

used in this reference. It is a passage in Deuteronomy (4¹⁹). 'The writer of Deuteronomy, in warning the Israelite against idolatry, bids him take heed "lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun and the moon and the stars, even all the host of heaven, thou be drawn away and worship them, and serve them, which the LORD thy God hath divided (*i.e.* allotted) to all the peoples under the whole heaven.'" And

this passage is more surprising than the other. For it says that Jehovah has assigned the heathen their gods, just as He chose Israel for His own peculiar possession. 'The God of Israel is supreme: He assigns to every nation its objects of worship; and the veneration of the heavenly bodies—which was widely diffused in antiquity—by nations other than Israel, forms part of His providential order of the world.'

The Bearing of Criticism upon the Gospel History.

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II.

THE controversy on the Fourth Gospel is very obstinately conducted, more obstinately than any other in the whole field of New Testament Criticism. If we date from the appearance of Bretschneider's *Probabilia* in 1820, it has been going on now for nearly ninety years; and yet the two sides confront each other as stubbornly as ever; neither will give way. Attack and defence are evenly balanced; a convinced book on one side is followed by a convinced book on the other.

I have specimens of both classes before me at this moment. The massive commentary of Dr. Theodor Zahn came out at the beginning of last year, and is a worthy monument of one of the most learned men of our time. By the side of this the Dean of Westminster's three Advent Lectures, published under the title *The Historical Character of St. John's Gospel*, will naturally seem slight, but the value of the little book must not be estimated by its size. Like everything the Dean writes, it is based upon close and careful first-hand study; and it has modified more than one current view in a sense of which future discussions ought to take note. Still more recently there is another excellent *Introduction to the N.T.*, by Professor Fritz Barth of Berne, which upholds the traditional view. And a volume of Baird Lectures on the treatment of the Gospels by Eusebius (*The Four Gospels in the Earliest Church History*, 1908), by Professor T. Nicol of Aberdeen, does the same.

On the other side I may mention two English books and two German, the latter both commentaries. Mr. Ernest F. Scott's *The Fourth Gospel: Its Purpose and Theology*, and Professor Burkitt's *Gospel History and its Transmission*, both appeared in 1906, and are both adverse on the point that is most important for our present purpose, the historical value to be attached to the Gospel. Of the commentaries, one is by a young theologian W. Heitmüller of Göttingen, and forms part of a series edited by Johannes Weiss. The object of this series is popular, but the commentary on St. John is a competent piece of work characteristic of the school from which it proceeds. And the same may be said even more strongly of the commentary by Walter Bauer, which takes the place of an older work by H. J. Holtzmann: it is extremely close, exact, and conscientious.

We might place perhaps in an intermediate class books like Dr. Edwin A. Abbott's *Johannine Vocabulary* (1905) and *Johannine Grammar* (1906), which are admirable collections of materials that do not as such point to a particular conclusion, or the very candid little book by Mr. H. L. Jackson (1906), in which the balancing of arguments seems to be more important than the final construction put upon them; and, lastly, two delicately discriminating papers by Dr. Lock in *The Interpreter* for July, 1907, and *Journal of Theological Studies* for April 1908.

I cannot, indeed, help making a certain allowance for 'the personal equation' in some of the works that I have quoted on the negative side. Professor Burkitt is always bright and always frank, and he tells us without any reserve what he does not like in the Fourth Gospel. But it seems to me (if I may put it so) that he has taken hold of the Gospel by the wrong end. The controversy with the Jews in chap. 8, has made an impression upon him which he seems unable to shake off. I wonder if it would help him to consider, on the hypothesis that the Gospel is really the work of an eye-witness if not of an Apostle, that if so, the author must have himself seen the Master whom he so deeply revered and loved nailed to the cross; he must have himself seen the faces of those who wagged their heads and reviled Him (Mk 15²⁹). We might well believe that they would haunt him for the rest of his life in his dreams, and come back to him whenever he thought of anything specially diabolical. Would it be surprising, if to such a one the debates which Jesus must have had with the Jews were reproduced in an unsympathetic form? The 'son of thunder' may well have had two sides to his nature, an ardent love on the one hand, and an ardent hate on the other. For the rest, I cannot but think it specially important that Professor Burkitt and the Dean of Westminster should be read side by side.

In Mr. Scott, too, there is a personal equation. Nothing can be more delightful than his exposition when he is in sympathy with his subject. But he is deeply imbued with Ritschlianism, and he is a modernist and a liberal; and he cannot forgive the evangelist for not being all these things like himself. If we could suppose that, instead of being always prepared with a scolding wherever the poor man shows signs of lapsing into metaphysics or 'ecclesiasticism,' he had asked himself whether after all there was not some excuse for both—whether the metaphysics of the day did not furnish a means of bringing home to the most educated and thoughtful of contemporaries the highest and the deepest import of the faith which he held; and whether there may not be a time when it is well that the gaze should be turned inwards upon the society to which it is a privilege to belong as well as outwards upon the wide world—if we could imagine Mr. Scott's book reconstructed on these

lines, would it not have gained something in the process, and not lost? And would not the writer's admirable gifts have been seen to better advantage?

