

sacrificed to the heroic daring of creativeness',⁶ which is the universal and eternal work of God. This calls for a conscious recognition that nowhere has God left Himself without witness and everywhere we need to walk with quiet step and sensitive ear lest we miss some new disclosure of His grace. Never must we presume to dictate to God the channel through which that disclosure may come.

History and Rudolf Bultmann

J. C. Hindley

For a conference of this kind we presumably want to assess Bultmann's contribution as a whole, for his greatness lies in his brilliant performance in dovetailing many disparate and detailed researches into one unified understanding of history, scripture and experience. Yet the whole cannot be assessed without a precise examination of each piece of the interlocking evidence and the auxiliary researches on which Bultmann's impressive structure rests, and that would take at the very least a whole book. We can do no more than offer a few impressions on the theme suggested. The task is made yet more difficult by the fact that when Bultmann leaves the field of his technical competence to talk about philosophy and historical method his language becomes impressionistic and imprecise to an alarming degree. We could indeed devote the whole of this paper in trying to elucidate what precisely Bultmann has to say to us. We shall therefore do no more than raise questions and suggest some of the major points at which (as it seems to me) Bultmann's position is less than secure.

I

There appear to be three main drives behind Bultmann's 'existential interpretation' of the Christian faith. Firstly, there is his general scepticism about the possibility of talking about God at all as He is in himself. This scepticism led him in an early essay to say, 'The object of an existential analysis of man is man; and it is likewise man that is the object of theology.'¹ It follows that all talk of God's action or God's nature which does not directly speak of man must be eliminated as 'myth'. In the second place, Bultmann's concern with man is clarified

⁶ Berdyaev, N., *The Meaning of the Creative Act*, translated, Donald A. Lowrie, Collier Books, 1962, p. 307.

¹ 'The Historicity of Man and Faith' in *E. and F.*, pp. 92 f.

through his association with Heidegger: the latter's existential analysis is held to be a true account of man as he can be understood apart from revelation, and the general conclusion which especially concerns us here is the belief that all that really counts for man's self-understanding is his own immediate apprehensions and self-consciousness: in a sense he projects himself upon his world, the world of objects; he exercises his freedom and finds authentic existence by giving meaning to that world. Here is the basis of the distinction between *Historie* as objective knowledge about the past and *Geschichte* which is personal life in the present. In the third place, Bultmann believes that by scientific historical analysis of the New Testament he can show that its original and authentic message corresponds with his own teaching (or, of course, *vice versa*. It is a very real question how far Heidegger's analysis of the relativity of history applies to Bultmann's own scientific historical work on the New Testament).

Whether or not the foregoing is at all an adequate sketch of the skeleton which articulates Bultmann's thought, it does seem that it embodies the questions which Bultmann puts to us on the relation between history and the Gospel. They are:

1. Can we meaningfully talk about God 'entering history' and acting decisively in events datable to the reigns of the Roman emperors Augustus and Tiberius?
2. Is objective knowledge about the past obtainable and, if so, is it in any case relevant to deciding questions about the Christian faith?
3. Is Bultmann's total picture of the New Testament teaching legitimate exegesis, or a necessary adaptation to modern thought, or both, or neither?

II

The first two questions are closely linked, but for a study of method the second is primary as it is raised in the context of any and every type of enquiry into man's existence. Bultmann seems to express the problem in the verbal distinction between the German words *Historie* and *Geschichte*. *Historie* refers to past events treated as an object which may be viewed with scientific detachment, while *Geschichte* (also translated as 'history') is used by Bultmann and others to denote the present experience of personal being in the stream of history.² This distinction is not linguistically possible in English, and in my view it is unfortunate that the fashion is growing to speak of Christianity as an 'historical religion' in the latter sense. This is not only an improper use of the English language, it is a logical

² This appears to be the Intention of Bultmann's Preface to *J. and W. Contrast*, however, Schniewind's discussion (*K. and M.*, Vol. I, p. 82): '*Geschichte* means the mutual encounter of persons, *Historie* the causal nexus in the affairs of men.'

sleight-of-hand which enables us to maintain the goodwill of the original meaning of 'historical' while setting up the business under new management. Indeed, I suspect it is an entirely different business. For the sake of accuracy and clarity, therefore, I shall retain the German term *Geschichte* for the existential meaning.

It is not difficult to find four different applications of the *Historie/Geschichte* distinction in Bultmann's various writings, but perhaps the basic one is that derived from Heidegger. The latter, if I understand him aright, was concerned to analyse the character of personal being (*Dasein*) as *Geschichtlichkeit* (historical being in the existential sense). He therefore argued that every scientific pursuit (including the study of history) was subordinate to and determined by man's need to understand himself. On this view it may (crudely) be said that I use the past as a means to affirming my own future. It would therefore appear that there can be no objective knowledge of the past. Crossing this distinction is another, viz. that to study a figure of the past historically is to treat him as an object and by that very fact to prevent oneself from 'knowing him' existentially.

