers to continue loving each other, and inserted the other love of his life, the promise of Jesus to return shortly for them:

Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers: the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armour of light; let us live honourably as in the day, not in revelling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarrelling and jealousy. Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires. (Emphasis is mine).

Although there is no mention here of the end days explicitly, it can be inferred from the sentence: “For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers. the night is far gone, the day is near.” Salvation here does not refer to being saved when one

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289 “For ‘no human being will be justified in his sight’ by deeds prescribed by the law.... But now, irrespective of law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe” (Rom. 3:20-22 NRSV, http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Romans+3 [accessed June 20, 2012]).
believes in Jesus Christ, but after one believes, which is being in Heaven safe and sound. That day is near because the last judgment is coming soon. The last two lines that refer to good conduct (verses 13-14) mean that Paul was exhorting his audience to behave well here on earth so as to earn a ticket to the kingdom of heaven which was coming down shortly. One must also take into consideration the fact that it has been about eight years since Paul first started preaching the coming soon of the end. Surely he must have felt that the dawn of the new age was nearer to fruition as more time passed by.

For his part, Ehrman takes these verses to mean: “Believers in Christ are to... lead moral, upright lives in view of their coming salvation. (13:11-14).”291 Manson also thinks so, more or less: “11-14 contain the reminder that Christians are already living in the overlap of two ages.... The old order is moving to a close, and the new order to its consummation.... ‘Salvation’ in 11 is the completion of what is already begun in the experience of the believers; and it is already nearer than when they became believers.”292

Saint Augustine, though, read these lines too, and the thought that the end was coming soon never entered his mind. That is because perception is always reality, as elaborated in sub-chapter 2.1 which discussed Tertullian’s own understanding of the last days, or rather, misunderstanding of the end. Augustine never perceived Jesus was returning soon because neither Jesus, nor Paul, nor anybody else, ever made such a promise, as far as he was concerned. His frame of mind was such that he believed the end will be coming at some distant date in the future. In fact, he wrote dismissively of doomsday prophets: “Some have said that four hundred, some five hundred, others a

292 Manson, “Romans,” in Black, 950
thousand years, may be completed... [before the return of Jesus....] But on this subject He [i.e., Jesus] puts asides the figures of the calculators, and orders silence, who says, 'It is not for you to know the times, which the Father hath put in his own power.'”\(^{293}\) Hence, there was no way he was going to read the above quoted verses, nor any line in the Bible for that matter, and come out a believer in the imminent end

Is it possible that Paul, in his letter to the Romans, expressed a belief in the end days that was not imminent in his letter to the Romans? He wrote, for example, that “We ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while \textit{we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies}. For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? \textit{But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.}”\(^{294}\) (Emphasis is mine). Could “redemption of our bodies,” coupled with “wait in patience,” mean Paul was urging the faithful to wait patiently for that day when our bodies will be resurrected at the day of judgment, which will happen sometime in the distant future, and not necessarily soon?

The answer is no, at least that is my argument. Because, in the first place, “redemption of bodies” does not mean resurrection of the dead during the end times. The meaning is closely tied with the preceding verses of Paul, namely: “But if Christ is in you, \textit{though the body is dead because of sin}, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, \textit{he who raised Christ from

\(^{293}\) Augustine, \textit{The City of God}, 665

the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.”  

(Emphasis is mine). The operative statements in this passage are that the body is dead because of sin, but God will restore the body to life if the Spirit dwells in that person. That is what one waits for patiently, and that is what one hopes for. Moreover, “wait for adoption” means waiting to be adopted as a son of God: “For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.”  

Summarizing therefore, if the Spirit of God lives in a person, his body, though now dead, will be restored to life, and he will become a son of God.

Ehrman, though, argues differently; for he explains Romans 8:18-39 as: “Those who have been united with Christ will eventually experience the complete salvation that will come when God redeems this fallen world (8:18-39).”  

It seems then that Ehrman is arguing that Romans 8:23-25 refers somehow to the last days. Even if that were so, there is, nevertheless, no incompatibility between the eschatology in the said verses and the concept that the end is forthcoming. One has to wait patiently even if the event is supposed to happen soon because one does not know exactly when the last days will come. There is nothing illogical in that sentence.

Manson is a bit different from Ehrman, though. He asserts that this passage refers to the resurrection: “What has been begun in them [i.e. their salvation] has yet to be completed when their bodies are set free at the resurrection and their full sonship is

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achieved. “Recall that Paul also believed in the resurrection of the dead except that it was bound to happen soon when the Son of Man returned: “For the Lord himself... will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord for ever.” (Emphasis is mine). In short, assuming Manson is correct, there is no conflict between the resurrection of the body here in Romans and Paul’s expectation that the end was coming soon as shown in 1 Thessalonians.

Before Paul ended his letter, he exhorted his listeners to be patient and tolerant towards each other: “Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarrelling over opinions.” And not to be judgmental: “Why do you pass judgement on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister?” For, he added, when the end finally comes, “we will all stand before the judgement seat of God.”

But does the above line suggest more of death and judgment at some undefined time in the future, rather than at some soon-to-come last days? All alone by itself, the verse may be interpreted either way. But, within the context of the totality of Paul’s eschatological outlook, the only meaning that can be derived from it is that all the early Christians were going to stand before God's judgment seat when the end came, which

298 Manson, “Romans,” in Black, 946.
was coming shortly. Resurrection, and judgment that came hand-in-hand with resurrection, were not contrary to Paul’s vision of the imminent end. As I have shown previously, Paul believed in the soon-to-come resurrection of the dead. Ehrman puts it pithily: “The earliest Christians were Jews who believed that they were living at the end of the age and that Jesus himself was to return from heaven as a cosmic judge of the earth.”303 Paul never wavered in his belief. He was impatient, in fact, at the delay of his Master: “My desire,” he confessed to the Philippians, “is to depart and be with Christ.”304

The dichotomy of day or night when talking about the forthcoming eschaton was a constant theme for Paul, as it would be for succeeding Christian writers. The disciples belonged to the sunshine, while the heathen continued to wallow in the darkness of the night. It was also a wonderful way of emphasizing poetically to his congregation that the day of their deliverance was nigh, and the wait was nearly over! The righteous ones will stand to the right of God's hand to enjoy eternal bliss in his kingdom, while the wicked will be shown the left hand of God to slide into the infernal abyss below for all eternity.

2.2 The life of Jesus according to Mark.

This sub-chapter will discuss the eschatological message of Jesus according to Mark. At the start of his Gospel, Jesus right away revealed the purpose of his earthly mission: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.”

This was the same missive proclaimed by Paul decades earlier that the day of reckoning was coming shortly, with no pre-qualifications whatsoever. But towards the end of Mark’s tale, the particulars of the mission changed. When Jesus was preparing his apostles for his eventual immolation in the cross, the eschatological details proclaimed by Jesus deviated from Paul’s original message: the last days were to come only after certain cosmic phenomena occurred, such as the darkening of the sun and the moon, and the collapse of the stellar firmament. Only then was the end to occur, although it still remained at hand.

Prior to his execution, however, Jesus was an enigma in Mark’s Gospel. When he performed miracles, he instructed the witnesses, apostles as well devils, not to tell anyone about it. Right at the very beginning of his ministry, when he carried out his first miracle ever, he annoyingly rebuked a demon to be silent after a possessed man proclaimed to one and all within earshot: “I know who you are, the Holy One of God!”  

When Peter confessed to him in front of all the disciples that he was the Son of God, he immediately reacted by “sternly [ordering] them not to tell anyone about him.”

And when the ultimate proof of Jesus' divine ministry was revealed to his favorite apostles, Peter,
James, and John, by his transfiguration,\textsuperscript{308} his earthly hour of greatest triumph, inscrutably, never got translated into an opportunity for maximum exposure. Instead, he gave his followers strict orders “to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead.”\textsuperscript{309}

Why then, if Jesus was the Messiah, who came down from Heaven to save mankind from sin, did he not proclaim to the whole world the purpose of his career here on earth? Why was he working at such cross-purposes? The most obvious reason was that Mark was trying to explain to his followers, forty years removed from the death of Jesus, why a great majority of Jews, the target audience of Jesus' ministry, never hitched their wagon to Jesus' message. One of the serious objections Christian missionaries had to overcome was why hardly anyone knew about the wondrous deeds Jesus performed in his lifetime, most especially among the Jews. The reason, as Mark alleged, was not because Jesus never performed his miracles at all, but because the apostles were complying with the mandate from the Savior not to reveal any of his divine manifestations until he was gloriously resurrected and had returned to his heavenly

\textsuperscript{308} “His clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses.” (Mark 9:3-4 NRSV, \url{http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Mark+9} [accessed July 4, 2012]). It is interesting to note that Elijah prefigures the last days: “Probably because of the story of his assumption into heaven alive... Elijah became an important figure in the apocalyptic scheme... ‘Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes....’ (Malachi 4:5).” (Selby, \textit{Introduction to the Bible}, N.T. 10). Wilson asserts that “Moses and Elijah represent the Law and the Prophets: their very presence is a sign that Jesus is Messiah.” (Wilson, “Mark,” in Black, 809).

\textsuperscript{309} Mark 9:9 NRSV, \url{http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Mark+9} (accessed July 4, 2012). The term “Son of Man” is an allusion to the book of Daniel: “I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.” (Daniel 7:13:14 AV, \url{http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel+7&version=KJV} [accessed December 22, 2012]). (Emphasis is mine).
abode. Or, as Paula Fredricksen puts it, tackling the same puzzling problem of Mark's Gospel:

Mark can thus explain... three uncomfortable facts that confronted his community: the lack of recognition that Jesus had apparently received among his own people in his lifetime; the continuing lack of Jewish recognition for Christian claims about Jesus; and the recent destruction of Judaism's holiest site by the same imperial power that had executed Jesus a generation earlier.  

When Mark the evangelist wrote his Gospel, sometime between 70 and 75, times were quite different from Paul’s. A cataclysmic event had shaken the Jewish world in 70, to its very literal foundation, a decade or so after the apostle from Tarsus had passed away. Jerusalem and the Jewish Temple were torched and in ruins, victims of suppression by Rome of a calamitous revolt by the Jews against their Roman masters. The destruction was just not supposed to happen. It was not written in the holy scriptures. The House of God could not be violated; or so the Israelites surmised. Surely this must have been the presage to the apocalypse. Nothing else could explain it.

Fredricksen, From Jesus to Christ, 49. Ehrman has another explanation regarding the same perplexing behavior of Jesus: “Jesus in Mark’s Gospel does not want people to have the wrong idea about him, for example, by thinking he is the kind of messiah they have anticipated. For Mark, the title “messiah” does not signify earthly grandeur and power but just the opposite. As messiah, Jesus was the Son of God who had to suffer and die.” (Ehrman, The New Testament, 97)

See Introduction, Table 1. Other scholars assign various dates for Mark. According to Hauer, Mark was written around 68 and 70. (See Hauer, An Introduction to the Bible, 301). Fredricksen is of the opinion that Mark was created around 70: “In the period around the destruction of the Second Temple (70 C.E.), an anonymous Gentile Christian wrote of these [oral traditions] down. This person was not an author--he did not compose de novo. Nor was he a historian.... The writer was an evangelist, a sort of creative editor. He organized these stories into a sequence and shaped his inherited material into something resembling a historical narrative. The result was the Gospel of Mark.” (Fredriksen, From Jesus to Christianity, 4). Kee thinks Mark was written sometime 68 and 70. (See Kee, Understanding the New Testament, 422). Early Christian Writings has the date as 65-80. (See Early Christian Writings http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/ [accessed January 9, 2013]). According to Wilson: “a date between A.D. 65 and 70 would most nearly fit the facts” for this Gospel. (Wilson, “Mark,” in Black, 799). The Catholic Encyclopedia opines that “From internal evidence we can conclude that the Gospel was written before A.D. 70.” (Catholic Encyclopedia, s.v., “Gospel of Saint Mark,” http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09674b.htm [accessed February 9, 2013]).
The whole run-up to the destruction of the Temple was in itself an unmitigated disaster. Josephus asserted that even before the start of the Jewish revolt, “[there were some] sort of robbers in Jerusalem, which were called Sicarii, who slew men in the daytime, and in the midst of the city.”\footnote{Josephus The Wars of the Jews, Book 2, 13.3.254.} These men, he confided, “concealed daggers under their garments, with which they stabbed those that were their enemies.”\footnote{Ibid., Book 2, 13.3.255.} In other words, Sicarii were assassins intent with only one mission: kill their enemies. The first man they killed was “Jonathan the high priest, after whose death many were slain every day.”\footnote{Ibid., Book 2, 13.3.256.} Furthermore, there were other sets of persons who were:

more wicked in their intentions, who lay waste the happy state of the city no less than these murderers [i.e. the Sicarii]. These were such men as deceived and deluded the people under pretense of divine inspiration... and these prevailed with the multitude to act like madmen, and went before them into the wilderness...; but Felix [i.e. the Roman governor of Judea]... sent some horsemen and footmen, both armed, who destroyed a great number of them.\footnote{Ibid., Book 2, 13.4.258-260.}

Josephus also referenced interestingly an Egyptian who was a “false prophet, that did the Jews more mischief than the former [i.e. the aforementioned wicked persons;] for he was a cheat, who pretended to be a prophet also, and got together thirty thousand men that were deluded by him.”\footnote{Ibid., Book 2, 13.5.261.} He added contemptuously that the Egyptian was one of the first to run away at the first taste of blood in battle. The coward may have been the same Egyptian Luke spoke of in the Acts of the Apostles,\footnote{See Acts 21:38 NRSV. Although the Egyptian mentioned by Josephus was a different person from the one Luke was alluding to, as the two lived during different time periods, Luke may have conflated the two persons as one and the same villain the Romans were referring to when they interrogated Paul.} when Paul was apprehended and
asked by the Roman authorities: “Then you are not that Egyptian fellow who… started a revolution and led four thousand armed terrorists?”

A new procurator, Gessius Florus, was sent to Judea in 64 who, by the barbarity of his actions, set in motion the forces that inevitably grew into the Jewish rebellion. After a riot broke out between Greeks and Jews in Caesarea Maritima, he quickly occupied Jerusalem to teach the Hebrews a lesson or two, for he instinctively favored the Gentiles who were his own kind. He ordered his troops to plunder a section of Jerusalem called the Upper Market Place. Some peaceful Jews were inadvertently caught up in this action and brought before him. To instill greater fear among the inhabitants of the city, he ordered his soldiers to whip the otherwise law abiding people before nailing them to the cross. A full-fledged rebellion thus erupted in 65 chiefly from the brutal acts inflicted by the Romans against the populace, and lasted up to 70 when Jerusalem fell, although the Romans still had to perform some cleanup operations to rid Israel of all rebels, culminating in the fall of Masada in southern Israel in 73.

The first few years of the revolt saw see-sawing victory and defeat for the rebels. They were initially able to drive out the hated Florus from Jerusalem, leading to widespread rejoicing among them, and self-congratulatory pats to one another on the shoulder. Their victory, however, was short-lived. Cestius, the Roman governor of Syria to whom Florus reported, was able to retake Jerusalem, only to be forced out later on by the rebels. On the way north back to Antioch, the provincial capital of Syria, the Roman

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forces were ambushed at a narrow pass called Beth-horon, where a different Hebrew force under Judas the Maccabean had also won a major battle against another oppressive foreigner, the Seleucid Greeks, two hundred years earlier. Their victory over Roman arms thus became pregnant with symbolism. As the belief in a redeeming Messiah was very high in those tumultuous times, they believed their victory to be a sign that their Messiah, just like in their glorious Maccabean past, was finally coming down to rid them of the hated imperial army, and to restore them to their ancient glories.

The Jews returned to Jerusalem confident of ultimate victory as they believed God and history were on their side. They even minted some coins as a sign of their independence.319 The Emperor Nero, meanwhile, assigned the task of overcoming the insurrection to Flavius Vespasian, a battle-hardened veteran who had just suppressed a similar one in Britain. He, joined by his son Titus, waged a brilliant campaign against the Jewish rebels that by the summer of 69 he recaptured all of the territory taken earlier by the rebels except for Jerusalem. He had to delay his final assault on the city however, to return to Rome to be installed as the new Emperor after Nero was assassinated a few months earlier. The lull in fighting emboldened the Jewish malcontents to continue the struggle as they took this to be another sign God was still favoring them.

Titus resumed the war against the Jews after order was restored in Rome by his father. As he started squeezing the insurgents around the area near Jerusalem, the remaining Jews fled to the city for safety. The result was to swell warring factions with

319 “At first, the Jews succeeded in liberating parts of the land from Roman control; the independence of the Jewish nation was declared, and Jewish coinage was issued.” (Kee, Understanding the New Testament, 124).
more recruits, leading to more infighting inside the city walls among protagonists, with the same ferocity they could muster fighting the Romans. Rebel bands thus were busy shooting arrows at each other that even Temple visitors were killed by stray arrows. As the imperial troops surrounded Jerusalem, choking any kind of relief from reaching the capital, famine added to the city’s miseries, leading to a complete breakdown of order and despicable cannibalism. Women killed their own suckling infants in order to survive. Stragglers left the city surreptitiously to scrounge for food, but, when caught, were whipped before being crucified in front of the city walls to heighten the feeling of terror inside. These actions were designed to break down the will of the inhabitants to resist and to entice them to surrender before it was too late.

The month of August in the year 70 saw Roman troops pouring in and overcoming all resistance at the city walls, fighting all the way up to the outer defenses of the Temple. By the end of the month, with soldiers fighting house to house and massacring the inhabitants, the Temple finally fell in a sea of flames on the same date the city fell to the Babylonians in 586 BCE.³²⁰ The last of the Jewish priests were then rounded up and executed. Roman legionnaires afterwards offered sacrifices to the gods in the burned out Temple courts. The following month saw Roman soldiers capturing the last of the rebel bands around Jerusalem, and Titus entered the city as its conquering general on September 29. He returned to Rome in a triumphal procession the following year. Titus succeeded his father Vespasian, who died in 79 without first bewailing that

³²⁰ The date of roughly August 30 is celebrated in Judaism to commemorate the fall of both the First Temple to the Babylonians and the Second Temple to the Romans.
“Alas, I [i.e. Vespasian] think I am becoming a god.”\textsuperscript{321} An arch commemorating the former's victory in Jerusalem, showing the spoils taken from the city, was erected by his brother Emperor Domitian in his honor in 82 after his death the previous year.

The trauma of having their city destroyed by the Romans was not the only severe blow Jews suffered during the war. The toll in human lives and suffering was beyond belief. As Josephus recounted it:

And now, since his soldiers were already quite tired in killing men [while retaking Jerusalem], and yet there appeared to be a vast multitude still remaining alive, Caesar [i.e. Titus] gave orders that they should kill none but those that were in arms, and opposed them, but should take the rest alive. But, together with those whom they had orders to slay, they slew the aged and the infirm; but for those that were in flourishing age, and who might be useful to them, they drove them together into the temple, and shut them up within the walls … Now the number of those that were carried captive during the whole war was collected to be ninety seven thousand; as was the number of those that perished during the whole siege [of Jerusalem] eleven hundred thousand …\textsuperscript{322}

Mark’s version of the “good news” was written sometime during the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem or shortly after. The most dramatic part of his story came when Jesus predicted the destruction of the Temple in stark terms, and coupled it with his imminent second coming.\textsuperscript{323} Mark needed to describe the fall of the Temple in apocalyptic terms because the audience for his Gospel was God-fearing Greeks with

\textsuperscript{321} Durant, \textit{Caesar and Christ}, 288. Smith thinks Vespasian said it in jest: “Domitian decreed that he should be addressed as ‘Our Lord and our God.’ Others would ignore it, or even treat it as a joke. Vespasian could quip: ‘I feel I am becoming a god.’” (M.A. Smith, \textit{From Christ to Constantine} [London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1971], 75).

\textsuperscript{322} Josephus, \textit{the Wars of the Jews}, 6:414-420. The numbers may seem exaggerated, but whatever the numbers were, the whole point was that it was just devastating.

\textsuperscript{323} This part of Mark's Gospel is also known as the “Little Apocalypse.” Kee expressed the relationship between the sacking of the Temple and the forthcoming apocalypse as follows: “The destruction [of the Temple] was understood to be the final proof that the old dispensation had come to an end; the new age was already beginning to dawn.” (Kee, \textit{Understanding the New Testament}, 127)
Jewish sympathies, and perhaps some Hellenized Jews too, living most probably in Antioch, which had a large Jewish population.\textsuperscript{324}

They must have known what happened in Jerusalem from eyewitnesses’ accounts, and the fact that Titus marched past Antioch before returning to Rome in triumph was not only a big reminder of their loss, but also the sight of him with his victorious troops rubbed salt into their festering wounds. They were shocked to their very bones, not only at the magnitude the nation had to pay in terms of lives and limbs, but also at the realization their Temple was desecrated and utterly destroyed.\textsuperscript{325} It was just beyond belief. They could not accept the bitter fact that the unrighteous triumphed over the righteous, and, more importantly, they could not fathom why God permitted it at all. Furthermore, they were extremely concerned as how to interpret the messiahship of Jesus in light of the failure of the revolt and their yet unfulfilled expectation of the second coming. Jesus had promised to come back for them, but that was forty years ago! The answer offered by the evangelist was that the obliteration of the House of God was all part of God's unfolding plan for the eventual destruction of the wicked world and redemption of the faithful.

\textsuperscript{324} White supports Antioch as a possible site where Mark’s Gospel was written. (See White, \textit{From Jesus to Christianity}, 231-232). The readers of Mark’s Gospel were definitely not Jews living in the homeland, for Mark took great pains in explaining Jewish customs to his audience. (See Mark 7:1-4 NRSV) Ehrman believes the audience of Mark may have been sympathetic to the Jews. (See Ehrman, \textit{The New Testament}, 102). So does Kee. (See Kee, \textit{Understanding the New Testament}, 105). Wilson also confirms a Semitic connection for the Markan Gospel: “Another feature of the Gospel is its strongly Semitic colouring. Not only does Mark record on occasion the original Aramaic words of Jesus, but his own Greek bears clear marks of Aramaic traditions. There are grounds for suspecting Aramaic sources behind the Gospel, though whether written or oral it is impossible to say.” (Wilson, “Mark,” in Black, 800).

\textsuperscript{325} “This [i.e., the fall of Jerusalem] was unquestionably the most grievous tragedy of all to the early Christians, and hence it plays so great a part in the ‘prophecies’ of the ‘eschatological discourse.’” (Craveri, \textit{The Life of Jesus}, 344).
The whole story in Mark's Gospel regarding the fall of Jerusalem, juxtaposed with the second coming, began when Jesus was leaving the Temple in Jerusalem while one of the apostles was waxing ecstatic over the beauty of the Temple. To which Jesus interjected: “You see these great buildings? Not a single stone here will be left in its place; every one of them will be thrown down.”\(^\text{326}\) The apostles Peter, James, John and Andrew, asked him privately afterwards: “‘Tell us when this [i.e. the destruction of Israel's holiest site] will be,’ they said, ‘and tell us what will happen to show that the time has come for all these things to take place.’”\(^\text{327}\) Although the question seemed to revolve around the fall of Jerusalem only, it may be inferred from the second part of the response of the apostles that they meant to include the last days also in their question.

Jesus replied by describing the events that was going to precede the destruction of the Temple, conjoined it with the coming end of the world: “When you hear of wars and rumours of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, \textit{but the end is still to come}. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines.”\(^\text{328}\) (Emphasis is mine). The fact that Jesus responded by predicting “the end was still to come,” showed that Jesus meant to couple

\(^{326}\) Mark 13:2 UBS, http://www.biblija.net/biblija.cgi?m=Mk+13%2C1-2&id25=1&pos=0&set=20&l=en2 (accessed July 6, 2012). Actually, some stones of the Temple did not follow the bidding of the Master. Some of the stones were left standing after the sacking in what is now called The Wailing Wall. Ehrman posits that the prediction by Jesus of the destruction of the Temple was part of latter's unfolding eschatological drama. The Temple was not needed anymore in the soon-to-come next life, hence it could be dispensed with. He further claims that this may have been one reason why Jesus was put to death, for he was actively and openly threatening the hold of the Temple authorities over the nation of Israel, symbolized physically by the Temple in Jerusalem. (See Ehrman, \textit{The New Testament}, 279)


the two terminal events, the fall of Judea’s holiest site and the end of the ages, most probably because the apostles themselves had those two in mind when they asked their question. He also advised them to “Beware that no one leads you astray. Many will come in my name and say, ‘I am he!’ and they will lead many astray.”

The story of false prophets closely matched what Josephus, the Jewish historian, also wrote a few decades later as mentioned in chapter 2.0. Jesus continued: “This is but the beginning of the birth pangs,” meaning the terror of the eschaton was just starting, just like the first acute pains of childbirth. Here he was starting to link the destruction of the Temple with the eschaton. He then went on to describe the events surrounding the pillage of Judea's capital:

You will see “The Awful Horror” standing in the place where it should not be. (Note to the reader: be sure to understand what this means!) Then those who are in Judea must run away to the hills…. How terrible it will be in those days for women who are pregnant and for mothers with little babies! …For the trouble of those days will be far worse than any the world has ever known from the very beginning when God created the world until the present time. Nor will there ever be anything like it again.

The note Mark inserted in parenthesis meant he was speaking directly to his audience to pay attention closely so they could understand the exact meaning of the

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330 “Even the reference to ‘false prophets’ in the ‘eschatological discourse’ has a historical foundation…. [A] certain Dositheus in Samaria professed to be the Messiah, to the great irritation of the Nazarene’s disciples…. [He] was soon supplanted by Simon Magus, who is mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles…. Later, one Menandrus of Antioch claimed to be an incarnation of the Power of God.” (Craveri, *The Life of Jesus*, 345).
events, especially as it related to the second coming. He was telling them the traumatic events that transpired during the fall of Jerusalem were predicted so vividly by Jesus, and were signs that the last days were about to come. “The Awful Horror” meant a pagan image was set up in the Temple by a foreign conqueror. This was an abomination in the eyes of the Jews, as nothing profane should have been allowed in the Temple.

“The Awful Horror” was also used by the prophet Daniel when he prophesied the fate of Israel’s Messiah and the destruction of the First Temple a couple of centuries earlier:

And at the end of that time God's chosen leader will be killed unjustly. The city and the Temple will be destroyed by the invading army of a powerful ruler…. The Awful Horror will be placed on the highest point of the Temple and will remain there until the one who put it there meets the end which God has prepared for him. 333

The uncanny resemblance between Daniel’s prediction and Mark’s description of the last days of the Temple showed Mark was very much aware of Daniel’s book. 334

Jesus then continued: “Then, if anyone says to you, “Look, here is the Messiah!” or, “Look, there he is!” - do not believe him. For false Messiahs and false prophets will appear. They will perform miracles and wonders in order to deceive even God's chosen people... Be on your guard! I have told you everything before the time comes.” 335

334 The phrase ‘desolating sacrilege’ [i.e. White’s terminology for ‘Awful Horror’] is one used in writings of the Maccabean revolt period to refer to the desecration of the Temple by Antiochus Epiphanes (…Dan 9:27…).” (White, From Jesus to Christianity, 237). Wilson also uses the same term “desolating sacrilege”: “The phrase ‘desolating sacrilege’ comes from Dan. (9:27, 11:31, 12:11), where it refers to the pagan altar erected in the Temple in 168 B.C. by Antiochus Epiphanes.” (Wilson, “Mark,” in Black, 814).
335 Mark 13:14-19 UBS,
admitted here implicitly that false Messiahs fooled even God’s people. Jesus nevertheless predicted this would happen, and thus sort of absolved them from their grievous error.

Some of the other details offered by Mark regarding the fall of Jerusalem, such as “The Awful Horror,” and the false prophets, matched the accounts related by Josephus, who was an eyewitness to the events. This probably meant Mark was getting his description firsthand from escapees who survived the capture of the city.

For Mark, persecutions will be harbingers of the last days, presumably because their communities were being oppressed. So Jesus in his Gospel urged his listeners to hold fast till the end in order to attain salvation. He then abruptly switched to describing the events surrounding his second coming:

In the days after that time of trouble [i.e. the destruction of the Temple] the sun will grow dark, the moon will no longer shine, the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers in space will be driven from their courses. Then the Son of Man will appear, coming in the clouds with great power and glory. He will send the angels out to the four corners of the earth to gather God’s chosen people from one end of the world to the other.

As a final admonition, Jesus predicted the end was going to come soon: “Remember that all these things [regarding the second coming] will happen before the people now living have all died” He, however, refused to name the exact day or time when this would


336 “As for yourselves, beware; for they will hand you over to councils; and you will be beaten in synagogues; and you will stand before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them.... But the one who endures to the end will be saved.” (Mark 13:9-13 NRSV, http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Mark+13 [accessed February 9, 2013]).


338 Mark13:30 UBS,
occur. It was known only by God the Father up in heaven: “No one knows, however, when that day or hour will come — neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son; only the Father knows. Be on watch, be alert, for you do not know when the time will come.”

But now, the pristine message of the man from Tarsus regarding the last days has been altered, albeit subtly. According to Mark, the end was just around the corner, but this time, it had to wait for the correct sequence of celestial events to occur. The explanations must have been effective, mainly because if it were not so, Christianity would have been consigned to the dustbins of History. Mark also became a vanguard for all subsequent eschatological apologists who used the same or similar reasons to account for the delay. Others became more creative in their explanations, as will be seen later.

Mark, for his part, even added another reason for the delay: “But before the end comes,
the gospel must be preached to all peoples. This was akin to Paul's belief later in his life that, although he still believed the end of all things was at hand, the end will nevertheless come only after the quota for converted Gentiles was met. Many Christians since then have used this line of reasoning to claim they were divine agents in the developing saga of the last days, no matter how late the centuries.

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341 Columbus, for example, believed he was participating in the rolling out of the eschatological drama when he discovered the new world, for he believed “that he was fated to fulfill various prophecies prior to the appearance of the Antichrist and imminent apocalypse.” (Daniel Wojcik, *The End of The World as We Know It: Faith, Fatalism, and Apocalypse in America* [New York: New York University Press, 1997], 21). He wrote to the Catholic sovereigns, Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain, that “an important stage of prophecy had been fulfilled with the discovery of new lands and new people and that the eschatological clock was ticking away.” (Delno C. West and August Kling, *The Libro de las Profecías of Christopher Columbus*, 29, quoted in Sharan Newman, *The Real History of the End of the World* [New York: The Berkley Publishing Group, 2010], 120). The Puritan settlers of the New World were deeply imbued with the same eschatological spirit; they believed their effort to convert the natives was an integral part of the approaching last days. (See Newman, *The Real History of the End of the World*, 119).
2.3 Matthew's version of the life of Jesus.

Matthew’s stories regarding the day of judgment was the same, in general, as Mark’s, all the way up to when Jesus predicted the fall of Jerusalem and the forthcoming catastrophes that will herald his second coming. However, there are some differences between Matthew and Mark in their eschatological narrative, such as how Jesus started his apocalyptic mission, or how much the idea that the end was at hand suffused Matthew’s works for example. These alterations will be the subject matter of this subchapter. It is important to reiterate, however, that the end was still nigh in Matthew’s recounting of the Gospel, just like it was in Mark’s.

In Matthew's Gospel, the most “Jewish” of all the Gospels, written sometime between 80 and 90, Jesus' ministry commenced a bit different from Mark's. In the latter's version, John the Baptist first preached a general repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And then, after the Baptist’s incarceration, Jesus started his mission by proclaiming the end was near. In Matthew's Gospel though, John the Baptist was the first to

342 Matthew is often labeled “the most Jewish of all the Gospels” because it is only in Matthew where Jesus proclaimed that he did not come to abolish the law or the prophets, but to fulfill it, and anyone breaking it will suffer the consequences. (See Matt.5:17-20 NRSV). Furthermore, scholars attest to the Jewish character in Matthew, such as Ehrman, (see Ehrman, The New Testament, 116, and 131), or Stendahl, (see Stendahl, “Matthew,” in Black, 769-770, and 779), or Selby, (see Selby, Introduction to the Bible, N.T. 112).
343 See Introduction, Table 1 for the dates. Other scholars, however, assign different dates for Matthew’s Gospel. Stendahl, for example, avers that: “The date [for Matthew] is usually set after A.D. 70.” (Stendahl, “Matthew,” in Black, 770). Hauer thinks Matthew was written between 85 and 100. (See Hauer, An Introduction to the Bible, 301). Fredriksen declares that “From surviving literary evidence we know of at least two other anonymous Christians, who, independently but at roughly the same time (c. 90-100) combined Mark with other materials, both written and oral…. The results were the Gospels of Matthew and Luke.” (Fredriksen, From Jesus to Christianity, 4). Kee thinks Matthew was written sometime between 85 and 100. (See Kee, Understanding the New Testament, 422). Early Christian Writings has the date as 80-100. (See Early Christian Writings http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/ [accessed January 9, 2013]).
344 See Mark 1:14 NRSV.
announce the coming last days: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

Only after he was imprisoned by Herod did Jesus take over John's task by propagating the same good news: “Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee.... From that time Jesus began to proclaim, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.’”