The two German commentators both repeat the usual shibboleths of their school; but they both sometimes get into difficulties and perplexities. When Heitmüller comes to 21²⁴, he says that in this verse 'the beloved disciple is indicated as author of the Gospel, but in v.²³ his death is implied. The author cannot well have certified his own death. But that vv.^{24f.} should be separated from what precedes as an addition, cannot be made probable.' In other words, the writer contradicts himself directly in consecutive verses. Whether he wrote *bonâ fide* or not, and whether he confused, or wished to identify, John the Presbyter with John the Apostle, Heitmüller cannot say. Bauer begins by saying that a writing could not well have a stronger self-authentication than is contained in 21²⁴, but he ends by saying that this very self-authentication becomes a self-contradiction and a ground of suspicion ('so wird dieses letzte "Selbstzeugnis" zum Selbstwiderspruch und zur Selbstverdächtigung'). These are the sort of things that, I confess, stick in my throat. It is not a question of orthodoxy or of heterodoxy, but of the plainest common sense. Do rational beings contradict themselves in this way? But indeed, in the case of Heitmüller, I find my own literary canons almost inverted, e.g. on p. 185; what are mountains for him become molehills for me, and my molehills are his mountains.

I am aware that on this question of the interpretation of John 21²⁴ I have used some strong language, for which I think that Mr. H. L. Jackson intended quietly to rebuke me. I said *a propos* of this passage (*Fourth Gospel*, p. 81), 'I hope that a time may come when it will be considered as wrong to libel the dead as it is to libel the living.' I would not repeat exactly those words, but I am not sorry that I wrote them. I think that a protest, and a strong protest, was needed. But the reason why I would not repeat them is, because I see that Mr. Jackson and others regard it as possible to treat the verse as coming under the head of ordinary pseudepigraphy. I should not of course think it any libel to say that an author assumed *a nom de plume*. For instance, in 2 Es 14⁸⁸⁻⁸⁹, when

Ezra says that] he dictated ninety-four books of mysteries to five men in forty days, the fiction is evident, and harmless because evident. But it is another thing to make such a statement as that at the end of the Gospel. A statement like this, if not true, is deliberately false; and, if it is false, then I should say that the writer stamped himself as dishonest and insincere. I may be wrong; but that is my view.

Of all the literature that I have ever read on the Fourth Gospel, nothing has gone so far to reconcile me to the possibility that a large part of the Gospel may be in the last resort allegory rather than history, as the two papers of Dr. Lock's to which I have referred above. Dr. Lock does not sum up in this sense himself, and I am glad that he does not; but I have never seen that alternative stated so persuasively. There are, however, one or two points which I do not think that Dr. Lock has discussed, but which go to confirm me in the view that I have always hitherto held. One, and by no means the weakest, is the verse 21²⁴, that I have just been considering. This is the most explicit of all the passages which imply that the author of the Gospel was an eye-witness, and wrote as an eye-witness. Other passages, like 19⁸⁵, are ambiguous, and might mean, not that the author was himself an eye-witness, but that he derived his knowledge of this particular incident from an eye-witness. There is no ambiguity in the verse in which those who publish the Gospel are speaking. And my reason for not liking to explain this as part of the language of pseudonymity is the seriousness and directness with which the statement is made, and the way in which it falls in with so much besides in the Gospel. The idea of 'bearing witness' is, as Dr. Westcott showed years ago, one of the leading ideas of the whole book. The witness is doubtless to the truth which the Gospel was written to prove, viz. 'that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.' It branches off into many forms. The Baptist bears witness; the Scriptures bear witness; Jesus Himself bears witness, both by His words and by His works; the Father in heaven bears witness. It is a great array of testimony. But to what is all this testimony directed? What was it, and what does it mean? Surely it is the testimony of fact to fact.

I am well aware how much the notion of

allegory has been gaining ground of late. Loisy, Heitmüller, Mr. Scott, Professor Burkitt, all fall back upon it. They maintain that the author was indifferent to historical reality, and interested only in the spiritual significance of the things that he related. Some of them, strangely enough, emphasize at the same time the anti-Docetic object of the Gospel—the purpose in the mind of the writer to refute the notion that the Divine Being, who to all appearance walked the earth as man, was a phantom only and not real flesh and blood. The writer of the Gospel is supposed to aim at refuting this. But what sort of refutation would his Gospel be, if it were itself nothing more than a string of allegories? Of what avail would it be to cast out phantom by phantom? For my part I can only take the opening words of the First Epistle of St. John in their most literal sense, and see in them the substance of the Gospel; it is an appeal to what the writer had himself seen and heard and to that which his own hands had handled. I can only endorse the verdict of the Dean of Westminster: 'It is to my mind impossible to doubt that the evangelist of the Fourth Gospel intended the scenes which he described to be accepted as real occurrences; it is impossible to believe that he knew them all the while to be the outcome of his imagination.' (*Historical Character*, etc., p. 9).

