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CONTENTS

HISTORY AND THEOLOGY IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL Leon Morris, B.Sc., M.Th., Ph.D.	117
HAS CHRISTIANITY A VESTED INTEREST IN THE OUTCOME OF EXPERIMENTAL RESEARCH? R. E. D. Clark, M.A., Ph.D.	130
THE CHRISTIAN MISSION, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ISLAM J.W. Sweetman, D.D.	138
THE GOSPELS AND SOME RECENT DISCOVERIES <i>The First Rendle Short Memorial Lecture—2 March 1962</i> F. F. Bruce, D.D.	149
REVIEWS	168

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Faith and Thought

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EDITORIAL

The name of the late Père Teilhard de Chardin has again come into prominence; but this time through the work of a critic, not by the work of the man himself. Canon C. E. Raven has recently written an appreciation of de Chardin in a work entitled *Teilhard de Chardin: Scientist and Seer*. The conflict between science and theology which has been taken for granted by many thinkers, in both camps, has been resolved, claims Canon Raven, by a unique system of thought in de Chardin. Similar principles of emergence in religious dogma and devotion may be compared with the more apparent evolutionary pattern of development.

Some reviewers of W. James *The Christian in Politics* have suggested that this work is the most cogent treatment of the subject since Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*. How many Christian people there are, it seems, who traditionally think that politics is unfit for Christian consumption. Mr James is not convinced. For him, it is far worse, however, to disguise political programmes under the clothing of a religious belief. This has been done both within Christian environments and outside, and the result is devastating to Christianity and other religions alike.

In this number, Dr J. W. Sweetman has contributed an article which touches upon the need for the confrontation of Christianity and Islam. The closing paragraphs of this contribution will repay careful reading and thought, since they come from the pen of a recognised authority on the subject.

The Fourth Gospel has been the field of renewed enquiry of late. It is interesting to note that some of the more recent commentators on this work have repeated the suggestion that it is for interpretation, and

not historical accuracy, that we should look in the Gospel of St John. The article on *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, therefore, is a very welcome contribution from Dr Leon Morris, Warden of Tyndale House, Cambridge. The author here has given us a well-documented survey of arguments which bring back the Fourth Gospel from the rarified atmosphere of mysticism to the authoritative realm of history and fact.

The University of Bristol provided a very happy place and occasion for the inauguration of the *Rendle Short Memorial Lecture* on 2 March 1962. This Lecture, to be delivered annually, is sponsored by the Bristol Library for Biblical Research, and the first Lecture was given by Professor F. F. Bruce. This is perhaps very fitting, for not only was the President of the Victoria Institute a long friend of the late Professor Rendle Short, but the latter had been an active member of the Institute since 1920, and was Vice-President from 1937 until the year of his death. The Institute has agreed with the Trustees of this Lecture that the addresses shall be published in *Faith and Thought*. We are therefore glad to include the Inaugural Lecture in this number.

History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel

THAT the author of the Fourth Gospel was a theologian no one, I think, would doubt. That fact has been recognised ever since this gospel began to be studied. But John does not simply write theology. He tells a story. His book is a book about Jesus in which narratives and discourses are interwoven with comments of the Evangelist. What are we to say about the references to historical fact? Some suggest that there never ought to have been any question of taking the Johannine history seriously. Thus we have P. W. Schmiedel's well-known statement, 'A book which begins by declaring Jesus to be the *logos* of God and ends by representing a cohort of Roman soldiers as falling to the ground at the majesty of His appearance (18.6), and by representing 100 pounds of ointment as having been used at His embalming (19.39), ought by these facts alone to be spared such a misunderstanding of its true character, as would be implied in supposing that it meant to be a historical work.'¹ Not all, however, share this point of view. In recent discussions many have been a good deal more respectful to John's grasp of history. Most recent scholars would agree that on some points at any rate Johannine history should be accepted. But the question still remains a live one. Does John allow his history to be dominated by his theology? Granted that he makes use of certain facts, does he at the critical moment distort the picture, or even manufacture incidents, in order to bring out his theological meaning? Such questions are important and the position will bear examination.

Interpretation

It must be accepted unhesitatingly that John is not attempting to set forth an objective unbiased account of certain facts. He is a convinced believer and he is writing to set forth the saving significance of certain truths. He tells us as much himself: 'these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name' (John xx. 31). There is no question as to whether John is giving us interpretation. The question is whether his

¹ *Encyclopedia Biblica*, ii. 2542.

interpretation is a good one, and soundly based, whether he keeps it subservient to the facts, or whether he allows it to dominate the facts in the interests of buttressing up a dogmatic position.

First let us notice that, quite apart from the Johannine problem, it is often very difficult indeed to set forth 'facts' without interpretation. Usually the two go hand in hand. Indeed for the writing of history this is a necessity. A history differs from a journal or a chronicle among other things in being more selective. And a history treats what it selects in such a way as to bring out its significance. This bringing out of the significance is a necessary part of historical writing. If the facts it deals with are significant facts the absence of interpretation may be downright misleading. Thus C. H. Dodd reminds us that there are occurrences 'which can take their true place in an historical record only as they are interpreted, as, for example, the beginning of the Reformation at Wittenberg, or the fall of the Bastille, or the abdication of King Edward VIII. It is true that the element of interpretation opens the door to all the fallibilities of the human mind, but the point is that the attempt to rule out any interpretation in such cases inevitably suggests a false interpretation. The events are such that the meaning of what happened is of greater importance, historically speaking, than what happened. There are even events of outstanding historical importance in which practically nothing at all happened, in the ordinary external sense of happening. It was simply that the meaning of the whole situation changed for an individual or a group, and from that change of meaning a chain of happenings ensued. Such events were the call of the prophet Mohammed, and the conversion of Ignatius Loyola, and the mysterious inward process that made the house-painter Adolf Hitler into the hope or the terror of Europe.'¹

¹ *History and the Gospel* (London, 1938), pp. 104 f. Dodd also thinks that 'the events of history do not exist as such apart from their significance to those who experienced them, and this significance is inherent in them' (op. cit. pp. 28 f.). T. A. Roberts makes some trenchant criticisms of Dodd, and on this latter point reminds us that 'People immediately concerned with events are not always in the best position to understand the full significance of what is happening, and thus are not able to offer sound explanations' (*History and Christian Apologetic* (London, 1960), p. 89). It is true that events often have more meaning than is apparent to those who take part in them. This criticism is surely valid. But when Roberts rejects Dodd's idea of 'occurrence plus meaning' without considering the examples Dodd adduces, he is on less safe ground. The fall of the Bastille is not adequately understood if the description be limited to the actual happenings on that July day in 1789. Roberts says

Now the events of which John is writing are significant events in this sense of the term. They are events in which the significance was not obvious to all, nor apparent within a short time. Men like Pilate or Caiaphas, who were actually concerned in these events, did not understand the real meaning of what was going on. If such events are to be described at all adequately it is necessary that some element of interpretation enter into the description. It will be necessary, of course, that the interpretation be not such as to shape the facts.¹ But interpretation there must be if justice is to be done to the material.

Admitting then that the Fourth Gospel contains more than a factual account, the question that arises is not 'Can we allow an element of interpretation?' but rather 'What kind of interpretation are we faced with? Is it an interpretation that sits light to the facts or rests securely upon them?'²

The Four Gospels and History

This question is wider than one Gospel. It is increasingly recognised in modern writing that there is theology in all four Gospels. They are

'events happened in the past, and events are what they are, no more, no less. They cannot be divided by some process of division, mental or otherwise, into occurrences and meaning. An event strictly has no meaning' (p. 92). This seems contradicted by his own contentions elsewhere, e.g. his account of the significance of the Battle of Britain (pp. 89 f.).

¹ Cf. Hoskyns, 'it is illegitimate for us to suppose that we are interpreting the gospel, if we for one moment think that we have solved the problem of the Fourth Gospel by maintaining either that the Evangelist has identified his ideas with the Truth of God or his spiritual experience with the eternal life of the Spirit of God, or that he has simply equated what any observer might have seen or heard of Jesus with that which eye hath not seen nor ear heard of the glory of God' (*The Fourth Gospel* (London, 1950), pp. 17 f.).

² Cf. H. Cunliffe-Jones, 'The presentation of the ministry of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel is markedly different from that in the other three, and yet it leads to the same result. If the right way to think of the Fourth Gospel is to think of it as an interpretation rather than a simple narrative, and that the independent factual historical traditions which it may contain are to be discerned through that interpretation rather than picked out from it as plums from a cake, can we not go on from there to ask whether we agree with the interpretation, and whether that interpretation expresses something that was true of the life and death and resurrection of Jesus as it happened? If our answer is in any way positive to these questions, then it should be possible to think together what we have accepted as true of the ministry in all four Gospels' (*Studia Evangelica*, ed. K. Aland et. al. (Berlin, 1959), p. 22; this volume is henceforth referred to as *SE*).

none of them pieces of objective history, but all are written 'from faith to faith'. Their concern is to set forward the purposes of God, to show men what God has done in Christ for their salvation, and so to bring them to faith. But it is also being recognised that all four Evangelists were concerned for the facts, that they realised that Christianity is a historical religion and that the facts must be treated with respect.

There is an interesting comparison here with the apocryphal gospels spawned in the early church. These 'gospels' are not really concerned with fact though they purport to relate events. They are concerned with edification as their authors understand it, and the result is a curious hotchpotch of piety and wonder tales and superstition. The canonical Gospels are essentially different. As A. Wikgren puts it, they 'show a qualitative difference, and are by comparison set within a definite historical matrix and are redolent of the times and places which they treat. The one is clearly imaginative writing; the other might be called appreciative reporting.'¹ This last expression sums up the Gospels very beautifully. Appreciative they certainly are. But what the writers are doing is reporting, and that should not be overlooked. They never break out into expressions of praise or adoring wonder or the like. They give us sober narratives of events. We need not doubt that a selection of incidents has been made, nor that that selection has been carefully arranged. But the writers do not lose touch with the world of reality. Their feet are on the ground. They do not give way to the temptation to manufacture traditions which will fit their doctrines.²

It must also be borne in mind that the Gospels are early writings. Sometimes writers pay so much attention to the lapse of time between the occurrence of the events and the composition of the Gospels that they do not notice that this interval is not long enough for much in

¹ *SE*, p. 120.

² This seems to me to make the verdict of T. A. Roberts unduly sceptical when he says, 'there seems to be sufficient evidence to establish the fact of the existence of Jesus as a historical person, but there may be insufficient evidence to say very much more than this' (op. cit. p. 164). However, he does point out that Christianity's claim about the act of God in Jesus 'cannot be proved or disproved by the historian, using the techniques of historical criticism, for the claim goes beyond the bounds of what is within the historian's power to assert to be either true or false' (loc. cit.). But he insists that theological language 'is not historical language and is not entirely supported by appealing to historical considerations. Our main criticism of historical theologians is that all too frequently they seem unaware of this distinction' (op. cit. p. 171).

the way of development. The wonders of the apocryphal gospels took much longer to appear.¹

The Gospel

It is significant that from very early times the church thought of the four Gospels as being essentially in harmony. The manuscripts were entitled, significantly, not 'The Gospels', but 'The Gospel', and the four were differentiated by 'according to Matthew', etc.² The church proceeded from a deep-seated conviction that there is no cleavage between one and another of the four, but that they must be taken together in any attempt to understand the Christian gospel. We still need this insight.

O. Cullmann has an interesting comment on the fourfold gospel. 'Four *biographies* of the same life could not be set alongside one another as of equal value, but would have to be harmonized and reduced to a

¹ Cf. A. Wikgren, 'the lapse of time between the events and their earliest christological interpretation was so short that remembrance of the historical Jesus and his teaching would very probably be strong enough to preclude any drastic revision of the tradition in the interest of the christology at this stage' (op. cit. pp. 123 f.). Earlier he has contrasted Christianity with the religions of Egypt and Greece. 'Osiris may have been an ancient Egyptian king; Orpheus was very possibly a reformer of the Dionysiac religion. But there is nothing in the way of written records from the period concerned which remotely approaches our gospels in authenticity, and the myth has completely taken charge of what if any historical events may have been involved. It is difficult to imagine that proponents of the view that the myth is all-important, to the exclusion of the historical events, will be ready to place Christianity and these cults on the same level in this respect. If they do not, they must suppose that the christology arose from the events and sustains the same vital connection with them' (op. cit. p. 122).

² O. Cullmann thinks that at first the multiplicity of Gospels was a problem to the church: 'When the need to possess a New Testament canon alongside that of the Old Testament gradually emerged and apostolic authorship was required as the criterion for canonicity, it was inevitable that the combination of our four Gospels should give offence' (*The Early Church* (London, 1956), p. 41). But his attempt to show the 'offence' is not in my judgment particularly convincing. I see no evidence that the church did other than welcome the Gospels, perhaps hesitating a little over John. In any case Cullmann can say 'The description of the Gospels as *εὐαγγέλιον κατὰ Μαθθαῖον, κατὰ Μάρκον, κατὰ Λουκᾶν, κατὰ Ἰωάννην* which had probably become current by the middle of the second century, best does justice both to the true unity of the four Gospels and the necessity of having a number of different authors. It is a question of combining different witnesses to the one Gospel' (op. cit. p. 53).

single biography in some way or other. Four Gospels, that is, four books dealing with the content of a faith, cannot be harmonized, but require by their very nature to be set alongside one another.¹ There is more than one thing in this passage that I would disagree with, but the suggestion that the Gospels should be set side by side is valuable. It is possible to struggle vainly seeking better and better ways of harmonising difficult passages, and in general wrestling with the difficulties posed by the fact that we have four Gospels. It is better to seek to discover what may be learnt from each of the four and to rejoice in the enlarged understanding that the fourfoldness brings us.² For we need all four and would be immeasurably impoverished without any one of them.

It is possible to be taken up with the differences between the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptists. And these differences are real. We should not shut our eyes to them. But neither should we be hypnotised by them. The fact is that, unlike some modern scholars, the Church has traditionally been more impressed with the resemblances than with the differences. The Church has not worshipped two Christs, the Christ of John and the Christ of the Synoptists. It has worshipped one Christ, the Christ of the gospel, the fourfold gospel. It has acted on the assumption that, for all their obvious differences, the four Gospels are basically in harmony. In this connection H. Cunliffe-Jones has asked an interesting question: 'can we think with full integrity of mind, and without diminishing the persistent analytic study of the New Testament documents, that whatever the intimacy of the relation between the first three Gospels, and, even though we realise that it is quite impossible to compose a formal harmony between the Gospels, can we think that we have in fact for our thinking as well as for our devotion, four synoptic Gospels, because all four contribute to a common understanding of a common Lord?'³ 'Four synoptic Gospels'! It is an

¹ *Op. cit.* p. 54.

² Cunliffe-Jones quotes B. F. Westcott, 'The real harmony of the Gospels is essentially moral and not mechanical. It is not to be found in an ingenious mosaic composed of their disjointed fragments, but in the contemplation of each narrative from its proper point of view' (*SE*, p. 20).