It was a message he carried throughout his ministry, all the way up to the end of his earthly life. And lest his followers be cast into the eternal fires of Gehenna when the day of reckoning came, he counseled them repeatedly to do good and be good, for “Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”

The idea that the kingdom of God was at hand permeated the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus used this theme as a subject matter for many of his parables. Jesus urged his followers, for example, to be concerned for the coming kingdom first before worrying about mundane things, because, as he assured them, God will provide for them:

“Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

This appeal may have given later Christians a license to be indolent as long as they strove for

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348 The evangelist propped up Jews and downgraded non-Jews. Matthew, however, was not completely anti-Gentile. He threw the Greeks a lifeline once in a while. He had Jesus one time praising a Roman centurion after his extraordinary expression of faith: “Truly I tell you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith; ...the heirs of the kingdom [i.e. Jews] will be thrown into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matt. 8:10-12 NRSV, http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Matthew+8 [accessed July 4, 2012]).
righteousness, as the author of 2 Thessalonians, to be discussed later, was going to observe in his warning to members of his congregation.\footnote{Now we command you, beloved, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to keep away from believers who are living in idleness and not according to the tradition that they received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us; we were not idle when we were with you, and we did not eat anyone’s bread without paying for it; but with toil and labour we worked night and day, so that we might not burden any of you...For even when we were with you, we gave you this command: Anyone unwilling to work should not eat. For we hear that some of you are living in idleness, mere busybodies, not doing any work.” (2 Thess. 3:6-11 NRSV, \url{http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=2Thessalonians+3} [accessed Dec 4, 2012]).}

He also painted a sanguine scenario of the end days, sometimes. He compared the coming celestial realm to a mustard seed that, when it grows, will harbor a multitude:

“The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; ...when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.”\footnote{Matt., 13:31-32 NRSV, \url{http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Matthew+13} (accessed July 4, 2012).} Lest, however, his audience gets carried away with complacency and let down their guard, Jesus immediately forewarned them:

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; when it was full, they drew it ashore... and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.\footnote{Matt. 13:47-50 NRSV, \url{http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Matthew+13} (accessed July 4, 2012).}

Matthew’s version of the transfiguration of Jesus copied Mark’s story almost verbatim. Jesus also warned his apostles not to reveal to anybody his true nature as the Son of Man.\footnote{See Matt. 17:9 NRSV.} The coincidence is not surprising at all, for these two narratives formed, together with Luke’s, the Synoptic Gospels. Accordingly, Mark’s story of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem had its counterpart in the Gospel of Matthew.
Matthew’s rendition of Mark’s “Little Apocalypse” started the same way as the former’s, but with a little twist. Jesus was asked by his disciples: “Tell us when this [i.e. the destruction of the Temple] will be, and what will happen to show that it is the time for your coming and the end of the age.” This time the apostles were linking *explicitly* the sack of Judea’s holiest site with the coming *eschaton*, unlike Mark’s version where the two episodes were conjoined by the disciples *implicitly*. Since Matthew was aware of Mark’s Gospel, this time he framed the question in such a way as to preclude any doubts regarding the meaning of the inquiry from the close followers of Jesus. The rest of Jesus' discourse regarding the fall of Jerusalem and his second coming was practically the same as Mark’s, together with all the needed pre-qualifying cosmic phenomena. The effect, however, of the retelling of the fall of Jerusalem must have been different. Since Matthew’s audience was more Jewish than Mark’s, the wounds that were reopened from recounting the story must have deeper and more painful.

There are other places in Matthew’s Gospel where his version was different from Mark’s regarding the coming *eschaton*. When Jesus, in the former’s account, sent the apostles out to convert the “lost sheep of the people of Israel,” he commanded them “not [to] go to any Gentile territory or any Samaritan towns.” Jesus then immediately instructed his missionaries to “proclaim the good news: ‘The kingdom of heaven has

355 Matthew’s audience was more Jewish than Mark’s followers because, as I have pointed out earlier, the latter had to explain Jewish customs to his readers while Matthew did not.
come near.”  In Mark’s version, there was no corresponding instruction from Jesus to concentrate in Judea alone, nor was there any mention of the end.

Continuing, the Savior predicted they would be persecuted while fulfilling their mission. He, however, advised them: “When they persecute you in one town, run away to another one.” Their efforts, nevertheless, would be worth their sacrifices because, as he was concluding his instructions, he quickly confirmed to them once more he was coming back to save them from their looming ordeals.

A little while later, just before Jesus went up to Jerusalem to face his inglorious end, he linked his suffering and death with the imminent *parousia*, but not as vividly as when he combined the *eschaton* with the destruction of the Temple. This time he mixed his message with the coming martyrdom of his apostles, while reiterating the fact that his triumphal return will definitely will be coming soon, within the lifetime of some of his followers:

I must go to Jerusalem and suffer much from the elders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the Law. I will be put to death, but three days later I will be raised to life.… If anyone wants to come with me, he must forget self, carry his cross, and follow me. For whoever wants to save his own life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it … For the Son of Man is about to come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and then he will reward each one according to his deeds. I assure you that there are some here who will not die until they have seen the Son of Man come as King.

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358 This is another proof that Matthew’s audience was more Jewish than Mark’s.
359 See Mark 6:7-13 NRSV.
361 “I assure you that you will not finish your work in all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.” (Matt. 10:23 NRSV, [http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Matthew+10](http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Matthew+10) [accessed July 4, 2012]).
362 Matt. 16:21-28 UBS.
Finally, just before the Master ascended into heaven, he ordered the apostles to preach the gospel to all nations, but without linking his command with the forthcoming enddays, unlike Mark's tale. 363

Other than the *eschaton* that was packaged with cosmic pre-qualifications in the story of the fall of Jerusalem, the *parousia* was promised without any pre-conditions by the first two evangelists. It was still the same unadulterated message Paul had proclaimed earlier, some twenty-five years before. It was not destined to stay the same, however. The end of the ages was in the process of aging, and needed some changes.

363 See Matt. 28:18-20 NRSV, and compare against Mark 13:10 NRSV.
2.4. The end according to Luke: now you see it, now you don’t.

Luke’s rendition of the eschatological saga was different from that of the previous evangelists, not only in the details, but also, more importantly, in the timing of the *parousia*. His outlook on the last days was equivocal, fluctuating from imminence to a time in the distant future. But in his ambivalence lay intimations of the future of the *eschaton*: as more time passed, it was going to be postponed more and more. This subchapter will not only chronicle the changes but attempt also to explain why they occurred.

Luke’s wrote his opus (i.e. Gospel and Acts^364^) sometime between the years 90 and 110.^365^ He may have been a Gentile convert, as well as a follower of the Pauline tradition.^366^ Since the quality of the author’s Greek was quite high,^367^ he must have been

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^364^ "The final book of narrative is the Acts of the Apostles, which is the beguiling sequel to Luke’s Gospel, its companion volume." (Fox, *The Unauthorized Version*, 209). Selby describes it as follows "We must always keep in mind in discussing Luke’s Gospel that it is the first part of a two-volume which we may designate, following Henry J. Cadbury’s happy device, by the hyphenated title, Luke-Acts. (Selby, *Introduction to the Bible*, N.T. 74). He further adds: “Luke is associated with Acts not only by common authorship, but also as the first of at least two volumes of a single work.” (Ibid., N.T. 150). See also White, *From Jesus to Christianity*, 248-250, for an explanation of why the two books of Luke can be treated as one narrative composed of two volumes.


^366^ See White, *From Jesus to Christianity*, 247.

^367^ See ibid., 247. Grant argues for the same point as White. (See Michael Grant, *An Historian’s Review of the Gospel*, 188) Samuel Sandmel, however, is reluctant to heap the same praise on Luke: “Educated writers in the Hellenistic period [i.e., the era after Alexander the Great] often tried deliberately to absorb and imitate the manner of Athens of the Classical period—therefore the word Attic—somewhat as if an author today would try to write in the manner of the Elizabethan age.… Koine [Greek] is the language of
very well educated. (Legend had him as a physician.  He may have been writing either in Ephesus or Corinth. His audience was most probably the Gentiles in the Pauline churches around the Aegean region, who were in the majority by this time rather than Jews.

Luke was a pivotal figure when it came to the message of the *parousia*. His Gospel was like a missing link in the developing history of the *eschaton*: it contained both a belief in the coming last days and one where the end of the ages was pushed to a more distant future. Ehrman, however, is not of the same opinion: “Luke, even though the end of the age was not to come in the lifetime of Jesus’ disciples, [believed] it was still destined to come soon. Indeed, Luke may have anticipated that it would come in his own lifetime.... For Luke himself the end is still at hand, and the gospel needs to be proclaimed with yet greater urgency.” Later, he adds: “He and his congregation may have expected to be the last generation before the end.”

Luke, however, was ambivalent. While maintaining the conviction of Paul and the other two synoptists that the end was nigh, he nevertheless modified the eschatological message such that the trajectory of the second coming pointed to a different direction to the left of the original: the day of reckoning was still coming in the future, but at an unknown date. But within Luke’s *apertura a sinistra* lay the right course Christianity had


369 See White, *From Jesus to Christianity*, 252.


371 Ibid., 173.
to take, paradoxically, if it wanted to pass the test of the centuries. The impending doom had to vanish in a sea of flames before the faith could be reborn afresh, oblivious of its previous mindset of an imminent eschaton. Then the whole eschatological saga starting from Paul onwards was reinterpreted, with nary a trace of a forthcoming end. Later Christian writers, Tertullian in his early career for example,\(^{372}\) will read the apocalyptic lines written by Paul without a clue of its original intent whatsoever.

There were various factors contributing to the change in the eschatological landscape. Luke had to tailor his story according to the changing mindset of the audience for his message to be effective, before the strange tale of a soon-to-come doomsday could come to confuse the flock and drive them away. His congregation was predominantly Greek, as compared to the followers of the other two synoptists who tended to be more either Jewish, or Jewish leaning.\(^{373}\) The fervent expectation of pious Jews for a Redeemer hardly had any place in the hearts and minds of the inhabitants of the Greco-Roman world. The apocalyptic tradition was not part of their culture.\(^{374}\) The date of Luke’s Gospel, moreover, about forty to fifty years after the man from Tarsus had preached his good tidings around the Hellenic world, meant that most, if not all, of Paul’s adult converts, who believed in the parousia, had already passed away from the scene, or if not, were most probably old and senile. The very fact that Paul’s original eschatological

\(^{372}\) See sub-chapter 4.1.
\(^{373}\) See sub-chapters 2.2 and 2.3 for a description of the target audience for Mark and Matthew.
\(^{374}\) “As the churches became more and more gentile, not only in constituency but in character, new problems arose. The traditional Hebraic background of the Church’s thought and teaching began to be submerged in Hellenistic thought forms. The dynamic understanding of existence which resulted from Israel’s preoccupation with history and eschatology was gradually overlaid with the more static concepts of Greek categorical thought. ...these Greek concepts aided the Church in its adjustments to the delay of the eschaton.” (Selby, *Introduction to the Bible*, N.T. 407)
message had mutated in Luke’s Gospel showed how far these communities had come since the apostle from Tarsus established them.

Furthermore, Christianity had now grown and spread into more cities around the Aegean than during the time of Paul. That there were more converts and more churches by Luke's time can be deduced from John’s Revelation, written on a date not too distant from Luke’s opus. John mentioned cities where Christians lived spread across Asia Minor, such as Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea, important places then, but now all but footnotes in the annals of Time. Neither Paul nor the Acts of the Apostles, which chronicled the spread of Early Christianity during Paul’s time, mentioned any of these cities. History always marches forward, and leaves its monuments behind.

Moreover, a new order too was now in place. The novelty of a transitory Christian religion was now gone, unlike the time of Paul. Instead there was, in Luke’s Acts of the Apostles, a growing ecclesiastical hierarchy appointed by the apostles, totally unlike Paul's charismatic churches where leaders were chosen by God. Elders, as successors to the founding apostles who were now mostly gone, had to be appointed in order to oversee the burgeoning Christian churches. The churches now existed for the long haul. The Last Judgment could therefore be postponed to a future undetermined date without doing any harm to the Gentiles’ minds and spirits.

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375 90-110 for Luke, and 95-96 for Revelation. (See Introduction, Tables 1 and 4 respectively for the dates.) The date for Luke’s Gospel has been discussed in more detail at the beginning of this chapter, whereas John’s will be discussed more thoroughly in sub-chapter 4.3.
376 “By the crisis of 70, four decades after the Crucifixion, the majority [of the apostles] were probably gone.” (Hauer, An Introduction to the Bible, 296).
The most important reason for the change, in fact the *sine qua non*, was that Jesus was a no-show, contrary to what the prophets promised. The fact that the *parousia* had not materialized, coupled with a changing attitude among the faithful, were, however, serendipitous events that ensured the survival of the church.377 Both acted like two interlocking gears that made the whole machinery of early Christian history take the course it did. If, by chance, Christianity had continued on its eschatological stance unabated, it would have ended its life most probably in the ashes of history.

Jesus, in Luke's retelling of the gospel, began his ministry in Nazareth by preaching to a crowd in the synagogue:

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The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to let the oppressed go free,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.378
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It will be very hard to find any iota of the approaching day of doom in this passage, no matter how detailed it is examined. The good news, according to Luke, was all the wondrous things cited above that Jesus was going to perform for different segments of society, mostly the destitute, the sick, and the disenfranchised. Luke's Gospel right from the start veered away from Matthew's and Mark's versions, where the good news was the forthcoming kingdom of God. Jesus' mission, as defined by Luke, was to elevate unlucky

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377 "It appears that, when the end did not arrive, Christians realized that Jesus said it would and changed his message accordingly." (Ehrman, *The Historical Jesus*, 216)
ones from their impoverished condition, while the elevation the faithful could find in the other two synoptists was straight to heaven.

There was also another instance in Luke's story where, unique to his idiosyncratic version, he portrayed the people around Jesus as having eschatological expectations, while the Master himself exhibited no such aspirations: “As they [i.e. a crowd of people] were listening to this [i.e. a conversation between Jesus and another person in the throng,] he [i.e. Jesus] went on to tell a parable, because he was near Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately.”379 (Emphasis is mine). The theme Luke seemed to be imparting was that Jesus was not really an eschatological prophet, but he was just trying to accommodate the believing masses. Otherwise, the italicized words above should have applied not only to them but to Jesus also.

There were other episodes where Luke changed the original eschatological message of the other evangelists, or just plainly omitted any reference to it. Jesus did not mention the parousia when he sent his apostles to perform missionary work among the towns of Galilee in his version, unlike Matthew’s story noted earlier where Jesus proclaimed the imminent doom as he sent his followers to convert the so-called “lost sheep” of the people of Israel. Furthermore, when Jesus was tried before the Sanhedrin towards the end of his life, he was asked if he was the Messiah, the Son of God. His reply, in Matthew's version, was to warn his inquisitors he was coming back to judge them: “You have said so. But I tell you from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at

the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.” (Emphasis is mine). In
the corresponding lines from Luke's account, however, the soon-to-come day of
reckoning in Matthew’s version was absent: “If I tell you, you will not believe me.... But
from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God.”

When the Pharisees asked Jesus when the Kingdom of God would come, he did
not answer the question directly, but replied instead: “The Kingdom of God does not
come in such a way as to be seen. No one will say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or, ‘There it is!’;
because the Kingdom of God is within you” The subtle shift hidden inside Luke’s story
may not be so evident at first glance, but it was a drastic change. The Kingdom of God
will not be coming down from heaven anymore, as the earliest Christian writer had
preached endlessly, but was present here and now in men’s hearts. It may also be
probable that Luke intended the new meaning of the Kingdom of God to be an ointment
to soothe hearts broken from unfulfilled promises. The new version of the end, from
Luke's point of view, was now split into two parts. First was the Kingdom of God, now
present within the faithful. Next was the Last Judgment that was still to come at some

January 22, 2012). The expression “The Kingdom of God is within you” is also used in the Gospel of
Thomas, a gnostic work a “qualified expert has recently estimated ... [to have been] probably composed in
the first century,” or roughly contemporaneous with the Synoptic Gospels. (See Bentley Layton, trans., The
of Thomas, though, is more restrictive: we all carry sparks of the divinity within us, and not the divine
itself.
383 “Luke doesn’t have the kingdom of God coming in power; he has the kingdom of God present. It’s
present among them in Jesus own ministry.” (Ehrman, The Historical Jesus, 222).
384 “The concept of a kingdom already in being probably replaced the expectation of the Parousia in the
heart of the Christian community, disappointed as it was that Jesus’ promises had not materialized.”
(Craveri, The Life of Jesus, 352).
unknown date. Reformulating the *eschaton* this way altered the tense without having to eliminate the idea altogether.

But just to reemphasize the point further that the *eschaton* was still a long-time coming, Jesus, turning to his disciples, immediately added, “The time will come when you will wish you could see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you will not see it.” It is unmistakable here, in starkest terms possible, that none of the Jesus' followers would live to see the glorious day of the Lord. It will come in the who-knows-when future, totally unlike the stories from Mark, Matthew, and the man from Tarsus.

Luke departed again from Paul's apocalyptic message in the Acts of the Apostles. When the apostles asked Jesus when he was going to return just before he ascended to the heavens, he responded: “The times and occasions are set by my Father's own authority, and it is not for you to know when they will be. But when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will be filled with power, and you will be witnesses for me in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” His reply was to dismiss any talk of an imminent return, but instead to link the immediate future not with the last days, but with the descent of the Spirit. Ready or not, alterations to the *eschaton* were being made.

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387 “The disciples inquire whether this is the time that the Kingdom will be brought to Israel. They expect that now is the time in which their apocalyptic hopes will be realized, when God will intervene in history and establish his glorious kingdom for his people... Jesus tells his disciples not to be concerned about when the end will come. Instead, they are to work in the present to spread the gospel through the power of the Holy Spirit.” (Ehrman, *The New Testament*, 158).
After the Holy Spirit came down a while later as Jesus had promised, Peter preached to a crowd a bewildering brew of earthly and cosmic events surrounding the end of the world, but never associating it with a theme of imminence:

This is what I will do in the last days, God says: I will pour out my Spirit on everyone. Your sons and daughters will proclaim my message; your young men will see visions, and your old men will have dreams…. I will perform miracles in the sky above and wonders on the earth below. There will be blood, fire, and thick smoke; the sun will be darkened, and the moon will turn red as blood, before the great and glorious Day of the Lord comes.388

Peter was actually paraphrasing words uttered centuries earlier by the eschatological prophet Joel of the Old Testament, who, faced with the unimaginable devastation wrought by a huge plague of locusts,389 predicted the world was coming to an inglorious end shortly.390 After God had promised to recompense the Jews for their suffering,391 he then talked of the events surrounding the last days:

Then afterwards
I will pour out my spirit on all flesh:
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
your old men shall dream dreams,
and your young men shall see visions.
Even on the male and female slaves,
in those days, I will pour out my spirit.
I will show portents in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire
and columns of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the

389 “The earth quakes before them, the heavens tremble. The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining.” (Joel, 2:10 NRSV, http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Joel+2 [accessed December 15, 2012]).
390 “Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming, it is near.” (Joel, 2:1 NRSV, http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Joel+2 [accessed December 15, 2012]).
391 “I will repay you for the years that the swarming locust has eaten.” (Joel 2:25 NRSV, http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Joel+2 [accessed July 18, 2012]).
moon to blood, before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes.\(^{392}\)

And when Peter's listeners asked him what should their course of action be in view of all the events he had enumerated, his reply was: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you... and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”\(^{393}\) Be contrite then, not because the end was near, but in order to savor the spiritual fruits being bestowed by the Spirit. Luke, rather than staying on the same eschatological path blazed by Joel some three centuries before, veered away from it.

The Acts of the Apostles also showed the church was settling down. Church officials were being appointed and entrusted to oversee the expanding churches: “In each church they [Paul and his missionary companion Barnabas]... appointed elders, and with prayers and fasting... commended them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.”\(^{394}\) Luke also mentioned that Paul, before visiting Jerusalem for the last time, had “sent a message to Ephesus, asking the elders of the church to meet him.”\(^{395}\) The man from Tarsus thence instructed the elders to “keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock which the Holy Spirit has placed in your care. Be shepherds of the church of God.”\(^{396}\)


\(^{394}\) Acts, 14:23 UBS, [http://www.biblija.net/biblijica.cgi?m=Acts+14%2C21-28&id25=1&pos=0&set=20&l=en2](http://www.biblija.net/biblijica.cgi?m=Acts+14%2C21-28&id25=1&pos=0&set=20&l=en2) (accessed January 22, 2012). Luke’s account, however, has to be taken with more than some grains of salt. Paul, as evidenced by his letters, and as I have pointed out numerous times earlier in sub-chapter 2.1, never claimed he appointed the leaders. In fact, he claimed it was God who assigned the shepherds of the flock (See 1 Cor. 12:27-28 NRSV). So, when it comes to conflicts between accounts of the two, for reasons I have already stated earlier in the same sub-chapter 2.1, I am confident Paul’s version is more accurate than Luke’s.


\(^{396}\) Acts, 20:28 UBS,
Although Luke kept postponing the *parousia* farther and farther out into the future, he took the opportunity, nevertheless, of warning his audience not to let down their guard even if the end was delayed. He used the parable of the vigilant slaves to stress his point:

Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit; be like those who are waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet, so that they may open the door for him as soon as he comes and knocks. Blessed are those slaves whom the master finds alert when he comes.... If he comes during the middle of the night, or near dawn, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves.... You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.  

Continuing, he explicitly warned his audience the *parousia* was going to be delayed, while stressing at the same time that they always have to be prepared for the return of Jesus which may occur at any hour, perhaps at a time least expected: “Blessed is that slave whom his master will find at work when he arrives... But if that slave says to himself, “*My master is delayed in coming*”..., the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour that he does not know, and will... put him with the unfaithful.”  

The line of “having the lamps always lit” harkens back to the story of the wise and foolish virgins found in Matthew's Gospel. The wise maidens had their lamps lit when the Master arrived, whereas the foolish ones did not, and were consequently denied entry into the wedding feast, unlike their wise counterparts who were accepted as invited guests. This line became quite a common theme among later Christian writers, for it

symbolized the requirement to be always ready when the delay is no more and Jesus finally returns.\textsuperscript{400}

Luke, however, never did let go of the story of the impending \textit{eschaton}. He did proclaim that the day of reckoning was still coming soon in other parts of his narrative, even if it meant contradicting himself. Shortly before Jesus was transfigured, for example, he emphasized to his apostles the imminence of the \textit{parousia}: “But truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God.”\textsuperscript{401} Most notably, in his version of Mark’s “Little Apocalypse,” he basically wove the same story as the other two evangelists, including the linkage between the fall of Jerusalem and the impending doom. His account, however, contained some details not included in the stories of the earlier evangelists: “When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near.”\textsuperscript{402} His depiction of armies encircling the Jewish capital matched closely the account of Josephus.

Jesus then continued by enumerating the same dire events that was to occur on earth and likewise in the sky above as recounted in the first two gospels, before announcing his forthcoming second advent to his apostles: “Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near....So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of

\textsuperscript{400} Some cathedrals built during the Middle Ages also carried the same story in statuaries found in the churches: “There is hardly a French cathedral in which we do not find sculptured representations of the contest between vice and virtue, allegories of the virtues, the parable of the wise and foolish virgins.” (The Catholic Encyclopedia, s.v., “Pietro and Ambrogio Lorenzetti,” \url{http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09357c.htm} [accessed December 17, 2012]). Together with the Last Judgment found in the tympanum of most medieval churches, both preached to the faithful the need for eternal vigilance. \textit{Memento Mori!}


God is near. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place.”

On one hand the second coming was imminent, while at the same time it was not in other portions of Luke's Gospel. Logical consistency never was a virtue with him, simply because he did not have to be. He was writing principally a religious tract for the edification of the faithful, and not history as we know it. The same inconsistency will appear with other early Christian writers later as well. Yet, in Luke's changing presentation of the *eschaton*, lay intimations of the future: Christianity, for the most part, will march on without prescience of an impending day of doom.

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2.5 The Gospel according to John:

John deviated altogether from the eschatological tales written by the other three evangelists and Paul. The end was not forthcoming, in his idiosyncratic view, because it was not needed anymore. As long as they believed in Jesus Christ, the members of his community were already enjoying eternal life here on earth; there was no need to wait for it on the last day. His Gospel was a complete rejection of the eschatological message of Paul and the synopticists. This sub-chapter will detail John’s startlingly fresh view of the eschaton.

Someone wrote the Gospel of John sometime between 95 and 120, never claiming, however, to be the apostle John, preferring to stay anonymous instead. He made mention of a certain “beloved disciple of Jesus” in his Gospel, but he never explicitly proclaimed to be that person. Modern scholarship ascribes the originators of all the Johannine works -- the Gospel of John, Revelation, and the three letters attributed to John -- to members of the Johannine community in general, without assigning the authorship to any specific adherent. They were mainly Jewish Christians of the first

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404 For dates, see Introduction, Table 1. Other scholars assign different dates to this Gospel. Wilson is not decisive with his date: “It has been assumed that this [Gospel of John] was the last Gospel to be written perhaps as late as 100 C.E. But even this judgment is questionable, and the truth about the matter will probably never be known. There is no logical necessity which compels us to place a late date upon the Fourth Gospel, though it is obviously different in character from the first three.” (Wilson, Jesus, 48). Selby claims that John’s can be dated “not later that the early decades of the second century.” (Selby, Introduction to the Bible, N.T. 79). Barrett asserts that the year 100 was the more probable date, but “greater precision is hardly to be obtained.” (Barrett, “John,” in Black, 845) Kee thinks it was written earlier, around 90 to 100. (See Kee, Understanding the New Testament, 422). Hauer opines that the book was penned between 80 and 100. (See Hauer, An Introduction to the Bible, 253). Ehrman posits that “The Gospel of John was the last canonical Gospel to be written, probably around 90-95 C.E.” (Ehrman, The New Testament, 196).

405 The same anonymity is true of the previous three evangelists.

406 “An attractive theory of authorship is that of a Johannine School, which perhaps began with the beloved disciple and his reflections.... The Johannine School theory is supported by the existence of other Johannine
century living in the Holy Land for the most part. They believed in Jesus as the Messiah sent from on high, but they still held on, at least initially, to their Jewish beliefs including prayer at synagogues, much to the irritation of their fellow Jews. Matters came to a boiling point, however, when the Christians refused to stop proselytizing, and thus earned expulsion from the synagogue for apostasy. Perhaps the anti-Semitic tone of this Gospel was due to their banishment from the Jewish community, culminating in “the Jews [becoming] the unalterable opponents of Jesus.”

By the time the author of the Gospel of John started his work, the eschatological landscape had changed considerably. Although he wrote his piece a few years, or perhaps even a few decades after Luke, his perspective on the end times pushed the eschatological envelope farther than even Luke attempted, such that it was, consequently,

...writings - the Letters of John. These are similar enough to the gospel in language, style and thought to suggest common origin.” (Hauer, An Introduction to the Bible, 253). White asks: “Who, then, compiled John’s Gospel? We do not really know. The most widely accepted theory is that what we call the Gospel of John is really the product of several distinct stages of transmission and editing, the earliest core of which was thought to be from John himself.” (White, From Jesus to Christianity, 307). Ehrman concedes that “The Fourth Gospel was probably not the literary product of a single author. Obviously one person was responsible for the final product, but that person, whoever he or she was, constructed the Gospel out of any number of preexisting sources that had circulated within the community over a period of years. (Ehrman, The New Testament, 196). For the sake of simplicity, though, I will still call the author of the Johannine works as John.

Fredriksen claims that the group was Hebraic: “Academic consensus now holds, on the strength of the gospel’s anti-Jewish statements and the clear reference in the text to an expulsion from the synagogue, that John’s community was originally Jewish.” (Fredriksen, From Jesus to Christ, 226).

For a more detailed discussion on the history of the Johannine community, see Ehrman, The New Testament, pages 192 to 195. Selby also attests to the break between the Johannine and Jewish community. (See Selby, Introduction to the Bible, N.T. 329) So does Fox. (See Fox, The Unauthorized Version, 207). The same is the case for White. (See White, From Jesus to Christianity, 314).

“The sustained polemic against ‘the Jews’ throughout the Gospel have led some interpreters to call John the most anti-Semitic book in the New Testament. This polemic, furthermore, is not simply against perverse Jewish leaders but has the effect of a blanket indictment of the nation.” (Selby, Introduction to the Bible, N.T. 200).

Ibid., 228.

Luke was written sometime 90-110, while John’s Gospel was created around 95-120 (See Table 1 of Introduction).
a radical departure from the first two Synoptic Gospels. Any mention of a soon-to-come *parousia* was just completely gone.

In John’s Gospel, the kingdom of God was decoupled from the last days. The break can clearly be seen in two passages, for example: “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above,” and “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit.” Jesus cited the need to be baptized in order to enter heaven, but without any connection whatsoever with an impending day of doom. Compare these verses against Mark, where the kingdom of God was conjoined with the forthcoming last days: “Now after John [the Baptist] was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.’”

One did not have to wait anymore for the kingdom of God to come in the last days before enjoying eternal life. All one had to do was believe in Jesus, and one

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412 “Luke's Gospel tones down the apocalyptic character of Jesus' proclamation, as it is found, for example, in the Gospel of Mark. In John's Gospel, the apocalyptic message is toned down even more.” (Ehrman, *The New Testament*, 193).

413 “In John, Jesus does not... proclaim the imminent appearance of the kingdom.” (Ibid., 183) He further adds: “Thus, in the Gospel of John,... the kingdom is not described as soon to come, but has already present to those who believe in Jesus. (Ehrman, *The Historical Jesus*, 215). Along the same vein, although not as starkly as Ehrman puts it, Selby opines that “Although the expectation of the eschaton still occupies a place in the thought of the Fourth Gospel, it has receded to a periphery.” (Selby, *Introduction to the Bible*, N.T. 207). In short, there was still going to be a general resurrection of the dead come the last days, but the end was not forthcoming anymore. Wilson expresses the same idea. (See Wilson, *Jesus*, 115).


416 Selby also has the same observation, and some: “The proclamation of the Kingdom of God [in the Synoptics] would give place [in John’s Gospel] to having eternal life; the call to repentance and believing in the Gospel would become [in John’s Gospel] believing in him [i.e., Jesus].” (Selby, *Introduction to the Bible*, N.T. 200).
would possess life everlasting. This was the same promise made by Paul and the synoptists, but this time sans the second coming in John’s version. As such, the believer was not going to undergo any kind of adverse judgment, now or ever: “Very truly, I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come under judgment, but has passed from death to life.”. Written this way, it echoed Luke's assertion that the Kingdom of God was now dwelling in the hearts of men. The concept of eternal life, however, was different in Luke’s way of thinking; it was attained through good works, and not through faith as John proclaimed.

Perhaps a definition of what the evangelist meant by “eternal life here on earth” is salutary and appropriate. When John used this term, he meant life everlasting for the soul, but not for the body. This definition can be ascertained from what Jesus preached: “This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life; and I will raise them up on the last day.” (Emphasis is mine). In addition,

417 “And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.” (John 3:14-18 NRSV, [http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=John+3](http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=John+3) [accessed December 20, 2012]).
418 “One could understand the Christian life to be characterized by the present experience of eternal life..., rather than as lived in expectation of a fulfillment in the near future, such as we find in Paul and in the synoptic tradition.” (Kee, Understanding the New Testament, 370). Hauer claims that “In the Synoptics there is a mood of expectancy rooted in the hope of the return of Jesus (parousia) and the new life to come. In John, that hope is maintained, but the tone is dominated by a feeling of realization, not expectancy. For believers, the new life has already come. Through belief in Jesus they already experience the power of the Resurrection.” (Hauer, An Introduction to the Bible, 246). (Emphasis is mine).
Jesus, speaking of the Eucharist, proclaimed that “Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day.” (Emphasis is mine). Since only the dead can be raised on the last day, it goes without saying that only the spirit can enjoy sempiternal life while still on earth, continuing all the way until one enters the kingdom of God upon death. In other words, the soul was to enjoy life without end here today on earth, while the body was going to be resurrected on the last day, coming at some unknown date in the future. The belief in the resurrection of the dead was not only confined to Jesus and his followers alone, but was also prevalent among other Jewish groups in Jesus’ times as well: the Pharisees, for example. The tradition can be traced a few centuries back to the book of Daniel, as when an angel told him: “But you [Daniel], go your way, and rest; you shall rise for your reward at the end of the days.”

The recounting of the story of Lazarus highlighted also John’s belief in the resurrection of the dead on the last day, and also emphasized the concept that eternal life could be enjoyed here and now. Martha, the former’s sister, gently chided Jesus for not being around to be of help when her brother died. When Jesus replied that Lazarus will rise again, Martha agreed, thinking he meant the general revival of the dead at the time of judgment. He admonished her, however, telling her life without end was for the present: “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they

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425 “Martha said to Jesus, ‘Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died’” (John 11:21 NRSV, [http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=John+11](http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=John+11) [accessed July 28, 2012]).
die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die." 427 And then Jesus proceeded to raise Lazarus up from the dead. 428

Ehrman has a different take, though, arguing that these verses proclaim “that the resurrection of the dead is not a future event that’s going to happen later. The resurrection happens as soon as somebody has faith in Jesus. Then a person already has eternal life, not that they’ll have the kingdom when it comes (John chapter 11, verses 23 through 26).” 429 This idea of Ehrman is hard to reconcile with the other verses of Jesus, when, for example, the latter exclaimed: “Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day.” 430

The non-canonical The Gospel according to Thomas resounded with a similar idea of life everlasting while still here on earth: “Whoever finds the meaning of these sayings [of Jesus] will not taste death,” 431 although the meaning was different. Thomas, the name of the so-called author, was referring to the Gnostic belief that by understanding the secret meaning of the words of Jesus, the divine spark trapped in a material body can somehow lock into the same spiritual essence of Jesus, thus attaining eternal life. 432

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428 See John 11:38-44 NRSV.
429 Ehrman, The Historical Jesus, 224.
431 Layton, The Gnostic Scriptures, 380. Ehrman also links the two anti-apocalyptic Gospels as such: “The apocalyptic emphasis... is argued against by John, and is argued against even more strenuously even later, for example, in the second-century Gospel, the Gospel of Thomas. Here, in fact, there’s a clear attack on anyone who thinks that there will be a future kingdom here on earth, in the Gospel of Thomas.” (Ehrman, The Historical Jesus, 224)
432 It is interesting to note that Jenkins wrote: “Egyptian Gnostics loved John.” (Philip Jenkins, Jesus Wars: How Four Patriarchs, Three Queens, and Two Emperors Decided What Christians Would Believe for the Next 1,500 Years. [New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2010], 91-92). The most probable reason for this “love” was, as I have already cited, the common idea of enjoying life sempiternal now.
However, John did profess, idiosyncratically, to believe in a certain kind of second coming of Jesus, different from what all the previous New Testament authors had written. He believed a *parousia* had happened in the past, but without a corresponding *eschaton*. In other words, Jesus had reappeared in the past to fetch the apostles and the newly resurrected dead without the world coming to an end. He was outstandingly unique in this belief, for not even future writers of the Ante-Nicene era were going to comprehend the second advent this way.

