

St. Paul's Conception of the Last Things
H.A.A. Kennedy
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In choosing for the subject of his Cunningham Lectures "St. Paul's Conceptions of the Last Things," the author of this work has endeavored to supply a real need. Even in German theological literature, where monographs on the various aspects of Pauline teaching are most abundant, it can hardly be said that a satisfactory discussion of the topic exists. Kabisch's book is too one-sidedly physical in its interpretation of the apostle's fundamental conceptions, and the smaller treatise of Teichmann, besides confining itself to the Resurrection and the Judgment, is too much dominated by the idea of development in St. Paul's eschatological thought to give a fair presentation of the facts. In English, the book of Charles, taking in the whole field of Old and New Testament eschatology, by reason of its comprehensiveness, offers no more than a brief and sketchy outline of the apostle's positions. But Dr. Kennedy not only has prepared a timely book, he has also prepared what may, on the whole, be called a good book. We do not mean by this that there are not in his discussion several points, some of them important, in regard to which we feel bound to differ from the conclusions reached. To some extent even the basis on which the discussion is carried on evokes dissent. We are made to feel that the author does not share our belief in the inspiration of the apostle to the extent of regarding him an infallible teacher. Thus we are told that "the inspiration of the apostle is an equipment of the Spirit for the work he has immediately to do," and in the same connection that "one of the fundamental truths of God's operation in history is a gradual change in the mental perspective of nations and individuals" (pp. 27-28). We are asked to admit "the possibility of very considerable variation as to details in the apostle's conceptions at different times, for the simple reason that neither in Judaism nor in primitive Christian circles does there seem to have been any rigid eschatological system" (p. 163). On the other hand, while holding this laxer view of inspiration in the abstract, and professing readiness, if need be, to draw, or at least not *a priori* to reject, its consequences, the author, it must be said to his credit, makes a very restrained and discreet use of the liberty he thus vindicates for himself. He does not delight, as so many modern writers do, in involving the apostle in the greatest possible number of inconsistencies. In most cases he finds that the contradictions do not in reality exist. Illustrative of this attitude is his manner of dealing with the assertion that the doctrine of universal judgment was simply a portion of the popular religious consciousness of the time which the apostle had retained, without endeavoring to adjust it to his profounder and more spiritual conceptions. First, we are reminded that "this is a supposition which even the soberest and most restrained Christian thought ought not to reject *a priori*," because "the very highest endowment of a human soul with the Divine Spirit can never turn the consciousness into an isolated automaton." We are almost immediately reassured, however, on learning that "in St. Paul's case, as in that of all the New Testament writers, we must be content to form our estimate of his conceptions solely from the evidence which we possess" (p.277). The only instance where the danger of the toned-down theory of inspiration shows itself in concrete form is found in the remarks of p. 280, to the effect that the imprisonment epistles represent a vaguer and more simplified outlook into the future than the earlier epistles, an outlook summed up in the simple term *ελπιδος*. It is suggested that Paul, "as he sought to fathom the treasures of wisdom and knowledge which were hidden in Christ, felt less confidence even in the prophetic forecasts which had been a stable element in his eschatological thought. Perhaps he grew more and more to distrust the use of earthly imagery and pictures drawn from human experience to body forth the circumstances of a life belonging to another order." When

on the basis of this the question is put, "Will not the Christian Church act wisely in following the example of her great spiritual teacher?" we cannot help feeling that the injunction must fail to move the reader, because the example of a teacher who loses confidence in his own previous teaching is apt to lose its constraining power.

The author nowhere makes an explicit avowal of his attitude with reference to the genuineness of the epistles. It appears, however, that he recognizes not merely the imprisonment epistles but also 2 Thessalonians as genuine. Only the data from the pastoral epistles are conspicuously absent from his discussion. This might seem to indicate that there was doubt in his mind if not as to the genuineness of these documents, at least as to the advisability of introducing their statements as Pauline in the present state of the controversy. The latter objection, however, would seem to bear equally much against the inclusion of 2 Thessalonians in the sphere of investigation.

The book is divided into six chapters dealing successively with "The Place of Eschatology in St. Paul's Religious Thought," "Formative Influences in St. Paul's Conceptions of the Last Things," "St. Paul's Conception of Life and Death," "St. Paul's Conceptions of the Parousia and the Judgment," "St. Paul's Conception of the Resurrection," "St. Paul's Conception of the Consummation of the Kingdom of God." At the close of the book an additional note is added to chapter 2 on "The Pauline Eschatology and Hellenism." The first chapter well brings out the dominating place eschatology occupies in the apostle's view of salvation. We believe the matter could have been even more strongly put than the author puts it. The question is not so much whether the doctrines of justification and possession of the Spirit and union with Christ carry with themselves an outlook into the future, but rather whether those acts and states to which these doctrines refer are not from the outset eschatological acts and states, or, more strictly speaking, anticipations in this life of what had previously been regarded as reserved for the end. Only by realizing the extent to which this is true can we appreciate the profound eschatological interest that pervades all Paul's teaching. Especially in connection with the pneuma conception this might have been more strongly emphasized. The Spirit is from the beginning to Paul the element of the eschatological, heavenly world. We note with satisfaction the disavowal of Johannes Weiss' position, that the element of Christ-mysticism is an uneschatological or anti-eschatological factor in Paul's religious consciousness. The very opposite is true: it is a piece of the most pronounced eschatological interpretation of Christianity. We are not quite prepared to follow the author in his repeated assertion that there is no unified eschatological scheme in St. Paul's epistles. He appeals to this unsystematic character against the modern schemes of development attributed to Paul. In our opinion, a reliance on more detailed and penetrating exegesis of the crucial passages would have proved equally effective for disposing of this modern notion, and would have resulted in bringing out the essential harmony of all Pauline deliverances on the subject. We may be allowed to appeal in this connection to the opinion of Wernle, who, as a rule, is sufficiently emphatic in affirming the unsystematic, missionary character of the apostle's teaching, and yet believes that Paul's eschatology represents a simple, consistent system in comparison with previous Judaistic eschatological speculation. On the other hand, the author places due emphasis on the sobriety of Pauline and New Testament eschatology in general as over against the Jewish, apocalyptic mode of treating the subject. Excellent also is what is said in the second chapter about the indebtedness of Paul to the Old Testament and to Jesus in this line of teaching, and about the difference between him and Judaism in the spirit which animates their respective eschatologies (p. 44). Not much weight is attached to the hypothesis of Persian influence as an important formative