In so far as these views apply to history in general there is obviously much truth in them which would be admitted by all historians.³ As Collingwood said, there are no 'bare facts' and no completely impartial historians: our interests govern what we select and how we appraise the selection. But history is also a process of discovery of that which is there, that which is *implied* by evidence (as Collingwood, at least, clearly admitted⁴). At some points Bultmann himself recognizes this, as when he speaks of 'dialogue with history'.⁵ It would seem therefore that to some extent history does determine *Geschichte*, although Bultmann's characteristic teaching depends on denying this.

As regards the second distinction we have noted, it must be pointed out that there is a closer analogy than Bultmann seems to allow between knowing a person historically and knowing him existentially. Unless our knowledge of persons is to be limited to what is given in each separate encounter, we would recognize that my knowledge of a lecturer, for example, and my existential encounter with him is partly dependent on and modified by my knowledge of his books, gossip about him, and so on.

³ It is, however, very doubtful whether Heidegger's analysis is either to be found in or confirmed by R. G. Collingwood's distinction (in *The Idea of History*, 1946) between the 'inside' and the 'outside' of an event, despite Bultmann's eulogy of the latter (*H. and E.*, p. 130). For a critical appraisal of Collingwood on the part of a distinguished working historian, see E. H. Carr, *What is History?* (London, Macmillan, 1961).

⁴ Cf. the distinction between a work of history and a work of imagination, *The Idea of History* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 246: 'The historian's picture stands in a peculiar relation to something called evidence . . . in practice, what we mean by asking whether a historical statement is true is whether it can be justified by an appeal to the evidence.'

⁵ *J. and W.*, p. 12.

On general grounds we must therefore allow that historical knowledge can be one means of our existential encounter with the past. The argument, however, shifts to the view that in the case of saving knowledge of God it is intolerable that we should be dependent on the 'relativities of history'. To which the answer is, we are partially, but not totally, dependent. Both Bultmann and Gogarten⁶ seem to be obsessed with the search for *one* cause for faith which shall be both necessary and sufficient. In fact, all real life situations involve many causes that are necessary and few that are, in themselves, sufficient. Historical knowledge is necessary, but certainly not sufficient, for faith. The tension introduced by the 'relativities of history' is a part of our whole human predicament, and one might suppose that the principle of *sola fide*, which Bultmann claims for his position, is equally applicable here.⁷ Our faith is (partly) that the historical evidence *is* and *implies* what we *take* it to be and to imply.

We may add that the New Testament itself certainly looked back to Jesus in this way, as Bultmann himself partly admits⁸ —one may compare Acts 2:22, 8:32 ff, 10:38 f; 1 Peter 2:18-25; Hebrews 4:15, 5:8 f. The whole argument of the Fourth Gospel presupposes this position, and one must take leave to differ from Bultmann's exegesis of 2 Cor. 5:16 f.⁹ The verse means 'I no longer estimate Christ by worldly standards', but this does not imply, 'I consider knowledge of his earthly life to be irrelevant'. The production of Gospels in itself proves the relevance of history, however much we must agree that these are theological rather than (primarily) historical works. They are theological *history*.¹⁰

⁶ Who tackles these points very clearly in *Demythologising and History*, London, S.C.M. Press, 1955.

⁷ Austin Farrer puts the point with his usual elegance in his contribution to *K. and M.*, Vol. I, pp. 219 f.

⁸ In the earliest Hellenistic kerygma, 'A visualization of what Jesus had done was also indispensable, since his life, considered divine, served as proof of his authority, as Acts 2:22, 10:38 f. show' (*T.N.T.*, Vol. I, p. 86).

⁹ *T.N.T.*, Vol. I, p. 238, *kata sarka* applies to the verb (as Bultmann admits) and means therefore an *attitude* which is sinful (Bultmann again, *op. cit.*, p. 237). What I think Bultmann overlooks is that (1) the context in 1 Cor. 5:16 suggests that 'knowing after the flesh' is an attitude we can adopt towards *other men*, and it would be foolish to say, 'I used to regard other men in their earthly existence but do so no longer', (2) in the parallels which Bultmann adduces (Rom. 9:5 and 1 Cor. 11:26) the phrase *kata sarka* must qualify the noun, which makes these passages irrelevant. The best English commentators disagree with Bultmann, cf. A. E. J. Rawlinson, *The New Testament Doctrine of the Christ* (London, Longmans, Green and Co., 3rd impression, 1949), p. 90, n. 5; W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (London, S.P.C.K., 1955), p. 195, n. 4; C. K. Barrett, *From First Adam to Last* (London, Adam & Charles Black, 1962), pp. 90 f.

