

Concordia Seminary - Saint Louis

## Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary

---

Master of Sacred Theology Thesis

Concordia Seminary Scholarship

---

6-1-1950

### The Eschatological Tension of the Kingdom of God and Interpretations by American Protestant Theology

Vernon Schreiber

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/stm>



Part of the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

---

#### Recommended Citation

Schreiber, Vernon, "The Eschatological Tension of the Kingdom of God and Interpretations by American Protestant Theology" (1950). *Master of Sacred Theology Thesis*. 201.

<https://scholar.csl.edu/stm/201>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Concordia Seminary Scholarship at Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master of Sacred Theology Thesis by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. For more information, please contact [seitzw@csl.edu](mailto:seitzw@csl.edu).

THE ESCHATOLOGICAL TENSION OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND  
INTERPRETATIONS BY AMERICAN PROTESTANT THEOLOGY

---

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty  
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,  
Department of Systematic Theology  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Sacred Theology

---

by

Vernon R. Schreiber

June 1950

Approved by: Jaroslav Pelikan  
Advisor

J. E. May Jr.  
Reader

H2, 708

52335

BV  
4070  
C69  
M3  
1950  
no. 6  
c. 2

52335

CONCORDIA SEMINARY LIBRARY  
ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
II. THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT . .	8
The Union of the Kingdom as Future and Present in the Reign of Christ . . . . .	14
The "Already" and "Not Yet" after Pentecost . . . . .	21
The Witness of the Church to the Kingship of Christ . . . . .	25
III. THE AMERICAN CONCEPT OF PROGRESSIVE ATTAINMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD . . . . .	35
The Development of the Idea of Progress . . . . .	35
Theological Optimism and the Entrance of the Socio-Ethical Element . . . . .	44
Historical Documentation of the Entrance of the Socio-Ethical Element . . . . .	48
The Kingdom of God and Eschatology . . . . .	61
IV. THE KINGDOM OF GOD AS PRESENT AND COMING: THE ESCHATOLOGICAL TENSION OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD . . . . .	82
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	100

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to examine the New Testament teaching of the Kingdom of God and analyze, with limitations, the development of the concept of the Kingdom in American Protestant theology. In our quest for an understanding of the problems raised by an investigation of American theological utterances concerning the Kingdom of God, we have turned first of all, to the New Testament presentation of the Kingdom of God. The method of offering the data which has been chosen by the writer consists chiefly of a Biblical survey, beginning with an examination of the meaning of the word "Kingdom" and the announcement of that Kingdom on the part of Jesus. An investigation of the meaning of the word "Kingdom" according to its New Testament usage has led the writer to the view that it is the "Redemptive Rule" of God which brings deliverance for mankind, a Kingdom which has entered history in the person of Christ. However, in examining the many statements on the Kingdom of God one also finds that Christ and the Apostolic writers conceived of the Kingdom on the basis of three principles: 1) God's Kingdom has come; 2) God's Kingdom is coming at the present time; 3) God's Kingdom will come.

From these principles a number of questions emerge to form at least a beginning for examining the attitude of American Protestantism towards the entrance of God's Kingdom into the

world and its history: How does American Protestantism understand the Kingdom of God and how does it see that Kingdom revealed? How does it understand the activity of the Kingdom in history, and where does it see the Kingdom entering and operating in history? How does it view the victory of God's Kingdom and relate it to the end of history?

In speaking of American Protestantism, we should now indicate the limitations which are contained in this thesis. Since Protestantism has spoken much of the Kingdom of God, it is far beyond the scope of this paper to treat all the utterances in American theology and the vagaries of apocalyptic sects. For the most part, therefore, we have limited ourselves to that trend which has been by far the most articulate in theological expressions concerning the Kingdom. We have defined as the source of this theology the Calvinism of New England under the leadership of Jonathan Edwards. The outgrowth of the Calvinism with which we are primarily concerned is generally known as "American Liberalism," a title claimed by itself.<sup>1</sup>

This choice is not intended to deny the outgrowth of a genuine conservatism from the same New England origins. It remains true, however, that the school of thought which produced Horace Bushnell and the "Later New Haven Theology," the "Oberlin Theology", Henry C. King and the ready listeners to Albrecht Ritschl,

---

<sup>1</sup>Frank Hugh Foster, The Modern Movement in American Theology (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1939), p. 144.

was by far the most influential theology in America. Through it American theology as a whole has an attitude of optimism about the nature of man and certainty of bringing in the Kingdom of God through social reforms which to this day has marked American theology as distinctive in the Christian world.

Theologically, American liberalism can be described as the attempt to form a synthesis between reason and revelation. From the view point of a philosophy of history, it can also be described as the idea of the immanent working of God. According to this idea the world is progressively developing into something better, a process in which God is revealed and eventually culminates in a perfected ethical society that God would be pleased to call His Kingdom.

History, according to this view, is wholly and exclusively governed by laws of nature which can be discerned for the most part. However, this theology developed out of a Christian tradition and was concerned about finding a place for Jesus. A place was found, and Jesus became the great Teacher who could show one how to progressively attain the ideal of the Kingdom. It confidently viewed the victory of God's Kingdom as possible within the limits of the historical process.

Through this emphasis on Jesus the Teacher and the certainty that the Kingdom of God could be worked out on the basis of ethical action, the influence of the liberal trend extended beyond those accepted all of its theological propositions. American theology as a whole was willing to consider

the eschatological questions pertaining to the end of history of little consequence and answer that the victory of God's Kingdom was possible within the limits of historical processes. This desire to see Christ as manifest ruler of America led to the wide-spread program of reforms known as the "Social Gospel" and characterizes the interest of American churches in formulating specific laws of the land in order to "Christianize" the nation.

In this quest, however, the Kingdom of God was transferred into a human possession; and God as Sovereign was forgotten in the interests of progress and democracy. The eschatological setting of the Gospel became a "husk" within which the true "kernel" of Christ's teaching was sought. The witness of eschatology to the radical and sudden appearance of the Kingdom of God was regarded as an outmoded view. The Kingdom has come --- in Christ, the gentle and smiling Teacher. The Kingdom is coming -- in social reforms with education as the means of grace. The Kingdom will come -- in evolutionary progress with the corresponding realization that if not all things are yet "Christianized," the important thing is to keep on going.

To be sure, the importance of Christ's eschatological thinking could not remain ignored, thanks to the efforts of such men as Albert Schweitzer. But this recognition of eschatology -- it came much later in America -- had little effect on one's attitude towards the Kingdom. For it was



still taken for granted that no modern man could possibly operate within this framework of thinking, and that he must necessarily view the activities of the world with a "long perspective" which Jesus never possessed. And yet, there was a result: a noteworthy decline in historical glibness concerning a liberal Jesus holding up the Kingdom of God as a goal.

Concurrent with the historical undermining of past beliefs there was the disillusionment of wars and depressions. The resulting change of direction in American theology, however, has not been as fruitful as some of its claims to "realism" might indicate. If the restraining effect of sin upon the perfection of society has been recognized, as in the case of Walter Marshall Horton, the eschatological implications of the ultimate victory of the Kingdom are left undeveloped. If a theology is apparently constructed within the framework of Biblical eschatology, as in the case of Reinhold Niebuhr, the manifestation of the Kingdom of God remains in social reforms sponsored by Christianity; and the importance of eschatology in pointing out the spiritual nature of the Kingdom of God which comes to man is lost. Some others have turned to Biblical language, but they have subjected the Scriptures to a literalistic and extremely apocalyptic interpretation. Behind this latter interpretation, furthermore, lies a great deal of the same theological optimism which emanated from the traditions of American Calvinism;

and this interpretation also sees the fulfillment of the Kingdom within the bounds of history and through the compulsion of legalism.

However, the interest of American theology in the relationship of God and the world can not be rejected by saying that a Christian has no interest in the world. For the Christian sees that God also loved the world and reconciled it to Himself. Therefore the Christian view of history has significance and must be present. For the Church exists in the world and must constantly examine its part in the historical process. The Church administers the Word and Sacraments to men, instructs them in the way of righteousness, and affects its witness to the world by the decisions it makes.

The view of history taken by the Christian Church is an eschatological one, interpreting the activities of the world in the light of the coming and inevitable end of those activities. Therefore we have seen fit to enlarge upon the passing criticisms contained in our historical study of American theology. To this end we have restated the Biblical exposition of the New Testament's teaching on the Kingdom of God in a systematic fashion. In it we address ourselves specifically to the question of how the Kingdom of God enters the world and reveals itself in operation. But the present activity of God's Kingdom in the world always contains in itself the eschatological "not yet" towards all deeds within history. This is the tension of the "already" and "not yet"

of the Kingdom of God. While the Church can experience the gracious rule of God, it must take care to avoid identifying the Church with the Kingdom. In this connection we also take cognizance of the Roman Catholic identification on such lines. Another danger presented by a church turning its concern for the Kingdom to interest in itself is found in indifference towards the world. For God is also Lord of all, and the Church must be concerned with the orders of life which God has maintained according to His will. Therefore, we conclude our study with an attempt to realize the importance of the struggle between God and Satan in Creation and to look for the meaning of creation in view of the ultimate end of the struggle.

**FRITZLAFF MEMORIAL LIBRARY**  
**CONCORDIA SEMINARY**  
**ST. LOUIS, MO.**

## CHAPTER II

### THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Kingdom of God is the Reign of God. The term "Kingdom of God" or "kingdom of heaven" occurs 119 times in the New Testament.<sup>1</sup> Only Matthew uses the expression "kingdom of heaven," although he also refers to the "Kingdom of God" three times.<sup>2</sup> While it is not possible to tell whether Jesus used one phrase or the other in the Aramaic, all exegetes seem to agree that the two terms are synonymous.<sup>3</sup> There are two likely reasons for this variation in Matthew: 1) the practice of the Jews to substitute the word "heaven" for the name of God; 2) the desire to point out that the Kingdom which Christ and the apostles proclaimed did not originate on earth, but in heaven.<sup>4</sup>

More discussion has revolved around the meaning of Basileia itself. Does it mean "realm" or "reign"? The term

---

<sup>1</sup>W. Arndt, "The New Testament Teaching on the Kingdom of God," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXI (January, 1950), p. 8.

<sup>2</sup>Matt. 12:28; 21:31; 21:43 and perhaps, depending upon the reading, 6:33; 19:24.

<sup>3</sup>K. L. Schmidt, "Βασιλεία," Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament, ed. by Gerhard Kittel, (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1933), I, 583.

<sup>4</sup>Arndt, op. cit., holds to this view and also cites Heinz-Dietrich Wendland's Die Eschatologie des Reiches Gottes bei Jesus, p. 15.

"Kingdom" in English is somewhat ambiguous but usually suggests a territory or a community governed by a king. The Greek term Basilēia which the English translates is also ambiguous. However, the weight of modern scholarship favors the interpretation of it as "reign" or "rule."<sup>5</sup> One prominent argument in favor of this interpretation is the fact that the expression represents an Aramaic phrase well established in Jewish usage: "The malkuth (or malku) of Heaven." C. H. Dodd points out that this term is properly an abstract noun meaning "kingly rule" and connotes the fact that God reigns as King. In the light of this meaning, Dodd concludes:

In sense, though not in grammatical form, the substantive conception in this phrase "the Kingdom of God" is the idea of God, and the term "kingdom" indicates that specific aspect, attribute or activity of God, in which He is revealed as King or sovereign Lord of His people, or of the universe which he created.<sup>6</sup>

The Kingdom of God as Deliverance. In Rabbinical terminology of Christ's time, the Jews spoke of a man taking upon himself the malkuth of heaven when he submitted himself

---

<sup>5</sup>Schmidt, op. cit., p. 580f.

<sup>6</sup>Charles Harold Dodd, Parables of the Kingdom (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), pp. 34-35. Cp. A. E. J. Rawlinson, The Gospel According to St. Mark (Third edition; London: Methuen and Co., 1931), p. 13. Rawlinson translates Mark 1:15 as, "The Reign of God is at hand."

unquestioningly to the Law.<sup>7</sup> More often, they used it in a different way: as an object of hope. Jewish thought was penetrated with the idea of a coming King and Kingdom. Though sorely oppressed, the pious Jews still had hope in the clear demonstration of God's ruling hand which, as he knew, already extended over all the nations. The evil and miserable world which was the Jew's lot would not maintain itself forever, and in the last times the faith of Israel would be vindicated: "The God of heaven shall set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed. . . and it shall stand forever" (Dan. 2:44). In that sense the Basileia of God which would redeem His people was an eschatological idea which looked to the future, the last times. When the Basileia would come, it would be conferred unto one "like unto a son of man" (Dan. 7:13), and its authority would be exercised by the "saints of the Most High" (Dan. 7:18); the hope of the Kingdom was at the same time a Messianic hope (cp. Ps. 110).

The Proclamation of Deliverance as Future. When John the Baptist and Jesus first stepped out to preach the Kingdom, they were, therefore, handling a frequently discussed topic. They gained their audience because they said that

---

<sup>7</sup>Dodd, op. cit., p. 35. Dodd also remarks, "The Rabbinic expression . . . finds a parallel in the saying of Mk. x. 15: 'whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child will never enter into it.'" (p. 41).

the kingdom was near -- lying in the future, but near.<sup>8</sup> Jesus said: "I say to you, of a truth, there are some of those standing here who will not taste of death until they see the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:27), and "I shall not from now on drink the fruit of the vine till the kingdom of God has come" (Luke 22:18). The coming of the Kingdom was often

---

<sup>8</sup>The close relationship of the messages of Jesus and John in the Gospels is obvious. It might be noted, however, that several exegetes have objected that the similarities in the messages have been emphasized to the extent that the profound differences between the two have been lost, or at least obscured. Rawlinson's comments on Mark 1:15 maintain the right distinction: "Mark's sentence, which should be translated 'The Reign of God is at hand! Repent and believe the Good News,' does admirably sum up the essence of our Lord's primary message." He goes on to point out that Jesus' message actually stands out in contrast to the Baptizer's warning about judgment. Above all things, Jesus' message is a piece of Good News, although, of course, the need for repentance remains in both instances. *Op. cit.*, p. 15. Although it is not necessary to follow Rawlinson's method of identifying all passages that would link the two preachers of the Kingdom as later Christian interpretations -- this is his explanation of the presence of Luke 3:18 -- it remains that John's warning and Jesus' offer did not gather one unified following (Cp. Acts 19:4).

Rudolph Otto presents one of the best examinations of the two messages in his The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Press, 1938) pp. 65ff: "The Original Element in Jesus' Preaching of the Kingdom as Compared with the Message and Person of John the Baptist." In this section Otto states his position thus: "The profound difference between John and Jesus is immediately perceptible when one places their key words side by side. On the one hand, 'The judgment of wrath is coming;' and on the other, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' The latter was different; it was a new message, a man with the second message could not remain in the following of the first; it was a message by which the first man could not avoid being offended, and, in fact, he was offended" (pp. 69-70). Cp. F. E. Mayer, "The Kingdom of God According to the New Testament," Proceedings at the Twenty-Fifth Convention of the Texas District of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1942), p. 2Cf.

linked simultaneously with messages about the end of the world. The parabolic saying of Luke 21:29-31 springs up in a context dealing with the end of the world and Matthew's reference to the judgment scene and the righteous inheriting the Kingdom presents the same great object of hope: the eschaton (Matt. 25:34).

