CHAPTER ELEVEN

JESUS' NEAR EXPECTATION OF THE PAROUSIA

In this chapter we raise the fourth and final question proposed above, namely in what sense exactly (if undelimited) did Jesus think of the End as imminent?

The discussion in chapter 10 resulted in the negative conclusion that we have no evidence that Jesus definitely delimited his expectation. This conclusion is confirmed in a positive way by Mk. 13, 32 par. Mtt. 24, 36 where Jesus' knowledge concerning the End excludes knowledge of its date. Of course in order for this verse to be acceptable here as evidence, its authenticity must be upheld. Bultmann 1 regards it as a creation of the Jewish-Christian apocalypticist: others 2 suggest it is a community saying, prompted by the Parousia-delay 'crisis'. However, against all objections to authenticity, we must regard it as doubtful that a saying, so embarrassing from early days 3 would have been invented. 4 Schniewind 5 rightly notes that the present interim period could be given an interpretation in the entire salvation-history scheme in terms much less embarrassing (as, for instance, in II Peter 3) without recourse to such a 'solution' as this. Some 6 argue that the expression 'the Son

2 Cf. Grässer, Problem, p. 82; Conzelmann, Mitte, p. 179, n. 1.
3 The verse certainly occasioned early embarrassment to be sure; and this may well account for its omission by Luke and the modified form of the saying in Acts 1, 7. Yet—and this is particularly true in relation to the Arian controversy later—difficulty arose not so much through any 'non-fulfilment' as through the proposition itself that Jesus could admit to ignorance: it is certainly such an embarrassment which Acts 1, 7 avoids.
4 Cf. e.g. Schmiedel, in E.B. II, col. 1881; Lagrange, Marc, p. 350 Taylor, Mark, p. 522; Lohmeyer, Markus, p. 283; Glasson, Advent, p. 97; Cullmann, Christology, pp. 286f.; Duncan, Son of Man, p. 106; Beasley-Murray, Mark 13, p. 109; Branscomb, Mark, p. 239; Cranfield, Mark, pp. 41f.; Kümmel, Promise, p. 42; Robinson, Coming, p. 87; Michaelis, Verheissung, p. 46; Schniewind, Markus, ad loc.; Fison, Hope, p. 127; Bosch, Heidenmission, p. 146.
5 Markus, ad loc.
6 Cf. Bultmann, Geschichte, p. 130; Bousset, Kyrios Christos, p. 52; Dalman, Words, p. 194; Kümmel, Promise, p. 42; Grässer, Problem, pp. 77f.; Klostermann, Markus, p. 138.
... the Father' is characteristic of the early church's vocabulary, not of Jesus'. But in answer we make the following three points:

(a) the formulation of the saying could be attributed to the early church without the content of the verse being necessarily unauthentic; ¹ (b) though a disputed text can hardly be used to confirm the authenticity of another disputed saying, yet Matt. 11, 27 should not be altogether ruled out of court here. It is not impossible that Jesus spoke of 'the Son' and of 'the Father', however rarely or ambiguously; ² (c) Iersel ³ notes what is too often overlooked, that the formulation here in terms of 'Son... Father' actually exposes and heightens the embarrassing character of the saying, for it is precisely as Son (to whom the Father delivers up all things, Matt. 11, 27; Lk. 10, 22) that Jesus' ignorance is problematical. The gospels are not hesitant about Jesus' ignorance of certain things, ⁴ but the omission of this passage by Luke (with the significantly re-phrased expression in Acts 1, 7, whether a parallel version of the same saying, or an authentic second pronouncement) and the omission in some later manuscripts of Matthew ⁵ suggest that this particular expression of ignorance was an embarrassment. ⁶ It seems, therefore, quite probable that not only the concept but also the actual formulation of this saying is authentic.⁷

The verse should not be interpreted as meaning ignorance of the precise moment only (which interpretation has already been

¹ So cf. Kümmel, Promise, p. 42.
² Cf. Richardson, Theology, p. 151; Cranfield, Mark, p. 411; Schniewind Markus, ad loc.; Lohmeyer, Markus, ad loc.; Robinson, Problem, p. 81, n. 1; Beasley-Murray, Mark 13, pp. 105f.; Allen, in Oxford Studies, p. 312; Cullmann, Christology, pp. 286ff.
³ Der Sohn, pp. 117ff.
⁴ Cf. e.g. Mk. 5, 9: 5, 31-32; 6, 38; 8, 5: 8, 27f., 10, 37.
⁵ οὐδὲ δὲ υἱός omitted from Matt. 24, 36 by Ετx W. fl. 565. 700. Syx, pesh. etc. cf. also the omission in Mk. 13, 32 by Codex Montanensis and one Vulgate MS (cf. Taylor, Mark, ad loc.); cf. Gore, Dissertations, pp. 111f.
⁶ Thus Iersel, Der Sohn, pp. 117f.; cf. M’Neile, Matthew, p. 356. Even to-day, the expression in this explicit form causes difficulty: Dom Graham, for instance (in Christ of Catholicism, p. 195) writes, 'He could refrain from satisfying the undue curiosity of the disciples on a matter which they had no right to enquire (Acts 1, 7) ... As touching a point which the Father had not charged him to reveal, he could even profess his ignorance (Mk. 13, 32) ... But deep within his mind there was no absence of knowledge, whether of the past, present or future ...'
⁷ Iersel, Der Sohn, p. 119 (following Taylor, Schniewind, etc.) is surely right, 'Die Annahme der Authentizität dieses Logions stellt den Exegeten und Historiker eigentlich vor geringere Probleme als die Leugnen derselben.'