

ENDEAVOUR

Magazine

*The eternal life which was with the Father
was made manifest to us—and this we proclaim
to you, so that you may have fellowship with
us; and our fellowship is with the Father
and with his Son Jesus Christ. from 1 John 1*

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FELLOWSHIP

Our cover reminds us of the new and enhanced relationship that came into being between man and man, and God and man, as a result of God's decisive intervention with the appearance of Jesus Christ on the stage of this troubled earth nearly 2000 years ago.

'Fellowship' is very much a New Testament word and as such will not convey much to our present generation, but how can we translate or, better, re-interpret, what Jesus meant by 'fellowship' to a materialistic 20th Century community? To explain that an object is a flat piece of metal on the end of a wooden shaft with a handle, soon conveys the idea of a spade, but it is very different with an abstract concept and when we have to consider such concepts as 'fellowship of the Holy Spirit' the task becomes even more difficult.

Let us review a few 20th Century 'fellowships' taking first a very broad and general definition, namely, an 'association of people'.

Firstly, with the Public House fellowship we have a group or groups of people generally in friendly association, gathering together informally around the bar discussing various topics over a drink. The grouping may vary from time to time, but will be loosely bound by a similar but ill-defined common interest. Topics will not usually be taken to great depths, largely because of the informality of the situation, there being no fixed times or prepared programmes and people coming and going at random. There

is, therefore, little prospect of the discussion benefitting from prepared thought, even less of deep study. Nevertheless, trains of thought may well be generated and, in a less tangible way, a companionship is made between the casual participants of the group. Some kind of fellowship is thus established and indeed this may be very helpful for unwinding those unresolved tensions which build up from a weary and monotonous day, which far too many people experience in their work.

Secondly, we have 'fellowships' in clubs - Tennis Clubs, Dancing Clubs, Chess Clubs, Veteran Car Clubs, Fishing Clubs etc; there are innumerable clubs of this type where fellowship is generated between people having a common and specialist interest built up around hobbies and recreational activities.

Thirdly, we have, for the younger, Youth Clubs. These are principally designed for the association of boys and girls or young men and women, not for intellectual pursuits but for emotional and recreational purposes to help the young to bridge the gap to adulthood and perhaps make associations which will become deeper in marriage.

We have so far only identified fellowship at rather superficial level, but this does not mean that any particular association or club may not have a considerable value for a particular purpose at a particular time in the life of an individual.

Because of the differing backgrounds of those meeting in the Public House or Youth Club, exchange of ideas is only possible within the common ground possessed by the members. If we wish to proceed to a deeper and closer fellowship more common ground is desirable and at least two main approaches are possible; we may choose our 'fellows' selectively from among those who have a similarity of ideas to ourselves, for example, 'A Christian Fellowship' for those who are followers of Christ, or secondly we may try to impose on a heterogeneous group a common theme, for example, 'This government is ruining the country'. With this process we are, of course, making our group a 'Debating Society'.

This latter approach would lead to a useful exchange of knowledge and views to the general benefit of the group. Such knowledge is, however, mainly of an intellectual or political kind. However, 'man' is also emotional and experiences pleasure in sharing emotional experiences and feelings. This too we do in a variety of ways. Christian groups have devotional services, hymn singing and prayer meetings. These impart a 'togetherness' and to many, a 'togetherness' with God and Jesus. To others, however, hymn singing is not a meaningful occupation and he or she experiences little or no sharing or fellowship.

There is good reason to believe that Jesus chose the communal meal - as the medium of fellowship. His enemies called him a 'Winebibber and gluttonous man'. He would gather together those from all backgrounds, no doubt for deep discussion, but also for close emotional fellowship with ties with himself and through him to God. The early church soon modified this meal by accentuating the symbolic character of this fellowship as a remembrance of the sacrificial death of Jesus. Undoubtedly, for the first few generations of Christians and indeed for many today, this simple, common meal of remembrance gives fellowship both with Jesus and fellow Christians, but we have to acknowledge that for many others it conveys little.

Could a return to the theme and spirit of the 'discussion - meals' of Jesus be beneficial today? We suggest that the most practical way of finding an answer is to try, as these things can only be realistic in a living context. Many have gathered together small, informal groups for discussion and the sharing of light refreshment; others find close fellowship in spending a week or weekend camping. Can these simple practices lead the way to Christian fellowship?

Discussion via 'letters to The Editor' is invited on these remarks.

Editor.

Truth

by G. DEARDEN

One of the profoundest of the recorded sayings of Jesus was uttered when he stood in front of Pontius Pilate and proclaimed, "My task is to bear witness to the truth. For this was I born; for this I came into the world and all who are not deaf to truth listen to my voice." Pilate's retort, whether cynical or genuine, was the rhetorical question, "What is truth?" The more one reads of the life and works of Jesus and his apostles, the more one sees that there is no simple answer to the question. Those of us who were brought up to believe that 'The truth' comprises a list of declarations made in a small pamphlet may have fallen into the pitfall of thinking that 'the truth' is an entity which can be encompassed by the human mind and taught to others as a number of theological propositions. The effect of such a view is to close rather than to open the mind. It encourages the expulsion or rejection of new thoughts, new answers to problems, new ways of considering the mission of Jesus, as though these were necessarily harmful.

There is danger in creating the impression that we know 'the truth' in the sense of having arrived at its fullness and that anything new or additional must be extraneous and erroneous. To entertain 'honest doubt' as a means of progressing toward truth is regarded as weakness or even sinfulness by many who are convinced that they already hold 'the truth', in all its essentials.

One of the implicit objectives of the contributions to Endeavour magazine is to contest that point of view and to represent truth as a goal towards which Christians are striving. Knowing the truth implies boundless understanding and the best of Christ's disciples have achieved only a modicum of it. What do we really know about the nature of God, of Jesus Christ, of the angels, of heaven and of what the kingdom of God means in its fullness? How much truth is there, when we look back over the last generation, in our interpretations of prophecy, our notions about the book of Revelation, or some of the fundamentalist pronouncements about the literal historicity of all aspects of the book of Genesis? How much harm has been done to the faith of others through assertions made by dogmatic Christians on matters where the evidence is scanty or controversial? To listen to some exponents of scripture one would conclude that it is almost an unforgivable sin ever to say, "I do not know;" or "I cannot understand;" or "there are several ways of considering that problem." As we seek to move towards a greater appreciation of the truth of God and to share views and experiences with one another for that purpose, it seems vital to reflect on at least three issues.