³ *SE*, p. 24. He has earlier noted Dodd's point that the Farewell Discourses in the Fourth Gospel have a good deal of matter in common with the Synoptic Gospels and goes on, 'If this is so, then the possibility of integrating together the teaching of Jesus in all four Gospels is not so remote as it might at first sight seem. If the teaching of Jesus as given to us in the Fourth Gospel is in fact in large measure a true interpretation of the actual historic teaching of our

intriguing phrase for a valuable idea. And though the Church has never used this terminology it has always acted on the idea that underlies it.

It is important that we penetrate beneath the surface of the words to the meaning they are expressing. A. M. Hunter has pointed out that we can have a unity of idea even though the form of words may be very different. Thus he cites passages like the Synoptic reference to 'the Kingdom of God', Paul's 'being in Christ' and John's 'the Logos becoming incarnate'. 'Now, isolate each of these phrases, and observe what is likely to happen. Your study of the Kingdom of God may take you back through Judaism to the Old Testament and perhaps even (as it did Otto) to primitive Aryan religion. Your study of the Pauline formula "in Christ" may take you back to Hellenistic mysticism (as it did Deissmann). Your study of the *Logos* may take you back through Philo to Plato and the Stoics. At the end of your investigations you may be left wondering what conceivable connexion there is among them all. Yet when Jesus said, "The Kingdom of God has come upon you" (Luke x. 9) and Paul, "If any man is in Christ, there is a new creation" (2 Cor. v. 17) and John, "The *Logos* became flesh and dwelt among us" (John i. 14), they were not making utterly different and unrelated announcements; on the contrary, they were using different idioms, different categories of thought, to express their common conviction that the living God had spoken and acted through his Messiah for the salvation of his people.¹ What each of these writers is doing is saying in his own idiom that in Jesus Christ we see God's action for the salvation of all mankind. It is this breadth of vision that we need if we are to compare the Fourth Gospel with the other three. There are differences indeed, but there is not a different message and not a different Christ. John is speaking about the same Lord and the same salvation as his Synoptic confreres, and his different forms of expression should not hide this fact from us.

Next let us notice the point made by C. H. Dodd, 'I believe that the course which was taken by *Leben-Jesu-Forschung* ("The Quest of the Historical Jesus", according to the English title of the most important record of that "Quest") during the nineteenth century proves that a severe concentration on the Synoptic record, to the

Lord, then while for other purposes we need to stress the analysis of the differences between the different traditions as to the teaching of our Lord, for many theological and pastoral purposes the unity and coherence of the teaching in all four Gospels is a stress of enormous practical importance' (*SE*, p. 23).

¹ *The Unity of the New Testament* (London, 1944), pp. 14 f.

exclusion of the Johannine contribution, leads to an impoverished, a one-sided, and finally an incredible view of the facts—I mean, of the *facts*, as part of history.¹ The Synoptic Gospels do give us historical facts. But those who have concentrated exclusively on these three Gospels when they want facts have come to such extraordinary conclusions that, quite apart from virtues we see in individual passages, the Johannine contribution is essential if we are to have an adequate picture of Jesus as He was. Or, to put the same thing in another way, we must feel that it was for good reason that the Holy Spirit inspired men to write four Gospels and not three.

John's Interpretation and the Facts

Here let us notice some words of Vincent Taylor, 'What, then, are we to say of the historical value of the Fourth Gospel? Little indeed, if we will have it that the historical is the purely factual, but much if we believe that interpretation is a valid form of historical writing, and that the Evangelist's work is legitimate interpretation. That his interpretation is legitimate, as compared, say, with the fantastic developments in the Apocryphal Gospels is shown by three things: (1) our knowledge of the Synoptic sayings with which he so often begins, (2) the many points of contact between the picture of the Johannine Christ and that presented by the Synoptists, and (3) the response his interpretation has evoked throughout the centuries, so that many Christians find themselves peculiarly "at home" with John, while appreciative of the worth of the Synoptics and the Pauline Epistles as a whole. To these considerations we may add the special Johannine traditions which historians of the calibre of Goguel believe to be historical, such as the tradition concerning a pre-Galilean ministry, the extended treatment given to the Jerusalem ministry, the reference to Annas, the date of the Last Supper, and the strong emphasis laid upon the reality of the humanity of Jesus, the divine Word who became flesh. One cannot hesitate to affirm that the Fourth Gospel contributes to a fuller appreciation of Jesus and his teaching than can be gained from the Synoptic Gospels read in isolation.'²

What Taylor is stressing so strongly is that the element of interpretation which is undoubtedly present in the Fourth Gospel is no necessary hindrance to its truthfulness. John deals with facts. Let us consider

¹ *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge, 1953), p. 446.

² *The Life and Ministry of Jesus* (London, 1954), pp. 23 f.

in this connexion the picture of John the Baptist that emerges from this Gospel. The fourth Evangelist is not concerned to give us by any means a complete picture of the Baptist's activities. He sees him in one capacity only, that of a witness to Jesus. His ethical teaching, his denunciation of the 'offspring of vipers' (Luke, iii. 7), his warnings of the coming wrath, even his baptising of Jesus are all passed over in silence. He is shown consistently as bearing his witness to Jesus, that and nothing more. Here surely is a place where John may be thought of as allowing his interpretation to dominate the facts, and of letting us see the Baptist not as he was, but as he would have liked to be? Such is the conclusion of more than one exegete.¹

But now the Dead Sea scrolls have altered all that. One of the more unexpected results of the study of the scrolls is that at point after point there are contacts with John's portrait of the Baptist. Some scholars are of opinion that John the Baptist had originally been a member of the Qumran community. Others (with greater probability) feel that if this is not proven at least the most likely supposition is that he had been brought up in some such community. Whatever the explanation, it is plain enough that the Baptist was familiar with teaching of the Qumran type. Again and again John's portrait of the man and his activity is illuminated by the scrolls. There can scarcely be any doubt but that the fourth Evangelist knew the facts about the Baptist and was scrupulously careful in recording them.² J. A. T. Robinson says on this point, 'one of the most remarkable effects of the Scrolls has been the surprising vindication they appear to offer of ideas and categories attributed to John by the fourth Evangelist which recent criticism would never have allowed as remotely historical. Indeed, nothing, I prophesy, is likely to undergo so complete a reversal in the criticism of the Gospel as our estimate of its treatment of the Baptist, and therefore of the whole Judean ministry of Jesus with which it opens.

¹ P. Gardner-Smith thinks the Fourth Evangelist knew little about the Baptist. 'What is not so often recognized', he says, 'is that there is little evidence that he knew more of the John of history than what he might have learned from the vague traditions of the churches before these traditions became crystallized in the Synoptic Gospels' (*Saint John and the Synoptic Gospels* (Cambridge, 1938), p. 4). How the picture has changed since 1938!

² Cf. W. H. Brownlee, 'Almost every detail of the Baptist's teaching in both Synoptic and the Fourth Gospels has points of contact with Essene belief' (*The Scrolls and the New Testament*, ed. K. Stendahl (London, 1958), p. 52); 'The most astonishing result of all is the validation of the Fourth Gospel as an authentic source concerning the Baptist' (*ibid.*).

This treatment has almost universally been assumed to spring from purely theological motives of a polemical nature and thus to provide evidence for a very minimum of historical foundation. . . . On the contrary, I believe that the fourth Evangelist is remarkably well informed on the Baptist, because he, or the witness behind that part of his tradition, once belonged to John's movement and, like the nameless disciple of 1, 37, "heard him say this, and followed Jesus".¹ Now if on this point where he has so often and so confidently been assailed the fourth Evangelist is now seen to emerge with flying colours this gives us confidence in other passages.² The doctrinal and polemical motives are there. Few would deny it. But we are treating of the writing of no ordinary man. At the very least our author was an exceedingly able writer. He did not have to distort his facts to accomplish his doctrinal aims. He was able to take what actually happened and speak of it in such a way as to bring out its deeper meaning. John was not trying to impose a pattern on the history, but to draw attention to the pattern that emerges from the history.³

¹ *SE*, p. 345. A. Wikgren is also impressed by John the Baptist. "The enigmatic figure of John the Baptist is one which no early Christian apologist is likely to have invented and which most would like to have forgotten. Certainly he constitutes an insurmountable stumbling-block to any purely mythological interpretation of Jesus. . . . The Qumran scrolls have now also released a flood of new light upon the total background against which John and Jesus began their ministries. Whatever one may think of the bearing of this upon the question of Christian origins, the effect is nevertheless to set them both more firmly than ever within a definite historical situation, and to facilitate a more accurate appreciation and evaluation of the religious factors which constituted the milieu in which messianic thought had its most important pre-Christian development' (op. cit. p. 124).

² It is interesting to notice how opinion has changed on such a subject as the raising of Lazarus. Cf. Bishop Cassian, "The Lucan parable (16) ends with Abraham's answer to the request of the Dives (v. 31) that Lazarus might be sent in his father's house. For the liberals of the XIX century the resurrection of Lazarus in John was a fiction intended as an answer to this request. The contemporary scholars would not deny its historicity' (*SE*, p. 145). As an illustration of this W. H. Cadman in an article called "The Raising of Lazarus' (*SE*, pp. 423-434) discusses the story without casting doubts on its historicity at all. J. E. Davey raises grave doubts (op. cit. pp. 119, 126 f.), but he thinks there is some history here and that it gives the explanation of Jesus' return to Jerusalem (op. cit. p. 46).

³ C. H. Dodd sees the passion narrative as fixed in the tradition very early, and speaks of 'the absence of any such theologizing of the story as might not unreasonably have been expected, in view of its theological importance. This is especially notable in the Fourth Gospel. That work is in general deeply

It is important to notice that John writes a good deal of 'witness'. We have already had occasion to notice that he emphasises this aspect of the work of the Baptist. But he does not stop there. He thinks of the witness also of others. Altogether there are seven who bear their witness to Jesus within his pages. Most important of all is the witness of the Father (John v. 31 f. etc.), for this is the witness that carried conviction to Jesus. Our Lord is said also to have borne witness to Himself (viii. 14, 18), and His works bore witness to Him also (v. 36, x. 25). The Third Person of the Trinity bears witness to the Second (John xv. 26), and the inspired Scripture joins in this witness (John v. 39). The seventh witness is that of human witnesses of various kinds: the disciples (John xv. 27), the Samaritan woman (John iv. 39), even the multitude (John xii. 17).

This stress on witness is noteworthy. Witness is a legal word. It points to valid testimony, to that which will carry conviction in a court of law. It is incompatible with hearsay or with a garbled version of the facts produced to force a theory. The fact that John so continually appeals to confirmation by witnesses indicates that he at any rate had no notion that he was departing widely from the truth. He was setting forth what he believed to be the basic facts and he cited witnesses who could confirm this. The Synoptists have nothing like this. The confident appeal to witnesses is John's own.

In this connexion one must protest against a good deal of the method of some scholars who assume that John wrote out of the needs of the Church at the time that the Gospel was composed, and that he freely composed incidents to meet that need. Thus Cullmann understands John iv. 38 to refer not to any situation in the life of Christ, but to the later life of the Church. The words are: 'I sent you to reap that whereon ye have not laboured: others have laboured, and ye are entered into their labour.' Cullmann understands the 'others' to mean the Hellenists of Acts viii who took the Gospel to Samaria. The apostles came later and

penetrated with a distinctive theology, but if one reads its passion narrative it is difficult to find more than two or three points at which the narrative appears to have been influenced by that theology. As a whole it is singularly plain and objective' (*History and the Gospel*, pp. 83 f.). On a very small point, the doubled 'verily, verily' (against the single 'verily' of the Synoptics) J. E. Davey draws attention to Jesus' habit of repeating words as shown in the Synoptics (Matt. xxiii. 37; Luke x. 41, xiii. 34, xxii. 31) and concludes 'it seems probable that John has preserved in "verily, verily" a trick of speech of Jesus Himself (at times), which is here supported by parallel, yet quite different, cases in the Synoptic Gospels' (op. cit. p. 55).

entered into the labour of their predecessors. He maintains that John's 'aim is to show that the Christ of the Church corresponds to the Jesus of history, and to trace the direct connection between the life of Jesus and the varied expressions of Church life'.¹ So in this particular instance 'the evangelist (John iv. 33 f.) is concerned to show that this mission (i.e. that of the Hellenists to Samaria) was intended by Christ'.² In other words, though the passage purports to tell of an incident in the life of our Lord, it actually refers to no such incident but to a situation in the life of the Church. J. A. T. Robinson has subjected this to a close scrutiny in an article called 'The "Others" of John iv, 38' with the significant sub-title, 'A test of exegetical method'.³ He is able to show without much difficulty that Cullmann's thesis that there is no satisfactory historical situation in the life of Jesus to which these words can be applied is not accurate. There is the ministry of John the Baptist and his followers (and other suggestions have at times been made). The point is that when we put to the test the suggestion that John was in the habit of manufacturing incidents on which to hang his instruction for the church of the day, it is found wanting. Robinson's conclusion is worth noticing: 'It is, I believe, by taking the historical setting of St. John's narrative seriously, and not by playing ducks and drakes with it, that we shall be led to a true appreciation of his profound reverence for the history of Jesus as the indispensable and in expendable locus for the revelation of the eternal *Logos* itself.'⁴

In point of fact John was hardly in a position to manufacture his incidents and his sayings. It is agreed by nearly all students that one of his aims was to deal with opponents of a Gnostic, Docetic type who in effect denied the reality of the incarnation. That is why he carries through his emphasis on the truth that 'the Word became flesh' (John i. 14). The Docetists denied this. For them the Godhead could not defile itself with contact with sinful flesh. All here was 'seeming'. In the face of this kind of teaching John stressed the actuality of the incarnation.⁵ But he was on safe ground only so long as he kept to the facts. The moment he made use of a fabricated incident he laid himself open to the accusation that he was proceeding along the same

¹ Op. cit. p. 186.

² Op. cit. p. 192.

³ *SE*, pp. 510-515.

⁴ Op. cit. p. 515.

⁵ Cf. Hoskyns, 'his whole conscious intention is to force his readers back upon the life of Jesus in the flesh and upon His death in the flesh, as the place of understanding: he is therefore guilty of gross self-deception if he is inventing or distorting the visible likeness of Jesus to further his purpose' (op. cit. p. 117).

lines as the Docetists. If his 'incidents' did not happen outside his fertile brain then he was no different from the Docetists who denied the reality of the events of the life of Christ while sticking to the spiritual reality they saw in the stories. As Robinson says, 'it is astonishing how readily critics have assumed that our Evangelist attached the greatest importance to historicity in general and had but the lightest regard for it in particular'.¹

The subject is a large one, and in a short article it is not possible to do it justice. Much of the evidence has not even been mentioned here, and this cannot profess to be an approach to a complete survey. But I have endeavoured to draw attention to some factors which are in danger of being overlooked or minimised, and which have the effect of supporting the view that John is concerned with history just as much as with theology.

¹ Op. cit. p. 344.

R. E. D. CLARK, M.A., PH.D.

Has Christianity a Vested Interest in the Outcome of Experimental Research ?