Characteristics of the Kingdom. However, this message was not some easily recognizable summum bonum. Jesus said that the Son of man would come down from the clouds, but he did not present a sensual concept of the kingdom which the mockery of the Sadducees could put to rout (Mark 12:25f). Nor did He set any time, although His words had a familiar ring in the ears of his hearers, He separated Himself and the theme of His message from the nationalistic and political aspirations which had Jerusalem as the center of their hope. He appointed the Twelve, and the number twelve is admittedly significant in the Hebrew mind. However, He, like John the Baptist, had a negative point which repudiated nationalism: the Jew would have no favorable position (Matt. 8:12; 21:43). It was a message of repentance: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matt. 4:17). It told of a kingdom that comes to men regardless of what they are doing or what their preference in the matter might be. The call is simply to be ready for the coming of God. A man will not know how the kingdom grows: Mark 4:26-29 (" . . . and the seed should spring up and grow, he knoweth not how." cf. Matt. 13:31, Luke 13:2ff).



There is a corresponding element of hiddenness in the other parables such as the Tares (Matt. 13:24-30), the Treasure in the Field (Matt. 13:44), the Pearl (Matt. 13:45), the Fishnet (Matt. 13:47-50). Returning to the parable of the Secretly Growing Seed for a moment, its purpose is not to point out that the kingdom will grow gradually but that it is God's doing; it is through His power that it grows and develops; man is not calling it into existence or making it prosper. In summary, all of the parables mentioned contain two main characteristics: 1) It is of another sort than man is accustomed to; 2) It is of an overwhelming nature.

The Decisive Preaching of the Kingdom as Present. However, Jesus' view was not exclusively futuristic. It must be recognized that there are many passages which speak of the Kingdom as a present reality, and this is crucial to His preaching. The Pharisees asked when the Kingdom which He preached would come. He quickly replied that the Kingdom even then was "in your midst" (Luke 17:21).<sup>9</sup> Matt. 12:28 is just as decisive: "If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you" (Luke 11:20). Burrows explains: "The Aramaic verb probably used by Jesus in this saying means primarily to arrive or reach, also to

---

<sup>9</sup>Paul M. Bretsher, "Luke 17:21," Concordia Theological Monthly, XV (November, 1944), p. 730f.

be fall or happen to a person. . . in effect, 'what has happened to you is the Kingdom of God.'<sup>10</sup> There has been a call to repentance, but whether men repent or not, the Kingdom is an historical happening. The power of God is at work in the world and the Kingdom is actually present. "If we are seeking the differentia of the teaching of Jesus upon the Kingdom of God, it is here that it must be found."<sup>11</sup> Finally, Jesus' quotation of the prophetic description of the messianic age in answer to the disciples of John the Baptist stands forth, the promise of God is actually being fulfilled. (Luke 7:21, cp. Matt. 11:5).

The Union of the Kingdom as Future and Present in the  
Reign of Christ

Identification of the Kingdom with Christ. The Kingdom was preached as future and present, but how can it be both at the same time? The answer is found in Christ Who had no hesitancy in preaching its present certainty. We have seen this in the texts last mentioned. He also read to His people from the scroll of Isaiah and said, "This day (seemeron) is this scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:21). Whatever

---

<sup>10</sup>Millar Burrows, An Outline of Biblical Theology (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, c. 1946), p. 189.

<sup>11</sup>Dodd, op. cit., p. 189.

he said about the coming Kingdom, He saw that future already in Him as Seemeron. The explanation of the Kingdom as a present reality but still coming lies in Christ. The Kingdom is present in the Messiah.

The statement that the Kingdom is present in the Messiah explains why we find passages which presuppose that Jesus and the Kingdom are identical. While Mark 11:10 speaks of "the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the Lord," the parallel passages to Mark 11:9 (Matt. 21:9, Luke 19:38) speak only of the person Jesus Christ and omit altogether a parallel to Mark 11:10. Jesus' statements about forsaking house, children, etc., "for my sake" probably affords a better insight. Mark 10:29 and Matt. 19:29 refer to His sake or His name's sake, but Luke 18:29 reads, "for the sake of the Kingdom of God." Again, Mark 9:1 (Cp. Luke 9:27) speaks of the coming of the Reign of God in power, but its parallel, Matt. 16:28, speaks of the son of Man coming in with His Kingdom.

Furthermore, a follower waits for the Son of Man and for the Lord exactly as He waits for the Kingdom itself. An example of this expectation is found in an investigation of Matt. 25:1: "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom" (Cp. Luke 12:32, 35, 36). For more examples, see K. L. Schmidt's article on Basileia in which he examines these and other passages and concludes: "Grammar as well as the whole context speaks of the fact that the connection between

the kingdom and Jesus who came into the world is nothing less than John's, 'The Word was made flesh' (John 1:14)."<sup>12</sup> In the words of Visser 't Hooft: "The Reign of God is not only proclaimed. It is inaugurated. The anointed of God, the Messiah-King has come to reign on behalf of God."<sup>13</sup>

The Promise of the Paraclete. The disciples and many followers saw the great acts of Jesus and were willing to lay down their clothes to prepare the way for His triumphal entry into Jerusalem as King. The opening day of the week of His Passion found Him hailed as "the King that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Luke 19:38). But He was, to use a phrase of Visser 't Hooft, a "hidden King." His Kingship was to be God's creation, not the object of the plans of men. He had indicated this when men unsuccessfully attempted to seize Him and make Him King (John 6:15).

The Kingdom is already in Him who has "overcome the world" (John 16:33). But in the great discourse of John 14-17 He reveals that there is an element of unfulfillment in the Kingdom which is present in Him, a "not yet" alongside the "already." He must go to the Father to prepare a place for His own (John 14:3). But what then? He will come again; but as He promises that He will come again, He also promises the Paraclete Whom the Father will send in His name

---

<sup>12</sup>Schmidt, op. cit., a free translation.

<sup>13</sup>W. A. Visser 't Hooft, The Kingship of Christ (New York: Harper and Brothers, c. 1949), p. 74.

(John 14:26; 15:26). He must depart -- "It is expedient" -- so that the Paraclete will come; and He will guide them into all truth (John 16:7, 13). His departure will bring sorrow, but that sorrow shall be turned to joy. The disciples would not be without Christ; for the Paraclete will testify of Him, and thus Christ will be present before He comes again.

The Place of Jesus' Death in Fulfillment of the Kingdom. The hint which Jesus had given to the effect that the way of His Kingdom was not the way of the world in John 6:15 (Cp. Mark 4:11f; 10:42-45; Matt. 20:25-28) was now to be given full meaning. He acknowledged the validity of Pilate's question, but He could truthfully reply, "My Kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). He accepted the title of King, but with a reservation the disciples had not seen clearly during His public ministry: the sign of His Kingship was to be the Cross, an emblem of suffering, not compulsion. The course of events, outwardly a series of disasters, contained a revelation of the glory of God through the Son. The Cross revealed that Christ is a priestly King who dies for His people. He was condemned, but that sentence upon Him as King of the Jews was necessary to reveal fully the true nature of His mission from God: to reconcile men to God through His death on the Cross.

On the third day He rose again and confirmed the fact that He had overcome the world. Again, He opened the Scriptures to the disciples and said: "Thus it is written, and

thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:44-47, cp. vv. 27). They were to preach to all nations, but not immediately, not until endued with power from on high (v. 49). About to ascend into heaven, He promised them the Holy Ghost and power (Acts 1:5,8). The promise which could not be fulfilled until he departed to the Father was about to come into being.

Pentecost and the Gospel of the Kingdom. On the day of Pentecost the false hopes of the disciples were replaced with true understanding. There was no longer any disillusionment about the failure to redeem Israel (Luke 24:21), or the persistent question which remained even on Ascension Day: "Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). On Pentecost "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak . . ." (Acts 2:4). They knew the "Gospel of the Kingdom" and understood such statements as "Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 23:5) and that new birth through water and the Spirit was a necessity for entrance (John 3:5). The Spirit is the source of that new life for Christians (Rom. 8:10; John 6:63; II Cor. 3:6) and the Kingdom a present reality of "righteousness and joy and peace in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 14:17).

Furthermore, entering into the Kingdom and entering into

eternal life are equated. Mark 9:43-47 is probably one of the most important examples of this form of identification. Nor does the passage's significance end there; for while Mark 9:47 speaks of entering into the Kingdom, its parallel, Matt. 18:9, speaks of entering into life. Matt. 23:3 and Luke 11:52 should be considered in the same manner: Matthew reports that the scribes and pharisees would shut men off from the Kingdom, but Luke has them taking away the key of knowledge.

Realizing the life-giving presence of the Spirit, men were able to preach the Kingdom as present; and it was a "Gospel of the Kingdom" which they preached. The use of this phrase to describe the preaching of the Kingdom is not at all forced. The two phrases are linked together throughout. In place of εὐαγγελίον τοῦ θεοῦ (Mark 1:14) many variant readings state that Jesus came into Galilee "preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God." K. L. Schmidt would not ignore the importance of the verb εὐαγγελίζω in preaching the Kingdom (Luke 4:43; 8:1; 16:16; Acts 8:12). Similarly, he lists other important verbs used in this connection, such as, κηρύσσω, διαμαρτυροῦμαι, διαγγέλλω, πείθω, λαλέω .<sup>14</sup>

Paul also claimed the same Gospel as the others (Cp. I Cor. 15:11), and in his proclamation "he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing

---

<sup>14</sup>Schmidt, op. cit., p. 584.

and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God" (Acts 19:8). Acts 20:24ff is especially significant, Paul stating that he has received from Jesus the ministry "to testify the Gospel of the grace of God." And then he continues immediately (v. 25): "And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see me no more."

Βασιλεία and εὐαγγέλιον are also united in the parable of the sower: Mark and Luke speak of sowing the word, but Matt. 13:19 has more: "If anyone heareth the word of the kingdom . . ." Again, the parable, as it is related in Mark 4, does not speak of knowing the mysteries of God, but reports that Jesus said: "To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom" (Mark 4:11). A. E. J. Rawlinson remarks that this phrase "seems virtually to express the idea of the mystery of Christianity, i.e., of Christian salvation as a whole."<sup>15</sup> Otto Piper concludes that the reign of grace through Jesus is the one explanation of Mark's treatment of this parable. It is a "kingdom" parable, but it is equally a "gospel" parable speaking of the secret purpose of God.<sup>16</sup> The message of the Kingdom was that of the Gospel.

---

<sup>15</sup>Rawlinson, op. cit., p. liii.

<sup>16</sup>Otto A. Piper, "The Mystery of the Kingdom of God," Interpretation, I (April, 1947), p. 189ff.



The "Already" and "Not Yet" after Pentecost

The Victory Won but Still Coming. The promise of the Paraclete that was the "not yet" in the preaching of Jesus was now realized. In the testimony of the Spirit the Apostles proclaimed the Reign of Christ as the message of the Gospel. But again, they conceived of the Reign of Christ as both fulfilled and unfulfilled. If the presence of the Spirit is the fulfillment of a promise, the presence of the Spirit is itself a promise, maintaining the tension of the "already" and "not yet" of the Reign of Christ. For the Spirit, in assuring that Christ is reigning, also points to the coming of Christ again.

The New Testament writers were not at all hesitant in expressing the paradox that while the victory of Christ was already a present reality, it was also a victory still coming. First of all, it is a real victory. Paul says that God has "translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Col. 1:13). It is a reign that is here and now (I Cor. 15:24-28), a Kingdom which cannot be shaken (Heb. 12:28). The Kingdom is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost (Rom. 14:17). The victory of Christ over Satan in the Gospel accounts demonstrated the Kingdom as already present (Matt. 12:29; Luke 11:20-22; Luke 10:18), and after His resurrection and ascension, the epistles enlarge the picture by stating that He is over all things, a victor over the evil powers which

are now made subject to Him (Eph. 1:21,22; Col. 2:10,15; I Pet. 3:22).

But if the victory is spoken of as realized, it is also characterized as something promised as yet to come. Christians are heirs of a future Kingdom in James 2:5. Col. 4:11 implies that Paul and his comrades are working for a future Kingdom, and all are admonished to remember that suffering now will make men worthy for the coming (II Thess. 1:15; II Tim. 2:12; Rom. 8:17). In Hebrews, often cited as completely removed from "primitive" Christianity and its simple hopes, James Moffat can only reluctantly admit that basileia is at least an effort to "preserve something of the primitive view of Jesus as messianic king."<sup>17</sup> But the forward look of Hebrews is not lost in any way (Heb. 9:27,28; 10:37). While the author of Hebrews says that Christ has "everything under His feet," without exception, he adds: "But now we see not yet all things put under him." (Heb. 2:8). He uses Psalm 110, significantly combining both the priestly and royal functions of Christ: "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool" (Heb. 10:12, 13).

---

<sup>17</sup>James Moffat, "Epistle to the Hebrews," The International Critical Commentary (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1924), p. xxxiii.

The Meaning of the Victory Won but Still Coming. Visser't Hooft refers to Kittel's Woerterbuch for an explanation of this ambiguity of New Testament thought. The answer lies in the verb katergeeo which is used again and again. The basic meaning is "to render ineffective"; the secondary meaning, "to annihilate." In most passages the first meaning is used, a good example being I Cor. 2:16, which Moffat translates: "the dethroned Powers who rule this world." Through this understanding an explanation of the victory won but still coming is possible. "The inimical powers are no longer on the throne . . . But they do not yet admit their defeat and are still acting as if they were the true rulers of the world."<sup>18</sup> Thus, in principle Christ has abolished Death "through the gospel" (II Tim. 1:10), and though Death still comes, it has lost its sting (I Cor. 15:55). And Satan is bound (Mark 3:22-26). While Paul writes that Christ "must reign until all his foes are put under his feet," he also adds that God "has put everything under his feet" (I Cor. 15:23,27). The time between the resurrection and the return of the Lord is a time between the victory which is only known to faith and the full victory, but nevertheless, the victorious Lord of now guarantees the ultimate victory.

This expression of the "already" and "not yet" of the Kingdom of God brings to mind another New Testament expression

---

<sup>18</sup>Visser't Hooft, op. cit., p. 81.

of the same tension. We refer to "this age and the age to come" (Eph. 1:19f.; Cp. Matt. 12:32), a concept particularly emphasized and illuminated by Anders Nygren. It amounts to this: At the first coming of Christ and His message of "to-day" the age to come invaded the present age, so that now the two ages overlap each other, and this overlapping lasts from His first coming to His second coming.

The decisive moment in history lies in the resurrection of Christ. Now life is triumphant over death. This is the explanation of the contrast of Adam and Christ (Rom. 5:12). What is ordinarily called "life" is in its totality and without exception subject to the power of death, but the Gospel announces to the slaves of this age of death that the age of life has come.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, that age is no longer merely coming; with the resurrection it has become a present reality (II Cor. 5:17). Why? Christ stands at the center, on the line between the two ages (I Cor. 15:17; I Cor. 15:20). The resurrection of Christ and of the dead are not separate, but a unity, with Christ the "first fruits," the beginning of the process. Nygren also refers to Rom. 1:4 where the resurrection is the dividing line between the seed of David and flesh and the Spirit.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup>Anders Nygren, "This Age and the Age to Come," The Augustana Quarterly, XXI. (April, 1942), p. 106.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 107.

This whole overlapping of the two ages is the "last hour" (I John 2:18) in which Christians point to the end of the old and the beginning of the new, an hour prolonged now only through the patience of God (II Pet. 3:9).

### The Witness of the Church to the Kingship of Christ

Christ as "King" or "Lord" of All. The knowledge of Christ's victory over Satan and Death through His Crucifixion and Resurrection clearly placed the Apostles and their followers in a state of tension between this world and the world ushered in by the coming Kingdom. They recognized that their lot was not of this world. But while they were not of the world, they were in the world. And they also saw Christ as Lord of all things in this world. It was true, He was crucified as King of the Jews, but that title held universal implications. There is no fundamental difference between this designation and that of "Lord."

. . . The King of Israel is, as the Jews put it to Pilate, "the king messiah" (Luke 19:38). Though he occupies the throne of David, he will reign not only over the house of Jacob but over the whole world, for to his reign there will be no end (Luke 1:32,33). He is the Son of man to whom, according to the prophecy of Dan. 7:14, a kingdom is given which includes all peoples and nations. The twenty-fifth chapter of St. Matthew confirms this cosmic interpretation of Christ's Kingship.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup>Visser 't Hooft, op. cit., pp. 75-76.

