

Professor Hogg on the Kingdom of God.

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IN the February number of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES, a certain 'insignificant-looking book' was pronounced to be 'the most valuable book of the season.' This was *Christ's Message of the Kingdom*, by Professor A. G. Hogg of the Madras Christian College. Of that little book I have made a rather careful study, and with the editor's permission I attempt in the present paper a simple account of its contents, without comment of my own. Whatever may be thought of Mr. Hogg's argument, it at least calls for the consideration of Biblical and theological students; and I hope that this slight sketch may serve to introduce it to not a few readers.

The form of the work is notable, and is not at first sight favourable to a just estimate of its importance. It is described on the title-page as 'A Course of Daily Study for Private Students and for Bible Circles'; and it consists of ninety short studies—some very short (even less than a page)—that is, readings for fifteen weeks of six days each; the seventh day in each week being devoted to questions suggested by the six days' study. It is quite a novelty to find a serious theological treatise presented in such a form as this; but the author states that he has done so, not only to render the book suitable for Bible Circles, but also to help the reader to study it in a devotional spirit, carefully comparing the Scripture passages indicated, and not hurrying on with mere speculative inquiries. The Scripture references, which are given at the head of each day's study, are quite extraordinarily apposite; and it is absolutely essential to a true understanding of the book that the reader should not trust to his knowledge, however accurate, of chapter and verse, but should conscientiously look out and read every single text or passage, however familiar. Again and again one is struck by something in them of which one had only partially seen the point, or even not seen it at all.

The main purpose of the book is to answer the question, What was Christ's Message of the Kingdom? He preached 'the Gospel of the Kingdom'; He said, 'the Kingdom is at hand'; more than that, 'The Kingdom is come' (Mt 12²⁸, Lk 11²⁰; cf. Lk 17²¹ R.V. margin). The ex-

pression, let me add, occurs in His recorded words 50 times in St. Matthew, 16 times in St. Mark, 35 times in St. Luke, 4 times in St. John. I do not here distinguish between the 'Kingdom of God' and the 'Kingdom of heaven'; but of course Professor Hogg does not ignore the difference. The point is, what did our Lord mean by the phrase, 'the Kingdom is at hand'?

The answer to the question, as given in this book, may be thus stated: (1) In a much more important sense than we generally realize, the Kingdom did actually come as 'a new world-order' in our Lord's day; (2) there was no reason why its consummation should not then have come in the fullest sense, except the sin and unbelief of man; (3) there is no reason, except our unbelief, why we should not be living and acting now under the new world-order which is already present, including the use of the divine power already at the disposal of faith for working what are called miracles; (4) there is no reason, except our own unreadiness, why the full consummation of the Kingdom should not come now, there being no fixed date, near or distant, for that consummation.

It is an illustration of Professor Hogg's spiritual method that the book begins with a whole week of personal application. The opening sentence is characteristic: 'St. Paul could not keep silent.' This alludes to one of the texts referred to just above, Ro 1¹⁴, 'I am debtor. . . .' Then, 'He felt himself under obligation to give freely as he had freely received—to tell to any one who would listen of that wondrous new life in Christ into which he had entered, and which had transformed for him the face of the world.' Then, 'The world misunderstands and misjudges the Father. Can His children keep silence?' Various doubts are then noticed, doubts about God meaning what He says,—not conscious or expressed doubts, but doubts evidenced by our conduct. These are illustrated from the O.T. Gn 3 is referred to ('Yea, hath God said?'); and the 88th Psalm as a picture of utter darkness; and various complaints in other Psalms.