John was aware of the promise Jesus gave to his apostles, that he was coming back for them. Hence, he had Jesus tell his disciples: “In my Father’s house there are many dwelling-places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, *I will come again* and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.”

433 (Emphasis is mine). The author also believed that Jesus had kept his promise, for he had Judas, one of his disciples (not the traitor), a couple of lines down ask the question: “Lord, how is it that you will reveal yourself to us, and not to the world?” 434 The question is actually a statement of the facts that the evangelist thought had happened in the past, before his time: Jesus had come back to fetch the apostles only, and nobody else living at the time of his coming. That is why Jesus did not appear “to the world.”

But in so doing, Jesus created a huge problem on earth when he went up the second time: he left the Johannine community stranded high and dry. The pain of

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abandonment was more acute for those members who were still expecting a reunion with Jesus soonest in his heavenly realm, a wish that was yet unfulfilled. We are aware of this group because they were the target audience of 1 John and Revelation, works that proclaimed the coming soon of the new age.\textsuperscript{435} Hence, in response to the query from Judas, Jesus issued words of comfort to allay the anxieties of his followers who were left behind, some of whom must have been in a terrible quandary, uncertain of what was going on, unsure if he was coming back or not:\textsuperscript{436}

Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, \textit{and we will come to them and make our home with them}.... I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. \textit{Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.}\textsuperscript{437} (Emphasis is mine).

Jesus was telling his followers that he will still return, only this time he will come back not for them, but to them. He and his Father will come down to dwell among them, so as not to leave them orphans, all alone amidst the encircling gloom. Moreover, they will have the assistance of the Holy Spirit to guide them. In short, he was telling those who were passed up not to worry, for everything was under control.

\textsuperscript{435} Both pieces will be discussed in sub-chapter 4.3
\textsuperscript{436} Barrett takes the same approach partially. (See Barrett, “John,” in Black, 860-861).
\textsuperscript{437} John 14:23-27 NRSV, \url{http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=John+14} (accessed January 31, 2013). It seems that the theme of sending the Holy Spirit down to guide the followers of Christ was a common belief among various Christians. Apparently John, and the members of the Johannine community, had not seen, or read, Luke’s account where the Holy Spirit descended from heaven after Jesus’ ascension. In John’s version, the Spirit came down \textit{before} Jesus went up to heaven. (See John 20:22 NRSV).
To be doubly sure that none of his present followers aspired for any kind of *parousia*, Christ explicitly proclaimed there was never going to be any kind of rapture for them: “I am not asking you [i.e. his heavenly father] to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one.” 438 He cautioned them, however, that they will never be free from persecution. 439

As for the members of John’s community who had passed away before the *parousia* of Jesus, John claimed Jesus had called them at the time of his reappearance to join him in his kingdom: “I am telling you the truth: the time is coming — *the time has already come* — when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear it will come to life.” 440 (Emphasis is mine). When Jesus said “the time is coming,” he was referring to the time in the past when he predicted that the departed ones were going to hear him and be revived. But when he proclaimed “the time has already come,” Jesus was now speaking to the members of the Johannine community, telling them he already had called the dead to him. John’s followers must have been acutely aware of the difference in the tenses Jesus was using because this is exactly what they believed had happened. It was not news to them.


439 “I have said this to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world!” (John 16:33 NRSV, [http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=John+16](http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=John+16) [accessed December 20, 2012]).

440 John 5:25 UBS, [http://www.biblija.net/biblija.cgi?Bible=Bible&m=Jn+5&id25=1&pos=0&set=20&l=en](http://www.biblija.net/biblija.cgi?Bible=Bible&m=Jn+5&id25=1&pos=0&set=20&l=en) (accessed February 19, 2013). However, in the Standard Version of the Bible, the line above is: “Very truly, I tell you, the hour is coming, *and is now here*, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.” (John 5:25-27 NRSV, [http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=John+5](http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=John+5) [accessed January 29, 2013]). (Emphasis is mine). The difference is in the tense: “*the time has already come,*” versus “*and is now here.*” It does not, however, nullify my argument. The dead were either being fetched, or were already fetched.
How am I sure that this is what John meant? Because this is the only way one can reconcile John 5:25, and John 14:2-3, with the concept that there was not going to be another imminent second advent of Jesus. This is the only way to unify the said passages with the overall theme of John that permeated his Gospel, that the disciples were already enjoying eternal life here on earth as a reward for their belief in Jesus. There was no need for him to come down a third time.441 Not interpreting the said verses the way I have done means one will have to be resigned to the fact that the two verses in question contradict what the evangelist proclaimed so profusely in his Gospel. Thirty-six times John used the phrase “eternal life” in his piece, almost twice per chapter.

As for the non-apostles who were alive at the time Jesus had come back, and who died afterwards, he promised them he was also going to get them too, on judgment day: “Do not be astonished at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and will come out—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.”442

Summarizing therefore, this was the scenario John was telling his community: first, Jesus had already come back in the past for the first group, that is, the apostles and the dead; second, as for the second batch, that is, those who were alive then but had died afterwards, they did not miss out for Jesus was still coming back to fetch them at the end of time. And for the third batch, the living members of John’s community, they were

441 Jesus had already descended from heaven twice in the past. This first time was his first advent. The second time was to get the apostles and the newly resurrected dead.
already enjoying eternal life. There was no need for Jesus to return for a third time to fetch them; in other words, there was no need for another *parousia*.\(^{443}\)

Other scholars, however, have different interpretations for John 5:28–29. John, according to Ehrman, used different sources to come up with his Gospel.\(^{444}\) The opening chapter of John, for example, where he talked of the “Word,” was one source which the author combined with others to create his finished product.\(^{445}\) Ehrman thinks that verses 28 and 29 in chapter 5 are “remnants of the older apocalyptic view,” meaning that they came from one of the sources John used to assemble his Gospel, a source that “maintained a dualistic view of the world, in which this age belonged to the forces of evil whereas the age to come belonged to God.”\(^{446}\)

Selby also thinks that the prologue is “more likely an early Christian hymn, possibly originating with the Johannine circle itself, which was expanded by prose interpretations to make an appropriate introduction to the Gospel.”\(^{447}\) Smith, according to Kee, however, doubts if John used different sources: “It is important to note now how diverse in form... [the Gospel of John] is. At the same time, however, all the components of John-the sayings material, the signs accounts, the Passion story, and the prologue-

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\(^{443}\) Note: only the soul will enjoy life everlasting. The body will be revived at the day of judgment. So, to be more accurate, the bodies of the third batch will be revived at the same time when the second batch gets called by Jesus on the last day.

\(^{444}\) “John no doubt had sources for his account--possibly a source that narrated Jesus’ signs, for example, and sources that described his discourses. He put these sources together into his own flowing narrative of Jesus’ life, ministry, death, and resurrection.” (Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus*, 61).

\(^{445}\) “At some point in its [i.e., the Johannine community’s] history, someone within this Christian community composed a hymn to Christ as the Word of God became flesh.... The author of the Fourth Gospel eventually attached this moving hymn to his narrative, providing a prologue that explained his understanding of Jesus, as narrated in the various stories that he had inherited from his tradition.” (Ehrman, *The New Testament*, 194-195).

\(^{446}\) Ibid., 193.

exhibit a remarkable unity of style and vocabulary. One can only conclude that, if John worked from existing sources, he has so thoroughly worked them over and adapted them to his own style and aims that they can no longer be distinguished as coming from separate sources.”

“In John’s Gospel,” Ehrman further elaborates, “this dualism does not have a temporal dimension (this age and the future age) but a spatial one (this world and the world that is above). Those who are from the world that is above belong to God, those from below belong to the Devil.” In another book, he avers that:

In this Gospel [of John] Jesus does not utter his apocalyptic message at all, except in a couple of older traditions, like the one found in 5:28-29. In fact, the older view—that there will be a day of judgment and a resurrection of the dead at the end of the age is here debunked in the newer view, that in Jesus a person can already be raised into eternal life.

In short, it seems Ehrman is asserting that the said verses were included in John’s Gospel inadvertently, as a result of using a text that still clung to the older view of the impending eschaton. The said verses should not be interpreted then as explicitly contradicting John’s belief that eternal life was beginning here and now for the faithful, even while it may seem contradictory if taken out of context.

Selby, for his part, thinks verses 25-29 point to a “general” resurrection of the dead, to be found in the story described earlier of Lazarus: “Something of the importance

448 D. Moody Smith, *The Composition and Order of the Fourth Gospel*, (New Haven: Yale University Press), 114, and 241, quoted in Howard Clark Kee, *Understanding the New Testament*, 166). (Note: I have personally examined Smith’s book for the citation Kee used in his own work. I have not been able to find the quotation in the pages Kee specified. I can only surmise that Kee is most probably mistaken regarding the page numbers).
449 Ibid., 193.
450 Ehrman, *Jesus*, 131.
of the Resurrection for John’s thought is indicated by the way in which the brief section on the Resurrection (vs 25-29),... points forward to the story of Lazarus which in turn interprets Jesus own Resurrection.”

It seems then that Selby is denying the imminence of the last days in these verses. Barrett is of the same mind, when explaining John 5:27: “The Son of God is audible..., and already there are, not men physically dead in their tombs,... but men who are spiritually dead to hear him and be quickened. Those who hear and believe have already eternal life, and for them the experience of death and judgment is already over.”

Kee, for his part, avers that in John 5:26-28 “John comes closest to the apocalyptic role of the Son of Man in Daniel and Mark.” Since Mark believed Jesus was an apocalyptic prophet who preached the end was nigh, he must mean then that in these verses Jesus practically proclaimed the last days were coming soon.

Before ending his gospel, the evangelist felt he had one more burning affair to resolve: there were some who still believed Jesus was coming back to retrieve their esteemed leader, the unnamed disciple. To convince the die-hards of the error of their ways, John took great pains to disabuse them of any lingering attachment to the concept of an imminent day of reckoning. Towards the end of his narrative, he had Peter asking Jesus if the “beloved disciple “ would still be alive when the latter came back. Jesus then

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451 Selby, Introduction to the Bible, N.T. 243.
453 Kee, Understanding of the New Testament, 174. I think he should have included verse 29 also, which is a continuation of verse 28.
454 “In the opinion of some scholars,... some members of the Johannine community had expected that their beloved leader, this unnamed disciple, would not die before the coming of the end. When he did [die] they were thrown into confusion. Had the Lord gone back on his promise? This author constructs the story to explain that Jesus had never said “that he would not die.”” (Ehrman, The New Testament, 189).
replied that it was none of Peter's business what would happen during the last days, while denying at the same time he promised John would be alive by the time he returned.\textsuperscript{455}

Finally, after putting down his pen, the author must have felt a sense of relief, nay, probably more of satisfaction. He had accomplished all his goals. He had admonished the pro-\textit{parousia} crowd that Jesus had already come back as he promised, and it was not going to be repeated in the future. There was no need as Jesus and his father were now dwelling among them. As such, they were now enjoying life eternal here on earth. As for all those whom Jesus will find asleep on the last day, there was no need to worry for he will come down to call them to assume their proper places in his kingdom.

\textsuperscript{455} See John 21:20-24 NRSV. White insists that John, the ‘beloved disciple,’ was already dead by the time the Gospel was written: “In [an] editorial comment,... the author explains that a ‘rumor spread in the community that \textit{this disciple} would not die’ (21:23); the author then goes on to show that the rumor was false, since it was based on a misunderstanding of what Jesus had meant. In other words, the author of the Gospel is having to account for the fact that the ‘beloved disciple’ is now dead.” (White, \textit{From Jesus to Christianity}, 306-307). Furthermore, he asserts that “there were some Christians who thought John would not die before the return of Jesus, so the occasion of his death has caused chagrin, which the author has to allay.” (Ibid., 307). Ehrman believes John 21:22-23 was a later addition by a Christian scribe to the Gospel of John (See Ehrman, \textit{Misquoting Jesus}, 61). Hauer, for his part, asserts that “the epilogue to the gospel hints that this disciple [i.e. the ‘beloved disciple’] did not live too long (21:23).” (Hauer, \textit{An Introduction to the Bible}, 252). Painter posits that the reason the beloved disciple appeared in tandem with Peter in this episode is that “All of these references may be later additions belonging to a time when the Johannine Christians were attempting to come to terms with Petrine Christianity, here represented by Peter. (Painter, “John, Johannine Literature,” in Ferguson, 617).
3. **Hebraic response to the devastation of Jerusalem.**

If the fall of the Jewish capital, and most specially the Jewish Temple, to the invading Roman armies shocked Christians, as I have described in the chapters dealing with the Synoptic writers, it should have traumatized all the more world Jewry. This chapter will discuss the book of Ezra as an example of the adverse Jewish reaction to the fall of Jerusalem, while at the same time highlighting the differences in the reaction of the two faiths to the same catastrophe, culminating in the eventual separation of Christianity from its ancestral Jewish faith.

The pain, and the bewilderment, were more intense. Jews were the chosen people of God, living on the land God had promised them a thousand years ago. Not only did they lose their crown jewel, God's shining city on a hill, but they were kicked out of their inheritance by their idol-worshipping enemies. In addition, pagan Rome continued to lord it over them. This state of affairs was just not supposed to happen. “This... [was] the crux of the issue facing Jews in the first century.”

How could their affairs have gone so wrong?

They could not blame Yahweh for their misfortune. They could not point an accusatory finger at him; for to do so would only mean their three lower fingers were bent and pointed at them, cursing them in return. No, the fault lay not with their God. But, just like as of yore, when Jerusalem was first sacked by the Babylonians, the blame rested squarely on their shoulders. They had abandoned the faith of their forefathers, as

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they did before in the days of Jeremiah, who rebuked them five hundred years or so earlier before the fall of the First Temple:

Your wickedness will punish you,
and your apostasies will convict you.
Know and see that it is evil and bitter
for you to forsake the LORD your God;
the fear of me is not in you,
says the Lord God of hosts.  

It was not surprising then that some of the books written to express the plight of the dispersed Jews and their quest for redemption were attributed to long-gone Biblical prophets connected with the destruction of the First Temple: Ezra, and Baruch for example. There were also other books that did not reference the fall of Jerusalem, but still mentioned the last days, like the Apocalypse of Abraham and the Sibylline oracles. The themes of the books were threefold. First, God's punishment on Israel was just because it was the sins of Israel that led to the destruction of the city and the Temple; second, there will be, however, redemption at the end of time; and lastly, Jews had to wait for it patiently in the meantime.

The Apocryphal book of Ezra was written originally in Hebrew or possibly Aramaic during the first and second centuries of the Christian era, and edited possibly as late as the third century by Christians. The date for Baruch is, however, murkier.

458 This book of Ezra referenced here is not the same book of Ezra found in the Old Testament. The latter was written after the Jews returned from their Babylonian exile in the sixth century BCE. This canonical book was written sometime fifth or fourth century BCE. (See Everett Ferguson, “Ézra (Esdras),” in Ferguson, 414).
459 Ferguson claims that Ezra was written towards the end of the first century. It was kept by Christians in a Latin version, whose scribes later added two chapters each at the beginning and end of the volume. (See ibid., 414). Sandmel makes the same claim regarding the date as Ferguson, but pushes the date for the last
Portions of it may have been written during the Maccabean period, (second and first century BCE), while others may have been created in the latter part of the first century, after the first Jewish revolt against the Romans.\(^{460}\) Both volumes formed part of what is now called pseudepigrapha, spurious volumes attributed incorrectly to famous figures in antiquity. Anonymous authors falsely claimed their pieces were written by more authoritative persons in order to imbue their pieces with the same aura and gravitas carried by the sacred writers. But whatever means they used, unacceptable by our modern standards, their aim, nevertheless, was noble. It was “the comforting of the distressed people and the encouraging of hopes for a messianic solution.”\(^{461}\)

The author of the apocalyptic book of Ezra, also called 2 Esdras, or 4 Ezra in other editions,\(^ {462}\) added, however, a new and unique twist to the issue of Israel's guilt. Ezra posed the question of why did the Almighty not concentrate his attention on the faithful ones and reward them by not allowing the fall of the house of Israel? Why did Yahweh not save Israel on account of their good behavior? This surely must have been a burning question among the surviving Jews who had fastidiously kept the faith during the time of tribulations. God's reply was that some will be saved, but others, presumably those who had perished, will not. After more to and fro on the same topic, the Almighty replied exasperatingly: “Do not ask any more questions about the multitude of those who

\(^{460}\) See Ibid., 69-70.


\(^{462}\) See Ferguson, “Ezra (Esdras),” in Ferguson, 414. See also Sandmel, *Judaism and Christian Beginnings*, 80.
perish. For they also received freedom, but they despised the Most High, and were contemptuous of the law, and forsook his ways."{463}

The above dialogue encapsulates the time-immemorial problem of theodicy: if God is good, why is there evil in the world? There have been many answers to this question, but the traditional reply, as can be deduced from the Almighty's irritated response above, has always been: God is good, but man chooses sin out of his own free will. If so, his punishment will be ordained and foreordained. Yahweh reemphasized this point to Ezra, that if he had the choice he would not have destroyed Jerusalem, but the evil ones defied him out of their own free will and thus forced his hand. And in order to cut short any more discussions of this sort, he reminded Ezra of the impending doom: "Therefore my judgment is drawing near."{464} And when the end comes, the heart of the faithful "shall be changed and converted to a different spirit."{465} This line is similar to Paul's, who, in his letter to the Corinthians, proclaimed that the bodies of the faithful will be changed from mortal to immortal when the *eschaton* comes. When Ezra queried God as to when will the end transpire, the response he got was: "When the number of those like yourself will be completed."{466} It seemed quotas were also popular with Jews.

As can be seen from the story recounted above, the book of Ezra showed a growing difference between Judaism and Christianity. While both faiths believed in the coming last days, Jews needed to assign blame for the destruction of the Holy City. It was

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{463} 2 Esd, 8:55-56.
{464} Ibid., 8:61.
{465} Ibid., 6:26.
{466} Ibid., 4:35.
the fault of wicked ones who did not follow God’s Law, while the followers of Jesus did not need to accuse anyone. The Savior had predicted Jerusalem was going to be destroyed, and it was part of God's unwinding plan for the last days. That was not the case, however, for the people of Israel. It was utter blasphemy to suggest Jehovah was part of any conspiracy to destroy his own house.467

Yet, the early church began its religious life as part of the Jewish faith, as testified to by the Acts of the Apostles: “Many miracles and wonders were being done through the apostles, and everyone was filled with awe.... Day after day they met as a group in the Temple.”468 The first Christians believed they were as Jewish as any other inhabitant of Judea; praying at Judaism's holiest site was part of their faith. What distinguished them from their Jewish brethren was their belief in Jesus as the Messiah.469 But as time went by, the chasm between the two related faiths became wider, until they became unrecognizable to each other.

An unexpected outcome of the eventual split between Judaism and Christianity was the demonization of the pharisaic roots of, ironically, the apostle from Tarsus. Paul

467 Sometimes, though, it appears God conspired with the enemies of Israel, but only to display his awesome powers; “Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Go to Pharaoh; for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his officials, in order that I may show these signs of mine among them, and that you may tell your children and grandchildren how I have made fools of the Egyptians and what signs I have done among them—so that you may know that I am the LORD.’” (Exodus 10:1-2 NSRV, http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Exodus+10 [accessed January 2, 2013]).
469 “The Christian movement began... as a sect within the commonwealth of Israel. It understood itself in terms of the eschatological hopes and expectations which flourished in bewildering variety in late Judaism. Convinced that in Jesus the promised Messiah had come, it saw itself standing at the climax of Israel's history.” (Selby, Introduction to the Bible, 327).
boasted he was, as I noted in chapter 2, a Pharisee. Thirty years later, “Pharisee” was a pejorative word. Matthew had Jesus hurling invectives at them: “But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you lock people out of the kingdom of heaven.... Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cross sea and land to make a single convert, and [yet] you make the new convert twice as much a child of hell as yourselves.”

By the time the evangelists started writing their accounts, Christianity was well on its way shaking off its Jewish roots, for better or worse. Perhaps the destruction of the Temple hastened the split. Its religious belief had changed so much that ultimately a new species was born, totally unlike its ancestral faith. With probably no devious intentions at the start of the breakup, the new faith became not only more Greek, but increasingly anti-Jewish as the years passed. The denouement from the divorce, however, became exponentially deadlier in the centuries to come. When Matthew wrote the lines below, never perhaps did he imagine the devastating chain of events an entire race would suffer for countless generations to come: “So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing

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470 Perhaps a reason for Jesus’ vitriol against the Pharisees may have been due to a difference in socio-economic status between himself and the sacerdotal class: “The priestly aristocracy belonged to the wealthy class.” (Jeremias, Jerusalem in the time of Jesus, 96) Some priestly families, in fact, practiced excess to absurd lengths: “It was reported that Martha of the high-priestly family of Boethus was so pampered that she carpeted the whole distance from her house to the Temple gate because she wanted to see her husband Joshua b. Gamaliel officiate on the Day of Atonement, on which day everyone had to go barefoot.” (Ibid., 97).
472 “The widening gulf with... Judaism forced much of the Jesus movement to establish a firmer footing in the Greco-Roman world.... A growing percentage of these Christians were ethnically Gentile rather than Jewish.” (White, From Jesus to Christianity, 259)
473 Matthew’s audience was Jewish Christians who were already leaving their familial beliefs behind. It is not surprising then that Matthew could portray Jews of his time as responsible for Jesus’ death, just as he had accused the Pharisees of murdering the prophets of old: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For... you say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our ancestors, we would not have taken part with
[during the trial of Jesus] but rather that a riot was beginning, he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd [of Jews], saying, ‘I am innocent of this man’s [i.e. Jesus’] blood...’ Then the people as a whole answered, ‘His blood be on us and on our children!’”

Perhaps it was not really Matthew’s fault for the tragic outcome of his words, for it is very hard to predict the outcome of one’s actions especially over la longue durée. All the more should he be held blameless, since even “The best laid schemes o’ mice an’ men/Gang aft agley,” a Scottish bard once remarked.

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them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ Thus you testify against yourselves that you are descendants of those who murdered the prophets.” (Matt. 23:28 NRSV, http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Matthew+23 [accessed February 20, 2013]).

474 Matt. 27:24-25 NRSV, http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Matthew+27 (accessed July 8 2012). Those being portrayed here as guilty of murdering Jesus were the “other” Jews, those who did not follow Christ, the Jewish Messiah.

4. The passing of an era.

Principally because Jesus had not returned as promised, the expectation of an early end to the affairs of the world vanished from the eschatological scene. Excuses, however, had to be created to explain the non-fulfillment of the earlier promise of an imminent last days. The reason given by the author of 2 Thessalonians, for example, was that the Wicked One, who was going to presage the second coming of Jesus, had not yet arrived. The author of Didache called this evil wrongdoer the world-deceiver. At the same time, he proclaimed, just like the synoptic writers, that certain celestial events, such as a rip in the sky and a blast from the heavenly trumpet, had yet to occur before the day of judgment could come. Others reasoned that thousands of years had to transpire before the end was to come. This “millennial” concept was going to become popular even for persons who believed the end was near, like the author of Revelation for example. When Christian communities came under stress, from external persecution or apostasy within the ranks, the tendency was to have a pessimistic view of the world that led to an expectation of an early exit from their valley of tears.

The end of the first century marked a watershed in the eschatological saga. Gone was Luke's ambivalence regarding the end days. Most, if not all, of the literature after the Gospels showed a dichotomy in the eschaton: either Paul’s message of an impending doom was absent from the scene, confined to the dustbins of history, or it remained pristine without any trace of contamination. In the former, which was the more numerous, the imminent return of Jesus disappeared. The Last Judgment was going to come at some
far-away time. As for the latter view, the imminent day of reckoning was still alive and kicking.

There is no imminent end-of-the-world theme in seventy percent of all the materials created after the Gospels were written as listed in all the Tables 2 to 4. The reasons for the change have been enumerated mostly during the discussion of Luke’s Gospel. In summary, at the beginning of the second century, the man from Tarsus and his original converts were all deceased. But if some were still alive at the turn of the century by some miracle of fate, they were most probably old and decrepit, with dim memories. Christianity was also becoming an established religion. The church was spreading out and settling down, with a need for some organization.\textsuperscript{476} While the idea of a hierarchy was only hinted at in Luke, it became more of a reality as time went on. The converts were also mostly Greeks rather than Jewish, with no fervent expectation of a redeeming messiah. They were also urban dwellers, unlike the rural folk of Jesus’ time. All these factors contributed to a church that was looking forward to a rather more permanent stay on earth, instead of an imminent apocalyptic end.

At the same time, the most important reason for the change was that Jesus had not come back as promised. It made the task of switching to a new paradigm so easy and convenient. All that had to be done was to repackage Christianity with a new theme that fitted squarely with the mindset of the changing audience: Jesus will come back only at a

time of his choosing, but not anytime soon. Had the early Christians insisted on
remaining within the confines of an impending eschaton, the sun would have set on the
Christian faith.\footnote{477}{Nobody would even have noticed its demise: “Had the church been wiped off the face of the earth at the end of the first century, its disappearance would have caused no dislocation in the empire, just as its presence was hardly noticed at the time. I think no one would have disputed that.” (Ramsay Macmullen, \textit{Christianizing the Roman Empire (AD 100-400)} [New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1984]), viii).}

Selby attributes the changing of Paul’s eschatological message to three factors:

First was the increasing opposition to the movement which began with the
Temple officials, but... spread to the synagogues until before the end of the first
century the Church and Synagogue were separated into bitter opponents.....
Second was the development of the gentile mission.... [The] Church developed
the belief... that the eschaton would bring the nations to obedience to Israel’s God.
The result was that the mission progressed with so much greater success among
the gentiles that they came to dominate it. In the third place, the eschaton, which,
following the Resurrection, the original disciples had expected almost
momentarily, began to recede into the future, requiring new adjustments in the
Church’s life and theology.\footnote{478}{Selby, \textit{Introduction to the Bible}, N.T. 18}

The first reason he gives is something I discuss here, but I do not attribute it as a cause
for the disappearance of Paul’s message of the soon-to-come Messiah, simply because
that I do not see it as reason enough for the Church to turn away from Paul’s
eschatological teachings even if it was distancing itself from its mother faith. But Selby’s
next two reasons I fully agree with.

Nevertheless, the eschatological message of Paul continued unabated and
unadulterated from time to time in spite of all the changes enumerated above; for the
apocalypse was not only a product of geography and heritage, but also a state of mind.
When the pressures were too much to bear, when the choice then became purely binary,
either sticking it out with the faith no matter how dire the consequences, or abjuring Jesus
to find relief from the unbearable pain of torture, then the siren song of the forthcoming
cataclysm became irresistible. The worldview of the future by the oppressed thus became
extremely pessimistic: God will have no other recourse but to annihilate mankind, just as
he had done before in the time of Noah.
4.1 Out with the old, and in with the new!

The end of the first century was a new world when it came to the eschaton, different from the ancients’ promise of an early relief from mundane existence.\(^{479}\) It was a brave new world indeed, not because utopia had now descended on earth, but, on the other hand, because Christians were freed from their eschatological moorings and now had to face a new but uncertain world, replete with bone-chilling and soul-trying ordeals. This sub-chapter will discuss all the literature as listed in Table 2, biblical as well as apocryphal, that did not reference the imminent coming of the last days.

Although stress in the form of torture and agony often led to a firm belief in the parousia, a heavy hand, however, did not automatically guarantee an apocalyptic frame of mind. 2 Thessalonians is a good example. The congregation was suffering from some sort of persecution.\(^{480}\) Nevertheless, the kingdom of God was not forthcoming, nor did the author indicate that members were yearning for an early deliverance from their sorrows.

It is doubtful if 2 Thessalonians came from Paul’s hand simply because the eschatological message in this letter was very different from what he preached. He was always definitive in the timing of the second coming: it was bound to happen soon, no

\(^{479}\) Ehrman describes the new situation superbly in this manner: “If we were to tally up these data [from Paul’s letters to all the Gospels, including the Gospel of Thomas] we’d have a fairly compelling subtotal. Early traditions record apocalyptic messages on the lips of Jesus [from Paul to Matthew]. Later traditions [from Luke] generally mute this emphasis. And the latest of our early sources [i.e., Gospels of John and Thomas] explicitly argue against it. I’d say we have a trend.” (Ehrman, Jesus, 132).

\(^{480}\) “We ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith during all your persecutions and the afflictions that you are enduring. This is evidence of the righteous judgement of God, and is intended to make you worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering.” (2 Thess. 1:4-5 NRSV, [accessed January 4, 2013]).
exceptions and no qualifications allowed. The second letter, in addition to not specifying when the *parousia* was going to happen, started adding conditions to it, like the appearance of the “lawless one” before the end could come.\(^481\) The diabolical figure mutated later into the antichrist in 1 John.

Craveri alludes to the doubt that Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians when he writes:

“Paul’s Epistles testify amply to his conviction that the wait would be the briefest....But in his Second Epistle to the Thessalonians (and for this reason some critics believe it to be apocryphal), there is also a reference to... ‘he who holds back’ or ‘that which holds back.’”\(^482\) Hendrix opines that

On stylistic, form-critical, and theological grounds, some consider 2 Thessalonians as a later forgery intended to “correct” the expectation of the imminent end-time promoted in 1Thessalonians. Other scholars accept the letter’s authenticity and have attempted to re-create a situation at Thessalonica that might have occasioned such a apparent revision of Paul’s eschatological views.\(^483\) Ehrman claims that “The letter whose authorship remains in greatest doubt [is] 2 Thessalonians.”\(^484\) He further asserts that “The author must have been a Christian from one of the churches Paul established, who evidently had read 1 Thessalonians.”\(^485\)

Neil, however, is a contrarian: “It has been held that the second letter [to the Thessalonians] is a forgery, or that is was written by one of the other members of the missionary team.... None of these objections is now generally felt to be strong enough to

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\(^481\) “Let no one deceive you in any way; for that day will not come unless the rebellion comes first and the lawless one is revealed, the one destined for destruction.” (2 Thess. 2:3 NRSV, [http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=2Thessalonians+2](http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=2Thessalonians+2) [accessed January 18, 2013]).

\(^482\) Craveri, *The Life of Jesus*, 343

\(^483\) Holland L. Hendrix, “Thessalonica, Thessalonians, “ in Ferguson, 1125.


\(^485\) Ibid., 403
upset the traditional view... that the letter is genuinely Pauline.” And so is Selby:

“Selby thinks that “In all probability the two letters to Thessalonica are the earliest that we have from Paul.” Kee belongs to this camp.

The missive was created towards the end of the first century, some fifty years after the first one was transmitted to the Thessalonians by Paul. The former was sent roughly around the time of Emperor Domitian, who reigned from 81 to 96, or it may even have been sent a year or two after his death. This Roman Emperor “began like [the archangel] Gabriel and ended like Lucifer.” He “always had a dividing line between his better and worst selves. He had always been coldly severe; now [towards the end of his reign] he slipped into cruelty.” He created a divine cult in which he, together with his deceased father and brother, his wife and sisters, had to be worshipped as gods. At the same time he organized a new priesthood called Flaviales, to attend to the worship of these new deities. All documents addressed to him had to greet him as Dominus et Deus Noster, “Our Lord and Our God.” Christians, as well as non-Christians, were subject

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487 Selby, Introduction to the Bible, 338.
488 See Kee, Understanding the New Testament, 422
489 “We can assume that he [i.e., the author of 2 Thessalonians] wrote sometime after Paul had died, possibly near the end of the first century, when writing letters in Paul’s name become both more feasible and, from what we can tell, more popular.” (Ehrman, The New Testament, 403). Early Christian Writings has the date at between 80 and 100. (Early Christian Writings http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/index.html [accessed January 8, 2013]). Hauer avers that “Not all scholars agree on the date of this letter. Some think it was shortly after (perhaps even before)... [1 Thessalonians].” (Hauer, An Introduction to the Bible, 282.). He does not give a date, though, for 1Thessalonians. Kee is of the opinion that both letters to the Thessalonians were written around 50 to 52. (See Kee, Understanding the New Testament, 422). Early Christian Writings has the date at between 80 and 100. (Early Christian Writings http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/ [accessed January 9, 2013]).
490 Durant, Caesar and Christ, 289.
491 Ibid., 291.
492 Ibid., 291-292. See also Smith, From Christ to Constantine, 75.
to execution if they did not pay homage to his divinity.\textsuperscript{493} It is not surprising then that the epistle talked of hard times:

\begin{quote}
We boast about the way you continue to endure and believe through all the persecutions and sufferings you are experiencing. All of this proves that God's judgment is just and as a result you will become worthy of his Kingdom, for which you are suffering. God will do what is right: he will bring suffering on those who make you suffer, and he will give relief to you who suffer and to us as well. He will do this when the Lord Jesus appears from heaven with his mighty angels.\textsuperscript{494}
\end{quote}

The faithful were definitely going to enter the kingdom of God, but not right away. The end was going to come at Jesus' due time, and no sooner.