The identity of King with Lord is also brought out in John's statement that Christ is Lord of lords and King of kings (Rev. 1:5; 17:14). In the same book of Revelation the Messianic Psalm 110, used time and again to express the world-embracing, cosmic Kingship of Christ, is quoted to show that the Lord has conquered and sat down beside the Father on His throne (Rev. 3:21; cp., for a typical example of this use of Psalm 110 in the New Testament, Heb. 2:10,11).

The Special People of the Messiah-King. However, in proclaiming Christ as King, or Lord, of all the disciples also recognized that as King He would gather His own special people. The Basileia is His "redemptive Rule" but it does not operate in a void. It implies a sphere of rule. This realization on the part of the disciples was in complete accord with the mission of Jesus. It is true that Jesus is the "Kingdom," and that through Him God comes to deliver man from his sins. However, as the Messiah Jesus clearly came to gather a community. He pictured His Messiahship in terms of Isaiah's "Suffering Servant" and Daniel's "Son of man," both of whom were, as Hunter observes, definitely "societary figures."<sup>22</sup> He saw Himself as the Shepherd seeking the Lost Sheep (Luke 15:3-6), and He sent out the disciples

---

<sup>22</sup>Archibald M. Hunter, The Message of the New Testament, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, c. 1944), p. 58.

as sheep to proclaim the Kingdom to Israel (Matt. 10:16). And when He tells the disciples that it is the Father's good pleasure to give them the Kingdom, they are a "little flock" (Luke 12:32). On the eve of His death He refers to the prophecy of Zechariah: "I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered abroad" (Matt. 26:31; cp. Mark 14:27). The Fourth Gospel is more explicit: "I am the good shepherd, and I know mine own . . . and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other I have . . . (John 10:14-16). He tells Peter to "feed my sheep" (John 21:17).

Moreover, Jesus went beyond the mere employment of figurative speech in such statements. This is evidenced by the fact that before He departed He celebrated the Last Supper. At that time He declared Himself to be "the Son of man" of Daniel Seven (Luke 22:22) and identified His followers as "the saints of the Most High" by saying: "I appoint unto you a kingdom, even as my Father appointed unto me" (Luke 22:29). "Hort saw it long ago: 'The twelve,' he wrote, 'sat that evening as representatives of the ecclesia at large.'"<sup>23</sup>

The members of the early New Testament church saw that where Jesus had once been the Proclaimer of the Kingdom, that mission had now been given to them through the twelve repre-

---

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 65.

sentative disciples. The command was to extend His Kingdom into all the world. In fulfilling that mission, however, they did not imagine themselves as isolated or loosely connected individualists convincing other individuals. If Jesus had sought a new people, they were also to be a people in the closest fellowship, a fellowship that recognized Jesus as Lord through the presence of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 12:3). The Church is a temple filled by God's Spirit (Eph. 2:21f.; I Cor. 3:16) and an οἶκος πνευματικός (I Pet. 2:5), a house of living stones "whose cement, so to speak, is the indwelling Spirit of God."<sup>24</sup> When we speak of the fellowship of the Spirit, we are indebted to Paul's own phraseology: "If there be therefore any comfort of love, if any fellowship (κοινωνία) of the Spirit . . ." (Phil. 2:1) and "the communion (fellowship, κοινωνία) of the Holy Ghost be with you all" (II Cor. 13:14). In all of this the apostles were mindful of the discourses of John 14-17 on the guidance of the Spirit and Christ's prayer for oneness.

The Church's Testimony of the Last Things. The missionaries of the Church went forth to proclaim Christ as Lord, but they recognized His Lordship as limited to His own peculiar people whom He had purified (Titus 2:14). And those people are intimately joined together "in Christ" (I Cor. 1:30; Rom. 8:1; Col. 1:2). However, we have seen that the Christ

---

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 75.



was also a King who was to come and demonstrate His rule over the whole world. Was that Kingship forgotten and were they contented with the present activity of the Spirit? When this question is posed, it must be remembered that the Spirit was the living Promise of the return of Jesus. In the very act of preaching the breaking-in of the Kingdom into the old creation they were pointing out to the world the meaning of the future and the Second Coming of Christ as Judge and Redeemer. Thus the Church witnessed to the Kingship of Christ and prayed, "Maran atha" (I Cor. 16:23).<sup>25</sup> Similarly, they testified of their hope in their continued celebration of the Last Supper. In that celebration they were assured of the coming and presence of Christ even then, but they also remembered His words that "I shall not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes" (Luke 22:18) and that "as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come (I Cor. 11:26). The eschatological setting of the Last Supper had its parallel in the practice of Baptism. It, too, was seen as a "breaking-in" of life upon death, for as men were baptized into the death of Christ they were also "united with him in a resurrection like his" (Rom. 6:5). The negative side of Baptism, the destroying of the sinful body, is matched by the positive side which points to the new life of a new aeon which has

---

<sup>25</sup>Hunter's translation is excellent: "Our Lord, Come."  
Ibid., p. 41.

come in the resurrection of Christ. And to point to a sharing in the resurrection of Christ now also points to something more: the general resurrection, of which Christ's resurrection is the first fruits.<sup>26</sup>

The Witness of the Church Applied to the Christian's Life. Nurtured by the Church with such an eschatological witness, the Christian can say that "today" the Kingdom of Christ has come to him. He is united with Christ; He is "in Christ." Christ's resurrection is the first fruits of the resurrection of all who believe in Him, and by His appearing Jesus has "brought to light" eternal life through the Gospel (II Tim. 1:10). But the Christian cannot say that everything pertaining to the will and reign of God has been established in his heart "this day." The Christian is still a part of the world and a participant in the struggle between faith and unbelief.

There is a sharing in the victory of Christ, but what Christ can say without reservation concerning the presence of the Kingdom remains in the future for the Christian. His confidence lies in the fact that the Kingdom has begun its reign. It has come, through Christ; and yet it never ceases to be the Kingdom to come. Thus the Gospel of the Kingdom is the announcement of the forgiveness of sins and eternal life entering the world of sin. However, that does not mean

---

<sup>26</sup>Anders Nygren, Commentary on Romans, (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c. 1949), p. 231 ff.

that there is to be a new law, governing this world in accordance with the laws of the Kingdom of God. Christian faith knows that this world remains this world: a world of sin. The Gospel is not one of the many powers struggling for the mastery of this world, in this, the old aeon.<sup>27</sup> To forget the eschatological implications pertaining to the future is to fail to take seriously the powers of evil in this world. This world is not to be told that it is gradually beginning to be transformed, but that there is need for a second intervention from God. Any self-confident refusal to hold to this look to the future removes the tension between the present and coming Kingdom and cuts the nerve of the Biblical outlook which is filled with hope in that which is not yet seen.

The Fulfillment of the Kingdom and the Second Coming.

Maintaining the tension of the "already" and "not yet" in this world is not an end in itself, however. The Christian kerygma also looks for a real end to the present dilemma. While it speaks of the resurrected God-man, Jesus Christ, who is present now in His Church giving life to lost men, it finds its strength by identifying that present Christ with the future, coming Kingdom. The day is coming when "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things under the earth" (Phil. 2:10), a day of salvation

---

<sup>27</sup>Cf. Nygren, "This Age and the Age to Come", op. cit., p. 108.

for believers, but judgment upon the unbelievers. Here and now the Christian can know the power of His resurrection (Phil. 3:10) and walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:10). This present power, however, always points to the consummation, when at last "the kingdom of the world is become the Kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev. 11:15). Noting our last source, in Revelation the full tension of the "already" and "not yet" comes to its climax. At the very outset the Apostle describes Jesus Christ as He Who is and is to come (Rev. 1:4,8). He has already made His people kings and priests (1:6), but He will manifest His power so that the whole world will have to acknowledge His victory and "all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him" (1:7). To accomplish this end, there will be an end, a real end, as real as the Word made flesh. Unimaginable glory will be unveiled for the Christian who is already saved and is now in a fellowship of suffering with Christ, a fellowship that prepares the way for the fellowship of glory (Rom. 8:18, cf. II Cor. 4:17).

Already the new creation is breaking in through Christ, but at the parousia there will be a new world in which God will be all in all (I Cor. 15:28). God will come, the King and Lord of the world Who will be, and is, its sole consummator and redeemer. Nor is it a legitimate limitation of New Testament teaching to state that men are saved out of a world which has no destiny. The Eighth chapter of Romans sees

the whole creation longing for redemption. Subjected to corruption because of man, it also has a part in the same hope. Anders Nygren in his commentary refers at this point to II Pet. 3:13: "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" (Cp. Isa. 65:17; Rev. 21:1).<sup>28</sup> Nygren's exposition of Romans continues:

The redemption of mankind is also to be the redemption of creation. For Paul the two go hand in hand and are inseparably united. Just as God, on the day of resurrection, will give man a body which corresponds to the new aeon of glory, a 'spiritual body,' so He will create a corresponding new cosmos, 'new heavens and a new earth'. So the consummation will not come by any automatic process of development. God does indeed lead the whole creation on toward a goal which He has fixed definitely; but the consummation will come through His own mighty; and it will concern not only individuals, but it will have cosmic meaning and cosmic dimensions. Only then, in union with this total fulfillment, will 'the revealing of the sons of God' take place. <sup>29</sup>

This is the world view maintained by Paul and the entire New Testament: The Kingdom of God has come; it comes down from God and man must be in readiness for it. That reign is already inaugurated in the "hidden" King-Messiah. It is offered to the repentant who believes and is victorious in Him. At the same time the Christian must fight the powers of evil which act as though they have not been deposed also looks and prays for the parousia. For then the Christ in whom the Kingdom is present and victorious "once for all" will

---

<sup>28</sup>Nygren, Commentary on Romans, op. cit., p. 331.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 332.

make manifest those who are already kings through Him and glorify them at the resurrection. The cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and authority and power" (I Cor. 15:24). "And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all" (I Cor. 15:28).

### CHAPTER III

#### THE CONCEPT OF PROGRESSIVE ATTAINMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN AMERICAN THEOLOGY

##### The Development of the Idea of Progress

A study of the Kingdom of God according to American Protestant theology must be preceded by a short definition of the Kingdom. In the light of Chapter One of this paper it will be remembered that the Kingdom of God according to the teaching of the New Testament is God's deliverance for man, a deliverance seen specifically in and through the entrance of Jesus Christ into the world. This deliverance, however, is always conditioned by the eschatological tension which sees that while the victory is already won, the final victory has not yet been consummated.

However, in applying this definition to a study of the Kingdom in America, the student is confronted with the necessity of examining the problem under two aspects: First of all, there is the development of the modern theological "world view." Men were looking for a meaning to the unfolding of the years and often explained their philosophy of history in terms of the Kingdom of God. Secondly, there is the recognition of the certainty of an end of all things in this world, and this involves eschatology. However, in the modern era concern over the place of eschatology in properly understanding the Kingdom received tardy recognition and study. There-

fore, the writer has seen fit to divide this chapter into two parts, examining the implications of eschatology, doctrinally and historically, in the second part. In studying theological opinions we shall proceed, therefore, to consider first the development of the idea of progress in relation to the Kingdom of God; and this involves a philosophy of history.

If one views the Kingdom as the power of God bringing redemption and deliverance to men, history then appears as an interim instead of a field of operation in which men create a realm of ethical activity. The Kingdom which has come in Christ, "the first fruits," is also coming at the end of the world, with finality and as God's deliverance. This understanding necessarily makes the intervening period of time, history, an interim period. The Kingdom is "already" (Matt. 12:28) and "not yet" (Matt. 24:14); and, consequently, history is the period intervening between the arrival of the Kingdom of Christ and its final fulfillment.

In view of this meaning of the Kingdom and the presentation of history as an interim, some questions about history and the Kingdom immediately arise. In a sense, nineteenth century theology operated with the Biblical principle that the Kingdom had come, and this was the problem: Will that Kingdom transmute history? The nineteenth century believed that it would. How did the idea that the Kingdom would transmute history come into being? It is usually held that the advent of remarkable technical progress and the powerful



influence of the Darwinian concept of evolution created the hope that the Kingdom of God could be progressively attained.

The New World View. It is true that evolution lent itself to such a belief in progress, but evolution is not the whole story nor even the battleground for opposing theologies. In fact, Christianity itself has played a large part in making such an idea of progress possible. Hope in progress and belief that history has a goal could not and did not arise in the ancient world view of history as a series of never ending cycles of birth and decay.<sup>1</sup> It was Christianity which had long been kindling hope despite obstacles and hostility in life. Hence in American theology it was the corruption of that original hope which caused such an enthusiastic belief in the wonders of science and the promise of evolution. The source of this corruption was the philosophical idea of immanence.

To be sure, it may be said that God is immanent in the world. God is at work, not an absentee world-owner. He guides and directs the world, and nothing is outside His power. However, the idea of immanence in American theology stressed another point. Underlying this view of the immanence of God was the idea that God and man are only different sides of the same reality. That is to say, in nature and in man God's movements and impulses could be traced so as to

---

<sup>1</sup>Lotto A. Piper, "Progress and Christian Eschatology", The Lutheran Outlook, IX, (September, 1944), p. 271.

demonstrate a basic and essential growth towards good and perfection in this world. /

This idea of immanence, however, removes, or at least seriously weakens, the Christian concept of God's transcendence, which is theologically expressed in the difference between the Creator and the creature.<sup>2</sup> It further assumes that there can be a steady advance from imperfection to perfection, as though the two stages belong to the same order of existence. But such a transition from imperfection, it must be remembered, is not a change in degree but in essence. Of course, if it is held that there is a continuity between man and God instead of a gulf caused by sin, certain conclusions can be made. It can then follow that the immanence of the Kingdom of God can be discerned by man as gradually transmuting history into something better, steadily carving out a final perfection. Much of American theology took that step and made the consequent conclusions.

Historical Documentation. In tracing the development of the concept of the immanence of the Kingdom of God we turn first to Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758). This great theologian and preacher of early America successfully defended Calvinism against the inroads of Arminianism,<sup>3</sup> vindicating

---

<sup>2</sup>George Hammar, Christian Realism in Contemporary American Theology (Uppsala: Appelbergs Boktryckeriaktiebolag, 1940), p. 161.

<sup>3</sup>Walter Marshall Horton, Realistic Theology (New York: Harper and Brothers, c. 1934), p. 19.

man's absolute dependence on God and asserting the reality of original sin and the total depravity of human nature. Prompting a series of revival movements,<sup>4</sup> he announced the sovereignty of God and held to a strong theocentric position. However, this victory was short lived. Briefly, there were two causes for ultimate failure: 1) Edwards' theory of virtue; 2) the stress on revivalism.

First, Jonathan Edwards' teaching of true virtue as benevolence to "Being" in general unintentionally led his followers to lose their theocentricity and to turn to a rational, natural theology.<sup>5</sup> Unable to maintain the position Edwards had constructed for himself, the "New England Theology" which succeeded him was progressively "liberalized" and removed from its theocentric position in order to offer defense against Arminian and Unitarian adversaries.<sup>6</sup> Secondly, Edwards' introduction of revivalism did not gain its desired end. The ultimate result was rather a shift from objectivism to subjectivism, from theocentricity to anthropocentricity, and a stress on moralism. Significantly, the remarkable success of the "Great Awakening" directed Edwards' attention to the possibility of the ~~of the~~ Millenium and the coming of the Kingdom of Christ on earth, a tendency which henceforth

---

<sup>4</sup>December, 1735, and later, the "Great Awakening of 1740."

<sup>5</sup>Hammar, op. cit., pp. 86-89.