¹⁰ Compare C. F. D. Moule, *The Birth of the New Testament* (London, Adam & Charles Black, 1962), chap. 5, and 'The Intention of the Evangelists' in *New Testament Essays*, Ed. A. J. B. Higgins (Manchester, University Press, 1959). Also, J. M. Robinson, *The Problem of History in*

III

I believe therefore that historical knowledge in general is, despite an inevitably subjective element, obtainable. I also conclude from the foregoing that it is likely to be relevant to Christian faith. Before, however, accepting this conclusion we must face Bultmann's other and more radical philosophical objection, viz. that to speak of God acting decisively at one moment in the past, as do orthodox doctrines of incarnation and atonement, is incurably mythological and quite unacceptable to modern man. There is of course no doubt that the Bible does this. Must it, however, in *this* matter be demythologized? Once again we are launched on an endless philosophical discussion. I confine myself to three points:

1. In his concern for modern man, does Bultmann draw the line between acceptable and unacceptable myth at the right point? Bultmann's concern with existentialism ignores an equally important and influential group of 'modern men', the philosophical empiricists, and (I suspect) they are essentially the academic version of the universal secularism of our age. For such men the *real* hurdle (which Bultmann curiously never discusses) is to believe in God or a transcendent reality of any kind. Once this hurdle is surmounted, the idea that God might dispose of and act in history (though baffling no doubt) is not so serious.

2. Any New Testament student must be impressed by the brilliant insight which Bultmann shows into the character of man 'under faith'. Nevertheless, he overlooks the possibility that the need for an 'objective atonement' (to speak approximately), and the fact that God has met the need, *might be given in the revelation of faith itself*. I suspect that this omission runs back to Bultmann's acceptance of Heidegger's analysis of 'guilt' as the determining character of *Dasein*. Guilt, Heidegger holds, is not primarily a relationship to reality but a feeling or condition of *Dasein* in itself. In *Being and Time* he writes, 'Being-guilty does not first result from an indebtedness (*Verschuldung*) but, on the contrary, indebtedness becomes possible only 'on the basis' of a primordial Being-guilty.'¹¹ This may be the furthest that philosophical analysis can reach (though even that is doubtful). But do we not see, at least in the light of revelation, that this is as perverse as it sounds? The experience of God's saving act does illuminate the condition of sin itself as an alienation

Mark (London, S.C.M. Press, 1957), and H. Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke* (London, Faber & Faber, 1960). One may also point to Bultmann's embarrassment at the appearance of the Synoptic Gospels in a Christianity which was largely moulded by 'Paulinism', cf. *H.S.T.*, p. 303.

¹¹ M. Heidegger, *Being and Time* (E.T. New York, Harper and Row, 1962), p. 329.

from God, a break in personal relationship which presupposes the Other from whom I am alienated. It is not a mere feeling or attitude such as is depicted in Franz Kafka's novel *The Trial*. Moreover, in faith, one knows that this alienation has been overcome by God's atoning act. We need not here recapitulate the arguments of the theologians who have maintained the need for an 'objective atonement'. We might, however, point to one of the most recent of them, Leonard Hodgson, whose book, *The Doctrine of the Atonement*, shows, I think, that this view can be presented in a non-mythological form. Juridical analogies are, after all, no less and no more mythological than other personal categories which Bultmann thinks we *can* use in our talk about 'encounter with God'.

3. What must remain objectionable for Bultmann is the assertion that an act *in time* and *at one point of time* was decisive. Yet it is upon this assertion that the claim of Christianity to be an historical religion in the ordinary meaning of those words depends. Hodgson clearly recognizes the antinomy between this affirmation about God as He is for us and a belief in God's impassibility, timelessness, etc., in himself, and confesses that an inability to solve it must be reckoned a part of our fallen predicament.¹² I wonder whether we must not be bolder. Bultmann, both in his rejection of the idea of God's act in history (not, one need hardly say, *Geschichte*, for by this concept Bultmann claims to solve the problem) and in his proposal to demythologize eschatology, forces us to face the issue unequivocally. For both of these proposals stem ultimately from an *a priori* denial that God can enter time or know as real the development of world history.

