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A review of the course of eschatological discourses during the past century

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B O S T O N U N I V E R S I T Y
G R A D U A T E S C H O O L

Thesis

A R E V I E W O F T H E C O U R S E O F E S C H A T O L O G I C A L
D I S C U S S I O N D U R I N G T H E P A S T C E N T U R Y

Submitted by

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A REVIEW OF THE COURSE OF ESCHATOLOGICAL DISCUSSION
DURING THE PAST CENTURY

A N A L Y S I S

I Introduction.

1. Each successive age has attempted to establish for itself an intellectual justification of Scripture.
2. The rise of the historical method of criticism brought the question, "What place had eschatology in the mind of Jesus?" into prominence.
3. How are we to reconcile the statements of Jesus that the Kingdom of God was already present, on the one hand, and that it was to be introduced by His Messianic return, on the other? In other words there is an apparent contradiction between the Messianic consciousness of Jesus and His non-Messianic discourses.
4. This paper will be confined largely to the historical aspect of the problem, rather than the literary.

II Review of eschatological discussion.

1. Reimarus was the first to recognize the eschatological presuppositions back of the Gospels.
2. Strauss "deliberately transforms eschatology, endeavoring to substitute for the outward expectation of Christ, the thought of His inward presence." He accepts, however, the Messianic consciousness of Jesus as an historical fact.
3. Christian Hermann Weisse emphatically rejects the eschatological point of view in favor of a "spiritual interpretation." "The real duty of criticism" he says, "is to show that Jesus had no part in those fantastic errors which are falsely attributed to Him."

The whole struggle over eschatology was a gradual elimination of Weisse's ideas.

4. The "Liberal Lives of Jesus", according to Schweitzer's grouping, prepared the way for a recognition of eschatology.
5. Johannes Weiss accepts the thorough-going eschatological view.
6. Wrede and Schweitzer publish, in 1901, two books in which they assert that modern theology has "read into Mark" its most important matter, and that there was a distinctly dogmatic element in Jesus' teaching. But agreement ceases here, Wrede taking the skeptical view that the later accretions have made it impossible for us to get at the real facts.
7. Schweitzer, however, accepts eschatology in a thorough-going fashion and explains all Jesus' teaching upon the assumption that He was possessed by "dogmatic ideas", dogmatic and therefore historical.

Schweitzer's work important. It has created much discussion and many refutations.

8. von Dobschutz places the sayings of Jesus into three groups:

(a) Non-eschatological group. Jesus teaches emphatically that there must be some real intercourse between man and God.

(b) Transmuted group. Jesus deliberately transmuted many current ideas so that they had a meaning entirely different from their original one. We see Jesus bringing actual and present salvation to the world.

(c) Purely eschatological group. Jesus, seeing men's sin and hatred, their obdurateness, looked forward to a final decision in favor of righteousness. He was not wrong in such an expectation, although the realisation, in fact, took another form.

The abiding truth in eschatology is that we have to expect and pray for a state of things in which God's dominion will be fully established.

9. Moffatt sees in Jesus' conception of God the secret of the faith for which Jesus lived and died. We find in the psychology of Paul a

sufficient explanation of Jesus' psychology. We must admit both the eschatological and the ethical in Jesus' teaching.

10. Muirhead blames the Evangelists for any inconsistency which may appear in Jesus' teaching. Jesus felt that a day of final judgment was impending for Israel. His sayings depict a collapse of the world which will result in a new and glorious career for humanity.
11. Shailer Mathews' contribution summarized. While the coming of the eschatological Kingdom was delayed, yet the struggle against Satan had begun. The future members of the Kingdom were, in a prophetic sense, the Kingdom itself. Jesus saw Himself so supreme that He was forced to use the extremist valuations of His day to express His own self-consciousness.
12. Sanday and Scott are in essential accord with von Dobschutz, Moffatt, and Mathews.

III Where are we today? Can we determine upon a "common view"?

Much of the difficulty in the past has been occasioned by the fact that men have tried too often to base their interpretation of the Scripture exclusively upon reason. But faith is complementary to reason, and life justifies the exercise of both. Upon such a basis alone, i.e. of reason and faith combined, can we attain to a satisfactory view of eschatology. Upon such a basis the following view seems acceptable:

Jesus, convinced of His Messiahship, looked forward to a final issue, brought about by God, whereby a new order of things was to be established upon the earth. At the same time He was conscious that He was bringing new life to men, and in this sense, was already ushering in the Kingdom. He made no explanations of Who or What He was. He wished men to find that out for themselves. The outstanding fact in regard to Jesus is that He is redeeming the world. How He began His task and how He is accomplishing it is of secondary importance.

This may reasonably be said to be the "common view" of modern criticism.

A REVIEW OF THE COURSE OF ESCHATOLOGICAL
DISCUSSION DURING THE PAST CENTURY

I.1 Each successive age of the Christian era has been obliged to grapple with problems peculiar to itself. Each age has attempted to establish to its own satisfaction an intellectual justification of the Scriptures. During the first few centuries thinkers and theologians concerned themselves with questions relating to the intrinsic reasonableness of the Christian religion. Gnosticism and Arianism and a host of other isms bear witness to the intellectual ferment which the leaven of Christ's teaching introduced. One intellectual difficulty was no sooner brought to a satisfactory explanation or outgrown than another, or many another, arose to take its place. And so man's progress has always been marked by intellectual struggle. Today we have problems, many of them, which demand the finest scholarship and the most earnest effort, just as our fathers had them. It is with one of these problems that I shall deal in this paper - that of eschatology. For the past two or three decades eschatological discussion has been particularly prominent and some of the best efforts of Biblical criticism have been contributed to it.

