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The Best Books on the Kingdom of God.

BY THE REVEREND W. F. HOWARD, M.A., D.D., OF THE LAMPLOUGH CHAIR OF NEW TESTAMENT LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE, HANDSWORTH THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE, BIRMINGHAM.

It is just a hundred years since F. D. Maurice published *The Kingdom of Christ*, and though few to-day would read that expansion of his letter to a Quaker as a serious exposition of our Lord's teaching about the Kingdom of God, its republication in Everyman's Library (two vols.) shows that the quickening influence of that daring mind is still felt. This book is really a defence of the Christian Church as a universal society, as its sub-title shows: 'Hints on the Principles, Ordinances, and Constitution of the Catholic Church, in Letters to a Member of the Society of Friends.' Much nearer to an exposition of our Lord's teaching is the same writer's *The Kingdom of Heaven*, a series of sermons on St. Luke's Gospel, first published in 1864, with a definite reference to Renan's *Vie de Jésus*, which was then creating no small stir. In 1866 J. R. Seeley's *Ecce Homo* made its first anonymous appearance. The fourth chapter ends with these words: 'We conclude, then, that Christ, in describing himself as a king, and at the same time as king of the Kingdom of God—in other words, as a king representing the Majesty of the Invisible King of a theocracy—claimed the character first of Founder, next of Legislator, thirdly, in a certain high and peculiar sense, of Judge, of a new divine society.' The rest of that book is one of the most original and fascinating expositions that this aspect of the Gospel has ever received. In spite of all the changes in our use of Scripture which the years have brought, and though there is much in the mind of Jesus to which this representation gives no clue, *Ecce Homo*, with its message of the 'Enthusiasm of Humanity,' remains a great classic of Christian literature.

The next book we shall name represents the great contribution which Scotland made in the later nineteenth century to the twofold task of introducing readers to the critical study of the Gospels, while bringing into vivid and reverent prominence the historical figure of the Man Christ Jesus. A. B. Bruce was a great expositor, and though *The Kingdom of God* is not by any means his best book, its appearance in 1889 (a sixth edition was called for in 1904) marks the beginning of the critical movement in British works on the subject. Synoptic criticism here lifts its head. Moreover, the bearing of the Son of Man in

the Similitudes of Enoch upon Messianic passages in the Gospels is taken into account, and yet the Apocalyptic element in the teaching of Jesus is still given a very subordinate place.

Within the twenty years that followed the first appearance of this once famous book something took place in Germany which gave an entirely new direction to all discussions about the Kingdom of God and the related problems. Later on we shall return to this controversy, which in recent years has revived, and promises to be once more one of the living issues in the interpretation of the Gospels. Meanwhile, let us take a leap of some twenty years and consider some of the more important English books.

There are few living theologians who can so clearly and judiciously sum up the arguments on both sides of a controversy, and work out a positive line of treatment, as Professor E. F. Scott. In 1911 *The Kingdom and the Messiah* (T. & T. Clark) appeared. A few references in the text and a few footnotes are all that reveal to the general reader that a controversy had been raging for a full decade. Without being caught up into the dust of battle he is quietly taken over the territory and shown where the new boundaries now run. The questions which by this time have come to the fore are these. What is the meaning of the term—is it the Kingdom of God or the Kingship of God?—was Jesus concerned in His teaching with the realm or the reign of God? What is the relative importance of the eschatological passages in the Gospels? Did Jesus expect the Kingdom to come with dramatic suddenness in the immediate future? Was His moral teaching an 'interim ethic'? Did He claim for Himself the title Messiah or not? If not, what is the explanation of the references to the Messianic secret in the Gospels? All these questions are answered in the light of recent discussions, and a comparison of Bruce and Scott shows how entirely the problem had shifted its ground as a result of the debate which had been carried on so vigorously in Germany.¹

¹ Twenty years later Professor E. F. Scott covered some of the same ground again in *The Kingdom of God in the New Testament* (Macmillan, 1931). The treatment is rather different, reflecting the changed