AT one time it was generally agreed that the Bible, as the infallible word of God, taught good science as well as good theology. If it spoke of a universal flood, then it was up to geologists to explain the main features of geological formations in terms of this catastrophe; if it taught that God created life, then it was up to science to show that, however hard man might try, he would never synthesise life in a test tube; if it spoke of the sins of the fathers being visited on the children, it followed as a scientific fact that evil habits were inherited.

Today such teaching is unorthodox. In the main Christian opinion has swung to a precisely opposite point of view. To quote Alan Richardson, 'It is no longer supposed that there is a cosmology revealed in the Bible which may be either proved or disproved by scientific research'¹—and the words would doubtless be considered applicable to all branches of science.

The Bible, we are told, was not written to satisfy man's curiosity or to tell him what he can find out for himself. Christianity has no vested interest in science: it cannot by its very nature tell us if other planets are inhabited, whether the universe is large or small, whether creation started at a point in time or is continuous to the present day, whether life was created or is a development of the interplay of natural forces. All scientific theories are equally compatible or incompatible with Christianity, just because Christianity is not concerned with science.

It has a familiar ring, this swing of the intellectual pendulum. One extreme; then its opposite. But then, quite often, there comes a synthesis—there is something to be said, after all, for *both* points of view.

Can the same be true about the relation of Christianity to science, we wonder? The current view is understandable enough, for it is obvious that the Bible is no scientific textbook. But what of the earlier view. Must we dismiss it *in toto*, or can it also enshrine an element of truth?

¹ *The Bible in the Age of Science* (S.C.M., 1961), p. 29.

Let us ask quite deliberately: Can Christianity ever predict the result of a scientific investigation? The earlier view implied an answer *yes* to this question, whereas the view often accepted today requires an equally emphatic *no*.

Suppose I say that, according to a particular *scientific* theory, the result of a certain experiment will be so and so. Just what do I mean? I mean, of course, that this is what I anticipate. But I make no claim to 100 per cent certainty. I know well that, on occasion, observation has seemingly supported the false theory or has discounted the one that is true. Unexpected complications make prophecy hazardous.

In the same way, a Christian who holds the earlier view need not be over-dogmatic. His theory—the theory that the author of nature and of the Biblical revelation are one—may lead him to *expect* that scientific discovery in a certain field will follow a certain course, but dogmatism in individual instances is uncalled for. Nevertheless, as in science, it would be true to claim that on the whole the rightness of a theory will correlate with right predictions.

So the answer to a common misunderstanding is at once apparent. It is said that if a young man pins his faith on Bible science, his faith will be shattered each time predictions prove wrong—shattered, even, by such trivialities as an extra-intelligent chimpanzee or the discovery of men on Mars. But to argue thus is as fallacious as it would be to argue that Dalton's atomic theory is overthrown by the discovery that chlorine hydrate is non-stoichiometric.

It is here, perhaps, that many theologians in the past became muddled. Unwarranted dogmatism about astronomy, geology, evolution, and genetics was followed by the feeling that science had let Christianity down. So many Christians (or their successors) abandoned the view that, in principle, theology can predict the course of scientific discovery and came to their present curious viewpoint. (Curious, because if you believe that the same God who created the Universe *also* revealed Himself in the Bible, then you must surely think it odd that God was astonishingly careful never to drop the least hint that He knows more about His universe than man does. Rather like a cosmic Lewis Carroll writing a Wonderland story, but with never a hint that he knows more about mathematics than do ordinary mortals!)

So we see that the newer view would never have taken shape were it not for the fallacy that you can, by thinking, work out, with 100 per cent. certainty, what the consequences of a theory will be. This assumption is itself the relic of a bygone mode of thought, inherited

from days in which the Universe was considered to be so simple that any philosopher could plumb its depths from an armchair. The situation is different today. The universe has turned out to be of vast complexity, and one part interacts with another in a thousand subtle ways. We may always *expect* that the results of our theory will be so and so, but we can never be quite sure.

Once abandon the claim to certainty and the older theological position is seen to be sensible after all. Religion and science are clearly linked—but we cannot expect to realise a 100 per cent. tie-up all the time!

So much for the background. But let us be concrete. Can we name definite scientific findings and facts which were or might *in principle* have been predicted, at least tentatively, as a result of the study of the Bible?

It would seem that there are many such.

It is reasonable, I think, to say that the teaching of the Bible would lead us to conclude that a once-for-all creation of the universe is more likely than an all-the-time theory. Even if the latter is right, it does not follow that the first is wrong, for a process of continuous creation might well have had a start (even though, in deference to the principle of Occam's razor, that start is left out of consideration in modern mathematical formulations).

Again, the enormous size and wonder of the physical universe as revealed by astronomy are findings which seem to agree with (and are potentially predictable from) the biblical revelation. If the earth is but God's footstool; if God is really so great and wonderful that it is humiliation for Him to look down on earth and sky, if the stars are really in multitude comparable with grains of sand (though only 3,000 were visible to the naked eye before the days of telescopes), if His thoughts and ways are really unimaginably greater and more unfathomable than ours—then an unimaginably vast and wonderful universe would seem to follow as a matter of course. And it is such a universe that science has revealed in our day.

The same reasoning applies to the vast complexity and never-ending nature of science itself—quite a modern conception. Greeks, like Aristotle, thought they were well on the way to the end of knowledge: how different is the book of Job where God insists that Man's knowledge is virtually nil.

Today, the vastness of science appals us. Every scientific memoir

suggests endless further enquiries. Science has become an unending task. This again is a scientific finding that is potentially predictable on a Christian biblical basis. Indeed, did not Clerk-Maxwell make that prediction when, in his inaugural Professorial lecture at Cambridge in 1871 he referred to the prevailing notion that physicists had nothing left to do save to measure constants to another place of decimals, and retorted: 'We have no right to think thus of the unspeakable riches of creation.'

Again, the biblical teaching that the heavens are waxing old like a garment suggests that in nature there are seeds of decay—a principle recognised in the second law of thermodynamics.

Turning to the creation of life, the Bible is not very clear for the words translated *created* and *made* are imprecise and primitive. Yet it is reasonable to conclude that, in the end, it will be shown that life could not have arisen by chance and perhaps too that the process of evolution could not have taken place over its whole realm on a chance basis. On this subject the 1957 Moscow Symposium on the Origin of Life has aroused much interest, but although the promoters of the Congress were wedded to the opposite point of view, the Christian will find much in the published proceedings which seems to support creation rather than evolution. But again we must be cautious. Chemistry has revealed a quite fantastic correlation between the properties of matter and the needs of life: it is *conceivable* that the entire creative activity of God went into bringing this correlation about, rather than in subsequently arranging the atoms to form organisms. Either way, of course, there is much evidence of plan—which is just what Christian doctrine leads us to expect.

In psychology it would seem that we can predict, on a Christian basis, that properties of the human mind will be discovered which cannot be interpreted in terms of material organisation. For the Bible certainly teaches that there is a life to come and it is difficult (though not quite impossible) to accept this view if at death we cease to exist. Experimental demonstrations of extra-sensory perception by psychical researchers seem to confirm this prediction. But we must not be over-dogmatic: conceivably the soul is too subtle to be discoverable by means hitherto used. If extra-sensory perception were explained away, our Christian prediction would remain for a future generation to confirm.

While on the subject of psychical research, it would be reasonable to predict, on the basis of the Bible, that there will be discovered a new

form of matter, different from ordinary matter in very surprising ways. (Such matter is unaffected, or only very slightly affected, by gravity, can interpenetrate ordinary matter, is highly susceptible to the influence of mind but absorbs electro-magnetic radiation in the visible range.) This seems a natural inference from the fact that the Bible speaks of angels, etc., making their appearance. We are reminded also of the risen body of our Lord. Presumably we should not simply dismiss such events as miracles—miracles they were, but spiritual beings make use (presumably) of some definite kind of 'material' which, like ordinary matter, is also part of creation. Similarly, it will not do to dismiss such matter as 'spiritual', in contrast to 'material', for it can be touched (our Lord's body) and interacts with oscillating magnetic and electric fields. It would be quixotic, surely, to say that what affects our senses and interacts with well known physical forces is not material, at least in some sense.

A physicist might wish to speculate further. Since the new kind of matter can imitate ordinary matter in structure, he might reasonably predict the discovery of particles similar to protons, electrons and perhaps neutrons, but with vastly smaller masses and charges—or bound together perhaps by forces other than electrostatic.

As Christians, may we not fully expect developments along these lines? And is there not already enough to give encouragement? From the sub-atomic world there is arising a picture of vast complexity in which many new and unfamiliar forms of matter seem possible—the so-called *anti-matter* being the best known. The discovery of the neutrino—postulated many years ago but only detected recently—reveals how difficult and elusive particles with small or zero mass may be. Neutrino—made atoms might one day emerge on the scientific horizon—and what then?

Again, the geophysicist can hardly read the descriptions of the early Earth in Genesis and Job 38 without a feeling that science has verified the statements made in a remarkable way. Present views demand that the ocean came from the rocks in which it was once dissolved—'it burst forth from the womb' is an apt metaphor. It left the earth in the form of steam, so that there was darkness before the ocean condensed, there was great turmoil ('proud waves') in the waters; in the period of condensation sun and moon eventually peeped through the mists and there came a time when the ocean could no longer sweep over the continents—the bounds of the ocean being set. All these details are clearly stated. Potentially Christians could have successfully predicted

(indeed, sometimes they did) the course of scientific discovery regarding the early history of the earth.

Turning to ethnology, the biblical insistence that the sins of the fathers are visited 'even upon the third and fourth generation' might reasonably lead to the scientific prediction that, when sins have become prevalent in a society, there ought to be an observable effect after this lapse of time. Unwin's researches,¹ which covered an investigation of all the cultures for which data were available, show that this is indeed the case. After moral standards have lapsed a culture remains little altered for about a century but then, unless there has been a reform, the standard achieved falls to a lower level.

When we turn from the more direct and detailed statements of the Bible to those of a relatively secondary nature, large numbers of possibilities arise, but uncontrolled speculation and the uncertainties of exegesis come increasingly to the fore.

One difficulty is that we cannot always be certain how far popular proverbs, sayings and beliefs were incidentally made use of for the purpose of religious teaching. Just as today we speak of an ostrich-like behaviour without believing that, as a matter of natural history, ostriches put their heads in the sand to avoid unwelcome sights, so, it may be, Jesus spoke of disciples being wise as serpents without implying that serpents are wise. Similarly the Psalmist's reference to a poly-headed dragon in the wilderness doubtless refers to Egypt and does not imply the existence of an unknown biological species. We use similar expressions today (e.g. a two-faced person has not, anatomically speaking, two faces!). Given perversity or lack of knowledge it is possible to build a quite fantastic scientific picture from a collection of biblical texts—a foolish historian a thousand years hence might do the same on the basis of the language *we* use.

In this connexion we must not forget that biblical exegesis and secular knowledge (including science) must always mutually interact upon one another. Biblical allusions to facts will be difficult to understand if we are ignorant of the facts referred to: quite often the meanings of words can only be determined by appeal to non-biblical sources.

In illustration, the word translated 'firmament' in Genesis may puzzle us. Scholars tell us that the original meaning is connected with a verb which means to beat out thin, as for example in beating out

¹J. D. Unwin, *Sex and Culture* (Oxford, 1934).

copper to form a bowl. But pure etymology is not very helpful, for it does not tell us where to put the stress. A thing beaten out is of necessity *solid*, for we cannot beat out air or water. On this basis 'firmament clearly refers to the idea that the heavens are a solid vault with windows through which the rain passes'.¹ Or the stress may be put upon the idea of *expanse*—a large vessel is made from a small lump of copper, a *large* area is covered by a scrap of gold beaten out into leaf or foil. The open visible expanse of heaven through which the birds fly (Gen. i. 20) would then be the meaning; 'the firmament of heaven is simply the expanse of the sky'.¹ Either view makes sense, the first giving us a picture of the universe like that held by the ancient Babylonians, whereas the second view is quite concordant with science—for as the waters condensed, an expanse of clear atmosphere must suddenly have formed between the oceans below and the waters (clouds) above. In view of the close correspondence between the scientific picture and the general biblical picture, it would seem reasonable to adopt the latter interpretation. It was the tragic mistake of the sixth-century Egyptian monk Cosmas Indicopleustes that he sought to interpret the Bible without reference to the best scientific opinion of his day, with the result that his work now seems pathetic and amusing.

There is danger, of course, in such an approach. If we reinterpret the Bible so as to bring it into line with science, we may destroy the evidence that agreement with science really exists. We must first be certain, then, that without such reinterpretation the agreement is there, certain that we are on the right track. But if the foundation is sure, it is right to build upon it.

We demand no special treatment for the Bible here. We treat all old documents in the same way. There is, for example, a passage in Aristotle's *Generation of Animals* concerning lead ore which, we are told, increases in bulk and becomes thick, coherent and white when *pneuma* (spirit, or air) gets into it. The passage was unintelligible to classical scholars (who ever saw a lump of galena behave in so odd a fashion?) until the method of ore-dressing known as flotation was rediscovered in our own day. Now we recognise Aristotle's description as sensible and accurate. Again, how easy it would be to dismiss Virgil's story of how, at the destruction of Troy, the head of Aeneas became bathed in

¹ These two quotations, both recent, are taken from eminent British professors of theology!

flame as mere mythology. But interpreting the light as St Elmo's fire and remembering that a flash of lightning followed the event, our respect for the historicity of the story is increased. No doubt thousands of like instances could be cited.

To summarise our conclusions, the evidence shows that theology cannot be simply divorced from scientific results. The Christian definitely has a stake in the results of the research laboratory. He may rightly claim that much modern scientific development confirms his belief, in the sense that results are such as he would expect if his faith were true. If, on rare occasions, and often for short periods in history only, it may seem to be otherwise in some isolated field of endeavour, then there is no cause for alarm. No theory predicts all the right results all the time. But considered as a whole, the Christian (or Judaeo-Christian) faith is surely remarkable in its predictive power even at the purely mundane scientific level. And this is a wonderful fact which can only serve to strengthen faith in those who view it rationally.

We may agree, of course, that Christians in the past often overstated their case by virtually telling scientists what it was their business to discover, and that a reaction was overdue. But the older view was not wholly false. It would seem sensible to accept the idea that God often revealed—or at least alluded to—scientific facts which were unknown to man at the time, but that nevertheless *we* must be extremely cautious in our interpretations of these revelations. Indeed, we are more likely to recognise the import of the allusions when science has advanced the requisite degree than to understand them out of due season. But, despite caution, we must not refuse to recognise them for fear lest by so doing, we shall force our interpretations of the Bible into pre-conceived grooves of thought.

J. W. SWEETMAN, D.D.

The Christian Mission, with Special Reference to Islam

I

CONSIDERING that the Christian Mission is approaching its two-thousandth birthday, it exhibits a distinct vitality. What change of circumstances it has witnessed, what pressures it has endured, to what adaptations it has been influenced! With the long record of its history before us, in spite of periods documented with complete inadequacy, it is hard to imagine any entirely new contingencies which could arise for which past experience has not some guidance to offer.