<sup>6</sup>Horton, op. cit., p. 20.

remained a part of American theology.<sup>7</sup> Strangely enough, therefore, the powerful Puritan preacher of the absolute transcendence of God "ends up by building a bridge to later immanentism."<sup>8</sup>

Another American force which played its part in influencing theological thinking should be mentioned. Walter Horton points to the historical significance of the period from 1776 to 1840. Those years saw the ascendancy of rationalism in a spirit of self-assurance and independence: "an outburst of theological republicanism."<sup>9</sup> This spirit of rationalism held sway among the leaders of the new republic. It is true that it never had numerical strength among the masses, nor did it maintain itself for a long period of time. But its importance was this: America grew, pioneered, fought battles, and idealized the resourceful Yankee individualism. As H. Richard Niebuhr observes, "Absolute individuals had replaced absolute kings and absolute churches."<sup>10</sup> There was optimism about God and optimism about man. That optimism outlived the rationalist movement and continued as a part of American thinking. Walter Horton finds his evidence in the new kind of preachers of the nineteenth century:

---

<sup>7</sup>H. Richard Niebuhr, The Kingdom of God in America (New York: Willett, Clark and Company, c. 1937), pp. 141-143.

<sup>8</sup>Hammar, op. cit., p. 89. Cf. p. 115f. for a study of the effects of revivalism.

<sup>9</sup>Horton, op. cit., p. 23.

<sup>10</sup>Niebuhr, op. cit., p. 100.

When Theodore Parker and Horace Bushnell began to preach their new liberalism based upon German philosophical idealism, shortly before the middle of the nineteenth century, they questioned most of the basic assumptions of their predecessors, but they never questioned the assumption that whatever is best, is, or is to be.<sup>11</sup>

With the above reference to optimism, we are now ready to consider those men who sought the answer to life in the immanent working of God. Horace Bushnell (1802-1876) is the best example of this tendency in the "Later New Haven Theology."<sup>12</sup> His theology, a theology preached as he saw the need rather than systemitized, held to two basic concepts: 1) the superiority of intuition to reason; 2) the world as a developing organism.<sup>13</sup> Concerning this latter point, Otto Heick refers to the indebtedness of men of Bushnell's time to Hegel's idealism and its conception of divine immanence and of the progressive unfolding of divine truth.<sup>14</sup> Although George Stevens points out that Bushnell was not a deliberate founder of a new school of theology,<sup>15</sup> Foster nevertheless lists a

---

<sup>11</sup>Horton, op. cit., p. 25.

<sup>12</sup>O. W. Heick, "History of Protestant Theology," A History of Christian Thought, edited by J. L. Neve, (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c. 1946), II, p. 286.

<sup>13</sup>Horton, op. cit., p. 27.

<sup>14</sup>Heick, op. cit., p. 277f.

<sup>15</sup>George W. Stevens, "Horace Bushnell and Albrecht Ritschl, A Comparison," American Journal of Theology, VI, (June, 1902), p. 37.

number of theologians as members of the "Bushnell School."<sup>16</sup>

Thus representative preachers of the "Bushnell School" such as Theodore Munger and Henry Ward Beecher preached the love of God above all else and advocated the complete acceptance of evolution as the unifying principle of life and action.<sup>17</sup> Lyman Abbott belonged to this school and carried its thoughts further. His important work began in 1892 with The Evolution of Christianity, stressing the "new conception of God as immanent in nature."<sup>18</sup> George Gordon is also ranked among the great preachers and teachers of the movement. In Ultimate Conceptions of Faith he discusses the great ideas which should govern a preacher's works and calls them "ultimates" which should be continually considered. Gordon's "historical ultimate," Foster explains, was "the kingdom of God established among men, towards which both evolution and the governing hand of God in history are tending."<sup>19</sup> Again, Gordon's most important contribution seems to be his emphasis on the immanence of God, that in every man there is a genuine incarnation of God.<sup>20</sup> Although in this respect Jesus was definitely

---

<sup>16</sup>Frank Hugh Foster, The Modern Movement in American Theology (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., c. 1939), p. 68f.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 68f., p. 86f.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 112.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 111.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 112.

unique in his relation to God, Gordon still saw the Atonement of Christ as a "caricature upon Christianity."<sup>21</sup>

What had happened to the American idea of the Kingdom? In the proclamation that the Kingdom of God could be seen in the world, Christ was removed from the center of history in Whom the Kingdom comes; and the concept of the immanence of the Kingdom of God had made the theory of evolution accessible to theology.<sup>22</sup> To say one word on this union of science and theology we might point out that, irrespective of the scientific basis of evolution, the appropriation of the laws of nature to prove a happy spiritual destiny is unwarranted.

Whatever the movements of nature which God controls, they must be distinguished from purposive human action in which man acts in relative independence of God. For while it may be true that mankind may also be making advances in the arts, literature, in scientific achievements, in the improvement of living conditions, all such accomplishments can be used for either good or evil purposes, for construc-

---

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 129.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 144. In his summary of the position of liberalism at the close of the nineteenth century Foster points out these results, among others: The acceptance of evolution, the rejection of endless future punishment, the conception of the work of Christ generally conceived in substantial accord with Bushnell, and the disposition to drop such topics as original sin, not merely from the creeds but from serious consideration.

tive or destructive ends. In the history of man each advance brings with it a corresponding possibility of evil. Otto Piper strikingly describes this ambivalence in all history as "The Law of Equalization."<sup>23</sup> For the simple reason that man is allowed to make decisions, there is always a constant opposition to God; and this is where the kingdom of Satan enters in.

#### Theological Optimism and the Entrance of the Socio-Ethical Element

The Ethical Kingdom. On the basis of the optimistic idea of continuity between God and man, centering around the idea of God's immanence in nature, American theology was now prepared to make some practical applications of its position. In answer to the question, "How can the Kingdom come within history?" the confident reply was that the Kingdom not only could come, but that it would come through ethical beings and an ethical social order. Briefly, the answer amounted to this: Jesus accepted His task as the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth. In His teaching about the fatherly love of God and His own example of love He proceeded to plant the seed of the new kingdom of God. In accordance with the prevalent idea of evolution and progress, the Kingdom of God could be seen as mounting to an ever greater

---

<sup>23</sup>Piper, "Progress and Christian Eschatology," op. cit., p. 271.



realization, provided that men would be guided by the ethical demands and principles laid down by Jesus. This immanent Kingdom of God was defined in two ways: 1) a kingdom of ethical beings; 2) a socio-ethical Kingdom of God which comes into being when the laws and customs of the community are transformed so that they are in accordance with God's will.

This view of the possible realization of the Kingdom of God found expression in what is generally known as the "Social Gospel." But such a theory can be advanced only at the expense of failing to perceive the true element of evil in all secular and worldly advance.<sup>24</sup> The inevitable result is nothing less than the naive belief that a "do good" love on the part of zealous reformers can work everybody into his own little corner of a static kingdom. At the risk of repetition we again point out that the humanized conception of God in which there is an unbroken continuity between man and God was fundamental. The idea of immanence consistently

---

<sup>24</sup>H. R. Niebuhr, *op. cit.*, p. 193: "The idea of the coming kingdom was robbed of its dialectical element. It was all fulfillment of promise without judgment. It was thought to be growing out of the present so that no great crisis needed to intervene between the order of grace and the order of glory. In its one-sided view of progress which saw the growth of the wheat but not that of the tares, the gathering of the grain but not the burning of the chaff, this liberalism was indeed naively optimistic." Our own historical documentation of this tendency will follow shortly.

underlined American optimism.<sup>25</sup> In the history of American theology the rejection of Jesus' eschatological statements as unworthy insertions on the part of misinformed disciples had prevented serious consideration of Christ's anticipation of frightful evil. And this anticipation nullifies the prospect of worldly progress to a point where within history it can be said that evil is everywhere suppressed. The failure to grasp the significance of this negation of worldly hope, incidently, is a sophisticated restoration of the error against which the Augsburg Confession, Article XVII, warns:

They condemn also others, who are now spreading certain Jewish opinions that, before the resurrection of the dead, the godly shall take possession of the Kingdom of the world, the ungodly being everywhere suppressed.<sup>26</sup>

Finally, any presentation of Jesus as the Teacher who lays down ethical principles transforms the Gospel into Law. For Jesus did not report a discovery about a God in a distant realm Who takes no initiative Himself in seeking men out or at best speaks of a Kingdom which men, aided by legal documents, must gradually build up and up so that it will reach from earth to heaven. But Jesus does announce that the Kingdom of God comes down to men and that God is

---

<sup>25</sup>H. R. Niebuhr also concludes that this American belief in progress was not due to "the Darwinian theory of evolution nor the success of science and technology nor yet the expansion of European civilization, though all reinforced it." Ibid., p. 190.

<sup>26</sup>Triglot Concordia (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), p. 51.

seeking men.<sup>27</sup> It is not a story of human evolution or human advance and action, but one of revelation of God's action from Creation to the final consummation. And Jesus, the Incarnate, is at the center of that action; He is the determinative point; through Him God's Kingdom finds men.

Hence we must conclude that the Kingdom of God, if it is to be considered from the point of view of a philosophy of history, must be seen as lying beyond man's resources and comprehension, coming to man as salvation. It is the announcement of the Redeemer, Jesus Christ, Who has come to bring the remission of sins and to restore the life of God to man. Only by receiving the Holy Spirit Who brings this life can man enter the Kingdom (John 3:5), for no one can say that Jesus is the Lord "but by the Holy Ghost" (I Cor. 12:3). Christ's spirit now working in man enables man by faith to overcome here and now the futility born of sin, and thus only in the sphere of Christian faith does genuine progress take place. At the same time man sees that there still re-

---

<sup>27</sup>D. M. Baille, God Was in Christ (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, c. 1948), p. 63. Baille points to the distinctiveness of Jesus' preaching in this manner: "It is perfectly true from the historical point of view that in mankind's agelong enterprise of the quest of God, Jesus is the climax. . . . But is that the whole truth? If Jesus was the supreme discoverer of God, I should wish to carry the high argument yet further by asking: What kind of God did He discover? . . . It is a God who takes the initiative, a God who is always beforehand with men, a 'prevenient' God who seeks His creatures before they seek Him."

mains a gulf between himself and God that can never be overcome in this world, in human history (Rom. 7). But again the Spirit prompts the hope that God in His time will redeem all things and fulfill human longings for redemption (Rom. 8). Understanding this, the tension of the "already" and "not yet" of the Kingdom of God is maintained.

#### Historical Documentation of the Entrance of the Socio-Ethical Element in the Kingdom of God

The Influence of German Theology. Following the development of the concept of immanence on the part of the Bushnell school, another force entered to further the American conception of the Kingdom of God. The German theologian Albrecht Ritschl, together with his two eminent followers, Adolph Harnack and Wilhelm Herrmann, became a great teacher of American theology; and his theological principles deserve separate treatment.

Albrecht Ritschl struggled with the problem of a workable morality within German religious life. He had seen the effects of both the ethical lassitude of the old orthodoxy and the resultant Pietistic repudiation of the content of the Christian faith in favor of ethical results. In seeking an answer he became an avid reader of Kant and his conclusions on moral consciousness in man's heart. Ritschl's colleague at Goettingen in the years following 1864, philosopher Hermann Lotze, added his influence by leading Ritschl

to develop the distinction between judgment of fact or being (Seinsurteile) and judgments of value (Werturteile) which Kant had suggested in his work.<sup>28</sup> With this philosophical background as a starting point, Ritschl held that theology is not able in any case to establish a purely theoretical knowledge of God. This in turn led him to establish an autonomous and peculiarly religious judgment of value in which Christian faith finds both its source and ultimate validation. The Christian can have a sense of dominion over the world because God is not a God of wrath but constant love.<sup>29</sup> He will unconditionally forgive when man ventures near to Him.

Jesus was the perfect Revealer of this attitude on the part of God, and Jesus was the Urbild of a spiritual dominion over the world. He inspires men to trust God, and thus man becomes reconciled to God. The purpose of forgiveness is to create a cheerful belief in both divine providence and the ethics of Christ in one's worldly calling.<sup>30</sup> Through

---

<sup>28</sup>Robert F. Davidson, Rudolph Otto's Interpretation of Religion (Princeton: Princeton University Press, c. 1947), p. 36.

<sup>29</sup>James Orr, "Professor Swing on Ritschl and His Critics," Princeton Theological Review, I, (January, 1903), p. 45. Orr, an American opponent of Ritschlianism, points to Scriptural statements about the wrath of God and charges that Ritschl "undeniably eliminates, or reduces to subjective illusion" the idea of God's wrath, and, consequently, the meaning of guilt.

<sup>30</sup>Otto W. Heick, "Albrecht Ritschl in Modern Thought," The Lutheran Church Quarterly, (October, 1941), p. 362.

Through Christ, then, the Christian is led to experience the blessedness of God's Kingdom. Apart from the value judgment there is no knowledge of the divine Christ.<sup>31</sup>

F. E. Mayer admitting the difficulty of precise definition, correctly marks Ritschl's formal principle as his concept of judgment value and his material principle as the establishment of a this-worldly ethical kingdom.<sup>32</sup>

Thus Ritschl's great dogmatic idea was the Kingdom of God which was given a thoroughly moralistic treatment so that it is "the moral unification of the human race through action prompted by universal love to our neighbor."<sup>33</sup>

Ritschl, accordingly, began his little volume, Instruction in the Christian Religion (1875):

The kingdom of God is the divinely vouched-for highest good of the community founded through His revelation in Christ; but it is the highest good only in the sense that it forms at the same time the ethical idea, for whose attainment the members of the community bind themselves together through their definite reciprocal action.<sup>34</sup>

However, Ritschl did not want to develop a theology

---

<sup>31</sup>Davidson, op. cit., pp. 38-39.

<sup>32</sup>F. E. Mayer, "Albrecht Ritschl and the Rise of Liberal Theology in Reformed Churches," Concordia Theological Monthly, XV, (May, 1944), p. 147f.

<sup>33</sup>Mayer, op. cit., p. 147, quoting from Ritschl's Recht-fertigung und Versöhnung, III, p. 270.

<sup>34</sup>Chester Charlton McCown, The Search for the Real Jesus (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, c. 1940), inserts this direct quotation from Ritschl on p. 261.

independent of the Bible. He was seeking a place for Christianity in religious life and claimed the Bible as the source of his teachings on the intention of Jesus Who is the binding element of the Christian Church. He found his answer in an historical investigation which discovered that Jesus was a moralist. The disciples were mistaken in looking for the immediate appearance of Christ. The Kingdom of God was ethical through and through, completely stripped of its eschatological significance. What kind of response to this theology could be expected in America?

McCown observes:

This conception of Christianity, as a spiritual religion with clear ethical ends to be attained gradually by a united community, suited exactly the evolutionary optimism of the close of the nineteenth century. It was not strange that Ritschlian theology had a tremendous vogue.<sup>35</sup>

Not too many American theologians adopted Ritschl's whole theology. Horton explains that this was due to the simultaneous arrival of the theologies of Schleiermacher and Ritschl so that, unlike the substitution of the latter for the former in Europe, Americans tended to combine the "mysticism" of Schleiermacher and the ethics of Ritschl.<sup>36</sup> For an example of the Ritschlian influence, however, we shall treat briefly the work of Henry C. King, probably the most popular American representative.

---

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 226.

<sup>36</sup>Horton, op. cit., p. 32.