First, 'the truth' of which Jesus spoke and of which John in particular wrote so much, is a whole way of life and not simply a set of articles of faith. Our Master claimed to be the embodiment of that truth when he said, "I am the way, the truth and the life."

Secondly, this is a truth to strive for and a goal to be aimed at; we journey at different rates and with varying degrees of success towards it; we do not arrive this side of The Kingdom. At the end of his ministry, Jesus said to his closest disciples, "There is still much that I could say to you but the burden would be too great for you now. However, when he comes who is the Spirit of Truth he will guide you into all the truth."

Thirdly, the truth of God is not discovered simply by the rigours of academic study. Paul reminds the Corinthians that, "as God in his wisdom has ordained, the world failed to find him by its wisdom." He goes on later to say, "we are interpreting spiritual truths to those who have the Spirit; we speak of these gifts of God in words found for us not by our human wisdom but by the Spirit." The plain tenor of Paul's teaching and of that in John's epistles is that the truth is spiritually discerned by those whose way of life is attuned to Christ. As none of us is fully attuned, none can know the whole truth in this life.

All this amplifies what Jesus himself said to his disciples - "If you dwell within the revelation I have brought you are indeed my disciples; you shall know the truth and the truth will set you free." To achieve that is the total Christian purpose. It is the only thing that really matters because to know the truth will bring freedom and to be free means eternal citizenship in The Kingdom of God.

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Giving Diligence to Keep Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace

by

J. H. WEAVING

The words that form the title of this article were used by Paul in his letter to the Ephesians, which was a general letter and probably intended for all the churches.

Paul had had a special revelation of the power and presence of Jesus on his journey to Damascus and as a result of this he had retired to Arabia, no doubt for meditation and prayer; retired to take stock of his old life to ensure that he went the right way this time in the new realm to which he had been called by Jesus.

It is quite clear that he was overjoyed at the prospect of serving his new Master in contrast to the Tables of Stone of his old life. His letters indeed abound with this contrast.

In the quietness of a spot in Arabia Paul had to ask himself this question, "What do the life and teaching of Jesus mean to me?" It would not be surprising if his first feelings were ones of relief at the freedom of mind that he now had after release from the stifling bondage of laws and ordinances. With this release came the dreadful, but wonderful realisation that the logical conclusion from his Master's teaching of the Kingdom of God, was that there could be no division between Jew and non-Jew. Grace and love allowed no barriers! He had once been an exclusive person - a pharisee of the pharisees*, but he had been stopped in his tracks. What was his position now? The 'Letter to the Ephesians' goes a long way towards telling us.

Primarily it points out that the Good News proclaimed by Jesus and brought about by his sacrifice, was that salvation was not just for an exclusive semetic few but for every man. The wall that had previously divided Jew from gentile was now destroyed. Indeed, the 'Good News' was, "that the universe, all in heaven and earth, might be brought into a unity in Christ". (Eph.1:10).

* a separated one of a separated group.

This meant, Paul says, that the recipients of this grace are "raised up and enthroned with Jesus in heavenly realms". (Eph.2:7).

The situation then and today is well contrasted in Wesley's hymn:-

THEN

The Church's one foundation
is Jesus Christ our Lord;
She is his new creation
.....

NOW

Though with a scornful wonder
Men see her sore oppressed
By schism's rent assunder
By heresies distressed.

The Jew and Gentile problem still exists but it is small in comparison with the divisions of colour, class and creed that rend the church today. It is, indeed, a 'Shattered Cross' that stands in Calvary in this 20th Century.

What would Paul say to this generation? Would he echo his words to the Galatians? "There is neither Black nor White. There is neither Middle Class nor Working Class." He would have no need to modify his last citation,

"There is neither male nor female."

But alas, we are not "all one in Christ Jesus." To the first century church, his message clearly showed that he was overwhelmed by one fact - Christ crucified. This was the corner stone of the new creation to which he likened the church. So overwhelmed was he that the original 'Message' of his master is partly obscured, it seems; it is with reticence that he calls to mind that Jesus called this 'new creation' the 'Kingdom of God'. In the letter to the Ephesians it is the Kingdom of Christ and in the sister letter to the Colossians he pens the wonderful words:-

"He delivered us from the power of darkness and hath translated us into the Kingdom of his dear Son."

There are a few references to the Kingdom of God in 1 Corinthians, but uppermost in his mind is the salvation that Jesus had wrought through the cross:-

"I was determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified."

This teaching he needed above all to convince his hearers that Jesus had to make men realise that the only valid force in life was love. The cross divided men asunder - those that could see love and truth and those that preferred darkness.

This man revealed the 'Kingdom of God' to be not a political empire* for the Jews, but a divine realm in which men loved each other and loved the principles of God; where all men are equal, slaves and masters; where there is no unkindness or selfishness; where there are no barriers of class or colour. Against the wonderful backcloth painted by our Lord with his own blood we find the stage today filled with strife, hatred, and injustice; a society divided by class, colour and creed.

The worst examples of this we see in Rhodesia, South Africa and nearer to home, Northern Ireland, where to be a Roman Catholic is to hate a Protestant. Paul would be outraged - "O foolish Belfastians who hath bewitched you?"

Is there anything we can do to help? I feel that if we were to put the question to Jesus, the answer might well be, "Be sociable yourself and offer fellowship to all men!"

Do we suffer from those very things which we condemn in others? We may not shoot Catholics in Northern Ireland, but do we find those with different views from our own intolerable and not worthy of our company? Paul's appeal to this generation would surely be - "Make an effort to extend your friendship to all with whom you come into contact; share with them your thoughts and accept with gratitude their experience in life." We believe that if we do this we shall begin to experience the fellowship of the Kingdom of God.

* This is not intended to imply that Jesus did not also teach that there would be an ultimate glorious manifestation of the Kingdom at the last day.

Book Review

CRITICISM CRITICIZED

"Can we trust the New Testament?" John A.T. Robinson.
Mowbray Paperback. 1977. pp.142. 75p.

