

Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes
Johannes Weiss

Jesu Predigt in ihrem Gegensatz zum Judenthum
W. Bousset

Jesu Verkündigung und Lehre vom Reiche Gottes in ihrer geschichtlichen Bedeutung dargestellt
Georg Schnedermann
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This is one of a series of treatises that have recently appeared on Christ's idea of the kingdom. Weiss refers in his Preface to the books of Schmoller and Issel on the same subject, and acknowledges his indebtedness to Baldensperger's book on the self-consciousness of Christ, which has been noticed in a recent number of this Review. We have here an attempt to show the exclusively apocalyptic and eschatological nature of Christ's preaching concerning the kingdom. Baldensperger recognizes the double aspect of this preaching, and distinguishes in it an eschatological and a spiritualistic, soteriological element. To do away with either of these factors, according to him, would require a prejudiced and arbitrary treatment of the text of the record. It is not too much to say that Weiss furnishes an example of such dealing with the text. He holds that the view according to which the disciples form and realize the kingdom as a present spiritual community, is entirely foreign to the Gospel. Christ taught that the kingdom was future, as to its establishment on earth, at least. Only in a transcendental sense, in so far as Satan had fallen from heaven and was fast losing his power over the world of spirits through the casting out of demons, did Jesus speak of the kingdom as a present reality in heavenly places. He did not consider Himself the founder of the kingdom, but held that its realization was to be left entirely to God's miraculous interference. His own work was merely preparatory, by the preaching of the Word and the dislodging of Satan. During the earlier stages of His ministry He expected the coming of the kingdom in His lifetime. Later on, the hardening of the people and the hatred of their leaders convinced Him of the impossibility of this near approach. Jesus foresaw that He would fall a victim to the opposition, but, far from counting this a failure of His work, He was led by His religious cast of mind to view it paradoxically as a means for bringing about the desired end, as a ransom for many, i.e., the nation. His death was to be a transition to an exalted state, which, in turn, would be followed by His coming in glory and the end of the present world, during the lifetime of that generation. The establishment of the kingdom itself was conceived of after the manner of a political restoration. The ascetic elements of Christ's teaching are to be understood in the light of the approaching end of the world. Even the righteousness demanded by Him bears a negative, ascetic character, and is not to be compared with morality in the modern sense. The words of Jesus, on which we are accustomed to base our Christian ethics, have to submit to various restrictions and transformations before they will serve this purpose. Jesus laid claim to the dignity of Messiah, Son of Man, in the future kingdom; but He neither considered nor called Himself such for the present. Except in two passages (Mark 2:10, 28), where, following Baur and De Lagarde, Weiss makes "Son of Man" equivalent to the simple "man," he attributes to the name everywhere an eschatological meaning. The mere enumeration of these statements will give some idea of the arbitrary critical method that has been resorted to to evolve them from the sources. So the distinction in Matt. 13:41 between "the kingdom of the Son of Man" (the visible Church) and "the kingdom of the Father," is explained from the catholicizing tendency of the later

Church. The author admits that the results present a difficult problem to Systematic Theology. The ethical-religious application of the idea of the kingdom is not after the mind of Christ. Even the more recent turn given to it by Kaftan and others, making the kingdom the highest good, savors of Kantianism. That which is universally valid in the preaching of Jesus, and ought to form the central idea of our Systematic Theology, is not the idea of the kingdom but that of Sonship of God. We no longer share the eschatological frame of mind of Christ, and no longer put into the petition, "Thy kingdom come," the meaning of it as He taught it to His disciples. The treatise seems to us to be instructive, especially in several respects. It shows to what an extent this apocalyptic construction of the consciousness of Jesus undermines the authority of His teaching. Moreover, it may teach those who would turn back from the authority of the Bible, as a whole, to the authority of Christ as an infallible basis, that this position is no safe retreat from the onslaught of criticism. And, finally, it exposes the arbitrary character of the Ritschlian exegesis when it attempts to ethicize all of Christ's teaching concerning the kingdom.