factor in the later Jewish eschatology, although all through the book the parallels from Mazdeism are quoted, largely from Söderblom. The author also takes what we believe to be the correct position in regard to our Lord's great eschatological discourse, with reference to which he denies the necessity of assuming that a later Jewish apocalypse is welded together with the genuine words of Jesus. In chapter 3 the discussion of the Pauline notion of death is more illuminating and satisfactory than that of life. Perhaps this is due to the author's disinclination to distinguish closely between the several aspects of that which Paul calls life. Granted that the idea was to the apostle a synthetic one, and that he has nowhere analyzed it for us into its several elements or aspects, the fact still remains that the points of view from which he regards it in various connections are distinct, and to reconstruct these points of view must be helpful to our understanding of Paul's own mind on the matter. Especially the distinction between life as a *bonum* objectively inherited and life as a state or energy subjectively possessed or exercised, and the flowing together of these two ideas, we should have liked to find discussed more pointedly and at greater length. The chapter on the Parousia and Judgment does not call for particular comment, except in so far as the author ascribes to the apostle the view that "the man of sin" of 2 Thess. 2 would be the false Jewish Messiah. We are, of course, aware that this is a widespread hypothesis which has gained considerable vogue through its advocacy by Weiss, Bousset and others; nevertheless the to our mind very serious objection, that a Jewish pseudo-Messiah could not be expected "to oppose and exalt himself against all that is called God, or that is worshiped, so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God," ought to have been weighed and, if possible, removed. The discussion of the resurrection is, on the whole, luminous and convincing. We doubt whether the expression ἰδιον σωμα in 1 Cor. 15:30 warrants the inference that "each renewed spiritual nature will possess its distinct and characteristic σωμα πνευματικον. All that the words imply is that the resurrection body, generally considered, will have its own specific difference. We also must dissent from the exegesis which makes Paul affirm that the σωμα ψυχικον of ver. 44 is of necessity characterized by "corruption, dishonor, weakness." From ver. 45 it appears that the apostle identified this "psychical body" with the body given the first Adam at creation, which cannot have been a body of corruption, dishonor and weakness, since elsewhere he plainly teaches that these attributes are the result of sin. Undoubtedly the juxtaposition of these other predicates and ψυχικον creates somewhat of a problem, but it is better to state the problem clearly and leave it unsolved, than to solve it in a way which brings the apostle into conflict with himself. We find ourselves more fully in accord with the writer in his exegesis of the difficult passage 2 Cor. 5:1-10. His main contention that Paul does not speak here of a resurrection body to be received at death, but as the parousia, we unqualifiedly accept. At the same time we believe that a more minute exegesis of the passage would have resulted in expressing, far more effectually than Dr. Kennedy does, the utter untenableness of the modern exegesis. The author also follows the advocates of this modern view in his interpretation of ενδυσσασμενοι, in ver. 3 as equivalent to επενδυσσασμενοι, which in view of the context (ver. 4) seems to us impossible. We also feel bound to disagree when he assumes that in v. 6-8 Paul overleaps the interval between death and the parousia, as he does in ver. 1. In our opinion, "to be absent from the body" and "to be at home with the Lord" refer distinctly to the as yet unclothed state of the believer, who has died, previous to the parousia. Paul here states the ground of his being always of good courage, but he states it, of course, in the form which corresponds to the minimum of his expectation; this was unavoidable since, according to ver. 4, he was in doubt as to whether he would receive the maximum of "being clothed upon" at the parousia, or the minimum of having to wait for the parousia during an interval of nakedness after death. A question which it might have been of some interest to discuss is whether the preparation of the resurrection body

begins, according to Paul, during this life or not. In his exegesis of 2 Cor. 3:18; 4:16 the author shows that the latter is his opinion, and we believe this to be correct, but the point might have been explicitly raised. This and other similar instances of omission to state sharply certain controversial questions of detail are probably due to the lecture-form of the discussion, and to the author's desire to keep the large aspects of the subject before his readers. It gives us pleasure to say that the concluding chapter on the consummation of the Kingdom of God is eminently cogent in its rejection of the theories of a second probation or of the temporary duration of the punishment of the wicked, and of the premillennial advent of Christ. The expression on p. 294 that the apostle expects for believers "a real assimilation to Christ's divine nature" we consider infelicitous. It is certainly not provable from Phil. 3:21, unless we assume that the body of the exalted Christ formed in the apostle's view part of Christ's divine nature. On p. 324 the subject of Col. 2:16 is through an oversight represented as Christ, whereas it is God. The appended note on the Pauline Eschatology and Hellenism is too brief and cursory to deal satisfactorily with such a difficult and widely ramified question. The Pauline notion of *σαρξ* in its antithesis to *πνευμα* involves a problem which, if it be solvable at all, will certainly require more thorough treatment than the author is able to afford it in these few concluding pages.