

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_expositor-series-1.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php)

## THE ESCHATOLOGY OF THE GOSPELS.

### I.

#### THE PROBLEM AND ITS HISTORY.

ESCHATOLOGY is at the present moment a favourite subject which attracts more and more the interest of large circles. I hope, therefore, that the following four lectures, which were delivered at the Summer School of Theology at Oxford, September 1909, may be welcomed here. I give them, with the exception of some slight alterations, in the original form of lectures.

The subject, as it was formulated by the Committee of the Summer School, is not equivalent to "The eschatology of Jesus"—it includes much more; nor is it so comprehensive as the paper read before the third International Congress for the history of religions, at Oxford, September 1908, on "The Significance of early Christian eschatology."<sup>1</sup> As it is given, the subject places us before the whole gospel-question, reminding us of two most important points which we never should lose sight of in studying the Gospels, two points indeed which make the problem so intricate and difficult: first that all depends on 'the Gospel', i.e. on what Jesus Himself thought and said; and secondly, that we have this only in the form of 'the Gospels,' i.e. in the different forms of tradition. Or, to use Matthew Arnold's words: "All our criticism of the four Evangelists who report Jesus has this for its governing idea: to make out what in their report of Jesus is Jesus, and what is the reporters."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Transactions, ii. 312-320.

<sup>2</sup> *God and the Bible*, 1875, 167.

## I.

Before we attack the problem itself, it will be desirable to say a few words with regard to its history. This, I think, is what a methodical study needs most. It makes the distinction between the reading of a scholar and a dilettante. The latter, when he comes across any question, will at once go into it or through it with his own brains only, and perhaps one or two books with which chance has provided him; while on the other side the scholar will, before starting, find out what the question really is: what has to be said about it when it is taken in connexion with all related problems, and what has been said already by those into whose labours he is entering. Having thus fixed as a well-trained explorer the latitude and the longitude of his own position, he may say confidently: There we are, and it is in this direction that we have to go on further.

1. Now the question laid before us is, we may safely say, as so many other questions, at the same time quite old and quite recent. It is quite old, because there was no time in Church history when Christians were not occupied by the eschatological sayings in the Bible. It is quite recent, because it was only in the last century that the question became a problem in the sense of modern historical investigation. I think it is always very useful, especially for men of our own time, who are so proud of the results of modern research, to be reminded that those problems have been felt ever since the first age, that the same observations have always been made, and that it is only the method of dealing with them, the way by which we try to solve them, which changes. It has been observed from the very beginning that in the holy Scriptures there is plenty of information about the last things, the end of the world and the glorious and happy state of a new age, about judgement and final salvation. It has been

felt always with keen regret that information on these subjects is so scanty, so fragmentary, so very uncertain. Now the old method was to gather all utterances scattered through the whole book and to combine them so as to gain a systematic, self-consistent view. Biblical interpretation, as you know, from the first century down to the eighteenth was dominated by dogmatic and practical presuppositions. People did not ask what Jesus said nor what the apostles meant, but what God had to tell them by the mouth of His prophets and apostles. In this way they dealt with the eschatological utterances as with a collection of divine oracles which were to be fulfilled in their present time, and thus were to be explained by the events which just then were going on. You may read Hippolytus' commentary on the Book of Daniel, or his treatise on the Antichrist, or the fifteenth catechesis of Bishop Cyril of Jerusalem, or whatever patristic commentary of non-Alexandrian type you like : you will find them always explaining New Testament prophecies as coming to fulfilment in the interpreter's own time. What was said about " battles and wars, famines and pestilences, and earthquakes " was always easy to be identified with some events of the time. There were always some heretics able to be stamped as the Antichrist or his prophet. Wyclifites, Hussites, the Reformers recognised the Antichrist sitting in the temple of God in the Pope, whilst, on the other hand, the Jesuits easily found marks of the Antichrist in Luther or Calvin. Later on there was Napoleon as the beast from the abyss, or the railway as the dragon with his tail—in our time it would be the motor cars. At all events it was always something of the interpreter's own time. You had only to open your eyes and to look around you to see that the time was fulfilled and the end at hand.

