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RESEARCH SCIENTISTS' CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

Some Highlights in Current Theological
Thought about the Bible

by

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This evening I propose to talk basically about the modern approach to the Bible as I see it. Partly I shall depend on my reading and partly on the contacts I have made in England and America. I shall talk about the kind of thing that it seems to me evangelicals should learn from people of other schools of thought, specifically in the way in which they approach Scripture. Some of this will be by way of praise and some of blame. There are some things we should imitate and some we should avoid. At the beginning I want to stress that this is no more than a personal assessment. I shall mention things that seem important to me. I hope I have understood correctly the scholars with whose teachings I shall deal. At any rate what follows is the impression they have left on me. Whether what I have to say is relevant to your situation or not I have no means of knowing. I hope so. But all that I can claim is that what follows seems to me important.

Listen to the Text

My first point is that there is a tremendous emphasis these days on the importance of getting at the literal, grammatical meaning of the scriptural writers. We must listen to what the text actually says and not read our own pattern back into it. This sounds so obvious that it scarcely needs saying. It is surely something we would all agree to. It is elementary that when we open the Scripture the first thing we must do is simply to let those words say what they have to say. We must not make them mean what we want them to mean.

But in actual fact we are often guilty of just this error. This I think is one area in which the critical scholar very often has a good deal to teach us. My experience of it is that very many critical scholars, when they are dealing with the text are much more faithful to the original writer's meaning than are many Evangelical scholars. The trouble with the evangelicals is that they "know" too well what the whole teaching of Scripture is. Therefore, when they are dealing with a specific passage, they are tempted to see in it a piece of theology of which they are quite certain, but with which in actual fact the writer is not concerned at that point. We can do our cause a good deal of harm in important cases by trying to read too much into a Scriptural passage. If a fair-minded observer sees that the passage does not mean what we say it means, our case is lost, even though the theology we are advocating may be quite sound. I am very impressed as I read a great deal of critical work to-day with the way in which the writers spare no pains in the endeavour to get right back to what the text means, without imposing any pattern of any sort on it.

The Sentence as the Unit of Expression

The second trend which I see fairly widely, and about which I am not nearly so happy, is the trend to see the unit in interpreting the Bible in the sentence rather than the word. You see this in such a book as James Barr's Semantics of Biblical Language. This is the thunderbolt with which Barr has blown apart a great deal of fine theological work that has been going on for many, many years. Barr complains bitterly of the tendency which you will find in many writings, to distinguish between the Hebrew and the Greek cast of thought and to see this difference reflected in the very structure of the language. It is often pointed out for instance that the tense system of the Hebrew verb is quite different from the tense system of the Greek verb. It is then maintained by some that this corresponds to different approaches to the whole problem of existence. The Greeks and the Hebrews thought differently, is the reasoning, and this affects the very shape of their languages.

Now Barr has a very detailed examination of this. In particular he has torn to shreds a book by Thorlief Boman, a Scandinavian. He has also criticized severely a fellow citizen of Edinburgh, Thomas Torrance. When you have two people from Edinburgh differing about the interpretation of Scripture, then you really have a fight on your hands. That is what has happened since Barr's Semantics came out.

Barr objects to the whole idea that you can get profit from word studies. This of course is really to set the cat among the pigeons, because no book I should imagine has been more influential in New Testament Studies in recent years than Kittel's great Theologisches Wörterbuch. This is coming out volume by volume and it has now reached Volume 7. Each volume contains something like 1,000 pages, and they are really big pages. In Kittel you have a detailed study of one word or word group at a time. The scholars responsible are steadily ploughing their way through the whole New Testament. Now Barr blithely suggests that the whole method is wrong and that Kittel should be thrown overboard. It is the sentence as a whole that is significant, he thinks, and not the word.

Barr also objects to a favourite hobby of Evangelicals among other people of arguing by derivation. It is not at all uncommon for people to take a word and say this is derived from such and such a root and to claim that this hypothetical root gives us its meaning. Barr points out that it is an elementary fact that this is just not so. It is the use at a given time and not the derivation which is important for an understanding of any word. This has caused a certain amount of consternation in some New Testament circles. But Barr, of course, is quite correct. Root meanings may be interesting, but they tell us something about the history of a word, not its meaning in a given context.

Another thing that Barr objects to is the habit some people have of finding that a word will mean a certain thing in one context, another thing in another context and so on. They search out all the possible meanings of a given word and then when they come to the passage that is their heart's delight, they proceed to find all the given meanings in that one passage. You must have seen this kind of thing and no doubt you have done it yourself. Now Barr maintains that it is the sentence which is the unit and not the word. A word is simply a semantic counter. It matters little what meanings it can have elsewhere. In any given context it simply fits into a given sentence. In other words it has just one meaning in one place, not all the meanings of which it is capable.

An outstanding example of the kind of thinking that is behind Barr's book (although it certainly was not produced by it), is the New English Bible. One critic of that translation said that he could not imagine what purpose a concordance to it would serve, and I confess that I share that puzzlement. I cannot imagine what purpose a concordance would serve either. In the New English Bible there is no attempt at all to render consistently any given Greek word by a corresponding English word — none at all. What the translators have done again and again is to take a whole Greek sentence, get the thought of it, and try and put that into contemporary English so that any individual word in the New English Bible has no necessarily close relationship with the corresponding word in the Greek Testament. There is something to be said for this approach for the sentence is undoubtedly important, and a word's context is important. But I think that Barr and those who think with him overlook the fact that words do in fact have meaning and individual meaning at that. Barr's work is too extreme.

Let us consider two English sentences, "the lady was fair", and "the lady was a blonde". In structure the two sentences are much the same. But there is a definite difference in English. Your choice of word gives an individual shade of meaning. Barr does not seem to me to give adequate attention to this. His emphasis is on the sentence structure. This is what matters and any one individual word does not seem to matter so much.

However, Barr is quite a force in New Testament interpretation at the present time and his views in my opinion will be heard a good deal of for a long time to come. That of course has its consequence for people like you and me. We must face some new questions: Is the sentence the basic unit of interpretation? Have we given too close attention to individual words? Should we concentrate more on the sentence, or perhaps even on paragraphs, rather than on the occurrence of this word rather than that in a given sentence? The issue is not one which can be avoided.

Variety in New Testament Teaching

The third thing that I notice in contemporary theological approach to the New Testament is a frank recognition that there was a variety of opinion on many matters in the early church. It is common to most theological writing today that we must interpret sayings as they are in their own context and not as they are found elsewhere.

Let me illustrate with a remark that I heard at a meeting of Evangelicals not so very long before I left England. One gentleman in dealing with the interpretation of a passage in I Corinthians said, "Surely it is an accepted tenet in the interpretation of Scripture that the first time an idea turns up it is commonly explained and that this explanation should be accepted in subsequent occurrences of that idea." He went on to point out that the idea before us in I Corinthians is to be found also in the Acts of the Apostles. "Now what we must do in I Corinthians" he went on, "is to take the explanation that we found in the Acts, because that is the first occurrence of the idea in Scripture."

I do not know how widespread this idea is among Evangelicals, but the critical scholar would immediately point out that there is every probability that I Corinthians was written long before Acts. He would also suggest that the fact that Acts occurs before I Corinthians in our Bible is a curious accident and maintain that in any case Paul must be allowed to speak for himself. You cannot say that Luke in Acts lays down what Paul in I Corinthians must mean by a given idea. What you must do if you want to find out the significance of an idea in Paul is look at Paul's letters, and see what this idea means to him. If you want to find out what it means to Luke then you must look at Luke's writings and see what it means to him. Each must be allowed to speak for himself. You must not try to force any Scriptural writer into an unnatural agreement with any other Scriptural writer.