Possessed by an exalting enthusiasm and passion for the words, works and personality of Jesus Christ as author and embodiment of a divine revelation, His first disciples witnessed to the power of His Spirit and proclaimed in ever-widening outreaches the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. Materially poor and insignificant, sometimes persecuted and forced underground, leaving monuments in the catacombs, yet confidently 'appealing to Caesar' in spite of the risks involved and infiltrating one of the mightiest empires the world has known, they persevered through good and evil report until they were recognised as the licit religion of that Empire and embarked upon the labours of centuries of gradual assimilation as *lex* and earthly dominion. In spite of the realisation of the dyarchy in human affairs and always longing for the subordination of all power and authority to God, the church sometimes disregarded the persuasion of men's minds and fell into an inferior but benevolently intended coercion, to the ultimate dispraise of Christian freedom and the spiritual autonomy of the individual. It exhibited and still exhibits the ineluctible dualism of the divine-human society. It certainly had a divine treasure, but all too surely showed that it had this treasure in earthen vessels. As it was human it was fallible, but as it was divine it pressed on with emancipating and redemptive power, self-condemning, penitent before God and humbly submitting to divine judgment upon itself, in spite of all waywardness seeking less its own self-justification than the justification of God.

Thus the Christian Mission may be considered in the rarified atmosphere of theological disquisition, in which are sought out the ultimate

principles of the divine action among men, but also as it is unfolded on the stage of history as human response. Upon the face of its earthly progress can be traced human effort, the record of situations which have been empirically confronted, the wounds it has sustained in its way-faring, its temporary limitations, its halts and its failures in faith and vision; and yet through all it has continued to cling to a conviction that even thus through real men, agonising and striving for their own salvation, the reality and efficacy of divine grace was being manifested in redemptive activity of which they knew themselves in need equally with those to whom they ministered. From the inworking of faith in their own lives they gathered increasing confidence that the divine grace would work outward into the masses of the needy world. The changes of the centuries have not diminished that conviction.

The Gospel which the Christian Mission was to proclaim was in the first instance the proclamation of grace and a testimony to the facts of the life, person, teaching and passion of Jesus of Nazareth, but was also a witness to experiences associated with the impact of those events upon people who were in His fellowship during His earthly life or by the power of His Spirit had come to know and believe something which had transforming power in their lives. Institutions and theologies were derivative; primary was the new life which was Christ's gift. 'I came that they might have life and might have it more abundantly.' One may therefore say that the history of divine events, and of men's apprehension of the divine truth and power which those events carried, is the primary content of the Christian Gospel. 'God was in Christ Jesus reconciling the world unto himself.'

II

But the apprehension is by fallible men. And as in the apprehension so also in the proclamation. In prosecution of the mission aiming at the stirring of conscience in the course of which self-rebuke was never intentionally absent, for Christ's denunciations of self-righteousness could not suffer any such complacency to last long, the missionary exercised a diagnostic and critical function which did not always meet with the approval of those towards whom it was directed. Great men outside Christendom like Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi, though themselves not least among the propagators of world-cults on a quite remarkable scale, now and again complained of the arrogance and censoriousness of missionaries. 'Let us have no preaching. Christ

did not preach himself or any dogma' once wrote Rabindranath. But this did not prevent either of them from loving C. F. Andrews and appreciating his spiritual qualities. It may be that these critics observed some traces of professionalism among missionaries, especially when in the process of time they were clearly recognised as the agents of highly organised societies. But it was rather unrealistic to call for no preaching from those whose all-absorbing obedience was to the command 'Go and preach'. This is an example of the *skandalon* of which Christ warned his disciples.

This is one aspect, the human aspect, the hazard of human misunderstanding illustrated by the human vicissitudes, grave and gay, glorious and deplorable in the annals of the progress of the Christian Church. If one considers the Christian Mission to be part of the adventure of human communication, it will not be exempt from the deficiencies which mark fallible human action. In communication at any level there must be distinguished the substantial truth which is to be communicated and the faltering idiom in which it is sought to convey the truth. The success of the venture depends to some extent on the efficiency of the communicator and the goodwill of the responding party in receiving the communication. Clumsiness and misunderstanding too easily arise from a variety of causes, and so what is intended to be all light and love does not emerge as bright and loving as could be wished. Lack of humility can be exhibited both by communicator and respondent. Some people think it an insult that they should be thought to be in need of instruction, but it seems a mark of petulance for anyone to be irritated at the offer of good news, if it could be seen in that light. True! Men are not always wise, tactful or loving when they seek to persuade their fellows, and the results of their blunders are often almost disastrous.

Sometimes pride of race or nationality is a hindrance to both the giving and the receiving of the Gospel. Extraneous matters are allowed to influence the situation too much. Political rivalries and jealousies prejudice the situation, as if there should be respect of persons in the sharing of those things which should be the common enjoyment of all men. Can there really be foreignness in things of the spirit? So far as the Christian Mission is concerned there is abundant evidence that great evangelists have conceived their mission in the widest terms. Francis of Assisi is a portent for the revival of the home church of his time, but he still penetrates to the heart of the Muslim army on a mission of peace. Wesley translates his urgent call into missionary work among

the Indians of Georgia, but carries it on among the miners of Kingswood and the mobs of Wednesbury. The chaplains attached to European military or civil groups abroad inevitably extend their service to the nationals of these lands; like the saintly Henry Martyn, chaplain to the East India Company and translator of the New Testament into Urdu and Persian. Whether 'undistinguishing regard' cast on Adam's race has for some an Arminian nuance, Charles Wesley's expression is yet in harmony with the inner convictions of those dedicated to the wider service of mankind like William Carey and his fellow missionaries, and the net is cast wide in the interests of 'completing the number of the elect and hastening the kingdom'. Fundamentally the Christian missionary cannot be nicely discriminating. It would be hard for him to exclude anyone without prejudice to what he understands to be a universal message. A gospel not for all is for no one at all; otherwise there could always be the fear that one was one of the exceptions.

Unintentionally there may arise fear lest a mission should be a threat to disrupt the solidarity of a community, and then the Christian Mission is looked upon as a kind of 'fifth column' menacing the integrity of a state. There are many illustrations of this point in the annals of Christian missions. There is evidence from as early as the seventh century that missionaries to China sought certificates of legality for the religion they were seeking to spread. In the Tang Dynasty an imperial edict declared Christianity to be a legal religion after the close examination of translations of Christian documents. Intense interest was expressed in the pacific virtues of the Christians. Indeed, in mediæval times missions had little to differentiate them from embassies in the mode of conducting their affairs. The Jesuits were introduced into the courts of the Mogul Emperor and Peking. With the Holy Roman Empire, Christianity had become as *lex* the enforceable way of life backed by the power of the empire and acting in conjunction with the secular authority. The way a statesman like the Cardinal Nicholas de Cusa faces the position is clear from his *De Pace Fidei* wherein he outlines a *modus vivendi* between peoples professing various religions. Perhaps to many Indians the Christian evangelisation of the depressed classes, particularly by the mass movements, may have appeared as a threat of disruption to the established order of society. Political alarm was caused and nationalists were aroused to opposition to Christian missions in spite of the good service they rendered to the community at large. Illustrations such as these could be multiplied and show how

the Christian Mission could become involved in the complex of human affairs and concerns other than the purely religious, and the course of events affected in one way and another. To some fervent nationalists missionaries incurred the odium of 'colonialism', and conversion was regarded as disloyalty to one's culture and one's country. There can be no doubt that at a certain level there was much which could be blamed as mere proselytisation, but it should be remembered also in this regard that Christ sternly rebuked proselytisers. To alienate men from one group and attach them to another by a conversion which is simply a change of label is most reprehensible.

III

It is when we come to events at the rise of Islam that we see how the human factors really external to the sphere of pure religion, and not concerned with the healing and strengthening of the human spirit, assumed a decisive dominance. The contempt with which their Arab mercenaries were treated by the Byzantine overlords, and the failure of the Church of the Mediterranean littoral to take all the opportunities which the dispersion of Arabs throughout Asia Minor and North Africa offered for dedicated service for the unprivileged, resulted in the day of Arab resurgence in the birth of a protestant Islam. We have evidence from the early chronicles how religion had become a pawn in the schemes of imperial rivalry. How little the people of the day could regard religion as a matter of purely spiritual and personal choice, and voluntary response is illustrated for us from a story in the *Annals of Agapius*, the early Christian Arabic writer (tenth century A.D.). The people of the Christian metropolitan city of Edessa were on the borders of land often disputed between Persia and Byzantium and at this particular time the Persians were in possession. A disgruntled doctor brought it to the attention of the Persian court that the Christians of Edessa were adherents of the Malkite sect, the established Byzantine Church, which was under Muhammad's contemporary Heraclius, the Byzantine Emperor. This, he considered, was undesirable and so he advised the Persian ruler to convert them to either the Jacobite or the Nestorian sects, Christian non-conformists under the patronage of Persia. The order went forth, but a short time afterwards Heraclius reconquered the city and reconverted the inhabitants to the Malkite sect. Is it surprising, therefore, that the newly rising Arab power should, in imitation of the political precedent, come to regard

distinctness in religion as a *sine qua non* in its new order? A proclamation, perhaps erroneously attributed to Muhammad himself, but nevertheless indicating the approved practice, is extant from the earliest days of the Islamic expansion, calling upon the Byzantine ruler in Alexandria to yield up his authority and accept the Muslim creed of the Unity of God.

From these early days, therefore, the Islamic faith became notoriously 'rebellious' by its actions in the political field, quite apart from the conspicuous ambiguities of the Qur'ān in the description of Christian belief. It may be that Semitic reactions to the Greeks have also to be included in the analysis of forces at work to sever Arab from Byzantine. The hesitations in the expressed judgments of the Qur'ān bear witness to the way in which the Prophet's mind was working. At first we read: 'Thou shalt certainly find of them nearest in love to the believers those who say, "We are Christians" (Sura v. 85), but later the Sword Verse is revealed, and 'Fight those who believe not, such men of those given the Scripture (Jews and Christians) as do not practise the religion of truth' (Sura ix. 29). Distinctive religious belief here becomes a sort of hall-mark of genuine political loyalty. But when a Christian today complains that 'Islam' is more the badge of a group solidarity than of a religious conviction, even if his judgment is true, he should recognise how much the stage of history was set at the rise of Islam to bring this about. With an historical background such as this the Christian Church must in proper proportion acknowledge its own responsibility for action of old, which creates subsequent difficulties that have arisen in the relations between Islam and Christianity.

No nation approaches another in a diplomatic mission with a *tabula rasa*. History must always condition the mission, giving it more or less chance of success, preparing for or prejudicing the situation. If one could wipe the slate clean of all records one could perhaps begin *de novo* to assess the position on its merits. When history is prejudicial a new spirit is a *sine qua non*, and it is always best to face the situation frankly and not seek to hoodwink the present generation by a re-writing of history to suit the new conditions. Decisions taken blindly or under deception can in the end turn out disastrous.

What is true on the political plane is also true in the case of the relations between Islam and Christianity, and not least because the political estrangement has from first to last had such a profound influence. Initially, Christianity was in the privileged position *vis à vis* Islam and upon her must fall the major responsibility for the schism

and misunderstanding which ensued, although the sole responsibility is not hers. But as a consequence one may consider that Christianity cannot approach Islam in a self-righteous and patronising spirit, but rather with contrition for her initial share in the misunderstandings at the rise of Islam. Too often the Christian Church is to be condemned because it is not Christian enough. If sometimes one considers that there is a one-sided judgment or a dual standard, it should be remembered that it is ultimately encouraging to think that Christians are judged by the unbelieving by Christian standards, because this gives promise that it will be the Christian standards which will ultimately prevail.

If the Christian Church had not been so preoccupied with the defence of its preserves and had shewn the out-reaching missionary compassion and dedication to the service of the unprivileged to which it later awoke, what a different tale there would have been to tell. Need Muhammad have had such a garbled and inadequate account of Christian belief if he had had the New Testament available in some way for his instruction in his own tongue? Not that one can accuse the Christians of that day and age of being guilty because they had not a literate public and the power to broadcast literature in the present-day manner. That would have been as foolish as to quarrel with the ancient Britons for not using telephones. But even allowing for the limitations of the day and the necessity for most communication to take place by word of mouth, it still should have been possible that a more fully instructed Church could have risen above the apocryphal inanities of which the Qur'an gives evidence. The opportunity ought to have been seized to instruct those large Arab groups already nominally Christian, like the Ghassanids. And today the lesson should be learned that an uninstructed Church exposes the Christian witness to many dangers.

When we review the legacy of history it is very admonitory and reveals how a rival dogmatism can be brought into being which causes deep ideological rifts hard to surmount. There has been a gradually widening gulf, a gradual divergence. If we credit the descriptions of Muslim sects given by Al Baghdadi and Shahrastani, it is obvious that there was within Islam itself, until its orthodoxy was hardened into the monolithic structure it later exhibited, a great variety of opinion. Milder and less antagonistic influences might have prevailed to bring Islam and Christianity closer together. Indeed it is remarkable that there is still left so much in the common stock which can freely be

claimed as essential to the two religions: Creative Might, merciful and compassionate, exercising providence, sternly rebuking unrighteousness and summoning men to a new life and divine forgiveness, communicating His will through prophets and scriptures, among which it gives a high place to Jewish and Christian Scripture and a most exalted station to Jesus Christ, the Word of God, and 'a Spirit from the Lord', born of a Virgin, exalted to heaven and coming again in an eschatological mission. The Nativity assumes a special place in Muslim thought, and it may be recalled how Al Ghazzali is movingly described as experiencing an ecstasy in the Dome of the Rock when he observed there that relic of the childhood of Christ, the Cradle of Isa.

It is now quite clear that Islam strongly protests against the very data on which Christian faith is founded. The Nativity may be approved, but not the Word made flesh. The translation to the heavens may be stoutly maintained, but not the resurrection after the experience of death. The Qur'an refers to the crucifixion ambiguously, but now dogmatically the Muslim, whether of orthodox or Ahmadi persuasion, denies the crucifixion. And what is thus denied is not to be regarded as a scepticism about details which are of little importance and not a revision of history, but of things which the Christian considers to be fundamental to his faith. They are not necessarily the precisely formulated and credally expounded theological articles but the very warp and woof of the New Testament version of the *Gospel*, the good news of the Divine involvement in the human predicament, the nature of the universe, the agape-love of God, His self-giving and His redemptive work. To reject these, the Christian feels, would be to reject the record, consider it unworthy of credence, present another substituted documentary authority for different events which do not bear the same significance and which claims authority as a counter-revelation.