It is ironic that John Robinson who, briefly forsaking his brilliant career as a New Testament scholar, scandalized the 'orthodox' in 1963 with his book, "Honest to God", should now, having returned to his more rewarding scholarly career, equally scandalize those who gleefully welcomed his earlier work. The summary of his latest popular book, which is printed on the cover, is an accurate presentation of the contents - "This is more than just a survey, by one of the most distinguished New Testament scholars of the day, of the state of New Testament studies. It is, first and foremost, a rigorous personal searching for a truthful answer to the question posed in the title. Robinson's conclusion is that the New Testament can indeed be regarded still as a trustworthy guide to the words and works of Jesus the Christ."

For those who are familiar with the details of transmission of the N.T. manuscripts, his 'non-popular', but much more detailed textbook, "Redating the New Testament", should be consulted; this when it appeared was bitterly attacked by some of those whose work and opinions were fundamentally questioned, but no effective and detailed answer to the position which he there adopted has yet been forthcoming. It is arising out of that work that he wrote the present book as popular presentation of his beliefs based on the considerations of the more scholarly work.

Apart from the overwhelming importance of the question with which he there deals, the book contains revealing and educative glimpses of many side issues which arise in the course of presentation. As an example of this, he commences a chapter headed, "Facts and Fallacies" with the observation, "One of the most powerful factors in distrust is ignorance, and I find in talking to laymen that there are all kinds of misconceptions about the New Testament, and what scholars do, that lay them open to believing anything - or nothing." This observation is developed as a powerful argument that if our faith is robust, rather than timid and fearful, we shall welcome all critical examination of the New Testament. Either we are wasting our life by building on sand, if our faith is misplaced, or we are casting away a valuable opportunity to learn further from the Word of Life by the energies and work of others who have

specialised in this difficult field of studies. The fact that the ideological outlook of many has led them to prostitute their learning in the service of a misplaced campaign against Christianity should not be allowed to stand in the way of fearlessly facing the questions and, in the outcome, strengthening an already robust faith.

One result of 'burying our heads in the sand' is that we continue to be misled and puzzled by the misconceptions of a bygone age, which we have inherited from our youth, and are thus placed in a precarious position when meeting modern criticism, by our mistaken belief that we have to defend an untenable position if we are to remain faithful to God. He deals in detail with this question in a chapter headed, "Four Attitudes", which commences with the revealing sketch of them - "In the confusion of voices on what can be believed about the New Testament, four positions may be discerned. These are what might be called, the cynicism of the foolish; the fundamentalism of the fearful; the scepticism of the wise, and the conservatism of the committed What I am describing are tendencies that to some extent cut across all of us, but which yet are powerful in pulling us apart - and, I believe, in distorting the truth." The chapter ends with a sobering fact and warning - "It is sobering to reflect that it is mainly in those areas of Christendom where biblical criticism has made least impact, in eastern Orthodoxy and peasant Catholicism, that Marxism has made most the best, and ultimately the only valid reason for taking the quest seriously is the love and trust of truth for its own sake, which means, for the Christian, for Christ's sake."

The book contains a number of popular presentations of his technical reasons for dating all of the Gospels, including the fourth, prior to the fall of Jerusalem. He supports strongly the earlier position taken up by Dodd that the fourth Gospel is, in some ways, the most historical of the four. His words in this connection are intended to be biting, in response to the exaggerated and unsupportable claims that would put the date as AD 170 - "For one thing no one now believes in the simple view that Mark gives us the Jesus of history: John the Christ of faith In fact it is becoming clear that Mark is much more theological and John much more historical than was previously supposed. It is also becoming clear that the consensus is rapidly dissolving that John is dependent upon the Synoptics This indeed has been one of the swiftest turn-about in critical history." He shows that in language it is exactly what we would have expected from an early record, judged by the recently discovered "Dead Sea Scrolls", that its picture of Palestine is exactly in alignment with that preceding the fall of Jerusalem but of a nature impossible for anyone composing 20 years later to picture, and that there is no slightest hint of a knowledge of the actual conditions following the fall of the city, such as would have escaped, inevitably, a writer of around AD 80 or later.

Perhaps the two most important chapters, so far as his personal faith is concerned, are the two following his treatment of Gospel dates, each headed by a question, "Who is this man?" and "What became of him?". In the first of these he examines the claims made by many critics that the recorded sayings of Jesus are neither verbatim, which, of course, no one would expect them to be, nor an accurate presentation of what he said, but rather a reading back into his life of that which their self-developed theology would expect him to have said. He examines and compares the phraseology of the Epistles and Acts with that placed in the mouth of Jesus in the Gospels, and shows that it is fundamentally different and earlier than that which the Church towards the end of the century was using, and even that which would not have been invented for him as early as AD 50. Speaking of the promise of Jesus that he would send them the Spirit to recall all to their minds, he comments - "As John also insists, the Holy Spirit would not speak 'of himself', inventing and creating out of nothing: he would take the things of Jesus and show them in a new and living light. This is the process that above all we see at work in the Fourth Gospel itself. It is seeing and showing everything 'from the end' - not inventing or creating, but holding everything up for the true light to shine through it, so that in the flesh we can see the 'glory'. John's Gospel is not un-historical but history really entered into."

In the second of these two chapters, he points out that the passion narratives occupy a disproportionate space in the total Gospel narratives being a third of Mark and nearly half of John, and continues - "It is this that dominates the early sermons of Acts and the Epistles - his birth is not mentioned and his Ministry hardly at all." This concern for a multitude of historical details, which in no way advance the theology of later years, shows that "the early Christians had an interest in the historical story for its own sake," and is described by him as "the Achilles' heel of the theory of many of the form-critics that the Church had no concern for the historical framework of Jesus' life." It is in this connection that he says of the Fourth Gospel, "As well as being theologically the most profound, it is full of historical and geographical details for which no plausible doctrinal or symbolic reason can be found. They are there because that is how it happened - though how it happened, and when, and where, is also, with those with the eyes to see through the details, of profound significance." His detailed analysis of the trial and resurrection narratives is penetrating and a deadly thrust at those who claim to find proof of falsity in it, and equally devastating to some who have attempted to bolster its credulity with inventions and reasoning of their own. It was not the arid question of, "Who moved the stone?" which established the historical veracity of the event, but the historical evidence of the abiding presence of a life-giving power within the Church. As he says, "It was this third strand in the evidence that was really decisive for the early Church. For belief in the resurrection was not confined to those who had seen the appearances, let alone to those who had viewed the tomb. It was

founded not on other people's tall stories, but on a corporate, spiritual awareness of Christ no longer as a dead memory, however vivid, but as a vivifying presence."