I.2 Down to the 18th century criticism of the Scriptures had been dominated by dogmatic and practical considerations. The Church, feeling that it had already completely appropriated and developed the truth, arrogated to itself a great body of dogma. It asked its prelates that they should give only such representations of its faith as could best serve for the further proclamation of Christian truth. But the 18th century witnessed a reaction. Men began to turn back to the Jesus of history in search of an ally in the struggle against the tyranny of dogma. During the last two centuries men have come to ask, "Was there a Jesus of Nazareth?" and "If there was such a Jesus, have the records of His life and teaching been satisfactorily preserved?" And so historical criticism arose.

And with the historical method the question naturally arose, "What was the meaning of the men who uttered the eschatological predictions found in the Gospels?" "What place had eschatology in the mind of Jesus?" At first there were only a very few who supported the view that the eschatological passages were to be taken literally. A majority tried to return to the allegorizing tendency of Origen.

I.3 In brief, this is the problem. The synoptics contain many passages which assert that Jesus is to inherit the Kingdom of God and that He will return, in a more or less spectacular way "upon the clouds of Heaven", and in His own generation, to establish His reign. On the other hand there is a whole series of passages which attest that the Kingdom has already begun, and God's reign upon earth actually inaugurated. In other words there is an apparent contradiction between the Messianic consciousness of Jesus and His non-Messianic discourses. Or, if we see in the records no evidence of a Messianic consciousness how are we to explain the distinctly eschatological passages? The problem resolves itself into two phases, the literary and the historical. For we are bound to ask, "Are the records which we possess authentic?" And if investigation and experience lead us to the conviction that they are, we then must ask, "What was the mind of Jesus that it could have contained this apparent contradiction?"

I.4 In the present paper I shall touch upon both phases of the problem to be sure, for they are in many respects intimately related, but shall confine myself as much as possible to the latter, i.e. the historical, since I have neither the equipment nor the time to adequately treat the literary side. The present discussion, then, will fall largely in the realm of the self-consciousness of Jesus.

Before entering upon a discussion of the problem itself I shall present, in a very brief compass, something of its historical background from the time of Reimarus - one of the first to give eschatology a place and recognition - down to the present day. For the material covering this historical section I am indebted, for the most part, to Albert Schweitzer's excellent

book, "The Quest of the Historical Jesus", in which the author traces the efforts of criticism to arrive at a clear conception of the historical Jesus.

II.1 To begin with Reimarus,¹ Schweitzer remarks that he "was the first, after eighteen centuries of misconception, to have an inkling of what eschatology really was". His was the first comprehensive life of Christ. In it he recognizes the eschatological presuppositions back of the Gospels. Under the leadership of Jesus the Kingdom of the Messiah was about to be brought in. There was no difficulty in the Jews accepting Jesus as the Son of God, for were not all sons of God? The nation was the Son of God. The Messiahship was political and upon two occasions Jesus rather expected a popular uprising. One of these occasions is marked by His sending out the disciples - "Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes". The other when He makes His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. "Truly I say unto you there are some standing here who shall in no wise taste of death till they see the Kingdom of God come with power," is to be taken literally.

"His work", says Schweitzer, "is perhaps the most splendid achievement in the whole course of the historical investigation of the life of Jesus, for he was the first to grasp the fact that the world of thought in which Jesus moved was essentially eschatological." This statement reflects, of course, Schweitzer's fundamental position that everything in Jesus' teaching is to be interpreted in the light of eschatology, but at the same time is valuable in that it gives Reimarus his rightful historical place as regards eschatological discussion.

II.2 We next come, in the historical line, to Strauss², whose "Life of Jesus" marked an epoch in Biblical research. He was not unacquainted with eschatology although he "deliberately transforms it, endeavoring to substitute for the expectation of the second coming of Christ, as an external event of the future, the thought of His inward presence." For Strauss the Messianic

1. Hermann Samuel Reimarus: The Aims of Jesus and His Disciples. 1778.

2. David Friedrich Strauss: The Life of Jesus. 1835.

consciousness of Jesus was an historical fact. "According to his view Jesus thought of His Messiahship in the form that He, although of human parentage, should after His earthly life be taken up into Heaven, and thence should come again to bring in His Kingdom." Strauss tries to escape the dilemma "either spiritual or political" by making the eschatological expectation intelligible as one which did not set its hopes upon human aid but on Divine intervention. One of the principal proofs that the preaching of Jesus was eschatologically conditioned is His statement at the Last Supper, "I will not drink henceforth of the fruit of the vine until I drink it new with you in my Father's Kingdom," in which Jesus evidently expects that within a year's time the pre-Messianic dispensation will have come to an end and the Messianic age begun. But Strauss qualifies all his statements regarding the eschatological ideas of Jesus by recalling that we cannot determine the part which the expectations of primitive Christianity may have had in molding these sayings. The problem of the Son of Man, i.e. whether the expression simply denoted "man" or whether Jesus meant a supernatural person quite distinct from Himself but identified with the Messiah, appears in Strauss. But the latter does not suspect the significance of his incidental remark that "these sayings fall in the first period before He knew Himself to be the Messiah" for herein lies the germ of the solution of the problem of the Son of Man on the lines of Johannes Weiss. "This", says Schweitzer, "is already the central problem in which are focused all the questions regarding the Messiahship and eschatology."

It is worth noting, however that Strauss, in his "Life of Jesus for the German People" published in 1864, "renounced his better opinions of 1835, eliminated eschatology, and instead of the historic Jesus, portrayed the Jesus of liberal theology."

II.3 The next figure of importance so far as eschatological discussion is concerned is that of Christian Hermann Weisse. In his "Problems of the Gospels" published in 1856 he emphatically rejects the eschatological

point of view in favor of a "spiritual" interpretation. Jesus' conception of the Messiahship was fully formed when He began to teach in Capernaum but He avoided any declaration of it and did not allow the people to see that He held Himself to be the Messiah until His triumphal entry. Weisse makes the significant statement, "We are almost certainly justified in regarding the question; What sense the Divine Saviour desired to attach to this predicate? What, in fact, He intended to make known about Himself by using the title Son of Man? - as an essential question for the right understanding of His teaching, and not of His teaching only, but also of the very heart and inmost essence of His personality."