But the author had a pressing problem to solve: others were already behaving as if the last days had already come, and were preaching so to others. He did not put the blame on anybody directly, except to say that these persons were disingenuous: “either by spirit, or by word, or letter, as though from us, [they claim] that the day of the Lord is already here.”\textsuperscript{495} Although the author did not say so, it is possible the perpetrators were deluded, but were probably blameless because some other prophets had come and proclaimed to them that the kingdom of God was at hand.\textsuperscript{496} They had been waiting for this moment for so many countless years now. Now had to be the time, otherwise the promise of the Master was an empty one, and that was just not possible.

\textsuperscript{493} Ibid., 292. See also Eusebius, \textit{Church History}, Book III, 17.
\textsuperscript{494} 2 Thess. 1:4-12 UBS, \url{http://www.biblija.net/biblja.cgi?m=2+Thes+1%2C3-12&id25=1&pos=0&set=20&l=en2}, (accessed July 12, 2012).
\textsuperscript{495} 2 Thess. 2:2 NRSV, \url{http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=2Thessalonians+2} (accessed January 18, 2013).
\textsuperscript{496} They may have been descendants of the original congregation Paul himself had established in their city half a century ago, or even a few original souls, or even proselytes of other missionaries who still clung to their eschatological beliefs of the impending day of doom. It must be remembered that Paul was not the only missionary plying the Aegean for converts; there were others as has been discussed in sub-chapter 2.1.
The writer thus had the most unenviable task of not only proclaiming Jesus had not yet returned in spite of the solemn promise made ages ago, but also to explain the reasons for the delay.\(^\text{497}\) He, fortunately, knew the cause, for he and others had already correctly divined the reason, or so they thought. He wrote to his congregation:

“Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ… I beg you, my brothers and sisters not to be so easily confused in your thinking or upset by the claim that the Day of the Lord has come.”\(^\text{498}\) He continued: “The Day will not come until the final Rebellion takes place and the Wicked One appears…”\(^\text{499}\) He further stated that the Wicked One was going to appear at the proper time, but will be destroyed only when the Lord Jesus came.\(^\text{500}\) This was the same scenario as in John's Revelation, written about the same time.\(^\text{501}\) Later Christian writers who believed both missives came from the hands of the man from Tarsus, such as Tertullian who will be discussed later, used 2 Thessalonians to prove Paul could not have believed the end was forthcoming, quoting the same lines that have been cited here.

Unlike the evangelists Mark and Matthew who combined the crisis of the Temple’s destruction with the second advent, the author linked the crisis of persecution

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\(^\text{497}\) The author still had to *deny* that the last days had already started not only because Jesus obviously had not returned as promised half a century ago, but also because of the stubborn belief in the coming soon of the last days by some in the community.


\(^\text{500}\) See 2 Thess. 2:6-9 NRSV.

\(^\text{501}\) 2 Thessalonians was written towards the end of the first century, whereas Revelation was inked around 95 or 96. (For dates, see Introduction, Tables 2 and 4 respectively). The date for Revelation will be discussed in more detail in sub-chapter 4.3.
with the last days too, but with one very significant difference – the parousia was not going to happen soon. The good news of the kingdom of heaven was definitely changing. Even if there was a persecution that cried to the highest heavens for retribution, God was going to do justice to his people when the Last Judgment came, but only at a time of his choosing. The church was settling down, and was not looking for any immediate deliverance no matter how dire the times were. The new “news” was totally unlike the story recounted by the synoptists with regards to the persecution of the apostles. In their version, Jesus predicted the disciples were going to be harassed, but he alleviated their fears and concerns by guaranteeing them he would be returning shortly to snatch them away from the jaws of death while they still lived.

Just before the author finished his letter, he admonished the faithful concerning an unwanted behavior that was common to many doomsday faiths. Some members had quit their jobs and were now standing by idle, with nothing to do but await the coming days of wrath, thus becoming wards of the community. In short, they were parasites. He minced no words reminding his audience how to treat these freeloaders: “While we were with you, we used to say to you, ‘Whoever refuses to work is not allowed to eat.’”

The letter to the Colossians, written probably in Ephesus, sometime 85 to 95, was addressed to a Pauline congregation. The letter was the first of its kind, for the

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503 For dates, see Introduction, Table 2. Kee thinks the letter was written between 58 and 60. (See Kee, Understanding the New Testament, 422 ). Moule avers that “The date of writing ... will be either between 54 and 57, or 61 and 63, according to one’s choice of locality [where the letter was first penned; either Rome, or Ephesus, or Caesarea].” (Moule, “Colossians and Philemon,” in Black, 990). Ehrman opines that
community did not have any aspirations for an imminent end, nor was it undergoing any kind of persecution, even though the members were reminded there was an inevitable end to all things of this world. It seemed the concern of the faithful regarding the afterlife was to live a proper Christian life so as to guarantee life without end in heaven when the time came, whenever it came, an aspiration similar to the sentiment of a majority of Christians today.

The authorship of Colossians has been traditionally attributed to Paul, because, for one, there are many references to the same persons Paul cited in his letter to Philemon, an epistle attributed to Paul undisputedly. One of persons named in the letter is Epaphras, who was mostly responsible for the conversion of the Colossians, and who was a companion of Paul when he wrote his letter to Philemon.504 Modern scholars, however, are still debating the issue,505 because there are other more important issues that negate the possibility the man from Tarsus could have been the author. One of them was the presence in Colossians of Christological disputes among the parishioners. Nothing of that sort was mentioned in any of Paul's letters regarding the nature of Jesus Christ,

The writer was elated to learn that some of the inhabitants of the city, located in Asia Minor and near Ephesus, had converted to the faith, but he was concerned that some

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504 See Col. 1:6-7 NRSV and Philem. 1:23 NRSV.
505 “As is the case with 2 Thessalonians, scholars continue to debate the authorship of Colossians.” (Ehrman, The New Testament and Other Early Christian Writings, 422). Early Christian Writings has the date at between 50 and 80. (See Early Christian Writings http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/ [accessed January 9, 2013]).
were being led astray by false missionaries. He asserted that Jesus was fully divine in a completely human body: “See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit according to human tradition..., and not according to Christ. For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.” The writer did not state specifically what his opponents were saying, but they were presumably arguing against his belief.

In addition, there was also a big contrast between the author’s concept and Paul’s when it came to the death and rebirth of Christians in Jesus Christ. In his letter to the Romans, Paul stated: “We have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.” (Emphasis is mine). But Colossians described it differently: “When you were buried with him in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.” (Emphasis is mine). There is a difference in the tense between the two quotes. The man from Tarsus said resurrection with Jesus was for the future, whereas it had already happened in Colossians.

Most importantly, Paul wanted to save as many as he could in preparation for the imminent eschaton, while it seemed the author of Colossians barely cared for it. When the latter did reference the second coming, he just mentioned it briefly, and only in

506 “I am saying this so that no one may deceive you with plausible arguments.” (Col. 2:4 NRSV, http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Colossians+2 [accessed July 19, 2012]).
507 Refer back to the abovementioned quote of Col. 2:8-9 NRSV in the footnotes of the previous page.
generic terms: “Your real life is Christ and when he appears, then you too will appear with him and share his glory.”510 There is no mention of the imminent second coming, unlike Paul’s message where the end days was just around the corner. Paul, hence, could not have been the author of Colossians for all the reasons cited.

Jude was written about thirty to sixty years after Paul had written his letters.511 The author claimed to be Jude, also known as Judas in Mark's Gospel (the other Judas who was not the betrayer), who was the brother of James, who in turn was the brother of Jesus.512 It is hard to accept, though, that the brother of Jesus really wrote this letter, for he must have been an Aramaic-speaking peasant, and not conversant in Greek rhetoric.

511 It was written around 90-110, as compared to the Pauline letters which were written around 50-60. (See Introduction, Table 2 and Table 1 respectively). Other scholars assigned different dates to this piece though. “We do not know exactly when the pseudonymous author [of Jude] produced his account; most modern scholars date it somewhere near the end of the first century.” (Ehrman, The New Testament, 485). Hauer thinks Jude was written between 110 and 130. (See Hauer, An Introduction to the Bible, 301). Boobyer thinks Jude “can be dated between 65 and 75;” or possibly “80-90. Some prefer 90-110.” (Boobyer, “Jude,” in Black, 1041). Early Christian Writings has the date at between 90 and 120. (See Early Christian Writings http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/ [accessed January 9, 2013]). Selby posits that “When the circumstances of developed Gnostic heresies with their antinomianism and libertinism are taken into account, these two Epistles [i.e., Jude and 2 Peter] can hardly be dated much before the middle of the second century.” (Selby, Introduction to the Bible, 451).
512 There was a gospel tradition that the brethren of Jesus were, among others, James and Jude: “Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon?” (Mark 6:3 NRSV, http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Mark+6 [accessed January 6, 2012]). Eusebius also testified that James was the brother of Jesus (See Eusebius, Church History, Book I, 12:4, and Book II, 1:2). Other modern scholars also affirm the same, such as Fredriksen (See Fredriksen, From Jesus to Christ, 144). Craveri (See Craveri, The Life of Jesus, 151), Kee (See Kee, Understanding the New Testament, 311), and Ehrman (See Ehrman, The New Testament, 484). The position of the Catholic Encyclopedia is the opposite: James, and Jude, are not the brothers of Jesus. (See The Catholic Encyclopedia, s.v., “The Brethren of the Lord,” http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02767a.htm [accessed January 6, 2013]).
and apocryphal Jewish books as the author of this letter displayed. Ehrman used this line of argument for discounting Jude the apostle was the author. (See Ehrman, The New Testament, 484). Hauer agrees with Ehrman: (See Hauer, An Introduction to the Bible, 309). So do Kee (See Kee, Understanding the New Testament, 378), and Norris (See Frederick W. Norris, “Jude,” in Ferguson, 638), and Boobyer (See Boobyer, “Jude,” in Black, 1041). Although White affirms that some scholars “still argue that the letter of Jude might have been written by the actual brother of Jesus... sometime in the 50s or 60s,” nevertheless, ‘the attribution to ‘Judas, the brother of James’ bears the mark of later tradition, since it avoids calling him the brother of Jesus.” (White, From Jesus to Christianity, 422).

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Even Eusebius affirmed the authorship was contested during his times.514

The author addressed himself to a general audience, rather than to a specific person or a specific church: “To those who have been called by God, who live in the love of God the Father and the protection of Jesus Christ: May mercy, peace, and love be yours in full measure.” Due to this characteristic, it was called a catholic epistle.516

He was concerned about false teachers who were mixing around with them spreading false doctrines: “For some godless people have slipped in unnoticed among us, persons who distort the message about the grace of our God in order to excise their immoral ways, and who reject Jesus Christ, our only Master and Lord.”517 Dissenters were always a bane of the earliest churches; the apostle from Tarsus himself spoke out often against those who were leading the flock astray. We do not know the nature of the disagreements, because all the writer did was hurl invectives against his opponents. He assured his readers the recusants were going to suffer the same fate as the fallen angels
when the day of judgment arrived, without specifying the date: “Remember the angels who did not stay within the limits of their proper authority, but abandoned their own dwelling place: they are bound with eternal chains in the darkness below, where God is keeping them for that great Day on which they will be condemned.”

The author predicted that scoffers, whom he blamed for the divisions within the community, were going to arise during the last days: “They [i.e. the apostles] told you that near the end of time, selfish and godless people would start making fun of God. And now these people are already making you turn against each other. They think only about this life, and they don't have God's Spirit.” While it may seem from these lines that the writer thought the end was at hand, for the jeerers were supposed to appear only at the end of time, he certainly did not appear to subscribe to the idea that Jesus was coming back anytime soon, for he immediately instructed his audience to await the second coming without specifying when it will arrive: “keep yourselves in the love of God, as you wait for our Lord Jesus Christ in his mercy to give you eternal life.”

The pattern of mixing specificity and generality for the end days, or discussing what will happen during the last days without mentioning when it will come, was going

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520 Jude 21 UBS, http://www.biblija.net/biblija.cgi?Bible=Bible&m=Jude+1%2C17-23&id25=1&pos=0&set=20&l=en (accessed July 22, 2012). Selby also claims Jude was not an apocalyptic writer. (See Selby, Introduction to the Bible, N.T. 454). Kee thinks that: “For Jude, the eschatological expectation is alive and central to his outlook. There is no mention of the parousia, however; rather, it is the prospect of the believer being presented before God in purity.” (Kee, Understanding the New Testament, 381)
to be a common *modus operandi* for succeeding Christian writers. It was a means to remind the faithful that the end was definitely going to come, thus employing fear to motivate them to be on the right side with God, but without committing to a definite date to escape the obvious problem of being labeled a fake. Paul's eschatological expectations were just getting old, simply because the end never came as he had predicted. Continuing along the path of an imminent *parousia* would have jeopardized the very existence of the movement. Many, if not most, of the succeeding preachers were not going to fall into that trap.

The *Didache* (aka Teaching of the Twelve Apostles), a book unknown until the nineteenth century, is the earliest Christian manual that we know of, having been created during the first half of the second century. The days of a charismatic church established by the first Christian writer as a temporary way station on a quick ride to the next life was, by this time, long gone; for the handbook instructed the faithful to “elect for yourselves bishops and deacons who are worthy of the Lord, gentle men who are not fond of money.” The author was wary of officials who were in it for the money, for the Christians was getting to be so numerous that one could earn a living ministering to their

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522 See Table 2 of the Introduction for the date cited here. The date, however, is a matter of dispute among scholars. Ehrman opines that “Scholars have debated the issue [of the date of this manuscript] for as long as they have known of the document’s existence.... Recent scholars tend to think that the book was produced by a single author on the basis of earlier sources at his disposal. Its final production may date to around 100 C.E.” (Ehrman, *The New Testament*, 478) Kee thinks it was produced around 100-130. (See Kee, *Understanding the New Testament*, 423). Hauer believes the work was created towards the end of the first century in Syria. (See Hauer, *An Introduction to the Bible*, 297). Ferguson gives a wider range of possible dates for this book: “Dates from before A.D. 70 to a century later or sometime between the late first of early second century have been proposed for the compilation. The place of origin is also disputed. Syria best fits the contents, but some aspects of the transmission and usage of the Didache support Egypt.” (Everett Ferguson, “Didache,” in Ferguson, 328).

religious needs. He therefore warned his parishioners further: “But he [i.e. the itinerant preacher] should not remain more than a day. If he must, stay one more. But if he stays three days, he is a false prophet.” Get rid of him by sending him off to the next city if he overstays, in other words.

The congregation at this time was settling down to a more comfortable stay on earth, unlike Paul’s times: “The... Church was developing in a less charismatic, more bureaucratic direction. This should not be understood as a negative observation. Ideas and aspirations... require institutional embodiment to survive beyond one generation, if indeed they make it that far on a spontaneous basis.” Moreover, “In the aftermath of the war (i.e. the Jewish war of independence in 65-73), the realization must have settled in with almost everyone that the Church might just be in business in this world for quite some time.”

The writer used different strategies when discussing the parousia. He spoke, for instance, of the second advent of Jesus but eschewed any mention of imminence: “Be watchful for your life. Do not let your lamps be extinguished, or your robes be loosed; but be prepared. For you do not know when our Lord is coming.” This was the same tool of the trade mentioned previously: motivate the faithful through fear in order to keep them within bounds. Furthermore, he qualified the terrible day of wrath by adding the

524 Ibid., 216, 11:5
525 Hauer, An Introduction to the Bible, 297.
526 Ibid., 299.
527 Ehrman, Lost Scriptures: Books that did not Make it into The New Testament [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003], 217, 16:1. Notice mention of the lamp that has to be always lit in order to be ever ready for the coming of the Savior who may appear at any time, a reference to the parable of the wise and foolish virgins in Matthew's Gospel.
presence of a bogeyman, another tool of the trade: “For in the final days the false prophets and corrupters will be multiplied.... Then the world-deceiver will be manifest as a son of God. He will perform signs and wonders, and the earth will be delivered over into his hands.” The “world-deceiver” was still not called an antichrist, but he was coming later. In addition, events in the heavens above and the earth below must first occur before the coming of the last days: “Then the signs of truth will be manifest: first a sign of a rip in the sky, then a sign of the sound of a trumpet, and third, a resurrection of the dead. But not all of the dead. For it has been said ‘The Lord will come and all his holy ones with him. Then the world will see the Lord coming upon on the clouds of the sky.’” The author thus proclaimed that after some celestial and terrestrial events occurred, Jesus was to return. But not once did the writer profess that all the events pertaining to the last days were coming soon.

Daley, though, thinks otherwise: “The Didache,...speak[s] of history’s final crisis as imminent (... Did. 16:2...).” The verse cited by Daley in Didache reads as follows: “Gather together frequently, seeking what is appropriate for your souls. For the entire time of your faith will be of no use to you if are not found perfect at the final moment.” (Ehrman, Lost Scriptures, 217, 16:2). There is no mention, however, that the final moment was going to happen anytime soon, unlike Paul where he unequivocally proclaimed that the end was going to happen within his lifetime. It may be argued, though, that the only way the audience can be found perfect on the last days is if the end

528 Ibid., 217, 16:3-4.
529 Ibid., 217, 16:6-8.
531Ehrman, Lost Scriptures, 217, 16:2.
happens during their lifetime. But is this what the author really meant? I would argue that, when it came to the last days, the author was hedging his bets. As I have pointed out, he had set different preconditions for the arrival of the second advent. That, in my opinion, is somebody who is not convinced that the end was coming soon.

The author was thus laying the groundwork for explaining the rationale for Jesus' delay if in case anyone inquired: the prophesied concurrent events had not yet come to fruition. He could thus appropriate the words of Paul without the need to embrace his message of an imminent parousia. Although he instructed the congregation to recite the same words pined for by the latter: “Maranatha! Amen,” to implore the Lord of the heavens to come quickly, the concept that Jesus was returning soon was, nevertheless, absent overall. The author of Didache thus employed yet another stratagem that was going to be quite common: quote the words of the eschatological prophet, but make sure to remove all traces of the imminent final hours beforehand.

Another popular book among the early Christians was The Shepherd of Hermas, written sometime 100-140. The author was the brother, Pius, was the bishop of Rome, thus a contemporary of the Ante-Nicene Fathers of the second century.

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533 See Introduction, Table 2. Kee agrees with White on the dates for this piece. (See Kee, Understanding the New Testament, 422). Ehrman thinks it was done sometime first half of the second century, (Ehrman, Lost Scriptures, 251). Aune is of the opinion that it was created between 90 and 150 (See David E. Aune, “Hermas,” in Ferguson, 521). The Catholic Encyclopedia assigns a general date of first or second century to the piece. (See Catholic Encyclopedia, s.v., “Hermas” [accessed January 8, 2013]).
The book did not become part of the canon of the New Testament because it was written past the time of the Apostles. However, it was included in the fourth-century codex Sinaiticus, the oldest complete Bible in existence today. This may have been one reason why the church authorities of the time classified it as quasi-canonical. Eusebius, for example, vouched for its utility: “others considered [it ] quite indispensable, especially to those who need instruction in the elements of the faith. Hence, as we know, it has been publicly read in churches, and I have found that some of the most ancient writers used it.”

In terms of style and content, the volume belongs to the apocalyptic genre, which is usually characterized by visions of the end appearing in highly symbolic form needing explanations from an interpreter, usually an angelic host. In the case of Hermas, the angel appeared as a shepherd, giving the book its title. There were five different visions

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534 “The Shepherd was a popular book among Christians of the first four centuries. Written by Hermas, brother of Pius, bishop of Rome, during the first half of the second century.” (Ehrman, Lost Scriptures, 251). White also confirms the relationship between Hermas and the bishop of Rome. (See White, From Jesus to Christianity, 341).

535 “It [i.e., The Shepherd of Hermas] was still included as one of the books of the New Testament in the fourth-century codex Sinaiticus and is mentioned by other authors of the time as standing on the margins of the canon.” (Ehrman, Lost Scriptures, 251). In addition, he writes: “It was eventually excluded from the canon... in part because it was known not to have been written by an apostle.” (Ibid., 251). White alludes somehow to the same point: “The identification of Hermas in the Muratorian Canon serves to discredit the work as scripture, since it was ‘recent.’” (White, From Jesus to Christianity, 341). He adds: “Both Clement of Alexandria (ca. 200 CE) and Tertullian (ca. 210 CE) treat it as scripture, while Eusebius later admits that its authority is debated.” (Ibid., 341).


537 “The Shepherd of Hermas is a complex Christian apocalypse written in Greek in stages from ca. A.D. 90 to 150.” (Aune, “Hermas,” 521). (Emphasis is mine). Kee defines the attributes of this genre as follows: “The divine revelation is not offered to the elect community in the form of a blueprint of the future or a carefully outlined scenario. Rather, the knowledge of the end of the age is communicated in elaborate cryptic images, dramatic and compelling in their intensity, but conveying nothing to those who lack insight into the mystery.” (Kee Understanding the New Testament, 360). Ehrman, more or less, describes it the same way. (See Ehrman, The New Testament, 494). So does Collins. (See John J. Collins, “Apocalyptic Literature,” in Ferguson, 73).
in this piece, revolving around the idea of what Christians had to do to regain salvation after committing acts of transgression against God. Some persons asserted that anyone who fell into sin was forever lost. Hermas, however, insisted Christians had a second chance, but only as a last chance; they could repent and return to God's good graces. Anybody who did not express remorse for their wrongdoings would face the wrath of God on judgment day.

When Hermas referred to the end times, he never mentioned it was about to happen shortly. And when he talked of persecution, he never specified a need for immediate remedy. Both outlooks were getting to be common for Christian writers who did not subscribe to the idea of an impending eschaton. When he asked, for example, his angelic guide the meaning of a vision he had of various colors he had seen previously on the head of a beast, he got this reply:

Listen, she said. The black is this world, in which all of you live. The fire- and blood-red shows that this world must be destroyed through blood and fire. But you that escape this world are the part that is gold. For just as gold is tested through fire and thus become useful, so also you who dwell among them [i.e. the pagans] are put to the test. Those who endure and are burned by them will be made pure.... But the part that is white is the age that is coming, in which the chosen ones of God will dwell. For those who have been chosen by God for eternal life will be spotless and pure.538

All things must come to an end, but the end itself is coming at some unspecified date in the future.

The letter 2 Peter, containing a few themes that would be used extensively by later writers, such as a six-thousand-year lifetime for the world, was written around 120-

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The author was facing the same festering problem of eschatological expectations as in 2 Thessalonians, written twenty to fifty-five years earlier.

It seemed as though no matter how vigorously ministers preached that the last days were \textit{not} coming soon, some still clung to the hope of an early deliverance.\footnote{See Introduction, Table 2 and Table 1 respectively. Ehrman thinks that “If Jude can be dated near the end of the first century, 2 Peter must be somewhat later.” (Ehrman, \textit{The New Testament}, 485). Kee, for his part, asserts that the letter was created sometime 130 to 150. (See Kee \textit{Understanding the New Testament}, 422). Boobyer claims that “Around A.D. 140 is frequently suggested as its date.” (Boobyer, “II Peter,” in Black, 1031). Selby asserts that 2 Peter “can hardly be dated much before the middle of the second century.” (Selby, \textit{Introduction to the Bible}, 451). Hauer thinks it was written around 130 to 150. (See Hauer, \textit{An Introduction to the Bible}, 301). Senior claims it was written perhaps in the early part of the second century. (See Donald P. Senior, C.P. and Frederick W. Norris, “Peter,” in Ferguson, 905). The fact that the books listed in sub-chapter 4.3, from James up to 2 Clement, spanning a period of about seventy-five years (75 to 150), contained proclamations from the writers that the end was at hand, shows unequivocally that there were persons who still clung to their belief that the end was nigh. Perhaps they held on to such belief, notwithstanding advice to the contrary from others, because their faith was multi-generational: their forefathers had advised them that the last days were coming soon. Moreover, Cyprian, living in the third century and the last author cited in sub-chapter 4.3, still believed the end of time was near.}

Others, though, could presumably be dissuaded. The author thus sought to alleviate the anxieties of those persuadable members, not only because the \textit{parousia} had not arrived, but also because other people were mocking them to their great discomfiture. The author derided these scoffers as licentious persons who enjoyed taunting them for sordid reasons: “First of all, you must understand that in these last days some people will appear whose lives are controlled by their own lusts. They will mock you and will ask, ‘He promised to come, didn't he? Where is he? Our ancestors have already died, but everything is still the same as it was since the creation of the world!’”\footnote{2 Pet. 3:3-4 UBS, \url{http://www.biblia.net/biblia.cgi?m=2+Pet+3%C2%A71-18&id25=1&pos=0&set=20&l=en2}, (accessed July 13, 2012).}
Before his readers could assumed that the author was implying the end was near (because of the presence of deriders), he quickly took the message of the eschaton in a direction completely different from Paul's. His explanation added a new tool to a growing bag of eschatological cures available for use by later Christian apologists. The delay was due to the fact that God and men, immortal and mortals respectively, treated years differently: “But do not forget one thing, my dear friends! There is no difference in the Lord's sight between one day and a thousand years; to him the two are the same.”\textsuperscript{542} And, not contented with that clarification, he added one more, just in case all his explanations were still ineffective: “The Lord is not slow to do what he has promised, as some think. Instead, he is patient with you, because he does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants all to turn away from their sins.”\textsuperscript{543} Instead of being carried away by mockers and joining their vile ranks to complain, Christians should rather be thankful to God, for he was tarrying only because he wanted to give mankind all the time they needed to repent so they can be assured of a spot in the coming kingdom of God.

Summarizing the author's arguments then, when Jesus promised he was coming back soon, it was from his perspective. For with God, a person living in eternity, a thousand years is comparable to a day for mortals. In addition, God wanted to give the faithful as much time as they needed so they can take advantage of the relaxation of the rules to repent for their sins. The Almighty was lengthening the eschatological timetable

to accommodate human frailties. So, instead of blaming him for not returning soon, Christians should rather be extremely thankful to God for his never-ending acts of mercy. This line of reasoning was a complete revamp of the original eschatological message of Jesus and the man from Tarsus. Instead of echoing Paul’s sense of urgency, of being ready at all times, for “The Day of the Lord will come as a thief comes at night,” the message was now that Jesus was extending the time of his second advent long enough to service human needs. The author concluded by using a tool his predecessors had provided him, namely, the fear of the unknown to keep the flock within the straight and narrow path: “And so, my friends, as you await for that Day, do your best to be pure and faultless in God’s sight and to be at peace with him.” Immediately afterwards, he reminded them to: “regard the patience of our Lord as salvation.” Men's reactions should therefore be: Deo gratias!

The letter 1 Timothy formed part of a trilogy called the “Pastoral” epistles, which included 2 Timothy, and Titus. All were written about sixty to seventy years after Paul had finished composing his letters. The three were pastoral in outlook, concerned with

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545 2 Pet. 3:14 UBS, http://www.biblijca.net/biblija.cgi?Bible=Bible&m=2+Pet+3%2C1-18&id25=1&pos=0&set=20&l=en . (accessed July 13, 2012). This was a common modus operandi of many Christian writers: use fear as a motivating factor to keep their parishioners in line, lest judgment day comes and finds them wanting.
546 120-130 is the date given by White for the Pastoral Epistles, while Paul had finished writing his letters by the year 60. (See Introduction, Table 2 and Table 1 respectively). Norris alludes to the late date of the letter when he asserts that “Most scholars since the nineteenth century... [view that] the conception of the gospel as tradition and the sense that apostleship as accepted authority represents a second or perhaps third generation beyond Paul... More conservative scholars, however, note that tradition and apostolicity are concerns in 1 Corinthians and Galatians. The difference in vocabulary could result from the different situations Paul faced, or even represents a change in approach.... These scholars believe that Paul may have made these shifts himself.” (Frederick W. Norris, “Timothy,” in Ferguson, 1131-1132). Hauer thinks the
church organization and leadership responsibilities,\(^{547}\) together with guidelines for proper behavior by Christians. Although by tradition Paul has been mentioned as the author, it could not have been so by any stretch of the imagination. First and foremost, the letters were concerned about church hierarchy, a topic toxic to Paul.\(^{548}\) In addition, none of the epistles described the second coming as imminent. Moreover, when mention was made of the law, it was not the Mosaic laws the man from Tarsus so ubiquitously used in his letters when referring to Jews and Gentiles, but, rather, ordinary civil and criminal law.\(^{549}\)

The *parousia* will come, the writer proclaimed, sometime in the future, with no fixed date, for the churches were getting established for the long run, with no need, nor wish, for a speedy exit to heaven. Instead, a hierarchy had to be established and

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\(^{548}\) It should be quite evident by this time that Paul had established charismatic churches, after discussing it at length in sub-chapter 2.1, whose leaders were chosen by God as he saw fit, and not by any human being. A hierarchical church was thus anathema to Paul.

\(^{549}\) “The letters differ markedly from other Pauline letters in vocabulary, style, and mood, and especially because of the developed church structure the letters imply.... [They] were almost certainly not written by Paul himself. (Hauer, *An Introduction to the Bible*, 302). Ehrman asserts the same thing: “Scholars continue to debate the authorship of the Deutero-Pauline epistles [i.e., 2 Thessalonians, Colossians, and Ephesians] but when we come to the Pastoral epistles... there is greater scholar unanimity. These three letters are widely regard by scholars as non-Pauline.” (Ehrman, *The New Testament*, 410). Kee argues the same point, more or less: “The common strategy of these short writings is to portray Paul as he neared the end of his apostolic career.... This device of pseudonymity does not conceal the fact... that the author is addressing the situation of his own times, probably the early second century.” (Kee, *Understanding the New Testament*, 328). (Emphasis is mine). Higgins also claims the author was not Paul: “The fact that they show knowledge of all the ten Pauline letters suggests that they are not of Pauline authorship.” (Higgins, “The Pastoral Epistles,” in Black, 1001).
responsibilities defined. It was a complete contrast to Paul's temporary arrangement of charismatic gifts bestowed by the Holy Spirit on the faithful on the verge of immortality. Unfortunately, his interim arrangements were not part of the agenda anymore.

Accordingly, the author admonished the members “to obey your orders and keep them faithfully until the Day when our Lord Jesus Christ will appear. His appearing will be brought about at the right time by God.”\(^{550}\) He could not have been any clearer: a quick trip to heaven above was clearly out of the picture. Accordingly, he discussed more mundane topics, like qualities a person should possess if he wanted to be a bishop: “Whoever aspires to the office of bishop… must be above reproach, married only once, temperate, sensible, respectable.”\(^{551}\) The church was now settling down for \textit{la longue dureé}, with a need for competent bishops to lead the flock. Divorcés need not apply, not even prophets of doom.

The author of 2 Timothy denied that the day of judgment was nigh, and, in addition, accused doomsday prophets of leading the faithful astray: “Hymenaeus and Philetus… [claimed] that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some.”\(^{552}\) He admitted, though, that the world will come to an end at some time in

the future, but without conceding any imminence.\textsuperscript{553} The person who wrote the third letter in the series, Titus, did not mention the parousia at all.

A common point running through the Pastoral letters, as in almost all of the New Testament, \textit{ad nauseam}, was a warning against false teachers. The author instructed Timothy, for example, to “remain in Ephesus so that you may instruct certain people not to teach any different doctrine, and not to occupy themselves with myths and endless genealogies that promote speculations rather than the divine training.”\textsuperscript{554} He even named them: “among them are Hymenaeus\textsuperscript{555} and Alexander, whom I have turned over to Satan, so that they may learn not to blaspheme.”\textsuperscript{556} He did not reveal, however, how he handed them over to the prince of darkness. Many would surely want to get pointers from him.

The Epistle of Barnabas was a non-canonical piece of literature written sometime 132-135.\textsuperscript{557} It almost made it to the official canon of the New Testament, for it was part of the codex Sinaiticus. If it had, it would have been a very destructive anti-Jewish work of the New Testament.\textsuperscript{558} The special treatment accorded Jews may have been influenced

\begin{footnotes}
\item[553] “You must understand this, that in the last days distressing times will come.” (2 Tim. 3:1 NRSV, http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=2Timothy+3 [accessed January 8, 2013]). What is important to note here is that Paul’s message was of a soon-to-come end of the world. The author of Titus believed that there will be an end to all things, but nowhere did he say it was coming soon.
\item[555] This is the same person he accused above of being a prophet of doom.
\item[557] For the dates, see Introduction, Table 1. White thinks it was created earlier, around 100 to 120. (See White, \textit{From Jesus to Christianity}, 328). Ehrman claims that “Most scholars have concluded... that the book was written sometime during the first half of the second century, possibly around 130 CE.” (Ehrman, \textit{Lost Scriptures}, 219). The Catholic Encyclopedia claims it must “have been written in A.D. 130-131.” (Catholic Encyclopedia, s.v., “Epistle of Barnabas” http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02299a.htm [accessed January 8, 2013]). Early Christian Writings assumes it was written circa 80-120. (Early Christian Writings http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/index.html [accessed January 8, 2013]).
\item[558] “Had it [i.e., the Epistle of Barnabas] been finally admitted into the canon, the history of Jewish-Christian relations might have been even more horrendous than it was. Among all the early Christian
\end{footnotes}
somehow with the way Christians were treated in Judea during the second Jewish revolt of around 132 during the reign of Emperor Hadrian.\(^{559}\) They suffered much at the hands of the Hebrews, especially in the opening rounds of the uprising, for they refused to join the rank of the rebels: “Only the newly-formed sect of Christians rejected the authority of Jewish leaders.”\(^{560}\)

The leader of the Jewish rebels was Simeon Bar Kokba, who proclaimed himself the Messiah and was supported by a foremost spiritual leader of the time, rabbi Akiba. The former was the brains and brawn of the revolt, while the latter was a confidante of the Almighty. Due to his divine connections, the rabbi was supposed to coach them to victory. He was so revered that it was said Mosaic laws did not mean anything until they were studied and interpreted by him.\(^{561}\)

In the beginning the rebels were victorious, and memories of the successful Maccabean revolt three hundred years earlier inspired them to establish a free state in Israel, and to mint some coins as a sign of their independence. In the end, however, superior Roman arms and tactics crushed the rebels after four years of ruthless fighting,

\(^{559}\) Hadrian issued an edict to rebuild Jerusalem as a purely Roman city. “Since its destruction it had lain destitute and barren, a haunt for beasts of the field. ... It was to be purely Roman, a seat of Roman culture, known as Aelia Capitolina;” at the same time, “and again with the best intentions, Hadrian issued another edict. He was determined to rid the Roman dominion of the heinous practice of mutilation, and, mistakenly placing circumcision in such a category, he forbade the practice. Both edicts set the Jews afire, and they rose in their final rebellion against Rome, one of the most serious and protracted in Roman history.” (Abram Leon Sachar, A History of the Jews [New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1966], 122).

