# THE ABIDING SIGNIFICANCE OF THE APOCALYPTIC.

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IN history, as in science, the theory which can be summed up definitely in one statement may, by drawing attention to one aspect and excluding the disturbing influence of others, be, for a time, useful in research. Thus, in science, what is known as Newtonism—the theory that everything can be explained by the laws of motion and that all laws of motion are in the end the one law of inertia—was useful precisely by its limitation, and produced results which would have been impossible with anything more complicated. But, when it was thought that every energy of mind and every quality of the universe could be reduced to this law of equivalence of quantity, it became mere blinkers. In the same way, the theory of the Rule of God on the earth, as a crude material expectation of a catastrophic change by the fiat and election of God, was a useful instrument of research for a time. It explained many things in the Old Testament and helped to deliver from merely rationalistic interpretations of the New. But when everything is reduced to it—all questions of faith and of the character of God, and all questions of moral motive and ideal—it also becomes mere blinkers. Just as the true and whole reality of the visible world is its infinitely varied meaning in which we carry out infinitely varied purposes, so the religious world is the world of infinite eternal meaning and absolute eternal purpose. The prophets and Jesus and Paul may have cherished a near historical perspective, but that is a small matter compared with what is much more certain —that they were religious men of the deepest spiritual insight and the highest consecration, and not puppets pulled by the string of one obsession. While the very intensity of their faith in God's working in the world may have foreshortened their perspective of its full manifestation, they lived in a world of eternal realities which for them was already present, and it was this that has made them abiding moral and spiritual inspirations. No doubt it is necessary to realise that in many ways they thought differently in their age from what we do in ours, but it is also necessary to realize that, in essentials, spiritual and moral quality is the same in every age and that we can understand what was greatest in them only as we also live in the things unseen and eternal which are of every age.

But, while their expectation of a Rule of God on earth sprang from what is moral and spiritual, it, in turn, deeply affected the form of their moral and spiritual outlook. To show this adequately would require a treatise, and that by a person much better equipped for the task than I am. Yet merely to point out that there is

such a double relation and give some indications and illustrations may be of sufficient usefulness to justify a short paper.

The first point is that all prophecy rests on the view that civilisation is not an end in itself. It should serve spiritual and moral ends, and, if it do not serve these ends, it cannot be kept going. Hence, as the civilisation of the prophets' own age was not serving them, it was always exposed to disaster and might at any time be overthrown. Yet what makes this prophecy is not alone the conviction that such disaster comes by moral causes. It is still more that this would not happen were not good as active a power in the world as evil, and that calamity is as much for the manifestation of the good as for the destruction of the evil. If God pulls down and uproots, it is to build and to plant.

In all the prophets *the Divine Rule is in the World-Rule at once destructive and re-creative.*

The second point is what the Rule of God is. This concerns the ultimate spiritual order, and the new vision of it began with Hosea. A righteous world had been thought to consist in the exact equivalence of action and award, and a righteous God to be One who administers this law exactly and without respect to persons.

But the last thing Hosea desired was that his erring wife should receive the due reward of her deeds. What concerned him was the soul of the woman herself: and he boldly applied the same to God in respect of Israel. And, from this, it was easy to extend the principle to all God's erring children. In a word, *the ultimate order of the world was conceived to be redemptive, not legal.* The whole Rule of God might be far beyond man to know, but, if this was its method and its purpose, not only can we know what is essential in it, but we can serve it. Hence all morality as well as all faith was transformed. It was no longer a legal obedience to gain its reward, but a service of men which was a fellow-working with God for man's blessedness in God's Rule. This was and remains a judgment of the world as it is, yet it was and is a glorious end worthy of all material losses and tribulations, a world as it should be, for which we may be prepared to lose the world as it is. All prophetic and Christian expectation sprang from this redemptive not legal view of God's working.

The third point is that, out of this comes Isaiah's doctrine of the *Remnant, which was at once redeemed and redeeming.* This is the abiding life of the tree that is to be cut down. The second Isaiah is not merely attached to the first Isaiah by accident. The Servant of the Lord is this redeemed and redeeming Remnant, whereby the Rule of God is to come, as Jeremiah conceived it, as an order in which no one needs to say to his brother, "Know the Lord," for all shall know him and no one needs to legislate for his brother, for God will write his law on each heart. This was the culmination of prophecy in the Old Testament and the glorious liberty of the children of God in the New.