In answer to the question, "Did Jesus use the title Son of Man as an equivalent for "man" or did He employ a Messianic title understood by and current among the Jews?" Weisse answers that Jesus did not assume an acquaintance on the part of His hearers with the Old Testament Messianic significance of the expression. It was therefore ^Sincontestably the intention of Jesus that the designation should have something mysterious about it. The expression Son of Man was calculated to lead them on to higher conceptions of His nature and origin, and therefore sums up in itself the whole spiritualization of the Messiahship. And so Weisse rejects any suggestion that Jesus' self-designation, Son of Man, implies any measure of acceptance of the Jewish apocalyptic system of ideas. According to Weisse the real duty of criticism is to show that Jesus had no part in those fantastic errors which are falsely attributed to Him when a literal Jewish interpretation is given His great sayings about the future of the Son of Man, and to remove all obstacles which seem to have prevented hitherto the recognition of the novel character and special significance of the expression Son of Man in the mouth of Him who, of His own free choice, applied this name to Himself. Historical criticism must free the Master's own teaching from the imputation which lies upon it, i.e. of sharing the errors and false expectations in which, as we cannot deny, owing to the imperfect or mistaken understanding of the suggestions of the Master, the Apostles, and with them, the whole of the early Christian Church, became involved. This is Weisse's fundamental position

and it determines the rest of his views. In speaking of the Parousia of the Son of Man Jesus was using a figure. Jesus spoke of the future of His work and His teaching in a way that implied the consciousness of an influence to be continued after His death, an influence by which His work and teaching would be preserved from destruction and the final victory assured to it. After Jesus' death the Parousia appeared to the disciples as still awaiting fulfilment. Thought of thus as an isolated event they could only conceive it from the Jewish apocalyptic standpoint and they finally came to suppose that they had derived these fantastic ideas from the Master Himself.

"The whole struggle over eschatology" says Schweitzer, "is nothing else than a gradual elimination of Weisse's ideas. It was only with Johannes Weiss that theology escaped from the influence of Christian Hermann Weiss^e. For Weisse laid down the lines which were to be followed by the "Liberal Lives" of Jesus of the sixties and following years."

II.4 Under the title "The Liberal Lives of Jesus" Schweitzer groups four of the later books of Strauss and the following:

Daniel Schenkel: The Portrait of Jesus. 1873.

Karl Heinrich Weizacker : Studies in the Gospel History, its Sources and the Progress of its Development. 1864.

Heinrich Julius Holtzmann : The Synoptic Gospels. Their Origin and Historic Character. 1863.

Theodor Keim : The History of Jesus of Nazara. 1867 - 1872.
The History of Jesus. 1872.

Karl Hase : The History of Jesus. 1876.

Willibald Beyschlag : The Life of Jesus. 1886 - 1888.

Bernhard Weiss : The Life of Jesus. 1882. 2nd edition 1884.

Schweitzer summarizes the contribution of these "Liberal Lives" as follows:

1. They cleared up the synoptic problem, bringing about a separation between the Synoptics and the Fourth Gospel.

2. This separation prepared the way for the complete recognition

of the fundamentally eschatological character of Mark and Matthew.

3. They brought into proper prominence the fact that Jesus had never, previous to Caesarea Philippi openly declared His Messiahship.

4. The inadequacy of the "natural" psychology followed by this liberal critical school prepared the way for the eschatological and historical views.

II.5 And now we come to one of the more prominent figures in eschatological discussion, Johannes Weiss ¹. Schweitzer says of him, and we must bear in mind of course Schweitzer's fundamental position as a thorough-going eschatologist, "In the light of the clear perception of the elements of the problem which Reimarus had attained, the whole movement of theology down to Johannes Weiss appears retrograde."

Weiss lays down the important alternative: either eschatological or non-eschatological. All modern ideas concerning the general conception of the Kingdom must be eliminated from it. In this way we arrive at a Kingdom of God which is wholly future. It is present only as a cloud may be said to be present which throws its shadow upon the earth. He does not establish it. He only proclaims its coming. God is to bring this about by supernatural means. Jesus does not even know the day or the hour when this shall come to pass. Jesus sent the disciples out upon their missionary journey as a means of rapidly and widely making known its nearness. But it was not so near as Jesus thought. There was too much hardness of heart and too much enmity to permit of this and Jesus realized that His own death must be the ransom price. After His death He would come again in all the splendour of Messianic glory, and this within the lifetime of the present generation. In describing the Messianic glory Jesus makes use of the traditional picture, but He does so with modesty, restraint and sobriety. The Messianic self-consciousness of Jesus as expressed in the title, "Son of Man", shares in the transcendental apocalyptic character of Jesus' idea of the Kingdom of God.

1. Johannes Weiss : The Preaching of Jesus Concerning the Kingdom of God. 1892.

II.6 The next step brings us over the threshold of the twentieth century for we find the year 1901 giving us two books of major importance. It is interesting to note that Wrede's "The Messianic Secret of the Gospels" and Schweitzer's "The Secret of the Messiahship and the Passion" appeared not only in this same year but upon the same day. The one is written from the standpoint of literary criticism, the other from that of the historical recognition of eschatology.

Wrede and Schweitzer agree in bringing some critical objections against the modern treatment of the subject. They agree that modern theology has read its most important matter into Mark and has based its most important assertions upon the "argument from silence". Schweitzer puts the matter into one of his inimitable figures, "The material with which it has hitherto been usual to solder the sections (of Mark) together into a life of Jesus will not stand the temperature test. Exposed to the cold air of critical scepticism it cracks; when the furnace of eschatology is heated to a certain point the solderings melt." The sceptical and eschatological interpretations agree further that a dogmatic element has intruded itself into the description of the Life, i.e. the Messianic secret of Jesus and all the secrets and concealments which go along with it.