The criticism of the Fourth Gospel has an important bearing on the Deity of our Lord, because it may be said to have that question for its special theme ('These things are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God'). At the same time I need hardly say that the fourth evangelist does not in the least put his teaching in the form of a question. It has in some respects become a question for us at the present day, but it was no question for him. He held his belief with the utmost tenacity, and he wrote out of the fulness of his heart to commend it to others. He writes with authority, with conscious authority; he knows in what he has believed, and he wishes to give others the benefit of his own experience—especially other Christians, to deepen and confirm their faith, but also all who are ready to become Christians, who have the open mind to receive the gift that God has vouchsafed to them.

Let us consider exactly what the Fourth Gospel does contribute. I do not think that it adds

anything altogether new. The fundamental truths were already there in the Synoptic Gospels and in St. Paul. Even the doctrine of the Logos is set forth in the Epistle to the Colossians—all but the name. And there are approximations towards it in the earlier Epistles: *e.g.* where it is said that Christ 'was made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption' (1 Co 1⁸⁰); and again where it is said, 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself' (2 Co 5¹⁹); and again the great saying, 'the Word was made flesh' is really anticipated where it is said that our Lord Jesus Christ, though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor (2 Co 8⁹); or that He 'emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men' (Phil 2⁷); or that God sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh (Ro 8³). And if the Fourth Gospel insists that 'Jesus is the Christ of God,' the other Gospels insist no less strongly that He is the Christ (the Messiah), the Son of Man, which, as we shall see, is a more significant name of the Messiah. Everything is contained potentially in that word, which is a Jewish title, but with a universal meaning; the Messiah is at once Son of Man and Son of God. It may be said, with truth, that the Fourth Gospel is only the working out in full detail of that great passage which no doubt ultimately comes from Q: 'No one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him' (Mt 12²⁷, Lk 12³²). The evangelist does develop this idea of the mutual relationship of the Father and the Son in full detail and in many different contexts. It is just this which imparts to the Gospel what the critics call its monotony. It is true that the evangelist does, as it were, turn round the idea this way and that and looks at it in varied lights, as one might turn about a gem and catch the light on each of its many facets. In that sense there is perhaps a certain monotony; and the Fourth Gospel does no doubt dwell on the idea as the other Gospels had not dwelt upon it. That is just, as we have seen, its special purpose. To that extent we may allow that it differs from the Synoptics; and we may be glad that it does so.

If we ask, then, what the criticism of the Fourth Gospel amounts to, what precisely is at stake in it, I suppose we should say something like this. The

main question is: Have we before us in this special presentation of the Divinity of our Lord a first-hand impression or a second-hand impression? Does the Gospel come to us from the first generation of Christians, or from the second generation? Is this doctrine in organic connexion with the rest of primitive Christianity, or is it detachable from it? It would be far too much to say that the doctrine stands or falls with the Fourth Gospel, because, as I have just been saying, we already have it in the Synoptic Gospels and in St. Paul. But, on the traditional view, the Fourth Gospel strongly reinforces these authorities, whereas, on the other view, it does not so much reinforce as echo them. In any case, the Fourth Gospel is what it is, and it states the doctrine as it does state it; but to us it comes with a different degree of impressiveness and weight according to what we believe to be its origin. Perhaps, in putting the matter thus, I ought to speak specially for myself; that is the way in which the question presents itself to me. It does not do so to every one. It can hardly, for instance, present itself as I have described to Mr. Ernest F. Scott, who may be said to magnify the teaching of the Gospel, though he rejects its Apostolic and first century origin. At the same time I doubt if he would have criticised the Gospel quite so freely in some ways if he had held a different view of its origin.

For many critics, especially on the Continent, rejection of the Fourth Gospel is part of a general movement or tendency to lower the standard (if I may so describe it) of the belief in our Lord's Divinity. Or this may be not quite the right way to put it. The tendency is really part of what is called Modernism, or at least of the more extreme form of Modernism. It goes along, in most cases though not in all, with a disinclination to use the ancient language of the Creeds. Some conspicuous representatives of Modernism in the Church of Rome, *e.g.* Abbé Loisy, while denying the Apostolic authorship and to a great extent the historical character of the Fourth Gospel, nevertheless profess their full adhesion to the Creeds. This attitude, I suppose, is more common in the Church of Rome than it is elsewhere; and, following the lead of the Modernists in the Church of Rome, I believe that it is also beginning to have some place among ourselves. But the movement took its rise in Protestant circles in Germany; and I believe that I am right in saying