For the preacher who has little interest in theological discussions, but is grateful for a clear statement of the main outline of the problem, together with a practical treatment of the moral questions involved, and some suggestions for co-ordinating the teaching of Jesus with a conception of society in our own time, we may recommend four books, entirely different from one another. First, in 1911, came a new type of book, *Christ's Message of the Kingdom* (T. & T. Clark). Professor A. G. Hogg, of the Madras Christian College, produced the kind of book which the S.C.M. in later years has done so much to popularize. It was described as a 'course of daily study for private students and for Bible circles.' The list of questions given for the retrospect of each week's course of study tested the reader's diligence and accuracy, but also gave a modern and practical turn to every aspect of the subject.¹ In *The Kingdom of Heaven* (Epworth Press, 1922) Dr. H. Maldwyn Hughes surveyed the subject with scholarly care and remarkable lucidity 'in the hope that the presentation of the material may help some of those who are engaged in the practical work of preaching and teaching to a better understanding of the central message of our Lord's ministry.'

Within the last few weeks we have read Canon Vernon Storr's *What is the Kingdom of God?* (in Hodder & Stoughton's 'Westminster Books'), a delightful little book which would form a model instrument for a study circle, and a very different book by Lionel Curtis, *Civitas Dei* (Macmillan). This book is described as an attempt to discover a guiding principle in public affairs. Just as F. D. Maurice a century ago went to the Kingdom of Christ as his inspiration for a gospel of a redeemed society, so Mr. Curtis to-day tries to find in Christ's teaching about the Kingdom the central point in his historical survey and in his political theory. The reader may best gather what is the nature and purpose of this book by some sentences written about it by two eminent reviewers. Sir Edward Grigg writes of it: 'The author starts by tracing the growth of human society in a series of vivid

emphasis in the general interest in the question. Within the last four years, as we shall see later, the interest has returned to eschatology—present or future?

¹ The book which had most deeply influenced Dr. Hogg was the great work by Professor Titius of Berlin, *Die Neutestamentliche Lehre von der Seligkeit und ihre Bedeutung für die Gegenwart*. The first part of that work appeared in 1895 under the heading *Jesu Lehre vom Reiche Gottes* (J. C. B. Mohr).

vignettes up to the moment of Christ's appearance. Christ, he urges, had faith in the perfectibility of human society upon this earth.' Professor Ernest Barker writes: 'It is, in brief, a gospel of democracy hallowed by the name of the commonwealth and consecrated by the name of the Kingdom.'

At this point we must go back forty-five years and ask the question which was then forced upon the attention of New Testament scholars. For the fascinating studies of Mr. Curtis raise the very same questions which were provoked by nineteenth-century interpretations of Jesus as a social moralist.

It was in 1892 that Johannes Weiss flung down the gage of battle with a pamphlet of sixty-seven pages, *Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes* (Göttingen; Vandenhoeck u. Ruprecht). In that beautifully written booklet, which is a model of clarity, almost every issue that has since been discussed in the long controversy was raised. The texts and the parables which are relied upon by opposing schools of interpretation are all before us here. He boldly declared that Schleiermacher, Ritschl, Kaftan, and the rest of the systematic theologians, when writing of the Kingdom of God, were dominated by the ideas of the Fourth Gospel. Against these he argued for ten theses. (1) The ministry of Jesus was dominated by the strong feeling that the Messianic Age was quite near. (2) Although with prophetic insight He sometimes spoke of the certainty of Satan's defeat as though it had already taken place, His usual way was to speak of the Kingdom as still in the future, and to teach His disciples to pray that the Kingdom might come. (3) Only God can bring in and establish the Kingdom. It is for Jesus rather in the strength of the Spirit to fight against the Devil and to gather a band of followers who will wait for the Kingdom of God in penitence, humility, and renunciation. (4) The Messianic consciousness of Jesus is the certainty that God in setting up the Kingdom will make Him both Lord and Messiah. (5) At the beginning of His ministry Jesus hoped to live to see the establishment of the Kingdom. But gradually He became sure that He must first tread the path of death, and so contribute to the setting up of the Kingdom in Israel. When that takes place He will return on the clouds of heaven during the lifetime of the generation that rejected Him. (Later on He abandoned any thought of a definite time for His return, and denied that the observation of outward signs could avail.) (6) At the Parousia, God will destroy the old world which is under the dominion of the Devil and create a new world. (7) At the