At this point, however, the two diverge. Wrede finds in the Gospel (of Mark) only the Christian conception of the Messiah. "If Jesus" he thinks, "really knew Himself to be the Messiah, the genuine tradition is so closely interwoven with later accretions that it is not easy to recognize it." The Messiahship of Jesus, as we find it in the Gospels, is a product of the early Christian theology correcting history according to its own conceptions. The consequence is that the general picture offered by Mark belongs to the history of dogma. The idea of intentional secrecy could have arisen only at a time when nothing was known of a Messianic claim on the part of Jesus. And this is a piece of indirect evidence that Jesus did not really profess to be the Messiah

at all. The positive fact to be inferred from this is that the appearance of the risen Jesus produced a sudden revolution in His disciples conception of Him. The Resurrection is, for Wrede, the real Messianic event in the life of Jesus. And the Marcan narrative arose from the impulse to give a Messianic form to the earthly life of Jesus. It was not wholly able to recast the material. In the Gospel literature which arose on the basis of Mark the Messianic secret becomes less important and the life of Jesus more Messianic in character until, in the Fourth Gospel, He openly comes before the people with Messianic claims.

II.7 Schweitzer, on the other hand, attempts to reconstruct the Jewish apocalyptic of the time independently out of Mark, Matthew and Paul, and tries to bring the details of the discourses of Jesus into an eschatological system and thus endeavors to explain the apparently disconnected events in the history of His public life.

In contradistinction to Wrede he makes a critical examination of the dogmatic element in the life of Jesus. Everything must be explained by eschatology. Eschatology is simply "dogmatic history", history as molded by theological beliefs. Is it not conceivable that the conduct of one who looked forward to His Messianic "Parousia" in the near future should be determined, not by the natural course of events, but by that expectation? The decision of Jesus for instance to make a journey to Tyre rested not upon any of the recorded facts, but was due rather to a "dogmatic idea" and led Jesus to give up His work as a teacher at the moment when it promised the greatest success. Again, in Jesus' recognition of John the Baptist as Elias we find Him abolishing the historic aspect of events. For the Baptist had not held himself to be Elias, he had done none of the things which Elias was to do, yet Jesus makes him Elias simply because He expected His own manifestation as the Son of Man, and before that it was necessary that Elias must first have come. And so, what before seemed natural, becomes, on close examination, doctrinal.

And again the eschatological interpretation says that Jesus'

resolve to suffer and to die are dogmatic and therefore historical, because they find their explanation in eschatological conceptions.

Predestinarianism, too, is wrapped up with eschatology. Only those who are predestined to understand Jesus' parables do so. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear", signifies that in this utterance there lies concealed a supernatural knowledge concerning the plans of God, which only those who have ears to hear - that is, the fore-ordained - can detect.

The key to Schweitzer's interpretation is found in his theory about the mystery of the Kingdom of God. By His parables Jesus intends to reveal the fact that the coming of the Kingdom will be coincident with the reaping of the harvests which were then ripening upon the earth. One thing cannot be gotten away from viz., that the initial fact to which Jesus points, under the figure of the sowing, is somehow or other connected with the preaching of repentance. And that the latter is drawing after it the coming of the Kingdom in a manner which was miraculous, unintelligible, but unfailingly certain, since the sufficient cause for it lay in the power and purpose of God.

With the prediction of the Parousia Jesus connects the prediction of the sufferings, strife, confusion and turmoil. Before prophesying the Parousia He prophesied the pre-eschatological events which must first occur. The foretelling of the sufferings that belong to the eschatological distress is part and parcel of the preaching of the approach of the Kingdom of God. It embodies the secret of the Kingdom. And likewise is historical because it reveals the fundamental dogmatic ideas of Jesus.

It is because Jesus does expect the coming of the Kingdom at harvest time that He sends out His disciples to make known in Israel as speedily as may be what is about to happen. That Jesus was actuated by a dogmatic idea is clear from the fact that He sent the disciples out immediately after the rejection at Nazareth, an event which would otherwise have discouraged and deterred Him from any such move. And herein we see that the apparent

disconnection of events in Mark is really historical, and is the result of the dogmatic, eschatological ideas of Jesus.

That Jesus fully expected the consummation of the Kingdom at this time is shown by the fact that He told the disciples explicitly that the dawn of the Kingdom would take place before they had completed a hasty journey through Israel. But neither the prediction of the Parousia nor that of the sufferings was fulfilled. This constituted the first "historic fact" for Jesus and it, in some way, determined the alteration of His plans and His attitude toward the multitude. Jesus' one thought now is to get away from the people who dog His footsteps in order to await in His company the appearance of the Kingdom of God.

Jesus' Messianic secret was wrung from Him by the pressure of events. He did not voluntarily give it up. After Caesarea Philippi it was made known to the other disciples against the wishes of Jesus by Peter. What Jesus Himself revealed to them was the secret of His sufferings.

And in this we find that Jesus' attitude has changed. In the first period Jesus' thoughts concerning His own sufferings were included in the more general thought of the sufferings which formed part of the mystery of the Kingdom of God. But in the secret of His passion which Jesus reveals to the disciples at Caesarea Philippi the pre-Messianic tribulation which was for others is set aside, abolished, concentrated upon Himself alone. That was the new conviction that had dawned upon Him. He must suffer for others.

This change was due to the non-fulfillment of the promises made in the discourse at the sending forth of the Twelve. The cataclysm He predicted had not taken place. He had expected it also after the return of the disciples. Something apparently remained to be done. The movement of repentance had not been sufficient. He had not succeeded in sending the sword on earth. And until the time of trial had come the coming of the Kingdom and the manifestation of the Son of Man were impossible.

That meant - not that the Kingdom was not near at hand - but

that God had appointed otherwise in regard to the time of trial. God in His mercy had relieved the world of suffering the eschatological tribulation and had appointed to Jesus instead to accomplish it in His own person. And so His own blood was to be the atonement which they would have had to render in the tribulation. From the revelation at Caesarea Philippi onward all that belongs to the history of Jesus in the strict sense, are the events which lead up to His death.

