

Will it be Christianity? It will be scientific; it will be ethical; it will be practical. Will it also be religious? If the new Christianity does not teach men to love their God with all their heart, in addition to, or rather in front of, loving their neighbour as themselves, it will not be Christianity.

The editors of the *Biblical World* believe that the struggle will be here. But they believe that the Christianity we are coming to, will insist upon the reality of the spiritual, and upon the necessity of fellowship between man and God.

The Present and the Future Kingdom in the Gospels.

BY PERCY GARDNER, Litt.D., LL.D., PROFESSOR OF CLASSICAL ARCHÆOLOGY
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD.

EVERY student of the problems of the Gospels is aware that of late there has appeared in Germany, France, and England a strong tendency to lay great stress on the eschatological element in the Synoptic writings. For many years past the ordinary view of criticism had been that when Jesus proclaimed the Kingdom of God, He may in a measure have shared the views of His contemporaries that a mighty convulsion was at hand, but that His teaching in the main had to do with the present, and was ethical rather than apocalyptic; that the Kingdom of which He spoke was in the hearts of men, not waiting to be revealed in the skies. But Johannes Weiss, in his remarkable paper of 1892, asserted that the phrase 'Kingdom of God' was used by Jesus only in the eschatological sense, that for Him the Kingdom was not partly present and partly future, but wholly future and supernatural, a sudden catastrophe. Dr. Schweitzer carries further the view of Weiss. He also thinks that by Jesus the Kingdom of God was expected to come in a great catastrophe. He observes that the ethics of Jesus belong only to a time of expectation, their end is to make men free of the world, and ready to enter unimpeded into the Kingdom. When he uses the term 'Son of Man' he is thinking only of the exalted being spoken of in Daniel, who is to come in the clouds of heaven, and to whom is given dominion over all peoples. Passages in which the 'Kingdom of God' or the 'Son of Man' are spoken of in another sense are to be cleared away.

This rigorous and *a priori* method of criticism seems to Dr. Schweitzer the only criticism worthy of the name. He greatly rejoices over the epoch-making pamphlet of Weiss. 'At last,' he writes,

'there is an end of "qualifying clause" theology, of the "and yet," the "on the other hand," the "notwithstanding." Weiss lays down the newest great alternative which the life of Jesus had to meet, *either* eschatological *or* non-eschatological. Progress always consists in taking one or other of two alternatives, in abandoning the attempt to combine them.'¹

Dr. Sanday, with his usual generous appreciation, has highly praised the treatise of Dr. Schweitzer. Learned it is, no doubt, and valuable as a record of the history of criticism, and clear, and full of up-to-date expressions. And beyond question, the man who consistently and clearly uses an extreme theory as a key to unlock historic problems does clear the air. He illumines men's minds, and makes them see whither arguments tend. On account of this merit we may pardon an extreme theorist a good deal of pedantry.

But, in compensation, systems of such extreme simplicity and logicity have drawbacks. They sometimes make up for the triumph of massacring *buts* and *notwithstandings*, and marching straight to their end, by outraging common sense, and constructing a house of cards, which, however fine to look at, will not resist a breath of wind. If their principle is faulty, their consistency only makes them the easier to refute.

The purely eschatological interpretation of the Synoptic teaching as set forth by Weiss and Schweitzer admits, I think, of a complete refutation. Such refutation one cannot, indeed, extract solely from a study of St. Mark's Gospel, because it is a document which may be interpreted in many ways; and stands at the end of a considerable

¹ *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, p. 237.

period of Christian development. To the end of time, probably, critics will differ as to many points in the life and teaching recorded in this Gospel. In the future, as in the past, every thoughtful reader will find in the Jesus of St. Mark a figure which will in some degree conform to his expectation.

But we have in the New Testament other documents of a less flexible temper. No serious critic doubts that in the Epistles to the Romans, Corinthians, and Galatians we have the words of St. Paul. Here we may excavate the text with confident hope that we shall find treasure. We can learn with certainty what St. Paul said and thought. We ought to take our start from the Epistles, since in all science the right method is to proceed from the better known to the worse known. St. Paul uses the phrase 'Kingdom of God'; and his use of it furnishes a conclusive argument against the theories of Dr. Schweitzer. For what is actual in the mental attitude of St. Paul, cannot be ruled out as impossible in the thought of his Master.

That St. Paul expected a catastrophic return of his Master we are certain, since in two long passages he describes that return as he expects it. He thinks that the existing world is about to pass; that all human relations, such as marriage, are of a temporary character. Soon the Kingdom of God is to arrive; Jesus Christ is to reign in a spiritualized world, inhabited by the spiritual bodies of the Saints. Flesh and blood cannot dwell in that Kingdom, any more than can the unrighteous. But while the Kingdom of God is thus in the future, it is also in the present, and on the earth.

