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CURRENT ISSUES.

ONCE it was possible to ignore eschatology. When Harnack wrote his fascinating book, *What is Christianity?* he was able to expound the gospel without troubling to deal with the eschatology. Then came Schweitzer, and there seemed to be more eschatology than gospel in the New Testament. A school arose which shifted eschatology from the circumference to the centre. And, since then, it has been at least admitted that eschatology is an integral part of original Christianity.

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But this does not make the modern man like it any better. He does not care to believe that Jesus suffered from an illusion, and he cannot bring himself to expect any sudden, immediate coming of the Kingdom. It is to this problem that Professor C. R. Bowen addressed himself, when he spoke as president to the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis in Chicago, last December. His address is now printed in the *Journal of Biblical Literature*, under the title "Why Eschatology?" He believes that we need eschatology, a genuine eschatology, and he gives us his reasons.

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One is, that we must have an explanation of the world in relation to God. Let us define Eschatology. It is "the undefeatable conviction that in the end God, and not the devil, shall rule, that all the age-long course of sin and shame shall end in purity and peace, that what creation made implicit shall become explicit, that the universe is at heart good, and from it evil as a foreign intruder shall be ultimately expelled." Christianity, as a historical religion, cannot dispense with this. It reiterates faith in the destiny of man.

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But what of the New Testament hope of an immediate end? Well, it was a vivid foreshortening of the time-process; it was

an error in perspective. History has proved that. But, Professor Bowen argues, this was merely an intense way of affirming the reality of the hope. If Jesus and the disciples believed that the Day of the Lord was at hand, they were interested not in chronology but in God's timeless purpose.

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Besides, such assurance of faith hastens the time. "How swiftly did the human spirit in those illumined years of the first century make progress towards its goal, leaping where we crawl!" Men felt then the divine purpose pressing upon their hearts. It was this, and no mechanical study of Daniel's prophecies, which gave them their glowing faith and insight. And, Professor Bowen urges, what we to-day need is not any preoccupation with simply apocalyptic categories but a keen vision of the divine end and purpose.

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What is the Glory of God? The manifestation of His presence and purpose, the honour and purity of His being. Dr. Abrahams, in a recent book of lectures on *The Glory of God*, stresses the truth that this divine Glory is most clearly revealed in His moral excellence, and consequently that a response is expected from His people. The primitive idea was that God's glory was most vividly shown in a storm, as a power working through lightning, thunder, rain, and hail. The Hebrews saw a massive manifestation of the Deity in such phenonema. As Dr. Abrahams observes, "the storm is nowhere else described in ancient poetry as it is in Hebrew." But as God's power working for righteousness, the Glory became associated afterwards with less dramatic and external phenomena; it was verified in human life. And God's people were expected to honour Him by reproducing the same moral excellence.

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There is a verse in the book of Proverbs which brings out this truth. "He that oppressteth the poor reproacheth his Maker: but he that hath mercy on the needy honoureth Him." Why? Because, as Dr. Abrahams observes, "Man's oppression denies the perfection of the world, man's mercy asserts that perfection." When one is kind, one is bringing out the Divine quality of kindness and love, illustrating it, as we might say.

Hence to act for God's Glory is to act from unselfish motives. To glorify God is the opposite of self-glorification. And Dr. Abrahams points out that the temptation to glorify oneself is never far from the very churches or parties which claim most loudly to be aching for the glory of God Himself. "All sects are inclined to take God's name in vain, presuming and boasting to be working for His glory when they are scheming for their own. 'In hoc signo' may camouflage a worldly ambition."

SINCE WELLHAUSEN.

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