The Second Week, which is entitled 'The

Vindication of Jehovah,' takes us again to the O.T., and refers us to various passages predicting the coming Kingdom or 'Messianic age,' which would be the vindication of God amid the perplexities and problems of life and death. Among the passages cited is the 74th Psalm, with its picture of disaster and distress, and in the very middle of it (v.12), 'Yet God is my King of old.' It is shown from the Psalms and Isaiah that the ideas of O.T. times about the coming Kingdom were progressively enlarging. At first, only national prosperity; then a restoration of Eden, and the abolition of sin and death; then, in view of the natural question, But what about those already dead? hints (Is 27, Dn 12) of a future resurrection. Dn 7 is cited as showing that the expected Kingdom was no mere earthly development, but was to be supernatural: 'The man-like figure "comes with the clouds of heaven."'

Then, in the Third Week, comes the question, 'Why does it tarry?' which is the title of the Week's Study. The Book of Job is cited to show that one object of the delay may be the discipline or training of God's people. Another reason would be the need of atonement, as shown in Is 53. But coming to the New Testament, we find both John the Baptist and our Lord saying the Kingdom is 'at hand'; and an interesting study of their words is undertaken, to show that they referred to the same Kingdom, and to the same time of its coming. The teaching of the Week is thus summed up:—

'(1) By the coming of the Kingdom Christ meant the same event as the Apocalyptists meant, viz. the arrival of a new age, when God would at last let Himself act in the way in which faith had always felt it only natural that He should act, giving His omnipotence free play in the service of His righteousness,—an age in which therefore supernatural forces would be available for the conquest of suffering evil, and sin.'

'(2) He announced this Kingdom as close at hand—indeed in some respects (viz. in the availableness of supernatural forces) as already present. . . .

'(3) He described the present phase of the Kingdom as a process of gradual growth, but did not thereby exclude the present phase from terminating in a sudden crisis of fulfilment.'

And yet, 'it appears so obvious that the Kingdom had *not* yet arrived.' What, then, did Christ's Now mean? The answer is expressed in the title of the Fourth Week, 'It need not Tarry.' 'May the Kingdom not really have been at hand—not merely that beginning of it which actually came to pass, but its consummation too? May it not have been the incredible obstinacy of human distrust that needlessly prevented what might really have taken place?' God, in fact, was always ready, but man was not. But by the Incarnation a Man appeared whose perfect life and absolute trust in His Father introduced the new world-order.

At this point emerges one of the chief teachings of the book. The author takes a strong view of what is called the *kenosis*. He is an absolutely orthodox believer in the Deity of Christ. 'God the Son became Man'; 'He was Very God'; 'God Incarnate,'—these are among his emphatic statements on that fundamental doctrine. But he holds that God the Son 'emptied Himself' more completely at the Incarnation than the average Christian has been accustomed to think. He takes our Lord's words in their most literal sense; such words as 'I can of Mine own self do nothing,' 'The thing which I speak, even as the Father said unto Me, so I speak,' and other similar utterances. He particularly lays stress upon the mysterious words in Mk 13³² (also in the R.V. of Mt 24³⁶), 'Neither the Son.' He points out, indeed, that this very passage implies the Son's unique greatness. 'Of that day and hour knoweth (1) no one; (2) not even the angels in heaven; (3) neither the Son'—the Son standing alone. Yet he will not explain away the plain statement that Jesus *did not know*. And his belief evidently is that his view, so far from detracting from the unique greatness of the Son of God, enhances it by magnifying His condescension.

Relying on our Lord's words, Professor Hogg draws a remarkable picture of what may have been in His mind during His earthly life and ministry; dwelling, as so many modern writers do, but with a reverent devotion not too common among them, upon the gradually growing consciousness of Jesus of His divine mission. Mr. Hogg does not, as some do, defer all that sacred consciousness till the Baptism. He infers from the narrative of Jesus being found in the Temple that 'the uniquely intimate filial consciousness of God which He manifested throughout His public ministry went

back to His earliest years,' but thinks that it was the baptismal revelation that assured Him of His Messianic office. Then Mr. Hogg suggests that He 'hoped' and 'expected' the immediate, or at least speedy, consummation of the Kingdom. 'He knew that with the Father all things were possible—that nothing could be too glorious for God. Would He not then have been false to His Father if He had counted an early consummation unlikely? . . . Is it not we ourselves who blaspheme God when we assume that the end necessarily was and necessarily is far off?'