same time the Judgment will take place, both of the living and the dead, of the good and the evil, of Jew and Gentile. (8) Palestine will become the glorious centre of the new Kingdom in which God will be acknowledged by all the nations, and in which will be neither sorrow nor sin, but all will see God and serve Him in eternal righteousness, purity, and blessedness. (9) Jesus and His faithful disciples shall rule over the new-born Israel, which will have absorbed the Gentiles. (10) The reign of God is not set up but is realized by the reign of the Messiah. Either they will reign together, or else Jesus will reign under the sovereignty of God. Two other books by Johannes Weiss deserve to be studied. In 1900 a second edition of this book was published, which was really an entirely new book of two hundred and fourteen pages. Then in 1901 he brought out a book, *Die Idee des Reiches Gottes in der Theologie* (Giessen; Töpelmann), which in one hundred and fifty-six pages gives a remarkably lucid account of the way in which the conception of the Kingdom of God was set forth through the centuries down to the Reformation, then in Pietism, afterwards in the *Aufklärung*, and then in the German theology of the nineteenth century, with a full account of its place in Ritschl's system. As that part of Ritschl's great work has not been translated into English, the last forty-five pages of this little book are of special value as a summary.

The eschatological view of the Kingdom in the teaching of Jesus was now put vigorously before the world.

It was about the turn of the century that the issue so raised was dealt with by two famous writers in ways that are most sharply contrasted. Is the key to the Gospel to be found in the group of our Lord's sayings that seems to be ethical in content, or in that other group that seems to be Apocalyptic in character? In the year 1900 Harnack delivered that brilliant course of lectures, *What is Christianity?* (to give the title of the English translation). He grouped the teaching of Jesus under three heads: (1) the Kingdom of God and its coming, (2) God the Father and the infinite value of the human soul, (3) the higher righteousness and the commandment of love. The Kingdom of God has a triple meaning. (a) It is something supernatural, a gift from above, not a product of ordinary life; (b) it is a purely religious blessing, the inner link with the living God; (c) it is the most important experience that a man can have, that on which everything else depends; it permeates and dominates his whole existence, because sin is forgiven and misery banished. As Harnack's name

is often cited as though the Liberal Protestantism for which he stood regarded the Kingdom of God as merely a movement for social righteousness carried along by a law of automatic progress, this note in his interpretation should be clearly heard: 'It is by the supernatural element alone that we can ever get at the meaning of life; for natural existence ends in death, and a life that is bound up with death can have no meaning. Here, however, the kingdom of God, the Eternal, entered into time. "Eternal light came in and made the world look new."' Scarcely had Harnack's famous book been published when there crept from the press a little book written by the assistant minister of a church in Strassburg, called *The Lord's Supper*, in connexion with the Life of Jesus and the History of Early Christianity. The second part of this bore the title: *The Secret of the Messiahship and Passion of Jesus: A Sketch of the Life of Jesus*. This book made little stir in Germany, and it was not translated into English and published until 1925. But those who wish to gain a clear idea of the theory which first made the name of Schweitzer so famous would do well to read *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God* (A. & C. Black) rather than the more famous book, which came out five years later, and in 1910 appeared in the brilliant English translation by Mr. Montgomery, with the alluring title *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (A. & C. Black). Every student of theology knows with what vehemence Schweitzer flung himself into the advocacy of 'consistent eschatology.' Starting from Mk 9¹ he was convinced that for Jesus the Kingdom was an imminent, catastrophic event, and all the contents of the Gospels must be read in the light of that definite anticipation. The ministry of Jesus is a call for repentance in preparation for the coming of the Kingdom. Thus the moral teaching is an interim ethic. The Beatitudes define the moral disposition which justifies admission into the Kingdom. The Kingdom itself lies beyond the borders of good and evil; it will be brought about by a cosmic catastrophe, through which evil is to be completely overthrown. 'Every ethical form of Jesus, be it never so perfect, leads therefore only up to the frontier of the Kingdom of God, while every trace of a path disappears so soon as one advances upon the new territory. There one needs it no more.' Jesus was conscious not that He was the Messiah, or the Son of Man, but that He was to fulfil that rôle when the Kingdom of God had come. This was the Messianic secret betrayed by Judas to the Chief Priests. There was another secret, the secret