His final chapter takes up the four basic attitudes from which he commences, and under the title of, "Trustful Faith" shows the strength and weakness resident in each. It is an examination from which we all can gather warnings about our own presuppositions. His own faith (which is trustful in every respect) is described thus - "The conclusion of the matter may be put quite simply. A Christian has nothing to fear but the truth. For it alone could show that this movement is not of God (Acts. 5.38f). But he also has nothing to fear in the truth. For to him the truth is Christ (John 14.6). It is large - larger than the world - and shall prevail. It is also a living, and a growing, reality. And therefore he is free, or should be free, to follow the truth wherever it leads."

Although he is at pains in this work to avoid most of the scholarly terms which might not be apprehended by the reader of a popular work, there is one such, which slips out occasionally, which may be downright misleading to some. This is the term 'myth' which many understand in a popular, misconceived way in which it is never used in modern critical analysis. It is not possible here to illustrate its true import to those who hold as firm as any man an allegiance to the authority of the Bible as God's Word, but for those with the energy to delve, its meaning is well illustrated in the long and involved analysis within the three major works of John Hick during the second half of this century: it is hoped in future issues to present a summary of the major contents of these three, each dealing with a subject fundamental to Christian faith.

Ralph Lovelock.

OMISSION - The Editor regrets that the name of the Reviewer of the Good News Bible was inadvertently omitted in the last issue.

This was David Pitt Francis.

A Salute to Bultmann

BBC TALK by DENNIS NINEHAM

Rudolph Karl Bultmann died on 30th July 1976 at the age of 91. A theologian commenting on an early 20th century theological dissertation remarked, "but since it was written, there has been two world wars and Bultmann!" It is indeed true to say that however outrageous some of his statements might seem to us, New Testament theology will never be the same again.

For many, the introduction to Bultmann, together with Paul Tillich and Bonhoeffer, came through the more popular work of the Bishop of Woolich - 'Honest to God'. This book shocked many, but it awoke a lot of us from our theological lethargy, and was useful because of this.

What are Bultmann's most outstanding contributions? He is best known for his demythology, but to me his greatest concept was the new awareness of the power of the challenge of Jesus - "The 'Kingdom of God' is upon you. It is like an express train coming into the station; a decision is required of you; you cannot escape."

Unlike the so-called liberal theologians of the 19th century, Bultmann did not try to explain away those passages and concepts that seemed unacceptable to the modern mind but, instead, insisted on their vital relevance to the 1st Century, then decided their true essence and finally endeavoured to re-interpret them for the 20th Century scene.

Dennis Nineham the well known New Testament theologian recently gave a most interesting critical appreciation on the B.B.C. Third Programme, with the above title. He spoke of his personal courage when, in the 1930's, it was not safe to attend any church save the official German church - "Bultmann went quite openly every Sunday to the Confessing Church* and frequently gave

* The group of German Evangelical Christians which most actively opposed the German Christian Church Movement sponsored by the Nazis between 1933 and 1945 and which claimed to stand fast by the Augsburg (Luther) and Reformation Confessions.

effective opposition to the Nazis during the war. On ecclesiastical issues he did not count the loss of popularity which he suffered by promulgating his radical views." Professor Nineham remarks, "What struck one most at the personal level was the sheer humanity of the man." He had a warm personality and a sense of humour.

He was a colleague of the existentialist philosopher Martin Heidegger from whom he derived considerable help in his theological conceptions. He was a student at Marburg and Tübingen and spent most of his life as a professor at Marburg.

What was it that made Bultmann's contribution to New Testament study so significant? We will quote Dr. Nineham directly:-

"First, there was his work on the Gospels. It was just after the 1st World War that Bultmann's major books began to appear and he then emerged as one of the two or three German scholars, usually known in England as form critics, who had lighted apparently more or less independently on a decisive insight into the origins and nature of the Gospels. Close study of the Gospels will soon reveal that they break up almost like so many jigsaw puzzles into a number of separate units. Each unit contains a single story about Jesus or a single item of his teaching and apart from an occasional link-word, each unit is self-contained and self-explanatory in the sense that it can be understood without any reference to what comes before or after. For instance, you could take the story about the Disciples plucking ears of corn on the Sabbath out of its context in the 2nd chapter of St. Mark's Gospel and put it down in the middle of Chapter 10 or even in one of the chapters of Matthew or Luke and it would still make perfectly good sense. If you think about it that is a fact. Writers usually compose their paragraphs specially for the context for which they are intended each paragraph leading on from the one before and preparing the way for the one that follows. Bultmann quickly saw the significance of the fact that this is not the case with the paragraphs or pericopes as he called them in the Gospels. Clearly in this case the paragraphs must have come into existence in more or less their present form independently of the Gospel writers and before ever they put pen to paper. Who then composed these pericopes? Knowing as they did a good deal about the way oral traditions have been handed on in different cultures, the form critics were ready with their answer. So far as these paragraphs can be said to have had an author, it was the early Church. The Gospel paragraphs owe their separate self-contained character to the fact that the little communities of early Christians when they gathered here and there for worship, instruction and discussion, were

accustomed to listen to some story about Jesus and then to have its meaning and moral for them drawn out and expounded. Naturally, only a single story was dealt with at each meeting and there will be no occasion for it to be linked geographically or chronologically with stories told on other occasions. And since the aim was to deepen the faith and form the characters of the members of the little communities, there will have been no call to include in the stories any details not essential to those purposes. So what the Gospel writers had to work on was a rather random collection of separate stories which had been preserved mostly in oral form on the principle of the survival of the fittest to edify and these stories will have retained for the most part no indication of the order in which, or the places at which, the incidents to which they related had occurred."