As president of Oberlin, Henry C. King's theological work carried great weight at the turn of the century. His study of philosophy thoroughly acquainted him with the system of Lotze, and in Germany he became unusually versed in the teaching of Ritschl. His Reconstruction in Theology (1901) gained immediate response.<sup>37</sup> Again, the underlying thought was the immanence of God, and "in his understanding of personality, King finds a basis for "an increased hope for men." There are no men unfit for immortality by nature."<sup>38</sup> In this major work King had no trouble in dismissing the entire eschatological problem with a few deprecatory sentences plus a long bibliographical footnote, and maintained, "Religion must be ethical, and the highest good of men is identical with the 'kingdom of God, the reign of love in the life of the individual and of society."<sup>39</sup> As far as the theological expositions of this era are concerned, we can say that the work of King may be taken as the terminus ad quem of the age of liberalism, as that of Bushnell represents its terminus a quo.<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup>Foster, op. cit., p. 178. Foster cites this as his one published work, but McCown also lists Theology and Social Conscience (1902) and Ethics of Jesus (1910).

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>McCown, op. cit., p. 269.

<sup>40</sup>Horton, op. cit., p. 35. Although King is marked as a pupil of Ritschl, this does not imply that his theology or that of other American Ritschlians differed intellectually from the theology of Bushnell. The connection was never broken. For a



The introduction of the historical discovery of Jesus has been touched on in our discussion of Ritschl. The greater popularizer and teacher in America in this respect was Ritschl's pupil, Adolph Harnack. For the purposes of this paper we are interested in him as the historian whose chief interest was the discovery of the "kernel" of Christianity.

Harnack looked at Christianity as part of world history to be studied on the same principle as the history of any other religion. The method was to find the "essentials" in a great historical occurrence which could be separated from contemporary "husks."<sup>41</sup> The popular picture of this method is found in Harnack's Das Wesen des Christentums which simplified Christianity to the uttermost: trust in God and brotherly love. The Gospel's convincing and saving power lay in the never-failing impression of the simple life-picture of Jesus. While many characteristics, even some which seem or were essential, might have to be surrendered, there was no avoiding the difficult task. Harnack therefore simply refused to follow the views of Jesus about the sharp contrast of the Kingdom of God and that of the

---

study of the affinity of Bushnell and Ritschl cp. George Stevens, "Horace Bushnell and Albrecht Ritschl, A Comparison," American Journal of Theology VI (1902), p. 35-56, or Hammar, op. cit., pp. 136-139.

<sup>41</sup>McCown, op. cit., p. 231

world.<sup>42</sup>

The Actual Emergence of the Social Gospel. The discovery of the "Jesus of history" had now furnished the growth-trend with the necessary ethical and religious formulae. A frame of reference within which either a theistic or humanistic social creed might be framed had now been obtained. All could agree that in the mind of Jesus the love of God was to evidence itself in human affairs which could promote the coming of the Kingdom.<sup>43</sup> As Shailer Matthews saw it in The Social Teachings of Jesus, Jesus did not really share the eschatological ideas of his retarded reporters, and although he could not have been expected to have used the word, Jesus was thinking of evolution all the time.<sup>44</sup>

Concurrent with the construction of a scientific and historical theology based upon ethics, the latter part of the nineteenth century also saw a tremendous economic growth in America. Protestant clergymen saw tremendous forces at work in the new America and took interest in the ethics of

---

<sup>42</sup>McCown, op. cit., p. 234: "He [Harnack] argued that it was usually a mistake to judge pre-eminent, epoch-making characters by what they shared with their contemporaries; it was wrong to lower them to the common level. These generally accepted views of the first-century Judaism were not the characteristic thing in Jesus, but rather his conception of the kingdom of God as an inner, spiritual power."

<sup>43</sup>Charles Howard Hopkins, The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism, 1865-1915 (Chicago: University Press, c. 1940), p. 205ff.

<sup>44</sup>Hopkins, op. cit., p. 208.

wealth, the dangers of monopoly, the religious problems of the cities, the tenement evil, and other issues. To give an answer and, as Episcopalian Henry Codman Potter put it, to justify the church's exemption from taxation,<sup>45</sup> they stressed the ethical aspects of Christianity, the moral teachings of Jesus.

Washington Gladden, an early pioneer and direct predecessor to Walter Rauschenbusch, began his discussion of labor problems in 1875 with a series of lectures on "Working People and Their Employers," published the next year as a book. He believed in the power of the converted individual's application of "Christ's law of life" as the solution to the problem and held that the church should know how to direct that "law."<sup>46</sup>

On the secular front, the call was also sounded by Professor Richard Y. Ely of Johns Hopkins University, a political economist who defined salvation as a persistent attack on all the evil institutions in the world until there

---

<sup>45</sup>Hopkins, op. cit., p. 35.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 29. It is both difficult and unnecessary to determine which preacher of this time was the first truly social preacher, but Hopkins would remind us that the "Roots of a social gospel of brotherhood are to be found in Channing's Baltimore sermon, while the 'new theology' derived from Bushnell by Munger, Gladden and other Congregationalists was in itself inherently social." Ibid., p. 318. Horton even ventures to say that Bushnell had "arrived at a view of the social dependence and social responsibility of the individual, quite consonant with the views arrived at much later by social psychologists and social reformers." Op. cit., p. 31.

was nothing but cities of God on earth.<sup>47</sup> Other names that could be included for sample representation of the clergy are the evolutionary theologian Lyman Abbott, Francis G. Peabody, Joseph Cook, and George D. Herron. The last named, who flashed across the stage during the last decade of the century, was probably as sensational as any. An indefatigable lecturer, Herron's challenge to the church was not to reform but to reconstruct society according to the standards of Jesus. He held that it was impossible to approve of the present civilization without rejecting Christ,<sup>48</sup> and groups inspired by Herron tried to combine Communism and Christian brotherhood so that they could come out with the Kingdom of God. One colony formed in Georgia from 1896-1900, and this well-meaning, but ill-fated group coined the phrase, "Social Gospel," first the name of one of their magazines. From this humble beginning the term gradually became the accepted word for social Christianity.<sup>49</sup>

The Social Gospel finally reached its peak when Walter Rauschenbusch became its representative. In all the studies of the age he remains the greatest name, and his is the "Classical statement of American social Christianity."<sup>50</sup>

---

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 109.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 189.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 195-196.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 215.

His chief works were Christianity and the Social Crisis (1907), Prayers of the Social Awakening (1910), Christianizing the Social Order (1912), and A Theology for the Social Gospel (1918).

Although most men concentrated on Jesus' personal attraction, Rauschenbusch's central concept was the Kingdom of God, which he believed to have been the heart of Jesus' teaching.<sup>51</sup> He and his fellow members of the "Men and Religion Forward" movement owed their understanding to the translation of the theory of evolution into religious terms:

Translate the evolutionary theories into religious faith, and you have the doctrine of the Kingdom of God. This combination with scientific evolutionary thought has freed the Kingdom ideal of its catastrophic setting and its background of demonism, and so adapted it to the climate of the modern world.<sup>52</sup>

Rauschenbusch's resulting belief in an immanent, active God formed both the basis of his criticism of modern society and his program for its reformation. As a theological foundation it created faith in a unified human society whose progressive perfection would realize the divine program of righteousness and justice. Taking this view, Rauschenbusch held that the disciples had failed to understand Jesus' plan for the reign of God on earth by making the natural and forgivable mistake of turning their interest to the Church. Then

---

<sup>51</sup>Walter Rauschenbusch, Christianizing the Social Order (New York: The Macmillan Company, c. 1912), p. 19.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 90.

the disciples original mistake was carried to completion by Augustine.<sup>53</sup> The Reformation provided a golden opportunity for the return of a great cause. Again, unhappily, the Reformers missed the point because Luther and Calvin were not really democrats, and the idea of the Kingdom of God is filled with democratic spirit.<sup>54</sup>

Nevertheless, Christianity, if it would restore the Kingdom ideal, still possessed the only power which is able to transform society, and "Christianizing" the social order means bringing it into harmony with the ethical convictions which we identify with Christ.<sup>55</sup> In fact, Rauschenbusch went so far as to say that the Church and the Christian ministry, the family, the <sup>sed</sup> educational system, and even political life were democratic and, consequently, already "saved" institutions. Only the corporations, the monopolies, the agencies of competition were under the rule of mammon. They, along with sinful practices in labor relations, needed to be restored to the Kingdom.

George Hammar, a native of Sweden, cannot help but remark on how the European reader is struck with the naive optimism regarding the possibility of accomplishing social reforms which will uproot sin. He continues:

---

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 66.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 86f.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 124.

Rauschenbusch has a keen eye for sin in contemporary society, but when John C. Bennett advances this fact in defense of the representatives of the social gospel, he at the same time finds himself called upon to add these words: 'While they were not blind to sin as a contemporary fact, they underrated the degree to which sin will be a factor in every form of human society.'<sup>56</sup>

What had happened to the Kingdom of God in the Social Gospel? The whole approach of Rauschenbusch and other adherents had identified the Kingdom with the perfection of the social order. If the new movement criticized the Church as an institution interested solely in its own existence, the new movement accomplished the same end that it had criticized: it had institutionalized the Kingdom into little communities or large nations preserving themselves by a system of ethics.<sup>57</sup> If it was amused at the imaginative descriptions of heaven of another day, it had developed a modern set of material delights for its own coming kingdom: "For the golden harps of the saints it substituted radios, for angelic wings concrete highways and high-powered cars, and heavenly rest was now called leisure."<sup>58</sup>

---

<sup>56</sup>Hammar, op. cit., pp. 154-155.

<sup>57</sup>F. E. Mayer, "The Kingdom of God According to the New Testament," p. 34. The writer lists, e.g., the Social Creed of the Methodist Church adopted in 1912 and cites the consistent position of that body to the effect that the Church must dictate the legislation of the nation in order to bring in the Kingdom.

<sup>58</sup>H. R. Niebuhr, op. cit., p. 196.

To summarize briefly, we see that the emphasis on the practical implications of the theological propositions concerning divine immanence had issued into the "Social Gospel," and this new conception satisfied most of the theological traditions of American thought. The Puritan belief in social discipline and a thoroughly Christianized society was met. Optimistic moralism was basic, and the anthropocentricity which had marked the earliest revivalism gained new prestige and sophistication. Evolution and scientific progress found a place as physical proof for spiritual conceptions of progress. Whatever doubt that might have remained concerning the possibility of progress was dispelled by the discovery of a historical Jesus who preached exactly the same sermons as a nineteenth century moralist.

Finally, the shallow identification of sin with an un-social attitude, rather than understanding it primarily as sin against God, led men to think of sin decreasing with the progress of social reforms. This one-sided ethicizing consequently led to the preaching of the coming Kingdom as though men could bring it in within the limits of the historical process. Furthermore, the revelation through Christ did not differ in quality from natural revelation, and the eternal order of the Kingdom was lost. Thus the "already" and "not yet" of the Kingdom of God was resolved on two counts. The Christian awareness of the final redemption



of man and history by God in God's own good time was negated by the idea of progress. The fact that God's Kingdom in Christ had already won the victory through the Cross and empty tomb was replaced by a religion which "reconciled God and man by deifying the latter and humanizing the former."<sup>59</sup>

### The Kingdom of God and Eschatology

Eschatology without the Kingdom. European opposition to the idea of an immanent Kingdom of God was not long in developing. It was soon sensed that the popularized idea of the Kingdom gave inadequate attention to the entire mood of the Gospels and that Jesus must have been thinking of an entirely different Kingdom in His proclamation.

The movement's greatest champion was Albert Schweitzer whose study of the synoptic problems was encouraged by Johannes Weiss's Preaching of Jesus Concerning the Kingdom of God (1892) which set up the "third great alternative": either eschatological or non-eschatological.<sup>60</sup> Schweitzer proceeded to investigate the eschatological setting of Jesus' preaching, and he found that all previous interpreters were

---

<sup>59</sup>H. R. Niebuhr, op. cit., p. 191.

<sup>60</sup>Albert Schweitzer, The Quest for the Historical Jesus, trans. by W. Montgomery from first German edition, 1906, (New York: The Macmillan Company, c. 1948), p. 238. The other two alternatives: either historical or supernatural, either synoptic or Johannine.

guilty of subtracting and reinterpreting. For example, he cites Ritschl's "naivete" in attributing modern ideas to Jesus which Ritschl could then "take back from Him as a loan." But eschatology makes this impossible.<sup>61</sup> Jesus' apocalyptic interpretation of Himself as the "Son of man" so completely dominated His teaching that only an interim morality was offered as preparation for the imminent, miraculous Kingdom.<sup>62</sup> And yet, Jesus' thinking -- too-colored and wrong though it was -- was the only and the best way. The best, because now the historical Jesus, unknown in so many respects, has replaced the liberal Jesus who was never better than a teacher.<sup>63</sup> What remained for Schweitzer? Religion exhibits an understanding of the historical Jesus to the extent that it possesses a strong and passionate faith in the Kingdom of God, and thus he give his answer:

He comes to us as One unknown, without a name, as of old. . . . And to those who obey Him, whether they be

---

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 251f.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 356f.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 403. The reason for Jesus' death was the failure of the Kingdom to appear after He had sent out the twelve (Matt. 10). Jesus then concluded that before the Kingdom can come, he must go to Jerusalem and fulfill prophecy by taking upon Himself the last Messianic woes. The wheel of the world must be turned: "He throws Himself upon it. Then it does not turn and crushes Him. Instead of bringing in the eschatological conditions, He has destroyed them. The wheel rolls onward, and the mangled body of one immeasurably great Man, who was strong enough to think of Himself as the spiritual ruler of mankind and to bend history to His purpose, is hanging upon it still. That is His victory and reign" (pp. 370-371).

wise or simple, He will reveal Himself in the toils, the conflicts, the sufferings which they shall pass through in His fellowship, and, as an ineffable mystery, they shall learn in their own experience Who He is.<sup>64</sup>

Schweitzer's The Quest for the Historical Jesus had achieved a great thing: he had made the eschatology of Jesus a subject of general discussion and forced the point that Jesus was not a social reformer, but must be understood eschatologically. And yet, his criticism did not immediately reverse the trend in America. The Social Gospel under Rauschenbusch continued to still greater heights, and it remained for post-war disillusionment and mushrooming social problems to bring about "the apparently inevitable inferences from the position of Johannes Weiss, Alfred Loisy, and Albert Schweitzer."<sup>65</sup>

The Long Perspective of an Eschatology without a Kingdom. Albeit belatedly, American study of the Kingdom of God has recognized the Biblical and historical weaknesses in the former "modernizing" of Jesus and His Kingdom. The recognition of the eschatological has become again a leading conception.<sup>66</sup> However, while there has been a willingness

---

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., p. 403.

<sup>65</sup>McCown, op. cit., p. 270

<sup>66</sup>As a whole, American theology's fondness for the application of the Sermon on the Mount to all phases of life has prevented it from warmly embracing Schweitzer's view of interim ethics. Two men who do accept Schweitzer on this point are Shirley Jackson Case (Jesus, A New Biography, 1927) and Joseph Warschauer (The Historical Life of Jesus, 1928).

to give the features furthest removed from the modern viewpoint a most prominent position, at the same time there is no reluctance to emphasize that the same primitive eschatological faith can no longer be shared. For men no longer believe that the present age is to come to an abrupt end; men now view life according to a "long perspective." At first glance, it might appear that the school recognizing the place of eschatology would be definitely opposed to the evolutionary idea of an immanent Kingdom of God in which it was important to modernize the teaching of Jesus as much as possible. Actually, this contradiction does not develop.

In the view of this writer, that opposition has not developed because the later eschatological insight had also failed to take seriously the New Testament announcement of God entering the world in Christ and establishing His Kingdom. From a historical point of view recognition of the eschatological element is a truer picture of the original element and content of Christianity. However, nothing is gained if, in spite of such recognition, eschatology is at the same time regarded as something which eventually must be eliminated from Christianity.