that among these, as a rule, it goes along with a certain reluctance to adopt the language of the Creed. I must not, however, exaggerate the significance of this reluctance. It would be too much to say that it amounts to a positive denial of the Divinity of our Lord. The German writers whom I have in my mind do not express themselves quite unambiguously on this head. Not from any want of honesty—for no one could be more honest—but rather because they are so honest that they scruple to say a syllable more than they are sure that they really mean. And then they do not like sharp and strong definitions; and still less the definitions of a bygone age, which aimed at being sharp and strong. Their intellectual honesty is such that it prevents them from making allowance in their own favour on the score of history. Their sense of continuity in the history of the Church, and their desire to keep up this continuity in their own persons, is apt to be weak. They have not, like so many Englishmen, a strong sense of loyalty to the Church. They accept the communion in which they were born, and they do not desire to change it. But at the same time their real interests are far more in the twentieth century than in any of the preceding centuries. They want, before all things, to unify their whole body of thought. That is a motive that is apt to be weak with us where loyalty to the Church is strong. We are not, very many of us, passionately bent on harmonizing our whole body of thought; by which I mean, making it strictly coherent and consistent—in other words, reducing it all to a strictly twentieth-century standard. The German's great passion is for Science: *die Wissenschaft* is for him a goddess who must be obeyed at all costs; no other loyalty can be allowed to clash with that. This is the grand side of the German attitude; and we English must learn to do justice to it. We must not expect all the world to have precisely the same kind of loyalty that we have ourselves. The great problem for us is to adjust and harmonize our different loyalties, to bring our loyalty to truth, and science into line with our loyalty to faith and devotion. 'These things ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.' At the present moment, and in the frame of mind in which English people now are, that I think should be our guiding motto.

We ought distinctly to recognize that that section of German opinion of which I have been

speaking—and it should be remembered that it is a large section, embracing more particularly the majority of the theological professoriate in the Universities—if it uses somewhat ambiguous language, does not do so at least from any wanton disloyalty, does not do so from timidity or even from want of clearness of thought (though there is perhaps a certain element of this), but before all things from sheer intellectual honesty, from an honesty which will not even allow itself to seem clearer in mind than it is. Therefore I would say that, if those who belong to this section of opinion use language that is lower than we are in the habit of using ourselves, we should hesitate a great deal, and study this language very carefully and sympathetically, before we describe it as amounting to a denial of the Divinity of our Lord. It is not intended to do this, even though there does go with it a somewhat brusque repudiation of some of the language of the Creeds and ancient standards of the Church. The formula that is most in favour with this party in Germany, and that would unite the greatest number of suffrages is the formula expressed in that phrase of St. Paul's which I have quoted, 'God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself.' 'God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself': almost all Protestant Germany would agree in that; it is its positive way of confessing its belief in the deity of our Lord. If a good many would refuse to say more than this, they would also refuse to say less. Let us respect them as sincere and straightforward men, and give them full credit for all that their formula means, for all that degree of communion with ourselves that it means. We must be very careful not to disparage it as meaning less than it does.

The whole Christian world—not we alone, or the Germans alone, or Protestants alone, but the whole Christian world has before it at the present time one vast problem, the problem (if I may so describe it) of finding the common term, or I should say the full dimensions of the common term, between the ancient and the modern (*τὸ παλαιόν* and *τὸ νέον*). We must not be content with anything less than what I have called the full dimensions of the common term between these two ways of looking at things. We must face the full difficulty of the task, and gird ourselves to discharge it as best we may. Also we must be on our guard against supposing that it is finished

before it is. It is a long way from being finished as yet; we must make up our minds to that. At the same time it will not matter so much being short of our goal, so long as we know that we are short of it, and do not pretend to be further on than we are.

The difference between ancient and modern is at its greatest in regard to the Supernatural. I must try to state this in such a way as to do justice to the attitude at once of the ancient mind and of the modern. That is the point at which the problem becomes most pressing. Many look at the question only from what we may call the ancient side, the Gospels taken just as they stand; and then no difficulty arises. Others look at it wholly from the modern side, the side of modern presuppositions; and then they too arrive at a clear, but really narrow and inadequate conclusion. The problem is to hold the balance evenly between the two sides, and do justice alike to both.

I start from the fact, which appears to me to be as certain as anything in history, that extraordinary phenomena happened in connexion with the life of Christ and the ministry of His Apostles, and happened on a large scale. The most decisive witness on this head is St. Paul, who speaks not only from his own experience, but from that of his immediate contemporaries and associates. If we try to place ourselves by the side of St. Paul and to look out on the world with his eyes, we shall realize that he was conscious of the presence and working of great forces, forces hitherto without exact precedent or parallel, both within himself and outside himself. He is conscious that he does not stand alone, but that he is included in a vast movement, a movement in many respects *sui generis*, a movement essentially spiritual and not material, and yet one that in spite of its apparent external insignificance, he feels is destined to change the course of the world. In himself and among his own surroundings this movement is at its height; it is sweeping on with full current. But that is not the beginning of it. Rather, it points back to its own beginning. These forces of which the Apostle is conscious had their rise, as he knows and the whole Church knows, in the life and work of Christ, which set the train in motion. This initial force was inevitably the greatest and weightiest of all. It was marked off sharply from all that had gone before it. It had a kind of preliminary in the call of John the Baptist; and

yet the ministry of John was different in kind. John had done no miracle; but he had foretold that his Successor would be mightier than he, and that prophecy had come true. The life and work of Christ were attended with miracle; they expressed themselves through miracle.