Dr. Nineham observes that Jesus came at a time of political and theological ferment and speculation and acted like a match applied to a powder keg:-

"In particular, Bultmann points to three elements in the first century beliefs and hopes. First, the apocalyptic expectations of the Jews, especially those centring on a personal saviour figure variously described as Christ, Son of Man, Son of David, and Son of God. Secondly, the diverse Jewish and Gentile beliefs and speculations known to us as Gnosticism, particularly those which included a personal redeemer figure who descended to earth from the high God to enlighten the elect and then ascending again to blaze the trail to Heaven for his followers. Thirdly, the mystery religions of the Gentile world with their notions of sacramental union with a divine hero figure, often a dying and rising God and consequent sharing in his divinity and eternity. The impact of Jesus, and particularly of his crucifixion, on his contemporaries was such that they were driven, Bultmann would have said, by the providence of God, to use these and other similar categories to understand and interpret him. What the New Testament offers us is thus a number of accounts of Jesus differing according as one or other of these backgrounds predominated in the writer's mind.....

As Bultmann saw it, the fact that the historical Jesus gave rise to such a preached Christ is the essential meaning of the New Testament accounts of the resurrection. Where Bultmann differed from others was in his recognition that the preached Christ is not identical with the Jesus of history but if so, why did Bultmann take Christ seriously? In essence, his answer was, 'God

help me I can do no other.' Bultmann's experience was that if this Christ figure is truly preached and I truly listen to the preaching he does something to me. He faces me as Bultmann believed Jesus faced his original hearers with an inescapable choice. He shows me just what my previous way of living has been worth and puts before me an alternative possibility, the possibility of relying entirely on God's power and grace. I cannot avoid seeing that this is an ultimate choice and I am judged by the decision I make with regard to it. To adopt this alternative is in a very real sense to know Jesus as the end of the world; the end of the world I have built up round me; for it involves admitting my sin and my helplessness and giving up all the pretended securities derived from this world by which I have been bolstering up the life of the natural man."

The next aspect of Bultmann's teaching which Dr. Nineham selects in his short appreciation was one occasioned by the impact of the Second World War on the realisation of his teaching in practice among the troops. One after another of his former pupils, who had become chaplains to the German forces, came back to report that his teaching just had no impact. This will not surprise most of us who have to read his works some three times or so before we even begin to plumb their depths. As a result of this Bultmann realised that what was lacking was a mode of expression of the Teaching of Jesus and First Century Christianity in terms of 20th century understanding. Unfortunately, or some may think fortunately, Bultmann's method of expression came out in terms more suitable for the erudite theological student than Hitler's troops!

Dr. Nineham observed that Bultmann starts from the thesis:-

"Each age interprets its environment both natural and supernatural in its own terms. For example, what we interpret as an epileptic seizure and treat accordingly was identified in earlier ages as demonic possession or as a disturbance in the balance of the humas. Similarly, Bultmann argued in the case of the supernatural. When the earliest Christians expressed their faith in terms of the Christ figure, that figure and his significance were bound to be conceived in essentially 1st century categories whether Jewish or Greco-Roman. They spoke of him, for example, as the Messiah, the anointed one or as the Son of God, that is the supernatural agent many Jews had been expecting God to send into the world to wind up history and bring everything in existence under his effective control - what the English versions of the New Testament call, His Kingdom. Likewise, the

death of this figure was interpreted as a sacrifice efficacious for human sin. And the New Testament speaks of him having been literally raised from the dead and of our being incorporated into his raised life. Such language Bultmann described as being myth, but it is crucially important to understand what he meant by doing so. He did not mean what the early Christians were talking about was non-existent or unreal. When ancient man spoke of a fit as a case of demon possession the phenomenon he was referring to was real enough, it is just that he described it in a way which meshed in with the rest of his understanding of reality, but does not mesh in with ours. Similarly, Bultmann was clear that what the New Testament Christians were pointing to in their terms was real enough and yet it is unnecessary and unreasonable to expect modern Western man to understand that reality or to express it in just those terms. Rather, Bultmann suggested the language of the New Testament must be demythologised before it can become clear or powerful today. Demythologisation is an ugly coinage, but perhaps the rough significance and at the same time the indispensability of what it meant, may become clear if we gloss Bultmann's terminology with the word of Leonard Hodgson, an English theologian contemporary with him, who used to insist that the first question we must always ask about any passage in the New Testament is this - 'What must the truth be now if people who thought as they did put it like that?' Unfortunately, from the point of view of English readers, Bultmann posed his attempts to answer that question in the rather esoteric and extremely complicated language of Heidegger's philosophy."

Finally, Dr. Nineham sums up Bultmann's achievement in demythology in a critical but positive way:-

"It does not have either the universal validity or the universal appeal Bultmann sometimes seemed to claim for it, nor was that by any means the only thing about which Bultmann was wrong. Probably, for example, his Lutheran background made him too optimistic about the possibility of finding all the essentials of a tenable 20th century faith already present in the New Testament, if only its documents are demythologised thoroughly enough. Long before Bultmann's death other inaccuracies and inadequacies in what he said had been pointed out in considerable numbers, but in an age of galloping cultural change such as ours, it implies no reflection on any scholar to predict that his ideas as they stand will not last. If Bultmann is rightly numbered among the great, that is because he identified a number of the real problems in the

theological situation of his time, confronted them with courage, openness and immense acumen and so opened up the way towards solutions and new positions more satisfactory than his own."

John Weaving

What Is Relativity ?

by

B. C. RENNIE

What is relativity? It is simply the principle that all motion is relative. In other words, if scientists on Earth say that a comet is passing by at a great speed then a scientist on the comet is equally entitled to say that the Earth is passing at a great speed. Put that way, the idea seems perfectly reasonable, and it would be hard to find any disagreement with it. The genius of Albert Einstein was to carry this simple and obvious idea, by a long chain of careful reasoning, to a surprising conclusion. Einstein's method, of which he was a master, was the 'thought experiment' that is an experiment of great accuracy that is not actually done, but only imagined; the advantage over a real experiment is not solely that it is easier and cheaper, but more importantly it is more accurate, for we imagine instruments much more accurate and scientists more careful than real ones. Einstein's experiment was to have a train travelling at uniform speed on a long, straight track. One scientist has set up a laboratory in the train and another scientist has done the same at one of the stations, and they are comparing results. They both use the same units of length because for instance they can both measure the distance apart of the rails, and they both use the same units of time (for instance the time taken for light to go unit distance). Each has a clock and as one passes the other they synchronise the clocks. Now the scientist in the station wants to synchronise another clock some distance down the line and he has two ways of doing it. One way is to get the scientist in the train to check it as he passes; the other way is to send a light-signal, estimating the time for the signal to travel by halving the time for a signal to make the return journey. The surprising thing is that these two methods give different answers. This is just a matter of simple algebra with times, speeds and distances, nothing really difficult, but you have to work very carefully to get it right. The inevitable conclusion is that there is no right way to synchronise a distant clock, each observer is entitled to his own opinion. Now suppose that two observers both report the time and place of some event, it is, of course, possible to predict the report of one from that of the other, but the relation will be complicated, for the time reported by the second observer will depend on both the time and position reported by the first, and