Professor Hogg urges that this 'adds to the story of the life of Christ an absorbing human interest.' 'It gives a new moving power to' certain passages 'by permitting us to interpret them in their natural sense as expressions of genuine disappointment.' For instance, the weeping over Jerusalem, 'If thou hadst known, even thou,' and the words, 'O Jerusalem . . . how often would I . . .' How far more pathetic these words—such is Mr. Hogg's contention—if they express, not merely sorrow for a rejection which was always before Him as a matter of course, but grief for a sin which He had fondly hoped might have been averted; and how much deeper our sense of His love!

But if it be granted that the Lord might have so laid aside His divine knowledge as to be liable to such disappointment of genuine hopes, the question arises, why should He expect any other issue of His ministry?

First, because of 'the limitless power of God'; and, secondly, 'it was difficult for Him to believe that men could long remain deaf to such a wondrous message from the Father.' This is illustrated by a verse which Mr. Hogg twice puts at the head of the Daily Studies, Mk 6⁶, 'He *marvelled* because of their unbelief.' How could He 'marvel' if He knew it all beforehand? Even when He perceived the certainty of His rejection and death, that death, and the resurrection which was to follow, 'would surely give to the message an irresistible power,' and the consummation would quickly follow (cf. Jn 12²⁴, the 'corn of wheat' . . . bearing much fruit, and the declaration just after, 'I, if I be lifted up,' etc.). 'We may,' says Mr. Hogg, 'venture to suppose that our Lord began His public ministry with a solemn consciousness on the one hand that the establishment of the Kingdom *might* cost a criminal tragedy

like that foreshadowed in Is 53, but on the other hand with the great and glad hope (of which we seem to see the last flicker in the Gethsemane prayer) that the Father, with whom all things were possible, might . . . fulfil His gracious purpose toward mankind in some way less grievously tarnished by human sin and guilt.' 'Ought we not,' adds Mr. Hogg, 'to feel convicted of unbelief if we have at all felt that His hope was unwarrantable?' And he gives us for reference Mt 17²⁰, Mk 9²³ 10²⁷.

If, then, we may venture to think that Jesus did 'hope' or 'expect' a speedy consummation, then '*it really might have been fulfilled.*' 'Since we cannot ascribe any fickle wavering of purpose to God, it follows that if the date of the consummation was really uncertain, this must have been because God intended it to depend upon the attitude of man.' 'God will not bind Himself by any prediction as to the time of the consummation, but reserves to Himself full freedom (Ac 17) to send it *whenever* He sees that human conditions are ripe for it (Mk 4²⁹).'

Therefore, the answer to the question, Why did the Kingdom tarry? and why does it tarry now? is, *It need not have tarried then, and it need not tarry now.*

Then follow Studies for two weeks, entitled 'The Kingdom as Present' and 'The Kingdom of Glory.' Under the former head the whole question of Miracles is discussed. 'For many N.T. scholars,' writes Mr. Hogg, 'the presumption that miracles do not happen has become a guiding principle of criticism. The Christian on the other hand should proceed on the assumption that unless the message of the Kingdom is a false message, miracles are to be expected.' Christ and the New Age had begun. How, then, would we expect Him to act? We should expect Him (1) to be 'content with ordinary agencies whenever these sufficed for His purposes, because the Messianic Age was not to be something absolutely different from all that had gone before, but was only to supplement and perfect it.' (2) But when ordinary agencies were not sufficient, He 'would freely draw upon the infinite resources of God.' (3) He would 'look upon the fact that supernatural (that is, unprecedented) agencies did actually operate at His desire as furnishing an irrefragable proof of the truth of His message.' (4) He 'would regard the use of these supernatural powers of the Messianic

age as no peculiar privilege of His own, but as open to all.' To illustrate this the Gospel narratives are examined; and I may perhaps condense the resulting conclusions as follows:—

(a) Our Lord often healed men without recourse to 'miracle.' The evidence from the Gospels for this statement is remarkable, and worth careful study. The conclusion is, 'Christ's ministry of healing was a work in which He used the curative applications of His day, drawing upon supernatural agencies only as a supplementary resource'; 'it therefore made heavy demands upon His time and physical strength'; 'He felt the need of constant prayer to keep Himself spiritually in tone for the acts of faith involved in His more striking cures' (Mk 9²⁹).