The inference backwards that we draw from the writings of St. Paul is abundantly confirmed by every document that criticism can distinguish bearing upon the Life of Christ. We cannot help seeing that not only St. Paul and the authors of these documents, named or unnamed, but the whole body of Christian opinion at the time agreed in assuming, not merely that extraordinary things happened in connexion with the Person of Jesus, but that His Person was itself extraordinary and transcendent, something beyond the measures of common humanity. The Early Church, practically with one consent, drew the conclusion for which it claimed to have the express testimony of Christ Himself, that He was nothing less than God (predicate), or Son of God. The opinion of the time favoured the view that there could be such a thing as a direct Divine manifestation upon earth, and the great body of Christians believed that they had been the recipients of such a manifestation.

This is broadly the ancient view. And the evidence for it is so widespread and so consistent, in its central part (the Epistles of St. Paul) so fresh from the very heart of the events, and in its more peripheral part (the Gospels) to a large extent so beyond the reach of invention, that we cannot do otherwise than accept it as substantially true.

But then comes in the modern way of looking at things. And here we are so imbued with the idea of science and with the scientific recognition of natural law, that the extraordinary element in what has just been described challenges us and rouses a feeling of incredulity and opposition. In its more extreme form this temper refuses to listen to the historical evidence, and practically rejects it without examination.

We are confronted with a double problem, as to the supernatural Person and as to the supernatural Work.

As to the Person, philosophy comes in to help us a little. There is increasing willingness to accept the philosophical as well as theological doctrine of Divine Immanence or Indwelling. Modern opinion is more and more inclined to think of God as immanent in the world and in the

heart of man. But if there is such real immanence of God, or the Spirit of God, in humanity, which up to a certain point is a matter of experience as well as of speculation, then it becomes less difficult to conceive of a supreme manifestation of God in human form. There is at least no essential incompatibility between the Divine and the human. I would not say that the analogy is by any means complete, but it is sound as far as it goes. It should at least prevent us from turning a deaf ear to historical reasoning, which apart from prejudice would be conclusive.

But then comes in the smaller difficulty of Miracle. We may believe in the regularity of nature, and yet not be ourselves absolutely precluded from believing at the same time in events, historically well attested, which seem perhaps at first sight to infringe upon that regularity. We must recognize a certain difference between the ancient conception and the modern. I think we must be prepared for some modification in our way of defining the supernatural. To the ancients, when once the Divine factor was introduced, anything and everything became credible. This was only natural, because the field of that which is regular was so much smaller than it is now, and the field of that which was mysterious and unaccountable was so much larger. It was an easier thing to take refuge in mystery than it can be now that so much that used to be mysterious has been reduced to law. At present our conviction of the regularity of nature is so strong that we believe in it even where we cannot trace it by sight and experiment.

This change of attitude inevitably affects our conception of the supernatural. We are ready enough to believe in the supernatural. We are probably more ready than ever to believe in the supremacy of Spirit. And we have perhaps a higher conception than ever of the power of the spiritual to influence the material. But we are reluctant to think of even this influence as exercised otherwise than by law. I may say summarily, that the *supernatural* is not for us the same thing as the arbitrary or *unnatural*.

This is a principle that some of us at least would bring with us to the interpretation of miracle. But that is just the most delicate point in the whole inquiry. And there is still a great deal that we must be content not to know.

There is a further element in the question of

the supernatural that a Christian cannot help considering. We have before us not only the narrative of the Gospels, which has come down to us, as we may say roughly, from a period of some thirty to fifty years after the events, but also the later summarized expression which the same events have received in the Creeds. We may always remember that the expression is summarized—that it represents the condensed substance of narratives that we still have with us. It is always fair to go back from a summary to the full text summarized; the interpretation that we put upon this full text may also be put upon its abridgement. But the summaries in the Creeds have a further significance for us. They belong to the history of God's Church as it was evolved under His good providence. We have to think of them in that light; we have to think of them as embodying the principle of continuity as He has willed that it should be embodied. This, I think, quite apart from any question of legal obligation, would make us very unwilling to deny what He has thus willed to have affirmed. We shall be rather stimulated in the effort to find out what is the permanent truth that God intended to be conveyed, the real link in the chain that binds together the centuries.

Another still more searching question may be asked: What warrant have we for supposing that the Creeds express the substantial truth as to the Person of our Lord? The progress of recent critical inquiry has, I think, tended strongly to confirm the fundamental truth of the Creeds. At the same time I believe that it has also tended to put a rather different construction upon the life of our Lord from that which most of us have been in the habit of putting upon it.

