

**THE MYSTERY OF THE
KINGDOM OF GOD; THE
SECRET OF JESUS'
MESSIAHSHIP AND PASSION**

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The mystery of the kingdom of God; the secret of Jesus' Messiahship and passion by Albert Schweitzer & Walter Lowrie

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ALBERT SCHWEITZER & WALTER LOWRIE

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THE SECRET OF
JESUS' MESSIAHSHIP AND PASSION

BY
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WALTER LOWRIE

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ANY WAY
ANY
WAY

DEDICATED
WITH SINCERE RESPECT
AND DEVOTION
TO
DR. H. J. HOLTZMANN
BY
HIS GRATEFUL PUPIL
ALBERT SCHWEITZER



PREFACE

THE attempt to write a life of Jesus, commencing not at the beginning but in the middle, with the thought of the Passion, must of necessity sometime be made. Strange that it has not been made earlier, for it is in the air!

The fact is that all presentations of the life of Jesus are satisfactory up to a certain point,—the inception of the thought of the Passion. There, however, the connection fails. Not one of them succeeds in rendering intelligible why Jesus now suddenly counts his death necessary, and in what sense he conceives it as a saving act. In order to establish this connection one must try the experiment of making the thought of the Passion the point of departure, for the sake of rendering the former and latter periods of the life of Jesus comprehensible. If we do not understand the idea of the Passion, may not that be due to the fact that we have formed an erroneous notion of the first period of the life of Jesus and so have precluded for ourselves in advance all possibility of attaining insight into the genesis of the Passion idea?

The last years of research have revealed on

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what slight grounds our historical conception of the life of Jesus really rests. It cannot be concealed that we are confronted by a difficult antinomy. Either Jesus really took himself to be the Messiah, or (as a new tendency of the study now seems to suggest) this dignity was first ascribed to him by the early Church. In either case the "Life of Jesus" remains equally enigmatical.

If Jesus really regarded himself as Messiah, how comes it that he acted as if he were not Messiah? How is it to be explained that his office and dignity seem to have nothing to do with his public activity? How are we to account for the fact that only after his public activity was ended (not to reckon the last few days at Jerusalem) did he disclose to his Disciples who he was, and at the same time enjoined upon them strict silence with regard to this *secret*? It explains nothing to suggest that such conduct was prescribed by motives of prudence or by pedagogical considerations. In the Synoptical accounts where is there even the slightest hint that Jesus wished to educate the Disciples and the people up to a knowledge of his messiahship?

The more one thinks about it the more clearly one recognises how little the assumption that Jesus took himself to be the Messiah

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suffices to explain his "life," inasmuch as no connection whatever results between his self-consciousness and his public activity. It may sound banal to ask the question, but it is one which cannot on that account be avoided, why Jesus never tried through instruction to raise the people up to the new ethical conception of messiahship. The attempt would not have been so hopeless as one commonly assumes, for at that time there was a deep spiritual movement going on in Israel. Why did Jesus maintain persistent silence about his conception of messiahship?

On the other hand, if one assumes that he did not take himself to be the Messiah, it must be explained how he came to be made Messiah after his death. Certainly it was not on the ground of his public activity, for this had nothing to do with his messiahship. But then again, what was the significance of the revelation of the secret of his messiahship to the Twelve and the confession before the high-priest? It is a mere act of violence to declare these scenes unhistorical. If one resolves upon such aggression, what is there then left of the whole Gospel tradition?

And withal one should not forget, that if Jesus did not take himself to be the Messiah, this means the death blow to the Christian