In St. Paul's writings, the phrase 'the Kingdom of God' does not often recur, but when it is used, it is as often regarded in the present tense as in the future. In Ro 14¹⁷ he writes: 'The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.' Obviously here the Apostle is speaking of conduct in accord with the divine will. Eating and drinking, about which some Christians had scruples, are declared by him to be in themselves indifferent; what really matters is a life in the Spirit. And this life is one lived in the present on the earth. In 1 Co 4²⁰ St. Paul writes: 'The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.' He is opposing those who with

boastful speeches have claimed to better his teaching; and he demands that the controversy between him and them shall be decided not by words, but by spiritual power, for it is in that that the life of the Church which is God's realm consists.

We find a similar view, though differently expressed, in a later Epistle, also generally regarded as Pauline, that to the Colossians (1¹³). Here the Apostle is speaking of the causes which the converts have for joy and thankfulness. The chief of these is that God delivered them out of the power of darkness, and translated them into the Kingdom of the Son of His love. Obviously, since this deliverance has already taken place, the Kingdom into which they are admitted cannot be in the future.

In these and other passages St. Paul evidently uses the phrase 'Kingdom of God' as equivalent to the Church of Christ. And so we cannot be surprised that usually in connexions in which his Master would have used the phrase, he uses the word 'the Church' instead. The Church is the reflexion and embodiment on earth of the divine Kingdom. In the Church the will of God is done, although not so fully as it is done in heaven.

In some instances it is almost impossible to say whether, in speaking of the Kingdom, St. Paul means the future realm or the existing society. For example, in 1 Thess 2¹² he bids the disciples behave in a manner worthy of their vocation, since God calls (or called) them to His own Kingdom and glory. It is not possible here to say with precision whether the Apostle is thinking of the calling as members of the Society, or as heirs of a future Kingdom. The present and the future are but two sides of a status of salvation to which Christians have attained.

Alas for St. Paul! He does not understand the conditions of German criticism! He weakly speaks of the Kingdom as future, and at the same time as present. He falls into the snare of *but* and *notwithstanding*. He even dares, in company with all the great leaders in the history of the world, to be inconsistent, and to direct his writings rather to the building up of a Church and the salvation of his hearers, than to the formulation of a thoroughly thought-out system of interdependent propositions.

But surely no serious student of the Pauline writings can for a moment doubt which was primary in St. Paul's thought, the present or the future. The future dwelt in the background of his mind, and doubtless often dominated his meditations, but it was the present state of the Church, its morality, its beliefs, its relation to the world around, which made the working purpose of his life. He was sane, and so practical; he was a missionary, and most eager to found on the visible earth the divine Kingdom for the good of which he lived. History shows that great mystics often have a depth of worldly wisdom which goes far beyond that of the men who do not see beneath the surface of things.

When we turn back from the Pauline Epistles to the words of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels, we find precisely the same confusion of present and future which we noted in St. Paul. The Kingdom of God is sometimes spoken of as future; as the rule to be established by the Messiah when He comes upon the clouds of heaven as the Judge of mankind. And much is said in St. Mark, though it does not all come from Jesus, as to the events which shall precede and give token of that coming. But in a far larger number of passages, as any one who uses a Concordance may see, the Kingdom is spoken of as present, as already existing beneath the surface of the visible, in the hearts and wills of men. 'The kingdom of God is like unto leaven'; 'The kingdom of God is within (or among) you'; 'Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.' Why should I repeat all these sayings, which are familiar to every child?

Jesus does not refer, as does St. Paul, to an existing society, but to an invisible spiritual Kingdom, in which God's will is done. The Gospel of the Kingdom is more fully developed in the First Gospel than in the Second; but in several passages in St. Mk. it is clearly proclaimed. In the parables recorded in Mk 4²⁶⁻³² we have the same idea which is so prominent in the Matthean parables of a Kingdom growing up and spreading in the hearts of men. In Mk 12³⁴ when Jesus says to the scribe, 'Thou art not far from the kingdom of God,' it is not possible to consider the saying, if rightly reported, as referring to a future apocalyptic Kingdom, of the time of which the speaker is not Himself aware; it must refer to a present and spiritual

realm beneath the surface of the visible. In Mk 10¹² the saying, 'Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein,' must refer to a Kingdom into which men can enter by a disposition of intention and of life, not to one into which they may at some future time find entrance. The mixture of present and future in the Marcan teaching of Jesus exactly corresponds to that in the Pauline Epistles, although in the one case the Kingdom is invisible, in the other it has become in a certain measure visible.