This form of interpretation, which we may call the

historical adaptation of eschatological prophecy, was the most widely spread. Former times had only two alternatives besides, viz., the spiritualising interpretation of the Alexandrian school, which rather tended to abolish all eschatological ideas, and another one, which one may speak of as a really eschatological interpretation; there were only a few exceptional men who, disregarding the usual view, maintained that the predictions of those marvellous supernatural events which are spoken of in the New Testament were to be taken in a very strict sense, so that it would be impossible to identify them with anything in the ordinary course of history. You have, they declared, to expect them as they are foretold, but we do not know at what time they will happen; it may be in some few years, it may be in some hundred years, because, as has been said already in the second Epistle of St. Peter, "*A thousand years are with the Lord as one day.*"

It is very interesting to see on this point St. Augustine's correspondence with the Bishop of Salona, Hesychius.<sup>1</sup> To speak in general terms, this view, supported first by Irenaeus, found a stronger support only in more recent times. It was the so-called first Tübingen school—not that critical one of F. Chr. Baur, but an earlier one, founded by Storr and represented in Baur's own time by J. T. Beck. Quite evangelical in type, these theologians put themselves against all spiritualising as much as Bishop Nepos or Methodius in the third century, and contradicted the spiritualising interpretation of Origen. We may remark that there had been always a realistic tradition in western interpretation. So Bengel and the Tübingen men laid much stress on the realistic meaning of New Testament eschatology, but they neglected altogether that element of nearness in the prophecies which, taken strictly, would never

<sup>1</sup> Epp. 197, 198, 199 in Migne, PL 33, 899-925.

allow a hundred or thousand years to be put between prediction and fulfilment.

2. With the eighteenth century interpretation became historical, and thus only the question arose: what was the meaning of the men who uttered those predictions? Certainly they did not think about events of the second or fourth, or even the nineteenth century. By saying "what will shortly come to pass" they did not mean to say "shortly" for Hippolytus or for Cyril, nor even for Swedenborg, but "shortly" for themselves. They must have been thinking of the last things as being at hand. But how did they conceive them? Was it really to be understood verbally, exactly as the words used suggest, something almost supernatural, but at the same time visible, and to be touched,—some divine miraculous change of the whole external order of things,—or was it rather to be understood in a spiritual sense of something moral and inward?

There were at first only very few voices who supported the former view, which hardly could be brought into line with modern ideas. The majority of interpreters tried to escape from the difficulty by returning to the allegorising method of Origen. We quite understand that the average of modern theology, influenced as it was by Greek philosophy on one side, and by the predominant ethical ideas of the gospel on the other, could not do otherwise than spiritualise what was said by Christ and His apostles. It was in particular Schleiermacher's school, but also the critical school of Baur, which renewed the old spiritualising allegory. The whole school of *Vermittelungs-theologen*, as we use to call them, as well as the liberals of former times, acknowledged nothing but religious and moral ideas in the teaching of Jesus. The eschatological utterances, interpreted in this way, lost all their significance and became rather a duplicate

of other sayings put into an awkward picturesque form : so—it was argued—we had better neglect them and keep to the clearer utterances of the Fourth Gospel. You may take the Biblical theology of the late Professor Willibald Beyschlag, of Halle, as the average expression of this standpoint in Germany. We find it supported even at the present day by, for instance, Professor Erich Haupt, of Halle,<sup>1</sup> and by Professor Adams Brown, of New York.<sup>2</sup>

But this spiritualising interpretation does too much violence to the actual words of the Gospel. It could not stand the attack of a more realistic feeling in New Testament theology. Professor B. Weiss, of Berlin, simply by collecting all that is to be found in the Gospels, demonstrated clearly that there are many really eschatological ideas. I should mention here a very important English contribution, published for the first time without the author's name in 1878 with the title, *The Parousia, a critical inquiry into the New Testament Doctrine of our Lord's Second Coming*; in a new edition of 1887 the author's name was added—J. S. Russell. I do not know who he was, but at all events he was a very sincere Bible-reader. He made it quite clear that you cannot deal with the New Testament prophecies in the way of former interpreters, taking them as referring to a much later time, nor put them aside by reading something spiritual into them; you have to take them as they are : foretelling some great catastrophe in the lifetime of Jesus' own generation. When he comes to the end of his investigation, he puts the difficulty in the form of the following dilemma : either you have to say with some rationalists, Jesus and His apostles were wrong in their expectation; or, if you believe in the divine truth of the Bible, you must explain it by some event of the apostolic

<sup>1</sup> *Die eschatologischen Aussagen Jesu in den synoptischen Evangelien*, 1895.