(b) The real 'miracles' were *not* 'a breach of order.' If a new supernatural order was present, 'it must manifest its presence in supernatural occurrences.'

(c) There was no limit to the possible use by Christ of supernatural powers. It was for seeing this that He praised the centurion; and Mt 26⁵⁸ shows His 'utterly unlimited claims . . . upon His Father's resources.'

(d) 'The miracles both of Christ and in the Early Church were an indispensably necessary evidence of the truth of the Gospel.'

(e) The account of our Lord's Temptation shows that 'miracles' are not to be wrought either for private ends or to convince sceptics. 'While He estimated very highly the evidential value of His miracles for those who had the rudiments of faith,' He knew that 'where this was absent miracles had no educative value (Lk 16³¹),' and indeed created excitement, distracting attention from His teaching. Hence His frequent injunctions to those who were healed not to tell others about it.

(f) A note here refers to other kinds of miracles, the water made wine, the stilling of the tempest, the walking on the sea, the draughts of fishes. 'All these,' says Mr. Hogg, 'are cases where a striking interference with the natural order is brought to pass, not for the sake of averting tragedy or curing grievous pain, but for ends which at first seem ordinary. Only a kingly soul could feel it natural to expend such resources on such objects. They impress us as regal acts.'

So much for our Lord's miracles. But Professor Hogg further contends that as we are living in the Messianic age under a new supernatural world-

order, Christ's words in Mt 17 and Mk 11 are literally true: 'If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you'; and 'Have faith in God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever . . . shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that what he saith cometh to pass; he shall have it. . . . All things whatsoever,' etc. 'Miracles in the Christian sense,' he says, 'and prayer, are just the outer and inner aspects of the same fact—that the universe is not a fixed mechanical system, but a Messianic order in which the unlimited resources of God are freely available to us for all right ends.' How keen was Christ's disappointment at the disciples' failure at the foot of the mount of Transfiguration! 'With this cry ringing in our ears, let us look back over our own past efforts to benefit our fellow-men, and ask whether our lives have been a fulfilment of Jn 15¹⁶—"I chose you, and appointed you, that ye should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should abide: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My Name, He may give it you."'

On the subject of 'the Kingdom of glory,' Professor Hogg says that if the Kingdom in its present phase is 'the dawning of a new world-order,' 'much more will the perfected phase include a transformation of the entire known universe.' He considers that our popular notions of 'heaven' have hindered us from perceiving this and much more. 'As the Kingdom is the perfecting of earth, with victory over all forces of evil, decay, and death, so life in the Kingdom is the perfecting of earthly life with immunity from sin and disease and death.' One passage I must quote in full:

'Let us recollect what the consummated Kingdom of God means. It means an order of things in which God will at last act in the way in which faith has always felt it only natural that He should act, letting His omnipotence have free play in the service of His goodness, for the perfecting of the world and the abolition of every curse.

'But if this be so, then obviously those who live in the consummated Kingdom will have an omnipotent bulwark against all forces of evil, including death. Life in the Kingdom will therefore be immortal. Its immortality will not be due to any inherent metaphysical

indestructibility of the soul, but will be a consequence of the consummation of the Kingdom—a consequence accruing, therefore, only to those who are members of the Kingdom. Moreover, since the Kingdom means the perfecting of earth, life in the Kingdom must include the perfecting of our rich human life. In fact, the more truly precious any earthly relationship appears to us, the more confident may we be that this will be preserved and perfected in the eternal Kingdom. Is not this a satisfying gospel?

