

NOTE ON BOUSSET, DEUSSEN, GARBE, ET AL.

BY WILLIAM BENJAMIN SMITH.

IN *The Monist* of July, 1914, Professor Deussen maintains that the story of the resurrection of Jesus implies a "pious fraud," but "such a little one," it would seem, as need involve no serious moral blemish (while in somewhat similar tone Mr. Kampmeier apologizes for Jesus as not so very bad after all). The only interest, but a lively one, attaching to Deussen's judgment is purely psychologic: how could such an idea obtain a moment's lodgment in any mind even fairly *au courant* with New Testament criticism?—a question much easier to ask than to answer.

However, it is important to note that the resurrection-discussion takes a long stride forward in the new and weighty *Kyrios Christos* of Professor Bousset, which in essential agreement with the essay on "Anastasis" in *Der vorchristliche Jesus* (see "The Critical Trilemma," *Monist*, July, 1914) refers "God hath raised up Jesus" *not* to any resuscitation or raising from the dead, but to the *Erhöhung*, the exaltation, the establishment of the "Messiah-Son-of-Man," "a preexistent, heavenly, supramundane, spiritual being," at the right hand of the majesty on high. "The belief in the exaltation of Jesus as Son-of-Man was not the consequence but much rather the presupposition of the appearances of Jesus." Bousset explicitly rejects "the empty grave" as any part of the earlier tradition. "It may therefore still be proved that the women at the empty grave did not belong to the elder evangelic account of the end of the life of Jesus" (p. 79). "The belief in the exaltation of the Son-of-Man took the more concrete form, that he had risen on the third day bodily from the grave" (p. 79). Only one more such step of giant is needed to reach the position already maintained in the article on "Anastasis"—a step that can not be many years delayed.

In the same number of *The Monist* Garbe rests the historicity

on the prediction of the parousia: "Verily I say unto you, There be some here of them that stand by, which shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God come with power" (Mark ix. 1); "Ye shall not have gone through the cities of Israel, till the Son-of-Man be come" (Matt. x. 23); "There be some of them that stand here, which shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Son-of-Man coming in his kingdom" (Matt. xvi. 28); "There be some of them that stand here, which shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Kingdom of God" (Luke ix. 27). Quoting Schopenhauer, Garbe holds with Reimarus that unless these "predictions" had been actually uttered (by Jesus) they would never have held their place in the Gospels, since they were "conspicuously not fulfilled." Surely the force of naïveté can no further go. Garbe need not wonder that saner historicists rely so little on these passages. Schopenhauer speaks of "the glorious return of the Lord," and Garbe quotes with approval. But the reader sees that the scriptures cited say naught of any "return," but only of the "coming" of the kingdom of the Son-of-Man. The notion of "return" is not present; it is the "liberal" contribution of our authors.

Now it is at best merely amusing to talk of the Gospels as sacredly preserving an unfulfilled prediction, just in awe of it as a prediction uttered by Jesus. Who does so should take lessons in old Christian history. If the "prediction" had given offense, it would have been changed without a moment's hesitation. This point has already been sufficiently discussed in *Ecce Deus* (pp. 185-189). Schopenhauer, Garbe, and the rest have totally misunderstood the "coming," the parousia, the presence, in construing it as a "return." The reference is to the wide-spread preaching of the kingdom, the community of God-worshippers, to the proclamation and general acceptance of the Jesus-cult, to the victorious crusade for monotheism, against idolatry. To speak of Jesus as actually uttering such words and of the bewildered church as actually cherishing them, is to imitate the wife of Job (ii. 10). Wellhausen himself declares that "Mark ix. 1 is an additament to viii. 38, externally marked off by 'and he said' and also internally distinguished"—it is not Jesus but a much later Christian consciousness that speaks. Again, of Matt. x. 23 the same great historicist says: "The Son-of-Man is in the meaning of the concipient, not Jesus" (p. 49).

Garbe, Deussen, and their kind should read such critical works as *Kyrios Christos* and especially Norden's *Agnostos Theos*, to learn how they have misconceived "the problem of Jesus"¹ and the

protochristian monotheistic propaganda. They remind one of sophomores who would solve the general algebraic equation of fifth or sixth degree without regarding Abel. It is idle to reason with these, who have no proper conception of the problem. The best one can do is to say, "Well here is an equation of fifth degree, whose roots I know; now find them by your method, and then I'll hear you." When Deussen and Garbe solve one of the least of the real difficulties of the critical situation, then let them ask our attention.

Until then, let them sneer as they will: let them rage and imagine a vain thing; let them muzzle the press and employ varieties of argument in vogue only among such as know no better. Meantime the dawn creeps down the mountains. He who notes carefully the tone of the best European criticism can no more doubt the steady revolution in progress than watching the vibrations of a Foucault pendulum he could doubt the rotation of the earth.

¹ *Le Problème de Jésus*, by Charles Guignebert, of the Sorbonne—an able, learned, fair-minded book, just published, which scoffers especially would do well to read.