The fourth point is that a new conception of good and evil arose with the idea of a *Kingdom of Good and a Kingdom of Evil.* Sin

is not rightly described as being a religious and not a moral concern. Yet the moral depends on the religious. What is ultimate we may call worship, that is man's final and highest reverence. In essence sin is idolatry. We are either for what Paul afterwards described as the Anarchy of Darkness or for the Kingdom of the Son of God's love. Sin leads to transgression, which is rejecting what we know to be right. But in itself sin is being in the World-Rule and out of God's. What troubled the faithful was not acts of transgression, but that a rule opposed to God should be able to make itself so mighty in God's world. The later Jewish Apocalyptic was concerned mainly with the overthrow of this usurper. But I question whether, even in the most national Jewish Apocalyptic, it was ever a mere material transformation by outward might, wholly without Jeremiah's free and spiritual idea of the Kingdom.

The union of the idea that the Kingdom comes by the power of God yet is by the repentance and consecration of men was affected by this view that *the evil is one disloyalty and the regeneration one true worship*, because it could be thought that a change of rule might come by a change of mind at any moment.

*The Christian programme of it is the Lord's Prayer.* Schweitzer is quite right in saying that it is concerned with the Rule or Kingdom of God. But to make it a prayer for Schweitzer's kind of Kingdom, he has to do more violence to it than he does to the Beatitudes, which is saying a great deal. For example, he makes the fourth petition, Give us this day the future bread of the Kingdom. Apart from any question of interpretation, how does this fit in with the view that the Kingdom is wholly a future event? Nor is the view of Temptation, as the Messianic woes, more convincing. A prayer taught to common people is likely to have a plain religious meaning. The word translated *daily* I take to mean sufficient as opposed to a common word of similar form meaning abundant. The idea of the future in it is the philologist's error that popular words are made philologically. And Temptation may mean the great tribulation, but not as the woes of the Messiah.

The whole prayer is governed by the idea of our common Father who is in the heavenly things which unite us and do not, like the earthly things, divide. The supreme transforming need is reverence for this name. This is the Old Testament idea of the decisiveness of what we worship. Then the Father's Kingdom will be present in regard for His children; and with this His will can be done on earth as in heaven, which cannot mean merely perfectly, but fully and gladly. This may be in the future, and was expected to come by God's working, probably in some catastrophic form. But everyone who with others has God as their common Father and seeks God's heavenly things must, in some effective sense, be within the scope of these petitions now. And the last three petitions have certainly to do with the present. They concern living in a world where we have material needs, but hold them in due subordination to the spiritual; where we still require forgiveness, but realise it in mercy and peace as we exercise among our fellows the forgiving

spirit of our Father; where we are exposed to trial, but should be like our Master without anything in us to which the Prince of this World could appeal. All this means living now in God's Rule. And if this is the conception of the Kingdom, the way of expecting its coming cannot have been out of accord with it.

From this we can see how the Kingdom takes up in its most spiritual form the teaching of the Old Testament. It is doing God's will on earth with the same insight, freedom and consecration as in heaven. Over against it is a Kingdom of Darkness. If we reverence our common Father in the spiritual things which unite and bless men, we are in the one Rule; and if we worship worldly power which divides and oppresses, we are in the other. It is a moral rule, but the living in it is of religious insight, not moral effort. It is essentially serving God as Father and having His law as for our good always written on the heart.

With this we have in the teaching both of Jesus and of Paul the idea of sin as a moral state, but determined by religious sincerity. Sin in the Gospels is hypocrisy, resisting the appeal and will of God. In Paul it is resisting the truth in unrighteousness. It leads to transgression, which is conscious rejection of the right, and, when fulfilled, works degradation of the mind, the conscience and even the body. But sin is all failure to be committed wholly to the mind of God.

Equally evident is the doctrine of the Remnant. It consists of those who are wholly consecrated to knowing God's mind and obeying it: and the essential point is that they are not only redeemed but redeeming. Like their Lord they are for seeking and saving the lost. Living in a redemptive not a legal order, mere legal condemnation does not touch those who belong to it, so that they are not concerned about their souls, but about their service.

The tribulation of entering it is because of the nature of the Kingdom, as a spiritual victory over the souls of men, and not a mere change of outward conditions. It is the way of redeeming men from deceit and violence and of bringing in an order of peace on earth and goodwill to men. Considering their freedom in interpreting Scripture, we cannot suppose that either Jesus or Paul took the Messianic woes to be a mere useless appointment of God with no foundation but the announcement of prophecy. Jesus does not speak as if they were past, and Paul thinks he has still to fill up the sufferings of Christ for his body's sake. Moreover, while the Servant of the Lord, working in God's redeeming order and serving the kind of Rule which God seeks over the hearts of men, has to overcome the Rule of Darkness by suffering from it, the great and terrible day of the Lord, which prepares for the coming of His Kingdom has to do neither with the Messiah nor the Remnant, but with the lesson necessary for those who cherish it, of the destruction of the idolatry of the present World-Rule. Therefore, the idea that Jesus thought the Cross was a sort of forcing of God's hand by bearing for others the Messianic woes has no more foundation in prophecy than it has in the Gospels. Is there anywhere in the Old or New Testa-

ment where the woes are not conceived as the destruction of the World-Rule, as in Revelation? If, therefore, temptation in the Lord's Prayer means these woes, it is that we should be so under God's Rule as not to need this deliverance from the world's idolatry; and then it naturally goes with deliverance from the Evil One.