May not the right answer be that time is an essential aspect of God's being? I venture to think that the venerable argument that what changes cannot be perfect rests on a very inadequate idea of what might or might not constitute 'perfection'. Does it make sense, for example, to say that in a homogeneous musical composition the last three bars must necessarily be better or worse than the first three? Or that the fifteenth chord must be (necessarily) better or worse than the fourteenth, just because they are different? The value is in the whole and the successive relation of parts: the dimension of time is essential. Perhaps more significantly we can point to the category of personal being. Personality necessarily involves existence in time and (despite weighty opinions to the contrary) is there really a higher category than the personal in which to speak of God? Now I cannot avoid feeling that the conception of personal being 'outside time' is nonsensical in a sense in which

¹² L. Hodgson, *The Doctrine of the Atonement* (London, Nisbet, 1951), pp. 84 f. An acceptance of this antinomy is very reminiscent of *vishishtadvaita*, but can it be reconciled with the affirmation, 'He who has seen me has seen the Father'?

personal being 'outside space' is not. To say that God is personal (or rather, 'supra-personal') is to imply that time is an essential aspect of His being, though no doubt, as Cullmann argues biblically, we must also say that He is Lord of time.¹³

If all this be true, it would seem possible to conceive of God and the universe as a time continuum, in which life is a perpetual rhythm, perpetually subject to the loving guidance of God's grace and the correction of His holy wrath.¹⁴ The doctrine of incarnation and atonement is that in the course of this rhythm the principle which is exhibited at its very point was once and for all made concrete, and the forces making for disintegration once and for all contained, in the man Jesus and his cross. The Christian Gospel consists in making this known, and the Christian life in accepting its significance (and its benefits) existentially in the present. The link between that decisive event and the rest of history lies *both* in the fact that a new situation has been created,¹⁵ and in the continued living reality of Christ, pre-existent, incarnate and risen. I confess that this idea, mythological as it may be, seems to me to be intelligible in a way that the paradoxical unity of the historical event of the cross and the present word of proclamation is not.

It is against this background that one feels that Bultmann's (and Gogarten's) attempt to interpret the *ephapax* is unsatisfactory. Bultmann writes, 'Thus *ephapax* is understood as never before in its true sense of the "once" of the eschatological event. For it does not mean the datable uniqueness and finality of an event in past history, but teaches us in a high degree of paradox to believe that just such an event of the past is the once-and-for-all eschatological event which is continually re-enacted in the word of proclamation.'¹⁶ Bultmann undoubtedly preserves the objectivity of an act of God, but he reduces it to a kind of psychological jolt which shifts the personality from one pattern into another. For Western Christians or post-Christians, this jolt is naturally associated with Jesus and His cross, but it is one of Bultmann's disciples, Schubert M. Ogden, who has

¹³ O. Cullmann, *Christ and Time* (London, S.C.M. Press, 1951), Part I, chap. 4. Compare the argument of the whole book, and also W. G. Kummel, *Promise and Fulfilment* (London, S.C.M. Press, 1957), pp. 146 ff.

¹⁴ Some such picture of world history is presented by H. Butterfield, *Christianity and History* (London, G. Bell & Sons, 1949). One might also compare some modern Hindu interpretations of *lila*.

¹⁵ Bultmann himself says this (*K. and M.*, Vol. I, p. 37), but it is difficult to see what meaning can be given to it unless something like the mythological story be true. The essential argument of Cullmann's *Christ and Time* seems to me to be correct, and I do not find Bultmann's criticisms of Cullmann convincing (cf. Bultmann's essay, 'History of Salvation and History' in *E. and F.*, p. 226).

¹⁶ *K. and M.*, Vol. I, p. 209. I do not think that this existential interpretation of the unity of past and present can really gain support from Collingwood's idea of the re-enactment of past thought, which is concerned solely with an epistemological analysis (contrast, Bultmann, *H. and E.*, p. 136).

pointed out that Bultmann has in fact removed the reason for this connection, and faith in Bultmann's sense could still play its liberating rôle even if Jesus had never existed.¹⁷

IV

It is much less clear how we should respond to Bultmann's ingenious re-interpretation of eschatology. His view is, roughly, as follows: The original message of Jesus was the eschatological challenge of God to a man that he should, in the present, be determined wholly by the future, that is the realm of God's grace which is signified by the coming of the *eschaton*. In this way man is granted freedom from enslavement to his past and openness to God's future. This message was understood by Paul and John as deriving its power (inexplicably) from the cross of Christ. To see this and to live by it is to affirm the resurrection.¹⁸ Hence in the Fourth Gospel (where demythologization is complete) eternal life is a present possession because 'the resurrection of Jesus, Pentecost and *parousia* are one and the same event'.¹⁹ Unfortunately, the delay in the *parousia* led to a change in this view: the *eschaton* came to be viewed, not as a divine power which determines the present but as a 'far-off divine event to which the whole creation moves', and man's present existence was down-graded into a mere expectation of that future. We can, however, in the light of existentialist philosophy, which is a secularized version of the Gospel, recapture the original and authentic New Testament message.