I think that we have something to learn here although, of course, we cannot accept all that our critical friends would make of this. But this we can learn, that it is important to let each Scriptural writer speak for himself. We must not assume that all of them must necessarily be saying exactly the same thing.

May I illustrate from the sayings of our Lord on the Cross. In Mark the last saying that is recorded from the dying Lord is "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" In Luke His last recorded words are "Into Thy hands I commend my Spirit." Now I have seen a number of Evangelicals who have laboured a great deal to show that these two do not necessarily contradict one another. Some have gone so far that they seem to me to be saying that Mark really means much the same thing as Luke does. I think we are much better advised not to try and do that. Rather we should ask ourselves two questions:-

1. What is Mark trying to tell us about the death of the Lord?
2. What is Luke trying to tell us about the death of the Lord?

Let us not worry very much if what Mark is saying is not the same thing as what Luke is saying. We do not have to draw the conclusion from that that our critical brethren may perhaps draw, viz. that Mark and Luke contradict one another. We may well say these two things are both true and acceptable. Our Lord's death may be viewed from many angles. From one point of view, Christ died forsaken of God because He was bearing the sin of the world. From another point of view He died in fellowship and at peace with God because He was doing the will of the Father. These two ideas are not contradictory, but that does not mean that the two sayings quoted must be understood as though they were referring to the same thing. I do not think they are. This principle is capable of wide application. There are many places in the Scripture where it is profitable to ask what a saying means where it is, without trying to force it into an unnatural agreement with another statement somewhere else. It is important to let each writer speak for himself.

Jewish Law and Custom

A number of modern writers point out that we can understand many New Testament passages better if we give attention to the light shed on them by Jewish law and custom. This is a really fascinating subject but for our purposes tonight I would judge it is not terribly important. It is important for a number of passages, but probably not so over the whole area of the New Testament. May I give a very quick illustration and then hurry on my way. In Matthew 13:44 we have the well-known passage about the gentleman who found treasure in a field. He hid it and then went away and sold all he had and bought that field. There is a lot of discussion on the morality of this. People ask whether or not he told the man when he was buying the field that he had found the treasure, and so on.

It seems to me that a knowledge of Jewish law removes many of the difficulties here. The Jewish law was not, as with us, that treasure-trove was the property of the crown. Nor was it the property of the owner of the field or any such person. If treasure was found then it belonged to the man who found it and "lifted" it, i.e. lifted it out of the ground. He had both to find and to lift to establish his claim to it.

But supposing that he was a workman and that he was employed in the field. Then the treasure might belong to his master because his master could claim that the workman was his agent. He had sent him to find and to lift out that treasure. Therefore the treasure belonged to the owner of the field as the principal, and not to the actual finder, who

was only the agent. Of course, if the owner had not sent him to the field to find treasure, but for some other purpose, the treasure would belong to the finder (i.e. provided he also "lifted" it). Now nobody knows the relationship of the man in the parable who found the treasure to the owner of the field. But even an elementary acquaintance with the Jewish law is enough to show that in the case of the finding of treasure there is plenty of opportunity for legal difficulties. If by any chance the man who found it was employed by the owner of the field then he would have had a very great deal of trouble in establishing his claim to it. By Jewish law it was his if he lifted it. But by Jewish law the owner of the field might claim the treasure, maintaining that the man who found it was his agent. A lawsuit would be inevitable and the outcome uncertain. The sensible thing accordingly would be to do what Jesus says the man did -- to buy the field. Then when he lifted the treasure there would not be any question raised. Clearly now he was not the agent of anybody else. It was his own field. Buying the field would be a way of removing all legal doubts and establishing a clear title to what was undoubtedly his.

This kind of approach is proving very fruitful. There are quite a few passages in the Bible which are illuminated when examined in the light of Jewish law. The difficult parable of the unjust steward is one such which may be mentioned in passing. Another is the curious statement in John, "the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans". This statement was made at the very time that the disciples were off buying food, which is having dealings if anything is. There are quite a number of these which I think immediately become clear when you see the Jewish law behind them. But there are many things I want to deal with and this I think is not at the centre of our study tonight. If it is you can bring it up in the question time.

The Papyri

The fifth thing which is being insisted on is that we should use the light which is shed on the New Testament by the papyri. They give us the ordinary speech of men of the first century. The New Testament is not written in a variety of classical Greek but in a very real sense in the language of the people. But this, again, I think I need only allude to in passing. I do not think that it is of first importance for us.

The Interests of the Early Church

The sixth point that I make is important. The New Testament cannot be understood unless we bear in mind the interests of the early church and unless we remember that the interests of the early church were not necessarily the same as our interests. All the New Testament documents, with the possible exception of Luke - Acts are church documents. They are written by church members to meet some need of the church and they

ought not to be treated as though they were universal treatises. They are not books addressed to the general public at large. Some people have thought, for example, that the Gospel according to St. Matthew can be understood by thinking of it as something like a rather strangely written biography, published and sent out for anybody at all to read. Although I have no doubt that anybody who was interested was welcome to read it, it was not meant for the general public. It was meant for the church people. Some within the Christian church needed to know certain things about Jesus Christ and so they are put down in this Gospel for them. The needs and the interests of the church have to be understood if we are to evaluate the Gospels rightly.

And we must bear in mind that the needs and the interests of the early church are not the same as ours. The first century is not the 20th. A classical example of this is the passage in I Corinthians about ladies wearing hats in church. (As a matter of fact it does not say anything about wearing hats although this is the way we always take it. Paul talks about the necessity of ladies being veiled or being covered and he means a covering which really did cover the head in the literal sense of the term). The point is that in first century Corinth it was accepted that only a woman of loose morals appeared in public with her head uncovered. But some Corinthian Christians fairly obviously felt that they were emancipated by the Gospel. They were free from law, understanding that term in the widest possible way. They saw that salvation is not a matter of law-keeping, and that applies to keeping the laws of Corinth just as much as to keeping the law of Moses. As we are saved by faith in Christ we are no longer bound by this kind of thing. So they cheerfully set aside the accepted rules of behaviour in polite Corinthian society.

Paul is concerned to point out that it is no part of Christianity needlessly to flout the accepted conventions of the society in which we live. In that society, the society of first century Corinth, he says that it is important that women should have their heads covered when they are praying or prophesying. What that means in terms of the twentieth century is a matter for determination. Maybe in the twentieth century this should be taken over without any change. Maybe there should be a change. But the point I make is that we must bear in mind that the writings of the New Testament are church writings written to meet the needs of the first century and that those needs are not necessarily the same as ours. In some cases they are the same; in some cases they are not. A good deal of modern theological writing on the New Testament is making just that point.

Worship in Bible Times

A further point which arises out of this is that church books may be used in worship. There is a tremendous interest in worship these days on the part of interpreters of a great deal of the Bible. The Scandinavian

Mowinckel, for example, sees the Psalms as understood rightly only when they are seen as cultic. They are, in other words, a hymnbook for use in the temple. A lot of people, myself included, feel that Mowinckel has gone too far in this. When he rejects the individual element in practically all of the Psalms this is really too much of a good thing. But that some of the Psalms were meant from the beginning to be used in worship I think is certainly true. We must look at the Psalms in the light of the worship of the Temple and not simply assume they were meant to be private devotional poems for use in the quiet time of some individuals of ancient times.