<sup>2</sup> *Art. Parousia* in *Hastings DB*, iii. 674–680, 1900.

time, and you will easily find this in the destruction of Jerusalem.

Now, as a matter of fact, this solution of the question is a very old one. It has its Biblical support in the writings of St. Luke, who, as we shall see in our next lecture, colours the eschatological utterances in such a way that they may be understood of the destruction of Jerusalem. It has always had some support by later interpretation.<sup>1</sup> But it will not prove itself to be the final solution of the problem.

3. By modern research we have become acquainted with much apocalyptic literature, produced by later Judaism and highly appreciated in the early Christian Church, but forgotten for many centuries. We owe their discovery and collection to such scholars as Dillmann, Volkmar, Hilgenfeld, Schürer, and to English scholars, in the first rank of whom I should mention Professor R. H. Charles, besides Dr. Taylor, the late Master of St. John's, Cambridge, Rendel Harris and F. C. Conybeare. By reading this apocalyptic literature we became aware of a very important feature, not noted before, viz., that the eschatological ideas, or, as I would rather say, the forms in which they were uttered, were by no means an original product of the Gospel, but are taken over from later Judaism. This means that we have to explain them by an eschatological tradition. There was a certain amount of eschatological views spread in Judaism, being a part of what we call the "Weltanschauung," the general view of the world, prevailing at that time. And even Jesus and His disciples were participators of it; their horizon was not wider in this respect than that of their countrymen.

So a quite new form of interpretation appeared, the utter-

<sup>1</sup> This historical orientation of Jesus' predictions is the main feature in the most recent contribution to our subject by H. B. Sharman, *The Teaching of Jesus about the future according to the Synoptic Gospels*, Chicago, 1909.



ances of the Gospels being explained by Jewish eschatology. It was Joh. Weiss, in his book, *Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes* " [1892, second edition 1900], who started this new form with a rare success.<sup>1</sup> The current notions of the gospel were all to be taken in the realistic sense of late Judaism ; the eschatological prophecies of Jesus were to be understood from his Jewish conceptions, without any regard to their fulfilment. There is a strong tendency now among German interpreters to get rid of their own modern views with the aim of looking at the early Christian writings with early Christian eyes, a tendency which you would call perhaps Romanticism, but is, however, better styled historical sincerity combined with some antiquarian feeling. They enlarge intentionally the difference between early and recent Christian views as much as possible with the purpose of being historical as far as possible.<sup>2</sup> The best example of this one-sided archaism may be found in Kabisch's book on Pauline eschatology (1893). But there are many other contributions of the same style in Germany now. In this way we got used to these rather strange eschatological ideas, so that many of our recent German students will find themselves quite at home in them and will think this form of interpretation to be the usual, the only natural one.

4. This is not all. Quite recently the problem of eschatology has gained yet another aspect. We have learned not only to deal with the notions of Jesus and His disciples, and to explain them by contemporary views, but to ask for the practical significance of these views for those who held them. It is one of the great merits of Professor H.

<sup>1</sup> The influence of J. Weiss may best be seen in the second edition of H. Wendt, *Die Lehre Jesu*, 1901, where we have the most deliberate and circumspect judgement pronounced upon this eschatological view.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. the present writer's paper : *Der gegenwärtige Stand der Neutestamentlichen Exegese*, 1906.

J. Holtzmann, formerly of Strassburg,<sup>1</sup> that he showed how to combine both these modes of dealing with the question, not only to collect and explain the single utterances, but to make out their importance as influencing Jesus' whole life. There has been always some tendency in this direction in Strassburg theology. It was T. Colani<sup>2</sup> who first threw light upon the life of Jesus from the point of view of eschatology. From Strassburg started W. Baldensperger, now Professor at Giessen.<sup>3</sup> Professor F. Spitta, of Strassburg, has the great merit of always getting fresh lights upon the story of the Gospels out of those late Jewish apocryphas, going hand in hand with Joh. Weiss in their realistic interpretation. So you will easily understand how it came to pass that one of the most clever junior Strassburg men, Dr. Albert Schweitzer, also well known as an ingenious interpreter of Bach's music, happened to put forth his so-called theory of 'consequent eschatology,' i.e. that Jesus in all His acting is to be understood by nothing else than His eschatological view that He was designed by the Father to bring an end unto all things. Now I wonder how it happened that this theory, put forth in the form of a history, or rather an historical review, of the research on the life of Christ in the last hundred years "from Reimarus to Wrede" [1906], met with much more appreciation in England than in Germany, where even Schweitzer's friends were rather surprised by the one-sidedness of his views and declined to follow him. I need refer only to the criticism made

<sup>1</sup> Besides his *Lehrbuch der Neutestamentlichen Theologie* (1897), I would recommend in connexion with our question especially his masterful little treatise, *Das Messianische Bewusstsein Jesu*, 1907, which gives an accurate summary of the present stand, together with a complete record of recent contributions.