There is so much that is profound and true to the New Testament in this that one hesitates to raise questions. When Bultmann tells us that belief in the resurrection must mean a transformation of the believer himself, and that the New Testament message means the in-breaking of God's eschatological power for the renewal of life in the present, one can and must respond with enthusiasm. But is this the whole story? On general grounds we should never forget that human history had a definite beginning. Is therefore the idea that it might one day end either illogical or inconceivable? Moreover, if what we have said earlier about time and personality is correct, it does not seem impossible that the state of life on this earth, which has changed once from non-moral to moral, might change again from the morality of conflict to the synthesis of heaven. Teilhard de Chardin has given us a celebrated vision of what this might mean in scientific terms which modern man may

¹⁷ S. M. Ogden, *Christ without Myth* (New York, Harper & Row, 1961).

¹⁸ *K. and M.*, Vol. I, p. 41.

¹⁹ *J.C. and M.*, p. 33. Cf. the penetrating exposition in the essay, 'Man between the times according to the New Testament', in *E. and F.*, pp. 248-266.

reject, but can hardly pronounce to be either unintelligible or irrelevant.²⁰

It is interesting to note how even Plato thought of heaven, in his less philosophical moments, as a perpetual philosophical dialogue.²¹ I wonder if we are right to smile when we are told that 'there was silence in heaven for about half an hour'.²² I need hardly add that this is not a matter of Biblical literalism, but a confession that I cannot conceive of timeless personal existence nor be interested in timeless non-personal existence. I have read enough in the mystics and in Indian philosophy to realize the superficiality and perhaps even profaneness of these remarks which cannot be fully developed here. But do they not raise a real question, not least for a thinker who claims that *Geschichtlichkeit* is all? In fact (though Bultmann's language is extremely ambiguous) one cannot avoid the impression that, if pressed, he would solve this particular problem by jettisoning the idea of life beyond death or heaven in any form.²³

It is in fact by no means impossible to combine the truths which Bultmann seems to oppose to one another. In the terms proposed by careful New Testament scholars we may speak of an eschatology 'in process of realizing itself'.²⁴ The *eschaton* is realized in a new creation now, yet it is still to be consummated in the future. To say 'eternal life now' means an essential continuity between the present and the future, which, I take it, is also the meaning of Paul's symbol of the *arrhabon* ('earnest' or 'first instalment').

V

Before we attempt to ask what final evaluation of Bultmann's work arises out of our situation, we should at least glance at two other major questions: firstly, is Bultmann's interpretation taken as a whole a legitimate translation of the New Testament message, or a distortion of it? Secondly, is it true or false, and how can its truth or falsity be determined? Brilliant as Bultmann's achievement is, and profoundly as he interprets many themes in the New Testament, one still remains unconvinced by the total picture.

Bultmann has no doubt that he has uncovered the kernel of the New Testament message: that kernel is to be found in the

²⁰ Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*. Cf. also the development of Teilhard's view in relation to the world of religions in R. C. Zaehner, *The Convergent Spirit* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963).

²¹ *Apol. Soc.*, 41 c, quoted by Bultmann in *J.C. and M.*, p. 29.

²² Revelation 8:1.

²³ Cf. the analysis in *J.C. and M.*, pp. 28-32.

²⁴ J. Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (London, S.C.M. Press, 1954), p. 159, accepted by C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge, The University Press, 1953), p. 447, n. 1. Also the argument of W. G. Kummel, *Promise and Fulfilment*.

characteristic message of Jesus, Paul and John, and it is a strictly non-mythological message directed to man's self-understanding. The rest (including the ideas of 'incarnation' and 'atonement') is husk which may readily be thrown away. Bultmann, of course, does not say that other ideas (mythological ones) do not occur in the New Testament. They can, however, be shown to be peripheral. The method of demonstration is a historical analysis of different strata within the New Testament. It is probably not too gross an over-simplification to say that the major thesis of Bultmann's *Theology of the New Testament* depends on a water-tight division between three main streams of thought: Jewish Apocalyptic, Hellenistic ideas of the divine man and saviour god, and the authentic existential message. The first two are shown to be extraneous to the third, either because they are demonstrably non-Christian in origin, or because the texts which express them can be shown to be secondary in the tradition.

With regard to the Synoptic Jesus, Bultmann's position was first worked out in his massive book, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*. The influence of this work has been prodigious, and undoubtedly much is to be learned from it and from the whole form-critical movement. Nevertheless, both its generalizations about the patterns of the tradition and many of its particular judgments seem to the writer to require serious re-appraisal, and its general scepticism regarding the Jesus of History to be unwarranted. A detailed defence of this position is impossible here: we can do no more than take a few illustrative soundings at points of crucial importance.