With this we have the question of what Schweitzer describes as the "interim ethic" of the New Testament. That Jesus or even Paul based the kind of moral life they taught on the view that men are to be meek and lowly now before God's requirements and be the servant of all, because if they are last in service now they will be first in honour when the Kingdom comes in power, and be the exalted magnates of God's administration, is not humanly possible. Surely we are to live now in that way because the new order is to be of that kind, an order in which service, and not dignity or dominion, is the true honour. While the World-Rule uses men as tools for gain and slaves for service, God's Rule is for the blessedness and liberty of His children, so that the Apocalyptic hope is just that men like the prodigal should come to themselves and see the folly of worshipping and serving an oppressive tyrant.

The Rule of God on earth may be summed up as the rule of love, if love is concerned with the perfect image of God in man. That this is in some form effective now is never separate from the expectation of a fuller manifestation, not in another world, but in this. If we compare this hope with the striving for Nirvana, with absorption in the One and all ceasing from troubling, or even with the hope of a Heaven in which we have individual existence, but on a plane which has no relation to our life in the body, we see its significance for both faith and practice.

Faith is concerned with knowing the mind of God in the situation in which He has placed us and not with intellectual construction of the Deity. Thus it delivers us from what Ritschl calls a metaphysical idol. If this Rule is His purpose, and if we accept it and are consecrated to it, and then, even if it be only as Paul saw it in a mirror darkly, discern that all things are working together for it, there is meaning in calling God Father. And, if beyond this life, we have the hope of knowing the rule of love which now knows us, this other life has content from what we are serving now, whereas an other-worldly religion is as empty for faith as it is uninspiring for service. But this hope of God's Rule on Earth weaves faith and ethics into one seamless garment, because every right human relation we establish now is at once an evidence of the presence of God's Rule and is taken up into its future fulfilment.

Our civilisation is no more eternal than any other, but if there is a higher order which will at once destroy the present order because of its evil, yet be the fulfilment of its good, we can both serve our age and look beyond it. The deepest concern still is not what men think of particular thoughts or do of particular deeds, but what they worship. The decisive question about our world still is whether it is a redemptive order, and about ourselves whether we belong to the redeeming Remnant. And in the end

we maintain no freedom or spiritual possession except as we do not fear them that kill the body, which is as neither the threats nor allurements of evil find anything in us.

For the general expectation of a Rule of God on earth this may suffice, and I shall give what time remains to the question of whether there is any abiding value in its definitely apocalyptic or catastrophic form.

But, first, we must consider what this form really was. It was not the creation by God's might of a world entirely in accord with His mind. For Paul it was what he calls the manifestation of the children of God. Even sympathetic exponents of Paul seem to think his psychology muddled and his idea of relation to Christ primitive, tribal, almost mechanical, and the statement that the final judgment will be according to the deeds done in the body inconsistent with his doctrine of being justified by faith. But Paul's psychology is clear and simple. Man consists of *νοῦς* and *σῶμα* which we might call the matter and the form of personality. But this partakes of two worlds, the spiritual and the fleshly. We may, body and soul, rise into the abiding unity of the spiritual, or, body and soul, sink into the chaos and corruption of the fleshly. In the lower or psychical we are bound together yet separate; in the spiritual we are at once truly ourselves and have undivided fellowship. When we are in the spirit, therefore, Christ is not separate from us because He is in Heaven. His coming in power is just the manifestation of this spiritual world. Those who are in the spirit will be seen to be in God's order, and Christ is to reign in it till he brings all things into subjection to it. The question of justification and of being called, concerns fitness to be with Christ in this task. The Kingdom is thus an expansion of the present missionary task, and, therefore, election is to service in it. To those who thus serve there can be no condemnation, but even they may build with wood and hay and stubble and not with gold and precious stone. Only after the missionary task of the manifested Kingdom is complete, comes God's final judgment: and that is by what men have been, according to their opportunities. This, if I am right in my reconstruction of the book, is also what is set forth in Revelation, and, in spite of all that has been said to the contrary, I question if Jesus had any other idea or thought of the Kingdom as the final consummation of all things.

There is no reason why we should not expect a day of the manifestation of God's order in His children, when the Remnant in whom it is now embodied shall no longer be crucified in weakness, but be manifested in power. But that is not what I have undertaken to discuss. Our question is whether there are any abiding principles in it for our strength and guidance in our own time.

