VII. THE ORIGIN OF THE IDEA OF THE ESCHATOLOGICAL RESURRECTION COINCIDING WITH JESUS' COMING

On the basis of the results reached in the two previous chapters, an attempt will now be made to explain how the idea originated that the eschatological resurrection will take place at the time of Jesus' parousia (1 Cor. 15:23). Not only will an explanation be advanced as to how this idea arose (section a), but the rise of this idea will also be placed in the context of the development of analogous ideas in first century C.E. Judaism (section b).

a. The rise of the idea that the eschatological resurrection will take place at the time of Jesus' parousia

(1) In chapter VI the view was defended that the expectation of Jesus' coming at the end of time originated soon after Jesus' death. Previously, in chapter V, it had been argued that the Christian expectation of the eschatological resurrection was part of the Christians' belief from the outset since it was already the expectation of Jesus' followers during his lifetime. Consequently, it is reasonable to infer that the younger expectation—that Jesus will come at the end of time—was added and linked to the older one, the expectation of the eschatological resurrection. Both expectations have to do with the events of the last day. It does not come as a great surprise, therefore, that at one stage the two ideas came to be connected. As soon as the expectation of Jesus' coming at the end of time arose, it could be and perhaps was linked to the already existing expectation of the eschatological resurrection.¹

However, the evidence seems to suggest that this connection was not advocated until Paul wrote his letters to the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 4:16-17) and the Corinthians (1 Cor. 15:23). Apparently, as is clear from Paul's letters, the connection of the two expectations was not a necessary, unavoidable one. Christians could speak about the one without referring to the other. Paul himself did this repeatedly. Thus, al-

¹ Cf. W. Marxsen, 'Auslegung', pp. 27-29. This view is supported by several passages in Paul in which he presupposes a link between the eschatological resurrection and Christ's second coming without mentioning this link explicitly. See, e.g., 2 Cor. 5:10, Phil. 3:20-21, and Rom. 14:10; cf. chapter IV, pp. 71-75.
though theoretically speaking the two expectations may have been associated with each other as soon as the younger one (that of Jesus’ parousia) arose, the relationship between the two was not put into words until Paul did so in 1 Thess. 4:14-16 and 1 Cor. 15:23.

The examination of Paul’s ideas in 1 Thess. 4:14-16 and 1 Cor. 15:23 earlier in this study brought to light that Paul had very specific reasons there to write what he wrote: he wanted to comfort the grieving Thessalonians and to remedy the Corinthians’ misconception about the future resurrection.1 Apparently, these two passages are the only ones in which Paul had reason to make explicit what people may have assumed long before; namely, that the eschatological resurrection would take place at the time of Jesus’ second coming.

In both 1 Thess. 4:13-18 and 1 Corinthians 15 Paul uses the theme of Jesus’ coming in the future to recommend the belief in the eschatological resurrection. It is clear why Paul proceeds in this way. The Thessalonians were not adequately informed about the coming resurrection, but they were familiar with the idea of the second coming of Jesus. Therefore, Paul starts from the idea of Jesus’ coming, which had already been accepted by his addressees, and attaches to it the idea of the eschatological resurrection, which had not yet been accepted by them. In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul’s procedure is the same. His point of departure is the expectation of Jesus’ coming, an idea shared by the Corinthian addressees. To this concept he attaches the idea of the eschatological resurrection, an idea disputed by them. In Paul’s argumentation the eschatological resurrection is thus appended to the future coming of Jesus. Traditio-historically, however, the eschatological resurrection is an older idea than that of the future coming of Jesus. Whenever the two ideas appear in combination, the idea of Jesus’ coming must therefore be regarded as added, and attached to the resurrection on the last day. In Paul’s rhetorical presentation of these ideas they are arranged in an order (second coming + eschatological resurrection) opposite to the way they came to be connected in the history of tradition (eschatological resurrection + second coming).

(2) Paul makes the eschatological resurrection and the coming of Jesus coincide. In doing so he systematizes Christian expectations concerning the end of time that were originally unconnected and uncoordinated. By connecting the moment of the eschatological resurrection to that of

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1 See chapter IV, pp. 69-71.