I should explain that on the first point that I am going to submit to you I shall be speaking rather for myself than for any general consensus of scholars. In my own recent work it has been impressed upon me that we have been in the habit of saying too much about the *claim* of our Lord to be Divine, and about the acceptance or rejection of that claim. Not that this language is altogether wrong, but I think that it has had greater emphasis laid upon it than it ought to have. When we study the Gospels in detail I believe that we shall be surprised to see how little there is of the nature of a claim, and especially of a claim as to His own Person. The most significant incident in this respect—indeed, the climax of the Synoptic:

narratives, though in the fundamental Gospel of St. Mark its character as a climax is somewhat disguised—is the Confession of St. Peter. And yet even in this how little there is that we should call exactly 'a claim.' It is a question which receives a particular reply; and that reply, which might be called the affirming of a claim, is warmly commended; but that is all. If there is a claim, it is not put forward by our Lord Himself; the most that He can be said to do is to elicit the affirmation. The other salient passage of the kind is the answer of our Lord to the high priest's interrogatory at His trial (Mk 14⁶², and parallels). But that, too, is a response; our Lord does not take the initiative, but only assents to the question of another. In the Fourth Gospel there is more language that might be described as amounting to a claim: as, for instance, where our Lord says, 'I and the Father are one' (Jn 10³⁰), though He also says, in the same simple undemonstrative way, 'The Father is greater than I' (Jn 14²⁸). But even in the Fourth Gospel our Lord does not go about publicly proclaiming Himself as the Messiah and calling upon all men to receive Him as the Messiah. Even in the Fourth Gospel it is implied that up to the very last our Lord's language about Himself had not been altogether clear and unambiguous. The Jews are represented as coming round Him at His last visit to Jerusalem and saying, 'How long dost thou hold us in suspense? If thou art the Christ, tell us plainly' (Jn 10²⁴). And a little earlier, at the Feast of Tabernacles in chap. 7, the people are represented as groping about more or less in the dark and speculating who our Lord really was, as they could not have done if He had made a public claim.

The question is perhaps, after all, rather one of words, though this is just a case in which it seems specially desirable that our use of words should be accurate and well considered; because, as I have said, the broad construction that we put upon our Lord's life and ministry seems to depend upon it. I should not describe our Lord as exactly making a claim; at the same time I should be far from implying that our Lord Himself had any doubt, or that His disciples from St. Peter's confession onwards really had any doubt, who He was. He knew, in the human sense of knowing, *i.e.* as the Incarnate Son He knew at least from His Baptism, and His disciples also ended by knowing, that He was the Messiah, the Son of

Man and the Son of God. This is the point that the progress of criticism has made clearer and more certain.¹ We have been passing through a period in which each of these fundamental and significant titles has been challenged in its turn. And I think I may say that at the present moment each one has been corroborated and verified as it had not been before. The latest discussion has been about what I believe we may call our Lord's own favourite title, the Son of Man. I have given a brief sketch of the history of the controversy in my book *The Life of Christ in Recent Research*, published in 1907. A fuller account may be seen in Dr. Driver's article 'Son of Man' in Hastings' *Dictionary*. This article was written when the controversy was at its height; it may now be said to have worked itself out, or at least to have entered upon its last phase. At first the use of the title by our Lord was questioned altogether (by Lietzmann and Wellhausen) on linguistic grounds, because it was held that in the Aramaic spoken in the time of our Lord, the phrase 'son of man' 'the son of man' meant, or had come to mean nothing more than 'man' 'the man,' and at first it was not seen what such a name applied to our Lord could mean. But by degrees it became clear, first, that in any case our Lord really did use the title; it is too deeply embedded in the Synoptic tradition to be eliminated. Secondly, it became clear that it had a place not only in the Gospels, but in other apocalyptic writings of the time (*e.g.* in the Book of Enoch and in 4 Ezra). The earliest instance in which the phrase occurs is in Dn 7¹³, and until a short time ago, it was assumed that this was not only the first example of its use, but the first occasion on which it was used, and that all later usage starts from this and points back to it. What I have called the latest phase of the question dates from a very able book *Der Ursprung der israelitisch-jüdischen Eschatologie*, by Dr. Hugo Gressmann, (Göttingen, 1905), or rather, perhaps, more strictly from an article by Gunkel in Hilgenfeld's *Zeitschrift* for 1899. Gressmann's point, which he has developed with much force, is that the instances given do not represent the whole use, and that the passage in the Book of Daniel does not represent the first use of the phrase, but that all the instances together are really 'only fragments of a much

¹ See especially H. J. Holtzmann, *Das messianische Bewusstsein Jesu* (Tübingen, 1907).

richer and more comprehensive tradition'; in other words, that the phrase was a more or less standing term in the apocalyptic literature of the time, and that it is really an abbreviation of a longer phrase, such as 'the first man,' 'the original man,' 'the heavenly man,' 'the man in the clouds,' and the like, just as 'the day,' or 'that day,' stood for 'the day of the Lord' or 'the day of judgement,' etc. This is the point at which the question stands at the present time; and, whatever the ultimate result, Gressmann's treatment of it is in any case, as I have said, very able, and I think I may add that it has much in it that is attractive. With the question as to the origin of the idea I do not think that we need greatly concern ourselves. Gressmann would seek the origin outside Israel. If it were so, that would not matter. It would not be the first time, or the last, that Biblical religion has been enriched from some external source.