similarly the position reported by the second. This is why we must have space-time, for in translating the reports of one observer into the language of the other we have to treat space and time together, the time-measurements cannot be kept in a separate compartment or calculation from the space-measurements.

Creation Myths

by

W. G. LAMBERT

Why should we be interested in creation myths? * For isolated interest only? Why not listen to, or rather watch, a Walt Disney film instead? If it is only light entertainment one seeks, then that question is very relevant, of course, but if one is interested in more serious matters, then creation myths and creation stories are very definitely relevant. To anyone who is interested in the New Testament - in Jesus Christ - they are still relevant. Remember how the 4th Gospel begins? "In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God." One does not need a commentary to realise that here there is a deliberate allusion back to the 1st verse of Genesis, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." So 'Jesus' creation is related to the 'original creation.' It is seen as part of the total purpose of God's creation.

It is important to know something about the geographical setting of the creation stories. Their cradle was the Near East stretching in the north from the Aegean down to the Persian Gulf in the south. Traversing from west to east we have 'The Holy Land' in the middle. All around it we have other, mainly larger countries, such as Egypt in the west, with its mighty river - The Nile, without which that country would not have existed.

When one comes to the Holy Land one has to remember that in the south it is very much a desert. Again, a traveller going east across the Jordan likewise encounters a vast desert - the Arabian desert. Unlike Egypt this was never a great centre of civilisation, its inhabitants were nomads and it only became of any importance when the camel was domesticated and it was used for trade routes. One really could not use the area effectively without the camel, one might live by an oasis and support oneself somehow by engaging in a small amount of trade; possibly journeying here and there by donkey, but the area was never culturally important. The Holy Land is thus a comparatively small strip of land bordered by the Mediterranean on one side and desert beyond the River Jordan on the other. There were two

* An address given by W.G.Lambert at a One Day Study Group held at the University of Aston in January 1977.

adjacent countries, country Moab and Ammon on the edge of the desert, but they were never prosperous. As one goes north into Syria, one comes into a much more prosperous area, no doubt, primarily because it was very good agricultural land, better indeed than the Holy Land itself and secondly it was also strategically placed for controlling trade routes from the north. If one had to come down from the north into Palestine then, one would come through Syria. Crossing the desert was never a practical route even after the camel had been domesticated. This then is the setting, from the Holy Land one must go north not east to get into Mesopotamia and further north still to get into Anatolia, The Syrian seaports were always more important commercially than those of Palestine. The Hebrews themselves were never great sailors and their coastline did not give them much help in making ports.

Turning now to Mesopotamia, it is of course the land of the Tigris and the Euphrates. Like Egypt and the Nile, this country would not have existed without these rivers. Mesopotamia falls naturally into two parts divided by the point where the two rivers come closest together. Southward from here to where the rivers flow into the Persian Gulf and Northward upwards to the mountains of Anatolia. In the South the rainfall is too little for agriculture and cultivation of the land requires irrigation from the rivers. However, in the North there is, at certain times of the year, enough rainfall to provide vegetation and even if it is only in certain parts that crops could be regularly planted for Bedouin with their flocks, it was nevertheless a good area for grazing.

We have so far considered that part of the Near East involving the Holy Land that was accessible by land. One can, of course, go across the Mediterranean to Cyprus, Crete and the Greek Islands or, alternatively, overland and through Anatolia into the same area. Thus, Palestine occupies quite a strategic position; trade that came via the Red Sea would often come from the Red Sea Port of Ezion Geber into Palestine and on to other countries. It could, of course, go through Egypt but once the camel had been domesticated the Hebrews controlled much of the trade that did come through this area. Thus they were in the centre of things and though never, even under Solomon, one of the great powers of the Near East nevertheless they were a power, in their time; sufficient to make an impact both politically and economically. However, when one looks back over history, their great impact on the world was not political or economic but, of course, religious.

What can we find out about these countries looking at them historically? One can only have history of course when there are records. Archaeology can give us some idea of the materials of civilisation, but it is only when writing is available that we gain a concrete idea of who the people were and precisely what they did. Only then can we build up history. Writing began first in Mesopotamia, in the southern part; the part where they cultivated the land by

irrigation, but very soon afterwards it appeared also in Egypt; for chronological comparisons when was the time of Moses? We cannot give a precise date, but it must have been somewhere between say 1,400 and 1,200 BC. These are the extreme limits and 1,300 to 1,200 is more likely.

So writing existed in Egypt and Mesopotamia from 3,000 BC. onwards long before the Hebrews entered the land. Considering Egypt, we know all sorts of things about the people who lived there and their ideas. To give you some time scale we can think of the great pyramids which were erected between 2,600 and 2,500 BC. These were well over a thousand years before the time of Moses so one can see that in Egypt, civilisation had built up very rapidly. Fortunately we have texts from round about the time of the pyramids onwards and from these one can learn of the Egyptians' ideas of religion and in particular of their ideas of creation.

Coming now to Arabia, we have nothing from this great area until the first millenium and it is hotly disputed as to which are the earliest inscriptions. Although the inscriptions now number probably six thousand, curiously all the verbs are in the third person; there is not one in the first or second person. So despite the large number of inscriptions they are rather uninformative and tell us nothing about the people's ideas on creation. We have personal names, occasionally the name of a King, and the names of their Gods, but we have nothing in the way of literature. So that, unfortunately, it is a blank so far as our studies go.