If eschatology and the word about the Kingdom which is "not yet" are regarded as an opinion which can be eliminated, then the result is the same as if the idea of the "immanent Kingdom" had never been forsaken. The "tension" of the Kingdom from the viewpoint of eschatology reveals the

New Testament insistence that men do not attain the Kingdom but need redemption. More important, the eschatological significance of the Kingdom which can never be ignored is that it definitely distinguishes the activities of a world doomed to death from the activity of God in saving men. It points to the fact that the Kingdom which has entered the world through Christ is of an entirely different nature than a worldly kingdom: a Kingdom of reconciliation inaugurated through Christ and which God some day through Christ will establish in glory. If eschatology does not point to that fact but still looks to progress in a world where coercion, violent or non-violent, must be the order, then it does become superfluous. The decision to pass off eschatology as an outmoded concept is perfectly in order because there is no Kingdom which transcends a kingdom of worldly development.

The Long Perspective in Modern Studies. The first result of America's tardy recognition of eschatology was complete uncertainty about how Jesus could be preached: "No one seemed to be able to say what saying of Jesus had practical value for the day, even if they did not go all the way with Schweitzer."<sup>67</sup> The need to reply to eschatology was now before liberal theology, and the answer was found in the "long perspective."

A typical example of such a reply is an essay of Clayton

---

<sup>67</sup>McCown, op. cit., p. 270.

R. Bowen of Chicago University which admitted to "a guilty feeling that its eschatology really belongs far more in the center of the stage than we have allowed it to appear."<sup>68</sup> That belief in the imminence of the Kingdom poses a problem, for Bowen would not be above his teacher; and yet, he honestly feels he knows better in this matter. The solution is to accept, even claim, Jesus' eschatology but use it differently, not expecting a parousia, but trusting in the "slow processes of education, of legislation, of leagues and plans and conferences."<sup>69</sup> How can there be any eschatology, then? Bowen explains it in Hegelian terms. Eschatology is the ultimate synthesis of God's creating all things and sin's opposition in all things. It is the "Doch to Creation's Ja and Sin's Nein" which creates the faith that is needed to work out not a kingdom, but a democracy -- not of God, but of man -- not at hand, but to be won only by generations of slow and patient effort.<sup>70</sup>

The above remarks of Bowen, based upon a short essay, were chosen as one step in liberal theology signaling the attempt to meet eschatology without changing one's belief in a kingdom to be carved out in history. More recent books

---

<sup>68</sup>Clayton R. Bowen, "Why Eschatology?", Studies in the New Testament, ed. by Robert J. Hutchison (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, c. 1936), p. 78. This essay was delivered in 1924.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., p. 82.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., pp. 82-88.

have maintained this effort, including Chester Charlton McCown's The Search for the Real Jesus. This evaluation of eschatology states that it is indispensable for understanding the attitude of Jesus; but, at the same time, the fact that Jesus did not think along evolutionary lines must be properly understood. The disappearance of the modernized Jesus is not as disastrous as it might first appear. For behind that apocalyptic expression of hope there was a desire for a society ruled by the divine will which would reverse the evil ways of the world.<sup>71</sup> That is the crucial point. It is true that some of the views which Jesus held concerning the conditions of the world were wrong. The modern man recognizes this and knows that the modern methods to realize God's will on earth will be very different from His way. Nevertheless, McCown continues:

It is not . . . an unhistorical modernization to say that the ideal, nevertheless, remains the same. If anyone today wishes to be a son of the Father in whom Jesus believed, he will exhibit the same unwavering faith in righteousness, the same absolute devotion, the same unlimited selflessness, the same revolutionary temper.<sup>72</sup>

Jesus remains the "Ultimate," the one who exhibited the will and mind devoted to God at its highest point of develop-

---

<sup>71</sup>McCown, op. cit., pp. 273-274. McCown suggests another book of his, The Genesis of the Social Gospel (1929), and expresses special appreciation for Shailer Matthews' Jesus on Social Institutions (1928), both books expressing the same theme.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 274.

ment; and, in spite of Higher Criticism, in spite of consistent and inconsistent eschatology, beneath and within the cult ritual, catechism and kerygma, enough of the historical Jesus remains to stir up the conscience and challenge the human race.<sup>73</sup> And the human race, if history teaches anything, is moving slowly onward and upward.<sup>74</sup>

Frederick C. Grant similarly seeks to give meaning to Jesus in His historical setting and to disavow the "modernizing" of the old social gospel. Unlike McCown, Grant's historical criticism does not allow Jesus to make any eschatological statements, but the result is precisely the same: Whereas Jesus expected a this-worldly kingdom on the soil of Palestine in His own time, modern men of religion must work together to gradually establish God's moral rule over the world.<sup>75</sup> This must be the goal because Jesus was talking about the Kingdom in the language of a prophet who looked for the Kingship of God over everything.<sup>76</sup>

---

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., pp. 300-305.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., p. 309

<sup>75</sup>Frederick C. Grant, The Gospel of the Kingdom (New York: The Macmillan Company, c. 1940), p. 131. Grant states this as his thesis: Jesus preached "an earthly kingdom -- that is, an earthly realization of the reign of God -- which Jesus expected to see established in Palestine (and everywhere else on earth) in his lifetime" (p. 16).

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., p. 126. For Jesus to have claimed a messianic kingship, in view of all that he said about divine rule, would have been "nothing short of blasphemy" (p. 127).



Grant concludes his work by identifying the possibility of the Kingdom of God with the cause of the American democracy which was girding itself for another war:

The American dream of a new way of life for man upon this earth . . . that dream, though too often denied in actual practice, is 'not far from the Kingdom of God.' Under the conditions and circumstances of our modern world, something like that is the only possible expression of the hope of the Kingdom, that is, of the actual Reign of God over his world.<sup>77</sup>

Thus despite a new set of hypotheses in New Testament scholarship, the old beliefs still persist. These men and the majority of American churchmen as represented in the Federal Council of Churches still hold that the development of a better social order by legislation will eventually lead in the Kingdom of God.<sup>78</sup> They hold to this because of the basic failure to see that the eschatological statements of the New Testament which are a part of the tension in the "already" and "not yet" of the Kingdom point to a Kingdom which repudiates human attainments within history. Granting limitless improvement by means of legislation, the foundation is still the coercion of the Law, not the word of the gracious activity of God in Christ.

The Implications of Eschatology Approached, but Not Realized. If, on the one hand, a majority of American churchmen have been disposed to recognize various eschatological

---

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., p. 181.

<sup>78</sup>F. E. Mayer, "The Kingdom of God According to the New Testament," p. 41f.

statements of Jesus without changing their fundamental optimism which removes the true meaning of the Kingdom, others have been inclined to see a basic futility in human endeavours. This trend has been most critical of the old liberal optimism of which it was once a part. In place of sentimentality and optimism "realism" was demanded. It is significant to note the years in which the self-examination took place. The first World War, as John C. Bennett observed, did not hurt liberal theology as much as expected. That conflict could be looked upon as the death struggle of an age of darkness. It was the depression that struck home and exerted the greatest influence on theological development.<sup>79</sup> For men of shattered confidence, as D. M. Baille puts it so well, "It soon becomes a weary business to keep straining one's eyes into the distant past for a heroic figure . . . when what we need is the living God here and now."<sup>80</sup>

Walter Marshall Horton's Realistic Theology (1934) is a leading example of the desire to discredit the old liberal theology and label it "dead."<sup>81</sup> In it Horton reviews the history of liberalism and concludes that the answer is to be found in the application of "realistic" principles to the problems of theology:

---

<sup>79</sup>Hammar, op. cit., p. 58.

<sup>80</sup>Baille, op. cit., p. 80.

<sup>81</sup>Heick, "History of Protestant Theology," p. 321.

Realism is in fact hardly more than a temper or attitude of the present. . . . For myself, I can say only this much at present: that the word "realism" suggests to me, above all, a resolute determination to face all the facts of life candidly. . . so that any lingering romantic illusion may be dispelled at the start.<sup>82</sup>

If one will take this "realistic" attitude and face the "human predicament," then he will be forced to face the fact of sin, orthodox Christianity's "profound insight."<sup>83</sup> If the old liberals had been asked why we do not live better together, they would probably have said that the cause was "a lack of understanding" -- a key phrase for them -- rather than admit, "We are sinners."<sup>84</sup> Such an attitude of criticism is continued in Horton's evaluation of the liberal, optimistic social idealism of the social gospel movement. For him the expectation of ethical perfectionism has collapsed: "As a Christian one cannot seek less than the redemption of society; as a realist, one is bound to view its professions of repentance and vows of amity with a degree of incredulity."<sup>85</sup>

In criticizing the exponents of the Social Gospel, Horton then states that Realistic Theology reverts to the traditional concept of the Kingdom of God which is God's, not man's.<sup>86</sup>

---

<sup>82</sup>Horton, op. cit., p. 38.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., p. 157.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., pp. 154-155.

This implies a rejection of the immanent concept of the Kingdom of God. The final outcome of this reasoning must be the restoration of eschatology, but here he fails. In all his criticism he scrupulously avoids the topic. He states that the early Christians expected a "great cosmic convulsion" and that it never came,<sup>87</sup> but he does not treat the relevance of that hope today; he will not speak of the eschatological aspects of the Kingdom.

Horton criticizes the liberal theology which fathered him. Other examples are John C. Bennett and Henry P. Van Dusen. While Van Dusen in brilliant satire criticizes the vague shallowness of an outmoded liberalism, his The Plain Man Seeks God (1933) can still say that the purpose of God is "the gradual development on earth of a perfect society."<sup>88</sup> Bennett goes a step further and even talks about restoring eschatology in his Social Salvation (1935);<sup>89</sup> and yet he insists, "A Changed Liberal - But Still a Liberal," although he has now abandoned his earlier utopianism.<sup>90</sup> Horton and Bennett, if not Van Dusen, represent a definite dissatisfaction

---

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., p. 158.

<sup>88</sup>Hammar, op. cit., p. 336, quoting from Van Dusen's book, p. 142.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., referring to Social Salvation, p. 141.

<sup>90</sup>John C. Bennett, "A Changed Liberal - But Still a Liberal," The Christian Century, LVII (February 8, 1939).

with earlier utopianism.

But what is their basic trouble? We refer to the subheading of this section. They draw near to the implications of eschatology but cannot take the next step. They face a dilemma because they still want to bring in a Kingdom which consists of the improvement of human society. Thus Horton says that if the Kingdom of God would ever come, and he never seems to presume that it will reach full attainment, the Church's position would be one of bringing out the "divine spark" in all other social institutions.<sup>91</sup> Horton himself is beset by a personal "tension." His judgment of the world -- in which a form of eschatology might even be called implicit -- constantly places him in a position where he does not want the Church's victory to be of a political nature. Nevertheless, he prescribes political coercion.<sup>92</sup> His ethical judgments upon the world's state of affairs is too severe to allow for an easy escape into optimism; but when he envisions the Kingdom of God as coming, he sees reforms which embellish the world.

Therefore, it would seem there is not as much "realism" in modern criticism as is claimed. For the Kingdom of God wants to point out the world as it really is, under the subjugation of sin and death. The New Testament picture of

---

<sup>91</sup>Horton, op. cit., p. 150f.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., p. 261f.

the Kingdom of God shows that it is really at work in this world, redeeming all things from sin and death, but it also points out that his Kingdom is from God and beyond historical processes. Neither its coming nor its consummation will be found in social legislation, not any more than its entrance and original proclamation were based on this-worldly reforms. The message remains that there is another Kingdom. This Kingdom is real and actual and consists of God's deliverance for man through Christ. It has entered into, but not become a part of, a world whose activities will be judged and terminated by the living God.

The problem of interpreting this modern "realism" about the Kingdom of God probably reaches its climax in the work of Reinhold Niebuhr. This is the case because Niebuhr, who also repudiates his former optimism, is very explicit in his treatment of eschatology. This development reaches the point that, after the publishing of The Nature and Destiny of Man: Human Destiny (1943), D. R. Davies can report that the doctrine of the last things constitutes "the keystone, the essential idea, of his whole system of belief."<sup>93</sup>

Niebuhr's transition to this position began as early as 1932 with Modern Man and Immoral Society. Through his early ministry in a Detroit working-class congregation and his

---

<sup>93</sup>D. R. Davies, Reinhold Niebuhr: Prophet from America (New York: The Macmillan Company, c. 1945), p. 47.

interest in labor relations, Niebuhr discerned the futility of hoping for a process of development and completion within history, whether the advocates of such a possibility were Marxist, capitalistic, or democratic. But if there is futility on all fronts, must inspiration dry up? Faced with this acute problem, Niebuhr turned to the theological ideas and language of orthodox Christianity concerning the Kingdom of God. This approach to traditional Christianity might seem, and is, strange; but it is the history of Reinhold Niebuhr's procession from social ethics to theology. "He does not add social ethics as a substructure to his theology; he adds theology as a superstructure to his social ethics."<sup>94</sup>

Simply to criticize the above procedure of Niebuhr as the reversal of the usual way that a sound theology is built is not sufficient. Niebuhr had to start where he was, namely, with an insight into social ethics which saw futility and contradiction in man's efforts. But if he has returned to the language of orthodox Christianity, how has he used that language? As we have noted, it is fundamental to Niebuhr's thinking to see that the development of a perfect order within history is impossible, and that such a fulfillment is beyond history and dependent upon God.<sup>95</sup> By 1938 this approach

---

<sup>94</sup>Hammar, op. cit., p. 180.

<sup>95</sup>Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man: Human Destiny (New York: Scribner's, c. 1943), II, 289f.

contained an assertion of the Christian idea of the parousia.<sup>96</sup> But what is the exact relevance of this parousia?

In Human Destiny Niebuhr states that not only the parousia but the Resurrection and Last Judgment must be seriously considered as ideas dealing with history and super-history. He adds the warning that "it is important to take these Biblical symbols seriously but not literally."<sup>97</sup> As a myth Christ's second coming points to the fulfillment of history, and for all men His triumphant return is the expression of faith in the sufficiency of God's sovereignty over the world and history.<sup>98</sup> The Last Judgment contains the Christian philosophy of history by showing that since Christ Himself will be the judge, history will be judged by the ideal possibility which has already been known in history. This last day also "affirms that the historic process is essentially moral."<sup>99</sup> The Resurrection is also a symbol with profound significance; for it affirms nothing less than the redemption of history in its entirety.<sup>100</sup>

Why are these ancient concepts so important in Niebuhr's thinking? He is strongly Biblical in demonstrating that

---

<sup>96</sup>Beyond Tragedy, p. 21, referred to by Hammar, op. cit., p. 247.

<sup>97</sup>Niebuhr, Human Destiny, op. cit., p. 50.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid., pp. 289-291.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid., p. 292.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid., p. 298f.



they deny the possibility that history can progress to perfection, but then they are interpreted to validate Niebuhr's system of ethics. He interprets these "myths" or "symbols" to show that the modern program of social reforms is the divinely sanctioned way of the Kingdom. When a man's pride is broken, he sees that there is need for divine intervention and divine pardon. Then, with the right attitude of one "born again," man can be a part of the Kingdom which exercises its force in historical development.<sup>101</sup> In the end, therefore, the "myths" of eschatology are only devices by which Niebuhr bolsters his system of social ethics.<sup>102</sup> Niebuhr explicitly declares the absolute need for eschatology, but he has reduced the "myths" which form the eschatological "not yet" into merely a sobering influence upon human dreams.

The Christian, however, is not satisfied with this use of eschatology and the Kingdom of God. He is not at all happy about the tension of "already" and "not yet." For he sees in it the revelation that the Kingdom which has already come to him in God's grace has not yet been fully revealed. But Niebuhr, despite talk about eschatology, seeks to retain the picture of the Kingdom of God operative in history whenever the improvement of the structure of society is realized.

---

<sup>101</sup>Ibid., p. 83, cp. p. 192.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid., p. 244f.

It is true that Christians, as sanctified stewards of God in His creation, must work for reforms wherever there is the need. However, such historical occurrences do not have the import of salvation. The answer on how the Kingdom enters the world remains in the revelation of God in Christ, the Savior; and God's Kingdom comes to other men, regardless of worldly conditions, when they also are met by this gracious God.