For us, it is more interesting and more important to note that, if this theory is true, then the conception of the Messiah and the conception of the Son of Man, though associated, will be independent of each other in their origin and parallel in their development. In any case they will have coalesced, and coalesced perhaps before either conception was taken to Himself by our Lord. I mean that the Messiah was also thought of under the title, and with the functions, of the Son of Man. The most prominent function of the Son of Man in the similitudes in the Book of Enoch is judgement; and the Messiah also was to act as judge. We can see thus how the coalescence of the two ideas would be quite easy and natural. I cannot doubt for a moment—and I do not think that it can be doubted; those who doubt it are becoming fewer every day—that our Lord thought of Himself as both Messiah and Son of Man. As Messiah, He was to be a descendant of David and to reign over His regenerate people upon earth; as Son of Man, He was to rule and judge the nations from heaven. Both conceptions were originally eschatological; they are part of the broad doctrine and programme of the last things. But when we have said that, we have by no means as yet determined their ultimate meaning.

This, again, raises a great problem. I believe that our Lord used a great deal of eschatological language; that His language was, generally speaking, more eschatological in its origin than I at one time supposed. But does it follow that escha-

tology exhausted the meaning of this language? that its fulfilment was bound to be exclusively eschatological? I do not think it does follow. This is the answer that I am inclined to give to a question that has been exercising me for some time.

There are three great terms that stand out boldly in our Lord's active ministry, the terms Messiah, Son of Man, Kingdom of God, or of Heaven. All three are in their origin eschatological. But I should be prepared to say of all three, that their fulfilment is not—or has not as yet been—eschatological. If, or in so far as, it has been eschatological, we should have to widen the meaning of the word to such an extent that it ceased to come within the scope of what we commonly understand by eschatology.

Some one may ask, How can this be possible? I reply that it is involved in the mysterious depths of the word 'meaning.' I had something to say in my last book on this subject, and I believe that it holds the solution of more questions than one. We ask what is the meaning of these three eschatological expressions? Before we can answer that question, we must first know *whose* meaning, and *for whom*. We are primarily concerned with our Lord's meaning, and with His meaning for His contemporaries and disciples. We take these latter first. What He wished them to understand would be naturally what He Himself meant. At the same time, we must recognize that He may have known all along that they were incapable of understanding His full meaning. He will have been content that they should understand as much as they could. But we may be very sure that, whatever they might have understood, they, in fact, came short of it. We may strongly suspect that they made the meaning of the words more eschatological than it really was—His Jewish contemporaries for the most part entirely so, His own disciples at least partially so. Neither, we may be sure, entered into the full length, and depth, and breadth, and height of what our Lord really meant by the three expressions Himself.

When we approach His own meaning, we approach a great mystery. We can only guess at His real meaning; and, what is more, even if we guess right, we shall not know that we are right. All that we can be confident about is that our guess has certain elements of rightness.

One of these elements of rightness, I believe, is

—and it is an immense comfort and assurance to us in these days of uncertainty that it should be—that the meaning which our Lord's contemporaries and His disciples and He Himself read into those three expressions was in any case (as we should put it) strongly supernatural. The Messiah was a supernatural Being; the Son of Man was a supernatural Being; the Kingdom of God was to be supernaturally brought about. The meaning of the Kingdom of God was utterly supernatural; it was God Himself at work and reigning in the hearts of men. The upshot of this, as you will not fail to see, is that the Divinity of our Lord is absolutely assured. At least the only alternative is that He and His disciples, and those of His contemporaries who believed, were themselves, one and all, mistaken; that they just made a colossal blunder, and nothing else. The history of the world ever since is enough to refute this. The greatest movement in all history cannot be based on a colossal blunder. It does not need a Daniel come to judgement to tell us that. We may then, I think, with clear minds settle down to the assured belief, that our Lord was Himself really supernatural, and that His kingdom has also been in its essence supernatural.

I don't know what you will think; perhaps I am too sanguine; but I cannot help at the least dreaming that, in laying down these propositions, we have really disposed of a difficulty that I confess has somewhat puzzled me, and that I dare say may have puzzled some of you. The three terms of which we have been speaking are, as we have seen in their origin, eschatological. And our Lord employed them more or less eschatologically. That is to say, he at least sometimes threw His comments upon them into the form of prediction. The Messiah would come, the Son of Man would come with the clouds, the Kingdom of God would also come, before the generation then living had passed away. But, in the purely eschatological sense, these predictions do not appear to have come true. What are we to say to that? The first thing that I think we ought to do is to remove the restriction. The ideas in question are in their origin eschatological; but I must repeat that it does not follow that the ideas as employed by our Lord are only eschatological. On the contrary, I think we can see, if we look at the Gospels as a whole, that on His lips they are something more than that. I have said some-