Bultmann's view is that while Jesus did adopt apocalyptic speculations concerning the *parousia* of the glorious Son of Man, he did not identify this figure with himself, nor conceive of a time-gap of continuing history between his own death and the consummation. The apparent separation of Jesus from the Son of Man at Mark 8:38 (which figures largely in Bultmann's argument) is a real but not insuperable problem. The real basis for Bultmann's view, however, is the belief that a Son of Man figure already existed in Jewish apocalyptic thought, to which Jesus might have referred and which the early church might mistakenly have applied to Jesus himself. The opinion is growing among New Testament scholars, however, that no such figure in fact existed at such an early date.²⁵ Jesus therefore could only have been referring to himself, and probably in a way which did not immediately or necessarily imply supernaturalistic claims. Moreover, on the crucial question of the time-scheme, W. G. Kummel has shown, I think decisively, that Jesus did expect a period of history (though brief) between his

²⁵ Cf. J. C. Hindley, 'Jesus as "Son of Man" in the Light of Some Recent Discussions', *Society for Biblical Studies Bulletin* (ed. E. C. John, Bangalore, January, 1964), pp. 42-60.

death and the *parousia*.²⁶ Cullmann's 'linear' view of time would seem thereby to be established within the teaching of Jesus itself. True, Jesus discouraged the detailed and fantastic vision of the Jewish apocalypticists, but the difference between his message and theirs was not in principle so great as Bultmann maintains.

Bultmann's attempt to prove that the Synoptic tradition was contaminated by Hellenism is equally doubtful. Is the famous passage, Matthew 11:25-30, of Hellenistic-Gnostic origin?²⁷ Increasingly scholars reject this theory, and recently W. D. Davies has shown how naturally it fits into the background of thought provided by Qumran.²⁸ It might indeed further be argued that a precise relation can be discerned between this passage and Jeremiah 31:31-34, and in this way the essential thought ascribed to Jesus in these words would be shown to spring directly out of the Old Testament tradition. A further matter of central importance is the title 'Son of God'. In declaring that this title could only mean 'Messiah' in the Synoptic tradition, Bultmann admits that there is no contemporary evidence for his view.²⁹ But does he take account of W. Manson's argument that perhaps only a unique 'filial consciousness' testified to by Jesus himself could explain its revival as a Messianic title, or Jeremias' and Kittel's analysis of the term *abba*, which bears witness to the same filial consciousness?³⁰ It begins to look as though something in the historical experience of Jesus himself gave rise to the mythological language about 'incarnation' at least in part: the title 'Son of God' was not wholly the invention of later tradition.

Regarding St. Paul, Bultmann emphasizes the view that he was converted by the Hellenistic *kerygma* and re-affirms Bousset's view that the title *Kyrios* came from the Hellenistic church.³¹ In Bultmann's *Theology of the New Testament*, therefore, all the Christological (and we may add, sacramental) teaching is removed from the account of the theology of St. Paul and dealt with under 'The Kerygma of the Hellenistic Church aside from Paul'. By this device Paul is made a witness for Bultmann's demythologized account of the salvation event.

²⁶ Op. cit.

²⁷ Cf. the defence of its authenticity by A. M. Hunter in 'Crux Criticorum, Matthew 11:25-30, A Reappraisal', *New Testament Studies*, Vol. VIII, pp. 241-249.

In Bultmann's complex analysis the crucial verse 27 is a Hellenistic revelation saying. Cf. *H.S.T.*, pp. 159 f. and p. 410.

²⁸ W. D. Davies, 'Knowledge in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Matthew 11:25-30', in *Christian Origins and Judaism* (London, Dartman, Longman and Todd, 1962).

²⁹ *T.N.T.*, Vol. I, p. 50.

³⁰ W. Manson, *Jesus the Messiah* (London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1943), p. 105. G. Kittel, *T.W.N.T.* ad voc. J. Jeremias in *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, 1954, pp. 213 f.

³¹ *T.N.T.*, Vol. I, pp. 63, 124 ff.

There are two great difficulties in this procedure, one of substance and one of method. While it might be true that Paul was converted by the 'Hellenistic *kerygma*', recent research has emphasized that he was not a Hellenist but a Jewish rabbi.³² The problem therefore of why he should have been converted by the Hellenistic *kerygma* to worshipping a man who had died a few years earlier is so far as I can see insuperable, unless there was some ground for this attitude. It is here that Bultmann's account of the resurrection shows its weakness: while Paul himself attributed his conversion to an encounter with the risen Lord and appealed to the resurrection as a proof of Christ's authority, Bultmann dismisses the argument of 1 Corinthians 15 with the comment, 'But is such a proof convincing?'³³ One might ask the same question of Bultmann's exegesis here, vital and essential as his demonstration is, that the resurrection is not only an event in the past. Furthermore, as a matter of method, can we deny that Paul believed and counted important the Christological and other teaching which he derived (if that is the correct explanation) from the Hellenistic church? Regarding the crucial point it is in any case widely held that Bousset failed to deal satisfactorily with the phrase *maranatha* in 1 Corinthians 16:22, and that this Aramaic phrase in fact shows that the title 'Lord' goes back to the earliest Palestinian community.³⁴

It is also germane to Bultmann's thesis to deny to Paul the cosmological speculations of Colossians and Ephesians, and to minimize eschatological hope which he continued to hold to the end of his life. It is highly doubtful whether on either point Bultmann correctly represents Paul's position.