\(^{560}\) Ibid., 122.

\(^{561}\) See ibid., 122.
thus earning Hadrian the enmity of subsequent rabbis. The latter depicted the former as an arch villain in subsequent Rabbinic literature.\footnote{See Sandmel, \textit{Judaism and Christian Beginnings}, 249.} In the aftermath of the war, both Bar Kochba and rabbi Akiba were executed in 136. Jews suffered tremendously from the futile rebellion, more than they did during the first rebellion of 66-73. The nation of Israel lost approximately half a million lives, and survivors were “rushed to the slave markets of the East or to the gladiator arenas in the chief cities of the West.”\footnote{Sachar, \textit{A History of The Jews}, 123} They were also barred, together with Christians, from entering Jerusalem.\footnote{See ibid., 123.} The unhappy outcome may have played a part in the Jewish name given to Bar Kochba, which is bar Koziba, meaning “son of deception” in Hebrew.\footnote{See Sandmel, \textit{Judaism and Christian Beginnings}, 249.}

The letter of Barnabas claimed Christians were the heirs of the covenant mentioned in the Old Testament and not the pernicious Jews, who persecuted them as cited above. He cited as proof the fact that the prophets of old had convicted Jewry for its malfeasance since the beginning of the world. Moreover, all important events in the Scriptures were not to be taken literally as the ignorant Jews mistakenly did, but rather allegorically. The author, for example, interpreted the event when Moses, as he was coming down from the holy mountain of Sinai, got so revolted at the sight of Israelites cavorting down below in their rediscovered pagan rituals that he disgustedly threw down and smashed the tablets he received from God. This signified, from his point of view, that the covenant between Yahweh and his so-called chosen people was broken from that time on, never to be restored until the coming of Jesus. He died on the cross for the remission
of sins, however, not of Jews who had forsaken God, but of Christians solely who were the real chosen people of God from the beginning of time.\textsuperscript{566}

Other than the author's rants against the Jews as described in the previous paragraph, the letter was a manual of instruction to teach Christians what they should do as followers of the Gospels.\textsuperscript{567} It did not contain any clue as to who the author was, nor who the intended audience was. It was, rather, a “catholic” epistle just like Jude, addressed to the faithful in general. It was composed of two parts: the first touched on the last days, while the next one applied an allegorized interpretation of the Old Testament to Christian values and institutions.

On the coming \textit{eschaton}, the author did not show any inclination whatsoever towards an apocalyptic frame of mind: “And so by carefully investigating what is here and now, we must seek for the things that can save us... And we should hate the error of the present age, that we may be loved in the age to come.”\textsuperscript{568} He professed that Scriptures was proclaiming it will be all over after six thousand years, taking his cue from the interpretation proposed by 2 Peter:

Pay attention, to what it means that “he finished in six days.” This means that in six thousand years the Lord will complete all things. For with him a day represents a thousand years. He himself testifies that I am right, when he says, “See, a day of the Lord will be like a thousand years.” And so, children, all things will be completed in six days - that is to say, in six thousand years.\textsuperscript{569}

\textsuperscript{566} See ibid., 145-146.
\textsuperscript{567} White, \textit{From Jesus to Christianity}, 326.
\textsuperscript{568} Ehrman, \textit{Lost Scriptures}, 221-222, 4:1.
\textsuperscript{569} Ibid., 232, 15:4.
The concept of the world ending in so many thousands of years was going to be copied by other writers and spread around like a meme.

As I noted before when the Didache was discussed, Daley disagrees with my conclusion.\textsuperscript{570} There is one verse in chapter 4 that talks of the end: “We should pay close attention here in the final days. For the entire time of our faith will be of no use to us if we do not stand in resistance... both against this present lawless age and against the stumbling blocks that are yet to come.”\textsuperscript{571} It does mention the “final days,” but there is no mention that the end of all things was going to happen anytime soon. The previous and subsequent verses do not throw any additional light on the matter. I find it very hard to accept Daley’s argument because, as I have shown above, the author categorically stated the world was ending in six thousand years.

While others had the unenviable task of explaining the delay of the second advent, the author of the Apocalypse of Peter believed he did not have to, for the second coming was not meant for the generation of the apostles, but for succeeding ones. The book was written around the year 135, or perhaps later.\textsuperscript{572}

\textsuperscript{570} See Daley, ‘Eschatology,’ in Ferguson, 383.
\textsuperscript{571} Ehrman, \textit{Lost Scriptures}, 222, 4:9.
\textsuperscript{572} See Introduction, Table 2. Ferguson thinks it was created around mid-second century. (See Ferguson, “Apocalypse of Peter,” in Ferguson, 72). Early Christian Writings has the date as 100-150. (See Early Christian Writings \url{http://www.earlychristianwritings.com} [accessed January 9, 2013]). As for the Catholic Encyclopedia, it states that “The apocryphon is attributed by critics to the first quarter of the second century and is therefore one of the earliest specimens of non-canonical literature.” (Catholic Encyclopedia, s.v., “Apocrypha” \url{http://www.newadvent.org/catheen/08580c.htm} [accessed February 13, 2013]).
It was a popular book of the time, together with its companion, the Gospel of Peter, both well accepted by early Christians as part of the canon. The Apocalypse was quite famous that it spawned a number of copycat books. Another clue to its popularity can be inferred from the fact that both works were discovered bound in a manuscript in the tomb of a Christian monk in Egypt in 1887.

When the author spoke of the end, he wove his story of the last days using Mark's “Little Apocalypse” as his model. Jesus was atop the Mount of Olives when Peter, the supposed author of the piece, together with the other disciples, asked Jesus: “Declare to us what are the signs of your coming and of the end of the world that we may perceive and mark the time of your coming and instruct those who come after us..., that they, when they hear it, may take heed to themselves and mark the time of your coming.” (Emphasis is mine). By wording his query this way, there was no need to explain why Jesus was tarrying.

Jesus did not answer the question directly, but responded along the same vein as in the Gospel of the first evangelist, sans the ruination of the Temple. Unlike the previous

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573 See Ehrman, Lost Scriptures, 280. The Catholic Encyclopedia also endorses the same idea: “There is abundant evidence that the Petrine apocalypse was believed authentic in many quarters of the early Church, and enjoyed in a certain measure canonical authority.” (Catholic Encyclopedia, s.v., “Apocrypha” [accessed February 13, 2013]).

574 It was “the first Christian writing to describe a journey through hell and heaven, an account that inspired a large number of successors, ultimately, Dante’s Divine Comedy.” (Ehrman, The New Testament and Other Early Christian Writings, 414).


576 “It came to be excluded from the canon, in part, because Christians realized that it was pseudonymous.” (Ehrman, Lost Scriptures, 280). Moreover, Peter could not have written this Apocalypse because he was more than long dead when it was written around 135. However, I shall call the author as Peter for the sake of simplicity.

577 Ibid., 281,1.
Epistle of Barnabas, however, Jesus here treated the Jews favorably. For when Peter asked Jesus “What then does the parable of the fig-tree mean?” Jesus’ response was that the fig-tree represented the nation of Israel. And when the “twigs [of the fig-tree] sprouted forth in the last days, then shall false Christs come and await expectation.”

But this time, the Jews will reject the antichrist, and “he [i.e. the antichrist] shall slay them with the sword, and there shall be many martyrs.... Enoch and Elijah shall be sent to teach them that this is the deceiver.” Thus, the Jews will also be saved for they will become martyrs of the faith, who will have rejected the overtures from the enemies of God during the time of reckoning.

After Peter saw the souls of people who were going to be quarantined during the end times for either reward or punishment, he then addressed Jesus with a question, wrapped in a statement, regarding the eons-old problem of evil: “Lord, allow me to speak your word concerning the sinners, 'It were better for them if they had not been created.'” The Savior did not reply directly, but reiterated the fact that his sense of justice will reign supreme on the day of judgment. Everyone will get what he deserves: “As for the elect who have done good, they shall come to me and not see death by the devouring fire. But the... sinners... shall stand in the depths of darkness that shall not pass away, and their chastisement shall be the fire, and... [they] shall be punished for ever,

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578 Ibid., 281,2. The fig-tree is mentioned in the “Little Apocalypse” of Mark as well as in the other Synoptic Gospels, all in connection with the last days. (See Mark 14:28-31 NSRV; also Matthew 24:32-35 NRSV; and Luke 21:29-33 NRSV).
579 Ehrman, Lost Scriptures, 281,2.
580 Ibid., 281-282,2. As noted in sub-chapter 2.2, Elijah is a harbinger of the end days.
581 Ibid., Lost Scriptures, 282, 3.
every one according to his transgression." He then went on to describe the appropriate kinds of punishment reserved for persons who committed specific sins:

And again behold two women: they [i.e. the angels] hang them up by their neck and by their hair; they shall cast them into the pit. These are those who plaited their hair, not to make themselves beautiful but to turn them to fornication, that they might ensnare the souls of men to perdition. And the men who lay with them in fornication shall be hung by their loins in that place of fire; and they shall say one to another: 'We did not know that we should come to everlasting punishment.'

Peter then related the story of sinners who, realizing in their torments the errors of their ways, will cry out: “Have mercy upon us, for now we know the judgment of God, which he declared to us before time and we did not believe;” but it will be too late, and the angel Tatirokos will rebuke them: “Now do you repent, when it is no longer the time for repentance.”

In summary then, the author believed the last days was going to come, having received the vision of the apocalypse straight from the Master himself. But he believed the end was not going to come anytime soon. And there was no need to explain the delay of the eschaton, because the promised second advent was meant for the succeeding generations.

Another apocalyptic book, The Ascension of Isaiah, was originally a Jewish piece dating from the second to the first century BCE, but was reworked later by a Christian

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582 Ibid., 283, 6.
583 Ibid., 283-284, 7.
584 Ibid., 286, 13.
585 See White, From Jesus to Christianity, 481, footnote 51. White also claims that this piece was used by Ignatius of Antioch, who will be discussed in the last sub-chapter, to interpret the life of Jesus. (See ibid., 348).
writer to reflect Christian ideas and beliefs. It was created sometime between the end of
the first century and the third century. It is also sometimes called The Apocalypse of
Isaiah, although it must not be confused with another piece by the same name, which is

The story begins with the saintly Hezekiah, an eight century BCE Judean king, and his son and heir Manasseh, who was predicted to become a wicked king after he had assumed the throne. The former, upon learning this, resolved to kill his son, but was dissuaded by Isaiah, who told him that the die was cast, and there was nothing he could do about it. Isaiah predicted he was going to be martyred under Manasseh in a gruesome way, to be cut in half by a saw. And when it came to pass that Hezekiah joined his forebears in the silence of the dead, his son, Manasseh, proved true to form: he “served Satan and his angels and his powers.” Then the world was going to turn wicked, and abruptly Jesus Christ became part of his predictions:

His transformation and His descent [from heaven] and the likeness into which He should be transformed (that is) the likeness of man, and the persecution wherewith he should be persecuted, and the torturers wherewith the children of

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586 “The date of their combination has been placed as early as the end of the first century, or as late as the third century, with the beginning or the end of the second century the principal alternatives.” (Ibid., 126)
587 See Ehrman, The New Testament, 495. Ferguson avers that the Jewish portion was created earlier than the Christian part. (See Everett Ferguson, “Ascension of Isaiah,” in Ferguson, 126).
589 “The major southern prophet during the... Hezekiah (715-687 B.C.) years was Isaiah of Jerusalem.” (Selby, Introduction to the Bible, 268).
590 “And Isaiah said unto him [i.e. Hezekiah]: 'The counsel of Sammael against Manasseh is consummated: naught will avail thee.” (Early Christian Writings, “The Ascension of Isaiah,” 1:11
591 “And many in Jerusalem and in Judea he will cause to abandon the true faith, and Beliar will dwell in Manasseh, and by his hands I shall be sawn asunder.” (Ibid., 1:9
592 Ibid., 2:2. (Emphasis is mine).
Israel should torture Him, and the coming of His twelve disciples, and the teaching, and that He should before the sabbath be crucified upon the tree, and should be crucified together with wicked men, and that He should be buried in the sepulcher.\(^593\)

After the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, and the spread of Christianity,\(^594\) the author then talked of the events surrounding the *eschaton*, without claiming that it was soon-to-come: “And there will be much contention on the eve of [His advent and] His approach.... For there will be great jealousy in the last days; for everyone will say what is pleasing in his own eyes... And now Hezekiah and Josab my son, these are the days of the completion of the world.”\(^595\) After many other events that will happen in the future, then the antichrist will come, and “He shall bear sway three years and seven months and twenty-seven days.”\(^596\) And after “(one thousand) three hundred and thirty-two days the Lord will come with His angels and with the armies of the holy ones from the seventh heaven with the glory of the seventh heaven, and He will drag Beliar [the antichrist] into Gehenna and also his armies.”\(^597\)

\(^{593}\) Ibid., 3:13. This is where a Christian scribe came in with his modifications. Ferguson, though, claims the Christian portion of the narrative should have began later, in Chapter 6, which is, of course, incorrect.(See Ferguson, “Ascension of Isaiah,” in Ferguson, 126),

\(^{594}\) The author claimed he was living during the time of King Manasseh, about seven centuries or more ago. So all the events regarding Jesus were his forecasts for the future. From the point of view of his audience living in the first two or three centuries of the Christian era, all his predictions have already come true as of the present era of his readers. Hence, the author had established successfully his bona fides as a prophet to his audience. Thus all his prophesies for the future, seen from the point of view of his followers belonging to the first two or three centuries, will come true, including his divinations of Jesus and the last days.

\(^{595}\) Early Christian Writings, “The Ascension of Isaiah,” 3:22-4: 1

[http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/ascension.html](http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/ascension.html) (accessed January 27, 2013). Notice that the author is addressing King Hezekiah as though the latter was still living, when actually he had already passed away and it was now the reign of his son, Manasseh. The presentation of events in this work is chronologically inconsistent, and may lead to confusion easily. But consistency was never a virtue among the religious writers of old.


And then it came to pass that Isaiah was martyred: “On account of these visions, therefore, Beliar was wroth with Isaiah, and he dwelt in the heart of Manasseh and he sawed him in sunder with a wooden saw.”598 The rest of the book dealt afterwards with Isaiah’s vision of what he was going to see when he went up to heaven. This portion, starting from Chapter 6, was appropriately called the “Vision of Isaiah.”599

Summarizing therefore all the works in this sub-chapter, from 2 Thessalonians up to the Ascension of Isaiah, all these pieces talked of the parousia in one way or the other, without claiming it was coming shortly. There are several reasons why this very consequential change from Paul’s original eschatological message happened. The most important reason, the sine qua non, was that Jesus had not returned as promised by Paul and the synoptics. Moreover, the audience was changing; they were becoming more Gentile and less Jewish, and consequently they were becoming less receptive to the apocalyptic message. The Christian community was also settling down for a prolonged stay here on earth, requiring the leadership of bishops and elders, unlike the charismatic churches Paul established during his ministry, fleetingly he thought.

599 See Ferguson, “Ascension of Isaiah,” in Ferguson, 126.
4.2 No end in sight.

The eschatological trend at the start of the second century was non-eschatological, that is, the end was coming at sometime in the who-knows-when future. More than eighty percent of all Ante-Nicene Fathers, as listed in Tables 3 and 5, subscribed to the idea that *parousia* was to be an event in the distant future, and that the world was not going to end anytime soon. This sub-chapter will study all the literature written by the Ante-Nicene Fathers as listed in Table 3 that did not subscribe to that notion.

The unrealized *eschaton* not only forced Christians to change their eschatological outlook, but afforded them also the time and opportunity to continue writing treatises to explain tenets of their faith. Some did so openly in the light of day, but others only in the shadows, hiding in catacombs, for example, to escape from their oppressors. Some of the works they created, coming from disparate groups of Christians, were at cross-purposes with each other, such as the those that generated Christological disputes mentioned earlier. Centuries had to pass before such contentious issues could be resolved. And when the dust finally settled, the victors earned the bragging rights to write history as they interpreted it. Losers gained the dishonor of fading away, and memories of them were relegated to the dustbin of history.

In the meantime, though, persons arose who were forerunners of the victorious party, who were labeled later on, by the victors of course, as the orthodox.\(^\text{600}\) One of them

\(^{600}\) Ehrman calls the forerunners the proto-orthodox Christians. (See Ehrman, *The New Testament*, 6-7). At the same time, he asserts that it is an expression used by scholars: “*Proto-orthodoxy* is a term used by historians to refer to the kind of Christianity that ended up as victorious by the 3rd Christian century.” (Bart
was a person known to history as Justin Martyr (110-165), who ended his life as a martyr around 165, during the reign of Marcus Aurelius. Although the Emperor did not institute empire-wide persecution of Christians, he let local customs prevail, as was the prevailing custom of the times. In this manner, Justin and six other coreligionists were scourged and then beheaded under the prefect Julius Rusticus of Rome.\footnote{Ehrman, After the New Testament: The Writings of the Apostolic Fathers [Chantilly, Virginia: The Teaching Company, 2005], 104).}

Justin (110-165)\footnote{See Theodore Stylianopoulos, “Justin Martyr,” in Ferguson, 648.} was a Gentile convert, born in Samaria in present-day Israel, in a place called Flavia Neapolis, now called Nablus. It was a city founded by the emperor Vespasian, the founder of the Flavian dynasty.\footnote{See Introduction, Table 3. Ehrman thinks he was born in the year 100 also, but affixes his date of death as around 165, and so does Smith. (See Bart D. Ehrman, From Jesus to Constantine, [Chantilly, Virginia: The Teaching Company 2004], 130), and Smith, From Christ to Constantine, 190). Stylianopoulos also agrees with them that 165 was the date of Justin’s martyrdom. (See Stylianopoulos, “Justin Martyr,” in Ferguson, 647). The Catholic Encyclopedia, however, opines that he was born sometime 100. (See Catholic Encyclopedia, s.v., “St. Justin Martyr,” \url{http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08580c.htm} [accessed January 13, 2013]).} Justin became interested in philosophy early in his life, especially that of Socrates and Plato. In his autobiography, he confessed he found Jesus via Plato, for whatever the latter was looking for Justin found it in the former. His philosophical background imbued him with zeal to vie against his religious opponents: Jews, pagans, and heretics. He acted like an evangelist, proclaiming to all who would listen that the gospel was the only safe philosophy that could guarantee salvation in the next life.

Justin was called the founder of Christian theological literature: “The writings of Justin Martyr are among the most important that have come down to us from the second
century. He was not the first that wrote an Apology in behalf of Christians, but his Apologies are the earliest extant. They are characterized by intense Christian fervour.\(^{604}\) The sub-apostolic age began with him.\(^{605}\) His literary pieces propagated the “the despised teachings of those Galileans to whom their Master had said: ‘Ye are the light of the world.’”\(^{606}\)

Many of the works written by Justin have been lost in the early mists of Christian history. But of the volumes assigned to his name, there are only three that are his indisputably, namely, the _Dialogue with Trypho_ and his two Apologies. In the first one, written sometime 150 after the abovementioned Bar-Kochba uprising in Judea,\(^{607}\) Justin recounted to Trypho, a Jew, his belief in the ultimate resurrection of the dead and the millennial reign of the saints, but without specifying a date certain: “But I and others, who are right-minded Christians on all points, are assured that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and a thousand years in Jerusalem, which will then be built, adorned, and enlarged, [as] the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah and others declare.”\(^{608}\) He used here a concept that was getting to be popular by his time, namely, the chiliastic reign of the elect,\(^{609}\) an idea first introduced by the eschatological author of _Revelation_ a half-century earlier, a book that will be discussed in the next sub-chapter. The thousand year rule of the saints was getting to be another meme, and Justin's brand was called

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\(^{605}\) Ibid., 419.

\(^{606}\) Ibid., 419.

\(^{607}\) Justin Martyr, _Dialogue of Justin, Philosopher and Martyr, with Trypho, a Jew_, I.520 footnote 188.

\(^{608}\) Ibid., LXXX.638.

\(^{609}\) “The apologist Justin Martyr asserts in some of his works a millenarian hope, based on Old Testament prophecies as well as on Revelation.” (Brian E. Daley, “Chiliasm,” in Ferguson, 238).
premillennialism,\textsuperscript{610} which meant Jesus was coming down from heaven before the millennial reign of the just with the Son of God.

In the first of his \textit{Apologies} he wrote to the Emperor Antoninus Pius and his court,\textsuperscript{611} he touched on the future second coming, but without any hint of imminence, after he had shown that all the prophecies regarding Christ's first coming had already been fulfilled:

For the prophets have proclaimed two advents of His: the one, that which is already past, when He came as a dishonoured and suffering Man; but the second, when, according to prophecy, He shall come from heaven with glory, accompanied by His angelic host, when also He shall raise the bodies of all men who have lived, and shall clothe those of the worthy with immortality, and shall send those of the wicked, endued with eternal sensibility, into everlasting fire with the wicked devils.\textsuperscript{612}

While writing his \textit{Apology}, he could not escape discussing the problem of the delay of the \textit{parousia} that was supposed to be forthcoming, as presumably other groups still believed it on account of the yet unfulfilled promises of the seers. He justified the postponement by proposing that God was waiting for the time when all persons, living and still unborn, had repented for their sins before he closed the book of life: “For the reason God has delayed to do this [i.e. referring to the second advent,] is His regard for the human race. For He foreknows that some are to be saved by repentance, some even

\textsuperscript{610} According to Paul Boyer, “Premillennialists... believe in Jesus Christ’s bodily return before His thousand-year earthly reign.” (Paul Boyer, \textit{When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture} [Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992], 2). McConnell also defined the characteristics of pre-millennialism: “The spread of pre-millennial and kindred views - by which we mean the scriptural thousand years of peace following the more or less early return of Christ in physical manifestation - is an unmistakable fact of present-day religious thinking.” (Francis J. McConnell, “The Causes of Pre-millenarianism.” \textit{The Harvard Theological Review}, 12, no. 2 (Apr., 1919): 179 \url{http://www.jstor.org/stable/1507824} [accessed January 10, 2013]).

\textsuperscript{611} I am of the opinion that it is doubtful the Emperor really read his work. Or if he did, it is doubtful it had any effect on the Emperor, or his officials, for he was still executed as a Christian.

\textsuperscript{612} Justin Martyr, \textit{The First Apology of Justin}, Chapter LII.
that are perhaps not yet born.”\textsuperscript{613} The term “not yet born” proves that he did not believe in the imminent end of the world. In other words, “Justin states that God delays the end in order that future generations may have the opportunity of repentance,”\textsuperscript{614} a familiar theme used earlier in 2 Peter.

Justin, in his Second Apology, proclaimed to the Emperor's court that they should be thankful Christians were around, for they were the reasons why God's plan for the destruction of the world was being held in abeyance, most especially because there were still future generations awaiting salvation. If not for them, he pressed on, God would have already destroyed the world just as he did in the time of the Noah and the great flood.\textsuperscript{615} He further stated: “But since God in the beginning made the race of angels and men with free will, they will justly suffer in eternal fire the punishment of whatever sins they have committed.”\textsuperscript{616} This is the same view he expounded previously in his first Apology: “It is alike impossible for the wicked, the covetous, the conspirator, and for the virtuous, to escape the notice of God, and that each man goes to everlasting punishment or salvation according to the value of his actions.”\textsuperscript{617} He has thus effected a transmutation from an imminent second coming to an individual's responsibility for his actions at the end of time: “Apocalypticism can thus be relegated into the background and the emphasis placed on individual responsibility in choosing good or evil.”\textsuperscript{618}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[613] Ibid., Chapter XXVIII.
\item[615] Justin Martyr, \textit{The Second Apology of Justin for the Christians Addressed to the Roman Senate}, Chapter VII.
\item[616] Ibid.
\item[617] Justin Martyr, \textit{The First Apology of Justin}, Chapter XII.
\item[618] Barnard, “Justin Martyr's Eschatology,” 91.
\end{footnotes}
The overall impression that can be derived from a study of Justin’s statements regarding the deferment of the second coming was that he was comfortable with the idea that God had his own valid reasons for postponing it, and that there was no need to apologize.619 This was going to be a general and overwhelming trend to be used by other Christian authors, in spite of some exceptions in the form of occasional eschatological outbursts from time to time. Gone were the pristine days of Paul when the church existed simply to prepare men and women for a quick trip to their true residence up in the heavenly realm.

Unlike Justin, Irenaeus, a bishop of Lyons during the second century, did not subscribe to the idea of the millennium, or the thousand-year reign of Jesus. Instead, for him any talk of thousand years meant the world will exist for six thousand more years before its final demise, paralleling a claim first made in 2 Peter also. Since it is doubtful he knew the real age of the world, (i.e., billions of years old), six thousand years may have meant eternity for him.620 The six-thousand-year lifetime of the world would become a popular topic among subsequent Ante-Nicene Fathers, such as Hippolytus, Methodius, Cyprian, and still others who will all be discussed later.

In his most famous volume, Against Heresies, Irenaeus averred that: “For in as many days as this world was made, in so many thousand years shall it be concluded....

619 “There is no suggestion... from the Apologies that Justin is troubled by the non-arrival of the second advent, or that it has affected his innermost thought.” (Ibid.)
620 Pagels claims otherwise: “For as persecution intensified, Irenaeus... believed that he was seeing John's prophecies of the end fulfilled before his eyes.” (Pagels, Revelations, 111). It is hard to reconcile this statement with the fact that, as I will show in little while, Irenaeus believed the world was ending in six thousand years.
For the day of the Lord is as a thousand years; and in six days created things were completed: it is evident, therefore, that they will come to an end at the sixth thousand year." He added, however, a new qualification to his view about the end of the world. The Roman Empire, the mighty and proud bastion of his time whose capital was also called “the eternal city,” will have been destroyed and dissolved before the day of reckoning came, presumably well within his six-thousand year time frame. It seemed he was rebuking all those who believed in the reign without end of the Roman capital, and thus the Empire.

Tertullian (160-230), was another writer who believed the end was not coming for as long as mighty Rome stood. But unlike Irenaeus above who believed Rome was bound to fall, Tertullian seemed to have loved Rome at least at first. His admiration would swing later in life to the other extreme: he hated it and wished it would collapse under the weight of its vices. He was also the first of the Ante-Nicene Fathers who did not believe the world was coming to end soon, but who came to believe in the imminent end of the world later in life. The other one was Cyprian who came to accept the inevitability of the forthcoming day of judgment only later in life, almost at the very end. His story will be expounded on in sub-chapter 4.3.

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621 Irenaeus, Against Heresies, Book V, Chapter XXVII, 3.
622 See ibid., Chapter XXVI. The title of the chapter is: “John and Daniel have predicted the dissolution and desolation of the Roman Empire, which shall precede the end of the world and the eternal kingdom of Christ.”
623 All these assertions regarding Tertullian, including the love and hate relationship between Tertullian and Rome, will be discussed shortly.
Tertullian was born in Africa, around 160, the son of a centurion. He seemed to belong to a family of some means. He was quite erudite, highly skilled in rhetoric, and was bilingual. He wrote proficiently in Latin, earning him the title “great founder of Latin Christianity,” as well as Greek, although none of his Hellenistic works survived the test of time. He converted to Christianity no later than 197, embracing it ardently in accordance with his impetuous nature. He became a priest sometime in the year 200, but converted later to Montanism, an ascetic and break-away Christian group steeped in eschatological beliefs: “The views of the Montanists were essentially radical and their emphasis on apocalyptic eschatology was opposed to the attempts of other Christians to make the church at home in the world.” Since the dates of his works are not known precisely, it cannot be ascertained with accuracy whether he became a firm believer in the imminent parousia before or after his Montanist epiphany.

Initially, Tertullian showed an understandably human hesitation regarding the end of the world: he did not want it to come too soon. This sentiment found expression in his treatise, Apology, written sometime 197. He was the exact opposite of the man from Tarsus, who wanted to be united with his Master as soon as possible. Tertullian believed

624 See Introduction, Table 4.2 for dates of birth and death. Ehrman agrees that Tertullian was born around 160. (See Ehrman, From Jesus to Constantine, 135). So does Sider, while affirming that the writer’s date of death cannot be accurately ascertained, occurring sometime after 212. (See Robert D. Sider, “Tertullian,” in Ferguson, 1107). Smith thinks he was born also 160, but died after 220. (See Smith, From Christ to Constantine, 201). The Catholic Encyclopedia also confirms the date of birth as around 160. (See Catholic Encyclopedia, s.v., “Tertullian,” http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14520c.htm [accessed January 11, 2013]).


the Roman Empire stood as a bulwark against the onrushing last days. For as long as it stood intact, the end would not come to fruition. To achieve his wish, he exhorted his readers to pray for the continued well-being of the Empire and its sovereigns in order to postpone the parousia to as far distant a time as possible:

There is also another and a greater necessity for our offering prayer in behalf of the emperors, nay, for the complete stability of the empire, and for Roman interests in general. For we know that a mighty shock impending over the whole earth—in fact, the very end of all things threatening dreadful woes—is only retarded by the continued existence of the Roman empire. We have no desire, then, to be overtaken by these dire events; and in praying that their coming may be delayed, we are lending our aid to Rome's duration.

Perhaps the reason he prayed for Rome’s long-life was that he was still enjoying an aftertaste of the earlier times, when, according to Edward Gibbon, the famous English historian of the eighteenth century, the best time in the history of the world in terms of happiness and prosperity was the interlude between the death of the aforementioned Emperor Domitian to the accession to the purple of Commodus, roughly between 100 and 180 AD, or a period of about 80 years. “The good old days,” Gibbon would call it if he was writing today.

He further reiterated his understanding of a distant parousia when he wrote Anti-Marcion, sometime 207, against a group of Christians who believed the God of the Old Testament who created the world in seven days was different from the God of the New Testament.

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630 Tertullian, Apology, Chapter XXXII.
Testament who sent his son down to earth to redeem mankind. He first proclaimed that Christians should profess “a belief that there is only one God, and that He is none other than the Creator of the world, who produced all things out of nothing through His own Word... [who] is called his Son,” before writing down his understanding of a last judgment in words that resembled closely the later Nicene creed:

Jesus Christ... preached the new law and the new promise of the kingdom of heaven, worked miracles; having been crucified, He rose again the third day; (then) having ascended into the heavens, He sat at the right hand of the Father; sent instead of Himself the Power of the Holy Ghost to lead such as believe; will come with glory to take the saints to the enjoyment of everlasting life and of the heavenly promises, and to condemn the wicked to everlasting fire.633 (Emphasis is mine).

The italicized line above shows Tertullian to be familiar with Luke's version of the first Pentecost: instead of Jesus coming down from heaven to trigger the start of the last days, he sent the Holy Spirit instead to guide the church for a very long stay here on earth. From this depiction of events, it can thus be reasonably inferred that he did not subscribe at all to Paul's eschatological expectations.634 In fact, he elaborated further on the end days, which, in his version, will happen only after the end of the millennium, while mixing in some words from Paul but bereft of his eschatology: “Of the heavenly kingdom this is the process. After its thousand years are over..., there will ensue the destruction of the world and the conflagration of all things at the judgment: we shall then

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633 Tertullian, Anti-Marcion, Book I, Chapter XIII.
634 Although Tertullian stated, in the above quotation, that Jesus “will come with glory to take the saints to the enjoyment of everlasting life,” he did not mention the event was coming soon. This is the crucial difference between him and the Apostle Paul. The latter believed the parousia was imminent, while Tertullian did not, at least not when he wrote this piece. He eventually changed his mind later on around the time he joined the Montanist, which will be discussed shortly. 
be changed in a moment into the substance of angels, even by the investiture of an incorruptible nature.”

By the time he wrote *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*, around 209, he was still a nonbeliever in the imminent *parousia*. He used the same words Paul, the earliest Christian writer, used in 1 Thessalonians, already quoted so many times in this thesis, that signified Jesus was coming back soon, but without any hint whatsoever of the impending doom! In fact, he continued to quote the man from Tarsus, not to propagate the latter’s eschatological frame of mind, but to allege the latter never meant to have his words on the end days misinterpreted, for he claimed the Holy Spirit came down to “suggest (to the apostle [Paul]), in this very epistle to the Thessalonians, as follows: ‘But of the times and the seasons, brethren, there is no necessity for my writing unto you. For ye yourselves know perfectly, that the day of the Lord cometh as a thief in the night.’” Tertullian then revealed the reason why he believed the man from Tarsus was never an eschatological prophet: Paul's words in 2 Thessalonians proved the end will not come unless Rome had first fallen: “‘Let no man deceive you by any means. *For that day shall*...”