The Millennial Conception of the Attainment of the Kingdom within History. The writer would first point out that the millennial position on the Kingdom of God is not within the precise limitations of this paper. However, a partial treatment of its teaching may prove to be of some value in appreciating the American scene. For the extreme position of millennialistic ideas grew out of a radical reaction to liberalism. The result has been a literalistic interpretation of the Bible further colored by a distorted Calvinistic stress on the sovereignty of God.

Biblically, the doctrine of the millennial Kingdom on earth is based chiefly on the twentieth chapter of Revelation and certain prophecies in the Old Testament. This particular portion of Revelation refers to the period of a thousand years during which Satan will be bound. The martyrs and all others who have died in faith shall "live again" and "reign with Christ," but at the end of the thousand

years Satan will be loosed for a little while.<sup>103</sup> It is not our purpose to define all the errors of literalism and faulty principles of interpretation.<sup>104</sup> Rather we would confine ourselves to some passing remarks on the fundamental attitude of this view of the coming Kingdom, relating it to the conception of the immanent kingdom of history which we have previously studied.

Those who for the most part embrace this millennial concept stem from the Presbyterian or Baptist orthodoxy which broke off from those who openly adopted the concept of an evolutionary, scientific, progressive Kingdom. This former group has adhered to the fundamental doctrines of traditional Christianity. But despite their reaction against modernism, they have retained the same spirit of optimism towards forcing the Kingdom to overwhelm the world. They also are spiritual heirs of John Calvin, convinced that the sovereignty of God and Christ must be recognized in all spheres of human activity and thought. F. E. Mayer sums up their thinking:

Since Christ's sovereign glory is not recognized by all men today, therefore they believe that Christ must ultimately establish such a rule as will compel all men to accept Him as King of kings.<sup>105</sup>

---

<sup>103</sup>Carl N. Last, "The Kingdom of Christ with Special Reference to Premillennialism," an unpublished Bachelor's Thesis (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, 1947), p. 46f.

<sup>104</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 53f. For example, the "Kingdom of Heaven" of Matthew is distinguished from the "Kingdom of God" of other writers, the former referring to the millennial kingdom.

<sup>105</sup>Mayer, "The Kingdom of God According to the New Testament," *op. cit.*, p. 47.

On the one hand, the millennial idea destroys the meaning of the Kingdom of God as present here and now. It looks so strongly to the future that it can hardly be describing the Kingdom Jesus referred to when He said: "The Kingdom of God has come upon you." Furthermore, it requires radical transformation here on earth: the very conditions of life known to man would have to be transformed in order to enable all the faithful to rise and participate in the Kingdom; it would mean that the power of sin would be effectually broken through the binding of Satan. But this also completely negates the eschatological "not yet" which denies the possibilities of such perfection within the time known to human beings and insists that the Kingdom is not of this world.

Finally, the requirements for such a Kingdom are built fundamentally on a legalism which sees God compelling all people to obey Him by a manifestation of His sovereign power as King of the world. But this ultimately relegates the Kingdom which has already come in Christ to a preachment which is temporary and finally unnecessary. In the final analysis, the Kingdom is thought of primarily in terms of physical world power, although the Kingdom is constructed in social terms which have an Old Testament instead of a scientific flavor.<sup>106</sup> But despite this different terminology, the unanimity of optimism concerning the fate of this world's history and the

---

<sup>106</sup>ibid., p. 51f.

way of the Kingdom is closer than either group -- fundamentalist or modernist - would care to admit.

Conclusion. What then, can be said about the Kingdom of God at work in the world? At least this much can be said: the coming of the Kingdom is not a concept to be preached as a means for getting people to live a good life. For the time being, we will limit ourselves to the excellent critique of John Sardeson:

We are not helping God to bring His Kingdom. Christianity which knoww of death, over which only God has power, and of the possibility of an Anti-Christ, can have nothing to do with the presumptuousness and pride -- the most subtle of all sins -- which would bring about the Kingdom of God or prepare the way for it. . . . For as Luther's Small Catechism insists, 'The Kingdom of God comes indeed of itself, without our prayer; but we pray in this petition that it may come unto us also.' We only witness.<sup>107</sup>

At the same time, there is reason to recognize the need of meaning and reason in this worldly existence. In seeking this meaning we turn to the next section of this paper. In it we will present the New Testament picture in a systematic formulation intended to give place both to the hope of the next world and meaning to this world.

---

<sup>107</sup>John Hovland Sardeson, "Further Reflections on the Kingdom of God," The Lutheran Church Quarterly, XVIII (January, 1945), p. 38.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE KINGDOM OF GOD AS PRESENT AND COMING: THE ESCHATOLOGICAL TENSION OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The Entrance of the Kingdom of God into the World. The entrance of the Kingdom of God into the world is seen in the New Testament's report about Christ's preaching of the Kingdom. It should be noted that the usage of the word "Kingdom" denotes activity on the part of God rather than a realm. Christ's earthly work began with the proclamation of such a Kingdom. It was a call for repentance, but at the same time the announcement of Good News. Christ preached that this Kingdom was near, but it must also be remembered that there are many passages which speak of the Kingdom as a present reality and an active force. How can the Kingdom be both future and present? The answer is that the Kingdom is present in the Messiah. This explains those passages which presuppose that Jesus and the Kingdom are identical. The Reign of God is not only proclaimed by Jesus. It is inaugurated through the work of Christ, the Messiah-King.

The Kingdom of God Preached by Christ Is a Kingdom of Reconciliation. The nature of the Kingdom of God is seen in the work of Christ as Reconciler of man to God. When Jesus proclaimed the Kingdom, the Jews misunderstood Him and endeavoured to elevate Him as a political Messiah. His refusal of such nationalistic claims then helped to bring on His

rejection and crucifixion. In this act the hidden mission of the Messiah was revealed and accomplished: He was to be a King who would die for His people.

The work of Christ as the Reconciler through His sacrifice and suffering in the place of mankind is the Gospel preached by the Apostles. This preaching is also the preaching of the Kingdom; for the two terms, Gospel and Kingdom, are virtually identified in the New Testament. The identification of these two terms leads us to another picture of the work of Christ: the establishment of the Kingdom of God over Satan's kingdom. Through His death Christ destroyed Satan's claim to men and the power of death. Luther expresses this victory in his explanation of the Second Article in the Large Catechism:

If now, you are asked, What do you believe in the Second Article of Jesus Christ? answer briefly: I believe that Jesus Christ, true Son of God, has become my Lord. But what is it to become Lord? It is this, that He has redeemed me from sin, from the devil, from death, and all evil. For before, I had no Lord nor King, but was captive under the power of the devil, condemned to death, enmeshed in sin and blindness.

For when we had been created by God the Father and had received from Him all manner of good, the devil came and led us into disobedience, sin, death and all evil, so that we fell under His wrath and displeasure and were doomed to eternal damnation, as we had merited and deserved. There was no counsel, help or comfort until this only and eternal Son of God in His unfathomable goodness had compassion upon our misery and wretchedness, and came from heaven to help us. Those tyrants and jailers, then, are all expelled now, and in their place has come Jesus Christ, Lord of life, righteousness, every blessing, and salvation, and has delivered us poor lost men from the jaws of hell, has won us, made us free, and brought us again into the favor and grace of the Father, and has taken us as His own

property under His shelter and protection that He may govern us by His righteousness, wisdom, power, life, and blessedness.<sup>1</sup>

This view of the Kingdom answers one of the objections which we have urged against the optimism of the views presented in Chapter Two of this paper. It recognizes the reality of sin. The whole man is separated from God by the gulf of sin. Out of that state he must be saved by the redemptive act of God, and that victory over Satan and the power of death was confirmed by the Resurrection. At that decisive moment it became possible to say: Now life is triumphant over death. Victorious in His Resurrection, Christ reigns as the exalted Christ.

The power of Satan defeated, the risen and ascended Christ is now Lord and exercises His Kingship over the whole world. Although the earlier statement that He was crucified as the King of the Jews would seem to indicate that this term of "King" is more limited than the later New Testament description of Him as Lord, this is not the case. The Messianic concept of the Jew saw the Messiah's rule over all the world, and there is sufficient confirmation of the fact that the New Testament held to an interpretation of Christ's Kingship which extended to the entire universe (Matt. 20:25f). Furthermore, the title of King is meant in the idea of the Lord (Phil. 2:9-11), and the dogmatical

---

<sup>1</sup>Triglot Concordia (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), p. 685.



use of "Kingship" on the basis of passages which refer to Christ as the universal Lord of all is not forced.

While the Son of God receives this majesty from the Father, His Kingship in this world is of a different sort than that of world kingdoms. He does not rule His subjects through compulsion; and men are His subjects not because of the deeds they do, but because He has made them His possession. Paradoxically, He becomes man's Lord because He serves.

The Kingdom Comes to Man through the Bestowal of the Holy Spirit. The Kingdom of God enters the world in Christ, and Christ becomes the Reconciler of men to God. Thus the Kingdom comes upon God's initiative and is not dependent upon man's actions to bring it to earth. But to be a member of that Kingdom requires that a man be born again and have new life. As Luther saw it, the desire of man, therefore, is to know how the Kingdom can come to him personally. Therefore, God has not only set up this Kingdom of redemption and deliverance but has bestowed His Holy Spirit Who brings assurance of redemption and is the source of new life for the Christian (Rom. 8:10). This rising of a new life is the second birth needed for entrance into the Kingdom. The Word of reconciliation has been brought to man, and the Spirit assures him through the power of that Word that he is regarded and heard by God. Again, in comparison with our objections to other views, this Kingdom is really and truly present. There is no need to look for the Kingdom in some

remote future, whether within time or beyond time. When an individual has received forgiveness of sin and the power of the Holy Spirit, then he has entered into the Kingdom of God, and from that point his whole life has a new center: life from God.

The Eschatological Meaning of the Kingdom of Christ. The believer is assured that he lives a new life under the gracious Reign of Christ and that Satan's power has been removed. The Christian is a member of a new age. But this knowledge of the present victory of Christ is always conditioned by the realization that there is also a future hope with a final victory at the end. The connotation of the Kingdom of God is essentially eschatological: a state of affairs different from that which exists. This hope in the future brings out the tension of the "already" and "not yet" in the Kingdom of God. Although Satan and his hosts are deposed, they still act as though they rule the world. This is so because the victory is now known only to faith, but at the End it will be a manifest victory.

Through the Church's eschatological witness of the new order we see that eschatology is more than recognition that God must do something in the future. Others have seen this. Christian eschatology is more: it is indissolubly connected with the present.<sup>2</sup> What the Kingdom will be, it is now; for

---

<sup>2</sup>In dogmatical terms, this is to say that Christian life is always to be considered sub specie aeternitatis.

God has already done great things for man. Beginning with the Word becoming flesh, the "last things" of the Kingdom are breaking in and making men a part of a new age to come. Thus the Second Coming of Christ has not yet occurred, but He has sent the Paraclete through whom Christ dwells in the believer. The believer, new creature that he is, must still struggle and be at war with another spirit. But all the while the Spirit of God is directing him to hope and desire the complete redemption of his body in the Resurrection, the "first fruits" of which has been tasted already in the Resurrection of Christ.

Recognition of this tension gives proper emphasis to Divine initiative on all counts. This emphasis is always in danger of being lost the moment it is imagined that man is working to bring in the kingdom and is basically capable of bearing perfect authority. The basic faults of this view are optimism concerning the nature of man and the failure to see that the Kingdom to come is already the Kingdom from God in His redemptive activity in Christ and the Spirit. Herein American liberal Protestantism failed and, contrary to its intentions, turned the Kingdom of God into the kingdom of man, of humanity, with man redeeming and perfecting the world by his sovereignty.

The Kingdom of God and the Church: Related but Not Identical. The Kingdom of God comes to individuals through the bestowal of the Holy Spirit, but God also binds men together

in a community of faith (Gal. 6:10). It is only natural that Christ who announces and represents the Reign of God should also create a royal people. Recognition of this fact has resulted in a new and greater appreciation of the importance of the Church. As Visser 't Hooft observes:

The revolutionary change which has taken place in the realm of ecclesiology is based on a very simple discovery -- namely, that the King-Messiah and the people of God belong together.<sup>3</sup>

However, the obviously vital connection between the Kingdom and the Church does not remove all differences and make the two terms interchangeable. For if one can not speak of the Kingdom without recognizing the place of the Church in such a discussion, a distinction of terms must be maintained at the same time. The Church witnesses to the Kingdom, but in so doing it also points to an awareness of the eschatological tension of "already" and "not yet."

The "Already" of the Kingdom of God within the Church.

The intimate relationship of the Church and its Lord is revealed in Paul's fundamental conception of the Church being "in Christ" and also "the body of Christ." Through this relationship and the dwelling of the Spirit of Christ in this new people of God, it may be said that God has become, in a special way, immanent in a group of men. It is here that the confusion of American Protestantism is most evident. It has forgotten the nature of the Church. While it has gathered

---

<sup>3</sup>W. A. Visser 't Hooft, The Kingship of Christ (New York: Harper and Brothers, c. 1949), p. 89.

people together and formed organizations, it has forgotten how the Rule of Christ comes to men and concerned itself with artificially legislating men into a Kingdom which the Christ on earth never knew. Our own answer to social responsibility will be given later. Here we wish to point out that Christ's Rule rests in the Spirit and that, in addition, the Rule of Christ is present in the functions which He has given to the Church: the administration of baptism and the preaching of the Gospel and the promise of His presence in the Lord's Supper. It is here that God speaks to men and truly reveals His presence. In the Church Christ serves, redeems, and reconciles, thus making new creatures.

The very existence of such a people coming about through the Reign of God in Christ, through repentance and the forgiveness of sins, speaks of the Church's eschatological character. It is both "already" and "not yet." Everything that makes the Church the Church speaks of an "already" and demonstrates that the coming age of God is breaking in on this present age. It is the community of the last days, "the people of God in the great interim period between the coming of Christ and the coming of the Kingdom."<sup>4</sup>

The "Not Yet" Side of the Church. Although the Church is a special people of God and recognizes Christ as its Lord, it must also be remembered that it is not an aim in itself.

---

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 96.

The Church must also recognize that it also waits for the return of Christ and the coming of the Kingdom. The Apology of the Augsburg Confession makes this distinction by pointing out that the Kingdom of Christ is "righteousness of the heart and the gift of the Holy Ghost," a spiritual kingdom in which Christ "inwardly rules, strengthens, and comforts hearts, and imparts the Holy Ghost and various gifts."<sup>5</sup> It also rejects the suggestion that the wicked who belong to the outward organization of the Church should be counted as part of the Kingdom of Christ because their wickedness has not yet been revealed. It maintains that the Kingdom is always that "which He quickens by His Spirit" and cites the parable of the Wheat and the Tares: "The field, He says, is the world, not the Church."<sup>6</sup>

Thus the Apology both avoids and answers the Augustinian deduction that since Christ is head of both His Kingdom and the Church, the Kingdom and the Church are the same.<sup>7</sup> This idea of the superiority of the Church reached its climax about the fourteenth century; and it makes no difference, as Werner Elert observes, if the later theory provided the Pope with only indirect power over the State (Bellarmin). The claim

---

<sup>5</sup>Triglott, op. cit., p. 231.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 233.

<sup>7</sup>St. Augustine, The City of God, translated from the Latin by J. H. (London: Griffith, Farran, Okeden and Welsh, n.d.), XX, 9.

still remains.<sup>8</sup> The result of Augustine's identification had been to ignore the fact that the Church does not yet have what it already has, and to resolve this tension by the creation of two "Cities" in which the problem is that of forces from the outside, not the problem of inner strength and weakness. When the Kingdom is equated with the Church, there is no sense of the Kingdom as dynamic, as a force, as the Kingdom that comes, as the redemptive Rule of God, but only the idea of a vehicle which is being carried on by God until the end of time.