The primary requirement for the Christian is not to make Christianity more acceptable to Muslims but that faith should speak to faith. Not that an irenicon should be produced in which doubt speaks to doubt and lays aside this and that because it may not be so. Let faith speak to faith, and the spirit of man under the operation of the Spirit of God will come to know of the doctrine whether it be of God. We shall not edify one another by whittling away our strongest and most compelling convictions. We realise that the mistakes of the early days were not the only ones. Historically we may be sure that the divergence of thought was not so great at first as to constitute a dogmatic barrier, but contributed to by both parties; there was a curtain of restraint and

a dumb spirit was cast on both parties so that they were not on speaking terms. The absurd ideas which sprang up in Christendom such as the fabrication of the Muslim's worship of the idol of Muhammad—a fantastic misrepresentation of Muslim belief, the creation of the mental image of Islam as the Enemy-in-Chief, which made the Crusades possible—whether the provocation came from the Muslim doctrine of Jihad or not; the picture of Islam as the repository of all heresies; all this could hardly be changed into a more truly Christian, forgiving, reconciling and redemptively devoted attitude and activity, except under the inspiration humbly and contritely received of the newly discerned loving spirit of Christ, as so clearly at work in Peter the Venerable and Raymund Lull.

But since the consolidation of dogmatic blocs has been achieved and preconceptions have prevailed so long, and seemingly irreconcilable loyalties have been created, it cannot be a light task for the healing of divine grace to bring about a new fellowship and mutual service. Even if one side were willing to give would the other consider itself obliged to take? To those who are most desirous of seeing a new freedom of interchange of service and a more satisfactory achievement of communication it seems fatal to hope for proper communication so long as dogmatic barriers are opposed to the exposition of any individual or community's 'apologia' for its life, faith and thought. Saddest of all when it seems that a fear arises lest some lack of prestige should be the result if frank exchange is promoted.

IV

The Christian missionary to Islam has the strongest kind of conviction, confirmed often during years of intercourse and friendship with Muslims, that much which is rejected by Islam is rejected because it is not understood and not interpreted in the right way. He feels that if he could only persuade his Muslim friends to a new point of view of the facts, antagonisms could be lessened and a fruitful dialogue ensue, profitable all round. While too much could be claimed for a book like *The City of Wrong* and its implications wrongly assessed as concession to the Christian view of Good Friday, the perception of values which the book reveals is most important. Similarly in other books by sincere Muslims the softening of the views of harsh omnipotence for the milder aspect of divine love is to be welcomed. These might indicate a willingness to mitigate harsh antagonisms and to

embark on fruitful dialogue. The recent Colloquium in the United States, the conversations between Muslim and Dominican doctors in Cairo, the promotion of dialogue which the Anglican Church has made possible through Doctor Kenneth Cragg in many centres in the near and middle East, and any degree of openness and readiness to listen as well as speak are very welcome. Whether this must always be left to the few, to eccentric individuals, or to small groups, or whether the whole of Christianity can speak with a united voice about the things which belong to its peace and its salvation is a question we often ask ourselves. So much that has been done by individual Christians has been lost in obscurity. We remember how Martin Luther deplored the fact that the work of Ricoldo da Monte di Croce's work on Islam and the Qur'ān had remained unknown for 200 years.

Muslims have been addressed at great labour and with great ability without their knowing anything about it. The books which have been written have been confined to Christian circles and have at last died away into a Christian soliloquy. One wonders whether Muslims of a former generation, or even of the present age, ever had any idea that St Thomas Aquinas wrote his *Summa contra Gentiles* directly under the necessity of making a theological approach to Islam.

Now there remains to ask how shall we find a wider platform to hear what each other says. Communicate we must. We shall die if we go on talking to ourselves, even if we talk *about* one another. And here a more cogent and penetrating question arises which has already been touched upon above. Do we speak out of conviction to conviction? Anything else will be fruitless. Can Muslims and Christians only come to the point of valuable intercommunication when they have sacrificed all that is specially distinctive of their faith? Must both seek out the lowest common denominator of their thought so as to avoid offence? If this is so, how sterile the result! That there is something distinctive to communicate is the very life of the interchange, and without it what new thing are we to set our minds and tongues to? It may be objected that assured faith and the quest for truth are contradictory. Thus the protagonists wrap themselves in their own assurance and remain impervious to the new explorations of thought which lie before them. Deep conviction can be consistent with the acknowledgement of something still to learn, and the possibility of the cross-fertilisation of ideas should always be recognised. We cannot stand permanently poised hurling rival authorities at one another.

It is not true that in a very real sense we are all in quest? Should we resent the imputation even as Christians that we are not? 'Now I have found the ground wherein sure my soul's anchor may remain.' Are we not 'Comprehensors' and not 'Viators'? Having comprehended that which is presented to him by God in fullest measure, the Christian is still *in via*. 'Not that I have already attained or am already made perfect, but I press on.' To hold and to testify that we have received a perfect revelation does not mean the same thing as to be perfect recipients of it. God has still new discoveries for us to make. We have not yet attained to an all-inclusive (or should it perhaps be all-exclusive?) interpretation of God's revelation. Assurance must be accompanied with humility if we are to enter really into dialogue with people of other faiths and alien convictions. If we are complete and lack nothing, what can contribute to our store? Let faith speak to faith since we have this treasure in earthen vessels. This seems to be the truly Christian attitude, the attitude best befitting those who consider their highest calling to be the communication of a Gospel of reconciliation and redemptive love, and in this we are in no wise disloyal to the truth we have apprehended, but are held so securely by our faith that we can venture into the other man's world with confidence.

F. F. BRUCE, D.D.

The Gospels and Some Recent Discoveries *

It may well seem strange that the first of a series of lectures in memory of a distinguished surgeon should deal with a subject in the field of biblical criticism and archaeology. It is not so strange that a lecture in this field should be sponsored by the Bristol Library for Biblical Research. But why should an institution which aims at the furtherance of biblical research sponsor this 'Rendle Short Memorial Lecture'?

There is, I believe, another lectureship established in memory of Professor Rendle Short, one which deals with subjects within the range of his own professional interests. But some of his friends in this city have decided that his memory ought further to be honoured by a series of lectures not limited to medical or surgical themes. And let me say at once that I regard it as a high privilege to be invited to deliver the first of these lectures, for not only did I value the friendship of Professor Rendle Short, but I learned to respect his independent and penetrating way of thinking and expressing himself on biblical subjects.

From time to time he was kind enough to spare a few moments from an exceedingly busy life to write to me on some of these subjects. The criticism of the Gospels, for example, interested him greatly, and his studies in this field led him to some quite definite conclusions of his own. Instead of a two-source or a four-source hypothesis of Synoptic origins he preferred a multiple-source hypothesis. In a letter dated 6 December, 1942, he wrote to me as follows:

I have never seen a convincing reply to Westcott's arguments for the oral theory, and, especially, his point that there is more 'word-for-word' accord in the narrative of the sermons than of the incidents. The variations in arrangement of the incidents in the Synoptists fit an oral source better than a *long* written source. I have seen the story of the healing of the sick of the palsy, where the English wording is so similar in three accounts, with the characteristic parenthesis 'he saith unto the sick of the palsy', quoted as proof positive of a written source; to me it proves the opposite,

* The First Rendle Short Memorial Lecture, sponsored by The Bristol Library for Biblical Research. Delivered in the University of Bristol on 2 March 1962.

because the three Greek texts contain many little verbal variations. . . . I think . . . that Luke i. 1-4 almost proves that Luke knew of earlier unsatisfactory documents. My present view is that these were unsatisfactory because they were *multiple* and *fragmentary* and *brief*, probably in Aramaic (Torrey half convinces me of this; what say you?), and that the substance of the Gospels is stereotyped oral tradition, embodying, like pebbles in a conglomerate, short sections of written narrative or sermon-recollections. In John, the pebbles are few or absent.

From these words it will be seen that he remained unconvinced by one or two of the most 'assured results' of modern Synoptic criticism; but he had studied the data for himself and formed his conclusions without being influenced by irrelevant presuppositions.

A well-known educationist of our day has tried to account for the apparent paradox that men with a scientific training, when they are devout Christians, tend to be obscurantist in their approach to the Bible. Whatever may be said about this 'paradox', it may confidently be affirmed that Rendle Short was far from providing an example of it. Not only did he study the Scriptures intelligently in Hebrew and Greek but, firmly based as his own faith was, he vigorously contested the view 'that faith ought not to be supported by human learning or apologetics'. On the contrary, he wrote (I quote from a letter of 13 March, 1943):

I think that those Christian workers who are able should endeavour to protect enquirers, and young Christians, from the unfounded notion that our faith must be believed in the teeth of proved facts to the contrary. Faith will be unstable, and for many persons impossible, if we cannot say that 'we have not followed cunningly devised fables'.

And he certainly carried his convictions into practice, by writing articles and books calculated to show University students and other thinking young people who were not theological specialists that the Christian faith rests on something much more secure than 'cunningly devised fables'. The firm basis of his own faith was always made plain in his writings—an intelligent and wholehearted commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour—and he reckoned no apologetic sufficient which did not bring readers or hearers face to face with the personal challenge of Christ.

It would be difficult to estimate how many people had their faith confirmed at a spiritual epoch in their lives through reading or hearing

Rendle Short. Students of theology as well as others are included in their ranks. I have even had him quoted against me in essays and examination answers written by students of my own. All that I will say on this point is that no teacher of surgery is ever likely to have any dictum of mine quoted against him by a student of his!

The title 'Recent Discoveries and the Gospels' is thus one right within Rendle Short's keenest interests. By 'recent discoveries' I do not mean more incidental discoveries like the discovery in June 1961 at Palestinian Caesarea of a fragmentary Latin inscription in which Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea, dedicates a building in honour of the Emperor Tiberius—the first known occurrence of Pilate's name in any ancient inscription. I have in mind rather certain discoveries which underline the question of the total significance of the New Testament gospel. I am concerned in the main with two bodies of ancient literature which have come to light within the past twenty years in the Near East—one in the Nile valley and the other in the wilderness of Judea. The discoveries in Egypt were made before those in Palestine, although they were later in becoming public knowledge. These bodies of literature are the Nag Hammadi papyri and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

You may well think that the light thrown upon the Gospels by both these discoveries, and especially by the former, is disappointingly meagre. Yet it may be of interest to survey them both and try to assess what kind of relevant information they do yield.

I. DISCOVERIES IN EGYPT

The Nag Hammadi papyri are so called because their discovery was first reported in the small town of Nag Hammadi, west of the Nile, some twenty-five miles north of Luxor. The actual place of discovery was about five miles farther north, east of the river, at the site of the ancient city of Chenoboskion, where one of the earliest Christian monasteries was founded about A.D. 320.

In 1945 some peasants, engaged in digging operations at the foot of Jebel et-Tarif, dug into a fourth-century Christian tomb, in which they found a large jar containing thirteen leather-bound codices. These codices proved to contain forty-nine separate documents, amounting in all to about a thousand large folios.

The documents were written in various dialects of Coptic around the fourth century A.D., but many of them represent translations from earlier Greek originals. An examination of their titles was sufficient to

show that this was a Gnostic library; for many of these titles were mentioned in the anti-Gnostic writings of various orthodox Church Fathers as the titles of Gnostic works. Sometimes the Fathers gave not only the titles of these works, but also some indication of their contents; and it must be said that, for all their hostility to Gnosticism, the Fathers do appear to have given a reasonably fair account of the Gnostic books.

Gnosticism—or at least the particular Gnosticism that we are dealing with here—was an attempt to restate the gospel in terms of salvation by knowledge (Gk. *gnosis*). It had as its basic presupposition a world-view which envisaged matter as essentially evil and spirit as essentially good. Any such contact between the two as is involved in the biblical doctrines of creation, incarnation and resurrection was out of the question. The 'fall' in Gnosticism was the fall of particles of pure spirit from the upper realm of light to be imprisoned in bodies of matter; redemption was the liberation of these particles from their prison-houses so that they could ascend to their homeland of light once more. The redeemer must therefore be the revealer of the true knowledge, by which alone this liberation could be effective; the true and saving knowledge was believed to be accessible only to a spiritual élite. In Christian Gnosticism the role of revealer is filled by Jesus, and it is this Gnostic Jesus who figures in these documents.

The Secret Doctrine of John

For example, the *Secret Doctrine of John*¹ records a revelation purporting to have been made to the apostle John by the glorified Christ. It begins:

One day, when John the brother of James (these are the two sons of Zebedee) had come up to the temple, a Pharisee named Arimaniaios came up to him and said: 'Where is your Master whom you used to follow?' He said to him: 'He has gone back to the place from which He came.' The Pharisee replied: 'This Nazarene deluded you and led you astray; He closed your hearts and took you away from the traditions of your fathers.' When I heard that [says John], I came away from the sanctuary to a desolate spot, and with great sorrow of heart I thought: 'How then was the Redeemer appointed and why was He sent into the world by His Father who

¹ Known not only from the Nag Hammadi collection but also from the Berlin Coptic Papyrus 8502, on the basis of which its *editio princeps* was published by Walter Till in 1955. An English translation is given in *Gnosticism: An Anthology*, edited by R. M. Grant (London, 1961), pp. 69 ff.

sent Him? And who *is* His Father? And what is the nature of that aeon to which we shall go? He said to us: "This aeon has taken on the form of that aeon which shall never pass away." But He did not teach us about that aeon, of what nature it is.' Straightway as I thought that, heaven opened, the whole creation was radiant with an unearthly light, and the whole world was shaken. I was afraid and fell to the ground.

Then John tells how the exalted Christ appeared to him in the role of the Gnostic Redeemer, and promised to be with John and his fellow-disciples always. This promise reminds one of Matt. xxviii. 19 f., but the trinitarian language of the canonical Gospel is replaced by the formula: 'I am the Father, I am the Mother,¹ I am the Son.' John goes on to describe how the Christ gave him an account of the origin of the world, of man and of evil, based on a Gnosticising interpretation of Genesis i-vi, and of the ultimate destiny of souls.

Unlike the canonical Apocalypse of John, which records a revelation by the risen Christ of 'things which must shortly come to pass', this apocryphon is more interested in that which was in the beginning. But as for any light on the original Gospel story, it affords us precisely nothing.

Gnostic Gospels

The titles of some other Nag Hammadi documents which have been published to date might encourage us, however, to hope that some new gospel material was now available—such titles as the *Gospel of Truth*, the *Gospel of Philip*, and the *Gospel of Thomas*. But when we get down to detailed study it appears that the only one which shows any signs of contact with the first-century gospel tradition is the last-named, and even the *Gospel of Thomas* has little enough to offer us.

The Gospel of Truth

The first of the Nag Hammadi texts to be published was the one entitled the *Gospel of Truth*. This was because, at an early date after the initial discovery, the codex containing this document parted company with its companions (which remained in Egypt) and was acquired by the Jung Institute in Zürich, whence it is known as the 'Jung Codex'. It will in due course go back to Cairo to rejoin its companions in the

¹ The 'Mother' is probably the Holy Spirit, since the word 'spirit' is feminine in Hebrew (*ruach*) and Aramaic (*rucha*). So, in the *Gospel according to the Hebrews*, Jesus speaks of 'my mother the Holy Spirit'.