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635 Tertullian, *Anti-Marcion*, Book III, Chapter XXIV. Although he mentioned that the world will be destroyed at the time of judgment, it will happen only after a thousand years are over. In short, there is no *imminence* at all in this statement.

636 For the date of this work, see Catholic Encyclopedia, s.v., “Tertullian,” [http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14520c.htm](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14520c.htm) (accessed January 12, 2013). Sider has the date of this work as between 203-208. (See Sider, “Tertullian,” in Ferguson, 1107).

637 The quote from Paul that Tertullian used came from 1 Thess., 4:15-17: “For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of our Lord, shall not prevent them that are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we be ever with the Lord.” (Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*, Chapter XXIV). This is the same quote I used in the beginning of this thesis, and in other parts as well. As will be seen in the subsequent discussions, Tertullian did not think Paul was writing about the soon-to-come end times.

638 Ibid.
not come, unless indeed there first come a falling away,’ he [i.e. Paul, the supposed author of 2 Thessalonians] means indeed of this present empire.”

Apparently, Tertullian seemed to be the first Christian writer to suggest Paul meant that the “falling away” referred to the Roman Empire.

It must have been later in his life, around 210 probably, but definitely after he had written On the Resurrection of the Flesh, when Tertullian wrote De Spectaculis, which carried the ascetic philosophy of Montanism in it. The very first sentence showed Tertullian's new and grim demeanor right away: “Ye Servants of God..., seek well to understand the condition of faith, the reasons of the Truth, the laws of Christian Discipline, which forbid among other sins of the world, the pleasures of the public

639 Ibid. However, a question may arise from the things Tertullian just wrote: “If nobody knows except God when the world will end, then how does he know that the day of judgment will come only after the fall of Rome?” One thing we can be certain: Tertullian was not writing a thesis, much less a dissertation.


641 Not everybody agrees on the date of 210 for this treatise. Schaff dates the manuscript around 197 or 199, which means this is one of his earliest works. (See Schaff, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 3, 157, footnote 347, and page 9 respectively). However, those two date are doubtful, as his Apology, which was written in 197 also, does not show a belief in the impending day of doom as I have shown earlier, while De Spectaculis points to an imminent end of the world. The latter must have been created later than when he wrote On the Resurrection of the Flesh, which still did not show any reference to the coming last days, and the date of which is identified as 209 by the Catholic Encyclopedia. It avers that Tertullian joined the Montanists after 206, although it does not say exactly when after 206. (See Catholic Encyclopedia, s.v., “Tertullian,” http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14520c.htm [accessed December 13, 2012]). Sider affirms that by the year 210, Tertullian was in the Montanist phase of his life which supports my date, although he claims that his pieces show Montanist influences as early as 205. (See Sider, “Tertullian,” in Ferguson, 1107-1108). Craveri asserts something more radical: “Much of the work of Tertullian... bears witness to this [i.e., an admission that the day of judgment was imminent].” (Craveri, The Life of Jesus, 346). This can only mean that most of Tertullian’s treatises were eschatological in nature, not only De Spectaculis, contrary to what I have been arguing all along. The disparity in dates among various experts may be because, according to Schaff, “To arrange chronologically the works (especially if numerous) of an author [such as Tertullian]... is not always or necessarily easy. (Schaff, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 3, 12). He also quotes two experts who have different opinions on when De Spectaculis was written. Dr. Neander, one of these scholars, claims it was written before Tertullian joined the Montanist sect. (See ibid., 16). The other one, a certain Bishop Kaye, asserts that it probably was written when Tertullian was already a Montanist. (See ibid., 17-18). Accordingly, if Tertullian joined the Montanist sect at about 210 or so, then my date for De Spectaculis (around 210) is just about right.
shows.” He continued to show his disdain for earthly pleasures by urging his readers to do the same: “What greater pleasure [should one have] than distaste of pleasure itself, contempt of all that the world can give, true liberty, a pure conscience, a contented life, and freedom from all fear of death?” And in conformity with Montanist expectations of the imminent end, he started singing a different tune when it came to the last days:

But what a spectacle is that fast-approaching advent of our Lord, now owned by all, now highly exalted, now a triumphant One...! What the city New Jerusalem! Yes, and there are other sights: that last day of judgment, with its everlasting issues; that day unlooked for by the nations, the theme of their derision, when the world hoary with age, and all its many products, shall be consumed in one great flame.

By this time, even his concern for the well-being of the Empire was gone. He proclaimed he would revel most at the sight of emperors roasting in hell: “What there excites my admiration? what my derision? Which sight gives me joy? which rouses me to exultation?—as I see so many illustrious monarchs, whose reception into the heavens was publicly announced, groaning now in the lowest darkness with great Jove himself.”

Sic transit gloria mundi!

Tertullian’s contemporary, Hippolytus (ca. 170 - ca. 236), a “presbyter, rival bishop at Rome and martyr,” had the same eschatological point of view as the younger Tertullian: he did not think the world was going to end shortly in spite of suffering

642 Tertullian, De Spectaculis, Chapter I.
643 Ibid., Chapter XXX.
644 Daley writes: “Tertullian, who joined the Montanist sect ca. 207, reflected the group’s millenarian hope.” (Daley, “Eschatology,” in Ferguson, 384). The fact that a sect that believed in the imminent end of the world existed in Tertullian’s time does not contradict my statement that Tertullian started his life as a nonbeliever in the imminent parousia, but changed his perspective later in life as a believer.
645 Tertullian, De Spectaculis, Chapter XXX.
646 Ibid.
647 Ferguson, “Hippolytus,” in Ferguson, 531.
martyrdom himself. Modern scholars disagree among themselves regarding the details of his life. They cannot agree on the dates of his birth and death, and they also “disagree on key points, some dividing the writings attributed to him between two authors (a “Josipus” and a “Hippolytus.”)  

He was like Tertullian in outlook, like Irenaeus in religious beliefs, but was inferior to the two in terms of strength of mind and accomplishment. He was a leading theologian at Rome, but learned his trade in the Greek-speaking East. He fought with the bishops of Rome, however. Schaff claims he was a bishop of Portus, a city near the mouth of the Tiber river. Whatever was the case, Emperor Maximinus exiled him to Sardinia in 235, together with the then pope Pontianus with whom he was feuding at the time. Both suffered martyrdom a year later. It seemed Hippolytus was reconciled to the

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648 See ibid.
649 See ibid.
650 Ferguson say it was because he was a bishop of a schismatic church in Rome, feuding with Popes Zephyrinus, Callistus, and Pontianus. (See ibid.). Smith, though, attributes it to a difference in their way of life because he was stricter than the reigning pope Callistus: “[Pope] Callistus gained more hatred from the stricter Christians by allowing even grave offences to be forgiven after penance.... While Callistus and his friends were undoubtedly right in making some relaxation, Hippolytus and his friends were right in bewailing the drop in standards.” (Smith, From Christ to Constantine, 120).
651 “Hippolytus, was, as is generally maintained, Bishop of Portus, a harbor of Rome at the northern mouth of the Tiber, opposite Ostia.” (See Schaff, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 5, 11). This may mean then that Hippolytus opposed the bishop of Rome while he was a bishop of Portus.
652 “The Chronography of 354 mentions Bishop Pontianus and the presbyter Hippolytus as being banished to the island of Sardinia in the year 325.” (Catholic Encyclopedia, s.v., “St. Hippolytus of Rome,” [http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07360c.htm](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07360c.htm) [accessed January 14, 2013]). From this account then, Hippolytus was at odds with Pope Pontianus while still a presbyter, and not as a bishop as the other author claims. For “The Chronography of 354,” which is a catalogue of Popes from Peter to Liberius, who died in 366, see Catholic Encyclopedia, s.v., “Chronological Lists of Popes,” [http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12272a.htm](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12272a.htm) (accessed January 14, 2013).
Roman church before he died because the next bishop of the imperial capital, Fabian, brought his body back to Rome a few years later, with Pontianus’ remains as well.⁶⁵³

Although Hippolytus ended his life as a martyr, it did not seem he professed a belief in the imminent last days. In fact, he quoted the often-misinterpreted Pauline lines from the first letter to the Thessalonians to impress on Theophilus, his audience of one, that the end was coming, but without any reference whatsoever as to when.⁶⁵⁴ He cited 2 Thessalonians⁶⁵⁵ to assert that the end of the world will come only when the antichrist has been defeated.⁶⁵⁶ In this regard, he was like Tertullian, except he did not presume in any way that the well-being of Rome was deferring the advent of the last days.

Even if Hippolytus did not believe the end of the ages was nigh, he attempted, however, to answer the question of when exactly in the future will the world end. Mixing the now ubiquitous words from 2 Peter, that one day from God’s perspective was like a thousand years in human reckoning, with the claim from Genesis that the world was created in six days, he came up with his own idiosyncratic prediction: the world will end five-hundred years after Christ was born. For, he alleged: “The first appearance of our Lord in the flesh took place in Bethlehem, under Augustus, in the year 5500; and He suffered in the thirty-third year. And 6,000 years must needs be accomplished.... Since,

⁶⁵⁴ See Hippolytus, Treatise on Christ and Antichrist, 66.
⁶⁵⁵ He claimed, erroneously now we know, that it came from Paul’s hands. (See sub-chapter 4.1 where I contend 2 Thessalonians could not have been written by Paul).
⁶⁵⁶ See ibid., 63.
then, in six days God made all things, it follows that 6,000 years must be fulfilled.\textsuperscript{657} He then explained how he arrived at the figure of 5500 years for the birth of Jesus by resorting to a popular notion called \textit{gematria}, where words or phrases had corresponding numerical values:

How will you prove to me that the Saviour was born in the year 5500? Learn that easily, O man; for the things that took place of old in the wilderness, under Moses, in the case of the tabernacle, were constituted types and emblems of spiritual mysteries, in order that, when the truth came in Christ in these last days, you might be able to perceive that these things were fulfilled. For He says to him, “And thou shalt make the ark of imperishable wood, and shalt overlay it with pure gold within and without; and thou shalt make the length of it two cubits and a half, and the breadth thereof one cubit and a half, and a cubit and a half the height;” which measures, when summed up together, make five cubits and a half, so that the 5500 years might be signified thereby.\textsuperscript{658}

A younger contemporary of both Hippolytus and Tertullian was Origen, (ca.185 - ca. 251),\textsuperscript{659} one of the most learned and prolific writers of the early church.\textsuperscript{660} He was born in Alexandria of devout Christian parents. His father, Leonides, achieved

\textsuperscript{657} Ibid., \textit{On Daniel}, 4. Daley also avers that “Hippolytus foresees the end of the world as coming about 500 years after the death of Christ, at the conclusion of the sixth millennium of created history.” (Daley, “Chiliasm,” in Ferguson, 239).
\textsuperscript{658} Hippolytus, 5.
\textsuperscript{660} “Origen was the most brilliant and prolific Christian author of the first three centuries... Origen’s literary output was immense.... He is thought to have produced... biblical commentaries, volumes of homilies, theological treatises, polemical tractates,... apologies, and practical and pastoral works.” (Bart Ehrman, \textit{From Jesus to Constantine}, 132-133).
martyrdom around 201, during the reign of Septimius Severus. The same persecution saw the famous Christian martyr Perpetua give up her life for the faith.

That time in Roman history was quite turbulent though. Although Emperor Septimius Severus, the first in the line of Severan emperors, died in bed, family members who succeeded him were all murdered. More than fifty more years had to pass before an emperor could breathe his last again in a comfortable bed. In fact, the last emperor of the dynasty, Alexander Severus, was assassinated in the year 235 together with his mother, and friends too, sparking a half-century of anarchy: civil wars, foreign invasions, and a collapse of the economy. As Herodian, a writer of the period, commented on the finances of the times: “Every day, one could see the richest men of yesterday turned beggars today.”

Origen was a philosopher, theologian, mystic, exegete, Hellenist, Platonist, ascetic. He even made himself voluntarily “a eunuch for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.” Origen died around 251, after being imprisoned and tortured during the

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661 “In Alexandria,... Leonides, father of the renowned Origen, was beheaded.” (Schaff, History of the Christian Church, 2:59). Perhaps he was beheaded because he was a Roman citizen.

662 “The early third century saw the persecution in which Perpetua and Felicitas were martyred in Carthage. This same persecution struck savagely in Alexandria also.... Among those who actually suffered martyrdom was a certain Leonides.” (Smith, From Christ to Constantine, 122).

663 See Durant, Caesar and Christ, 622

664 Quoted by Durant, Caesar and Christ, 628.

665 Matt. 19:12 NRSV, http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Matthew+19 (accessed August 11, 2012). The historian Gibbon described it thus: “The primitive church was filled with a great number of persons... devoted... to the profession of perpetual chastity. A few of these... [such as Origen, judged it most prudent to disarm the tempter.” (Gibbon, The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, 1:374). Smith confirms the fact of Origen’s castration. (See Smith, From Christ to Constantine, 123). So does Schaff. (See Schaff, History of the Christian Church, 2:694). Daly is of the same opinion. (See Daly, “Origen,” in Ferguson, 836).
Decian persecutions. Unfortunately, some three centuries after his death, his austere outlook on sex and reproduction, and some Christological views he held, earned him condemnation from church authorities and an edict from the emperor Justinian I in 543 and anathemas in 553 at the Fifth Ecumenical Council.

Origen was probably the most productive author of his time, writing about two thousand pieces, including commentaries on almost all the books of the Bible. In his comments on the Gospel of Matthew, the meaning of a phrase such as “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” had lost absolutely all of its original reference to the end of the world. In his own unique view, he stretched the meaning of the phrase so much that it would have been unrecognizable even to the Synoptic writers. When he was discussing, for example, the relationship between virtue and the kingdom of heaven, he

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666 For the date, see Introduction, Table 3. Ehrman asserts that Origen died in 252: “He [i.e. Origen] was imprisoned during the persecution of the Roman emperor Decius in 250 A.D. and died two years later as a result of prolonged torture.” (Ehrman, From Jesus to Constantine, 133). Eusebius avers that when the Emperor Decius “had reigned not quite two years, he was slain with his children, and Gallus succeeded him. At this time Origen died.” (Eusebius, Church History, Book VII, 1 http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250107.htm [accessed January 14, 2013]). Assuming Decius died in 251 (See Gary J. Johnson, “Decius,” in Ferguson, 324), then Origen himself died in 251, or at the latest 252. The Catholic Encyclopedia claims he died in 253 or 254 (See Catholic Encyclopedia, s.v., “Origen and Origenism” http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11306b.htm [accessed January 14, 2013]). Smith also claims he died in 253. (See Smith, From Christ to Constantine, 127). Schaff asserts Origen died “at the age of sixty-nine, in the year 253 or 254, at Tyre. (Schaff, History of the Christian Church, 2:695).

667 “As a theologian, Origen developed many ideas that later became highly debated in disputes over the Trinity, the person of Christ, and the nature of the soul.” (Ehrman, From Jesus to Constantine, 133). Daly claims that “Although Origen... and his theology proved controversial both during his lifetime and after, the term ‘Origenist controversy’ is usually reserved for the debate that erupted in the last decade of the fourth century and resurfaced among monks in sixth-century Palestine. (Daly, “Origen,” in Ferguson, 837). And according to Smith: “Later ages were to count Origen as the father of both orthodoxy and heresy.” (Smith, From Christ to Constantine, 126). The Catholic Encyclopedia, however, claims that the issue of Origen’s condemnation by the church is in dispute; “Were Origen and Origenism anathematized? Many learned writers believe so; an equal number deny that they were condemned; most modern authorities are either undecided or reply with reservations.” (Catholic Encyclopedia, s.v., “Origen and Origenism” http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11306b.htm [accessed January 14, 2013]).

668 Se Daly, “Origen,” in Ferguson, 835.

claimed that each virtue “is a kingdom of heaven, and all together are a kingdom of the heavens; so that according to this he [i.e. the Christian] is already in the kingdom of the heavens who lives according to the virtues;” for the passage “‘Repent, the kingdom of God is at hand’ is to be referred not to the time, but to deeds and dispositions; for Christ, who is all virtue, has come, and speaks, and on account of this the kingdom of God is within His disciples, and not here or there.”  

This is another case of perception becoming reality, for his perception of the meaning of the “the kingdom of God” is a distortion of the first two synopticists’ usage of the term. For the former, it refers to virtue, whereas for the latter, the originators of the term, it is used in connection with the last days.

Earlier, Origen had touched on the same “kingdom of heaven,” allegorizing it to defend his argument: “that scribes [denounced by Jesus] —that is, those who rest satisfied in the bare letter—may repent of this method of [literal] interpretation [of the law] and be instructed in the spiritual teaching which is called the kingdom of the heavens through Jesus Christ the living Word.”  

Continuing, he averred that if “Jesus Christ, ‘who was in the beginning with God, God the word,’ has not His home in a soul, the kingdom of heaven is not in it, but when any one becomes nigh to admission of the Word, to him the kingdom of heaven is nigh.”  

This time, though, he was not wide off the mark, for he was very close to what Jesus preached, when, in Luke’s version, he

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670 Origen, *Commentary on Matthew*, Book XII, 14.
671 Ibid., Book X, 14.
672 Ibid.
proclaimed: “The kingdom of God is within you.” However, Origen and Luke have distorted the original meaning of the term, for both have detached it from its eschatological moorings.

After Origen was felled by the Decian persecutions, Christians enjoyed some respite until the emperor Valerian “seized power in 253. Valerian took a neutral attitude to the Christians for a while, but resumed persecution [afterwards], according to Eusebius.” One reason for the resumption of the oppression against Christians was the fact that faith was changing among pagans of the Roman world:

Superstition [and] disbelief grew among the higher classes of society, though genuine atheists may have been few. With the third century, however, as a result of the great dangers of the Empire, disbelief waned visibly, and a kind of faith came to the fore, though to the advantage of the foreign cults rather than of the old state religion. But in Rome the ancient native cult was so closely bound up with the state... that the unbeliever as well as the believer in foreign cults had to show official Roman piety in questions relating to the sacred fire of Vesta, to the sacred pledges or rule, to the state auspices, for Rome's eternity depended on these sanctities. In order to restore some semblance of order, divine intervention from the gods was needed, and the gods had to be appeased. Valerian thus ordered that “All persons must conform to the Roman ceremonials,’ and forbade any Christian assemblage.”

And so the Christians became scapegoats, for they were different and disloyal in the eyes

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674 Smith, *From Christ to Constantine*, 139.
676 Durant, *Caesar and Christ*, 650.
of the authorities. They did not offer homage to the heathen gods as other “loyal” inhabitants of the empire did.

Another reason for the Valerian persecutions was because the empire was severely strained, teetering on the brink of collapse when he assumed the throne in 253. A plague was sweeping the Roman world, from 250 until about 265, decimating the population. Furthermore, the Empire was experiencing countless internal (Roman versus Roman) and external (Roman against barbarian) wars. The tumultuous times played havoc with farming and finances. Coinage suffered large devaluations, ruining the economy. Many small farmers sold or abandoned their farms and drifted to the cities to become wards of the state. The Franks, Alemanni, Goths, Scythians, and Persians were punching through the eastern and western borders of the Empire. The Greek cities on the Black Sea coast were sacked by the Goths in 257. The Alemanni invaded Italy in 259. Tarsus, the birthplace of Paul, was captured by the invading Persians in 260 and devastated.

The maltreatment of Christians lasted until Valerian was captured in battle by King Shapur of Persia in 260, and the ascension to the purple by his son Gallienus. Lactantius, a Christian writer we will discuss next, narrated the plight of the Emperor who was made a prisoner by the Persian king and subjected to unusually harsh treatment:

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677 “The whole period [of the reign of Valerian from 253-260] was one uninterrupted series of confusion and calamity.... the Roman empire was at the same time, and on every side, attacked by the blind fury of foreign invaders, and the wild ambition of domestic usurpers.” (Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 1:199). The sole assumption to the purple by Gallienus, in 260, brought some respite to the suffering Christians. They were once again allowed to own buildings and cemeteries. (See Smith, *From Christ to Constantine*, 140)

678 “They [i.e. the Christians] were officially allowed to meet for worship, and to own building, and cemeteries.” (See Smith, *From Christ to Constantine*, 140).
Whenever he chose to get into his carriage or to mount on horseback, [he] commanded the Roman to stoop and present his back; then, setting his foot on the shoulders of Valerian, he said, with a smile of reproach, 'This is true, and not what the Romans delineate on board or plaster.' Valerian lived for a considerable time under the well-merited insults of his conqueror.... Afterward, when he had finished this shameful life under so great dishonour, he was flayed, and his skin, stripped from the flesh, was dyed with vermilion, and placed in the temple of the gods of the barbarians..., that this spectacle might always be exhibited to our ambassadors, as an admonition to the Romans, that, beholding the spoils of their captive emperor in a Persian temple, they should not place too great confidence in their own strength.679

The respite would last, however, only until the next great persecution under the Emperor Diocletian towards the last years of the third century.

Lactantius (ca. 260-330),680 was born a pagan, but converted later in life, the exact date of which is unknown. He was a victim of Diocletian's persecutions, losing his post in 303 as a teacher of Latin rhetoric in Nicomedia,681 although he was appointed to the post by Diocletian himself.682 He managed to remain inconspicuous after that, but regained his old post when Constantine, his patron, assumed sole control of the Roman Empire.683

680 For dates, see Introduction, Table 3. Smith disagrees with the dates, for he puts it at 240-320. (Smith, From Christ to Constantine, 190). McHugh has his own dates also: 250-325. (Michael P. McHugh, “Lactantius,” in Ferguson, 660). Schaff asserts he died in 330. (See Schaff, History of the Christian Church, 3:14).
681 He was luckier than others who were fed to the lions.
682 See McHugh, “Lactantius,” in Ferguson, 660. See also Smith, From Christ to Constantine, 163. It is interesting to note that Lactantius recounted a story that Diocletian instigated the persecution of Christians because they interfered with the augurs by making the sign of the cross while the latter were trying to divine the future by reading the entrails of birds. This so enraged Diocletian that he ordered everyone in his palace, including soldiers, to do homage to the gods at the pain of being scourged. (See Schaff, Ante-Nicene Fathers, 7:702.) Burckhardt disagrees somewhat with Lactantius, asserting this was but one incident among many that led Diocletian to oppress the Christians. (See Burckhardt, The Age of Constantine the Great, 244-258.)
683 See Smith, From Christ to Constantine, 163.
He was different from Origen because the former believed the last judgment was
ingh, sort of. He believed the day of judgment was coming, but he stretched the
timeframe a bit: it was supposed to happen no later than two hundred years from the date
of his writing. Expressed this way, he was a *rara avis*, unique among eschatological
believers. His idea was very different from Paul's, or even the Synoptic Gospel writers,
who were sure the end was coming within their generation, definitely less than the two
hundred years of Lactantius. In *The Divine Institutes*, he claimed that:

Perhaps someone may now ask when these things [i.e. the events surrounding the
end days] of which we have spoken are about to come to pass? I have already
shown... that the last day of the extreme conclusion is now drawing near.... And
although they [i.e. the eschatological prophets] vary, and the amount of the
number as reckoned by them differs considerably, yet all expectation does not
exceed the limit of two hundred years.\(^{684}\)

He immediately qualified his prophecy of two hundred years by claiming the end of the
world will happen only after Rome has fallen, just like Irenaeus and Tertullian before
him:

The subject itself declares that the fall and ruin of the world will shortly take
place; except that while the city of Rome remains it appears that nothing of this
kind is to be feared. But when that capital of the world shall have fallen, and shall
have begun to be a street, which the Sibyls say shall come to pass, who can doubt
that the end has now arrived to the affairs of men and the whole world?\(^{685}\)

Continuing, he claimed Satan was going to be let loose over the earth, to wreck
mischief and destruction on the world, but was to be destroyed eventually by the
avenging hand of God. It is surprising he quoted the Sibyls, an apocalyptic book that

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\(^{684}\) Lactantius, *The Divine Institutes*, Book VII, Chapter XXV. It seems then that Lactantius was reading
books written by various prophets who predicted the end was coming in so many years, the dates of which
varied. But none exceeded two hundred years from the time he was writing, which he now accepted as the
upper limit as to when the day of judgment will commence.

\(^{685}\) Ibid.
discussed the end days, but not John's Revelation, from which he borrowed many ideas, like the millennial reign of Jesus after the final destruction of the world, a belief now labeled as premillennialism.\textsuperscript{686} Furthermore, in his later abridged version entitled \textit{The Epitome of The Divine Institute}, he depicted the final acts of the last days:

Therefore peace being made, and every evil suppressed, that righteous King and Conqueror will institute a great judgment on the earth respecting the living and the dead, and will deliver all the nations into subjection to the righteous who are alive, and will raise the \textit{righteous} dead to eternal life, and will Himself reign with them on the earth, and will build the holy city, and this kingdom of the righteous shall be for a thousand years.\textsuperscript{687}

His views on eschatology may have been influenced by the bitter memory of his loss of office and the possible martyrdom of friends and acquaintances during the persecutions of Diocletian. But when he did discuss persecutions, he did not aim for imminent revenge. Instead, he cautioned his readers to await God's redeeming punishment on judgment day to redress the wrongs inflicted on them:

And yet most unjust persecutors... must not think that they will escape with impunity, because they have been, as it were, the ministers of His indignation against us. For they will be punished with the judgment of God.... On this account He promises that He will quickly take vengeance upon them, and exterminate the evil monsters from the earth. But He also, although He is accustomed to avenge the persecutions of His people even in the present world, commands us, however, to await patiently that day of heavenly judgment, in which He Himself will honour or punish every man according to his deserts.\textsuperscript{688}

\textsuperscript{686} See sub-chapter 4.2 for a definition of premillennialism.
\textsuperscript{687} Ibid., \textit{The Epitome of Divine Institutes}, Chapter LXXI.
\textsuperscript{688} Ibid., \textit{The Divine Institutes}, Book V, Chapter XXIV.
Methodius (260-312), a contemporary of Lactantius, died a martyr sometime 311 or 312, during the persecutions of the Emperor Galerius, who himself died a horrible death according to Lactantius, but not without revoking first all edicts against Christians. In the same manner as half a century before, the empire during Galerius’ reign was continuing to reel from the impacts of invasions, civil wars, and economic dislocations. Diocletian, the prior emperor, tried to impose price controls over the empire in order to tame the inflationary beast, to no avail however. It failed rapidly and completely.

At the same time, leadership and supremacy in the empire after Diocletian resigned from the throne in 305 was in a constant stage of fluidity and confusion. There were two co-rulers and rivals at the same time in the East, namely Licinius and Maximin, and there was Constantine in the West, with Maxentius the ruler of Italy and opponent of the former. All these leadership issues had to be sorted out before a supreme ruler could emerge. Constantine defeated Maxentius in 312 in the battle of the Milvian bridge, where Constantine is said to have received his famous vision of Christ instructing him in hoc signo vinces, (“in this sign you will conquer”), whereupon he used the labarum as his military insignia to vanquish his foe. Finally, he defeated Licinius, his last rival, in 324 to earn his laurels and become the sole emperor of the Roman Empire.

689 See Introduction, Table 3, for the dates. Norris thinks he died in 311. (See Frederick W. Norris, “Methodius,” in Ferguson, 747). So does Schaff in another of his works. (See Schaff, History of the Christian Church, 2:713).
691 “Tradesmen concealed their commodities, scarcities became more acute than before. Diocletian himself was accused of conniving at a rise in prices, riots occurred, and the Edict had to be relaxed to restore production and distribution. It was finally revoked by Constantine.” (Durant, Caesar and Christ, 643).
Christianity afterwards settled down comfortably in a state of dominant existence, except for a few years under the reign of the emperor Julian. Christians called him derisively “the Apostate,” for he had reverted back to paganism. He was trying to restore the native Roman religion to its former glories when he was struck down in 353 from a wound he received in battle in the East against the Persians. Christian sources claimed he uttered the words Vicisti Galilae! (“Galilean, (i.e. Jesus), you have conquered!”) just before expiring. Today a sarcophagus said to be his lies on the grounds of the Archaeological Museum in Istanbul. But this is all from a time period beyond the scope of this thesis.

Methodius was known chiefly as an opponent of Origen. Most of his works have been lost, but among them was an unusual piece entitled Against Origen Concerning the Female Python, dealing most probably with the latter's ideas on creation and the eternity of the world. The only piece of Methodius extant today is The Banquet of 10 Virgins, a manual of Christian life focusing on the ascetic life. It is not surprising he wrote on this topic as he himself was a monk, becoming Bishop of Olympus and Patara in Lycia, in southwestern Turkey. He expressed in his piece a unique idea that the world will exist for seven thousand years before the end would come, using Genesis as the basis for an allegorical interpretation of the end times:

692 “Methodius is known chiefly as the antagonist of Origin; although,... he himself was influenced in no small degree by the method of Origen, as may be seen by his tendency to allegorical interpretations of Holy Scripture.” (Schaff, Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol. 6, 699). See also Christian Classics Ethereal Library, “St. Methodius,” http://www.ccel.org/ccel/brownlie/greekhymns.methodius.html?highlight=methodius#highlight (accessed January 17, 2013).
693 See Norris, “Methodius,’ in Ferguson, 747.
694 See ibid.
For since in six days God made the heaven and the earth, and finished the whole world, and rested on the seventh day from all His works which He had made,..., so by a figure in the seventh month, when the fruits of the earth have been gathered in, we are commanded to keep the feast to the Lord, which signifies that, when this world shall be terminated at the seventh thousand years, when God shall have completed the world, He shall rejoice in us.\textsuperscript{696}

Most others, using the same kind of extrapolation from Genesis, came to the conclusion that the world will exist for six thousand years, and not seven thousand as Methodius had it, for the seventh day when the Almighty rested was taken to mean the millennial reign of Jesus as foretold in John's \textit{Revelation}.

Methodius, commenting on the parable of the wise and foolish virgins found in Matthew's Gospel,\textsuperscript{697} touched metaphorically on the delay of the \textit{eschaton}: “Let us then supply now the oil of good works abundantly, and of prudence, being purged from all corruption which would weigh us down; lest, while the Bridegroom tarries, our lamps may also in like manner be extinguished. For the delay is the interval which precedes the appearing of Christ.”\textsuperscript{698} He was urging the faithful to perform as many good works as they could, (i.e., “supply the oil of good works abundantly”), in order to be always ready for the Master, (i.e., their lamps should always be lit), no matter how long he delays his second coming. The author did not even try to explain why the Savior was postponing his return, in spite of the latter’s earlier promises long time ago through Paul and the Synoptic writers. It must have been an admitted fact to all and sundry that, at least by the time of Methodius, Jesus was really delaying his return, and one just had to hang on until he finally decided to come, whenever that would be. Perhaps the herd mentality was

\textsuperscript{696} Methodius, \textit{The Banquet of the Ten Virgins}, Discourse IX, Chapter I.
\textsuperscript{697} See Matt. 25:1-13 NRSV.
\textsuperscript{698} Methodius, \textit{The Banquet of the Ten Virgins}, Discourse VI, Chapter IV.
taking over again, where most everybody used the Gospel of Matthew as a guide for their mores in the world, without bothering to check why Jesus preached at the start of his ministry: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”  

Another writer who was a contemporary of Methodius but who believed the world was going to exist for six thousand years, rather than latter's seven thousand, was Commodianus, a third century figure. He seemed to have been a bishop, and that is about everything known about him. He penned a work entitled *Instructions of Commodianus* that touched on his beliefs regarding the last days. “We shall be immortal when six thousand years are accomplished.” He further repeated the concept of a six-thousand-year lifetime of the world when, speaking of martyrs, he wrote: “This has pleased Christ, that the dead should rise again, yea, with their bodies; and those, too, whom in this world the fire has burned, when six thousand years are completed, and the world has come to an end.” He singled out Medes and Parthians for especial treatment, which may be a clue that he may have lived somewhere in the East, suffering probably at their hands: “and the Medes and Parthians [shall] burn for a thousand years, as the hidden words of John declare. For then after a thousand years they are delivered over to Gehenna.” The “hidden words of John” he alluded to was John's Revelation.

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700 “Most scholars would place him in the third century, quite possibly in Africa, although others would put him later, perhaps in fifth-century. Gaul.” (See McHugh, “Commodian,” in Ferguson, 271).
702 Commodianus, *The Instructions of Commodianus*, Chapter XXXV.
703 Ibid., Chapter LXXX.
704 Ibid., Chapter XLIII.
Just like Methodius, Victorinus is another Ante-Nicene Father of whom very little is known, in spite of the fact that he wrote a commentary regarding the Revelation of John, which he called the Apocalypse of John. He seemed to have been a bishop of the Roman province of Pannonia. Although he suffered martyrdom towards the end of the reign of Diocletian, around 304,705 he did not preach the imminent end of the world. There was no need, from his point of view, for a quick revenge even if he had to pay the ultimate price.

One would expect, however, that a person who read and studied John's Revelation and disseminated his comments would be influenced by the latter's eschatological frame of mind, for John proclaimed right away in the very first sentence that Jesus was coming soon.706 But Victorinus quoted in his analysis the same words written by John without sensing any hint whatsoever of the imminent day of doom. He, quoting Revelation, inscribed: “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to Him, and showed unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass, and signified it. Blessed are they who read and hear the words of this prophecy, and keep the things which are written.”707 (Emphasis is mine). He interpreted the lines as follows: “the beginning of the book promises blessing to him that reads and hears and keeps, that he who takes pains about

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706 Although more than two hundred years had passed since John first wrote Revelation, it is not impossible to presume that Victorinus could still believe that the end was coming soon, just like Cyprian did, for example, who died half a century earlier but who still believed the last days were forthcoming, and who will be discussed in sub-chapter 4.3.