But Dr. Schweitzer proceeds, with utmost vigour and rigour, to rule out or to reinterpret these words. Either they are wrongly reported, or they are misinterpreted, or they belong to post-resurrection times. Have we not the right to ask him, before he lops the luxuriant branches of the Gospels into the closely cropped trees of a Dutch garden, to try his thesis on the Pauline Epistles? The disciple believed in the approaching end of the world, but he at the same time believed in a present and inward divine Kingdom. What right have we to assume that the Master did not do the same, that to Him the Kingdom was not in two tenses? Jesus was a prophet; and to the Jewish prophets the future and the present were inextricably mingled. Through the present they saw the future, and the future lay already determined beneath the surface of the present. Their minds were not mapped out as rigidly as the system of the modern theologian would desire. Dr. Schweitzer accuses the great contemporary theologians of Germany, Bousset and Wernle and Harnack and the rest, of importing into the life of Jesus the ideas of modern Protestantism. To read the past in the light of the present is a tendency that none of us can wholly escape. But there could scarcely be found a more extreme example of yielding to that tendency than is furnished by Dr. Schweitzer, when he demands of the Founder of Christianity a logical precision of thought utterly foreign to His age and country. To adopt a striking phrase of Dr. Schechter, 'Whatever the faults of the Rabbis were, consistency was not one of them.' From the earliest days to our own they seldom clearly distinguish the present from the future Kingdom.

The question whether the primacy in the teaching and life of Jesus belongs to the practical

or the apocalyptic side of His beliefs is no doubt a matter as to which various opinions may be held. I am altogether on the side of those who regard the apocalyptic side as comparatively unessential, though I am aware that much may be

urged to the contrary. But to assert, as does Dr. Schweitzer, that it is a question of *either—or*, and that the apocalyptic side of the teaching is the only side, seems to me a quite unmaintainable theory in the face of St. Paul's Epistles.

The Great Text Commentary.

THE GREAT TEXTS OF THE PSALMS.

PSALM I. 3.

'And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water,
That bringeth forth its fruit in its season,
Whose leaf also doth not wither;
And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.'

THE subject of the First Psalm is the advantage of being good. And that in this life. In the First Psalm, as in all the Old Testament, God is a rewarder, even here, of them that diligently seek Him. It is well with the righteous, it is ill with the wicked, now, in this life. The evidence was not always on the surface. A superficial view of the world told against the doctrine rather than in its favour. And the Psalmists were not always superior to the temptation of counting the proud happy. Yet it was experience that originally taught them that the lot of the righteous was better than the lot of the wicked; and an enlarged experience, confirmed by faith in God, always brought them back to that conviction. The First Psalm is a good introduction to the whole Psalter.

The Psalm is divided into two parts, each of three verses. The first part describes the righteous man and his lot; the second, the character and lot of the wicked man. The good man is first described negatively, in contrast to the bad man. He does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of the scornful. In the second verse he is described positively, and by himself. He is one who delights in the law of the Lord and meditates in it day and night. Then, in the third verse, the writer rises to the height of his great argument, and in a passage of singular beauty describes what God has laid up in store for him that loves Him and keeps His commandments. *First*, he shall

reach the perfection of his being, the completeness of that life which is his—'he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water.' *Next*, he shall accomplish the service for which he has been prepared, using appropriately and beneficently the gifts which God has given him—'that bringeth forth its fruit in its season.' *Thirdly*, he shall enjoy a perpetual freshness and interest in life—'whose leaf also doth not wither.' And *fourthly*, all his actions will be crowned with success—'whatsoever he doeth shall prosper'; or if we take the marginal reading, 'in whatsoever he doeth he shall prosper,' everything will work together for his good. The meaning is really the same.

I.

FULNESS OF LIFE.

'He shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water.'

To the Psalmist the life of devotion to the good was in no wise a thing of gloom; it was the only life that was rich and full as life could be. To delight in the law of the Lord did not mean that the nature was starved, deprived of its heritage, despoiled of the bloom and beauty whereby it ought to be adorned: consecration to holy things brought no emptiness, no dulling of life's brightness, no toning down of its joy: the man of spirituality was not left standing like some worn and scarred tree whose day of fruitfulness and grace was for ever gone by; he possessed, rather, the secret of perpetual youth and unfailing strength and undying gladness. He should be like a tree planted by the streams of water, that bringeth forth its fruit in its season: upon him there should descend no barrenness of winter; but in him, and upon