Coptic Museum there. The *Gospel of Truth* is the most important of the five documents contained in this codex, and was first published in 1956.¹

Some of the early Christian Fathers refer to the *Gospel of Truth* as a manifesto of the Valentinian school of Gnosticism. Now that the document itself is at last available for study, its character can be clearly recognised. It is not only Valentinian in tendency, but could well be the work of Valentinus himself, founder of the school, who flourished in the mid-second century A.D. Valentinus did not stray far from orthodox Christianity; he appears to have been in and out of membership of the church at Rome more than once, and his standing in that church was so high at one time that there was a distinct possibility of his being made bishop of Rome. What we have in the *Gospel of Truth* is a series of meditations or speculations on certain aspects of the gospel. The work itself is not intended to be a 'gospel'; it is a treatise *on* the gospel. It was not designed to take the place of, or even to be added to, the canonical Gospels. So far as his attitude to the canonical books of the New Testament was concerned, Valentinus was completely orthodox, as even Tertullian, that ruthless opponent of the Gnostics, acknowledged. 'Valentinus', he said, 'accepts the whole [New] Testament.'² This statement is confirmed by the *Gospel of Truth*, which shows that 'round about 140-150 a collection of writings was known at Rome and accepted as authoritative which was virtually identical with our New Testament'.³ But the followers of Valentinus seized on certain elements in his speculative treatment of the gospel and developed them in a distinctively Gnostic direction.

The Gospel according to Philip

Nor do we find more light on the gospel period from the document which is named, in its colophon, the *Gospel according to Philip*. This is a Coptic anthology of 127 *obiter dicta* and meditations reflecting the Valentinian outlook. Some of these are ascribed to Jesus;⁴ others are

¹ A reliable English translation of the Coptic text, with introduction and notes, has been provided by Dr Kendrick Grobel (London, 1960).

² *Praescriptio* 38.

³ W. C. van Unnik, in *The Jung Codex* (ed. F. L. Cross, London, 1955), p. 124.

⁴ E.g. No. 18, 'The Lord said to the disciples: Ye sons of the kingdom, come into the Father's house and take nothing away!'; No. 57, 'The Lord said: Blessed is he who exists before he came into being; for he who exists both was and will be'; No. 69, 'The Lord said: I am come to make the nether equal to the upper and the outer equal to the inner.'

based on canonical sayings of His, without His being explicitly named;¹ some are reminiscent of other New Testament passages, outside the Gospels.²

If this document does not illuminate the gospel narrative, however, it is useful for the insight it affords into Valentinian mysteries and sacraments. Its chief themes are these four: (i) Adam and Paradise;³ (ii) speculation on creation and generation;⁴ (iii) the bride, the bridegroom and the bridechamber (a Gnostic variation on the canonical theme of John iii. 29);⁵ (iv) the Valentinian sacraments—baptism, the eucharist, unction, and the 'mystery of the bridechamber'.⁶

The Gospel according to Thomas

More relevant to our quest is the document which immediately precedes the *Gospel of Philip* in one of the Nag Hammadi codices, a collection of about 114 sayings ascribed to Jesus, which is described in its colophon as the *Gospel according to Thomas*.⁷ The significance of this title is made plain by the words with which the document opens:

These are the secret sayings which Jesus the Living One spoke and Didymus Judas Thomas wrote down.

It is not the sayings themselves that are secret, however, but their interpretation; and that is seen to have been an interpretation in keeping with the general principles of Gnosticism, and more particularly with the principles of the Naassene or Ophite sect of Gnostics (so called because of the respect paid to the serpent—Heb. *nahash*, Gk. *ophis*—which imparted to mankind the gift of knowledge).

About half of the sayings preserved in the *Gospel of Thomas* bear a close resemblance to recorded sayings of Jesus in the canonical Gospels.

¹ E.g. No. 72, a meditation on the cry of dereliction; No. 126, a meditation on words similar to those of Matt. xv. 13: 'Every plant of heaven is planted by my heavenly Father, and cannot be plucked up again.'

² E.g. No. 37, 'What the father possesses belongs to the son; but so long as the son is small, he is entrusted with nothing that belongs to him; when he becomes a man, his father gives him all that he possesses' (cf. Gal. iv. 1 f.).

³ Nos. 13, 14, 15, 28, 41, 42, 71, 78, 79, 80, 83, 84, 92, 94.

⁴ Nos. 1, 29, 41, 84, 86, 99, 102, 120, 121.

⁵ Nos. 61, 67, 82, 122.

⁶ Nos. 24, 25, 43, 59, 66, 67, 68, 74, 75, 76, 90, 92, 95, 97, 98, 100, 101, 108, 109, 111. Since this lecture was delivered, an English edition of this document has appeared: *The Gospel of Philip*, by R. McL. Wilson (London, 1962). A German version with commentary by H. M. Schenke appeared in the *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, 84 (1959), cols. 1-26.

⁷ A fuller account is given in an article, 'The Gospel of Thomas', appearing in *FAITH AND THOUGHT*, 92, no. 1 (Summer 1961), 3 ff.

Some of the others are known as quotations in early Christian writers, and some are known from the fragmentary sayings of Jesus found some sixty years ago on papyrus scraps from Oxyrhynchus in Egypt. Of these fragmentary sayings seven appear on Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 1, discovered in 1897, and six on Papyrus 654 and two or three on Papyrus 655, both of which were discovered in 1903.

It is now quite clear that these Oxyrhynchus fragments belong to the Greek original of the compilation which we now have in a Coptic version as the *Gospel of Thomas*, although the Coptic version represents a different recension from that represented by the Oxyrhynchus sayings—a recension in which the Gnostic emphasis is more pronounced than in the Greek recension.

Can we accept some of the uncanonical sayings in the *Gospel of Thomas* as genuine utterances of Jesus? Perhaps we can, but only after the most critical scrutiny. Certainly this compilation has no real claim to be described as a fifth 'Gospel' alongside the canonical four. In spite of the language of its colophon, it is not, properly speaking, a Gospel at all. Even a compilation consisting entirely of sayings of Jesus of unimpeachable authenticity would not be a Gospel. *The Gospel of Thomas* does indeed encourage us in the belief that other compilations or digests of the sayings of Jesus circulated in the early Church. One of these—no doubt one of the earliest—has been thought to lie behind our canonical Gospels of Matthew and Luke, and to have been drawn upon by the writers of these two Gospels for the material which they have in common but which is not found in Mark. But even that early 'Sayings Source'—or, as it might well be called, 'The Book of the Prophet Jesus'—cannot be called a Gospel, if only because it did not include a passion narrative. The sayings of Jesus cannot be properly understood except in their historical context, and that historical context includes pre-eminently His ministry, death and resurrection. It is these events that constitute the good news; His sayings help us to interpret the events.

But the *Gospel of Thomas* contains no passion narrative. More than that, among the sayings of Jesus which it contains there is not one which speaks about His passion. This in itself is sufficient to suggest that the circle which preserved this tradition of the sayings of Jesus was one whose basic presuppositions were widely different from those of apostolic Christianity.

The sayings in the *Gospel of Thomas* may go back in part to our canonical Gospels, in part to other written documents (such as the

Gospel according to the Hebrews), and in part to independent oral traditions. In a number of places where the Synoptic record is followed fairly closely, the resemblance is closest to the form found in Luke's Gospel. But, by whatever lines it was transmitted, the material in the *Gospel of Thomas* has been subjected to gnosticising redaction. Besides, such a compilation would have an inner development of its own, and we should like to have a second-century Greek text of the work, as complete as the fourth-century Coptic text which is now available, before making confident pronouncements about its relation to the canonical Gospels.

At one point it has been thought that the *Gospel of Thomas* reflects an independent tradition of the Aramaic wording which Jesus used; this is in its version of the Parable of the Sower (Saying 9), where it says that some seed fell *on* the road (not *by* the road, as the Greek Gospels with their Coptic versions have it), thus reproducing the sense of the Aramaic preposition which Jesus probably used. Another contact (of a different kind) with the Aramaic-speaking Church of Palestine or Syria may be recognised in that saying which points to James the Just as the authority whom the disciples must consult after Jesus' departure, because it was for James' sake that 'heaven and earth came into being' (Saying 12).

The most important question is this: What account does this document give of Jesus? Here we find ourselves no longer in touch, even remotely, with the testimony of eyewitnesses. The Jesus of the *Gospel of Thomas* is not the Jesus who 'came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister'; not the Jesus who taught the law of love to one's neighbour in the way set out in the Parable of the Good Samaritan. The *Gospel of Thomas* is nowhere more Gnostic than in its repeated presentation of the ideal of the solitary believer; for it, true religion is an affair of the individual. The Jesus of the *Gospel of Thomas* expresses a real concern for the blindness and ignorance of men when he speaks of his mission in the world, but his concern is that of one who has come to impart true knowledge rather than of one who has come to bestow true life by laying down His own life.

Moreover, the knowledge which the Jesus of the *Gospel of Thomas* has come to impart is secret knowledge, intended for a select minority. This underlines an essential difference between apostolic Christianity and Gnosticism. There is indeed a place where Paul speaks of a 'hidden wisdom' which the Corinthian Christians are too immature to receive; but their immaturity has to do with ethics and not intellect, for it is in

love, not in knowledge, that they are deficient. To spiritually mature Christians this wisdom is freely imparted—not to a select minority, but to all (1 Cor. ii. 6 ff.). So also John's first epistle opens with a declaration that the writer is going to share with his readers all that he and his companions had seen and heard of the word of life. To all those readers without distinction he says, unlike the teachers of an incipient Gnosticism against whom he warns them: 'You, no less than they, are among the initiated; this is the gift of the Holy One, and by it you all have knowledge' (1 John ii. 20, N.E.B.). This 'initiation' which admits them all to the true knowledge is the anointing which unites them in the fellowship of that love which finds its crowning revelation in the self-offering of Christ. It is precisely the absence of this note of self-sacrificing love that puts the *Gospel of Thomas* and Gnostic writings in general into a class apart from the canonical Gospels and the other New Testament documents.

II. DISCOVERIES IN PALESTINE

From Egypt, then, we move to Palestine. Before we reach the Dead Sea let us halt for a few minutes at the monastery of Mar Saba, some twelve miles south-east of Jerusalem.

A Secret Gospel of Mark?

In December 1960, Professor Morton Smith of Columbia University, New York City, reported to the ninety-sixth meeting of the American Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis a discovery of exceptional interest which he made in this monastery in 1958 while he was cataloguing the contents of its library.

On the back of a Dutch book, printed in 1646,¹ he found a handwritten copy of a Greek letter. The copy was in a seventeenth- or eighteenth-century hand—probably, he says, mid-eighteenth century. But the letter of which this is a copy is a much more ancient document. The heading of the copy ascribes the letter to Clement of Alexandria, who flourished about A.D. 180,² although there is no mention of the identity either of the writer or of the addressees in the text of the letter itself. On stylistic grounds Professor Smith is disposed to regard

¹ A copy of Isaac Voss's edition of the Epistles of Ignatius.

² The copyist's heading runs: 'From Letters of Clement, the author of the *Stromateis*, to Theodore'. (John of Damascus, who lived at Mar Saba, refers to letters of Clement of Alexandria.)

the ascription of the letter to Clement of Alexandria as justified—of scholars to whom he has shown the text some agree with him while others disagree.¹

The chief interest of this letter lies in the fact that it refers to a longer edition of Mark's Gospel (current at Alexandria), which included 'secret' sayings of Jesus not found in the canonical Mark. According to the author of the letter, Mark came to Alexandria from Rome, where he had already published his shorter Gospel (which was in essence Peter's witness to Christ). At Alexandria he expanded it and added some 'secret' sayings. The Gnostic leader Carpocrates took this expanded Gospel and mixed spurious material with it.² The expanded Gospel inserted after Mark x. 34 the story of the raising of a rich young man from the dead; this story has resemblances to the raising of Lazarus in John xi. The narrative then goes on to tell of James and John's request to Jesus (cf. Mark x. 35 ff.). At the end of this incident there is a reference to Salome.³

We shall have to wait until the full text is published before we can pass judgment with any confidence on this discovery. If, however, the expanded Gospel gives more details of the process of initiation into the mystery of the kingdom of God than are given in the canonical Mark, we may have to do with a Gnostic edition of the original Gospel. Early Alexandrian Christianity, which claimed Mark as its founder, had a decidedly Gnostic flavour about it.

Documents of the Second Jewish Revolt

Coming now to the shores of the Dead Sea, we consider first and briefly the manuscripts found in caves in the Wadi Murabba'at and other parts farther south, in the neighbourhood of Engedi, where Jewish insurgents of A.D. 132-135 made a last stand against the Romans.

¹ A. D. Nock would assign it to a date not later than the fourth century; J. Munck thinks it may have been composed to support the Church of Alexandria's claim to have a special association with Mark.

² According to Irenaeus (*Against Heresies* i. 25.4), the followers of Carpocrates had writings which claimed that Jesus gave secret teachings to His apostles and other disciples, and permitted them to hand these teachings down to others who would be worthy and faithful.

³ A comparison of Mark xv. 40 and Matt. xxvii. 56 suggests that Salome was the mother of James and John who, according to Matt. xx. 20 ff., made on her sons' behalf the request recorded in Mark x. 35 ff. But in several Gnostic Gospels Salome plays a larger and more colourful part than she does in the New Testament.

These manuscripts have no direct bearing on the Gospels. They do show, however, that in the thirties of the second century A.D. Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek were used with equal facility by Jews in that area of Palestine; and there is every reason for believing that the linguistic situation was much the same in other areas of Palestine a century earlier—in the period with which the Gospels are concerned.

Discoveries at Qumran

But it is to the caves and buildings of Qumran, farther north along the western shore of the Dead Sea, that we must go for something more positive than we have found hitherto.

In his little book *Archaeology Gives Evidence*, published in 1951, Professor Rendle Short made reference to the discovery of the first cave of manuscripts at Qumran as being 'perhaps, the most sensational and unexpected archaeological discovery bearing on the Old Testament ever made' (p. 35). We need not quarrel with this assessment; it might indeed be argued that the discovery of manuscripts of Hebrew Scripture a thousand years and more earlier than anything of the kind previously known surpasses in importance as well as in unexpectedness all other archaeological discoveries bearing on the Old Testament. But it should now be added that subsequent discoveries have shown that the significance of the Qumran manuscripts for the study of the *New Testament*, and not least of the Gospels, may be even more 'sensational'.

To some aspects of the bearing of the Qumran documents on the Gospels, then, the remainder of this lecture will be devoted.¹

The Fulfilment of Prophecy

When Jesus, on the morrow of John the Baptist's arrest by Herod Antipas, came into Galilee proclaiming that the time of fulfilment had arrived and the kingdom of God had drawn near (Mark i. 14 f.), He served notice that the days were at hand, as foretold in the book of Daniel, when the God of heaven would set up a kingdom which would never be destroyed but would endure for ever (Dan. ii. 44, vii. 14, 22, 27). This proclamation He described as good news, and identified it with the good news which is announced by the Spirit-anointed speaker of Isaiah lxi. 1—good news for the poor, comfort for the

¹ See also two articles, 'Qumran and the New Testament' and 'Qumran and the Old Testament', appearing in *FAITH AND THOUGHT*, 90, no. 2 (Autumn 1958), 92 ff., and 91, no. 1 (Summer 1959), 9 ff.

broken-hearted, release for the captives, and all the other blessings belonging to the year of divine favour (cf. Luke iv. 17 ff.). Implicit in all this is the claim that the kingdom of God would be set up by the fulfilment of the mission appointed for the obedient, suffering and triumphant Servant of the Lord introduced in Isa. xlii. 1 and further portrayed in a number of the following chapters. In Daniel's visions the Isaianic Servant reappears as 'one like a son of man' who is closely associated, if not completely identified, with 'the saints of the Most High' (Dan. vii. 13, 18, etc.). If the Servant 'deals wisely' (Heb. *yaskil*, Isa. lii. 13), and thus makes 'the many' righteous (Isa. liii. 11), so in Daniel the saints of the Most High are described as 'the wise' (Heb. *maskilim*, from the same verb as *yaskil* in Isa. lii. 13), who turn 'the many' to righteousness (Dan. xii. 3). On these *maskilim*, as on the Isaianic Servant, the brunt of suffering falls because of their loyalty to God: for an indefinite period they 'fall by sword and flame, by captivity and plunder' (Dan. xi. 33).