Again, some people have pointed out that John 17 is not unlike the consecration prayer in certain ancient liturgical forms. The suggestion is made accordingly that we rightly understand John 17 only if we think of it as a prayer which has been shaped to some extent by liturgical use. This is not something I accept. My job tonight, as I understand it, is to inform. So I let you know that there are scholars who see John 17 as shaped by or even perhaps originated in the church's liturgical practices. This is a marked recent tendency. Worship is seen in many places. C.F.D. Moule in his book, The Birth of the New Testament says that the tendency today is to assume a liturgical context wherever it is in the faintest degree possible, rather than to start off from some other assumption. He thinks that this fashion has over-reached itself a trifle and our Professors are in danger of crying, "Worship, worship" when there is no worship". It seems to me that this judgment is eminently reasonable.

This applies to some individual books more than others. For example, Professor Guilding at Sheffield University has come out with the idea that the Fourth Gospel is really a series of synagogue sermons. She thinks that Jesus preached these sermons and they are rightly understood only when we see them against the background of the lections used in the Jewish Synagogue. Professor Guilding seems to me to assume all too lightly both that there was a Jewish Synagogue lectionary in the first century and that she knows what was in it (which things are not the same). She also assumes that the Christians understood that lectionary sufficiently well to be able to pick up allusions to it when they are as veiled as they are in the Fourth Gospel. There are many objections to the hypothesis, but it is put forward and argued with seriousness and with great learning. Archbishop Philip Carrington has argued in a similar fashion with regard to the second Gospel, though with Christian, rather than Jewish worship behind it. He sees Mark as having been composed to be read in sections in the services Sunday by Sunday.

It is quite common to find it suggested that certain narratives in the Gospels have been shaped by Christian worship. The happy hunting ground here, of course, is the institution of the service of Holy Communion.

You will find any number of scholars who say that what is recorded in Matthew, Mark and Luke as said and done at the time of the institution, is not due so much as to what actually happened at the time, as to what actually happened in the church at the time of the Communion Service. This was the kind of way in which the celebrant conducted the service of Holy Communion and so they naturally read it back to our Lord.

Christian hymns are discerned as in 1 Timothy 3: 16, "who was manifested in the flesh, was received up in glory" and so on. Many hymns are of course recorded for us in Revelation.

Many think that 1 Peter is a Baptismal Service minus the rubrics, exhortations, hymns and prayers. This, they hold, is the kind of thing that went on in a first-century baptism.

I think that this tendency has gone a bit too far. People have tended, as Professor Moule says, to say, "'Worship, worship', when there is no worship". But that the New Testament was intimately connected with worship, at least in some parts, I think there is no doubt. I think, too, that this is something that evangelicals have never even thought about, let alone given its due weight. But if the New Testament books were written by church members to meet the needs of the church, and if these books were sometimes read in church (and Revelation, I would judge from Rev. 1. 3 is meant to be read in Church), then we ought to think again about some of the things that we have said about these books. Obviously we cannot rightly interpret any book if we neglect the circumstances in which it was written.

The Use of the Old Testament in the New

The Old Testament is held by all New Testament writers to be verbally inspired. This, I think, is a place where the evangelical is a step or two ahead of the critical scholar. The critical scholar has to make a very determined effort to see what the Old Testament would look like if it were held to be verbally inspired. The New Testament writers clearly had such a view. Whether we agree with them or not, much in the New Testament cannot be understood unless it is seen that this was their view. So there is a determined effort in much modern theological writing to see what this means. Sometimes it is used in conclusions that we should regard as unwelcome. For example, it is suggested that the New Testament writers sometimes shaped events to fit prophecy. Matthew is said to have held that Jesus sat on both an ass and a colt, the foal of an ass, at the triumphal entry (Mt. 21: 2 - 7). He read this in the scripture and critical scholars think that he reasoned that it must be fulfilled literally. So instead of having Jesus sit on an ass, namely the foal of an ass, he had Him sit on both. I am not at all certain that this is the right understanding of Matthew, but I pass it on to you as the kind of thing that scholars are saying.

The Gospels

The approach to the Gospels is the most difficult and I should think important thing, and I intend to concentrate on that for a little while. It is being insisted on in a great deal of modern writing that the Gospels are not biographies. If you are interested in the modern approach to the Gospels you could scarcely do better than look up D. E. Nineham's Introduction to his commentary on Mark in the new Pelican Gospel Commentaries. This introduction is meant to be an introduction not only to Mark but to the Gospels as a whole. Nineham has put the general critical case very clearly.

He says that if the Gospels are read by a modern reader without any knowledge of their origins and consequent character, positive misunderstanding is likely to be the result. The nearest analogy to a Gospel in the experience of the modern reader is the biography. Therefore it is natural for him to approach and interpret the Gospels as if they were so many biographies. Anyone who treats them as if they were will almost certainly misuse them, discovering in them all sorts of information which in fact is not there, and at the same time missing a great deal of the religious insight and the historical information that they do in fact contain. The Gospels are the composition of the church. They were produced to meet certain church needs. They are not attempts to write rather strange biographies. They are meant to persuade non-believers and sometimes to help converts grow in grace. Thus the Gospels include arguments which would show that Jesus, though crucified, was in fact the Messiah. This would not appear attractive at all to Jews at first sight, so it had to be made plain.

Again, nobody questioned the sinlessness of Jesus, so the Gospels do not bring this out very explicitly. It is indicated, but there is no great emphasis on it. Again, the early Christians were not very much interested in the humanity of Jesus. They were interested in His divinity, and thus, though the Gospels talk about a Jesus who was plainly human, the humanity received very little emphasis. The divinity however receives a good deal. Nineham points out that we today are interested in the humanity. If we are to get a just understanding of this from the Gospels we must bear in mind continually that they were not written primarily, to meet our needs but to meet the needs of others.

Form Criticism

Form Criticism is accepted very widely in modern theological writing. The Form Critics tell us that we can learn a great deal about a narrative from the shape of it. As a story was told and re-told it tended to fall into a conventional pattern. A study of the various conventional patterns is thus very important. Form Critics will, of course, discount those features which are due to the pattern and concentrate attention on what they take to be the original content.

Generally they hold that the Passion story was originally independent. The story of the way that Jesus died always seems to have been of interest to Christians. Then they discern a series of Pronouncement stories. This is the kind of story which takes you through a series of incidents culminates in a significant saying. The story, the Form Critics will say, is preserved for the sake of the saying at the end. The incidents leading up to it may or may not be historical. Particular details, they hold, have probably been brought in simply to emphasize the punch line when it comes. They might think accordingly that the saying is probably historical while the story leading up to it is probably not. Miracle stories also follow a conventional form. There is always something to indicate the deep-seated nature of the illness (e.g. this man has been like this ever since birth, or for a definite time, say 38 years). Since there will always be something of this kind, you do not take too much notice of it. Then there will always be something to indicate the suddenness or completeness of the cure, so you do not take too much notice of that either. Indeed by the time the Form Critics are through there's not too much you do take notice of. The miracle story is seen largely as a conventional form in which narratives were cast about heroes in antiquity.