What is the meaning of the distinction between the Church and the Kingdom of God? On the one hand Christ's Rule is limited to the Church, His own royal people, for no one can call Him Lord except by the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, the Church is not to be completely identified and equated with His Rule in that its functions are performed by humans who within themselves contradict and resist the Rule of Christ. No one in the Church has yet completely won the battle between faith and unbelief, and therefore the life of this world must be a life of continual repentance. Visser 't Hooft points to the significance of the "not yet" of the Church:

The first public pronouncement of the King of the Church was: "Repent ye." And the first public word of the Reformation was Luther's first Wittenberg thesis: "Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ desires that the whole life of the faithful should be a life of repentance." But the tragedy of the Reformation churches is that this

---

<sup>8</sup>Werner Elert, Der christliche Glaube, Grundlinien der lutherischen Dogmatik (Berlin: Furche-Verlag, 1940), p. 658.

explosive truth, which was destined to give birth to a constantly re-formed church in daily renewed communication with Christ, was considered as an achievement and a ground for glorying.<sup>9</sup>

God as Lord of History and the Rule of Christ. The Kingdom of God which Christ proclaims as "at hand" is identical with His own Kingship and hence is not comparable to any earthly kingdom which stands on the basis of compulsion. Thus this Rule differs from the Kingdom of God over the world. But it must also be remembered and underscored that God is Lord over the whole world. This is also evident when one considers that God is the Creator of all things and, as the Apostles Creed points out in answer to early gnostic dualism, there is nothing outside His control. To view the world and its history as nothing more than an unchecked fall into sin is to almost forget the Sovereign God. He must be held as the Lord of history because He limits the effects of sin in the world, brings earthly good to all men, and holds it in His power to end the historical activity of men when it is His will to do so. In the meantime, God continues to direct and guide the events of this world. Although the expression "Kingdom of God" should perhaps be avoided because it is thought of in such close connection with the work of Christ, it can, in another sense, be understood as the ruling sphere of one God over the whole universe.

---

<sup>9</sup>Visser 't Hooft, op. cit., p. 102.



To continue, the Kingdom of Christ shows one aspect of the Rule of God, but it cannot be held that therefore those humans who do not know Christ are withdrawn from the Rule of God. In this respect God's ruling will goes beyond Christ's territory and demands obedience to the laws of the Creator in, for instance, the affairs of government. Again, however, this Reign of God cannot be fulfilled through the Rule of Christ. This was the mistake of Protestant theology which thought it could create a Kingdom of Ethics, a Christianized Social Order. But such plans abandoned the distinctive feature of Christianity: the signature of the Cross. Once more He had been, and is, misunderstood; and men want to make Him, not a Jewish, but an international strong man. It is here that we suggest our answer to the American idea that the Church must establish, as best it can, a theocracy through legislation.

We admit, on the one hand, that Christians can also participate in the affairs of citizenship. But since the Rule of Christ knows nothing of compulsion, we must distinguish between two orders, both corresponding to the Rule of God, both exclusive of the other. The Christian recognizes his part in this second order which rests on the rules of created order, the "Order of Creation," because God has made him a creature, not a spirit. As a part of creation the Christian has the right to use legitimate political ordinances of his nation to restrict the course of evil in the world. This is

not only the right of the Christian but a responsibility, since the custody of God's creation was given to men (Gen. 1:28); and man will be judged according to his use of the responsibility given to him.

The use of the word "responsibility" may not be strong enough. For while no forms of political life can be more than relatively good -- sin is operative in all people in all endeavours of a world under the curse of God -- their ultimate purpose is the purpose of God: the creation of conditions which will enable Him to raise Himself a people here on earth. Therefore the Christian can also hold the activities of this world in high esteem, seeing in them the will of God and the sphere of life in which effective Christian love for his neighbor can be put into practice.<sup>10</sup> But the Christian also remembers that it is not here that the deus revelatus speaks through His Word and Sacraments.

It is within these limitations that the Christian sees the possibility of social progress. The desire of many to right the wrongs of the world has been motivated by genuine Christian zeal, and it is not an aim to be regarded as something irrelevant to the Christian life. In this respect the charge against orthodoxy's quietism has been frequently deserved. Since the Christian knows the will of God for himself

---

<sup>10</sup>Otto A. Piper, "The Political Form of Lutheranism," an unpublished paper prepared for the Seminar in Lutheran Social Ethics, Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, Indiana (1949), pp. 14-15.

and the world, he cannot remain indifferent to the conditions of life around him. He sees in God an active Lord of the world, and in the service of love he concerns himself with the world which also longs for redemption. But he is also realistic enough to see that this work will entail the coercion of the Law, and that the Rule of Christ remains hidden in the skandalon of the Cross. The recognition of this opportunity for service to the world, coupled with the proper distinction between the "two orders" is accorded a place in the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article XVI:

This entire topic concerning the distinction between the kingdom of Christ and a political kingdom has been explained to advantage in the literature of our writers, that the kingdom of Christ is spiritual, to wit, beginning in the heart the knowledge of God, the fear of God and faith, eternal righteousness and eternal life; meanwhile it permits us outwardly to use political ordinances of every nation in which we live, just as it permits us to use medicine or the art of building, or food, drink, air. Neither does the Gospel bring new laws concerning the civil state, but commands that we obey present laws, whether they have been framed by heathen or by other, and that in this obedience we should exercise love."<sup>11</sup>

The more clearly this distinction is made, the more easily will the Church guard itself against secularization that results from confusing the Sovereignty of God over the world with the Rule of Christ and consequently weakens the message of the Gospel. But can the human endeavours of this world be said to give at least some signs of progress? If there is progress, the Christian view remains realistic enough to see that

---

<sup>11</sup>Triglot, op. cit., p. 331.

it is not from earth to heaven.

In answer to the modern optimistic view of unlimited progress, Christian theology points to Satan's way over a fallen world and fallen orders in which there is greed, ruthlessness, lack of discipline, personal ambition, carelessness and indifference on the part of citizens and governmental heads, and envy and enmity of neighbors, epidemics and famines. And all these forces are beyond the control of man and operated by Satan himself, forces which will be most frightfully concentrated just before the End.

In answer to modern pessimism which has lost the faith in unlimited progress and now can see only doom, the Christian theology relies positively that Christ's own victory over Satan in a believer's heart actually changes one's attitude toward God and the world and fosters real victory over the world. In this realm of the Spirit, then, there can actually be true progress, although it may not be always -- or often -- discernible to the world. Thus in this life there is also a hopeful view, but this hope exists only because Christ is the King who defeats the forces of evil. And this hope, because it is hope, maintains its look towards the Second Coming and the End of the powers of evil, for the King who defeats evil here and now is also a coming King.

The Extension of the Church throughout the World and the Rule of Christ. If the belief that world-wide reforms would inaugurate the Rule of Christ over the world, the second

error which can arise is the belief that a furthering of the Church organization to the extremities of historical life can make the Rule of Christ a world-rule. As we have seen, membership in the Church does not guarantee the Kingdom of heaven, and the sphere of Christ's Rule will be smaller than the outward organization of the Church. Generally speaking, it is impossible to sketch the relation of the Kingdom of Christ to history. No doubt there have been historical movements which could be called Christian, perhaps the effects of the Wesley revivals could be thus described; but actually a dissolution of Christianity always occurs. The "axiom" of Hanz-Dietrich Wendland seems correct: "The more 'Christian' the world, the more secular the Church!"<sup>12</sup> The Kingdom of Christ is not something that can be pinned down to standardized earthly conditions -- religious or secular -- any more than eternal life can be limited to this earth. The Kingdom remains the offer and bestowal of peace with God and paradoxically must expect to meet with opposition and strife until the End.

The Struggle within Creation and the Fulfillment of the Kingdom. All forces which oppose the constant coming of the saving kingdom of God form one powerful unit. Whatever the Christian does or does not do, he can always be assured of having the company and support of all the forces of darkness

---

<sup>12</sup>Hanz-Dietrich Wendland, "The Kingdom of God and History, VI," The Kingdom of God and History, edited by George Herbert Wood (London: George Allen and Unwin, c. 1938), p. 155.

throughout the universe. In return for this opposition to the will of God the devil offers us the world as he offered it to Christ. "Das kosmische Reich Gottes, die irdische Schoepfung, in die wir durch Gottes Herrschaft eingefuegt sind, ist zugleich das Mittel, durch welches der Apostat sein eigenes Reich aufzubauen versucht."<sup>13</sup>

In opposition to all the enemies of God stands the kingdom of the Christ who has defeated the powers of Satan and all evil and brought men under His saving rule. But here again the new creatures in whom He dwells through His Spirit are faced with paradoxical "already" and "not yet" of His Kingdom. Beset by the limitations of the flesh, there is always within themselves the same call to rebellion against God. The Christian does not know the way out, but only God. He alone knows why He gives us no easy escape. Werner Elert points to Luther's answer which recognizes, but does not resolve this tension: "Wir glauben aber, dass Luther mit jenem Satz recht hatte: Deus vult suos fortes facer. Gott will die Seinem zu Helden machen. Der Held wird nur im Streit. Er wird erst im Tode fertig."<sup>14</sup>

However, precisely because there is this battle, there will also be an End and the Kingdom will be fulfilled. It will be God Who makes an end to the struggle, and His victorious

---

<sup>13</sup>Werner Elert, op. cit., p. 663.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid..

agent will be the exalted Christ (Matt. 25:31). On Judgment Day the unreconciled will be condemned, not to a temporal death in which they will be as though they had never been, but to a second death (Rev. 20:14) which shall be eternal (II Thess. 1:9). On the other hand, the victory which will then be revealed will not be limited to personal redemption and personal resurrection and personal vindication on Judgment Day. The old universe which has supported the company of evil will be shattered and supplanted with a new heaven and a new earth. When all this is accomplished, then the Son will hand over His Kingship to God and take His place under the Rule of God, that God might be all in all. There will no longer be any "eschatological problem," no tension between the "already" and "not yet" of His Kingdom. If the possibilities of the Kingdom of God have been tasted in this world, in the new creation the persistent expectations of the old (Rom. 8:19) will be fulfilled and surpassed. For there are no limitations -- not even the limits of our imagination -- to the possibilities of God. There will be no opposition, but only fellowship with God; no limits but only the complete liberty of fellowship with God.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Arndt, W. "The New Testament Teaching on the Kingdom of God," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXI (January, 1950), pp. 8-37.
- Augustine, St. The City of God. Translated from the Latin by J. H. London: Griffith, Farran, Okeden and Welsh, n.d.
- Baille, D. M. God Was in Christ. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, c. 1948.
- Bible, Holy. Authorized Version.
- Bowen, Clayton R. "Why Eschatology?" Studies in the New Testament. Edited by Robert J. Hutcheon, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, c. 1936.
- Bretscher, Paul M. "Luke 17:21," Concordia Theological Monthly, XV (November, 1944), pp. 730-36.
- Bruce, F. F. "The Kingdom of God: A Biblical Survey," Evangelical Quarterly, XV (October, 1943), pp. 263-68.
- Burrows, Millar. An Outline of Biblical Theology. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, c. 1946.
- Davidson, Robert F. Rudolph Otto's Interpretation of Religion. Princeton: Princeton University Press, c. 1947.
- Davies, D. R. Reinhold Niebuhr: Prophet from America. New York: The Macmillan Co., c. 1945.
- Dodd, C. H. Parables of the Kingdom. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936.
- Eddy, Sherwood. Religion and Social Justice. New York: Doran and Company, c. 1927.
- Elert, Werner. Der Christliche Glaube, Grundlinien der lutherischen Dogmatik. Berlin: Furche-Verlag, 1940.
- Elert, Werner. An Outline of Christian Doctrine. Translated by Charles M. Jacobs. Philadelphia: The United Lutheran Publishing House, c. 1927.



- Foster, Frank Hugh. The Modern Movement in American Theology. New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., c. 1939.
- Grant, Frederick C. The Gospel of the Kingdom. New York: The Macmillan Company, c. 1940.
- Hammar, George. Christian Realism in Contemporary American Theology. Uppsala: Appelbergs Boktryckeriaktiebolag, 1940.
- Heick, Otto W. "Albrecht Ritschl in Modern Thought," The Lutheran Church Quarterly, XIV (October, 1941), pp. 361-77.
- Hopkins, Charles Howard. The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism 1865-1915. New Haven: University Press, c. 1940.
- Horton, Walter Marshall. Realistic Theology. New York: Harper and Brothers, c. 1934.
- Hunter, Archibald M. The Message of the New Testament. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, c. 1944.
- Last, Carl N. "The Kingdom of Christ with Special Reference to Premillennialism." Unpublished Bachelor's Thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1947.
- Mc Cown, Chester Charlton. The Search for the Real Jesus. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, c. 1940.
- Manson, William. Christ's View of the Kingdom of God. New York: George H. Doran Company, n.d.
- Mayer, F. E. "The Kingdom of God According to the New Testament," Proceedings of the Twenty-fifth Convention of the Texas District of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1942, pp. 16-53.
- "Albrecht Ritschl and the Rise of Liberal Theology in Reformed Churches," Concordia Theological Monthly, XV (May, 1944), pp. 145-157.
- "The Rise of Liberal Theology in Congregationalism," Concordia Theological Monthly, XV (October, 1944), pp. 649-66.
- Moffat, James. "Epistle to the Hebrews." The International Critical Commentary. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1924, p. xxxiii.

- Neve, J. L. "History of Protestant Theology." A History of Christian Thought. II. The Second Volume by Otto W. Heick and J. L. Neve. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c. 1946.
- Niebuhr, H. Richard. The Kingdom of God in America. New York: Willett, Clark and Company, c. 1937.
- Niebuhr, Reinhold. "Human Destiny." The Nature and Destiny of Man. II. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, c. 1943.
- Nygren, Anders. "This Age and the Age to Come," Augustana Theological Quarterly, XXI (April, 1942), pp. 99-111.
- . Commentary on Romans. Translated from the Swedish by Carl S. Rasmussen. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c. 1949.
- Orr, James. "Professor Swing on Ritschl and His Critics," Princeton Theological Review, I (January, 1903), pp. 38-51.
- Otto, Rudolph. The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Press, 1938.
- Piper, Otto A. "The Mystery of the Kingdom of God: Critical Scholarship and Christian Doctrine," Interpretation, I (April, 1947), pp. 183-200.
- . "The Political Form of Lutheranism." Unpublished paper based on the revision of lectures given at the Seminar in Lutheran Social Ethics, Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, Indiana (1949).
- . "Progress and Christian Eschatology," The Lutheran Outlook, IX (September, 1944), pp. 270-74.
- Rauschenbusch, Walter. Christianizing the Social Order. New York: The Macmillan Company, c. 1912.
- Rawlinson, A. E. J. The Gospel According to St. Mark. London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., c. 1925.
- Sardeson, J. H. "Further Reflections on the Kingdom of God," The Lutheran Church Quarterly, XVIII (January, 1945), pp. 34-42.
- Schweitzer, Albert. The Quest for the Historical Jesus. Translated from the German by W. Montgomery. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948.

- Schmidt, Karl Ludwig. " " , " Theologische Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament. I. Edited by Gerhard Kittel. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1933, pp. 579-92.
- Stevens, George Barker. The Theology of the New Testament. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, c. 1927.
- Tasker, R. V. G. The Nature and Purpose of the Gospels. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, c. 1927.
- Visser 't Hooft, W. A. The Kingship of Christ. New York: Harper and Brothers, c. 1948.
- Wahlstrom, Eric H. "The Kingdom of God," Journal of the American Lutheran Conference, V (November, 1940), pp. 785-96.
- Wood, George Herbert, editor. The Kingdom of God and History. London: George Allen and Unwin, c. 1938.