Turning to Syria and Palestine, recently, as many of you may have read in the newspapers, there have been ancient finds in Ebla, a site just south of the modern Aleppo. They can be dated about 2,300 BC., more or less exactly in our relative chronology and there are around 17,000 of them, but not a single one has yet been published and everyone who has been shown photographs, including the author, has been sworn to secrecy, so I am afraid one should not take any statement too seriously yet. For instance, the statement that there is a version of the flood story is extremely doubtful. The man who made it has confessed to the author that it was all very doubtful and he could not be sure that is what it was. I have handled one photograph myself and have had plenty of time to look at it, but it was simply a receipt for various quantities of grain. So that did not help. In Syria and Palestine we do not know anything in fact until just before the time of The Exodus and this follows the uncovering of Ras Shamra, an ancient site on the coast of Syria. This was a port and a lot of trade passed through it bringing wealth to the area. It is from this place that we have a lot of Canaanite literature dated about 1350 BC., a little while before The Exodus, when the Canaanite were flourishing and prosperous. This literature is indeed very important for study of the Old Testament. So for Syria this is all we have.

If we go north into Anatolia, one of the ancient peoples who lived there were the Hittites. From the Hittites we do have literature, but unfortunately much of it is not native, but borrowed. It dates from around about 2,000 to about 1200 BC., the greater part of it being in fact roughly contemporary with the finds of Ras Shamra, say about 1350 BC. Much of it was borrowed from the Mesopotamians, some of it from the people who are called Horites in the Book of Genesis and some of it was even borrowed from the Syrians. For this reason we find parallels with Ras Shamra texts and not very much of it is real Hittite but this does not matter too much, for what they have given us is still very useful.

Passing down into Mesopotamia itself, the southern area was, all through history, the creative zone. The north was usually a follower and rarely had much to contribute in the way of civilisation. Historically, one can sum it up quite quickly: the third millenium from the beginning of writing 3,000 roughly down to 2,000 BC., was a millenium of Sumerian dominance. These people are not mentioned in the Bible but they were a very creative and original people whose language is causing us much difficulty still and one has to use Sumerian to help decipher the tablets from Ebla, which is why they are so difficult.

In the north on the Tigris one has Assyria, which is important Biblically and important politically in that it was a great military power. It was the Assyrians who destroyed the Northern Kingdom (Israel) and carried it off into captivity. But culturally the Assyrians were always dependent on the people in the south. Their own native culture was very limited and the number of documents written in the Assyrian dialect even from Assyria is quite small. The big libraries the Kings collected were normally of Sumerian and Babylonian texts.

In the south, after the Sumerians disappeared, Assyria was displaced by the Babylonians, a people who were related culturally to the Assyrians. Their capital of Babylon was built on the Euphrates and from here they ruled over the southern area, occasionally expanding until the Assyrians fell. One can read about this in the Old Testament. The Babylonians now, for about a century, took over the whole area and under Nebuchadnezzar the second, they destroyed the southern Hebrew Kingdom and carried away the people of Judah captive as well as destroying the Temple.

That is the background; we now come to our subject, 'Creation myths - what are they?' Answering this question simply, they are a mixture of science, philosophy and religion. Let us take an illustration, a rather simple one perhaps. You all will have read in your younger days some 'Just So' stories or had them read to you and there was one famous one, of course, about how the giraffe got its neck. Well, how did it? We are told that one giraffe, liking the tender leaves at the top of the tree, stretched its originally short neck

until it was able to reach the tender shoots and thereby the giraffe got its long neck. A 'Just So' story is a very good example of a myth. One observes the facts of nature - the giraffe has a longer neck than other animals - and then one asks the question, "Why does it have a longer neck and how did it get it?" Then, in a story, one tries to explain the reason. I am not sure whether the story is true or not as regards the giraffe. There may be some scientists who might be inclined to agree that this is essentially what must have happened, but I am not sure. At least, however, this is the way that myth operates. Thus in this way they are scientific. In science, one has to postulate a theory to explain the facts that one observes. Very frequently no one is capable of proving the truth of the theory; there is not any proof available, but nevertheless, it is an accepted scientific method, so in this sense a creation myth is scientific.

It is also philosophy because there comes a time when science and philosophy have to merge - when one starts asking profound questions from the observable facts of nature such as "Why is the universe here?" We no longer ask ourselves a specific question, "How did the giraffe get its long neck?" Rather, by observing everything in nature, one asks a general question, "How did all these things come about and where did we human beings originate?" At this point, one is leaving science and getting into the realm of philosophy. Creation myths are asking precisely this sort of question and giving an answer. Myths show that one observes things and one notes that everything one sees has a beginning. Sometimes one can see the beginning as with a tree, or an animal. With other things one presumes there must have been some sort of beginning, for example, a river. Was it always there? One notices that it washes away its bank so there might have been a time when there was not a river there at all or at least only a very small one. So one begins to think that perhaps this river had a beginning and that it had gradually washed its way down, creating its own course by washing away the soft ground carrying the particles of soil down and depositing them later in the form of silt. People began to think therefore and ask questions and when one asks fundamental questions such as, "Why are we here? and not "How did we come to be here?" Then one is in the realm of philosophy and religion. So this is essentially the attempt of primitive men to answer basic questions, scientific, philosophic, and religious about his creation.

To be continued.....

The Social Gospel

by

B. C. RENNIE

We hear a lot these days about the 'Social Gospel',^{*} for the mass media, like the Athenians, spend their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing.

Many of us, however, have no need for a new gospel, like St. Paul who wrote, "The Jews require a sign and the Greeks seek after wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block and unto the Greeks foolishness."

This urge to have a new 'gospel' or, more accurately, a new morality or religion, comes partly from the fact that we live in a more complicated world than that of the early Christians of the first century. Of course, our world seems bigger and faster moving and harder to understand, but the New Testament teaches us all the principles that we need to know, and Jesus promises that the Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth.

Man is a religious animal, and in the absence of Christianity a natural religion will arise to supply the need. Natural religions, invented by people, all show their origins, in particular by three characteristics: (a) They are man-centred, regarding the human race as the most important part of the universe. (b) They are priest-ridden, insisting that the ordinary person is dependent upon the ministrations of a professional holy man or witch-doctor. (c) They are gnostic or ritualistic, requiring that the adherent or his professional adviser should know the right way to get out of any kind of difficulty. These three characteristics show up not only in the primitive pagan religions that anthropologists tell us about, but also in the corruptions that are always threatening to creep into Christianity. An example is the modern 'social gospel' for (a) it is clearly man-centred; (b) for 'priest' we may put 'social worker' and (c) note their insistence on the need for psychological research and the provision of trained social workers.