Dibelius, the German scholar who did a great deal in the Form Criticism of the New Testament, says a lot about legends. "In a legend", he says, "the main interest of the narrative lies elsewhere than in the historicity; it is directed to the religiousness and sanctity of the hero". This brings me to a point which is rather important, that the language of modern theologians is often very difficult to follow. When Dibelius uses the term "legend" he does not mean by it what you and I would mean by it. He means, as in the words just quoted, a story in which the main interest lies elsewhere than in its historicity. It may be completely historical, it may have happened exactly in the form in which it is narrated, but Dibelius will still call it a legend because the interest is not in the event but in the religiousness or the sanctity of the person about whom it was told. Similarly Bultmann uses the term "myth" in a way in which we do not normally employ the term today. Quite a lot of the terminology of modern theologians is difficult to understand. One is tempted to say unnecessarily difficult, but perhaps that is unkind.

It is insisted on by Gospel critics that a preacher would normally use one incident in his sermon. He would take, for example, an incident in the life of Jesus and preach about it. The Gospels represent a record of a certain amount of this preached matter so that what you see in the Gospels is to be taken as so many "preaching units" rather than as incidents arranged in chronological order. In other words the composition of the Gospels may be likened to a process of threading a string of beads. There is interest accordingly in why this bead was put alongside that bead. It is not as in a history where one event followed another in chronological order. In a history you put this event here because in actual fact it followed that event. In the Gospels, it is not so. In the Gospels, according to this approach, we have a series

of incidents which were used for preaching and which preserve something of the oral tradition of the Church. When the time came to write down this oral tradition, the units in it were strung together by Mark in one order, by Matthew in another order and by Luke in yet another. Now the questions that are before scholars investigating the Gospels today are questions like "What was the interest of Matthew that made him record it in this way"? - "What was the interest of Mark that made him put it this way"? - "Why did Luke reject both and put it in this other way". It is recognized that there is theological purpose behind all four Gospels. A great deal of attention is being paid to the pre-suppositions of the evangelists.

Now this is something which is important and which bears very much on the position in which we find ourselves. It is insisted in much modern theology that what is narrated in the Gospels depends basically upon the viewpoint of the writers. For example, it is said that Mark thinks of the Messianic secret. He holds that Jesus tried to keep His Messiahship secret from the people and this leads him to think of the people as very obtuse. They never realized what was going on in their midst. D. E. Nineham can say, "It is no doubt this concern which accounts for the Evangelist's theory that the parables were intended to conceal the truth .. and also for his including so much very unflattering information about the twelve which makes all the more interesting the question how far his account in this respect is true to the historical facts."

This raises squarely the issue of historicity and I want to read to you at this point something that Nineham has to say on this subject:- "when we bear in mind the wonderfully retentive memory of the Oriental, who, being unable to read and write, had perforce to cultivate accuracy of memory, it will not seem surprising that we can often be virtually sure that what the tradition is offering to us are the authentic deeds, and especially the authentic words, of the historic Jesus." Thus far the I.V.F. is standing on the sidelines and cheering. But Nineham goes on to say, "However, passages in which all competent scholars would agree in recognizing that that is the case are rare, and it is important not to claim too much. What the Gospels give us, inextricably fused together in a single picture, is the historic Jesus and the Church's reactions to, and understanding of, him as they developed over half a century and more." Now that last sentence is tremendously important if you wish to get a picture of the modern theological approach to the Gospels. The Gospels give us the historic Jesus together with the Church's reactions to Him. Most modern theologians would probably agree with Nineham that you have more of the Church's reactions than you do of the historic Jesus.

And this, I think is the point to bring in a reference to Rudolph Bultmann. Bultmann is quite sure that we have very little information about the historical Jesus but he does not seem to worry very much about that. Bultmann's interest is elsewhere than in historicity. He is well-known for his campaign for "demythologizing". Many have the idea that he is nothing other than a liberal of earlier days resurrected in our generation.

I do not think that that is fair to Bultmann. The liberal was concerned when he looked at the Gospels to decide that such and such things could not possibly be historical and to reject them. Other things, he would say, bear the stamp of historicity, and we may accept them. And, by a curious coincidence, the things which bore the stamp of historicity were the things which were congenial to the mind of the late 19th century. And so you get a picture of a Jesus who would have fitted very well into 19th century Germany. You know the gibe about Adolph Harnack, "He looked down into a well nineteen centuries deep and saw reflected at the bottom the face of a modern man." And that, I think, is not an unfair criticism of a great deal of the liberal theology.

Now Bultmann is not trying to do that at all. When he rejects part of the Gospel as mythical, he is not saying this has to be thrown overboard. To say that it is mythical is only a first step. You then go on to say, "Now what does this myth say to us?" "What is it that the writer is trying to express through this myth?" Writers of an earlier day did not say that at all. They said, "This is unhistorical -- out". The thought that myth is of value is a new thought. In the end we may find it just as unacceptable as that of the liberals. But it is a mistake to regard Bultmann as nothing other than a liberal.

He is not, and he does something which the liberals did not do. He insists on the note of challenge in Christianity. All the time he is trying to make his readers face up to the necessity for decision. The New Testament is not just a piece of ancient history that you may read to while away an idle moment. God was in Christ and you must do something about that. You must react to this preaching of the Gospel. You may find it very strange that a theologian as sceptical as Bultmann should keep on appealing for decision. But you should not shut your eyes to the fact that he does. And this again is something in which he differs from the liberals.

Let me read some words of Bultmann which may perhaps help us understand "demythologizing" which he stresses so much. "The whole conception of the world", he says, "which is presupposed in the preaching of Jesus as in the New Testament generally is mythological; i.e., the conception of the world as being structured in three stories, heaven, earth and hell; the conception of the intervention of supernatural powers in the course of events; and the conception of miracles, especially the conception that men can be tempted and corrupted by the devil and possessed by evil spirits. This conception of the world we call mythological because it is different from the conception of the world which has been formed and developed by science since its inception in ancient Greece and which has been accepted by all modern men. In this modern conception of the world the cause-and-effect nexus is fundamental. Although modern physical theories take account of chance in the chain of cause and effect in sub-atomic phenomena, our daily living, purposes and actions are not affected. In any case, modern science does not believe that the

course of nature can be interrupted or, so to speak, perforated, by supernatural powers. The same is true of the modern study of history, which does not take into account any intervention of God or of the devil or of demons in the course of history. Instead, the course of history is considered to be an unbroken whole, complete in itself, though differing from the course of nature, because there are in history spiritual powers which influence the will of persons. Granted that not all historical events are determined by physical necessity and that persons are responsible for their actions, nevertheless nothing happens without rational motivation. Otherwise, responsibility would be dissolved. Of course, there are still many superstitions among modern men, but they are exceptions or even anomalies. Modern men take it for granted that the course of nature and of history, like their own innerlife and their practical life, is nowhere interrupted by the intervention of supernatural powers."

What Bultmann is saying is that the whole world-view of ancient men was different from the world-view of modern men. They took it for granted, for instance, that any day you could expect to see a miracle. We take it for granted that any day you cannot expect to see a miracle. They took it for granted that, in the ordinary course of history, you might expect the demons or gods to enter and to alter things. Our historians do not commonly accept that at all.