Similar doubts attach to Bultmann's treatment of the Fourth Gospel, despite the, in many respects, acknowledged greatness of his commentary on that book. On his view, the Christological categories which imply a metaphysical union between Jesus and God are the result of later speculation on the Gnostic redeemer myth (known chiefly through Mandaean writings of the eighth-century A.D. or later).³⁵ Once again the existence of such a myth in the first century is challenged, and increasingly students of Gnosticism are saying that in fact the Gnostic Redeemer was modelled on Christian teaching and not *vice versa*.³⁶

³² Cf. W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*.

³³ *T.N.T.*, Vol. I, p. 295.

³⁴ 1 Cor. 16:22. O. Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament* (London, S.C.M. Press, 1959), pp. 208 f. V. Taylor, *The Names of Jesus* (London, Macmillan, 1953), chap. 9.

³⁵ *T.N.T.*, Vol. I, pp. 166 f., Vol. II, pp. 12 f. On the Mandaeans, to whom Bultmann makes frequent reference in his *Commentary on the Fourth Gospel*. Cf. C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, chap. 6.

³⁶ G. Quispel, 'Der gnostische Anthropos und die Jüdische Tradition' in *Eranos-Jahrbuch*, 1953, pp. 195-234. R. M. Grant, *Gnosticism and Early Christianity* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1959). On the

Moreover, Bultmann's literary analysis of the Fourth Gospel whereby passages which express the traditional eschatological viewpoint are eliminated has failed to commend itself to many distinguished scholars.³⁷

One is not required to deny that to some extent the language of Jewish apocalyptic has accentuated one aspect of the tradition or that in some measure Hellenistic thought-forms have drawn out more fully its implications. It does, however, seem very unlikely that historical criticism can uncover any primitive, wholly existential and non-mythological message which was independent of these elements. One cannot avoid the conclusion that, brilliant as Bultmann's *Theology of the New Testament* is, it is essentially a distortion of the New Testament message.

VI

The more important question, however, is whether that message regarding the divine act of salvation in history is true. How is its truth or falsity to be determined?

It must still be held that an essential (though of course not sufficient) line of enquiry is a historical investigation of both the earthly ministry of Jesus and the rise of the resurrection faith. One can only hint at what such an investigation might uncover, but despite Bultmann's scepticism sufficient traces can be found in the Synoptic record for what Vincent Taylor has termed our Lord's 'divine consciousness' to form a significant part of our grounds for retaining the doctrine of incarnation. There is a 'depth' in our Lord's challenge and his few utterances about himself which point beyond him to God, and it is important to affirm that they do point not only within him but beyond him to the heavenly Father. Moreover, such historical enquiry is one of the ways in which we today can be led to meet Jesus 'existentially', as the post-Bultmannian 'new quest of the historical Jesus' has emphasized.

It must further be stressed that Bultmann's admitted inability to explain the rise of the resurrection faith³⁸ is not a minor flaw which can easily be brushed aside, but a fatal weakness in the whole structure. It was not one bit easier for Paul or any first-century Jew to worship one of his human contemporaries than for a Muslim to worship Muhammed. It was in fact much more difficult, since for the Jew 'a hanged man is accursed by God'³⁹. We will grant with Bultmann that the empty tomb or a mere physical resuscitation in themselves could

Jewish background of the Fourth Gospel's Christology, cf. E. M. Sidebottom, *The Christ of the Fourth Gospel* (London, S.P.C.K., 1961).

³⁷ Notably, C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John* (London, S.P.C.K., 1955), p. 57. Also W. F. Howard, *Christianity according to St. John* (London, Duckworth, 1943), chap. 5.

³⁸ *T.N.T.*, Vol. I, p. 45.

³⁹ Deuteronomy 21:23, cf. Galatians 3:13.

not engender the faith of the New Testament. It is nevertheless equally true that without that stupendous event datable to Easter morning, to which the empty tomb bears witness, there would never have been a Christian church at all. While the arguments of David Hume prevent any claim that historical enquiry can 'prove' the resurrection, I am convinced that historical arguments go a long way to support our belief in it.

VII

What then, out of our situation, are we to say to Bultmann?

In this already overlong paper, too little attention has been paid to the positive and welcome stress of Bultmann on *Geschichtlichkeit*—personal existence in decision and openness to the future is the place where faith becomes real and relevant. Bultmann's profound analysis of this aspect of New Testament teaching must be especially welcomed in a situation where on all sides the demand is for religion which is relevant to life and which will affirm meaning not only in the eternal realm of mystical experience but also at the heart of our concern with social change and new patterns of personal and family life.