The betrayal of Judas was not as to the whereabouts of Jesus but as to what Jesus was - the Messiah. It was the betrayal of the Messianic secret.

And so there is an historical Jesus. The solid foundation of Christianity is the mighty spiritual force which streams forth from Him and flows through our own time also. The true historical Jesus has overthrown the modern Jesus.

Schweitzer gets Jesus successfully to the grave along the path of logical consistency - a success which is presupposed by the assumption of a "dogmatic" attitude on the part of Jesus. "If we can only get Him to the grave," we might imagine Schweitzer as saying, "and explain all that He did and said according to our dogmatic theory, the inconsistencies of the Gospel record will have vanished." What may be the result of such a process makes no difference, nor does the history of man's thought and belief and achievements. We must have Jesus' mind satisfactorily explained. Satisfactorily because we must thrust everything, however sacred, or mysterious, or spiritual, into the mold of reason, and after having removed the mold, cool our product in the tank of logic.

There can be no question, however, as to the importance of Schweitzer's work. His literary style is distinguished; his scholarship of the highest order; his sincerity unquestioned. His work might almost be said to be epoch-making, for scarcely any work on eschatology, great or small, written since the appearance of his book, has failed to give him large consideration. And not a few books have been called forth in refutation of his

position. In fact, throughout the mass of eschatological literature, one finds this refutory mood creeping in, it would seem, almost unconsciously.

We have been transported into the arena of present day discussion by means of the vehicle of Schweitzer. Let us now look about and endeavor to form some intelligent judgment as to the present status of the problem.

II.8 Among the most prominent contributions to the eschatological problem in the last decade is that of Professor von Dobschutz. His book, "The Eschatology of the Gospels" is made up of five lectures delivered in England in the summer of 1909. His position is, on the whole, perhaps the most acceptable of any who have written upon the subject. He divides the sayings of Jesus which relate to the Kingdom into three groups, (a) the non-eschatological group, (b) the transmuted group, (c) the purely eschatological group.

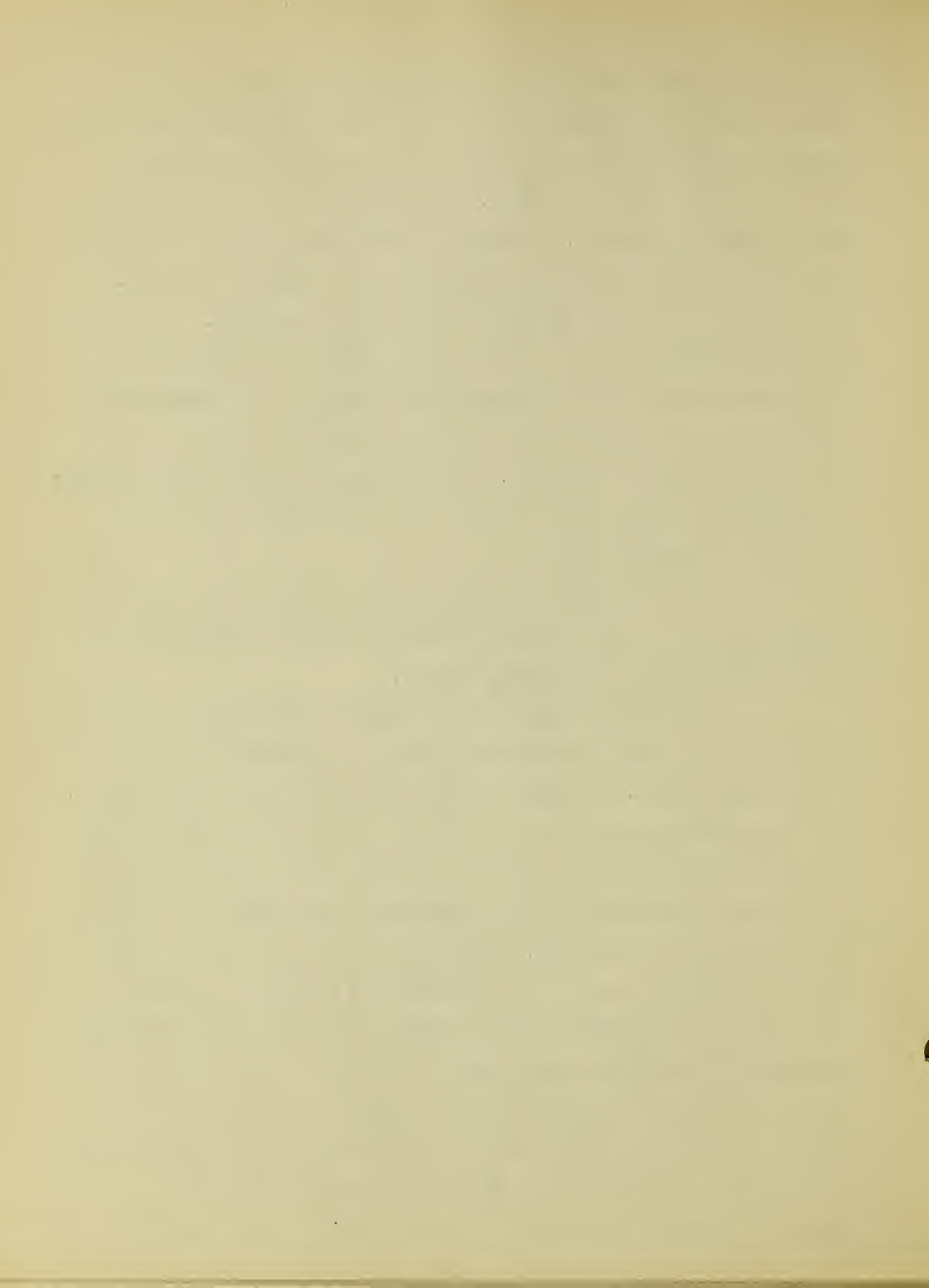
(a) In the first group of sayings Jesus talks of the relationship existing between man and God. Beyond all that is moral, intellectual, aesthetic, there must be some real intercourse with God. The centre of religion is a real experience of God's presence and helpfulness, of His grace and mercy. And this is what we find in complete fulness in Jesus. It is just this which constitutes His distinction from and His superiority to all prophets.