Ian Henderson has pointed out that we get something of a clue if we think of sacrifice. The thought of animal sacrifice is repulsive to modern men, and that whether they are Christian or non-Christian. When animal sacrifice is offered by primitive men, then modern men, Christian and non-Christian alike, are repelled. But in the first Century, neither Christian nor non-Christian would have regarded animal sacrifice with revulsion. They may have regarded it differently from one another. The Christian would have said, "This animal sacrifice is useless because all that the animal sacrifice pre-figured has been perfectly fulfilled in Christ." But he would not have regarded the sacrifice with revulsion. He would have considered it to be quite a natural religious activity. The non-Christian would have regarded it as a useful means of dealing with sin and approaching his god. He would have agreed with the Christian that sacrifice was a natural and laudable religious activity.

It is possible to multiply examples of this kind wherein in the first century Christian and non-Christian alike share a point of view which today is rejected by Christian and non-Christian alike.

What Bultmann is trying to do, (and he does it well or badly according to your point of view), is to take the Christian message, expressed as it is in the Bible in the categories of the first century and put it into categories which are acceptable in the twentieth century. Clearly this intention is good and right and we ought to accept it.

Whether we are to say the same thing about the achievement is another matter. Just as I was able to say about Barr that I think that he forgets certain things about words, so I would think that Bultmann forgets that the ancients were perfectly able to understand the limitations of language. We ought not to think that this is a new discovery made by a twentieth century theologian. Let me illustrate. I have a little pocket diary here and there is a section in it which gives me the times when the sun rises and the sun sets. Now it would be possible, if I approached this pocket diary with the superiority of a Bultmann, to enquire who are these outmoded ancients that produced this pocket diary? The veriest schoolboy at the present time knows that the sun neither rises nor sets, and that the apparent rising and setting is caused by the rotation of the earth on its axis. To talk about the sun actually rising in the middle of the twentieth century is really hopeless.

But that would not worry the manufacturers of the pocket diary if someone pointed it out to them. Next year they would produce another little diary with this same wretched terminology in it. The truth is that twentieth century man is well able to handle that terminology. We understand perfectly well what is meant when the little diary says that on a certain day the sun rises at 6.53 a.m.. The statement is intelligible and meaningful, though the language could not be defended as scientifically accurate.

Now Bultmann, it seems to me, misses out on that with regard to first century man. The men of that day did not understand our twentieth century science, but they did understand the sense in which they used their language. They were able to express truths in words which, if taken literally, may perhaps be absurd to us. They may perhaps have been absurd to men in the first century if taken literally. But the meaning that they are trying to convey by that language is clear to them, and, if we take the trouble, it can be clear to us. I think too, that we must bear in mind that Scripture is written in pre-scientific language but that "pre-scientific" does not necessarily mean "unscientific". The two are not the same. Some will probably object to the term "pre-scientific". Here everything depends on your definition of "scientific". There is a sense in which "pre-scientific" may be applied to the Bible but there is no sense in which "unscientific" is the right term. That is quite different.

I might, I think, illustrate the attitude of the Scriptures by pointing out that if we ask such a question as, "Why is the kettle boiling?" different kinds of answers may be given. We can say, "Because the gas is alight underneath it". This leads to the question, "Why is the gas alight underneath it?" Now we can talk about the combustion induced when the lighted match was placed near the jet. And so on. We get a series of causes and effects which will go back a long way. I do not know how far you could go back if you traced it back as far as you

possibly could. But I do know that you could go for a long, long time.

But you could answer that first question in a different way altogether. Instead of saying that the kettle is boiling because the gas is alight, you could say, "The kettle is boiling because I want to make a cup of tea". And if you answer it in that sort of way, then there is not very much more to be said. You cannot go back past the person - "Why do I want a cup of tea?" "Well I do, and that's all there is to it. And because I want a cup of tea I have seen to it that the kettle is boiling."

The one answer is what you might call the scientific, it shuts you up to the world of phenomena. It introduces you to a chain of cause-and-effect which can be traced back in an unbroken line for a long, long way. The other answer brings you into the realm of personality. And once you get into the realm of personality then there is not too much you can do along the line of cause-and-effect.

Now the Bible is much more interested in answering questions in terms of personality - the Person of God and the persons of men - than it is in questions of scientific cause-and-effect. But we today very often go to the Bible with our minds full of our scientific approach, and we try to make it answer questions it is not trying to answer. It is answering the equivalent of that question about the kettle boiling in terms of my desire for a cup of tea, not in terms of what goes on when coal gas is ignited. We must always bear in mind that this is the approach of the Bible writers.

It seems that I have filled in my time and I will accordingly conclude with just one more remark, namely, that much in modern theology is not due at all to exegesis. Our chairman referred to the views of the Bishop of Woolwich. Now few would regard the views put forward in Honest to God as the result of serious exegesis of the Scripture. There is an interesting article which appeared in the Expository Times sometime after Honest to God under the heading "Honest to John". The writer took as his starting point that though the Bishop of Woolwich may or may not have been honest to God in what he wrote, he certainly was not honest to the author of the Fourth Gospel in that each time he quotes from John he fails to do justice to the meaning as derived by exegesis. I think this is a fair criticism. I do not see how the Bishop of Woolwich's book can stand up to the criticisms urged by the American theologian.

Paul Tillich has a wide influence in modern theology but I doubt whether even in his wildest moment, he would claim that what he says is based on the Bible. He thinks that there has to be a kind of correlation. Modern philosophy and the Bible between them help us to understand life. But modern philosophy seems to be just as authoritative as the Scripture in Tillich's writings. Buttmann, of course, is a very, very sceptical scholar. There is so little left of the Bible when he is finished with it that there is not much point in trying to derive any teaching from it.

anyway. And most agree that he owes at least as much to Martin Heidegger's existentialism as he does to the Scripture. Probably more. And so one could go on. Most of the leading theologians, at the present, though they write about the Bible, do not draw their essential teaching from it. They draw it elsewhere, and they use the Bible as a means of bringing out certain things which seem to them important.

DISCUSSION

Chairman -

Thank you Dr. Morris, we are indeed very grateful not only for the way in which you have in fact answered the questions that we posed to you in the beginning, but for the tools that you have given us to enable us to delve for the answers ourselves, and in this I think lies the greatest value of the address that you have given us tonight. You have given us much to think of and fortunately it is going down on tape so that we can examine it in more detail and we hope that you will be good enough to edit the transcribed version in due course, so that we can not only hear it again but read it. The meeting is now open for discussion, and I would ask Dr. Morris to continue as leader of the discussion and you will address your questions and remarks directly to him.

Q. 1 (Rev. B. Rainsford) You mentioned at the beginning that the New English Bible would not be suitable to use with a concordance. It also seems to be unsuitable for use as far as learning by heart is concerned. Could you suggest a solution to the difficulty that parents and teachers have to knowing what version to teach Scripture to their children.