where—it does not matter where, because I have no doubt that others have said it often enough before, though I have seen it quoted as from me—that our Lord rarely took up a Jewish idea without recasting it in a form of His own. I believe that has happened to each of these ideas. Our Lord Himself certainly did not think of His Messiahship as the Jews of His day thought of their Messiah. No Jew ever dreamt of applying to the Messiah such a prophecy as that, 'My servant shall not strive nor cry.' The Son of Man is an apocalyptic title; but no apocalypticist ever thought of writing, 'The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.' The Kingdom of God belongs to the category of the 'last things'; but no one ever compared it to a seed growing secretly, or to leaven hid in three measures of meal, or to a merchant seeking goodly pearls. When we study, not a section here and a section there, but the Gospels as a whole, I think we shall see that, while our Lord does use eschatological language, He uses it not alone and as though it were the be-all and end-all of His teaching. It is really only an incident—perhaps a considerable incident, but yet not more than an incident—in a great body of teaching. Perhaps the evangelists have made it stand out rather more sharply than they ought. But in any case we may be sure that it must take its colour from the whole of its context. Take, for instance, the title Son of Man. It is impossible not to see that our Lord's use of this title was something far richer and far deeper, far more subtle and comprehensive, than ever occurred to the writer of the Book of Enoch or of 4 Ezra. I believe that our Lord (if we may so say) got at His use of the phrase (I am speaking for the moment of the human processes of His human mind) by meditating upon the Old Testament. I believe that He meditated upon every passage, Aramaic or Hebrew, in which the phrase occurs, but especially, perhaps, on Dn 7 and Ps 8. He meditated on passages like these; and He thought over His own mission as it lay mapped out before Him in His own mind and in His understanding of the Father's will. And then He blended the two conceptions together, and used the phrase in that wonderfully flexible way in which we find it used to express the resultant idea. I imagine that He treated the conception of the kingdom in precisely the same manner. The parables and

other sayings show us that for Him it meant something a great deal larger than an item of eschatology.

Not from the Gospels only do we draw these conclusions. The Epistles, especially the Pauline and Johannine Epistles, tell the same story. It is most instructive to observe what happened in the case of St. Paul. He too began by interpreting the kingdom eschatologically. He interpreted it after the manner of His contemporaries, and after the manner in which He supposed that it had been intended by our Lord. He treated it as a prediction, and an eschatological prediction, the fulfilment of which was near at hand. As late as the Epistle to the Philippians (4⁵) he still wrote, 'The Lord is at hand.' But in the meantime he too had begun to seek for a deeper interpretation. The eschatological expectation of St. Paul is much the strongest in the earliest Epistles (1 and 2 Th, 1 Co). By the time that he came to write the Epistle to the Romans, he had

already learnt to say, 'The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost' (Ro 14¹⁷), *i.e.* a present frame of mind and present blessedness. In the same Epistle St. Paul expounds at length that widespread work of the Holy Spirit through which Christians became more than conquerors, and by virtue of which, prosecuting itself throughout the ages, in the language of another Epistle, God was to become 'all in all.'

We are therefore, I think, justified in saying that the coming of the Kingdom of God really dates from Pentecost and is not yet complete. And when we say this, we also say that our Lord's prediction has not returned to Him void, but is in process of fulfilment. It is not yet wholly fulfilled. There yet remains, we know not how much, to come. We know not what the end of all things may be. But we are sure that it will be the realized kingdom of our God and of His Christ.

Recent Foreign Theology.

Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels.¹

It is easy and not unusual to exaggerate the dependence of faith in Christ's divinity on the Fourth Gospel, and to minimize the witness of the Synoptics. We are very far from being as much shut up to the first source of evidence as is often said. If the Johannine teaching were wanting, the figure of Christ in the Synoptics, rising, as it does, so much above the human measure, would be an enigma difficult to explain, but assuredly that figure could not be explained on merely human lines. John's witness is explicit, that of the other Gospels implied, and therefore less easy to appreciate. John supplements the work of his predecessors.

The present treatise is a brief but very effective discussion of the witness of the earlier Gospels. The exhibition of the makeshifts to which opposing interpreters are driven is not the least effective part of the argument. An insuperable difficulty in their way is the claim of Christ in the Synoptics

to be Judge of all. Every possible device is resorted to in order to parry the inference—denial that Christ makes the claim, reduction of its meaning, refusal to explain it at all, putting it down to excited imagination and feeling in Christ, or to a special original endowment by God not further explicable. His claim to Messiahship and references to His Second Coming are treated in a similar way. But the chief discussion turns on the claim to be Judge, because it is seen that this is incompatible with the thoroughly humanitarian view 'without reserve' which is strenuously maintained by many writers, who yet ascribe to Christ a unique position of a remarkable kind. But on the merely human view, what was there to suggest to the disciples, who are the supposed interpolators, this galaxy of attributes belonging of right to God alone? To say nothing of their Jewish conceptions of God, their powers of invention and creative imagination must have been great indeed. The diluted interpretations given are too ingenious to be credible. If Jesus by the claims in question simply meant that He was a new prophet, and was to exert some undefined critical influence on man's destiny, and to be a witness for His own people,

¹ *Das göttliche Selbstbewusstsein Jesu nach dem Zeugnis der Synoptiker.* Von Past. Lic. th. Joh. Steinbeck. Leipzig: Deichert, 1908. Mk. 1.25.