(b) von Dobschutz finds, in the passages which he assigns to this group, evidence that Jesus deliberately transformed or transmuted many of the current ideas into entirely new ones. It is to be taken for granted that Jesus had a peculiar estimation of His own importance, of His own office. But He had no means of speaking of His unique relation to God other than by calling God His Father and Himself God's Son. And He had no other notion in the language of His people to describe His peculiar office than that of Messiah. And to express His task there was no other way than to preach the Kingdom of God, because the Messiah was to bring salvation, and the Kingdom of God was the most comprehensive term for final salvation. Jesus adopted these terms in a sense different from the current one, and thus we get a "transmuted" eschat-

ology. Why did Jesus not explain His changed meaning? Because He liked to make men find out by themselves what He was. He liked to put forth His teaching in such a way that it was clear for those who were willing to understand, whereas others may guess as they like. This method was truly educatory. Life must be unfolded from within, it cannot be shaped from without. And it is from this point of view that we can best understand Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. It was a declaration of Messiahship to those who could understand. A man of note, upon being introduced to a stranger, does not immediately proclaim himself and his achievements, but allows the stranger either to guess or to learn, through indirect channels, his identity. So Jesus does His work and leaves it to His Father to reveal His Son to mankind. However slow may have been the understanding of His claim on the part of His disciples, He is the Messiah from the very beginning of His public career.

All this belongs to transmuted eschatology and represents Jesus bringing actual and present salvation to those who follow Him, salvation in a very different sense from what people expected.

(c) We get to the heart of the matter however, when we come to a discussion of the "purely eschatological" group. Von Dobschutz tries what has so often been tried, i.e. to come to a satisfactory estimate of Jesus' own mind. It is a perilous undertaking to say the least. That Jesus should have thought of a cataclysmic coming of the new era is, in view of His positive, reasonable and satisfying teaching regarding the inwardness of the Kingdom, surprising. But Jesus, seeing the actual sin, misunderstanding, and even hatred, which abounded everywhere in spite of His teaching, could not think of His work as being the final establishment of God's Kingdom. He could not help feeling that the prophecies of Scripture wanted some other and completer fulfillment. Firmly believing that He was the Messiah, bringing salvation to the world, He looked forward, naturally, to a final success. But what was to be the nature of this final success? It was only in the forms given by the prophets of old and by the apocalyptic tradition that He could imagine it. Convinced of His



unique position - His Messiahship - He felt that He represented, in Himself, the culmination of the religious history of His people. And so He could only think of Himself as standing at the end of history, at the end of the old order and the beginning of the new. In such case His coming back with the clouds of Heaven, in the glory of the Father, must needs occur in a very short time. Thus He did but add eschatological expectation to His conviction of being already in an eschatological relationship (in the transmuted sense) to the world. God could not leave His work undone or only half done. He would certainly bring it to a plain issue. Salvation, as brought by Jesus, was only an individual and inward experience; it ought to have some outward expression, some collective recognition. This because the salvation which He preached was universal, not individual or casual. We notice further that Jesus makes no effort to get a more detailed view of eschatology; He confines Himself to repeating the outlines of what was given by prophetic and apocalyptic tradition, emphasising only two points, viz, the responsibility of men regarding the coming judgment and that He Himself is the Son of Man who will pronounce judgment. Jesus does not know the day or the hour of the consummation, so also He leaves to the Father the form in which the new order will be shaped.

Then was Jesus wrong in His expectation? If we keep to the letter of His words we cannot help agreeing that He was wrong regarding the outward form of His prediction, especially as to the time of God's fulfilment.. But this does not involve any imperfection on His part, any more than His opinions regarding the authorship of the Pentateuch or His ideas concerning the planets would involve imperfection. The form of His expectation was unimportant, even for Himself. Any such considerations were overshadowed by His firm belief that His work and His own person could not be overthrown, but that it should gain universal importance and undisputed success and that He Himself should be acknowledged by every man as "King of the Kingdom of God".

Now in this latter expectation He was not wrong. He is today

acknowledged and adored by millions. We may truly say that it has pleased God to fulfill Jesus' words, but we should be guilty of false witness if we dared to maintain that Jesus Himself looked forward to any such fulfilment.

In his concluding chapter von Dobschutz deals with the somewhat different interpretation of eschatology to be found in the Gospel of John. For illustration he selects two passages; John xiv: 15-29 and v: 19-29. In the former, which deals with Jesus' coming, the "coming" means rather an abiding communion of the Lord with His disciples, unbroken even by death; an inward dwelling of the Lord in the hearts of Christians, a sort of mystical union. Note that it is not the Kingdom of God which is within you but rather the Divine person. This, however, is not an original view of Jesus. The coming of the Lord, promised by Himself as an outward eschatological act is changed into an inward mystical experience by Johannine colouring of His words. In explanation of this fact we must remember that St. John - whoever he was - lived in Asia Minor, surrounded by an atmosphere of Hellenism and mysticism and that this helped to transform his Jewish conceptions. And so it happened that the idea of the Parousia was turned into the idea of Jesus coming into the hearts of His believers. In the same passage we may find what we may call historical adaptation: the coming of Jesus is understood as meaning the appearances of the risen Lord, or again in His sending of the Comforter.

The second Johannine passage referred to (v:19-29) deals with the resurrection and judgment, two notions which undoubtedly belong to the eschatological stock of late Jewish doctrines, but which, in the Fourth Gospel, are colored to an almost opposite meaning.