A. 1 The short answer is "No".

Somebody has remarked that it is an understatement to say that at the present time we are at the cross-roads. We are at the cross-roads but it is one of those clover-leaf jobs and we are not quite sure where all the roads go to and how we are going to come out into the one that we want to get into anyway. I think that that is the way with Biblical translation at present. It is very difficult to recommend any one version with great confidence. Each version has its advantages and each its disadvantages. I am never tired of pointing out that versions made by individuals, generally speaking, tend to have the greatest brilliancies and also the most abysmal howlers. Moffatt, for instance, and Phillips, have some passages which are really tremendous. 1 Cor. 13 in the Moffatt translation I think is very difficult to beat. On the other hand, to match that you do get some awful errors. John 1:1 in the Moffatt version is in my judgment sheer mis-translation. The

Greek does not mean the Word "was divine", but the Word "was God". On committees, as you see from the Authorised Version, the Revised Version, or the Revised Standard Version, you get both ironed out. It seems that in committees when anybody comes out with something that is away off the generally accepted mark, whether outstandingly brilliant or outstandingly dull, the rest of the committee members sit on him and it does not go through. So if you are prepared to put up with the howlers for the sake of the brilliancies, by all means use J. B. Phillips, James Moffatt, Ronald Knox. If, on the other hand, you want to tread the safe path, by all means use a committee translation, the Revised Standard Version or one of the others. Another thing worth bearing in mind is that a translation may speak to your heart even when your head does not always keep up with it. I think that is a reason why the Authorised Version still keeps on going. It is capable of speaking to the hearts of people, even when they do not fully understand it. Its language is tremendous, and I think it will be used for a long, long time for that reason. For a translation which is faithful to the original but unbearably pedestrian I commend to you the Revised Version of 1881. This version is probably closest of all to a literal rendering. If, without a knowledge of Greek and Hebrew, you are trying to get the literal meaning of the original I think you will do it better with the Revised Version than any other in the market. On the other hand, its language is undoubtedly archaic and it has left many obscurities. There are passages where it is difficult to say what the Revised Version really means. I think the translators would probably retort that the reason for that is that they could not tell what it meant in the original. They are simply being faithful.

To sum up, if you want something in modern terms, I should think the Revised Standard Version is as good as is going. The New English Bible shows a lot of promise and there are some good things in it. It certainly is in language which people can understand in some places, though other places are rather curious for a twentieth century translation. I think that, taken over all I should not rate it as highly as the Revised Standard Version. So that if I had to have one modern version and no more, I should probably go for the R.S.V.. But in my judgment there is no substitute for reading it in the original.

Q. 2 (Noel Hickson) Sir, it seems to me that one of the most important things that has come out of this is your emphasis that the battle has shifted away from a battle over the question of historicity to the question as to whether we should put historicity to one side and look at some of the other questions. An awful lot of theological thinking seems from what you have said to have gone in this direction. I suspect also that some of the hopeful evangelicals feel that it is time that the battle was squarely joined over this issue. You have not said very much to us about the sort of people who are taking counter-stands and as to the sort of counter-stands that they are taking if there be any such. Could you fill us in perhaps a little bit on that side.

A. 2 I am not sure that I can. I could say this. If you take, for example, commentaries like the Tyndale Commentaries, or the New International Commentary on the New Testament (The New London Commentary on New Testament when it hits England), or William Hendriksen's "one-man-band" as he ploughs manfully on through the New Testament by himself, you will find that in all of them there is a tendency to insist on the point with which I started: we must get back to the simple, literal, grammatical meaning of the words used. We must do away with fancy attempts to read all the truths of Scripture into every single text, and let the text speak for itself. Again, in an earlier age Evangelicals tended to think that they had more of the answers than they now think. Here is a passage in Matthew which looks suspiciously like a contradiction of one in Mark, shall we say. In an earlier day I would think that many Evangelicals, would have tended to say "Of course these mean the same thing. You can see what Matthew means and, when you rightly understand him, Mark means exactly the same thing. Anybody that says anything different is really just being unnecessarily difficult."

In recent times you will not find that in Evangelical writing nearly so much. The Evangelical in our days will much more often tend to say, "This is plainly the meaning of the text in Matthew", and, "This looks to be the meaning of the text in Mark." He will perhaps go on, "I cannot say more. There may be a way of harmonizing these, or there may not be. But in any case I have no justification for trying to twist the meaning of either. If at present, they do not appear to fit in with one another, then my best plan is to interpret each according to the best light that God has given me and meanwhile to await further illumination".

The Evangelical, by and large, will be quite sure that they do fit in somehow. His doctrine of Scripture as a unified whole, as one word of God, is not affected. He does not believe in his doctrine of inspiration because he has faithfully worked through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation and come up with a good account of all the contradictions so-called, on the basis of which he says, "Since there is thus reconciliation on all these points, therefore Scripture must be inspired." That is not his procedure at all. His procedure is rather, "This is what the Lord Jesus taught about scripture. This is what the apostles taught. Therefore, though there be difficulties, this is the authentic Christian view." When he comes up against the difficulties, what he is inclined to say these days is, "I do not see my way through that difficulty. It is not a thing which causes me to overthrow the whole doctrine of inspiration but neither is it the kind of thing for which I will give an answer which in my heart-of-hearts I know to be false." I think that this kind of thing can be said about a great many modern Evangelicals. But I do not think that there is anything of an Evangelical school like, for example, a school of Form Critics or a school of "demythologizers" or a school of post-Bultmanians, which latter, of course, is the latest phenomenon to appear on the horizon.

Q. 2A (N. Hickson) In relation to this, where would people like Young and his group fit into this?

A. 2A E. J. Young is a profound scholar and a great saint of God. I count it as one of the high privileges of my time overseas, that I did get to know E. J. Young rather well. He is a very saintly man as well as being an outstanding scholar. He has a great love for the Hebrew text and a deep knowledge of the Hebrew language. And a firm conviction that when he handles the sacred text he is handling something that God has inspired. These are the ingredients that go into his exegesis. He simply then expounds the Scripture reverently with a deep concern for what the Hebrew means. I do not think he will try to go beyond what Scripture expressly says even if it means that on occasion he must finish up being ignorant of the exact significance of a certain passage. So with the whole of the Westminster group.

Q. 3 (Colin Gauld) You started off by saying that we should try to read the Scripture without imposing any preconceived pattern into it and you finished up by talking about Tillich and Bultmann who seem to take as equal authorities modern philosophy and Scripture. In what way can we in fact read Scripture without imposing any pre-conceived ideas. Are we not in fact guided by modern philosophy and modern thought? How in fact do we look at Scripture and understand what it says? Is there any Biblical philosophy, or something like this?

A. 3 Let us start by saying that you cannot read the Scripture in a vacuum. This applies to us in the twentieth century as well as those in any previous century. But let me give you a little illustration of the kind of wrong attitude we may have from an incident that happened during my time in the United States. On one occasion I was misguided enough to accept an invitation to deliver the John A. MacElwain lectures at Gordon Divinity School. The procedure is that they shut down all lectures for a week and everybody in the whole seminary has to come along and listen to the special lecturer. He delivers a lecture each morning and each afternoon. They also invite a number of other lecturers. It is quite a week. The special MacElwain lecturer sets an examination at the end of that week and marks the examination and the marks count towards the men's degrees. So that for that week there is no question but that the MacElwain lecturer has the undivided attention of the student part at any rate of his audience.

Under those circumstances it becomes imperative for the lecturer to devise an examination paper which is not going to be too difficult to mark. I was lecturing on the atonement, and one question I put down was "Give a short explanation in your own words of what is meant by the following", and I followed this with terms like "redemption", "reconciliation", "propitiation" and so on. I was highly intrigued when I got that pile of papers and began to wade through them to find how sometimes men were dominated by a single idea. One would have in his mind, shall we say,

that the essence of the atonement is that Christ paid our debt. He would say, "Redemption is the process in which Christ dies on the Cross and so paid our debt." When he came to reconciliation he would say, "We were estranged from God and there was a debt to be paid. On the Cross, Christ paid it." "Propitiation", he would assure me, "reminds us of the gulf between God and man. It was overcome because Christ paid our debt." Somebody else would put into each one of them, that Christ "bore our sin". Now this annoyed me intensely at the time because one of the things that I plugged hard, or at least I thought I had, all the week was we ought not to interpret one biblical category by another one. The very reason why Paul sometimes uses "redemption" and sometimes "reconciliation" is that these two words are quite different. Sometimes he wanted to express the one idea and sometimes he wanted to express the other. It just is not true to say that redemption is the process whereby Christ bore our sins. It is true to say that Christ redeemed us and it is also true to say that Christ bore our sins. But it is not true to say that these two are the same thing. These are two quite separate ideas, and we impoverish our understanding of Christianity if we try to turn one of them into the other.