Bultmann's denials however are no less significant and, I believe, the reverse of helpful. In denying the historical grounding of our faith (as in effect he does) Bultmann cuts away the one point of reference which modern empiricist man can understand. For is not empiricism (not only in the sophisticated dress of what used to be called Logical Positivism) an essential part of the outlook of modern secular and scientific man? Why, he asks, believe in God at all? In this situation it is not helpful to say 'You are addressed by God's Word'. It is, however, relevant to point to a human life whose character and circumstances are at least in part empirically known. Confronted with Jesus our secular empiricist man may acknowledge his moral and spiritual supremacy. He may then be led to see that for Jesus himself the supreme reality is God. I. M. Crombie of Oxford has sketched out the position that essentially we believe in God on the authority of Jesus, and it may well be argued that no other reason can ultimately survive sceptical criticism.⁴⁰ At any rate this is the implication of Herrmann's saying, often quoted by Bultmann, that a Christian should say 'God is Jesus' rather than 'Jesus is God', and it is surprising that Bultmann has failed to see that by denying the possibility or relevance of historical knowledge about Jesus he has cut the ground from under this position.

A special form of the foregoing question is the problem (a very real one to the writer) how can one affirm a link between one's religious experience and the historical Jesus? We have

⁴⁰ I. M. Crombie, 'The Possibility of Theological Statements' in *Faith and Logic*, ed. B. Mitchell (London, Allen & Unwin, 1957).

suggested that the ultimate logic of Bultmann's position destroys that link: it is historical enquiry which is a (one would hesitate to say 'the') prime factor in restoring it. For an essential continuity is (I believe) discernible between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith.

This last question is particularly important in an Indian context. The existential experience analysed by Bultmann may be paralleled in many forms of *bhakti*: even where there are differences, they may all be categorized as various apprehensions of the ultimate and be covered by the Vedantic umbrella. The Hindu also may emphasize (and today probably is emphasizing) *Geschichtlichkeit*. What he will still deny is historical revelation in the sense we have defined. One thinks of a paragraph in Vinoba Bhave's *Talks on the Gita* which condemns the historical fallacy. He writes, 'Let us not say, "Arjuna had Krishna. Where are we to find our Krishna?" Let us not get caught in the fallacy of historicity, that there was an individual called "Krishna". Krishna shines in the heart of each one of us, the Inner Ruler . . . So then, let us place all the flaws and falsehoods of our heart before Him and say, "O Lord, I take refuge in you" . . . If we do so, He who drove Arjuna's chariot will drive ours too; we ourselves shall hear the *Gītā* in his own voice, and He will drive us to victory.'⁴¹ Substitute 'Christ' for 'Krishna' and the words might have been written by Bultmann. For does not Bultmann, in the last analysis, transform Christianity into the *bhakti* cult of an *ishta devata*?

Now obviously the point is not merely that Jesus actually lived. This is not what Christians mean by a 'historical incarnation'. Nor is it a question of the superiority of Christianity to some other religion. Indeed it is hard to say whether it is a mark of superiority or (Vinobaji suggests) of inferiority to lay claim to a historical incarnation. The question is one of truth: what is the evidence on this matter and in what direction does it point? An important part of the evidence is produced by historical enquiry, and it still seems to be true regarding other 'avatars' that one has either reliable historical accounts without overtones of divinity, or claims to divinity without reliable historical evidence. In the case of Jesus, on the other hand, we find the combination of what we may call overtones of divinity together with substantially authentic historical records. (Obviously we cannot here go further into a detailed refutation of the widespread scepticism on this matter, which largely reflects Bultmann's analysis).

It is singularly unfortunate that Bultmann's position leads us to disregard the 'Jesus of History', whose teaching, more than any other single factor, has led men of other faiths to examine his way with sympathy, and to substitute for Jesus' personality and teaching, the present-day preacher's authoritarian 'Thus

⁴¹ Vinoba Bhave, *Talks on the Gita*, p. 23.

saith the Lord . . .’ The writer had the privilege of an interview with Professor Bultmann in Marburg in 1962, and one of the questions he put was, ‘How could I present the Christian message to a Hindu who does not share my idea of God?’ Bultmann’s reply was, ‘I must say, “I address you in the name of God, because that task is laid upon me”.’

We may well wonder if that is a position in which we can happily rest.

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OUR CONTRIBUTORS

The Rev. Fr. O. Vercauysse, S.J., is on the staff of St. Albert’s College, Ranchi.

The Rev. David Scott is Chaplain of Lucknow Christian College.

The Rev. J. C. Hindley is a lecturer in New Testament Studies at Serampore College, and Secretary of the I.C.T.A.