Then follow four weekly Studies, entitled 'The Reign of God,' 'Unworldliness and Other-Worldliness,' 'The Unworldly Life,' 'The Goal of Endeavour.' 'We pass,' says the author, 'from the question of what difference the establishment of the Kingdom makes to man, and begin to study the difference it makes *in* man.' Under the first head, 'The Reign of God,' he dwells on the character and conduct of the community of members of the Kingdom, expounding our Lord's teaching about 'meekness and humble service' being 'the only title to rank and authority,' about treatment of erring members and of wrongdoers who are outsiders, about 'rendering to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's,' etc. 'In any State the institutions of which do not perfectly conform to these principles, the sons of the kingdom must feel themselves not wholly citizens, but in some degree "strangers and pilgrims."' A good deal in these Studies reminds one of *Ecce Homo*.

Turning from the community to the individual, Mr. Hogg next reviews Christ's attitude to external religious observances, asceticism, marriage and family life, social reform, the ethics of trade, property, etc. His great point is that, although we are 'strangers and pilgrims,' we are not to be 'other-worldly,' but 'unworldly.' This is all put in a very interesting way, but need not detain us. I will only quote one sentence from the passages about the future life and marriage: 'All that is deep and spiritual in the marriage relationship will be continued and perfected in the age to come, because that age is not another world but this world regenerated.'

Passing over a week's Studies on 'The Goal of Endeavour,' and another on 'Divine Transcendence,' we come to a week on 'Fatherhood and Sonship.' And here, again, we meet the

question of our Lord's knowledge and foreknowledge. One of the Studies is a very remarkable one. 'Shall we venture to-day,' it begins, 'to speculate reverently concerning the way in which the filial consciousness which our Lord possessed from the first prepared the way for His apparently later consciousness of Himself as Messiah? From the outset He thought of God as Father in the rich ethical sense illustrated in the parable of the Prodigal, and at the same time as the incomparable, transcendent Lord.' What influence would this have on the thoughts about the coming of the Messianic age which He would share with the pious Jewish circle in which He was brought up? Would He not think, Why does it not come? We may naturally suppose, suggests Mr. Hogg, that He would entertain three thoughts: (1) 'the Father desires to establish the Kingdom'; (2) 'for His infinitude nothing is too difficult'; (3) yet, 'just because He is Father, He will not force the human will.' What would be the inference? 'That the Father is always willing to usher in the perfect world-order,' and 'that the Kingdom might have come at any time but for man's unfitness.' Then, 'realizing that no one else had a consciousness of and trust in the Father at all approaching His own,' He would, even before the Baptism, perceive that the Father meant *Him* to be the Messiah, who, 'by His own faith, and by awakening like faith in others, would make it possible for the Father to fulfil His purpose. This striking Study closes with a few humble and reverent words: 'We have been trying to conceive the course of Christ's inner consciousness, and we may feel quite sure that we have fallen very far short of the truth, for "no one knoweth the Son save the Father." . . . Yet is not even the little glimpse into His mind which we seem to ourselves to have obtained to-day full of inspiring suggestiveness?'

The last two Weeks are headed 'A Ransom for Many' and 'It is Finished,' and bring us to the supreme topic of our Lord's Death and Resurrection. The former begins by quoting in full the great passage, Is 52¹³-53¹². We need not imagine, says Mr. Hogg, what the prophet intended to convey. The point is how Christ applied it to Himself. He 'heard the Father call Him to fulfil that Servant's mission and destiny in His own Person'; and some interesting verbal affinities are pointed out between His language and the language of the prophecy.