The one-sidedness of Weiss is partly corrected by a little book of somewhat wider scope and of more recent publication: *Jesu Predigt in ihrem Gegensatz zum Judenthum*. Bousset's problem is whether the preaching of Christ should be understood as in essential harmony with the views of later Judaism, or as a reaction from those views and in opposition to them. He affirms the latter. In so far, his book is not merely in conflict with Weiss but also with Baldensperger. Bousset, however, does not seek the source of this reaction against Judaism in a development by Christ of Old Testament ideas, but explains it entirely on the principle that Jesus was a religious genius of the first rank. In His conception of the Fatherhood of God, He was wholly original and at the farthest remove from the pure transcendentalism of the later Jews, to whom such a thought was foreign. Even Christ's asceticism is distinct from the Jewish type, inasmuch as it lacks the feature of restrained but never really conquered passion and fanaticism. Side by side with it went His ethical activity, His loving service in the midst of men, His untiring devotion to the needs of the present world. In this respect, Christ's preaching was a return to the old prophetic models. His collecting and training of a number of disciples stands in sharp contrast with the eschatological frame of mind. He came eating and drinking and was counted a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber. This judgment ascetic Judaism would not have pronounced upon Him had it not felt the distance between Christ and itself. Even in regard to the eschatological expectations, which He had in common with His people, we observe in Christ a calm certainty, a blessed assurance, that is *toto genere* distinct from the anxious calculations of the apocalyptic mind. With all this, Bousset does not deny that the eschatological element was present in Christ's consciousness, that He looked forward to the end of the present aeon in his lifetime. But there is nothing in this of the impatience, the unrest, the feverish excitement of the Jewish expectations. It rather resembles the consciousness out of which many of the Psalms were written. In His life we hear the calm pulsations of approaching eternity. In Christ's conception of the kingdom, more particularly, Bousset finds a total absence of the political, national element. For Christ, as well as for Paul, the people of Israel resolves itself into the assembly of the righteous; and on this point Christ's preaching is claimed to be dissimilar, both from the old prophetic ideas and from the late Jewish conceptions. The promise of righteousness was predominant in His representation of the blessings of the future kingdom, a feature in which it once more approaches the old prophetic type of preaching. Righteousness is the essence of the kingdom. Hence the kingdom is not merely future, it is also a present reality; and this is meant by the phrase, "the mystery of the kingdom." But the transcendental idea of the kingdom is there likewise, even in the very last discourses. On the other

hand, the Ritschlian notion, that the ethical community of the disciples forms the kingdom, lacks all proof. Recent dogmatics cannot appeal to Christ's authority, when it employs the conception of the kingdom for the purpose of adjusting Christianity to the modern ideas of civilization. In an inquiry into the meaning of Christ's self-designation as "Son of Man," Bousset endeavors to prove that all references in Enoch and 4 Ezra to this figure, which ascribe to it superhuman proportions, are later interpolations from a Christian standpoint. In the mouth of Christ, the title implies a protest against the popular ideals of a political kingdom, and refers to a present function and authority as well as to the future. Bousset concludes, therefore, that Christ gave the name an entirely original turn; but it would seem to us that the basis for this very usage is clearly given in Daniel and the eighth Psalm, so that here also Christ can be shown to have recurred upon earlier prophecy. The treatise closes with the significant words of Wellhausen, "The Gospel develops hidden germs of the Old Testament, but protests against the prevailing tendency of Judaism."

A review of the whole controversy, in which the monographs of Weiss and Bousset mark opposing positions, is given by a third treatise of still more recent date: *Jesu Verkündigung und Lehre vom Reiche Gottes in ihrer geschichtlichen Bedeutung dargestellt*. The value of this treatise does not lie so much in its positive, constructive part, as in the critical treatment applied by it to recent writings on the subject. In a searching, detailed manner here and there bordering upon the pedantic, the statements of Haupt, Köstlin, Lemme, Issel, Schmoller, Johannes Weiss, Bousset, Bernhard Weiss, Beyschlag and Wendt are analyzed in successive paragraphs. It is interesting to observe how the author exposes the loose thinking of mediating theology, in which the distinction between various conceptions is often obliterated, one idea being first made to approach and then made to cover another different idea, so that in the end all notions appear swimming in a haze of indistinctness. In regard to the author's own statements, we must confess that they leave much in obscurity. His main contention is that Jesus did not begin with discovering or framing a new idea of the kingdom, but simply accepted the idea as it was familiar to His people. To express this fact, the author would call the idea "Israelitish." We are not sure whether this word implies an antithesis to the Judaistic ideas of the times. From some passages we should infer it did. But this again makes it difficult for us to understand how Jesus could simply accept this Israelitish idea as historically given, since, in this case, no Israelitish but only, a Judaistic idea was at hand. Or, does the author mean that, side by side with the Judaistic, apocalyptic notions, there existed in the mind of the pious people a purer conception of the kingdom, derived from the study of the prophets and in accordance with the prophetic preaching? If so, then the relation between these two currents of Messianic expectation ought to have been more clearly stated. But, barring this obscurity, the fact itself that Christ placed Himself upon a historic basis, and, instead of explaining or describing the kingdom, in the first instance merely announced its coming, is very properly emphasized by the writer; and likewise the other fact, that repentance and change of mind generally are represented nowhere as means of realizing the kingdom, but merely as conditions of entering the kingdom after its realization shall have taken place. Schnedermann's pamphlet is, of course, against the Ritschlian view.