Now what I meant by saying we should try to read the New Testament without preconception is that we should be ready to open our Bible and to let each passage speak to us for itself. When we come up against redemption we must not immediately say, "Ah, we know what that means, that means propitiation." It does not. Now, we cannot be completely emptied of preconceptions and it probably would not be a good thing if we were. If we were, we would not be in a position to speak to the men of our day. We are hopelessly immersed in the middle of the twentieth century, and so are the people to whom we must witness. The fact that we are so immersed means that we have a head-start when we try to talk to them. The difficulty about the Authorized Version is that when it is read you have the men of 1611 trying to talk to the men of 1964, and it is difficult for them. They had a different approach to life and they expressed their thoughts in different language. We need not lament over the fact that we have certain preconceptions, but at the same time we must see to it that we do not allow some one idea to dominate us so that we hold one scriptural passage to mean what it does not say, but which another passage says. It is even worse if we are dominated by ideas from outside Scripture altogether. We must let each passage speak for itself.

Q. 4 (Mrs. Bernice Hickson) I was impressed with the story about the kettle. Do you think it is the sort of thing that you can do if you are talking to children about things like Creation, say in Scripture class teaching. I am neither a theologian nor a scientist. Is this sort of thing an honest statement of what the Bible is saying in Genesis?

A. 4 Well I am, I fear, very much out of touch with Kindergarten children and I am certainly not going to lay down how you should teach Creation to kindergartners. But I will say that the approach I advocated is

honest enough. The writer of Genesis 1 is certainly not concerned to give a scientific account of the Creation in our sense of the term. How could the writer give a scientific account of something he never saw, something that nobody was on hand to witness? There must be a non-scientific element entering into the description of such a thing. I am impressed by the article by Dr. Thompson in the New Bible Dictionary on this matter of Creation. He points out that ancient man could see, for instance, the light and see how important it is. He would ask, "How is it that light is like this?" and the answer is "Because God made it so." He asks "How is it that the planets go like this?" and the answer is, "Because God made them so." And so right through the Creation story. You may perhaps feel that there is a better way to approach the Creation story than that of Dr. Thompson. But I think that he is drawing attention to an important truth, that the prime purpose which shines out of Genesis 1 is to tell us that the whole creation is how it is because God made it so. You have, it seems to me in Genesis 1 almost exactly the parallel to the boiling of the kettle.

Other parts of Scripture might be a bit more difficult to fit tidily into this particular illustration, but that one, I think is almost tailor-made for it. There is not there the equivalent of the igniting of coal gas. You have there, on the other hand, all the equivalent of "Because I want a cup of tea". It is "Because God wanted to make the light that way", "Because God wanted to make the animals that way", "Because God wanted to make man in His own image", and so on. The purpose of God is behind it, right the way through.

Q. 5 (P. Grouse) The large degree of unity between conservative scholars or Evangelicals I think is a very comforting thing but is there an equal degree of unity amongst critical scholars, say among the various Form Critics?

A. 5 No, they scrap and fight, they fight and war and devour one another.

Q. 5A Could you give us some illustrations of this?

A. 5A You blood-thirsty man! You can get a very good example from but yesterday with the controversy between Karl Barth and Emil Brunner. Barth maintained that there is no place for Natural Theology. You must derive all your theology from revelation. Brunner on the other hand maintained that while revealed religion is of course the really significant thing, there is in a certain degree a revelation in nature. He held at first that Karl Barth is not denying that. If you understand Karl Barth properly, he said in effect, you will see that this is what he is saying. But Karl Barth in reply produced a little booklet with the uncompromising title "Nein" - "No". He tore Brunner to shreds in that book. He would have nothing to do with his position.

Again, I would think that almost any theologian who stands in the line of Karl Barth today will be highly suspicious of a follower of Rudolph

Butlmann and vice versa.

Let me draw attention to something much more important. Anyone who reads Honest to God would, I think, scarcely gather the impression that, for example, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Paul Tillich are radically contradicting one another. The impression you get is that all is sweetness and light between most of the theologians that the Bishop of Woolwich cites. But Bonhoeffer is really arguing for a Christianity without religion. Tillich is a highly religious man, and it is a base libel to talk of him as anything other. Alan Richardson, discussing the thought of Paul Tillich, uses a very memorable phrase. He speaks of Tillich's "religious atheism", and both terms are important. It reminds us that there are certain unusual features about Tillich's idea of God. He may be, and is, called an atheist by some people. But there is no doubt about his being religious. All the time he is talking about man's need, man's insufficiency, man's sense of anxiety and fear and doubt and darkness and difficulty, and of the need for him to take a step of faith. This is being denied radically by Bonhoeffer. Bonhoeffer is saying that the modern secular man feels no need of God and therefore it is a mistake for an orthodox conventional Christian to preach to him the gospel, saying that this gospel will meet your need. He has no need. And so one could go on. Wherever you look there is distinction and division. Modern theologians are far from being one big happy family.

Q. 6 (P. Correy) I hope I am not being intellectually lazy but, I was wondering whether you could tell us whether there are any brief appraisals of some of the more modern theologians. Some of us find ourselves with rather a shortage of time and perhaps lacking in the equipment to read through some of these modern people such as Barth, Butlmann, Tillich, and so on to find out what they are saying and also to draw some kind of intelligent evangelical appraisal of what they have said. When I was in my undergraduate days, I remember Dr. Barton Babbage wrote a series of articles in the I.V.F. Magazine at that stage making an appraisal of various people such as Freud, and others. He first of all outlined the essential things they have to say and then gave a few lines of thought from the Christian point of view on these people's statements. The only book I have come across that does this to some extent is one by a man you mentioned a few minutes ago, Alan Richardson in his Bible in the Twentieth Century, or Bible in the Scientific Age or something. Could you give us any leanings as to whether such books are available and help in this direction?

A. 6 There is a series called "Modern Thinkers Series" published by the Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co. It deals with Tillich, Barth and others. Each thinker is dealt with in a little paperback (sort of a compromise between a book and a booklet). I think it will probably meet your need. All the booklets are written by Conservative Evangelicals with a view to explaining the thought of these scholars

for the rest of us which seems to be exactly what you are after. There are some other surveys written by more critical theologians. For instance R. H. Fuller has come out with a paperback entitled The New Testament in Current Study. He has a good deal about Bultmann and a lesser amount about lesser mortals. But this is written completely from the critical point of view. It is a very useful summary and I find it most helpful but whether it would be equally helpful to somebody who had not read a bit more of the critics I am not sure. Another book published this year is The Interpretation of the New Testament 1861 - 1961 by Bp. Stephen Neill. This is an excellent summary.