Now where does all this get us with the young people who get their kicks out of throwing stones at telephone boxes? The answers are there in the Bible for anyone who wants to find them.

* A somewhat contrary view has been expressed in a previous article in Endeavour entitled, 'Towards a Better Treatment of Offenders' (Issue No.40, Autumn 1973). Correspondence would be welcomed. Editor.

On the paying of tax to the authorities remember the incident described in Matt. 21 and Mark 12 with the much quoted phrase, "Render therefore unto Caesar..." and about the tribute money at Capernaum (Matt. 17). The message coming through from these passages is that we should keep the social system of the country running smoothly. Of course, the social system of first century Palestine was simpler and clearer than ours today, but the general outline is the same, we work and pay taxes and we hope to receive protection and the necessities and some of the luxuries of life. There was a difference, that in those days there was no question of modifying the system or of imposing new laws. Nowadays, the laws and the machinery of the social system are continually changing; in fact we all have some voice in the changes, even if it is only in having a vote at an election occasionally. How should we use our influence? Surely we must be guided by the Christian teaching, to get the system running so as to give the best possible overall results. Therefore, our Christian duty is to press for efficient social engineering. There are no easy answers to the problems of mugging, vandalism, drug abuse and so on. These problems of social engineering call for careful study, hard work, hard thinking and inspired leadership, certainly not for the mixture of pompous academic claptrap and glutinous sentimentality that is being offered to us under the name of the social gospel.

What happens these days? So often you come across people claiming to represent the Christian church but asserting that we should be kind to hooligans and never punish them! Is this simply due to stupidity? Partly, of course, but not entirely. There is a more subtle and powerful reason.

Recall the three temptations (the World, the Flesh and the Devil) of Jesus in the wilderness, recorded in Matt 4 and Luke 4. What is usually called the temptation of the World was when the Devil invited Jesus to jump off the roof of the Temple in Jerusalem. The idea was that to please the masses with a spectacular demonstration of power was an easy way to obtain popular support. This was recounted by Jesus to his disciples, and by them in the Gospels, not as an interesting story, but because all Christians should be warned about this temptation. Of course the Devil will tempt us in different ways, for none of us expects to be able to jump off a high building and land safely; for us the temptation will be to take the easy way to popularity, that is to conform to what the crowd expects of us. St. Paul expressed it in Romans 12 by his exhortation, "be not conformed to this world."

What sort of thing is 'this world' saying to us in the nineteen seventies? There has been one quite remarkable change in the world's values in the last hundred years. In the nineteenth century people were frank and open about punishment and suffering and death; whipping and hanging were used to maintain law and order, and nobody was embarrassed by talk about them. The death-bed scene was almost an essential ingredient for a best-selling sentimental novel. But sex was different; it was obscene, never mentioned in print

or in polite society. Now in the nineteen seventies all this has been reversed. Sex is the stock-in-trade of the mass media and every sentimental novel must have a 'love-making' scene. Pain and death are obscene now; the heroes of adventure stories go to absurd lengths to avoid killing the baddies or even hurting them. At home, if granny should die the children are hustled out of the house in case they should see a corpse and the undertaker is called to get the body out of sight as soon as possible, or better still, granny is sent away to die in a geriatric home. Whipping which used to be part of the experience of every child is now something disgusting to be seen furtively in a 'blue movie'. There could not have been a more complete or exact reversal of standards.

Of course, it is always easy to conform to the world and to drift with the tide of popular approval. If we choose not to punish the vandals, the hooligans and the muggers; then we can tell ourselves smugly that we are sirless; we cannot be blamed for anything; we have not condemned anybody. It gives a lovely warm feeling deep down inside. Is that not so? And if someone is tasteless enough to remind us of the victim whose face was kicked in then we can stoutly maintain our innocence, for after all, we were not there at the time, and anyway it was really only an accident - just a matter of someone having a psychological maladjustment, probably due to bad upbringing and someone else foolishly walking in a lonely street at night. And nobody can be blamed for accidents, especially not me; and nobody can be held responsible, especially not me. This kind of avoidance of responsibility fits in well with the world of the nineteen seventies, but not with Christianity.

There is another feature of the social gospel worth noting, the insistence about people being 'entitled' to things, which is very 'with-it', very modern, and in full accord with the policies of all the most powerful political parties. But what does the Bible say? See Matt 20 about the labourers who started work at different times in the vineyard. Romans 6 makes it clear that there is just one thing that we humans are entitled to, that is the wages of sin, which is death. Make no mistake about that.

The Social Gospel is a perversion that, like a parasite, fastens onto and fattens on the Church. Beware of it.

Einstein Anticipated

by

B. C. RENNIE

It was at the beginning of the twentieth century that Albert Einstein revolutionised physics and cosmology by proposing the theory of relativity, asserting that space and time are not two distinct things, but are two different aspects of one thing, the new concept of space-time. More recently there has been much debate about the early history of the universe, and the view now favoured by most is the theory of Canon Lemaitre, that it all started with a big bang a long time ago; perhaps thirteen thousand million years ago. Of course, it is hard to visualise the universe the size of your fist, so hot and so compressed that even atoms cannot exist, and even more difficult to imagine how it was not only the matter that was created, but the space-time in which matter exists.

However, Saint Augustine of Hippo (354-430) in his 'Confessions' discussed this aspect of the Creation and expressed the opinion that the world was created 'with time' and not 'in time'. Also in this connection there is a Biblical reference, the assertion of Jesus, "Before Abraham was, I am." (John 8:58).

It is sometimes hard to separate theology from astronomy and relativity. God (defined as creator of the universe) certainly cannot exist only in the space-time that He has created: that is one of the things that makes the idea of God the Creator difficult to grasp. We may, by a great effort of imagination, think of God as outside space, but the idea of being outside time calls for a very thorough training in relativity. Isaac Watts who wrote (quoting Psalm 90) "A thousand ages in thy sight are like an evening gone" was groping in the right direction, and perhaps going as far as most people can manage.