And this is the abiding truth in eschatology: it is to be sought not in the particulars of Jesus' coming and similar details, but in the fact that we have to expect and to pray for a state of things in which God's dominion will be fully established, and all obstacles, all evil energies finally destroyed. We have seen in St. John's Gospel - and the later history of Christianity affords plenty of similar examples - that this looking out for some external real change

is well combined with the finest and best inwardness. The Christian is a new creature, but he looks for a new Heaven and a new earth, and his prayer will be for ever, as his Lord taught him, "Thy Kingdom come".

II.9 Among those who, in recent years, have treated eschatology, is Dr. Moffatt of Oxford. In his "Theology of the Gospels" (1912), without attempting a close analysis of Jesus' self-consciousness, he says that it is in His conception of God more than in His derivative conception of the Kingdom that we can discover the faith for which Jesus lived and died. As God the Father was not merely or even mainly an object of hope for Himself or for men, it followed that the Realm or Reign could not be relegated exclusively to the age to come. The Kingdom of Jesus was not an abstract, vague condition of humanity, but neither was it defined in terms of an antithesis to the pagan powers of the world.

We cannot do away with the antinomies by attributing them to an interaction between a primitive tradition and a later consciousness of the Apostolic Church; some of them go back to the very consciousness of Jesus Himself. The vital point to be grasped is that neither the apocalyptic nor the present emphasis can be ruled out of the teaching of Jesus on the Kingdom. And if any psychological aid is sought the theology of Paul supplies what we want. The religious mind of Paul synthesises the present and the future. The apocalyptic form of eschatology remains in the background of his doctrine yet did not prevent him from recognising that the Kingdom was already a present experience. The Christian hope looks forward to the appearance of Christ; the period of the Divine Reign has begun. What was possible to Paul was not beyond the reach of Jesus. If the primitive theology of the Church succeeded in penetrating to some consciousness of the present Kingdom, it is an inversion of probabilities to deny that the mind of Jesus was unequal to such a depth and range of insight.

And so we must admit both the eschatological and the etnical or "present" elements in Jesus' teaching. At the beginning as at the end He was sustained by the belief that the Kingdom was close at hand. This was the

form taken by His faith in God's purpose of goodwill. But the essential significance of the Kingdom for Jesus - having taken over and modified the ancestral hope of Judaism - is to be found in His profound conceptions of God's nature and of His own destiny. This transmutation gives the starting point for the development which culminated in the Fourth Gospel by showing that the stress upon the inward and present aspect began not with the early Church but with Jesus Himself. Both Jesus' consciousness of God as the Father and of His own Sonship determine the conception of the new Realm or Reign of God which He came to inaugurate.

II.10 We find again in the work of Muirhead¹ a major work upon eschatology. Although his book was written six years in advance of the work of von Dobschutz, the two are in surprising harmony. It is interesting to note, however, that Muirhead blames the Evangelists for any inconsistency which may appear in Jesus' teaching. He regards the great eschatological discourse recorded in the thirteenth chapter of Mark and the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew as "mainly a number of utterances regarding the hastening decay of the Jewish legal system." The disciples assumed that the fall of the Jewish state was indistinguishable in time and essence from the end of the world.

Although essentially the same view as that of von Dobschutz, Muirhead gives us the "perspective of Jesus" from a somewhat different angle, at least in different language. Jesus must have attached some sort of finality to the downfall of the Jewish state, legalism and religious supremacy. This because of the deadliness of the conflict in which Jesus found Himself engaged. His recognition of the failure of Israel to live up to its Divine calling as God's vineyard; that those who should have been the conservators of religious devotion were its executioners, gave Jesus in the last weeks of His life, the feeling that a day of final judgment was impending. His prophecy had in it no

1. Lewis A. Muirhead: The Eschatology of Jesus. 1904.

artificial apocalyptic reckoning. It came purely from the spirit and supremacy of His holiness. In Jesus' mind the fall of the Jewish state, in view of the position in which Providence had placed Israel, would involve catastrophe for the whole world. The contemplation of such a collapse overwhelms the imagination. "Sun, moon and stars shall fail" says Jesus, but in His own consciousness the words used had no relation to literal fact. And so His sayings which seem to depict the collapse of the world are simply the obverse side of His conviction that in His sacrifice there opened out for humanity a new and glorious career in which it would be seen, even by men of that generation, to begin.

II.11 An extensive treatment of eschatology is given us by Shailer Mathews.¹ And with him we come, for the first time, to our own shores. His work on this subject was published in 1905, and he too, like Muirhead, is, in all essential points, in harmony with von Dobschutz. He does not, however, attempt to plumb the depths of Jesus' consciousness with such care as does his German contemporary. His treatment of the subject may be summarized as follows:

Formally speaking the Kingdom was eschatological, but, while its coming was delayed, the struggle with the kingdom of Satan had already begun. The future members of the Kingdom, while preparing to enter it, were, in a prophetic sense, the Kingdom itself. Co-ordinate with these two periods in the history of the Kingdom would be, naturally, two periods of Messiahship. In the first the Messiah would be engaged in prophetic work; in the second, which would open with the coming of the Kingdom, He would be the Messianic "Judge" and "King".

What was actually original and what was inherited by Jesus? The eschatological element was undoubtedly inherited. Messianism may properly be conceived of as a way of thinking of matters which are in no sense dependent upon the particular form in which they are portrayed. This way of thinking was inherited by Jesus. He was possessed with the idea of an impending eternity. Eschatology in His teaching is essentially a recognition of immortality. The

1. Shailer Mathews: The Messianic Hope in the New Testament. 1905

centre of His teaching is not the Kingdom of God with its mingled ethnic and political connotation; it is eternal life. To tell one of its certainty and the way to possess it was in truth to preach a gospel. The conception was not given by Judaism, it was given by the conscious experience of Jesus.