<sup>2</sup> *Jésus Christ et les croyances messianiques de son temps*, 1869.

<sup>3</sup> *Das Selbstbewusstsein Jesu im Lichte der messianischen Hoffnungen seiner Zeit*, 1888; second edition 1892, third edition 1903 (part I.).

upon the book by Professor P. Wernle (Basle),<sup>1</sup> by Professor Ad. Jülicher (Marburg),<sup>2</sup> and last, not least, Professor H. J. Holtzmann<sup>3</sup>—while Professor W. Sanday's treatment of the book in his work, *The Life of Christ in Recent Research* [1907], gave Dr. Schweitzer's book a splendid advertisement in this country and, at the Oxford Congress for the history of religions in 1908, Professor F. C. Burkitt<sup>4</sup> made himself champion of this theory of consistent eschatology, which I myself would prefer to call radical eschatology.

Now, without going into the question itself, which will be our task in the next lectures, I may be allowed to say only this: if eschatology is the key to all gospel-questions, then it becomes the problem of problems how Christianity could go on without eschatology through so many centuries. If there was nothing in Jesus but eschatology, then He was a misguided enthusiast, and it would be almost impossible to explain how the name of an eccentric became the symbol for millions and millions of Christians who took from Him not only some vain hopes of the future, but a joyful experience of real salvation and an unexampled amount of moral energy.

The exaggerated "Consistency," however, should not keep back others from following the method in a sounder way—this was rightly maintained by Professor K. Lake at the Congress.<sup>5</sup> We have a very remarkable instance thereof in

<sup>1</sup> In *Theol. Literaturzeitung*, 1906, N. 18, Sp. 501 ff.

<sup>2</sup> In his lectures *Neue Linien in der Kritik der evangelischen Überlieferung*, 1906, 1-13.

<sup>3</sup> In his reviews *Der gegenwärtige Stand der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*, *Deutsche Literaturzeitung*, 1906, N. 38 ff.

<sup>4</sup> See his paper on *The Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen*, Proceedings, II. 321-328, and cp. also his essay *The Eschatological Idea in the Gospel* in *Essays on some biblical questions of the day*, by members of the University of Cambridge, 1909, 193-213. Unnecessary to say, that Prof. Burkitt does not share all the conclusions of Dr. Schweitzer!

<sup>5</sup> See also the remarkable book of H. Monnier, *La mission historique de Jésus*, 1906.

a recent American contribution by Professor Shailer Matthews : *The Messianic Hope in the New Testament* [1905], a book whose very title, when compared with Dr. Kennedy's well-known book on *St. Paul's Conception of the Last Things* [1904],<sup>1</sup> shows how much the view has changed : it is not the material of eschatological notions and doctrines, but it is their living force and influence upon the piety and the whole life of their believers, which is discussed here.

At this point we may stop our historical inquiry into the different ways of dealing with our problem.

## II.

The word eschatology has very different meanings. There was a time, some fifty years ago, and it lasts perhaps till now, when people, talking about eschatology, did not mean to say anything else than what happens after death : " *It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgement*" (Heb. ix. 27). Now we know better that eschatology is the doctrine of the last things as understood by late Jewish teaching. And latterly we have come to use the word now to express a certain mode of feeling, not so much the different opinions on some points of eschatology as the whole fashion of mind produced by the belief in a near approach of the end. It is in this last sense that the word is taken here, viz., as signifying some idea which exercised a spiritual influence on the mind of Jesus and His disciples.

To understand this we must bear in mind what the belief of Jewish people in regard to the last things was in former times, and what was the evolution which this belief underwent.