707 Victorinus, Commentary on the Apocalypse of the Blessed John, Chapter I, 1.
the reading may thence learn to do works, and may keep the precepts.” One can justifiably wonder what happened to the “things which must shortly come to pass” even though he was still proclaiming the end was going to happen definitely: “He is to come, because assuredly He will come to judgment.” Since Jesus had not returned, in spite of what Paul and the Synoptic writers had proclaimed earlier, most everybody therefore assumed he never really promised it. In short, Victorinus was a participant in a groupthink, where most everybody did not believe Jesus ever promised to come back soon to retrieve the faithful, even if he read the line that claimed Jesus was clearly promising to return soon.

Victorinus’ blinders were on throughout his work, even when he was commenting on the last chapter of Revelation, where Jesus reiterated his promise to return quickly: “The one who testifies to these things [i.e. Jesus] says, ‘Surely I am coming soon’.” Victorinus ignored the line completely in his comments, as if it never existed. This only showed that even when presented with unmistakable evidence that the Savior was referring to the imminent eschaton, authors could ignore it without peril to them; the imminent parousia was by now a completely alien concept, and was nowhere in anybody's mind.

708 Ibid.
709 Ibid., Chapter I, 4.
710 Although most of Victorinus’ generation believed in the second coming, they did not believe, however, that the end was coming soon, unlike others who will be discussed in the next sub-chapter and who read the same words Victorinus read and interpreted it to mean the end was nigh.
Summarizing sub-chapters 4.1 and 4.2 therefore, both had the unmistakable message that the imminent end of the world was dead. For all practical purposes it was a relic of history, with no other use but for inclusion in historical books by researchers, to be used and perused by inquisitive minds. Imminence was out, but the eminent bishops were in. Christians were now sailing the unchartered seas of the post-eschatological world, confident of their sojourn as God was their co-pilot.

The forthcoming eschaton had first to be denied for those who still clung to the old beliefs, and then postponed for the rest. Some creative souls, and perhaps mathematically inclined at the same time, like Irenaeus and Hippolytus for example, alleged that the time schedule for the end days was stretched to six-thousand years based on their reading of holy scriptures. Methodius was more fanciful and gave mankind an extra one-thousand years, for a total of seven-thousand years, an extension which everybody surely welcomed. Perhaps these thousand-year extensions were not to be taken literally, but figuratively: the postponement was for countless millions, or even billions, of years in the future. Still others, like the author of 2 Peter, reasoned that God, in his everlastingly kind forbearance, was giving men some extra time so they could repent before he finally came down and passed eternal judgment on all. Surely, one must be thankful to the Almighty for the deferment, rather than complain that the end had not yet come. Others stipulated that Rome had to fall first before the onslaught of the last days swept through a dying world, like Tertullian and Lactantius for example.
Once in a while though, the old world order, where the expectation was for an imminent end of all things, got revived. For when the fiery flames of martyrdom clawed at one's earthly existence, the only way to escape the fire may have been the second coming of the Nazarene.
4.3 The more things change, the more they stay the same.

The end did not go gently into the night, for when the right moment arose, egged on by the deadly twin of persecution and death, the coming end reared its head again. In this regard, the pieces studied here were going against the flow, which was that the end was going to occur at some distant date in the future. Sub-chapter 4.3, therefore, examines the rest of the literature coming out of the New Testament and Apocrypha that still clung to the hope that the day of doom was nigh, the opposite of what was studied in sub-chapters 4.1 and 4.2.

The violence of the second advent was going to be a balm to soothe the aching wounds of victims, as well as sweet revenge against their enemies to more than even the score. Furthermore, the hope for redemption strengthened the resolve of martyrs, for the pain of the moment was going to be exchanged for eternal bliss in paradise. Thus did Cyprian exclaim, a third century martyr who will be discussed later, as he looked forward to judgment day:

Oh, what and how great will that day be at its coming, beloved brethren, when the Lord shall begin to count up His people, and to recognize the deservings of each one by the inspection of His divine knowledge, to send the guilty to Gehenna, and to set on fire our persecutors with the perpetual burning of a penal fire, but to pay to us the reward of our faith and devotion.\(^7\)\(^1\)\(^2\)

The earliest person we know who believed the end was imminent after the Apostolic Age was the author of James. Most probably it was it the only means by which he and his congregation could get respite from all the pain and suffering being inflicted on them. Justice was going to be rendered when Jesus came down quickly to snatch them

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\(^7\)\(^1\)\(^2\) Cyprian, *Epistle LV: To the People of Thibaris, Exhorting to Martyrdom*, 10.
away from their tormentors, who would earn their well-deserved deserts in the fiery caldrons of hell below, while they were going to enjoy at the same time all the everlasting delights provided by the Messiah on high. The author urged his audience to stay the course, for the reward was great: “Happy are those who remain faithful under trials, because when they succeed in passing such a test, they will receive as their reward the life which God has promised to those who love him.” Since the exact date when the letter was written is unknown, other than sometime between 75 and 125, it is hard to determine when, and perhaps even why, were they being persecuted. It may have been under the emperor Domitian towards the end of the first century, or at some other time from the hands of a local despot.

James was believed to have been written a good twenty five to seventy five years after the epistles from the apostle from Tarsus were written and dispatched to their destinations. It may have been written sometime around the earlier date, as its eschatology hardly deviated from Paul’s. However, the name the author assumed, James, may have meant he was declaring his opposition to the earliest Christian writer, for the

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714 See Introduction, Table 4. Other scholars ascribe different dates for James. Koch thinks it was sometime around the second half of the first century. (See Glenn A. Koch, “James,” in Ferguson, 603). Kee thinks the letter was written between 90 and 100. (See Kee, Understanding the New Testament, 422). The Catholic Encyclopedia asserts it was produced sometime in the year 47, during the persecution of the Christians by Herod Agrippa. (See Catholic Encyclopedia, s.v., “Epistle of St. James,” http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08275b.htm [accessed January 22, 2013]). Early Christian Writings claims it was written around 70 and 100. (See Early Christian Writings http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/ [accessed January 9, 2013]). Hauer opines “It is difficult to determine a time of origin for a work like James, It could be an early response to misunderstood Pauline teaching or a later compilation. (Hauer, An Introduction to the Bible, 308). Elliot-Binns claims that “The contents [of James] suggest that the epistle came from the very early period of the Church, before theological ideas had been worked out.” (Elliot-Binns, “James,” in Black, 1022). He does not specify, however, any date, or range of dates, for its creation.
relationship between the two figures was not amicable, in spite of the fact that both held deeply eschatological beliefs. The writer argued that good works guaranteed entrance to heaven, instead of faith alone as Paul had insisted.\(^715\) Even demons believed in God, he claimed. He preached that “A person is justified by works and not by faith alone.... For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is also dead.”\(^716\) And, unlike the early charismatic churches of the apostle from Tarsus discussed earlier, the community of James had a hierarchy of teachers and elders,\(^717\) who would pray and anoint the sick with oil, for example.\(^718\)

Since the author was supposedly the brother of Jesus, it meant the former must have been a peasant from Galilee whose native language was Aramaic. It is thus unconceivable he could have penned an effective Greek treatise such as this one. Most probably he was an anonymous writer masquerading as James, in order to gain more respect from Christians than he alone with his name could muster.\(^719\)

\(^{715}\) “Because James quotes the same passage from the Abraham story that Paul uses in Romans to defend ‘justification by faith’ to support justification by works ‘and not by faith alone’ (2:24...), it is possible that this is a self-conscious response to a perceived overemphasis on faith that might have resulted from Paul’s teaching.... In James, faith means belief, and the contrast is between merely believing and acting on that belief.” (Hauer, An Introduction to the Bible, 307).


\(^{717}\) See James 3:1 NRSV.

\(^{718}\) See James 5:13-14 NRSV.

\(^{719}\) “The author was almost certainly not really James, the brother of Jesus. Like Simon Peter..., the historical James was a lower-class Aramaic speaking peasant from rural Galilee who... never went to school to learn to read and write, let alone write such a rhetorically effective Greek composition as this letter. The book, then, is probably pseudonymous.” (Ehrman, The New Testament, 476). Koch agrees with Ehrman that it is pseudonymous. (See Koch, “James,” in Ferguson, 603). Elliot-Binns does not also think that James wrote the letter: “It [i.e. the letter of James] was not assigned to James before Origen and actually remained among the disputed books until the latest stages of the canon. This suggests that it came from some unimportant church and from a writer of no special prominence.” (Elliott-Binns, “James,” in Black, 1022). Kee and Selby are of the same opinion also, that the author could not have been the apostle James. (See Kee, Understanding the New Testament, 341, and Selby, Introduction to the Bible, N.T. 431).
The purpose of the letter was to advise the faithful how to live as an upright Christian, replete with a whole slew of detailed instructions. It followed Christ's mandates and exhortations as written in the gospels. The faithful were urged to love one another, for example, and not show favoritism. They also had to eschew oaths as much as possible. The rich had much to fear from the impending doom, as Jesus had proclaimed earlier: “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.”

The eschaton was mentioned rather briefly, but as an event inescapably imminent: “Be patient, then, my brothers and sisters, until the Lord comes. See how patient a farmer is as he waits for his land to produce precious crops…. Keep your hopes high, for the day of the Lord's coming is near.”

Another letter that matched James very closely when it came to persecution and the coming doomsday was 1 Peter, which was written between 80 and 95. Christians were enduring persecutions, probably under Domitian, so much that they were expecting relief to come soon with the reappearance of Jesus.

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722 I placed James ahead of 1 Peter because the presumed start dates are 75 and 80 respectively. For the date of 1 Peter, see Table 4 of the Introduction. Not all experts agree on the date as delineated by White, though. Selby thinks it was written later: “Because it reflects a situation remarkably similar to that in 1 Peter, Pliny’s correspondence with Trajan (ca. A.D. 113) is often cited as evidence for dating the Epistle in the early years of the second century.” (Selby, Introduction to the Bible, N.T. 439). Kee agrees with White on the ending date, but not on the starting date: 90 versus 95 respectively. (See Kee, Understanding the New Testament, 422). Senior claims it was most likely written “sometime in the decade of the 70s.” (Senior, “Peter,” in Ferguson, 905). Hauer is of the opinion that it was written early, although he does not define what he means exactly by early: “Because the apocalyptic perspective was popular early in the development of the New Testament, this may support an early dating for First Peter. (Hauer, An Introduction to the Bible, 309). Cranfield asserts that if it was written by the apostle Peter, it must have been written in 63. If it was not, then “a date in the reign of Trajan might seem most likely.” (C. E. B. Cranfield, “1 Peter,” in Black, 1026).
Many scholars discount the possibility that Peter was the author of this letter,\textsuperscript{723} in spite of its title. One other reason why it is difficult to assume Peter was the author is the fact that the letter claimed to be written from “your sister church in Babylon.”\textsuperscript{724} Babylon was code word for Rome, as John used it in \textit{Revelation} to mean the imperial capital.\textsuperscript{725} It came to be in vogue, however, only after Jerusalem fell; hence \textit{after} Peter's death.

The letter was addressed to a church that was more or less established already, as it referred to elders.\textsuperscript{726} The members were getting to be noticed by the Romans, as they were urged to be good citizens.\textsuperscript{727} It briefly touched on the second coming, as part of its homily; in doing so, it affirmed solidly the link between torture and the \textit{eschaton}: “In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith -- being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire -- may be found to result in praise and glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed.”\textsuperscript{728} And in spite of the fact that the church was establishing its roots for a

\begin{footnotes}
\item[723] “There is a considerable body of critical opinion which regards the epistle as pseudonymous; an equally reputable body of critical opinion supports the Petrine authorship.” (Ibid.). Hauer claims that “Many modern literary historians have questioned whether the letter originated with Peter.” (Hauer, \textit{An Introduction to the Bible}, 308). Ehrman asserts that “Many scholars,.. doubt that Peter wrote this letter.” He then explains the major reason for the misgiving: “Peter... was a lower-class fisherman from Galilee... who was known to have been illiterate.... His native tongue was Aramaic. This letter, on the other hand, is written by a highly literate Greek-speaking Christian who is intimately familiar with the Old Testament in its Greek translation and with a range of Greek rhetorical constructions.” (Ehrman, \textit{The New Testament}, 462). Senior is of the same opinion. (See Senior, “Peter,” in Ferguson, 905). Kee implies that the epistle was not written by Peter: “The persecution of Christians in Asia Minor, which seems to be the immediate occasion for 1 Peter (4:12-16), could have begun any time after C.E. 95. But that would be long after Peter had died.” (Kee, \textit{Understanding the New Testament}, 355-356). Selby poses the same question of erudition that Ehrman propounded in doubting that Peter was the author. (See Selby, \textit{Introduction to the Bible}, N.T. 438).
\item[725] See Rev. 18:2 NRSV.
\item[726] See 1 Pet. 5:1 NRSV.
\item[727] See 1 Pet. 2:13-17 NRSV.
\end{footnotes}
prolonged existence with a set of leaders, the author did not waver as to the timing of the parousia: “The end of all things is near.”

Another epistle that contained the same eschatological point of view as 1 Peter was Hebrews. It was written between 90 and 115, about forty to sixty-five years after Paul had written his dispatches. The author claimed his epistle was an “exhortation” enclosed in a short letter he was writing the faithful, containing instructions on good Christian behavior. Many scholars have concluded that this epistle was not really written

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729 1 Pet. 4:7 NRSV, http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=1Peter+4 (accessed July 19, 2012). See also Hauer: “Like Paul and Mark, First Peter reflects the apocalyptic view that the present age will end soon... and Christ will be revealed.” (Hauer, An Introduction to the Bible, 309).


731 For dates, see Introduction, Table 4. Selby thinks it was created earlier: after 68, but before 90, with 89 as the more probable date. (See Selby, Introduction to the Bible, N.T. 423). According to Ehrman, “The book [of Hebrews] was probably produced near the end of the first century.” (Ehrman, The New Testament, 445). Kee has a narrower range of dates for the creation of this piece: between 90 and 95. (See Kee, Understanding the New Testament, 422). Attridge opines that it was created “sometime in the last third of the first century. Attempts to determine a more precise date have been unconvincing.” (Harold W. Attridge, “Epistle to the Hebrews,” in Ferguson, 514). Hauer hazards a guess of an even earlier date: “It probably originated... before the Temple was destroyed in 70 C.E.” (Hauer, An Introduction to the Bible, 304). He is inconsistent, though, as he claims in another part of his book that the letter was created sometime between 90 and 95, the same date range as Kee’s estimate. (Ibid., 301). The Catholic Encyclopedia believes the letter was probably written during “the second half of the year 63, or the beginning of 64.” (Catholic Encyclopedia, s.v., “Epistle to the Hebrews,” http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07181a.htm [accessed January 23, 2013]). It must be noted, however, that the date cited by the Catholic Encyclopedia is heavily influenced by its belief that the author of the epistle was the apostle Paul. (See ibid.). Early Christian Writings assumes it was written circa 50-95; the starting date is by far the earliest date of all. (See Early Christian Writings http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/index.html [accessed January 8, 2013]). Ehrman also mentions in passing that “some scholars have thought that his [i.e., the author’s] references to priests who continually perform sacrifices indicate that the Temple was still standing when he wrote, and therefore the book must have been written before 70 C.E.” (Ehrman, The New Testament, 444). He, however, discounts this idea: “Others have pointed out that later Jewish authors also spoke of the Temple in the present tense long after it was gone and have noted that almost all of the reference to the Jewish sacrificial systems in the book are drawn from the descriptions in the Old Testament rather than from first-century practice.” (Ibid.) Kee also makes the same observation regarding the early date for the composition of this piece: “Some interpreters of Hebrews have assumed that the writer’s mention of the cult sacrifices implies that the Temple was still standing and functioning when he wrote, which would place the date of the document before C.E. 70.” (Kee, Understanding the New Testament, 347, footnote 6).

as a conventional letter, chiefly because it did not follow the usual format for a formal letter of the time, and the style was more of a homily than anything.\(^{733}\)

Tradition had it that Paul wrote Hebrews, as it intriguingly mentioned Timothy, a companion of the apostle from Tarsus in his travels around the Aegean. Biblical authorities are mostly united, though, in their assessment that Paul was not the author.\(^{734}\) The writer was thus anonymous, although he was familiar with Paul's epistles. Even Eusebius, for his part, alleged that Origen opined: “If I gave my opinion, I should say that the thoughts [of the writer of Hebrews] are those of the apostle, but the diction and phraseology are those of someone who remembered the apostolic teachings, and wrote

\(^{733}\) As to the concept that Hebrews was more of a homily than a letter, Ehrman professes that “most scholars... think that it [i.e. Hebrews] was originally a sermon or homily delivered by a Christian preacher to his congregation.” (Ehrman, *The New Testament*, 438). Hauer goes a bit further, denying explicitly any resemblance to a letter at all: “Except for an ending that reads like the closing of a Pauline letter (13:18-25), the Letter to the Hebrews makes no pretense of being a letter at all. It begins abruptly with a prologue stating the theme, then develops what may be the longest sustained argument in either the Old or New Testaments.” (Hauer, *An Introduction to the Bible*, 304). Furthermore, he claims that “It was probably classed as a 'letter' simply because the great majority of the New Testament books are letters. (See Ibid.) Kee agrees with Hauer. (See Kee, *Understanding the New Testament*, 422). So does Bruce (see F. F. Bruce, “Hebrews,” in Black, 1008), and Attridge (see Attridge, “Epistle to the Hebrews,” in Ferguson, 514). Selby denies it is a letter . (See Selby, *Introduction to the Bible*, N.T. 419). White agrees, more or less, with all the scholars cited here, claiming that the epistle does not resemble a letter, but is more of a homily. (See White, *From Jesus to Christianity*, 318).

\(^{734}\) Ehrman claims that Hebrews “came to be included in the *canon* only after Christians of the third and fourth centuries became convinced that Paul had written it. Modern scholars, however, are unified in recognizing he did not. The writing style is not Paul’s, and the major topics of discussion (e.g., the Old Testament priesthood and the Jewish sacrificial system) are things that Paul scarcely mentions, let alone emphasizes.” (Ehrman, *The New Testament*, 438). Bruce has the same opinion, (see Bruce, “Hebrews,” in Black, 1008), and Kee (see Kee, *Understanding the New Testament*, 352). So does White (see White, *From Jesus to Christianity*, 318-319), and Hauer (see Hauer, *An Introduction to the Bible*, 304), as well as Attridge (see Attridge, “Epistle to the Hebrews,” in Ferguson, 514), and Selby (see Selby, *Introduction to the Bible*, N.T. 419).
down at his leisure what had been said by his teacher.... But who wrote the epistle, in truth, [only] God knows.”

The author was trying to prevent some of his parishioners from returning to their ancestral Jewish faith. Hence he attacked Judaism as inferior to Christianity. Moses, for example, was one of the revered figures of the Jewish Scriptures. But the author claimed he was inferior to Jesus: “Yet Jesus is worthy of more glory than Moses, just as the builder of a house has more honour than the house itself.”

The prophets, another example, were God’s spokesmen in former times, but now it is Jesus, the Son of God: “Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. He is the reflection of God’s glory and the exact imprint of God’s very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word.”

Even the Jewish high priest was lower than Jesus’ priesthood:

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736 “What little can be detected from... internal references suggests a Christian congregation facing some crisis of faith.” (White, From Jesus to Christianity, 319). Ehrman is a bit more explicit as to where the would-be apostates were heading: “The author appears fearful that a conversion (or return) to Judaism might occur among members of his community.” (Ehrman, The New Testament, 444). So does Hauer (See Hauer, An Introduction to the Bible, 304). Selby, on the other hand, discounts it: “Some have contended that the purpose of Hebrews is to prevent Jewish Christians from lapsing back into Judaism... The evidence is, however, against this part of the title as well.... Such issues as circumcision, and the gentle mission, and the place of the Law in the life of the Church, which would be essential to such a purpose, are absent. The author in his treatment of Israel’s cultus confines himself to the Torah itself. (Selby, Introduction to the Bible, N.T. 420-421).


Now the main point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one [i.e. Jesus] who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister in the sanctuary and the true tent that the Lord, and not any mortal, has set up.... But Jesus has now obtained a more excellent ministry, and to that degree he is the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted through better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no need to look for a second one.  

The old was now passé, and only the new mattered. Clearly, the author had Judaism in his sights. Evidence of some Judaizing pressure can be inferred from the following verse: “Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings; for it is well for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by regulations about food, which have not benefited those who observe them.” (Emphasis is mine). To prevent Christians from abjuring their faith, he warned these erstwhile followers of Judaism of the dire consequences of apostasy, which was to him a one-way journey to perdition:

For it is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have once been enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, since on their own they are crucifying again the Son of God and are holding him up to contempt.

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740 As Ehrman puts it, referring to the Old and New Testaments: “The old has now passed away and believers must cling to the new.” (Ehrman, The New Testament, 438). Kee, however, disagrees with Ehrman’s “simplistic” view: “The dominant theme of the entire work is that God has provided through Christ a new access to his presence and has opened the way for a newly defined people to attain that access. Far more is involved in the contrast than as simple old-new way.” (Kee, Understanding the New Testament, 348).
742 That some Christians were guilty of abandoning their faith is documented in the contemporaneous letter of Pliny to the Emperor Trajan: “Others [i.e., some of the Christians], accused by the informer, said that they were Christians and afterwards denied it; in fact, they had been but had ceased to be, some many years ago, some even twenty years before. They all worshipped your image and the statues of the gods, and cursed Christ.” (Pliny, “Pliny to Trajan,” in Readings in Ancient History: Thought and Experience from Gilgamesh to St. Augustine, ed. Nels M. Bailkey [Lexington, Massachusetts: D.C. Heath and Company, 1987], 432).
743 Heb. 6:4-6 NRSV, [http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Hebrews+6](http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Hebrews+6) (accessed January 24, 2013). The phrase: “they are crucifying again the Son of God” is in reference to the supposed complicity of the Jews in...
It is also possible that the persons who were going back to their ancestral faith had lost faith in Christianity because the promised second advent had not materialized. In fact, Hebrews 10:24-25 may be interpreted as implying that the reason why some followers were now avoiding meeting with other Christians was that they had already lost faith in the promise of a soon-to-come last days.

The author, however, only mentioned the second coming briefly. But he knew it was coming soon: “Let us not give up the habit of meeting together, as some are doing. Instead, let us encourage one another all the more, since you see that the Day of the Lord is coming nearer.” Furthermore, he added: “You need to be patient, in order to do the will of God and receive what he promises. For, as the scripture says: 'Just a little while longer, and he who is coming will come; he will not delay.'”

the crucifixion of Jesus, which clearly shows the author was speaking to “God-fearing” Greeks, or Jewish Christians, or both.

Ehrman, speaking of the social context of Hebrews, makes the following comment: “From its earliest days the Christian message was closely tied to the apocalyptic notion that the end of the age was imminent... With the passing of time and the failure of the end to appear, some believers gave up their confidence in this apocalyptic message... Did some of them maintain their monotheistic devotion to the God of Israel but jettison their faith in Christ as his messiah, and join the local synagogue as Gentile “God-fearers”? No doubt some of them did that.” (Ehrman, The New Testament, 444).

“And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” (Heb. 10:24-25 NRSV, [accessed January 24, 2013]). (Emphasis is mine). Attridge also alludes to the possibility of apostasy when commenting on verse 25: “Hebrews aims to revitalize the faith of a congregation some of whose members have become disaffected for various reasons, including doubt occasioned by delay of the coming ‘day’ (10:25).” (Attridge, “Epistle to the Hebrews,” in Ferguson, 514). Bruce, however, does not explicitly interpret verse 25 to be eschatological: “The reference may be to a house-church or house-synagogue where this group had been in the habit of meeting; they were in danger of slipping back into the general life of the Jewish community to which they formerly belonged.” (Bruce, “Hebrews,” in Black, 1016).


No picture of the last days is as spectacular and bizarre as that of John's Revelation, which has gripped the imaginations of men and women throughout the ages, and will continue most probably till the world finally ends. It is also quite fitting that the New Testament finished with a tale of the end of time, and the new age soon aborning.\footnote{748}{"There is something appropriate in the way that the New Testament, and therefore the Bible, concludes with an apocalypse. From the earliest of Paul to II Peter... we have observed a preoccupation with the eschaton which concludes the present evil age and ushers in the new age of righteousness and eternal life. (Selby, \textit{Introduction to the Bible}, N.T. 455).}

The book was written most probably during the time of the Emperor Domitian, towards the end of the first century, sometime 95 or 96,\footnote{749}{For the dates, see Introduction, Table 4. Turner assigns various dates for Revelation depending on the underlying assumptions. “The earliest possible date would be the reign of Nero. The reference to the Temple in 11:1,2 implies that it is still in existence.... It is doubtful whether Nero’s persecution was sufficiently sustained to provoke such a book as this, and the edict concerning emperor-worship... hardly belongs to this reign.... Some passages, such as that of the seven kings in 17:10 suggests the reign of Vespasian or Titus.... But the same difficulty about emperor-worship meets us here.... The most reasonable suggestion is the reign of Domitian (81-96) and this accords with the very early Church tradition of Irenaeus and also for the demand for emperor-worship in this reign and the fierce persecution of Christians (c. A.D. 92 according to Pliny).” (N. Turner, “Revelation,” in Black , 1045). Selby parallels, more or less, Turner’s analysis. (See Selby, \textit{Introduction to the Bible}, N.T. 460). Ehrman is a bit different, though: “It is difficult to know exactly when he [i.e., the author] wrote this book. Modern interpreters usually appeal to details in some of the visions to pinpoint a date.... On the basis of a detailed study of all... clues in the text, most investigators think that parts of the book were written during the 60s..., soon after the persecution of the Christians under Nero. If we begin to count from Julius Caesar, Nero happens to have been the sixth ruler of Rome.... There are other aspects of the book, however, that suggest that it was not completed until somewhat later, probably around 95 C.E., during the reign of Domitian. For example, the code word ‘Babylon’... came to be used by Jews to designate Rome as the chief political enemy of God \textit{after} the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E.” (Ehrman, \textit{The New Testament}, 498). Kee thinks Revelation was written a few years earlier than White, claiming it was written around 90-95. (See Kee, \textit{Understanding the New Testament}, 422). Aune, for his part, asserts that “The traditional date of composition is ca. A.D. 95,” within the ballpark of the other scholars. (David E. Aune, “Book of Revelation,” in Ferguson, 981). Craveri opines that “it was written during the reign of Domitian, between A.D. 94 and 96, but it is probably even later.” (Craveri, \textit{The Life of Jesus}, 349). According to Wilson: “The book, known variously as the Apocalypse and the Revelation of ‘St. John the Divine’ probably dates from about the year 90.” (Wilson, \textit{Jesus}, 250). In summary therefore, it appears that most authors are of the opinion that Revelation was written sometime between 90 and 96, during the reign of Domitian.}

748 “There is something appropriate in the way that the New Testament, and therefore the Bible, concludes with an apocalypse. From the earliest of Paul to II Peter... we have observed a preoccupation with the eschaton which concludes the present evil age and ushers in the new age of righteousness and eternal life. (Selby, \textit{Introduction to the Bible}, N.T. 455).

749 For the dates, see Introduction, Table 4. Turner assigns various dates for Revelation depending on the underlying assumptions. “The earliest possible date would be the reign of Nero. The reference to the Temple in 11:1,2 implies that it is still in existence.... It is doubtful whether Nero’s persecution was sufficiently sustained to provoke such a book as this, and the edict concerning emperor-worship... hardly belongs to this reign.... Some passages, such as that of the seven kings in 17:10 suggests the reign of Vespasian or Titus.... But the same difficulty about emperor-worship meets us here.... The most reasonable suggestion is the reign of Domitian (81-96) and this accords with the very early Church tradition of Irenaeus and also for the demand for emperor-worship in this reign and the fierce persecution of Christians (c. A.D. 92 according to Pliny).” (N. Turner, “Revelation,” in Black , 1045). Selby parallels, more or less, Turner’s analysis. (See Selby, \textit{Introduction to the Bible}, N.T. 460). Ehrman is a bit different, though: “It is difficult to know exactly when he [i.e., the author] wrote this book. Modern interpreters usually appeal to details in some of the visions to pinpoint a date.... On the basis of a detailed study of all... clues in the text, most investigators think that parts of the book were written during the 60s..., soon after the persecution of the Christians under Nero. If we begin to count from Julius Caesar, Nero happens to have been the sixth ruler of Rome.... There are other aspects of the book, however, that suggest that it was not completed until somewhat later, probably around 95 C.E., during the reign of Domitian. For example, the code word ‘Babylon’... came to be used by Jews to designate Rome as the chief political enemy of God \textit{after} the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E.” (Ehrman, \textit{The New Testament}, 498). Kee thinks Revelation was written a few years earlier than White, claiming it was written around 90-95. (See Kee, \textit{Understanding the New Testament}, 422). Aune, for his part, asserts that “The traditional date of composition is ca. A.D. 95,” within the ballpark of the other scholars. (David E. Aune, “Book of Revelation,” in Ferguson, 981). Craveri opines that “it was written during the reign of Domitian, between A.D. 94 and 96, but it is probably even later.” (Craveri, \textit{The Life of Jesus}, 349). According to Wilson: “The book, known variously as the Apocalypse and the Revelation of ‘St. John the Divine’ probably dates from about the year 90.” (Wilson, \textit{Jesus}, 250). In summary therefore, it appears that most authors are of the opinion that Revelation was written sometime between 90 and 96, during the reign of Domitian.
today believe that John was not living in a time of active—or, at least, systematic-persecution.”

It is hard to agree with her conclusion, however, for Revelation is replete with martyrdom and martyrs: “I also saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus.” Pagels probably believes the author was writing his book after the persecutions of Domitian had ended. She also claims that a common misconception regarding Revelation is that it made explicit reference to the antichrist.

The only time, in fact, the word was ever used in the entire Bible was in the first two Johannine letters, 1 John and 2 John.

The author repeatedly claimed his name was John, but with no other corroborating evidence. Late in the second century, Irenaeus, a church father discussed earlier in sub-chapter 4.2, identified the author as John, the disciple of Jesus. Eusebius disagreed, however, associating him rather with a certain John from Ephesus, where a monument was erected in his honor, unrelated to the apostle John. Most biblical

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750 Pagels, Revelations, 46.
752 “Irenaeus encouraged believers to see the Antichrist in John's Revelation and Daniel's too, even if the word is not in these two books.” (Pagels, Revelations, 112).
753 1 John: “Children, it is the last hour! As you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come,” (1 John 2:18 NRSV, http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=1John+2 [accessed January 25, 2012]) (Emphasis is mine), and John 2: “Many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh; any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist.” (2 John 1:7 NRSV, http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=2John+1 [accessed January 25, 2012]). (Emphasis is mine).
754 “The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place; he made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.” (Revelation 1:1-2 NRSV, http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Revelation+1 [accessed March 8, 2013]).
755 “John also, the Lord’s disciple, when beholding the glorious advent of His kingdom, says in the Apocalypse: ‘I turned to see the voice that spoke with me.’” (Irenaeus, Against Heresies, Book IV, Chapter XX, 11). Ehrman confirms the observation. (See Ehrman, The New Testament, 497). Aune also notes the same. (See Aune, “Book of Revelation.” in Ferguson, 981).
experts now conclude the author was not John the apostle,\textsuperscript{757} but rather a member of the so-called Johannine community, and that is about as far as they are willing to go.\textsuperscript{758}

The author proclaimed immediately that the second coming of the Lord was nigh. From the start he asserted: “This book is the record of the events that Jesus Christ revealed. God gave him this revelation in order to show his servants what must happen very soon.”\textsuperscript{759} Despite the passage of time of about forty years since Paul proclaimed Jesus was returning soon, and the failure of the prediction since then, the vision of the \textit{parousia} still burned intensely in the bosom of this writer. However, his notion of the \textit{eschaton} was a bit different from Paul’s, and more like his contemporaneous writers. He gave himself some wiggle room by hinting at some undefined quota of martyrs before the end would finally come. When a group of martyrs asked Jesus when was he returning to render judgment on the living and the dead, his reply was to advise them to wait a while longer, until “the number would be complete both of their fellow-servants and of their brothers and sisters, who were soon to be killed [as martyrs] as they themselves had been

\textsuperscript{757} “As is often pointed out, apocalypses are characteristically pseudonymous, borrowing great names from the past.... In such apocalypses the name is borrowed, not only for prestige, but also to place the writing in an ancient period so that the outline of history which the work contains will appear as the author’s successful prediction, thus far, of the course of world events.” (Selby, \textit{Introduction to the Bible}, N.T. 455-456). Hauer states that “The fact is we do not know who ‘John’ was.” (Hauer, \textit{An Introduction to the Bible}, 313). Kee also affirms the anonymity of the author, except for his name. (See Kee, \textit{Understanding the New Testament}, 361). Ehrman also doubts if the apostle John, the son of Zebedee, wrote this book. (See Ehrman, \textit{The New Testament}, 497). So does Turner. (See Turner, “Revelation,” in Black, 1044)

\textsuperscript{758} “It is not unlikely that John the Elder (author of the Gospel and Epistles) and John the Prophet [author of Revelation] belonged to the same ‘religious circle’.” (Ibid.) Painter mentions in passing that Revelation was part of the Johannine corpus while discussing the relative importance of each piece: “The other representatives of the Johannine literature did not prove so influential. Revelation declined in influence, probably because of the Montanist heresy and growing skepticism regarding millenarianism, and the Epistles paled to insignificance alongside the more vital and impressive Gospel [of John].” (Painter, “John, Johannine Literature,” in Ferguson, 620).