of the Passion. At first Jesus had expected the speedy coming of the Kingdom, even before the Twelve had returned from the circuit of the cities of Israel announcing the near approach of the end. Now Jesus recognized that there was delay. Before He as the Son of Man could come from heaven He must first go there Himself. This involved His death and resurrection. So He set His face to go to Jerusalem. The Woes of the Messiah, a 'sort of hurricane belt' (as Sanday described them) had to be passed through on the way to the end. Jesus Himself must pass through the same experience as the people. Indeed at the end the others are freed from the trial of suffering, and Jesus suffers alone. He gives His life a ransom for many. Thus the journey to Jerusalem 'was the funeral march to victory.' In the Upper Room Jesus celebrated an eschatological sacrament with the Twelve, as once before in a veiled form He had done so with the multitude by the lake of Genesaret. This time He explains its significance by saying that He would drink no more of the fruit of the vine until He drank it new in the Kingdom of God. Is there an irreconcilable antagonism between the two views of the Kingdom of God, as represented, let us say, by Harnack and by Schweitzer? For thirty years it seemed so, and those who looked for a more reasonable treatment of the sayings upon which Schweitzer lays such stress were inclined to turn to such a book as von Dobschütz's lectures, *The Eschatology of the Gospels* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1910). But quite recently a book of very great importance has turned attention into another direction. Rudolf Otto's *Reich Gottes und Menschensohn* (München; C. H. Beck, 1934) is shortly to appear in an English translation published by the Lutterworth Press. Like Schweitzer, Otto stands for a 'consistent eschatology,' but unlike him he contends that Jesus proclaimed the Kingdom as a *mysterium*, a *mirum*, a sphere of salvation, a power which has already broken through into the present order by the

presence of Jesus. Otto will have nothing to do with the thought of an interim ethic. There is no space left to give any account of Otto's stimulating pages. The influence that it has already had may be seen in Professor C. H. Dodd's brilliant book, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (Nisbet, 1935), with its doctrine of 'realized eschatology'; and the violent reaction it has caused may be seen in Bultmann's long article in criticism of Otto in the current number of *Theologische Rundschau*.

A book which stands in a class by itself is Professor T. W. Manson's *The Teaching of Jesus* (Cambridge, 1931). One of the most interesting suggestions in this remarkably independent book is that the Son of Man in the Gospels is another embodiment of the Remnant idea. The mission of Jesus 'is to create the Son of Man, the Kingdom of the Saints of the Most High, to realize in Israel the ideal contained in the term. This task is attempted in two ways: first by public appeal to the people through the medium of parable and sermon and by the mission of the disciples: then, when this appeal produced no adequate response, by the consolidation of His own band of followers. Finally, when it became apparent that not even the disciples are ready to rise to the demands of the ideal, He stands alone, embodying in His own person the perfect human response to the regal claims of God.'

Those who are interested in the critical questions which lie behind so much in the discussions of the last generation should on no account overlook that Rylands Library lecture by the late Professor A. S. Peake, *The Messiah and the Son of Man*. Originally published as a brochure, it can now be obtained in permanent form in the posthumous volume, *The Servant of Yahweh and other Lectures* (Manchester University Press, 1931). It is marked by all the critical acumen and historical insight of one of the greatest Biblical scholars that this country has produced, and it contains a very full bibliography down to 1924.

The Teaching of John the Baptist.

BY THE REVEREND MARTIN KIDDLE, M.A., THE CLERGY HOUSE, LEEDS.

THE late Professor Burkitt reminded us in one of the last of his books (*Jesus Christ: An Historical Outline*, 14) that there was nothing new in John the Baptist's warning that the end of the existing state of things

was near, but that the novelty lay rather in the remedy he advocated as a preparation for that event. In a letter which he wrote to me on this subject only a few weeks before his death, Professor