

## IV. NEW TESTAMENT.

**The Messianic Hope in the New Testament.**

By Shailer Mathews of the Department of Systematic Theology. The Decennial Publications, Second Series Vol. XII. The University of Chicago Press. 1905. Pp. XX, 338. Price \$2.50 net.

This is a comprehensive survey and application of the Jewish Messianic hope under four historical divisions: "Part I. The Messianism of Judaism," "Part II. The Messianism of Jesus," "Part III. The Messianism of the Apostles," "Part IV. Christian Messianism and the Christian Religion." Dr. Mathews shows a thorough acquaintance with the authorities and sources of his subject and an extensive measure of independent skill in the statement and application of the principles of interpretation and construction by which he determines the conduct and conclusions of his discussion.

The nature of the Jewish Messianic hope is fully discussed by the historical method, under its two aspects of "The Politico-Social Program of Revolutionary Messianism," and "Apocalyptic Messianism," and it is concluded that the latter became the dominant form, and determinant in the forms of thought and expression for the religion of Jesus, both in himself and in his followers. There are found "seven Messianic elements common to the apocalyptic literature," viz.:

1. Two ages, "this age" and "the coming age."
2. The present age is evil and under control of Satan.
3. The coming age will be God's product by some catastrophic method.
4. The judgment in connection with this catastrophe is to be final and will punish the enemies of the Jews.
5. The new age to be characterized by the Kingdom of God, not produced but "given," and a Jewish Kingdom.
6. Resurrection of the righteous.
7. The personal Messiah, either "anointed" for his work, or superhuman.

The Messianism of Jesus and of the Apostles is tested by these seven elements. Jesus is found to hold six of the elements, differing only in the fifth point above. Jesus "distinctly repudiated" "the restriction of membership in the coming Kingdom to Jews." Jesus likewise controverted the characteristic elements of that pharisaic system that was built upon their Messianism. But with Jesus, as with Jews and Christians alike, the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to the future age. He is not, in his ministry, doing properly Messianic work, receiving the Messianic promises, or undergoing the Messianic experiences. He is preparing for all this and so must come again. He and his followers rested their hopes in the speedy coming of the really Messianic age. "Even though it should be shown that such an expectation was historically to be disappointed, the greatness of the personality which compelled itself to forecast its future in such ultimate conceptions is indisputable." Similarly "Primitive Christianity" is found to "reproduce pharisaic Messianism" and Paul, while contributing more of modification than his Christian predecessors, is still only casting in Christian modifications the pharisaic hope. In the "post-Pauline Christianity" we find the beginnings of a new form of conceiving the faith, stating its essentials in terms of Greek metaphysic, etc.

Early Christian history corroborates the results obtained from the previous study. The Christian church is a "Messianic fraternity" "in an evil age." In this Messianic conception the ethical teaching as to the family finds its positive content and its limitations, even its errors, which grow out of its temporary character.

Similarly the economic and political bearings of the new religion are seen from the apocalyptic standpoint and no effort is made to enter Christian principles as vital forces for the reconstruction and renovation of the social organism or organizations. The teaching of Jesus, the practice of the early church, the apostolic teaching all seek to rescue from society the elect and hold them aloof

till God shall "give" the new age with its Messiah in his kingdom.

The object of the book is to constitute a contribution to theological reconstruction. This is forecasted in the first sentence of the *Introduction* and announced in the beginning of the concluding *summary* where the results of "our investigation" are "summarized with a view to their use in constructive processes which lie outside our present purpose" but which a footnote bids us expect in the author's "forthcoming book, *The Gospel and the Modern Man.*" Such reconstruction must depend "not only upon strictly philological exegesis, but also upon that larger historical exegetical process that endeavors to separate the content of a correctly apprehended teaching from the historical form in which it is cast," for "it is in the content of biblical teaching alone that men of to-day can feel more than an antiquarian interest." So far from approving the apostolic injunction to "hold fast the form of sound words," Dr. Mathews finds the form a real hindrance to the freedom of the truth, though he would hardly agree that this injunction is apostolic. This fundamental principle he applies with vigor. To illustrate, in considering the Messianism of Jesus we must deal with three questions. First it is necessary to ascertain what that teaching is; then we must analyze "the content of the Messianic self-consciousness of Jesus;" lastly, we must ascertain what elements in the words and thoughts of Jesus are essential. "The question as to what is true, and what is false in his teaching"—there is such a question of which the "reverent critic" is the judge—"is not to be confused with the question as to what is inherited and what is original in his thought." The Messianism of his times is "the interpretative medium through which we must study him;" but not all such heritage is to be rejected at once as false. "Much of what he inherited was rejected by him," and more of it "will be rejected by men in different intellectual conditions." "The practical problem for to-day lies just