1. The religion of Israel was, as you know, national in a far stricter sense than we can use this word of the religions

<sup>1</sup> Cp. also W. O. E. Oesterley, B.D., *The doctrine of the Last Things, Jewish and Christian*, 1908.

of the Greeks or the Romans or other peoples. It meant not only that every member of the nation by his birth was to be an adherent of this religion, but that the very subject of the religion was the nation, [not the individual. Israel as a nation was the chosen people of God ; it was in the nation's history that God revealed Himself to mankind, it was to the people that He had given all His promises, the individuals having no right for themselves, but only as members of the nation. It was their happiness to belong to this chosen people of God, and their hope and aim that their children or grandchildren perhaps would participate in the glorious fulfilment of God's promises to His people. To be sure, at a later time, let us say from the time of the Maccabean revival, a more individualistic conception began to spread among the Jewish people : it may have been suggested by the individualistic doctrines of the Persian religion, as some recent scholars maintain, or it may have come out of this very Hellenistic influence, so strong at the time, against which the Maccabean movement was directed. Its deeper source, however, is to be looked for in the Maccabean movement itself : the Jews of this time, prepared as they were by Persian and Hellenistic conceptions, could not think of God as leaving without any personal reward those who gave up even their life for His sake. It appeared to them impossible, incompatible with God's righteousness, that the martyrs should die without any compensation. It was as a benefit on behalf of the martyrs that Jewish religion asked at first for a personal continuation of life after death. But note : it is not a continuation in our sense of the word. Death comes in and separates body and soul. Neither of them is living when separated from the other. They are both in an estate of unconscious existence which you may rightly compare to sleep. The body is in the tomb, the soul in the so-called Sheôl, which

is not to be identified with Hell, but rather with the Hades of the Greeks, where the souls live their life as shades. This existence—if we may call it existence, being quite unconscious—lasts until that great day when God fulfils His promises to the nation. Then, but only then, those who are to participate in this glorious and happy time of salvation will be awakened, both body and soul will come out of their different receptacles, and will be united, and so the man will be able to enjoy a new life in company with all those who are alive then. So, you see, the old national conception of the last things has not given place to another one of more Hellenistic and individualistic type ; it is still the old Jewish notion of the nation as the subject, only enlarged by the idea of a bodily resurrection of some earlier members of the people. There is a splendid sermon of the late Principal John Caird, of Glasgow, in his University sermons, upon Hebrews xi. 39, 40 : “ And these all having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing for us than that they without us should not be made perfect.” Dealing with the idea of “ Comparative resurrection ” the Principal says some most beautiful and stimulating things of great practical value for the religious life. But he treats the question as a matter of speculation, and not having first gone through these late Jewish conceptions, he misses just the one important point to be noticed from the standpoint of the modern historical method, viz., that we have in those words the Christian adaptation of that Jewish notion : salvation will come for all those who deserve it, but only when it comes for the nation.

This view is quite different from what we are accustomed to, and I would like the reader clearly to understand the great importance of this difference. The Jewish conception, by keeping to the national idea, has always an historical

orientation : it is based upon that notion of two ages, one which is now, and another to come ; the present bad, sinful, full of oppression, the future good, holy, happy. On the other hand, Greek, and later Christian thought, more individualising in its nature, goes rather in the line of a local than of a temporal contrast : happiness is not here, but you can find it elsewhere. Or, to make this a little more clear, one might say that, in the case of the Jews, possibility of salvation, being an expectation and not yet a reality, caused the stress to be laid upon the time *when*, while in the case of the Greeks, possibility of salvation being conceived as a present fact, caused the stress to be laid upon the place *where*. You know the islands of the Hesperides far in the West, where the happy heroes enjoyed a god-like, everlasting life ; you know the two parts in the Hades, one dark and harmful, a real hell for the sinners, the other a bright and happy abode for pious and righteous men. In the latest stage of Greek religion and philosophy it is rather the contrast of above and below, of heaven and earth. And you see that this is what most Christian people think of as the original Christian conception : that after their life on this sorrowful earth has come to an end, they immediately will go to another life, a life of glory and happiness in heaven. This is what they call salvation. Now without entering into the dogmatic question of what will happen to us after death, we may safely say that this is not the original Christian conception of salvation, which was almost in the line of Jewish thought, not perhaps so much national, but collective, historical : a time was to be expected when all who believed and placed their hope in God as the Saviour of His faithful people should see His glorious salvation, not only the quick, but also those who had died before, because they would rise again at that very moment.

