

**THE DOCTRINE OF THE
LAST THINGS; JEWISH
AND CHRISTIAN**

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The doctrine of the last things; Jewish and Christian by W. O. E. Oesterley

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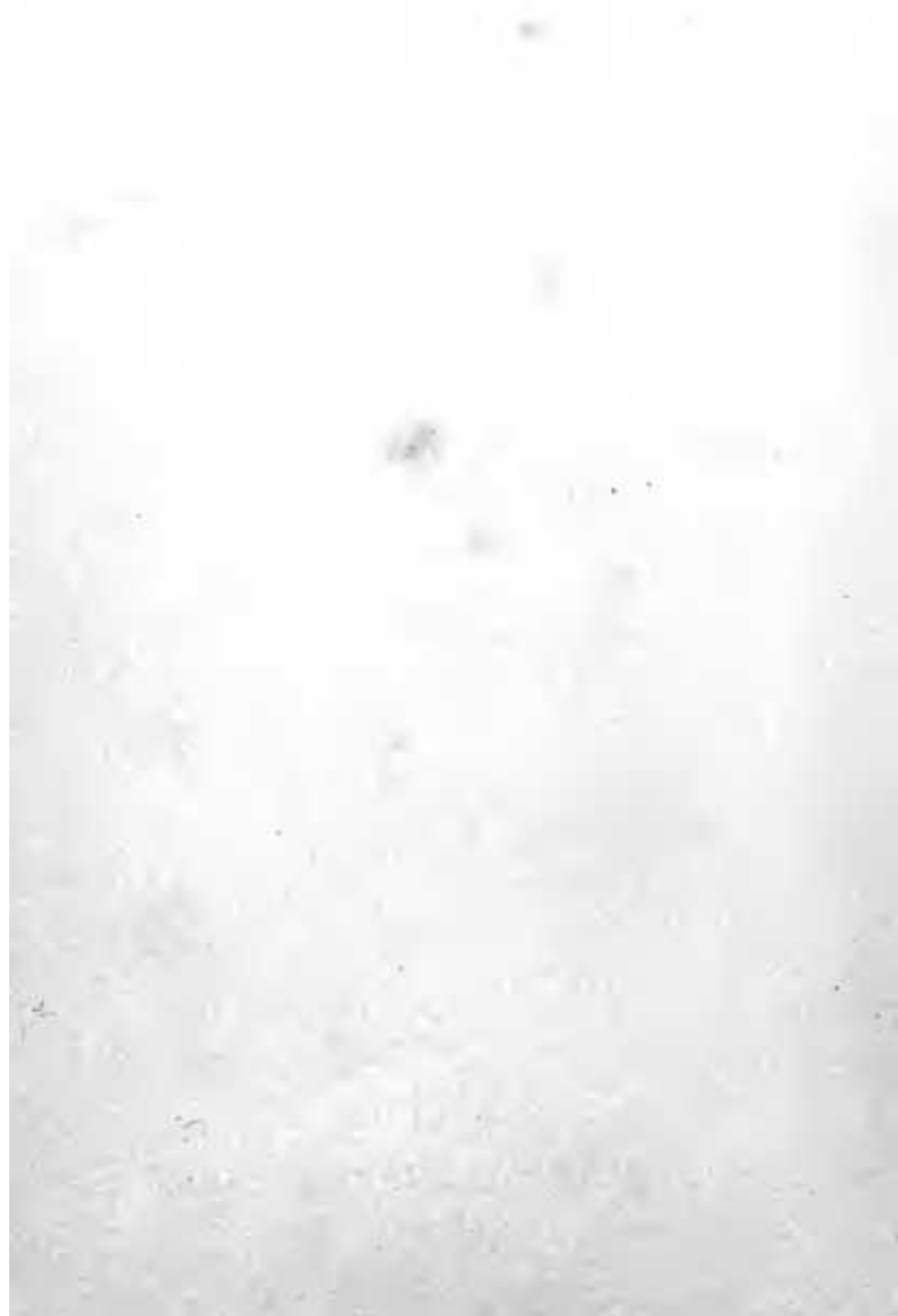
W. O. E. OESTERLEY

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THE LAST THINGS;
JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN.

BY
THE REV. W. O. E. OESTERLEY, D.D.
JESUS COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

FOR a right understanding of what the Gospels teach concerning the "last things" it is indispensable that the antecedents upon which that teaching was, in the first instance, based should be studied. Eschatology, like so many other things, went through a process of development before it assumed that form which the Gospels have made so familiar to us. No developed growth can be satisfactorily studied without knowing something about its earlier processes of formation and the conditions under which development took place. And, therefore, if we wish to understand what the Gospels teach concerning the "end of the world," the first requisite is that we should have some idea of that earlier

teaching upon which it is based. Where is this earlier teaching to be found? Firstly, in the Old Testament; secondly, and chiefly, in the Apocalyptic literature; and thirdly, though in a much less degree, in Rabbinical literature, wherein are re-echoed so many of the popular conceptions on this subject which were current in our Lord's day. It is the main object of the following pages to offer to the general reader some insight into what these three classes of literature have to say upon the subject under consideration.

In order to show in the clearest manner the character of these antecedents, it has been thought well to give a goodly number of quotations from each class of literature. This seemed the more necessary because the connection between the Gospel Eschatology and that which preceded it cannot be adequately realised unless the *ipsissima verba* of each are placed side by side and compared; but it is very tedious to be con-

stantly interrupting the reading by turning up references, and therefore to have these quoted in full before one will, it is hoped, be found to be a considerable convenience. In the case of the Apocalyptic and Rabbinical literatures it seemed doubly necessary to give quotations, and not merely references, because many of the editions of the works belonging to those two classes of literature are, owing to their expense, unavailable for those who have not the use of a good theological library.

But while the purpose of this book is, in the main, to present in popular form an outline of the antecedents of Christ's doctrine of the "last things," it is impossible to remain altogether silent upon some topics which inevitably suggest themselves. When it is found, for example, that there is substantial identity in a number of essential points between the Eschatology of the Gospel and its antecedents, many people will be inclined