\textsuperscript{759} Rev. 1:1 UBS,
The executions were going to last just a tad longer. But when the magic number was reached the longed-for end of the world was finally going to come, but no sooner. Paul had also used this concept of a quota earlier in his epistle to the Romans, except that his quota concerned Gentiles rather than martyrs that John used.

But all talk of the imminent end did not quell dissension from showing up, as Jesus commanded the scribe to write to the church in Ephesus: “I know that you cannot tolerate evildoers; you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them to be false.” In addition, the Son of God instructed the author to further ostracize a group called Nicolaitans, who, in the words of the second century Irenaeus, were: “followers of that Nicolas who was one of the seven first ordained to the diaconate by the apostles. They lead lives of unrestrained indulgence.” The dissidents were selected by Jesus Christ’s own apostles! These early Christians were surely a quarrelsome lot.

After describing all the catastrophic events that were fated to happen during the last fading days of the world, such as death, famine, pestilence, and war, the author added that Satan was to be imprisoned for a millennium, to be released at the end of the period to wreak havoc on the earth before the last day finally came. Chiliasm became a staple for later Christian writers when it came to be their turn to dabble in the end times. And,

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762 Irenaeus, Against Heresies, Book 1, Chapter XXVI, 3.
763 See, for example, the Apocalypse of Peter, written around 132-135, and discussed in sub-chapter 4.1. See also Justin’s Dialogue with Trypho, inked sometime in the middle of the first century, and discussed in sub-chapter 4.2.
as plagiarism was a nagging problem then, as it is still now, the writer warned cheaters toward the end of his book that if they tampered with his book, they would suffer the consequences: “If anyone adds to them [i.e., John’s words], God will add to that person the plagues described in this book; if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away that person’s share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.”764 The writer then ended his book with the same mournful dirge from the first Christian writer: “Come, Lord Jesus!”765

There have been other cataclysmic visions of the approaching doom written by other authors, mostly non-canonical books such as apocalypses attributed to Peter, or Paul, or Abraham, or others.766 None, however, has enjoyed the impressive success of John's book. It is still being used by present-day writers as a map for the horrendous sequence of events, celestial as well as earthly, that will occur in the near future when the real end of the world comes to pass.

766 “Almost all of the ancient apocalypses were written pseudonymously in the name of a famous religious person from the past (the book of Revelation is a rare exception). Among the surviving Jewish apocalypses are some claiming to be written by Moses, Abraham, Enoch, and even Adam. We have Christian apocalypses reputedly from the pens of the prophet Isaiah, and the apostles Peter, Paul, and Thomas.” (Ehrman, The New Testament, 495). The Jewish apocalypses will not be discussed here because this thesis is concerned mainly with doomsday books written by Christians. The only exception is the apocalyptic book of Ezra, which is deliberated upon in chapter 3. Except for the Apocalypse of Peter and the Ascension of Isaiah, which were examined in sub-chapter 4.1, the Apocalypses of Paul and Thomas will not be discussed here mainly because both were mostly penned after the Nicene Creed was promulgated in 325, and are thus beyond the scope of this study. The Apocalypse of Paul, for example, “dates from the end of the fourth century, but it contains materials that were composed earlier, as they are alluded to by the proto-orthodox church father Origen in the early third century.” (Ehrman, Lost Scriptures, 288). The Apocalypse of Thomas, on the other hand, was created around 400. (See Ferguson, “Apocalypse of Peter,” in Ferguson, 73).
Another letter that was used by the same Johannine community was 1 John, written sometime between 95 and 130. This letter addresses much of the same subjects contained in 2 John and 3 John, and all three share very similar vocabulary. Tradition attributes the authorship of the Gospel of John, of the Johannine epistles, as well as Revelation, to be the apostle John, the “beloved disciple”. Many biblical scholars today, however, believe that the authors of all the five works cited above were different persons, but who came from the same aforementioned Johannine community.

The author of 1 John proclaimed right away, in the first two sentences of the letter, the humanity of Christ: “We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—this life was revealed, and we have seen it and

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767 For the dates, see Table 4 of the Introduction. Other scholars, however, have different opinions regarding the date. Ehrman asserts that “1, 2, and 3 John were written by a member of the Johannine community near the end of the first century.” (Ehrman, The New Testament, 207). Hauer claims that “the scholarly consensus favors the first decade of the second century.” (Hauer, An Introduction to the Bible, 311). Johnston thinks the letter was written anywhere from 70 and 100. (See G. Johnston, “I, II, III John,” in Black, 1035). Kee’s estimate of the date the letter was written is somewhere in the middle of White’s, that is, between 90 and 110 (See Kee, Understanding the New Testament, 422).

768 As has been stated earlier in the Introduction, both 2 John and 3 John will not be discussed because the two letters did not speak of the parousia in any manner.

769 As noted in previous discussions regarding the authorship of The Gospel of John and Revelation, most scholars today believe the person who wrote the former was not the author of the latter. As regards the Johannine letters and the Fourth Gospel, Ehrman asserts that “the author [of the Johannine epistles] was not the same person who wrote the Gospel of John, but his theological views were very similar.” (Ehrman, The New Testament, 207). Selby concurs, more or less. (See Selby, Introduction to the Bible, N.T. 444). Johnston, however, is not of the same opinion. He writes: “Vocabulary, style, and similar ideas relate 1 Jn to the Fourth Gospel. Each has its own stamp, of course, and the Gospel is four times long. Common authorship might easily be assumed, and the onus of proof is on those who deny it. (Johnston, “1, II, III John,” in Black, 1035). Hauer, though, is more ambivalent: “The vocabulary, literary style, and theological perspective of this letter (and Second and Third John), are similar enough to those of the Fourth Gospel to cause many to conclude that the letters and the gospel came from the same author, or from the Johannine School. (Hauer, An Introduction to the Bible, 311). As cited previously, Turner thinks that the “Author [of Revelation] could not have written [the Gospel of] John or the Johannine Epistles.” (Turner, “Revelation,” in Black, 1044). He however, opines that the author of the Fourth Gospel is the same person who wrote the Johannine epistles, while conceding that this author came from the same Johannine group as the person who wrote Revelation: “It is not unlikely that John the Elder (author of the Gospel and Epistles) and John the Prophet [i.e., author of Revelation] belonged to the same ‘religious circle’.” (Ibid.)
testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us.”

It seems that the writer was trying to isolate a splinter group who had broken away from his community: “They went out from us, but they did not belong to us; for if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us. But by going out they made it plain that none of them belongs to us.” It seemed then that the dissenters were claiming that Jesus was fully God, but his humanity was an illusion.

The author may have been so upset at the way things turned out for the community that he believed the schism was a harbinger of the coming end. He spoke not only of one antichrist who was hastening the approach of the last days, but many antichrists, which most probably referred to the dissidents he was condemning. Thus the eschatological conflict was now taking place: “Children, it is the last hour! As you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. From this we know that it is the last hour.” And then he went on to urge his followers to keep the faith no matter what the times were.

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772 “They [i.e. the epistles of John] oppose a schismatic movement that minimized the real humanity of Jesus.” (Painter, “John, Johannine Literature,” in Ferguson, 619). Ehrman is a bit more expansive in describing the tensions within the Johannine congregation: “The author of 1 John indicates that a faction from within the community has split off from the rest of the group and left in a huff.... [The] secessionists may have held a point of view that we know about from other sources from about the same period, such as the writings of Ignatius [who I will discuss later].... Ignatius opposed a group of Christians who... maintained that Jesus was not himself a flesh-and-blood human being but was completely and only divine... If Jesus was God, he could not have experienced the limitation of human flesh.... Jesus was not really a human; he merely appeared to be. “ (Ehrman, The New Testament, 203-204). White affirms the connection between the docetism attacked by 1 John and Ignatius of Antioch. (See White, From Jesus to Christianity, 348).
It was not persecution then, that elicited visions of the last days, but probably the psychological shock from the loss of what must have been very close relationships with members of his community. The author may also have been already convinced beforehand that time was short, and the trauma from the breakup reinforced his conviction further.

The author of 1 Clement, written sometime 95 or 97, believed in the parousia just like the writer of 1 John, but in his own nuanced way. First, he called his residence as “The church of God that temporarily resides in Rome;” and his addressee was “the church of God that temporarily resides in Corinth.”\(^{775}\) He did not explain exactly what he meant by the term “temporarily,” but it may not be farfetched to assume that he used it to remind his readers that their permanent domicile was in the kingdom of God above, which was coming down soon for them.

Tradition ascribed the authorship of this letter to Clement, the third bishop of Rome, and it probably was, although the author never claimed to be Clement.\(^{776}\) He wrote

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\(^{774}\) For dates, see Introduction, Table 4. White thinks it was written between 100 and 120. (See White, *From Jesus to Christianity*, 338). Whereas Kee assigns the date of 95 to the creation of the epistle. (See Kee, *Understanding the New Testament*, 422). Snyder, for his part, asserts that the letter was written around 86. (See Graydon F. Snyder, “Clement of Rome,” in Ferguson, 264). The Catholic Encyclopedia claims that “It is now universally acknowledged... that it was written about the last year of Domitian (Harnack) or immediately after his death in 96 (Funk).” (Catholic Encyclopedia, s.v., “Pope St. Clement I,” http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04012c.htm [accessed January 29, 2013]). It, nevertheless, immediately adds another assertion that “by 2002 most scholars supported a date earlier than 96, some agreeing with the A.D. 70 date.” (Ibid.) Early Christian Writings avers that it was written around 80 to 140. (See Early Christian Writings http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/ [accessed January 29, 2013]).


\(^{776}\) “Although traditionally ascribed to Clement, thought to have been the third bishop of Rome, the letter itself never names its author or mentions Clement.” (Ehrman, *Lost Scriptures*, 167). Ferguson asserts that Clement of Rome was the “Bishop of Rome... and traditional author of two works included in the writings of the apostolic fathers.” (Snyder, “Clement of Rome,” in Ferguson, 264). In the words of White: “The
his letter to the church in Corinth after some usurpers ousted its old leadership. Clement urged the Corinthians to reinstate the old guard, for the former leaders derived their authority ultimately from the apostles, who in turn got their calling personally from Christ. This line of reasoning was enshrined later on as the doctrine of apostolic succession, which was destined to gain more importance as time went by. The young Turks were guilty of committing an illegal act, and their action should therefore be abrogated.

He then reminded his audience that they should not pay heed the scoffers who, just like those cited in 2 Peter, were trying to implant doubts in their minds regarding the last days: “How miserable are those who are of two minds, who doubt in their soul, who say, ‘We have heard these things from the time of our parents, and look! We have grown old, and none of these things has happened to us.’”777 Moreover, they should not succumb to feelings of despair on account of the delay of the Master, for “his plan will come to completion quickly and suddenly.”778 They should therefore not lose sight of “how the Master continuously shows us the future resurrection that is about to occur, or which he made the Lord Jesus Christ the first-fruit by raising him from the dead.”779 In other words, there was no reason to give up hope as the end was surely coming any moment now, in spite of Jesus tarrying for what was now more than half a century.

777 Ibid., 175. Note: the line enclosed within single quotes is a paraphrase of 2 Peter 3:4 NRSV.
778 Ibid.
779 Ibid., 176.
The writer did not give a reason for the sixty-year long delay. Probably he did not feel a need for an excuse because the promise of the second advent was for his generation and not for the earlier ones, in the same manner the author of The Apocalypse of Peter rationalized the deferment of the *eschaton* as mentioned in sub-chapter 4.1. Whatever it was, he emphasized to his followers that they should act rather like apostles, who, after they “received his [i.e. Christ's] commands and were fully convinced through the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and persuaded by the word of God, they went forth proclaiming the good news that the Kingdom of God was about to come, brimming with confidence through the Holy Spirit.”\(^780\)

He mentioned that his church in Rome had just experienced what seemed to be the last vestiges of persecution,\(^781\) most probably during the reign of the tyrant Domitian. Clement may have held on to his belief in the soon-to-come day of judgment, in spite of its decades-long postponement, probably because he suffered in the past the piercing tongs of torture; or perhaps not.

There was another letter that was ascribed to the same author, called appropriately *2 Clement*. However, it could not have been written by the same person,\(^782\) mainly because it was written about fifty-five years after *1 Clement*, 150 versus 95

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\(^780\) Ibid., 177.

\(^781\) “Because of the sudden and repeated misfortunes and setbacks we have experience, we realize that we have been slow to turn our attention to the matters causing disputes among you.” (Ehrman, *The New Testament and other Early Christian Writings*, 303).

respectively. In addition, the styles used in the two dispatches were quite different.

The two epistles were, nevertheless, esteemed by some Christians as part of the canon early on, as evidenced by their inclusion in a fifth-century Bible called Codex Alexandrinus. Both are now not considered part of the official canon.

2 Clement was more of a sermon than a letter. It addressed a general audience rather than a specific church as in the first epistle; it was thus more of a catholic homily. The author used quotations from sacred texts to urge the faithful to repent in order to be ready to enter the forthcoming kingdom of God. “If, therefore, we do what is righteous before God, we will enter into his kingdom and receive his promises.... For this reason, we should await the kingdom of God with love and righteousness every hour, since we do not know the day when God will appear.” The writer cautioned his audience afterwards not to be swayed by the scoffers who will come to mock them by quoting verbatim from

1 Clement: “How miserable are those who are of two minds, who doubt in their soul, who

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783 For dates, see Introduction, Table 4. White thinks it was created towards “the latter part of the second century.” (White, From Jesus to Christianity, 341). Snyder asserts, though, that the date is just plain unknown. (See Snyder, “Clement of Rome,” in Ferguson, 264). According to the Catholic Encyclopedia, it was written sometime 140, and “its reference to Gnostic view does not allow us to place it much earlier.” (Catholic Encyclopedia, s.v., “Pope St. Clement I,” http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04012c.htm [accessed January 29, 2013]). Early Christian Writings claims it was written around 130 to 160. (See Early Christian Writings http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/ [accessed January 29, 2013]). Richardson insists that “It was written at some time before the middle of the second century.” (Cyril C. Richardson, Early Christian Fathers http://www.ccel.org/ccel/rcf/richardson/fathers.pdf [accessed January 30, 2013]).

784 See Ehrman, Lost Scriptures, 185.

785 “An ancient homily by an anonymous author has come down to us in the same two Greek manuscripts as the Epistle of Clement, and is called the Second Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians.” (Catholic Encyclopedia, s.v., “Pope St. Clement I,” http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04012c.htm [accessed January 29, 2013]). Snyder opines that “2 Clement is not a letter but a homily or appeal.” (Snyder, “Clement of Rome,” in Ferguson, 264). According to White, “The work contains no epistolary features.... It is... a sermon on the church.” (White, From Jesus to Christianity, 341). As stated earlier, Ehrman considers that “The traditional title of the book (“The Second Letter of Clement”) is a misnomer: the book ... is not a letter but a sermon.” (Ehrman, Lost Scriptures, 185).

786 Ibid., 189
say, 'We have heard these things from the time of our parents, and look! We have grown old, and none of these things has happened to us.' The words of admonition in both letters showed clearly that Christians were still holding on to the belief in the impending *parousia* for a hundred years now, in spite of its repeated failure to materialize. Scoffers were correspondingly showing up in both periods to taunt the faithful for holding on to forlorn hopes that seemed to be nothing but empty promises. Old habits, on both sides of the dispute, do indeed die hard.

Instead of justifying the delay of the last days, however, the author even attempted to predict idiosyncratically the timing of the second advent by quoting from the Gnostic Gospel of Thomas. It will come, as he alleged, when “the two are one, and the outside like the inside, and the male with the female is neither male nor female.”\(^788\)

Originally, as written in the aforementioned Gospel of Thomas,\(^789\) the passage espoused the Gnostic belief that claimed the soul, imprisoned inside the body of a man or woman, could find fulfillment only when it joined the spiritual world of God outside the material world. Thence it would not matter whether one is male or female.\(^790\) This concept was not far from Christian orthodoxy, but for the fact that Gnostics believed the body was not needed anymore, and could thus be discarded when the soul ultimately entered the

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\(^787\) Ibid. And as duly noted in the discussion of *1 Clement*, the line enclosed within single quotes is a paraphrase of 2 Peter 3:4 NRSV.

\(^788\) Ibid., 189.


\(^790\) “The goal of salvation is to overcome the sexual differentiation that has characterized humanity from the beginning (‘Male and female created he them,’ Gn 1:27), but which according to the Gospel of Thomas is to be replaced by androgynous existence (Thos... 22)” (Kee, *Understanding the New Testament*, 162).
kingdom of God. Consequently, there was not going to be any resurrection of the dead (since there was no point reviving something that was evil), nor any last judgment.\textsuperscript{791}

From the author's point of view, however, the meaning was different. For example: “Now 'the two are one' [meant] when we speak truth to one another and when one soul exists in two bodies without posturing.”\textsuperscript{792} Or, the phrase “‘the male with the female is neither male or female’”\textsuperscript{793} meant that “a brother who sees a sister should think nothing about her being female and she should think nothing about his being male.”\textsuperscript{794} And, if everything was done according to his interpretation, the kingdom of heaven will duly come.

It is not known why the author of 2 Clement thought the last days were at hand. He did not specify, for example, any persecution afflicting him or his associates. In fact he did not even explain why he believed in the imminent end. Such was not the case, however, for Ignatius, the bishop of Antioch (50-117),\textsuperscript{795} who believed in the eschaton

\textsuperscript{791} “In the Gospel of Thomas, for example, there is a clear attack on anyone who believes in a future Kingdom here on earth.” (Ehrman, \textit{Jesus}, 131). Moreover he asserts: “In this Gospel there is no anticipation of a coming Kingdom of God on earth.” (Ehrman, \textit{Lost Christianities}, 64). If there is no Kingdom of God here on earth in the future, then it necessarily means there is no last judgment. Perkins explains in more detail Gnostic beliefs: “From the Gnostic point of view, most Christians were captive to a materialist blindness that kept them from seeing the truth. Orthodox Christians believed in a resurrection of a material body, when they should have recognized that resurrection refers to the union of the soul with the Savior.... They [i.e. Christians] had a literalist interpretation of judgment at the end of the world, but judgment takes place as the individual soul leaves the body at death. The ‘end of the world’ images refer to the collapse of this world of darkness that will result when all of the light returns to the heavenly world.” (Pheme Perkins, “Gnosticism,” in Ferguson, 468).

\textsuperscript{792} See Ehrman, \textit{Lost Scriptures}, 190.

\textsuperscript{793} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{794} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{795} For dates, see Introduction, Table 5. Fremantle, however, has the date of his death, via martyrdom, in 109, which he claims to be coming from Jerome. (See Anne Fremantle, ed., \textit{A Treasury of Early Christianity} [New York: The New American Library of World Literature, 1953], 37). White asserts that “Eusebius places ... his martyrdom in 107. [This] date... [is] considered unlikely by modern scholars, some of whom would push his death into the reign of the emperor Hadrian (117-138 CE)”. (White, \textit{From Jesus to
and welcomed his future martyrdom in Rome wholeheartedly. His letters were collected and edited throughout the centuries. It was only in the nineteenth century when scholars reconstructed the original works of Ignatius.796

Ignatius expressed so fervently his desire to be a martyr that some may question his mental state.797 In his letter to the Romans, he pleaded with the citizens not to interfere with his coming ordeal, which he embraced in words that bordered on the masochistic:

May I enjoy the wild beasts that are prepared for me; and I pray they may be found eager to rush upon me, which also I will entice to devour me speedily, and not deal with me as with some, whom, out of fear, they have not touched. But if they be unwilling to assail me, I will compel them to do so. And let no one, of things visible or invisible, envy me that I should attain to Jesus Christ. Let fire and the cross; let the crowds of wild beasts; let tearings, breakings, and dislocations of bones; let cutting off of members; let shatterings of the whole body; and let all the dreadful torments of the devil come upon me: only let me attain to Jesus Christ.798

The last phrase echoed the same intense feelings of Paul who wished passionately to be with his Master as soon as possible: “Marana tha!”

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796 Ibid., 560.
797 “This longing for death may appear to some modern readers to border on the pathological.” (Ehrman, The New Testament, 467). Schaff refers obliquely to the same thing: “Ignatius has been censured for his language to the Romans, in which he seems to crave martyrdom.” (Schaff, Ante-Nicene Fathers, 1:133). He, though, excuses Ignatius: “But he was already condemned, in law a dead man, and felt himself at liberty to glory in his tribulations.” (Ibid.) Smith claims Ignatius is strange, at the very least, for he “has a morbid preoccupation with martyrdom, and uses most bizarre expressions as he tells of his desire to die for Christ.” (Smith, From Christ to Constantine, 35). The Catholic Encyclopedia is more kind to him: “An enthusiastic devotion to duty, a passionate love of sacrifice, and an utter fearlessness in the defense of Christian truth were his chief characteristics.” (The Catholic Encyclopedia, s.v., “St. Ignatius of Antioch,” http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07644a.htm [accessed March 8, 2013]). (Emphasis is mine).
798 Ignatius, The Epistle of Ignatius to the Romans: Shorter Version, Chapter V.
Perhaps he was not really going out of his mind. His reality was just different from those who accused him of insanity. He believed in the idea of being with Jesus so much so that he welcomed any avenue, pleasant or unpleasant, that ushered him into his presence as quickly as possible. As a result, he embraced martyrdom without any regrets whatsoever. He did not have wait long for death to overtake him so he could finally be with Jesus. He had just to suffer a little while on earth, and then he would be rewarded with the prize he thought everybody in his right mind should wish to attain: an eternity with the eternal God. Besides, he was not alone in his way of thinking. Many others, in full possession of their faculties, would follow in his bloodstained footsteps as martyrs for the faith. Hopefully, for their sake, they got the prize they so agonizingly worked for.

He consequently wrote a letter to the Ephesians, while he was on the road to Rome and blessed martyrdom, expressing his firm belief in the coming end of the world, and venting again his wish to be with Jesus who was going to be his comfort in his supreme hour of trial:

The last times are come upon us. Let us therefore be of a reverent spirit, and fear the long-suffering of God.... For let us either fear the wrath to come, or let us love the present joy in the life that now is; and let our present and true joy be only this, to be found in Christ Jesus, that we may truly live. Do not at any time desire so much as even to breathe apart from Him. For He is my hope; He is my boast; He is my never-failing riches, on whose account I bear about with me these bonds from Syria to Rome, these spiritual jewels, in which may I be perfected through your prayers, and become a partaker of the sufferings of Christ, and have fellowship with Him in His death, His resurrection from the dead, and His everlasting life.799

The first sentence in the paragraph above showed his rather unique belief that the end of
the world had already begun, and not at hand as other eschatological writers had it. For
he said that “the last times are come upon us,” and not “the last times are coming upon
us.” Perhaps he was so exuberant in his expectation of the second advent that he thought
the end was already starting. In this regard, he was different from Paul and the synoptists,
who all claimed the new age was forthcoming, but had not yet commenced.

Not all ante-Nicene Fathers of the church embraced martyrdom as eagerly as
Ignatius did. One good example was Cyprian, the bishop of Carthage, who went into
hiding in 250 to escape the execution block prepared for him during the persecutions of
Emperor Decius, who demanded “the universal acknowledgement of the gods through
sacrifice.” The eminent bishop was severely criticized by his peers for his act of
cowardice. But he later redeemed himself when he achieved martyrdom for the faith
when he was decapitated in 258 under a new Emperor Valerian.

The condition of the Empire during the time of Decius (249-251) was as dire as
those described previously during the later period of Emperor Valerian (253-260). The
Roman world of Decius was in a state of near anarchy. The throne was being supported

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800 The phrase “at hand” is used here to mean in the near future, just as it was used in the Gospel of
Matthew: “Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matthew 3:2 AV,
He, of course, did not mean that the last days were already past, for there was still the matter of “the wrath
to come.” In short, the end was starting, but not yet over.
801 “Cyprian decided that it was politic to be out of town and to look after the churches from a country hide-
out. So he lay low until the storm was past.” (Smith, From Christ to Constantine, 133).
803 “While the Christians were picking up the pieces after Decius’s persecution... the Roman Empire
tottered on the verge of collapse. There were several claimants for the throne, and there was only a measure
of stability when Valerian seized power in 253.” (Smith, From Christ to Constantine, 139).
on the tips of swords, as well as whims, of Roman armies. Emperors were made and unmade through force of arms. Decius became Emperor when he defeated the reigning monarch, Philip the Arab, in 249 on the fields of Verona, a city in northeastern Italy. To restore the former glories of Roma Antiqua, he waged “campaigns against the Goths, and he laid out an ambitious program for the restoration of the Roman religion, morals, and character, and gave orders for the destruction of Christianity.”

Cyprian (200-258) was born in Carthage into a wealthy family. Taking advantage of this asset, he rose to become a popular rhetorician in the city of his birth. Later on, however, he grew pessimistic of his life in Roman society, and became convinced real success was to be found in the “temperate, studious, and prayerful life of a Christian.” He thus converted to Christianity, and was baptized probably around 246, on the eve of Easter, April 18. His conversion demonstrated that Christianity could attract not only the lower classes, but the moneyed ones too.

It was not an easy transition for him, though, as he had to give up some creature comforts when he embraced the Christian faith. In a letter he wrote to his friend Donatus,

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804 Durant, Caesar and Christ, 628. Smith captures the mood of Decius’ times against the Christians with these words: “Decius aimed to restore the ancient Roman virtues; one means he adopted was to try to revive the ancient religion of Rome. His edict that all should sacrifice to the traditional gods was aimed to crush Christianity.” (Smith, From Christ to Constantine, 183). Burckhardt claims likewise, more or less. (See Burckhardt, The Age of Constantine, 30).

805 For dates, see Introduction, Table 5. Sider agrees with the dates given by Schaff. (See Sider, “Cyprian,” in Ferguson, 306). The Catholic Encyclopedia avers that “date of the saint’s birth and of his early life nothing is known;” it claims, however, that he was beheaded in 258. (Catholic Encyclopedia, s.v., “St. Cyprian of Carthage,” http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04583b.htm [accessed August 23, 2012]). Smith also affirms that Cyprian was “martyred during Valerian’s persecution in 258. (Smith, From Christ to Constantine, 183).


807 See ibid.
he, speaking in the third person, attested to his sacrifices: “When does he [i.e. Cyprian] learn thrift who has been used to liberal banquets and sumptuous feasts? And he who has been glittering in gold and purple, and has been celebrated for his costly attire, when does he reduce himself to ordinary and simple clothing?” It did not mean, however, that he was ready to give up on his erudite past, for he soldiered on to become “the first great Latin writer among the Christians... Until the days of Jerome and Augustine, Cyprian's writings had no rivals in the West.” As a result of his accomplishments, he rose rapidly in the hierarchy, becoming bishop of Carthage three years after his conversion.

Throughout Cyprian's life, he was a good study in contrasts. Although he balked initially at the prospect of martyrdom, in the end he earned the crown. His act of pusillanimity gave way to an acceptance of his inevitable fate afterwards. His initial reluctance to accept the eschaton expanded to a firm embrace later on, becoming no less fervent than Ignatius in his belief that Jesus was returning shortly, his views evolving over time. In a way, though, the various conflicting episodes of his life revealed his humanity clearly, warts and all, bereft of any hagiography.

All of Cyprian’s treatises touching on the eschaton were written over a six year period, from 251 to 257, a year before his execution, during the turbulent times of Decius' and Valerian's persecutions. At first he was tentative. He wanted Jesus to come, but more

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808 Cyprian, To Donatus, 3.
810 Cyprian's initial reaction to the persecution of Decius was not as bad as the response of many other Christians of his time: “Within weeks [of the Decian persecution,] apparently vast numbers of Christians had lapsed and soon began to seek reconciliation.” (Sider, “Cyprian,” in Ferguson, 306). At least he did not abjure his faith.
in the manner of a supplication than a firm conviction: “There follows in the prayer, Thy kingdom come. We ask that the kingdom of God may be set forth to us.... We pray that our kingdom, which has been promised us by God, may come, which was acquired by the blood and passion of Christ; that we who first are His subjects in the world, may hereafter reign with Christ when He reigns.”

Little by little, though, Cyprian became convinced that the end was coming soon. It showed when he wrote *Exhortation to Martyrdom, Addressed to Fortunatus* in the year 251, and this time he knew the last days were at hand: “You have desired, beloved Fortunatus that, since the burden of persecutions and afflictions is lying heavy upon us, and in the ending and completion of the world the hateful time of Antichrist is already beginning to draw near.” He further claimed that the cosmic clock had already rung in the last hours of the six-thousand-year lifetime of the world: “It is an ancient adversary and an old enemy with whom we wage our battle: six thousand years are now nearly completed since the devil first attacked man [i.e. since the devil had first appeared in the Garden of Eden and seduced Adam and Eve.]”

As though the miseries of internal and external wars were not enough, a plague that had previously hit Rome in 250 had spread to Carthage by 252. Death was stalking people in the streets. The world of Cyprian was coming under severe stress. The only

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812 Ibid., *Exhortation to Martyrdom, Addressed to Fortunatus*, 1.
813 Ibid., 2.
814 “A severe plague in Carthage in 252 required a further apology from Cyprian. *To Demetrian*, showing that Christians are not the cause of national disasters, and evoked two pastoral treatises to Christians urging them not to forsake their responsibilities to the dead and the devastated (*On the Mortality, On Works and Alms*)” (Sider, “Cyprian,” in Ferguson, 307).
way out was a quick escape from a disintegrating world into the safety of Christ's arms when he came down to fetch the saints in the last days. The maladies were turning him into a firm believer in the forthcoming and inevitable end days, impelling him to write in 252:

[Jesus] predicted and said that wars, and famines, and earthquakes, and pestilences would arise in each place....He previously warned us that adversity would increase more and more in the last times. Behold, the very things occur which were spoken; and since those occur which were foretold before..., as the Lord Himself promises, saying, 'But when ye see all these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is at hand.' The kingdom of God, beloved brethren, is beginning to be at hand; the reward of life, and the rejoicing of eternal salvation..., are now coming, with the passing away of the world; already heavenly things are taking the place of earthly, and great things of small, and eternal things of things that fade away.

This time the end was not just coming soon, but in Cyprian’s opinion it was already “beginning to be at hand.”

The persecutions of the Valerian era created apostates among Christians who dared not tempt torture and martyrdom. Cyprian alluded to these abjurations of the faith when he penned another letter to reassure his fellow Christians in 254 that the last days were already starting, most especially since evil seemed to be emerging victorious, and hope among the faithful was wearing thin. Nevertheless, there was no need to worry, for Christ predicted it himself:

Nor let it disturb you, dearest brethren, if with some, in these last times, either an uncertain faith is wavering, or a fear of God without religion is vacillating, or a peaceable concord does not continue. These things have been foretold as about to

815 “There were many and frequent earthquakes, so that many places were overthrown throughout Cappadocia and Pontus; even certain cities, dragged into the abyss, were swallowed up by the opening of the gaping earth.” (Firmilian, To Cyprian, 10).
816 Cyprian, On the Mortality, 2.
happen in the end of the world; and it was predicted by the voice of the Lord, and by the testimony of the apostles, that now that the world is failing, and the Antichrist is drawing near, everything good shall fail, but evil and adverse things shall prosper. 817

As Valerian’s campaign of oppression did not seem to be abating, Cyprian cautioned the clergy and the faithful a year later to be steady in their faith as the end times were beginning to take hold: “For you ought to know and to believe..., that the day of affliction has begun to hang over our heads, and the end of the world and the time of Antichrist to draw near, so that we must all stand prepared for the battle.” 818 He then urged them to be ready to face their forthcoming ordeal: “A more severe and a fiercer fight is now threatening, for which the soldiers of Christ ought to prepare themselves with uncorrupted faith and robust courage, considering that they drink the cup of Christ’s blood daily, for the reason that they themselves also may be able to shed their blood for Christ.” 819

Finally, as death seemed to be knocking at his door, filling him with a premonition of his own demise, Cyprian wrote to Cornelius, the bishop of Rome, a year before he paid the ultimate price: “It matters nothing to us by whom, or when we are slain, since we shall receive from the Lord the reward of our death and of our blood.” 820

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817 Ibid., To the Clergy and People abiding in Spain, 7.
818 Ibid., To the People of Thibaris, Exhorting to Martyrdom, 1.
819 Ibid.
820 Ibid., To Cornelius, Concerning Fortunatus and Felecissimus, 19. It is interesting to note that Cyprian had earlier endorsed Cornelius as the bishop of Rome when there was a schism in Rome with two contending claimants to the throne of Peter: “Cyprian allowed himself the privilege of making quite sure that Cornelius had been properly elected before acknowledging him as legitimate bishop.” (Smith, From Christ to Constantine, 135). Regarding the schism, between Cornelius and a rival named Novatian, see Michael P. McHugh, “Cornelius,” in Ferguson, 294.
In the end, “Cyprian faced death with grave dignity. As a Roman citizen, he was beheaded.”

When the real end finally comes, for Cyprian, as well in his view as for all others, past, present, and future, nothing on this world would really matter. All earthly paradigms would be swept away. On that last day, to be brought upon either by the hand of God, or by cosmic forces when the sun, in its death throes, will expand and incinerate all living things on earth, everything on earth will be just as it is expressed in that mournful song for the dead: *Dies irae! Dies illa! Solvet saeclum in favilla!*

Until then, tales of the end will never die, nor will they fade away. But, in the meantime, no matter how the eschatological message is used or misused, whether it proclaims the end is nigh or not, whether it is analyzed in the sedate halls of academia, or preached by some wild-eyed prophet of doom, *plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose.*

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821 Smith, *From Christ to Constantine*, 140.
5. Bibliography

1. Books

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