Christianity is what it is because of the way in which Jesus not only interpreted these and other Old Testament scriptures, but actually fulfilled them in His own person and ministry. Yet, in the period preceding A.D. 70, He and His followers were not the only teachers in Israel to declare that the time of fulfilment had arrived and the kingdom of God had drawn near, or to envisage the consummation of the divine purpose in terms which involved a unitive exegesis of the Isaianic Servant and of Daniel's Son of Man and saints of the Most High.

The 'new covenanters' who had their headquarters at Qumran for some two centuries preceding A.D. 70 are now clearly seen to have interpreted the Old Testament in these terms, and to have developed this interpretation along lines of their own. Their effective founder, regularly referred to in their literature as the 'Teacher of Righteousness', explained all biblical prophecy to them as being on the point of fulfilment, and taught them to see their own eschatological role clearly set out there.

The Roman occupation of Palestine from 63 B.C. onwards seemed to provide a setting in which they might expect to see the fulfilment of all that the prophets had spoken—the catastrophic collapse of 'this age' and the glorious dawn of the 'age to come'.

The Qumran literature, in fact, introduces us to a school of biblical interpretation strongly reminiscent of the early Christians. This appears most clearly, perhaps, in the way in which various eschatological and apocalyptic scriptures were applied to the community and

its leaders. The community was the righteous remnant, the true Israel within Israel, bound to God by a new covenant. Their purificatory ceremonies were the fulfilment of that divine sprinkling with cleansing water, that outpouring of a new spirit, promised in Ezekiel xxxvi. 25 f. — a baptism of 'water and spirit' (cf. John iii. 5), in which the external cleansing was worthless unless it was accompanied by purity of heart. They looked forward to a new Jerusalem and a restored temple, where acceptable sacrifices would be presented by a worthy priesthood, as outlined in Ezekiel xl-xlviii. But most striking of all is their understanding of the Servant Songs of Isaiah xlii-liiii, especially the fourth Song (Isa. lii. 13-liiii. 12).

The expiatory work ascribed to the Servant of the Lord they regarded as a duty lying upon the whole covenanting community. Or, if we use categories borrowed from the book of Daniel rather than from the book of Isaiah, we may say that they identified themselves with the *maskilim* who by their faithfulness and suffering 'turn the many to righteousness' (Dan. xii. 3). And as a matter of historical fact it is practically certain that they were the spiritual heirs of those godly souls who submitted to martyrdom during the persecution under Antiochus Epiphanes rather than compromise or renounce their loyalty to God. Yet their propitiatory role is not inconsistent with the execution of judgment on the wicked; the Servant who justifies the many is also the Son of Man to whom has been given authority to execute judgment. So, in the Habakkuk commentary from Qumran, God will judge all the nations by the agency of His elect, and by their rebuke all those who kept His commandments in the time of their tribulation will condemn all the ungodly of His people. The Qumran community, that is to say, looked upon itself as called to fulfil corporately the two-fold function of Servant of the Lord and Son of Man—the former by piety and suffering now, the latter by placing itself as a ready instrument in the hand of God when the hour of requital struck, as (they believed) it very soon would.

Qumran and the Gospels

The parallels and coincidences between the two movements—of Qumran and primitive Christianity—are sufficiently numerous and impressive to call for some attempt to account for them. One answer which immediately suggests itself is that the two movements shared a common historical background and ancestry. No doubt they did, but

the same might be said, in a general way, of the Pharisaic and Sadducean movements and others with which we are familiar in first-century Judaism. In a more particular way, however, Qumran and primitive Christianity may have a common ancestry which goes back to more remote times than is commonly thought.¹

In a book published in 1961 under the title *The Scrolls and Christian Origins* (by far the best book on the subject known to me), Principal Matthew Black of St Andrews traces the Essene movement² back to the ancient ascetic strain in Israel—represented by the Kenites, Rechabites and Nazirites—which (he believes) survived in greater vigour than has usually been realised. This strain, he holds, continued to flourish in the post-exilic age as a 'nonconformist' tradition in two main groups—a southern and a northern. From the southern group came the men of Qumran; the northern group provided the milieu within which Christianity arose. Principal Black's thesis, could it be established (and there is much to be said in its favour), would account for many of the affinities which have been traced between the New Testament and the literature of Qumran.

In Luke's nativity narrative we are introduced to people who, like Simeon of Jerusalem, waited for the consolation of Israel or, like the aged prophetess Anna of the same city, looked for the redemption of Jerusalem. In his passion narrative we are told that Joseph of Arimathea was one of those who were expecting the kingdom of God. People like these—among whom Zacharias and Elizabeth, Joseph and Mary, may also be reckoned with confidence—could well have been 'associate members' of one or another of those circles of nonconformist piety which flourished in Israel at that time. Some of those circles took the form of 'baptist' communities whose activity in the Jordan valley

¹ One feature of this common ancestry may have had to do with the calendar. The Qumran community regulated its life by a different calendar from that which was followed in the Jerusalem temple. The Qumran calendar, similar to one which we know best from the *Book of Jubilees* (a work held in high repute in the community), was not lunar: the months (of thirty days each) ignored the phases of the moon, and the annual festivals and other solemn occasions fell not only on the same day of the month but also on the same day of the week year by year. Attempts have been made to relate this calendrical divergence of the men of Qumran (which in any case was not peculiar to them) to the calendrical practice of the early Christians, and in particular to one of the knottiest problems of early Christian chronology—the date (and nature) of the Last Supper. See A. Jaubert, *La Date de la Cène* (Paris, 1957); 'Jésus et le calendrier de Qumran', *New Testament Studies*, 7 (1960-61), 1 ff.

² Of which the Qumran movement was a branch (possibly the principal one).

and its vicinity is well attested for that whole period. The canticles of Luke's nativity narrative (more particularly, the *Magnificat* and *Benedictus*) sound like manifestoes of such a circle, and they serve as a counterpart in the cradle of Christianity to the *Hymns of Thanksgiving* found at Qumran; despite their differences both breathe the genuine spirit of contemporary Jewish piety and hope.

A personal link between the two movements has been sought in John the Baptist. According to Luke's account, John lived in the wilderness until he began his public ministry (Luke i. 80). If a youth who was born in 'a city of Judah' (Luke i. 39) and was later to be active in the Jordan valley found a congenial retreat in the wilderness, this would not have been far from the vicinity of Qumran. Nothing, of course, can be based on that consideration. But a closer connexion between John and the Qumran community might be looked for in their baptismal doctrine and practice. When we are told in the *Qumran Rule of the Community* (iii. 25 ff.) that the man who is impure and rebellious in heart cannot hope to be cleansed by lustral water, we are reminded of Josephus' account of John's teaching: 'he taught that baptism would appear acceptable in God's sight if they underwent it not to procure pardon for certain sins but with a view to the purification of the body when once the soul had been purified by righteousness' (*Antiquities* xviii. 117). But Josephus' interpretation of John's baptism, which differs from the Gospel account, was no doubt influenced by the Essenes' teaching about their ceremonial washings, with which he was more familiar. Josephus is probably right, however, in suggesting that John formed a community of his own: this is the natural sense of his statement that John bade people 'come together by means of baptism' (*ibid.*), and agrees with the Gospel statement that John's mission was 'to prepare a people that shall be fit for the Lord' (Luke i. 17, N.E.B.).

The opening chapters of the Gospel of John deal with an early phase of Jesus' activity, in the regions of Judea and Samaria, which was concurrent with the later ministry of John the Baptist, when John had not yet been imprisoned (John iii. 24). The dispute about purification between some of John's disciples and 'a Jew', mentioned in John iii. 25, is the kind of dispute which must have been very common in those regions at a time when so many competing 'baptist' groups were active there. The disciples of John and the disciples of Jesus were not the only people engaged in baptising—or at least in the practice of ceremonial washing—in the Jordan valley and Dead Sea areas in those days. The

Qumran texts and material installations have provided us with a new background against which we can view these chapters in a better perspective. Even the language in which John the Baptist, in the Fourth Gospel, speaks of Jesus as the Coming One who will baptise with the Holy Spirit because His own endowment with that Spirit is unlimited (John i. 26-34, iii. 27-36) has a striking parallel in the Qumran *Rule of the Community* (iv. 30 f.), where the hope is expressed that one man will eventually manifest in an unprecedented degree that purity of heart which accompanies the full impartation of the Holy Spirit.

Indeed, of all the Gospels, it is the Fourth which presents the most striking points of contact with the Qumran texts, to a point where some have spoken of a 'common conceptual world'. Such characteristic Johannine expressions as 'the sons of light', 'the light of life', 'walking in darkness', 'doing the truth', 'the works of God', are equally characteristic of Qumran literature. Like that literature, the Gospel and Epistles of John view the world, and especially the world of mankind, in terms of sharply contrasted light and darkness, good and evil, truth and falsehood. Professor W. F. Albright, who was one of the first scholars to draw attention to this relation between Qumran and the Johannine literature, concludes that John and other New Testament writers 'draw from a common reservoir of terminology and ideas which was well known to the Essenes and presumably familiar also to other Jewish sects of the period'. At the same time, he emphasises the 'wide gulf between the doctrines of the Essenes and the essentials of Johannine teaching'. Of these essentials he lists four (which appear in other New Testament writings as well); these relate respectively to the function of the Messiah, the salvation of sinners, the ministry of healing, and the gospel of love.¹

The affinities in vocabulary and concept should not obscure the new element in John's use of the common terms. When he speaks of the 'true light', for example, he is not speaking of an abstraction, nor even primarily of a body of teaching or a holy community; for him the 'true light' is Jesus Christ, the incarnate Logos.

This at least may be said: the Qumran discoveries are a major cause of the 'new look on the Fourth Gospel'² to which a number of scholars

¹ W. F. Albright, 'Recent Discoveries in Palestine and the Gospel of St John', in *The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology*, ed. W. D. Davies and D. Daube (Cambridge, 1956), pp. 153 ff.

² Cf. J. A. T. Robinson, *Twelve New Testament Studies* (London, 1962), pp. 94 ff.

have been referring of late, and have provided an additional, and weighty, reason for believing in its fundamentally Hebraic character. If we look for a closer contact between Qumran and the Fourth Gospel than the 'common reservoir of terminology and ideas' envisaged by Professor Albright, we may reflect on the high probability that the 'beloved disciple' of this Gospel may have been a disciple of John the Baptist before he became a follower of Jesus.

This brings us back to John the Baptist. With regard to him, let it be said that even if he did owe some debt to the Qumran community, it was a new impulse which sent him forth to proclaim a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. His recorded ministry is essentially a prophetic ministry. He describes himself as a voice crying to Israel:

In the wilderness prepare ye the way of the LORD;

Make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

The men of Qumran had found in these words of Isaiah xl. 3 their authority for withdrawing to the wilderness. John, himself the son of a priest, might at one time have found something specially appealing in a movement which attached so much importance to the preservation of a pure priesthood as the Qumran movement did; but when 'the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness' (Luke iii. 2), as it had come to many a prophet before, he learned and taught the necessity for something that went beyond the doctrine and practice of Qumran.

Even more evident is the impossibility of accounting for the mission and message of Jesus in terms of Essene or Qumranic doctrine and practice. 'Volunteers for holiness' as the members of this community were, they understood holiness in a very different way from Jesus. They tried to preserve their holiness by keeping themselves to themselves as far as possible, whereas Jesus deliberately sought the company of people who, as the saying is, were 'no better than they should be' because it was they who were in greatest need of His help as a physician of the soul. For this, as the Gospels relate, He was condemned by the Pharisees of His day; but the Pharisees themselves were condemned by the men of Qumran for their laxity, for being 'seekers after smooth things', people who chose an easy way of holiness.

The same contrast emerges in their interpretation of the law. To give but one example, Jesus asked the Pharisees and lawyers of His acquaintance who among them would not immediately pull out an ox or ass that had fallen into a pit on the sabbath day, implying that any one of them would, as a matter of course, give the animal a helping

hand, sabbath or no sabbath. But just such a humane action as this is expressly forbidden in Qumran literature as a breach of the sabbath law. No greater contrast could be found to this rigorism than the interpretation of the law in the Gospels, where the main criterion is an appeal to the original intention of each institution or commandment—an intention which reflected the Creator's care for the wellbeing of His creatures.

The Significance of Jesus

Our ancient sources of knowledge about the Essenes give us a fairly detailed description of their beliefs and practices; they tell us nothing about the founder of the Essene movement. We knew nothing about the Teacher of Righteousness until the Essene documents themselves came to light. Can we imagine any comparably detailed ancient description of Christians which made no mention at all of the Founder of Christianity? Why, the first extant pagan reference to Christians¹ cannot even mention them without adding at once that they received their name from Christ, 'who was executed by the procurator Pontius Pilate when Tiberius was emperor'.

This is not to undervalue the significance of the Teacher of Righteousness for the community of which he was the effective founder. It is rather to underline the still greater significance of our Lord for the community which *He* founded. The Teacher of Righteousness died—how, we do not know. It is not at all certain that his followers expected him to rise from the dead in advance of the resurrection of the just. But even if they did, of this we may be sure: he never did so rise, and no one ever thought he had done so. Jesus also died—how, we know very well. If He had remained in the power of death, it is doubtful whether the community which He founded would have survived in any form; it certainly would not have come to life again in the way that it did, to remain in being to this day. The abiding significance of Jesus for His community is that *its* life is perpetually dependent on *His* risen life.

The Christian scholar and scientist whom we are commemorating tonight was prone to end on this note. One of his books² has a chapter entitled: 'We must decide in some way about Jesus Christ'—about Jesus Christ not just as a great figure in history but as our eternal Contemporary. Let the present lecture end on this same note, with gratitude to God for every remembrance of His servant Arthur Rendle Short.

¹ In the fifteenth book of the *Annals* of Tacitus (chap. 44)—written in the early years of the second century A.D. but dealing with the events of Nero's reign (A.D. 54-68).

² *The Bible and Modern Research* (London, 1931).

BOOK REVIEWS

American Culture and Catholic Schools. By EMMETT McLOUGHLIN. Lyle Stuart, New York, 1960. Pp. 288. \$4.95.