here. After a study of Messianism enables us to understand Jesus better, there is still left the question as to what in his teaching is eternally true." We need pursue his application of this method further only to say that his conclusion as to the incarnation seems to be that the strictly Jewish conception of it was quite other than would properly employ our term *incarnation* and that Jesus did not likely so conceive himself. "He regarded himself as the Christ—the Anointed of God—because he was conscious of God in his personality. What 'unction' was in Semitic thought, incarnation was in Greek thought." The Jew might argue from his death that Jesus was the Christ; but "for the man who does not care to reach that particular conclusion it [his death] stands equally significant as a fact in the history of the race, a testimony to the superehuman personality of the historical Jesus. It matters not in what schematic relation it is placed, etc."

What is the principle which is to guide in all this work of separating eternal truth from the forms of conceiving it as recorded in our Bible? The author's answer is *Messianism*, pharisaic, apocalyptic Messianism; and he stretches this term to cover all relating of one's present life and hopes to the future. By such an accommodation of the term the author is able to find his principle everywhere. Paul's doctrine of justification grows directly out of it and means only acquittal at a future judgment. It is hardly too much to say that Paul would never be able to recognize his system under this author's presentation and that he would be utterly surprised to know that he was so dominated by the Messianism of the Pharisees in his religious and theological thought and teaching. It would be equally surprising to the first century Christians to be told how very limited was their outlook, how mistaken their hopes and how crude their idea of their mission in the world.

Naturally such a study as this cannot proceed without critical examination of the literary sources. Such critic-

ism is little applied to the apocryphal literature. Here it is difficult to be sure of conclusions but Dr. Mathews seems to locate rather more of it in the first century B. C. than would be generally so admitted. He follows the usual views of the "critical school" as to the New Testament writings, though with a large measure of freedom and independence, an independence which loses something of admiration from the fact that it not rarely seems to be in the service of the thesis of the present work. We find here the usual vices of that subjective criticism which in the want of any scientific canons must be a law unto itself. We even find that *derniere resort* of the "critic," the "gloss." Peter's confession of Jesus as  $\delta \beta \iota \omicron \varsigma \tau \omicron \upsilon \theta \epsilon \omicron \upsilon$  (Mt. 16:16) "is clearly an addition of the evangelist." "Clearly" on what grounds? There is need of recognizing that "scholarship" is not the only substantive that may follow the epithet "critical." Criticism is not inseparable from scholarship. There is also a dogmatism of scholarship before which we all tremble. Our author sometimes seems to the reviewer to go out of his way to acknowledge the tyranny of the critical scholasticism of our day. When he reaches "traditional" conclusions, as he does by vigorous reasoning, at many points, he inserts in the text or a note some word to vindicate himself from the suspicion of accepting too much of the text as original or any of it as authoritative. His attitude toward John's Gospel is far more conservative than is popular among the scholars of the day and the author's tone is distinctly confessional in announcing his views and in making such full use of it.

The work is the result of profound research, elaborate thought and keen analysis. It will give any reader new views and heightened interest in the essentials of the faith of the Son of God.

W. O. CARVER.

### **The New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers.**

By a Committee of the Oxford Society of Historical Theology. The Clarendon Press, Oxford, England. 1905.

This is an admirable piece of work and will be found