But a strong point is made of the fact that our Lord announced His Resurrection with the same exactness and emphasis as His Death. So His mission was not merely to die. It was to die *and to rise from the dead*. 'I lay down My life, *that I may take it again*'; and this, as Mr. Hogg also points out, Is 53 plainly predicts. One object, then, of His death was *to conquer death by rising again*. It was 'the resurrection of One who had been announcing the arrival of a new age in which for faith all things were possible—who had claimed that His own miracles were evidences of its presence—who *had foretold* that though He was about to submit to death He would rise again—and who then did actually die, unmistakably and by violence, *and fulfilled His prediction*.'

But what made His soul 'exceeding sorrowful'? Mr. Hogg sets aside the ordinary explanation, for which, in his opinion, the only evidence is the Cry from the Cross, and that cry, he urges, was 'not a cry of despair,' but 'the self-preserving cry of faith as it reels under the assault of despair.' And in the next Study he suggests that the 'agony' was caused by His 'horror at the sin of man in crucifying the Messiah, His grief at all that this sin would cost mankind in days to come'—*e.g.* 'Weep not for Me, but for yourselves and for your children.' 'When we realize the wild carnival of sin that makes up the story of the end, . . . can we wonder that in the garden our Lord shrank in every fibre of His being from the voluntary surrender which was to evoke all this guilt?'

One other reason for Christ's death is suggested, which cannot be put in a few words. It must suffice to quote two passages. 'In relation to sinfulness which is still obstinate and impenitent, God cannot satisfy His holiness by any weaker expression of His opposition to sin than that which is afforded by voluntarily, willingly, letting sinners vent their utmost hate upon Himself.' 'Is not this the final secret?' 'Not so much by suffering the punishment of sinners (though that also is in one sense true, since all suffering is in its origin the penal consequence of sin), as by enabling sinners openly to vent their malice against God Himself, our Lord made atonement and satisfied the righteousness of God.' This, I confess, is not very clear; nor, to me, is the further exposition of the subject, nor the illustration from the Christian treatment of unrepenting offenders enjoined by our Lord in Mt 18. But I have not space to

enter into the subject further. I will only note the absence of any direct reference to 'propitiation'; and I venture to ask, Without *that*, can we arrive at 'the final secret'?

We now come to the last Study, 'It is Finished.' In what sense, asks Mr. Hogg, could Christ feel or say 'It is finished'? The answer is, (1) 'Atonement had been made.' He had gone as a lamb to the slaughter, and now in sure faith He looked forward to a resurrection in which He should find that His soul had been made an offering for sin, and should see the pleasure of the Lord prosper in His hand.' (2) The New Covenant of Jer 31 had been introduced. (3) The way was ready for the 'full outpouring of the Spirit.' (4) The Church, the new Israel, had been founded. The last day's Study dwells on the Lord's promise of His spiritual presence, in Mt 18, 'Where two or three,' etc., and in Mt 28, 'Lo, I am with you alway.' Then, 'Do we here reach the summit of Christ's message of the Kingdom?' 'No, this unseen presence remains something less than the uttermost goal of His mission.' 'He is with us unseen "*unto the consummation of the age,*" but *then* unseen no longer' (Mk 14⁶², '*Ye shall see* the Son of Man'; the 'henceforth' of Matthew and Luke being taken as an interpolation). 'He will come "in the glory of His Father," invisible no longer.' 'Let not us, therefore, be like the mockers who say, "Where is the promise of His coming? . . . For the Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness; but is long-suffering." So the book closes.

I have abstained from commenting on the views set forth in this remarkable work, and in closing I only wish to make one remark. It seems to me that we are not told what it is that would be necessary for the consummation of the Kingdom to 'tarry' no longer, but to come now. Mr. Hogg's answer would probably be 'sufficient faith in God's people,' and it seems impertinent to re-join, 'But how much?' Yet, as he does assume the existence still, when the great day comes, of finally impenitent souls, he probably expects much the same variety of spiritual attainment as at present; and one wonders, if in the purposes of God the date depends on human readiness, what may be the necessary degree and extent of that readiness. As far as I can see, the book does not suggest a solution of this problem. Nevertheless, it is a great and an inspiring book.