This book has been called forth by the demand of Roman Catholic bishops in the U.S.A. for public funds for R.C. education. What is the nature and purpose of R.C. education? What are its methods and results? What effects will such education have on democratic institutions and the American way of life? These are the questions to which the author claims to give 'frank, honest, objective, documented answers'.

Mr McLoughlin describes in detail the 'brain-washing', morality, emotional indoctrination and far-reaching censorship of the Catholic Church. He constantly gives us examples from his own experience: he was a product of the R.C. educational system, spending twelve years in a seminary and fourteen more as a parish priest.

J. W. BAIGENT

Bible Guides. Ed. WILLIAM BARCLAY and F. F. BRUCE. Lutterworth. 5s. No. 4, *Nation Making* by L. TOOMBS. No. 5, *Historians of Israel (I)* by G. ROBINSON. No. 6, *Historians of Israel (2)* by H. ANDERSON. No. 17 *Paul and His Converts* by F. F. BRUCE.

The twenty-two paperback volumes planned for this series will cover the whole Bible and present 'the purpose, plan and power of the Scriptures' to the general reader. Firmly based upon an up-to-date knowledge of historical background and literary criticism, they bring out the message of the Bible and show its relevance to modern life. The short headed sections and direct, often colloquial, English make for easy and interesting reading. We believe that they will have a wide appeal and can envisage their usefulness in Schools and Colleges. Perhaps a short Bibliography would have extended their value.

Nation Making covers Exodus, Numbers, Joshua and Judges. No attempt is made to summarise the history but Bible passages are set for reading, the author using his space to explain their religious and ethical teaching. The Exodus (dated c. 1290 B.C.) is seen as the 'formative event' of the nation of Israel. 'She can never escape that fact, never evade its implications, never define herself in any other way. . . . She lives from then on under the banner of the exodus.' It is the key to the understanding of the rest of Israel's history. Not all readers will be happy about the author's attitude to miracles or to the historicity of some of the narratives, but all will benefit from his exposition of the relevance of the history of Israel to the Atomic Age. This section is full of observations like this: 'The law insists that every act is a religious act and that a man is judged as much by how he runs the office as by how he says his prayers.'

Historians of Israel (1) deals with the Books of Samuel and Kings. After quite a detailed account of the probable sources of these books it is reassuring to be told that 'Scripture is no less inspired and authoritative because it is seen to have passed through many stages before it arrived at its present form'. The author summarises the history in short sections, and comments on spiritual lessons, for, as he says, 'there is a timelessness about the experience of others . . . their hopes and fears, their triumphs and tragedies, their strength and weaknesses are ours'.

Historians of Israel (2) shows clearly that timeless spiritual values are enshrined in the Books of Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah. They are 'religious propaganda history' and show that 'the chief actor on the stage of human history is God'. The author sees no reason for querying the Chronicler's order of events: Ezra came first to Jerusalem in 458 B.C., followed by Nehemiah in 445 B.C.

In *Paul and His Converts* Professor Bruce skilfully guides the reader through the Epistles to the Thessalonians and to the Corinthians. After an introduction to Paul and his letters we are given a masterly summary of Paul's teaching in these four epistles, section by section. Professor Bruce thinks it quite probable that chapters x-xiii. of 2 Corinthians are part of a previous 'severe letter'. In his final chapter he shows us what the first-century documents have to say to us today in our situation. The author deals with the Second Advent, Christian ethics, marriage and the family, Christian unity, apostolic succession, Christian stewardship, and the power of love.

J. W. BAIGENT

Protestant Thought and Natural Science; A Historical Interpretation. By JOHN DILLENBERGER. Collins, 1961. 25s.

Dr Dillenberger's recent book on the relations of Protestantism to science is interesting, provocative, and always interesting. It does much to redress the imbalance of A. D. White's *History of the Warfare of Science and Religion*. The present work starts with the early days, and gives us, with much evidence of careful study, an account of the ideas which were held at various periods up to the present day. The value of this book is chiefly historical, modern views being passed over more lightly.

On the historical side there is much of interest. Dr Dillenberger shows, for instance, that there is little evidence for Luther's alleged opposition to Copernicus; the words 'the fool would upset the whole art of astronomy' are omitted from the earliest version of the *Table Talk*, and, even if genuine, are an 'off-hand remark of a volatile man' spoken several years before Copernicus' best-known work had appeared. There is no other occasion, so far as is known, on which Luther mentioned Copernicus.

Briefly, the story which Dr Dillenberger has to tell runs as follows. In the late Middle Ages (early thirteenth century), when the writings of Aristotle were re-discovered, they presented a serious challenge to Christianity. Much of what Aristotle taught, e.g. that immortality is impossible, and that the world is eternal, was heretical. The theologians, but notably Aquinas, 'baptised' Aristotle by refuting the teachings inconsistent with Christianity, and developing

the rest. The net result was a geocentric picture of the universe, which owed very little to the Bible, much to Aristotle, and much to imagination. Though factually wrong, it provided an excellent framework in which life, purpose and destiny found a meaningful place for ordinary men and women. And it endured with little change for centuries.

Then came the scientific revolution—indeed—it is still with us. The old framework was destroyed and a new one took its place. The scientific picture of the world is probably a good deal easier to square with Scripture than was the old—for the Bible has nothing to say about the empyrean heaven, concentric spheres, plants moving in circular orbits, the perfection of circles, the perpetuum mobile, the four elements each with its allotted place and the rest. Nevertheless, the general framework of the new scheme proved hard to reconcile with the Christian faith. Physical explanations for the rainbow or 'the mystery and grandeur of colour' seemed to reduce everything to a pointless dead-level mechanism—at least, in the popular mind. What should Christians have done? What would we have done? Nothing at all, perhaps? But this would leave Christianity old-fashioned, wedded to the outworn and false views of the universe. Protestantism repudiated this line. Try to re-state Christian doctrine in terms of the new science, as Aquinas had re-stated it in terms of Aristotle's metaphysics a few centuries before? The language and ideas of science did not lend themselves very well to this procedure. Still, one might perhaps think of God as a scientific hypothesis. Dillenberger, in common with many modern writers, thinks that Newton did just this. Finding that his law of gravity failed to explain some of the features of the solar system, Newton suggested that God had intervened to make things as they are. Later, when scientific explanations were forthcoming for what Newton could not explain, it seemed as if Christians could only find room for God in the 'gaps' that existed in scientific knowledge, and sceptics suggested that, as science progressed, God would be squeezed out.¹

Both Newton and Boyle, however, realised that science did not probe very deeply into nature, especially as all efforts to explain gravity failed. Nature was shrouded in ultimate mystery, and both suspected that that mystery had something to do with God. They could not express the idea clearly, though Newton battled with the problem to the very end. A later generation made use of Newton's ideas in a way of which he would have disapproved. They forgot the mystery that had haunted Newton and imagined that gravity, and similar concepts, explained the universe.

¹ In the reviewer's opinion this gap concept is fallacious. We might argue that changing patterns, obviously designed, which appear on a T.V. screen are caused by real persons upon which the camera is focused. Our belief in design is not imperilled if we later discover that what we saw was a recording—or even a recording of a recording. Newton, of course, believed that there was a plan in the solar system, and in the general design of nature. It is of no consequence if the later advance of science shows that God's intervention was further back in time than had been supposed. No one would dream of arguing that T.V. actors had been squeezed out of their plays when a scientist shows how moving pictures can be stored in magnetic tape.

One solution to the difficulties which confronted the ordinary man was soon on the scene; it was suggested that nature and the Scriptures were two books of God, and that it was man's duty to read them both. This idea brought two vital questions to the fore. Firstly, without realising it, those who used the argument began to put nature and the Bible on an equal footing. This was dangerous for Christianity because, for Christians, the drama of salvation had always been more important than nature. Secondly, as science was studied problems were solved with increasing clarity. Inevitably, this created a contrast with the non-clarity of Scripture. In some respects, science tended to create a non-clarity in the latter which had not been observed before—as, for example, in the discussions of the early chapters of Genesis, where 'day', 'firmament', etc., had to be re-interpreted. In fact, science began to clear up some of the non-clarity of Scripture, and this was the first step in the creation of an independent theology which later blossomed as deism.

Another type of reconciliation was afforded by the design argument, which sought to undermine any disparity between the new world picture and the Christian faith, by making use of science for theological purposes. The design argument is, of course, very old, but it flourished in Protestant thought till the present century. Dillenberger thinks, however, that it tended to put stress on the wisdom of God rather than on the more scriptural glory of God. In the design argument, God was the Hypothesis which accounted for the strange events in nature. So it was felt natural to account, in the same way, for the events of history. As a result, Christian apologetic made extensive use of the evidence afforded by the New Testament miracles.

In the eighteenth century repeated statements of the design argument became increasingly tedious and unimaginative. Though books appeared with intriguing titles, such as *Insect-theology* and *Water-theology*, all tended to say much the same thing. The difficulty seems to be that, while we may be amazed at what we find in nature, our emotions would be saturated by the wonders of a universe a thousandth as wonderful as the one in which we live, while the postulate of design does not, at first sight, advance knowledge. Dillenberger thinks that the design argument had its day, but in the end ceased to be useful in the Christian cause. For, firstly, many scientists themselves saw no reason to interpret their work in this way, and secondly, increasing interest in nature made an interest in revelation decline. When, in time, alternative explanations of supposed instances of design were forthcoming, the design argument probably turned people away from theology. Dillenberger's comment is interesting: 'Reflection on this period raises the question whether a conscious apologetic is not usually a boomerang' (p. 153).

The book provides many interesting quotations of past attempts—some more useful than others—to relate Christianity to the new science. The author distinguishes two extremes. On the one hand we may deny that a relationship between science and Christianity exists. This is the position of Barth in our own day, though it was rare in the past. At the other extreme are those who claim that the relationship is very intimate indeed. Those in this group would describe New Testament miracles in psychological jargon, argue that life itself is a miracle anyway, so that miracles cannot be clearly distinguished from natural events, or argue with Bavinck that waves, not being material, must partake of a

spiritual quality. The trouble with many of these lines of thought is that, in the end, they lead to pantheism, or something near it.

Between the two extremes there are various possibilities. We may see the work of God, not in science as such, but in events to which science directs attention, but which are not of the stuff of science themselves—an original or continuous creation, for example. We may equate the mysteries of science with the mysteries of religion, or look for God at work in all events which, though they seem to be at random (and here the argument applies to history as much as to science), eventually cause a pattern to emerge. Again, we may fill up the gaps in scientific knowledge with theological answers. In modern physics, for example, we may seek for the sphere of God's activity below the level of indeterminism. Another possibility is to define intervention in a way which runs contrary to the ordinary processes we know, that is to affirm that God is at work in order rather than disorder.

If we cannot relate science and Christianity directly, then we may still look for analogies between them. Thus, with Henry Drummond, we may claim that spiritual laws have their counterparts in natural laws; we may appeal to complementarity in physics as illustrating different ways of looking at the same problem, or we may draw analogy from the randomness and pattern which we find in many realms of thought. Again, we may draw analogy between emergent qualities in nature and spiritual factors which might perhaps emerge at a certain level. (The author does not touch upon the close analogy between scientific and religious discovery.)

Dr Dillenberger thinks that answers are unsatisfying—no one knows the answer. Perhaps a new relationship will be discovered. Meanwhile, if we separate the disciplines, theology will continue just as if nothing had happened in the world of science, and its impact upon man will suffer. If, on the other hand, we integrate them, they will tend to distort one another. On the whole, he thinks, we should veer towards the former rather than the latter position. A rather dismal conclusion to a valuable book!

R. E. D. CLARK

The Inextinguishable Blaze. By A. SKEVINGTON WOOD, B.A., PH.D. Paternoster.
15s.

This is vol. vi of the Paternoster Press project of a history of Christianity from Pentecost to the present day, of which Dr F. F. Bruce's *The Spreading Flame* is vol. i. Dr Wood deals with the eighteenth century, generally felt to be the nadir of morals in public and private life in the English-speaking countries, and he shows that while the enemy had come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord lifted up a standard against him. The title of the book is taken from one of Charles Wesley's hymns, but a good alternative might have been 'The Golden Chain', for the author shows the vital linkage between the life and work in succeeding eras of Luther, Calvin, Arminius, Ridley, Latimer and the Stuart Puritans and that of their spiritual successors in the eighteenth century. The story moves from Wales to the then American Colonies, to England and to

Scotland, and beside the well known names such as Griffith Jones, Howell Harris, Daniel Rowland, Jonathan Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys appear many worthy servants of God who had their essential though less spectacular parts to play. The scenes of Revival, with great numbers under open conviction of sin and need, and many of them truly converted, with churches filled and whole townships reformed are carefully related to the patient work which had been done by unknown ministers of the Word in quiet parishes over the years, without obvious results, but all the time keeping a fire burning which, like the peat fire under the heather, only needed the wind of the Revival to bring it to open flame. We are introduced to such national figures as Count Zinzendorf and the Countess of Huntingdon. A full and careful account is given of the evangelical conversion of the leading figures, including Whitefield and the Wesleys, and there is also a documented account of the influence of the Moravians, of the Calvinist-Arminian disputes which led to the severance in form, though not in heart, of George Whitefield and John Wesley, and of the considerations, perhaps we should say forces, which led to a number of the evangelical preachers finding themselves outside the confines of the Established Church to which most of them belonged, and to which they would have wished to adhere. If the story begins with the forerunners of earlier centuries, it brings us to the successors in the nineteenth century, to Wilberforce and the 'Clapham Sect' and to the great missionary activities which have carried the same fire to the ends of the earth.

The book is not without its warnings:

Against too broad a tolerance that sinks into indifference and indolence on the one hand and on the other against too narrow a spirit which regards as 'orthodox' only one's own belief and one's own reading of the Scriptures, and fails to see that different opinions may be the result of no more than partial views of the same truth.

The book is worthy of close perusal, and of prayerful consideration that we may follow the faith and avoid the failures of those who have preceded us in the service of the Lord.

There is a 'Short Bibliography' which will, we suspect, provide more than enough for most readers!

A. E. DALE

Mirror of Minds. By Professor GEOFFREY BULLOUGH. The Athlone Press. 35s.

In this volume, the Professor of English Language and Literature at King's College, London, surveys the great range of English Poetry from Chaucer to Kathleen Raine (say 1385 to 1956) and shows how the current thought of the day in regard to the nature of the human mind, its relation to the body and to Divine Powers outside the range of man and his world is reflected in the verse of the poets of the time. Not only so, but with regard to those whose writings extended over a considerable period (notably Shakespeare of course), he is able to show the changing interests and reaction of the poet to the contemporary

psychological current of his time, or to the contending currents as in the cases, for example, of Wordsworth and Shelley.

This reviewer is reminded of an archaeological section through the successive layers below an ancient city, revealing at each level objects of common use corresponding to the culture of the particular time, and in some cases showing also the development of one particular type of object from the crude to the sophisticated!

Needless to say, the book is marked by deep erudition and acute perception. There is an adequate index of persons and subjects, and the notes to each chapter, assembled at the end of the book, include a bibliography. The printing and production is excellent.

A. E. DALE