

to pass by on the other side. I am not wittingly acting the part of the Good Samaritan, for I have been moved, not by compassion, but by zeal without knowledge. It was in blissful ignorance of the supreme difficulties besetting its interpretation that I elected this theme. The ardor with which I set about the grouping of the New Testament passages bearing on it soon yielded, however, to despair. I laid aside my disorderly mass of scriptural references, waiting patiently for the protest of the Committee. The irony of their silence so exasperated me, that I bent myself to the desperate task of bringing order out of what many reserved exegetes are inclined to regard as the inextricable confusion of the New Testament writers. I read the discouraging confession of Beyschlag: "Whoever seeks not merely to reproduce the imagery (of the 'Parousia'), but to discover the truths which Jesus meant to teach, must be bold enough to seek his way in the dark" (1). I listened to the remorseless logic of Strauss: "The only trouble in the case is, that the event did not agree with the prophecy. Now, Jesus either made these predictions, or he did not: if he did, he is thereby proved to have at times lost his mental balance, and hence must be taken with reserve as a religious teacher and guide; if he did not, his disciples, who put such things into his mouth, are not to be trusted in their reports of his teaching" (2). But neither of these bogies—and they are only specimens of many—frightened me from the path set before me. If I could catch no glimmer of light, I could at least say so; and where should I seek light but in a place like this? If no light could be found even here, still misery loves company. Let us by all means set out with the assurance that light will come as the result of earnest search; but even if the quest be a hopeless one—if we cannot ascertain the mind of the Master on this subject, or if that mind, when we reach it through his earliest pupils, be a bundle of irreconcilable ideas—the sooner we recognize the fact and act upon it, the better.

(1). New Testament Theology. (2). Der alte und der neue Glaube, p. 80.