2. This salvation might be conceived in many different ways : the mass of Jewish people took it in a political sense, either purely national : viz., that the yoke of heathen tyranny should be broken off, and Israel, free from all oppression, should enjoy his own land, his Holy City with the temple of God, and live a happy life under his God's gracious guidance, God's royalty being identified with the dominion of Israel over all other nations. Or else the conception was rather mixed up with party-morals : the salvation would come for that very part of Israel which remained faithful to the Lord their God, which, humble and poor, had to stand the oppression by that proud, rich company of unrighteous and godless men, who ruled, by their own will, over God's people, so that the salvation was to be seen in a true restoration of the theocracy against the tyranny of the Has-monean or Sadducean priests or princes like Herod and his sons. Besides these there was a third form of conception, which, compared with the two political ones already mentioned, may be called mythological, as it deals not so much with human powers in opposition to God's kingdom, but with the spiritual powers of the devil and his demons, always in rebellion against God, and trying to make men offend against God's holy will and law with the aim of bringing them under their own pitiless dominion.

There are only a few traces of this last conception in pre-Christian Jewish eschatology, especially in the book of Enoch, where the fallen angels, the so-called Egregores (watchmen), play a great part.

Now we may say that in whatever way salvation was conceived, the very aim of Jewish religion was to get this salvation, not so much to ensure a share in it (because most Jews supposed this to be their natural right), but to get God to bring it. Because it was not to be brought by means of human operation. It was supposed to be a



quite superhuman, supernatural acting by God Himself, sending His salvation to His people. Only that this faithful people may influence His motion by pressing on Him in prayer, fasting and doing His ordinances in the law. As to how God would do it, there was no certainty; either He would come by Himself, breaking open the heaven and descending, or He would send His Messiah, the blessed one, His beloved, His Son, the Son of man, the Son of David. This coming would be preceded by various signs. The heathen power would rise to an almost unheard of level of tyranny, cruelty and abomination, the iniquity of the godless and unrighteous would join with them, so that the apostasy from the one God, the living and true one, and His worship to the idols and all the sins of idolatry would become general; there would be signs in the heaven and on earth, the sun giving no more light, the moon being changed into blood, the stars falling from heaven, earthquakes, famines, pestilences frightening mankind everywhere. Then at the very culmination of horrors the Messiah would appear in a miraculous way, and by His wonderful power He would destroy all His enemies, and by the aid of His angels collect His chosen people from all parts of the world, and reign over them in justice and peace, filled as He was with God's Holy Spirit, the Spirit of righteousness and truth.

3. It is not necessary to go further into detail now, because all this is very well known, especially through the works of Professor Charles. We only repeat, that there was no self-consistent doctrine of eschatology among the Jews of Jesus' time, and that the influence of eschatology was rather restricted to some circles, the life of the people being occupied by the business of the present time and ruled by the heavy yoke of Pharisaic ordinances. It was really something new to the people when John the

Baptist started his preaching in the wilderness of Judaea :  
 “ *Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*”

And whatever may have been the position taken by Jesus in regard to eschatology, there can be no doubt that eschatology was much more important in early Christianity than in late Judaism. It was so, because the messianic hope had found in Jesus its proper object : since Jesus had appeared, people were convinced that His glorious advent (the Parousia) was to be expected at the earliest term. This is the main distinction between early Christian and late Jewish eschatology : all has received a stricter form, many possibilities being excluded by the very fact that it was Jesus, with all His personal characteristics, who was to be expected ; all has been brought nearer, the fact that the Messiah was known, that it was Jesus, and that Jesus had disappeared only for a short time, giving urgency to all expectations. There was—as I tried to show in my paper read before the Oxford Congress in 1908—even an increasing tendency towards eschatological occupation in the second half of the first century, the very time when our Gospels were written. So the problem comes before us, whether the eschatology of the Gospels belongs to the original stock of Jesus-tradition, or is due to this later eschatological inclination of Christianity, which, borrowing from Judaism, transformed the gospel into a rather eschatological teaching. It is lastly the question, how far Jesus can be brought under the law of historical continuity, He Himself being dependent backwards on late Judaism and influencing forwards early Christianity—and how far He must be regarded as an exceptional being outside the operation of this law, unrooted in His nation, and misunderstood by His followers.

E. VON DOBSCHÜTZ.