First there is the question of our Civilisation.

It is right to cherish the hope that our civilisation will gradually regenerate itself, and to work to this end as the prophets did in their time. But in history, the highest in a civilisation never seems to emancipate itself from the lowest except by catastrophe

—and this is not far from Apocalyptic. And perhaps catastrophe does not come till there is at work in men's souls a higher order to be emancipated by the children of God being manifested. Whether we are to expect one final cataclysm or not, the destructive yet liberating effect of cataclysms are of the historical order.

The second point is the Remnant, and with it the moral attitude. How are we expecting a new creation? Is it by what Paul calls the bond written in ordinances, by safeguards of freedom here, and laws amended there, by national safeguards here and national concessions there? Or is our hope in a change of rule altogether and, before that, of reverence? Can we work for it otherwise than as we live in it? And have we not to commit the manifestation of it in the end to God?

There is a sense in which all true morality is an interim ethic. It is not being in accord with any order that exists, but for one that ought to be. All increasing vision of what is required and all sacred obligation to follow it in reverence for the highest and in regard for one another assumes, in one sense, the active presence now of what should be, and, in another, has merely to do what is our immediate call and leave the manifestation of it wholly to God.

But the Christian ethic is still more definitely interim; and it applies specially to the Church. It is to be the Remnant, who live in God's Rule and are working in the world as its leaven. This means that we should think only one thing supremely worth doing, to be ministers of reconciliation, beseeching men in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God of whom are all things. "Of whom are all things" is the essential, because it means so being friends with God as to see His mind and purpose as the interpretation of His world, and thereby all things in the world, even the worst, working for good. It is this entire change of Rule or nothing. Jesus did not think it worth while to cross the street to make the most disreputable Publican into the most reputable Pharisee, the very thing to which we give so much of our energy. His ethic rests on the belief that we cannot reform the world from without by stronger institutions or improved regulations, but only by a right worship, a transformation of reverence. And that faith is the substance of apocalyptic.

And even this change of mind is in a sense a catastrophic hope, a manifesting by God and not a working by man. It is our part to live as God's children, to be the redeeming as well as the redeemed, and God's part in His own time and way to manifest that the Rule we live in is His Rule.

What we believe is largely shown by what we do not believe. He that believeth shall not make haste, and most of the stunts in theology as well as in politics are mere attempts to force God Himself into making haste. There are such things as Days of the Lord, but they may be darkness and not light. Yet they are days of revealing for every high thought and purpose, if they find us as good servants, not striving, but serving our day and generation

by calmly and graciously filling our own place. To be crucified to the World-Rule is to hold the freedom of God's children dearer than life, but this is also to possess the world as well as to overcome it. When that is seen the Kingdom will be manifested in power. But will it be seen without the uprooting as well as the re-planting of a Day of the Lord?

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CHRISTUS VICTOR: AN HISTORICAL STUDY OF THE THREE MAIN TYPES OF THE IDEA OF THE ATONEMENT. By Gustaf Aulén. Translated by A. G. Hebert, M.A. *S.P.C.K.* 6*s.* net.

The author of this book is Professor of Systematic Theology in the University of Lund. In March and April, 1930, he delivered the Olaus Petri Lectures and these are here translated by A. G. Hebert of the Society of the Sacred Mission, Kelham. No more impressive and important contribution to the study of the Atonement has appeared for a long time. Of theories of the Atonement there are, broadly speaking, two: one the Objective and the other the Subjective. The former regards the whole of the satisfaction for sin as made by God Himself in Christ. The latter looks upon the death of Christ as producing an effect upon the believer which in some way tends to make him a contributor to his own redemption.

The Objective theory says that Christ's atoning work brings about a change in God's attitude to the sinner. The Subjective theory suggests that by the death of Christ a change is wrought in the attitude of man.

Dr. Aulén's contention is that there is another view which he asserts is the typical view of the New Testament, of the Fathers, and of Luther—a view to be clearly distinguished from the other two.

The whole subject is discussed with considerable force and ability, and the book deserves serious attention, for it has in it the promise of great helpfulness.

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PERSONAL PROBLEMS OF CONDUCT AND RELIGION. By J. G. McKenzie, M.A., B.D. *Geo. Allen & Unwin, Ltd.* 5*s.* net.

No subjects could be of greater interest and of more practical importance than those dealt with in these pages. Here are a few of the problems discussed: "What our young people are thinking." "Temptation and Churchgoing." "Christ and the World." "The delinquent child." The method employed is the application of psychological knowledge to concrete difficulties. Anyone who is concerned with practical Christian work will find much to help him in these bright, vigorous and sympathetic attempts to come to grips with some of the perennial problems of human life, though he may not be prepared to endorse all that the author says.