Q. 6A What do you think of Alan Richardson?

A. 6A Again he is a critical brother. He objects to the critics in certain things and goes all the way along with them in others. It also has to be borne in mind that he is a bit "churchy". He is apt to discern sacraments for instance in places where certain other people would not. He is quite a stimulating and helpful person in many ways but you have to be careful with Richardson.

Q. 7 How can the Psalms differ when you interpret them as part of the ceremony of the Temple?

A. 7 May I give you one quick example. What do the psalms mean by talking about "the righteous" and "the wicked"? Put them in cultic surroundings and Mowinckel says that "the righteous" is a technical term for the people of Israel, and "the wicked" is a technical term for the enemy. So when you come up against a cultic psalm, you have "the people of God" exulting in the destruction of their enemies or praying that God will destroy their enemies or something of the sort. If the psalm which Mowinckel sees as a cultic psalm is in fact a psalm of an individual meditating quietly before God then "the righteous" and "the wicked" will stand for those who are righteous and wicked in an ethical and religious sense. The language will have different meanings in the two cases. So with quite a number of other things.

C. 7A Wouldn't the thought be the same?

A. 7A I don't think so, no. You see if you are talking about a battle between the Israelites and the Moabites and "the wicked" means the Moabites, then that is different from the case when exactly the same words are used generally about people who are hostile to God. In the latter case the application is much much wider than simply to the Moabites. The ultimate lesson that you would draw for your own soul may be much the same, but the path to it will certainly be different. Indeed the ultimate result might well be different, too. Anyhow, like it or not, that is the kind of difference that is meant. Mowinckel and

others who see cultic phenomena in the psalms would say that many of the psalms are explicable only when you understand the kind of ceremony that went on.

Q. 8 (Dr. H. Guinness) Would this affect the 121st Psalm for instance or not? There you have an extraordinarily difficult situation, with God evidently pledging Himself to protect you from every kind of physical and mental as well as spiritual harm?

A. 8 Mowinckel takes Ps. 121 to be a cultic liturgy, a form composed of different parts expressing different emotions. He takes the bit about preservation from all evil as part of the blessing used in a Temple service: "May the Lord guard thee from all harm ... " It is uttered in the sanctuary with a view to securing protection against some physical enemy, perhaps originally the Edomites, or the Moabites. Nobody can now tell which. It would then be used, of course, as a prayer against other enemies.

Q. 9 (Dr. John Olley) A question relating to the interpretation of Scripture and a question earlier about the philosophical basis. Is it not our view now that it is the view intended by the author which is the main meaning of the Scriptures? Is not the new approach itself the result of our living in this age? If we were dealing with the Old Testament in a previous age more interest would have been placed on a typological interpretation. How much is this newer method a result of our living in this present age?

A. 9 I do not know, as I said in answer to the earlier gentleman. We are in this present age and there is no point in trying to get out of it. It may be that it is a pretty silly procedure to try and find out what the author meant by what he said, but to men of our age it seems sensible. The only thing that we can do is to act up to our best insights here. Certainly we are immersed in our age and must act accordingly. We can, I think, profitably ask what a saying like one we are discussing would have meant to a first century man, or, if it is in the Old Testament, to a man in the eighth century B.C. (or whatever the date might be). We may legitimately ask such questions and to some extent answer them. We must always bear in mind that in actual fact we are not in the first century, or in the eighth century B.C., and that any answer we can give can be only approximate. But we can trust that the Lord will lead us along that path which is most profitable for us. There is, after all, a Scripture that tells us that the Spirit will lead the people of Christ into all the truth.

Q. 10 I have heard quite a few people say that Honest to God has no earthly nor heavenly use. Would you think it has any use at all? In other words what is your opinion of it?

A. 10 I have been doing so much speaking since I came back to Australia that I have forgotten when it is I spoke to whom. But sometime recently

I took an hour on that same question. It is thus a little difficult to concentrate my view into a few minutes.

As a brief summary, I think that Honest to God is asking questions that ought to be asked but I am not at all happy with the answers given. The fact of the matter is that we live in a secular age. Men today are not much given to sitting back quietly accepting the Christian faith or to setting themselves up violently in opposition to it. They do neither. They treat it as completely irrelevant. In modern novels (e.g. those by Ernest Hemingway or John Steinbeck) Christianity is not so much as mentioned as a rule. It is not that the modern novelist thinks of Christianity as an evil force to be opposed at all cost, or that he thinks of it as something which is a power for good in the community, though perhaps not as well supported as it might be. He simply ignores it. In thinking about life Christianity can be overlooked. This is a secular age, to an extent that earlier ages were not.

Now Christians, by and large, are living in a ghetto. They are speaking to one another but they are not speaking in a way that strikes the outside world as at all relevant. The outside world is quite happy for Christians to get away in churches and sing hymns and engage in worship if they want to do that sort of thing. After all it does no one any harm and it is obviously of some interest and value to the people who do it. Let us not worry about it accordingly. But that same outside world cannot for the life of it understand what the Christians are talking about. The language of Christianity is meaningless to it.

And I think we ought to add to that, that the pursuits of the Church are so often completely trivial. If by any chance he gets himself caught up for a while in a congregation the outsider is apt to find that the whole energy of the congregation is being spent on questions like "How are we going to renovate the organ?" or, "What should we do about the young people's fellowship?" But the idea of a group of people with a burning sense of mission to the world is completely absent. Most of our churches occupy their time in things which are completely unreal, and hopelessly trivial.

It is out of this situation that I think the Bishop of Woolwich is writing. We do him a grave injustice if we do not appreciate his sincerity of purpose. I know him slightly personally, and I know him to be an honourable and an upright man. He is one who is deeply concerned that the Church is cutting no ice, and he is saying, "This is the way in which the Church must meet the challenge of today." Now I think that his solution is wrong. But I do not doubt that he is completely right to raise the question and I think that we ought to give ourselves furiously to think whether in point of fact we are operating in a ghetto and if so whether there is any way in which we can break out. It is imperative that we make the gospel real and meaningful.

I referred earlier on to Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and of course Woolwich looks back to Bonhoeffer a great deal. Bonhoeffer complains that the Christian evangelist (he does not mean the evangelist in the technical sense, the man that comes along to take a week's mission, but any man trying to convey the gospel of men of to-day) by and large, adopts a stereotyped approach. He says: "You are a sinner, you need a Saviour, you must repent of your sin, you must put your trust in Christ and then you will find that you have peace of heart with God." He employs this kind of approach to everybody. But now he comes up against modern man, and modern man in point of fact has no sense of need. He feels quite all right. He is happy. He has a good job. He earns a nice pay packet. He goes along to the golf club or whatever it is is his particular interest. His life is full and he has no sense of need. When the evangelist comes to him and says, "You are a sinner", he says, "So what?" When the evangelist says "You must repent", he says, "I don't see why". The message leaves him completely cold. Bonhoeffer is saying we must not regard evangelism as the repetition even of profound truths in the kind of language that is going to appear irrelevant to men. I like Bonhoeffer's answer to the situation even less than I like that of the Bishop of Woolwich. But at the same time when I read this kind of thing I feel horribly uncomfortable. I do not know that I have ever seriously thought what I ought to do about that situation. It is true that the heart of the gospel is expressed in words like that, and it is true that to the ordinary man of today they are quite meaningless, quite irrelevant. The ordinary approach to him is quite hopeless. This is the sort of question that this whole controversy raises.

Chairman. Dr. Morris has touched in these last few minutes upon the whole reason for the existence of this Fellowship. This is indeed the challenge that we have felt within ourselves for some years.