The Kingdom of God may or may not be considered as necessary in our modern religious vocabularies, but it is no mere archaeological concept. Deep within it is the thought that men must embody the love of God in their social relations, that there is a community of "children of God" who are like the Master, Jesus. Such elements as these in the teaching of Jesus emphasize distinctions not merely between Messianism and ethics, but between truth and the form of truth. And so the student becomes increasingly convinced that none of the essential teachings of Jesus are dependent upon the Messianic scheme as such. Jesus does not use the idea of the Kingdom as inclusive of all His teaching. If it be abandoned His general ethical and religious teaching would not be injured.

The personality of Jesus made the new self-consciousness at His baptism possible. Thereafter He believed Himself to be so great and so possessed of God as to be absolutely and unquestionably convinced that all the glories of the eschatological Kingdom were to be secondary to His own position as its king. A greater thought than this probably never entered a man's mind and left it sane. From the day of His baptism onward this conviction set Jesus in a different class from that to which other men belonged. He puts Himself over against humanity as its Divine Master. The real meaning of Jesus in history is not the ascription to Him of a Messianic future on the part of His followers, but rather to a personality, the greatness of which is indisputable. Almost unexpectedly eschatology is thus seen to be of the utmost interpretative importance. Consider what it must have meant for one so eminently sane as Jesus to attach to Himself the eschatological concept. Why did He forecast His future as involving such expectations? It was because He saw Himself so supreme that He was forced to use the extremist valuations of His day and people to express His own self-consciousness. He regarded Himself as the Christ - the anointed of God - because He was conscious of God

in His personality. It was His inner life that forced upon Him the Messianic interpretation.

II.12 I have reviewed the work of Sanday¹ and Scott² and find that each of them holds views very similar to those of von Dobschutz, Moffatt and Mathews. All of these men might very well be placed in the same general group so far as their eschatological views are concerned. It is for this reason that I omit an extended mention of the two first named.

III What, then, may be said of eschatology today? Have we reached any conclusions? Is the problem any nearer a solution than it was twenty years ago? In answer to these questions I turn to von Dobschutz and those with whom he is in essential agreement. For this group takes a middle ground, a position between the extreme of thorough-going eschatology on the one hand and the non-eschatologists on the other. They do not settle with finality all of the pertinent questions aroused by the apparent contradictions in the Biblical text. A great many questions, not only in this, but in every field of intellectual activity, cannot be answered. Many a philosopher has discovered that the secret of a normal life lies in pursuing a "golden mean" between the bright plain of pure reason on the one hand and the fog of mysticism on the other. For if the seeker goes too far into the plain he may be blinded by too much light, and if he wanders too far in the other direction he may be choked by the fog. The Creator of man decreed that the reasoning power with which His creature was endowed should not be a self-sufficient instrument wherewith man might guide and determine and conserve his whole life. He rather decreed that man's reasoning power should be somewhat limited and that he should find in faith the complement to a normal life. Faith and reason are complementary, but if taken separately, the one may lead to barren rationalism and the other to

1. William Sanday: The Life of Christ in Recent Research. 1908.

2. E.F.Scott: The Kingdom and the Messiah. 1911.

fanatical mysticism. And so, if we find in the Biblical records some points which interrupt the smooth course of an exacting reason we must pause before rendering a condemnation upon those records to consider whether reason or life should have the right of way. For there are considerations in life and experience which enable us to overcome what may seem to be an insuperable logical difficulty. One of these considerations is the experience, possible to a human being, of the reality of Jesus Christ. Another lies in history. Nothing is more consistent than the progress of Christ through the nineteen centuries which have elapsed since the Scriptures were written. In the world's life and in his own life man may discover the abiding secret of interpretation sufficient for all requirements, be they intellectual or otherwise. It is on this basis, I believe, that we must come to a solution of the problems surrounding eschatology. We must put our Biblical records to the test of life rather than to the test of reason.

Upon this basis, what explanation of the eschatological problem seems best? It seems to me to be this, and I am conscious that in this view I reflect, to a very large degree, the position of Professor von Dobschutz:

Jesus felt Himself to be the Messiah, the Divinely appointed agent of God whose office it was to redeem men from their sin. He was the Son of God. He was conscious of a unique filial oneness with God. From actual life and experience He gained a vivid impression of men's obdurateness, of the implacability of evil, and was conscious thereby of the irreconcilable conflict between such evil and the good which He represented and which He was. The utter opposition of the two led Him to hope for and to expect a decision in favor of the good; a decision which would be final, a decision in which He, as the Messiah, would be the determining factor, the triumphant instrument. With all this He was conscious of the fact that He was bringing new light and new life to those who became His followers - a new life which was in itself a token of the new state of existence to which He looked forward, and which was

in fact, part and parcel of that new state. For the new order was to be spiritual. Those to whom He brought this new life, this emancipation, understood, each for himself, Who and What Jesus was. To understand Him, each in his own measure, was sufficient. What title each applied to Him was of little consequence to Jesus. If some understood Him to be the Messiah of prophecy and saw in the suffering servant the king who was foretold, they were not misguided, for such He was. If others, who were expecting in the Messiah a political ruler who should redeem Israel from her oppressors, were sorely disappointed to find in Jesus no such purpose, it was not Jesus' fault that they misunderstood. To have given detailed explanations of What and Who He was would have been about as happy a procedure as to have been continually making excuses for His presence among men.

With the exception of Schweitzer all those whose works I have reviewed are in essential agreement upon the interpretation given above. It may reasonably be said to be the "common view" of modern criticism. I am inclined to feel that the storm of eschatological discussion which has waxed so strong during the past two decades is near an end, that time has mellowed the surprise and alarm which the first discovery of the antithetical passages in Scripture aroused, and that we may now believe, with the majority of scholars, that Jesus' mind could very well have compassed eschatology without endangering the great and vital message and the succoring Life which it was His privilege to bring to the world.

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